

Sona Grigoryan

**ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS OF IBN TAYMIYYAH:
CORRUPTION OF THE SCRIPTURES**

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

Budapest

May 2011

**ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS OF IBN TAYMIYYAH:
CORRUPTION OF THE SCRIPTURES**

by

Sona Grigoryan

(Armenia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

Chair, Examination Committee

Thesis Supervisor

Examiner

Examiner

Budapest
May 2011

**ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS OF IBN TAYMIYYAH:
CORRUPTION OF THE SCRIPTURES**

by

Sona Grigoryan

(Armenia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

External Examiner

**ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS OF IBN TAYMIYYAH:
CORRUPTION OF THE SCRIPTURES**

by

Sona Grigoryan

(Armenia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

Supervisor

External Supervisor

Budapest
May 2011

I, the undersigned, **Sona Grigoryan**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 23 May 2011

Signature

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Aim and plan of this study	1
1.2. Previous Scholarship on the Theme and Justification of the Topic	3
1.3. Methodological Considerations.....	4
1.4. The polemical discourse of Ibn Taymiyya	5
1.4.1. Anti-Christian Polemics.....	11
2. <i>TAḤRĪF</i> : CORRUPTION OF THE SCRIPTURES	14
2.1. The Relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an.....	14
2.2. The concept of <i>Taḥrīf</i> before the time of Ibn Taymiyyah.....	16
2.3. Ibn Taymiyya's Discussion on <i>Taḥrīf</i>	28
2.3.1. The status of the Gospels according to Ibn Taymiyyah.....	38
3. OUTCOMES OF THE <i>TAḤRĪF</i> : THE TRINITY AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST	43
3.1. Introduction to the Refutations of the Trinity and Divinity of Christ in Islam	43
3.1.1. The Trinity.....	44
3.1.2. The Divinity of Christ.....	50
3.2. Ibn Taymiyya's discussion on the Trinity.....	54
3.3. Ibn Taymiyya's discussion on the nature of Christ.....	57
4. CONCLUSION.....	63
APPENDIX-Glossary of Arabic Terms	65
BIBLIOGRAPHY	68

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should express my gratitude to people whose help was essential to complete this thesis. First and foremost, I would like to thank deeply my supervisor Professor Aziz Al-Azmeh for his crucial advices throughout the entire course of my study, comments and corrections and especially for raising problems which have been essential for better understanding of my topic. I am truly grateful to Professor Tijana Krstic for her great cooperation any time, important advices and good discussions. Many thanks go to Professor Volker Menze for his useful comments, Judith Rasson for correcting my English and to all the professors from whom I benefited during my study. I am very thankful to my friend Mushegh Asatryan for his constant assistance in acquiring the needed literature for the research. My warmest thankfulness goes to my friends Hayk, Dora, Sandro, and Andras for their best support and encouragement. Words are never enough to express my gratitude to my family.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
EP ²	Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition, Leiden: Brill, 1960-2005
ICMR	Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations
IQ	The Islamic Quarterly
JIP	Journal of Islamic Philosophy
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
MW	The Muslim World

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Aim and plan of this study

It is not an exaggeration to call the anti-Christian polemics of Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-‘Abās Aḥmad Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām Ibn ‘Abd Allah Ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī (1263-1328) a comprehensive crystallisation of Muslim anti-Christian polemics, a tradition which originated as early as the eighth century. The significance of Ibn Taymiyyah’s polemic lies not only in his effort to put all the existing arguments against Christianity, developed in numerous refutations before his time, into a comprehensive argumentative framework, but also in his ability to draw new conclusions and to articulate an approach with distinctive features and emphases in his discussion of older polemical themes. This thesis rests on the assertion that central to Ibn Taymiyyah’s polemical outlook is one fundamental assertion: *ahl al-kitāb* (*People of the Book*) are united by the virtue of the archetypal Revelation received through the archetypal prophet Abraham; any belief or custom, be it Christian, Muslim or Jewish, contradicting the perennial and self-consistent Revelation must be the outcome of human error. This is the ideological and theological-historical backbone upon which Ibn Taymiyyah based his overall arguments. In the light of this claim, obedience to Scriptures as manifestations of divine Revelation becomes a primary duty for *ahl al-kitāb*. Deviation from the Scriptures through corrupting their texts and meaning is what Ibn Taymiyyah accuses Christians of and this becomes the cornerstone of his polemical argumentation.

Corruption of the Scriptures, the Arabic term for which is *tahrīf*, is an old polemical *topos* originating in the Qur’an.¹ The Qur’an accepts that the Torah and Gospels, as divine revelations, originally derived from the *lauh al-mahfūz* (Eternally Preserved Tablets); however, the Qur’an accuses both Jews and Christians of intentional and non-deliberate

¹The Arabic word originates from the root *hrf*, literally meaning “distortion.” In the Qur’an there are four verses which use a derivative form of the word *tahrīf*, but not the term itself (Q 2:75, 4:46, 5:13, 5:41).

alterations in the text and meaning of the Torah and Gospels (respectively, *tahrīf al-nass* and *tahrīf al-ma'nā*).² The Qur'anic accusation of the corruption carries other connotations such as substituting, concealing, twisting the language of, and forgetting (*tabdīl, kitmān, labs, nisyān*) parts of the Scriptures.³ As my further discussion will show, the concept itself is complex and the outcome of later elaborations and exegesis by various Muslim scholars.

Ibn Taymiyyah treated the theme of *tahrīf* in a most detailed and careful manner, using the large amount of the material existing at his time. The goal of this study is to discuss the concept of *tahrīf* as seen by Ibn Taymiyyah. This will demonstrate the centrality and crucial importance of the prophetic message in his thought, while drawing attention to his own distinctive treatment to the Gospels, on the other. This thesis will argue that Ibn Taymiyyah did not reject the value of the Gospels as sources of certain knowledge, but that he reduced their status to one analogous to collections of *Hadīth* (Tradition of the Prophet) and books of *Sīrah* (biography of the Prophet Muḥammad) in Muslim tradition, thereby giving them secondary epistemological value. With this approach Ibn Taymiyyah stands apart from the mainstream of previous Muslim authors.

The first introductory chapter sets out the background of Ibn Taymiyyah's polemical discourse in general and is followed in the second chapter by a discussion of the concept of *tahrīf*. This second chapter discusses how the relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an was viewed by Muslim authors, providing a background for a fuller understanding of *tahrīf*. Further, this chapter seeks to sketch the features of the concept of *tahrīf* as understood by Ibn Taymiyyah against the background of previous discussions by Muslim authors.

²See *EP*, s.v. *Tahrīf*. For a general survey on the concept of *tahrīf* and its various interpretations see W. Montgomery Watt, "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible," *Glasgow University Oriental Society Transactions* 16 (1955-1956): 50-62; R. Caspar, and J. M. Gaudeul, "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le tahrif des Ecritures," *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980): 61-104; Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures," *Muslim World* 92 (2002): 419-436; McAuliffe, Jane Damen, "The Qur'anic Context of Muslim Biblical Scholarship," *Islam and Christian Relations* 7(1996): 141-158.

³ See R. Caspar, *Textes de la tradition musulmane*, 62-63.

The third chapter examines other polemical themes taken up by our author, such as the Trinity and Divinity of Christ, treating them as outcomes of *tahrīf*. Again, a brief overview of the previous discussion on these two subjects will be provided before proceeding to discussions of Ibn Taymiyyah. The conclusion will return to the overall argument of the thesis after having considered the sources.

1.2. Previous Scholarship on the Theme and Justification of the Topic

Ibn Taymiyyah is, without doubts, one of the most controversial and original figures in Islamic religious thought. He was an influential Ḥanbalī author who wrote on almost every major subject of religious discourse in Islamic intellectual history. Ibn Taymiyyah is also one of the most disputed authors, whose works open up possibilities for diverse interpretations (and misinterpretations). However, there is still no comprehensive study on Ibn Taymiyyah that would provide a thorough introduction to his intellectual input and legacy. The study of the French scholar Henri Laoust (*Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques d'Ibn Taimīya*, 1939) is a monumental work which has formed the basis for several studies and a starting point for those interested in the subject. The other useful work in a Western language is the study of Muhammad Umar Memon (*Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle against Popular Religion*, 1977), which provides good material about Ibn Taymiyyah's struggle to re-establish what he held to be a pure Islamic community true to its divine origins and prophetic beginnings. Victor Makari's work (*Ibn Taymiyyah's Ethics: The Social Factor*, 1983) has its contribution in avoiding misinterpretations about Ibn Taymiyyah. It shows the influence of Ibn Taymiyyah's theological thought on his definition of ethics. An outstanding guide in English is the study of Thomas Michel (*A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyyah's Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ lī man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, 1984) which provides a comprehensive contextual introduction to Ibn Taymiyyah's polemical thought in general and

also a translation of one third of *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ lī man baddala Dīn al-Masīḥ* [The Right Answers to those who altered the Religion of Christ, hereafter referred to as *al-Jawāb*], Ibn Taymiyyah's main anti-Christian work, which is the main source used in this thesis. The most recent study on Ibn Taymiyyah is the Oxford publication of a collection of essays (Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, ed., *Ibn Taymiyya and his Times*, 2010) which provides rich material about Ibn Taymiyyah, reconsidering many concepts and interpretations of him.⁴

As for the specific theme of *tahrīf*, there is no monograph which examines the evolution of this doctrine or the social history of polemical texts and the social contexts of polemical writers. Instead, many modern authors interested in Muslim-Christian polemics make general reference to the theme and existing texts without necessarily engaging in discussion of genealogy of particular concepts or contexts in which those texts were written. These works are found elsewhere in my references. The best treatment of the doctrine in the polemics of Ibn Taymiyyah is again the study by T. Michel cited above. Michel points out the major features of Ibn Taymiyyah's discussion on *tahrīf*, including the parity between the Gospels and the *Sunnah*. This last notion, however, is not sufficiently developed in his study.

This thesis does not seek to provide a thorough examination of the historical evolution of the notion of *tahrīf*, what it aims at is to discuss primary aspects of this notion in the work of Ibn Taymiyyah, against the background of previous uses of the notion.

1.3. Methodological Considerations

This study takes *tahrīf* to be a central polemical *topos* in the anti-Christian polemic of Ibn Taymiyyah. It is seen as the axis around which Ibn Taymiyyah built his argumentation against Christianity. The aim is to show what semantic burden the term *tahrīf* carries in the polemical arguments of Ibn Taymiyyah. To achieve this aim, this notion will be considered

⁴ For annotated translations of Ibn Taymyyah's works see <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/it> (accessed: May 21, 2011) carried out by Yahya Michot.

against the background of previous uses of *tahṛīf*. For this reason authors and accounts that will be examined will be chosen for their representative value in the evolution of the major features of *tahṛīf*. The same approach will be taken towards other polemical themes such as the Trinity and Divinity of Christ. To emphasize the centrality of *tahṛīf* in Ibn Taymiyyah's writing, these two polemical themes are seen as outcomes of scriptural corruption. They, too, will be discussed against the background of the previous polemical tradition in order to highlight Ibn Taymiyyah's position within this tradition.⁵

Ibn Taymiyyah's text is highly digressive and repetitive and a close reading is needed to follow the logical structure of the text. The reconstruction of Ibn Taymiyyah's argumentation system is the essential task of this thesis. It will be accompanied by definitions of the technical terminology of the text.

1.4. The polemical discourse of Ibn Taymiyya

In the eyes of the popular and some scholarly public Ibn Taymiyyah is nowadays mostly associated with Islamic fundamentalism whose ideological forefather he is considered to be. His name is closely associated with the Wahhābī movement which erupted in the eighteenth century in Saudi Arabia and which was influenced by the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah, especially in his denunciation of Sufi rituals, veneration of saints and tombs. also with Ibn Taymiyyah is the most often quoted and selectively read medieval author by modern Muslim militant extremists, who take Ibn Taymiyyah's condemnation of Mongols and Christians in the thirteenth century, resulting from the specific context of Mamluk-Mongol and Mamluk-Christian conflicts in which Ibn Taymiyyah personally participated, as universally applicable

⁵Medieval anti-Christian polemical works are numerous and these issues appeared constantly in medieval Muslim-Christian polemical writings. For a biographical guide to these writings see R. Caspar, "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chretien: les auteurs et les oeuvres du vii^e au x^eme siecle compris," *Islamochristiana* 1 (1975):125-181/2 (1976):184-249 for the eleventh and twelfth centuries; vol. 4 (1978): 247-267 for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; also D. Thomas and Barbara Roggema, ed. *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*. Volume 1 (600-900) (Leiden: Brill, 2009); D. Thomas and Alex Mallett, ed., *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, Volume 2 (900-1050) (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

to all times and places.⁶ This ahistorical approach to Ibn Taymiyyah's opus is the main cause for misinterpretation of his thought.⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah's figure had been controversial in his own time, when he was variously regarded by his contemporaries as a man of profound learning and deep piety, as a great reformer, as a miscreant, or as an arrogant, scandalous person with "a screw loose."⁸ The reason for this perception is Ibn Taymiyyah's opposition, in word and deed, to all manner of popular religious beliefs and practices during the time of Mamluks, matters which caused conflicts between him and both Mamluk leaders and the 'Ulama, often resulting in his imprisonment.⁹

Ibn Taymiyyah's zealous and consistent struggle was against those who failed to follow the prophetic message and true nature of *tawhīd* (the oneness of God) as the *salaf*, the community of pious ancestors had done. The Qur'an is the most perfect book reflecting the nature of relationship between God and His creatures and asserting *tawhīd*. It is followed in rank by the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and the *Ijmā'*, a consensus of the *Salaf*.¹⁰ This hierarchical structure of sources conceptualized in theology and the principles of Muslim jurisprudence provides guidance for the Straight Path. Asserting this idea as absolute, Ibn Taymiyyah saw any deviation from these sources as a threat to the community of believers and to Islam itself.

⁶See Johannes, J.G. Jansen, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Thirteenth Century: A Formative Period of Modern Muslim Radicalism," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5-6 (1987-88):391-396; Mona Hassan, "Modern Interpretations and Misinterpretations of a Medieval Scholar: Apprehending the Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyyah," in *Ibn Taymiyya and his Times*, ed. Yossef. Rapoport, Shahab Ahmed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 338:366.

⁷ See Aziz al-Azmeh, "Introduction," to *Ibn Taymiyyah* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2000).

⁸See Donald Little, "Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?" *Studia Islamica* 41 (1975): 93-111.

⁹Ibn Taymiyyah was put on trial three times from 1305 to the time of his death: he was accused of a literalist, anthropomorphic interpretation of divine attributes, of undermining legal oaths, and repudiating the ritual of visiting tombs. It was a time when the Mamluks took power in Syria and Egypt and had strong connections to Sufi orders, against which Ibn Taymiyyah preached. The frequent detentions of Ibn Taymiyyah were a result of seeing him as a threat to the nexus between state actors and various religious institutions. See D. Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyyah," *International Journal of the Middle East* 4, (1973): 311-327; for a summary of events and the historical context see *EP*, s.v. "Ibn Taymiyyah;" H. Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques d'Ibn Taimiyya* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'institute français d'archéologie orientale, 1939), 110-150; S. A. Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyya on Trial in Damascus," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39 (1994): 41-85. For historical sources on Ibn Taymiyyah see Hasan Qasim Murad, "Miḥan of Ibn Taymiyyah: A Narrative Account based on a Comparative Analysis of the Sources," MA thesis (Montreal: Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill, 1968), which I did not have a chance to consult.

¹⁰See H. Laoust, "L'Influence d' Ibn Taymiyya," in *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*, ed. A. T. Welch and P. Cachia (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1979), 15-33, 19-20.

The ultimate goal of Ibn Taymiyya's efforts was the re-establishment of a *salafī* community devoid of any innovation (*bid'a*).¹¹ In order to attain this goal, Ibn Taymiyyah affiliated himself with a broader category of "theology of the *Sunnah* and *salaf*,"¹² to some extent undermining even divisions of schools within Islam¹³ and going against any teaching or custom contradicting what he saw to be the true nature of the *salaf* as ideal followers of the prophetic message. This is the perspective from which Ibn Taymiyyah's polemical discourse against Sufis, philosophers, speculative theologians, and Shi'as must be regarded.

It has been assumed for a long time in both Western and Muslim scholarship that Ibn Taymiyyah was a staunch enemy of Sufi mysticism. The study of H. Laoust, making a case for Ibn Taymiyyah's interest in and sympathy for Sufism,¹⁴ triggered an interest in re-evaluating this assumption, and resulted in the conclusion of G. Makdisi asserting ideological connections between the Ḥanbalī school and Sufism in general.¹⁵ Makdisi argued that Ibn Taymiyyah belonged to the Qadiriyyah order and was "no less a Sufi than al-Ghazālī."¹⁶ Why, then, represent Ibn Taymiyyah as an irreconcilable opponent of Sufism?

¹¹It is hard to say whether Ibn Taymiyyah sincerely believed that his thought and that of the *salaf* was identical. W. Hallaq states that Ibn Taymiyyah "modestly thought" of his own thoughts as coming down from the *salaf*: See W. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), lii. However, what is more likely is that he relied on *Salafism* as an instrument to guarantee the validity of his own methodology and epistemology. An impressive demonstration of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Salafism* is expressed in his treatise *Introduction to the Foundations of Qur'anic Exegesis* studied by Walid Saleh. It shows that Ibn Taymiyyah's extreme reliance on the Qur'anic interpretations of the *salaf* raises them to the level of prophetic knowledge and undermines the traditional dimension of interpreting the Qur'an on the basis of philology. See W. A. Saleh, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics: An Analysis of an Introduction to the Foundations of Qur'anic Exegesis," in *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, 123-162.

¹²See Racha el-Omari, "Ibn Taymiyyah's 'Theology of the Sunnah' and his Polemics with the Ash'arites," in *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, 101-116.

¹³This Radical conclusion reached by Ibn Taymiyyah resulted in isolation from his own Ḥanbalī school. Bori argues that Ibn Taymiyyah in fact did not have many followers, perhaps only a dozen, nor were all of them Ḥanbalī; see Catarina Bori, "Ibn Taymiyyah *wa Jamā'atu-hu*: Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Ibn Taymiyyah's Circle," in *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, 23-52. As Memon argues, Ibn Taymiyyah's struggle to establish a society after the image of the *salaf* shorn of innovations, failed, since soon after his death he became the object of veneration, a custom he had considered to be a blasphemous innovation. See U. Memon, *Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle against Popular Religion* (Paris: Mouton, 1977), 6.

¹⁴Laoust, *Essai*, 89ff.

¹⁵See G. Makdisi, "The Hanbali School and Sufism," *Humaniora Islamica* 2 (1974): 61-72.

¹⁶G. Makdisi, "Ibn Taymiyyah: A Sufi of the Qadiriyyah Order," *American Journal of Arabic Studies* 1 (1973): 118-129, 118.

The problem lies somewhere else; to put it in general terms, Ibn Taymiyyah opposed two specific aspects of Sufism, the *Ittiḥadiyyah* (monistic pantheism) Sufism taught by Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) and certain Sufi rituals, especially saint veneration which he regarded as *shirk* (associationism). As Michel also points out, Ibn Taymiyyah praised Sufism as a way of getting closer to God; “it is righteousness, obedience, good deeds and charity.”¹⁷ However, the true way of Sufism does not contradict the *Sunnah* and is in accord with the Qur’an. The way Ibn ‘Arabī taught Sufism, specifically *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* (pantheistic unity of existence) was, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, a distortion of God’s transcendent nature. The major problem with this teaching is that it denies multiplicity in the universe and does not exclude anything from participating in divine worship.¹⁸ It violates an essential principle of *tawḥīd*, namely, the total dissimilarity of God from anything else.

A problematic concept is *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* is *fana’* (annihilation of the self in union with God), which serves adherents of this doctrine as a means of annihilating the experience of multiplicity and for achieving an intuitive realization of the whole. The other problem in Sufism is the ritual of *dhikr* (the mantric repetition of the name of God in Sufi ritual) which, in the way it is performed by Sufis, creates space for *shirk*. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the best type of *dhikr* is *shahādah*, and the rest, even if it calls the name of the Prophet, is an indication of *shirk*. Another target of Ibn Taymiyyah’s was the practice of pilgrimages to the tombs of holy men, which he saw as a threat to the uniqueness of the *Ḥajj*.¹⁹

If by emphasizing God’s immanent presence adherents of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* create an instance of *tashbīh* (anthropomorphism), philosophers are guilty of the opposite, namely of *ta’ṭīl*, a belief in the transcendence of God so remote that His role in the management of human affairs is denied. Thus, philosophers represented another threat to Islam since they

¹⁷T. Michel, “Introduction,” in *A Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyyah’s Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ lī man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ* [hereafter: Michel, *Response*] New York: Caravan Books, 1984, 25.

¹⁸Ibid., 12.

¹⁹Ibid., 30-39.

construe prophecy as a natural phenomenon and regarded prophets to be inferior to philosophers.²⁰ A major problem Ibn Taymiyyah saw among philosophers was their teaching about the eternity of the world and their rejection of the creation of the world *ex nihilo*.²¹ The other charge against philosophers is their teaching according to which God knows only universal ideas and not the *particularia* of the universe,²² and thus God is not present in religious life. This is, again, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, a manifestation of *ta'ṭīl*. Ibn Taymiyyah directed his most severe criticism at the logic of Aristotle,²³ which he thought should be barred from any inroads into theology. Those who rely on logic as the organon of philosophy and metaphysics commit violence against prophetic knowledge. Ibn Taymiyyah describes logic as prolix, complicated, and superfluous and refers to *fiṭra* (innate intelligence) as more reasonable and sufficient for thinking.²⁴

As for speculative theologians, Ibn Taymiyyah's main mistrust of them derived from their attitude of taking reason as a guide to revelation. The issue of the relationship between reason (*'aql*) and revelation (*naql*) is of primary importance for the understanding of Ibn Taymiyyah's theological framework, which I will discuss below. It is, however, important to mention at this stage that both 'Asharite and Mu'tazili theologians are accused by Ibn Taymiyyah of giving reason a primary consideration. He claims that the effort to understand divine matters through rational "categories and terminology is futile because of inadequacy

²⁰Michel argues that Ibn Taymiyyah used the terms *falāsifa* (philosophers) for those belonging to the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions, namely, al-Fārābī (d.950), Ibn Sīnā (d.1037), Ibn Rushd (d.1138), and al-Tūsī (d.1274), while al-Suhrawardī (d.1191) and followers of the Ishrāqī school (Illuminationists) were labeled *mutafalsifa*, would-be philosophers. Hallaq does not accept Michel's categorization and argues that there is no semantic differentiation between the two terms since for Ibn Taymiyya philosophy in itself is erroneous and whoever engages in it is a pseudo-scholar. See, respectively, Thomas Michel, "Ibn Taymiyya's Critique of *Falsafa*." *Hamdard Islamicus* 6, No. 1 (1983):3-14, 4 and W. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 4, n.3

²¹J. Hoover argues that Ibn Taymiyyah denied both eternal emanation of God (Ibn Sīnā) and creation in time out of nothing (*mutakallimūn*). Rather, he, like Ibn Rushd, saw God's creation as perpetually dynamic and voluntary. Further, Hoover argues that seeing God's dynamic and voluntary creation as necessary for his perfection and self-sufficiency allows calling Ibn Taymiyyah an Avicennan theologian. See John Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya as an Avicennan Theologian: A Muslim Approach to God's Self-Sufficiency," *Theological Review* 27 No. 1 (2006): 34-46

²²T. Michel, *Response*, 18.

²³Edited and translated in Hallaq's *Ibn Taymiyyah Against the Greek Logicians*.

²⁴W. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya*, xl.

of the instrument employed.”²⁵ He blames Mu‘tazilī scholars for their denial of anthropomorphic expressions in the Qur’an and their reliance on rational and allegorical interpretation. ‘Asharite theologians, on the other hand, were blamed for allowing themselves to be lured by Mu‘tazili views, especially in their denial of attributes as subsistent in God.²⁶ Both groups strayed from *salaḥī* theology, which is based on the essential compatibility of reason and tradition, a compatibility in which reason has no primacy over revelation.

Ibn Taymiyyah’s greatest attack, however, is directed against Shi‘is whom he considered to be the most erroneous of Muslims, having, in his view, abrogated *shar‘ia* effectively, equated the status of *imāms* with that of prophets, and committed the same *shirk* as Christians by admitting a type of divine union.²⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah’s most comprehensive refutation of Shi‘ism, *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, was composed as a response to Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Muṭahhar al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī’s (d.1325) *Minhāj al-Karāmah* and is a wide-ranging criticism of Shi‘a beliefs and practices. It must be mentioned that Ibn Taymiyyah not only wrote but also acted against Shi‘as, having participated personally in the Mamluk military campaign against them in Kisrawan in 1300.²⁸ This was the time when Mongols were actively supported by Druze and ‘Alawī Shi‘is. Thus, while examining Ibn Taymiyyah’s anti-Shi‘a polemics the political context of the period must be taken into account. Not accidentally, Ibn Taymiyyah refers to Mongols, Shi‘a, and Christians as equally dangerous groups for Islam and equally erroneous in their beliefs.

²⁵ Michel, Response 50.

²⁶ Racha el-Omari, *Ibn Taymiyyah’s ‘Theology of the Sunnah,’* 114.

²⁷ Michel, *Response*, 58.

²⁸ See Tariq al-Jamil, “Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī: Shi‘i Polemics and the Struggle for Religious Authority in Medieval Islam” in *Ibn Taymiyyah and his Times*, 229-246; 233-234.

1.4.1. Anti-Christian Polemics

Al-Jawāb was written as a response to a letter written by Paul of Antioch, the Melkite bishop of Sidon (d. ca.1180).²⁹ The original letter of Paul, *A Letter to a Muslim Friend*, written around 1150 had already been in circulation for two centuries before it reached Ibn Taymiyyah in 1317.³⁰ As D. Thomas also shows, *al-Jawāb* was a response not to the original version of Paul's letter but to another text (*Letter from the People of Cyprus*), which was an expanded version by an unknown author from Cyprus who had adopted a more conciliatory tone than Paul of Antioch. He removed or changed some parts of it and added numerous quotations from the Bible and the Qur'an.³¹

Ibn Taymiyyah's polemics against Christianity can by no means be separated from his wide polemical discourse since profound errors both in Christianity and Islam eventually have the same essence: disobedience to the prophetic Books and therefore a distorted understanding of God's nature. It has to be stated that the use of the term "polemic" is conventional in this context since through the refutation of Christianity Ibn Taymiyyah equally pursues apologetic aims. His primary goal in demonstrating Christian errors is to raise consciousness among Muslims about the possibility of similar failures and distortion in religious matters if Muslims do not follow the prophetic knowledge transmitted through the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Not only does *Al-Jawāb* seek to engage with the questions posed by the Christians, but it also uses the opportunity to teach about Muslim beliefs through constant

²⁹The letter was edited and translated by P. Khoury in *Paul d'Antioche, Éveque melkite de Sidon (XIIe s.)* (Beirut, 1964), 58-83 (Arabic) and 169-187 (French).

³⁰The letter was answered by the Mālikī jurist Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Idrīs al-Qarāfī (d.1285) through his *Al-Ajwiba al-Fākhiraḥ 'an al-As'ilah al-Fājiraḥ* [Efficacious Answers to Arrogant Questions], one of the most comprehensive refutations of Christianity before the time of Ibn Taymiyyah.

³¹The letter was also sent to Ibn Taymiyyah in 1316 and to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Tālib al-Anṣārī al-Dimashqī in 1321, who responded to it with a work entitled *Jawāb Risālat li Ahl Jazīrat Qubrus* [Letter to the People of the Island Cyprus]. For more about this correspondence in general see D. Thomas, "Paul of Antioch's 'Letter to A Muslim Friend' and the 'Letter from Cyprus,'" in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. D. Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 203-221; D. Thomas, Ebied Rifaat, ed., *Muslim-Christian Polemics during the Crusades: The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Tālib al-Dimashqī's Response* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

parallels between errors of Muslims and Christians. The criticism of Christianity, therefore, must be looked at as a means to instruct Muslims in their own religion.

Al-Jawāb contains the entire set of arguments against Christianity developed from the earliest centuries up to the time of Ibn Taymiyyah. It is not the only anti-Christian work of Ibn Taymiyyah.³² However, in length and thematic amplitude it surpasses not only his own works on Christianity but any others written by Muslim authors up to the fourteenth century (around one thousand four hundred printed pages and three manuscript versions).³³

The Christian letter does not claim that Islam is a false religion or that Muḥammad is not a prophet, but rather denies the universality of Islam and of Muḥammad's prophecy.³⁴ Paul in fact uses many Qur'anic arguments to prove the authenticity of Christianity. One of his central points is to show that the Qur'an itself accepted the Bible and deny the argument about the Bible's corrupted nature.³⁵ This is the statement upon which Ibn Taymiyyah

³²The other works are: *Al-Ṣarīm al-Maslūl 'alā shātim al-Rasūl* [A drawn sword against those who insult the Messenger], written as a result of an incident in Damascus in 1293. (Ibn Taymiyyah was in[?] a crowd which wanted to stone a certain Christian who was accused of insulting the Prophet and found guilty in court. Ibn Taymiyyah was arrested for the first time for fomenting fights between two religious groups and after he was released he composed this work, which is more legal than polemical in nature, to clarify the incident in relation not only to Christians, but to Muslims as well). The second one is *Al-Risālah al-Qubruṣiyyah* [Letter to the People of Cyprus] written around 1303 to the king of Cyprus asking for good treatment of Muslim prisoners in Cyprus. This is closest to *al-Jawāb* in content and argumentation, which shows that Ibn Taymiyyah's ideas on Christianity did not change significantly during his lifetime. Another work is the *Mas'alat al-Kana'is* [Questions on Churches] written at the beginning of the 1300s, in which Ibn Taymiyyah justifies measures taken by the Mamluk sultanate against Christians and Jews, such as closing some churches, making them wear distinguishing clothes, etc. *Iqtidā' al-Ṣīrat al-Mustaqīm* [Following the True Path] was written in 1321 and directed against all innovations both by non-Muslims and Muslims threatening the purity of Islamic society. Another work against Christians is the *Takhjīl Ahl al-Injīl* [Reproaching the People of the Gospels], which has been deemed a part of *al-Jawāb*; however, Michel argues that it was a separate work attached to *al-Jawāb*. In addition, Ibn Taymiyyah expressed his view on Christianity in many *fatwas*. For more discussion on these works see T. Michel, *Response*, 69-86, 370-382; S. M. Stern, R. B. Serjeant, Ewald Wagner, W. B. Henning, I. M. Lewis, Eric P. Hamp, "Notes and Communications: The Oxford Manuscript of Ibn Taymiyyah's anti-Christian Polemic," *BSOAS* 22, No.1/3, (1959):124-141.

³³Besides Paul, Ibn Taymiyyah quotes two authors: a convert to Islam, al-Ḥasan Ibn Ayūb and his work *Risālah ilā Abī Ibn Ayūb* [Letter to Abī Ibn Ayūb] and a Melkite Christian, Sa'īd Ibn Batrīq (Eutychius, d.941), and his works *Kitāb al-Burhān* [Book of Demonstration] and *Nazm al-Jawhar* [Row of Jewels, known as the Annales]. The first author accuses Christians of *taqlīd*, blind imitation of previous errors, of which Ibn Taymiyyah makes substantial use; Ibn Taymiyyah quotes the second author to provide a convenient background for Christian theological controversies. See Michel, *Response*, 96-98; also M. Swanson, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Kitāb al-Burhān: A Muslim Controversialist Responds to a Ninth-Century Arabic Christian Apology," in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed. Y. Y. Haddad, W. Z. Haddad (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1995), 95-101.

³⁴ P. Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche*, 60.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

composed the most thorough answer to the issue of *tahrīf* with the claim that Muḥammad accepted only the original Books as revealed by God without further distortion.

2. TAHRĪF: CORRUPTION OF THE SCRIPTURES

2.1. The Relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an

Not only does the Qur'an manifest a high degree of scriptural awareness and strong recognition of embodying divine Revelation, but it also demonstrates kinship with previous Books of Revelations. The Qur'an confirms that the God of Muslims is identical with that of *ahl al-kitāb* (the *People of the Book*). Muslims therefore should believe in previous revelations since they came from the same God.³⁶ Each Revelation confirms the previous one as they have the same source: the Torah was confirmed by the Gospels and the Qur'an came to confirm both.³⁷ The Book revealed to Muḥammad was the Heavenly Book which is the same and one for the *ahl al-kitāb*.³⁸ The close relationship between biblical and Qur'anic stories and figures came to confirm this notion³⁹ and gave a basis for Muslim prophetology and the construction of salvation history. To understand the history of Revelation, Muslim exegetes took up the examination of biblical references in the Qur'an, which resulted in the vast body of materials generally termed *Isra'iliyyāt*⁴⁰ and *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiya'* (Stories of the Prophets).⁴¹ These stories about patriarchs and prophets were not only taken from the New

³⁶See for example Q 29:46, "And dispute ye not With the People of the Book...And say, " We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)." I am using the English translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

³⁷ See Q 4:50, "ye People of the Book! Believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was (already) with you" (3:3, 46:30 etc).

³⁸For more on the understanding of the Book and the idea of one Heavenly Book see Geo Widengren, "Holy Book and Tradition in Islam," in *Holy Book and Holy Tradition*, ed. F. F. Bruce and E. G. Rupp (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), 210-236. Widengren insists on the idea that the notion of only one Heavenly Book existed already both in Mesopotamian and Israelite-Jewish religions, exactly corresponding to the ideas exposed in the Qur'an as opposed to assumptions that there were several Heavenly Books.

³⁹See more on this relationship in Vernon K. Robbins and Gordon D. Newby, "A Prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qur'an and the Bible," in *Bible and Qur'an: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. John C. Reeves (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 23-43.

⁴⁰See *EP*, s.v. "Isra'iliyyāt." For a broader discussion see Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "Assessing the *Isra'iliyyāt*: An Axegetical Conundrum," in *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature*, ed. Stefan Leder (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1998), 345-69; Roberto Tottoli, "Origin and Use of the Term *Isra'iliyyat* in Muslim Literature," *Arabica* 46 (1999): 193-210.

⁴¹ See John C. Reeves, "Some Explorations of the Intertwining of Bible and Qur'an," in *Bible and Qur'an*, 43-61 and Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in the Holy Land: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 18-24. For more on the prophetic stories see Brannon M. Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis* (London: Continuum, 2002) and R. Totoli, *Biblical prophets in the Qur'an and Muslim literature* (Richmond, Curzon Press, 2002).

and Old Testaments but also from apocryphal texts, homiletic and midrashic writings. Often together with *Tafsīr* (exegesis) and *Ta'rikh* (history) they completed information not exposed (or at least not explicitly exposed) in the Qur'an. These sources served not only to complete the Qur'anic text but also gave these stories Islamic meaning.⁴²

Kinship with previous monotheistic Books,⁴³ however, does not assume equality with them; the other aspect of the Qur'an with regard to the previous Books is that, besides confirming them, it also completes them. The Qur'an refers to itself as *kitāb muṣaddiq* (confirming Book, 46:12). It is the *umm al-kitāb* (literally: the Mother of the Book) which is not only the continuation of the prophetic series of revelations but also their culmination. The idea of completion refers to the prophetic history as well, claiming Muḥammad as the *khatam al-anbiyya'* ("the seal of the prophets," 33:40). Hence, by referring to itself as *kitāb*, the Qur'an does not suppose imitation of the previous *kutub*, rather it demonstrates awareness of its independence and excellence.⁴⁴ This position endows the Qur'an with the freedom to claim that in the case of any contradiction between itself and the previous Books only the Qur'anic statement must be asserted and taken as truth. In this regard, the Qur'an is not seen as completing and closing the revelatory series, but also as the Book abrogating the previous ones (*naskh*) which failed to preserve the original divine message.⁴⁵

⁴²Brian M. Hauglid, "On the Early Life of Abraham: Biblical and Qur'anic Intertextuality and Anticipation of Muḥammad," in *Bible and Qur'an*, 90.

⁴³It is worth mentioning that the declaration by the Qur'an about familiarity with the previous Books is a fertile ground for the historical assessment of the Qur'an in critical scholarship. The most recent study of the Qur'an through its relationship with the Bible has been done by G.S. Reynolds who argues that the Qur'an should be appreciated in the light of the biblical literature as opposed to the previous tradition in scholarship which assessed the Qur'an in the light of the life of the Prophet Muḥammad. See G. S.Reynolds, *The Qur'an and its Biblical context* (London: Routledge, 2010).

⁴⁴For a discussion on the concept of *kitāb* see Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self-image. Writing and Authority in Islamic Scripture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 53-77. Madigan argues that the Qur'an, by using the term *kitāb*, merely adopted the technical term for scripture without identifying itself with Christian and Jewish Books. Moreover, the term *kitāb* does not mean the existence of physically written material since the Qur'an "prefers to operate as the voice of divine address to the present situation," 76.

⁴⁵The concept of *naskh* has multiple implications in Islamic theology and law. It is the abrogation of one canonical text by another with which it is in contradiction. *Naskh* was originally used to solve contradictions between Qur'anic verses. See *EL*², s.v. "naskh." For the concept of abrogating other religions see J. D. McAuliffe, "The Abrogation of Judaism and Christianity in Islam: A Christian Perspective," *Concilium* 3

What is then the value and utility of the previous Books for Muslims if, on the one hand, the Qur'an declares kinship with them, and, on the other hand, it acknowledges their altered nature. Any attempt to answer this question will encounter the concept of *tahrīf* and the need for examining its evolution over the course of time. The discussion below will examine some major characteristics and expositions of the concept.

2.2. The concept of Tahrīf before the time of Ibn Taymiyyah

It will be clear from the discussions below that while having doubts about biblical authority Muslims nevertheless used the Bible for both apologetic and polemical reasons. Already in the early centuries Muslims were aware of the biblical value as a weapon against Christians themselves.⁴⁶ The initial trend which developed among Muslim exegetes was the demonstration of the testimonial value of the Books, which in fact fitted into the idea of progressive Revelation and a typological understanding of the Books. Muslim authors scrutinized the biblical text⁴⁷ in order to show that there was evidence of the coming of Muḥammad and Islam both in the Torah and the Gospels.⁴⁸ In these terms, the central

(1994): 154-163; also, H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 35-41.

⁴⁶About early usage of the Bible among Muslims see D. Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemics," *ICMR*7, No. 1(1996): 29-38; M. I. Beaumont, "Early Muslim Interpretation of the Gospels," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 22, No.1 (2005): 20-27.

⁴⁷Muslim authors' access to the biblical texts is a problematic issue. It is suggested in the scholarship that for a long time Muslims relied on the oral translations of the texts. There might have been some written translations, but they were only partial. The best known biblical text in Arabic is the translation of the Tanakh in the tenth century by Saadia Gaon, however, some argue that Muslims did not give it much attention. See more on this issue in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 111-130. There is no common opinion on translations of the Gospels, either. So far the thesis of S. Griffith seems to have prevailed: Griffith argues that the Gospels first became available in Arabic for apologetic and liturgical purposes under the patronage of Melkites in Palestine in the ninth century. Earlier Muslim references to the Gospels were not taken from the complete versions of translated Gospels, rather they were based on Christian informants or some fragmented translations of needed passages. See S. H. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century," *Oriens Christianus* 69 (1985): 126-67. See also David Cook, "The New Testament Citations in the *Ḥadīth* Literature and the Question of Early Gospel Translations into Arabic," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. E. Grypeou, M. Swanson, D. Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 185-237.

⁴⁸The idea is found in the Qur'an as well; 7:157, 2:129, and 61:6. About controversies on the verse 61:6, which states "His name shall be Aḥmad" see A. Guthrie, E. F. F. Bishop, "The Paraclete, Al-Munḥamanna and Ahmad," in *MW*, Vol.41, No.4 (1951): 251-256 and W. M. Watt, "His Name is Aḥmad," *The MW* 43 (1953): 110-117. The former authors treated the phrase as a later interpolation from the Syriac translation of "Paraclete"

accusations against the People of the Book are their wrong interpretations and concealment of certain biblical verses that predicted the coming of Muḥammad.

An early example of using the Bible as a testimony for Muḥammad's coming appears in the *Sīrat rasūl Allah (Life of Muḥammad)* by Ibn Ishāq (d.761) (edited by Ibn Hishām) who, after quoting John 15:26 ("But when the Comforter has come whom God will send to you from the Lord's presence, and the spirit of truth which will have gone forth from the Lord's presence he (shall bear) witness of me and ye also"), concludes that "*Munaḥḥemānā* in Syriac (the word for "Comforter") is equivalent to Muḥammad, and which is the Paraclete in Greek."⁴⁹ The Islamicized interpretation of these verses became a long-lived tradition for Muslim authors.⁵⁰ So far, no satisfactory explanation, linguistic or historical, exists for the connection between *Munaḥḥemānā* and Muḥammad. Ibn Ishāq himself is not troubled to explain the link, which leads me to assume that he had assumed that Jesus predicted the coming of Muḥammad (61:6) and since Jesus predicted the coming of Comforter (15:56), then this Comforter is no one else than Muḥammad.⁵¹

The notion appears in one of the earliest Muslim-Christian controversies, namely, the correspondence between Caliph 'Umar II (717-720) and the Byzantine Emperor Leo III (717-741).⁵² Besides raising questions concerning the nature of Christ and the Trinity, Caliph refers to the verse in the Gospels where Jesus spoke about the Paraclete and "pointed to the

while Watt rejects this and suggests that *aḥmad* is an adjective, and the phrase means "a messenger who will come after me whose name is more worthy of praise."

⁴⁹Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 104.

⁵⁰For further discussion on the use of the verse by Ibn Ishāq see S. Griffith, "Arguing from Scripture: the Bible in the Christian-Muslim Encounter in the Middle Ages," in *Scripture and Pluralism*, ed. T. Heffernan and T. Burman (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 29-58.

⁵¹See S. Griffith, *The Gospel in Arabic*, 141-143.

⁵²The authenticity of this correspondence has been questioned in scholarship, but A. Jeffery argues that there are no grounds not to believe in the real existence of such a correspondence. See A. Jeffery, "Ghevond's Text of the Correspondence between 'Umar II and Leo III," *The Harvard Theological Review* 37, No. 4 (1944): 269-332. The text is preserved in the *History* of Ghevond, allegedly a seventh century Armenian historian. For the Armenian text of 'Umar see http://www.digilib.am/Second_Page/page0.html (accessed: April, 5, 2011).

mission of our Muḥammad.”⁵³ He also claims that the Scriptures are corrupted because of being handed down from “nations to nations, and from tribes to tribes,” and they, being “earthly people were forgetful and fell into error.”⁵⁴ Against the accusation of falsification, Leo argued in his response⁵⁵ that the Bible was mentioned in the Qur’an itself by the leader of their religion, i.e., Muḥammad. Therefore, its authenticity should not be questioned by Muslims.⁵⁶

In one of the most famous interactions between Muslims and Christians, namely, the dialogue between the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī (775-785) and the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy (d. 823),⁵⁷ al-Mahdī claims that the mentions of the Paraclete in the Gospel of John (14:16, 14:26) “all refer to Muḥammad.”⁵⁸ Timothy replies that the Paraclete is “uncircumscribed” and “invisible like God,” therefore Muḥammad could not be the Paraclete.⁵⁹ Al-Mahdī also claims that: ‘the rider on an ass and the rider on a camel’ (Is. 22:7) is Muḥammad, to which Timothy replies:

The rider on an ass is Darius the Mede, son of Assuerus, and the rider on a camel is Cyrus the Persian, who was from Elam. The King of Elam destroyed the kingdom of the Medes, and passed it to the Persians, as Darius the Mede had destroyed the kingdom of the Babylonians and passed it to the Medes.⁶⁰

A more developed study of the Bible endeavoring to show the passages announcing the advent of Muḥammad and Islam was carried out by a ninth-century Christian convert to

⁵³A. Jeffery, “Ghevond’s text,” 277.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵For the response of Leo, see “Ghevond’s Text of the Letter of Leo III to ‘Umar II,” ed. and tr. A. Jeffery, in *The Early Christian–Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632–900 A.D.), Translations with Commentary*, ed N. A. Newman (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993), 63-131.

⁵⁶*Letter of Leo*, 64-65. This is a common argument among Christians; Cf. D. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam “the Heresy of Ishmaelites”* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 136-137.

⁵⁷See “The Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I and the ‘Abbasid Caliph Mahdi” in *The Early Christian–Muslim Dialogue*, ed. A. Mingana, 174-246. The letter is composed in a manner of questions and answers and touches upon vast polemical themes between Islam and Christianity. It is believed that the original manuscript was written in Syriac, although it had a wide circulation in Arabic.

⁵⁸Ibid., 191.

⁵⁹Ibid., 192.

⁶⁰Ibid., 195. This theme also appears in the pseudonymous dialogue between Jacobite ‘Abd al-Masih Ibn Ishaq al-Kindī and ‘Abdallah al-Hashimī, written in Arabic at the time of Caliph al-Ma’mūn (813-833). See “The Apology of al-Kindī” in *The Early Christian–Muslim Dialogue*, ed. and tr. Anton Tien, 381-516.

Islam, Ali ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabarī (d. 870).⁶¹ With his *Kitab al-din wa'l dawla* (*The Book of Religion and Empire*),⁶² Ibn Rabban aims to abolish doubts about the superiority of Islam and its prophet. He quotes numerous verses from the Bible⁶³ in order that “the reader may see it clearly and increase his conviction and his joy in the religion of Islam.”⁶⁴ His key argument against Christians is their deliberate concealment of the biblical passages on the prophethood of Muḥammad: “They have hidden his name and changed his portrait found in the Books of their prophet.”⁶⁵ The simplest way of discovering references both in the Old and New Testaments was to give direct translations to the words “glory/glorious” or “praised, splendor,” and so on, into Arabic, which would yield “Ḥamd,” “Aḥmad,” “Muḥammad” (from the same root *ḥmd*), therefore foretelling Muḥammad’s coming. For example, he quotes the verse “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be *praised* in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness” (Ps. 48:1) translating the word “praised” as “Maḥmūd,” which, he claims, is equivalent to *Muḥammad*. “This prophecy of David--peace be upon him--is clearness and explicitness itself which cannot suffer any ambiguity. David had indeed mentioned the Prophet.”⁶⁶

He paraphrases the end of the passage “Unto us a child is born, and unto us a child is given, whose government is on his shoulder” (Is. 9:6) as “the prophecy is on his shoulder,” which is “the seal of prophecy” and therefore “a clear allusion to the portraiture of the

⁶¹The issue of al-Tabarī’s (afterwards Ibn Rabban, not to be confused with more famous historian al-Tabarī, the author of the *Annales*) conversion is debated; some argue that he was a conformist; others claim that he was oppressed by Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861), who organized a literary campaign against the *dhimmis* (non-Muslims), and who, according to some scholars, ordered Ibn Rabban to refute the Christians. See Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: from Ibn Rabban to Ibn Ḥazm* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 29. What is important here is that the knowledge of his previous religion and the Bible served well in his refutation of Christianity.

⁶²The full title of the book is *Kitab al-din wa'l dawla fi ithbat nubuwwat al-nabī Muḥammad, salla llahu ‘alayhi wa-sallam* [The Book of Religion and Empire on the Confirmation of the Prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad, God bless Him and Grant Him Salvation].

⁶³M. Watt counts them at 130, see M. Watt, *The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible*, 59.

⁶⁴Ibn Rabban al-Tabari, “The Book of Religion and Empire,” in *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, ed. and tr. A. Mingana, 570.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., 623.

Prophet, and a reference to his face and his moles.”⁶⁷ He proceeds afterwards to the testimonies in the Gospels, where, again, the major topic is the Paraclete. Referring to John 14:26 (“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”), Ibn Rabban claims that the Paraclete, i.e., the Holy Spirit, is Muḥammad, as:

Among the disciples of the Christ there has not been, down to our time, a single one who taught mankind anything besides what the Christ had already taught; the Paraclete, therefore, is the Prophet and the Qur’an is the knowledge that the Christ has called ‘everything.’⁶⁸

Even if Ibn Rabban was not the first to use the Bible as testimony for Muḥammad and Islam, his work was a primary example for later Muslim polemicists, who exploited the biblical text to confirm the prophethood of Muḥammad, a major theme in Muslim anti-Christian polemical discourse.⁶⁹

This theme, although subsiding somewhat before more elaborated arguments against the Books, did not cease to be important in later centuries. A famous thirteenth-century scholar al-Qarāfi (d. 1285) devotes a large part of his *Al-Ajwiba al-Fākhiraḥ* to the examination of both the Torah and the Gospels in the light of their foretelling the coming of Islam.⁷⁰

Later Muslims developed more systematic and complex refutations against the previous Books. The central argument of later polemicists against the Books was their lack of concomitant transmission (*al-naql al-mutawātir*). Concomitancy (*tawātur*) is the transmission of information (*khabar*) through different reliable transmission chains (*isnād*) which mutually confirm each other, thus excluding any possibility of mendacity. This provides the highest

⁶⁷ Ibid., 628.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 646.

⁶⁹ This line of argument was included in another literary genre called *dala’il* (or *a’lam*) *al-nubuwwah* (“proofs or signs of prophethood”), where the authors, besides telling about the miracles performed by Muḥammad, also include testimonies on his prophecy from the Bible. One example of this literature is *Dala’il al-nubuwwah* [Signs of Prophethood] by Ibn Qutayba (d. 889). See Adang, *The Muslim Writers*, Appendix 3.

⁷⁰ See al-Qarāfi, *Al-Ajwiba al-Fākhiraḥ ‘an al-As’ilah al-Fājiraḥ* (Lubnān: Dār al-kutub, 1986), al-bāb al-rābī’, 163-182. Al-Qarāfi counts fifty testimonies from the Bible on the coming of Islam.

form of veracity and it is one of the essential characteristics of the Qur'an.⁷¹ Muslim authors claimed that the previous Books did not have a reliable chain of transmission. This accusation was directed especially against the Gospels which cannot be reliably traced back to Jesus. As for the Torah, its public revelation to Moses at Mount Sinai guaranteed more authenticity.⁷² The next central issue, which refers specifically to the Gospels, is the authority of the apostles, who were ordinary people liable to errors.

This theme⁷³ appears in the work of a ninth-century Mu'tazilī scholar and famous stylist Abū 'Uthmān al-Jāhiz (d.869). The section dealing with the Gospels in his *Fī al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā* (Refutation of Christianity) providing discussion on Christians is rather short, but al-Jāhiz in a brief passage introduced arguments which became central in further criticisms of the Gospels:

They received their religion from four individuals: two of them according to their claim from the disciples John and Matthew, and two of those who responded later (*min al-mustajībah*), Mark and Luke. These four were not safeguarded against error, forgetfulness, intention to lie, collusion on matters, agreement to share leadership and mutually allowing what has been allotted to each....And if they [Christians] say they [the apostles] were too fine to lie intentionally, had memories too good to forget anything, were far above from making errors in the religion of God or losing anything committed to them; we can say: the differences in the accounts of the Gospels, the contradictions in meaning in their writings, and their differences over Christ himself, together with the differences in their legal teaching are evidence that what we have said about them is correct and that you have been careless about them [the Gospels].It cannot be denied that the one such as Luke said what is wrong because he was not a disciple and had been a Jew a few days before. Those, who according to you were disciples, were better than Luke in Christ's eyes, judging by appearance, in purity, noble character and blameless behavior.⁷⁴

⁷¹ See *EL*², s.v. "tawātur." Also, Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, *'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Muṣṭalaḥatuḥu* (The Science of Ḥadīth and its Terminology) (Bayrūt: Dār al-'Ilm li'l-Malayīn, 1979), 146-151.

⁷² Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 43.

⁷³ From here on I will concentrate on the refutations specifically against the Gospels, referring to other parts of the New Testament and the Torah only when needed.

⁷⁴I am using the translation by D. Thomas in D. Thomas, "The Bible and the Kalām," in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. D. Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 179. For the original Arabic text see Al-Jāhiz, *Fī al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā* in *Thalāth Rasa'l li Abū 'Uthmān al Jāhiz*, ed. J. Finkel (Cairo,1926), 24. David Thomas calls it "the single best-known statement about the nature and authenticity of Christian Scripture." He argues that the Bible, because of distrust, was of secondary significance for Muslims, as an instrument to show Christians their errors and not a part of theological discussions, and that the description given by al-Jāhiz is a strong indicator of why Muslims did not show much interest in the Gospels. Hanah E. Kassis argues that with this passage al-Jāhiz introduced "a new methodology for the rebuttal of the Christians," 243. See Hannah E. Kassis, "Critique of

The highlights of this criticism, namely, questioning the authority of the apostles, which in turn questions the authenticity of the Books they composed, became essential themes in later refutations against the Gospels. Almost all Muslim authors, including those whom I will mention below, bring in the issue of inauthentic transmission and disagreements between the Gospels as core arguments.

One of them is ‘Abd al-Jabbār Ibn Aḥmad (d.1025), another Mu‘tazilī author who denies the validity of Christianity on the basis of evaluating Christian Scriptures and history. In his work, entitled *Tathbīt dala’il al-nubuwwah* [Confirmation of the Proofs of Prophecy],⁷⁵ ‘Abd al-Jabār devoted a long section to anti-Christian polemics and scriptural errors. The major argument against Christianity is the deliberate replacement of the Christian religion with Roman customs, which is a new element in the refutation of Christianity. Al-Jabār criticizes the authenticity of the Gospels because they were composed by different persons, (“treacherous disciples”) in different periods.

Those who had made an agreement with the Romans took counsel what to substitute for the Gospels which they could not obtain, and decided to compose another Gospel... Thus some persons wrote a Gospel, then afterwards other persons another Gospel; thus they wrote a number of Gospels. They omitted however a great deal of what was in the original Gospel. There were amongst them several persons who knew many things contained in the real Gospel but they refrained from mentioning these things so that they could achieve their design which was to gain power.⁷⁶

Clearly, ‘Abd al-Jabbār employs an entirely negative approach towards the composition of the Gospels with the claim that they did not reflect the Revelation given to

Scriptures. Polemics of al-Jahiz and Ibn Hazm against Christianity and Judaism,” in *Religious Apologetics--Philosophical Argumentation*, ed. Yossef Schwartz, Volkhard Krech (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 237-250.

⁷⁵For an extensive treatment of this work see G. S. Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu: ‘Abd al-Jabār and the Critique of Christian Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). For the recent edition and translation of the treatise see G. S. Reynolds, S.K. Samir, *Critique of Christian Origins: A Parallel English-Arabic Text* (Brigham Young University: Islamic Translation Series, 2010). A translation with commentaries is provided in S. M. Stern, “Abd al-Jabār’s account of how Christ’s Religion was falsified by the Adoption of Roman Customs,” in *Theological Studies* 19, No. 1 (1968): 128-185.

⁷⁶Stern, *‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account*, 135, para.8ff. ‘Abd al-Jabbār writes about the Gospels also in his *magnum opus al-Mughnī* in the same manner as does al-Jāhiz: see D. Thomas, “The Bible and the Kalām,” in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, 185.

Jesus. The most antagonistic language is employed against Paul, “a cunning and roguish Jew, out of mischief and assisting mischief-doers, trouble maker and power-seeker...” who was the greatest distorter of Christian teachings.⁷⁷ Another target is Constantine who, although he accepted Christ and his divinity, did not remove Roman customs and religious practices. What he abolished was idolatry, but instead he adopted the veneration of the cross, which implies idolatry in itself.⁷⁸

The antagonistic language of ‘Abd al-Jabbār was surpassed by an Andalusian scholar, Ibn Ḥazm⁷⁹ (d. 1064), who produced the most extensive and detailed refutation of the Bible among medieval Muslim anti-biblical writings. His *Izhār tabdīl al-Yahūd wa al-Naṣārā* [Exposition of the Alteration of the Torah and Gospels by Jews and Christians]⁸⁰ has a unique place in the history of Muslim anti-Christian polemics for several reasons; unlike previous authors, Ibn Ḥazm diminished the testimonial role of the Torah and the Gospels,⁸¹ instead engaging in a thorough exegesis and elaboration of the doctrine of *tahrīf*. No other author dealt with such a wide scope of Christian biblical texts, which included the Old and New

⁷⁷Ibid., 137, para. 14ff. Stern provides a good discussion on the figure of St. Paul as seen by Muslims in general: see 176-185. For this purpose see also P.S. van Koningsveld, "The Islamic Image of Paul and the Origin of the Gospel of Barnabas," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), 200-28. The most recent publication I consulted is S.W. Anthony, "The Composition of Sayf b. ‘Umar’s Account of King Paul and His Corruption of Ancient Christianity," *Der Islam* 85 (2010) 164-202.

⁷⁸Ibid., 143, para. 24. For more on Constantine see 159ff.

⁷⁹Ibn Ḥazm was a prominent intellectual in the Muslim academic tradition. His activity ranged widely among history, theology, jurisprudence, literature, and psychology. He adhered to the *Zāhirī* school, which accepts the explicit sense of the Qur’an and *Sunnah*, and which also influenced Ibn Ḥazm’s critique of the Bible. See *ET*, s.v. “Ibn Ḥazm.”

⁸⁰This critique does not exist as a separate work but there is some consensus among modern scholars that it was incorporated in Ibn Ḥazm’s *magum opus*, *Book of Opinions on Religions, Sects and Heresies (Kitāb al-Faṣl fī l-Mīlāl wa l-Ahwā’ wa l-Niḥāl)*, [hereafter *Faṣl*]. The section dealing with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures is entitled: *Faṣl fī munaqaḍāt zāhira wa takādhīb wāḍiḥa fī-l-kitāb alladhī tusammīhi al-yahūd al-Tawrāt wa fī sha’ir kutubihim, wa fī-l-anājil al-arba’a yutayaqqanu bi dhalika tahrīfuhā wa tabdīluha wa annahā ghayr alladhī anzala allah ‘azza wa jalla* [Treatise on the Obvious Contradictions and Evident Lies in the Book which the Jews Call the Torah and in the Rest of their Books, and in the Four Gospels All of which Show that They were Altered and Changed and Altered, and Thus Different from What God, Mighty and Exalted, Revealed]. The Cairo edition (1899) consists of three volumes, two of which include an analysis of the Jewish (Vol. 1, 116-224) and Christian (vol. 2, 1-99) texts. See Theodore Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Ḥazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 10. Pulcini provides a thorough study of the *Faṣl*, making its content available for English speakers. See also, Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 65-6.

⁸¹Ibn Ḥazm, however, does not ignore this practice: in another work, namely *Al-Uṣūl wa al-Furū’*, he devotes an entire section to exploring testimonies about Muḥammad from the Bible. See Yafeh Lazarus, “Some Hitherto Neglected Biblical Material in the Work of Ibn Ḥazm,” *Al-Masāq* 5(1992): 17-28.

Testaments and extra-biblical materials.⁸² Ibn Ḥazm's other polemical devices the highly antagonistic language with none of the apologetic tone mostly existent in the previous Muslim writings.

Ibn Ḥazm's criticism relies on exegetical method and a detailed examination of Christian texts. His methodology is based on scrutinizing and comparing numerous verses from the Christian texts, pointing out contradictory or missing parts among them. The general conclusion of Ibn Ḥazm is that there must be only one true version of a sacred text, which necessitates the rejection of the rest. However, even with the rejection of the rest the problem would not be solved since Christian texts, he claims, include contradictions even within themselves.

Ibn Ḥazm begins his critique of the New Testament with an introduction which provides information about the four Gospels as well as the Acts and Epistles.⁸³ The Gospels and the other parts of the New Testament, Ibn Ḥazm emphasizes, were not revealed to Christ by God, but written by four individuals at different times. The Christian texts therefore do not have prophetic origins.

While speaking about the lack of concomitant transmission of the Christian Books, Ibn Ḥazm mentions two major reasons for that: the historical circumstances and deceptive individuals. Ibn Ḥazm states that Christianity was not a strong religion during the time of Jesus. Christians were a small group (unlike Jews, who were numerous and had many prophets) who were persecuted and lived underground for three hundred years after the resurrection of Jesus.⁸⁴ During this period of troubles the authentic Gospels revealed by God disappeared, which was followed by the composition of Christian books by individuals whom Ibn Ḥazm refers to only with harsh epithets. Afterwards, he claims, everything was

⁸²Pulcini maintains that Ibn Ḥazm used an Arabic Bible that had originated in Christian circles and was based on the Latin *Vorlage*. In his citations of the Gospels Ibn Ḥazm used the Arabic translation of Isaac Velasquez which had been influenced by the Vulgate and Diatessaron. See Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 185.

⁸³Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, II, 2-4.

⁸⁴Ibid., 4-5.

introduced by people like the Emperor Constantine, who was an Arian himself,⁸⁵ bishops, and patriarchs.⁸⁶ Ibn Ḥazm uses highly antagonistic language towards Paul and Peter. The “cursed Paul” (*Būlus al-mal‘ūn*) and “nasty Peter” (*Bātīrah al-maskhūf*) altered the teachings of Christ and introduced into Christianity forbidden customs such as eating pork and denying circumcision.⁸⁷

Ibn Ḥazm puts in much effort to expose inconsistencies between (a) the Torah (that of Ezra) and its Christian version, i.e., the Septuagint (*al-Tawrat tarjamahā al-sab‘una shaykhan*);⁸⁸ (b) between the Old and New Testaments;⁸⁹ (c) between the Gospels;⁹⁰ and (d) within the Gospels.⁹¹ He brings in numerous examples eventually leading to the same conclusion, that Christianity in a way is based on distorted texts.

The criticism of the Torah also enhances Ibn Ḥazm’s refutation of Christianity since it is also a basis for Christian texts. The central accusation against the Torah is its forgery after the original one was lost because of the exile of the Jews to Babylonia. The chief protagonist of the forgery, according to Ibn Ḥazm, is the scribe Ezra, who dictated the new Torah forty years after their return from Babylonia.⁹² Ezra did not dictate the Torah with mere corrections, but altered it to such an extent that it became a forgery.⁹³ Ibn Ḥazm devotes long passages to pointing out numerous errors and absurdities contained in the Torah. These

⁸⁵ Ibid., 5. Although in Christian sources Constantine’s affinity to Arianism has been debated, Muslim sources accept it as historical fact.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁸⁸ He compares, for example, Gen. 5:3, which reads “when Adam lived 130 years and begot a son in his own likeness and shape and called him Seth” in the Torah, while in the Septuagint it reads “when Adam lived 120 years....” emphasizing two different versions of the same information, *Faṣl*, II, 7.

⁸⁹ He compares Matthew 1:9, which states that Uzziah begot Joatham, with 1 Chron. 3:11-12, which states that Joatham was son of Azariah, son of Amaziah, son of Joash, son of Uzziah. This shows that in the Gospel by Matthew the names of three fathers are removed (*usqīṭa thalāthat āba’ mimā fī kutūb al-Yahūd*) from the genealogical lineage of Jesus. Ibn Ḥazm concludes that there cannot be two truthful versions of a sacred book; therefore, one of them should be taken as corrupt, *Faṣl*, II, 11.

⁹⁰ He points out the discrepancies between the genealogical lines given by Matthew and Luke: Luke traces Joseph’s lineage to Nathan, son of David (Luke 3:33), while Matthew traces it to Nathan’s brother, Solomon (Mt. 1:6), *Faṣl*, II, 15.

⁹¹ He points out the verse in Matthew where Jesus says that he came to change the law but confirm it (Mt. 5:17), yet a few verses later Jesus changes a law concerning divorce (Mt 5:31), *Faṣl*, II, 21.

⁹² *Faṣl*, I, 197.

⁹³ *Faṣl*, I, 178

mistakes are arithmetical, geographical, and historical.⁹⁴ Ibn Ḥazm concludes that these errors could not have been the work of any prophet but the product of an “ignorant atheist, malicious liar or mocker,” referring to Ezra.⁹⁵ Besides, there are two different versions of the Torah: the Torah of Ezra, the Christian version of which was translated by seventy persons, and the Samaritan Torah. Again, it is not possible that two of them are true, just as it is not possible to verify the authenticity of both.

The polemical themes introduced by Ibn Ḥazm became an indivisible part of later polemical writings. His refutation through an extensive scrutiny of the Bible remained a unique scholarly achievement of medieval Muslim biblical criticism.⁹⁶ Ibn Ḥazm also remained unique in his complete rejection of the Bible as a book of mere false fabrications.

These were the main characteristics of the Muslim attitudes towards the previous Books by the time of Ibn Taymiyyah. From the very beginning the essential use of the Bible was to serve as a testimony for Islam. Later, however, Muslims developed more elaborate argumentation against the previous Scriptures, specifically the Gospels.

Before proceeding to Ibn Taymiyyah’s refutation of the Gospels, a few words must be said about non-polemical usage of the Bible. This is not to say that the authors who did not

⁹⁴For example, according to Gen.5:32, Noah begot Shem when he was five hundred years old. Gen. 7:6 states that Noah was six hundred years old at the time of the flood. Shem therefore would be one hundred years old at the time of the flood while Gen. 11:10 states he was at that age two years after the flood, *Faṣl*, I, 121. As a historical Ibn Ḥazm mentions the Gen. 4:15 which promised that Cain will be ransomed sevenfold, the Jews, however, hold that Cain was killed by Lamech, *Faṣl*, I, 121, (as Pulcini points out, this tradition comes from Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha, and was developed in *aggadah*, Pulcini, 70) Example of geographical errors are found in Gen. 2:10-15; in the Abyssinian land there is only one river, Nile, no such river as Gihon is mentioned there, *Faṣl*, I, 119. Descriptions go throughout the whole first volume, *Faṣl*, I, 116-224.

⁹⁵*Faṣl*, I, 123.

⁹⁶In the end of his life Ibn Ḥazm wrote another tractate against his Jewish rival Samuel al-Naghṛīlah (Samuel Hanagid, d. after 1056) with sharp criticism of the Bible. It has been suggested in modern scholarship that Ibn Ḥazm was not only the true founder of Muslim biblical polemics but also influenced modern biblical criticism in the West. Lazarus-Yafeh suggests that Muslim biblical criticism (especially that of Ibn Ḥazm) could have been transferred to the West through Andalus. She mentions Jewish commentator and author Abraham Ibn Ezra (d.1164) who knew Arabic and was familiar with Muslim biblical criticism. He is mentioned by Spinoza (1677) and explicitly praised for his critical remarks about the composition of the Bible. See Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 130-141. The statement that Ibn Ḥazm (and Muslim biblical criticism in general) had an impact on the European biblical criticism in the modern period still needs to be explored, yet it testifies again to the significant place of Ibn Ḥazm’s in biblical criticism. See also Muḥammad Abu Leila, “Ibn Ḥazm’s Influence on Christian Thinking in Research,” in *IQ* 31, No. 2 (1987): 103-115.

treat the Bible polemically ignored writing about inaccuracies and discrepancies in the scriptural texts. However, *tahrīf* does not seem to have been the primary issue in their references to the scriptures.

One of the examples of the non-polemical use of the Gospels is demonstrated in the *Ta'rikh (History)* of al-Ya'qūbī (d. 897). This work is considered the earliest universal history in Arabic. What is important here is that al-Ya'qūbī used the Torah and the Gospels as primary historical sources. The figure of Christ in his account is presented as it was accepted by Christians, in contrast to most Muslims, who presented the “islamicized” character of Jesus.⁹⁷ Similarly, al-Bīrūnī (d.1048) in his *al-Āthār al-Bāqīya 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliya* [The Vestiges of Past Centuries], usually referred to as *Chronology of Ancient Nations*, does not give much importance to the authenticity of the Gospels and Christianity, but rather puts effort into describing Christian rites, feasts, customs, and calendars without judging their validity based on the Scriptures.⁹⁸ This was, however, a marginal trend, and especially characteristic for writings whose aim was comparative studies of religions.⁹⁹

As for the field of exegesis, two exceptions must be mentioned. One is a work attributed to al-Ghazālī (d.1111), *Al-Radd al-Jamīl lī-illāhiyyāt 'Isā bi-Ṣarīḥ al-Injīl* [Excellent Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus based on the Gospels].¹⁰⁰ What is unusual about this work is that it takes the Gospels as they are without questioning their textual authority. The problem lies in the interpretation of the Gospels; the author's suggestion is to take the passages of the Gospels which are in accord with what is rational in a literal sense in

⁹⁷See al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh* (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir, Dār Bayrūt, 1960), Vol.1, 68-81. For further discussion see S. Griffith, “The Gospel, the Qur'an, and the Presentation of Jesus in al-Ya'qūbī's *Tarikh*,” in *Bible and Qur'an*, 133-161.

⁹⁸See Al-al-Bīrūnī, *Vestiges of the Past*, ed. and trans. S. Eduard Sachau (London: Allen&Co., 1879), 20-27, Chapter XV- XVII, 282-314.

⁹⁹*Al-Milal wa l-Niḥal* literature is a good example of this type of descriptive approach (except for Ibn Ḥazm's writing as noted above).

¹⁰⁰The authorship of this work has been highly disputed; for a good review of discussion on the authorship see M. al-Kaisy Friemuth, “Al-Radd al-Jamīl: al-Ghazālī's or Pseudo-Ghazālī's?” in *Bible in Arab Christianity*, 276-294, where the author convincingly argues that the work might have been written by al-Ghazālī.

case they contradict what is rational, *ta'wīl*, i.e., an allegorical interpretation must be implied.¹⁰¹

The most striking non-polemic approach to the Bible belongs to a fifteenth-century controversial Muslim author, al-Biqā'ī (d.1480). Although he does not fit into the time scope of my research, I find it worth mentioning him briefly since his approach was and remained extra-ordinary. Al-Biqā'ī was not concerned with *tahrīf*, nor did he try to defend authenticity of the Bible. His objective was a better understanding of the Qur'an through the Hebrew Bible and Gospels.¹⁰² Going against the mainstream, he was attacked by the scholars of his time as someone who glorified the Bible.¹⁰³ He had to produce a separate treatise to defend his own approach, where the main argument is that to use the Bible for exegetical purposes is as legitimate as to use it for polemical purposes.¹⁰⁴

2.3. Ibn Taymiyya's Discussion on *Tahrīf*

The concept of *tahrīf* in the polemical discourse of Ibn Taymiyyah encapsulates the major arguments against Christianity and the reasons why Christianity could not be taken as a rational religion by a Muslim thinker. Ibn Taymiyyah, in fact, does not introduce new arguments concerning the corruption of the previous Books. It is clear from his writing, however, that he is thoroughly familiar with the arguments developed by various polemicists by his time. What is significant about Ibn Taymiyyah is that he puts all the existing arguments on *tahrīf* into one comprehensive framework, thus establishing the most thorough

¹⁰¹The major aim of al-Ghazālī is to refute the divinity of Christ: for example he refers to John 1.14 insisting that the Word cannot be interpreted as denoting God but rather refers to his command or essence of the human. Since it is unacceptable for the intelligent mind that the Word as God becomes flesh, it should be interpreted metaphorically rather literally. Ibid., 277-278. The text has been translated into French: see Robert Chidiac, SJ, ed. and trans., *Réfutation excellente de la divinité de Jésus-Christ d'après le texte même de l'évangile*, Paris, 1939. The Arabic version is accessed at <http://www.ghazali.org/books/jamil.pdf> (accessed: 10 April, 2011).

¹⁰²See on this Walid A. Saleh, "A Muslim Hebraist: Al-Biqā'ī's Bible Treatise and His Defence of Using the Bible to Interpret the Qur'an," *Speculum* 83 (2008): 629-654.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 634.

¹⁰⁴See the edited version of the treatise in W. Saleh, *In Defence of the Bible: A Critical Edition and an Introduction to al-Biqā'ī's Bible Treatise* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

system of argumentation on the issue. This also explains why he is not engaged in the scrutiny of the biblical text,¹⁰⁵ but rather is concerned to set the conclusions drawn by previous authors into an argumentative framework that would allow him to reach his own conclusion.

Ibn Taymiyyah's conclusion about the previous monotheistic Books is neither as radical as was the case with Ibn Ḥazm (who eventually rejected the Gospels as a source of knowledge) nor is it similar to the positions of those who claimed that the previous Books could be used as historical sources without a critical approach towards their content or taken as sacred prophetic Books (as accepted by al-Ghazālī). Ibn Taymiyyah also does not refer to the Christian apostles, Paul and Peter, as harshly as some of the previously mentioned authors.

Below I shall analyze the argument structure of the concept of *tahrīf*¹⁰⁶ as articulated by Ibn Taymiyyah, which will lead to a statement of his conclusion about the status of the Gospels. It will be argued that Ibn Taymiyyah did not reject but reduced the status of the Gospels, presenting them as a secondary source of knowledge like the *Sunnah* in Islamic tradition and unlike the Qur'an as an absolute source.

For Ibn Taymiyyah, prophetic Revelation is at the center of measuring the authenticity of any kind of knowledge. I shall therefore briefly address the issue of Revelation and Reason or intellect as sources of knowledge and the epistemological value given them by Ibn Taymiyyah. Giving absolute primacy to prophetic Revelation, concomitantly transmitted through tradition, is what constitutes the axis of Ibn Taymiyyah's

¹⁰⁵In the tables of M. Accad, which provide Gospel citations by Muslim authors from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, Ibn Taymiyyah's citations are quite few in comparison with others, see Accad M., "The Gospel in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table." (four parts) *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14 (2003): 67-81, 205-20, 337-52, 459-79. It must be also mentioned that Ibn Taymiyyah is silent about his sources, and the question of what would be the possible version of the New Testament he used remains open. The same issue refers to the Torah as well.

¹⁰⁶ In this chapter, while analyzing the parts dealing with the *tahrīf*, I will mostly rely on my own translations from the Arabic text of *al-Jawāb*.

theological thought. The prophetic message expressed in prophetic Books must be the major, if not the only, provider of true knowledge. As noted above, in his polemical discourse against *kalām*, Greek logic, philosophy, and the speculative mysticism of Ibn ‘Arabi, Ibn Taymiyyah’s major argument is that they are not based on principles derived from prophetic Revelation. This does not mean, however, that Ibn Taymiyyah totally rejects intellectual knowledge. He insists on the idea that whatever is known through Revelation cannot be contradicted by Reason. None of the Prophets is accused of reporting an irrational message or things inadmissible for the human mind.

A distinction should be made between what the mind knows to be false and impossible and what it is unable to imagine and have knowledge of. The first includes the absurdities of the mind and the second what surpasses it. The messengers have brought information of the second.¹⁰⁷

What Ibn Taymiyyah argues is that Revelation includes rational proofs in itself and therefore cannot contradict Reason. They are in agreement with and confirm each other.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, if one speaks on behalf of Revelation it is not permissible for him to claim that it is beyond Reason. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, this is the case with the Christians, who introduced many innovations which do not derive from the Scriptures and therefore cannot be proven by the Books themselves. What cannot be proven by the Books cannot be proven by Reason either. Because the Christians do not rely on the true prophetic knowledge, they do not possess sound Reason. They justify the existence of these innovations as being beyond Reason, such as the Trinity, for instance, which is against God and the Books of God.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Ibn Taymiyyah, *Right Answer to those who altered the Religion of Christ*, in T. Michel, *A Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyyah’s Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ* [hereafter: Ibn Taymiyyah, *Right Answer*], 331.

¹⁰⁸See more on this topic in B. Abrahamov, “Ibn Taymiyyah on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition,” *MW* No. 3-4 (1992), 256-272; Khalil, Mohammad Hassan, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Reason and Revelation in Ethics,” *JIP* No. 2, (2006): 103-132; Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyyah’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); M. S. Özervari, “The Qu’anic Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyyah and his Criticism of Mutakallimūn,” in *Ibn Taymiyyah and his Times*, 78-101. For a general discussion about the Reason and Revelation in Islamic tradition see A. S. Tritton, “Reason and Revelation,” in *Arabic and Islamic studies in Honour of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. G. Makdisi (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 619-631, also; George Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹⁰⁹Ibn Taymiyyah, *Right Answer*, 333.

Reason does not have an independent status; therefore, it cannot serve separately as a source of knowledge. Giving independent status to Reason is the other approach which Ibn Taymiyyah attacks.¹¹⁰ Philosophers and those who follow this way, affiliated with Christianity or Islam, bear the main accusation of giving absolute primacy to Reason. These people make Reason the basis of tradition, while Reason, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, includes contradictory and confusing opinions leading people to deviation from prophetic knowledge. Reason, unlike Revelation, is dependent on human matters and changes with the change of men's situation.¹¹¹ The grave mistake of the Christians, as Ibn Taymiyyah explains it, is that they rely on philosophers as if they know about the divine truth and what the messengers brought. Yet, "all these people knew was what they had learned of mathematical and natural sciences like geometry and astronomy and a bit of ethics and civil and domestic politics. This is merely a small part of what the messengers brought."¹¹² Rational proofs (*'aqliyyāt*), theological proofs (*kalāmiyyāt*), philosophical proofs (*falsafiyāt*), and the like, which do not derive from the *Sunnah* and the Qur'an, are not immune from containing errors since they are based on general and ambiguous opinions;¹¹³ therefore, whoever attempts to reason out of the content of Revelation eventually creates confusion.

There is another concept that needs to be mentioned, namely, the idea of "primeval religion" (*dīn al-fiṭrah*),¹¹⁴ which originated in the Qur'an and which is an important exegetical object for understanding the attitude of Muslims to other religions. The Q 30:30 states, "So set your face steadily and truly to the *fiṭrah* of God according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: No change let there be in the work wrought by God: the standard Religion: But most among mankind understand not" (also Q 7:172). The

¹¹⁰ This is what, according to B. Abrahamov, distinguishes Ibn Taymiyyah from Ibn Rush in regard of reason as for Ibn Rush reason had an independent status, see Abrahamov, *Ibn Taymiyyah*, 272.

¹¹¹ Cf. Abrahamov, *Ibn Taymiyyah*, 261.

¹¹² Ibn Taymiyyah, *Right Answer*, 349.

¹¹³ Abrahamov, *Ibn Taymiyyah*, 271.

¹¹⁴ See *EI*², s.v. "fiṭrah." For the treatment of the issue see also Camilla Adang, "Islam as the Inborn Religion of Mankind: the Concept of Fitra in the works of Ibn Hazm," *al-Qantara* 21 (2000):391-410.

interpretations of this verse gave rise to the *fiṭrah* tradition¹¹⁵ attributed to the Companion of Muḥammad, Abū Hurayrah (d.678), who quoted the Prophet saying, “Every Child is born with the *fiṭrah*: it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or Magians...”¹¹⁶ The common conclusion of Muslim interpreters is that *fiṭrah* is Islam and all humans were born with this *fiṭrah* and only later strayed from it because of wrong education. Ibn Taymiyya’s conclusion is the same¹¹⁷ and it perfectly fits his theological outlook of one true Revelation, therefore one true religion.

The discussion above is a good point of departure for understanding Ibn Taymiyyah’s overall polemics against Christianity. He discusses the Christian attitude towards the Revelation and authenticity of the Books that are claimed to contain the Revelation. In the categorization of humanity into two types, namely, people who possess the book (*ahl al-kitāb*) and those who do not, Christians fall in the former. However, failing to appreciate the value of the Book, Christians deviated from their own prophetic tradition. The rest of the discussion below will explore Ibn Taymiyyah’s critical estimation of the Scriptures as Christians possessed them, on the one hand, and the way they distorted the teachings of their Books, on the other. This will be accompanied by a discussion of the technical terminology that is employed in order to tackle the argument structure of the text.

As mentioned above, for the Scripture to be considered authentic it must infallibly include the concomitantly transmitted revealed content (*shar‘*) which constitutes the foundation of true belief. The message and the religion of all the prophets are the same and cannot be in contradiction with each other. It means that the religion of the prophets should be one, although there can be many ritual codes and laws.¹¹⁸ Contradiction is the outcome of distorting the message, of which both Jews and Christians are accused. The veracity of the

¹¹⁵ See Livnant Holtzman, “Human Choice, Divine Guidance and Fiṭrah Tradition: The Use of Ḥadīth in Theological Treatises by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah,” in *Ibn Taymiyya and his Times*, 166.

¹¹⁶ The quotation is taken from the same place.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹¹⁸ Michel, *Response*, 98.

prophetic message is affirmed, first of all, by the assertion that the prophets are protected from error (*ma‘šūm*). Ibn Taymiyyah applies the Muslim concept of *‘iṣmah*, according to which the prophets are infallible.¹¹⁹ The nature of messengers and prophets, in fact, is crucial for Ibn Taymiyyah’s further argumentation.¹²⁰ He contrasts the idea of “prophetic infallibility” with the Christian claim that the apostles were infallible without being prophets. The claim of Ibn Taymiyyah is that only the prophets/messengers are infallible while those who are not prophets, even saints or Muḥammad’s companions (like Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Alī and other companions of the prophet Muḥammad), are not immune to errors and mistakes. The Christians’ claim that the apostles, who brought the Gospels, are messengers of God and infallible without being prophets, is therefore a contradiction.¹²¹

From this point, in order to build up another argument against the Gospels, Ibn Taymiyyah moves to the discussion of why the apostles are called messengers. The apostles’ being messengers is based on the assumption, Ibn Taymiyyah explains, that Jesus himself is God, therefore, those who brought his word are messengers. Ibn Taymiyyah uses the following logical chain of argumentation against these assertions:

You cannot prove the divinity of Jesus except by these Books and you cannot amend these Books except by proving that those Apostles were infallible messengers of God. You cannot also prove that they are Messengers of God except by proving that Jesus himself is God. The consequence, therefore, is an inadmissible circular argument. For it is not possible to prove the divinity of Jesus except by these authentic Books, and these Books cannot be proven authentic except by proving that they are [transmitted by] Messengers of God,

¹¹⁹See *EL*², s.v. “‘Iṣmah”. The idea is that the prophets, because they are guides of humankind, cannot make mistakes. The essence of the infallibility of the prophets, as understood by Ibn Taymiyyah, is their ability to transmit the Revelation in an infallible way, which makes them excel over saints and imāms (who are claimed infallible in Shi‘a Islam), see H. Laoust, *Essai*, 186-195. Ahmed Shahab, however, argues that for Ibn Taymiyyah the concept of the infallibility of the prophets does not mean that the prophet cannot fall in error; it rather means that if the prophet falls in error God intervenes and corrects him (which is the case with the “satanic verses”). The prophet with his characteristic of *ṣidq* (veracity) is able to acknowledge his mistake and correct it. Therefore, *‘iṣmah* is the combination of divine intervention and veracity, see Ahmed Shahab, “Ibn Taymiyyah and the Satanic verses,” *Studia Islamica* 87 (1998), 67-124.

¹²⁰In Islamic tradition the words for prophet and messenger, both used for Muḥammad, are *nabī* and *rasūl*, the word for apostle is *ḥawārī*. In Christian Arabic usage the word *rasūl* refers to Disciples of Christ which is unacceptable for Ibn Taymiyyah.

¹²¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥiḥ li man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Isma‘īl, al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmīyah, 2003 [hereafter: Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb*], 311.

and that in its turn cannot be proven except by proving that Jesus himself is God.¹²²

This passage with its repetitive style not only shows Ibn Taymiyyah's argumentative framework but also points out the essence of his criticism: Christian belief is contradictory because it is not based on the true prophetic Books and therefore cannot be proven.

The problem is twofold: on the one hand, Christian principles of belief are not divine because the Gospels do not contain the divine message completely and in that they resemble the *Sunnah* in Islamic tradition, which will be discussed below. On the other hand, Christians, through wrong interpretations and innovations, distorted even what is contained in the Gospels.

Several factors make the Gospels inauthentic. One of them emphasized by Ibn Taymiyyah, is the lateness of the Gospels' record. All four Gospels were written after the resurrection of Jesus with no mention that they contain the word of God revealed through Jesus. Ibn Taymiyyah constantly brings in the argument that two of those who wrote the Gospels, namely, Mark and Luke, never witnessed Jesus, and the other two, Matthew and John, dictated them only after Jesus' resurrection. Moreover, the apostles confess that they recorded only some of what Jesus narrated and some of his deeds. The Gospels, therefore, do not express the whole prophetic message.¹²³

The other criteria that Christians do not meet are the concomitant transmission of the Gospels and methods of checking the veracity of the transmission. The Gospels are not the outcome of a concomitant transmission of the prophetic message, which the Prophet taught, as concomitancy supposes many transmitters who trace back to the Prophet with no collusion. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, Christians do not possess methods to control transmission.

¹²² Ibid. لا يمكنكم اثبات كون المسيح هو الله الا بهذه الكتب، ولا يمكنكم تصحيح هذه الكتب الا باثبات ان الحواريين رسل الله معصومون. و لا يمكنكم اثبات انهم رسل الله الا باثبات ان المسيح هو الله، فصار ذلك دورا ممتعا. فانه لا تعلم الهية المسيح الا بثبوت هذه الكتب و لا ثبوت هذه الكتب الا بثبوت انهم رسل الله، و لا يثبت ذلك الا بثبوت انه الله.

¹²³ Ibid.

Transmission by a few is always liable to error, especially if it is not affirmed by the faithful community. Common Christians neither possess the Gospels nor do they know them by heart. Therefore it is easy for the few people who memorize or possess the Gospels to introduce changes in them since they are not controlled by the *Ummah*.

The copies are available for intelligent people of *ahl al-kitāb*, and their common people do not memorize the Gospels in a way common Muslims memorize the Qur'an. Therefore, if a group of them [intelligent people] contemplates to change a copy or copies it possesses, it is possible to do so. Then, if another group contemplates not to memorize it, it is possible to do so.¹²⁴

Relying on copies of the Gospels but not on their complete memorization is highly problematic because “if copies of the books were to vanish, this will lead to a situation where there will be no concomitant transmission of texts as they are memorized only by a few people and this is not reliable.”¹²⁵

The other problem is translation. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, Jesus' words were uttered in Hebrew and then translated into other languages.¹²⁶ However, Christians claim, as Ibn Taymiyyah explains, that the Gospels were written in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and Syriac. Then they were translated into seventy-two languages. The translation into various languages and the wide circulation of the Gospels were accompanied by errors already existing in the Books, and this, Ibn Taymiyyah claims, can be proven by anyone who is knowledgeable in several languages.¹²⁷ What is more problematic for Christians is the lack of techniques of distinguishing between false and true information. This argument is highly important for the parity between the Gospels and *Sirah* and *ḥadīth*.

These were, so to speak, technical (and often non-deliberate) defects that led to the corruption of the Gospels. However, textual corruption (*tahrīf al-lafẓ*) becomes secondary to

¹²⁴ Ibid., 348. فاذا قصد القرآن. و النسخ انما هي موجودة عند علماء اهل الكتاب و ليس عامتهم يحفظ الفاظها كما يحفظ عوام المسلمين الفاظ القرآن. فاذا قصد طائفة منهم تغيير نسخة او نسخ عندهم امكن ذلك. ثم اذا تواطت طائفة اخرة على ان لا يذكر ذلك امكن ذلك.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 340.

¹²⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah is sure that Jesus, like “all other prophets of Israel,” spoke Hebrew. This was a common view among Muslims, *Al-Jawāb*, 343.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 343-344.

the corrupted meaning of the sacred texts, *tahrīf al-ma‘na*, because an authentic text loses its value by being subjected to altered interpretations.¹²⁸ Ascribing teachings and doctrines to the Gospels which they did not contain and introducing new doctrines through wrong interpretations of the texts are a major accusation against the Christians. Instead of obeying the Books, Christians introduced innovations (*bida‘*), thus abandoning the prophetic message and replacing (*tabdīl*) it with legislations of Church councils and leaders.

There is nothing in their books that proves through the text or its obvious meaning the Creed that is the root of their religion [i.e. the Nicæan Creed] such as the Trinity, the Union and Incarnation, and also there is nothing that proves their rules like prayer to the East, permission of forbidden things such as pork or carrion and things like that explained somewhere else.¹²⁹

These doctrines are the outcome of deviation from what was said by Jesus. None of them, as Ibn Taymiyyah constantly repeats, are found in the sacred texts. Rather, these are innovations brought neither by prophets nor even by the apostles who accompanied Jesus. Most of the innovations, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, started in the time of Constantine at the first council, attended by three hundred eighteen participants, who “established for themselves the creed which is now the belief of Christians.”¹³⁰ The people who legislated new rules and principles were not prophets or followers of prophets but ordinary people liable to error. Therefore, the religion of Christians, as it is, has a human and not divine origin:

... those who established these laws, are the participants of the first council of Constantine attended by three hundred eighteen people who disagree with Arius who made Jesus inferior to God like Muslims do, and so they established their creed. This council was held long time after Jesus, more than three hundred years, and the explanation for that is another matter.¹³¹

¹²⁸ On this point Ibn Taymiyyah is close to al-Ghazālī’s approach that the wrong interpretation of the Gospels is the biggest mistake of Christians; see also T. Michel, Response, 115.

¹²⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Jawāb*, 315. فليس في الكتب التي بأيديهم ما يدل لا نصا و لا ظاهرا على الامانة التي هي اصل دينهم وما في ذلك من التثليث و الاتحاد والحلول ، و لا فيها ما يدل على اكثر شرانعمهم كصلاة الى الشرق و استحلال المحرمات من الخنزير والميتة و نحو ذلك كما قد بسط في موضوع اخر

¹³⁰ Ibid., 109.

¹³¹ Ibid., 314. و الذين وضعوها اهل المجمع الاول الذين كانوا عند قسطنطين الذي حضره ثلاثمائة و ثمان عشر و خالفوا عبد الله بن اريوس على ثلاثمائة سنة و بسط له الذي جعل المسيح عبدا لله كما يقول المسلمون، و وضعوا هذه الامانة. و هذا المجمع كان بعد المسيح بمدة طويلة تزيد موضع اخر.

Many innovations were introduced by the mother of Constantine, Helen of Ḥarran, as

Ibn Taymiyyah claims:

Jesus did not legislate for...the Great fast of fifty days and did not specify spring for it. Nor did Jesus make the feast of Christmas and feast of Epiphany and Resurrection. All this was invented by Helen of Harran, mother of Constantine.¹³²

Ascribing all these innovations to Jesus, Christians failed to obey him and to follow what he said and therefore what God said, since

...the order from Jesus is order from God. Who obeys Jesus, obeys God. What Jesus taught about the unseen is what God taught him. Therefore, he is infallible to lie about what he has been taught.¹³³

Christians themselves, Ibn Taymiyyah claims, admit that disagreements among different Christian groups are the outcome of misinterpreting the Scriptures.¹³⁴ This also explains the existence of many contradictory sects among the Christians. “Some agree on Jesus’s subordination to God and reject incarnation and union, like Arianism. Some of them reject union but agree on incarnation like the Nestorians.”¹³⁵

To put it generally, the problem which Ibn Taymiyyah raises is that Christians do not believe even in what they have, the Gospels as they are. According to him, Christians should follow the Gospels containing narratives about Jesus in the same way that Muslims follow the *Sunnah* containing narratives about Muḥammad.

Ibn Taymiyyah gives more credence to the Torah. It is a Book to be more trusted both among Jews and Christians. Often Ibn Taymiyyah, while classifying the Books according to their reliability, calls the Torah the second Book after the Qur’an.¹³⁶ However, the Torah is not devoid of alteration, and the proof of that is the disagreement between the Samaritan

¹³² Ibid., 341-342. من اعيادهم. فاكثرت ذلك مما ابتدئته هيلانة الخرائية ام قسطنطين.

¹³³ Ibid., 339. فامر المسيح امر الله، و من اطاع المسيح فقد اطاع الله. و ما اخبر المسيح عن الغيب فانه اخبره به، فانه معصوم ان يكذب فيما يخبر به.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 319.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 341.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 314.

what Jesus said is received by God, then one should believe its narratives and obey its commands. This resembles what the Messenger said in *Sunnah*.¹⁴¹ The parity that Ibn Taymiyyah makes between the Gospels, *Sunnah*, and *Ḥadīth* supposes a reduction of the status of the Gospels and not their complete rejection as a source of knowledge, thus establishing a unique approach to the Scriptures of Christians. To clarify this comparative approach towards the Gospels one should examine the *Sīrah* and *Ḥadīth* in Muslim tradition. *Sunnah al-Nabī* includes everything narrated by the prophet, his acts, sayings (*Ḥadīth*), and biography (*Ṣīrah*). *Sunnah* and *Hadīth* (usually referred in literature as Tradition) are often used in the same sense; however, they are different inasmuch as *Hadīth* is a narration about the acts and sayings of Muḥammad and *Sunnah* is a register of exemplary acts which are deduced from *Ḥadīth* and can have legal consequences.¹⁴² It is important to note how the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* are distinguished from each other in order to understand the logic by which Ibn Taymiyyah constructed parallels between the *Sunnah* and the Gospels.

The Qur'an, the primary and ultimate source of *Sharī'a*, contains the divine Revelation transmitted by Muḥammad. Its authenticity is guaranteed by continuous concomitant testimony (*tawātur*). It was recorded during the lifetime of the Prophet with his assertion that it is what he received from God. The *Sunnah*, on the other hand, was preserved within the community due to the companions of Muḥammad, who did not transmit it completely, but only parts of it. These two sources are not of the same rank because the Qur'an consists of totally manifest Revelation (*waḥy zāhir*) as a direct result of communication between God and the Prophet, while the *Sunnah* consists only of internal Revelation (*waḥy bāṭin*) as a result of inspiration (*ilḥām*), through which Muḥammad

¹⁴¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Jawāb*, 339

¹⁴² Mohammad Hashim Kemalī, *The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2003), 58-117.

conveyed his own (not God's) words.¹⁴³ Another reason for the priority of the Qur'an over the *Sunnah* is that the authenticity of the former is never questioned. It is *qaṭ'ī*, i.e., certain, while the authenticity of the *Sunnah* is probable (*ẓannī*). The next reason for the priority of the Qur'an over the *Sunnah* is that the latter explains the former; something that has explanatory value cannot have primacy over the main source. It is also important to note that the Qur'an is considered miraculous and inimitable (*i'jāz*), therefore it cannot be compared with anything else. This distinction shows that the *Sunnah* in Islamic tradition, although a secondary source, plays a significant role as it transmits knowledge from the prophet. Not accidentally, Ibn Taymiyyah refers to *Sunnah* as revealed. In this regard, the role of the Gospels as transmission of the words of Christ, his deeds and miracles, is given as much importance as the *Sunnah*.

Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, however, that any transmitted knowledge, except from the Qur'an, is fallible. Both the *Sunnah* and the Gospels, falling into this category, contain errors and contradictions. Ibn Taymiyyah refers to the canonized collections of *Ḥadīth*,¹⁴⁴ pointing out that there might have been errors in their original copies and with their wide circulation errors became widespread. Especially narratives which trace back to only one transmitter (*aḥād*) or a relatively small number of transmitters might contain many errors. However, even with this type of narration, Ibn Taymiyyah argues, Muslims possess methods of checking their veracity, unlike Christians. Muslims can verify the narratives through the discipline of *al-jarḥ* and *ta'dīl*; in fact, *ḥadīth* criticism decides whether transmitters are reliable or not. Another way of determining the veracity of narratives is the opinion of the *ummah*, which controls transmission through concordance (*ijmā'*) and never agrees on error. For Ibn Taymiyyah, the *Ummah* is infallible (he also refers to *Ummah* as people of concomitancy

¹⁴³Some *Ḥadīths* have special status as they give the words of God. These are *Ḥadīth qudsi*, as contrasted to *Ḥadīth nabawī*, which give the words spoken by the Prophet. For more, see W. A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (Hague: Mouton, 1977).

¹⁴⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb*, 339. He refers to the six collections: *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan al-Sughrāh*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, and *Sunan Ibn Mājah*.

(*ahl al-tawātur*),¹⁴⁵ and therefore what is affirmed by *Ummah* cannot be a lie. Because Christians lack control of the faithful community, those who memorize the narratives can change them. Ibn Taymiyyah's sums up his arguments:

So if books transmitted by prophets were of the same type as the book transmitted by Muḥammad, and if they were not concomitantly transmitted, and further, since believing someone who is not infallible is itself not a proof, the conclusion is that Christians do not possess all the traditional knowledge of distinguishing between truth and falsehood like Muslims do.¹⁴⁶

This discussion does not lead to the conclusion that the Gospels are devoid of value. On the contrary, the problem, as Ibn Taymiyyah sees it, is that the Gospels should be followed the way they are, based on two foundations: narrative reports about the prophet (*al-khabariyyāt*) and commands (*al-amriyyāt*), as two essential bases for legislation.¹⁴⁷ Christians must heed both of them as Muslims obey the *Sunnah*. In addition, there is another sound reason not to reject the Gospels: Ibn Taymiyyah, following the old anti-Christian polemical tradition, claims that the Gospels predict the coming of Muḥammad¹⁴⁸ and therefore represent a valid source for Muslims.

In this chapter I have brought together Ibn Taymiyyah's arguments against the authenticity of the Gospels through demonstrating the structure and method of his argumentation. This analysis led to the conclusion that Ibn Taymiyyah, unlike many Muslim polemicists, does not reject the Gospels as a source of knowledge, nor does he consider the Gospels Scripture in an absolute sense as is the case with the Qur'an. Ibn Taymiyyah claims that the Gospels, even if erroneously, contain prophetic knowledge and therefore have some measure of cognitive and normative value. In this regard the Gospels resemble the *Sunnah* with their secondary but still important role. The problem lies in that Christians have failed to

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Jawāb*, 340.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. فاذا كانت الكتب المنقولة عن الانبياء من جنس الكتب المنقولة عن محمد و لم تكن متواترة عنهم و لم يكن تصديق غير المعصوم حجة، لم يكن عندهم من العلم بالتميز بين الصدق و الكذب ما عند المسلمين.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 327.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Jawāb*, 244.

embrace the Gospels even that way, instead introducing terms and concepts absolutely foreign to the essence of the prophetic content. The next chapter is devoted to the discussions of these innovated terms and concept.

3. OUTCOMES OF THE *TAHRĪF*: THE TRINITY AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST

3.1. Introduction to the Refutations of the Trinity and Divinity of Christ in Islam

In his discussions on the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation Ibn Taymiyyah did not avoid the previous Muslim tradition of refuting these doctrines on the basis of extra-scriptural arguments. His arguments against the Trinity and Incarnation are structured in the mode of dialectical theology, with the study of concepts and the indication of logical contradictions. However, Ibn Taymiyyah in an unprecedented manner emphasizes the idea that these doctrines are unwarranted by the Scripture, and that is what results in their contradiction of Reason. Thus, in general terms, for Ibn Taymiyyah the Scripture is again a point of departure for constructing his argumentation against Christians.

The doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, if based on the Revelation, would not contradict the concept of *Tawḥīd*. Neither would they be a source of confusion or mystery,¹⁴⁹ since everything that is in the divine Books is for true guidance. His discussion on the nature of Christ follows the same logic of his refutation of the Trinity. The doctrines of divine Indwelling (*Ḥulūl*) and Union (*Ītīḥād*) are logically inconsistent and contradictory because they do not originate from prophetic teachings and are not found in the Books. Therefore these concepts lead to confusion and distortion of the nature of God. Having this as a point of departure, Ibn Taymiyyah constructs his argumentation against the Trinity and Incarnation within the scope of Islamic notions of Revelation and exegesis.

Ibn Taymiyyah, again in a distinguished manner, used these Christian doctrines to demonstrate for Muslims themselves the falsity of certain beliefs. In his Christological refutations Ibn Taymiyyah draws parallels between the *Ḥulūl* and *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*. He sees

¹⁴⁹Ibn Taymiyyah refers to the Christian claim that it is impossible to comprehend God and specifically the mystery of the Trinity. This theme was common among Church Fathers, especially Cappadocean fathers (such as Gregory of Nazianus) and John of Damascus, and was known by the Arab Christians who were the sources of Muslim authors. See Haddad Rashid, *La Trinité Divine chez les Théologiens Arabes: 750-1050* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), 87.

both of them as threats to the oneness of God and cause for *shirk*. If the Christian doctrine gives space for partitioning and temporality in God, the Muslim teaching of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* ignores the dissimilarity between God and His creature.

They [Christians] hold that *Ḥulūl* and *Īttiḥād* occur in time, and that the Eternal One has taken residence in or united with temporal creature after the two had not been united. These others declare an absolute unity. Those who assert it say that He is the existence of everything, not holding for the union of the two existences, nor for the indwelling of one of them in the other.¹⁵⁰

This is not to say that previous writings on the Trinity lack the accusation of the wrong interpretation of the Sacred Books; this accusation had existed since the beginning of this particular polemical theme. However, earlier Muslim authors mostly followed the development of a rationalist anti-Trinitarian polemical discourse through logic and philosophy. In order to show the specificity of Ibn Taymiyyah's refutation I will provide a brief overview of major features of the refutations of the Trinitarian doctrine and perceptions of Christ's nature and Incarnation by his time.

3.1.1. The Trinity

It must be pointed out from the very beginning that Muslim authors,¹⁵¹ even the most competent ones, always relied on the Qur'anic references to the Trinity as a plurality of divinities, one of them being the following verse:

O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of God aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the Son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of God, and His Word, which he bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding From Him: so believe in God and His apostles. Say not "Trinity": desist: it will be better for you: for God is One God (4:171).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 318.

¹⁵¹ These doctrines have been refuted by numerous Muslim authors and it is impossible to present these discussions thoroughly here. I will rather focus on selected authors who had significant input into the elaboration of the debate on the issue. For a detailed discussion of these topics, for a survey of famous works on these issues, and useful references to Muslim authors see Al-Sharfi, *Al-fikr al-Islami*, 197-258, 259-377, also D. Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam, Abū 'Isa al-Warraq's 'Against the Trinity'*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 31-50, and *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq's 'Against the Incarnation'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 37-59.

Another verse of reference was: “They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three (*thālithu thalatahtu*) in a Trinity: for there is no God except One God” (5:76). These verses suggest that Christians conceive of God as one of the three divinities, and that the divine Godhead consists of three separate divine entities. Relying on these references, Muslims represented the doctrine as *Tathlīth*, i.e., Tritheism, as contrasted to *Tawḥīd*,¹⁵² Monotheism, and in fact, never departed from this pre-disposition. The notion of Tritheism was used as a polemical motif even if Muslims had clear understanding of Christian theology.

One of the earliest Muslim discussions on the Trinity is that of Zaydī Imām al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 860) included in his *al-Radd ‘alā al-Naṣārā* [Refutation against the Christians].¹⁵³ Al-Qāsim describes God as three individuals (*ashkāṣ*) differentiated in hypostases (*aqānīm*) and united in essence (*dhāt*).¹⁵⁴ He puts the emphasis on the hypostases as three separate persons, thus ignoring to some extent the identity between them in the divine essence. It is important to mention that the Arabic word *shakhṣ* that he uses for describing the hypostases carries the meaning of a quantifiable individual, which makes the Trinity a community of three differing entities. The idea that there is more than one divine entity which creates a form of plurality in the understanding of God was the issue that Muslim authors targeted the most.

One might assume according to this definition that Muslims, even if familiar with the terms describing the doctrine, were not aware of their philosophical notions. However, this was not entirely the case; one of the first greatest Arab philosophers, Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūbī al-

¹⁵² Literally, *tawḥīd* means “to make one” and *tathlīth* means “to make three,” which is a clear indication of one against three.

¹⁵³ See D. Thomas, “The Doctrine of the Trinity in the early Abbasid Era,” in *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 83f.

¹⁵⁴ As early as the ninth century Muslim authors were acquainted with the Arabic terms to explain the doctrine: *jawhar* (sometimes also *dhāt*) became the usual term for Greek *ousia*, “substance”, and *uqnūm*, from Syriac *qnoma*, meant “hypostasis,” “person.”

Kindī (d.864),¹⁵⁵ explained the Godhead as a community of hypostases identical to the divine essence and differentiated by their own properties. The critical argument of al-Kindī was that the hypostases create a composite (*murakkab*) entity. Whatever is composite is a result of causality (*'illah*), and whatever is caused (*ma'lūl*) is no longer eternal (*azalī*).¹⁵⁶ The idea of a strict divine unity is vitiated as soon as these constituents within the Godhead are emphasized as the main characteristic of the Trinity. What is possible to conclude is that Muslim authors, even if acquainted with the Trinitarian terminology, did not put much effort into accepting them in the way they existed in the Christian context (or rather, as they were understood by the three main denominations in Christianity: Melkites, Jacobites, and Nestorians).

Even the most famous and detailed presentation and refutation of the Trinity from the ninth century, namely, that of Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq¹⁵⁷ (d.860), provides a similar presentation of the doctrine. As Thomas also points out, Abū 'Isā still follows the earlier Muslim pattern of Trinitarian refutation. It is clear from his account that he commands a good knowledge of all three Christian sects, Jacobites, Melkites, and Nestorians, which is evident from the structure and content of his *Radd*. First of all, Abū 'Isā presents the understanding of the Trinity among the three sects and then comes up with answers for each of them.

The Jacobites and Nestorians claim that the Eternal is One substance and three hypostases, and that the three hypostases are the one substance and the one substance is the three hypostases. The Melkites, those who follow the faith of the king of Romans, claim that the Eternal One is one substance which possesses three hypostases, and that the hypostases are one substance but the substance is other than the hypostases, though they do not acknowledge that it is numerically a fourth to them.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵Al-Kindī himself based his arguments on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry as well as Aristotle, see D. Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abu Isa al-Warrāq's Against the Trinity* (Cambridge: Oriental Publications, 2002), 36.

¹⁵⁶See al-Sharfī, *Al-fikr al-Islāmī*, 209.

¹⁵⁷Al-Warrāq was a sceptical, controversial free thinker for his time and was regarded as suspect. His refutation "Against the Trinity and the Incarnation" stands out as the single most detailed and comprehensive work by a Muslim against Christians from the entire early period of Islam. See Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemics*, 2-30.

¹⁵⁸Al-Warraq, *Al-Radd*, 67.

It is clear from this description that Abū ‘Isā was preoccupied with the idea of presenting the hypostases as three differentiated and quantifiable items, which was sufficient to consider the doctrine invalid. “The argument against you stands as long as you claim that they are differentiated any way and the one substance is not [differentiated],” he claims.¹⁵⁹ The persons of the Trinity were thus a multiplicity in a variety of guises, whereas God is singular. Further, Abū ‘Isā argues against the contradictory nature of the doctrine: if the substance is the hypostases then the hypostases cannot be differentiated. However, this is what the Jacobites and Nestorians claimed, and this is what Abū ‘Isā announces as a “patent contradiction.”¹⁶⁰ The reply to the Melkites is also based on the argument that the doctrine bears inner contradiction.¹⁶¹ If the hypostases were one substance but the substance is distinct from the hypostases (as opposed to what the Jacobites and Nestorians say), it would follow that there are four constituents of the Godhead and not three as is claimed. Abū ‘Isā hence emphasizes two points wherever it is possible: that the one cannot be three and vice versa (in the case of the Jacobites and Nestorians) and that the Godhead has four and not three constituents (in the case of the Melkites).¹⁶²

That Abū ‘Isā was influenced by the polemical thrust of traditional Islamic methodology of Trinitarian refutation should not cause one to underestimate the value of this work. It remains one of the most careful studies on the Trinity among medieval Muslim polemical writings. It also influenced later refutations such as those of an Ash‘arite author, al-Bāqillānī (d.1013).¹⁶³ These authors based their work on previous writings on the Trinity and

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 77.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 81f.

¹⁶² A helpful guide for discussion can be Yaḥya Ibn ‘Adī’s reply to al-Warraq, see E. Platti, “Yaḥya Ibn ‘Adī and his Refutation of al-Warraq’s Treatise on the Trinity in Relation to his Other Works,” in *Christian-Arabic Apologetics During the Abbasid Period*, ed. S. Kh. Samir, J.S. Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 172-191.

¹⁶³ Thomas shows that al-Bāqillānī and Mu‘tazilī scholar ‘Abd al-Jabbār followed al-Warraq in their refutations.

intensively elaborated the discussion on the relationship of the substance and hypostases.¹⁶⁴ Al-Bāqillānī bases his refutation on the assertion that God can be neither substance nor hypostases. He relies on the Aristotelian classification of existing things into three categories, namely, pure substance, composite bodies, and accidents existing in substances and bodies.¹⁶⁵ Further stressing the view that substances are the loci of accidents, al-Bāqillānī claims that God's substantiality assumes that He must receive accidents (*a'rāḍ*). He is also aware of two types of substances, noble (*sharīf*) and ignoble (*khasīs*), according to which the former does not accept accidents but the latter does.¹⁶⁶ This, however, does not change the nature of al-Bāqillānī's argument, for, on this basis, he suggests another analogy; the same distinction, he claims, can be made between bodies, so that there could be noble and ignoble bodies. Therefore, God, in the same way, can be called a body, a noble body.¹⁶⁷ What can be concluded is that the concept of substantiality functioned differently in the Christian and Muslim contexts. If for the former the substance existed by itself and being so did not create problems, for the latter the substance was not regarded as self-subsistent and was thus subject to accepting accidents.

As for the hypostases, the discussions on the issue were more intensive as they represented the greatest source of contradictions for Muslims. They discussed the divine hypostases as follows: on the one hand, hypostases are identical by the virtue of the divine substance; on the other hand, each of them is differentiated by its own Attribute which is not possessed by the other two. The question that Muslims ask in general is: if the hypostases are one substance, and the Father is the substance of Himself as well as of the Son and the Holy

¹⁶⁴ For a general discussion of al-Bāqillānī's refutation see al-Sharfi, *al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, 204-214. Also, Wadi Z. Haddad, "A Tenth-Century Speculative Theologian's Refutation of the Basic Doctrines of Christianity: al-Bāqillānī" in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, 82-95.

¹⁶⁵ Al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, 17.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Spirit, why are not all the hypostases one substance, i.e., the Father? Al-Bāqillānī argues¹⁶⁸ that if the hypostases are one substance they cannot be differentiated, and that if they are then there is no reason why one of them is Father to the others.¹⁶⁹ In the same way ‘Abd al-Jabbār opposes the claim that hypostases are different by their Attributes yet identical in substance by arguing that it is impossible for things to be different and identical at the same time (*wa kawn al-ashyā’ muttāfiqa mukhtalifa mustahīl*).¹⁷⁰

Over time, the term *uqnūm* was replaced by the term *ṣifah*, referring to Attributes and qualities describing God. It has been a central concept among Muslim theologians who gradually developed sophisticated discussions on the issue of Attributes, the central concern of which was to provide an explanation that would exclude any pluralistic notion in the understanding of God. To put it generally, two approaches existed concerning the issue, one promoted by the Mu‘tazilah and the other by the Ash‘arites. For the former, the Attributes were only an expression of a human approximation for an unknowable God. Attributes merely served to apply appellations to God. For the latter, God’s Attributes represented realities subsistent in and not distinct from God’s essence.¹⁷¹ There was a distinction in the Attributes of God: inherent Attributes which God possessed from all eternity on account of his essence (*ṣifāt dhāt*) and Attributes which God merits manifests in his acts (*ṣifāt fi‘l*), and Arab Christians were aware of this differentiation.¹⁷² Arab Christians most often affiliated themselves with the second approach, representing the hypostases as essential Attributes of God distinguished from Attributes of action. The rationale behind this was to explain the Trinity through the vocabulary and its associated concepts borrowed from Islamic theological

¹⁶⁸ Al-Bāqillānī constructs his discussion on the hypostases upon two aspects: the unity of the hypostases on the one hand their differentiation on the other hand, see Kitāb al-Tamhīd chapter 8, 85-86.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 86-87.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-‘Adl* [The Summa on the Topics of Divine Unity and Justice], vol. 5, ed. M. M. al-Khudhayrī (Cairo: 1965), 91.

¹⁷¹ Ash‘arites embraced the approach of Ibn Kullab (d.855) for whom the divine Attributes did exist yet were not distinct from God’s essence. See *EP*, s.v. “Ibn Kullab” and “Kullabiya.”

¹⁷² R.Haddad, *La Trinité Divine*, 194.

tradition and make the doctrines less vulnerable to attack.¹⁷³ Replacing the term *uqnūm* with *ṣifāh* by Arab Christians, however, never eased the tension between the two sides. Not least because of a simple problem: Why was the number of the Attributes limited to only three? Therefore, Christian endeavors to ease the tension through common terms failed to solve the problems, moreover, they gave more space for miscommunication and misunderstanding.

3.1.2. The Divinity of Christ

The image of Christ in Islamic tradition is shaped according to the Qur’anic representation of Christ which affirms some aspects of the portrait of Christ as it is in Christian tradition while rejecting others. The Qur’an affirms that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary and given the Gospels (Q 3: 45-48), that he performed miracles (5:113), some of which are not even mentioned in the Gospels (such as giving life to a bird made from clay (3:49))¹⁷⁴ and had a measure of the Holy Spirit (2:87, 253, 5:113). However, the Qur’an does not accept Christ as the son of God and calls him an apostle of God (2:116, 4:171, 6:101 etc.). Christ, according to the Qur’an, was not crucified and was taken to heaven, not put to death (4:157-158).¹⁷⁵ In

¹⁷³Wolfson argues that it was particularly Arab Christians (among Western Latin theologians the only exception was Marius Victorinus) who identified the individual hypostases in the Trinity with specific Attributes of God (Existing, Living; Knowing). He argues that this approach resulted from the encounter with Islam. See H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1974), 122f. Thomas also noted that Arab-speaking authors tried to make use of the disagreements among Muslims concerning divine Attributes, however in making parallels between the hypostases and Attributes Arab Christians failed to grasp the function of the Attributes in Islamic context, “For in Muslim understanding an Attribute confers a quality upon its subject: thus knowledge makes someone knowing. But it does not confer a quality upon itself.” See D.Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 4.

¹⁷⁴ It has to be mentioned that the Qur’anic picture of Christ traces back not only to the Gospels and Diatessaron, but was also shaped by apocryphal materials such the *Protoevangelium* of James, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, and the Infancy Gospel; see O. Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam* (London: Continuum, 2010), 33-34. For example, al-Jāhiz mentions that baby Jesus spoke in the cradle, which might be traced to the Arabic Infancy Gospel, see Al-Jāhiz, *Fī al-Radd*, 12. Cf. Al-Sharfī, *Al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, 269.

¹⁷⁵ To deny the crucifixion of Christ Muslim exegetes interpreted the words *shubbiha lahum* in the verse to mean that another person took Christ’s likeness and died instead of Christ. See more on the discussion of Christ’s crucifixion in M. Ayoub, “Towards an Islamic Christology II: The Death of Jesus, Reality of Delusion,” *The Muslim World* 70, No. 2 (1980): 91-121.

addition, the Qur'an tells that Christ prophesized the coming of Muḥammad (already mentioned above: 61:6).¹⁷⁶

This image of Christ affected the Muslim perception of Christ's nature over the centuries. What has been a central issue in Christological discussions by Muslims is to prove Christ's humanity and by all means to deny his divine nature as a threat to the oneness and distinctiveness of God. Muslim authors used much ink to explain Christ's miracles as performances characteristic of all the apostles and not proof of divinity. The Qur'an accepts that Christ's conception without a father is unique among the apostles; however, it is not unique in the history of humankind. It resembles the birth of the first human, Adam, who was created from dust by the will of God.¹⁷⁷ Ibn Ishāq reports that even Muḥammad had to argue with Christians from Ethiopia and Najran that Christ was no more unique than Adam.¹⁷⁸ The comparison of the miracles of Christ and other prophets appears in the refutation of 'Alī b. Rabbān al-Tabarī's *al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā* where the author provides a list of prophetic miracle acts to show that Christ cannot be unique in these terms.¹⁷⁹ Later Muslim authors who provided more systematic refutations still referred to the issue of Christ's miracles to invalidate the claim of his divinity. 'Abd al-Jabbār mentions in the *Mughnī* that God does not have to be present in a place to perform miracles and it is not necessary that the divine character be inherent (*ḥalla*) in the human in order to perform miracles, since God acts differently: He causes an action in the way that He creates bodies.¹⁸⁰

Although the status of Christ is not more than a prophet, in Islamic tradition Christ is given quite a specific place.¹⁸¹ Suffice it to see the sayings ascribed to Christ in medieval

¹⁷⁶ For a wider examination of the perception of Christ according to the Qur'an see Ivor Mark Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims: A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Regnum Studies in Mission, 2005), 1-10.

¹⁷⁷ See D. Thomas, "The Miracles of Jesus in Early Islamic Polemic," *JSS* 39, 1994, 221-43: 222.

¹⁷⁸ A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 657.

¹⁷⁹ D. Thomas, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 222-223.

¹⁸⁰ 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī* V, 135.

¹⁸¹ It must be mentioned that the figure of Christ has served as a point for "dialogue or reconciliation" for modern scholars, who have put effort into demonstrating the common features of Christ in the Muslim and

Arabic sources from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries that provide not only a prophetic portrait of Christ but also Christ as an ascetic, mystic, and pious sage.¹⁸²

The central Christological issue was concerned with the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, whose refutation by Muslims was greatly influenced by the teachings about the createdness of Christ and denial of the divine sonship. The earliest, most thorough refutation of the Incarnation is provided by Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq with a detailed description of the issue. One sees in this refutation a shift from scriptural arguments towards logical ones which were a characteristic feature for later authors such as al-Baqillānī and al-Jabbār.¹⁸³ The major objective is to point out the inconsistencies and contradictions within Christian doctrines. One of the major arguments against the Incarnation—which also works against the Trinity—is the following: if the hypostases are united by substance, why was it that only one of them, the Word, became incarnate?

If they claim that the uniting was an action of the three hypostases, then we say: Then why was it the uniting of the Word and not of the Father or the Spirit? And why was it the Word that united and not either of the others, although it had no part in the action of uniting that they did not have?¹⁸⁴

As Abu ‘Isā saw it, either the three of them must be able to unite themselves with a human or there must be an inherent distinction among them which would disallow them all from acting similarly. More specifically, this means that the Son must have something that the Father and Holy Spirit do not, which contradicts the Christian claim that the Son is not different from the

Christian traditions. See, for example, N. Robinson, “Jesus and Mary in the Qur’an: Some Neglected Affinities,” *Religion* 20 (1990):161-175; Räisänen Heikki, “The Portrait of Jesus in the Qur’an: A Reflection of a Biblical scholar,” *The Muslim World* 70 (1980):122-133; E. Hulmes, “The People of the Book and the Question of Jesus,” *Theology* 95 (1992): 334-342.

¹⁸² For more on these sayings see Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) and also, Leirvick, *The Images of Jesus*, 54-107.

¹⁸³ For a good treatment of scriptural and rational evidence against the Christian understanding of Christology see al-Sharfī, *al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, 304-346.

¹⁸⁴ D. Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 96, para. 152. D. Thomas suggests that al-Warrāq’s refutation is significantly different from his Muslim contemporaries since it presupposes considerable knowledge of Christian teachings and their implications, see the “Introduction” by D. Thomas in *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 68.

other hypostases.¹⁸⁵ The other argument concerns the relationship between the human and divine, namely, the appearance of the Word through the human without indwelling or mingling (*la 'alā al-ḥulūl wa la 'alā al-mukhālaṭah*) with the human body of Christ. If this means that God did it through controlling the body of Messiah, then the Word must have been united with other prophets, humans, animals and so on, since God has control over all of creation. Therefore, Abū 'Isā concludes, the entire doctrine is a fallacy.¹⁸⁶

The most common criticism against the corruption of the doctrine was that mingling and indwelling, the act of uniting through appearance, movement, and silence, are actions specific for bodies and temporal creatures. The Incarnation of the Eternal One in the temporal creature is what has been an object of severe criticism among Muslim authors.¹⁸⁷ To show the invalidity of the unity al-Bāqillānī asks whether the union continued to exist at the time of the crucifixion (supposing that it happened). If it did, it means that God was killed and dead, which is impossible to be held as true by Christians themselves. On the other hand, if the Christians reply that the unity did not exist at the time of crucifixion, it means they are abandoning their own doctrine.¹⁸⁸

Clearly the major concern of Muslim authors in the refutation of both the Trinity and divinity of Christ was to show their logical inconsistency and to raise questions which would allow drawing a categorical conclusion about the invalidity of these doctrines. Ibn Taymiyyah pursued the same objective, although his major purpose was to point out the inauthenticity of these teachings in relation to the Scriptures.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 99, para; 156.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 173, para. 227.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Sharfi, 358 ff.

¹⁸⁸ Al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, 97-98.

3.2. Ibn Taymiyya's discussion on the Trinity

Ibn Taymiyyah, in the course of structuring his argument, did find common points of objection with previous writers; however, given his scripturalist orientation, his primary objection against the doctrines is its innovative nature and departure from the Revelation. This, in accordance with the logic of Ibn Taymiyyah's overall polemics, would mean that the doctrine cannot be proven true.

In addition, Ibn Taymiyyah's whole refutation of the Trinity¹⁸⁹ is based on the Islamic understanding of God and Revelation. He identifies the concept of the biblical God with that of the Qur'an by a staunch claim that the prophets received a perennial, self-consistent Revelation from the one and same God. He thus interprets the verse "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19) as: "The meaning is that they command people to believe in God and His Prophet which God sent and the angel by which God sent down the Revelation which he brought. That would be a command for them to believe in God and His angels, books, and messengers."¹⁹⁰

This interpretation is a clear reflection of the Qur'anic understanding of God, prophets, and angels. "The Son is the one reared, the subject of mercy"¹⁹¹ and without divine nature, like all the prophets. God supports the prophets through the Holy Spirit (as is confirmed in the Quran, 2:87, 2:253, 5:110), which might also be an angel such as Jibril (Gabriel). Any other application to the verse is a matter of *ta'wīl*, i.e., an allegorical

¹⁸⁹For general discussion on the issue see Nancy Roberts, "Reopening the Muslim-Christian Dialogue of the 13th-14th Centuries: Critical Reflections on Ibn Taymiyyah's Response to Christianity," *MW* 84, No. 3-4 (1996): 342-366; Muhammad H. Siddiqi, "Muslim and Byzantine Christian Relations: Letter of Paul Antioch and Ibn Taymiyyah's Response," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31, No.1 (1986); Ismail Abdullah, "Tawhīd and Trinity: A Study of Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*," *Intellectual Discourse* 14, No.1 (year): 89-106.

¹⁹⁰ Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Right Answer*, 262.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

interpretation, which diverts the message from its evident meaning and leads to mysteries incompatible with the teachings of the prophets.

Instead of obeying the evident understanding of God, Christians, Ibn Taymiyyah claims, introduced terminologies and concepts such as *uqnūm* to describe Him. If by hypostases Christians mean to affirm God's attributes of Essence, Word and Life (corresponding with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, respectively which islamised the three persons of the Trinity and the attributes as represented by Paul of Antioch), this is a faulty argument, since the Attributes of God cannot be limited to three. Further, Ibn Taymiyyah bases his discussion on the identification of the hypostases with the Attributes. If God's Attributes, therefore names, are numerous, their limitation to three expresses ignorance of the rest. He totally rejects the idea of Attributes of essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) on the basis of a strict assertion that any Attribute ascribed to God cannot be less essential than the rest.

Ibn Taymiyyah turns to another problem concerning the hypostases. This is related to the Christian claim that the Father is the origin of the other two Attributes. If the Father is the essence and the origin of Life and Speech, it means that the Father existed before them. This in turn means that the Father became living and knowing in time. This idea, on the one hand, implies that God became completed by the other two, and, on the other hand, it implies that the Attributes came into being over time, which means they cannot be eternal. This is what Ibn Taymiyyah describes as "the greatest form of unbelief, and the most impossible." The Attributes of Perfection necessarily follow upon the essence of the Lord from the beginning to the end. From eternity to eternity He is living, knowing, acting. He did not become living after He had not been, or knowing after He had been unknowing."¹⁹² Similarly, claiming that the Logos (*al-Nuṭq*) is born from the Father like speech from the mind would mean that the Logos came into existence over time and turned God's potentiality for speech into an act of

¹⁹² Ibid., 267.

speech, a patently absurd proposition, as God is ever realized and accomplished, and does not move from potentiality into actuality.

Ibn Taymiyyah's claim is that there must be a clear distinction between God and his Attributes. God as a substance has many Attributes, like power, hearing, sight, and so on, but none of them is God. Attributes are meanings expressed through the names by which people know God. Not only do Christians limit the number of God's Attributes to three, but they also fail to differentiate between God and His Attributes. Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding of Attributes and their identification with hypostases became crucial for the further refutation of the Trinity. "An Attribute is not a self-subsisting substance,"¹⁹³ he claims. Yet Christians made Attributes equal to the Father in substance. With the assertion that only a substance can be equal to a substance, Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that Son must also be a substance. According to this logical structure, the Holy Spirit is the third substance, which means there are three substances and therefore three gods: "this is a clear statement establishing three substances and three gods," he concludes.¹⁹⁴

In the light of this discussion of Attributes, Ibn Taymiyyah points out another mistake of Christians, namely, making the Son and the Holy Spirit Attributes of God. "The term 'son' is never used in the divine Books with the meaning of any Attribute of God."¹⁹⁵ For Ibn Taymiyyah it is absolutely unreasonable to refer to the Knowledge and Word of God as "son" and then to make it an Attribute. An Attribute of God subsists in His essence, not in anything else. Consequently, the Knowledge of God as an Attribute cannot subsist in the Son. The same is true for the Holy Spirit, who is represented by Christians as the Life of God and as an Attribute. That God is living (*ḥayy*) is clear by His nature, and Life of God is an Attribute, again, subsisting in him and not in the Holy Spirit. Ibn Taymiyyah concludes, consequently, that Christians have ascribed meanings to the Son and Holy Spirit that were never stated by

¹⁹³ Ibid, 270.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 276.

Christ or an apostle. Moreover, if the Holy Spirit were one of the three divine hypostases or Attributes, “every one of the prophets would be a God to be worshiped, as Holy Spirit speaks through all the prophets. Each of the prophets would have divine and human natures, yet Christians claim the divinity of the Christ only and not of other prophets.”¹⁹⁶

Ibn Taymiyyah devotes a number of passages to the discussion of the Holy Spirit and its procession from God, as in the Nicene Creed. He places particular emphasis on the idea of procession in the Creed (“Holy Spirit the giver of life who proceeds from God”), explaining it as an act of emanation: “Processing here means an overflowing, a pouring forth, and an emanation from something.”¹⁹⁷ This would mean, Ibn Taymiyyah implies separation from God or partition. The Life of God as an Attribute subsistent in Him cannot be emanated.¹⁹⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah’s final conclusion is that Christian doctrines cannot be supported by scriptural evidence, which means that they cannot be proven by Reason either.

3.3. Ibn Taymiyya’s discussion on the nature of Christ

It will be evident from the discussion below that Ibn Taymiyyah, although he followed the previous tradition of pointing out the contradictions in the doctrine, emphasized another aspect of the doctrine, its inauthenticity in relation to the Scriptures. The point of departure for Ibn Taymiyyah remains the same: the Christian teachings about Christ and the Incarnation are at variance with prophetic message, and therefore contradictory.

Ibn Taymiyyah argues against the Incarnation of the divine Word in Christ through an explanation of the meaning of God’s word. He summarizes “various opinions about the Word of God,” enumerating three types of understanding of them: it is either (1) an Attribute subsisting in God, or (2) created and different from Him, or (3) it is neither of these two, but

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 272.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ He refers to the Qur’anic verse *allahu šamad* (112:3), usually translated as God is Eternal Absolute but interpreted as “one from whom nothing proceeds.” See Roberts, “Reopening the Muslim-Christian Dialogue,” 354.

what is found in men's souls.¹⁹⁹ The last one is the most heretical among all and is held by philosophers and Sabaeans,²⁰⁰ who deny that God has speech or knows particular things or He is able to change celestial things. The second view, held by Mu'tazila, affirms that God is a speaker yet claims that His Speech is created and separate. Ibn Taymiyyah refers to the Mu'tazilī thesis of *khalq al-Qur'an*, according to which the Qur'an was created in time and is not co-eternal with God. The first view is that of the *salaf* and the true one, as Ibn Taymiyyah claims. According to this understanding, the Speech of God is generically eternal (*qadīm al-naw'*), i.e., God is always a speaker by will. He refers to its Muslim, rather *salafī*, understanding, namely, that the Speech of God subsists in Him, the same way as His Life and power subsist in Him. Speech therefore is uncreated and not separate from God.²⁰¹ Despite disagreements around the Speech of God, Muslims, nonetheless, never said that the "Speech of God is a god or a lord. Similarly no Muslim ever declared that God's life is a God or lord, or that it is equal to the Lord in essence."²⁰² The problem, as Ibn Taymiyyah sees it, is that Christians misinterpret the idea of the indwelling of divine Word in the prophets.

The early prophecies and the divine Books like the Torah, the Gospels, the Psalms, and the rest of the books of the prophets never single out Christ by anything which demands postulating his unity with the Godhead or his indwelling within Him as the Christians claim. These books, rather, single him out only in the way in which Muḥammad singled him out in God's statement.²⁰³

Ibn Taymiyyah states that the phenomenon of indwelling is shared by all the prophets, not by Christ alone. It was manifested in Abraham, Moses and Muḥammad. Indwelling does not mean that the essence of God resided in someone, it rather means, as Ibn Taymiyyah explains it, that intellectual representation (*al-mithāl al-'ilmī*) of love, power, worship, light,

¹⁹⁹ Response, 287

²⁰⁰ These are people of the Mesopotamian pagan city of Harran largely connected to Hellenic tradition.

²⁰¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Right Answer*, 280.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 299.

and remembrance of God reside in true believers.²⁰⁴ It can be a unity but not unity of essences: it is a unity in the sense of intermingling of the feelings of lover and beloved and not their selves. Belief in the Messenger does not mean belief in someone else other than God. It is an exposition of adherence to what God has commanded and what He has forbidden since:

The Messenger commanded what God had commanded, forbade what He forbade, loved what He loved, hated what He hated, befriended the friends of God, and opposed His enemies. Whoever pledges to hear and obey him has pledged to hear and obey God. Whoever obeys him, has indeed obeys God.²⁰⁵

For the terms *Ḥulūl* and *Ītīḥad*, therefore, there could be a correct meaning which Christians failed to follow. Various terms can be employed to indicate divine indwelling such as residence (*suknā*) or interpenetration (*takhallul*),²⁰⁶ and they all must be understood in the way explained above. According to Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding of union, it is the unity of Will and Act between God, prophets, and upright believers.

Ibn Taymiyyah's basic yet most categorical solution to the problem of Indwelling and Union, as it is seen by Christians, is to rule them out, since they contradict sound reason. The Christian claim that the Incarnation of the creative word of God in created man and the birth of both of them together, which is expressed by the union of divinity and humanity, is contrary to sound reason, and not spoken by a Messenger of God. For Ibn Taymiyyah this is the strongest basis for declaring the concepts invalid. However, with this statement he does not conclude the discussion and engages in more elaborate refutation.

The next argument is constructed against the Christian statement that God is a complete man and complete God.²⁰⁷ He articulated several answers to this statement. First he puts a question to Christians, asking what exactly is united with the humanity of Christ: the

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 288.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 291-292.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 293.

²⁰⁷ He refers to the Melkite statement of Paul: "We hold the Incarnation of the creative Word of God in a created man and the birth of together, i.e., the Word with humanity..." 285.

Word with the essence or the Word without the essence. Ibn Taymiyyah gives the results for both cases. If what became united with Christ was the Word with the essence, then Christ would be the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, i.e., all three divine persons. This, however, is what the Christians would reject. On the other hand, if Christians answer that what is united with Christ is the Word alone, without the essence, it must also be a subject for refutation since the Word is an Attribute and thus inseparable from its essence and does not subsist except in what it describes.²⁰⁸

The next point to base his refutation on is the nature of the Union. If the essence united with the humanity of Christ and yet the humanity of Christ still remained, it means there remain two essences as they were before, which means in turn there is no union in fact. If some Christians claim that after the union one substance exists, it supposes a transformation of both divine and human essences, which means “the divinity was transformed and its Attributes and real nature replaced by something else.”²⁰⁹ Since assuming change in the eternally unchanged Being is inadmissible, this possible answer by Christians is also deemed to be false.

Next to the theological and conceptual arguments, Ibn Taymiyyah comes up with rhetorical-mythological one: he claims that if the indwelling were to take place in the way Christians perceive it, it would take place not in the body of Christ but of Abraham or Muḥammad since they were two special friends (*khalīlayn*) and there is no rank higher than that.²¹⁰

Ibn Taymiyyah further develops his major argument against divine-human union.²¹¹ First he describes it as such an unreasonable concept that even Christians themselves are not

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 287.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 297.

²¹¹ Ibn Taymiyyah quotes Said ibn Bitrīq: “Through union with that one substratum, the substratum, the substratum of one creative Word of God, Christ was one with the Trinity by nature of his divinity and one with

able to speak about it adequately. Then he explains the most obvious and impossible circularity in the concept: the formulation of the union as perceived by Christians assumes the dependence of God upon a created being. “If the Creator has the creature as substratum, it necessarily follows that Creator and the creature have subsistence through the other; each of the two of them will be in need of the other, since something has a need for whatever serves as a substratum for it.”²¹² However, portraying God as dependent on something or someone is the greatest blasphemy. Ibn Taymiyyah states this as his final conclusion on the subject, “whether they [Christians] hold for the hypostatic union or for the divine indwelling without union.”²¹³

Moreover, the union as presented by Christians assumes division and partition in God. If Christ is completely divine and completely man, it means he shares divinity with God, which is incompatible with the nature of God.²¹⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah also refers to the Holy Spirit (which had been touched upon in the refutation of the Trinity), explaining that it should be accepted inasmuch as it symbolizes love between God and His creatures.²¹⁵

As for the miracles of Christ, Ibn Taymiyyah adheres to the traditional argument in Muslim tradition according to which these miracles were not unique to Christ alone and that these miracles cannot serve as proof for the divinity of Christ. The miracles of Moses, as Ibn Taymiyyah claims, were even greater but they only gave evidence of his prophethood and messengership and not of his divinity.²¹⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah also holds the traditional view regarding the crucifixion of Christ. He refers to the famous verse of the Qur’an (4:157) which states that Christ was not killed nor crucified but that it only appeared so to the spectators (*shubbiha lahum*).

the people by nature of his humanity. He was not two, but one with Father and Holy Spirit, for he was it [the divine nature], and he was one with all people by combining two different substances....” 312.

²¹² Ibid., 314.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 282-283.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 283.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 298.

This chapter has brought together Muslim arguments against the doctrines of the Trinity and divinity of Christ. It showed that Ibn Taymiyyah, although relied on the previous tradition of refuting these doctrines on the basis of logical argumentation, primarily aimed to show that they are foreign to prophetic message and do not derive from the Books.

4. CONCLUSION

In defining the relationship between God and the Universe -- a problem which “underlies Ibn Taymiyyah’s entire controversialist writing”²¹⁷ -- the Scripture, as a revelation of God himself and reflection of the perfect relationship between the Creator and creature, has absolute epistemological value. Following the Scripture means asserting *tawhīd* and obedience to God in the way it is described in the message brought by the prophets. The prophetic message is one and the same for *ahl al-kitāb*: it does not recognize any contradiction or inconsistency. The failure to understand this principle is what creates errors and deviation from the Straight Path.

This thesis has sought to explain the role of prophetic knowledge in the theological outlook of Ibn Taymiyyah through examining the concept of *tahrīf*. The concept was taken as a manifestation of any contradiction with the Scriptures as a result of errors by both Christians and Muslims. The second chapter pointed out features of the notion of *tahrīf* developed by various authors before the time of Ibn Taymiyyah. It showed the polarized approaches towards the Bible by Muslim authors, from considering it as a mere fabrication to taking it as a Sacred Book and historical source. The discussion of Ibn Taymiyyah’s text showed his unique approach to the Gospels: he recognised their cognitive value and their inspired nature by comparing them to the *Sunnah* in the Muslim tradition. This chapter concluded that Ibn Taymiyyah did not reject the Gospels but only reduced their status. With doing so, he implied the idea that the Gospels should be followed in accordance with their secondary yet important value.

The third chapter discussed polemical themes such as the Trinity and divinity of Christ that Ibn Taymiyyah considered concepts at variance with the prophetic message. It provided an overview of the previous refutations of these themes not least because Ibn

²¹⁷ T. Michel, *Response*, 1.

Taymiyyah made efficient use of them. It became evident that Ibn Taymiyyah, although he relied on the previous polemical tradition of refuting Christian doctrines in terms of logic and adduced extra-scriptural arguments against them, unlike others, he placed the greatest emphasis on their non-scripturalist nature, which resulted in all the illogical consequences and contradictions to Reason. By refuting Christians, Ibn Taymiyyah had the major goal of showing Muslims themselves their own mistakes; he used the Christian doctrines of Union and the Incarnation to criticize specific Muslim, namely Sufi, concepts.

This thesis has broadened the notion of *tahrīf*, seeing it as a concept expressing everything that is in contrast, not warranted, and not implied by the content of the prophetic message. Further study of the concept needs to examine its historical evolution through a closer discussion of its development and the social context within which the notion evolved. The subject of *tahrīf* not only foregrounds the reception of the Bible by Islamic scholars but also sheds light on the broader issue of the understanding of “the Book” among Muslims. It is therefore central to the comparative study of monotheistic religions and the history of inter-confessional relations.

APPENDIX

Glossary of Arabic Terms

āḥād: narratives which trace back to one transmitter only

ahl al-kitāb: People of the Book-Muslims, Christians and Jews

amr: command, order

al-milal wal-nihal: heresiographical literature

‘ālim (pl. ‘ulama’): a person expert in religious sciences of Islam

‘aql: reason, intellect

asma‘: (sg. ism) epithets and attributes of God

āyah: signs manifested by God, verses of the Qur’an

azalī: eternal

bāṭin: inner meaning of the Scripture, esoteric form of interpretation or knowledge

bid‘a: illicit innovations

dhāt: essence, substance, equivalent of Greek *ousia*

dhikr: the mantric repetition of the name of God in Sufi ritual

dīn: universal religion brought by the prophets

falsafah: philosophy, especially of Hellenist tradition

fanā‘: mystical concept of annihilation of one’s ego

faqīh: a scholar of jurisprudence

fatwā: legal opinion of a faqīh

faylasūf (pl. falāsifah): philosopher

fiqh: Islamic jurisprudence

fiṭrah: form of primeval knowledge, innate nature of creatures

ḥadīth: narratives about sayings, deeds and decisions of the Prophet which, if proven authentic, become basis of belief

ḥajj: one of the pillars of Islam, pilgrimage to Mecca

ḥawārī: disciple of Jesus

ḥulūl: the indwelling of God in human

i‘jāz: the inimitability of the Qur’an

ijmā‘: the consensus of ummah which is one of the basis of law in Sunni Islam

ilhām: inspiration accessible to all as opposed to revelation accessible only to a prophet

‘illah: causality

iṣmah: infallibility of the prophets in Sunni Islam and also of Imams in Shi‘a Islam

isnād: chain of transmitters of *ḥadīth* narrative

jarh wa ta‘dīl: *ḥadīth* criticism which evaluates the reliability of transmitters

jawhār: essence, substance

kalām: speculative theology

khabar: information from mind or sense perception which might be true or false

khalīl: friend of God: refers to Abraham and Muḥammad

khalq: literally creation: refers to the thesis of khalk al-Qur’an held by Mu‘tazila according to which the Qur’an was created and not co-eternal with God

madhhab: four law schools in Sunni Islam

musnad: literature that deals with the *ḥadīth* tradition, especially with the chain of transmitters

mutashābih: anthropomorphist

mutawatir: concomitant, refers to *ḥadīths* concomitantly transmitted from the Prophet

nabī: prophet of God, who does not bring a new revelation

naql: transmitted tradition

naskh: abrogation of one canonical text by another with which it is in contradiction, originally used to solve contradictions between Qur’anic verses

nubūwwah: prophethood, prophecy

qadīm: eternal

radd: refutation

rasūl: messenger of God who brought a Book

salaf: Ancestors of Muslims, specifically first three generations of Islam

shar‘: revealed law

sharī‘a : religious law

ṣifāh: the technical term for divine attribute

sīrah: the biography of the Prophet

sunnah: The Prophet’s exemplary deeds

shirk: worshipping others than God, associationism

tabdīl: alteration

taḥrīf: literally corruption, distortion; intended or non-deliberate change of the Scriptures

tamthīl: Mimesis

tashbīh: anthropomorphism

tathlīth: tritheism

ta‘ṭīl: denial of the reality of the divine attributes

tawātur: concomitant transmission of a Tradition.

tawḥīd: oneness of God

ummah: Muslim community of believers

uqnūm: hypostasis of God

uṣūl al-dīn: Muslim dogmatics

waḥdat al-wujūd: pantheistic unity of existence

zāhirī: the evident meaning of the Scripture

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Abd al-Jabbār Al-Asadābadi, ‘Abū al-Ḥasan. *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-‘Adl* Vol. 5. Ed. M. M. al-Khudhayrī. Cairo: Al-Dār al-Miṣriyyah līl-Ta’līf wa Tarjamah, 1965.
- Al-Bāqillānī, Abū Bakr Ibn al-Tayyīb. *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*. Ed. R. J. McCarthy, Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-Sharqiyyah, 1957.
- Al-Jāhiz, Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr Ibn Baḥr. *Fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Naṣārah* in *Thalāth Rasa’l lī Abū ‘Uthmān al Jāhiz* Ed. J. Finkel. Cairo, 1926.
- Al-Qarāfī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Idrīs. *Al-Ajwiba al-Fākhiraḥ ‘an al-As’ilah al-Fājiraḥ*. Lubnān: Dār al-Kutub, 1986.
- Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-Faṣl fī l-Milal wa’l Ahwā’ wa l-Niḥal*. Cairo, 1899.
- Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqī al-Dīn. *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ lī man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*. Ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Isma‘īl, n.p.:al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmīyah. 2003.
- _____. “Right Answer to Those Who Altered the Religion of Christ.” In, *A Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyyah’s Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. T. Michel. New York: Caravan Books, 1984.

Secondary Sources

- Abrahamov, Binyamin. “Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition.” *The Muslim World* 82, No. 3-4 (1992): 256-272.
- Abu Laila, Muhammad. “Ibn Hazm’s Influence on Christian Thinking in Research.” *Islamic Quarterly* 31(1987):103-115.
- Accad, M. “The Gospel in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table.” (four parts) *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14 (2003): 67-81, 205-20, 337-52, 459-79.
- Adang, Camilla,. “Some Hitherto Neglected Biblical Material in the Work of Ibn Hazm.” *Al-Mashaq* 5 (1992): 17-28.
- _____. *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.

_____. "Islam as the Inborn Religion of Mankind: the Concept of *Fitra* in the works of Ibn Hazm." *Al-Qantara* 21 (2000): 391-410.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. *Ibn Taymiyyah*. Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2000.

Al-Jamil, Tariq. "Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī: Shi'ī Polemics and the Struggle for Religious Authority in Medieval Islam." In *Ibn Taymiyyah and his Times*, ed. Yossef. Rapoport, Shahab Ahmed, 229-246. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Al-Sharfi, 'Abd al-Majid. *Al-fikr al-Islāmī fi-l-radd 'ala al-Nasārā* [Islamic Thought of Refutation against Christianity]. City: Al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1986.

Anthony S.W. "The Composition of Sayf Ibn. 'Umar's Account of King Paul and His Corruption of Ancient Christianity." *Der Islam* 85 (2010): 164-202.

Ayoub, Mahmoud M. "Towards an Islamic Christology II: The Death of Jesus, Reality of Delusion." *The Muslim World* 70, No. 2 (1980): 91-121.

Beaumont, M. "Early Muslim interpretation of the Gospels." *Transformation* 22 (2005): 20-27.

_____. *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims. A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries*. Exeter: Paternoster, 2005.

Caterina, Bori. "A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyya." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 67, No. 3 (2004): 321-348.

_____. "Ibn Taymiyyah wa Jamā'atu-hu: Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Ibn Taymiyyah's Circle." In *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, ed. Yossef. Rapoport, Shahab Ahmed, 23-52. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Caspar, R., and J. M. Gaudeul. "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chretien: les auteurs et les oeuvres du viieme au xeme siecle compris." *Islamochristiana* 1 (1975):125-181.

_____. "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chretien: les auteurs et les oeuvres du viieme au xeme siecle compris." *Islamochristiana* 2 (1976): 187-249.

_____. "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chretien: les auteurs et les oeuvres du viieme au xeme siecle compris." *Islamochristiana* 4 (1978): 247-267.

_____. "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le tahrif des Ecritures." *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980): 61-104.

Cook, David. "The New Testament Citations in the *Ḥadīth* Literature and the Question of Early Gospel Translations into Arabic." In *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. E. Grypeou, M. Swanson, D. Thomas, 185-237. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

- Demiri, Lejla. "Hanbalite Commentary on the Bible: Analysis of Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī's al-Ta'liq." In *The Bible in Arab Christianities*, ed. D. Thomas, 295-313. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Firestone, Reuven. *Journeys in the Holy Land: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.
- Friemuth, Maha al-Kaisy. "Al-Radd al-Jamīl: al-Ghazālī's or Pseudo-Ghazālī's?" In *The Bible in Arab Christianities*, ed. D. Thomas, 275-294. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Graham, William. *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*. Hague: Mouton, 1977.
- Griffith, Sidney. "The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century." *Oriens Christianus* 69 (1985): 126-67.
- _____. "The Gospel, the Qur'an and the Presentation of Jesus in al-Ya'qūbī's Ta'riḥ." In *Bible and Qur'an*, ed. John C. Reeves, 133-160, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- _____. "Arguing from Scripture: the Bible in the Christian/Muslim Encounter in the Middle Ages." In *Scripture and Pluralism*, ed. T. Heffernan and T. Burman, 29-58. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Guillaume, Alfred, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955.
- Guthrie, A. E., and F. F. Bishop. "The Paraclete, Al-Munḥamanna and Ahmad." *MW*, 41, No. 4 (1951): 251-256.
- Haddad, Rashid. *La Trinité Divine chez les Théologiens Arabes: 750-1050*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1985.
- Haddad, Wadi. "A Tenth-Century Speculative Theologian's Refutation of the Basic Doctrines of Christianity: al-Bāqillānī." In *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed. Y. Y. Haddad, W. Z. Haddad, 82-95. Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1995.
- Hallaq Wael. *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Hassan, Mona. "Modern Interpretations and Misinterpretations of a Medieval Scholar: Apprehending the Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyyah." In *Ibn Taymiyya and his Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport, Shahab Ahmed, 338-366. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Hauglid, Brian. "On the Early life of Abraham: Biblical and Qur'anic Intertextuality and the Anticipation of Muḥammad." In *Bible and Qur'an*, ed. John C. Reeves, 87-105. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

- Heikki, Räsänen. "The Portrait of Jesus in the Qur'an: A Reflection of a Biblical scholar." *The Muslim World* 70 (1980):122-133.
- Holtzman, Livnat. "Human Choice, Divine Guidance and the Fiṭra Tradition: The Use of Ḥadīth in Theological Treatises by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah." In *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Ahmed Shahab, 163-187. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Hourani, George. *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Hoover, Jon. "The Justice of God and the Best of All Possible Worlds: The Theodicy of Ibn Taymiyya." *Near East School of Theology Theological Review* 27, No. 2 (2006): 53-75.
- _____. "Ibn Taymiyya as an Avicennian Theologian: A Muslim Approach to God's Self-Sufficiency." *Theological Review* 27, No. 1 (2006): 34-46.
- _____. *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- _____. "God Acts by His Will and Power: Ibn Taymiyyah's Theology of a Personal God in his Treatise on the Voluntary Attributes." In *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Ahmed Shahab, 55-77. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Hulmes, E. "The People of the Book and the Question of Jesus." *Theology* 95 (1992):334-342.
- Ismail Abdullah, "Tawḥīd and Trinity: A Study of Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*." *Intellectual Discourse* 14, No.1 (year): 89-106.
- Jackson, S. A. "Ibn Taymiyya on trial in Damascus." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39 (year): 41-85.
- Jansen, J. J. G. "Ibn Taymiyya and the Thirteenth Century: A Formative Period of Modern Muslim Radicalism." *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5-6 (1987-88): 391-396.
- Jeffery, A., ed. and tr. "Ghevond's Text of the Letter of Leo III to 'Umar II." In *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.), Translations with Commentary*, ed. N. A. Newman, 63-131. Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993.
- _____. "Ghevond's Text of the Correspondence between 'Umar II and Leo III." *The Harvard Theological Review* 37, No. 4 (1944): 269-332.
- Kassis, E. Hanna. "Critique of Scriptures. Polemics of al-Jahiz and Ibn Hazm against Christianity and Judaism." In *Religious Apologetics -- Philosophical Argumentation*, ed. Yossef Schwartz, Volkhard Krech, 237-250. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002.
- Kemali, Mohammad Hashim. *The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*. Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2003.

Khalil, Mohammad Hassan. "Ibn Taymiyyah on Reason and Revelation in Ethics." *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 2, (2006): 103-132.

Khoury, P. *Paul d'Antioche, Éveque melkite de Sidon (XIIIe s.)*. Beirut, 1964.

Laoust H. *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques d'Ibn Taimîya*. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'institute français s'archéologie orientale, 1939.

_____. "L'Influence d'Ibn Tayniyya." In *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*, ed. A. T. Welch and P. Cachia, 15-33. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, (1979).

Lazarus-Yafeh, H. *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

_____. "Some Hitherto Neglected Biblical Material in the Work of Ibn Ḥazm." *Al-Masāq* 5 (1992): 17-28.

Leirvik, Oddbjørn. *Images of Jesus in Islam*. London: Continuum, 2010.

Little, Donald. "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Definition of Ibn Taymiya." *International Journal of the Middle East* 4 (1973): 311-327.

_____. "Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?" *Studia Islamica* 41 (1975): 93-111.

_____.
Madigan, Daniel. *The Qur'an's Self-image. Writing and Authority in Islamic Scripture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Makari, Victor. *Ibn Taymiyyah's Ethics: The Social Factor*. Chico, CA: Scholar Press, 1983.

Makdisi, George. "The Hanbali School and Sufism." *Humaniora Islamica* 2 (1974): 61-72.

McAuliffe, Jane Damen. "The Abrogation of Judaism and Christianity in Islam: A Christian Perspective." *Concilium* 3 (1994): 154-163.

_____. "The Qur'anic Context of Muslim Biblical Scholarship." *Islam and Christian Relations* 7 (1996): 141-158.

_____. "Assessiing the *Isra'liyyāt*: An Exegetical Conundrum." In *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature*, ed. Stefan Leder, 345-69. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1998.

_____. "The Prediction and Prefiguration of Muḥammad." In *Bible and Qur'an*, ed. John C. Reeves, 107-132. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Memon, U. Muhammed. *Ibn Taimay's Struggle Against Popular Religion With an Annotated Translation of His Kitāb Iqtidā' aṣ-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*. The Hague: Mouton -Paris: De Gruyter, 1976.

Michel, Thomas. "Ibn Taymiyya's Critique of *falsafa*." *Hamdard Islamicus* 6, No. 1 (1983): 3-14.

_____. *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyyah's Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥiḥ lī man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*. New York: Caravan Books, 1984.

Mingana, A., ed. "The Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I and the 'Abbasid Caliph Mahdi." In *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.), Translations with Commentary*, ed. N. A. Newman, 174-246. Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993.

_____, ed. and tr. "The Book of Religion and Empire." In *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.), Translations with Commentary*, ed. N. A. Newman, 568-684. Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993.

Nickel, Gordon. "Early Muslim Accusations of *Tahrīf* : Muqātil Ibn Suleymān's Commentary on Key Qur'anic Verses." In *The Bible in Arab Christianities*, ed. D. Thomas, 207-223. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Omari, Racha. "Ibn Taymiyyah's "Theology of the Sunna" and his Polemics with the Ash'arites." In *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Ahmed Shahab, 101-122. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Özervali, M. S. "The Qur'anic Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyyah and his Criticism of the Mutakallimūn." In *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Ahmed Shahab, 78-100. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Platti, E. "Yaḥya Ibn 'Adī' and his Refutation of al-Warraq's Treatise on the Trinity in Relation to his Other Works." In *Christian-Arabic Apologetics During the Abbasid Period*, ed. S. Kh. Samir, J.S. Nielsen, 172-191. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

Pulcini, Theodore. *Exegesis of Polemical Discourse: Ibn Hazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Reeves, John. "Some Explorations of the Intertwining of Bible and Qur'an." In *Bible and Qur'an*, ed. John C. Reeves, 43-60. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Reynolds, G. S. *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu: 'Abd al-Jabbar and the Critique of Christian Origins*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

_____, and S. K. Samir. *Critique of Christian Origins: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*. Islamic Translation Series. City: Brigham Young University, 2010.

_____. *The Qur'an and its Biblical Context*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Roberts, N. Nancy. "Reopening the Muslim-Christian Dialogue of the 13th-14th Centuries: Critical Reflections on Ibn Taymiyyah's Response to Christianity." *MW* 86, No. 3-4 (1996): 342-366.

Robbins V.K and Newby G. D. "A Prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qur'an and the Bible." In *Bible and Qur'an*, ed. John C. Reeves, 23-42. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Robinson, N. "Jesus and Mary in the Qur'an: Some Neglected Affinities." *Religion* 20 (1990):161-175.

Saeed, Abdullah. "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures." *MW* 92 (2002): 419-436.

Sahas, D.J. *John of Damascus on Islam "the Herecy of Ishmaelites."* Leiden: Brill, 1972.

Saleh, Walid. "A Muslim Hebraist: Al-Biqai's Bible Treatise and His Defense of Using the Bible to Interpret the Qur'an," *Speculum* 83 (2008): 629-654.

_____. *In Defence of the Bible: A Critical Edition and an Introduction to al-Biqai's Bible Treatise*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

_____. "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics: An Analysis of an Introduction to the Foundations of Qur'anic Exegesis." In *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, ed. Yossef. Rapoport, Shahab Ahmed, 123-162. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Şālih, Şubhī. *Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Muṣṭalaḥatuhu* [The Science of Ḥadīth and its Terminology]. Bayrūt: Dār al-'Ilm li'l-Malayiin, 1979.

Shahab, Ahmed. "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Satanic Verses." *Studia Islamica* 87 (1998):67-124.

Siddiqi, Muhammad. "Muslim and Byzantine Christian Relations: Letter of Paul Antioch and Ibn Taymiyyah's Response." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31, No.1 (1986): pages.

Stern, M. "Abd al-Jabār's Account of How Christ's Religion was Falsified by the Adoption of Roman Customs." *Theological Studies* 19, No. 1 (1968): 128-185.

_____. Serjeant R. B. "Notes and Communications: The Oxford Manuscript of Ibn Taymiyyah's anti-Christian Polemic," *BSOAS* 22, No.1/3, (1959):124-141.

Swanson, Mark. "Ibn Taymiyya and the Kitāb al-Burhān: a Muslim Controversialist Responds to a Ninth-century Arabic Christian Apology. In *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed. Y. Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Zaidan Haddad, 95-107. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995.

Tarif, Khalidi. *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001.

Thomas, David. *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam, Abū 'Isa al-Warraq's 'Against the Trinity.'* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

_____. "The Miracles of Jesus in Early Islamic Polemic" *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39 (1994): 221-243.

_____. "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7 (1996): 29-38.

_____. "The Doctrine of Trinity in the Early Abbasid era." In *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, ed. L. Ridgeon, 3-29. New York: St. Martins Press, 2000.

_____. "Paul of Antioch's 'Letter to A Muslim Friend' and the 'Letter from Cyprus'." In *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. D. Thomas, 203-22. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

_____. *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq's 'Against the Incarnation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

_____. "Early Muslim Responses to Christianity." In *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule, Church Life and Scholarship in Abbasid Iraq*, 231-54. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

_____. "The Bible and the Kalām." In *The Bible in Arab Christianities*, ed. D. Thomas, 175-191. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

_____. *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

_____, and Barbara Roggema. *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*. Volume 1 (600-900). Leiden: Brill, 2009.

_____. "Apologetic and Polemic in the *Letter from Cyprus* and Ibn Taymiyyah's *Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ lī man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ.*" In *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Ahmed Shahab, 247-265. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Tien, Anton, ed. "The Apology of al-Kindī." In *The Early Christian–Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632–900 A.D.), Translations with Commentary*, ed. N. A. Newman, 381-516. Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993.

Tottoli, Roberto. "Origin and Use of the Term *Ira'iliyyat* in Muslim Literature." *Arabica* 46 (1990): 193-210.

_____. *Biblical prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim literature*. Richmond, Curzon Press, 2002.

Tritton, A. S. "Reason and Revelation." In *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honour of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. G. Maqdisi, 619-631. Leiden: Brill, 1965.

van Koningsveld, P.S. "The Islamic Image of Paul and the Origin of the Gospel of Barnabas." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996): 200-28.

Watt, Montgomery W. "His Name is Ahmad," *The MW* 43, 1953, 110-117.

_____. "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible" In *Transactions of the Glasgow. University Oriental Society* 16 (1955–1956):50–62.

Wheeler, Brannon M., *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis*. London: Continuum, 2002.

Widengren, Geo. "Holy Book and Tradition in Islam." In *Holy Book and Holy Tradition*, ed. F. F. Bruce and E. G. Rupp, 210-236. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968.

Wolfson H. A. *The Philosophy of the Kalām*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.