Transfer and Religion

Interactions between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century

Edited by

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Entangled Arguments

A Survey of Religious Polemics between Judaism and Islam in the Middle Ages*

Daniel Boušek

The polemics between Christianity and Judaism played a very important role in the process of religious self-definition within Christianity from its very beginnings. As Amos Funkenstein pertinently put it, 'Judaism and Christianity were confrontational cultures […]. The conscious rejection of values and claims of the other religion was and remained a constitutive element in the ongoing construction of the respective identity of each of them.'[1] These mutual bonds of aversion and fascination found their expression in hundreds of Jewish-Christian polemical treatises.[2] However, as Jacob Katz observed, 'the antagonism between Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages […] is that of conflicting exponents of the same tradition.'[3] In comparison, medieval Islam's debate with Judaism, and vice versa, stood at the periphery of both Muslim and Jewish theologians. The polemics against Judaism and the Hebrew Bible, although present in the Qur'an and in Hadith and Sīra literature, are far less abundant and were never really considered important by Muslim authors. Judaism and Islam were less interested in each other, or, in Funkenstein's words: 'Judaism and Islam were *not* confrontational cultures.'

Jewish-Islamic polemics differ from those of Christianity not only in quantity but also in character. While at the centre of Christian-Jewish polemics stood

* This article was researched and written as a part of a project supported by a Czech Science Foundation grant, 'The Reflection of Interreligious Relations in Medieval Aragon in the Works of Solomon ibn Adret and Profiat Duran' (15–09766S).

[1] Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1993, p. 170.

[2] For a general overview of the Jewish anti-Christian polemic see, for example, Samuel Krauss and William Horbury, *The Jewish-Christian Controversy. From the Earliest Times to 1789*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, and Jeremy Cohen, "Towards a Functional Classification of Jewish anti-Christian Polemic in the High Middle Ages", *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992, pp. 93–114.

[3] Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 4.

the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible – the Holy Scripture of both sides of the dialogue – Muslims did not only target interpretations of the Script, but the Script itself – both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament – which they do not consider in their present form to be God's revealed word. The Muslim polemicists tried, on the basis of verses from the Qur'an, to prove in a variety of ways that throughout the course of their history the Jews and Christians had not only tampered with their Scripture, but had also effaced all mention therein of the advent of the ultimate prophet, Muḥammad. At the centre of the medieval Islamic polemics against Judaism thus stands the text of the Hebrew Bible. Herein lies what is perhaps the most important difference between the Christian-Jewish and Muslim-Jewish polemics. In the first case, a commonly shared divine text is expounded in different ways; in the second, the text itself is subjected to polemical scrutiny.[4]

This essay offers a survey of Muslim-Jewish polemical literature and its key themes and polemical strategies from the period of early Islam through to the fifteenth century. While Muslim-Jewish polemics have been extensively studied starting from Moritz Steinschneider's seminal *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache zwischen Muslimen, Christen und Juden*,[5] the Jewish side of the polemical discourse has remained at the periphery of scholarly attention. Steinschneider's book, to which he added an appendix (one hundred and forty pages long) on all medieval Jewish literature mentioning Arabs, Muslims, or Islam, might be in some sense justifiably viewed as the first and still the only monographical treatment of the subject. In spite of several studies discussing particular polemical aspects or polemical tracts, a general survey of Jewish anti-Islamic polemics is still lacking. This essay will therefore focus mainly on Jewish responses to Islamic anti-Jewish polemic, while keeping in mind that those responses can be rightly evaluated only when juxtaposed with Islamic anti-Jewish polemic. In fact, the Jewish polemical discourse is mainly an apologetic.

[4] See Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds. Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 8–9.

[5] Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1877. His research subsequently enriched and contextualised Ignác Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 32 (1878), pp. 341–87; Martin Schreiner, "Zur Geschichte der Polemik zwischen Juden und Muhammedanern", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 42 (1888), pp. 591–675; Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, New York NY: Columbia University Press, 1957, vol. 5, pp. 86–102; Moshe Perlmann, "Polemics between Islam and Judaism", *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. Shelomo D. Goitein, Cambridge MA: Association for Jewish Studies, 1974, pp. 103–38; and some parts of the above-mentioned Hava Lazarus-Yafeh book.

1. The Main Themes of Islamic Anti-Jewish Polemics

The phenomenon of Muslim polemics against Judaism and its adherents is as old as Islam itself. The Qur'an represents the very first source. Its suras, especially those from the period of Muḥammad's preaching in Medina, encapsulate, whether explicitly or implicitly, almost all of the themes of medieval Muslim polemics against Jews, Judaism, and the Hebrew Bible that later generations of Muslims would develop further and reformulate. Leaving aside the question of its historicity,[6] it is clear that the traditional Islamic narrative accounts for ill-will between the Prophet Muḥammad and the Jewish tribes by pointing to the latter's unwillingness to accept Muḥammad's message. Evidence of this narrative can be found in both the Qur'an and the Prophet's biography, Sīra, in which the Jews are presented as unreliable, treacherous, stubborn and ungrateful toward God.[7] They are 'strongest in enmity to the believers' (Q 5:78–82) and hostile to the Prophet, just as the Israelites had been to the messengers sent by God to their nation. The Qur'an dissolves the distance between past and present by directly associating Muḥammad's Jewish contemporaries with the misdeeds of their Biblical ancestors. A similar picture of the Jews, albeit more elaborate and hostile, emerges from the Hadith literature.[8] Yet, despite the intensity of Muslim-Jewish strife in the Medinan stage of Islam, classical Islam directed its polemics mainly against Christianity.[9]

These decidedly antagonistic statements formed the underpinnings of anti-Jewish expressions and became topoi in Islamic polemical and theological works, Qur'anic exegesis, and *adab* literature, throughout the centuries.[10] More numerous and important, however, are the arguments that concern the very foundation of the Jewish faith, namely the Torah. According to the Qur'an, this earlier scripture, revealed by God to Moses and now superseded by a new dispensation, contains references to the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad. However, the Torah is said to have been tampered with and falsified by the Jews. Thus, Islam's polemical discourse with Judaism was from the very beginning – and, to some extent, still is – centred on three partially contradictory and mutually overlapping postulates: that the Hebrew Bible was subjected to textual

[6] See, for example, Gordon D. Newby, "The Sīrah as a Source for Arabian Jewish History: Problems and Perspectives," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 7 (1986), pp. 121–38.

[7] See Hartwig Hirschfeld, "Historical and Legendary Controversies between Mohammed and the Rabbis," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 10 (1898), pp. 100–16.

[8] Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Jew-Hatred in the Islamic Tradition and the Koran Exegesis," *Antisemitism Through the Ages*, ed. Samuel Almog, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988, pp. 161–70.

[9] For Islamic anti-Christian polemics, see Erdmann Fritsch, *Islam und Christentum im Mittelalter. Beiträge zur Geschichte der muslimischen Polemik gegen das Christentum in arabischer Sprache*, Breslau: Müller & Seiffert, 1930.

[10] See, for instance, William M. Brinner, "The Image of the Jew as *Other* in Medieval Arabic Texts," *Israel Oriental Studies*, 14 (1994), pp. 227–40.

and/or interpretative alteration (*taḥrīf*, *tabdīl*); that the Hebrew Bible contains references to Muḥammad's mission (*aʿlām al-nubuwwa*); and that Muḥammad's revelation has abrogated Jewish Law (*naskh*).[11] The following pages expatiate upon these postulates.

Among the medieval Muslim authors whose polemical works had the greatest influence on the development of these arguments and the genre overall, the Ẓāhirī (i. e. literalist) law school theologian Ibn Ḥazm of Cordoba (d. 456/1064), and a Jewish convert to Islam from Baghdad, Samawʾal al-Maghribī (d. 571/1175), warrant particular attention. Ibn Ḥazm expounds his opinions about Jewish and Christian scriptures mainly in two works. The first is his monumental heresiology, *Al-Fiṣal fī l-milal wa-l-ahwāʾ wa-l-niḥal* (Book of Distinctions of Religions, Sects, and Heresies).[12] Written between 418/1027 and 421/1030, the work incorporates material from another, now lost, work refuting Judaism and Christianity: *Iẓhār tabdīl al-yahūd wa-l-naṣārā li-l-Tawrāt wa-l-Injīl* (Exposure of Jewish and Christian Falsifications in the Torah and Gospels).[13] Ibn Ḥazm's second noteworthy work is *al-Radd ʿalā Ibn al-Naghrīla al-yahūdī wa-rasāʾil ukhrā* (Refutation of Ibn Naghrīla the Jew, and other letters),[14] a sharply polemical diatribe directed against Ismāʿīl ibn Naghrīla, or Samuel ha-Nagid (993–1056), the great Hebrew poet and statesman of Granada, whom the author charges with writing a pamphlet exposing alleged inconsistencies and logical contradictions in the Qurʾan.[15] Ibn Ḥazm is rightly considered the real founder of Muslim polemics against

[11] The modern Muslim anti-Jewish polemic enriched these three claims with several novel arguments based on Biblical criticism, quotations from the Talmud, and anti-Semitic slurs that are reminiscent of past infamous blood libels. The polemics are harnessed in anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli pamphlets for political gain in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. See Livnat Holzman and Eliezer Schlossberg, "Fundamentals of the Modern Muslim-Jewish Polemic," *Israel Affairs*, 12/1 (2006), pp. 13–27.

[12] On Ibn Ḥazm's polemic, see particular chapters in Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*, Leiden: Brill, 1996; Theodore Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse. Ibn Ḥazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures*, Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1998.

[13] On the incorporation of the earlier into the later work, see Moshe Perlmann, "Eleventh-Century Andalusian Authors on the Jews of Granada", *Preceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 18 (1948–1949), p. 270.

[14] Ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-ʿUrūba, 1960; Emilio García Gómez, "Polémica religiosa entre Ibn Ḥazm e Ibn al-Nagrīla", *Al-Andalus*, 4 (1936), pp. 1–28.

[15] On the discussion for and against the existence of such a pamphlet and for a different hypothesis of whose arguments Ibn Ḥazm actually refutes, see David J. Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings. Politics and Society in Islamic Spain 1002–1086*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 199–205; Sarah Stroumsa, "From Muslim Heresy to Jewish-Muslim Polemics. Ibn al-Rāwandī's *Kitāb al-Dāmigh*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 107 (1987), pp. 767–72; Maribel Fierro, "Ibn Ḥazm and the Jewish Zindīq", *Ibn Ḥazm of Cordoba. The Life and Works of a Controversial Thinker*, ed. Camilla Adang, Maribel Fierro, and Sabine Schmidtke, Leiden: Brill, 2013, pp. 497–509; and Ross Brann, *Power in the Portrayal. Representations of Jews and Muslims in Eleventh and Twelfth-Century Islam*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 75–90

the Hebrew Bible, as his knowledge of the text is unprecedented in medieval Muslim literature. He was also the first to paraphrase or cite extensive parts of the Bible. His polemics were resumed by Samaw'al al-Maghribī, who, after his conversion in 1163, wrote a slanderous and polemical pamphlet, *Ifḥām al-yahūd* (Silencing the Jews).[16] *Ifḥām al-yahūd* has undoubtedly exerted the most significant influence on the polemics, both Islamic and Jewish.[17]

Each of the three groups involved in the polemical dialogue, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, had its traditional weak point that served as a clear target for the other two groups. Christian and Muslim anti-Jewish polemics focused on the accusation of the falsification of the Torah and on the abrogation of the Mosaic Law. At the centre of the Jewish and Muslim anti-Christian polemics stood the concepts of God's Unicity and of the Trinity. The key theme of the anti-Muslim polemics of both the Jews and Christians was the prophecy, or more precisely, the question of Muḥammad's prophethood.

The accusation that Jews and Christians had adulterated and falsified their Scriptures (*taḥrīf*) is the most basic Muslim argument against both the Old and New Testaments. This polemical motif, used in pre-Islamic times by sectarian and traditional authors including Samaritans, Hellenistic pagan authors and Christians,[18] is used in the Qur'an to explain away the contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an, and to establish that the advent of Muḥammad and the rise of Islam was predicted in the uncorrupted *true* Bible. The abuse of 'scripture' was thus a polemical notion adduced in support of the Muslim claim that God's salvific design had been achieved only with the revelation granted to Muḥammad. Since the Qur'an, however, does not state explicitly who affected this alleged tampering with the Torah – or, how and when – the Muslim exegetes and polemicists propounded a wide range of different interpretations of the relevant verses. If the Jews really cannot find the Prophet's name in their Scripture, it is

[16] Moshe Perlmann (ed. and trans.), Samaw'al al-Maghribī, *Ifḥām al-Yahūd. Preceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 32 (1964). For the earlier recension, see *Samaw'al al-Maghribī (d. 570/1175), Ifḥām al-yahūd. The Early Recension*, ed. Ibrahim Marazka et al., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006.

[17] Maimonides polemicized against *Ifḥām al-Yahūd* in his *Letter to Yemen*, as well as Sa'd ibn Kammūna, the author of *Tanqīḥ al-abḥāth li-l-milal al-thalāth*, and an anonymous Jewish author from the fourteenth century. See Haggai Mazuz, "The Identity of the Apostate in the Epistle to Yemen", *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, 38/2 (2014), pp. 363–74; Bruno Chiesa and Sabine Schmidtke, "The Jewish Reception of Samaw'al al-Maġribī's (d. 570/1175) *Ifḥām al-yahūd*. Some Evidence from the Abraham Firkovitch Collection I", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 32 (2006), pp. 327–49. Samaw'al's polemic could also be found in Josef Sambari's chronicle *Divrei Yosef* (1672).

[18] William Adler, "The Jews as Falsifiers. Charges of Tendentious Emendation in Anti-Jewish Christian Polemic", *Translation of Scripture (Jewish Quarterly Review Supplement)*, Philadelphia PA: Annenberg Research Institute, 1990, pp. 1–27; Irven M. Resnick, "The Falsification of Scripture and Medieval Christian and Jewish Polemics", *Medieval Encounters* 2 (1996), pp. 344–80; Edmund Stein, "Alttestamentliche Bibelkritik in der späthellenischen Literatur", *Collectanea Theologica*, 16 (1935), pp. 1–48.

because they either misinterpreted it (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*), or distorted its text (*taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*). Muslim religious authorities present divergent opinions on this question. According to Ibn Ḥazm, the Torah's text has undergone so many alterations and distortions in the course of history that it should no longer be regarded as a true expression of divine will. This is proved by highlighting passages to show that the Hebrew Bible is replete with chronological, historical, and geographical inaccuracies; theological impossibilities, including anthropomorphisms, and stories that attribute preposterous behaviour to Biblical personalities including patriarchs and kings considered by Muslim theologians to be prophets, and thus infallible. Ibn Ḥazm proclaims, therefore, that the 'damned and counterfeit book called by Jews *al-ḥumāsh*' has nothing in common with the Torah handed down by God to Moses.[19] The Jews might have found cold solace in the fact that Ibn Ḥazm and some other polemicists considered *Injīl* to be even more corrupted than *Tawrāt*.[20]

These theoretical considerations had practical consequences. Adherents of *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* considered it their duty to honour these books as they contain God's revelation. Thus the Shāfiʿite jurist al-Nawawī (d. 677/1278) charges those who impugn and revile the Torah and Gospel with committing the same sin as that of disparagement of the Qurʾan.[21] Contrariwise, the followers of *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* make it their religious duty to condemn the adulterated Scriptures authored not by God but by a falsifier or falsifiers, declaring that Muslims ought not to study them. It is therefore no wonder that, when the exegete al-Biqāʿī decided to use the Bible as a proof text to interpret the Qurʾan in 1456, his move caused outrage among Muslim religious intellectuals. At the centre of the ensuing dispute, which proved to be one of the major religious controversies of late Mamlūk Cairo, stood the question of whether Muslims were allowed to quote and use the Bible for religious purposes. Luckily for us, al-Biqāʿī wrote a polemical treatise defending his revolutionary decision, *al-Aqwāl al-qawīma fī ḥukm al-naql min al-kutub al-qadīma* (The Just Words on the Rule regarding Quotations from the Ancient Books), the most extensive discussion of the status of the Bible in Islam.[22]

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[19] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Fiṣal fī l-milal wa-l-ahwāʾ wa-l-niḥal*, ed. Aḥmad Shams ad-Dīn, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiya, 1328 AH (2007), vol. 1, p. 181.

[20] See Alfred Morabia, "Ibn Taymiyya, les Juifs et la Torah", *Studia Islamica*, 50 (1979), pp. 84–5; Sidney A. Weston (ed.), "The Kitāb Masālik an-Naẓar of Saʿīd ibn Hasan of Alexandria", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 24 (1903), p. 340.

[21] Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb", pp. 366–7. Cf. Camilla Adang, "A Fourth/Tenth Century Tunisian Muftī on the Sanctity of the Torah of Moses", *The Intertwined Worlds of Islam. Essays in Memory of Hava Lazarus-Yafeh*, ed. Nahem Ilan, Jerusalem: Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 2002, pp. VII–XXXIII.

[22] See Walid A. Saleh, "A Fifteenth-Century Muslim Hebraist: Al-Biqāʿī and his Defence of Using the Bible to Interpret the Qurʾān", *Speculum*, 83/3 (2008), pp. 629–54. Walid A. Saleh is also the author of the edition, *In Defence of the Bible. A Critical Edition and an Introduction to al-Biqāʿī's Bible Treatise*, Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Intertwined with the theme of the Torah's corruption is the question of the absence of *tawātur*, the lack of reliable transmission. The purpose of this argument was to prove that the invasions and assaults that devastated Biblical Israel, the subsequent exiles and persecution experienced by the Jewish people during their history, and even the deliberate burning of the scrolls of the Torah and deletion of parts of its text – especially those containing the references to Muḥammad – by some of the sinful kings of Israel, had irreparably impaired the transmission of their holy text, which therefore could not be regarded as reliable. The question of *tawātur* plays a key role in Ibn Ḥazm's polemic. He asserts that Ezra the Scribe, identified with the enigmatic person of the Qur'anic ʿUzayr, falsified the Hebrew Bible. The origin of this charge may lie in the Rabbinic interpretation, according to which Ezra was in some sense a second Moses who had set out to spread the Torah after it lapsed into disuse (B*Sukkah* 20a). In the tenth century, the Qaraite author al-Qirqisānī expressed concern that such stories had become known to Muslims: 'Were the Muslims to learn of this, they would need nothing else with which to revile and confute us.'[23] It was due to Ibn Ḥazm that Ezra, who until then had been presented mainly in a very positive light in Islamic literature, came to be seen as a falsifier.[24] It was he who altered the original version of the Biblical text of which only one exemplar was preserved in the Temple, which was later destroyed or forgotten by the Israelites following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the subsequent Babylonian exile. According to Ibn Ḥazm, in Ezra's text,[25] concocted from memory and held in possession by the Jews until his time, only fragments of the original text remained, namely verses preserved by God in order to testify to Muḥammad's prophethood and to the corruption of the Torah.

The second most common argument against the Bible deals with *aʿlām* or *dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* – 'Signs' or 'Proofs of Prophethood' which, according to interpretations of several verses in the Bible, announce the coming of Muḥammad

[23] Al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-anwār*, I.3.3; trans. Bruno Chiesa and Wilfried Lockwood, *Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī on Jewish Sects and Christianity. A Translation of "Kitāb al-Anwār", Book I, with two Introductory Essays*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984, pp. 105–6. Cf. Geoffrey Khan, "Al-Qirqisānī's Opinions concerning the Text of the Bible and Parallel Muslim Attitudes towards the Text of the Qur'ān", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 81 (1990), pp. 59–73.

[24] See Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 41–7, 50–74. Martin Whittingham argues that 'Ibn Ḥazm was not the originator of the Ezra motif amongst Arab Muslims, though he was to be its chief publicist', "Ezra as the Corrupter of the Torah? Re-Assessing Ibn Hazm's Role in the Long History of an Idea", *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, 1 (2013), pp. 253–71.

[25] Ibn Ḥazm's younger contemporary in the east, ʿAbd al-Malik Al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), even knows that Ezra wrote this corrupted Torah copy 545 years before the coming of Jesus. See Michal Allard, *Textes apologétiques de Ğuwainī*, Beirut, 1968, pp. 44–57; for an English translation see Francis E. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 161–4.

and Islam.[26] This argument is based on the Qur'an's claim (Q 61:6) that Jesus brought to his people good tidings about a prophet who would come after him, named 'Aḥmad'. Since the Qur'an did not give any specific indication as to where in the Bible these tidings or allusions should be located, the task was left for the next generations of Muslims. It is usually assumed by Islamicists that, because of limited knowledge of the Biblical text during the first century or so of Islam, no serious attempts were made to substantiate the Qur'anic claim. However, Uri Rubin has convincingly argued that Muslim reliance on the Bible had already been demonstrated in early biographical sources and Hadith compilations.[27] Still, it was primarily the polemical encounter with Christian arguments that the Hebrew Bible contained explicit references to Jesus, but not to Muḥammad, that forced Muslims to repay their critics in kind. While, in the middle of the eighth century, John of Damascus speaks in his anti-Islamic polemic about Muslims' fecklessness when called upon to present specific reference to Muḥammad in the Bible ('they are surprised and at a loss'),[28] from the second half of that century we encounter, in Muslim literature, the development of a specific literary genre called 'Signs' or 'Proofs of Prophethood'.[29] Three of the earliest texts of this kind were composed in the ninth century by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869), 'Alī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. around 251/865), and Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889).[30] The authors tried to show that Muḥammad's unique personality, the miracles he performed, and the worldly success of his message prove the authenticity of his prophethood. The books typically contain a section with verses from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament that purportedly foretold the coming of Muḥammad and rise of Islam. One of the traditional ways of detecting references to Muḥammad was to interpret names, as well as adjectives and verbs from the root *ḥ-m–d* in the Arabic translation of the Bible, as representative of the verb 'to praise'.

[26] Elijahu Ashtor (Strauss) published an (incomplete) list of Biblical verses used in Muslim polemics, "Methods of Islamic Polemics" (Hebrew), *Memorial Volume for the Vienna Rabbinical Seminary*, Jerusalem: Ruben Mas, 1946, pp. 182–97.

[27] Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder. The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims*, Princeton NJ: Darwin Press, 1995, pp. 21–43.

[28] Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam. The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites"*, Leiden: Brill, 1972, p. 135.

[29] Sarah Stroumsa, "The Signs of Prophecy. The Emergence of an Early Development of a Theme in Arabic Theological Literature", *The Harvard Theological Review*, 78 (1985), pp. 101–14.

[30] See David S. Margoliouth, "On the Book of Religion and Empire by 'Alī b. Rabban al-Tabari", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 14 (1930), pp. 165–82; Ibn Qutayba, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, in Carl Brockelmann, "Ibn Ḳazī's Kitāb al-wafā' fī faḍā'il al-Muṣṭafā nach der Leidener Handschrift untersucht", *Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*, vol. 3, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1898, pp. 2–59. Gérard Lecomte, "Les citations de l'ancien et du nouveau testament dans l'œuvre d'Ibn Qutayba", *Arabica*, 5 (1958), pp. 34–46; Georges Vajda, "Judaeo-Arabica 1. Observation sur quelques citations bibliques chez Ibn Qotayba", *Revue des études juives*, 99 (1935), pp. 68–80; Camilla Adang, "Medieval Muslim Polemics against the Jewish Scriptures", *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions. A Historical Survey*, ed. Jacques Waardenburg, New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 145–7.

Consequently, all passages with the words *muḥammad*, *ḥamd*, *maḥmūd*, *aḥmad*, and so on were interpreted as explicit references by name to the Prophet. It seems that the information required to sustain this interpretation was supplied by Christian and Jewish converts to Islam, who, unlike Muslims, had ready access to the original scriptures. Additionally, Christian converts to Islam could make use of ready-made collections of Messianic passages, called *Testimonia*,[31] and the Christological interpretation of a Biblical verse simply transferred from Jesus to Muḥammad.

The aforementioned Ibn Rabban,[32] a Nestorian convert to Islam, devoted the bulk of his *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* (The Book of Religion and Empire) to more than sixty Biblical testimonies, covering almost all of the books of the Bible. At the beginning of the book, where Ibn Rabban claims that the *People of the Book* had hidden Muḥammad's name and altered his portrait in their Scripture, he boasts that he was better equipped than his predecessors to 'demonstrate this, disclose its secret, and withdraw the veil from it, in order that the reader may see it clearly and increase his conviction and his joy in the religion of Islam.'[33] The 'Proofs of Prophethood' that form a stock ingredient of Muslim-Jewish polemics were Genesis 17:20 and Deuteronomy 18:18 and 33:2.

1. 'And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and I will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation' (Gen. 17:20). It is no surprise that Arabs, i. e. Muslims, who were by universal agreement considered descendants of the Biblical Ishmael, took this passage – and the entire cycle of stories about Hagar and Ishmael, son of the bondwoman, *ben ha-amah* – as a direct reference to a future mighty Islamic community. Using a typically Jewish technique of computation known as *Gematria* (*ḥisāb al-jumal*) to combine the numerical value of letters, Muslims identified another reference to the coming of Muḥammad. In this case, the allusion is found in the Hebrew expression *bi-me'od me'od* 'exceedingly'. The numerical value of the consonants contained in the expression amounts to 92, which, in turn, equate to the numerical value of the letters of the Prophet's name – *M-Ḥ-M-D*.

[31] The Church fathers devoted a large part of their oeuvre to *proofs from prophecy*, using Old Testament 'proof-texts' to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, that the ritual commandments in the Law are no longer obligatory, and that the Church, not the Jews, is now the people of God. The Apologists, such as Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, and Tertullian, worked out a great amount of the *Testimonia*, which was eventually assembled in collections such as Cyprian's *Testimonia ad Quirinum* (d. 258).

[32] 'Alī Ibn Rabban, *Al-Dīn wa-l-dawla fī ithbāt nubuwwat al-nabī Muḥammad*, Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1402 AH (1982); Alphonse Mingana, *The Book of Religion and Empire. A Semi-Official Defence and Exposition of Islām Written by Order at the Court and with the Assistance of the Caliph Mutawakkil* (*A. D. 847–861*) *by ʿAli Ṭabari*, Manchester: The University Press, 1922.

[33] 'Alī Ibn Rabban, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, p. 35; *The Book of Religion and Empire*, p. 3.

2. 'The Lord came from Sinai, He shone upon them from Seir, He appeared from Mount Paran' (Deut. 33:2–3). Muslims have taken the statement as prophecy of the rise of three religions in three successive revelations: Sinai symbolises Judaism, Seir Christianity, and Paran Islam.[34]

3. 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from among your own people like me […]. I will raise up a prophet for them from among their own people, like yourself' (Deut. 18:15–18). According to Muslim exegesis, the words 'from among their own people' allude to the descendants of Ishmael.

Although the traditions about miracles filled the biographies of Muḥammad and *dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* literature, and Muslim dogmatists stressed the importance of the miracle as a tool for proving the authenticity of prophecy, the only miracle unanimously accepted by all Muslims was the Qurʾan's miraculous inimitability (*iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*).[35]

The third main theme of Muslim polemics against the Hebrew Bible and Judaism is that of *naskh*, or abrogation of the Mosaic law. The concept of abrogation – the supersession of one revealed law by another – did not appear in interreligious polemics upon the arrival of Islam, but had been at the centre of Christianity's polemics against Judaism for centuries. In Islam it is based primarily on Q 2:106: 'Such of Our revelations as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, we bring (in place) one better or the like thereof.'[36] The original intention of this verse was to explain the contradictions between various verses of the Qurʾan or between the Qurʾan and Prophetic tradition (*sunna*). Upon these foundations, Muslim scholars built a sophisticated system through which to determine which verse had been revealed at a later date and thus represented a legally binding standpoint.[37] Muslim authors applied this exegetic rule of Islamic jurisprudence to their polemics against earlier religions and their Scriptures in order to explain why God later replaced his revelations to the Jews and Christians with Islam.

In their polemics, Muslims strained to convince Jews of the principle of abrogation by pointing out the *fact* that the Torah allowed for this concept as

[34] Mount Paran is taken to stand for Mecca, because Ishmael is said in Gen. 21:21 to have dwelled in Paran, and according to Q 2:119 in Mecca.

[35] See Abdul Aleem, "'Ijāzu'l-Qur'ān", *Islamic Culture*, 7 (1933), pp. 64–82, 215–33.

[36] According to Marmaduke Pickthall's translation, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran. An Explanatory Translation*, London: A.A. Knopf, 1930.

[37] John Burton, "*Naskh*", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition,* Leiden: Brill, 1960–2002 (below *EI*[2]), pp. 1009–12. The hermeneutic principle of abrogation played an important role primarily within the exegesis of the Qurʾān, holy traditions (*ḥadīth)*, and scholarship on the four (or five) sources of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies. Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, New York NY: Prometheus Books, 2004, pp. 192–202; David S. Powers, "The Exegetical Genre *nāsikh al-Qurʾān wa mansūkhuhu*", *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, ed. Andrew Rippin, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, pp. 117–38.

well, given that Mosaic Law had replaced the earlier, divergent Law of Jacob. At the same time, however, they emphasized that abrogation did not imply God changing his mind (*badā'*) – a notion rejected by both Sunni Islam and Judaism. Within the polemical context, this meant that, prior to the arrival of Islam, God had assigned each religion a previously defined period of validity – 'for every age there is a Book revealed' (Q 13:38). Christianity had abrogated Judaism (*sharī'at Mūsā*) at its appointed time, and Islam (*sharī'at Muḥammad*) – God's last and final revelation to mankind (Q 33:40) – nullified and replaced both prior revelations.

The oldest records of literary debates between Muslims and Jewish theologians on the subject of abrogation appear from the second half of the ninth century, with the first documented debate taking place between the Mu'tazilite theologian Ibrāhīm al-Naẓẓām (d. 221/836), and an otherwise unknown Jew named Manasseh ibn Ṣāliḥ.[38] By the tenth century, defence or rejection of the concept of abrogation had become the primary expression of Jewish-Muslim polemics. Discussions of *naskh* are a fixed ingredient in *kalām* tracts and may also be found in works informing readers of the varied positions held on the matter by the Rabbanites, Qaraites, Samaritans, and the 'Īsāwiyya sect.

2. Polemics against Rabbinical Literature

While Christian anti-Jewish polemics first dealt systematically with Rabbinical literature in the *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* (1110) of the Spanish Jewish convert to Christianity Petrus Alfonsi,[39] it appeared much earlier in Muslim literature. The Rabbinical concept of unwritten revelation, the oral Torah, was already known to the authors of early Islam, who viewed it as a damnable precedent that should be avoided in Islam. Their readiness to condemn the concept was probably motivated by their hope of diminishing the authority of the ever-growing Hadith literature, or of preventing it from being written down. Several *aḥādīth* discussed by Ignác Goldziher[40] elucidate the word *mathnāt* – the Mishnah – as meaning

[38] Louis P. Cheikho (ed.), *Trois traités anciens de polémique et de théologie chrétiennes*, Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1923, pp. 68–70; English translation by A. S. Tritton, "'Debate' between a Muslim and a Jew", *Islamic Studies* (Karachi) 1 (1962), pp. 60–64; and John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu. Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 110–2.

[39] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue Against the Jews*, trans. Irven M. Resnick, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006. See also Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law. Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*, Berkeley: California University Press, 1999, pp. 201–18.

[40] Ignác Goldziher, "Kämpfe um die Stellung des Ḥadīt im Islam", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 61 (1907), pp. 860–72, especially pp. 865–9.

'a book wilfully composed by Jewish rabbis'. Ibn al-Nadīm's bibliographical lexicon *Fihrist*, written in 987, defines *al-mishnā* as a part of the Hebrew Bible written by Moses, 'from which the Jews derive the science of the law, with religious ordinances and judgments. It is a large book, its language being Kasdānī and Hebrew.'[41]

The principal reason for polemical Muslim literature employing Talmudic aggadic material was to bolster the claim that Judaism's perceptions of God were primitive and anthropomorphic. Samaw'al al-Maghribī ascribes the present form of Judaism and its Rabbinical jurisprudence to the social conditions of exile and the rabbis' policy of non-assimilation of the Jews into the majority society by segregation. Their laws are incorporated in the Mishnah (*al-mishnā*) and the Talmud (*al-talmūd*) and have a negative influence upon Jewish life and the position of Jewish society as intentionally segregated. The rule of Talmudic jurisprudence and the Jews' dispersion in exile, through which they load upon themselves ever newer burdens and limitations beyond the demands of Moses' Torah, make their lives more difficult and prevent them from reflecting critically on their religion and integrating into the majority society. In their efforts to preserve the religious identity of the Jews by segregating them, the rabbis deviated from Biblical law by prohibiting mixed marriages with non-Jews and banning the consumption of meat slaughtered by them. Thus, according to Samaw'al, the cause of the Jews' suffering in exile is not only the constant institutional humiliation and persecution caused by the majority society, but the unreasonable legislation imposed by the rabbis and enshrined in Rabbinical literature. Both factors prevent them from realizing the absurdity of their adherence to an out-of-date and irrational religion and accepting Islam.[42]

Ibn Ḥazm was the first Muslim author to give a rather more detailed, albeit somewhat misleading, account of the Rabbinical literature. If the Hebrew Bible is a wholly falsified book in Ibn Ḥazm's understanding, the Talmud is worse still, a genuine heresy composed by the rabbis. While Ibn Ḥazm does not mention the Mishnah, he defines the Talmud as the '[Jew's] trusted pillar in questions of their jurisprudence, rules, religion, and law, and it contains sayings of their rabbis as all unanimously agree.' Despite this definition, Ibn Ḥazm's notion of the Talmudic canon seems to have been somewhat vague. He erroneously (based on al-Qirqisānī) identifies the *Shiʿur Qomā* (The Measure of the [Divine] Body) – a mystical work from Late Antiquity dealing with secret measures

[41] Gustav Flügel (ed.), *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1871, vol. 1, p. 23; Bayard Dodge (ed. and trans.), *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm. A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, New York NY: Columbia University Press, 1970, vol. 1, pp. 43–44. However, it is entirely possible that he was referring to the Book of Deuteronomy, which al-Bīrūnī (d. 441/1048) calls *al-muthannā*. Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-āṯār al-bāqiya ʿan al-qurūn al-khāliya. Chronologie orientalischer Völker von Albērūnī*, ed. C. E. Sachau, Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1878, p. 19.

[42] Moshe Perlmann (ed.), *Ifḥām al-yahūd*, pp. 71–85 (Arab.), pp. 64–70 (Eng.).

of the Godhead – as a part of the Talmudic corpus. Ibn Ḥazm speaks of the anthropomorphic portrayal of God in this mystical tract with utmost horror and disgust and calls into question Jewish monotheism itself.[43]

Another book that Ibn Ḥazm identifies as part of the Talmud is the Mishnaic tractate *Sāder nāshīm* (Seder nashim). Ibn Ḥazm quotes a story in which God is served by an angel called Sandalphon while wearing a ring on his finger and a crown on his head.[44] While he typically recounts various anthropomorphic stories without stating their source, he asserts that all of these sayings are part of the Talmud.

As stated above, Ibn Ḥazm attributes the authorship of the Talmud to 'heretical rabbis'. They are the true creators of Judaism as they deformed the original religion of Moses beyond recognition, invented beliefs, and instituted all kinds of practices that have no basis in Scripture, including prayers and religious institutions like the synagogue. According to Ibn Ḥazm, the rabbis simply invented a new religion. Jewish liturgy, rituals, and commandments are not based on the Hebrew Bible, but on a different *nova lex*, the oral Law recorded in the Talmud. Moreover, they think themselves higher than God and the prophets, and consider the Talmud, their own invention, to be of greater value than God's revelation in the Torah. Ibn Ḥazm's judgement thus closely echoes Peter the Venerable's remarks a century or so later that the Jews 'prefer' their doctrines to God.[45]

Critics of these Rabbinical inventions applied the term *mawḍūʿāt* to them, which can be translated as 'invented traditions'. Unsurprisingly, the Qaraites used the term with the same meaning.[46] Camilla Adang has convincingly argued[47] that it was probably the Qaraites of Talavera or Toledo who provided Ibn Ḥazm with the anti-Rabbanite passages of Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī's (d. c. 328/940) systematic legal compendium, *Kitāb al-anwār wa-l-marāqib* (The Book of Lights and Watchtowers),[48] or Salmon ben Yeroḥam's *Milḥamot ha-Shem* (Wars of the

[43] Ibn Ḥazm's anti-Talmudic polemic was treated for the first time by Ignác Goldziher, "Proben muhammedanischer Polemik gegen den Talmud I", *Jeschurun*, 8 (1872), pp. 76–104.

[44] The debate about the crown on the Creator's head is not found in *Seder Nashim* but in bChag 13b.

[45] Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, p. 191.

[46] See Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community. The Jews of the Fatimide Caliphate*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2008, p. 113.

[47] Camilla Adang, "Éléments karaïtes dans la polémique anti-judaïque d'Ibn Ḥazm", *Diálogo filosófico-religioso entre cristianismo, judaísmo e islamismo durante la edad media en la Península Ibérica*, ed. Horacio Santiago-Otero, Turnhout: Brepols, 1994, pp. 419–41. Karaite origin of Ibn Ḥazm's diatribes had already been established by Ignác Goldziher, who was the first to publish this text of Ibn Ḥazm's together with a German translation. See his "Proben muhammedanischer Polemik gegen den Talmud I", p. 102, n. 16.

[48] Chiesa, B. and Lockwood W. (trans.), *Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī on Jewish Sects and Christianity*, pp. 124–33.

Lord), c. 955.[49] These authors studied the Talmud and the *Shi'ur Qomā* with the express purpose of picking out objectionable *aggadot* and holding them up to ridicule in order to prove the theological backwardness of the Rabbanites.[50] Also Alfonsi's *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* draws inspiration from these sources of anti-Talmudic and anti-Rabbinic polemics, as well as al-Kindī's *al-Risāla* (Treatise).[51] However, while growing awareness among the Christian theologians of the existence of an extensive body of post-Biblical Jewish literature – especially of the Talmud and Midrashic literature – radically changed the content and the function of medieval Christian anti-Jewish polemics from the twelfth century onwards, the same does not hold true with regard to Muslim medieval polemical literature, where it played a rather marginal role.[52]

It is possible to point to a further divergence between Christian-Jewish and Muslim-Jewish medieval polemics. In Muslim countries, accusations against the Jews and Judaism remained confined to literary polemics. Volumes of the Talmud or other forms of Rabbinical literature were never condemned for blasphemy and thrown into the bonfire after public dispute between representatives of both religions, as was the case in Paris in 1242, in Toulouse in 1319, in Rome in 1553, or in Venice in 1586.[53]

3. The Mamlūk Period: Fatwas and Polemics Against Dhimmīs

The Muslim world underwent a profound transformation during the thirteenth century. The Crusaders intruded into the Middle East and remained there for nearly two centuries (1098–1291), and most of Spain was lost to the armies of the Reconquista. By the close of the eleventh century, all of Sicily had submitted to

[49] Salmon ben Yeruḥim, *The Book of the Wars of the Lord*, ed. Israel Davidson, New York NY: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1934, pp. 108–32.

[50] Another plausible source for Ibn Ḥazm's arguments could have been the pre-Kabbalistic work *Sefer Raziel,* where the angel that binds the phylacteries on God's head is called Sandalphon, and not Michael or Metatron, as by al-Qirqisānī. See Saul Liebermann, *Shkiin. A Few Words on Some Jewish Legends, Customs and Literary Sources Found in Karaite and Christian Works*, Jerusalem: Wahrmann Books, 1970, pp. 11–4.

[51] See Barbara Hurwitz Grant, "Ambivalence in Medieval Religious Polemic: The Influence of Multiculturalism on the *Dialogues* of Petrus Alphonsi", *Languages of Power in Islamic Spain*, ed. Brann Ross, Bethesda MD: CDL Press, 1997, pp. 156–77.

[52] Amos Funkenstein, "Basic Types of Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Later Middle Ages", *Viator*, 2 (1971), pp. 373–82 (this article appeared in an extended form in Hebrew, *Zion*, 33 (1968), pp. 126–44).

[53] Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 9, pp. 62–71. The same is true with regard to the censorship of Hebrew books, which is never mentioned in the Muslim literature or practised, yet was a widespread practice in Christian Europe from the thirteenth century onward. The sole call for censorship is found in a polemical pamphlet penned by a Jewish convert to Islam from fourteenth-century Morocco. See below. Moshe Perlmann, "'Abd al-Ḥaḳḳ al-Islāmī: A Jewish Convert", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 31 (1940–1941), p. 177.

the Normans. The Mongol horde swept across Asia and took Baghdad, putting an end to the caliphate. Under threat, Islam responded by highlighting religious and social boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims. Amidst waning tolerance and deterioration of the social, economic, demographic, and legal positions of *dhimmīs* – 'the protected people' – during the Mamlūk period in Egypt and Syria (648–923/1250–1517), a flood of Muslim polemical literature emerged, targeting Jews and, in particular, Christians.[54] This literature is eclectic and only seldom presents new polemical motifs. This is true especially of al-Qarāfī's (d. 684/1285) *Kitāb al-ajwiba al-fākhira ʿan al-asʾila al-fājira* (The Glorious Answers to Wicked Questions) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī ajwibat al-yahūd wa-l-naṣārā* (Guide of the Perplexed in Reply to the Jews and the Christians).[55] It is a telling fact that until the late Middle Ages, Islamic legal books do not include the equivalent of *De judies*, a section devoted to Jewish law in the Latin canon law. It was only in the Mamlūk period that Muslim lawyers felt the need to delineate the social and religious boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims. Thus, it is no coincidence that the jurist Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, author of the aforementioned polemical tract, also authored the most comprehensive lawbook dealing with the more general Islamic law for *dhimmīs*: *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma* (The Laws Pertaining the Protected People).[56] The whole period was indelibly marked by the ongoing debate of jurists concerning the legality of the construction, repair, or continuance of the sacral buildings of non-Muslims in the realm of Islam. Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), an influential Syrian Ḥanbalī jurist and Ibn Qayyim's teacher, penned several formal legal opinions (*fatwā*, pl. *fatāwā*) ordering the closure of synagogues and churches (*Masʾala fī l-kanāʾis*).[57] Further legal opinions were authored by scholars such

[54] See Eliyahu Ashtor (Strauss), "The Social Isolation of Ahl Adh-Dhimma", *Etudes orientales à la mémoire de Paul Hirschler*, ed. Ottó Komlós, Budapest: J. Kertész, 1950, pp. 73–94; Doran Arad, "Being a Jew under the Mamluks: Some Coping Strategies", *Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Middle Islamic Period. Jews in the Ayyubid and Mamluk Sultanates (1171–1517)*, ed. Stephan Conermann, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2017, pp. 21–40.

[55] See Jon Hoover, "The Apologetic and Pastoral Intentions of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Polemic against Jews and Christians", *The Muslim World*, 100 (2010), pp. 472–489. For his indebtedness to Samaw'al al-Maghribī see Moshe Perlmann, "Ibn Qayyim and Samau'al Al-Maghribi", *Journal of Jewish Bibliography*, 3 (1942), pp. 71–4.

[56] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma*, ed. T. Saʿd, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1423 AH (2002). Similar treatises, however, were also written by Maghrebian jurists. See Georges Vajda, "Un traité Maghrébin «Adversus Judaeos»: «Aḥkām ahl-Ḏimma» du Sayḫ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Maġīlī", *Études d'orientalisme dédiées a la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1962, vol. 2, pp. 805–813.

[57] Fritsch, *Islam und Christentum im Mittelalter*, pp. 25–33; Alfred Morabia, "Ibn Taymiyya, les Juifs et la Torah", *Studia Islamica*, 49 (1979), pp. 91–122; 50 (1979), pp. 77–107; Martin Schreiner, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der theologischen Bewegungen im Islām", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 52 (1898), pp. 559–60. For his polemic against Christianity, see David Thomas, "Apologetic and Polemic in the *Letter from Cyprus* and Ibn

as Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq (14th/7th c.),[58] Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 754/1353),[59] Ibn Ḥajar (d. 846/1442),[60] Ibn ʿUbayya (d. 879/1474) regarding the so-called Ramban synagogue in Jerusalem,[61] and Najm al-Dīn ibn al-Rifʿa (d. 709/1310).[62] Sermons, polemical and theological works, and legal opinions of contemporary Muslim jurists and theologians inveighed against the benevolent behaviour of Muslim elites towards protected minorities (*dhimmīs*) and their employment in the administration and called for the destruction or closure of their houses of prayer. These treatises aimed to influence public opinion and especially the governing elites whose responsibility it was to supervise enforcement of the document called *Shurūṭ ʿUmar*, which summarized the principles and rules that Muslims applied to the *dhimmī*s under their rule.[63]

Although Christian and Jewish prayer houses attracted the attention of Muslim jurists, their legal expertise was primarily used to tackle the question of the lawfulness of the employment of *dhimmī*s. Complaints about the perceived ubiquity of Jews and especially Christians in administration began appearing from the mid-eleventh century in both Andalusia and in Fatimid Egypt. Tradition held that it was a violation of God's order because Muslims should exercise authority over non-Muslims, and not vice versa.[64] However, it was only during the Mamlūk period that the socially-rooted religious animosity was translated from poems into theological writings. The stance of Muslim jurists of the period is epitomized in al-Nawawī's *fatwā* (thirteenth century) responding to the appointment of a Jew as an inspector of coins in the treasury of the Muslims. According

Taymiyya's *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*", *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport et al., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 247–68.

[58] Martin Schreiner, "Contribution à l'historie des Juifs en Égypte", *Revue des études juives*, 31 (1895), pp. 212–21.

[59] Seth Ward, "Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī on Construction, Continuance, and Repair of Churches and Synagogues in Islamic Law", *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions* II, ed. William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks, Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1989, pp. 169–88.

[60] Richard Gottheil, "Dhimmīs and Muslims in Egypt", *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of William Rainer Harper*, ed. Robert Francis Harper et al., Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1908, vol. 22, pp. 353–414.

[61] Shelomo Dov Goitein, "Ibn ʿUbayya's book on the destruction of the Synagogue of the Jews in Jerusalem in 1474", *Zion*, 13–14 (1948–1949), pp. 18–32 (Hebrew).

[62] Seth Ward, "Ibn al-Rifʿa on the Churches and Synagogues of Cairo", *Medieval Encounters*, 5/1 (1999), pp. 70–84. Much later al-Damanhūrī even collected legal opinions of the four Islamic legal schools regarding churches in Cairo (1739). Moshe Perlmann, *Shaykh Damanhūrī on the Churches of Cairo*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1975.

[63] See Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire. From Surrender to Coexistence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

[64] See, for example, Bernard Lewis, "An Anti-Jewish Ode. The Qasida of Abu Ishaq against Joseph ibn Naghrella", *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume*, ed. Saul Lieberman, Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1974, vol. 22, pp. 657–668, and al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara fī taʾrīkh Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, ed. M. Ibrāhīm, Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1968, vol. 2, p. 201.

to al-Nawawī's reasoning, such an appointment was unlawful. It promises the ruler God's reward if he dismisses and replaces the Jew with a competent Muslim. Al-Nawawī's reasoning lay in the *dhimmīs*' a priori untruthfulness and enmity toward the Muslims: 'they will not refrain from anything which is in their power to cause you harm, damage, or injury.'[65] Perhaps the most comprehensive *fatwā* was that written by the Mālikī jurist Ibn al-Naqqāsh.[66] Typical examples of this sort of pamphlet are Asnāwī's tract against Christian officials,[67] written during the reign of the Mamlūk sultans Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ṣāliḥ (d. 658/1260) and Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ḥasan (d. 762/1361), published amidst a wave of anti-*dhimmī* propaganda; and Ghāzī ibn al-Wāsiṭī's 'An Answer to the Dhimmis',[68] written around the turn of the fourteenth century.

Muslim polemical tracts also target Jewish physicians. Here they are portrayed as individuals whose only aim is to harm Muslims with false or poisonous drugs, and who deprive Muslim physicians of work. A telling example is the thirteenth-century polemical treatise by al-Jawbarī, *Kitāb al-Mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār* (*The Best Collection Disclosing the Secrets*).[69] The fifth chapter presents extravagant allegations against the Jews and 'discloses the fraudulence of the Jewish men of learning'. The author depicts Jews as 'the most cunning creatures, the vilest, most unbelieving and hypocritical. While ostensibly the most humble and miserable, they are in fact the most vicious of men. […] If they remain alone with a man, they destroy him. They offer him sleep-inducing food, they slay him'. Al-Jawbarī describes further how Jewish physicians mix their drugs in order to

[65] Ignác Goldziher, "Usages juifs d'après la littérature religieuse des musulmans", *Revue des études juives*, 28 (1894), p. 94; English translation by Bernard Lewis, *Islam from the Prophet Muḥammad to the Capture of Constantinople*, New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1987, vol. 22, pp. 228–9. The thirteenth century *fatwā* titled 'The Employment of Dhimmīs by Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mālikī' also attempts to prove, on the basis of tradition and passages from the Qur'an, that *dhimmīs* cannot be employed; neither as official scribes, tax-gatherers, or as executive officers in general, nor as money-changers or butchers. Richard Gottheil, "A Fetwa on the Appointment of Dhimmis", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 26 (1912), pp. 203–14.

[66] François Belin, "Fetoua relatif à la condition des Zimmis", *Journal Asiatique*, 18 (1851), pp. 417–516; 19 (1852), pp. 97–140.

[67] Published by Moshe Perlmann, "Asnawi's Tract against Christian Officials", *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, ed. Samuel Löwinger et al., Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1958, vol. 22, pp. 172–207; Moshe Perlmann, "Notes on Anti-Christian Propaganda in the Mamlūk Empire", *Bulletin of the School for Oriental and African Studies*, 10 (1940–1942), pp. 843–61.

[68] Richard Gottheil, "An Answer to the Dhimmis", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 41 (1921), pp. 383–457.

[69] See Moritz Steinschneider, "Gaubarî's 'entdeckte Geheimnisse': Eine Quelle für orientalische Sittenschilderung", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 19 (1865), pp. 562–577; Moshe Perlmann, "Notes on the Position of Jewish Physicians in Medieval Muslim Countries", *Israeli Oriental Studies*, 2 (1972), pp. 315–9. Cf. Paulina B. Lewicka, "Healer, Scholar, Conspirator. The Jewish Physician in the Arabic-Islamic Discourse of the Mamluk Period", *Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Middle Islamic Period. Jews in the Ayyubid and Mamluk Sultanates (1171–1517)*, ed. Stephan Conermann, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2017, pp. 121–43.

harm, overpower, and eventually kill their patients. Variations of al-Jawbarī's accusations are repeated time after time in various Muslim polemical treatises of the Mamlūk period, reflecting and at the same time fashioning the image of Jews. This literature offers variations of stories suggesting that 'if they [the Jews] stay alone with Muslims, they try to kill them'; 'the Jew always cheats the Muslim'; 'if two Jews meet, [they do so] only in order to plot to kill Muslims'; and that Jews sought on several occasions to assassinate the prophet Muḥammad. While the 'golden age' of such stories was undoubtedly the Mamlūk period, they had already begun to appear in the literature of Ayyūbid Egypt.[70]

4. Jewish Converts to Islam and the Anti-Jewish Polemics

Converts play a prominent role in the production of anti-Jewish polemics. In addition to Samaw'al al-Maghribī, a significant place is occupied by Sa'īd ibn Ḥasan of Alexandria with his work written in 1320, *Kitāb Masālik al-naẓar fī nubuwwat sayyid al-bashar* (Path of Investigation about the Prophethood of the Master of Mankind);[71] 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī's *Al-Sayf al-mamdūd fī l-radd 'alā aḥbār al-yahūd* (The Outstretched Sword in Refutation of the Jewish Sages),[72] written around 797/1395 by the convert from Ceuta, in Morocco; and *Ta'yīd al-milla* (The Fortification of Faith), a work probably written by a Mudejar of mid-fourteenth-century Aragon as a manual for Muslims who wished to debate with Jews face to face.[73] 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī's pamphlet, influential and popular in the Maghreb until recent times, has a clear penchant for Gematria. Naturally, it was mostly Jewish converts to Islam who worked with this essentially Jewish hermeneutical technique. Samaw'al al-Maghribī was the first to use it in connection with the aforementioned expression *bi-me'od me'od*, meaning 'exceedingly' (see above). However, it was 'Abd al-Ḥaqq who worked with Gematria in the most

[70] See Joseph Sadan, "Some Literary Problems Concerning Judaism and Jewry in Medieval Arabic Sources", *Studies in Honour of David Ayalon*, ed. Moshe Sharon, Leiden: Brill and Hebrew University, 1986, pp. 365–70.

[71] Ignác Goldziher, "Sa'id b. Hasan d'Alexandrie", *Revue des études juives*, 30 (1895), pp. 1–23. The edition, together with the English translation, was prepared by Sidney A. Weston (ed. and trans.), "The Kitāb Masālik An-Naẓar of Sa'īd Ibn Hasan of Alexandria", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 24 (1903), pp. 312–83.

[72] 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī, *Al-Sayf al-mamdūd fī'l-radd 'alā aḥbār al-yahūd* (*Espada extendida para refutar a los sabios judíos*), ed. and trans. Esperanza Alfonso, Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1998.

[73] Leon J. Kassin (ed. and trans.), *A Study of a Fourteenth-Century Polemical Treatise* Adversus Judaeos, Ann Arbor MI: Columbia University, 1969. For polemical treatises from the Ottoman period, see Joseph Sadan, "A Convert in the Service of Ottoman Muslim Scholars Writing a Polemic in the Fifteenth-Sixteenth Centuries", *Pe'amim*, 42 (1990), pp. 91–104 (Hebrew).

'creative' way, presenting dozens of computations revealing references in the Hebrew Bible to Muḥammad, Islam, Mecca, or Islamic rituals.[74]

Converts' Jewish background does not necessarily mean that these authors possessed a better or more original arsenal of polemical arguments than Muslims of non-Jewish origin, or that their citations from the Hebrew Bible conformed more closely to the original wording; in fact, the opposite is true. On many occasions, they wilfully distort the Biblical text or add a word (typically the names Muḥammad and Ishmael) in order to back up their claim. This is particularly the case in the works of ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq and Saʿīd ibn Ḥasan. Nevertheless, some drew on their Jewish education and enriched Muslim polemics with new arguments by discussing themes relating to Rabbinical lore. Moreover, they shed light on the inner life of converts, with most concluding their tracts with accounts of the circumstances that accompanied their conversion and the reasons for it.[75] Probably the most famous case is that of Samawʾal al-Maghribī, whose conversion was triggered by a dream vision of the Prophet Muḥammad.

Iberian Muslims also seemed concerned with polemics against Christianity and Judaism. This was increasingly the case as the so-called reconquest ensued. Notable examples include the fourteenth-century work *Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn wa-l-mujādala bayna l-naṣāra wa-l-muslimīn* (The Key of Religion and the Disputation between Christians and Muslims) by Muḥammad al-Qaysī, a religious scholar of Tunisian origin who lived as a prisoner of war in Catalonia at the beginning of the fourteenth century;[76] and the aforementioned anti-Jewish polemic, *Taʾyīd al-milla*. These works were promptly glossed and adapted to Aljamiado in order to serve the broader audience of Mudejars in defence of their faith. The widespread dissemination of these polemics attests to their popularity.[77]

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[74] See Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "The Contribution of a Jewish Convert from Morocco to the Muslim Polemic against the Jews and Judaism", *Peʿamim*, 42 (1990), pp. 83–90 (Hebrew); Perlmann, "'Abd al-Ḥaḳḳ al-Islāmī", pp. 171–91.

[75] Ryan Szpiech discusses these conversion stories in his book *Conversion and Narrative. Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemics*, Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, pp. 180–200; Sarah Stroumsa, "On Jewish Intellectuals Who Converted", *The Jews of Medieval Islam. Community, Society, and Identity. Proceedings of an International Conference held by the Institute of Jewish Studies, London 1992*, ed. Daniel Frank, Leiden: Brill, 1995, pp. 179–198.

[76] Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld and Gerard A. Wiegers, "The Polemical Works of Muḥammad al-Qaysī (Fl. 1309) and their Circulation in Arabic and Aljamiado among the Mudejars in the Fourteenth Century", *Al-Qantara*, 15 (1994), pp. 163–99.

[77] See David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today*, Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2014, pp. 31–3; David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence. Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 196–9.

5. 'These Arguments have been Rehearsed so often that they have become Nauseating'. The Jewish Response

Understandably, Jewish apologetic responses rejected each of the claims raised against Judaism in Muslim polemics. Surprisingly, though, the number of books by Jewish authors exclusively dedicated to polemic against Islam is small. Until recently, scholars could point to only two Hebrew works written, somewhat paradoxically, by authors who belonged not to the cultural milieu of Islam, but to Christian Spain: *Maʾamar ʿal Yishmaʿel* (Treatise against the Muslim) by the Barcelona rabbi Shlomoh ibn Adret (c. 710/1310) and *Qeshet u-magen* (Bow and Shield) by Shimʿon ben Ṣemaḥ Duran of Algiers (d. 848/1444). However, the ongoing study of manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah has expanded this modest corpus of Hebrew polemics to include works produced by Jews living under Islam and written in Judaeo-Arabic. These all stem from the cosmopolitan urban environment of Baghdad intellectual society's multi-confessional salon-like sessions (*majlis al-kalām*, pl. *majālis*), in which religious and theological questions were discussed.[78] Within this intellectual environment, Jewish religious leaders followed their Muslim counterparts in adopting a philosophical defence of religion. They often did so in response to challenges raised by freethinkers such as Ḥiwi ha-Balkhī, who came from within the Jewish fold, or Ibn al-Rāwandī and Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, who emerged from the Muslim community. *Majlis* sessions were also celebrated in Fāṭimid Jerusalem[79] and in Cairo, where Saʿadya Gaon's *siddur*, or prayer book, was subject to ridicule in the *majlis* of the chief minister Yaʿqūb ben Killis (d. 371/991), a Jewish convert to Islam.[80] The authors of these Arabic-language polemics, preserved in varying conditions, are the Qaraites Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī),[81] and Yūsuf al-Baṣīr (d. around

[78] See David E. Sklare, "Responses to Islamic Polemics by Jewish Mutakallimūn in the Tenth Century", *The Majlis. Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, ed. H. Lazarus-Yafeh et al., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999, pp. 137–61. The intellectual atmosphere of Baghdad at this time and the humanistic culture among certain parts of Baghdadi society have been described by Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam. The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*, Leiden: Brill, 1986.

[79] Samuel M. Stern, "Fāṭimid Propaganda Among Jews According to the Testimony of Yefet b. ʿAlī the Karaite", *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University; Leiden: Brill, 1983, pp. 84–95.

[80] Mark Cohen and Somekh Sasson, "In the Court of Yaʿqūb ibn Killis. A Fragment from the Cairo Genizah", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 80 (1990), pp. 283–314; Mark Cohen and Somekh Sasson, "Interreligious Majālis in Early Fatimid Egypt", *The Majlis. Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, ed. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh et al., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999, pp. 128–136. The most recent treatment of Saʿadya to date is Robert Brody's *Saʿadyah Gaon*, Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013.

[81] Chap. 15 of the third *maqāla* of *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-marāqib* is devoted to a response to the Muslims (ed. Leon Nemoy, New York NY: Publications of the Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1940, vol. 222, pp. 292–301). Al-Qirqisānī states there (pp. 284, 292, 301, 304) that

431/1040),[82] and the Rabbanite, Samuel ben Ḥofni Gaon (d. 403/1013).[83] The treatises capture the atmosphere of dispute at these sessions, which among other issues addressed the abrogation of the law and the miraculous inimitability of the Qur'an (*i'jāz al-Qur'ān*). From the descriptions of Samuel ben Ḥofni and Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, it is evident that Muslim debaters' argumentation managed to shake the convictions of those who took part. In order to prevent the conversion of co-religionists, these leaders felt obliged to write up manuals or aids containing answers to the Muslims' arguments for the potential participants in these debates.

Scholars have offered several explanations as to why Jews refrained from composing books refuting Islam. Firstly, Jews were reluctant to offend the Muslim majority among which they lived with the status of *dhimma* in a context in which it was punishable for members of the *dhimma* to criticize Islam, its prophet, and the Qur'an or to proselytize.[84] To openly criticize Islam was unthinkable due to the possibility of reprisals.[85] A second and perhaps more important reason was the lack of common ground for a meaningful polemical discourse that could arise from belief in the holiness of the same Scripture. While Christians in general accepted the holiness of the Old Testament and simply accused the Jews of misunderstanding its meaning by reading it literally where it should be read allegorically, Muslims did not accept the text of the Torah as divine. For this reason Maimonides, when asked whether teaching non-Jews the Torah was allowed, issued a *responsum* prohibiting the teaching of the Jewish

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he had written a book concerning the prophecy of Muḥammad. The text was first published by Israel Friedlaender, "Qirqisānī's Polemik gegen den Islam", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 26 (1912), pp. 77–110.

[82] On Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, see David E. Sklare, "Yūsuf al-Baṣīr: Theological Aspects of his Halakhic Works", *The Jews of Medieval Islam. Community, Society, and Identity*, ed. Daniel Frank, Leiden: Brill, 1995, pp. 249–70.

[83] On Samuel ben Ḥofni see David E. Sklare, *Samuel ben Ḥofni Gaon and his Cultural World. Texts and Studies*, Leiden: Brill, 1996.

[84] See the discussion of the eleventh-century jurist al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya wal-wilāyāt al-dīniyya*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2006, pp. 258–60, 262. The ban on non-Muslims studying the Qur'an was included in the "Pact of 'Umar" by al-Ṭurṭūshī in his *Sirāj al-mulūk* (written in 1122), ed. M. Fatḥī Abū Bakr, Cairo: Al-Dār al-Miṣriyya al-Lubnāniyya, 2006, vol. 22, p. 542, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma*, vol. 2, p. 114. On the question of the punishment for denigrating the Prophet, see Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam. Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 149–52.

[85] Maimonides speaks quite explicitly about this concern at the end of his *Epistle to Yemen*, in which he responded to Muslim claims: 'Read it (the Epistle) at public gatherings […]. Take adequate precautions lest its contents be divulged to the Gentiles by an evil person and mishap overtake us. When I began writing this letter I had some misgivings about it, but they were overruled by my conviction that the public welfare takes precedence over one's personal safety.' (Translation by B. Cohen in Abraham Halkin [ed.], *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, New York NY: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1952, xx).

Scriptures to Muslims, yet allowing it to Christians. He did so on the basis that the latter accept the basic truth of the Torah, whereas the former vigorously deny its authenticity, and thus do not accept it as evidence in a disputation.[86] In addition to these arguments, there was another reason for allowing Christians but not Muslims to be taught the Torah. The person of Muḥammad is of significance to Muslims for the very reason that it affects his status as the Prophet, whereas Jesus is regarded by Christianity as not merely a prophet but as a unique incarnation of God. While the Jews addressed questions regarding the authenticity of Muḥammad's prophecy, there was no call to address the claims of divine status, Davidic descent, virgin birth, or other such claims made in the case of Jesus.

While the reasoning described above may explain the scarcity of polemical writings against Islam by the Jews of Islamic lands, it does not suggest that they were prevented from polemicising literarily with Islam. Jewish polemic can be found as early as in the oldest Muslim literature – the Qur'an and the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad. The same holds true for the oldest surviving Jewish literature to have been written under Islamic rule, including the thirtieth chapter of *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer* (eighth century), *The Secrets of Rabbi Shimʿon ben Yoḥai* (first half of the second/eighth century),[87] and *Maʿase Daniel* (around 328/940). From that time on, anti-Islamic polemic found its way into most works of Judaeo-Arabic medieval literature, with explicit or implicit regard to the barbs of Islamic polemics, beliefs, notions, and institutions. It can be found across a whole range of literature, including Biblical exegesis, poetry,[88] history, theological works such as Judah ha-Levi's *Kuzari*, pilgrimage accounts and guidebooks, responsa, and exegetical and halakhic works.[89] Furthermore,

[86] Jehoshua Blau (ed.), *R. Moses b. Maimon. Responsa*, Jerusalem: Ruben Mas, 1986, vol. 1, pp. 284–5 (no. 149). For an English translation see Albert van der Heide, "Their Prophets and Fathers Misled Them: Moses Maimonides", *The Three Rings. Textual Studies in the Historical Trialogue of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Barbara Roggema, Marcel Poorthuis and Pim Valkenberg, Leuven: Peeters, 2005, p. 45. For the discussion in later centuries see H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Their Relations, Differences, and Problems as Reflected in the Rabbinical Responsa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 276–8.

[87] See Moise Ohana, "La polémique judéo islamique et l'image d'Ismaël dans Targum Pseudo-Jonathan et dans Pirke de Rabi Elieser", *Augustinianum*, 15 (1975), pp. 367–87; Gordon D. Newby, "Text and Territory. Jewish-Muslim Relations 632–720 CE", *Judaism and Islam. Boundaries, Communication and Interaction. Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, ed. Benjamin H. Hary et al., Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp. 82–96. On the history of the text, see Bernard Lewis, "An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History", *Bulletin of the School of the Oriental and African Studies*, 13 (1950), pp. 308–38.

[88] See Norman Roth, "Polemic in Hebrew Religious Poetry of Mediaeval Spain", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 36/1 (1989), pp. 153–77.

[89] See Sarah Stroumsa, "Jewish Polemics against Islam and Christianity in the Light of Judaeo-Arabic Texts", *Judaeo-Arabic Studies. Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies*, ed. Norman Golb, Amsterdam: Psychology Press, 1997, pp. 242–4, 246–7.

the number of books written by Jews against Christianity in Arabic is not substantially larger than the number of books directed against Islam.[90] While in confrontation with two politically and numerically dominant religions, Jews in the Islamic countries primarily directed their polemical energy towards the internal debate – that is, Rabbanites vs. Qaraites. Their apologia were thus intended exclusively for Jewish readers in order to strengthen their theological position and prevent conversions to the religion of the majority.[91] Certain aspects of Muslim anti-Jewish polemics were addressed by Rabbanites including Saʿadya, the Gaon of the Sura Academy in Baghdad during 928–942, Jehuda ha-Levi, Abraham ibn Dāwūd, Maimonides, Nethanel ibn Fayyūmī and Ibn Kammūna; and also by Qaraites such as Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, Daniel al-Qūmisī (around 287/900), and Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī. Of the two groups, the latter reacted to Islam more explicitly and vigorously than the former.[92]

As stated above, Jewish authors did not respond to all three of the main Muslim polemical claims in the same measure. For example, Maimonides (d. 600/1204) rebuts the claims of *taḥrīf* and *aʿlām al-nubuwwa* only briefly in his *Epistle to Yemen*:

> They (Muslims) could find nothing stronger than this ignominious argument, the falsity of which is easily demonstrated to one and all by the following facts. First, Scripture was translated into Syriac, Greek, Persian, and Latin hundreds of years before the appearance of Muḥammad (*pasul*). Secondly, there is a uniform tradition as to the text of the Bible both in the East and the West, with the result that no differences in the text exist at all, not even in the vocalisation, for they are all correct. Nor do any differences affecting the meaning exist. The motive for their accusation lies, therefore, in the absence of any allusion to Muḥammad in the Torah.[93]

Muslims themselves, opines Maimonides, realise how fallacious the foretellings are and for that reason ʻwere compelled to accuse us, saying, "You have altered

[90] See Daniel J. Lasker, "The Jewish Critique of Christianity under Islam in the Middle Ages", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 57 (1990–1991), pp. 121–53.

[91] For internal debate within Judaism, see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 91–99. For the later period, see Leon Nemoy, "Ibn Kammūnah's Treatise on the Differences between the Rabbanites and the Karaites", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 36 (1968), pp. 107–65.

[92] See Haggai Ben-Shammai, "The Attitude of Some Early Karaites towards Islam", *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, vol. 2, pp. 3–40; Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community*, pp. 116–20.

[93] Translation by B. Cohen in *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, p. VIII. For Maimonides' attitude to Islam, see Stefan Schreiner, "Irrtum, Torheit oder falsche Religion – Christentum und Islam nach dem Urteil Moshe b. Maimons", *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge*, 32 (2005), pp. 23–52; David Novak, "The Treatment of Islam and Muslims in the Legal Writings of Maimonides", *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions*, ed. William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks, Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1986, pp. 233–50.

the text of the Torah, and expunged every trace of the name of Muḥammad therefrom.'"[94]

In his *The Exalted Faith,* Abraham ibn Dāwūd responded to Ibn Ḥazm's charge that Ezra the Scribe wrote a 'new Torah' after the Babylonian exile. He argues that the Torah could not have been altered during the period of the kings and the prophets with the people's consent. Throughout the Babylonian exile, the Jews had access to the Torah in every place where they settled. Even if Ezra had altered the Torah, then:

> [H]ow could the people have agreed? How could the people, whether they were near to or far from the mountains of Mesopotamia and Persia and those who remained in the land of Israel and [the people] who journeyed to Egypt and Africa, listen to him without dispute and protest against [Ezra's version of the Torah]? … But [on the contrary] we find [that] the Torah is generally acknowledged in a single version in which there is no difference among [the copies possessed by any of the] communities of Israel, which [extend] from the end of India to the end of Spain and the west throughout the length of [human] settlement. From the end of the borders of Africa, Ethiopia, and Yemen in the south to the end of the cities of [the] Zoroastrians who are by the sea that encompasses the north there is no difference [among any of the copies of the Torah in any detail, including] the three small [letter] nuns that were placed in the first copy and similarly are found in all of the copies of the Torah that are commonly acknowledged in the world. How could it be true of Ezra [that he altered the Torah] when he made [all of] the people together listen to him [when] he drew them into his covenant? Indeed, this [perversion] would have been impossible. Therefore, it is false [to claim] that there is a change in [the Torah], and it is false [to claim] that [the Torah] was altered.[95]

The argument of the textual unity of the Hebrew Bible shared by all Jewish communities scattered around the world is echoed by practically all Jewish polemicists who tackled the question of *taḥrīf*.[96] However, sometimes the Jewish authors gave back to Muslims what they dished out, suggesting that it was not the Torah but the Qur'an that was tampered with. They did so either within discussions of the inimitability and the integrity of the Qur'an by touching on sensitive issues regarding its codification, divergences between the recensions, and contradictions in meaning amongst certain verses[97] or, by retelling the so-called

[94] *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, VIII. Cf. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "*Taḥrīf* and Thirteen Torah Scrolls", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 19 (1995), pp. 81–8.

[95] Norbert M. Samuelson and Gershon Weiss (eds. and trans.), *The Exalted Faith. Abraham Ibn Daud*, Rutherford NJ: Associated University Presses, 1986, pp. 180b15–181a11. I deviate slightly from this translation.

[96] Cf. Jehuda ha-Levi, *Sefer Kuzari*, 1:48–50, 3:31–33; *Ibn Kammūna's Examination of the Three Faiths*, trans. Moshe Perlmann, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 50–4. Mention should be made of a very short work against *taḥrīf* written by the Qaraite ʿAlī Ibn Sulaymān, who lived in Jerusalem and Cairo at the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth century. It was published by Hartwig Hirschfeld, "Ein Karäer über den Muhammed gemachten Vorwurf jüdischer Torahfälschung", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 26 (1912), pp. 111–3.

[97] See, for example, *Ibn Kammūna's Examination of the Three Faiths*, pp. 106–14, or Sklare, "Responses to Islamic Polemics", pp. 157–8.

'Story of Muḥammad's Jewish Companions'.[98] The story relates that the Qur'an was actually written by ten Jewish sages from Mecca who had converted to Islam in order to prevent Muḥammad or the monk Baḥīrā from harming Israel. They began to write the Qur'an, interpolating their names at the beginning of the Suras without anyone noticing, and inserting a secret Hebrew sentence affirming their authorship within the text itself to prove Jewish authorship of the Qur'an. Included among the ten Jewish sages were ʿAbdullah ibn Salām, the learned rabbi from Medina who converted to Islam and became the Prophet Muḥammad's adviser; and the rightly-guided caliphs Abū Bakr (the son of an exilarch, *resh galuta*), ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and ʿAlī. The story of the sages – similarly to the seventh-century (?) *Sefer Toldot Yeshu* (Narrative of the History of Jesus) – is a form of counterhistory, defined by Funkenstein as a story that 'employs the sources of the adversary in order to turn [in this case Islamic] memory on its head.'[99]

Concerning *taḥrīf*, the Jewish polemicists reject the old argument of alleged Biblical prophesies of the coming of Muḥammad and Islam. In addressing this question, al-Qirqisānī divides the Muslims into the lay public and 'people of learning and speculative thinking'. The former accuse the Jews of lying when they deny that the Torah mentions Muḥammad, and the latter suggest that either the text of the Torah is a falsification (*taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*), or that it has been misinterpreted (*taḥrīf al-maʿānī*), and proclaim that the Torah speaks of Muḥammad in intimations. Al-Qirqisānī rejects these arguments, suggesting instead that all references to prophecies of Muḥammad's coming cited by Muslims were either fulfilled prior to the emergence of Islam, or will be fulfilled during the Messianic Age. A sign of this age is the Israelites' return from exile to the Land of Israel.[100]

Naturally, the Jewish interpretation of the so-called 'Signs of Prophethood' differed from that of the Muslims. Maimonides starts his apologetic response in *The Epistle to Yemen* with a refutation of the three Biblical verses most often adduced by Muslims, or, in his words, 'these arguments [which] have been rehearsed so often that they have become nauseating' (Gen. 17:20; Deut. 33:2; 18:15).

1. Whereas Muslims suggest that the words 'I will make of him a great nation' in Gen. 17:20 apply to their prophet, Maimonides suggests that they imply neither prophecy nor a Law, but merely refer to a large number of Muslims. Maimonides dismisses the argument that *bi-me'od me'od* (exceedingly) is demonstrated by

[98] The text was edited by Jacob Mann, "An Early Theologico-Polemical Work", *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 12–13 (1937–1938), pp. 411–59. Cf. Simon Shtober, "Present at the Dawn of Islam. Polemic and Reality in the Medieval Story of Muḥammad's Jewish Companions", *The Convergence of Judaism and Islam*, ed. Michael M. Laskier et al., Gainesville FL: University Press of Florida, 2011, pp. 64–88, where there is further relevant literature.

[99] Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, p. 39.

[100] Al-Qirqisānī, *Anwār*, III.15.9.

Gematria to be equivalent to *M-Ḥ-M-D* (Muḥammad = 92), by pointing to the fact that the name mentioned in the Qur'an is *A-Ḥ-M-D* (Aḥmad = 53).[101]

2. According to Muslim exegesis, the verse 'The Lord came from Sinai, He shone upon them from Seir, He appeared from Mount Paran' (Deut. 33:2–3), symbolises three successive revelations. Maimonides rejects this for linguistic reasons. First, he argues that if the verb 'he appeared' (*hofiaʿ*) points to Muḥammad, then it would have to be used in a future tense. And second, the verse describes the revelation at Mount Sinai. In Maimonides' understanding Seir and Paran are mountains near Sinai, Seir being nearer and Paran further away.[102]

3. According to Maimonides, God's promise to Moses to raise 'a prophet for them from among their own people, like yourself' (Deut. 18:15–18) did not announce the coming of a new prophet bringing a new law, but a prophet sent to relieve the Israelites of the need to turn to diviners and astrologers in order to arrive at foreknowledge of the future.[103] Other Jewish exegetes most often identified this prophet with Jehoshua or Samuel.[104]

However, this does not mean that Rabbanite and Qaraite commentators would deny that Islam was referred to in the Hebrew Bible; it was the last of the four kingdoms that subjugated Israel, according to the Book of Daniel (chapter 11), or 'the little horn' (Daniel 7:8). Redemption will come when this kingdom ends.[105] In accordance with the Jewish and the Christian exegesis, Maimonides also identifies the little horn' with Muḥammad, against whom Daniel's prophecy warns that:

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[101] *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, p. ix. Maimonides refers to Sura 61:6, where Jesus announces to the children of Israel that after him will come a messenger 'whose name shall be Aḥmad'. The *gematria* of this verse was first employed by Samau'al al-Maghribī, *Silencing the Jews*, pp. 31–4.

[102] *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, p. ix. Somewhat different reasoning was proposed by Saʿadya Gaon, who considers them merely distinct appellations for Mount Sinai, which towers over three neighbouring countries that each name it differently. *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, p. 165. Abraham ibn 'Ezra, when commenting on this verse, wrote: 'Those lacking faith said that 'from Seir' refers to the religion of Edom (i. e. Christianity), and Paran is the religion of Ishmael, and they are wrong.' Cf. *The Exalted Faith. Abraham Ibn Daud*, 178b–179a.

[103] *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, ix–x. In *MT Hilkhot 'ovde kokhavim u-mazalot* 9:2 Maimonides explains the verse differently: 'He is not coming to establish a [new] faith, but rather to command the people [to fulfil] the precepts of the Torah and to warn against its transgression.'

[104] For exegeses of this verse by Qaraites, see Daniel Frank, *Search Scripture Well. Karaite Exegetes and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East*, Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 234–47. According to the author of *Ta'yīd al-milla*, by this the Jews mean the prophet Job and other prophets. Kassin, *A Study of a Fourteenth-Century Polemical Treatise*, p. 330.

[105] For 'the little horn' (*qeren ze'ira*) in the Hebrew literature see Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, pp. 308–310. For other derogatory nicknames for Islam in the usage of the Qaraites see Ben-Shammai, "The Attitude of Some Early Karaites", pp. 8–12.

[I]n some future time a person would appear with a religion similar to the true one, with a book of Scripture and oral communications, who will arrogantly pretend that God had vouchsafed him a revelation, and that he held converse with Him. The person will found a new religion similar to the divine law and make claims to a revelation of a Scripture, and to prophecy. He will furthermore endeavour to alter and abolish the Law.[106]

The prophet Daniel not only foresaw the coming of Islam, but also alluded to Israel's humiliation and degradation 'suffered only at the hand of the Arabs, may they be speedily vanquished.'[107] The Arab conquests were nothing more than a harbinger of the end; the final, brutal kingdom that announces the messianic fulfilment of time.

In Jewish theological writings intended for internal consumption, numerous polemical allusions shower contempt on the most sacred concepts of Islam in highly abusive terms. The most characteristic of these are Hebrew puns on Arabic expressions that might not be immediately clear to a non-Jew. Just as Jesus is called 'that man', the medieval Hebrew or Judaeo-Arabic literature commonly uses the terms 'madman' (*meshugga'*) – derived from Hos. 9:7: 'The prophet was distraught, the inspired man driven mad [*meshugga'*]' – or *pasul* (unfit) – a pun on the Arabic *rasūl* (messenger) – as substitutes for the name Muḥammad. Obviously, the rhetorical function of these invectives is to deny true prophethood to anyone after the last of the Hebrew prophets. In a similar vein, the holy city of Mecca is referred to in Hebrew as *makkot* (plague), and the Holy Book of Islam is dubbed the *qalon* (shame).[108]

Neither did the Muslim dogma of the miraculous inimitability of the Qur'an remain without a response from Jewish authors. While some treated it only cursorily, others rejected it in detail: Yūsuf al-Baṣīr tackled the issue in a small book;[109] al-Qirqisānī's treatment of it in his *Kitāb al-anwār* is presumably a précis of his lost polemic against Islam;[110] and Ibn Kammūna's section on the inimitability of the Qur'an covers almost half of his chapter on Islam in *Examination of the Three Faiths*.[111] Closely connected with *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* are the accusations

[106] *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, iv–v. For 'the little horn' in the Christian exegesis see John V. Tolan, *Saracens. Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, New York NY: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 45.

[107] *Epistle to Yemen* in *Epistles*, p. 127.

[108] See Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, pp. 302–3, 316; Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 6, p. 94, 333, n. 17, 410, n. 65; Paul B. Fenton, "Jewish Attitudes to Islam: Israel Heeds Ishmael", *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, 29 (1983), pp. 91–3; Yishak Avishur, "Hebrew Derogatories for Gentiles and Jews in Judaeo-Arabic in the Medieval Era and their Metamorphoses", *Hadassah Shy Jubilee Book: Research Papers on Hebrew Linguistics and Jewish Languages*, ed. Yaakov Bentolila, Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1997, pp. 97–116 (Hebrew).

[109] Sklare, "Responses to Islamic Polemics", pp. 150–61.

[110] Nemoy (ed.), vol. 222, pp. 298–300.

[111] For Ibn Kammūna's anti-Islamic polemics, see Barbara Roggema, "Epistemology as Polemics: Ibn Kammūna's Examination of the Apologetics of the Three Faiths", *The Three*

of the abrogation of Jewish Law,[112] perceived by Jewish polemicists as the biggest challenge, as demonstrated by the space the issue occupies in the polemical works.

By the mid-tenth century, abrogation was a widely discussed topic within Christian, Jewish, and Muslim theological discourse.

Jewish authors of course knew about the Christian and Muslim claims to the abrogation of the previous revelation. In his commentary on the Book of Daniel, the Qaraite Yefet ibn ʿEli (10th century) writes that Christianity and Islam agree on one thing: that 'the Torah has been abrogated (*qad nusikhat*) and replaced by a different law (*sharʿ*); that is, by a religion that will no longer be abrogated by any other [religion]. When Islam rose, [the Muslims] proclaimed of the Torah the same as the Christians, namely that the book of their lord [i. e. Muḥammad] had replaced (*qad nasakha*) the Christian religion with another.'[113]

Using intellectual arguments and verses from the Hebrew Bible, Jewish authors defended the eternal validity of the Torah and the concordance between its teachings in the past and present time. Saʿadya Gaon was the first Jewish thinker to engage in a systematic polemic with Islam, although he never wrote an independent treatise on the subject. Dominated by the subject of abrogation, his polemic appears across many of his works, though primarily in his interpretations of the Hebrew Bible, and in his philosophical/theological treatise, *Kitāb al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt* (The Book of Beliefs and Opinions), chapter III.7–10. A very similar set of arguments and counter-arguments is raised in Samuel ben Ḥofni's *Treatise on Abrogation of the Law* (*Kitāb Naskh al-sharʿ*),[114] several chapters in al-Qirqisānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār*,[115] Nethanel ibn Fayyūmī's *Bustān al-ʿuqūl* (The Garden of Wisdom), and various works by Maimonides.

Maimonides had already taken a stance against the Muslim concept of abrogation in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, where the authenticity and irrevocability of the Torah appear as the subject of the eighth and ninth articles of his 'Thirteen Principles of the faith'. He states: 'The Ninth Fundamental Principle is the authenticity of the Torah, i. e. that this Torah was precisely transcribed from God and no one else. To the Torah, oral and written, nothing

Rings. Textual Studies in the Historical Trialogue of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, ed. Barbara Roggema, Marcel Poorthuis, and Pim Valkenberg, Leuven: Peeters, 2005, pp. 57–68.

[112] The medieval Hebrew usually translates the Arabic *naskh* as *temura*, *heʿeteq*, or *biṭul*.

[113] David S. Margoliouth (ed.), *A Commentary on The Book of Daniel by Jephet ibn Ali the Karaite*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889, pp. 125 (Arabic), 65–6 (English).

[114] See Sklare, *Samuel ben Ḥofni Gaon*, pp. 28–9; Sklare, "Responses to Islamic Polemics", pp. 137–161. We learn from Moshe ibn 'Ezra that this book refuted the inimitability of the Qur'an as well. Moshe bn 'Ezra, *Kitāb al-muḥāḍara wal-mudhākara. Liber Discussionis et Commemorationis* (*Poetica Hebraica*), ed. and trans. Abraham S. Halkin, Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1975, p. 36:40–38:3.

[115] Al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, III.15. For discussion of his views, see Adang, *Muslim Writers*, pp. 202–10.

must be added nor anything taken from it, as it is said, 'You must neither add nor detract' (Deut. 13:1).[116] Naturally, all the Jewish authors rejected the possibility that Judaism could be replaced by another religion, including Islam. Of fundamental importance for his doctrine of the irreplaceability of Mosaic Law or the written and oral Torah (*Torah she-bi-khtav* and *Torah she-be-ʿal peh*) is the uniqueness of the Torah of Moses, and of Moses' status as a prophet in relation to other prophets and laws; nobody on a lower spiritual level can come up with a better law that might abrogate Mosaic Law. 'Moses is God's prophet and spokesman, and the greatest and most perfect of the seers. To him was vouchsafed by God what has never been vouchsafed to any prophet before him, nor will it be in the future. The entire Torah was divinely revealed to Moses […]. It will neither be abrogated nor superseded, neither supplemented nor abridged.'[117]

Another cornerstone of the uniqueness of the Torah and its irreplaceability is the revelation on Mount Sinai and the public nature of Moses' miracles. Saʿadya,[118] Jehuda ha-Levi,[119] Maimonides,[120] and Abraham ibn Dāwūd[121] (who relies heavily on Saʿadya) unanimously agree on the fact that, while Moses performed miracles publicly before the eyes of his entire people, Muḥammad prophesied only before a handful of believers. The same applies to his miracles.[122] The public nature of his prophecies and miracles guarantees the reliability of accounts and bolsters the argument of uninterrupted transmission and unanimous agreement.

Muslim polemicists usually associated with the abrogation and *taḥrīf* of the Torah an argument that the people of Israel were no longer the chosen people, and that the Muslims had taken their place. They often cited Genesis 49:10 ('The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet') – which also holds an important position in Christian-Jewish polemics[123] – in order to demonstrate that the Jews' loss of national sovereignty, political inferiority,

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[116] Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*, New York NY: Behrman House, 1972, pp. 420–1; cf. *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot melakhim,* 11:6, and *The Guide of the Perplexed* II, chap. 39.

[117] *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, p. VI.

[118] Saʿadya Gaʾon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, Introduction, pp. 29–30; cf. Eliezer Schlossberg, "R. Saadia Gaon's Attitude Towards Islam", *Daʿat: Periodical of Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah*, 25 (1990), pp. 21–51 (Hebrew).

[119] *Kuzari*, 1:86–9.

[120] *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, p. VI.

[121] *The Exalted Faith. Abraham Ibn Daud*, 181b–183a. Cf. Resianne Fontaine, "Abraham ibn Daud's Polemics against Muslims and Christians", *The Three Rings. Textual Studies in the Historical Trialogue of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Barbara Roggema, Marcel Poorthuis, and Pim Valkenberg, Leuven: Peeters, 2005, pp. 22–9 and 32–3.

[122] Elijah of Genazzano used the same argument, but this time with Christianity, against Francesco of Aquapendento during their disputation held in Orvieto between 1472 and 1489. Elijah contrasts this with the private teachings of Jesus to his disciples. Judah Rosenthal, *Meḥḳarim u-Meḳorot*, Jerusalem: Mass 1967, pp. 440–1.

[123] Bernard Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens dans le monde occidental 430–1096*, Paris: Université de Paris, 1960, pp. 227–37; Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 98–100; Baron, *Social and Religious History*, vol. 5, pp. 125–30; Sbath, *Vingt traités*, pp. 31–2.

and subjugation by a foreign power were evidence of God's wrath at his chosen people for refusing to accept the new religion, and a sign of the abrogation of his religion.[124] On the basis of a literal interpretation of key Qur'anic verses dealing with the Jews,[125] Muslims believed that God had forever cursed Jews, and decreed upon them perpetual abasement and poverty.[126]

In Muslim (and Christian) polemical literature, the destruction of the Jewish kingdom and the expulsion of the Jews from their homeland are often presented as evidence of the abrogation of their religion which requires them to adopt a new law – the Islamic or the Christian law. Al-Qirqisānī presents a different interpretation, suggesting that their misfortune resulted from their neglect and violation of God's commandments in the Torah. Through the prophets, God told the Israelites that the renewal of their state, the coming of the Messiah, and the rebuilding of the Temple (foreseen by the prophet Ezekiel) depended upon their willingness to repent. 'A man may repent only for something that he has neglected in his insubordination. This is the opposite of the Muslims' claim that Mosaic Law was nullified and made invalid and that it was therefore necessary to adopt a different one.' Instead of adopting a new law, the Jews should return to observation of the Torah.[127] Moreover, al-Qirqisānī launches a counter-attack proclaiming that all nations – Christian and Muslim included – will accept the laws of the Torah (including the Sabbath), the pilgrimage on the Feast of Tabernacles, and the celebration of Passover as stipulated in Isaiah 66:23 and Zechariah 14:18.

Jewish apologists concur that the political inferiority and subjugation of the Jews are not reflections of their relations with God. Nathanael ibn Fayyūmī of Yemen states that, despite all appearances, God did not forsake the Jews or condemn them to perdition. On the contrary, they suffer because they are God's chosen people. As a father reproaches his son, so God chastises Israel in order to purify it from its sins:

> But we recognize full well that the Creator has imposed greater responsibilities upon us than upon others, and that He deals with us more severely than with them. Our punishment He determines, theirs not. In this manner God shows His love for us, by this means does He ennoble us […]. Since He regards us as pre-eminent, He holds us to strict account in this present fleeting life […]. He hastens to chastise us that He may purify us

[124] Ibn Ḥazm mentions precisely this argument in his polemic against Judaism: 'If they argue that the Torah says that Mosaic Law is valid for all ages, we respond that this is an unacceptable interpretation, for the Torah also says: "They shall inhabit this land for all ages", and we can see with our own eyes that they have left it.' Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-Fiṣal*, p. 129.

[125] In this context the Islamic tradition most often mentions Q 2:61: 'And abasement and poverty were pitched upon them, and they were laden with God's anger; that because they had disbelieved the signs of God and slain Prophets unrightfully; that because they disobeyed and were transgressors.'

[126] See Ben-Shammai, "Jew-Hatred", pp. 161–70.

[127] Al-Qirqisānī, *Anwār*, III.15.9.

from our sins just as the intelligent and affectionate father promptly administers bitter medicine to his son against the boy's will, in order to purge his body of deleterious waste. The father certainly knows better than the boy what is for his good. It is therefore incumbent upon us to accept His chastisement cheerfully that ours may be the reward. He imposes severe penalties upon us in order to make our portion beautiful, for it is written, 'Whomsoever the Lord loveth, he chastiseth.'[128]

Ibn Fayyūmī stresses that the Hebrew Bible abounds in promises of Israel's salvation and perpetuity. Its very survival despite the persecutions is undeniable evidence of God's protection. The existence of Israel and its Law are mutually interdependent: 'Israel's indestructibility is the result of a Divine pact betokened by the perpetuation of the Torah in our midst.'[129] In sum, God's blessing – the status of chosen people – belongs not to Ishmael (the Muslims), but Isaac (the Jews).

The response of medieval Jewish authors to the discrepancy between the claim of Israel as God's unique, chosen nation, and its present powerlessness is the same as the response of the authors of the Hebrew Bible: its very powerlessness was proof of God's power, which manifests itself through the use of the world powers as 'the rod of his anger and the staff of his indignation' (Isa. 10:5) to chastise and purify Israel. With their blind urge for power, the nations of the world – whether Biblical Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, or Edom and Ishmael – unknowingly serve a higher design.

6. Muḥammad – Prophet, or Imposter?

The question of Muḥammad's prophethood was of crucial importance in medieval Jewish polemics. While Muḥammad's contemporaries, the Jews of Medina, responded according to Muslim sources predominantly in the negative, later generations were not so unequivocal. For the most part, Jewish thinkers oscillated between an attitude of refusal and one of receptivity towards the new religion – either denying Muḥammad the status of a prophet, or admitting that he was a real prophet, but insisting that his mission was intended solely for the idolatrous and uncouth Arabs, given that each nation was due a divine revelation in accordance with its specific language and requirements. The latter perspective was primarily advocated by sects on the fringes of Rabbinical Judaism or communities particularly exposed to pressure from the Muslim society, such as the Yemenite Jews.[130]

[128] Nathanael ibn al-Fayyūmī, *The Garden of Wisdom*, pp. 114–5 (Eng.), pp. 72–3 (Arab.).

[129] *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, VII.

[130] For a general assessment of the Jewish perspective on Muḥammad, see Norman Solomon, "Muḥammad from a Jewish Perspective", *Abraham's Children. Jews, Christians and Muslims in Conversation*, ed. Norman Solomon et al., Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2006, pp. 132–9.

Willingness to acknowledge Muḥammad as a prophet is evident in the example of the ʿĪsāwiyya, the oldest known Jewish messianic movement in Islamic times. The movement was named after its founder, Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī, who was active in the reign of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān ibn Muḥammad (744–50). A self-proclaimed prophet and a forerunner of the Messiah,[131] Abū ʿĪsā admitted that Jesus and Muḥammad were God's true messengers to the people. It was therefore recommended – though not obligatory – that Jews study the Gospels and the Qurʾan, despite the fact that the laws contained within them were not binding for them.[132] Strangely, Abū ʿĪsā's followers were not entirely repudiated by the bulk of the Jewish people. While their writings have not survived, their influence is discernible in the aforementioned Jewish apocalypse, *The Secrets of Rabbi Shimʿon bar Yochai,* which stems from early ʿAbbāsid times. The text describes Muḥammad as a prophet sent by God to the Ishmaelites – the Muslims/Arabs – in order to save Israel from the wickedness of the kingdom of Edom (Rome). It seems that such opinions were not rare among the Jews. The Muslim jurist Shaybānī wrote around 800 that 'today the Jews in the areas of Iraq recognize that there is no god but God and Muḥammad is the prophet of God, but they claim that he was sent as a prophet only to the Arabs, and not to the Jews.'[133]

Acknowledgment of Muḥammad's prophethood was not limited to Jewish sects, but could also be found in the works of the authors associated with the mainstream of Rabbinical Judaism, including Nathanael ibn Fayyūmī, whose *The Garden of Wisdom* quotes profusely from the Qurʾan to support its author's arguments. The views of this leader of Yemenite Jewry (who died around 560/1165) bear traces of the teachings of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (Brethren of Purity), including their tendencies to harmonize the different religions,[134] and equates religions with different medicaments, useful to specific nations. God sent mankind prophets both before the Sinaitic revelation and afterwards. Muḥammad is one of them, but the Jews are not the intended audience of his Arabic *furqān*. Muḥammad's mission is to the pagans, who are ignorant of the one God. As stated in the Qurʾan (14:4), God sends a prophet to every people, according to their language. 'Consequently,' suggests Ibn Fayyūmī, 'had He sent a prophet to us, he would surely have been of our language.' God promotes His will in the history of humankind, and:

[131] See Steven M. Wasserstrom, "The ʿĪsawiyya Revisited", *Studia Islamica*, 75 (1992), pp. 57–80; Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew. The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam,* Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 71–89.

[132] Al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, III.13.1–2; cf. al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-tamhīd*, ed. Richard J. McCarthy, Beirut: Librairie Orientale, 1957, pp. 161, 189–90.

[133] Goldziher, "Usages juifs d'après la littérature religieuse des musulmans", p. 91.

[134] Ronald C. Kiener, "Jewish Ismāʿīlism in Twelfth Century Yemen: R. Nethanel ben al-Fayyūmī", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 74/3 (1984), pp. 249–66; Salomon Pines, "Nathanaël ben al-Fayyūmī et la Théologie Ismaëlienne", *Revue de l'Historie Juive en Égypte*, 1 (1947), pp. 19–22.

He therefore sends prophets in every age and period that they might urge the creatures to serve Him and do good, and that they might be a road-guide to righteousness. […] It is incumbent, then, upon every people to be led aright by what has been communicated to them through revelation and to emulate their prophets, their leaders and their regents. Not one people remained without a law, for all of them are from one Lord and unto Him they all return. All call unto Him, all turn their faces unto Him, and every pious soul is translated to Him. […] But Muḥammad's message was to a people whose fathers had not been warned and who had no Divine Law through which to be led aright.[135]

Ibn Fayyūmī advances a theory – propounded by several medieval Jewish thinkers – that presupposes a progressive unfolding of human moral nature. According to this notion, the non-Jewish faiths, particularly Christianity and Islam, fulfil an essential role in refining human nature and promoting the moral advancement of the world. They do so by eradicating idolatry and paganism and spreading a purer idea of God, which will culminate in the appearance of the Messiah. Thus, behind the spread of Christianity and Islam lies the hand of Providence.[136] According to Reuben Ahroni, Ibn Fayyūmī's 'concession' with regard to the role of Muḥammad 'is no more than a mere tongue-in-cheek acquiescence' intended to provide Yemenite Jews with a way out of the predicament of religious propaganda produced by Yemenite Muslims.[137] As is made clear in the following pages, the Jewish religious leaders generally perceived this 'interconfessional spirit' as dangerous, and protested against it.[138]

As already mentioned, Christian theologians soon formulated within their polemics against Islamic prophetology a set of 'negative attributes' of the true prophecy.[139] The Jewish polemic took up this Christian concept of 'negative attributes'. An intermediate role was played by Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammaṣ, the ninth-century author of the first Jewish theological work, *Twenty Chapters* (*ʿIshrūn maqāla*).[140] In the fourteenth chapter of 'Twenty' he cites an unidentified Christian source to include ten 'negative attributes' of the true faith, reinterpreted to favour Moses and Judaism.[141] He uses these attributes

[135] Nathanael ibn al-Fayyūmī, *The Garden of Wisdom*, pp. 108–9 (Eng.), pp. 69–70 (Arab.).

[136] This argument became common in the Yemenite polemics. See, for example, the seventh chapter of Zachariā al-Ẓāhirī's *Sefer ha-Musar* (16th century), ed. Yehuda Ratzaby, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1965, pp. 124–7.

[137] Reuben Ahroni, "From *Bustān al-ʿuqūl* to *Qiṣat al-batūl*. Some Aspects of Jewish-Muslim Religious Polemics in Yemen", *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 52 (1981), pp. 327–8; Reuben Ahroni, "Some Yemenite Jewish Attitudes towards Muḥammad's Prophethood", *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 69 (1998), pp. 49–99.

[138] See, for example, al-Qirqisānī's critique, Ben-Shammai, "The Attitude of Some Early Karaites", pp. 25–6.

[139] Stroumsa, "The Signs of Prophecy", pp. 101–14.

[140] Stroumsa, *Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ's Twenty Chapters* (*ʿIshrūn maqāla*), Leiden: Brill, 1989, pp. 262–9.

[141] Cf. similar arguments propounded by Abraham ibn Dāwūd in Fontaine, "Abraham ibn Daud's Polemics", pp. 32–3.

to conclude that, unlike Moses, Muḥammad cannot be considered a true prophet. Although Al-Muqammaṣ did not state this explicitly, he did not have to, as his readers – Jews, Christians, and Muslims – would have understood the barbs aimed at the Muslim polemical claims. First, insistence that the Prophet's first victory over his enemy at Badr was achieved by preternatural, heaven-sent aid rather than by warfare seemed to undermine the notion of Islam's military success. Second, the argument that the Prophet's tradition should not be transmitted from a single direction, but rather from every corner of the earth, undercuts claims of the Torah's corruption; the Torah, indeed, exists in a variety of languages unlike the exclusively Arabic Qurʾan. Third, the rejection of claims of piecemeal collection of evidence and traditions from various individuals undermined the notion that Muslims travelled for the purpose of collecting traditions. Finally, the requirement that a Prophet's book must record stories about the Prophet's preternatural deeds revealed a 'weak point' of the Qurʾan, which does not mention Muḥammad's miracles. Al-Muqammaṣ subsequently shows that all these requirements, and others, are instead met in the case of Moses.[142]

While al-Muqammaṣ excludes Muḥammad from being a prophet more or less indirectly, early Qaraite authors such as Daniel al-Qūmisī, Salmon ibn Yeroham (d. 344/955), Yefet ibn ʿEli (d. c. 394/1004), and al-Qirqisānī do so openly and often unscrupulously, combining complaints about the hardships of life in 'the Exile of Ishmael' with derogatory nicknames for the religious institutions of Islam and its prophet. The attitude of early Qaraites toward Islam, especially in the case of the Jerusalem community, was very negative and more aggressive than that of their Rabbanite counterparts. Al-Qūmisī was not only the first to coin pejorative nicknames for Muḥammad such as *meshugga*ʿ, but also formulated the polemical attitude of early Qaraism towards a variety of Islamic rituals, including prayer, fasting during Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. In doing so, he accused Islam of superficial monotheism and secret idolatry. Al-Qirqisānī was the only one of the Qaraite authors who used arguments from rational theology in his polemics against Islam. In the chapter of his *Kitāb al-anwār,* titled 'The refutation of the Muslims and those who have affirmed Muḥammad's prophethood', al-Qirqisānī invalidates Muḥammad's prophethood, arguing that illogical and contradictory statements in the Qurʾan and the Muslim oral tradition prove Muḥammad's message untrustworthy and counterfeit.[143] Mark Cohen sees in Qaraism's more aggressive response to Islam, which it was close to with regard to some of its practices, a tendency 'to dissuade Qaraites from taking the similarity too far'.[144]

[142] See Adang, *Muslim Writers*, pp. 162–5; Stroumsa, "The Signs of Prophecy", pp. 112–3.

[143] Al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār*, III.15,1–16; Ben-Shammai, "The Attitude of Some Early Karaites", pp. 15, 26–28.

[144] Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross. The Jews in the Middle Ages*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 157.

Maimonides' view on Islam was also very influential. His attempts at undermining Muḥammad's status as a true prophet bringing God's revelation must be understood as part of his campaign to refute the Muslim argument of abrogation. He has the same goal in mind when, in the *Guide* (II.35), he places Moses' miracles above those of the other prophets. In II.40, Maimonides differentiates between divine religions and conventional religions.[145] In principle, both come from God, yet only divine religion – by which he means the religion of Moses – can offer its followers spiritual consummation. Another difference between divine and conventional religions rests in the prophet-lawgiver, who is distinguished from a false prophet by several criteria, which Maimonides presents at the conclusion of the chapter:

> The way of putting this [the claim of someone to prophetic revelation] to the test is to consider the perfection of that individual, carefully to examine his actions, and to study his way of life. The strongest of the indications you should pay attention to is constituted by his renunciation of, and contempt for, the bodily pleasures, for this is the first of the degrees of the people of science, and all the more, of the prophets. In particular, this holds good with regard to the sense that is a disgrace to us – as Aristotle has set forth – and especially in what belongs to it with regard to the foulness of copulation.[146]

Although Maimonides illustrates his words by referring to the false prophets Zedekiah, the son of Maaseiah, and Ahab, son of Kolaiah (Jeremiah 29:21–23), when he exhorts his readers at the end of the chapter to 'know who I have in mind', they undoubtedly understand these references as allusions to Muḥammad's numerous wives and inclinations to earthly delights – factors that, in Maimonides' eyes, disqualify him as a prophet.[147] Zachariā al-Ẓāhirī of Yemen (d. c. 997/1589), Maimonides' great admirer, roundly says that the *meshugga'* cannot be a prophet since 'he fornicated every day'.[148]

Maimonides conceived of both Christianity and Islam as superficial copies and imitations of Judaism, thus inevitably distortions of the original form that they strive to imitate.

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[145] This distinction between conventional and divine religions is also made by Yehuda ha-Levi, *Kuzari*, 1:81; 2:48; 3:7–9, 51, 97–98, 124–25.

[146] Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, vol. 2, p. 384. The Prophet's qualities are described in detail in II.36: 'He will have detached his thoughts from, and abolished his desire for, bestial things – I mean the preference for the pleasures of eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, and, in general, of the sense of touch, with regard to which Aristotle gave a clear explanation in the *Ethics*, saying that this sense is a disgrace to us', p. 371. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III.13.1118a–b.

[147] See Shamir Yehuda, "Allusions to Muḥammad in Maimonides's Theory of Prophecy in his *Guide of the Perplexed*", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 64 (1973–1974), pp. 212–24. Quotes from the medieval commentators on *Guide of the Perplexed* who identified these allusions as referring to Muḥammad can be found in Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain*, Leiden: Brill, 1994, pp. 220, 320.

[148] Zachariā al-Ẓāhirī, *Sefer ha-Musar*, p. 127.

All of these men [Jesus and Muḥammad] purposed to place their teachings on the same level with our divine religion. But only a simpleton who lacks knowledge of both would liken divine institutions to human practices. Our religion differs as much from other religions for which there are alleged resemblances as a living man endowed with the faculty of reason is unlike a statue which is ever so well carved out of marble, wood, silver or gold [...]. Likewise a person ignorant of the secret meaning of Scripture and the deeper significance of the Law, would be led to believe that our religion has something in common with another if he makes a comparison between the two [...] The tenets of the other religions which resemble those of Scripture have no deeper meaning, but are superficial imitations, copied from and patterned after it.[149]

If Muḥammad, as Maimonides suggests, is not a prophet and Islam a mere superficial imitation of Judaism, what, then, is its role in God's plan for humankind? Despite his critique of Islam and especially Christianity in *Mishne Torah* (Hilkhot Melakhim 11:4), Maimonides accords to Christianity and Islam a positive historical function in God's plan of redemption, which he locates in the dissemination of monotheistic knowledge of the Scriptures and the notion of God's commandments among nations that would not have otherwise received them. Islam, with its pure monotheism, but denial of the absolute authority of the Scriptures; and Christianity, with its acceptance of the Scriptures – despite wrong exegeses – and its idolatry, function in the world as *praeparatio messianica*. They plant seeds that will reach fruition in the messianic era, when the pure monotheistic doctrine of Judaism will be universally accepted. Maimonides sees Christianity and particularly Islam as 'contributing factors to the universal rejection of overt idolatry, which is required as an historical precondition for the future Messianic era.'[150]

As in the case of other questions, on this matter Maimonides probably followed Jehuda ha-Levi,[151] who, in *Kuzari* (4:23) likens Israel suffering in exile to a seed which falls onto the ground and is transformed into its elements and thus produces a tree resembling that from which it had been produced: 'These religious communities [the Christians and the Muslims,] are only a preparation and prelude to the awaited *Messiah*, who is the fruit [of this process]. All of them will come to be his fruit when they acknowledge him, and the tree will also become one.'[152]

[149] *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, p. iv. The same idea of seeing in Christianity and Islam only unsuccessful 'imitations' (*tashbīhāt*) of Judaism was expressed before Maimonides by Jehuda ha-Levi in *Kuzari*, 3:8–9; 2:30–32.

[150] David Novak, *The Image of the non-Jew in Judaism. An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws*, New York NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1983, pp. 141–2; see also Eliezer Schlossberg, "The Attitude of Maimonides towards Islam", *Pe'amim*, 42 (1990), pp. 38–60 (Hebrew).

[151] On the possibility of these influences, see Howard Kreisel, "Judah Halevi's Influence on Maimonides: A Preliminary Appraisal", *Maimonidian Studies*, ed. Arthur Hyman, vol. 2, New York NY: Yeshiva University Press, 1991, pp. 95–121.

[152] The quotation follows the as yet unpublished translation of Barry S. Kogan and Lawrence V. Bernan. Cf. Sarah Stroumsa, "Islam in the Historical Consciousness of Jewish Thinkers of the

The view of Christianity and Islam as exercising a positive role in the process of the evolution of mankind from idolatry to monotheism took root in Judaism. It is restated in the seventh chapter of the *Sefer ha-Musar* (Book of Instruction) of the aforementioned Zachariā al-Ẓāhirī, according to whom God sent mankind Christianity and Islam only to clear the way for the Messiah. In the first stage, Jesus (*Yeshuaʿ*) diverted idolaters from worshipping idols to worshipping God in the form of statues, and in the next stage Muḥammad (*meshuggaʿ*), although making false claims to be a prophet, 'brought them a little bit out of the darkness' by teaching them not to worship statues, but 'God in their heart.' At the end, however, the Muslims will confess: 'Our fathers have inherited nought but lies' (Jer 16:19). And although Christianity and Islam today prevail over Judaism, in the event they are doomed to fall.[153] Echoing Jehuda ha-Levi and Maimonides, al-Ẓāhirī reversed the successionist claims of both Christianity and Islam, which perceived themselves as being the true fulfilment of (initial) Judaic monotheism and the final embodiment of God's revelation to mankind.

7. 'Treatise Against the Muslim' and 'Bow and Shield'. Two Polemics from Spain

As Shelomo ibn Adret and Shimʿon ben Ṣemaḥ Duran were the only Jewish authors to dedicate books in Hebrew exclusively to a polemic against Islam, it is worthwhile to briefly consider their contributions to anti-Islamic polemics. The work of the former draws mainly from the Jewish anti-Islamic polemical tradition, while the latter is heavily indebted to the Christian anti-Muslim tradition.

Ibn Adret's *Maʾamar ʿal Yishmaʿel* (Treatise against the Muslim)[154] is of special import in our context because of its direct response to Ibn Ḥazm's anti-Jewish polemics in his *Book of Distinctions on Religions, Sects and Heresies*. What did prompt a rabbi living in Catholic Barcelona at the beginning of the fourteenth century – specifically, Dhū l-Ḥijja 703/July 1304 – to write a tract refuting anti-Jewish arguments written in Arabic over two hundred years earlier? Surely the Jews of his time had to confront Christian rather than Muslim polemics. Camilla Adang and Bezalel Naor suggest the possibility that Ibn Adret was invited to

Arab Middle Ages", *The Intertwined Worlds of Islam. Essays in Memory of Hava Lazarus-Yafeh*, ed. Nahem Ilan, Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Ben-Zvi Institute, 2002, pp. 443–58 (Hebrew). Cf. Schreiner, "Irrtum, Torheit oder falsche Religion", pp. 46–52.

153 Zachariā al-Ẓāhirī, *Sefer ha-Musar*, pp. 125–7.

154 Joseph Perles, *R. Salomo ben Abraham ben Adereth. Sein Leben und seine Schriften, nebst handschriftlichen Beilagen*, Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung (H. Skutsch), 1863, Appendix, pp. 1–24. From Perles' edition the text was re-edited by Bezalel Naor (ed.), *Maʾamar Al Yishmaʿel. Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret*, Spring Valley NY: Orot, 2008, and Ḥajim Z. Dimitrovsky (ed.), *Teshuvot ha-Rashbaʾ le-rabenu Shelomo b. r. Avraham ben Adret*, Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, vol. 4, 1990.

write the *Treatise* by coreligionists living in the Muslim part of Spain or in the Maghreb.[155] Harvey Hames offers a different opinion, suggesting that the *Treatise* should be read through the prism of the Christian anti-Jewish polemics, as the real reason for its composition was the necessity to square up to the challenges posed to Judaism by such personalities as the learned Dominican friar Ramon Martí (d. c. 1285/90) and Ramon Llull (d. 1315).[156] Ibn Adret knew the men personally and debated polemical topics with both on several occasions.[157] Ibn Adret responded to the polemical arguments of Martí's *Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Iudaeos* (Dagger of Faith against Moors and Jews) in his commentaries on Talmudic *aggadot* (*Perushei aggadot*),[158] which also targets the attempts at conversion of Ramon Llull. *Pugio fidei*, completed in Barcelona in 1278, is a collection of both real and fancied citations from the Talmud and midrashic literature that purportedly confirm Christian doctrines. Martí also charged the Jews with tampering with the text of some passages of the Hebrew Bible. Harvey Hames infers that, since Ibn Adret did not know Arabic,[159] it was probably Ramon Martí who introduced him to Ibn Ḥazm's Biblical criticism in his *Book of Distinctions*.

However, we should not forget that both Aragon and New Catalonia had extensive Muslim populations. In Catalonia there were roughly 6,000 Mudejars around 648/1250 and in Aragon, Mudejars made up around 35 per cent of the total population.[160] Hence, Muslims were the neighbours of the Jews in Catalonia and Aragon and thus the latter may have felt the need to have a *vade mecum* for their discussions with their Muslim interlocutors. Therefore, while Ibn Adret may have had in mind the contemporary Christian polemic as well while writing the *Treatise against the Muslim*, I suggest that the *Treatise* should be read primarily as a direct response to Islamic polemics. In any case, the arguments of both polemics overlapped and became entangled at many points.

Since the *Treatise* is an apologetic response to Ibn Ḥazm's *Book of Distinctions*, it is Ibn Ḥazm who sets its agenda: the falsification of the Hebrew Bible

[155] Camilla Adang, "A Jewish Reply to Ibn Ḥazm. Salomon b. Adret's Polemic against Islam", *Judíos en tierras de Islam. Judíos y musulmanes en al-Andalus y el Magreb*, ed. Maribel Fierro, Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2002, pp. 181–2. Naor, *Ma'amar Al Yishma'el*, p. 32, n. 57.

[156] Harvey J. Hames, "A Jew amongst Christians and Muslims. Introspection in Solomon ibn Adret's Response to Ibn Hazm", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 25 (2010), pp. 203–12.

[157] See Harvey J. Hames, *The Art of Conversion. Christianity and Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp. 251–71, 289–92; Charles Touati, "Rabbi Salomon ben Adret et le Philosophe-Missionnaire Catalan Raymond Lulle", *Revue des études juives*, 155 (1996), pp. 185–9; Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews. The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1984, pp. 156–163; Jeremy Cohen, "The Christian Adversary of Solomon ibn Adret", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 71 (1980), pp. 48–55.

[158] Perles, *R. Salomo ben Adereth*, Appendix, pp. 24–56.

[159] Joseph ben al-Fawwāl says so in the introduction to his Hebrew translation of Maimonides' *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Seder Mo'ed (Venice, 1546, see fol. 2a) quoting Ibn Adret's alleged words.

[160] See Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, pp. 23–6.

and the abrogation of the Mosaic Law. Ibn Adret treats the *taḥrīf* in roughly four thematic circles: Biblical stories of incest, the numbers of Israelites after their exodus from Egypt, the unreliability of the transmission of the Biblical text, and the insufficiency of the testimony of one witness. Ibn Adret dismisses each of these claims as baseless, although he admits that the Hebrew Bible does contain narratives of incest and fornication involving the forefathers of the nation. However, he assures his readers that there must be a reason for their inclusion, even if the meaning of such narratives is not immediately apparent., Even though the reason for some of its stories and commandments may be concealed from the unlearned, the authority of the Torah is unshakable. Thus, it is not important to know the reasons for them, but to simply obey them. For Ibn Adret, the aim of some of these rather puzzling narratives is to educate. In other cases, he simply explains away their plain Biblical meanings in favour of their Talmudic exegesis.

If morally damnable stories about the forefathers of David's royal dynasty served Ibn Ḥazm as evidence for the falsification of the Torah, Ibn Adret uses them to prove the contrary. To be sure, no royal dynasty would tolerate in its Holy Scriptures stories that besmirch its founders if it did not hold the Scripture as revealed; that is, untouchable. Ibn Adret responds to the accusation that the number of Israelites leaving Egypt was overplayed by arguing that the interest of a would-be falsifier would be, on the contrary, to downplay their numbers in order to enhance the wonder that 'such an inconsiderable nation conquered the country of twenty-three kings.'

Ibn Adret calls into question Ibn Ḥazm's accusation of unreliable transmission of the Biblical text with arguments that are common in the stock of Jewish apologetics, that the public revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai had provided ample *tawātur* for it, and that the very fact that Jews in different parts of the world, as well as Christians, had shared and used the same text of Scripture for hundreds of years guaranteed its authenticity, whereas Ibn Ḥazm, in pointing to the existence of one scroll of the Torah stored in the Temple, hints that throughout Israel's history it was liable to manipulations and falsifications perpetrated by sinful priests and kings. The author of the *Treatise against the Muslim*, on the other hand, sees in this carefully preserved copy an exemplar serving to fix prospective errors introduced by scribes. In addition, even if kings damaged parts of the Torah, it does not mean that they damaged the whole Torah. It is not in men's power to destroy all the copies of the Torah all over the world. Furthermore, the Torah has been translated into many languages so that other nations might also learn from it. It is clear that Ibn Adret's arguments align with the polemical tradition established by Abraham ibn Dāwūd and Maimonides. Having defended the infeasibility of falsifying the Torah, Ibn Adret turns to the abrogation of the Mosaic Law, which he rebuts with an argument very much in accord with that of Saʿadya Gaon.

The *Treatise against the Muslim* testifies to the importance that the Muslim heritage still had in Christian Spain. Ibn Adret might have seen a special challenge in Ibn Ḥazm's reasoning and in the continuing tradition of Muslim anti-Jewish polemics in Christian Spain, particularly within a context in which double-sided conversions were not uncommon. On the other hand, the *Treatise* itself probably had little impact on the Jewish anti-Islamic polemic, since it was preserved in just one manuscript – Saraval's collection – unfortunately lost amidst the Nazi pillaging of the library of the Breslau Jewish Theological Seminary.[161]

A specifically Spanish context can be also assumed for the composition of the anti-Islamic polemic of Shim'on ben Ṣemaḥ Duran (762–848/1361–1444), who had fled his native Majorca after the anti-Jewish riots of 793/1391. He travelled to Muslim Algiers, where, from 811/1408, he served as the chief rabbi.[162] That Duran's refutation of Islam is rooted in the Christian-Jewish polemic is discernible from his writing of a dual polemic against Christianity and Islam, part of his commentary on the Mishnaic tractate *Avot*, titled *Magen avot* (Livorno, 1199/1785). In its separately printed form, the polemical tract bears the title *Bow and Shield* (*Qeshet u-magen*, Livorno, 1199–1205/1785–1790).[163] Its first part is a defence of Jewish law against the Christian accusation that Jesus abolished the Torah.[164] The themes of distortion and abrogation of the Hebrew Bible are introduced in the second part, an anti-Islamic polemic.

At the beginning of the chapter dealing with Jewish responses to Muslim anti-Jewish polemics, Duran names several reasons for the scarcity of Jewish polemical works. At the end of his polemics against Islam, he claims that he was not aware of antecedents, 'except the little material found in the Kuzari'[165]. In his understanding, the reason for this lies both in the weakness of the Muslim arguments – which are not worth answering – and in the dangers involved in disputing them. Perhaps because of this self-proclaimed awareness of the paucity of the Jewish anti-Islamic polemical tradition, Duran had to fall back on the

[161] For information about the manuscript, see Perles, *R. Salomo ben Abraham ben Adereth*, p. 83, n. 5.

[162] See Martin Jacobs, "Interreligious Polemics in Medieval Spain. Biblical Interpretation between Ibn Ḥazm, Shlomoh ibn Adret, and Shim'on ben Ṣemaḥ Duran", *Gershom Scholem (1897–1982). In Memoriam*, ed. Joseph Dan, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2007, vol. 2, pp. 35–57.

[163] Moritz Steinschneider (ed.), *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums,* 8 (1881), Hebrew part, pp. 1–35; a German translation M. Steinschneider, *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, 7 (1880), pp. 1–48. New edition with English translation prepared by Prosper Murciano, *Simon ben Zemah Duran, Keshet u-Magen. A Critical Edition*, microfilm publication, Ann Arbor MI, 1975.

[164] In most of his arguments on Christianity, he seems to be indebted to Profayt Duran's *Kelimat Ha-Goyim*. See Eleazar Gutwirth, "History and Apologetics in XVth Century Hispano-Jewish Thought", *Helmantica*, 107 (1984), pp. 238–9.

[165] Duran recounts ha-Levi's arguments against the miraculous character of the Qur'an (*Kuzari* I:6).

reservoir of Christian anti-Islamic polemical motifs and techniques. It offered him a colourful image of the prophet Muḥammad as a false prophet and of the Qurʾan as a wholly contradictory and irrational book.[166]

Duran's polemical agenda differs from that of Ibn Adret, whose polemic he did not know. Whilst the latter bases his polemic primarily upon the exegesis of Biblical and post-Biblical material, the former uses arguments based on on the writtings of Muslim philosophers. Duran does not defend the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic tradition, but rather attacks the rationality of Islam. The main objective of his polemic is to prove that the irrational and imperfect teachings enshrined in the Qurʾan cannot abrogate the consummate Torah. To achieve this, Duran scrutinizes the Qurʾanic sayings that contradict the Biblical narrative and logic; Muḥammad's moral integrity and trustworthiness; the Qurʾan's content and form; its teachings concerning God's existence; theodicy; the miraculous inimitability of the Qurʾan; its ambiguities, incoherence and contradictions, and the triviality of the Qurʾan's teachings about nature and the soul. Duran, however, admits that he had only read a small part of the Qurʾan himself, and that most of his information concerning its teachings and *aḥādīth* were gathered from the Hebrew translation of Ibn Rushd's *Al-Kashf ʿan manāhij al-adilla fī ʿaqāʾid al-milla* (The Exposition of the Methods of Proof Concerning the Beliefs of the Community).[167] Duran's selection of the book was not accidental, as it fit in perfectly with his polemical design. The goal of the book is to examine the religious doctrines expounded by the different sects and to decide if any of them were the intention of the lawgiver.[168] According to Duran, the diverse or opposing views held by different Muslim thinkers, or Islamic theological and philosophical schools, on fundamental theological questions, resulted directly from the muddled and contradictory sayings of the Qurʾan, testifying to its unrevealed nature. God's message to mankind ought not to sow discord and schism.

In this regard, Duran's polemic is very different from that of his predecessors and rather follows the Christian polemical patterns. Duran's labelling of Islam as an irrational and materialistic religion and his depiction of the Qurʾan as a composition rife with confusion whose contents contradict logic is a well-known

[166] Joseph Sadan writes about a *common reservoir* of the polemical techniques of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in medieval Spain: "Identity and Inimitability. Contexts of Inter-religious Polemics and Solidarity in Medieval Spain, in the Light of Two Passages by Moše ibn ʿEzra and Yaʿaqov ben Elʿazar", *Israel Oriental Studies*, 14 (1994), pp. 325–47.

[167] Moshe of Narbonne mentions in the colophon of the Leiden manuscript of the Hebrew translation of *al-Kashf* that the manuscript was written in 1347. *Al-Kashf* was, therefore, translated some time before this date. See Silvia Di Donato, "Il Kitāb al-kašf ʿan manāhiğ di Averroè nella traduzione ebraico-latina di Abraham de Balme", *Annali di Ca' Foscari*, 41/3 (2002), pp. 5–36.

[168] Ibn Rushd polemicizes in particular against the Ashʿarites, Muʿtazilites, the sufis and the 'literalists' claiming that they have all distorted the scriptures and developed innovative doctrines that are not compatible with Islam.

topos of Christian anti-Islamic polemics, particularly those of the Mozarabs, which draw heavily on Ps. al-Kindī's Arabic *Risāla* or the anonymous *Liber denudationis*.[169] There is no doubt that Duran was indebted to the text. He follows the *Risāla* in arguing that a number of Islamic beliefs and rituals have their roots in Judaism, such as prayer, fasting, notions of purity and impurity, pilgrimages to Mecca, and dietary laws. Besides religious practice, Duran also sees the influence of Judaism on Islam in the realm of religious beliefs, namely monotheism, God's incorporeity, the creation of the world etc. Duran turns the accusation of anthropomorphism upon Islam, arguing that the Qur'an itself uses corporeality when describing God.

Duran also pays due attention to the Muslim idea of heaven, which plays a central role in Christian anti-Islamic polemics, though not in Jewish ones. The Qur'an, Duran says, offers only material images: the righteous enter paradise, where they will enjoy eating, drinking, and having intercourse with virgins, whereas the sinners will stay forever in hell, a place of burning fire. The majority of Muslim religious leaders, claims Duran, accept these images literally. The Qur'an does not allude at all to spiritual delight. To Duran, these notions are indicative of the imperfection of the Qur'an since they are the source of difference of opinion inside the Muslim community: while theologians and the common people accept them literally, some Muslim sages, such as Ibn Sīna, al-Fārābī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Rushd, are 'ashamed of them' and either present them as allegories of spiritual matters, or 'do not believe in them'. By his claim that Muslim philosophers are ashamed of and contradict the teachings of the Qur'an, Duran again emulates the strategy of his Christian counterparts. These polemical motifs are just a few from many that Duran took over and introduced into Jewish literature.[170]

In taking over Christian polemical motifs, Duran did not swerve from the polemical tradition of Jews and Muslims living in Christian Spain. Muslim

[169] See Thomas E. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050–1200*, Leiden: Brill, 1994; Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010, pp. 86–8, 167. The *Risāla* was known among the Mozarabs from the eleventh century. It also influenced the anti-Islamic polemics of the Jews, who transcribed it into Hebrew letters. See Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, "La Apologia de al-Kindi en la España del siglo XII: Huellas toledanas de un 'animal disputax'", *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la Reconquista de Toledo*, Toledo: Instituto de estudios visigótico-mozárabes, 1989, pp. 107–29.

[170] Al-Kindi's *Risāla* or *Liber denudationis* were not Duran's sole sources of inspiration. Though he does not expressly state it to be the case, he may well have taken the concept of cultural borrowings and influences from Maimonides. He even admits that Islam professes monotheism (see Marc B. Shapiro, "Islam and the Halakhah", *Judaism*, 42 (1993), pp. 332–43), though unlike Maimonides, he charges Islam with retaining vestiges of a pagan past, specifically in connection to the pilgrimage to Mecca. See Gerald R. Hawting, "*Širk* and 'Idolatry' in Monotheist Polemic", *Israel Oriental Studies*, 17 (1997), pp. 107–26; cf. Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, pp. 157–9; Bernard Septimus, "Petrus Alfonsi on the Cult at Mecca", *Speculum*, 56 (1981), pp. 517–33.

authors did the same, as is the case in the anti-Jewish tract from Huesca, *Fortification of Faith* (761/1360). Muslims and Jews, minority communities of Christian Spain, polemicized against each other by making use of arguments from the polemical literature of the majority Christian society. That shows that the polemical agendas of both *Treatise against the Muslim* and *Bow and Shield* are rooted in the specific cultural milieu of medieval Spain, where all three traditions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – permeate and become entangled in the polemical genre.

Moreover, if it is unlikely that Ibn Adret's polemic exerted an influence on subsequent Jewish thinking about Islam or the way the Jews wrote about Islam, the same cannot be said about Duran's *Bow and Shield*, whose reception in Jewish literature is attested in both polemical and historical writings. It appears in abridged form in Abraham Farissol's (856–935/1452–c. 1528) anti-Christian polemical treatise, *Magen Abraham* (Shield of Abraham), although it was not the author who attached it to the book, but a later anonymous copyist.[171] Nevertheless, its inclusion testifies to the authority of *Bow and Shield* among the Jews. Furthermore, passages and quotations from *Bow and Shield* – specifically those about Islam's borrowings from Judaism – figure in *Sefer Divrei Yosef* (1083–4/1672–3), by the Egyptian historian Joseph Sambari.[172]

8. Conclusions

The present survey would seem to confirm Amos Funkenstein's claim, presented in the introduction, that 'Judaism and Islam were *not* confrontational cultures'. We should not be misled by the size of the body of polemical literature surveyed here. Despite this essay's rather lengthy presentation of a seemingly substantial body of polemical literature, we should be conscious that such works constitute only a fraction of the literary output of Islamic and Jewish cultures. Though polemics against the Jews and Judaism play a prominent role in the canonical texts of Islam, in later periods it became a marginal topic, with the main brunt of Muslim polemical energy now being borne by the Christians.

Islamic anti-Jewish polemical discourse right from its beginning revolved around a relatively constant set of polemical claims and motifs based on the Qur'an and its exegesis (*taḥrīf*, *aʿlām al-nubuwwa*, *naskh*), the veracity of which polemicists tried to prove with the help of a set of verses culled from the Bible.

[171] For details, see David Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew. The Life and Thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol*, Cincinnati OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1981, pp. 57–84 (Ruderman mistakenly ascribes the authorship of *Qeshet u-magen* to Profayt Duran).

[172] See the discussion in Martin Jacobs, *Islamische Geschichte in jüdischen Chroniken. Hebräische Historiographie des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004, pp. 176–8.

This discourse was later augmented by a rather succinct and superficial discussion of the Rabbinical literature; nevertheless, it did not usher in new and original polemical motifs and techniques. While, from the twelfth century onwards, Christian anti-Jewish polemics were marked by the employment of the Talmud or Jewish oral tradition to corroborate Christian arguments, Muslim polemics did not do so in their own efforts to demonstrate that the Jewish sages of antiquity had already recognised Muḥammad's prophethood. They used the Rabbinical literature only with the intention of bolstering the claim of *taḥrīf* and *naskh*. In other words, in the Muslim literature we do not find an equivalent of Ramon Martí's *Pugio fidei*, a major sourcebook for anti-Jewish treatises. Later polemicists hardly went beyond the polemical discourse established by Ibn Ḥazm, Samaw'al al-Maghribī, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.

While Muslim polemicists left behind several books and treatises, this was not the case for their Jewish counterparts. Although the Jews – as we have seen – do polemicize against Islam, the number of books dedicated fully to polemics is meagre. The Jews generally refrained from composing books refuting Islam; and, if they did so, the refutation was mainly incorporated into works dealing more generally with theological themes. Moreover, Jewish authors did not respond to all three polemical claims in the same measure, paying more attention to claims of falsification of the Torah and especially its abrogation. The central theme was the question of Muḥammad's prophethood, that is, whether his prophecy was intended for all mankind, or just for Arabs? Naturally, the Jewish authors typically defended the latter, which provided them with a way out when pressed by their disputants.

Jewish apologetical discourse was very quickly standardized and widely restated. This was certainly the case with Ibn Adret's *Treatise against the Muslim*. Only Duran's *Bow and Shield* deviates from standard Jewish anti-Islamic polemics in that, to a large extent, it takes up narratives and techniques of Christian anti-Islamic polemics, which revolve around the question of the rationality of the teachings of the Qur'an and Islam and Muḥammad's moral integrity. This takeover and reuse in Jewish anti-Islamic polemics presents a potentially fruitful path for future research, building on the research started some one hundred and forty years ago by Steinschneider, the editor and translator of Duran's *Bow and Shield,* and the author of *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache zwischen Muslimen, Christen und Juden*.

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