

# Islamic Reformism and Christianity



Islamic Reformism and Christianity:  
A Critical Reading of the Works of Muḥammad  
Rashīd Riḍā and His Associates  
(1898-1935)

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## Introduction

The history of Christian missions has been written predominantly from a Christian, missionary perspective.<sup>1</sup> Missions have scarcely been studied from the perspective of the people among whom missionaries worked, in the case of the present research: the Muslims in the Middle East in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The available studies on the history of missions among Muslims are, in fact, incomplete, for they do not give detailed accounts of the reactions and interpretations of the people to whom the missionaries had been sent. Moreover, they do not tell us whether the missionaries themselves were aware of the Muslim reactive positions and writings, and the influence of their work on mutual Muslim-Christian perceptions and misperceptions. Main problems that still need to be examined are: How did Muslims, in various regions and under various circumstances, perceive the missionaries and their work? What ideas did Muslims develop about Christianity as they saw it enter Muslim societies? How did the direct encounter between Islam and Western Christianity through the emergence of missionaries in the Muslim world influence the Muslim polemics against Christianity?

The present work is a *critical study of the dynamics of Muslim understanding of Christianity during the late 19th and the early 20th century in the light of the polemical writings of the well-known Syro-Egyptian Muslim reformist Sheikh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935) and his associates*. It is observable that neither Muslim nor Western scholars paid due attention to his views on Christianity. No full-scale study of his perspectives on that subject has been undertaken so far. Although there are scattered and brief remarks in some individual studies on some of his works on Christianity, investigation is still needed by focusing on his polemics and answers to the social, political and theological aspects of missionary movements among Muslims of his age.

The base of our analysis in the present study encompasses Riḍā's voluminous publications embodied in his *magnum opus*, the journal *al-Manār* (The Lighthouse). The core of these writings on the Christian beliefs and scriptures consisted of polemic and apologetic issues, which had already existed in the pre-modern Islamic classification of Christianity. However, *al-Manār* polemicists have added to their investigations many modern aspects largely influenced by Western critical studies of the Bible. There is no documented

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<sup>1</sup> For such studies, see for example, Erich W. Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam: A Study of the Religious Forces of Islam and Christianity in the Near East*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1953; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The Great Century A.D. 1800 A.D.-1914 in Northern Africa and Asia*, vols. 4-6, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1945; Julius Richter, *A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East*, 1st edition, New York: AMS Press, 1970 (reprinted from the edition of 1910); Dennis H. Phillips, 'The American Missionary in Morocco', *The Muslim World*, vol. LXV, no. 1 (January, 1975), pp. 1-20; Lyle L. Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims: The Record*, South Pasadena, CA: the William Carey Library, 1977.

public debate (*munāẓarah*) between Riḍā and his contemporary missionaries. But *al-Manār* developed certain sorts of arguments drawn from critical studies about biblical texts, church history, political confrontations in the period of colonialism, and evidence of what it perceived as the wrong picture portrayed by missionaries (and some Christian Arabs) of Islam.<sup>2</sup>

## A Brief Biographical Sketch

As one of the most significant Muslim religious figures during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the life of Riḍā, his journal and his religious and political thought have been extensively studied (see bibliography). Biographical information on him is mostly taken from his autobiography, which he published more than thirty years after his migration to Egypt.<sup>3</sup> His famous biography of his teacher Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), *Tārīkh al-‘Ustādh al-‘Imām*, is also marked as one of the important sources for his life.<sup>4</sup> By writing this work, Riḍā not only ‘wrote the history of his Sheikh, [but also] what he did [himself] as though he were writing his own history as well.’<sup>5</sup>

Born in al-Qalamūn, a village near Tripoli (Lebanon), in 1865, Riḍā belonged to a religious Sunnī family claiming its kinship to the descendants of the Prophet. In his young years, he was deeply involved into the Naqshabandī Sufī order. In the circle of Sheikh Maḥmūd Nashshābah of Tripoli (1813-1890),<sup>6</sup> Riḍā read the ḥadīth collection of *al-‘Arba‘īn al-Nawawīyyah*, and obtained his *‘ijāza* (diploma) in the field of prophetic traditions. The well-known Muslim scholar Sheikh Ḥusayn al-Jisr (1845-1909), the founder of the National Islamic School of Tripoli, extended to him another *‘ijāza* certifying him to teach and transmit religious knowledge. In al-Jisr’s school, emphasis was laid upon the combination between religious education and modern sciences, especially mathematics, natural sciences, French, alongside Arabic and Turkish.<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, Riḍā’s uncle, Muḥammad Kāmil ibn Muḥammad (1843-1939), taught him Arabic, and had an impact on his religious knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

Riḍā’s fascination with the significance of the press for religious reform movement started when he came across some issues of the short-lived *al-*

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Waardenburg, *Muslims and Others*, Walter de Gruyter, 2003, p. 205. Cf. Mahmoud Ayoub, ‘Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflict’, *The Muslim World*, vol. LXXIX (1989), pp. 25-43; Jane Smith, ‘Christian Missionary Views of Islam in the 19th-20th Centuries’, *Islam and Muslim Christian Relations*, vol. 9 (1998), p. 361; Hugh Goddard, ‘Christianity from the Muslim Perspectives: Varieties and Changes’, in Jacques Waardenburg (ed.), *Islam and Christianity: Mutual Perceptions since the Mid-20th Century*, Leuven, 1998, pp. 213-256.

<sup>3</sup> R. Riḍā, *al-Manār wā al-‘Azhar*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1934 (Quoted below, *Azhar*).

<sup>4</sup> Id., *Tārīkh al-‘Ustādh al-‘Imām*, Cairo: Dār al-Faḍīlah, 2003, 4 vols. (Quoted below, *Tārīkh*).

<sup>5</sup> Ṭāhir al-Tanāhī, *Mudhakkirāt al-‘Imām Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1961; as quoted in Elizabeth Sirriyeh, ‘Rashīd Riḍā’s Autobiography of the Syrian Years, 1865-1897’, *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 3/2 (1 July 2000), p. 184.

<sup>6</sup> See, al-Ziriklī, *Al-‘Ālām*, Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2002, vol. 7, pp. 185-86.

<sup>7</sup> Sirriyeh, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Anīs al-‘Abyaḍ, *al-Ḥayāh al-‘Ilmiyya wā Marākiz al-‘Ilm fī Tarābulḥ Khilāl al-Qarn al-Tāsi‘ ‘Ashar*, Tripoli, 1985, p. 97.

'*Urwah al-Wuthqā* (The Firmest Bond, co-published by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839-1897)<sup>9</sup> and Muḥammad 'Abduh during their exile in Paris) among his father's papers. In his village Riḍā started his preaching career, and took the central mosque as a place for teaching religious sciences to its people, especially *Tafsīr* lessons.<sup>10</sup> In his autobiography, he also mentioned that he regularly went to cafés to deliver sermons among Muslims, who were not habitual visitors of the mosque. He also gathered women in a room inside his house, where he instructed them about the rules of rituals and worship matters.<sup>11</sup>

By the end of 1897, Riḍā had left his birthplace searching for more freedom in Egypt. A few months later, he directly embarked upon publishing the first issue of his journal *al-Manār*, the name he later exploited for his private printing house in Cairo. Islamic journalism experienced its earliest zenith in Egypt with the publication of Riḍā's journal, and through which he established himself as the leading Salafī scholar in the Muslim world. From the time of its foundation, *al-Manār* became Riḍā's life work in which he published his reflections on spiritual life, his explanations of Islamic doctrine, endless polemics, his commentary on the Qur'ān, *fatwās*, and his thoughts on world politics.<sup>12</sup>

Through his journal, Riḍā claimed himself to be the organ and disseminator of the reformist ideas of 'Abduh, a man of paramount importance in his life. After 'Abduh's death, Riḍā established himself more as a leading heir to his reformist movement by taking over the commentary of the Qur'ān known as *Tafsīr al-Manār*, which 'Abduh had begun. The impact of 'Abduh on Riḍā's thoughts is noticeable in his writings, especially those authored before 'Abduh's death. In various ways, he imbibed ideas akin to those of his mentor, and was closely involved in his teacher's vigorous defenses against the aspersions cast upon Islam.<sup>13</sup> In his journal, for instance, Riḍā gave much attention to 'Abduh's debates on the comparison between Islam and

<sup>9</sup> About Afghānī, see, for example, Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972; id. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983; Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and 'Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, London & New York: Cass, 1966; Albert Qudsi-zadah, *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: An Annotated Bibliography*, Leiden: Brill, 1970; Mazheruddin Siddiqi, *Modern Reformist Thought in the Muslim World*, Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1982; W. Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Abyad, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

<sup>11</sup> Riḍā, *Azhar*, pp. 171-179.

<sup>12</sup> Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1789-1939*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 226-227.

<sup>13</sup> Assad Nimer Busool, 'Sheikh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's Relations with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh', *The Muslim World*, vol. LXVI (1976), pp. 272-286. There are still, however, other far-fetched theories, which attempt to disassociate Riḍā from 'Abduh, and doubt that he was the real disseminator of his ideas. See the reconsideration of the Tunisian researcher Muḥammad al-Ḥaddād, one of Muḥammad Arkoun's students, *Muḥammad 'Abduh: Qirā'ah Jadīdah fī Khitāb al-'Islāh al-Dīnī*, Beirut, 2003.

Christianity, especially his well-known confrontations with the French historian and ex-minister of foreign affairs M. Gabriel Hanotaux (1853-1944)<sup>14</sup> and with the Christian journalist Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922).<sup>15</sup> In his answers to westerners, ‘Abduh habitually made attempts to explain his arguments with the help of Western works, primarily quoting from authors, such as John William Draper (1811-1882), Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) and Edward Gibbon (1737-1794).<sup>16</sup>

Unlike ‘Abduh, it is nowhere mentioned in the available sources that Riḍā was an active member in any inter-religious society of his time. We know that ‘Abduh had founded a political-religious society known as *Jam‘iyyat al-Ta’līf wā al-Taqrīb bayna al-‘Adyān al-Samāwīyya* during his stay in Beirut (circa 1885). Its major aim was to call for harmony and rapprochement among the so-called heavenly revealed religions. The society attracted many Jewish, Christian and Muslim (Shī‘ī and Sunnī) members. One of the major political objectives behind the society was to try to diminish the pressure practised by European colonial authorities in the East (especially among Muslims), and to improve the image of Islam among the people of the West.<sup>17</sup> The most prominent Christian members of the organization were the Canon of York, Reverend Isaac Taylor (1829-1901) (see, chapter 3), and the Orthodox archimandrite Christophoros Gibāra (d. 1901).<sup>18</sup> In his early years in Egypt, Riḍā constantly praised the

<sup>14</sup> The article of Hanotaux appeared in the *Journal de Paris* in French in March and May 1900 under the caption: ‘Face to face with Islam and the Muslim Question’. ‘Abduh’s reply firstly appeared in *al-Mu‘ayyad* and *al-Ahrām* journals, see, Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 382-95. See also, Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, London: Oxford University Press, 1933, pp. 86-89 (quoted below, *Modernism*).

<sup>15</sup> M. ‘Abduh, *al-‘Islām wā al-Naṣrāniyya ma‘a al-‘Ilm wā al-Madaniyya*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1341/1922 (Quoted below *Naṣrāniyya*). For more details, see the annotated German translation, Gunnar Hasselblatt, *Herkunft und Auswirkungen der Apologetik Muhammed ‘Abduh’s (1849-1905), Untersucht an seiner Schrift: Islam und Christentum im Verhältnis zu Wissenschaft und Zivilisation*, PhD dissertation, Göttingen, 1968; Donald M. Reid, *The Odyssey of Farah Anṭūn*, Minneapolis & Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, INC, 1975, especially pp. 80-97 (Quoted below, *Odyssey*); Mishāl Gohā, ‘Ibn Rushd bayna Farah Anṭūn wā Muḥammad ‘Abduh’, *al-‘Ijtihād*, vol. 8 (1996), pp. 61-87; id, *Farah Anṭūn*, Beirut: Riad el-Rayyes Books, 1998, pp. 57-78.

<sup>16</sup> Hasselblatt, *ibid.*, pp. 184-199.

<sup>17</sup> More about the society, see, Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, pp. 819-820. More about secret societies in Egypt, see, for example, Malak Badrawi, *Political Violence in Egypt 1910-1925: Secret Societies, Plots and Assassinations*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 1st ed., 2000; Eliezer Tauber, ‘Egyptian secret societies, 1911-1925’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 42/4 (2006 July), p. 603-623.

<sup>18</sup> Little is mentioned in the available sources about Gibāra. What I know about him so far is that he – despite having considered himself a Christian, denied the concept of Trinity. In his writings he endeavoured to bring the three religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – together. Georg Graf mentioned him in his work on the history of Christian Arabic literature; see Georg Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, Citta del Vaticano, 1966, p. 165. According to the collection of the titles of Arabic books published in Egypt (1900-1925), Gibāra was the author of *Wifāq al-‘Adyān wā Waḥdat al-‘Imān fī al-Tawrāh wā al-‘Injīl wā al-Qur’ān*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif, 1901, 64 pp. See, ‘Aydah Ibrāhīm Nuṣayr, *al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya al-Latī Nushirat fī Miṣr Bayna ‘Amay 1900-1925*, Cairo: American University in Cairo, 1983, p. 129. After Gibāra’s death, neither Christian nor Muslim groups accepted burying his body in their graveyards. In order to solve the problem, an Egyptian Christian witnessed before the Patriarch

members of the organization, but never became a member. His sympathy probably resulted from the fact that ‘Abduh was its president. Despite his belief in the co-existence among religions, Riḍā’s interest in such ideas dwindled after ‘Abduh’s death.

As a ‘print’ scholar and mufti, Riḍā was able to reach readers from all over the world through his community-building works; and to take a highly prominent position in modern Muslim intellectual life in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.<sup>19</sup> Since the early establishment of the journal, he managed to gain subscribers and to extend the influence of his religious ideas in Russia, Tunisia, India, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Bosnia, the Far East, Europe and America.<sup>20</sup> Riḍā produced the majority of the articles published in the journal, but was keen on making it a good podium for many contributors among outstanding Arab men of letters concerning a wide range of religious matters, such as theology, law, historiography, and Qur’ānic exegesis.

As evidenced in his unrelenting tide of writings, Riḍā placed a high premium on fighting against the state of stagnancy among Muslims, and defending Islam against its opponents. He endeavoured to achieve reform in the Muslim world while at the same time preserving its identity and culture. As a Muslim reformist, Riḍā not only has historical importance, but also continues to exercise overt influence on modern Muslim thought today. His journal, which started as a private project, signposted the path for many subsequent Muslim thinkers in developing their ideas on many political, social and religious issues. For instance, the religious activism and ideological career of Ḥasan al-Bannā (1904-1949), the founder of the movement of the Muslim Brothers, has its roots in Riḍā’s religious thought. As a young man, al-Bannā frequented his circle and regularly read his journal. He received his early religious training in Islam by his father Aḥmad al-Bannā, who was a close friend of Riḍā and a

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that the late Gibāra returned to his belief in the Orthodox Church before his death. Gibāra was then buried according to the Orthodox tradition. See, *al-Manār*, vol 4/12 (16 Jumāda al-ʿŪlā 1319/31 August 1901), 478-480. More about Muslim polemics against Gibara and his journal *Shahādat al-Haqq*, see the work of Muḥammad Ḥabīb, a Christian convert to Islam, *al-Suyūf al-Battārah fī Madhhab Khirustuphoros Gibārah* (The Amputating Sword to Christophoros Gibarah’s Doctrine), Cairo: al-ʿĀṣimah Press, 1313/circa 1895.

<sup>19</sup> Muḥammad Khalid Masud, et al, (eds.), *Islamic legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 30-31.

<sup>20</sup> Riḍā’s list of subscribers in his diary (1903), Riḍā’s private archive, Cairo. See, for example, Mona Abaza, ‘Southeast Asia and the Middle East: *al-Manār* and Islamic Modernity’ in Claude Guillot, Denys Lombard and Roderich Ptak (eds.), *Mediterranean to the Chinese Sea: Miscellaneous Notes*, Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1998, pp. 93-111; Azyumardi Azra, ‘The Transmission of *al-Manār*’s Reformism to the Malay-Indonesian World: the Cases of *al-Imam* and *al-Munir*,’ *Studia Islamika*, 6/3 (1999), pp. 79-111; Jutta E. Bluhm, ‘A Preliminary Statement on the Dialogue Established Between the Reform Magazine *al-Manār* and the Malay-Indonesian World’, *Indonesia Circle*, 32 (1983), pp. 35-42; id., ‘*al-Manār* and Aḥmad Soorkattie: Links in the Chain of Transmission of Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s Ideas to the Malay-Speaking World,’ in Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street, (eds.), *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 295-308.



subscriber to his journal.<sup>21</sup> Al-Bannā also attempted to continue Riḍā's work by carrying on *al-Manār* after the latter's death in 1935.<sup>22</sup>

Riḍā's views on the Christian faith and its scriptures have also left their impress upon later Muslim writers. Riḍā's release of the Arabic edition of the Gospel of Barnabas (see, chapter five), for instance, inspired several translations in several languages, such as Urdu (1916), Persian (1927), and Indonesian (1969).<sup>23</sup> This Gospel, which was translated by the Lebanese Christian Khalīl Sa'ādeh (1857-1934), has made a major impact on a generation of anti-Christian polemical writers, especially in Pakistan. It was found to be a useful weapon in the hands of many Arab and Indian Muslim writers in their resistance to Christian missionary efforts.<sup>24</sup> Philip Lewis, the inter-faith advisor to the Anglican Bishop of Bradford, observed that the late 1990s posters advertising a meeting between Muslims and non-Muslims in his city included the words in large bold letters: 'Banned – The Gospel of Barnabas', subtitled 'The True Teaching of the Prophet Jesus'. The speaker, the son of the city's best educated imam, elaborated on the Gospel saying that the Church by rejecting it intended simply to prevent Christians from knowing the truth.<sup>25</sup> Besides the impact of this Gospel, Riḍā's ideas were well cited by later Muslim writers on Christianity. In his commentary on the Qur'ān, *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, the Muslim ideologue Sayyid Quṭb, for example, extensively quoted Riḍā's excursus on the Trinity.<sup>26</sup>

## Previous Studies

A few studies have given attention to Riḍā's views on Christianity. As early as 1920, Ignaz Goldziher noted that missionary writings in Arabic on Islam, namely in Egypt, lay the foundation for an 'energetic reaction' from the side of the group of *al-Manār* publicists. The Hungarian orientalist gave short mention

<sup>21</sup> Letter, Aḥmad al-Bannā to Riḍā, Cairo, 10 August, 1935; Riḍā's private archive, Cairo.

<sup>22</sup> See, Brynar Lia, *The Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, London, 1998, p. 56, pp. 220-221, and p. 260.

<sup>23</sup> C. Schirrmacher, *Mit den Waffen des Gegners: Christlich-muslimische Kontroversen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, Schwartz Verlag, 1992, p. 277 (Quoted below, *Waffen*).

<sup>24</sup> Oddbjørn Leirvik, 'History as a Literary Weapon: The Gospel of Barnabas in Muslim-Christian Polemics', *Studia Theologica*, vol. 54 (2001), pp. 4-26 (Quoted below, 'Barnabas'); cf. H. Goddard, 'Modern Pakistani and Indian Muslim Perspectives of Christianity', *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations*, vol. 5 (1994), pp. 165-188.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Lewis, 'Depictions of Christianity within British Islamic Institutions', in Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001, pp. 209-211.

<sup>26</sup> Neal Robinson, 'Sayyid Quṭb's Attitude Towards Christianity: Sūra 9.29-35 in *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān*', in Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, Curzon Press, 2001, p. 167. For more about comparison between *al-Manār* and *al-Zilāl* of Quṭb, see also, Olivier Carré, *Mysticism and Politics: A Critical Reading of Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān by Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966)*, translated by Carol Artigues, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003, especially pp. 24-26, 94-99, 144-150, 222-228 and 244-250.

to the Arabic edition of the *Gospel of Barnabas*, describing it as ‘eine apokryphe Fälschung’.<sup>27</sup> In his own words:

Kräftiger ist die gegen die Missionsarbeit in umfangreichen Abhandlungen entfaltete positive Apologetik und Polemik. Zu bemerken ist der stetig wiederkehrende Hinweis auf die unbestrittene Authentie des Korans gegenüber der von christlich theologischer Seite selbst angezweifelte und bestrittenen Authentie ganzer grossen Teile der biblischen Urkunden und ihre Forschung über die Textverderbnis, selbst der als authentisch anerkannten Texte.<sup>28</sup>

In his *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, Charles Adams hinted that *al-Manār* placed particular emphasis upon the necessity of counteracting Christian missions in the Muslim lands by forming the school of Dār al-Da‘wa wā al-Irshād (he translated it as ‘the Society of Propaganda and Guidance’).<sup>29</sup> He made brief mention of the anti-Christian writings of Riḍā and of *al-Manār*’s most prolific polemicist Muḥammad Tawfiq Ṣidqī (1881-1922), which we shall discuss in detail (see, chapter 6).<sup>30</sup> In his study of *al-Manār* commentary of the Qur’ān, the Dominican Islamicist Jacques Jomier devoted one chapter to the ideas of the commentary on Christianity and Judaism.<sup>31</sup> The author noted that ‘le Commentaire du Manār parlera donc beaucoup de la personne de Jésus et de la Trinité’.<sup>32</sup> He discussed in some detail Riḍā’s counterattacks against missionary writings on Islam, and his views on the figure of Jesus, his presumed divinity, the Trinity, the authenticity of the Gospels, the crucifixion, the veneration of saints, etc. He maintained that ‘la lutte, on le voit, est serrée et Rachīd Riḍā se lance dans une apologétique infatigable’.<sup>33</sup> At another level, Henri Laoust followed the great stages in the career of Riḍā with special emphasis on his role in the formulation of the modern *da‘wa* (or what he labelled as missionary apologetics), comparing his practices with those current in the Middle Ages. He gave little attention, however, to Riḍā’s works on Christianity and other principal publications, which he used as reading materials for future Muslim missionaries trained in his Dār al-Da‘wa wā al-Irshād.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1920, p. 342; see the Arabic translation of the book, Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār (trans.), *Madhāhib al-Tafsīr al-‘Islāmī*, Cairo, 1955, p. 370.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 342-43.

<sup>29</sup> Adams, *Modernism*, p. 196.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 241-242.

<sup>31</sup> J. Jomier, *Le Commentaire Coranique du Manār*, Paris, 1954; especially the chapter, ‘Le Commentaire du Manār, en face du Judaïsme et du Christianisme le devoir de Prosélytisme’, pp. 301-337 (Quoted below, *Commentaire*).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>34</sup> For more details, see Henri Laoust, ‘Renouveau de l’apologétique missionnaire traditionnelle au XXe siècle dans l’oeuvre de Rashīd Riḍā’, in *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Age : Islam, Byzance, Occident*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980, pp. 271-279.

As an attempt to understand the concept of 'l'amitié des Musulmans pour les Chrétiens' in the verses of al-Mā'idah (5: 82-83) and their place in the field of Christian-Muslim dialogue, Maurice Borrmans, the editor of the Catholic journal *Islamochristiana*, made an annotated French translation of the *al-Manār* commentary on these passages.<sup>35</sup> In the context of Muslim discussions on Christianity, the Lebanese scholar Maḥmūd Ayoub analyzed Riḍā's work *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā wā Hujaj al-'Islām* (Allegations of Christians and Proofs of Islam), a collection of sixteen articles which firstly appeared in *al-Manār* (see, chapter 4). The author discussed a few themes of the book, comparing it with 'Abduh's above-mentioned work on Islam and Christianity, and with two later studies, namely: *Muḥāḍarāt fī al-Naṣrāniyya* by Sheikh Abū Zahrah (Cairo, 1965), and his *Muqāranat al-'Adyān* (Cairo, 1966).<sup>36</sup> He concluded that the attitudes of both 'Abduh and Riḍā were not intransigent, but could be regarded as conciliatory. While asserting 'the superiority of Islam as a comprehensive guide for human life and a rational faith, Riḍā wished that the men of faith in both Christian and Muslim communities would live in harmony and amity.'<sup>37</sup> In her *Qur'ānic Christians*, Jane D. McAuliffe studied the interpretations of *Tafsīr al-Manār* as part of the long tradition of Islamic exegesis. She mainly dealt with such Christian themes as 'Nazarenes of faith and action' and the 'followers of the Qur'ānic Jesus'.<sup>38</sup>

Christine Schirmacher has studied the introductions written by Sa'ādeh and Riḍā to the Gospel of Barnabas. Sa'ādeh depended in his Arabic translation on the English translation made by the Anglican clergyman and scholar, Lonsdale Ragg, and his scholarly collaborator and wife, Laura, from the Italian manuscript (preserved in the Austrian National Library in Vienna).<sup>39</sup> Schirmacher observed that Riḍā held an attitude similar to some Western scholars in the eighteenth century who were convinced the Gospel of Barnabas, because of its ancient pre-Islamic character, was not invented by Muslims.<sup>40</sup> J. Toland was, however, ironical in his comment on the Gospel: 'Here you have not a new Gospel, but also a true one, if you believe the Mahometans<sup>41</sup> [...] How great (by the way) is the ignorance of those, who make this [Gospel] as an original invention of the Mahometans!'<sup>42</sup> Although Schirmacher placed both introductions in the context of prior Western treatment and of the later Muslim apologetic use of the Gospel, she did not critically examine the whole text of

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<sup>35</sup> Maurice Borrmans, 'Le commentaire du *Manār* à propos du verset coranique sur l'amitié des Musulmans pour les Chrétiens (5,82)', *Islamochristiana*, vol. I (1975), pp. 71-86.

<sup>36</sup> M. Ayoub, 'Muslim Views of Christianity: Some Modern Examples', *Islamochristiana*, 10 (1984), pp. 49-70.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>38</sup> Jane D. McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

<sup>39</sup> Lonsdale and Laura Ragg (trans. & eds.), *The Gospel of Barnabas. Edited and Translated from the Italian Manuscript in the Imperial Library at Vienna*, Oxford, 1907.

<sup>40</sup> Schirmacher, *Waffen*, p. 304.

<sup>41</sup> John Toland, *Nazarenus or Jewish, Gentile and Mahometan Christianity*, London, 1718, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

the introductions themselves, especially against the background of the whole corpus of *al-Manār*, including Riḍā's perception of this Gospel before and after the appearance of his edition. Sa'ādeh's introduction, in addition, should be studied in relation to the English one of the Raggs, which he sometimes quoted literally.

In his *Muslim Perceptions of Christianity*, Hugh Goddard described Riḍā's views in a similar brief way.<sup>43</sup> For him, Riḍā's works on Christianity were influenced by the Indian Muslim polemicist Raḥmatullāh al-Qairanāwī (1834-1891). In his three-page analysis the author maintained that since Riḍā's Arabic edition of the Gospel of Barnabas appeared it has become a standard work in Muslim writings about Christianity. In his *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam*, Oddbjørn Leirvik shortly examined the teachings of Jesus and the concept of the crucifixion and death of Jesus according to the thoughts of both Riḍā and 'Abduh and their general skepticism towards the canonical Gospels.<sup>44</sup> Olaf Schumann dedicated one chapter of his work, *Jesus the Messiah in Muslim Thought*, to the ideas developed by 'Abduh and the school of *al-Manār* on Jesus. The author studied Riḍā's method of interpreting the relevant Qur'ānic passages on the divinity of Jesus, his miracles, as well as his publication of the Gospel of Barnabas.<sup>45</sup>

In his PhD thesis, Simon Wood made an annotated translation of Riḍā's aforementioned work *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā*.<sup>46</sup> Riḍā's writings, Wood argued, 'reflect an overwhelming awareness of Muslim weakness relative to non-Muslim strength. The tone of calm confidence one finds in earlier classical Arabic texts is altogether lacking in the works of Riḍā and his contemporaries.'<sup>47</sup> In Wood's view, following Riḍā's steps, later contemporary influential Muslim thinkers staunchly upheld the 'traditional supersessionist position on pluralism in general and Christianity in particular'.<sup>48</sup> Wood applied the term of 'supersessionism' in studying Muslim traditions. The same view was held by the controversial polemicist Bat Ye'or, who defined the Muslim 'supersessionist' current as claiming that the whole biblical history of Israel and Christianity was Islamic history, that all the Prophets, Kings of Israel and Judea, and Jesus were

<sup>43</sup> Hugh Goddard, *Muslim Perceptions of Christianity*, Gery Seal Book, London, 1996, pp. 55-58.

<sup>44</sup> Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam*, Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1999, pp. 140-143 (Quoted below, *Images*).

<sup>45</sup> Olaf Schumann, *Jesus the Messiah in Muslim Thought*, ISPCK/HMI, 2002, pp. 112-144; id., *Der Christus der Muslime: christologische Aspekte in der arabisch-islamischen Literatur*, Cologne/Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1988; id., 'Arabische Schriftsteller begegnen Christus', in *Hinaus aus der Festung: Beiträge zur Begegnung mit Menschen anderen Glaubens und anderer Kultur*, Hamburg: E.B.-Verlag, 1997, pp. 145-174.

<sup>46</sup> Simon Wood, 'The Criticisms of Christians and the arguments of Islam: An annotated translation of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā wā Hujaj al-Islām*', unpublished PhD thesis, Temple University, May 2004. During the last phase of finishing the present work, the dissertation has been published as, *Christian Criticisms, Islamic Proofs: Rashīd Riḍā's Modernist Defense of Islam*, Oxford: OneWorld, 2008. The quotations below are based on Wood's unpublished thesis.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

Muslims. That the People of the Book should dare to challenge this statement is intolerable arrogance for an Islamic theologian. Jews and Christians were thus deprived of their Holy Scriptures and of their salvific value.<sup>49</sup>

## Sources and Organization of the Study

The current study makes use of several sources. First of all, the thesis aims at examining the bulky corpus of *al-Manār*, attempting to trace the development of the thoughts of its author on Christianity and missionary activities of his time, and to determine the circumstances, which affected his discourse.

Besides surveying *al-Manār*, I will make use of Riḍā's private papers remaining in his personal archive in the possession of his family in Cairo.<sup>50</sup> The archive contains thousands of papers, letters, documents, and published and unpublished manuscripts. The papers were unorganized in carton boxes and plastic bags. I have generally studied and organized the whole collection, which can be divided as follows:

- 1) His diaries, which he used to write since his arrival in Egypt in 1897. I have found about 25 booklets in which he registered his personal memoirs, telling us about his health problems, national and international events, his meetings with various figures, his living costs and the administrative affairs of *al-Manār*, etc.
- 2) Documents of Arab organizations and societies to the foundation to which he contributed, such as *Shams al-'Islām* (The Sun of Islam), *Dār al-Da'wa wal-'Irshād*, and *Jam'iyat al-Rābiṭah al-Sharqiyya* (Association of Oriental League).
- 3) His correspondences with contemporary Muslim and Arab figures.
- 4) Other personal documents and belongings, such as the contract of the establishment of Dār al-Manār, his bank transactions, and the documents of the *waqf* of Al-Qalamūn mosque, established by his family in his village of origin.
- 5) Drafts of published and unpublished memoirs and articles by 'Abduh.

In the course of the preparation of the present study, and as a result of my findings in Riḍā's archive, I managed to discover the family archives of two of Riḍā's associates. The first one contains the archival material of the Syro-Turkish ex-military captain in the Ottoman army Zekī Ḥishmat Kirām (1886-1946), which was preserved by his son in Kornwestheim, near Stuttgart in Germany. Kirām was one of Riḍā's informants and translators, who also kept

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<sup>49</sup> B. Ya'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide*, Cranbury, Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press/Associated University Presses and Lancaster, 2002, p. 370.

<sup>50</sup> The research took place in July-August 2004. I am very indebted to Riḍā's grandson Mr. Fu'ād Riḍā for giving me access to the papers of his family archive in Cairo. Some of the materials of this collection have been used in two earlier studies. In his biography of Riḍā, Aḥmad al-Sharabāshī made use of many documents of the archive in documenting Riḍā's life and works; A. al-Sharabāshī, *Rashīd Riḍā Ṣāhib al-Manār 'Aṣruhu wā Ḥayātuh wā Maṣādir Thaḳāfatuh*, Cairo, 1970. In his study, Aḥmad Fahd al-Shawābika also employed the archive material in sketching Riḍā's political and intellectual life; A. Fahd al-Shawābika, *Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā wā dawruh fī al-Ḥayāh al-Fikriyya wā al-Siyāsiyya*, 'Amman: Dār 'Ammār, 1989; originally PhD thesis presented to the Department of History at 'Ayn Shams University in Cairo in 1986.

Riḍā up to date about the developments of German orientalism, and briefed him about the situation of Muslim institutions in Berlin and other significant news items in the German press. It largely includes Kirām's correspondences, diaries and unpublished manuscripts and typescripts and other published works.<sup>51</sup> The second archive contains the papers of Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī (1893-1987), one of the most significant figures of Salafism in Morocco. After having contacted Hilālī's family in Meknès, I managed to get access to his remaining archive.<sup>52</sup> Although there are no remaining letters of Riḍā in both archives, they are still very significant in shedding more light on the position of both figures in Riḍā's world. Further study of all these documents is also needed in the future.

Polemics are never produced in a vacuum. They should always be seen against the background of their author's political and social context. The first three chapters of this study try to set a close scene for assessing *al-Manār's* views of Christianity. It is also important to underscore the development of *al-Manār's* contributions to the subject by analyzing Riḍā's major polemical works on Christianity in more detail; and to investigate his position, which went through a full circle development in more than three decades.

The *first* chapter investigates the methods that Riḍā, who had no command of Western languages, used in compensating his lack of direct access to primary sources on the West.<sup>53</sup> As *al-Manār's* views on Christianity and polemics against Christian missions comprised a part of its whole understanding of the West, I would argue that one should first look at *al-Manār's* sources of knowledge of the West before discussing his polemics on Christianity. The chapter will try to map out a significant part of the literary setting of Riḍā's journal in that regard by dwelling upon two different aspects. *First of all*, we focus on Riḍā's readings of various translated European works, which *al-Manār* republished or quoted from the local and foreign press.<sup>54</sup> In his

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<sup>51</sup> Special gratitude is due to Dr. Harūn Zekī Kirām (Kornwestheim – Germany), his son, for gifting me the whole archive of his father during my one-week research in Germany in January 2005.

<sup>52</sup> It took place in January-February 2006. I express my thanks to Dr. Abdel-Ilāh Ijāmi, who introduced me to al-Hilālī's family, Mr. Abdel-Ghanī Bū Zekrī, the grandson of al-Hilālī, and Dr. Mohammad Daraoui of the University of Meknès, one of Hilālī's students, for their generosity and good reception during my stay in Morocco.

<sup>53</sup> Emad Eldin Shahin, *Through Muslim Eyes: M. Rashīd Riḍā and the West*, Virginia: IIIT, 1994, p. 91 (Quoted below, *Eyes*). Peter Watson was mistaken when he stated that Riḍā spoke several European languages and studied widely among the sciences. See his 'Islam and the West: why it needn't be war', *The Times* (London), 29 April, 2004.

<sup>54</sup> About the translation movement in the Arab World, see, for example, A. S. Eban, 'The Modern Literary Movement in Egypt', *International Affairs*, vol. 20/2 (April 1944), pp. 166-178. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 62-65. Cf. Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community: An Analysis of the Intellectual and Political Evolution of Egypt, 1804-1952*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 58-61; H. A. R. Gibb, 'Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, vol. 7/1 (1933), pp. 1-22.

polemics, Riḍā made use of Western discussions on Christianity and discoveries on Biblical themes which were investigated in Arabic journals and newspapers of his time. It has been sometimes very difficult to trace the Western sources used in *al-Manār*, since Riḍā usually cited titles in Arabic translation with names of authors transliterated in Arabic. During my research I have managed to identify most of these cases and their religious background, especially within the history of Christian modern movements and controversies in Europe. Two cases are selected for further special analysis. We firstly examine the controversy known as the *Babel-und-Bibel-Streit* (1903), which had been launched by the German Professor of Assyriology and Semitic languages Friedrich Delitzsch (1850-1922). Riḍā used this case as a tool in order to prove the Qur'ānic insistence on the corruption of the Holy Scriptures. The second one is his reaction to the Arabic translation of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (*EH*), and his harsh response to the analysis developed by the Dutch orientalist A.J. Wensinck (1882-1939) on the figure of 'Ibrāhīm'. This affair led to the dismissal of Wensinck from his post as a member of the Royal Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo in 1933. As his ideas were not agreeable with Islamic traditions on this subject, and were considered disrespectful by many Muslim religious circles, Wensinck's dismissal came after an anti-orientalist press campaign, initiated mostly by religious activists. As the two cases are different both as regard to their contents as well as dates (the first from 1903 and the second from 1933), a comparison between both reflects how Riḍā's treatment of such subjects had changed over the years. In the second place, we shall discuss the question how Riḍā's network in the Muslim world and abroad played a preponderant role in his acquisition of knowledge either on topics pertinent to Christianity or Western scholarly works on Islam. The three hitherto unstudied archives will be of great importance for this part. To establish the precise extent of this network would fall outside the scope of the chapter. But some unpublished documents present an interesting picture about his regular requests to friends with knowledge of Western works to brief him with Arabic translations. We will focus our attention on some of the prominent figures, known as the *Manār* literary group, who contributed to the journal with their reflections on the West and Christianity or directly with polemical reactions to Christian writers. Our point is not to discuss individual interpretations, but rather to make a coherent presentation of those contributors, whose thoughts would imply positions accepted by Riḍā himself.

In the *second* chapter we shall examine the diversity of Riḍā's relations with prominent Arab Christian luminaries by illustrating his cooperation, conflicts, and religious and political confrontations with them. What concern us here are his intellectual (mis)perceptions of this generation of Christians, who made a great contribution to the formation of the modern history of the Arab world. In order to get a good overview, three different aspects are put forward for discussion. Firstly, as a point of departure we briefly sketch Riḍā's political activities with other Syrian Christian nationalists who had similar political ideas. A more focused attempt is made to revisit responses to the writings of Syrian

Christian intellectual émigrés, such as Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922), Jurjī Zaidan (1861-1914), the Syrian doctor Shiblī Shumayyil (1850-1917), Khalīl Saʿādeh, and others. Most of these Christian partners were very critical of their own religion and its clergy. Secondly, it will be important to shift the discussion to investigate some of Riḍā's heavy responses to the mouthpiece of the Syrian Jesuit community, *al-Machreq*, and its criticism of his ideas, especially his last work, *al-Wahy al-Muḥammadi* (mentioned below, *al-Wahy*).<sup>55</sup> Why was Riḍā more drawn to these secularists (who were of Christian origin, but sharp critics of the clerics and the *ʿUlamā*), while vigorously attacking the Jesuit magazine for its critique of Islam? Thirdly, the chapter moves to speak about Riḍā's attitude towards the question of Egyptian nationalism and the status of the native Egyptian Coptic community. For the sake of comparison, it is appropriate to probe Riḍā's relationship with them over the years. An important historical point was his reaction to the Coptic Congress in 1911 in Asyūt (Southern Egypt). The prime reason behind organizing the Congress was the assassination of the Coptic Prime Minister Buṭrus Ghālī Pasha in 1910 by a member of the National Party, the 25 year-old Ibrahīm Naṣīf al-Wardānī. This period is considered as one of the most critical points in the history of the Muslim-Coptic relations in Egypt. The Copts had seen his assassination as the culmination of the anti-Christian propaganda by Muslims. The Congress resulted in a petition briefing Coptic demands, which was presented to the Khedive and the British.<sup>56</sup> As a Muslim thinker, Riḍā immediately embarked on responding to the Coptic demands in a series of articles, which he later collected in his work: *Muslims and Copts or the Egyptian Congress*.<sup>57</sup>

The *third* chapter is devoted to a general overview of *al-Manār*'s response to missionary work by analyzing the reflections of Riḍā and his associates on the theological and social effects of missions in the Muslim world in the late 19th and early 20th century. We shall see that even Riḍā's separate works on Christianity came as reaction to missionary attacks against Islam and its doctrines. As Christian missionary groups in Western colonies used to consider themselves the religious spokesmen of the dominant Western civilization,<sup>58</sup> Riḍā's understanding of missions should be seen within the background of the history of European colonialism. By investigating Riḍā's views over the years,

<sup>55</sup> R. Riḍā, *al-Wahy al-Muḥammadi*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1934.

<sup>56</sup> Kyriakos Mikhail, *Copts and Moslems under British Control*, London, 1911; S. Sheikaly, 'Prime Minister and Assassin: Butros Ghālī and Wardani', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 13/1 (1977), pp. 112-123; Moustafa El-Fikī, *Copts in Egyptian politics (1919-1952)*, General Egyptian Book Organization, 1991, pp. 38-45; Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Murrākishī, *Tafkīr Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā min Khilāl Majallat al-Manār (1898-1935)*, Tunisian Press: Tunisia and Algeria, 1985, pp. 181-183; Jacques Tagher, *Christians in Muslim Egypt: An Historical Study of the Relations between Copts and Muslims from 640 to 1922*, Altenberge: Oros Verlag, 1998.

<sup>57</sup> Rashīd Riḍā, *a-Muslimūn wā al-Qibt aw al-Mu'tamar al-Miṣrī*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1st ed., 1329/1911.

<sup>58</sup> Hermas J. Bergman, 'The Diplomatic Missionary John van Ess in Iraq', *The Muslim World*, vol. LXXII (1982), p. 180; cf. Jacques Waardenburg, 'European Civilization and Islam in History', in Joergen S. Nielsen (ed.), *The Christian-Muslim Frontier: Chaos, Clash or Dialogue*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1998, p. 11.



the chapter paves the way for the last four chapters by specifically highlighting *al-Manār's* various confrontations with the missionary enterprise in the Muslim world. What was the nature of Riḍā's combat against missions? How did he judge missionary education? We shall also consider Riḍā's deployment of his energetic activity of *da'wa* and his aspiration for the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam, such as the well-known case of Lord Headley in England. He saw the conversion of Europeans to Islam as a sharp indication of the failure of Christian missions to convert highly educated and real Muslims. How did Riḍā understand the significance of propaganda for religions? Did he relate the missionary work to colonialism? How far did he interact with his Muslim readers in their daily encounter with missionary work? How effective were his efforts of enhancing Islamic missionary work in the face of Christian missionary work?

The *fourth* chapter takes up a detailed analysis of Riḍā's afore-mentioned work *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā*, which has been recently translated in English by Simon Wood. As a collection of articles (later compiled in one volume), this specific work represents *al-Manār's* formative views, which Riḍā began to write as response to a variety of Christian publications on Islam as early as 1901, two years after his arrival in Egypt. As Riḍā wrote his replies occasionally, his articles came out as incoherent, but full of lively polemics against various contemporary missionary writings on Islam. For the sake of clarity, I shall not follow the chronological order of Riḍā's discussions according to their appearance in *al-Manār*. In order to have a more systematic analysis of his ideas, it is appropriate to set up the structure of the chapter on the basis of the replies Riḍā developed to each of his counterparts separately. The most significant among these Christian writings were: 1) a piece of work by a certain Niqūlā Ya'qūb Ghabriyāl, an Egyptian missionary, which he entitled as *Researches of the Diligent in the dispute between Christians and Muslims*,<sup>59</sup> 2) the Protestant monthly magazine, *The Glad Tidings of Peace*, which was founded by a certain George Aswan in the town of Bilbīs (al-Sharqiyya province) in 1901,<sup>60</sup> and 3) the mouthpiece of the Society of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church, *The Standard of Zion*, which was founded

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<sup>59</sup> Niqūlā Ya'qūb Ghabriyāl, *Abhāth* (sometimes *Mabāhith*) *al-Mujtahidīn fī al-Khilāf Bayna al-Naṣārā wā al-Muslimīn*. The treatise was published for the first time in Cairo in 1901 by the American Mission in Egypt as a guide to missionary workers among Muslims; and was reprinted in 1913 and 1922. See, *Summer 1914 Edition of the Descriptive Guide to the Nile Mission Press*, Nile Mission Press, 1914, p. 40. It has been recently published by Asmār in Damascus (2006). Many Arab Christian websites make use of digitalized versions of the work in their answers to Islam. See for example, <http://www.the-good-way.com/arab/pdf/abook/rb4905a.pdf>; <http://www.callforall.net/data/literature/lectures/mabaheth/>; and <http://www.alnour.com/response/mabaheth/mabaheth1.htm>. All accessed 7 June 2007.

<sup>60</sup> Arabic: *Bashā'ir al-Salām*. It is mentioned in the index of Arab journals (no. 490), Abdelghani Ahmed-Bioud Hasan Hanafi and Habib Fiki, *3200 Majalla wā Jarīda Arabiyya 1800-1965: 3200 Revues Journaux Arabes de 1800 à 1965*, Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1969, p. 28 (Quoted below, *Reveues*). It is also mentioned in the index of Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Maḥmūd 'Ismā'īl 'Abd al-'Allāh, *Fahras al-Dawriyyāt al-'Arabiyya al-Latī tamtalikuhā al-Dār*, Cairo: Matba'at Dār al-Kutub, 1961, p. 42 (Quoted below, *Fahras*).

in 1894.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately I have not been able so far to find the last two works. We depend in our investigation on Riḍā's citations of them.

The *fifth* chapter assesses Riḍā's attempt of searching for a 'true' Gospel by discussing his acceptance of the controversial Gospel of Barnabas. It will be discussed that Riḍā took a previous initiative to find another 'true' Gospel by publishing some fragments from the Gospel according to Tolstoy before his publication of the Arabic edition of Barnabas. I will also show that his introduction to the Gospel was one of his many strenuous efforts to prove the authenticity of the Islamic narrative on Jesus and his disciples, and his prediction of the coming of the prophet Muḥammad. In order to determine Riḍā's motivations of publishing this Gospel, we shall focus on this Arabic edition by studying the two Arabic introductions, one written by Sa'ādeh as its translator and the other by Riḍā as publisher. It should be noted that Riḍā published the Gospel in two different editions: one prefaced by the two introductions, and the second including the text of the translation without any preface, which he probably published as a cheaper and popular edition. Riḍā, however, published his own preface in *al-Manār* simultaneously with the publication of the Gospel. The reason why he did not print that of Sa'ādeh in his journal is not known. Another question that springs to the mind of any researcher of the Arabic edition is: why would Sa'ādeh, as a Christian, embark upon such an initiative, and cooperate with Riḍā, while being aware of the sensitivity of the whole subject? Did Sa'ādeh actually believe in the authenticity of the Gospel of Barnabas? Another significant point is that no previous research, to my best knowledge, has studied Riḍā's publication of this Gospel against the background of the response of indigenous Christians of his age. Also *al-Manār* does not give a clear picture about whether there had been any anti-Barnabas polemics on the part of Christians in the Muslim world. It is significant, therefore, to examine: how did the Christians (especially in Egypt) perceive the Gospel, when they saw it translated into Arabic and published by a Syrian Muslim? What kind of polemical tone did they develop against it and its publisher? In this chapter a hitherto unstudied anti-*Manār* treatise is presented. In the light of Riḍā's relation with the Coptic community, we shall examine the reaction of an Egyptian Muslim convert to Christianity and a follower of the Anglican missionary Temple Gairdner (1873-1928) against the Gospel under the title: *The Helmet of Salvation from the Hunting Trap of the Fra-Marinian Gospel of Barnabas*. The author of the treatise was a certain 'Iskandar Effendi 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Bājūrī, who identified himself as the 'missionary of Giza'.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Arabic, *Rāyat Sohyūn: Majalla 'Ilmiyya Dīniyya*. No. 1569, see, *Revues*, p. 84 and the *Fahras*, p. 143.

<sup>62</sup> 'Iskander 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Bājūrī, *Khūdhat al-Khalās min Sharak 'Injīl Barnābā al-Frā Mārīnī al-Qannās*, Cairo: Matba'at al-Tawfīq, 1908. The *Khūdhat al-Khalās* (or *helmet of salvation*) is a quotation from Ephesians 6:17. Yūsuf Manqāryūs, the head of the Clerical School in Egypt and founder of the Christian magazine *al-Haqq*, took an important part in the publication of the treatise. Bājūrī later wrote an epilogue for Zwemer's biography of al-Ghazālī, *al-Ghawwāṣ wā al-La'ālī* (Cairo, 1926). See, Jamāl al-Bannā, 'al-Ghazālī fī 'Uyūn Masīhiyya', in *al-Rāya*, Doha, 3 January 2007.

The *sixth* chapter is purported to evaluate the polemical contributions of the above-mentioned prolific polemicist Tawfiq Ṣidqī in Riḍā's journal. It is a follow-up to the first chapter in which we discuss some biographical information about him. In the period 1912-1916, Ṣidqī achieved considerable prominence in *al-Manār* due to his writings on various subjects, especially those related to the reliability of the *sunna*, Christianity, and the application of modern medical and scientific discoveries to Islamic concepts. Most relevant for us in the chapter are his polemical articles, in which he, as a physician, was able to extensively exploit English critical works on Christianity and the life of Jesus. He also attempted to analyse a wide range of Biblical passages in order to prove many 'errors and contradictions', which could not be explained away. Our discussion shall centre on three major works: 1) *The Religion of God in the Books of His Prophets*,<sup>63</sup> 2) *The Doctrine of Crucifixion and Salvation*,<sup>64</sup> and 3) *A View on the Scriptures of the New Testament and Christian Doctrines*.<sup>65</sup> All three works were first published as articles in *al-Manār*, and later compiled in separate treatises. Riḍā always published Ṣidqī's views alone, except in the case of the *Doctrine*. In corporation with him, Riḍā published the first edition of this treatise in 1331 (circa 1913). *Al-Manār* later published several editions of the treatise. The first part contained Riḍā's commentary on the Qur'ānic verse related to the slaying and crucifixion of Jesus (Surat al-Nisā', 157), earlier published in *Tafsīr al-Manār*. At the request of some of his readers, Riḍā decided to publish his commentary as a supplementary part to Ṣidqī's views. As the chapter is primarily devoted to a systematic and general analysis of Ṣidqī's ideas, I shall elaborate on Riḍā's reflections at the end of our discussion in order to keep the thematic lines of discussion as clear as possible. It is not my intention to rehearse all the christological attitudes expounded by Ṣidqī at length. My purpose is to examine these particular works, and to study their methods and the sources used.

The *seventh* chapter closes the analysis by examining how Riḍā exploited all these views in his *fatwās*. *Fatwās* are very important sources, not only because they enable us to understand the *mufīṭ*'s thoughts but they also reflect the urgent and appealing themes occupying Muslim societies. The chapter aims at serving two purposes. First of all, it sums up some elements which Riḍā already raised in his discussions on Christianity. Since its very beginning, different people in various regions brought their petitions to *al-Manār* inquiring about many subjects, including theological issues related to other religions. Secondly, it examines Riḍā's thinking in a wider perspective by focusing on the

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[http://www.raya.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu\\_no=2&item\\_no=211031&version=1&template\\_id=24&parent\\_id=23](http://www.raya.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=211031&version=1&template_id=24&parent_id=23); accessed on 3 August, 2007.

<sup>63</sup> Tawfiq Ṣidqī, *Dīn Allah fī Kutub 'Anbyā'ih*, Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1330/1912 (Cited below, *Dīn*). For technical reasons, I shall use the treatises, not the articles, as references below.

<sup>64</sup> Rashīd Riḍā & Tawfiq Ṣidqī, *'Aqīdah al-Ṣalw wā al-Fidā*, Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1331/1913 (Cited below, *'Aqīdah*).

<sup>65</sup> T. Ṣidqī, *Nazrah fī Kutub al-'Ahd al-Jadīd wā 'Aq'aid al-Naṣārā*, first edition, Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1331/1913 (Cited below, *Nazrah*).

reception of his ideas by studying the dynamic contact with his readers. As we shall see, the petitions of most of these *fatwās* came as a result of the encounter of those Muslims with Christians and missionaries. The questions to be answered here are: What were the most urgent topics in the minds of his questioners? What was the influence of missionary activities and polemics against Islam (as circulated among Muslims of that time) on the contents of the questions?

Each chapter ends with a conclusion in which a summary of the headlines of its arguments and general remarks is mentioned. The whole study will be ended with a general conclusion in which its main observations are summarized.



## Chapter One

### Riḍā's Sources of Knowledge of the West, With Special Reference to Christianity

Before dealing with Riḍā's sources of knowledge, it is significant to note that various researchers have already agreed that Western writings of the higher Biblical criticism which emerged in European universities in the 19th century had a great deal of influence on the Muslim apologetic literature on Christianity. All the critical questions regarding the biblical miracles and the historical events were rapidly transferred to the Muslim lands, especially after the famous debate between the German missionary Karl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-1865) and the above-mentioned Indian polemicist al-Qairanāwī. Al-Qairanāwī used different works of famous European theologians, such as Thomas Hartwell Horne (1780-1862) and David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), who were influenced by the historical criticism of European theology. The Pfander-Qairanāwī public debate represents a crucial point in Christian-Muslim controversy in the modern time.<sup>1</sup> The arguments used by al-Qairanāwī affected most of the subsequent Muslim writings, including those of Riḍā, who often praised him.

Albert Hourani described Riḍā as a Muslim scholar, who 'belonged to the last generation of those who could be fully educated and yet alive in a self-sufficient Islamic world of thought'.<sup>2</sup> Riḍā, moreover, believed that if it were not for the Church, for politicians, and for the inner decay of the Islamic tenets of faith, Europe might well become Muslim.<sup>3</sup> Unlike his mentor 'Abduh (who had close personal relations with a number of Europeans, traveled more than once in Europe, and was able to read French),<sup>4</sup> Riḍā could not read in any foreign language, except very little Turkish. But he managed to draw his vast

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<sup>1</sup> Christine Schirmacher, 'The Influence of Higher Bible Criticism on Muslim Apologetics in the Nineteenth Century', in Jacques Waardenburg (ed.), *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 274. Christian W. Troll, 'New Light on the Christian-Muslim Controversy of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 34 (1994), pp. 85-88; C. Schirmacher, 'Muslim apologetics and the Agra debates of 1854: a Nineteenth Century Turning Point', *Bulletin of the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies*, vol. 13/1 (1994), pp. 74-84. Al-Qairanāwī's book *Izhār al-Haqq* became the most popular and widely read book in the Ottoman Empire, see Ignaz Goldziher, 'Über Muhammedanische Polemik gegen ahl al-kitāb', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, XXXII (1878), pp. 343-344 (Quoted below, 'Polemik'). Al-Qairanāwī used such works as, T.H. Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scripture*, London, 1818; and D.F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (The Life of Jesus), Bonn, 1835.

<sup>2</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abduh was a friend of the English writer Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. See Blunt's diaries, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events*, two parts, London: Martin Secker, 1918. See also the account of his visit accompanied by Blunt to the English philosopher Herbert Spencer in his house in Brighton (August 1903), part II, pp. 69-70.

knowledge of the Western world from various sources. On more than one occasion, he stated that he acquired his primary experience about the modern progress of the West, when he was in Lebanon through his discussions and personal contact with those whom he labelled as 'liberal Christian intellectuals' and with American missionaries. As a studious visitor of American missionary bookshops and Christian liberal societies, he started to read their books and journals, such famous Arabic journals as *al-Muqataṭaf* and *al-Ṭabīb*.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Arab world witnessed at this time a rapid increase in the number of translated books in various fields. Publishing ventures (mostly dominated by Syrian Christians) brought their readers news and popular treatment of Western thought and institutions from many perspectives. This provided Riḍā with another opportunity to compensate his inability to read in Western languages with the help of translated books.<sup>6</sup>

The present chapter is devoted to study Riḍā's attempts to find his sources of knowledge on the West. Although *al-Manār* gives a good picture of Riḍā's line of thought in this regard, his remaining papers in the family archive could add to our knowledge more about other dynamic factors, which obviously contributed to *al-Manār*'s conceptualisation of the West in general, and of Christianity in particular. A detailed analysis of Riḍā's sources would go beyond the scope of this study. I also admit that it will be unattainable to systematically trace all the sources exploited by Riḍā throughout his journal's thirty-seven years of publication. Selecting a representative sample of these sources, however, would be sufficient to adequately evaluate the kind of approach he was using both in his criticism of other religions and his own justification for defending Islam.

### 1.1. Western Ideas in Arabic Print

In his pioneering study of Riḍā's views on the West, Shahin notes that the introduction of many European writings on sociology, jurisprudence and politics into the modern Arabic literary movement played an important role in moulding the political and social awareness of Muslim thinkers. In 1876, for instance, a disciple of al-Afghānī translated *Histoire de la Civilization en Europe* by the French historian F. Guizot. 'Abduh also admired the book and read it to his Azharī students in his house.<sup>7</sup>

Riḍā also was keenly aware of the significance of making use of such works in his journal. Shahin has traced a few of the Western works, which Riḍā read and fully admired. Among the names which his journal introduced and reviewed were Dumas, Tolstoy, Hugo and Homer, Gustave Le Bon, E. Desmoulins, Shaw, and others. The authors of a particularly profound impact

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<sup>5</sup> See, Riḍā, *Azhar*, p. 193.

<sup>6</sup> Robert M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society: An interpretation*, Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 88-89; Emad Eldin Shahin, 'Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's Perspectives on the West as Reflected in *al-Manār*', *The Muslim World*, vol. LXXIX (1989), pp. 113-114.

<sup>7</sup> Shahin, *Eyes*, p. 25.

on his thought, and whose writings were frequently quoted in *al-Manār*, were Le Bon's *Les Lois Psychologiques de l'évolution des Peuples*, Desmoulins' *A Quoi Tient la Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?*, and Spencer's *Education* and *The Principles of Sociology*.<sup>8</sup> One of his most important objectives of analysing them was, besides, to sustain his arguments against Western missionary assaults on Islam. He and his group of apologists often quoted these studies in order to justify Islam as a way of life that is in harmony with the 20th ethics and beliefs.<sup>9</sup>

In its early years, *al-Manār* enthusiastically reviewed works translated by the Egyptian jurist Aḥmad Fathī Zaghlūl (1863-1914),<sup>10</sup> such as his translation of *L'Islam: impressions et études* by Henry de Castries (1850-1927).<sup>11</sup> Riḍā's citation of Zaghlūl's translation was said to largely contribute to the fame of his journal among the Egyptian audiences. As a result of their reading of Zaghlūl's translation in *al-Manār*, a group of notable jurists and lawyers became subscribers to the journal.<sup>12</sup> In the period October 1899-September 1906, *al-Manār* published a translation series of the educational work, *L'Émile du dix-neuvième siècle*, by the French writer Alphonse Esquiros (d. 1876).<sup>13</sup> The translation was prepared for *al-Manār* by the Egyptian jurist 'Abd al-'Azīz Effendi Muḥammad, the attorney general at the Zaqāzīq Court in the Nile Delta, who was motivated by 'Abduh to translate the book.<sup>14</sup>

Riḍā believed that most of these European philosophers and writers had not entirely relinquished religion, but rejected the traditions of the Church and perceived its hierarchy as responsible for their backwardness.<sup>15</sup> As compared to missionaries and Western medieval writers, he admitted the moderateness of some modern Western scholars who fairly studied Islam and had no purpose of blindly attacking its scriptures and history.<sup>16</sup> He moreover criticised Muslim scholars for not taking any initiative to learn foreign languages or at least to know what is written in foreign languages on Islam. Admiring the ideas contained in such works, he constantly urged his Muslim fellow scholars to read

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Eban, *op. cit.*, p. 172-171.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Zaghlūl was the brother of the well-known political leader Sa'ad Zaghlūl, who was known for his translations of works by people such as Jeremy Bentham on the principles of Legislation, and the French works of Descartes, Desmoulins and Le Bon, see, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid, *Egypt and Cromer, A Study in Anglo-Egyptian Relations*, London: John Murray, 1968, p. 152.

<sup>11</sup> Paris: Colin, 1896. The book was also quoted by subsequent Muslim scholars, such as Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, see, *al-Ta'aṣṣub wā al-Tasāmuḥ bayna al-Masīhiyya wā al-'Islām*, Cairo, 1965, pp. 149-196.

<sup>12</sup> *Tārīkh*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1006-1007.

<sup>13</sup> *L'Émile du dix-neuvième siècle*, Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1869.

<sup>14</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 2/31 (Jumādā al-'Ākhira 1317- October 1899), p. 489. *Al-Manār* later published the articles in one volume under the title, *Emīl al-Qarn al-Tāsi' 'Ashar aw al-Tārbiyyah al-Istiqlālīyyah*, 1331 (1913).

<sup>15</sup> Shahin, *Eyes*, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> See, Riḍā's appraisal of the works of the Italian Leone Caetani (1869-1935), *al-Manār*, vol. 11/1 (Muḥarram 1326/March 1908), pp. 9-31.



them as a good instrument in ‘convincing Europe that Islam is a religion of knowledge and cultivation.’<sup>17</sup>

In a similar way, Arabic journals extensively published many of the views of Western writers and politicians on Islam and Muslims, which Riḍā also eagerly followed and used in his refutation of any attack on Islam. An important example was his regular citation from the London-based monthly review *The Nineteenth Century and After*, which was a widely known periodical in Arab journals. He selected some of its articles containing views of Western scholars on Eastern and Islamic issues.<sup>18</sup> He also knew the name of the Scottish diplomat and writer David Urquhart (1805-1877), and some of his writings on the ‘spirit of the East’.<sup>19</sup> In February 1914, he quoted and gave a detailed comment on a lecture delivered in the same year by the Dutch orientalist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) at Columbia University on the religious state of Muslims and the relationship between Islam and Christianity in the Dutch East Indies, which was earlier translated by the Syrian Arabic journal *al-Hudā*.<sup>20</sup>

Riḍā’s illustration of these views sometimes carried a double message to those whom he considered ‘atheists among Muslims.’<sup>21</sup> For instance, he quoted the New York-based tri-weekly Arabic newspaper *al-Bayān*<sup>22</sup> on the renunciation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to the Lausanne Treaty between the U.S. and Turkey. The background of that event dates back to 1923, when the Presbyterian missionary groups denounced this treaty. Later in 1926, Bishop William T. Manning of the Episcopal Church induced 110 bishops to sign a memorial in which they condemned it, as they believed that it negatively affected their missionary work by enforcing laws that would prohibit the teaching of religion.<sup>23</sup> But Senator William Edgar Borah (1865-1940), the Chairman of the Senate’s Foreign Affairs Committee and the Administration, backed the treaty by rejecting their appeal because of his country’s international

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Kitāb al-Islām’, *al-Manār*, vol. 1/11 (Muharram 1316/June 1898), p. 184.

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, *al-Manār*, vol. 15/3 (Rabi‘ al-ʿAwwal 1330/March 1912), pp. 201-209; vol. 15/4 (Rabi‘ al-ʿĀkhar 1330/April 1912), pp. 299-305; vol. 15/8 (Sha‘bān 1330/August 1912), pp. 627-636; vol. 18/2 (Rabi‘ al-ʿĀkhar 1333/March 1915), pp. 141-153.

<sup>19</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 5/3 (Ṣafar 1320/May 1902), pp. 101-104. Cf. D. Urquhart, *The Spirit of the East, Illustrated in a Journal of Travels through Roumeli during an eventful period*, 2 vols., London: Henry Colbourn, 1838; G. H. Bolsover, ‘David Urquhart and the Eastern Question, 1833-37: A Study in Publicity and Diplomacy’, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 8/4 (December, 1936), pp. 444-467.

<sup>20</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, ‘Al-ʿIslām Yuqāwim al-Naṣrāniyya’, *al-Manār*, vol. 17/3 (Rabi‘ al-Awwāl 1332/February 1914), pp. 210-217; see, Riḍā’s reply, vol. 17/4 (Rabi‘ al-ʿĀkhar 1332/March 1914), pp. 268-272.

<sup>21</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 27/2 (Shawwāl 1344/May 1926), p. 157.

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Bayān* was founded by the Syrian journalist Sulaymān Baddūr (d. 1941) in 1911. It played a major role in her support of the Great Syrian Revolution against the French (1925-1926). See, *Ziriklī*, vol. 3, p. 122. The newspaper maintained a consistently high literary and journalistic reputation. See, B. T. Mehdi, *The Arabs in America 1492-1977*, New York, 1978, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Robert L. Daniel, ‘The Armenian Question and American-Turkish Relations, 1914-1927’, *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 46/2 (Sep., 1959), p. 272.

commercial and political relations.<sup>24</sup> Riḍā drew the attention of whom he named as ‘geographical’ Muslims to the renunciation by those bishops of the treaty as a sign of their strong religious sentiments and solidarity. Those Muslims should learn a lesson from that, and should not be ‘tempted’ by any slogans which would indicate that Europe was completely on the secularization path. Religion, in Riḍā’s evaluation, was still playing an important role in Western politics.<sup>25</sup>

At another level, *al-Manār* polemicized against Christianity by using the well-known controversy around the views of the former dean of Saint Paul’s Cathedral in London W.R. Inge (1860-1954) on Christianity. Inge was known in his time as the ‘outspoken Dean’ or sometimes ‘Mr. Valiant-for-Truth’.<sup>26</sup> In his career, he extensively contributed to different magazines and papers. In April 1927, Riḍā eagerly cited a report made by *The Daily Express* on some of Inge’s conclusions on the relationship between the natural sciences and religious knowledge, which he spelled out in a book under the title *Science, Religion and Reality*.<sup>27</sup> The book had ‘a practical object, that of indicating possible terms of peace [...] between religion and science.’<sup>28</sup> Riḍā quoted *The Daily Express* which described the controversy as a ‘bombshell with heavy clatters’ in the body of Christian churches.<sup>29</sup> As a modernist (although he himself disliked the term), Inge accepted the ‘unfettered’ criticism of the Bible in general, but he felt very much the tension it created for orthodoxy. He rejected the miracles as props or proofs for the Christian creed, and made a clear distinction between natural and supernatural sciences.<sup>30</sup> Riḍā’s idealism led him wonder: ‘Had Inge read his writings [in *al-Manār*] on the miraculous nature of [the Qur’ān], he would have become one of its preachers.’<sup>31</sup> He even added that ‘Inge, and people like him, searching for [the truth] had no other resort but the religion of the Qur’ān, which combines ‘reason’ with ‘heart’, and is supported by logic and science’.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> More about Borah’s life, see, Robert James Maddox, *William E. Borah and American foreign policy*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970.

<sup>25</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 27/2, p. 157.

<sup>26</sup> W. R. Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, first and second series, 2 vols., London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1924-1926. More about his life, see, Adam Fox, *Dean Inge*, London: John Murray, 1960, p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Needham (ed.), *Science, Religion and Reality*, foreword by Arther James Balfour, London: Sheldon Press, 1925. See also, W. R. Inge, *Science and Ultimate Truth*, Fison Memorial Lecture, 1926, Longmans, 1926. Cf. G. Valente, ‘A Finite Universe?’ Riemannian Geometry and the Modernist Theology of Ernest William Barnes’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 38 (June 2005), p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> L. P. Chambers, ‘Book Review: *Science, Religion and Reality*, by Joseph Needham’, *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 37/1 (Jan., 1928), p. 78.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Taḥawwl al-Kanīsa al-Injīziyyah ‘An al-Taḳālid al-Naṣrāniyya (The Church of England recants its Christian traditions)’, *al-Manār*, vol. 28/2 (Ramaḍān 1346/April 1927), pp. 144-149.

<sup>30</sup> Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>31</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 28/2, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

*Al-Manār* was always in search for Western views which might support the Islamic views concerning the negation of the divinity of Jesus. For example, Riḍā quoted an article from the Swiss daily *Journal de Genève* (27 January 1928) dealing with a controversial lecture given in Geneva on the early Christian history.<sup>33</sup> Riḍā had received the Arabic text of the article from one of his readers who had a good command of French. It referred to a lecture delivered by the Swiss theologian Auguste Lemaître (1887-1970) at the Society of Protestant Friends in Geneva in which he raised critical questions on various subjects, including the divinity of Jesus. The *Journal* commented that the problem of the nature of Jesus is as old as Christianity. All Churches, Protestant or Catholic, still believe in his divinity, and make this article of faith a basis of their theology. The faith in the divinity of Jesus requires a new rational theory regarding the relation between the Father and the Son.<sup>34</sup> As a liberal theologian, Lemaître was against 'rigidity' and 'returning back to old formulas'. 'Investigating the essence of God and the approach of understanding of the real meaning of Christ in history changes through ages. It is possible that the relationship between Christ and God is neither decided at the moment, nor in any historical period. It is rather better to amend the constitutions of faith according to the age while completely keeping up the traditions; but one should seek the real links between this tradition and the modern age.'<sup>35</sup> Riḍā was convinced that such Christian forums in the West would be enough verification that the Qur'ān had brought forward clear-cut evidences as regard to the Christian belief many centuries ago. In this vein, he continued, the Church resisted such voices, since it was worried that Christians would one day become free-thinking and researchers among them would in droves convert to Islam.<sup>36</sup>

Religious developments in Germany, especially Adolf Hitler's pressure on the churches, were also widely discussed in Egyptian journals. In 1934, for instance, Riḍā published two articles on what he titled: 'The Nazi Irreligious Movement and the Bravery and Frankness of the Vatican', and 'Religious Conflicts among German Protestant Sects'.<sup>37</sup> The historical background of these two articles was the opposition of a group of young pastors to Hitler and the policy of 'Nazification' of the German Protestant Churches, when he nominated the fervent pro-Nazi bishop Ludwig Müller (1883-1945) as the country's Reichsbishop and 'Delegate and plenipotentiary for all questions

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<sup>33</sup> 'Tatawwur al-Itiqād bi Ulūhiyyat al-Masīḥ (Development of the belief in the divinity of Jesus)', *al-Manār*, vol. 29/9 (Sha'bān 1349/February 1928), p. 693-695.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 693

<sup>35</sup> As quoted in *al-Manār*, ibid., p. 693. Lemaître followed what he himself called 'une démarche de désespoir'. It is 'Une théologie qui commence par nier toute trace de la réalité divine dans la conscience ne peut connaître Dieu en Christ que par une démarche purement arbitraire'. See, Bernard Reymond, 'La théologie libérale dans le protestantisme de Suisse romande', *Évangile et liberté: périodique du protestantisme libéral français*, October 1999. E-copy is available at: <http://www.eglise-reformee-mulhouse.org/el/eln2.htm>, accessed on 25 May 2007.

<sup>36</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/9, p. 695.

<sup>37</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 34/1 (Muḥarram 1353/May 1934), pp. 73-78. *Al-Manār* cited here the Egyptian dailies, *al-Muqaṭṭam* (7 March, 1934) and *Kawkab al-Sharq* (12 April 1934).

concerning the Evangelical churches'. The resistance movement, known as the so-called *Bekennende Kirche* (or Confessing Church), was primarily led by Martin Niemöller (1892-1984), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) and Heinrich Gruber (1891-1975).<sup>38</sup> The Pope was alarmed by the whole series of events, especially by the conflict with the Evangelical church. The Vatican expressed its serious anxiety about the Church and Germany, and that it might be a rehearsal for a similar treatment of the Catholics.<sup>39</sup> *Al-Manār* also referred to the rejection by the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946) of the fundamental tenets of the Christian doctrine, and his desire to build up what Riḍā called 'a new racist religion'.<sup>40</sup> Riḍā did not give any analysis of the situation, except his short comment that 'Germany and its people – the most civilized in the world – [...] were trying to get rid of such a 'falsified' religion [Christianity], which is contradictory to scientific facts and rational self-evident truths; [...] including] its strict rules, church system, big wealth, fanaticism of its bishops and priests, and their spiritual authority on the people'.<sup>41</sup>

Within the above-mentioned context, archaeological discoveries on Biblical themes on the one hand and Western contemporary discussions on Biblical figures and their relation to Islam on the other attracted *al-Manār's* attention. We turn now to compare Riḍā's early polemical treatment of the discovery of the Code of Hammurabi and the famous *Babel-und-Bibel-Streit* with his later harsh response to the release of the Arabic translation of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and the ideas of A.J. Wensinck, mentioned above.

### 1.1.1. Hammurabi and the Babel-und-Bibel-Streit (1903)

Riḍā considered such discoveries as 'great news', 'a step from within Europe [to] jump to Islam', 'a new line of thought in Christianity', and 'the appearance of a new Qur'ānic sign'.<sup>42</sup> *Al-Manār* must have depended on various Arabic papers and journals, which followed these discussions. In his journal, Farah Anṭūn (see, chapter 2), for instance, published lengthy quotations from

<sup>38</sup> S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-1945*, Regent College Publishing, 2001, p. 35. Cf. John S. Conway, 'The Historiography of the German Church Struggle', *Journal of Bible and Religion*, vol. 32/3 (July 1964), pp. 221-230.

<sup>39</sup> Conway, *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>40</sup> 'Al-Nizā' al-Dīnī fi Almāniya: Ba'd Rijāl al-Kanīṣah yataḥadawna al-Nāzī (Religious conflict in Germany: Some Clergymen challenge Nazism)', *al-Manār*, vol. 33/9 (Dhū al-Qi'dah 1352/February 1934), pp. 692-696. *Al-Manār* quoted here another article published in *Kawkab al-Sharq* (22 January 1934). Rosenberg pleaded for a new 'religion of the blood', based on defending the Arian soul and its noble character. More about Rosenberg's ideas on Christianity, see, for example, Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 92-121.

<sup>41</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 34/1, p. 78.

<sup>42</sup> 'Al-Naba' al-'Azīm (Great News)', *al-Manār*, vol. 6/3 (Ṣafar 1321/May 1903), pp. 87-109.

Western and Arabic periodicals on this subject as front-page in his famous paper *al-Jāmiʿa*.<sup>43</sup>

Friedrich Delitzsch was the major figure behind the *Streit*. In his lectures, delivered at the *Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft* before an audience including the emperor of Germany Wilhelm II (1859-1941), Delitzsch found a certain relationship between the Old Testament and Assyrian creation myths. He not only pointed to the presence of Babylonian ideas in biblical texts, but ultimately opposed the Church's concept of divine Revelation as well. His ideas on the subject triggered vehement controversies and many articles appeared contradicting him.<sup>44</sup>

Riḍā referred to the historical arguments that the Mosaic laws were similar to the Code of Hammurabi, whose black diorite block (2.25 metre) had been discovered in 1901 under the ruins of Susa, the ancient capital of Babylon.<sup>45</sup> Riḍā maintained that German scholars identified King Hammurabi with the Biblical figure Amraphel (Genesis 14: 18-20).<sup>46</sup> He argued that Amraphel was the Biblical figure Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham according to the story of the Old Testament, and was also mentioned in the New Testament as in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews (7:1-3). But he reconfirmed that Hammurabi, unlike Moses, was an idolater and his scriptures were of a pagan nature.<sup>47</sup>

Riḍā criticised Muslim scholars, such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and others, for their conclusion that the Torah was transmitted by uninterrupted chains of transmission (*tawātur*), and that its distortion (*tahrīf*) according to the Qur'ānic verses was not related to the text. According to this Islamic view, scripture that has been passed down by means of this successive transmission was not prone to textual corruption. God would not allow His word to be distorted so that it was no longer truthful.<sup>48</sup> Riḍā maintained that such views gave missionaries the chance in their attempt to convince common people that Muslim scholars admitted the invulnerability of the Torah against textual corruption. Later

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<sup>43</sup> 'Mashāhīr al-Sharq: Hammūrābī', *al-Jāmiʿa*, vol. 4/2 (March 1903), pp. 67-78; he has quoted among others the American Protestant magazine *al-Nashrah al-'Usbū'iyya* (founded 1871, Beirut).

<sup>44</sup> Friedrich Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel. Ein Vortrag. (gehalten am 13. Januar 1902)*, Leipzig, Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung 1902; id., *Zweiter Vortrag über Babel und Bibel*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1903; id., *Babel und Bibel: Ein Rückblick und Ausblick*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1904; Idem., *Babel und Bibel: Dritter (Schluss-) Vortrag*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1905. See also, Reinhard G. Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel-Streit*, Freiburg/Schweiz: Univ.-Verl.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1994; Emil G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1955, pp. 147-163. Klaus Johanning, *Der Bibel-Babel-Streit: Eine forschungsgeschichtliche Studie*, Frankfurt, 1988.

<sup>45</sup> F. Delitzsch, *Zweiter vortrag*, p. 22. Cf. Stanley A. Cook, *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi*, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903; F. M. Th. Böhl, 'King Hammurabi of Babylon in the setting of his time (About 1700 B.C.)', in *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen*, 9 (1946) pp. 341-368.

<sup>46</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/3, p. 89.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>48</sup> See, Chawkat Moucarray, *The Prophet & The Messiah: An Arab Christian's Perspective on Islam & Christianity*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001, *passim*, pp. 47-72

Muslims attempted to study the Scriptures carefully, and reached other conclusions. The Qur'ānic affirmation of the corruption of the scriptures in their present form, he went on, became much clearer after Western scholars had historically criticised them.<sup>49</sup> Riḍā challenged Christian missionaries to refute these archaeological discoveries. He saw a positive aspect of Christian missionary attacks on Islam that they should stimulate Muslims to study and translate such Western books on the Bible, and to make known for everybody that 'the Bible contains information fully contradictory to science'.<sup>50</sup>

Riḍā labelled the discovery of the Code of Hammurabi as a 'quake' in Europe with regard to the history of the Bible. *Al-Manār* dealt in some detail with the repercussions of the Bible and Babel controversy, and its impact on the belief in the divine nature of the Bible in Europe. In the wake of Delitzsch's first lecture in 1902, public opinion forced Kaiser Wilhelm II to distance himself from Delitzsch's proposal that the Old Testament was nothing but transcribed Assyrian wisdom.<sup>51</sup> The Kaiser met Delitzsch in the presence of his wife Auguste Viktoria and the *Oberhofprediger* Ernest Dryander (1843-1922). *Al-Manār*, probably following *al-Jāmi'a* of Faraḥ Anṭūn, quoted the Arabic translation of the German text of the Kaiser's letter to Admiral Friedrich von Hollmann (1842-1913) in which he tells the story of his meeting with Delitzsch.<sup>52</sup>

Riḍā was not surprised by the interest of Wilhelm II in the issue. He was persuaded that the Kaiser interfered in the affair only to use religious sentiments as instrument for achieving his political success by demonstrating that politics is no enemy of science, but its strongest tool.<sup>53</sup> Riḍā described the Kaiser's letter to Hollmann as 'illusive' and 'contradictory', but also showed his 'impulsiveness, deep understanding and experience'.<sup>54</sup>

Depending on the Kaiser's own words, Riḍā made an Arabic analysis of the arguments. The Kaiser divided the revelation into two kinds: the first historical and ongoing, while the second is purely religious.<sup>55</sup> As for the first kind, the Kaiser said: 'It [the revelation] sometimes appears in the shape of a great man, a priest, or a king, either amongst the heathens, the Jews or the Christians. Hammurabi was one of these; Moses, Abraham, Homer, Charles the Great, Luther, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kant, and the Emperor Wilhelm the Great as well. God chose them and saw them qualified to achieve great and everlasting deeds and be in service of their people according to His will, both in

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<sup>49</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol 6/3, pp. 87-88.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>51</sup> By 1905, the controversy had resulted in the publication of 1,650 articles and 28 pamphlets, see, Suzanne Marchand, 'German Orientalism and the Decline of the West', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 145/4 (December, 2001), pp. 468-469.

<sup>52</sup> About the letter, see, Lehnmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-230.

<sup>53</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/3, p. 96

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96; See chapter 7: 'Der Babel-Bibel-Streit als Politikum Kaiser Wilhelm II', in Lehnmann, *op. cit.*, p. 211-230.

<sup>55</sup> 'Eine fortlaufende, gewissermaßen historische [Offenbarung]' and 'eine rein religiöse auf die spätere Erscheinung des Messias vorbereitende Offenbarung'. As quoted in, *ibid.*, p. 224.

spiritual or mundane acts.<sup>56</sup> The second kind of revelation had started with Abraham and was ended by the coming of Jesus.

Riḍā was, however, extremely astonished that the Kaiser did not include Islam as a religious community beside the heathens, Jews and Christians, and Muḥammad as a prophet beside other prophets. Wilhelm II, according to him, was either 'ignorant' or 'fanatic'.<sup>57</sup> It was the German Emperor, who as part of his *Weltpolitik* visited Constantinople and Damascus (autumn 1898) and in a flirting spectacular speech declared himself as a friend of Islam and the protector of the sultan and the Muslim World.<sup>58</sup> Riḍā ironically indicated that the Kaiser mentioned his grandfather among great historical figures as if he intended to portray him as 'a tool' in the hands of God, which was entitled to preserve the German glory and establish the German Empire. But this alleged divine message was, in Riḍā's view, baseless, as his grandfather was none but an 'instrument' in the hands of his Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck (1862-1890).<sup>59</sup> Riḍā contended that the prophet of Islam has proved to be greater than Bismarck, and there would never come any new discovery to discredit the Divine origin of his mission.<sup>60</sup>

Riḍā's conclusions from Hollmann's letter mainly depended on his acceptance of the aspects that were in agreement with Islam. In the letter, he accepted the existence of God as the only creator of the world, and that people were in dire need of revelation in their search for knowledge about God. But he primarily rejected the Kaiser's division, and found it absurd and impossible that the Divine entity would be 'split into parts'. Human beings, according to him, are tiny creatures as compared to the ultimate and countless beings in the universe. It was also arrogant to confine the Divine to some individuals on the earth, which is a tiny planet in the universe. God, Riḍā continued, diffuses a spiritual world in the cosmic system with all astonishing secrets and comprehensiveness. In their pagan phase, human minds recognised that world, and called it 'the world of deities', and believed that every part of the universe was organised by its own god. But prophets receiving their missions through revelation named it 'the world of angels', which illustrates that the prophet's spirit is highly connected with these spirits in the acquisition of the Divine knowledge.<sup>61</sup> Riḍā differentiated between the knowledge of prophets and that of poets and kings. The former is not acquisitionable (*muktasab*), but revealed to them through the Spirit with its main subject of faith and the preservation of a specific connection between God and people. The latter is acquisitionable

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<sup>56</sup> In German: 'Offenbart er sich bald in diesem oder jenem großen Weisen, oder Priester oder König, sei es bei den Heiden, Juden oder Christen. Hammurabi war einer, Moses, Abraham, Homer, Karl der Grosse, Luther, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kant, Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse. Die hat er ausgesucht und Seiner Gnade gewürdigt, für ihre Völker auf dem geistigen wie physischen Gebiet nach seinem Willen Herrliches Unvergängliches zu leisten.' Ibid, p. 224

<sup>57</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/3, p. 98

<sup>58</sup> Holger Weiss, 'German Images of Islam in West Africa', *Sudanic Africa*, vol. 11 (2000), p. 53.

<sup>59</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/3, p. 101

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 101

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 102-103.

with no specified subject, but including imaginations, fantasies, stories and policies.<sup>62</sup>

Riḍā concluded that the Kaiser was mistaken in many of his remarks. He firstly argued that monotheism was known among nations before Abraham. Although there was no historical sign of its existence, there were prophets before him who had also propagated it. Secondly, God's manifestation in Christ was less than His manifestation in Moses, since Jesus only follows the Law of Moses with little reforms: 'I came not to change the law'. His manifestation in Muḥammad, Riḍā went on, was more than that in Abraham, Moses and Jesus, as he was the only figure to whom Jesus' prophecy (John, 16: 12-14) was applicable.<sup>63</sup>

### 1.1.2. Arabic Translation of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1933)

Thirty years later the afore-mentioned Dutch orientalist A.J. Wensinck summarized the thesis of his teacher Snouck Hurgronje on the position of the prophet 'Ibrāhīm' in a lemma in the *EI*.<sup>64</sup> Snouck never attempted to translate his dissertation, but his ideas became widely known through Wensinck's article in the *EI*. The sensitivity of the historical analysis of the figure of Ibrāhīm dates back to the well-known case of the Egyptian liberal intellectual Tahā Ḥusayn, almost seven years before the publicity of the ideas of the *EI*.<sup>65</sup>

In his article, Wensinck argued that major attention was paid to Abraham in the Qur'ān only after Muḥammad migrated to Medina, and not before the outbreak of the dispute between himself and the local Jewish community. In this manner Abraham was presented as the forerunner of Muḥammad, precursor of Islam, preacher of pure monotheism, and founder of the Ka'ba with his son Ismā'īl inviting all mankind to perform Hajj. This would have allowed Muḥammad to claim priority for Islam over Judaism and Christianity. The reason behind the acceptance of the Abraham concept was primarily designed to provide the Prophet with a new means to demonstrate the independence of the Islamic faith vis-à-vis Judaism and to present Islam from that time on as the originally revealed religion.<sup>66</sup>

The present writer has elsewhere analyzed the Wensinck affair in the context of the question of academic freedom and Western scholarship on Islam

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Het Mekkaansche Feest*, Leiden, 1880. Cf. A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammads*, Berlin, 1869.; A. J. Wensinck, 'Ibrahim' in *EI*, II, 432a. See the critical views, Y. Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran*, Paris 1958; Rudi Paret, 'Ibrahim', in *EI*, III, 980a.

<sup>65</sup> About Husayn's indebtedness to Western scholarship, see Mohamed Al-Nowaihi, 'Towards the Reappraisal of Classical Arabic Literature and History: Some Aspects of Taha Husayn's Use of Modern Western Criteria', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 11/2 (Apr., 1980), pp. 189-207; Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'Towards a Structural Analysis of Pre-Islamic Poetry', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 6/2 (Apr., 1975), pp. 148-184.

<sup>66</sup> Khalil Athamina, 'Abraham in Islamic Perspective: Reflections on the Development of Monotheism in Pre-Islamic Arabia', *Der Islam*, vol. 81 (2004), p. 185.



with an example from Egypt in the early 1930s.<sup>67</sup> It has been shown that as soon as the Egyptian royal decree of nominating five orientalist members in the Academy became known in the press, the Egyptian physician and health inspector Ḥusayn al-Harrāwī launched a most virulent attack against orientalist circles, especially against Wensinck. His first article appeared as a front-page in the famous Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* as, ‘Orientalists and Islam: Arabic Language Academy member Wensinck ridicules Islam’. He severely attacked the *EI*, and accused the Dutch scholar of ‘assuming a premise and then searching the Qur’ān for those verses that support this premise, discarding anything that would contradict it so as to produce a conclusion that plants the seeds of doubt in the mind of the reader. This is the method that orientalists used in their studies on Islam, on the life of the Prophet or on any matter to which they wished to bring the Qur’ān to bear as evidence. It was an old ruse, the purpose of which was to arm evangelists and colonialists with pseudo-logical arguments to shake the beliefs of the Muslim people and cause them to abandon their religion.’<sup>68</sup>

What concerns us here is Riḍā’s reaction to the publication of the Arabic edition of the *EI* as part of his evaluation of Western scholarship on Islam. These scholars of Islam were trained in theology and Semitic languages, and tried to apply similar historical methods as used by their colleagues on the same Biblical stories and their counterparts in the Qur’ān, such as the story of Abraham in the case under discussion.

Before treating Riḍā’s partaking in the controversy, we should say something about Riḍā’s relationship with Wensinck. It should be first of all stressed that Wensinck’s reputation among Muslim scholars in Egypt had been much connected to his most famous work, *A Handbook of Muḥammadan Traditions* (1927), more than his contributions to the *EI*. The prominent Muslim jurist Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (1892-1958), one of Riḍā’s students,<sup>69</sup> was perhaps the first Muslim scholar to pay attention to Wensinck’s work. In October 1928 he received the *Handbook*, which he considered as a treasure that should be known to Arab and Muslim readers. Two years later Shākir met Wensinck for the first time in the Salafiyya Library in Cairo, and requested his

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<sup>67</sup> Umar Ryad, ‘The Dismissal of A.J. Wensinck from the Royal Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo’, a paper presented at: ‘Conference Academic Freedom and Religious Freedom’, University of Leiden, 27-28 February 2007; published in Willem B. Drees & Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld (eds.), *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe: Academic and Religious Freedom in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Leiden University Press, 2008, pp. 91-134. See also, Rached Hamzaoui, *L’Académie de langue arabe du Caire: histoire et œuvre*, Tunis: Université de Tunis, 1975, p. 69ff; Sj. van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de islam*, Leiden: Documentatiebureau Islam-Christendom, Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, 1988, p. 18-23; Usep Abdul Matin, ‘The *Fatwā* of Aḥmad al-Syabāsī on encouraging Muslims to use Wensinck’s *Concordance* and *Handbook*’, an unpublished paper, Seminar Problems and Methods of Islamic Studies: Islam and the West: Their mutual relations as reflected in *Fatwā*-Literature, MA programme, Leiden University, 1999.

<sup>68</sup> Yunan Labib Rizk, ‘Chronicles’, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, no. 647, July 2003.

<sup>69</sup> Ron Shaham, ‘Egyptian Judge in a Period of Change: Qadi Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, 1892-1958’, *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 119 (1999), pp. 440-455

permission to embark upon translating the work into Arabic. In the same year, Shākir's enthusiasm about the work stimulated Riḍā to personally direct the same request at Wensinck, who replied in the affirmative: 'Yes, I wish that the book would be of much use, especially among the people of Egypt and Ḥijāz whom I respect and love much.'<sup>70</sup>

It is also worthy to note that Wensinck probably saw Riḍā for the first time when the latter was giving a lecture on February 9, 1930 at Jam'īyyat al-Rābitah al-Sharqiyya (mentioned above) in Cairo. In his travel diary, Wensinck gives a caricatural description of Riḍā: 'The Sayyid [Riḍā] is a corpulent small man without legs,<sup>71</sup> big turban, a fat nose, and a full beard, superb when he speaks. The subject was 'old and new'. The majority of the audience was enthusiastic. Before he started a young man showing great approval had stood up and said: 'Yahyā [long live] al-Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā'. This lecture [went on] with some interruptions, and sometimes the Sayyid would interrupt himself.'<sup>72</sup>

Although *al-Manār* was not directly involved in the controversy, and did not utter any explicit view on his dismissal, Riḍā's general attitude towards Wensinck and his *Handbook* was ambivalent. In the very beginning he had highly praised the author's meticulous efforts in compiling the ḥadīth. Wensinck's great critic, al-Harrāwī, belonged to Riḍā's circle, but he did not contribute to *al-Manār* journal with any anti-orientalist polemics during Riḍā's life. His work was, however, later published as a series of articles in Riḍā's journal and later in one volume by Dār al-Manār, a few months after the latter's death in 1936.

In August 1934 (seven months after Wensinck's dismissal), Riḍā wrote the preface of the *Handbook* in which he positively praised the work. He maintained that due to many commitments he was not able to fully participate in the editing of the work. He stressed the usefulness of the *Handbook* for Muslim scholars in tracing all kinds of traditions; and this work would have spared him 'three quarter' of his preceding work and effort in the study of ḥadīth.<sup>73</sup> As an orientalist, Riḍā went on, Wensinck had finished his work for the purpose of serving his career and for the sake of other orientalists; but Muslims rather needed it for the sake of knowledge about the sayings and

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<sup>70</sup> Letter, Wensinck to Riḍā, 1st September 1930, Leiden; the letter is found among Riḍā's personal papers in his archive. As Shākir could not finish the whole task of translation, Riḍā recommended Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī (1882-1968) to continue carrying out the translation work. The controversy around Wensinck's writings on Islam did not influence the continuation of the translation work. Shākir invited readers from all over the Muslim world to use the work. 'Abd al-Bāqī has been able to publish the Arabic edition of the *Handbook* under the title *Miftāḥ Kunūz al-Sunnā* (or Key to the Treasures of Sunna), Cairo: Maṭba'at Miṣr, 1934. The work was published a few months after Wensinck's dismissal from the Academy. In his introduction (written 23 July, 1934), Shākir still appreciated the work, and did not refer to the stormy debate around the man.

<sup>71</sup> In Dutch: 'zonder beenen'. Wensinck probably means that due to his thick body and the religious dress it was difficult to see his legs.

<sup>72</sup> See, Wensinck's travel diary in Egypt, Jeddah, Syria and Jerusalem (end 1929-early 1930), Leiden University Library, p. 38. UB Bijzondere Collecties (KL) - Or. 25.686.

<sup>73</sup> *Miftāḥ*, op. cit., p. 3.

traditions of their Prophet. He cited the one ḥadīth that ‘Verily, God will support Islam through men who do not belong to its adherents’.<sup>74</sup>

One year later, Riḍā, in the introduction to his last work *al-Wahy*, all of a sudden renounced his appreciation for Wensinck’s efforts. According to him, most orientalist did not belong to the independent and fair-minded European scholars, since they did not study Arabic or the books of Islam in order to know the truth about it. They were only seeking out its weak points by describing Muslims in a disfigured way so that their people would be driven away from Islam. Riḍā had a similar attitude towards the *EI*. The *EI* and Wensinck’s *Handbook*, which were two key examples that had already disappointed his high expectation of their orientalist scholarship. Riḍā recanted his earlier lofty impression and rendered it as a futile piece of work. He believed that the translation of *al-Wahy* would have the effect of influencing fair-minded Europeans and convert them to Islam. Riḍā was, however, surprised that when he sent copies of *al-Wahy* to all orientalists, it sufficed Wensinck to thank him without giving any review of the book.<sup>75</sup>

As soon as the Arabic translation of the *EI* appeared, he rushed to admit that Western scholars did Muslims a great favor. However, he pointed out that Muslims also had a record of early achievements in organizing such encyclopaedias, but had become stagnant in preserving their own heritage. He recommended Muslim readers everywhere to purchase the Arabic translation, as reading the *EI* in Arabic, the ‘public language of Islam’, would be more useful than the English, French or German editions. He summed up some reasons: 1) Man’s prime need is to know oneself, it is very useful that Muslims better know themselves through the eyes of the fair-minded, biased or opponents among the orientalists. 2) The materials on which the authors depend are abundant in Europe, and orientalists follow scholarly lines of investigation. European public opinion depended on their analyses by which they make judgments on the Orientals. 3) The translation should be supplemented with corrections and analysis made by Muslim scholars in order to guarantee the ‘adequacy’ of given data according to the mainstream of Islamic thought.<sup>76</sup>

Riḍā’s main concern was that Western historical and literary critical views on Islam should be evaluated in the light of the criticisms of Muslim scholars, who should also take part in the project. A few years earlier (1926) he welcomed an invitation provided by *Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Islamkunde*, presided by Georg Kampffmeyer (1864-1936), inviting him and other Muslim scholars to cooperate with its editorial members. He had great expectations that their invitation to work together with Muslim scholars would result in great success.<sup>77</sup> Riḍā’s suspicion of the *EI* concentrated only on two of his

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<sup>74</sup> ‘Muqaddimat Miftāḥ Kunūz al-Sunna’, *al-Manār*, vol. 34/4 (Rabī‘ al-ʿĀkhar 1353/August 1934), pp. 296-297.

<sup>75</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 35/1 (Rabī‘ al-ʿĀwwal 1354/July 1935), pp. 36-37.

<sup>76</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 33/6 (Rajab 1352/October 1933), p. 477.

<sup>77</sup> See, *al-Manār*, vol. 26/8 (Rajab 1344/February 1926), p. 638.

opponents, whom its editorial committee had chosen in the advisory board: namely the anti-Salafī Azharī scholar Sheikh Yūsuf al-Dijwī (1870-1946)<sup>78</sup> (see, chapter 3) and the fervent Muslim propagandist and Egyptian nationalist Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī (circa 1878-1954).<sup>79</sup> Dijwī's views as a traditionalist scholar were, according to Riḍā, not to satisfy the minds of 'educated' Muslims, let alone orientalists. As for Wajdī's views, they did not directly 'refute the allegations'. Riḍā requested that the committee should appoint other scholars of higher scholarly position, such as Sheikh Al-Azhar Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (1881-1945) and the Mufti of Egypt Abd al-Majīd Salīm (1882-1954).<sup>80</sup> Riḍā, however, did not further develop any scholarly historical response to Wensinck's article on Abraham, nor did he critically study the views of Dijwī and Wajdī.<sup>81</sup>

Riḍā showed a completely different attitude by publishing a more severe article in which he talked about the 'corruption' of the *EI*. 'A deceiving name', he wrote, '[...] for an encyclopedia pieced together by a group of Western scholars for the sake of serving their religion and colonial states in the Muslim world. [It was intended] to destroy Islam and its forts, after all the failure of missionary attempts to attack the Qur'ān and its prophet or spread false translations of the Qur'ān.'<sup>82</sup> He harshly attacked the contributors of the *EI* of intentionally presenting Islam and its men and history in a 'twisted' way. In general he believed that 'Westerners are highly qualified in science, arts and industry, but their qualifications in fabricating things are more effective.'<sup>83</sup> Riḍā plainly revoked his earlier recommendation of the Arabic version, as the translators did not comply with his former advice of supplementing the criticisms of Muslim scholars to what he saw as 'distorting' information on Islam. He therefore believed that their 'useful' work had now changed to become 'harmful'. He requested the *EI* subscribers to appeal to the editorial committee that the translators should add 'corrections' in the margins, otherwise they should end their subscription, by which they would be financially supporting those who attack Islam. For him, the publication of the Arabic version of the *EI* was even more dangerous than missionary books and journals. Missionary writings would hardly betray any Muslim, but the danger of *EI* could not be avoided, especially among the educated class.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> About their conflict, see, Riḍā, *Azhar*, p. 15f. Yūsuf al-Dijwī, 'Sāhib al-Manār,' *Majallat Nūr al-Islām*, vol. 3/5 (Jumāda al-'Ulā 1351/1932), p. 337 (Quoted below, 'Sāhib'); Daniel Neil Crecelius, 'The Ulama and the State in Modern Egypt', unpublished PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1967, pp. 314-315.

<sup>79</sup> About his life and works, see, Muḥammad Ṭāha al-Ḥājirī. *Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī: Hayātuh wā Athāruh*. Cairo: The Arab League, 1970.

<sup>80</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 33/6, p. 478.

<sup>81</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 33/8 (Ramaḍān 1352/December 1933), p. 630.

<sup>82</sup> 'Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmiyya wā mā fihā min Mafāsīd', *al-Manār*, vol. 34/5 (Jumāda al-'Ākhira 1353/October 1934), pp. 386-387.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

## 1.2. *Al-Manār* Literary Figures

Riḍā was the major writer in his journal, but he regularly made use of the writings of other publicists and scholars since its early appearance. In his *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, Charles Adams (having written his book during Riḍā's lifetime) branded those who gathered around Riḍā's journal and had sympathy for Abduh's ideas as the *al-Manār* party'.<sup>85</sup> He spoke of different types of people who associated themselves with the literary, political or reformist concepts laid down by 'Abduh. In collecting his information, Adams mainly depended on references in *al-Manār* itself or the biography of 'Abduh. The study of Riḍā's archive adds many more figures to the list of Adams. Mahmoud Haddad, however, has correctly remarked that not everyone who wrote in *al-Manār* can be considered a Manārist.<sup>86</sup> The Mararists were not a homogenous group, nor even a group, and even when taken as individuals they are not devoid of contradictions and inconsistencies in their various expositions.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, in order to put Riḍā's works to be dealt with in the ensuing chapters into their particular historical context at the time of their production, one has to pay attention to the social and religious setting of some of the writers of *al-Manār* by giving brief accounts of the lives and places in Riḍā's circle, and most importantly the sources they brought forward to his journal. This group of writers on whose writings Riḍā depended in his knowledge of Western sources can be divided into two categories: those who were living in Egypt or elsewhere in the Muslim world, and his associates of network among Muslim activists and writers living in the West.

### 1.2.1 Muslims Living in the West

Riḍā was in contact with many Muslims living in Europe and the United States. *Al-Manār* had, for example, its own correspondent in Cambridge, U.K.. In 1922, its anonymous correspondent wrote a report on the Girton conference held in the city (1921) on the general theme of 'Christ and the Creeds'.<sup>88</sup> The report tells us that two of the key speakers were Hastings Rashdall (1858-1924), the Dean of Carlisle, and H.D.A. Major (1871-1961), principal of Ripon Hall in Oxford. Both theologians were connected to the Modern Churchmen's Union, which developed a movement of opposition to the doctrine and practices of the Anglo-Catholic party. The Union achieved its highest public notice with its Cambridge conference. Major was accused of heresy because of his denial of

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<sup>85</sup> Adams, *Modernism*, pp. 205-247.

<sup>86</sup> Mahmoud Haddad, 'The Manarist and Modernism: An attempt to fuse society and religion', in Stéphane A. Dudoignon (et al), *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, transformation, communication*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 55.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 56

<sup>88</sup> 'Al-'Islām wā al-Naṣrāniyya', *al-Manār*, vol. 23/4 (Sha'bān 1340/April 1922), p. 267-272. For more details on the issue, see, C. W. Emmet, 'The Modernist Movement in the Church of England', *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 2/6 (Nov., 1922), pp. 561-576.

the physical resurrection of the body.<sup>89</sup> Rashdall's paper 'Christ as the Logos and Son of God' aroused sharp controversy with such statements as: 'It is impossible to maintain that God is fully incarnate in Christ, and not incarnate at all in anyone else.'<sup>90</sup>

The Druze prince Shakīb Arslān (1869-1946) was one of the foremost sources that provided *al-Manār* with information about Western religious, social and political ideas. Much has been written about his political cooperation with Riḍā in integrating Arab nationalist movements with the idea of pan-Islamism.<sup>91</sup> It suffices here to analyse a few of Arslān's relevant contributions to *al-Manār*. This serves our aim not only of understanding Riḍā's various sources, but also to show Arslān's use of these Western discussions on Christianity as consolidation of his arguments how important Islam was in his anti-imperialist struggle.

From Europe, Arslān was able to make his Geneva exile residence 'the umbilical cord of the Islamic world'.<sup>92</sup> His effectiveness as an exiled agitator rested with his ability to attract attention to his activities, to publish frequently in the Arabic press, and to maintain contact with influential groups within Arab [and Muslim] states.<sup>93</sup> For example, he extended his 'transnational network'<sup>94</sup> to include the nationalist *Salafiyya* movement in North Africa, and there he became 'a mentor of a generation'.<sup>95</sup>

Arslān repeatedly argued that pan-Islamism should be the ideal accredited remedy for the decline of Muslims and their lagging behind the Christian West. For him, Europe did not entirely succeed in separating religion from politics. It was inevitable that many politicians still interfered in matters of religion. He used the controversy around the Anglican Prayer Book, which erupted in England in July 1927, to prove his point.<sup>96</sup> Arslān intended to send an indirect message to the growing Westernising movement in the East. Those who were propagating the strict separation between religion and state should not to be 'deluded' by the conviction that Europe's progress had only been scored due to

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<sup>89</sup> Emmet, *ibid.*, p. 566.

<sup>90</sup> 'Modernism [Christian and Islamic],' *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan), vol.10, pp.7-17.

Available at:

[http://www.sjsu.edu/upload/course/course\\_1507/195\\_Christian\\_and\\_Islamic\\_Modernism.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/upload/course/course_1507/195_Christian_and_Islamic_Modernism.pdf); accessed on 18 April 2007.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, Arslān's magazine, *La Nation Arabe*, Geneva, 4 vols., 1934-1938; W. L. Cleveland, *Islam against the West: Shakīb Arslān and the campaign for Islamic nationalism in the West*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985; J. Bessis, 'Chekib Arslan et les mouvements nationalistes au Maghreb', *Revue Historique*, no. 526 (1978), pp. 467-489.

<sup>92</sup> As quoted in Cleveland, *ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>94</sup> Raja Adal, 'Constructing Transnational Islam: The East-West Network of Shakib Arslan', in Stéphane A. Dudoignon (et al), *op. cit.*, pp. 176-210.

<sup>95</sup> Cleveland, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-114.

<sup>96</sup> More about the affair, see, Robert Currie, 'Power and Principle: The Anglican Prayer Book Controversy, 1927-1930', *Church History*, vol. 33/2 (June, 1964), pp. 192-205; link on the website of the Church of England, <http://cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/1928/>, accessed on 4 April 2007.

its total separation of religion from politics.<sup>97</sup> Arslān attempted to deduce from this postulate that religion and politics were still enmeshed in Europe, and not completely detached. He cynically compared the English parliament's interference in the case to be like 'a religious synod' giving much of their attention to the Book of Prayer, while ignoring all urgent political issues.<sup>98</sup> 'The English nation as the most civilized', he went on, 'cannot pray but under the official approval of the parliament and after the royal order. Such purely confessional issues and discussions had taken place in irreligious and political councils'.<sup>99</sup>

Arslān read various Western works and introduced their ideas to the Arab readers. A significant example was his comments and additions to the Arabic translation of Lothrop Stoddard's *The New World of Islam* by the Palestinian translator Ajjāj Nuwayhid.<sup>100</sup> In *al-Manār* he praised some orientalists, while blaming and sometimes attacking others. He was impressed by the French translation of the Qur'ān made by the Swiss orientalist Edouard Montet (d. 1934).<sup>101</sup> *Al-Manār* cited his preface to the translation in which he described the origin of the Qur'ān as: 'The Qur'ānic doctrine has a strong relation with Jewish and Christian doctrines. Jewish historical reports related to Prophets and Fathers, and also the Christian ones related to Christ represent the subject of various pages of the Qur'ān.'<sup>102</sup> In his criticism, Arslān gave a systematic analysis of Montet's concept of revelation and the early history of Islam. Riḍā nevertheless did not go further than giving an emphatically traditional response that 'all Muslims disagree with the translator in his view, and they believe that all that is mentioned in the Qur'ān on the beliefs of Christians and Jews, their conditions and histories is a revelation from God'.<sup>103</sup>

Under the title 'what is being said about Islam in Europe', Arslān translated and gave his critical views on what the French military interpreter Jules Sicard wrote on 'Abduh's movement of Islamic reform'.<sup>104</sup> Aḥmad Balafriḥ (b. 1908),<sup>105</sup> Arslān's Moroccan secretary and right hand and the later founder

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<sup>97</sup> Shakīb Arslān, 'Azmat Kitāb al-Ṣalāh (The Crisis of the Book of Prayers)', *al-Manār*, vol. 29/3 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1346/June 1928), pp. 201-214.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921; Ajjāj Nuwayhid, *Ḥāqir al-'Ālam al-'Islāmī*, 4 vols., Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafiyyah, 1352/circa 1932-33.

<sup>101</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/5 (Jumādā al-'Ūlā 1348/November 1929), pp. 377-380; vol. 30/7 (Sha'bān 1348/January 1929), pp. 524-534.

<sup>102</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/5, p. 378. Compare the French text: 'Cela est si vrai que, dans les éléments communs au Christianisme et au Judaïsme, dont nous constatons la présence dans le Coran, le texte arabe du Prophète est pénétré de l'inspiration juive plutôt que de l'inspiration chrétienne: c'est la forme juive qui l'emporte.' Edouard Montet, *Mahomet: Le Coran*, Paris: Payot, 1929, p. 29.

<sup>103</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/5, p. 387.

<sup>104</sup> Jules Sicard, *Le monde musulman dans les possessions françaises: Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc, Afrique Occidentale Française*, Paris: Larose, 1928. *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/1 (Muḥarram 1348/June 1929), pp. 33-46.

<sup>105</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/3 (Rabī' al-'Awwal 1348/August 1929), pp. 211-224.

of the Istiqlal party, translated another part of the same work, which is relevant to our discussion. Balafrîj was the founder of the Association des Etudiants Nord-Africains (1927) during his study at the Sorbonne. Between 1926-1932, he regularly visited Arslân in Geneva.<sup>106</sup> Balafrîj was described by a later analyst as follows: 'he knows the works of French writers better than most French people, and on many an occasion when I called on him a year earlier I would find him engrossed in some new book by a French philosopher or historian.'<sup>107</sup>

Again Arslan and Balafrîj vouched their sharp critique against the West. It was not only Western clergymen who tried to prove the superiority of Christianity upon Islam, but also people in functions among colonial policy-makers and officers (such as Sicard).<sup>108</sup> Sicard discussed the Muslim contact with Christianity in five different points: 1) is the conversion of Muslims to Christianity possible or desirable?; 2) his own attitudes towards the political-religious terrain of Islam; 3) the dogma of the trinity; 4) the harmony [between Christianity and Islam] on matters of doctrine; and 5) moral consequences.<sup>109</sup> Sicard bluntly assumed that 'in the hearts of Muslims there is irreducible hostility towards the dogma of the Trinity. This is serious and worth being noted as it has important results in separating us [Christians] from them [Muslims]. [...] They [Muslims] do not understand, or at least their majority, that Christianity does not use the words 'father' and 'son' in the mortal sense, but strictly spiritual; we should therefore limit ourselves to this simple declaration, when discussing this subject.'<sup>110</sup>

In his general comment on Sicard's work, Riḍā also scornfully added that the author, as a French military officer, tried by his writings to agitate the spirit of hostility between his French homeland and Islam in order to justify its colonial presence, and to guarantee his position in the French army.<sup>111</sup> Riḍā vigorously reacted that it were the Christians who adamantly adhered to their hostility against the concept of 'pure' monotheism in Islam by their attachment to some 'ancient pagan doctrines'.<sup>112</sup> 'It is stupid of the writer', he continued, 'to think that he would deceive Muslims by using such puzzling and decorated words in his attempt of harmonizing the concept of trinity [for Muslims]'.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> About their relation, see, for instance, Cleveland, *op. cit.*, p. 94-102; John P. Halstead, 'The Changing Character of Moroccan Reformism, 1921-1934', *The Journal of African History*, vol. 5/3 (1964), especially pp. 443-444.

<sup>107</sup> Rom Landau, *Moroccan Journal*, London: Rebert Hale Limited, 1952, p. 4.

<sup>108</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/1, p. 223.

<sup>109</sup> Sicard, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-97.

<sup>110</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/1, p. 218. Compare: 'le dogme de la Trinité se heurte à une hostilité irréductible. Il s'agit là d'un point de doctrine très important et dont la portée a des conséquences très sérieuses, du point du vue qui nous sépare des sectateurs de l'islam [...] Ils ne se rendent pas compte, du moins en grande majorité, que les mots : Père, Fils, le Christianisme ne les entendent pas d'une manière charnelle, mais strictement spirituelle; la discussion sur le terrain doit se borner à cette simple déclaration.' Ibid., pp. 91-92.

<sup>111</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/1, p. 223.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp. 223-224.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.



As early as 1930, Muḥammad Basyūnī b. Muḥammad ‘Imrān (1885-1953), one of the followers of *al-Manār* in Indonesia (Sambas, West Borneo), sent Riḍā a query requesting him to refer it to Arslān. The query focused on the causes of Muslim decline as compared to the progress of the Western world. Arslān promptly answered the question in the form of a well-known treatise tackling the reasons why Muslim nations stagnated while the others experienced rapid progress. The treatise has become one of the significant contributions by Arslān to *al-Manār*.<sup>114</sup> ‘Imrān brought forward his appeal to Arslān to write on the subject as a continuation of what ‘Abduh and Riḍā had already written in their defense of Islam in order to renew the effect in the spirit of Muslims. Although it addressed Muslims, the treatise was primarily an indirect response to the Western incursion in the Muslim world. As Riḍā put it in his foreword to the treatise, Arslān was spurred to respond to the questions: ‘after his return from his trip to Spain and Morocco (summer 1930), and after he was aroused by the scenes of the remnants of Islamic civilization in Andalusia, and witnessed the French attempts to christianize the Berbers in Morocco as a beginning to christianize all the Arabs in North Africa, just as Spain had christianized their ancestors in Andalusia in the past.’<sup>115</sup> Arslān elucidated that he agreed with the Protestant view that the cause of decadence in Medieval Europe was not Christianity as such, but the Catholic Church under the Pope. Christianity, however, should be given the credit for saving Europe from paganism.<sup>116</sup> Arslān also briefly alluded to the above-mentioned Sicard in order to disprove the contention of certain European writers that Christianity was a bar to the progress of civilization and had been the cause of the decline and downfall of the Greeks and the Romans. According to him, Sicard, as a French agent in the Department of Religious Affairs in Rabat, was ‘a very conceited person [...] who played a key role in the process of Christianizing the Berbers.’<sup>117</sup>

In the wake of Wensinck’s affair, Arslān acknowledged orientalist works to be one of the major sources of information on Islam and Muslims for Europe. The orientalist, according to Arslān, is the *tarjumān* (translator), whose honesty or dishonesty would affect the public opinion. In the case of dishonesty, his works could agitate European hatred against Islam. Arslān divided orientalists into three categories: 1) Those who only searched for and enlarged the fallings

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<sup>114</sup> Shakib Arslān, *Lī-mādhā Ta’akhkhara al-Muslimūn wā li-mādhā Taqaddama Ghayruhum*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1349/1930-1. See the parts in *al-Manār*, vol. 31/5 (Rajab 1349/December 1930), pp. 353-370; vol. 31/7 (Ramaḍān 1349/February 1931), pp. 529-553. It has been firstly translated in English by M. A. Shakoora as: *Our decline and its causes*, firstly published 1944, Lahore: Sh. Muḥammad Ashraf. The Islamic Book Trust in Kuala Lumpur published its revised edition in 2004. My thanks are due to Dr. Nico Kaptein for lending me his copy of the translation. About Imrān’s life, him, see, Martin van Bruinessen, ‘Basyuni Imran’, in *Dictionnaire biographique des savants et grandes figures du monde musulman périphérique, du XIXe siècle à nos jours*, Fasc. no 1. Paris: CNRS-EHESS, 1992, p. 26. G.F. Pijper, *Studiën over de geschiedenis van de Islam in Indonesia, 1900-1950*, Leiden: Brill, 1977, pp. 134-141.

<sup>115</sup> Arslān, *Our decline*, p. xxi

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-89

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., pp. 92-93. The translator wrongly read him as Saicar.

and weaknesses of Muslims in the eyes of Europeans. Their main intention was to serve Christianity by 'defaming' Islam and representing it as evil. Examples of this category were H. Lammens (1862-1937), Martin Hartmann (1851-1918), D. S. Margoliouth (1858-1940) and Wensinck. 2) The second, whom he called 'sensible enemies', were those whose main concern was to serve European civilization and Christian culture and to spread those among Muslims, but with no 'deception'. Although they followed specific scientific methods, they did not always refrain from writing 'allegations' and 'poison' against Islam whenever needed. People under this category were Louis Massignon and Snouck Hurgronje. 3) A rare third class consisted of serious and objective scholars, who had no prejudice against Islam and whose critical approaches were produced after deep investigation. He counted among these Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), G. Kampffmeyer, Max Mayerhoff (1874-1945), and others. This group, according to him, knew perfectly well that they were raised with negative attitudes widespread in the West against Islam. They tried, however, to contribute in a positive way to lessening the remaining medieval perceptions and bad image of Islam in Europe.<sup>118</sup>

Arslān never read Wensinck's work, and he included his name under his first category on the basis of Harrāwī's articles. Presumably Arslān's views in this regard had an impact on Riḍā's above-mentioned hesitation. He had nothing to say on the dismissal of Wensinck from the Academy, but considered the case an internal question associated with Egyptian politics. As he was no Egyptian, he preferred to remain silent on that point.<sup>119</sup> Arslān must have known Wensinck personally as he attended and presented a paper on Arabic philology at the International Congress of Orientalists in Leiden, presided by Snouck Hurgronje in 1931.<sup>120</sup> During this event he had a short discussion with Snouck, and concluded that his views on Islam in Java proved that he was 'a wise person', 'one of the less fanatic scholars', and 'a great orientalist'.<sup>121</sup>

Arslān, on the other hand, deemed the Arabic translation of the *EI* as a useful and necessary project for young generations, despite its many 'biased attitudes', 'mistakes' and 'grave scientific errors' on Islam. He assigned these errors to the first category of orientalists. Arslān made it clear to the translation committee that they should not underestimate the diversity of contributors to the *EI*, which would make their task more difficult. The advice of historians, chemists, geographers, jurists, philosophers, astronomers, and theologians should be taken into consideration in order to be able to create a rather faultless translation, and to avoid the 'deluding' of young generations.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Shakīb Arslān, 'al-Mustashriqūn wā Māwqifuhum al-Khaṭīr min al-'Islām (Orientalists and their dangerous stance towards Islam', *al-Manār* (quoted from *al-Jihād*), vol. 33/6, pp. 435-440.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 436.

<sup>120</sup> Snouck Hurgronje (ed.), *Actes du XVIIIe Congrès International des Orientalistes, Leiden, 7-12 septembre 1931*, Leiden : Brill, 1932.

<sup>121</sup> See, his article in *Ḥaḍīr al-'Alam al-'Islāmī*, vol. 3, pp. 372-374.

<sup>122</sup> Arslān, 'al-Mustashriqūn', p. 439.

Elsewhere I have studied the life and works of the Syro-Turkish officer in Berlin Zeki Kirām, who was one of Riḍā's informants in Europe, and also belonged to the circle of Arslān.<sup>123</sup> Kirām kept Riḍā up to date with the developments of German orientalism and briefed him on the situation of Muslim institutions in Berlin and other significant news items in the German press (see, appendix I).

Kirām met Riḍā for the first time on October 13, 1921, during the latter's only visit to Europe. In his diary, Riḍā writes: '[Then] we visited [probably with Arslān] Zaki effendi Kirām al-Dimashqī in his bookstore. He is an active young man whose leg was injured during the last war, and he was treated in Germany. Then he married his nurse, and they opened a bookstore together where he sells books with her. He is now studying medicine'.<sup>124</sup>

In February 1926, Riḍā wrote to Arslān to send him Kirām's address.<sup>125</sup> Since that time, their relation grew. In Kirām's eyes, Riḍā was his 'guide', 'teacher', 'lighthouse', 'elder brother', and 'father'. For Riḍā, Kirām was a 'good and sincere friend'. Kirām had also some business with Dār al-Manār in Cairo where he had labels printed for medicines made in his private laboratory in Berlin.<sup>126</sup> Kirām also asked Riḍā to send him information or Islamic books, which he sometimes needed when writing German articles or giving lectures to German audiences on Islam.<sup>127</sup>

Kirām translated one of the works of the German orientalist Max Horten on the Islamic *Geisteskultur*. He sent a summary of his translation to Riḍā to publish in his *Manār*. His Arabic style was not perfect, and his writings in Arabic also contained occasional grammatical mistakes. Riḍā revised the Arabic translation and sent it back to Kirām for correction. Kirām suggested that he would send the revised version including with the original German terms to Horten to compare them to the Arabic sources he used.<sup>128</sup> A summary of his translation of some of Horten's ideas was later published in *al-Manār* under the title: 'Testimonies of Fair-minded Western scholars about Islam, the Prophet and the Muslims' (1929).<sup>129</sup> In another article in *al-Manār*, he discussed some of the Western medical discoveries on the 'bad effects' of pork and wine on the human body. Kirām argued that pork was prohibited by the divine revelation only because there were no microscopes with which one could have discovered its harms for the human body. For Riḍā, the divine revelation must be

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<sup>123</sup> More about his life, see, Umar Ryad, 'From an Officer in the Ottoman Army to a Muslim Publicist and Armament Agent in Berlin', *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 63/3-4 (May-August 2006), pp. 235-268 (Quoted below, 'Kirām'). It is interesting to note that I have been able to trace the family of Kirām in Germany by checking the telephone directory of Germany on the Internet.

<sup>124</sup> Riḍā's diary, October 13, 1921.

<sup>125</sup> Shakīb Arslān, *al-Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā 'aw Ikhā' Arba' in Sanah*, Damascus: Ibn Zaydūn Press, 1937, p. 441 (Quoted below, *Ikhā'*).

<sup>126</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 19 Muḥarram 1350/5 June 1931.

<sup>127</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 11 Rabī' al-<sup>2</sup> Awwal/15 July 1932.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Zekī Kirām, 'Shahadāt 'Ulamā' al-Gharb al-Munṣifin li al-<sup>2</sup>Islām wā al-Nabī wā al-Muslimīn', *al-Manār*, vol. 30/2 (Ṣafar 1348/8 July 1929), pp. 140-141. See another article by Kirām in the same volume, p. 140.

applicable to all people in all ages, and not restricted to such arguments. God, and not Muḥammad or Moses, was the one Who prohibited eating pork in the Torah and the Qur'ān.<sup>130</sup>

He also sometimes translated German orientalist works at Riḍā's request. Riḍā urgently requested him to study the work *Mohammed, sein Leben und sein Glaube*<sup>131</sup> by Tor Andrae (1885-1947), on the life of the Prophet Muḥammad and his faith, and to provide him with a summary of the book. Kirām wrote Riḍā back that he did not know the author, but promised him to translate the book into Arabic.<sup>132</sup>

The purpose of briefing *al-Manār*'s founder about the German press was that he, as an influential Muslim scholar, would get acquainted with the opinions of policymakers in Europe; and that he would also 'convey the current events [to his readers] as soon as possible in order to confront the Zionists and other enemies, who spend millions for disseminating news to the press in order to mislead the public opinion.'<sup>133</sup> The ill propaganda of some 'intruders trading in the name of Islam' also caused Islam gross damage and the propagation of 'false beliefs' under the name of Islam, such as those of Bābiyya, Bahā'iyya or Aḥmadiyya, were, in Kirām's view, the reason behind the decline of the spread of Islam in Europe.<sup>134</sup> He repeatedly complained to Riḍā about the degeneration of Muslim institutions in Berlin and their feeble role in serving Islam. He was convinced that Muslims in Berlin suffered from ill-information and a lack of understanding of the European mentality and did not have any capability of presenting Islam to the Western public in a proper way. In one letter, he directed his severe attack against the Aḥmadiyya *Islamische Gemeinde zu Berlin*.<sup>135</sup> He had serious doubts about their way of serving Islam. In his view, their work would, on the contrary, defame the image of Islam in the West. He moreover labeled the five board members of the *Gemeinde*, without giving any names, as 'charlatans', 'five fanatic communists', and 'opportunists who knocked at all doors to get financial benefits for their own interests'.<sup>136</sup>

Kirām bemoaned the state of Muslims who, like him, had nothing to defend their oppressed rights, but the 'Islamic feeling' and the 'Oriental Arab heart'.<sup>137</sup> He also tried to convince Riḍā that, 'due to his own vast readings and solid belief based on knowledge [...], he was able to launch a strong movement

<sup>130</sup> Id., 'Qawā'id al-Sihḥa fī al-'Islāmundhu 1348 Sanah wā Qawā'id al-Sihḥa fī Urūbā Ba'da 1348 Sanah', *al-Manār*, vol. 30/5, pp. 381-384.

<sup>131</sup> Tor Andrae, *Mohammed, sein Leben und sein Glaube*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1932.

<sup>132</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 8 Muḥarram 1352/May 1933.

<sup>133</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 9 October (no year).

<sup>134</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 3 Dhu al-Hijja 1351/March 1932.

<sup>135</sup> Arabic: *al-Jam'iyya al-Islāmiyya fī Berlin*, founded by Maulana Sadr-ud-Din of Lahore in Berlin Charlottenburg 1922.

<sup>136</sup> More about this, see, Ryad, 'Kirām', pp. 245-249. See, letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin 3 June 1926.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

for the cause of Islam and Arab Islamic peoples.<sup>138</sup> He considered himself as ‘one of the pivots of *’imān* (faith), and a missionary of Islam’.<sup>139</sup> The only way to destroy ‘the allegations of Zionism, Christianity, Jesuitism and Freemasonry’, in Kirām’s mind, was to use weapons of their own and select some of their controversial books for translation. Kirām maintained that his financial situation and lack of time did not help him enough to exert more efforts in ‘defending Muslim rights’,<sup>140</sup> and ‘devoting all his time to missionary work’.<sup>141</sup>

In *al-Manār*, Riḍā praised Kirām’s efforts of ‘reproaching Christian missionaries, and Muslims who give them support’. In addition, he described those Muslims as ‘atheists, slaves of colonizers and enemies of their umma’.<sup>142</sup> Among Riḍā’s papers in Cairo, I have found two Arabic manuscripts which contain the Arabic translation of a polemical text on the history of the Jesuits, which seemed to be a polemical treatise against the order. In my view, Kirām sent this translation to Riḍā, as they bear Kirām’s handwriting. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the manuscripts, which leads directly to the original work and its author(s).

On preparing his German lectures ‘Der Prophet Mohammed und die Frau’, Kirām was advised by Arslān to consult Riḍā’s then recently published work on the rights of women in Islam, *Nidā’ ’ilā al-Jins al-Latīf*. At his request, Kirām received the treatise with a word of dedication.<sup>143</sup> He delivered those two lectures on the rights of women in Islam in one of the principal Berlin hotels. The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* reviewed the lectures.<sup>144</sup> The London-based *Daily Telegraph* also commented on them.<sup>145</sup> Arabic journals, such as the Egyptian Wafdist journal *al-Jihād* and the Palestinian *al-Jāmi’ā al-Islāmiyya* (Pan-Islamism), quoted the lecture at length.<sup>146</sup>

As an Arab activist in Berlin, Kirām was preoccupied with the developments of the Zionist question in Germany. He kept Riḍā updated with

<sup>138</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 14 November 1929.

<sup>139</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 8 Muḥarram 1352/May 1933.

<sup>140</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 14 November 1929.

<sup>141</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 8 Muḥarram 1352/May 1933.

<sup>142</sup> See Riḍā’s comments on the margin of Kirām’s translation of Horten’s ideas. *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/2, p. 140.

<sup>143</sup> Letter from Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 3 Dhū al-Hijja 1351/March 1932; Rashīd Riḍā, *Nidā’ ’ilā al-Jins al-Latīf: Huqūq al-Mar’ah fī al-Islam*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1932. The treatise was found among Kirām’s collection of books with Riḍā’s signature on the front page. Cf. W. J. A. Kernkamp, *De Islām en de vrouw: Bijdrage tot de kennis van het Reformisme naar aanleiding van M.R. Riḍā’s Nidā’ lil-Djins al-Latīf*, published PhD dissertation (University of Utrecht), Amsterdam, 1935.

<sup>144</sup> E. F., ‘Der Prophet Mohammed und die Frau’, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Berlin, Nr. 414 (22 September 1933).

<sup>145</sup> ‘Nazi Plans for Women’, *The Daily Telegraph*, London, Nr. 24, 444 (Saturday, 23 September 1933). It is probable that it was Kirām himself who provided the *Daily Telegraph*, and German and Arab newspapers with information about his activities in Berlin, or even wrote the articles himself.

<sup>146</sup> See, ‘Al-Jarā’id al-Almāniyya tatkalām ‘an al-Maqām al-Ijtimā’i li al-Mar’ah al-Muslimah’, *al-Jihād*, Cairo 26 September 1933; ‘Al-Dūktūr Zekī Kirām yuḥāḍir fī al-Mar’ah’, *al-Jāmi’ā al-Islāmiyya*, Yafa (Palestine), 5 Rajab 1352/24 September 1933.

the news of the petitions and protests of German Jews against the Zionist movement.<sup>147</sup> In order to substantiate the Arab cause, he believed that the Jewish statements would be of great benefit in fighting the enemy with his own 'weapon'. He was in contact with some anti-Zionist liberal Jewish organizations in Europe. In 1930, he sent *al-Manār* a translation of an article on the history of the Jewish migration to Palestine written by the Jewish German scholar H. Löwe in the *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin*. Kirām's intention was to give the readers of *al-Manār* insight into 'the persecution of the Jews by non-Muslims and the welfare they enjoyed under the banner of Islam.'<sup>148</sup> The reason why the article never appeared in *al-Manār* is not known.

Following the steps of the above-mentioned Fathī Zaghlūl, another Palestinian student in Paris, 'Ādel Zu'ayter (1895-1957), known as 'the Sheikh of Arab translators', translated many Western works on history, philosophy, sociology and Arabic heritage into Arabic.<sup>149</sup> Zu'ayter's career as a translator started when he traveled to Paris to read law at the Sorbonne (1921). His favourite writer was Gustave Le Bon. He not only translated his works on the civilization of Arabs, but also on the world of Indian civilization, the psychology of socialism, the psychology of revolution and political psychology, etc.<sup>150</sup> Thanks to Zu'ayter's translation, Le Bon's works became widely known in the Arab world. They also received, and still receiving, much attention from the side of many Muslim writers.<sup>151</sup>

Zu'ayter was in contact with Riḍā, and tried to publish some of his works through *al-Manār* (see appendix II). From Paris he was a subscriber to *al-Manār*, and kept sending Riḍā his primitive draft translations in order to be edited and corrected.<sup>152</sup> Riḍā praised Zu'ayter's efforts in serving the Arab culture by introducing his translated works, but did not forget to remind Arab readers not to adopt what he called 'anti-religious theories' in Le Bon's works.<sup>153</sup>

### 1.2.2. Writers in the Muslim World

The name of Muḥammad Tawfīq Ṣidqī has been frequently mentioned in the introduction. He was known to the readers of *al-Manār* as one of the most productive contributors who vigorously attempted to apply his medical and scientific knowledge to Islamic subjects. As he also heavily criticised

<sup>147</sup> Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 14 November 1929.

<sup>148</sup> Letter, Kirām, Shawwāl 1348 (1930).

<sup>149</sup> <http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/history/1422/07/article18.SHTML>; accessed, 30 April 2007

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> See, for instance, Ana Belen Soage, 'The Muslim Reaction to Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg Address', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, vol. 8/1 (March 2007), pp. 137-143.

<sup>152</sup> Letter, Adel Zu'ayter to Riḍā, Boulevard Brune, Paris, 14 October 1922.

<sup>153</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/4 (Muḥarram 1347 – July 1928), p. 317.

Christianity and its history, he played a most significant part in giving Riḍā new insights in the Western contemporary sources on Biblical studies.

Belonging to a middle-class Egyptian family, Ṣidqī was born in September 1881, and died in Cairo end of April 1920. In his early age, Ṣidqī memorized the Qurʾān. He finished his primary schooling in 1896, his secondary education in 1900, and finished his medical studies in 1904. The Egyptian Ministry of Education honoured him for his success. He was later appointed as a physician in al-Qaṣr al-ʿAynī Hospital in Cairo, where he worked for one year. In 1905 he moved to the Prison Hospital of Turah. In 1914 he moved to the Prison Hospital for Juveniles in Cairo.<sup>154</sup>

Ṣidqī was known not only to the readers of *al-Manār*, but also to those of other Egyptian periodicals such as *al-Muʾayyad*, *al-Liwāʾ*, and *al-ʿIlm*. He started reading *al-Manār* when he was a student at the Khedīwiyya secondary school in Cairo. His interest in *al-Manār* grew and he eagerly followed its Riḍā's public lectures in the city. Later he became Riḍā's family doctor and one of his close friends. When they were students, Ṣidqī had religious disputes with his Coptic friend ʿAbduḥ effendi ʾIbrāhīm (1883-1920), who later converted to Islam.<sup>155</sup> Both of them came in touch with Riḍā after having attended many of his public lectures. They used to visit him in his *al-Manār* office to discuss their religious doubts on specific Christian and Islamic doctrines regarding concepts such as *ʾUlūhiyya* (divinity), *Rūḥ* (soul), and *Baʿth* (resurrection).<sup>156</sup>

Unlike Ṣidqī, ʿAbduḥ ʾIbrāhīm did not author any work, nor did he make any attempt to publish in *al-Manār*. Ṣidqī started to publish his first series of articles in Riḍā's journal in the summer of 1905 under the title: 'Religion in Perspective of Sound Reason'.<sup>157</sup> His very impetus to write on such issues was,

<sup>154</sup> Biographical information is taken from *al-Manār*. It is an article published in *al-Majallah al-Tibbiyya al-Miṣriyyā* (Egyptian Medical Magazine) after Ṣidqī's death (May 1920). *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9 (Dhū al-Hijjah 1338/September 1921), pp. 483-495. It is also interesting to know that I managed to trace one of Ṣidqī's grandsons in Cairo through the telephone directory on the Internet, but unfortunately they do not preserve any archival materials for his grandfather.

<sup>155</sup> ʿAbduḥ ʾIbrāhīm also studied medicine, and like Ṣidqī became a physician in the Prison Department in Cairo. When he converted to Islam, his family invited him for a debate with Coptic clergymen at their house in order to convince him to return back to his former Coptic belief. Riḍā provided him with needed literature (such as al-Qairanāwī's work) for that debate. In his biography of Ṣidqī, Riḍā made no mention to these debates. After his conversion to Islam, ʿAbduḥ later married a Muslim woman. His eldest son (ʾIsā, died 1980) became one of the prominent Muslim economists, who (together with Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī) was a pioneer in establishing Islamic Banks in the Gulf. The story of ʿAbduḥ's conversion to Islam is mentioned in ʾIsā ʿAbduḥ and Aḥmad Ismāʿīl Yaḥyā, *Limādhā Aslamū?* (Why did they convert?), Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1992, pp. 70-135. The story of conversion has been given as a model in a lecture by the Egyptian *Salafī* preacher and psychologist Muḥammad Ismāʿīl al-Muqaddam (b. 1952).

Audio version is to be found at:

[http://www.islamway.com/?iw\\_s=Lesson&iw\\_a=view&lesson\\_id=6752](http://www.islamway.com/?iw_s=Lesson&iw_a=view&lesson_id=6752), checked, 24 November 2006.

My thanks are due to Mr. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʾIbrāhīm, ʿAbduḥ's grandson, for sending me a copy of the book.

<sup>156</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9, pp. 486-487.

<sup>157</sup> 'Al-Dīn fī Naẓar al-ʿAql al-Ṣaḥīḥ', five articles, *al-Manār*, vol. 8/9, 11, 13, 19, 20, (July-December 1905).

according to Riḍā, to find answers to many questions and doubts which occurred to his mind with regard to his religion. Riḍā related Ṣidqī's doubts to his modern education and his personal debates with missionaries during his school time.<sup>158</sup>

In his comment on Ṣidqī's articles, Riḍā showed that he was impressed by Ṣidqī and his classmate 'Abduh 'Ibrāhīm and their way of deduction, especially their analysis and acquisition in matters of *'aḳīda* (doctrine). He also provided them with religious sources. Riḍā maintained that their studious discussions had helped Ṣidqī to remove his religious doubts, and had lead 'Abduh to be convinced by the truth of Islam.<sup>159</sup> In his reply to missionary writings on Islam, Ṣidqī read Western works on Biblical criticism, and introduced them to the readers of *al-Manār*; such Western writers as the Englishmen Walter Richard Cassels (1826-1907), John Mackinnon Robertson (1856-1933),<sup>160</sup> Christian Heinrich Arthur Drews (1865-1935),<sup>161</sup> and William Harry Turton.<sup>162</sup> Like Riḍā, his motive was to defend Islam against these writings by using the works of fair-minded and atheist Western writers. However, Riḍā maintained that Ṣidqī's writings in this regard were to be complemented by other Muslim works, such as the above-mentioned *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*.<sup>163</sup>

Ṣidqī's articles in *al-Manār* aroused intense controversies in Egypt, and many religious scholars heavily reacted to them. Following the ideas of Muḥammad 'Abduh, Ṣidqī, for instance, discussed the Qur'ānic narrative of Adam's creation, and tried to reconcile it with the Darwinian evolutionist views. Sometimes Riḍā's readers blamed *al-Manār* for opening its pages for such discussions which seemed to contradict with the Qur'ān. Riḍā defended his friend's arguments explaining that he discussed Darwin's ideas as a scientific theory, and that his analysis was based on his own *ijtihād* (reasoning). His articles would only express his own views, for *al-Manār* was not responsible for pieces written by others.<sup>164</sup>

The most controversial debate was Ṣidqī's criticism of the *Sunna* in his article *al-'Islām huwa al-Qur'ān waḥdahu* (Islam is the Qur'ān Only). In his view, Muslims should rely upon the Qur'ān, as the features of the Prophet's behaviour were only meant for the first generation of Muslims, and not to be imitated in every particular case. Ṣidqī's article in this regard came as a result of his deliberation (together with 'Abduh 'Ibrāhīm) with Riḍā on his conviction that Muslims were in no need for the *sunna*, as it was a temporary source for Islamic law during the time of revelation only. Riḍā suggested that it would

<sup>158</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9, p. 487.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 488.

<sup>160</sup> For example, J. M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*, London, 1900.

<sup>161</sup> C. H. A. Drews, *Die Christusmythe: Die Zeugnisse für die geschichtlichkeit Jesu*, 2 vols., Jena : Diederichs 1910-1911; translated by C. Delisle Burns, *The Christ Myth*, Amherst, N.Y., [etc.]: Prometheus Books, 1998.

<sup>162</sup> William Harry Turton, *The truth of Christianity: being an examination of the more important arguments for and against believing in that religion*, London: Jarrold & Sons, 1902.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9, p. 490.



probably be more fruitful if Ṣidqī formulated his arguments to be published in *al-Manār*, and put them forward for discussion among scholars of Al-Azhar and others.<sup>165</sup> As we shall see, his polemical writings on Christianity even created a political controversy around *al-Manār*, especially after the interference of Lord Kitchener, the British Commissioner in Egypt (see, Chapter 3).

In 1922 Ṣidqī and his friend ‘Abduḥ ‘Ibrāhīm died of typhus. A few days before his death, Ṣidqī wrote one of his last contributions to Riḍā’s journal on the *‘aqīda*, and asked his family to send it to *al-Manār* even after his death. The news of his death reached Riḍā, when he was in his birthplace preparing for the Syrian Congress. In an article entitled: ‘A Big Islamic Disaster’, Riḍā paid his tribute to Ṣidqī and his friend ‘Abduḥ as two ‘spiritual brothers’. He praised the former’s contributions to his journal, describing him as one of the ‘most God-fearing’ Muslims.<sup>166</sup> Riḍā showed his high esteem of Ṣidqī by representing him as one of the ‘pillars’ of knowledge and reform in Egypt. He concluded: ‘we have never found any other highly valuable friend or a highly esteemed student, who served *al-Manār* the way Ṣidqī did. He was benevolent and grateful to the favours given to him by the founder of *al-Manār*. However, we should admit that his favours to us were greater. Besides his sincerity in our friendship, he was above all our private physician, who also did my children great favours.’<sup>167</sup>

Another significant polemicist was the Syrian Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Tannīr (d. 1933), who also introduced Western critical studies on the Bible throughout his book entitled: *al-‘Aqā’id al-Wathaniyya fī al-Diyānah al-Naṣrāniyya* (Pagan Doctrines in the Christian Religion).<sup>168</sup> Tannīr’s *Aqā’id* was one of Riḍā’s favorite books, which he regularly quoted in his discussions, *fatwās*, and *Tafsīr*. The book enjoyed wide popularity in Muslim circles in Egypt and elsewhere.

The author’s full name is Muḥammad Ṭāhir b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. Salīm al-Tannīr, who studied at the American University in Beirut. He was living at ‘Ayn ‘Annūb, a village near Beirut. In Beirut he published his own magazine *al-Muṣawwar*. After World War I, Tannīr moved to Egypt. Later he returned to Syria, and was buried in Dummar, on the outskirts of Damascus. Muḥammad Ṭāhir co-published a piece of work on astronomy with his father.<sup>169</sup> According to the Australian missionary scholar Arthur Jeffery (d. 1959), ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad’s father, specialized in exploiting the ultra critical Western theories on the Scriptures with a view to show that what was preached by missionaries

<sup>165</sup> Muḥammad Tawfiq Ṣidqī, ‘al-‘Islām huwa al-Qur’ān waḥdah’, *al-Manār*, vol. 9/7 (Rajab 1324-August 1906), pp. 515-524. The issue is discussed in G. H. A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, pp. 23-30; see also, Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 67-68.

<sup>166</sup> ‘Raz’ ‘Islāmī ‘Azīm: Wafāt al-Duktūr Ṣidqī’, *al-Manār*, vol. 21/8 (Dhū al-Qi‘dah 1338/August 1920), pp. 447-448.

<sup>167</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9, p. 495.

<sup>168</sup> Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Tannīr, *al-‘Aqā’id al-Wathaniyya fī al-Diyānah al-Naṣrāniyya*, n. d., n. p. (circa 1912, Beirut).

<sup>169</sup> Ziriklī, *op. cit.*, vol. 6, p. 173.

in the East was not believed by the intellectuals in the West. The father's works also caused many repercussions in Egypt shortly after the First World War.<sup>170</sup>

Following his father's steps, Tannīr brought forth his *'Aqā'id* as a reply to some of the contemporary Christian apologetic and polemic literature on Islam.<sup>171</sup> As we read in the beginning of the book, the author sarcastically dedicated his work 'to the Crusaders of the Twentieth Century, the Missionaries'.<sup>172</sup> The treatise continued to be one of the significant Muslim polemical works in the present time. It was reprinted in Tehran in 1391 (circa 1972). Muḥammad 'Abdullāh al-Sharqāwī, a professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Dār al-'Ulūm in Cairo, published a revised edition of Tannīr's work in 1988.<sup>173</sup>

Tannīr brought forward the theory of 'Pagan Christs', and quoted from several Western sources in an attempt to prove the 'absurdity' of the Christian faith. Tannīr's work caused reactions in Christian circles. Some of the sources maintained that due to its harsh attacks Tannīr's work was banned in Beirut (see chapter 2).<sup>174</sup> In the preface, Tannīr stated that the motive behind writing the book was not 'hostility' or 'fanaticism' against people who confess other religions. First of all, he composed this small book to answer the objections, or to raise counter objections, to those found in some missionary books, some of which were in Arabic and others in English. These books, according to Tannīr, were full of 'slander and attacks against Islam and Muslims'. The second reason was to call the Christians back to the truth of Islam.<sup>175</sup>

Tannīr emphasized that there were similarities between the story of Jesus and the stories of other ancient religions. These similarities allegedly prove that the Biblical story of Jesus was nothing more than a composite or rehash of ancient myths. His attention focused on seeking nearly identical parallels between the story of Jesus and other mythical figures, such as the Krishna story as told in the Hindu Vedas, dated to at least as far back as 1400 B.C., and the Horus myth, which was also said to be identical to the Biblical tale about Jesus.

<sup>170</sup> A. Jeffery, 'New Trends in Moslem Apologetics', in John R. Mott (ed.), *The Moslem World of Today*, Hodder and Stoughton Limited: London, 1925, p. 310 (Quoted below, 'Trends'); id., 'A Collection of Anti-Christian Books and Pamphlets Found in Actual Use among the Mohammedans of Cairo', *The Moslem World*, vol. XV (1925), p. 29. According to Jeffery's list of Muslim literature (no. 11), Abd al-Wahhāb Salīm Al-Tannīr, for example, translated a book attributed to Charles Watt, which he titled in Arabic: *Iḍrāru Ta'lim al-Tawrāh wā al-'Injīl*, Cairo, 1901.

<sup>171</sup> At the top of his list of missionary publications was *The Moslem World*, which he described as 'a magazine full of slander and broadsides against Islam'. Among the Arabic books are: *al-Hidāyah* (The Guidance), 4 vols., Cairo: The American Mission, *al-Bākūra al-Shahiyya* (Sweet First-Fruits), Cairo, The Nile Mission Press, n.d.; and for example the works of St. Clair Tisdall, M. A. Rice, Samuel Zwemer.

<sup>172</sup> Tannīr, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>173</sup> Id., *al-'Aqā'id al-Wathaniyyā fī al-Diyānā al-Naṣrāniyyā*, edited by 'Abdullāh al-Sharqāwī, Cairo: Dār al-Saḥwā, 1988. This edition is to be found at: <http://www.da3wah-4-islam.com/vb/showthread.php?t=279>. Accessed on 22 October 2007. Many Muslim websites cite the treatise at length.

<sup>174</sup> *Al-Machreq*, vol. 15 (1912), p. 298.

<sup>175</sup> Tannīr, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-8.

He developed these ideas from a long list of historical and biblical Western studies from which he cited a large number of passages in arranging his argument, such as Huxley's *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*,<sup>176</sup> Jameson's *The History of Our Lord*,<sup>177</sup> Bunsen's *The Angel Messiah*,<sup>178</sup> Fiske's *Myth and Myth Makers*,<sup>179</sup> and Ferguson's *Tree and Serpent Worship*.<sup>180</sup>

The method of drawing an analogy between Jesus and pagan deities or heroes of Antiquity was first introduced by Western authors in the nineteenth century. The American atheist Kersey Graves (1813-1883), for instance, found that stories of a crucified savior had circulated in the first civilizations. The story was very old and had been accepted in all of these cultures throughout the Far East, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean countries.<sup>181</sup> Gerald Massey (b. May, 1828), the English Egyptologist, also found over 100 similarities between Jesus and Krishna.<sup>182</sup> Robertson followed the same method of comparing Jesus to Krishna.<sup>183</sup>

From beginning to end, Tannir followed the comparative method of drawing an analogy between the Christian doctrines and elements and traces in other different ancient beliefs. The main object of the book was to argue that there was wholesale influence of the pagan mysteries and other foreign doctrines and practices on Christianity. The doctrine of Trinity, for example, which was taught by Christians, was borrowed from heathenism.<sup>184</sup> He attempted to find parallels of such doctrines in other ancient religions in Egypt, India and elsewhere. The same held true for the cross, the incarnation, the virgin birth of Jesus, the appearance of the star in the East, and other events in the life of Jesus.

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<sup>176</sup> Thomas Henry Huxley, *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*, London: Williams and Norgate 1863; published also in New York, 1880.

<sup>177</sup> Jameson, *The History of our Lord: as exemplified in Works of Arts, with that of these Types; St. John the Baptist, and other Persons of the Old and New Testament*, Compiled by Lady Eastlake, London, 1892.

<sup>178</sup> Ernest De Bunsen, *The Angel-messiah of Buddhists, Essenes and Christians*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892.

<sup>179</sup> John Fiske, *Myth and Myth Makers: Old Tales and Superstitions interpreted by Comparative Mythology*, London, 1873.

<sup>180</sup> James Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, London: India Museum, 1873.

<sup>181</sup> Kersey Graves, *The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors*, New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1875. According to Graves, the sixteen saviors are: Thulis of Egypt (1700 B.C.), Khrisna of India (1200 B.C.), Crite of Chaldea (1200 B.C.), Attis of Phrygia (1170 B.C.), Thammuz of Syria (1160 B.C.), Hesus of the Celtic Druids (834 B.C.), Bali of Orissa (725 B.C.), Indra of Tibet (725 B.C.), Iao of Nepal (622 B.C.), Sakia, a Hindu god, (600 B.C.), Alcestis of Euripedes (600 B.C.), Mithra of Persia (600 B.C.), Quexalcoatei of Mexico (587 B.C.), Aeschylus (Prometheus) (547 B.C.), Wittoba of the Telingonese (552 B.C.), Quirinus of Rome (506 B.C.), and according to the author, Jesus Christ allegedly about the year A.D. 28 or A.D. 32.

A soft copy of the book can be also found at:

[http://www.acwitness.org/essays/bkup/16\\_crucified\\_saviors/index.html](http://www.acwitness.org/essays/bkup/16_crucified_saviors/index.html); accessed on 11 July 2006

<sup>182</sup> Gerald Massey, *The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ*, London, 1886.

<sup>183</sup> See: John Mackinnon Robertson, *Christ and Krishna*, London 1889.

<sup>184</sup> Tannir, *op. cit.*, p. 17-39.

Christianity, according to him, largely borrowed from the records of older nations. He insisted that the idea of a suffering God atoning through his death the sins of men, descending into the abodes of darkness and rising again to bring life and immortality to light, was found in the oldest records of the beliefs of the human race, such as those concerning Buddha and Krishna.<sup>185</sup> The question of the virgin birth was of special interest in the treatise. Tannīr sought an analogy between the myths of the birth of Krishna and how the divine Vishnu himself descended into the womb of Devaki and was born as her son Krishna. In this, the deity was not only the effective agent in the conception, but also the offspring.<sup>186</sup> He also placed special emphasis on the relation which the idea of the virgin birth in the Gospels supposedly had with ancient Egyptian religious conceptions. However, he found that the Egyptian story of the virgin birth was much more complex and cruder than the Biblical one. In the story of the birth of Horus and in the idea of the divinity of the pharaohs a great resemblance was thought to be found.<sup>187</sup> The concluding section of al-Tannīr's treatise was again devoted to analogies; first between Krishna and Christ, and then between Buddha and Christ, stating in parallel columns the coincidences as related in pagan books and in the Gospels.<sup>188</sup>

Another interesting associate of *al-Manār* was the Moroccan *Salafī* scholar Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī (d. 1987), who travelled to Egypt for the first time in 1921 (see, appendix III). He soon contacted Riḍā and became a close friend and disciple of *al-Manār*. As a big sympathizer with the Saudi Royal family, Riḍā recommended Hilālī to Ibn Saud for the position of religious teacher at *al-Haram al-Nabawī* in Medina.<sup>189</sup> Besides Saudi Arabia, Hilālī made many trips during his life to India (he taught Arabic at the *Dār al-ʿUlūm* of *Nadwat al-ʿUlāmā* in Lucknow), Afghānistan, and Iraq. In the 1940s, he travelled to Germany through his connection with Shakīb Arslān, where he studied for his PhD at the University of Bonn,<sup>190</sup> and became a Muslim activist and an active member of Radio Berlin in Arabic during the Second World War.

Hilālī's correspondence with Riḍā contains important information about the relation between both men, and that they shared the same political ideology of Pan-Islamism. In *al-Manār*, we can read Hilālī's name appearing on the list of a manifesto against the Italian aggression on Libya in 1931, which was signed by Riḍā and other well-known names.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 55-58.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 59ff. Cf. F.F. Bruce, 'The Person of Christ: Incarnation and Virgin Birth,' in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, Carl F. H. Henry (ed.), Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975, p. 128. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 73-74.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 149-184.

<sup>189</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Hijaz, 15 Dhū al-Hijja 1345/16 June 1927. Another letter, Medina, 16 Jumāda al-ʿAwwal 1346/11 November 1927.

<sup>190</sup> T. al-Hilālī, *Die Einleitung zu Al-Birūnī's Steinbuch*, Gräfenhainichen: Druck von C. Schulze, 1941.

<sup>191</sup> See the manifesto, *al-Manār*, vol. 31/9 (Muḥarram 1350/June 1931), pp. 714-717.

During his various journeys, Hilālī attempted to disseminate *al-Manār*'s views in these countries.<sup>192</sup> A relevant example for our study was his defence of Riḍā's acceptance of the possibility of a natural death of Jesus (see, chapters 6 and 7), when a certain 'Abdullah b. Ḥassan, a Najdī scholar, openly criticised *al-Manār*.<sup>193</sup>

In addition to his contributions to Riḍā's journal, Hilālī wrote to Riḍā about his experience with Muslim organizations as a Muslim preacher. In Lucknow, he became a senior teacher of Arabic (summer 1928).<sup>194</sup> During his stay in India, he learnt English, and later co-published a printed English translation of the Qur'ān with the Indian physician Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān.<sup>195</sup>

It is interesting to know that Hilālī learnt English from an American missionary in Lucknow. He believed that it was significant to have a good command of any Western language in order to promote his work of *da'wa*. Besides their three-times-a-week lesson, this American missionary requested Hilālī to attend his religious sermons in his missionary basis in order to improve his language. Like Riḍā, Hilālī praised the enthusiasm of Christians in disseminating their religion, while Muslims lacked zealotry in propagating Islam.<sup>196</sup>

On the eve of the Christmas of 1930, Hilālī met with a certain young American missionary under the name of William Smith (?) about whom we do not have any information. When they started their debate on the nature of the Bible and the Qur'ān, Hilālī made it clear that he never read the Gospel, and was now learning English to read it in its English version. Smith immediately ordered for him a copy from London, which he sent to Hilālī with a brief note: 'Asking God to bestow on you many blessings through this book.'<sup>197</sup> Hilālī instantly embarked upon drafting his polemical commentaries on this version, and gave Riḍā a summary of his findings. In one of his letters, for example, he informed Riḍā that he wrote these Arabic notes on the margins of the Gospel according to Matthew on the copy sent to him by Smith. Riḍā was much interested in reading Hilālī's comments. Arslān showed a similar interest in reading the comments. After having finished the translation, a proposal was made by Riḍā to let the treatise be published by the well-known Saudi businessman Muḥammad Naṣīf of Jeddah.<sup>198</sup>

Hilālī explained his primary motive of translating by writing to Riḍā: 'I hope that some Muslim organization would shoulder the task of translating the Gospels into eloquent and correct Arabic with annotations in order to expose

<sup>192</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Medina, 23 Jumāda al-ʾĀkhira 1346/December 1927.

<sup>193</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Mecca, 10 Rabīʿ al-ʾAwwal, 1346/September 1927.

<sup>194</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 27 Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1347/13 October 1928.

<sup>195</sup> Al-Hilālī and Khān, *Interpretation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an*, Saudi Arabia: Maktabat Dār al-Salam, 1996.

<sup>196</sup> 'Taḳī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, 'Al-Barāhīn al-ʾInjīliyya 'alā 'anna 'Isā dakhal fī al-ʿUbūdiyyā wā lā Ḥazza lahu fī al-ʾUlūhiyya', unpublished typescript, Morocco, n. d.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>198</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 28 Jumāda al-Thāniya 1352/18 October 1933.

the confusion of the Christians, just as what they did with our Book [the Qur'ān]. But we should only illustrate the facts, without imitating the Christians in their wrong-doing [with our Book].'<sup>199</sup> His prime aim of producing an excellent translation with footnotes was also to convert Arab Christians to Islam and diminish the possibility that Muslims would be seduced by missionary attempts.<sup>200</sup> But the 'real enemy', in Hilālī's view, 'remains Western Christians, not the Eastern ones'.<sup>201</sup> Hilālī unfortunately lost his copy of the Gospel with its notes, but later published his comments in the magazine of *al-Shubbān al-Muslimūn* (established by the Iraqi writer and lawyer Tāhā al-Fayyād (1899-1964) in Basra) under the title: *Ḥawāshī Shattā 'alā 'Injīl Mattā* (Various Footnotes on the Gospel according to Matthew).<sup>202</sup>

As a fervent advocate of disseminating the Arabic language among all Muslims, Hilālī established the Arabic Lucknow-based magazine *al-Diyā'*, in cooperation with the Indian scholar 'Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī (d. 1999).<sup>203</sup> Its main purpose was to promote the knowledge of Arabic among Indian Muslims. *Al-Manār* blessed his project by publishing the introductory statement of al-Nadwī in the magazine.<sup>204</sup> Besides his writings in Riḍā's journal,<sup>205</sup> Hilālī also tried to introduce *al-Manār* to many Indian scholars. He believed that the only way to propagate *al-Manār*'s reform mission was to encourage learning the Arabic language, and to combat the 'rigid' scholars who argue that translated works were enough for learning Islam.<sup>206</sup>

A certain Badr al-Dīn al-Ṣinī, a Chinese Muslim, was in the same period on the Indian stage with Hilālī. Little is known about this person. However, he took a good part in Riḍā's religious circle. Al-Ṣinī was actually known to the readers of Arab Muslim magazines in Egypt and elsewhere. In one of his letters, Riḍā asked Hilālī to take care of him by reading many Islamic sources

<sup>199</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, 24 Jumāda al-Ulā 1352/14 September 1933.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Letter, al-Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 14 Jumāda al-Ulā 1351/4 September 1933.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid. Hilālī reworked his *Ḥawāshī* in his later work *al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya*, which he especially composed at the request of a certain Mundhir al-Darūbī, a Moroccan engineering student in the United States in the 1970s in order to use it in his polemical debates with Christians there. Ibn Bāz later ordered the publication of Hilālī's *Barāhīn* in twenty thousand copies in Saudi Arabia. See, Hilālī's article in *Majallat al-Buhūth al-Islāmiyya*, softcopy, available at: <http://www.alifta.com/Fatawa/fatawaDetails.aspx?BookID=2&View=Page&PageNo=1&PageID=1658>; accessed on 20 April 2007.

<sup>203</sup> See, Jan-Peter Hartung, *Viele Wege und ein Ziel: Leben und Wirken von Sayyid Abu l-Hasan 'Alī al-Hasanī Nadwī (1914-1999)*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2004.

<sup>204</sup> 'Naḥḍah Jadidah li 'Iḥyā' Lughat al-'Islām al-'Arabīyya fī al-Bilād al-Hindiyya (New Renaissance for revitalizing the Arabic Language of Islam in the Indian Lands)', *al-Manār*, vol. 32/5 (Muḥarram 1351/May 1932), pp. 345-351.

<sup>205</sup> See, for example, his famous debate with the Shī'ī scholar Sayyid Mahdī al-Kāzīmī al-Qazwīnī (d. 1940) on the issue of visiting shrines and tombs in Islam, *al-Manār*, 7 articles, vol. 28/5-10, vol. 29/1 (June 1927- January 1929). See also, his response to a certain Graham Lewis(?), the editor of the Oriental section in the *Illustrated Weekly of India Bombay* (27 August 1933). T. al-Hilālī, 'Ma'sāt Amīrah Sharqiyya (The tragedy of an Oriental Princess)', *al-Manār*, two articles, vol. 34/7 (Ramaḍān 1353/January 1935), pp. 535-543, vol. 35/1, pp. 82-86.

<sup>206</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 8 Rabī' al-Thānī 1352/31 July 1933

with him.<sup>207</sup> Riḍā also committed him with translating his works into Chinese. Through Hilālī, al-Ṣinī made a proposal to Riḍā for translating his book *al-Waḥy* into Chinese. Hilālī described al-Ṣinī as ‘an energetic self-made Muslim’.<sup>208</sup> Although he admitted the benefit of the Chinese translation, Hilālī believed that an English translation would be more effective. Among the names he suggested to make the translation was a certain Mirza Muḥammad Khān Bahādir, an Iraqi of Persian origin living in Basra.<sup>209</sup>

### 1.3. Conclusion

Studying *al-Manār* in the light of the archive of its founder, we have found two focal categories of sources used by Riḍā in his efforts to collect relevant materials, and which helped him to compensate his lack of knowledge of Western languages (and subsequently influenced the development of his views on Christianity): 1) the critical Western works in Arabic print offered him a wide range of precedents related to the West, and 2) the contributions of various individuals in his circle of associates who had a good command of Western languages (especially English, French and German), and possessed a certain degree of religious involvement in the subject.

These contributions included such subjects as the rise of new Christian movements in the West and historical and archaeological discoveries related to the Bible (such as the afore-mentioned German scholar Delitzsch). *Al-Manār*’s treatment of these subjects was to advocate the authenticity of Islam vis-à-vis Christian missionary claims of the superiority of their religion. It is apparent from Riḍā’s archive that he came into personal contact with various people, and they marked the pattern of his journal and broadened his scope as a journalist immensely. The objective of their contributions seems to have been first to describe certain European ideas that would fit well in the *al-Manār*’s programme. The effect of their interaction was also determined by the kinds of topics of discussions, which Riḍā finally selected for print.

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<sup>207</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, 24 May 1935, n. p.

<sup>208</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 8 Rabi‘ al-Thāni 1352/31 July 1933. See, *al-Manār*, vol. 33/10 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1352/April 1934), pp. 756.

<sup>209</sup> Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, al-Zubayr, Iraq, 28 al-Muḥarram 1353/13 May 1934

## Chapter Two

### Riḍā and Arab Christians: Attitudes towards Syrian Christians and the Egyptian Coptic Community

In order to present a good picture of Riḍā's relations with Arab Christians, I shall first of all make an account of some of his Syrian Christian fellow-citizens, who, like him, made Egypt their new residence after migration. In the course of our discussion we shall turn our focus from a short sketch of Riḍā's political ambitions with them and their struggle for independence from the colonial presence in the Arab East, towards an outline of the personal biographies of those among them with whom Riḍā had lively debates. This is suggested as a useful means of illuminating the historical context of the discussions at stake. Many of these Christian writers had championed secularism. Riḍā's attitudes towards these individuals generated very interesting discussions on religion, history, Islamic philosophy and literature. At another level, Riḍā's polemics with Syrians Christians was extended to include religious controversies with the Arabic Jesuit journal *al-Machreq*. The last part of the chapter is devoted to study Riḍā's attitudes towards the Egyptian Copts, and his reflections as a Syrian émigré on their political demands, ending with his sharp reactions to the Christian writer Salāma Mūsā, who was a close disciple of Syrian Christian publicists in Egypt.

#### 2.1. Syrian Christian Nationalists: A Common Political Agenda

As early as *al-Manār*'s beginning, the Syro-Lebanese emigrant community in Brazil knew about it. The Sao-Paulo-based journal *al-Asmaʿ*,<sup>1</sup> co-edited by the Christians Khalīl Milūk and Shukrī al-Khūrī, reviewed *al-Manār* describing it as 'one of the best Islamic journals.'<sup>1</sup> Naʿūm al-Labakī (d. 1924), the founder of the Syrian journal *al-Munāẓir* (The Debater) in Sao Paulo,<sup>2</sup> blamed Riḍā for restricting the subjects of his journal to religious issues, and that he stopped his discussions on Syrian national problems and religious strife in their homeland Syria. The contents of the journal, according to him, were not in agreement with the subtitle of his journal: 'scientific, literary, informative and educating journal.' In his reply, Riḍā explained that he used to write such items before the banning of his journal in Syria, and they would have been valueless as no Syrian Muslim, Christian or Jew had access anymore to his articles. As the circle of his readers became limited to the people in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, India, Java, and a group of Syrian emigrants in America, it was more appropriate for him to deal mostly with other Islamic religious instructive

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<sup>1</sup> 'Al-Manār fī al-Brazīl (*al-Manār* in Brazil)', vol. 1/37 (Rajab 1316/December 1898), p. 734.

<sup>2</sup> 'Al-Manār wā al-Munāẓir', vol. 2/40 (Shaʿbān 1317/December 1899), p. 683. In 1908 Labakī returned back to his birthplace Beirut, where he continued its publication. He was the president of the Representative Council of Lebanon. See, Zirikli, *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 40.



issues. Riḍā was also convinced that his treatment of such Islamic themes was not only of benefit for his Muslim readers, but for Christians as well. He asserted that a Christian teacher at one of the high schools in Syria after having read *al-Manār* demanded Riḍā to send him all previous issues. He also persuaded the director of the school to subscribe to the journal and collect its issues in the school's library. Riḍā finally concluded that it was also reasonable to subtitle his journal as 'informative and educating', since religious sciences are the most 'venerated' fields.

Born and bred in Syria, which is known for its religious and ethnical minorities,<sup>3</sup> Riḍā was familiar with its substantial Christian population. His coming to Egypt coincided with the resumption of the emigration wave of Syrians (most of them Christians), who fled the Hamidian oppression to Egypt towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> In his later political career, Riḍā gathered around his political project of Arabism an active group of Syrian emigrated intellectuals, who opposed the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and promoted the idea of an Arab monarch.<sup>5</sup>

Political interests linked both Muslim and Christian elites in their cultural pride of the Arab heritage, as a means to face the cultural expansion of the West.<sup>6</sup> Syrian Christians, in particular, played a large role in the revival of the Arab literary movement. After his migration to Egypt, Riḍā came closer to his Syrian Christian fellow writers and publishers, who, like him, had earlier escaped the Hamidian regime. This group probably enjoyed the greatest freedom of thought that was experienced by any group of Arab intellectuals in the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Most of these Syrians were Christians by origin, but adopted a strictly secularist agenda. Although the majority of those Christians enjoyed modern Western education and adopted Western methods of thinking, some of them, however, shared with Riḍā his resentment to the penetration of the West in the Arab world, including missionary activities. Riḍā went closer to

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<sup>3</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, 'The Compact Minorities and the Syrian State, 1918-45', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 14/4 (Oct., 1979), pp. 693-712. About Christian Arab Nationalism, see, Spencer Lavan, 'Four Christian Arab nationalists: A Comparative Study', *The Muslim World*, vol. LVII (1967), pp. 114-125.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt 1725-1975*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, 1985, pp. 1-53. A. Hourani, 'The Syrians in Egypt in the eighteenth and nineteenth century', *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire*, Cairo, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> Philip S. Khoury, *Urban notables and Arab Nationalism: the Politics of Damascus 1860-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 62-63.

<sup>6</sup> See, Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 170-182. The Christian Butrus al-Bustānī was one of the pioneers who called for Arabic cultural revival. See, Butrus Abu-Mannch, 'The Christians between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: The Ideas of Butrus al-Bustani', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 11/3 (May, 1980), pp. 287-304.

<sup>7</sup> See, Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: the Formative years, 1875-1914*, p. 114-121. Cf. Reeve Spector Simon et al (ed.), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, Columbia University Press, 1993.

those Eastern Christians, who shared with him the same anxieties that 'the Sublime Porte would fall in the hands of Europe'.<sup>8</sup>

In 1912 and 1913 new Arab political groupings came into being. One of the best known among these new groups was *Ḥizb al-Lāmarkaziyya al-Idāriyyā al-ʿUthmānī* (Ottoman Administrative Decentralization Party), which Riḍā founded in Cairo in December 1912. The party was dedicated to the achievement of self-government in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>9</sup> Within the party, Riḍā called for an Arab revival as the necessary herald of the restoration of Islam. He also declared that as a Muslim he was a brother to all Muslims, and as an Arab a brother to all Arabs, and he saw no contradiction between the two.<sup>10</sup> His model of 'an Arab Empire' would have recognized both Christianity and Judaism and would have given non-Muslims the right to serve in the administration of the government and the judicial system (except the *Shariʿa* courts).<sup>11</sup>

After the rise of the theory of Arabism, some Christian Arabs (mostly Syrians and Palestinians) already had implicitly accepted the theory that Islam is an essential part of Arabism because it brought grandeur to the Arabs.<sup>12</sup> Many Arab Christians, such as Shibli Shumayyil and the prominent lawyer Iskandar 'Ammun, had joined Riḍā's Decentralization Party. Being on close terms with many of these Christian Syrians of his generation, Riḍā managed in his political strife to gain the support of those who 'were unwilling to admit the inferiority of the East to the West'.<sup>13</sup> For him, Syrian Christians were 'the most advanced class in education, wealth, generosity, courage and pride'.<sup>14</sup> By 1914 he had developed his theory of Arabism in its full shape, which was also accepted by a group of Christian Arabs.<sup>15</sup>

The impulses for the concept of the 'Greater Syria' sharpened Riḍā's desire for Pan-Arabism. In his struggle against the imposition of the French Mandate in Syria, he played a prominent role with other Muslim, Christian and Druze nationalists. In 1918, a number of Syrian émigrés had established the Syrian-

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<sup>8</sup> See his articles on the Oriental Question, 'al-Mas'ala al-Sharqiyya', *al-Manār*, vol. 14/11 (Dhū al-Qi'dah 1329/November 1911), p. 833-853.

<sup>9</sup> Elie Kedourie, *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies*, Routledge, 1974, pp. 43-44.

<sup>10</sup> Mahmoud Haddad, 'The Rise of Arab Nationalism: reconsidered', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 26/2 (1994), pp. 215-216 (Quoted below, 'Rise'); Sami Zubaida, 'Islam and nationalism: continuities and contradictions', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 10/4 (2004), pp. 407-420.

<sup>11</sup> Mahmoud Haddad, 'Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 117/2 (April-June 1997), pp. 270-271 (Quoted below, 'Nationalism').

<sup>12</sup> C. Ernest Dawn, 'From Ottomanism to Arabism: The origin of an ideology', *Review of Politics*, vol. 23/3 (July 1961), p. 396.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/1, (Muharram 1330/January 1912), p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> Dawn, *op. cit.*, pp. 394-395. More about Riḍā's ideas on Arabism, see, his letter to the First Arab Congress in Paris (June 1913), *Al-Mu'tamar Al-'Arabī Al-'Awwal*, Cairo, 1913, pp. i-iii; J. Jomier, 'Les raisons de l'adhésion du Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā au nationalisme arabe', *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, no. 53 (1973), pp. 53-61; Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 20-22.

Palestinian Congress. During its first major session in Geneva (summer of 1921), where demands for Syrian unity and independence were presented to the League of Nations, Riḍā was elected as the vice-president.<sup>16</sup> Its president was Michel Luṭfallah (1880-1961), the son of a wealthy Greek Orthodox Christian émigré in Egypt, who was the inspiration behind the establishment of the Congress and its major financier.<sup>17</sup> But by 1922, disputes between Syrian factions became intense, a rift between Syrian and Palestinian members started to appear, and the Syrian membership was split into two. Luṭfallah, allied with the Damascene physician Abdel-Raḥmān Shāḥbandar (assassinated in 1946), chose to advocate a purely secular nationalism. The other group, headed by Shakīb Arslān, propagated the idea of Arabism, as based on the Islamic Divine tenets. They clashed with Luṭfallah-Shāḥbandar's faction because of their links with the British and the Hashimite royal family. Riḍā chose to remain linked to the former faction, since he as well concentrated on the ideological articulation of nationalism and particularly on the importance of the Islamic content in its formulation.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.1.1. Farah Anṭūn (*al-Jāmi'a*)

Riḍā's acquaintance with Farah Anṭūn goes back to their young age in their hometown Tripoli. In their early years, he met with Anṭūn for the first time at the house of Jurjī Yannī, a teacher and writer in Tripoli. At that time, Riḍā saw Anṭūn as one of the most intelligent Christian young men in Syria. He was modest, shy, but irritable, and often hesitating to give his opinions frankly in case he had not studied the matter in question thoroughly.<sup>19</sup> Both young men agreed that the Syrian stage was too cramped for their dreams of entering the world of journalism. In 1897 they decided to travel to Egypt on an Austrian ship (3 December, 1897) heading towards Alexandria together.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Marie-Renée Mouton, 'Le Congrès syrio-palestinien de Genève (1921)', *Relations Internationales*, no. 19 (1979), pp. 313-328. About Riḍā's political ideas and activism, see, for example, Eliezer Tauber, 'Three Approaches, One Idea: Religion and State in the Thought of 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Kawākibī, Najīb 'Azūrī and Rashīd Riḍā', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 21/2 (1994), pp. 190-198; id., 'Rashīd Riḍā and Faysal's Kingdom in Syria', *The Muslim World*, vol. 85 (1995), p. 235-245; 'Rashīd Riḍā as Pan-Arabist before the World War I', *The Muslim World*, 79/2 (April 1989), pp. 102-112; 'Rashīd Riḍā and Political Attitudes during the World War I', *The Muslim World*, 85/1-2 (January-April 1995), pp. 107-121, 'The Political Life of Rashīd Riḍā', in *Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic*, vol. 19-20 (1998), pp. 261-272.

<sup>17</sup> Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 223.

<sup>18</sup> More about the two factions, see, Philip S. Khoury, 'Factionalism among Syrian Nationalists during the French Mandate', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 13/4 (Nov., 1981), pp. 441-469. Cf. Y. L. Rizq, 'A Diwan of contemporary life (305): Looking towards the Levant', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 449 (30 September-6 October 1999); republished in *Al-Mashriq: A Quarterly Journal of Middle East Studies* (Australia), vol. 3/12 (March 2005), pp. 59.

<sup>19</sup> Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 805.

<sup>20</sup> Riḍā's diary, December, 1897. The diary of his early months in Egypt reveals that he was on close terms with Anṭūn. When having visited Anṭūn in the hotel in Cairo, Riḍā used, for example, to observe his prayer in the latter's room, since there was no mosque close in the neighbourhood.

During the early years of *al-Manār*, Riḍā entrusted Anṭūn to translate French materials into Arabic.<sup>21</sup> In Alexandria Anṭūn founded his journal *al-Jāmiʿa* (firstly appeared 1899) through which he disseminated his secularist views. Riḍā was watching the progress of his friend's magazine and brought its contents on ethics, philosophy and sociology to the attention of ʿAbduh, who, as a result, expressed his positive impression of Anṭūn and always recommended his magazine to his friends.<sup>22</sup>

The young Christian journalist Anṭūn was much influenced by the ideas of the French writer Ernest Renan, and gave the most systematic presentation of his French writings in the Arab world. He published serial translations of Renan's *La Vie de Jésus*. Following the path of Renan, he very soon published another article in the spring of 1902 on Ibn Rushd in which he also stressed that religious orthodoxy had obstructed the spirit of free inquiry in Islamic civilization.<sup>23</sup> Renan's skeptical attitude towards religion concurred perfectly with Anṭūn's anticlerical feelings.<sup>24</sup> In that article, Anṭūn extended his theory to maintain that Christianity, unlike Islam, had been proved to tolerate philosophy.

Alarmed by Anṭūn's arguments, Riḍā promptly raised the problem to ʿAbduh, and fervently requested him to give response. Anṭūn was very surprised to learn that it was Riḍā, as one of his best friends, who agitated the feelings of the mufti against his journal.<sup>25</sup> Riḍā eagerly requested ʿAbduh to defend Islam and its scholars against Anṭūn's 'blasphemy'. While staying in Alexandria, ʿAbduh was planning to meet with Anṭūn to discuss the contents of his article personally, but had no chance. During a tour in Northern Egypt, ʿAbduh started drafting his articles of defence depending on his memory, while keeping Riḍā updated in a series of letters with the development of his investigations on the matter. He asked Riḍā to inform ʿAnṭūn of his plan of writing a refutation to his article on Ibn Rushd, and to ask him whether he was ready to publish it in *al-Jāmiʿa*. They agreed that Riḍā would edit the final drafts of the rejoinders in his own handwriting and send them to *al-Jāmiʿa* for publication. Anṭūn was in the beginning hesitant to give space to ʿAbduh's refutation in his journal.<sup>26</sup> But later he published most of his ideas in one separate volume supplemented with ʿAbduh's response, which he dedicated to 'the fairly-minded among the Easterners, Christians, Muslims, or followers of any other religion.'<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Reid, *The Odyssey*, p. ix.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. See, *Tārīkh*, p. 805. Cf. Riḍā's reviews of *al-Jāmiʿa* and other works by Anṭūn, *al-Manār*, vol. 1/48 (Shawwāl 1316/25 February 1899), p. 936; vol. 3/16 (Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1318/July 1900), p. 380.

<sup>23</sup> Ernest Renan, *Averroes et l'Averroïsme*, Paris, 1852.

<sup>24</sup> About his anticlericalism, see, Reid, *Odyssey*, pp. 70-74.

<sup>25</sup> F. Anṭūn, *Ibn Rushd wā Falsafatuh*, Alexandria, January 1903, p. 2 (Quoted below, *Ibn Rushd*). At that time, ʿAbduh was traveling throughout Egyptian Northern cities to collect donations for the victims of a fire catastrophe in the Delta of Egypt.

<sup>26</sup> Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, p. 809-810.

<sup>27</sup> Anṭūn, *Ibn Rushd*, p. 1.

Their arguments did not remain purely on an intellectual level. They quickly developed into insult and distortion of each other's position, by changing the conflict into violent and contemptuous hostility.<sup>28</sup> Riḍā and Anṭūn charged each other of having escalated the problem in order to gain popularity for their journals and raise the number of subscribers. The issue also spoiled Anṭūn's friendship with Riḍā and both of them turned to insult each other for being ignorant. Anṭūn suggested that Riḍā lacked the knowledge required (especially, of the French language and of the science of *kalām*) to embark on such debates, and should have left the matter to his more erudite teacher. From his side, Riḍā maintained that his adversary not simply made a well-intentioned mistake, but had purposely disparaged Islam as well. He also maintained that Anṭūn's strategy was to separate the teacher from his disciple. Anṭūn declared that while 'Abduh's rejoinders took the shape of a respectable intellectual debate, Riḍā was inclined to slander and offense.<sup>29</sup>

What irritated Riḍā was what he described as Anṭūn's implicit intention to marker Islam as a religion that is against the spirit of science and wisdom, while Christianity was presented as the religion that promoted science in Europe. He further understood that Anṭūn's ideas explicitly denoted that the nature of Islam predetermines lack of knowledge and civilization; and that Muslims would never achieve progress as long as they would cling to their religion and not convert to Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

According to Riḍā, some of his readers notified him that articles like those of *al-Jāmi'a* were more dangerous for Muslims than missionary publications. However, he maintained that Anṭūn had the right to defend his religion, but should have uttered his views in a moderate way. Riḍā portrayed *al-Jāmi'a* as a 'sectarian' and 'religious journal' in content, although it did not overtly show any Christian tendency and still claimed itself as a platform for literary, scientific and medical subjects.<sup>31</sup>

Anṭūn fervently accused Riḍā of having manipulated religious issues for propagating *al-Manār* among common Muslims.<sup>32</sup> It was observable that *al-Manār* started to gain more reputation, and witnessed a rapid increase of its circulation after Riḍā had published 'Abduh's defenses against Anṭūn's work.<sup>33</sup> Anṭūn explicitly proclaimed that he never intended to take part in debating with the founder of *al-Manār*. By his discussion, he only endeavoured to address 'Abduh as an authoritative and a highly-esteemed Muslim scholar. In Anṭūn's

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<sup>28</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 254.

<sup>29</sup> Reid, *Odyssey*, p. 87.

<sup>30</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 3/12 (Jumāda al-Thāniya 1320/September 1902), p. 471.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 474-475. Riḍā gave another example on how Christian magazines zealously supported Anṭūn in what he saw as anti-Muslim campaign, see, *al-Manār*, vol. 5/13 (Rajab 1320-October 1902), pp. 515-517.

<sup>32</sup> Anṭūn, *Ibn Rushd*, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> See my paper, 'A printed Muslim 'Lighthouse' in Cairo: *al-Manār's* early years, religious aspiration and Reception', presented at the conference, 'Sacred Texts and Print Culture – The Case of Qur'ān and Bible of the Orthodox Churches during the 18th and 19th Century', Central European University, Budapest, 2-4 December 2005.

eyes, Riḍā, whom he had known as a 'sober' and 'restrained' person, appeared to be of a 'rash' and 'eccentric' character after having propagated insults against him.<sup>34</sup> His reaction, unlike his teacher, was 'foolish' and 'imprudent'. He intolerably did not accept the methods of scientific analysis and the conclusions of *Al-Jāmi'a*'s article. In Anṭūn's own words, 'the irrefutable evidence of [*al-Jāmi'a*] increased his [Riḍā] foolishness, and he was driven frenzied to the degree that we became anxious about his state of mind'.<sup>35</sup> He moreover compared Riḍā in his aloofness to grasp the facts mentioned in *al-Jāmi'a* in a mocking way with 'a crocodile [...] when you throw to him a pearl, he would immediately rush to smash it with his teeth, but never try to use it as an ornament to his ears. Having failed to smash the pearl, the crocodile would throw it again and swoop down upon it while being enflamed with anger and grudge'.<sup>36</sup>

In a sixteen-page private letter addressed to 'Abduh on the pages of his magazine, Anṭūn accused Riḍā of provoking the problem. His assault on *al-Jāmi'a*, said Anṭūn, was nothing but 'envy and lack of decency'. 'Nothing', he went further, 'would satisfy his [Riḍā] rancour, but insulting others'.<sup>37</sup> Anṭūn drew 'Abduh's attention to the fact that the 'recklessness' and 'foolishness' of his disciple would harm his position as the grand mufti of Egypt.<sup>38</sup> Finally, he made three suggestions to 'Abduh: 1) to find two trustworthy arbiters among Al-Azhar scholars to judge the whole issue, 2) to disclaim all matters published in *al-Manār*, 3) or to bring the 'attack' of Riḍā against him and his journal to an end. In case Riḍā did discontinue his campaign, Anṭūn warned 'Abduh that he would instantly publish a hundred thousand copies of the letter and distribute them among the public.<sup>39</sup>

The debate with 'Abduh undoubtedly pushed the interest in Anṭūn's magazine to its highest point. But it was Riḍā's critique of *al-Jāmi'a*, which led to the immediate withdrawal of Muslim subscribers, which contributed to its collapse. Due to its sharp attack, *al-Manār* was said to be 'the assassin of *al-Jāmi'a*'.<sup>40</sup> But Riḍā believed that the reason for the latter's collapse was its editor's lack of knowledge of Islamic matters. After its first failure, Riḍā proudly taunted that 'no Arab paper would ever survive without its Muslim readership, as they represented the majority of the nation'.<sup>41</sup>

*Al-Jāmi'a* disappeared in 1904, and was revived irregularly after its editor's moving to New York in the period between 1906 and 1909. We notice that Riḍā's attitude towards Anṭūn started to change, and he eulogized Anṭūn's

<sup>34</sup> Anṭūn, *Ibn Rushd*, pp. 85-87, see also pp. 226-227.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> As quoted in, Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, p. 812.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 813.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 815.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 811. Cf. Reid, *Odyssey*, p. 54.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. See also *al-Manār*, vol. 5/14 (Rajab 1320/October 1902), pp. 559-560; Riḍā was later informed by one of his friends that Anṭūn had especially intensified his debate with 'Abduh only in order that he could gain more subscriptions. *Al-Manār*, vol. 5/14, pp. 559-560.

efforts of republishing his journal in the United States. He described it again as 'one of the best edited and most useful Arab papers'.<sup>42</sup> He also welcomed the return of Anṭūn and his magazine to Egypt in 1909.<sup>43</sup> But Anṭūn managed only to publish two more issues of *al-Jāmi'a*, and it disappeared for good in the following years.<sup>44</sup>

After Anṭūn's death in 1922, it was Riḍā who called upon a ceremony dedicated to his memory. One of Anṭūn's biographers believes that by this attempt Riḍā tried to make amends for their old conflict.<sup>45</sup> In a letter (see, appendix IV), Rose Anṭūn, Farah's younger sister, expressed her gratitude to Riḍā for his initiative by saying: '[since] I was staying with my brother in all his doings till the last moment of his life, I know perfectly well how he held you in very high esteem. [...] Now with all what you did, you have added one new noble deed to all the ones we knew from you before. I shall never forget it that you were the first one my eyes had grasped during the funeral ceremony and the first to summon upon my brother's commemoration.'<sup>46</sup>

### 2.1.2. Jurjī Zaidān (*al-Hilāl*)

The Greek Orthodox Jurjī Zaidān (1861-1914) was an important member of the Syrian community in Egypt.<sup>47</sup> In 1892 he founded his magazine *al-Hilāl* (The Crescent) in which he published much on ethics, sociology, geography, literature, Arab history, and world politics. He also published many works on subjects such as the history of Lebanon, education and social order, Machiavelli and Ibn Khaldūn, and the siege of Damiette by the Crusaders. Just as many of his contemporary Syrian Christian intellectuals, Zaidān held the view that each religion is to a certain extent in agreement with sciences, though for him science should remain the decisive criterion in evaluating things. He was impressed by Muḥammad 'Abduh and his recognition of the 'duty to interpret the Qur'ān in such a fashion as to bring it into agreement with modern science'.<sup>48</sup> As a Christian intellectual, Zaidān's writings on Islam were, as

<sup>42</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 10/2 (Ṣafar 1325/April 1907), p. 158.

<sup>43</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 13/2 (Ṣafar 1328/March 1910), p. 142.

<sup>44</sup> Reid, *Odyssey*, p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> A. Abū Khiḍr Mansī, *Farah Anṭūn*, Cairo, 1923, p. 23.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Rose Anṭūn to Riḍā, Cairo, 24 February 1923. The ceremony took place on the first of March 1923 at the American University in Cairo. Riḍā delivered a speech in which he referred to the history of his relation with Anṭūn. For more details about Anṭūn's commemoration, see, the supplement of his sister's magazine *Majallat al-Sayyidāt wā al-Rijāl*, *Farah Anṭūn: Ḥayātuh wā Ta'bīnuh wā Mukhtarātuh*, Cairo, September 1923.

<sup>47</sup> Much has been written on him, see his memoirs, *Mudhakkirāt Jūrjī Zaidān*, edited by Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1968; Hamdi Alkhayat, *Gurgi Zaidan: Leben und Werk*, PhD dissertation, Cologne: Orient Mercur Verlag, 1973; Thomas Philipp, *Gurgi Zaidan: His Life and Thought*, Beirut, 1979 (Quoted below, *Gurgi*); id. 'Language, History, and Arab National Consciousness in the Thought of Jurjī Zaidan (1861-1914)', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 4/1 (Jan., 1973), pp. 3-22; id., 'Women in the Historical Perspective of an Early Arab Modernist (Gurgi Zaidan)', *Welt des Islams*, vol. 18/1-2 (1977), pp. 65-83.

<sup>48</sup> Philipp, *Gurgi*, pp. 58-59.

described by T. Philipp, mostly ‘precarious’.<sup>49</sup> When dealing with the relationship between Islam and Christianity he tried to play down any tension between both religions, and tended to show that Christians during most of the history lived in harmony with their Muslim compatriots.<sup>50</sup>

A few days after his arrival in Egypt, Riḍā met Zaidān in the company of Anṭūn for the first time in the latter’s office at *al-Hilāl* (early January 1989). Their first conversation focused on the situation of journalism in Egypt.<sup>51</sup> When Riḍā established himself as a Muslim journalist, Zaidān used to send *al-Manār* his novels on Islamic history and literature in order for Riḍā to review them critically.

In the early years of their relation, Riḍā, at many occasions, praised Zaidān as ‘a historian with objective eyes’<sup>52</sup> due to his appreciating of others’ criticism of his views.<sup>53</sup> While heavily involved in his controversy with Farah Anṭūn, Riḍā was earnestly defending Zaidān against the criticism of some Muslims, who accused him of ‘religious fanaticism’ and tried to disqualify his works on Islamic history as a Christian thinker.<sup>54</sup> Riḍā, on the contrary, saw the benefit of such novels in educating Muslim youngsters about unknown parts of their own history. He often excused Zaidān for his historical mistakes, since he, as a novelist, was allowed sometimes to collect his information on a non-historical basis. In his historical novel *Fatāt Ghassān* (The Maiden of Ghassān), Zaidān went further by citing the controversial Muslim narrative on the story of *al-Gharāniq*. Riḍā mildly criticised Zaidān for having incautiously mentioned such a controversial story. Despite his strong conviction in its forged nature, Riḍā believed that Zaidān included the story in his novel on the basis of the account of the early Muslim historiographer al-Ṭabarī. He maintained that ‘he [Zaidān], as a Christian, should be forgiven if he believed in the story. Some early Muslim scholars mentioned it without giving any critical remarks.’<sup>55</sup> Another noteworthy example was the harsh criticism of many Muslims against Zaidān’s

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>51</sup> Riḍā’s Diary (1897-1898).

<sup>52</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 5/9 (Jumāda al-ʿUlā 1320/August 1902), pp. 356-357.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, *al-Manār*, vol. 6/10 (Jumadā al-ʿUlā 1321/August 1903), pp. 391-398. Riḍā also received questions from his readers as a result of their readings in Zaidān’s novels on Islamic history, see, Riḍā’s *fatwā* on reciting the Qurʾān in the graveyard raised by a student of Al-Azhar, *al-Manār*, vol. 5/13, p. 508.

<sup>54</sup> The first Muslim to criticize Zaidān was the traveler and book dealer Amīn al-Halwānī al-Madanī. See his short book, *Nabsh al-Hadhayān min Tārikh Jurjī Zaidān*, Bombay, 1307/1890. It was a rejoinder to Zaidān’s history of modern Egypt. In his work, Madanī enumerated 101 errors attributed to the writer. In 1891, Zaidān published his *Radd Rannān ‘alā Nabsh al-Hadhayān* in which he alluded al-Halwānī’s Indian origin and his jealousy of the Syrian success. See, Lewis Beier Ware, *Jurjī Zaydan: The Role of Popular History in the Formation of a New Arab World-View*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1973, pp. 196-197. More about Madanī and his visit to Amsterdam and Leiden (1882-1883) and participation in the Leiden Orientalists Congress (1883), see, C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Het Leidsche Orientalistencongres: Indrukken van een Arabisch Congreslid*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1883. About his life, Zirikli, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 15-16.

<sup>55</sup> J. Zaidān, *Fatāt Ghassān*, Beirut: Manshūrat Maktabat al-Hayāh, n. d., part I, p. 75; see Riḍā’s review of it, *al-Manār*, vol. 6/10, p. 392-398.



acceptance of the story that the Prophet's regular meetings with monks (such as Baḥīra) and other lettered people of his time as a young boy had an immense impact on his later religious career as a Prophet, especially during the commercial trips with his uncle.<sup>56</sup> Although Riḍā rejected Zaidān's interpretation, he was certain that he had no intention whatsoever of defaming Islam. He in the meanwhile demanded Muslims to take their knowledge only from authoritative and well-versed Muslim scholars instead. Despite all these critical remarks, Riḍā insisted on his appreciation of Zaidān's enrichment of Arabic literature. He never thought that the latter had the least intention to offend or attack Islam, nor was he ever proved to be 'a fanatic Christian'.<sup>57</sup>

Riḍā's response to Zaidān's works on Islamic history was inconsistent. His attitude towards the man drastically changed and became basically connected to their political differences later. The most significant example was Riḍā's approach to the latter's voluminous work on the history of Islamic civilization.<sup>58</sup> When Zaidān embarked upon writing his work (1902), Riḍā regularly praised his endeavours as a service to Muslims and Arabs by compiling their history which is scattered all through the various sources in one piece of work.<sup>59</sup> He acknowledged Zaidān's initiatives as unprecedented in furnishing the history of Islam, and saw this specific work as 'a useful example for Arab readers'.<sup>60</sup> He moreover urged other Arab historians to follow his steps.<sup>61</sup> He again disapproved of Muslim attacks on the book as 'unfair to recompense those who make efforts to serve [Muslims] by constantly stressing their lapses before giving mention to the benefits of their works'.<sup>62</sup> Riḍā continued to give his positive assessment for Zaidān's works in the following years, while he persistently kept requesting other authors to critically review the author's historical data.<sup>63</sup>

However, by 1908 *al-Manār* turned to sketch its first detailed criticism of Zaidān's work on the pre-Islamic history by publishing two articles by Aḥmad Umar al-Iskandarī (1875-1938), a teacher of Arabic Literature, in which he berated Zaidān's work. In his articles, al-Iskandarī suspected Zaidān's ability to write on Islamic history. Although his effort deserved appreciation, as a historical piece of work it should have been written in a more accurate way.<sup>64</sup> In

<sup>56</sup> Zaidan, *ibid*, *passim*, pp. 32-36 & p. 72.

<sup>57</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 7/13 (1 Rajab 1322/11 September 1904), pp. 514-518.

<sup>58</sup> J. Zaidān, *Tārīkh al-Tamaddun al-'Islāmī*, 5 vols., Cairo, 1901-1906.

<sup>59</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 8/13 (Rajab 1323/August 1905), p. 511-512.

<sup>60</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 5/14, p. 552.

<sup>61</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 7/4 (Ṣafar 1322/May 1904), p. 149.

<sup>62</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 7/13, p. 518.

<sup>63</sup> See, *al-Manār*, vol. 8/16 (Sha'bān 1323/October 1905), p. 638; vol. 9/11 (Dhū al-Qi'ḍah 1324/December 1906), 873-875; 10/7 (Rajab 1325/September 1907), p. 553, 11/8 (Sha'bān 1326/25 September 1908), pp. 619-620.

<sup>64</sup> J. Zaidān, *al-'Arab Qabl al-'Islām*, Cairo, 1907. See, A. al-Iskandarī's critique, 'Ilmāmah bī Kitāb Tārīkh al-'Arab Qabl al-'Islām', *al-Manār*, vol. 11/9 (Ramaḍān 1326/October 1907), two articles, pp. 681-750 & vol. 11/10 (Shawwāl 1326/23 November 1908), pp. 780-787. Cf., al-Iskandarī's contributions to the Arabic language, *al-Manār*, vol. 10/12 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1325/February 1908), pp. 887-915.

January 1912 *al-Manār* published a sharper criticism launched by the Indian scholar Shibli al-Nu‘mānī (1869-1914).<sup>65</sup> Nu‘mānī accused Zaidān of making an effort to belittle the Arabs and to abuse them. Just as Riḍā, Nu‘mānī had been on good terms with Zaidān. At the beginning of their relation, Nu‘mānī did not believe any accusation against him of blatantly misrepresenting Arab history.<sup>66</sup> At a certain moment, however, Nu‘mānī shifted his attack to the personal integrity of Zaidān by demonstrating that his sole attempt was to deliberately falsify and change the truth about Islamic history. The motive for Nu‘mānī’s response was that Zaidān had engaged in circulating ‘intrigues’ through the publication of such works, while nobody took the initiative to oppose him.<sup>67</sup> Zaidān on the other hand habitually eulogized Nu‘mānī’s work and highly recognized his scholarly prestige among Indian scholars. But this was no justification for Nu‘mānī to quit his religious ‘zealousness’ by giving concessions. He also made it clear that he was not ready to ‘accept his [Zaidān] praise in return for allowing him to attack the Arabs.’<sup>68</sup>

In October of the same year, two other articles by al-Iskandarī appeared in Riḍā’s journal in which he again sharply criticised Zaidān’s work on the history of Arabic literature.<sup>69</sup> Some of Zaidān’s shortcomings, according to al-Iskandarī, were his many mistakes in giving references and documentation for his data, his incorrect conclusions, contradicting information, his imitation of orientalist who sometimes formulate their views without any verification, and his literal application of the theory of evolution in all aspects.<sup>70</sup>

Riḍā gave the views of both al-Iskandarī and al-Nu‘mānī more credibility by reprinting their criticism in a separate treatise together with another article by the Jesuit Louis Cheikho, the editor of *al-Machreq*.<sup>71</sup> In his preface to the treatise, Riḍā also retreated his position by saying that Zaidān, as a non-Muslim, wrote his history without any proper qualification in Islamic knowledge from real authoritative scholars. Zaidān, Riḍā contended, relied on the works of Western orientalist in his approach in collecting his historical data rather than

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<sup>65</sup> He was a member of the Salafiyyā movement in India. He is the founder of Nadwat al-‘Ulamā in Lucknow. He wrote many works on the history of Islam. More about his intellectual life, see for example, Ahmad Anis, ‘Two Approaches to Islamic History: A critique of Shibli Nu‘mani’s and Syed Ameer Ali’s interpretations of history’, unpublished PhD dissertation, Temple University, 1980; Mehr Afroz Murad, *Intellectual Modernism of Shibli Nu‘mānī: An exposition of religious and political ideas*, New Delhi, 1996.

<sup>66</sup> Various letters, quoted in Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

<sup>67</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/1 (Muḥarram 1330/January 1912), p. 59.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>69</sup> J. Zaidān, *Tārīkh ‘Adāb al-Lughā al-‘Arabiyyā*, 4 vols, Cairo, 1911-1914.

<sup>70</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/10 (Shawwāl 1330/October 1912), pp. 743-744.

<sup>71</sup> *Kitāb ‘Intiqād Kitāb Tārīkh al-Tamaddun al-‘Islāmī*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1330/1912; cf. Philip, *Gurgi*, pp. 64-65. It is interesting to know that in his early review of this book in 1904, Riḍā insisted that Zaidān never intended to be dishonest in dealing with Islamic sources, unlike the Jesuits whom Riḍā considered to intentionally falsify such sources in their attack on Islam, *al-Manār*, vol. 7/13, p. 518. Louis Cheikho was, for instance, one of his main antagonists. Cheikho considered Protestants and members of the Syrian Protestant College as a natural object of wrath, Philip, *Gurgi*, p. 60.

making an effort to directly rely on Islamic sources. For this reason, his works came out with the gravest of errors. However, Riḍā denied that he had anything to do personally with these criticisms and that al-Nu‘mānī (and other authors) must take the responsibility.<sup>72</sup>

On his part, Zaidān was frustrated by this unexpected Manārist campaign against his works. A few months after the appearance of these articles in *al-Manār*, he complained to his son Emile that the views of al-Iskandarānī and al-Nu‘mānī showed some aspects of religious hatred and fanaticism that he had to contend with occasionally during his career. They were therefore not worthy of any answer.<sup>73</sup> Riḍā and al-Nu‘mānī, whom he had considered as good friends, have now turned out to be his adversaries. When al-Nu‘mānī was still extensively involved in writing against Zaidān’s work in *al-Manār* and elsewhere, one of *al-Hilāl*’s Muslim readers in Egypt tried to console the latter for al-Nu‘mānī’s harsh attack on his integrity. In his reply to this reader, Zaidān maintained that he was perplexed by reading these attacks, and had no clear answer why Riḍā and al-Nu‘mānī had turned against him in such a way.<sup>74</sup> However, he had explicitly mentioned the direct reason behind their campaign in an earlier letter to his son Emile:

I read *al-Manār* and saw, what you saw too. Grief prevailed over all other feelings in me. Not because this foolish criticism had any influence upon me. Indeed, the station of *al-Hilāl* is too lofty as to be hit by any tasteless slander. But I was grieved by the deterioration of the character of our writers to such a level, that even from al-Nu‘mānī, the greatest scholar of India, emanated phrases that even the rabble would be ashamed to use. With all this we were friends for twenty years and our relations were amicable. When I read his criticism I wrote him a letter, reproaching him in very strong terms. A copy of it you will find enclosed [...] As for the owner of *al-Manār* he is excused by his exasperation with *al-Hilāl*, the success of our books, our fame.<sup>75</sup>

In June 1910, Zaidān was invited to teach a course in Islamic history at the recently founded Egyptian University, but a few months later had to learn that the University withdrew his appointment.<sup>76</sup> He suspected that Riḍā had a hand in opposing his post at the university. He was convinced that the founder of *al-Manār* was angered by the appraisal letter of Prince Muḥammad ‘Alī (b. 1872) in which he maintained that before the appearance of *al-Hilāl* nobody

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<sup>72</sup> Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>73</sup> Letter to Emile, 14 November 1908, as quoted in Ware, *ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>74</sup> A question from a certain Muḥammad Muṣṭafā from Alexandria, see, ‘Bāb al-Su‘āl wā al-Iqtirāḥ’, *al-Hilāl*, vol 20/9 (June 1912), pp. 562-563.

<sup>75</sup> Letter to Emile, Cairo March 28, 1912; as translated and cited in Philip, *Gurgi*, pp. 216-219.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67; more about the affair, see, Donald Malcolm Reid, ‘Cairo University and the Orientalists,’ *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 19/1. (1987), pp. 62-64 (Quoted below, ‘Cairo’).

mentioned the history of Islam. Another factor for irritation was, according to Zaidān, Riḍā's failure to imitate him in writing historical novels about Islam. In 1905, Riḍā had approached his Syrian friend Sheikh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zuhrāwī (1871-1916) to help him to compose a series of historical novels about Islam because nobody had written about this subject in Arabic earlier.<sup>77</sup> Referring to this imitation, Zaidān ended his letter to his son: 'regardless of the fact that my novels fill his library and he has read all of them. If this did not change his irritation, how can we blame him that his vexation increased when he started with his project and did not even finish the first novel.'<sup>78</sup>

In truth, Riḍā never openly accused Zaidān of any evil intention to misrepresent the history of Arabs and Islam. He explained his own reasons for publishing this collection of criticisms. Besides his incapability of writing on Islamic history, Riḍā made it clear that he was highly concerned that the Turkish translation of Zaidān's works might add fuel to the fire of Young Turk chauvinism.<sup>79</sup> The Turkish translation of his work was done by the Christian Zakī Maghāmiz of Aleppo, who was known for his anti-Arab sentiments. In one of his letters, Maghāmiz complained to Zaidān that the illustrations in his book showed too much superiority of the Arab civilization.<sup>80</sup> Maghāmiz also took part in the Turkish project of translating the Qur'ān. At another occasion, Riḍā suspected Maghāmiz of intentionally misrepresenting the Qur'ān through his assistance in the translation.<sup>81</sup> Zaidān later became a sympathizer of the Young Turks Revolution and strongly opposed any Arab attempt to form independent organizations, such as the Decentralization Party of Riḍā and his group. Riḍā was very disappointed about his stance by granting the Turks rights that he refused to the Arabs.<sup>82</sup>

This attitude became clearer especially after Zaidān's death. Not long after his death, Riḍā (who was also present at his commemoration ceremony) wrote a biography in which he discussed in details his inclination to the ideas of Ottomanism. For Riḍā, Zaidān was one of the pillars (*rukn*) of the modern Arab renaissance (*nahḍa*). However, he confirmed that after his trip to Istanbul (1908) Zaidān tried to revive the *shu'ūbi* (anti-Arab sentiments) beliefs among the Christian intelligentsia, and became convinced of the validity of absorbing the Arab provinces back into the Empire. He considered Zaidān's tendency as an attempt of championing the Turkish culture over the Arabs. Riḍā, who previously praised his works on Arab civilization, now upheld them as an attack on the Arab identity. For this reason, he allowed Nu'mānī's criticism of the work to be published in his journal in order to prevent the Turks from using Zaidān's work as a source of derision against the Arabs.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Philip, *Gurğī*, p. 219.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> The last volume of the Arabic edition of Zaidān's work appeared in 1906. When it had been translated into Turkish six years later, Riḍā made his major effort to criticize it. Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>80</sup> Letter from Maghāmiz to Zaidān, n.d., n.p., as quoted in ibid, p. 66.

<sup>81</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 25/10 (Sha'bān 1343/March 1925), p. 794.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 107-109.

<sup>83</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 17/8 (Sha'bān 1332/24 July 1914), p. 638-640; Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-200.

### 2.1.3. Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf and Fāris Nimr (*al-Muqṭaṭaf*)

As has been mentioned above, *al-Muqṭaṭaf* was one of the Arabic periodicals that brought Riḍā into contact with the Western world during his Syrian years. It was founded by the Syrian Christians Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf (1852-1927) and Fāris Nimr (1856-1951) after their arrival in Egypt in 1876. The great contribution of this journal was the revival of the Arabic language by introducing science and technology to an initially narrow, but ever-increasing Arabic reading public in a simple and sound language.<sup>84</sup>

*Al-Muqṭaṭaf* met with strong opposition from entrenched traditionalist circles. When its first issues arrived in Baghdad, for instance, conservatives in all communities, Sunnī and Shī'ī, Christian and Jewish resisted it because it preached new and 'dangerous' doctrines. Only some of the younger generation welcomed it.<sup>85</sup> But its appeal to the awakening needs of the Arabic-speaking East was broad enough to quickly win the support of Muslim intellectual leaders.<sup>86</sup>

Riḍā had friendly relations with the editors of the journal, and never had any confrontations with them. He always placed his ultimate tribute to the skill of the editors and the quality of their journal. His attitude should be explained against the background of *al-Muqṭaṭaf*'s position towards religion in general, and Islam in particular. The journal in many places stressed that there was no conflict between science and religion, and that the revealed Scriptures were not to be read as scientific textbooks.<sup>87</sup>

It was Jurjī Zaidān who recommended Riḍā to the founder of *al-Muqṭaṭaf*, and also had informed Ṣarrūf about Riḍā's coming to Egypt. In their earliest meeting, Riḍā discussed with him various subjects, including his main intention of establishing a journal in which he intended to propagate religious reform and the reconciliation between Islam and Christianity. In their discussion, Ṣarrūf explained to Riḍā the difference between Syria and Egypt. He attributed the spread of knowledge and reform in the Syrian territory to the consciousness of its people. But in Egypt its spread was only due to the efforts made by its government to establish freedom. As Ṣarrūf was greatly interested in philosophy, Riḍā made it clear that his intended journal was also an attempt to remove the thoughts in the minds of the majority of Muslims that philosophy contradicts religion.<sup>88</sup>

In his speech during the tenth anniversary of *al-Manār*, Ṣarrūf expressed his admiration of Riḍā's journal and its role in 'serving religious freedom and

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<sup>84</sup> L.M. Kenny, 'East versus West in *al-Muqṭaṭaf* 1875-1900', in D. Little (ed.) *Essays on Islamic Civilization presented to Niyazi Berkes*, Leiden, 1976, p. 145; More about its linguistic contributions, see, Adrian Gully, 'Arabic Linguistic Issues and Controversies of the Late Nineteenth Centuries', *Journal of Semitic Studies* XLII/1 (Spring 1997), pp. 75-120.

<sup>85</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 247.

<sup>86</sup> Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>88</sup> Riḍā's diary, 1897-1898.

fighting innovations and superstitions'. He told the audience about his primary impression of Riḍā when he read the early issues of his journal. He became convinced at that moment that Muslims would one day deem the reforms of Riḍā and his teacher 'Abduh in Islam just as Calvin and Luther as reformers of Christianity. Muslims, Ṣarrūf went on, had become in dire need for that kind of reformation, which was immensely endorsed in Riḍā's journal by combining religion and civilization. He also stressed that Riḍā's work should please Christians as well as other minority groups in the East, as 'the Near Orient would never advance without the progress of Muslims.'<sup>89</sup>

Riḍā's initial impression about the editors of *al-Muqṭataf* was that they tended to be 'atheists' or 'antagonists' in faith.<sup>90</sup> Their later discussions on the divine and other religious issues revealed to him that they (especially Ṣarrūf) were not total disbelievers in the existence of God and His might over the world. He enthusiastically quoted the response of *al-Muqṭataf* to a letter by the Coptic writer Salāma Mūsā (more about him below) in which he declared his pride of becoming an agnostic and gave his full sympathy to socialism versus any faith in God. Ṣarrūf argued that 'the rejection of God is the road towards the destruction of human civilization'.<sup>91</sup> Riḍā praised this way of thinking, which to a certain degree resembles the Qur'ānic manner of proving the existence of God.<sup>92</sup>

Riḍā's admiration of *al-Muqṭataf* and its founders made him formally call for organizing an event of celebrating the golden jubilee of the journal.<sup>93</sup> In his speech during that event (30 April, 1926), Riḍā admitted the scientific contributions of the founders of *al-Muqṭataf* to the revival of the Arabic language and its serving the whole umma. However, he was certain that due to the stagnancy of scientific and literal movements in the Arab world *al-Muqṭataf* did not receive the recognition or the circulation it deserved in its time. Riḍā expressed his strong belief that 'the Divine destiny was the moving factor in choosing the founders of *al-Muqṭataf* to be one of the corners of the Arabic scientific renaissance'.<sup>94</sup> He maintained that it was predestined by the Divine providence that the Americans would come to the East to establish their missionary college in Beirut. In that institution the founders of *al-Muqṭataf* had the chance to become very qualified in their native language and skilled in other languages. The Divine providence, Riḍā went on, was also behind their departure with their journal to Egypt in order that they could enrich the Arabic language with their vast knowledge of science and foreign languages.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>89</sup> *Al-Manār* vol 10/9 (Ramaḍān 1325/November 1907), pp. 717-718, cf. 'Al-Iḥtifāl bi-al-Manār', *al-Muqṭataf*, vol 33/1 (January 1908).

<sup>90</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Al-Dīn wā al-Ilḥād wā al-Ishṭirākiyya: Naṣr al-Muqṭataf al-Imān 'alā al-Ta'ṭīl', vol. 13/12, pp. 912-921.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 915.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Athar al-Muqṭataf fī Nahḍat al-Lughah al-'Arabiyya', vol. 27/10 (Jumādā al-'Ākhira 1345/January 1927) pp. 786-791.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 789.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 790-791.

#### 2.1.4. Shiblī Shumayyil: A Fervent Darwinist

Shiblī Shumayyil (1860-1917), of Syrian Greek Catholic origin, was a graduate of the medical school of the Syrian Protestant College. He also studied medicine in Paris before his settlement in Egypt, where he practiced his profession as a physician and took part in the public and intellectual life of the country. As a young man he clashed with the staff of the College over the theories of Darwin on the evolution. He was a sharp proponent of scientism, and distinctly was the foremost popularizer of Darwinism. The Arab world became acquainted with the evolution theories through Shumayyil's translation of Darwin's works into Arabic.<sup>96</sup>

Like Riḍā, Shumayyil escaped the Hamidian tyranny, and sought liberty in Egypt. Despite his agnostic and secularist line of thought, Shumayyil's general views of politics, religion and sympathy towards Islam must have been the greatest motive for Riḍā to strengthen their relationship. In Shumayyil's view, religion was a factor of division: not religion itself, but the religious leaders, who sowed discord between men, and this kept society weak. He further extended his view to postulate that all types of extreme solidarity taking the shape of national fanaticism had the same danger as the religious one, because they lead to the division of the society. For him, Christianity sprang from egoism: from the love of domination on the part of religious leaders, and the ordinary man's desire of individual survival. When Lord Cromer criticised Islam in his *Modern Egypt* as 'a social system [that] has been a complete failure',<sup>97</sup> it was the Christian Shumayyil who rushed to the defence of Islam by stating that 'it was not Islam, nor the Qur'ān but the power of the Sheikhs which kept the umma weak'.<sup>98</sup> In his eyes, there was no difference between Christianity and Islam (though he favoured Islam in other occasions) with regard to their strife to achieve social equality among people,<sup>99</sup> but his method of comparison between Islam and Christianity was sometimes seen by Christians as an attack on Christianity.<sup>100</sup>

Shumayyil's favourable impression of Riḍā was reflected in his regular homage of his figure and his journal. For him, Riḍā was a typical Muslim reformer who was 'keen in his *Manār* on unshackling [...] Islam from all fetters imposed by [conservative] scholars as an attempt to liberate religion from any

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<sup>96</sup> More about him, see, S. Shumayyil, *Majmū'at al-Duktūr Shiblī Shumayyil*, 2 volumes, Cairo: Matba'at Al-Ma'ārif, n.d.; Jean Lecerf, 'Shibli Shumayyil, métaphysicien et moraliste contemporain', *Bulletin d'études Orientales*, i (1931), pp. 153-86; Donald M. Reid, 'The Syrian Christians and early Socialism in the Arab World', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, V (1974), pp. 177-193; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 248-253.

<sup>97</sup> Lord Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908.

<sup>98</sup> See his article, 'Al-Qur'ān wā al-'Umrān', firstly published in *al-Mu'ayyad* (1908), reprinted in his *Majmū'at*, vol. 2, pp. 57-63; cf. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 250-253.

<sup>99</sup> *Majmū'at*, vol. 2, p. 58.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

blemish, and to make it attain its ultimate goal through *al-ʿAmr bi al-Maʿrūf wa al-Nahy ʿan al-Munkar* (to enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong).<sup>101</sup>

Riḍā considered Shumayyil's positive views of Islam a kind of recognition made by non-Muslims regarding the authenticity of its divine message.<sup>102</sup> Shumayyil once wrote to him (see, appendix V): 'You look at Muḥammad as a prophet and make him great, while I look at him and make him greater. Although we are in contrast with each other, what we have in common are broad-mindedness and sincerity [...] – and that makes our bond of friendship stronger.'<sup>103</sup> Despite the fact that Riḍā was appreciative of Shumayyil's high esteem of the Prophet of Islam, he did not accept his statement that the Prophet's political career had been stronger than his prophecy.<sup>104</sup>

In a letter to Riḍā, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī (1848-1935),<sup>105</sup> the Syrian journalist, disapproved of Shumayyil's propagation of Darwinism as a sign of entire rejection of religion.<sup>106</sup> Riḍā was not alarmed by Qabbānī's accusations, and saw them as not more than exaggeration, since the theories of Darwin were not 'evil' and do not conflict with the Islamic fundamental doctrines. Darwinism was merely a scientific school and should not be studied within the context of religious thought. Despite Shumayyil's agnosticism, Riḍā defended him as somebody who never intended to exclusively disprove religions. For him, Shumayyil was one of the most erudite and independent people in his thinking. Just as many educated Christians, the reason behind his scepticism was his training in the exact sciences according to the European traditions without having any parallel religious education that would convince him of the agreement between science and religion. He reminded his questioner that Shumayyil, at several occasions, had admitted that 'there is no socialist religion, except the religion of the Qurʾān'.<sup>107</sup> Instead of accusing the Christian Shumayyil of unbelief, Riḍā requested Qabbānī and other Muslim writers to

<sup>101</sup> The article was firstly published in the Egyptian daily *al-Akhbār*, 1907. It has been reprinted in *Majmūʿāt*, pp. 243-244.

<sup>102</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 11/1, pp. 10-11.

<sup>103</sup> Letter from Shumayyil to Riḍā, n.d., the letter contained a poem by Shumayyil on the Prophet. It was also published in *al-Manār*, vol. 11/1, p. 11.

دع من محمد في سدى قرآنه	ما قد نجاه للحممة الغايات
إني وإن أك قد كفرت بدينه	هل أكفرن بمحكم الآيات
أو ما حوت في ناصع الألفاظ من	حكم روادع للهوى وعظايات
وشرائع لو أنهم عقلوا بها	ما قيّدوا العمران بالعادات
نعم المدبر والحكيم وإنه	رب الفصاحة مصطفى الكلمات
رجل الحجا رجل السياسة والدّها	بطل حليف النصر في الغارات
ببلاغة القرآن قد خلب النهى	وبسيفه أنحى على الهامات
من دونه الأبطال في كل الورى	من سابق أو لاحق أو أت

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>105</sup> The founder of the journal *Thamarāt al-Funūn* (Fruits of the Arts, founded in 1876). For more about the journal's history, see Donald Ciota, 'Thamarat al-Funūn: Syria's First Islamic Newspaper, 1875-1908', PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1979.

<sup>106</sup> The letter was sent to Riḍā as a result of Qabbānī's reading of one of Shumayyil's articles in *al-Hilāl*, (June 1909); 'al-Duktūr Shiblī Effendī Shumayyil', *al-Manār*, vol. 12/8 (Shaʿbān 1327/September 1909), pp. 632-637.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



sustain him in his struggle against superstitions prevailing among Muslims. They should rather spare their efforts to fight those 'ignorant scholars' of Islam, whose ideas were, in his view, more dangerous to their religion than such theories as Darwinism.<sup>108</sup> If his mission succeeded, Riḍā dared to guarantee that the educated class of non-Muslims (physicians, chemists, astronomers, socialists, lawyers and politicians) would one day convert to Islam!

As far as Shumayyil was concerned, Riḍā had a strong wish that he would once adopt Islam. He was also convinced that if he just had had the chance to study Islam in the way he had studied Darwinism, he would become a Muslim. Riḍā once asked Shumayyil: 'due to your respect of the Qur'ān and the Prophet you are symbolically a Muslim!' In his answer, Shumayyil answered: 'No, I am a Mohammedan!'<sup>109</sup>

When the Iraqo-Kurdi poet Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (1863-1936) published his article on women's rights in Islam in the Egyptian daily *al-Mu'ayyad* (August 1910), he was dismissed from his job as a teacher of *Shari'a* at the College of Law in Baghdad. Many Muslim writers in Iraq, Egypt, Syria and elsewhere accused him of 'infidelity' and 'atheism'.<sup>110</sup> In that article, Zahāwī criticised the position of women in Islam, the veil, the system of inheritance and Islamic regulations of divorce as unjust. In his writings, Zahāwī in general denied the existence of God as the Maker of the world, defied the authority of the Qur'ān and was annoyed with the daily prayers and Ramadan.<sup>111</sup>

Zahāwī was influenced by Shumayyil's Arabic translation of Darwin's works.<sup>112</sup> As a result of the anti-Zahāwī campaign, Shumayyil requested Riḍā to write his views as a Muslim scholar on the ideas of the Iraqi poet. In December 1910, Riḍā responded to Shumayyil's request. He was very cautious not to label Zahāwī as infidel, although he could be seen as 'apostate' on the basis of his anti-Islamic statements. Riḍā, on the other hand, was more inclined to remind those who supported Zahāwī (such as Shumayyil) that his expression of such views was 'scorn' and 'ridicule' of Islam as the official religion of the Supreme

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> See Riḍā's review of Shumayyil's Arabic translation of the theories of Darwin, *al-Manār*, vol. 13/5 (Jumādā al-ʿUlā 1328/June 1910), p. 374-376.

<sup>110</sup> The article was entitled: 'al-Mar'ah wā al-Difā' 'anhā – Ṣawt Islāhī min al-'Irāq'. See the text of the article in 'Abd al-Rāziq al-Hilālī, *al-Zahāwī: al-Shā'ir al-Faylasūf wā al-Kātib al-Mufakkir*, Cairo, 1976, pp. 190-189. A certain Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Naqshabandī wrote his *al-Sayf al-Bāriq fī 'Unuq al-Māriq* against Zahāwī's views on women's rights. Later Riḍā published a treatise by the Najdī Muslim scholar Sulaymān b. Saḍmān al-Najdī (d. 1930) in Maṭba'at al-Manār in which he attacked Zahāwī: *Al-Diyā' al-Shāriq fī Radd Shubuhāt al-Māziq al-Māriq*, Maṭba'at al-Manār: Cairo, 1925. Cf. Sadok Masliyah, 'Zahawi: A Muslim Pioneer of Women's Liberation', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 32/3 (July 1996), 161-171. For more about him, see, G. Widmer & G. Kampffmeyer, 'Übertragungen aus der neuarabischen Literatur. II Der iraqische Dichter Gamil Sidqi az-Zahawi aus Baghdad', *Welt des Islams*, vol. 17/1-2 (1935), pp. 1-79; Wiebke Walther, 'Camil Sidqi az-Zahawi: Ein irakischer Zindiq im ersten Drittel dieses Jahrhunderts', *Oriens*, vol. 34 (1994), pp. 430-450.

<sup>111</sup> Sadok Masliyah, 'Zahawi's Philosophy and His Views on Islam', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 12/2 (May 1976), p. 180-183.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

Porte. His words should not be defended under the rights of freedom of expression.<sup>113</sup> Putting in mind that he was reacting at Shumayyil's request (whom he earlier had praised for his independence of thought), Riḍā argued that Zahāwī should have pursued his mission of reforming the situation of Muslims in another way, by addressing those superstitions widely spread among Muslims, instead of attacking the religious fundamentals of Islam. Zahāwī was found by Riḍā as to have ridiculed the Islamic Law, and therefore was not entitled to teach it to Muslim students. In order to avoid chaos in society, he strictly forbade Muslim individuals to physically attack him, nor to raid on his property; but they were allowed to manifest their objections in all peaceful means.<sup>114</sup>

Forty days after Shumayyil's death on January 1, 1917, the Syrian Club in Cairo held an obituary in his memory. In an article in his journal, Riḍā eulogized the late Shumayyil as one of the 'unique and sincere seekers of civil and social reform.'<sup>115</sup> Shumayyil's influence, according to Riḍā, was extended to his genuine efforts for the socialist cause besides his profession as a physician. In his comment on Shumayyil's affinity with Darwinism, Riḍā was astonished that the Catholics (especially the Jesuits) did not publicly attempt to criticise Shumayyil and his adherence to such theories. According to him, some priests were said to resist Shumayyil's 'infidelity' and propagation of Darwinism by discouraging Christian patients to visit his clinic for treatment. But the majority of Christians acknowledged his social reform despite his atheism. In Riḍā's understanding, Muslims did not see his manifestation of unbelief as a reason for ignoring him. They treated him, however, as a non-Muslim physician and sociologist.<sup>116</sup> Shumayyil's appreciation of the Prophet's personality and his social role in Arabia let Riḍā consider his demonstration of atheism as less destructive. He believed that the only reason he did not embrace Islam was that he studied Islam while being an agnostic, who did not believe in the existence of God. For Riḍā, attributing the Prophet's success only to his human traits had prohibited him from studying his achievements as a Prophet dispatched by God to humanity. But in spite of Sumayyil's materialism, Riḍā praised him for his 'compassion, generosity, sincerity, bravery and sense of honour.'<sup>117</sup>

### 2.1.5. 'Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī

Sheikh 'Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī (1847-1906) was one of the most well-known Christian Arab literary figures in the late nineteenth century. His father Naṣīf al-Yāzījī was also a man of letters and a great Arab philologist. Sheikh Ibrāhīm

<sup>113</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 13/11 (Dhū al-Qi'ḍah 1328/Decmebr 1910), pp. 841-846.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., pp. 844-845.

<sup>115</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 19/10 (Jumādā Al-ʿĀkhira 1335/April 1917), p. 625.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp. 625-626.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 629; after his eulogy of Shumayyil in *al-Manār* an anonymous graduate of Al-Azhar launched a campaign against Riḍā accusing him of infidelity for his acceptance of Darwinism and having put Shumayyil above the Rightly-guided Caliphs. See, *al-Manār*, vol. 20/1 (Shawwāl 1335/July 1917), p. 6.

had contributed to the Jesuit Arabic translation of the Bible. Before that, he had embarked upon learning Hebrew and Syriac. By 1889, he became a freemason in Syria, and migrated to Egypt in 1897 with other Syrian publicists, where he established or contributed to many Arab magazines.<sup>118</sup> He belonged to the group of Christian intellectuals who immensely contributed to the revival of the Arabic language in the modern time, and was one of the earliest proponents of Arab nationalism as well. For him, the Arabs were ‘the most remarkable people among all nations’.<sup>119</sup>

During his early years in Syria, Riḍā never had personal contact with al-Yāzījī, but he formed an unfavourable judgment of him on the basis of stories attributed to him that he attacked the Qur’ān and its language. At that time, Riḍā made no effort to get acquainted with him. Later in Egypt his image temporarily changed when he met with al-Yāzījī at the Egyptian Book Association. According to *al-Manār*, al-Yāzījī showed Riḍā ‘friendliness, gentleness and good manners’. After that meeting, Riḍā started to regularly praise him as one of the most knowledgeable Syrian Christian literary figures. What attracted Riḍā in al-Yāzījī besides his earnest contributions to the revival of the Arabic literary was his enthusiasm in opposing the archaic and foreign elements in the Arabic journals of his time.<sup>120</sup>

In a personal article written two years later entitled: ‘We and al-Yāzījī’, Riḍā, however, noted that many Syrian Christians were disappointed with al-Yāzījī’s pride and arrogance, and that his feeling of superiority had prevented him from sharing his knowledge with others.<sup>121</sup> Riḍā pointed here to Yāzījī’s criticism of Ya‘qūb Ṣarrūf, the founder of *al-Muqtaṭaf*, for his use of colloquial or foreign words, and for occasional slight grammatical mistakes in his writings. Riḍā’s view of al-Yāzījī was that he himself often made mistakes in his writings.<sup>122</sup>

In 1903, one of the missionary magazines attacked the Qur’ān on the basis of one work attributed to al-Yāzījī in which he was said to assault its language.<sup>123</sup> In his comment on Riḍā’s stance, al-Yāzījī accused *al-Manār* of causing ‘chaos’ and ‘disturbance of thoughts’ among the public by stirring up such accusations with no verification.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, Riḍā accused him of arrogance, stating that if he had been really innocent, he should have taken the effort to clear his name by at least writing a letter to the editorial of *al-Manār*. Riḍā repeated that al-Yāzījī hardly had any sincere friends whether in

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<sup>118</sup> He established with other people newspapers and magazines before his migration to Egypt, such as *al-Najāh* (1872), and *al-Ṭabīb* (co-editors Khalīl Sa‘ādeh and Bishārah Zalzal, 1884-1885). In Egypt he established two: *al-Bayān* (1897-1989), and *al-Diyār* (1898). For more about his life and works, see, ‘Isā Mikhā’il Sabā, *al-Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī* (1847-1906), Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1955.

<sup>119</sup> Dawisha, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>120</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/15 (Rajab 1319/October 1901), pp. 590-591.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Naḥnu wā al-Yāzījī’, *al-Manār*, vol. 6/8 (Rabī‘ al-Thānī, 1321/July 1903), p. 318.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

Syria or in Egypt. He also concluded that *al-Manār*'s critical response to him should not be seen as an attack on al-Yāzījī's person, but against the background of its general stance against missionary writings. It was thus in his view in no contradiction with his eagerness to establish concord and friendship with fair Christians.<sup>125</sup> Al-Yāzījī died three years later, and *al-Manār* was silent in giving any information about Riḍā's further responses to him during these years.

### 2.1.6. Khalīl Sa'ādeh

Very little is mentioned in *al-Manār* about Riḍā's relation with the Syrian Orthodox Khalīl Sa'ādeh (1857-1934), whose significance actually lied in their cooperation in editing the Arabic translation of the controversial Gospel of Barnabas (see chapter 5). In view of the importance of the Gospel, it might be useful to discuss their relation in the light of some biographical information about Sa'ādeh in order to place him in the intellectual and political setting of our discussion.

Sa'ādeh was known as a 'politically engaged man of letters'. He was born in Shuwayr, Mount Lebanon, and studied medicine at the Syrian Protestant College. In 1882 he was chosen as the spokesman of the student movement at the College. After his graduation in 1883 he became a staff member of the editorial board of the short-lived scientific and medical review *al-Ṭabīb* in Beirut (mentioned above). In the following years, he worked as a medical advisor for the Ottoman government in Palestine. In 1901 he left Syria for Egypt, where he eventually stayed till 1913. Like many of his Syrian fellows, he became involved in journalism, and wrote articles for *al-Ahrām*. He also became a correspondent of English papers, such as *The Times* and *The Standard*.<sup>126</sup> This period of his life witnessed an intensive intellectual productivity and political involvement. He was able to read in French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin. Besides his work as a journalist, Sa'ādeh gained special qualifying skills in English and was able to write literary works in English. He in fact wrote two novels: *The Syrian Prince* (London, 1893) and *Cesar and Cleopatra* (London, 1895). He compiled also an Arabic-English Lexicon during his stay in Cairo in 1911.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> C. Schumann, 'Nationalism, Diaspora and 'civilisational mission': the case of Syrian nationalism in Latin America between World War I and World War II', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 10 (October 2004), pp. 599-618. More about him, see, Ali Hamie, 'Khalil Saadeh: L'homme en Pœuvre: 1857-1934', unpublished PhD dissertation, Sorbonne, 1986 (Quoted below, 'L'homme'). Thanks to Dr. Hamie for sending me a copy of the thesis. It has been recently translated into Arabic, id. *al-ʿAllāma al-Duktūr Khalīl Sa'ādeh, sīratuh wā A'māluh*, Beirut: al-Furāt li al-Nashr wā al-Tawzī', 2007 (Quoted below, *al-ʿAllāma*). My gratitude is due to my colleague Abdullāh Ṣofān of the American University in Beirut for sending me a copy of the book from Beirut.

<sup>127</sup> See the speech delivered by his granddaughter Sofia Sa'ādeh during the event of his honor held by the branch of the Society of Feminist Development in his village Shuwayr in 2002, p. 3; available at [http://www.shweir.com/ain\\_el\\_assis.htm](http://www.shweir.com/ain_el_assis.htm), accessed, 20 November 2006.

Later he moved to Argentina, where he lived during World War I, until 1919. In 1919, he accepted an invitation by the Syrian community of Sao Paolo and moved to Brazil. There he founded the newspaper *al-Jarīda*, which developed into a cultural magazine and changed its name to *al-Majalla* later on. From 1930 until his death in 1934 he was the editor of the prestigious literary magazine *al-Rābiʿa*. During this period in South America, he did not write any direct contributions to Riḍā's journal. But from the Diaspora he had been sharing with him the struggle for the complete independence of Greater Syria. He also founded the Syrian League and the National Democratic Party to support the Syrian quest for complete independence.<sup>128</sup>

Saʿādeh regarded journalism as the measure for the advancement of nations, and the mirror of their morals and cultural refinement.<sup>129</sup> According to Schumann, Saʿādeh believed that the state of journalism was tied to the state of the nation itself. The nation would decline if the press declined and stagnated. If the nation woke up and joined the 'other living nations', it would be most visible in the awakening of its press. Saʿādeh wrote: '[Today] the hidden forces of the nation become evident in the advanced press. Its working spirits as well as its thinking brains become apparent, and its splendid literature emerges. There is no advanced press, however, unless it is based on excellence, unless its motto is knowledge and unless its strength is respect for the individual. Its content is nourishment for the brain the same way food is necessary for the stomach.'<sup>130</sup>

Saʿādeh was a secularist, who was strongly convinced of the necessity of the separation between religion and state. In Saʿādeh's view, Christianity (his religion by origin) had changed to be ritualistic. Contrary to early Christianity, whose followers had offered their lives for the cause of their faith, it had become one of the modern tricks in the hands of Christian states. He severely attacked religious fanaticism, but believed that religion is an integral part of the Oriental's life, and he had his strong faith that life is meant to dignify religion.<sup>131</sup> Just as Riḍā, Saʿādeh was aware of the diversity of voices and religious orientations in the Syrian homeland as well as in the Diaspora communities in South America. It was not at all his goal to eliminate these differences. Yet he wanted to ensure that his compatriots were united at least in the defense of the national cause in order to make the Syrian voice heard within the international arena, thereby giving hope to the Syrians who had lived in despair.<sup>132</sup>

In 1906 Riḍā briefly mentioned one of Saʿādeh's scientific works on pulmonary tuberculosis.<sup>133</sup> Saʿādeh's fame as a good writer in English was

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<sup>128</sup> Schumann, *op. cit.*, p. 606.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> As quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> See the booklet in his honor, p. 29.

<sup>132</sup> Schumann, *op. cit.*, p. 606-607.

<sup>133</sup> Khalil Saʿādeh, *al-Wiqāyah min al-Sull al-Riʿāwi wā Turuq ʿilājuh*, Cairo, 1906. See the review of *al-Manār*, vol. 9/5 (Jumāda al-ʿUlā 1324/June 1906), p. 394.

primarily the reason for Riḍā to entrust him with the Arabic translation of the Barnabas Gospel. In his short biography of Saʿādeh, Adel Beshara considered the publication of this Gospel as the most controversial event of his life. He wrote: ‘the publication of Barnabas [Beshara reads it ‘Barnabus’] in Arabic was met with some scepticism largely due to religious sensitivity. The late Rashīd Riḍā inflamed the public by prefacing the work with a preamble that took its entire meaning out of context. The preamble was incorporated into the book without Saʿādeh’s prior knowledge’.<sup>134</sup> In his statement, Beshārā relies on information cited by Badr Al-Hage, one of Saʿādeh’s biographers, in his collection of some of the unknown works by Saʿādeh. In his account, al-Hage quoted Anṭūn Saʿādeh, Kalīl’s son and the later founder of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.<sup>135</sup> Tracing the exact source mentioned by al-Hage, I could not find the pages referred to by Anṭūn.<sup>136</sup>

After the English publisher had sent him the English translation of the Gospel, Riḍā soon settled an agreement with Saʿādeh on publishing an exact Arabic translation by his *Manār*. It is conceivable that Saʿādeh must have known Riḍā’s reasons for publishing the Gospel. In his initial advertisement of *al-Manār*’s plan of cooperating with Saʿādeh, Riḍā explicitly maintained that the Gospel’s agreement with many Islamic principles was the very stimulant for him to think of translating it into Arabic. Besides, he was keen on making it known among Arab readers, just as the translators had done for English-speaking people. He also had a great desire that other translators would follow this step by increasing its publicity in all Western languages.<sup>137</sup> One year after the appearance of the Gospel’s translation, Saʿādeh contributed to *al-Manār* by publishing one of his scientific articles on the Substance theory.<sup>138</sup> Saʿādeh’s granddaughter Sofia, presently professor at the American University in Beirut, rejects the argument that this period of her grandfather’s life was controversial. In her own words: ‘he was known among his contemporaries as a staunch secular person, and his translation of the Gospel was out of curiosity more than anything else. He tried also to refute the fact that it was genuine, but never publicly fought with Riḍā on this specific matter even after his migration to South America.’<sup>139</sup>

Later we shall discuss Saʿādeh’s detailed evaluation of the Gospel, but it suffices here to stress that his very objective of translating the Gospel was spelled out in his introduction by saying:

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<sup>134</sup> Adel Beshara, ‘Dr. Khalil Saadeh: Nationalist Crusader’, *al-Mashriq: A Quarterly Journal of Middle East studies*, vol. 3/12 (March 2005), p. 68.

<sup>135</sup> Badr Al-Hage, *Silsilat al-ʿAʿmāl al-Majhūlah: al-Duktūr Khalīl Saʿādeh*, London: Riad al-Rayyes Books, p. 17.

<sup>136</sup> He cited Anṭūn Saʿādeh, *al-Athār al-Kāmilah*, vol. 12, Beirut, 1984, pp. 11-15.

<sup>137</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 10/5 (Jumādā al-ʿUlā 1325/July 1907), pp. 385-387; Riḍā expressed his gratitude to the editors for sending him a copy of this work. This copy still exists in Riḍā’s family archive with his own signature: *Milk al-Sayyid Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā* (Owned by Al-Sayyid Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā).

<sup>138</sup> Khalīl Saʿādeh, ‘Istihālat al-Mādah’, *al-Manār*, vol. 11/8, pp. 608-610.

<sup>139</sup> E-mail to the present writer, 28 April 2005.

'I started translating this book, which is called the Gospel of Barnabas well aware of the responsibility that I had undertaken. My aim was to serve historical studies and of course our language which is perhaps the most logical medium into which this work should be translated. This is the first time this book has come out in the Arabic language. It is a gospel about which scholars and historians have differed sharply. In these closing comments, though, I do have to stress that in this introduction all my discussions are purely scientific and historical in orientation and that I have been scrupulous to avoid all religious controversies which I left to those who are better equipped to deal with them.'<sup>140</sup>

Even after the Gospel's publication Sa'ādeh remained in solidarity with other Syrian nationalists, including Riḍā himself (see, appendix VI). Among Riḍā's papers, I found the charter of the Ottoman Socialist Party, founded in Cairo in December 1910. The charter was signed by Sa'ādeh as its secretary general. Among the founders of the Party were its president Shiblī Shumayyil and Rafiq al-ʿAzm (1867-1925), the prominent Sunnī Muslim and the chairman of the Decentralization Party.<sup>141</sup> Although Riḍā's name was not included among the founders, the party's resolutions came close to his later Decentralization Party, which demanded administrative autonomy for the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Sa'ādeh, Shumayyil and al-ʿAzm shared Riḍā's political cause, and later became members of his above-mentioned Decentralization Party.<sup>142</sup>

### 2.1.7. *Al-Machreq: A Jesuit Syrian Review*

Let us now turn to discuss Riḍā's polemics with the Catholic Arabic magazine *al-Machreq*. As the mouthpiece of the Syro-Lebanese Jesuits in Beirut since its first publication in 1898, it attempted to convey for the Catholic Arab communities the value and significance of Western science and technology as well as the cultural heritage of the Near East.<sup>143</sup> Riḍā was involved in controversies with *al-Machreq* around a variety of issues, especially on what he often wrote in his journal on Christianity. According to Riḍā's archival documents, he used to exchange the published issues of *al-Manār* with those of *al-Machreq*. The Oriental Library of the Jesuit Saint-Joseph College was subscribing to his journal, and many of its issues were kept there. Despite their

<sup>140</sup> As quoted in Beshara, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>141</sup> MS, the charter of Al-Hizb al-ʿUthmānī al-Ijtīmāʿī, handwritten by Khalīl Sa'ādeh, Riḍā's private archive.

<sup>142</sup> See, Hamie, 'L'homme', pp. 101-104.

<sup>143</sup> *Al-Machreq: revue catholique orientale*. See, Campbell, Robert Bell, 'The Arabic Journal, 'al-Mashriq': its Beginnings and First Twenty-Five Years under the Editorship of Père Louis Cheikho, S.J.', unpublished PhD dissertation, the University of Michigan, 1972. More about Cheikho, see: Ziriklī, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, pp. 246-247.

heated polemics, the library secretary praised Riḍā's journal as having been the 'mouthpiece of the Islamic Salafī renaissance' (see, Appendix VII).<sup>144</sup>

As soon as the above-mentioned *al-Manār* polemicist Ṭāhir al-Tannīr published his '*Aqā'id*', Father Louis Cheikho (1859-1927), the editor of *al-Machreq*, fervently attacked the author.<sup>145</sup> Tannīr's treatise, for him, was nothing but 'a childish' attempt to emulate earlier European works of 'unbelievers, Protestants, and heretics' in their critique of Christianity.<sup>146</sup> In the same year, *al-Machreq* attacked Riḍā's journal of having 'exceeded the proper bounds by attacking the Catholic belief'.<sup>147</sup> When *al-Manār* quoted an article from the Russian Muslim paper *Shūrā* (i.e. Council, founded in 1908)<sup>148</sup> in which Luther had been eulogized for his reformation, the editorial of *al-Machreq* immediately blamed Riḍā for praising him on the basis of his conflict with Catholicism. 'Had the *Shūrā* and *al-Manār* known who Luther and his works precisely were', *al-Machreq* wrote, 'they would have entirely discarded him and would have never contaminated their pages by mentioning his name.'<sup>149</sup>

In response to *al-Manār*'s postulation of the doctrine of Trinity, Cheikho counterattacked Riḍā for using the Gospel of Barnabas as a weapon against the doctrine of Trinity. *Al-Machreq* challenged Riḍā that he brought forward an Arabic translation of a 'forged' Gospel, as he lacked solid proofs against Christianity.<sup>150</sup> Riḍā, according to him, failed to recognize the sense of the Trinity's divine mystery. Cheikho's article was specifically formulated in reaction to Riḍā's views (mentioned in the context of his response to the Danish missionary Alfred Nielsen, see, chapter 3) that: 'Muslim theologians agree that there is nothing in the Islamic faith which is logically impossible (*muhāl 'aqlan*), meaning that the Muslim is not required to believe in anything that is logically impossible [...] Other religions than Islam require people to believe in what is rationally impossible, i.e., the reconciliation between two

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<sup>144</sup> Letter, *al-Machreq* to Riḍā, Beirut, 2 November 1928, Riḍā's private archive.

<sup>145</sup> Cheikho reacted with a tractate, *Tafrīd al-Tazwīr li Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Tannīr* (Refutation of the falsification of Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Tannīr), Beirut, 1912; as quoted in, G., 'Book Review', *The Moslem World*, vol. 3/2 (April 1913), pp. 197-200. See also, *al-Machreq*, vol. 15 (1912), pp. 432-445 & pp. 529-543. In his answer, Cheikho also quoted western works, such as, Laouan, *Du Brahmanisme et ses rapports avec le Judaïsme et le Christianisme*, Paris, 1888. See also, Arthur T. Upson, 'A Glance at *Al-Manār*', *The Moslem World*, vol. 4/4 (October 1914), pp. 394-395 (Quoted below, 'Glance').

<sup>146</sup> *Al-Machreq*, vol. 15, pp. 435-436.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 718.

<sup>148</sup> It was edited in Ottomanized Tatar language in the southern Uralian city of Orenburg by Riza al-Dīn b. Fakhr al-Dīn (1859-1936). The *Shūrā* was much influenced by *al-Manār*'s reformist ideas. More about the paper, its founder and the influence of *al-Manār*, see, Stéphane A. Dudoignon, 'Echoes to al-Manār among the Muslims of the Russian Empire: A preliminary research note on Riza al-Din b. Fakhr al-Din and the Shūrā (1908-1918)', in Dudoignon (et al), *op. cit.*, 2006, pp. 85-116.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 719.

<sup>150</sup> *Al-Machreq*, vol. 12 (1909), pp.558-559.



antitheses or opposites, such as the real Unity and the real Trinity. In other terms, that God is truly one, and truly more than one at the same time.’

Cheikho rebuked Riḍā for his allegation that the Catholic doctrine insists to combine contradictions.<sup>151</sup> ‘It is not logical’, Cheikho contended, ‘that such a paradoxical faith would be adopted by more than one third of the inhabitants of the globe among whom are the most civilized nations – such as the Greeks, the Romans and the Arabs.’ He insisted that Trinitarian concepts had been taken from the divine revelation, and Biblical prophets implicitly referred to them in the Old Testament. He pointed to many examples, such as God’s use of the plural form with reference to Himself, and to the plural form for ‘Lord’ used frequently in the Old Testament. In his conclusion, Cheikho reminded Riḍā that Catholic believers do not entirely grasp the mystery of the Trinity. But it is enough for them to know that God revealed it to them. He further upheld that there are many secrets that cannot be interpreted by human intellect, and that it is impossible for human beings to grasp God’s true nature; otherwise they would share with God his divine essence.<sup>152</sup>

*Al-Machreq* had many criticisms with regard to Riḍā’s religious views of the church. For example, it commented on his statement in one of his *fatwās* on polygamy that the Pope had authorized Charlemagne’s polygamy as historically mistaken. As a matter of fact, although Charlemagne, who was holding power over both the Church and state, married with many wives, the Catholic Church had never authorized him to do so.<sup>153</sup> Riḍā, according to *al-Machreq*, insisted on writing about many subjects about which he had deficient knowledge. A prominent example was also his insistence that freemasonry organizations collaborated with the Jews to demolish the Papal power in Europe.<sup>154</sup>

In 1922, one of *al-Manār*’s readers in Beirut complained to Riḍā about the writings of *al-Machreq* on Islam.<sup>155</sup> Later, when the tenth volume of *Tafsīr al-Manār* was first published in 1932, *al-Machreq* was critical to his Islamic religious views. It described Riḍā’s commentary on the Qur’ān as a ‘naïve attempt to combine between the Qur’ān and modern scientific discoveries, which had been never known in the time of the Prophet of Islam.’<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> L. Cheikho, ‘Lā Tanāquda fī al-Tawḥīd wā al-Tathlīth’, *al-Machreq*, vol. 22 (1924), pp. 737-744. Among Riḍā’s papers, I have found an unpublished anti-Cheikho article. It was written by a Shī‘ī Muslim from Iraq, who signed it as Muslim Najafī under the title: ‘al-Qawl al-Saḥīḥ fī Daḥḍ ‘Ulūhiyyat al-Masīḥ (The True Saying in Refuting the Divinity of Jesus’. MS., Riḍā’s private archive.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 743.

<sup>153</sup> *Al-Machreq*, vol. 5 (1927), pp. 397-398; see, Riḍā’s *fatwā*, *al-Manār*, vol. 28/1 (Sha‘bān 1345/March 1917), p. 29.

<sup>154</sup> *Al-Machreq*, vol. 30 (1932), pp. 143-144. See, *al-Manār*, 14/3 (Rabī‘ Al-‘Awwal 1929/March 1911), pp. 178; vol. 15/1, pp. 32; vol. 29/4, pp. 271-72. Cf. his article on the role of the Jews in the Freemasonry movement, vol. 6/5 (Rabī‘ al-‘Awwal 1321/May 1903), pp. 196-200, see also, *al-Manār*, vol. 8/11 (Jumādā Al-‘Ākhira 1323/August 1905), pp. 401-403.

<sup>155</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 23/4, p. 267.

<sup>156</sup> *Al-Machreq*, vol. 30 (1932), pp. 237-238, cf. vol. 29 (1931), pp. 315-316.

The controversy between Riḍā and *al-Machreq* culminated in 1934, when the Catholic journal embarked upon reacting to his above-mentioned work *al-Wahy*. *Al-Machreq* introduced Riḍā to its readers as ‘a Muslim conservative luminary in Egypt, a friend of the Wahhābi Ibn Saud, and a fervent Muslim apologist, who firmly adhered to the traditions and rejected anything that is not in agreement with the way of the Salaf.’<sup>157</sup> It also depicted Riḍā’s work as an attempt to idealize Islam, which did not add any new aspect of knowledge to the understanding of the concept of revelation in Islam.<sup>158</sup> The author’s exclusive concern was to respond to Christians and verify the superiority of Islam over Christianity without giving any profound treatment of any of his themes. *Al-Machreq* did not deny the religious value of the Qur’ān and its impact on Muslim believers in their liturgy and prayers, but this was not enough to prove its miraculous nature.<sup>159</sup> The writer of *al-Machreq* was of the view that the linguistic value ascribed to the Qur’ān was no miracle, and should be seen as equal to the high standard of the English or German translation of the Bible. In spite of admitting its aesthetic elements, *al-Machreq* alleged that there are many other linguistic and historical contradictions and defects in the Qur’ān.<sup>160</sup> With regard to Riḍā’s arguments that the Qur’ānic miracle was proved by its influence and the change achieved by Islam in many parts of the world – the same argument which was earlier used by Cheikho to prove the authenticity of the Catholic belief – *al-Machreq* viewed it as improbable. The Arabs had conquered decadent nations with ease. Muslims also learnt philosophy and other sciences from other nations, not directly from the Qur’ān. In conclusion, *al-Machreq* wondered why Riḍā dedicated his book to the civilized nations: ‘Is it because he knows perfectly well that Islam has not gained any of the civilized nations in the modern time? Or because he knows that the majority of the more than 240 million Muslims [in the 1930s] were formerly heathens, who considered Islam civilized as compared to their previous paganism?’<sup>161</sup>

In his introduction to the book, Riḍā’s stated that his work was primarily a proposal to ‘call civilized countries of the West and Japan (see chapter 3) [...] and free-thinking Western scholars to Islam.’ He further vindicated that there were three obstacles that prohibit non-Muslims from grasping the divine message of the Qur’ān: 1) the Church, which opposed it by propagating a tirade of lies and accusations; therefore, its students believe every Muslim to be an enemy of Christ and Christianity; 2) Western politicians, who inherited antagonism from the Church, and accepted its fabrications in order to serve their imperialistic policy; and 3) the state of decadence among Muslims, who were blissfully ignorant of their religion.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> *Al-Machreq*, vol. 31 (1933), p. 956.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 956.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 957-958.

<sup>160</sup> For examples of these, see, *ibid.*, pp. 958-959.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 960.

<sup>162</sup> See the English translation, *The Revelation to Muḥammad*, trans. by Abdus-Samad Sharafuddin, Saudi Arabia, 1960. The book is also mentioned in, Fehmi Jadaane, ‘Revelation et Inspiration en Islam’, *Studia Islamica*, 26 (1967), pp. 23-47.

On 16 May, 1934, a letter from Beirut signed by a certain Cheikh & Ladki (?) drew Riḍā's attention to Cheikho's attacks on his book. According to this letter, a group of scholars intended to react to Cheikho's critique of *al-Manār*. The sender of the letter (Cheikh & Ladki) advised them to wait, since it was the author of the book who should reply (see, appendix VIII).<sup>163</sup> Some weeks later, Riḍā started to respond to Cheikho in a series of four articles in his journal. He understood that the writer's aim to define him in such a way was to inoculate his readers with the idea that he and his journal would reject any modern religious, scientific and industrial innovations. Nonetheless, Riḍā defended himself by stating that his religious call was bound up to the Qur'ān and the Sunna, while summoning Muslims to acquire all useful modern means in their lives, as far as they do not contradict their religious principles.<sup>164</sup> Riḍā was deeply frustrated by the writer's belittling of his work, blaming him for looking at it 'from behind a black-tinted Jesuit pair of glasses'.<sup>165</sup> On the basis of an Arabic translation on the secrets of the Jesuit order (probably made by Kirām, mentioned above, chapter 1), Riḍā judged that 'the Jesuits are more extravagant and extreme in adoring money than the Jews and capitalists'.<sup>166</sup>

In his reply, Riḍā again insisted that Islam remains a 'friend' of Christianity, but not a friend of the church. For him, Islam is also completing the 'real Christian message'. As a Muslim scholar he still regularly wished to cooperate with Christian religious bodies (especially the Vatican) to oppose atheism.<sup>167</sup> The author of *al-Machreq* criticised Riḍā's delineation of Islam as the religion of freedom and brotherhood as contradictory. On the one hand, he asserted that Islam gives people of other religious denominations their rights under Muslim rule, while, on the other, he would strive for 'one Arab and Muslim world' by claiming that social and political reform would never be accomplished without the unity of all nations in terms of religion, language, politics and judiciary system. Riḍā asseverated that human reform cannot be entirely attained without homogeneity of the various aspects of life, even when there is no Arab nation or Muslim legislation. Riḍā insisted that Islam is the most homogenous religion capable of achieving this goal, when we compare it to other religions. The truth of Islam, he went further, does not rely on its acceptance by all human beings, and the goal of each religion is the attainment of the highest level of human perfection.<sup>168</sup>

As regard to *al-Machreq's* rejection of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān, Riḍā argued that to make the Qur'ān equal to English or German translation is no valid comparison. The Qur'ān, in his own terms, is inimitable in its language. It had been revealed among those who were known in their age for their

<sup>163</sup> Letter to Riḍā, Cheikh & Ladki, Beirut, 16 May 1934, Riḍā's private archive.

<sup>164</sup> 'Tafnīd I'tirāḍ Kātib Jesuītī 'alā Kitāb al-Wahy al-Muḥammadī (A refutation of an objection made by a Jesuit writer to al-Wahy al-Muḥammadī', *al-Manār*, vol. 34/2 (Ṣafar 1353/June 1934), pp. 147-151.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>167</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 34/3 (Rabī' al-ʿAwwal 1353/July 1934), pp. 227-231.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., pp. 227-228.

eloquence; while Muḥammad did not belong to the category of well-known Arab poets. Islam also challenged the Arabs to produce verses similar to the Qur'ān, but they failed. On the other hand, none of the English or the German translators had ever claimed that his work is inimitable.<sup>169</sup>

Secondly, Riḍā defended the Qur'ān as the miraculous word of God by stressing again that this was agreed upon among many Western scholars, who admitted the prophecy of Muḥammad. In his book, he cited scholars such as Edouard Montet (see, chapter 1), who explained the prophetic characteristics in Islam and stressed the rationalistic essence of Islam. Riḍā moreover tried to rationalize that the prophet without having received the divine message would never have been able to bring such an 'excellent' book containing all those religious, literary and legislative sciences after having reached the age of forty. Riḍā associated the success of the Prophet's mission with the growing number of Muslims throughout history. He compared the Qur'ān to a medical guide brought forward by a physician to cure people. If he were able to cure all of his patients with the help of his guide, people would definitely believe in the soundness of his knowledge. In the same way, he went on, a huge number of non-Arabs adopted Islam, since they believed in the power of its truth to guide them. As for the Arabs especially, they had adopted Islam as a result of the impact of its eloquent language on them.<sup>170</sup>

## 2.2. The Egyptian Coptic Community

Some of the Egyptian Copts saw Riḍā as an intruding Syrian (*dakhīl*), who had no right to interfere in Egyptian affairs.<sup>171</sup> The first one to coin the Syrians with the term *dukhalā'* (intruders) in Egypt was the founder of the Egyptian Nationalist Party Muṣṭafā Kāmil, who advocated that the Syrians (especially Christians) were collaborators of the British and hostile to the Egyptian nationalist cause in the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>172</sup> In the following section we will discuss Riḍā's various reactions to the Coptic community in Egypt.

<sup>169</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 34/4, pp. 311-315.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315. See also, *al-Manār*, vol. 34/5, pp. 376-381.

<sup>171</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/1, pp. 48-49.

<sup>172</sup> For Kāmil's ideas on the concept of nationalism, see, Fritz Steppat, 'Nationalismus und Islam bei Muṣṭafā Kamil. Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der ägyptischen Nationalbewegung', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 4/4 (1956), pp. 241-341. Riḍā was a sharp critic of Kāmil's nationalism, and was one of the early Muslim thinkers who at that moment saw the threat posed by the concept of nationalism to Islamic doctrine. About his rejection of nationalism, see, Safran, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-84. In his turn, Kāmil declared that the Khedive himself was not pleased with Riḍā's stances (especially his regular critique of Al-Azhar), and had a serious plan to send him away from Egypt. See, 'Al-ʿAsabiyya al-Jinsiyya wā al-Liwā', *al-Manār*, vol. 10/7, pp. 536-540. Riḍā defended the existence of the Syrians in Egypt, and fervently propagated the idea that the Syrians were the closest and most united faction among all emigrants to the Egyptians. See, 'Mūsāfahat al-Sūriyyīn lil-Miṣriyyīn', *al-Manār*, vol. 11/3 (Rabi' al-ʿAwwal 1326/May 1908), pp. 230-231.

### 2.2.1. Riḍā's Attitudes towards the Copts before 1911

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Coptic question and the demands of the Copts for social and religious equality had gradually become visible in the political scene of Egypt. In 1897, for example, a Coptic delegation handed a petition to the Egyptian Prime Minister and the British High Commissioner complaining that Copts were underrepresented in key political and administrative posts.<sup>173</sup>

The Copts, who viewed themselves as alienated within their own society, undertook the defence of their interests in their different newspapers and periodicals. The years 1908-1911 witnessed one of the most critical moments of the Muslim-Christian relations in the country. Muslim and Christian papers launched mutual accusations and their confrontation came to a head. The debates focused primarily on the representation in civil servant employment.<sup>174</sup> In 1908 the Coptic Reform Party, founded by Akhnūkh Fanūs, a wealthy Presbyterian Coptic landlord and member of the Legislative Assembly, had counted the Coptic demands as discrimination in employment and promotion, and the practice of religious rights. But other Coptic groups were anxious about their Muslim fellow-citizens. Some prominent Coptic figures accused Fanūs of the collaboration with the British authorities in destroying the national spirit in their homeland.<sup>175</sup>

In the early issues of *al-Manār*, Riḍā's views of the Copts were positive in the general sense. He constantly praised their religious zeal and concern for education, underlining that they were more organized than their Egyptian Muslim compatriots. He maintained that following the steps of other 'civilized lands', the Copts set up schools to teach their children modern sciences, while keeping up their belief and religious identity. As an active class in the society, they promoted proper education to the degree that it had been said that no illiteracy was to be found among them. Muslims, on the other hand, had hardly any similar organizations.<sup>176</sup>

Riḍā later developed a negative attitude as a result of what he saw as a campaign of protest against Muslims. He denounced the way the Copts presented their demands arguing that Muslims deliberately aimed at 'rooting' them out of the country. For him, it was natural from a sociological point of

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<sup>173</sup> *Al-Ahram Weekly*, no. 691 (20-26 May 2004).

<sup>174</sup> Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East, A History*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 61.

<sup>175</sup> Tāriq al-Bishrī, *al-Muslimūn wā al-Aqbāṭ fī Itār al-Wahdah al-Waṭaniyya*, 4th ed., Cairo, Dār al-Shurūq, 2004, pp. 79-81. Fanūs had sympathy for the British presence in Egypt. He drafted his project of establishing the Egyptian Party, which called for Egyptian-British friendship, see, id., pp. 72-73.

<sup>176</sup> See his articles, 'Al-Madāris al-Waṭaniyya fī al-Diyār al-Miṣriyya', *al-Manār*, vol. 1/15 (Ṣafar 1316/July 1898), pp. 260-261. In 1898 he wrote that the Copts of Egypt as a minority group had 40 charitable schools of their own while Muslims had only one; see, *al-Manār*, vol. 1/21 (Rabī' al-'Awwal 1316/August 1898), pp. 388-389. See also, 'al-Muslimūn wā al-Qibt: Aw 'Ayat al-Mawt wā 'Ayat al-Ḥayāh', *al-Manār*, vol. 8/9 (Jumāda al-'Ūlā 1323/July 1905), pp. 327-330.

view that any religious minority group must yield to its overzealous sense of unification in order not to be assimilated within the majority group. Being of Syrian origin, Riḍā made no distinction between any of the Egyptian minority groups including the Jews, the Copts or naturalized Orthodox Christians of Syrian or Armenian origin. He affirmed that if the Copts would seriously raise their demands of equality in the public debate, they would have included other Christians in their appeal. The Copts should also stop claiming in their newspapers that Muslims were colonizers and conquerors, and had no right in the country. However, he also criticised those Muslims who exceeded their boundary by taking harsh stances and constantly offending Coptic religious feelings.<sup>177</sup>

The Coptic newspaper *al-Waṭan* ('Homeland') was launched in 1877 primarily in order to provide the Coptic community with an outlet for its collective views and grievances. It soon became one of the strongest platforms for enflaming the Coptic confrontation with Muslims. According to *al-Manār*, when the Egyptian government started the project of the revival of Arab literature in the beginning of the 20th century by reprinting famous literary works at the expense of the national budget, *al-Waṭan* vigorously attacked the project as an attempt of 'backwardness'. The Coptic journal criticised the Egyptian government for having embarked upon a project that would 'adulterate its people's taste for sound literatures and useful sciences'.<sup>178</sup> Instead of promoting the Egyptians to the level of civilized nations, the paper went on, the government aimed at 'thrusting them to the darkness of Arab superstitions, nonsense and ignorance'.<sup>179</sup>

Riḍā was very discontent with these words and contrasted *al-Waṭan*'s stance with the initiatives of European scholars and other Arab Christians (such as the Jesuits in Syria), who were keen on preserving Arab literary works by printing them. Riḍā counterattacked by maintaining that *al-Waṭan*'s campaign explicitly aimed at 'erasing' Islam, its language and literature from Egypt and replace them with their sense of 'Coptism'. He described the Coptic writer of this article as 'fanatic', 'rude' and 'ignorant' of Arab literature and civilization. The Arabic language was not confined to Muslims, but was always a common ground among Jews and Christians of the Arabian Peninsula before Islam. Riḍā reminded the writer of 'fair-minded' Western thinkers (such as Le Bon and others), who admitted the significance and position of the Arabs and their language and literature in history. If the Coptic writer had been motivated to reach his conclusion by the anti-Christian statements in some of the circulating Arabic works, he should have not ignored the anti-Islamic tone in Arabic Christian as well as in Western missionary works. Riḍā ascribed all these remarks to *al-Waṭan*'s insistence on causing religious strife between Muslims

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<sup>177</sup> 'Al-Muslimūw wā al-Qibt', vol. 11/5 (Jumādā al-ʿŪlā 1326/June 1908), pp. 338-347.

<sup>178</sup> As quoted in *al-Manār*, vol. 13/12 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1328/January 1911), p. 909.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

and Copts with confidence that the British authorities would support them in their campaign.<sup>180</sup>

### 2.2.2. The Coptic Congress of 1911

Before analysing Riḍā's response to the Coptic Congress and the assassination of the Coptic Prime Minister Buṭrus Ghālī, we should shortly dwell upon some parts of the historical background of the crisis and its impact on the political scene of the Egypt of 1910-1911.

During his interrogation, the afore-mentioned al-Wardānī (see, the introduction), confessed that he had murdered Ghālī for his mediation between the British imperial officials and the Egyptian officialdom. Most Egyptian Muslim nationalists viewed Ghālī as too pliant and too willing to serve the British interests. He also represented the cabinet on the bench in the notorious Dinshiwāy trial in 1906, which resulted in the death sentences for many Egyptian farmers, the event that gave rise to the National Party of Muṣṭafā Kāmil.<sup>181</sup>

Although al-Wardānī was sentenced to death, common Muslims held him in esteem as a national hero. During his diplomatic trip in Egypt, the former president of the United States Theodore Roosevelt fanned the flames during his speech at the Egyptian University. In that speech, he praised the British rule, condemned nationalists and vilified the assassin.<sup>182</sup> However, al-Wardānī made it clear that although he was a Muslim and Ghālī a Coptic Christian, religion had no bearing on the motives for shooting the Prime Minister, whom he considered a traitor.<sup>183</sup>

Soon in 1911, a lay Coptic Congress was convened at Asyūṭ (Southern Egypt), whose main agenda was to ask for equal rights of citizenship. Asyūṭ was chosen because it was an important center for the Coptic community, a very significant centre for Protestant missionaries who also supported the idea.<sup>184</sup> The Coptic Congress, numbering 500 members or more (Riḍā counted more than 1000), was held in spite of the opposition of Patriarch Kyrollos V and many other notable Coptic figures. They, as well as the government, feared that the Coptic meeting in Asyūṭ would agitate the public. The Egyptian Khedive 'Abbās Ḥilmī did not welcome the idea of the congress either, and refused to meet its delegation in the Palace.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., pp. 908-912.

<sup>181</sup> Charles D. Smith, 'The Egyptian Copts: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Definition of Identity for Religious Minority', in Maya Shatzmiller (ed.), *Nationalism and Minority Identities in Islamic Societies*, McGill-Queen's Press, 2005, pp. 68-69. Bishrī, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-82. More about Ghālī's life, see, for example, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haikal, *Tarājīm Miṣriyya wā Gharbiyya*, Cairo, 1929, pp. 119-138; Arthur Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999, pp. 61-62.

<sup>182</sup> Reid, (Cairo), pp. 51-75.

<sup>183</sup> Badrawī, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>184</sup> Bishrī, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-87.

The congress, however, resulted in a petition briefing the Coptic demands before the khedive and the British. The representative of the Coptic Press in London, Kyriakos Mikhail, recorded the works of the Congress and other relevant discussions.<sup>186</sup> The congress demanded the government: 1) to exempt the Coptic government officials from their jobs and students from study on Sundays, 2) to entirely open administrative posts in the government services to the Copts, 3) to change the electoral system in the Egyptian provincial Councils to one similar to that in operation in Belgium in order to secure their rights as minorities, 4) the Copts should have equal rights to take advantage of all educational facilities provided by the new Provincial Councils; and 5) government grants should be bestowed on deserving institutions without any distinction of race or creed.<sup>187</sup>

In April 1911, Muslim Egyptians denounced the requests by organizing a rival congress in Heliopolis in Cairo under the auspices of the then Prime Minister Muḥammad Riḡāḡ Pasha, and other politicians. The Congress committee reported that the Copts were planning to establish 'a separate state for themselves'.<sup>188</sup> They also protested against the endeavour of the Copts 'to divide the Egyptian nation as one political unit into two religious groups, a Muslim majority and a Coptic minority'.<sup>189</sup> It also concluded that the prime reason behind the escalation of the problem was the close relation of the Coptic organisers with Western missionary bodies in Southern Egypt, who had convinced them that the Europeans could give them protection in case they would fail to get their demands.<sup>190</sup>

In his immediate reply, Riḡāḡ reacted to the Coptic demands in some articles in *al-Manār* and *al-Mu'ayyad*, which he later compiled in one small volume.<sup>191</sup> He considered the Coptic congress as exercising influence in awakening Egyptian Muslims to organize their own Islamic one, and making them seriously deliberate their common social and religious affairs. He propounded to the Muslim congress that its participants should try to avoid any discussions on politics, and engage themselves instead in preparing statistical tables on the number of Coptic employees in various sectors in Egypt.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Mikhail, *op. cit.* The Coptic community was planning to hold such a congress even before the murder of Ghālī, but that incident encouraged them to put it into reality. See, Bishrī, *ibid.*, p. 82. The demands of the Congress were no different from the ones presented to Lord Cromer and Mustafā Fahmī Pasha (d. 1914), who was a strong supporter of British interests in Egypt. The Copts submitted a similar petition to Lord Cromer and Fahmī Pasha in which they requested complete equality in the appointment of administrative jobs, closing the courts on Sunday, appointing an additional member to consultative council, and teaching Christianity to Christian students in governmental schools, see, Tagher, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>187</sup> Mikhail, *ibid.*, pp. 28-30.

<sup>188</sup> Tagher, *op. cit.*, p. 211f. More about the resolutions of the Congress, see, *al-Manār*, vol. 14/5 (Jumādā al-ʿUlā 1329/May 1911), pp. 353-372.

<sup>189</sup> The congress proceedings, Cairo, 1911; as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>190</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/5, p. 356.

<sup>191</sup> Riḡāḡ, *Mu'tamar*.

<sup>192</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/2, p. 158. Participants of the congress probably presented such statistical numbers before the congress, see, for example, the report of education in Egypt and the share of



Riḍā deplored the loss of Buṭrus Ghālī as a prudent leader. Contrary to the organizers of the Coptic Congress, he was capable of defending the interests of his community in a peaceful way. Despite Ghālī's participation in the Dinshiwāy trial and his siding with the British, Riḍā enumerated other advantages of Ghālī. The most important of these was his concern for his own community, while being fair in dealing with other groups.<sup>193</sup> Riḍā was convinced that the real motive behind his assassination was secular, not religious. Al-Wardānī made his attempt on the basis of the ideas he became acquainted with during his stay in Europe, and had never joined Al-Azhar or any other religious institution. The Copts, in Riḍā's view, were not satisfied with the official Muslim condemnation of the act, but intensified their accusation of Muslims as fanatics on the basis of this individual case only.<sup>194</sup> It might be interesting to know that al-Wardānī had mixed with anarchists in Lausanne, and was influenced by their ideas. His two-year sojourn in Switzerland stimulated his interest in European institutions, and induced him to obtain pamphlets on different aspects of humanitarian concerns.<sup>195</sup>

In his judgment of the religious motivations behind the congress, Riḍā was cynical. He stressed that the Muslim majority would have the right to determine the weekly day off. 'If they had no desire to work on Sundays in the Muslim government of Hājī 'Abbās Ḥilmī [Khedive of Egypt]', Riḍā said, 'they would better relinquish their jobs and exclusively devote themselves to contemplation and prayer.'<sup>196</sup> He also refused any Coptic claim that they as original inhabitants had the right to rule the country. The Copts were, for Riḍā, subjects to the 'Muslim Prince' of Egypt, who granted them their posts in the government services by means of tolerance, and not as a matter of obligation.<sup>197</sup>

Riḍā, nevertheless, demonstrated that the Islamic government throughout its history contained different people with other religious beliefs, though its legislative and political principles remained decided by the majority group. He also stressed that the Islamic law gave other religious groups the right to freely follow their religious laws, without complying with any Islamic rules.<sup>198</sup>

In Riḍā's thinking, 'Coptism' should remain a religious identity, and not to be mixed with any political ideologies. In other words, the Christians of Egypt should use the word 'Copt' only in addressing their religious affairs. They should only express themselves as 'Arab Egyptians'. He warned the Copts that

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Muslims and Copts. See, *al-Ta'lim fī Miṣr wā Haz al-Muslimīn wā al-Aqbāt Minhū*, Cairo: Matba'at al-al-Adāb wā al-Mu'ayyad, n.d. In his report, Sir Eldon Gorst also presented statistics of employment of Copts and Muslims in the Civil Service, see, Mikhail, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>193</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/3 (Rabi' al-'Awwal 1329/March 1911), p. 202.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203-204.

<sup>195</sup> His landlady in Lausanne would later speak of his gentleness, loyalty and kindness, but he became quite agitated and upset whenever he spoke of Egypt. Another Swiss would observe that the youth spoke of nothing but politics, and that he did so very passionately. Bardawi, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

Muslims were the majority, and they should avoid any clash with them; otherwise it would certainly end up in the loss of their rights as a minority group in case Muslims would decide to boycott them. Riḍā postulated that the Copts might have been convinced to consider the idea that ‘Christian Europe’ would interfere to force the Muslim majority to yield to their demands. In that case, Muslims would subtly try to exclude them from social life, by favoring Muslims by all means in all official posts.<sup>199</sup>

In his address to the Coptic Congress, the orator of the Coptic movement Akhnūkh Fanūs stressed that working on Sunday was a violation of the divine obligation upon Christians to observe it as ‘a holy Sabbath’.<sup>200</sup> He further clarified that ‘any Christian who intentionally works on Sunday should be put to death.’<sup>201</sup> As a reply to the Congress’ demand in this regard, Riḍā turned to expound his religious views on the ‘weekly feast’ in the three monotheistic religions. As compared to Riḍā’s analysis, the Egyptian Congress accused the Copts of raising that issue out of ‘greediness’ and ‘opportunism’ as they had certain expectations from the ‘Christian’ imperial powers to assist them in removing Islamic features from the whole society.<sup>202</sup> Riḍā maintained that he did understand the prime significance of weekly holidays for all nations as a sign of unity, without which religious minority groups could also become weak and were liable to vanish. But the national unity of each state should be given priority. He pointed out to the Coptic Congress that the Sabbath was clearly based on many passages in the Old Testament. The sanctification of Sunday, however, was not obviously established in the New Testament; and nowhere did we find in the Bible that Christ or the Apostles ordered the Sabbath to be changed from Saturday to Sunday. Riḍā referred to passages from the Old Testament relating that it was a ‘perpetual covenant ... [for] the people of Israel’ as regard to the day during which God rested after having completed the Creation in six days.<sup>203</sup> He insisted that Jesus did not break the Sabbath, and did not permit his disciples to break the Sabbath. Riḍā quoted other New Testament passages in which it was related that Jesus allowed his followers to do a little or good activity on the holy day.<sup>204</sup> In order to differ from the Jews, Riḍā went on, the Church replaced Saturday with Sunday, and Paul named it the Lord’s Day.<sup>205</sup> He also stressed that Jewish and Muslim scriptures proving the importance of the weekly day of rest were clearer than the Christian ones. Riḍā did not mind that minorities would follow the majority in this regard, as it

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., pp. 211-212. In December 1930, Riḍā, as advocate of Arabism, was invited to take part in a public debate held at the Faculty of Law (the Egyptian University) on the concepts of ‘Coptism’ and ‘Pharaonism’. His counterpart was the Egyptian lawyer Lutfī Jum’ah. See, *al-Manār*, vol. 31/6 (Shā‘bān 1349/January 1931), pp. 465-474.

<sup>200</sup> Bishrī, *op. cit.*, p. 98. Riḍā connects here Sunday to the Sabbath in the Old Testament: Exodus (31:14-15) and Exodus (35:2).

<sup>201</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 31/6, p. 216.

<sup>202</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/5, p. 358.

<sup>203</sup> Such as, Genesis 2:2-3, Exodus 23:12, 31:16-17, and Isaiah 56:6-8.

<sup>204</sup> Such as, Matthew 12:1-12, Mark 1:21-22, Luke 13:10-17, and John 5:1-18.

<sup>205</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/3, pp. 214-215.

was the case with Christians leaving work on Fridays under the Islamic rule, and Muslims on Sundays under the Russian Christian government. Riḍā, however, lamented that religious Christians were able to convince Muslim traders in some Islamic states to leave work on Sundays instead of Fridays. Muslims were not entirely prohibited to work on Fridays. But Riḍā argued that it was not attainable to open government offices on Fridays, while it was highly recommended in Islam to attend the service at the mosque as early as possible. For the sake of public interest and social unity, Riḍā concluded that all religious groups in Egypt should accommodate their official schedules according to the majority in matters of labour and government office hours.<sup>206</sup>

The Coptic Congress also raised the question of equality between Muslim and Coptic children in religious education. They pleaded that all the *kuttābs* (local religious schools) and the official schools should be open to all Egyptian children irrespective of their religion. The *kuttābs* were officially declared by the Ministry of Education to be purely Islamic institutions. The Coptic Congress requested that Coptic children should have their religious teaching within the *kuttābs*, just as their Muslim counterparts. According to the Provincial Councils, none of the tax revenues were devoted to Coptic educational interests, and the children of poorer Copts were dependent for their education upon private enterprise and generosity.<sup>207</sup>

The issue of the Coptic partaking in religious education in primary schools had been debated in Egypt earlier. In 1907 Riḍā asserted that the Coptic demand had its religious and political aspects. From a religious point of view, accepting their demand would be also profitable for Muslims, who would be stimulated to revive their religious education parallel to that of their Christian fellows. Riḍā warned the Copts against the harm that might be caused by random attacks from the side of Muslim riot-makers in case the government would take any positive decision in that regard. Those riot-makers will use it as a pretext to warn the public opinion against what they will see as a potential plan to replace the Islamic government entirely. At that time, Riḍā however was not anxious about the introduction of Coptic religious education at primary schools, and did not fear that it would lead to any kind of religious fanaticism among the members of both communities.<sup>208</sup>

In response to the Coptic Congress, Riḍā argued that it was known that there were many states which were not obliged to provide religious education to different religious groups. As it represented the majority group, the Russian state schools for instance did not teach any other religious faith, except the Orthodox doctrine. Jewish and Muslim communities had no right to give their children their own religious education in public schools. As part of the Ottoman Empire, Egyptian state schools confined their religious education only to Islam according to the Hanafī School of Law. For Riḍā, it was reasonable that the ruling majority would have the right to decide upon

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., pp. 218-219.

<sup>207</sup> Mikhail, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>208</sup> 'Al-Ta'lim al-Dīnī', *al-Manār*, vol. 10/2, p. 128.

religious education. It was unreasonable of the Coptic Congress to appeal to the Muslim government in Egypt to change the religion of the majority. It would be unfair if the government introduced Coptic religious education in state schools, without including other religious denominations, such as all the various divisions of Judaism and Christianity.<sup>209</sup> ‘Opening the gate’ of pluralism would also make the followers of the other Islamic *madhāhib* require the government to include their doctrines in religious education.<sup>210</sup>

The Copts pleaded for more rights than any other religious community, as they considered themselves as the native population of the country. Riḍā did not entirely approbate that view. But his remark in this regard was self-contradictory. He contended that ‘suppose that you [Copts] were the original descendants of the ancient Egyptians, then we [Muslims] would also have the option to follow the model of America – the most civilized Christian government in knowledge, justice and freedom – in [persecuting] Native Americans.’<sup>211</sup> But he immediately renounced that by stating that the Muslim Egyptian government gave equal rights to the Copts as nationals of the country. All holders of Egyptian citizenship, Riḍā went on, had equal rights with no regard of their Pharaonic, Israelite, or Arab origin. However, if the Copts were true in their allegation of being descendants from the ancient Pharaohs, the Jews in their progeny should be, according to Riḍā, nobler, since they descend from the line of Prophets. But Islam does not make any differentiation between both groups regarding their religion.<sup>212</sup>

Riḍā argued that it would not have been unusual if the Egyptian government had followed the European example in stipulating one religion to be taught to all children in public schools. In Egypt, however, there were Muslim institutes supported by the *Awqāf* system (religious endowments) fed by Muslims resources donated for teaching Muslim children. Such institutes, which were run by the government, accepted both Muslim and Coptic children. These endowments, according to Riḍā, used to pay the Egyptian University five thousand pounds annually (which accepted both communities as well). Riḍā was convinced that although they were a minority, the Copts were more active, and their demands were merely a token of their being immoderately desirous of acquiring more power over the Muslims.<sup>213</sup>

The Coptic press attacked Riḍā for his articles about their congress. Riḍā defended himself by stating that he never thought of causing discord between the two communities. His contribution to the whole debate was purely intended for the sake of public interest. He reminded his Coptic opponents of his earlier writings in which he as a non-Egyptian had drawn attention to the religious and social unity and strength of the Coptic minority community, as

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<sup>209</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/3, pp. 221-222.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

compared with their Muslim counterpart whom he frequently criticised of religious laxity.<sup>214</sup>

What alarmed Riḍā was what he saw as a Coptic demand of establishing a secular system in Egypt. His reaction to this point can be seen as a new phase in his thinking. He considered their demand as a threat that would diminish the Islamic presence in Egypt. The Coptic Congress had actually softened its language by asking for equality between Muslims and Copts.<sup>215</sup> Despite its mild tone, Riḍā still understood the Coptic plea as an attempt to replace Islam altogether with a new Coptic religious system. In line with the Egyptian Congress, he reconfirmed that the Egyptian 'Islamic' government treated the Copts with 'excessive tolerance and generosity'. Foreign powers had particularly accused the 'fragile' Muslims of discriminating religious minority groups. He understood that members of the Coptic Congress did not only claim more rights for the Copts, but also pleaded for an Egyptian government which should remain Islamic. Despite the spread of the non-Islamic 'illicit' acts (such as wine-drinking and adultery), Riḍā defended the Egyptian government as Islamic. Islamic Law, he moreover argued, does not consider those who commit sins as unbelievers. Although the foreign authorities did not give Egypt its complete independency at that time, Riḍā still believed that the government had not lost its entire Islamic face. Many Islamic features characterized the Egyptian society, such as the Sharʿī judicial system, religious endowments, Al-Azhar's religious institutions, and religious feasts. In their demands, the Copts, Riḍā stressed, indirectly aimed at 'erasing' these Muslim aspects and replacing them with their own.<sup>216</sup>

Riḍā believed that due to their Western education Eastern Christians in general became very keen on power and authority; and had a strong desire that both Ottoman and Egyptian governments would forsake their Islamic character altogether. He concluded that the Copts rushed to put forward their demands out of their 'hatred' of the Arabs. At the same time he ironically referred to those whom he often called as 'geographic Muslim leaders', whom he believed to have a stronger desire to remove the Islamic nature of Egypt as well. He was convinced that such a secularist group among Muslims would gradually attain the same aim by weeding out Islamic elements in their opposition to any Islamic initiative in the society. Riḍā again warned the Copts that they should remain content with the rights they had already been given enabling them to reach high official positions in Egypt. He further notified the Copts that their demands would agitate the Muslim public feelings against them, if their wishes of replacing the Muslim character of the government were to be put into practice. The Supreme Porte might also interfere to retain its Islamic state. It would also widen the gap of understanding between Islam and Christianity in other Muslim lands, as Egypt was seen as one of the pivotal centres of Islam. The British officials, as a result, would try to diminish any discontent among

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<sup>214</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/4, pp. 273-279.

<sup>215</sup> Bishrī, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-100.

<sup>216</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/4, pp. 279-284.

Muslims in their colonies (especially India) by opposing the Coptic plans. The Copts, Riḍā argued, would in this way harm their status and lose some of their rights instead of gaining any.<sup>217</sup>

Although he did not take part in its activities, Riḍā fully stood behind the Muslim Egyptian Congress. It was, in his view, effective, but belated. The first fruitful consequence was the change of tone in the Coptic protest. He believed that the Copts adopted a milder tone in presenting their question after they saw that the Muslim majority attempted to recover their unity. He compared the situation in Egypt with India. Muslims of India had recognized the importance of their unity by holding their annual meetings and congresses, when they saw the Hindus trying to promote their social unity. The same held true for Egyptian Muslims who through this congress achieved a remarkable progress in the direction of their unity. The dependency of Muslim Egyptians on their government in regulating their affairs was, in Riḍā's view, the reason they had been tardy in achieving integrity and unity. Following Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī's political ideas, Riḍā strongly believed that any governmental reform could not be established without the reform of the state as a whole. The leaders of any state should also exert much of their efforts and the natural resources of their countries in serving their subjects, preventing their people from any unneeded involvement in politics. Politics, as well as religious, economical and social public affairs should be run by a group of experts whom the people would trust. Riḍā related the success of Western societies to their great care for talented people in various fields by giving them leadership in offices and institutions. He was therefore satisfied with the decision of the Egyptian Congress not to interfere in any political discussion or conflict, and to concentrate on investigating the Coptic demands only, and on collecting facts and statistics of Coptic and Muslim officials in various offices. He again warned the Copts to stop accusing Muslims of stirring up religious fanaticism and to make an end to their writings in such a 'despising' language in their press.<sup>218</sup>

Riḍā concluded by recommending the Egyptian Congress to regulate the religious and social Islamic affairs. His proposal was general and did not include any suggestion directly related to the Coptic question. He prompted its members to have its center in Cairo and establish five permanent committees: 1) an administrative committee to regulate all further work; 2) a committee for education, which would organize charitable educational institutes and schools, and would in the future make a plan for establishing an Islamic college for girls; 3) a committee for preaching and guidance (*al-Wa'z wā al-'Irshād*), which would be entrusted to supervise preachers who would be dispatched all over the country; 4) an economic and financial committee, which would take care of investigating the matter of giving loans to poor families and combating usury

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., pp. 285-287.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., pp. 288-291.

and non-Islamic financial transactions; and 5) a charitable committee, which would provide assistance for aged, orphans and needy people.<sup>219</sup>

### 2.2.3. Salāma Mūsā

Even after his sharp critique of the Coptic Congress, Riḍā still admitted its success in adhering to their social and ethnical bond among the Copts more than the Muslims. At the same time, he constantly accused 'Coptic Egyptianists' of attacking *al-Manār* as a platform for Islamic ideas. Some of the Coptic newspapers also heavily criticised Riḍā for his anti-Christian writings.

Riḍā took part in polemics against the Coptic intellectual Salāma Mūsā (1887-1958) for his writings on Islam and religions in general. It is worth noting that Mūsā was the foremost disciple of the Syrian intelligentsia in Egypt. By the 1920s, when the zenith of the Syrian Christians in Egypt started to be on the wane (Zaidān died in 1914, Shumayyil in 1917, Anṭūn in 1922, and Ṣarrūf in 1927), Mūsā adopted without any hesitation the secularism of the Syrian Christians. His readings in their works had highly moulded his ideas on various subjects. Unlike his Syrian mentors, Mūsā was blunt and straightforward in his critique of Islam. Zaidān once advised him to omit a few offending paragraphs in one of his articles on Islam. 'Never mind', said Zaidān, 'if we criticise the Christians, for they themselves have already written the critique of their religion [Christianity]. But we must treat Muslims with circumspection. They have not yet produced any self-criticism.'<sup>220</sup> Mūsā developed his philosophy of 'Egyptianism', and advocated the idea of liberating society from what he deemed as shackles of theological traditions. Unlike the sense of 'Arabness' we have noted among Syrian Christians, Mūsā argued that Arabic should be 'declassicized' for the sake of Egypt. He encouraged therefore the idea of promoting the Egyptian dialect in literary works.<sup>221</sup>

In 1912 Salāma Mūsā published his Arabic translation of the treatise of the famous British writer Grant Allen (1848-99), *The Evolution of the Idea of God*.<sup>222</sup> Throughout his work, Allen tried to demonstrate that theology is a product of the human mind, and Christianity is riddled with pagan traditions. Two years later, Riḍā reviewed the book by stating that such attacks of modern atheists on religion have no impact on the conception of monotheism in Islam. Such European writers, he argued, became very critical of Christianity once they observed its 'pagan' elements.<sup>223</sup> Consequently, the Coptic newspaper *Miṣr*

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., pp. 295-298.

<sup>220</sup> Salama Musa, *Tarbiyyat Salāma Mūsā*, Cairo, 1947, p. 185; English Translation, *The Education of Salama Musa*, Leiden, EJ Brill, 1961, p. 153.

<sup>221</sup> More about him, see, Sylvia G. Haim, 'Salama Musa, An Appreciation of his Autobiography', *Welt des Islams*, vol. 2/1 (1952), pp. 10-24, Ibrahim A. Ibrahim, 'Salama Musa: An Essay on Cultural Alienation', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 15 (1979), pp. 346-357, Vernon Egger, *A Fabian in Egypt: Salamah Musa and the Rise of the Professional Classes in Egypt, 1909-1939*, University Press of America, 1986.

<sup>222</sup> Grant Allen, *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, London, 1903.

<sup>223</sup> See, *al-Manār*, vol. 17/3, pp. 225-231.

(‘Egypt’, firstly published 1895) launched a campaign against Riḍā for his assault on Christianity as a pagan religion. The paper appealed to the Egyptian government to ban Riḍā’s journal and banish him from Egypt for causing religious strife among Muslims and Copts. Ḥusayn Rushdī (1863-1928), the Prime Minister, invited Riḍā to his house to discuss the matter.<sup>224</sup> Riḍā explained to him that he had published a review of that book just as many other Egyptian papers. He also elucidated that his intention was to defend Islam against missionary writings by using such critical writings in his counterattack. He adamantly added that his journal would continue its anti-missionary campaign as long as they would publish their attacks on Islam. Rushdī requested Riḍā to confine his writings to defence only. Riḍā expressed his readiness to prepare a long list of anti-Islamic citations in missionary literature. He also tried to convince the Prime Minister that the Coptic daily was seeking the support of British missionaries in order to close down his journal and his preaching of Islam in Cairo.<sup>225</sup>

According to Riḍā, the anti-*Manār* campaign was led by Yūsuf al-Khāzin (died in Italy, 1944), a Christian Syrian editor in Cairo. He was a member of the staff editorial of the above-mentioned Coptic newspaper *al-Waṭan*.<sup>226</sup> Riḍā accused him of being one of the most fanatic Christians. According to *al-Manār*, al-Khāzin was reported to have said that he ‘felt uncomfortable when a Muslim would greet him’.<sup>227</sup> Riḍā again claimed that his opponents made another attempt to approach the British Commission and the Egyptian government to imprison or banish him from Egypt, but their campaign would not be successful. He moreover stressed that people knew the objective of his journal from its early beginning as it never intended to propagate any religious strife or animosity against Christians.<sup>228</sup>

In Riḍā’s view, worse than missionaries were those westernised among Muslims and Christians. He deemed the originally born Christian Salāma Mūsā as one of the strongest propagators of ‘atheism’ and ‘absolute looseness’, who certainly endangered the Egyptian nation through his contributions in *al-Hilāl*.<sup>229</sup> By the 1920s Mūsā became the principal writer and a leading pundit in the magazine. He also published nine books since he had joined the staff of the company.<sup>230</sup> Riḍā became upset that Emile Zaidān, the later editor of *al-Hilāl*, had given Mūsā this opportunity of attacking religion, and did not follow the line of his father who was more mindful of religions, their values and the entity of the Arab nation. Riḍā saw Mūsā’s books published by *al-Hilāl* as a ‘destructive propaganda against any oriental nation, which might be dazzled by

<sup>224</sup> *Al-Manār*, ‘Muḥārabat Muta‘aṣṣibī al-Qibṭ wā Ghayrihim lil-Manār (The Fanatic Copts [...] Combating *al-Manār*)’, vol. 17/6 (Jumādā al-‘Ākhira 1332/May 1914), pp. 487-490.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 479.

<sup>226</sup> In Cairo, he founded other journals *al-Akḥbār* (1896), *al-Khizāna* (1900), and *al-Aḥad*. Later he became a member of the Parliament in Lebanon. See, Zirkli, *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 228.

<sup>227</sup> ‘Al-Ta’aṣṣub ‘alā al-Manār’, *al-Manār*, vol. 17/4, p. 317.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., pp. 318-319.

<sup>229</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/2 (Shawwāl 1346/April, 1928), p. 118.

<sup>230</sup> Egger, *op. cit.*, p. 169.



his subverting materialistic philosophy'.<sup>231</sup> On its part, Mūsā's own magazine *al-Majalla al-Jadida* accused Riḍā that he had accumulated a huge wealth through the distribution of his journal in which he offended Muslim thinkers by constantly charging them of infidelity.<sup>232</sup>

Riḍā was one of the founding members of *Jam'īyat al-Rābiṭa al-Sharqiyya* (Association of Oriental League, established 1921-1922).<sup>233</sup> When the mouthpiece of the association, *Majallat al-Rābiṭa al-Sharqiyya*, first appeared in 1928, its editor was the controversial modernist 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq, and several of its contributors were leading Egyptian liberals, including Salāma Mūsā. Mūsā openly proclaimed his 'disbelief' in the East and 'faith' in the West. His 'anti-Easternism' swirled polemics and he was criticised for his assertions that Egypt was historically part of the Western rather than the Eastern world and that even the ethnographic and linguistic roots of Egypt were closer to the peoples of Europe as opposed to those of Asia.<sup>234</sup>

Riḍā immediately attacked the association for its drift to 'spreading atheist culture' in publishing the views of such liberals in its mouthpiece.<sup>235</sup> He was disappointed that the association, which had earlier gained his support, had now given the opportunity to Mūsā as 'propagator of unbelief and impudence' and an 'enemy of religions in general and Islam in particular, of morality and spiritual values, and of any Eastern nationalist, ethnical or linguistic bond'.<sup>236</sup> Riḍā had no reservation to qualify his ongoing propagation for a 'westernised' Egyptian society and the excessive praise in his writings of the British as an attempt to convince his readers of the necessity of 'assimilating Muslims into the English nation'.<sup>237</sup> For him, the westernisation process of Muslims would only be achieved at the expense of Islamic traditions and values. The present Christianity and its doctrine of the Trinity, for Riḍā, were far removed from the authentic message of Jesus, which was only to be found in the Gospel of John:

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<sup>231</sup> *Al-Manār*, 29/2, p. 118.

<sup>232</sup> *Al-Majalla al-Jadida*, vol. 2/10 (August 1931), p. 1180.

<sup>233</sup> The Association of the Oriental League was Egypt's Asian affiliation was aimed at disseminating the arts, literatures and sciences of the Orient, strengthening relationships between countries of the region and acquainting Egypt with that part of the world, regardless of race and religion. More about the association, see, J. Jankowski 'The Eastern Idea and the Eastern Union in Interwar Egypt', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 14/4 (1981), pp. 643-666. More about Riḍā's activities in the association, see *al-Manār*, vol. 23/3 (Rajab 1340/March 1922), pp. 219-223. In Riḍā archive, there are copies of the charter of the association and some reports of its gatherings besides some remaining letters addressed to him by its chairman Aḥmad Saḥfīq Pasha.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p. 645. More in Egger, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-132.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p. 660. Riḍā's major opponent in the League was 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq, the author of the well-known book *al-'Islām wā Uṣūl al-Ḥukm*, who was also appointed as the editor of the magazine. The tension between *al-Manār* and the League's magazine escalated, and both sides exchanged insults. Amin al-Husaynī, the mufti of Jerusalem, had to interfere to reconcile between both sides. See, *al-Manār*, vol. 29/10 (Shawwal 1347/April 1929), p. 788-791.

<sup>236</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/8 (Jumādā Al-'Ākhira 1347/December 1928), p. 620.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p. 623; Mūsā described the English as 'the greatest nation on earth', their government is the most advanced, England surpasses all other countries, the English are unsurpassed in quality of character. See Egger, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127.

‘Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the Only True God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent’ (3:17).

In the 1930s Riḍā became involved in the public discussions about Egypt’s religious and national identity. A well attended debate over the issue whether Egypt’s culture was ‘Pharaonic’ or ‘Arab’ was held at the Faculty of Law of the Egyptian University in December 1930. In this debate Riḍā claimed the massive and decisive Arab and Islamic character of Egypt, while his counterpart the Egyptian lawyer, Muḥammad Luṭfī Jum‘ah, defended the uniqueness of Egyptian culture.<sup>238</sup> Mūsā advocated the Pharaonic identity of Egypt as well, which he considered as superior to the Arab-Islamic heritage both by virtue of its more ancient age and its remarkable achievements.<sup>239</sup> In his debates on the ‘Arabness’ of the Egyptian culture, Riḍā frequently ridiculed Mūsā for his backing of the concept of Pharaonism. What irritated Riḍā was Mūsā’s giving precedence to the ancient Egyptian culture above the shari’a besides what he understood as ‘insults’ and ‘offences’ against anyone who would advocate Islam and its establishments in Egypt. He was very saddened by Mūsā’s depiction of Shakīb Arslān as ‘villain,’ (*waghd*). Riḍā felt also very offended and tried to prove his Egyptian nationality, when Mūsā personally debunked him as a non-Egyptian, who had no right to interfere in Egyptian affairs. Mūsā now reminded his readers of Riḍā’s part in the ‘Abduh-Anṭūn debate by pointing out that *al-Manār* had assassinated *al-Jāmi‘a*. The Egyptian youth had thus lost one of the significant intellectual sources in the country. In his words, Mūsā commented: ‘we [Egyptians] should understand our duty [...] the Egyptian press should remain an Egyptian craft, not only with its Egyptian public readers, but also with its craftsmen and editors, who must also remain Egyptian.’<sup>240</sup>

Riḍā related Mūsā’s views on Islam to his ‘ignorance’ and ‘animosity’. An example was his critique of the inequality between men and women in the inheritance law. Riḍā believed that the motivation behind Mūsā’s criticism was his ambition of replacing the Eastern identity by Western models of life and their style of dress. Riḍā was disappointed that the mouthpiece of the Oriental League had given Mūsā the chance to spread his ideas. The famous Egyptian feminist Hudā Sha‘rāwī (1879-1947), according to Riḍā, had once rejected a request put forward by Mūsā to her and her feminist society in which he had requested to appeal to the Egyptian government for the equality of inheritance law. She rejected his request because she had a strong conviction that any plan of reforming the social standards of women should emanate from Islamic Law itself.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 28.

<sup>239</sup> Egger, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-139.

<sup>240</sup> As quoted in *al-Manār*, vol. 32/1 (Jumādā al-‘Ākhira 1350/October 1931), p. 59.

<sup>241</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/8, p. 624.

Riḍā took up the issue of women's inheritance law once again in a lecture delivered by him at the Egyptian University.<sup>242</sup> He attacked Mūsā again that the impelling reason behind his hatred against the Arabs was that they had conquered his land and had changed it into a Muslim state. He probably preferred that it would have been a part of the Christian Roman Empire despite their persecution of his Coptic people for many years. Looking at Mūsā's own writings, we find that although he gave priority to the Pharaonic culture, he did not deny the social impact of Arabs and Islam on the Egyptians. He believed that the Arab conquest of Egypt had brought a new era of civilization, and that Islam had unfettered its people from sectarian disputes and the Roman political and economical exploitation.<sup>243</sup>

In addition to his propagation of atheism, Riḍā continued, Mūsā spared no effort out of pure animosity to drive Muslims away from their religion. Some Muslim 'atheists' rallied behind him under the slogan of *tajdīd* (renewal). Riḍā referred to one of the lectures delivered by Mūsā in 1928 to the members of the Association of Christian Young Men (A.C.Y.M.) in which he held the status of women in Islam as inferior, especially in its stipulation of inheritance. Riḍā maintained that Mūsā was the first writer to raise these allegations. The Egyptian Constitutionalist Maḥmūd 'Azmi and the Coptic-Catholic Faraj Mikhā'il delivered a similar lecture on the same subject. The three of them, Riḍā believed, brought forward the issue of women's inheritance not because they were concerned with removing inequality between men and women, but by raising such discussions they aimed at disintegrating the umma.<sup>244</sup>

### 2.3. Conclusion

In order to evaluate Riḍā's attitudes towards the Arab Christians of his age, we have analysed various cases. Syrian Christian émigrés in Egypt, who had lively relations with him, were mostly drawn to the world of journalism and political activism. We have observed how complex his approaches were towards them as secularists: sometimes they were on friendly terms, but he tended to have religious and intellectual controversies and heated polemics with some others as well. His positive or negative postures were mostly determined by his counterpart's stances towards the concepts he adamantly espoused in his writings, especially those related to Islamism or Arabism. He was therefore pragmatic in his political cooperation with them, and ready to cooperate with many of them as long as they accepted the Islamic character of society. Riḍā's critique was intertwined with an assault on those whom he called 'geographic Muslims', who were also trying to weep out the Islamic elements from society. I would venture to say that the rejection by Arab Christians of many Christian

<sup>242</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/9 (Dhū al-Qi'dah 1348/April 1930), pp. 690-709.

<sup>243</sup> See, for instance, Ghālī Shukrī, *Salāma Mūsā wā Azmat al-Ḍamīr al-'Arabī*, Beirut, 4th edition, 1983, p. 137. Mūsā never denied the tolerance of Islam given to other religious groups, and attributed the negative behaviour to some Muslim rulers, id., p. 219.

<sup>244</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/9, p. 700.

fundamentals and their sharp criticism of Christian clergymen were likely among the prime motives behind his willingness to cooperate with them. He, on the other hand, was not willing to tolerate the Jesuit attack on Islam and Mūsā's critique of Islam.

Riḍā's attitude towards the Coptic community was more sensitive. Some Copts considered him a non-Egyptian 'intruder', who had no right to interfere in Egyptian affairs. In its response to the Coptic Congress, *al-Manār* did not attempt to deeply analyse the drastic impact of al-Wardānī's assassination of Buṭrus Ghālī on the long-standing and sensitive relation between Muslims and Copts. Riḍā's stance was more apologetic to their demands. He did not take the issue further than discussing the status of non-Muslim minorities under Islamic rule, and accusing some Coptic groups who in his eyes were inflaming the religious strife among different communities. His tone was sometimes cynical. This has been clearly shown when he reproached the Copts to be 'satisfied' with the rule of the Khedive 'Hājī Abbās'. Throughout his articles, Riḍā did neither severely condemn Wardānī's crime, nor did he extol his act. He was also silent on the religious discourse prevalent among Muslim scholars (who did not condemn his act) and some nationalist groups (who hailed al-Wardānī as a national hero).<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> The then mufti of Egypt, for example, did not support the verdict of the Egyptian court by considering imposing the death penalty on al-Wardānī as unjustified from his own religious point of view. See, Badrawi, *op. cit.*, p. 41.



### Chapter Three

## ***Al-Manār* versus Evangelism: Rashīd Riḍā's Perceptions of Social and Theological Aspects of Missions<sup>1</sup>**

What follows here is a systematic treatment of Riḍā's various polemics against missionary writings and activities of his time. The discussion is mainly meant to put Riḍā's works on Christianity (discussed below), which he published in separate treatises, in its appropriate historical context in relation to the previous two chapters.

The present chapter traces his responses to the missionary work in the Muslim world, and his confrontations with some of the missionaries in Egypt. It will be divided into eight sections: 1) his early general understanding of the role of missionary work in each religion, and the development of his thinking over the years in this early phase (1900); 2) his perception of missions as part of western colonialism in the Muslim world, and the concrete examples through which he tried to find a link between both forces; 3) *al-Manār*'s confrontation with the British authorities in Egypt because of its attacks on missions and severe critique of Christianity; 4) Riḍā's evaluation of the missionary educational work and its (dis)advantages among Muslims; 5) the role of other Muslim writers and readers who reacted to missionary work in *al-Manār* from various regions in the Muslim world; 6) Riḍā's short-lived project of Dār al-Da'wā wā al-'Irshād; 7) his zealotry in propagating Islam as part of his anti-missionary strategies; and lastly 8) his criticism of the religious official scholars of Al-Azhar in Egypt and their mild responses to missions.

### **3.1. Mission is the Life of Religion**

In 1900, Riḍā wrote two articles on the importance of propaganda for the spread of religions, when the Muslim public opinion had become frustrated about news that circulated on the missionary success in converting Muslims in Africa. Riḍā chiefly discussed their ideas in order to relieve the sad feelings of Muslims about the conversion of Muslims to Christianity and to stimulate them to do more work in propagating Islam. He explained to those despaired Muslims the real reasons behind the spread of religions, asking them to develop a better understanding of missionary success. He rejected the common thought among Muslims that the spread of religions was only dependent on governments, when they use it as a policy tool. Governments can only facilitate

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of the chapter has been read at the conference: "Social dimensions of mission in the Middle East (19th and 20th century)", the Faculty of Protestant Theology at Marburg University and the Fliedner-Foundation Kaiserswerth, Düsseldorf-Kaiserswerth (13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> March 2006).

the growth of a given religion, which has already been spreading on its own for many other fundamental reasons.<sup>2</sup>

In his analysis of these articles, Juan R. Cole notes that Riḍā's encounter with non-Islamic missionaries led him to develop a 'missiology' (*Tariq al-Da'wa*) for Islam, which was characterized by both modern pragmatic and traditionalist Islamic aspects. This missiology, Cole argued, rested upon the explanation of the dynamics of the spread of religions in terms of organization and efficiency rather than in terms of the intrinsic truth of the message or the intervention of a supernatural agency. This secular explanation helped him to account for the successes of Christian missionaries in Africa in converting Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Cole has actually based his observation only on these two particular articles with no consideration of Riḍā's later, more paradoxical views. His remark is true when it comes to Riḍā's interpretation of the missionary enterprise in historical and social terms. Looking at Riḍā's whole understanding of the subject-matter, as we shall see, one would easily conclude that he totally renounced such views when it came to the struggle between Islamic expansion and the endeavours of Christian missions over the whole Muslim world. In his conviction, the spread of Islam was caused by the power of the 'truth' of its divine message as compared to the 'absurdity' of the Christian creed.

As we shall see throughout the chapter, Riḍā's views of Christian missions were not always coherent. In the two articles we just mentioned, Riḍā argued that all religions (including Islam) would successfully spread by propaganda regardless of its falsity or truth. But the rationality lying in true religions could in many cases help them to dominate over false doctrines. In historical terms, however, Riḍā maintained that without propaganda religions would have died out or vanished, as it had been attested that false beliefs easily disseminated by propaganda, while true ones had disappeared when its followers exerted no vigorous missionary effort. But he insisted that due to its power and rationality Islam had higher esteem and more authority than all other religions.<sup>4</sup>

Riḍā moreover asserted that the methodology of religious propaganda should contain two aspects to achieve success: philosophical proofs for the intellectual elite and the rituals and sermons for the lay people. A missionary therefore needed specialized skills and knowledge. These include knowledge of the language and customs of the local population, and a broad acquaintance with their religious sects and rites. He should be capable of delivering the message according to their mentality and in words that they would easily grasp. Riḍā also stressed that the propagandist should be convinced of the inner truth of his message and must act according to it, evincing great endurance and a

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<sup>2</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Al-Da'wah Hayāt al-'Adyān (Mission, the Life of Religions)', vol. 3/20 (Jumādā al-'Ūlā 1318/September 1900), pp. 457-463; 'Al-Da'wah wā Tariquhā wā 'Ādābuhā (Mission, Its rules and Methodologies)', vol. 3/21 (Jumādā al-Thāniya 1318/September 1900), 481-490. The articles were written as a reaction to an article in the Egyptian paper *al-Mu'ayyad* of Sheikh 'Alī Yūsuf (September 1900) on the success of Christian missions in Sudan.

<sup>3</sup> See, Juan R.I. Cole, 'Rashīd Riḍā on the Baha'ī Faith: A Utilitarian Theory of the Spread of Religion', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 5/3 (Summer 1983), p. p. 284, p. 276.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 3/20, p. 463.

never-failing hope of success. This emphasis on the internal strengthening of the community rather than on foreign mission was natural in a situation where many Muslim countries were under European colonial rule. Muslims saw the need for self-defence and self-strengthening as more important, in a situation of economic and political dependency, than the need for an aggressive expansionism.<sup>5</sup>

Riḍā was much impressed by the methods followed by Western missionaries in propagating their religion. He demanded Muslim religious men to follow their model of training and propaganda. He summarized the merits of the success of Christian missions over Muslim propagandists in various points. He admitted that missionaries received better training in secular sciences and the knowledge of the modern world than Muslim religious leaders. Christian preachers also exerted effort to learn foreign languages and translate their publications in the local languages, while Muslim scholars sometimes considered learning foreign languages as a 'deviance' from Islam. Other factors were their amiable treatment and deep awareness of the traditions, desires, religious sects, norms and mentalities of the local population. Christian missionaries also used to present their religion in a way that would attract followers of other religions. Riḍā mentioned an example of missionaries in China, who succeeded in attracting Buddhists by dressing themselves in the native clothes of the indigenous people and carrying the statues of their gods. In his view, missionaries had more unyielding endurance in propagating their religion as compared to that of Muslims. In Asia they suffered humiliation, but remained steadfast and resolute. An example of that was a story he read in a missionary periodical that one of the early missionary groups in China remained for nearly eight years preaching with no case of conversion. Their request to return back home was rejected. They received a demand from their mother institution in the West to remain determined in preaching the Word. As a result of their sincere missionary conviction, the local Chinese people began gradually to accept their work and converted to Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

Cole did not refer to other attitudes shown by Riḍā, and which implicitly contradict his lofty admiration of the religious aspiration of mission in many other places in his journal. One year after the publication of these articles, for instance, Riḍā stated that although there were many Christians preaching their religion because they believed in Christianity as the only truth, there were many individuals who committed themselves to missionary activity only because of the salaries they received from religious institutions. They used their job in most cases as a source of living without any conviction in spreading the truth.<sup>7</sup> In his view, the only 'true' mission of solid faith in Christian history was that of the disciples of Jesus; and any later missionary attempt was false. Riḍā constantly stressed that the Islamic *da'wa*, on the contrary, had been gaining millions of converts over centuries despite the frail state of Muslims, their lack

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<sup>5</sup> Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-285.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 3/21, pp. 488-89.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/16 (Rajab 1319 / 29 October 1901), pp. 624-26.



of knowledge, the fragility of Muslim leaders and the weakness of their civilization and culture, which represented an obstacle in the way of the expansion of Islam. Despite their scientific, social and political shortcomings, Riḍā argued, Muslims still preached their religion only motivated by their conviction of the truth of the Islamic message. Missionary groups, on the other hand, were given all protection by their governments. European supremacy in the East ‘made them speak loudly [...] Christians preach their religion motivated by politics, followed by money, and protected by weapons’.<sup>8</sup>

In the meantime, Riḍā, backing his statements, enthusiastically quoted a full Arabic translation of some speeches delivered by the English Canon Isaac Taylor (mentioned above in the introduction) on the successful expansion of Islam in Africa.<sup>9</sup> In 1887, Taylor announced to a British audience at a church conference in Wolverhampton that Christianity, because its message was ‘too spiritual’ and ‘too lofty’, had failed to civilize the savage, barbarous Africans.<sup>10</sup> Islam, he continued, had been more successful than Christianity in ridding that continent of its evils – evils like cannibalism, devil worship, and human sacrifice. The Islam-Christianity debate evoked many discussions in British newspapers, especially the *London Times* for several months after Taylor’s speech. Taylor admitted that missionaries did some good, but suggested that they failed because their efforts were misdirected.<sup>11</sup> Riḍā’s enthusiasm about Taylor’s critique of the modest results achieved by missions in Africa somehow contradicted his above-mentioned theory that the spread of any religion relied on organized propaganda. In his thinking, ‘although the vast sums of money and all the precious lives lavished upon Africa, Christian converts were reckoned by thousands, Muslim converts [without missions] by millions’.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 626.

<sup>9</sup> See his articles, ‘al-Muslimūn fī ‘Ifriqiya (Muslims in Africa)’, *al-Manār*, vol. 4/22 (Dhū al-Qi‘da 1319/February 1902), pp. 846-852; ‘al-Islam wā al-Muslimūn’, *al-Manār*, vol. 4/24 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1319/March 1902), pp. 924-932; ‘al-Qur’ān wā al-Kutub al-Munazzalah (Qur’ān and Revealed Books)’, *al-Manār*, vol. 5/2 (Muharram 1320/April 1902), pp. 52-64.

<sup>10</sup> Among Taylor’s works is: *The origin of the Aryans: an account of the prehistoric ethnology and civilization of Europe*, London: Scott, 1890. More about him and this debate, see, H. Alan C. Cairnes, *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965, pp. 211-214. His talk is also mentioned by Andrew Porter, ‘Late Nineteenth – Century Anglican Missionary Expansion: A Consideration of Some non-Anglican Sources of Inspiration’, in Derek Baker (ed.), *Studies in Church History* 15, Oxford: Blackwell, 1978, pp. 354-357; Thomas Prasch, ‘Which God for Africa: The Islamic-Christian Missionary Debate in Late-Victorian England,’ *Victorian Studies* 22 (Autumn 1989): 51-73. The next year Taylor visited Egypt. He compiled his memoirs under the title: *Leaves from an Egyptian Notebook*. Taylor’s speeches had a strong influence on the ideas of the father of pan-Africanism Edward Wilmot Blyden. See, Edward Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967. Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1812*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 76. Temple Gairdner was alarmed by both Taylor’s and Blyden’s praise of Islam; see T. Gairdner, *The Rebuke of Islam*, London, 1920, pp. 156-157.

<sup>11</sup> Cairnes, *ibid*, p. 211.

<sup>12</sup> See his two articles, *al-Manār*, ‘al-Ta‘aṣṣub (Fanaticism)’, vol. 1/26 (Rabi‘ al-Thānī 1316/September 1898), pp. 483-93; vol. 1/27 (Jumādā al-‘Ulā 1316/October 1898), pp. 504-16;

### 3.2. Mission and Colonialism

Like many Muslims of his age, Riḍā perceived the Christian missions as an integral part of the colonial presence in the Muslim world. He was convinced that Europe made use of religion as a political instrument for mobilizing European Christians by inflaming their ‘fanatic’ feelings against other nations. This was manifest in the spread of missions in Asia and Africa as ‘tools for conquest’. An example of that was the occupation of the Chinese harbour Kiao-Chau (1898) after the murder of two German Catholic priests by a mob in November 1897. On the pretext of protecting German missionaries in China, Kaiser Wilhelm II dispatched his brother with ships to enforce new German territorial demands, and the practical cession of the harbour from the Chinese government.<sup>13</sup>

In his analysis of the association of missions with colonialism, Riḍā drew historical parallels, such as the collaboration of the Church in medieval Spain with the authorities in converting the Muslims and the Jews.<sup>14</sup> He gave the example of the British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898), who was deeply imbued by Christian theology, and had hatred towards Islam.<sup>15</sup> Another case was the English politician, Lord Salisbury, who, according to Riḍā, was reported to say: ‘we should retrieve what the Crescent had taken from the Cross’.<sup>16</sup>

One of Riḍā’s readers in East Africa reported to him cases of compulsory conversion of Muslims by the German colonial authorities. Riḍā remarked that the Germans tried to spoil the relation between Arab and indigenous inhabitants. Due to their excessive ‘egotism’ taught by Bismarck, the Europeans, in Riḍā’s view, were the only race throughout human history, who used compulsion in matters of religion. In comparison to the German behavior in their colonies, Riḍā praised the British colonial policy of tolerance, asking the ‘Orientals to give them their preference over all other European governments’.<sup>17</sup>

In an article on ‘the Muslim World and European Colonialism’, Riḍā accused the Dutch authorities in Indonesia of adopting new schemes for

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and the reaction of one of his readers, vol. 1/28 (Jumādā al-ʿUlā 1316/October 1898), pp. 535-540.

<sup>13</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/26, p. 494. M. P. Shiel (ed.), *China in Arms: The Final Revision of The Yellow Danger*, with an afterword by John D. Squires, Kettering, Ohio: The Vainglory Press, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/26, p. 498.

<sup>15</sup> About his religious affinity, see, for example, David William Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/26, p. 498.

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Manār*, ‘Al-Mānya fī Sharqay ʿIfriqiya wā Tanṣiruhā al-Muslimīn (Germany in East Africa and Christianizing Muslims), vol. 7/18 (Ramaḍān 1322/24 November 1904), p. 720. Riḍā also received another letter from one of his readers in Dar as-Salam about discriminating the Arabs and the destruction of one of the mosques there, when two Greek employees complained about the voice of the *adhān*, vol. 7/20 (Shawwāl 1322/23 December 1904), p. 799-800.

Christianizing the whole Archipelago.<sup>18</sup> He also criticised Indonesian students in the Middle East (especially in Mecca and Egypt) for their indolence in religious knowledge. He accused them of staying for long years in another country without committing any effort to read its newspapers or magazines or works of history, sociology and geography. Such a small country as the Netherlands was able to colonize and exploit millions of people. In Riḍā's view, the Dutch had followed a unique and successful way in evangelizing Muslims, especially in Depok, a village between Batavia and Bogor. He was told that missionaries were dispersed among Muslims in remote villages, while 'enlightened' Arab Muslims were entirely forbidden to enter them. They also studied religious superstitions and 'false' beliefs that circulated among the locals, describing them as part of the people's faith in order to convince them of the 'fallacy' of Islam. They supported their arguments by focusing attention to the deteriorating state of Muslims as compared to the flourishing state of their Christian fellow citizens in knowledge, wealth and status. As a result, the inhabitants of these regions converted to Christianity, and started to 'hate' Muslims. Riḍā cynically explained that 'when a Muslim entered [these villages], he would not find shelter. None of the inhabitants would give him a cup of coffee or water; nor would they meet him or talk to him. Was Jesus dispatched to instill animosity and hatred among people to such a degree? Or was it the European policy which was further from the religion of Christ?'<sup>19</sup> Riḍā's critique also focused on the situation of Muslims on Java as the most ignorant and lax in religious matters. For him, 'if the Dutch continued in their policy, all Indonesian islands would easily change into another Spain'.<sup>20</sup> Riḍā's attack on the Dutch policy in the East Indies in that regard might sound extreme. According to Harry J. Benda, many Dutchmen in the Indies had great hopes of eliminating the influence of Islam by rapidly Christianizing the majority of Indonesians. These hopes were partly anchored in the fairly widespread, if facile, Western belief in the superiority of Christianity to Islam, and partly in the erroneous assumption that the syncretic nature of Indonesian Islam at the village level would render conversion to Christianity easier in Indonesia than in other Muslim lands.<sup>21</sup> In his consultations to the Dutch government, Snouck Hurgronje welcomed the educational work of Christian missions in Indonesia, but deplored their confessional bias, and discouraged missionary work in the areas of religious Muslim majorities.<sup>22</sup>

Also seeing it against the historical background, it should be emphasized that Riḍā wrote his article in 1911, when the Christian statesman A.W.F.

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<sup>18</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'al-ʿĀlam al-Islāmī wā al-Istiʿmār al-ʿUrūbī (The Muslim World and Western Colonialism)', vol. 14/5, pp. 347-352.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 349-350.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350. An unnamed Muslim notable in Singapore informed Riḍā, for example, that the number of converted Muslims to Christianity on Java exceeded 100,000 person every year. See, vol. 14/1 (Muḥarram 1329/January 1911), pp. 49-50.

<sup>21</sup> Harry J. Benda 'Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and the Foundations of Dutch Islamic Policy in Indonesia', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 30/4 (December, 1958), pp. 339.

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/5, p. 345.

Idenburg (1861-1935) was the governor-general (1909-1916) of the Indies. Idenburg was a fervent member of Abraham Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party. The newspaper *Soerabaiaasch Handelsblad* passed a judgment upon him: 'we have a governor-general here whose thinking is too much influenced by Kuyper, who has too many apostolic aspirations.'<sup>23</sup> Idenburg's Christianization policy even included his wish to officially involve civil servants in public festivities on Sundays, and to discourage Sunday markets.<sup>24</sup>

The Javanese journal *al-Wifāq* (edited by the Meccan publicist Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Fatta)<sup>25</sup> reported to Riḍā that the Dutch authorities intensified their 'prosecution' of Muslims in Java by inspecting worshippers during the time of the prayer. The journal commented that Muslims should always obtain permission whenever they wanted to establish congregational prayers, whereas missionary workers were given all the space to hold their gatherings and spread their publications over the whole island.<sup>26</sup>

Riḍā believed that, unlike the Indonesians, Tatar Muslims in Russia were difficult to convert because of their strong faith and firm adherence to the native language and culture.<sup>27</sup> Tatar Muslims were actually suspicious about Russian education and clothing. In their eyes, the ignorance of Tatar language would directly imply Christianization.<sup>28</sup> Christian missionary activity also strove to shape Muslim education, literature and publishing, as they recognized its powerful impact on Muslim locals.<sup>29</sup>

Riḍā made his point clearer by stating that the first step of European colonial conquest started with establishing missionary schools, hospitals and orphanages. Attendants of their institutions as a result would begin to doubt their doctrines and social constituents. The community would consequently be divided into two classes: those Westernized who tried to replace their traditions with European habits, and those of conservative minds who cling firmly to the

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<sup>23</sup> About his policy, see, Pieter N. Holtrop, 'The Governor a Missionary? Dutch Colonial Rule and Christianization during Idenburg's Term of Office as Governor of Indonesia (1909-1916)', in Pieter N. Holtrop and Hugh McLeod (eds.), *Missions and Missionaries*, Boydell Press, 2000, pp. 142-156.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 147-48.

<sup>25</sup> About his journal, see, Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, 'The Arabic Periodicals of the Netherlands East Indies', in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 152:2 (1996), p. 240-41, see also, Riḍā's review of Fatta's magazine, vol. 25/2 (Rajab 1342/February 1924), p. 159

<sup>26</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Al-'Islām fī Jawā (Islam in Java)', vol. 26/6 (Rabī' al-'Awwal 1344/October 1925), p. 480.

<sup>27</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/5, pp. 350-351. About Riḍā's views of Muslim education in Russia, see, for example, 'Al-'Infāq 'alā al-Ta'lim al-'Islāmī min Māl al-Ḥukūmah al-Rūssiya' (Spending of Russian National money on Islamic Education), *al-Manār*, vol. 9/3 (Rabī' al-'Awwal 1324/April 1906), pp. 205-207.

<sup>28</sup> Allen J. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk District and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1780-1910*, Brill, 2001, p. 250; cf. A. Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience*, Stanford, California, 1986.

<sup>29</sup> See, Agnès Kefeli, 'The Role of Tatar and Kriashen Women in the Transmission of Knowledge, 1800-1870', in Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (eds.), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001, p. 250.

past.<sup>30</sup> The clash between the old and new would consequently engender aggression from the side of Muslims against missions or Eastern Christians: a good excuse for colonial states to use military intervention under the pretext of protecting the interests and religion of minority groups in the East.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.3. Confrontation with the British

As has already been mentioned, Riḍā praised the tolerance of the British in their colonies as compared to their German counterpart in East Africa. But due to Riḍā's political activism and the pro-Caliphate tone in his journal, British authorities in Egypt entertained the idea of sending its founder to exile in Malta during the First World War.<sup>32</sup> The British diplomat Sir Mark Sykes (1879-1919) described Riḍā after their meeting as 'a leader of Pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic thought. In conversation he talks as much as he writes. He is a hard uncompromising fanatical Moslem, the mainspring of whose ideas is the desire to eliminate Christian influence and to make Islam a political power in as wide a field as possible.'<sup>33</sup>

As early as January 1899, the British Commissioner of Egypt Lord Cromer delivered a speech in the Sudan, in which he promised the Sudanese people to establish justice and religious freedom under the British Protectorate.<sup>34</sup> Riḍā believed that such 'daring' promises could not be fulfilled without definitive measures to bring missionary work to an end. It would be a 'false' pledge in case they would be given the opportunity to intensify their work there.<sup>35</sup>

As a matter of fact, the British were well aware of the Muslim religious sentiments. In order to maintain their political and economic interests in Egypt, they did not publicly encourage missionary work.<sup>36</sup> William Temple Gairdner criticised the British in Egypt by saying that 'the Mohammedans think that the government is simply running the country for them; that they are the only people; that the British officials are afraid of them, and have implicitly declared the superiority of Islam. Such policy can bring nothing but difficulty and disaster in the future. It is cowardly and unchristian; it is not even neutral. It ought to be wholly changed. The British official may one day see that this subservience to the Muslims and neglect of his own faith gain him, neither respect, gratitude, nor affection of the people, but the very reverse of all three.'<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'al-ʿĀlam al-ʾIslāmī wā al-Istʿmār al-Urūbī (The Muslim World and European Colonialism), second article, vol. 14/6 (Jumāda 1325/June 1911), pp. 432-440.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 433-434. Cf. *al-Manār*, vol. 17/7 (Rajab 1332/June 1914), p. 510.

<sup>32</sup> Haddad, 'Nationalism', p. 268.

<sup>33</sup> 'Select Reports and Telegrams from Sir Mark Sykes', report no. 14; as cited in *ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>34</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/42 (Shaʿbān 1316/January 1899), p. 827.

<sup>35</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/44 (Ramaḍān 1316/February 1899), p. 859.

<sup>36</sup> Mustafā Khālīdī and ʿUmar Farrūkh, *al-Tabshīr wā al-ʾIstīʿmār fī al-Bilād al-ʿArabiyya*, 2nd ed., Beirut, 1957, p. 148.

<sup>37</sup> W.T. Gairdner, 'Islam under Christian Rule', in E.M. Wherry, et al (ed.), *Islam and Missions*, New York and others: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911, pp. 195.

During his stay in office, Lord Cromer had to interfere once or twice in cases of Muslims who were converted to Christianity by American missionaries.<sup>38</sup> One of these cases was a student at Al-Azhar from Jerusalem, whose name was Maḥmūd (later Boulus or Paul), who entered the class of catechumens in October 1905. He confessed the Christian faith in February 1906.<sup>39</sup> When the boy's father learnt about that, he came to Egypt to take his son back. When the father appealed to Lord Cromer, the latter invited the boy to his office, and told him that he was old enough to profess whatever religion he preferred. Cromer asked the boy to sign a document to that effect in his presence and that of other witnesses. The Prime Minister of Egypt and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were present during the interview and witnessed the boy's confession.<sup>40</sup>

It cannot be argued that Cromer had joined missionary activity. However, he was not constrained to provide 'the missionary, the philanthropists, the social reformer and others of the same sort, with a fair field. [...] their interests are excellent, although at times their judgments may be defective. They will, if under some control, probably do much good on a small scale. They may even effect reforms more important than of the administer and politician who will follow cautiously in their track and perhaps reap the result of their labour'.<sup>41</sup> He was also not reluctant to describe Islam as an 'inelastic faith that contained within itself the seeds of its own political decadence. As the power of the Crescent waned before that of the Cross, the Frank was gradually transformed from being a humble receiver of privileges into an imperious possessor of rights'.<sup>42</sup> He also took pride in the so-called superiority of the Christian nations over the Muslims, quoting the words of Sir William Muir when saying: 'Christian nations may advance in civilization, freedom, and morality, in philosophy, science, and the arts, but Islam stands still. And thus stationary, so far as the lessons of history avail, it will remain'.<sup>43</sup>

In 1913, Lord Kitchener (1850-1916), a British commissioner following Cromer, made an attempt to ban the publication of *al-Manār* due to its anti-missionary writings. Kitchener was 'in full sympathy with the work that the [missionary] Press is trying to accomplish'.<sup>44</sup> He also had personal interviews with Samuel Zwemer (1867-1952), and Arthur T. Upson of the Nile Mission,<sup>45</sup> who were critical to *al-Manār*'s attacks on missionary activities. Zwemer saw it as one of the mouthpieces of hostility against Christianity and missions.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Bishrī, *op.cit.*, p. 566.

<sup>39</sup> Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>40</sup> W.T. Gairdner, *Thornton*, pp. 203-204. See also: Farrūkh, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>41</sup> Cromer, *op. cit.*, p. 642.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 794.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 637-38.

<sup>44</sup> J. Christy Wilson, *Apostle to Islam: A biography of Samuel M. Zwemer*, Michigan: Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1952., p. 80.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> S. Zwemer, *The Disintegration of Islam*, New York and others: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1916, pp. 210-216.

Upson reviewed the contents of one of *al-Manār*'s issues by attacking Riḍā and his journal: 'we close this issue of *al-Manār* feeling the worse for having spoiled our minds with some of its blasphemies, but we are glad to know that the editor [Riḍā] has been severely censured for his attacks upon our Lord Jesus'.<sup>47</sup>

Magnus, a biographer of Kitchener, described him as a British colonial officer with religious sentiments.<sup>48</sup> 'The British imperialism was in its heyday during Kitchener's lifetime, and there was confusion in regard to the meaning of the word. Some regarded it with horror as a cloak for barefaced exploitation; while others hailed it with exaltation as the religious mission of a great people elected by God. Kitchener believed in the reality of the white man's burden. He considered that the reluctance to shoulder the idea of imperialism would have constituted a cowardly betrayal of a missionary duty, which God, or providence, had imposed upon the British race'.<sup>49</sup> His 'correspondence with the Coptic Archbishop of Sinai and the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem were of absorbing interest to him and received equally assiduous attention'.<sup>50</sup>

Riḍā stated that after Lord Cromer's rule political and religious freedom guaranteed to the Egyptians became on the wane, especially when Lord Kitchener was reported to have sympathy with missionary work. For instance, Lord Kitchener demanded the Egyptian Minister of *al-Awqāf* (Religious Endowments) to cancel his project of establishing a hospital in Old Cairo, as it was to be situated nearby the British missionary hospital Herber. He feared that the Egyptian hospital would attract the attention of Muslims away from the missionary one.<sup>51</sup> Riḍā was disappointed with the fact that although the Egyptian government had provided missionary societies with many facilities to establish educational and medical centres for the goodwill of the country, they did not cease to maintain an anti-Muslim attitude in their tracts and publications.<sup>52</sup>

Driven by *al-Manār*'s anti-missionary stance, a group of American and British missionaries approached Lord Kitchener to take measures against Riḍā's

<sup>47</sup> The author reviewed volume 17/2 (Ṣafar 1332/January 1914) of *al-Manār*; see Upson, 'Glance', p. 395.

<sup>48</sup> About his life, George Arthur, *Life of Lord Kitchener*, 3 vols., London, 1920. Philip Magnus, *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist*, London, 1958. Alfred Milner, *England in Egypt*, London, 1894.

<sup>49</sup> Magnus, *ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> Arthur, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 345-346.

<sup>51</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'al-Tabshīr 'aw al-Tanṣīr fī Miṣr: Māḍihī wā Ḥāḍiruh wā Mūsā'adat al-Ḥukūma lahū (Missionary work: Its past and present and the Government's support for it)', vol. 33/3 (Muḥarram 1352/May 1933), p. 234. As it was difficult for them to pronounce, the Egyptians used to call Herber hospital as Hermel. M.M. Sulaymān, *al-Ajānib fī Miṣr: 1922-1952*, 1st ed., Cairo: 'Ayn For Human and Social Studies, 1996, p. 294. Kitchener was the first British governor to establish a new ministry to take control of *al-Awqāf* in Egypt, which had been administered previously by the Khedive. This reform, however, provoked controversy. Unlike Cromer and Sir Eldon Gorst, who had considered it to be impossible to interfere, Kitchener had no such inhibitions. He transferred the control of those endowments to a Minister, assisted by an under-secretary and a council of five, who were all Muslims. Magnus, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-72.

<sup>52</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Ḥuriyyat al-Muslimīn al-Dīniyya fī Miṣr (Religious Freedom given to Muslims in Egypt)', vol. 16/12 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1331/November 1913), pp. 958-959.

friend Tawfiq Ṣidqī. They tried to convince him of ordering a publication ban against Riḍā's journal. Riḍā was convinced that missionaries aimed to silence his journal's critical voice towards them, as it was the only Muslim mouthpiece countering their allegations on Islam.<sup>53</sup> It was Ṣidqī's article on the image of Jesus in both Christian and Muslim traditions that caused the conflict. In that article, he accused missionaries of sowing hatred and animosity among people. He also asserted that 'most Europeans (or even all of them) have made lying and breaking promises lawful in politics by using verses of the New Testament.' The same held true, Ṣidqī went further, for the lawfulness of wine-drinking, adultery, excessively violent wars for the minimum of reason, and animosity.<sup>54</sup>

In his diary (7-8 November, 1913), Riḍā recorded that 'Abd al-Khālīk Tharwat (1873-1928), the then Public Prosecutor and later Prime Minister, visited him in his missionary Society of Da'wa in Cairo (see below in the present chapter) to discuss the matter. Tharwat informed Riḍā that Kitchener was personally involved in the matter and formally complained to Muḥammad Sa'īd Pasha (1863-1928), the then Egyptian prime minister. Kitchener's interference came as a result of a protest by the American ambassador whom missionaries managed to approach as well. After seeing Kitchener's report, Riḍā insisted that his journal would not stop writing against missions so long as they attempted to 'defame' Islam and preached that Muslims should adopt Christianity. He developed his reply only as a refutation to their 'misunderstandings' of Islam, which he saw as binding on every capable and knowledgeable Muslim (see, Appendix IX).<sup>55</sup>

The following day, Riḍā accompanied Ṣidqī to the office of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister explained the impact of colonial control over the country. He himself was concerned with missionary writings on Islam and complained many times to British officials about the probable danger of their work in causing riots in Egypt. Ṣidqī's article, according to him, had three disadvantages: 1) it would not bear any result in diminishing their anti-Muslim campaigns, 2) it would result in a publication ban on *al-Manār*, and 3) as a civil servant Ṣidqī had no right to involve himself in such affairs, otherwise he might be dismissed from his position. The Prime Minister appreciated the religious role played by *al-Manār* in society, but requested Riḍā to bring his anti-missionary campaign to a standstill in order that he would convince Kitchener to withdraw his decision.

Riḍā explained that his publications in this respect were divided into two different sections: his commentary on the Qur'ānic passages related to Christianity and their logical and historical authenticity, and his defence of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> M. Tawfiq Ṣidqī, 'Naẓrah fī Kutub al-ʿAhd al-Jadīd wā Kutub al-Naṣārā (A view on the New Testament and the scriptures of Christians)', *al-Manār*, vol. 16/8 (Sha'bān 1331/August 1913), pp. 598-599. He referred to the verses of Luke (22: 36-38) in which Jesus requested his followers to sell their garments and buy a new sword, while it is stated in Matthew 5: 44 that the believers must 'love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you'.

<sup>55</sup> Riḍā's diary, 7-8 November, 1913, private archive in Cairo.



Islam against missionary attacks. Having been asked by the Prime Minister about the allegation of missionaries that it was him who usually started the attack, Riḍā answered that his journal was always in a ‘defensive arena’. He had become dissatisfied with the colonial ‘tyranny and the great amount of the religious freedom given to missionaries, as measured up to the limitation imposed upon Muslims.’ The Prime Minister had agreed with him on this point, but asked him to calm down the tone of his journal.<sup>56</sup> Finally Riḍā pointed out that he did not see Ṣidqī’s anti-European statements before publication, otherwise he would have corrected or deleted them. He moreover promised that Ṣidqī would discontinue his strongly-worded writings on mission, confining his writings to medical and scientific extracts and articles in the journal.<sup>57</sup> Riḍā in fact stopped publishing Ṣidqī’s articles after this meeting.

In 1921 one of Riḍā’s informants in the Sudan reported to him that the British authorities banned his journal at the request of Christian missions there. According to him, copies were confiscated and burnt before reaching his subscribers. Riḍā complained to Sir Wingate, the British administrator (1899–1916) of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, but with no result.<sup>58</sup>

At another level, Riḍā accused colonial politicians in Egypt of excluding devout Muslims from high positions, especially in the field of education. They instead would rather employ their own ‘fanatic’ clergymen. He referred here to the British ‘consultant’ in the Egyptian Ministry of Education Douglas Dunlop, who first came to Egypt as a Scottish missionary teacher.<sup>59</sup> Dunlop was known among Egyptian nationalists as ‘the assassin of education in Egypt’. He, for example, opposed the use of the Arabic language in Egyptian schools. Furthermore, he encouraged only the hiring of British teachers who knew no Arabic, and were then expected to convey subjects such as history, geography, and mathematics entirely in English.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.4. Missionary Schools

Riḍā’s *fatwās* for his readers in *al-Manār* (see, chapter 7) could construct a general idea of his views of the social dimension and influence of missionary schools on the Muslim local population. His answers to the questions raised to him from various regions concerning attending these schools were apparently undecided, and sometimes incoherent. We find examples of complete acceptance of their existence and useful role in promoting the social life in the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 16/12, p. 960.

<sup>58</sup> *Al-Manār*, ‘al-Siyāsa wā Rijāl al-Dīn fī Miṣr (Politics and men of religion in Egypt)’, vol. 22/7 (Dhū al-Qi‘dah 1339/August 1921), p. 523-535. The ban continued up to 1926, see, *al-Manār*, vol. 33/3, p. 235.

<sup>59</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 22/7 (Dhū al-Qi‘dah 1339/August 1921), p. 523-525.

<sup>60</sup> Muna Russell, ‘Competing, Overlapping, and Contradictory Agendas: Egyptian Education Under British Occupation, 1882-1922’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 21/1-2 (2001), p. 54.

Muslim world, while in other cases he harshly attacked their methods of attracting Muslim children to Christianity through their educational institutions.

The earliest queries Rida received concerning missionary schools did not directly deal with the question whether it was allowed to join these schools or not. In 1903, a Muslim student at a Christian school in Cairo asked Riḍā for a religious excuse not to fast during the month of Ramadan. Having been enrolled in this school with its overloading work and schedule, it became much more difficult for him to fast. Riḍā utterly found no excuse for breaking fasting just because of work. The student's work during the school day was no hard task, especially in the winter with short days and moderate weather. The only solution that Riḍā gave to this pupil was his prayer that God would help the young man to endure fasting.<sup>61</sup>

In the following year, an anonymous petitioner from the city of Asyūṭ (a southern province in Egypt predominately inhabited by Christians) raised a question with regard to an invitation by an American missionary school to attend its yearly festivals. Was it allowed for Muslims to attend missionary activities, while they mostly started with religious prayers and supplications upon Jesus as the Son of God? For Riḍā it was no problem to attend their festivities. He stated that only the emulation of non-Muslims in their religious rites is to be considered apostasy; but it was not forbidden to witness their rites and listen to their prayers, except in case one would fear an inclination towards their religion (such as in the case of children).<sup>62</sup>

In an earlier article (1903), Riḍā praised the American College in Beirut as the 'most ideal' educational institute for Muslims. He also described its then second President Howard S. Bliss, the son of its founder Daniel Bliss, as a 'divine philosopher rather than a Christian priest'.<sup>63</sup> Although he was deeply religious, Howard Bliss was 'very modern in his ideas [...] and accepted the implications of Higher Criticism and tried to make the students good members of their own sects, rather than Protestants'.<sup>64</sup> Riḍā's eulogy of the College came at the request of his Christian friend Jabr effendi ʿDumīt (1859-1930), a teacher of Arabic at the College in Beirut (see, Appendix X).<sup>65</sup> ʿDumīt was grateful to Riḍā for his words, confirming that his request was not for personal interests, but for the public interest. In a letter to Riḍā, ʿDumīt wrote: 'I will not say that

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<sup>61</sup> *Al-Manār*, Vol. 6/17 (Ramaḍān 1321/November 1903), p. 823.

<sup>62</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Huḍḍūr 'Ibādat al-Naṣārā', vol. 7/6 (Rabī' al-ʿAwwal 1322/June 1904), pp. 239-240.

<sup>63</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/14 (Rajab 1321/October 1903), pp. 566-67.

<sup>64</sup> Elie Kedourie, 'The American University of Beirut', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 3/1 (October, 1966), pp. 78-79 (Quoted below, 'American')

<sup>65</sup> Letter to Riḍā, Dumīt, 25 October 1903. His full name is Jabr Mikḥāʾl Dumīt was born in Tripoli, and died in Beirut. He received his education at American missionary schools in Lebanon. He traveled to Alexandria in 1884 and worked as an editor at *al-Maḥrūsah* newspaper. Later he became an interpreter during Gordon's campaign in the Sudan. From 1889-1923 he had been working as a staff member at the American College in Beirut. See, *Ziriklī, op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 108-109.

God would sustain me to reward you, as you [Riḍā] are like the sun that expects no acknowledgement or fame.<sup>66</sup>

Six years later Riḍā again issued a straightforward *fatwā* for the Muslim students at the College permitting them to remain enrolled despite the compulsion practiced by its administration to attend religious classes.<sup>67</sup> Until the end of the nineteenth century the Trustees of the College remained adamant in their refusal to relax the rules concerning attendance at prayers and at Sunday school or to follow separate catering facilities for non-Christians. In the same year, Muslim and Jewish students went on strike against compulsory church attendance, and the Trustee affirmed: 'The College was not established merely for higher secular education, or the inculcation of morality. One of its chief objects is to teach the great truth of Scripture; to be a center of Christian light and influence; and to lead its students to understand and accept a pure Christianity; and go out to profess and comment it in every walk of life'.<sup>68</sup>

Riḍā's *fatwā* came as a result of the request of Muslim students to him during his visit to Beirut (1909). They complained to him about the College's compulsion for all students to attend religious classes. They complained that they were asked to attend the daily chapel for fifteen or twenty minutes to listen to readings from the Bible. In the college there were societies for the Armenians, Greeks, Egyptians (both Christians and Muslims). There were the Young Men Christian Association and the Jewish Student Society. But their request for a permission to establish their own Muslim society was totally discarded. They were neither allowed to celebrate the *mawlid* (the day of the Prophet's Birth), while some of the American teachers made several negative and depraved comments on Islam.

To calm down their sentiments, Riḍā delivered a speech appealing them to keep up their Islamic bond firmly, and be faithfully dedicated to their religious practices and identity. In his sermon, he likewise asked them to be more tolerant with their non-Muslim classmates, while unifying themselves. He stressed the scientific significance and societal benefits of such Christian schools in spreading science and techniques in the Muslim lands, even though they were sometimes harmful for one's belief. Riḍā told them:

The founders of this school have sought to use education, which benefits all peoples, as a method to spread their languages and religious beliefs into the hearts and minds of whom they educate. That is a lesson for us. We should learn from it and improve ourselves so that we should be more qualified for this achievement than we are today. You must all cooperate, work together and seek the protection

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<sup>66</sup> Letter, Dumit to Riḍā, Beirut, 25 October 1903, Riḍā's private archive in Cairo.

<sup>67</sup> See, *al-Manār*, vol. 12/1 (Muḥarram 1327/21 February 1909), pp. 16-26, vol. 12/8, pp. 637-640.

<sup>68</sup> The Annual Report, as quoted in Kedourie, 'American', pp. 83-84. For more about the history of the College, see, for instance, Bayard Dodge, *The American University of Beirut*, Beirut, 1958; id., 'The American University of Beirut', *Journal of World History*, vol. 4 (1967), pp. 780-800.

of group effort and consensus. You may face in this world malice and pressure to drive you away from the right path, away from your desire for cooperation and agreement. It behooves you, therefore, to try to be tolerant of all unacceptable treatment you might encounter from those around you [at the college], and to respond with courtesy in work and deed [...] Although your conduct should seek only to satisfy your own conscience, and to apply your beliefs to your deeds, you should hold yourselves above intentional disobedience and stubbornness towards your superiors or your teachers, and above snobbery and false pride in your achievements.<sup>69</sup>

Riḍā tended to believe that America had no political aspirations in the East. For this reason, most American missionary schools in the East in general and the American College in Beirut in particular were better, more independent, and less prejudiced as compared to other Western religious educational institutions of countries with political ambitions in the East (such as England). The fair-minded Muslims would know perfectly well and could estimate the zeal of the founders of these religious institutions to spread their religion, wishing that there would emerge among Muslims similar 'generous' groups who would spend their money for the sake of propagating Islam by means of 'useful knowledge' passed through schools and 'good acts' through medical aid. As compared with their Muslim fellows, Christians were geared up to spend a lot of money for many years despite the consequences of converting none of the Muslims. Riḍā moreover argued that missionary institutions sometimes exaggerated the number of converts by annually sending illusive reports to their indigenous institutions in the country of origin in order to raise more funds.<sup>70</sup>

In his analysis, Riḍā maintained that the scientific advance offered by such schools might encourage some Muslim parents to choose them for their children because they firmly believe that a Muslim would never turn into a Christian. Another group would abandon them because of their influence on the children's doctrines, following the *fiqhī* (legal) views of prohibiting Muslims, despite their firm belief, to be involved in venerating other places of worship. For Riḍā, this view could only be applicable to Catholic and Orthodox schools (especially of the Jesuits), which also compelled Muslim children to follow their religious practices, including the veneration of images and saints. He argued that when Muslim students of the American College in Beirut refused to attend religious sermons in the Church, the administration insisted that they would either join them or be dismissed. According to Riḍā, the Ministry of Interior interfered to solve the problem by asking the American Consul in Beirut to appeal to the school, either to abandon the idea and build a

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<sup>69</sup> As translated by M. Haddad, 'Syrian Muslim Attitudes Towards Foreign Missionaries in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century', in Teijirian & Simon, *op. cit.*, p. 259 (Quoted below, 'Syrian').

<sup>70</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 12/1, p. 17.

mosque inside the school where students could easily practice their religion, or to refuse the enrollment of Muslim students.<sup>71</sup>

Riḍā maintained that a teacher at the American College (probably ʿUmīṭ) had once asked him about his religious views concerning the attendance of Muslim students of Christian classes. He argued that these classes contained ethical and religious admonitions which are also embodied in Islam. The college neither taught Muslim students Christian traditions, nor did it attack other beliefs. Riḍā stressed that these students reject to attend these classes on the basis of the view of the majority of Muslim jurists, who prohibited entering the places of worship of other religions. Although there is no legal Islamic basis of prohibition with regard to entering these places, Riḍā stressed that the choice of the students should be respected. Having respect for schools and houses is one of the pivotal corners of upbringing, but respecting one's belief and consciousness was higher than showing respect to the school regulations only. Thus, compelling those students to do so is worse, as this would corrupt their morality, and there would be no hope to instill them with esteem towards their families or nations.<sup>72</sup>

To conclude, Riḍā requested the college's administration to gain the respect of those students by dealing with them justly in a way comparable to their Jewish and Christian classmates, who were given permission to establish their own societies. They should also avoid all kinds of assaults against Islam in their lectures. If the objective of these lectures was to create harmony among the college's members, away from any political and religious tendencies, they should have attempted to gain the side of the Muslim students by allowing them to have their own activities. He also stressed that the college had only two choices, either to be tolerant in accepting the demands of the Muslim students, or to send them away. In Riḍā's own terms:

If they made the first choice, Muslims and 'humanity' would appreciate their deed; and they would draw closer to the 'real core' of any religion by establishing harmony among people: something shared by Islam and Christianity. But if they decided upon the second alternative, they would teach Muslims another new lesson that might cause harm to them [as Christians] and [to Muslims] among whom they lived by causing discord and strengthening fanaticism. However, it would be stimulating for Muslims to be more self-sufficient and competitive in establishing their own religious societies, which would found similar schools.<sup>73</sup>

Although Western education, in Riḍā's view, contained plenty of social benefits, it still had its impact upon the feelings of the Muslim umma. Muslims

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 21. In 1914 the Ottoman Government passed a law that forbade the College from giving religious instruction to any, except to Protestant students, see, Kedourie, 'American', p. 84.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 20-22.

<sup>73</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 12/1, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

should hasten to have good command of the sciences taught in these schools. He advised Muslim students at the American college to gain more scientific eligibility in new educational methods and to translate all the knowledge they acquired into Arabic in order to achieve progress in the whole umma. They should also endure any kind of ill-treatment or inequality practiced by the college, and to be flexible and wise enough by obeying the rules of the college.

Nonetheless, Riḍā gave preference to the view of allowing Muslim children to remain in such schools as long as they did not have ones alike. But they should avoid any disadvantages resulting from instructions which are incompatible with Islam. Besides, Riḍā advised Muslim students to strengthen their religious identity by: 1) studying Muslim books explaining the truth of Islam and the differences between Islam and Christianity; 2) reading Muslim works refuting the Bible and its doctrines; 3) observing all Islamic acts of worship at these schools, such as the five daily prayers, and to fast on the days they were required to attend the Christian religious classes; and 4) keeping their concern of competition with those people, trying to combine both religion and science, and to establish similar schools.<sup>74</sup> Although he presented such solutions for the students, Riḍā at the same time earnestly called upon the Muslims of Beirut to get their children out of the American college and the other missionary schools, and hasten in raising funds for establishing their own Islamic college to replace such institutions.<sup>75</sup>

A further change in Riḍā's attitude towards the college took place after he had received a letter from a certain 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ghandūr from Beirut at the end of the academic year 1909. In his letter, al-Ghandūr informed Riḍā that the president invited Muslim and Jewish students in his office and asked them to sign an oath that they should carry out certain religious duties in the following year including attending the church service and studying the Bible. The student who would be absent from prayers a number of times would be suspended.<sup>76</sup> In response, Riḍā no longer showed any courtesy or respect to the college, and totally prohibited Muslims from looking into or listening to books belonging to any other religion. Imitating the behavior of such people in their religious acts is unquestionably forbidden in Islam. He moreover attacked 'foreigners [...] of spreading their prejudice and partisanship in the East, [while] continuing to claim that the East was the birthplace of fanaticism.'<sup>77</sup>

On the relation between missionary schools and colonialism, Riḍā stressed that powerful colonial nations always attempted to reshape the social, national and religious identity of their colonized people by promoting educational systems according to their political agenda.<sup>78</sup> The idea was further developed in his answers to the afore-mentioned Danish missionary Alfred Nielsen (see,

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<sup>74</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 12/8, pp. 639-40.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 640.

<sup>76</sup> Haddad, 'Syrian', p. 262-263.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>78</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'al-Taṭawwur al-Siyāsī wā al-Dīnī wā al-Ijtimā'ī (Political, religious and social developement in Egypt', vol. 21/5 (Dhū al-Qi'dah 1337/August 1919), p. 274-277.

chapter 7). Riḍā made it clear that the most obnoxious thing done by missionary schools, even the American ones (which he still considered to be the most honest), was that they would make the students doubt their religion, without convincing them of the soundness of Christianity. Thus many of the students would become hypocrites and atheists. The same held true for Christian students and followers of other religions. Such institutions, however, brought benefits by disseminating pure and applied sciences in the Muslim countries, particularly agriculture, commerce and medicine. Although such advantages were worthy of gratitude, they were not attributed to the missions themselves in any way. The specialists in these fields at missionary schools were far remote from the instructions and rulings of the Bible.<sup>79</sup>

Apart from the services rendered by these schools and hospitals, Riḍā went on, they were mainly established to help the ‘colonial covetousness’, as it was clearly expressed by Lord Salisbury (1830-1902), the well-known English minister, who said: ‘Missionary schools are the first step of colonialism’. Riḍā thus insisted that there was an espousal between colonialism and mission:

Missionary schools, first of all, cause division among the populations of the land where they are established. The people, as a result, fall into intellectual disagreement and dogmatic doubts. The ‘foreigners’, in that way, would succeed in hitting the people of the country by one another. This will in the end give the colonial powers the opportunity to get them completely under control, humiliate and deprive them of their independence and wealth.<sup>80</sup>

Riḍā maintained that missionary activities had proved to be tragic and catastrophic for many countries by causing hostility and division among the peoples they were sent to. In Syria, for example, dissidence and religious strife were mostly caused by the activities of missionary schools in the country. Deplorable religious fanaticism was weaker before the coming of those missions, even though religious knowledge among Christian groups had been less. He also argued that the converted locals did not become better than the people of their former religion with regard to virtues, morals or the worship of God.<sup>81</sup>

An anonymous Tunisian Muslim also asked Riḍā for a *fatwā* on enrolling Muslim students at secular (*lā dīniyya*) and Christian schools, where emphasis was laid upon foreign languages, while Islamic and Arabic subjects were inappropriately lacking. Nevertheless, they would have the privilege to be exempted from a three-year military service after their graduation in such schools.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Umar Ryad, ‘Rashīd Riḍā and a Danish Missionary: Alfred Nielsen and Three Fatwas from *al-Manār*’, *Islamochristiana*, vol. 28 (2002), pp. 87-107 (Quoted below, ‘Nielsen’).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 25/3 (Sha‘bān 1342/March 1924), pp. 188-194.

<sup>82</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 32/3 (Dhū al-Qi‘dah 1350/March 1932), pp. 178-181.

Riḍā not only opposed these secular schools, but also severely criticised missionary ones, labeling them as much more dangerous for Muslims than the secular ones. He further denoted that teaching Arabic and Islamic doctrine and rules to children is the duty of every Muslim parent. Unless these schools enabled them to teach their small children Islamic values, there would be no excuse for them to put their children there. For Riḍā, it was no convincing justification to send their children to secular schools only for escaping military service. Muslim parents, however, are obliged to teach their children discipline as well. These schools, in his view, were less dangerous than the schools of ‘the preachers of Christianity’. It has been attested, he argued, that such religious schools were solely established by missionary organizations to propagate their religion, and pupils attending their lessons were demanded to practice Christian doctrines, worship and ethics. Missionaries also follow many ‘satanic’ methods to keep Muslims away from Islam, which vary according the state of knowledge or ignorance of the Muslim. Secular schools were established by secular organizations also ‘not only to propagate atheism, but also rejecting all Prophets and their message of guidance’.<sup>83</sup>

Atheism, Riḍā lamented, was in different degrees clearly widespread among those who studied at secular and missionary schools. The outcome of attending these schools could be seen in various ways. Among their graduates were the *al-Muʿaṭṭila*, who do not believe in God, His angels, Books, Prophets, and the Day of Resurrection. Some of them were only religiously committed to the political and social affairs of Islam, such as marriage, inheritance, feasts, funeral ceremonies, but did not perform prayer, pay *zakāt* (almsgiving), nor go on pilgrimage. Some of them acknowledged the sacredness of Ramadan, and sometimes fasted, but they did not abandon what Allah prohibits, such as wine-drinking, gambling, *zinā* (adultery and fornication) and usury. Finally, there were some of them who prayed and fasted regularly, but they did not know the minimum amount of what the real Muslim should know about the Islamic creed, values and rulings.

Most of the children learning at such schools would be ignorant of *al-Maʿlūm min al-Dīn bi al-Darūra* (the necessary minimum amount of knowledge that every Muslim should know). They would also give precedence to foreign languages over Arabic, and ignore that Islam stipulates Arabic as the language of Islam in order to unify Muslims under one banner in terms of worship, morals and law. The education of Muslims at such missionary and secular schools caused Muslims many ‘evils’ in their religion, life and politics. The reason pushing Muslims to enroll their children in such schools was the lack of similar well-financed Muslim organizations, and the fact that there was no real Muslim government that would take the responsibility of establishing such institutions. If Muslims established their own schools, there would be no need for the education[al institutions] of the enemies of their religion, which they deemed very necessary for their life. For him, establishing similar schools

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 180.



was *Fard Kifāya*, a duty that must be fulfilled at least by a sufficient number of Muslims.

Finally, he contended that Muslim parents, even those well acquainted with Islam and capable of raising their children in a real Islamic way, would be only rarely able to preserve their children's doctrines strong, when they join these missionary schools. As an example to support his ideas he told that his brother al-Sayyid Ṣāliḥ (d. 1922) once sent his own daughter to the American School for girls in Tripoli-Syria. Despite his deep knowledge of Islam and ability to debate with missionaries, he failed to convince her of the inaccuracy of hymns praising the saviourship and divinity of Jesus, which she had memorized there. As a result, he took her out of this school even before she finished her studies.

### 3.5. Encounters with Missions in *al-Manār*

By the end of the nineteenth century, the behaviour of some Christian missionaries in Cairo was strongly criticised in the Egyptian press. Reports on some Protestant missionary institutions that tried to entice Muslims to convert by giving them money were spread over the city. Members of the English Missionary School (situated in Muḥammad 'Alī Street, Cairo) rejected such rumours.<sup>84</sup> Riḍā quoted at length the views of the Christian paper *al-Falāḥ* (Success) of the Syrian journalist Salīm Pasha al-Ḥamawī as an example of 'enthusiastic' Christian writers, who dared to censure Western missions for their 'transgression'. The paper suggested Muslims to constitute their own missionary associations in order to challenge Western missions. Riḍā, as a result, dwelled upon the idea of initiating a classroom in the Ottoman School of the Syrian nationalist Rafīq al-ʿAẓm (mentioned above, chapter 2) in Cairo, where students would receive religious lessons.<sup>85</sup>

In the same period, Riḍā took a prominent place in two Muslim associations: The *Shams al-ʿIslām* (Sun of Islam) and *Makārim al-ʿAkhḻāq* (Good Manners). The two organizations aimed at combating Christian missions, and the revitalization of religious consciousness among Muslims. Riḍā became a member of the Sun of Islam on July 20, 1899.<sup>86</sup> He also toured Egypt in order to help founding new branches for the association in various provinces. He also consistently praised the benevolent activities supported by the association, especially religious propagation and the establishment of new educational institutions.<sup>87</sup>

Riḍā, however, criticised the 'overzealous and fanatic' reaction of both Muslims and Christians. He attributed the origin of fanaticism and disharmony among the followers of the two religions to the behaviour of some religious and secular leaders, who worked only for their own interests. As for his own

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<sup>84</sup> 'Al-Daʿwah ʿilā al-Dīn (Preaching Religions)', *al-Manār*, vol. 2/9 (Muḥarram 1317 /May 1899), pp. 140-143.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>86</sup> Riḍā's diary, 1899, private archive in Cairo.

<sup>87</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 2/37 (Rajab 1317/November 1899), pp. 589-590.

rejoinders against Protestant missionary writings, he stressed that they were purely defensive against their attacks on Islam. At the same time, he criticised some newspapers, which vehemently attacked missionaries with the purpose of satisfying the desire of 'fanatic' Muslims. By doing so, they intended to inflame the tension between both groups and to cause harm for the society.<sup>88</sup> Some of Riḍā's Muslim readers used to send him missionary publications on Islam so that he might refute them in his journal. In many cases, he would 'soothe their anger' by confirming that missionary writings were 'futile and that their attack on Islam had its advantage that it would renovate the spirit of research and reasoning and refurbish the sense of religious zealousness and national consciousness among Muslims.'<sup>89</sup>

A prominent example of Riḍā's polemics against missionary writings was his answer to the publication of the Arabic translation of the missionary book *The Sources of Islam* by Rev. W.St. Clair-Tisdall (1859-1928) of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1904. Riḍā's answer was part of an intense controversy in the Egyptian press against the book.<sup>90</sup> It was originally published as a Persian treatise in which Tisdall attempted to show that the Qur'ān was partly derived from ancient Arabian traditions, and that there was also Judeo-Christian influence on its narratives. In his foreword to the book, Sir William Muir concluded that 'if it be shown that much of this grand book [the Qur'ān] can be traced in human sources existing daily around the Prophet, then Islam falls to the ground. And this is what the Author proves with marvelous power and erudition.'<sup>91</sup> Compare this praise with the recent judgment of Tisdall's work made by Western scholars, who described it as 'a shoddy piece of missionary propaganda'<sup>92</sup>, and 'not particularly scholarly essay or even a polemical one [...]' It uses the salvation history of Christianity to refute that of Muslims.'<sup>93</sup>

Riḍā ridiculed the book as 'false camouflage' that would only affect weakly-minded Muslims. The author applied similar methods used by European scholars to 'demolish' Judaism and Christianity with investigating the origin of

<sup>88</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Arīhiyyat al-Tasāhul wā al-Wifāq (Munificence of Tolerance and Harmony)', vol. 7/22 (Dhū al-Qi'ḍah 1322/22 January 1905), p. 879.

<sup>89</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 5/11 (Jumādā al-ʾĀkhira 1320/September 1902), pp. 436-439.

<sup>90</sup> W. S. Tisdall, *Tanwīr al-ʾAfhām fī Maṣādir al-ʾIslām*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1904; idem, *The Sources of Islam: A Persian Treatise*, translated and abridged by Sir William Muir, T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh, 1901; idem, *The Original Sources of Islam*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1905; See also, id., *The Religion of the Crescent or Islam: Its Strength, Its Weakness, Its Origin, Its Influence*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1895. About his life, see, Gerald H. Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, New York, 1997, p. 673.

<sup>91</sup> Tisdall, *Sources*, p. vi. Tisdall's work has been reprinted in *The Origins of the Kuran*, edited by the pseudonym and former Muslim Ibn Warraq (ed.), *The Origins of the Kuran*, New York: Prometheus Books, 1998, pp. 227-292.

<sup>92</sup> François de Blois, 'Book Review [of Ibn Warraq's] *The Origins Of The Koran: Classic Essays On Islam's Holy Book*', *The Journal Of The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2000, vol. 10/11, p. 88.

<sup>93</sup> Herbert Berg, 'Book Review [of Ibn Warraq's] *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays On Islam's Holy Book*', *Bulletin Of The School Of Oriental and African Studies*, 1999, vol. 62/3, p. 558 (557-558).

their sources by proving them of an inaccurate and unholy nature. However, Muslims, in Riḍā's eyes, would continue to believe in the invulnerability of their Holy Book. Imbued by his missionary zeal, Tisdall was enormously puzzled by the methods of the Higher Biblical Criticism on his religion; thus, he attempted to attack Islam with 'the very weapon Christianity had been fought with.'<sup>94</sup> Riḍā was also very skeptical about Tisdall's knowledge of Islam: his method was no less spurious than that of other missionary writings in their attack on Islam. In constructing the sources of Islam, Riḍā believed, the author depended on the *Isrā'īliyyāt* (Israelite Lore) and legendary narratives attributed to insignificant authors.<sup>95</sup> Riḍā's general view of this Lore was in line with that of his teacher Muḥammad 'Abduh, viz. that such stories had been fabricated by the Jews with the purpose of undermining Islam.<sup>96</sup>

In 1911, the French orientalist Alfred Le Chatelier (1855-1929) published his history of Protestant missions in the Muslim world under the title 'La conquête du monde Musulman' in *La Revue du Monde Musulman* of the Scientific Mission of Morocco. Riḍā immediately requested his fellow citizen Mūsā'id al-Yāfi (1886-1943) to make an Arabic translation of the whole French text. Soon his translation, prepared in cooperation with the Salafī writer Muḥhib al-Dīn al-Khatīb (1886-1969), was published in many Egyptian newspapers, such as *al-Mu'ayyad*, *al-Faṭḥ* and *al-'Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*.<sup>97</sup> During Riḍā's visit to India in 1911, *al-Manār* also started publishing the entire translation in order to inform its readers about the 'future plans' of missionaries in the Muslim world.<sup>98</sup> Riḍā's above-mentioned brother al-Sayyid Sāliḥ criticised the French magazine for having taken another direction by writing on the subject in order to gain political and religious ends'.<sup>99</sup> In its comment on the purpose of the translation in Arab newspapers, *La Revue* criticised these Muslim journals:

Nous en venons par là à ce qui séparera probablement notre point de vue et celui de nos confrères arabes. Leurs vœux se bornent à affirmer, à acclamer l'indépendance de l'Islam, avec la certitude de ne pas la réaliser, mais d'achever au contraire de la perdre. Nous voudrions, nous, les voir assurer cette indépendance, par les voies de

<sup>94</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 7/3 (Ṣafar 1322/April 1904), pp. 101.

<sup>95</sup> Such as Abū Ishāq al-Tha'ālibī (d. 1035), *Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā' al-Musammā bi' Arā'is al-Majālis*, Cairo, 1312/1894, see the English edition by William M. Brinner, Brill, 2002. Another work is *Kharīdat al-'Ajā'ib wā Farīdat al-Gharā'ib* (by Sirāj al-Dīn Ibn al-Wardī (d. 861); edited by Carolus Johannes Tornberg, *Fragmentum Libri Margarita Mirabilium, auctore Ibn-el-Vardi*, Upsaliae, 1838; reprinted by Mahmud Fakhuri (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Sharq al-'Arabī, 1999.

<sup>96</sup> Brinner, *op. cit.*, p. xxviii, See Aḥmad Muflīh al-Qudah, 'Mawqif Tafsīr al-Manār min Riwayāt Asbāb al-Nuzūl wā al-Isrā'īliyyāt', 'Symposium on Sheikh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā: His Intellectual Role, Reformation and Methodology', International Institute for Islamic Thought, Jordan 1999, pp. 13-48.

<sup>97</sup> Later compiled in one small volume, A. Le Chatelier, *al-Ghārā' alā al-'Ālam al-'Islāmī*, trans. by Mūsā'id al-Yāfi and Muḥhib al-Dīn al-Khatīb, Cairo: al-Matab'a al-Salafiyya, 1350/1931-1932.

<sup>98</sup> See, vol. 15 the issues 3-9.

<sup>99</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/4, p. 259.

prospérité encore ouvertes à son avenir. [...] Ce n'est pas en se réislamisant que le Musulman d'Égypte échappera à la main-mise britannique : c'est en opposant le gentleman musulman au gentleman chrétien. Si le *Mo'ayyad*, le *Manar* et l'*Ittihad al Othmani* veulent se mettre pratiquement en travers de l'« assaut donné au monde musulman » la méthode est simple. Qu'ils disent à leurs lecteurs : « Sortons de nos petits coins, pour aborder, de face, le réalités qui sont ».<sup>100</sup>

*Al-Manār* also followed the news circulated on missionary activities in Muslim journals worldwide. In 1910, for instance, it published a translation of an article published in the Russian magazine *Shūrā* in Orenburg on missionary associations in Russia. The article described missions as 'uninvited guests'.<sup>101</sup> It belittled their success in converting or attracting local Muslims, although their numbers were on the increase and their finances were flourishing. Nevertheless, the revival of religious zealousness among the Tatar Muslims was due to missionary movements in Russian provinces. In that sense, missions had their positive impact by consolidating the feeling of brotherhood and unity among Muslim Russians. Any case of conversion was also, according to the article, insignificant, since it was in the favour of Islam to 'root out those [converts as] corrupt members of the Muslim community'.<sup>102</sup>

It is also noteworthy that the Shī'ī Muslim scholar Hibat al-Dīn al-Shahrastānī al-Najafī (1884-1967), the founder and proprietor of *al-'Ilm* Magazine in Najaf, took part in countering Christian missions in Riḍā's journal. As a Shī'ī reformist, al-Shahrastānī was keen to have relations with Muslim contemporary reformists in Egypt and Syria.<sup>103</sup> In his journal he also published biographies of famous Sunnī and Shī'ī reformists.<sup>104</sup> The ideas of both al-Shahrastānī and Riḍā ran parallel. Al-Shahrastānī intended to connect *al-Manār* with his magazine, as they had the common interest of reform.

In 1911 al-Shahrastānī wrote an article in *al-Manār* on Christian missions about one of his debates with Christian missionaries in Iraq. Riḍā published the article under the title: 'A Debate of a Muslim Scholar with Protestant Missionaries in Baghdad'.<sup>105</sup> In his preface to the article, Riḍā mentioned that although the debate was also published in *al-'Ilm*, al-Shahrastānī had asked him to republish it in *al-Manār* for the sake of circulation among Muslims

<sup>100</sup> See, 'Chronique', *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol. 6 (1912), Paris, p. 286 ; cf. *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/9 (Ramaḍān 1330/September 1912), p. 697-702; vol. 15/10, p. 799-800.

<sup>101</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Jam'īyyat al-Mubashshirīn fī Rūsyā (Missionary Association in Russia)', vol. 13/11, p. 853.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> See, Muḥammad Bāqir Aḥmad al-Bahādilī, *al-Sayyid Hibat al-Dīn al-Shahrastānī: Athāruh al-Fikriyyā wā Mawāqifuhu al-Siyāsiyyā*, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Fikr al-'Islāmī, 2000, p. 92.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>105</sup> 'Munāzarat 'Ālim Muslim li Du'āt al-Protestant fī Baghdād: Baḥthunā ma'a al-Du'āh al-Brotestāniyyin: Haflat Uns Ma'a Rufqat Fuḍālā', *al-Manār*, *al-Manār*, vol. 14/12 (Dhū Al-Hijjah 1329/December 1911), pp. 914-922.

everywhere. Riḍā's intention of publishing the debate was directed to the common method among Protestant missionaries of using imaginary characters and themes in their articles on Islam, such as the Anglo-Arabic magazine *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb*, in which Gairdner used to illustrate imaginary debates with extracts from the Bible as a medium in presenting his Christian texts and his apologetic discussions on Islam.<sup>106</sup>

In February 1911 in Baghdad, while he was touring around Iraqi and Indian cities, al-Shahrastānī attended two meetings with a group of Protestant missionaries, including the members of the Persia and Turkish Arabia Missions Rev. P. Boyes, Dr. F. Johnson and Dr. G. W. Stanley,<sup>107</sup> whom he described as people of 'good manners and [claiming] to have knowledge of practical and spiritual 'divine' medicine'.<sup>108</sup> Both Johnson and Stanley were physicians of the medical missionary team at that time. Among the attendants in the debate were other indigenous Iraqi Muslims and Christians, such as Dawūd Fitto (1865-1921), an Iraqi Christian pharmacist.<sup>109</sup>

The discussion took the form of a *munāẓarah* ('debate') around 'philosophical' and 'theological' issues, such as 1) the sacred character of the Bible, 2) the sonship of Jesus, 3) medical subjects, 4) Jesus as saviour, 5) evil and human sin, 6) and the concept Mahdism and the return of the Messiah.<sup>110</sup> Despite their theological differences, al-Shahrastānī was impressed by the studiousness of missionary physicians, who fulfilled their job with no expectation of any financial return from their patients. Their concern for propagating their faith was immense to the extent that they wrote on the walls of their hospital: 'Believe in Jesus Christ, He will save you and your family from all evil'. In conclusion, al-Shahrastānī ended his article saying: 'The Lord may make all difficulties easy for the seekers of the good, and to reward the people of beneficence with gratitude; He is the One who guides to the right path'.<sup>111</sup>

In his comment, Riḍā construed the praise of al-Shahrastānī of their medical work (even though he knew perfectly well that their only mission was to convert Muslims to Christianity), and it was as a clear-cut indication of Muslim tolerance with missions. But he blamed him for giving them this credit, while giving no attention to their anti-Islamic campaigns.<sup>112</sup> Two months later

<sup>106</sup> See, Constance E. Padwick, *Temple Gairdner of Cairo*, London, 1929; Werff, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>107</sup> About the history of the mission, see, *The Persia and Turkish Arabia Missions*, London: Church Missionary Society, 1909.

<sup>108</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/12, p. 915.

<sup>109</sup> Dawūd Fitto was born in al-Mawsil. He is a Syriac Orthodox of origin, who converted with his mother and sister to Protestantism. He studied at Protestant schools, where he learnt Arabic, English, Kurdish, and Turkish. When the Turkish Arabia Mission was established, he was trained as a pharmacist. He wrote scientific articles in the Egyptian magazine *al-Muqtataf*, and became its agent in Iraq. He worked as a pharmacist at the Protestant Pharmacy in Baghdad. After World War I, and due to the departure of many missionaries from Iraq, Fitto established his own pharmacy. See, Hārith Yusuf Ghanima, *al-Brūtustant wā al-Injilyūn fī al-ʿIrāq (Protestants and Evangelicals in Iraq)*, al-Nāshir al-Maktabī Press, 1998, pp. 171-173.

<sup>110</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/12, p. 916.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 922.

<sup>112</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/12, p. 922.

al-Shahrastānī explained to Riḍā that he neither intended to praise the missionary medical work, nor wished them any success. He only desired to ‘awaken Muslims and motivate their thinking’.<sup>113</sup> His supplications at the end of his article were ‘relative’, and were only meant to be only a concluding statement. On the other hand, he totally agreed what Riḍā repeatedly articulated in his writings about ‘their [missionary] activities as harming Muslims in their religion and politics’.<sup>114</sup>

One of the common ideas between Riḍā and al-Shahrastānī was articulated in their fight against missions and the endeavour to promote the *da‘wa* in the face of the Christian propaganda against Islam. Among Riḍā’s personal papers I have come across an unpublished manuscript of a treatise by al-Shahrastānī submitted to *al-Manār* for publication (see, appendix XI). The aim of this publication was to inform Riḍā and the readers of *al-Manār* about the author’s efforts to strengthen the Islamic *da‘wa* against Christian missionary work during his stay in India in 1913. From there he tried to ‘promote preaching, writing, and the advance of an Islamic social power through establishing Muslim schools and societies and distributing publications.’<sup>115</sup> The reason why Riḍā did not publish this work in his journal is not known. Al-Shahrastānī related to Riḍā one of his anecdotes about what he labeled as ‘a missionary trick’, which happened to him in India. He passed by a group of people surrounding a Christian priest preaching his religion in a park in Bombay. A man dressed as a European came, and started to recount that he traveled around the world in his search for the true religion, but did not find a better religion than Christianity. He took an oath before the priest and sat beside him. The same thing happened with another man, who was dressed as an Arab claiming to be a Hanafī Muslim from Mecca. He was followed by a man acting as a Shī‘ī from Karbala, then by a heathen from India with the same story. Al-Shahrastānī maintained that they were four Indians, who converted to Christianity a time ago. Their performance was only a ‘trick’ in order to deceive the common people. Had he known the Indian language and the Indian mentality, he would have debated with them all!<sup>116</sup>

When Riḍā published the above-mentioned Arabic translation of Chatelier’s ‘La conquête’, a Muslim ‘traveler’ sent *al-Manār* his observations on the influence of Protestant missionary organizations in the Gulf region during his visit as early as 1913.<sup>117</sup> The Arabian Mission had been one of the organizations founded by Samuel Zwemer. During his early stay in Arabia, Zwemer adopted the name ‘Dhaif Allah’ (the guest of Allah) in order to make a

<sup>113</sup> Letter, al-Sharistānī to Riḍā, Iraq, 16 Rabī‘ al-Thānī 1330/April 4, 1912.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> ‘Fayṣal al-Dalā’il fī Ajwibat al-Masā’il (The Distinction of Proofs in Answering the Questions)’, MS, Riḍā’s private archive in Cairo. It contains al-Shahrastānī’s answers to a group of questions raised by the Sultan of Oman Fayṣal Ibn Turkī (1864-1913) in his courtyard about a variety of Islamic themes. The treatise is dated 1913.

<sup>116</sup> Letter, al-Sharistānī to Riḍā, Ramdan 24, 1331/August 27, 1913.

<sup>117</sup> *Al-Manār*, ‘Du‘āt al-Naṣrāniyyā fī al-Baḥrain wā Bilād al-‘Arab (Missionaries in Bahrain and Arabian lands)’, vol. 16/5 (Jumāda al-‘Ulā 1331/May 1913), p. 379-383.

distinction for himself among the Bedouins. The Arabs, however, called him 'Dhaif al-Shaitan' (the guest of the Devil).<sup>118</sup> Another report asserts that local citizens named him: 'Fāṭih al-Bahrain' (the Conqueror of Bahrain).<sup>119</sup>

One of this Muslim traveler's servants went to probe information about their work, and made some pictures of their centers in Bahrain, Muscat, Kuwait and Basra. In spite of the effect of their efforts on Islam and Muslims, he indicated to *al-Manār* that they exaggerated their success among Muslims in order to gain more funding from their native institutions. He counted the number of male and female workers less than twenty persons, who neither had good command of Arabic, nor good acquaintance with the local population. He himself once visited their society in Bahrain and discussed many theological issues related to Biblical and Qur'ānic narratives of the Creation. He also noted that they established a small school consisting of two rooms, where they used to teach children downstairs, and to gather adults for religious services upstairs.<sup>120</sup>

As for the status of Zwemer in Bahrain, he added that the local inhabitants treated him very roughly in his early stay. On the market he established his own bookshop, where he first sold publications on various topics; but later he gradually put up only Christian books for sale. When he decided to purchase a piece of land, the local governor stipulated not to put any Christian symbol on the building. Zwemer appealed to the British Consul, who interfered in the matter and he purchased a spacious piece of land for about four thousand Rubies where they founded their school and their missionary hospital. He ascribed Zwemer's success in the last years to four reasons: 1) his high salary that exceeded 150 Rubies beside other donations from the United States; 2) the increase of the number of male and female missionaries in the region; 3) their exploitation of poor and needy Muslims by taking pictures for them as new converts in order to propagate their 'forged' success; and 4) their distribution of Gospels for free among Muslims.<sup>121</sup>

The traveler also noted that young Arab natives ridiculed their religious work, and developed many critical points to the Bible. Many times he prevented them from burning the distributed Gospel copies or throwing them in the sea. Common Muslims also used to sell their covers and use the paper leaves for making carton boxes for their daily use. He concluded that they handed out thousands of copies for free, which overloaded their societies with financial loss

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<sup>118</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 55. The center of the Arabian Mission was first situated in Bahrain and started work in Basra, Muscat and Kuwait. For more details, see, Alfred DeWitt Mason and Frederick J. Barny, *History of the Arabian Mission*, with a foreword by W.I. Chamberlain, New York, 1926; Wilson, "The Epic of Samuel Zwemer", *The Moslem World*, vol. XLII/III (June 1953), pp. 79-93; Id., *Flaming prophet: The Story of Samuel Zwemer*, New York: Friendship Press, 1970; Werff, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-267. Alan Neely, 'Zwemer, Samuel Marinus', in Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 763; about the Arabian Mission, see, for instance, Lewis R Scudder, *The Arabian Mission's Story: In Search of Abraham's Other Son*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998.

<sup>119</sup> Werff, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

with no real result. Their circulation, on the contrary, would revive the Muslim awareness of the 'vulnerability' of their holy scriptures to criticism.<sup>122</sup>

In his comment, Riḍā maintained that the reason behind missionary publications was primarily to 'scorn' Islam, and to cast doubts on the Muslim faith as the first step towards 'Western peaceful conquest'. He demanded Muslims to boycott their publications as a sign of defending their religion, and that all the books distributed by missionaries had to be destroyed. He encouraged them to replace these missionary writings with Muslim pamphlets and treatises in which a distinction was made between what he called the 'accurate' faith of Jesus and that 'doctrine of Paul'.<sup>123</sup>

When *al-Manār* published an anti-missionary article by al-Tannīr,<sup>124</sup> an unnamed Syrian friend of Riḍā criticised *al-Manār* for hurting the feelings of Christian compatriots by publishing severe anti-Christian statements in its anti-missionary campaign.<sup>125</sup> It was al-Tannīr's phrase *al-Thālūth al-Zinā'ī al-Muqaddas* (the holy trinity of fornication), which disappointed Riḍā's friend. Riḍā maintained that he received the first draft of Tannīr's article under this title, which he immediately amended in order not to hurt the feelings of Christian fellow citizens. The same word was also repeated throughout the whole text. Riḍā maintained that he had deleted all of them because it was *imtihān* (an offense) for *iṣtilāḥāt muḥtaramah* (respected terms). Riḍā justified that this phrase must have been forgotten by mistake during the printing process of this issue of *al-Manār*.<sup>126</sup> He also tried to validate his writings as it was his duty to stand against missionary attacks on Islam. He claimed that he never attempted to propagate his critiques of the Christian scriptures and beliefs in public. On the contrary, he was always preaching the significance of harmony among followers of religions in the one society.<sup>127</sup> Another critical point was that it was not Christian fellow citizens who attacked Islam, but American and British missionaries. Riḍā confirmed that missionary activity was 'more harmful in the Muslim world than brothels and gambling clubs'. Owners of such places would probably entice the Muslim to commit sins, but missionaries were trying to make him put down their religion entirely and to stir up animosity between Islam and Christianity.<sup>128</sup>

Elsewhere Riḍā firmly maintained that he would never stop defending his religion, so long as anti-Islamic writings on Islam continued. However, he did not mind that they would preach their religion by demonstrating its merits, while not attacking other beliefs.<sup>129</sup> Riḍā argued that since most foreign

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ṭāhir al-Tannīr, 'al-Radd al-Matīn 'alā Muftarāyāt al-Mubashshirīn', *al-Manār*, vol. 17/2, pp. 138-147.

<sup>125</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 17/3, p. 188.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.; cf. his article, 'Al-'Islām wā al-Naşrāniyya (Islam and Christianity)', vol. 23/4, p. 267-272.



missionaries had no good command of Arabic they hired Arab Christians for assisting them in publishing anti-Islamic literature in Arabic. He also added that ‘Muslims should not stop defending their religion against attacks on the Qur’ān and the prophet just for satisfying the feelings of Christian citizens’.<sup>130</sup>

In 1916, Riḍā published two articles as a refutation of an Arabic article written by Temple Gairdner in his periodical, *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb*. In this article published in April 1916, the legal authority of ḥadīth was broached.<sup>131</sup> This article was one of the routes through which the work of the Hungarian orientalist Ignaz Goldziher on ḥadīth became known in Egypt.<sup>132</sup> Some months after his contribution to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference (13-23 June, 1910) Gairdner decided to make a *Wanderjahr* in Europe.<sup>133</sup> The trip began in Germany in September, 1910, where he spent ‘three months [...] for the purpose of learning enough German to give [him] access to the incomparable German literature on Islamic subjects.’<sup>134</sup> In his correspondence with Duncan Black Macdonald of the Hartford Theological Seminary, Gairdner stated that ‘it would have been worth learning German only for the sake of [...] Goldziher’s [...] perfect gold-mine’.<sup>135</sup> Gairdner voiced his skepticism of the authenticity of almost all Traditions ascribed to the Prophet. He maintained that the considerations he followed would give ample ground for suspecting the stability of the foundations of Islamic tradition, and consequently of the enormous superstructure which has been erected thereupon. In his view, if the unreliability of traditions is established, the Islamic system ought logically to be discarded.<sup>136</sup>

Many Muslims were disturbed by Gairdner’s ideas, and urgently demanded Riḍā to publish his views on the issue. As usual Riḍā looked down at missionary methods of investigating Muslim sources. Missionaries, unlike philosophers, dealt with such questions not to reach the truth as such; but to cast doubts on other beliefs.<sup>137</sup> He added that if Gairdner’s only reason was to convert Muslims, let him rest assured that most of the Muslims who abandoned

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> *Al-Sharq wā al-Gharb* firstly appeared in January 1905. About this magazine, see, Padwick, *op. cit.*, p. 156ff; W.H.T. Gairdner, *D.M. Thornton: A Study in Missionary Ideals and Methods*, London, 1908, p. 207ff. For Riḍā’s reply, *al-Manār*, ‘al-Sunnah wā Sihhatuhā wa al-Sharī‘a wa Matānatuhā: Radd ‘alā Du‘āt Al-Naṣrāniyya bi Miṣr’, vol. 19 (Sha‘bān & Ramaḍān, 1334/June & July, 1916), pp. 24-50 & pp. 97-109. Gairdner’s article must have been a translation of the English article published by the same author in *The Moslem World* one year earlier. W.H.T. Gairdner, ‘Mohammedan Tradition and Gospel Record: The ḥadīth and the Injīl’, *The Moslem World*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1915), pp. 349-378 (Quoted below, ‘Traditions’).

<sup>132</sup> G.H.A. Juynboll, ‘The ‘*Ulamā* and Western Scholarship’, *Israel Oriental Studies*, vol. X (1980), p. 178.

<sup>133</sup> Padwick, *op. cit.*, p. 198 ff.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 204. For more details about his contact with Macdonald, see for example, J. Jermain Bodine, ‘Magic Carpet to Islam: Duncan Black Macdonald and the Arabian Nights’, *The Muslim World*, vol. LXVII/1 (January, 1977), pp. 1-11.

<sup>136</sup> Gairdner, ‘Tradition’, p. 363.

<sup>137</sup> Riḍā, ‘Sunnah’, p. 26.

Islam would never become real Christians, but rather turn into ‘atheists’ or ‘antagonists’. They mostly converted to Christianity due to their poverty and need for missionary financial support, unlike Western converts to Islam, who are in most cases the elite in Europe like the English Baron Lord Headley (to be discussed below).<sup>138</sup>

In 1921, an Arabic translation of one of Zwemer’s articles in the Anglican magazine *Church Missionary Intelligencer* appeared in *al-Manār*. In that article, he maintained that Muslims had already started to ‘welcome the Gospel’.<sup>139</sup> Zwemer argued that ‘political troubles in the Near East were not due to economic factors or any political aspiration for autonomy, but rather to religious discontent among the people’.<sup>140</sup> Due to the change of their ‘missiological’ approaches, he was rather optimistic about the accessibility of Christianity in Egyptian villages and towns for missionary work. Although Islam did not recognize the Crucifixion of Jesus, there were reports about a responsive spirit among Muslims including teachers and students of Al-Azhar University. The missionary regional conference, held in Helwan at the outskirts of Cairo in the same year, agreed that there was ‘a great and remarkable change [...] during the past few years in the attitude of Muslims’.<sup>141</sup> They also recommended ‘establish[ing] contact with Al-Azhar students; one or more homes or settlements should be located in Al-Azhar neighbourhood with several resident workers, who would show hospitality, make friendships, and encourage free intercourse’.<sup>142</sup> It is noteworthy to mention that Zwemer, later in 1926 and 1927, in fact entered Al-Azhar and distributed missionary tracts among students, an incident that provoked the Egyptian public opinion.<sup>143</sup> Riḍā saw Zwemer’s hope as a merely ‘missionary wishful thinking’. The missionary writer by such reports also intended to encourage zealous Christians in the West to raise more funds for their missionary plans.<sup>144</sup>

In 1923 a certain Muḥammad al-Rashīdī al-Ḥijāzī, a former military in Berlin, published an article on the activity of the German Orient Mission (Deutsche-Orient Mission) founded by Pastor Johannes Lepsius (1858–1926), an eyewitness to the Armenian genocide.<sup>145</sup> While collecting information about

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> As quoted by Riḍā, *al-Manār*, ‘Amānī al-Mubashshirīn aw Mukhada‘tuhum lil-Mūsirīn (Missionaries’ Wishful Thinking or their Deception of Rich [Christians]’, vol. 22/4 (Rajab 1339/March 1921), pp. 313–314; cf. *al-Manār*, vol. 28/2, p. 140–149.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>141</sup> See, *The Conferences of Christian Workers among Moslems 1924*, New York: International Missionary Council, 1921, p. 79.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>143</sup> For more, see, B. L. Carter, ‘On Spreading the Gospel to Egyptians Sitting in Darkness: The Political Problem of Missionaries in Egypt in the 1930s’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 20/4 (October 1984), pp. 21–22; Bishrī, *op. cit.*, pp. 456–458; J. Christy Wilson ‘The Epic of Samuel Zwemer’, *The Moslem World*, vol. XLII, no. 3 (June 1953), pp. 89–90.

<sup>144</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 22/4, p. 314.

<sup>145</sup> See, for example, his, *Deutschland und Armenien 1914–1918: Sammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke*, Postdam (1919). His archives are to be found at the Martin Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg.

Lepsius, Ḥijāzī came across the periodical of the mission, *Der christliche Orient* (1900), which he translated into Arabic for *al-Manār*'s readers under the title: 'Cunning Programmes of Mission among the Muḥammadans'.<sup>146</sup> He accused Lepsius of 'fanaticism' by having given a 'false testimony and fabrication' with regard to the genocide. Ḥijāzī laid emphasis on the contribution and biography of the Evangelical Armenian preacher Abraham Amirchanjanz, who was a born Muslim. Another convert named Johannes Awetaranian was also mentioned in the report of the issue.<sup>147</sup> Ḥijāzī summarized an item by Amirchanjanz in that issue on: 'Die Aufgabe der Mohammedaner-Mission'.<sup>148</sup> In his article, Amirchanjanz launched a severe attack on Islam:

'Islam is one of the most disastrous phenomena in human history. It is a mixture of truth and falsehood, and therefore more dangerous than the heathendom. This religion, taking over 200 million people, cannot be overcome easily. A carefully thought-out plan, like a military tactic, should be designed and performed well in attacking it.'<sup>149</sup>

In his conclusion, Ḥijāzī expressed his frustration in the negligence of Muslim governments to such 'conplots', which were intertwined with colonial plans. He again asked Muslim scholars to learn European languages in order to refute the views of missionaries on Islam. By doing so, they would also have the chance to be the 'delegates' of Islam in the West.<sup>150</sup> Riḍā confirmed the author's words by stating that he himself got frustrated by the failure of Muslim political and religious leaders to support him in his struggle against missions for more than thirty years.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Der christliche Orient: Monatsschrift der deutschen Orient-Mission*, Berlin, 1900. Ḥijāzī, 'Baʿthat Tanṣīr al-Maḥamaddiyyīn wā Barnāmaj Kaydiḥā lil-ʿIslām wā al-Muslimīn (Christian Missions [among] Mohammedans, and their cunning programmes for Islam and Muslims), vol. 24/10 (Rabiʿ al-ʿAwwal 1342/November 1923), p. 785-795. Among Riḍā's papers I have found a booklet of *Kunstblätter* from Berlin signed as a gift to Riḍā on 4 August 1923, a couple of months before the publication of his article in *al-Manār*. As is indicated in a letter sent to Riḍā (12 September 1923), Ḥijāzī was probably an Egyptian former military stationed in North Africa during the Great War. He tried to publish many articles in *al-Manār*, but his contributions were not suitable for the journal's interests. He also had contact with other Egyptian journals, and managed to publish a few contributions.

<sup>147</sup> See, Johannes Awetaranian, *Geschichte eines Mohammedaners der Christ wurde: Die Geschichte des Johannes Awetaranian. Von ihm selbst erzählt*. Nach seinem Tode ergänzt von Richard Schäfer, Potsdam, 1930.

<sup>148</sup> *Der christliche Orient*, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-88.

<sup>149</sup> As quoted in, Ḥijāzī, *op. cit.*, p. 788. Compare the German text: 'Der Islam ist eine der verhängnisvollsten Erscheinungen in der Menschengeschichte. Er ist ein Gemisch von Wahrheit und Lüge, und darum gefährlicher als das Heidentum. Diese 200-millionenköpfige Religion kann nicht so leicht überwunden werden. Ein wohlbedachtes [...] des Angriffs mit genauester militärischer Taktik muss entworfen und gut ausgeführt werden'. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>150</sup> Ḥijāzī, *ibid.*, p. 789.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3.6. A Muslim Missionary Seminary

As reaction to missionary work, Riḍā formed his short-lived project Jamʿiyyat (or Dār) al-Daʿwa wā al-ʾIrshād, which has been mentioned in many places above. It was founded in Cairo in 1912 as a well-structured private Muslim seminary. The idea of such a society first occurred to him when he was a student in Syria, where he used to frequent and read the literature provided by the American missionaries in that city, and he wished that Muslims would have had similar societies and schools.<sup>152</sup>

Conversion of Muslims in Cyprus, for example, greatly saddened him as well. He attributed that to their ill-information of their religion due to the lack of Muslim propaganda. Christian missions were more successful in propagating their faith into the native languages, and in a way suiting the mentality of the indigenous inhabitants. As was his habit, Riḍā strongly held Muslims obliged to raise funds to start missionary centres in order to train young propagators of Islam.<sup>153</sup>

During his visit to Turkey in 1909, Riḍā managed to raise funds for his seminary from the Supreme Porte. The Egyptian Ministry of Religious Endowments also accepted to participate in funding the school by a contribution of four thousand Egyptian pounds a year.<sup>154</sup> The project was also dependent on gifts and donations from rich Muslims. During his visit in Egypt in 1911, Sheikh Qāsim Ibn ʾĀl ʾIbrāhīm, a wealthy Arab merchant in Bombay and a senior honorary member of the board of the al-Daʿwa school, made a contribution of two thousand pounds, and a yearly donation of a hundred pounds. In March 1911, Prince Muḥammad ʿAlī Pashā, the brother of the Egyptian Khedive, was selected as the honorary president of the al-Daʿwa school.<sup>155</sup> ʿAbbās Ḥilmī, the Khedive of Egypt, also supported Riḍā's missionary plan by paying an official visit to the school, and meeting with the staff and students in May 1914.<sup>156</sup>

The society took the shape of a boarding school, which was primarily an endeavour to train two groups of people: the *murshids* (guides), who would function within the Muslim community by combating religious deviation, and the *duʿāh* (propagators) who would convey the Islamic mission to non-Muslims and defend Islam against missionary attacks. Riḍā included in his educational program subjects such as international law, psychology, sociology, biology, introductory mathematics, geography and economics. He also introduced the study of the Bible and the history of the Church. In the curriculum he

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<sup>152</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/1, p. 42; cf. C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, London: Oxford University Press, 1933, p. 196.

<sup>153</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Tanṣīr al-Muslimīn fī Qubruṣ (Christianization of Muslims in Cyprus)', vol. 9/3, pp. 233-34.

<sup>154</sup> Draft of letter from Riḍā to the Prime Minister Hussein Rushī, 13 January 1918, Riḍā's private archive in Cairo.

<sup>155</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/3, pp. 191-196; archival document relevant to the organization of the school; about other contributors, see, *al-Manār*, vol. 14/6, p. 480.

<sup>156</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 17/6, p.461-468.

proposed for the category of *murshids* to choose a well-circulated missionary treatise on Islam for study in order to enable them in defending Islam against the missionary allegations, especially in the minds of common Muslims. These allegations should be also collected, well studied, and debated among the future *murshids*.<sup>157</sup> We have already mentioned that Ṣidqī was appointed as a teacher at the society, where he taught the students scientific and medical subjects as well as his views on Christianity already crystallized in his polemics in *al-Manār*.

It was also intended to recruit qualified Muslim students from all over the world, especially from poor regions such as China or Indonesia. The school provided students with accommodation, books and the costs of living. Students were supposed to live strictly according to Islamic values. Those who would 'commit sins' should be sent away.<sup>158</sup> Although the school had to close down after the First World War, it had counted amongst its graduates well-known leaders, such as Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, the prominent grand mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Yūsūf Yāsīn, the prominent Saudi official and private secretary of the Saudi royal family, and other leaders of thought in India, Malaysia and Egypt.<sup>159</sup>

In order to update the students with the developments of missionary work, one of Riḍā's friends in the Sudan sent *al-Manār* a detailed report. In his account, he confirmed that schooling was the most significant way of disseminating Christian religious ideas. Missionary schools provided families of their students with needed materials, such as corn, clothes, jewellery, and medication. Social work was also one of their priorities. For example, students were trained a variety of professions, such as manufacturing, commerce and agriculture. They also established beehives in the European style in order to benefit the local population.<sup>160</sup>

Riḍā's missionary effort was hotly contested. Members of the Egyptian Nationalist Party opposed his establishing of the Da'wa School. They considered it as a 'futile and far-fetched' missionary project with no prospect, since English or Dutch colonial authorities in such lands as Indonesia and the Sudan would never give the graduates of his school the opportunity to propagate Islam there. However, Riḍā was confident that his missionary graduates would be given a good chance in these colonies. If not, they would have been capable of propagating Islam in other countries, such as China and Japan.<sup>161</sup>

Sheikh 'Abd al-'Azīz Jāwīsh (1876-1929), the editor-in-chief of the National Party mouthpiece, accused Riḍā's school of being an underground organization working on demolishing the Ottoman State and separate the Arabs from the Turks by appointing an Arab Caliph. Riḍā vigorously denied

<sup>157</sup> Vol. 14/11, pp. 811-812.

<sup>158</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/1, p. 52.

<sup>159</sup> Zaki Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 116-117.

<sup>160</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Mudhakkira 'an 'A'māl al-Mubashshirīn fī al-Sudān (A report on missionary work in Sudan), vol. 14/4 (Rabi' al-Akhar 1329/April 1911), pp. 311-313.

<sup>161</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Madrasat al-Tabshir al-Islāmī (Islamic Missionary School)', vol. 14/2, pp. 121-134. In his response to Jāwīsh's attack on his project, Riḍā cited many articles which praised his efforts from various newspapers in Turkey, Beirut, India and Egypt.

such charges.<sup>162</sup> Riḍā sent the protocol of his society to the editors of Gairdner's *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb*, which he considered then as 'the most decent among missionary papers'.<sup>163</sup> Riḍā considered their feedback more reasonable than that of these Muslim nationalists, such as Jāwīsh. In their comment, the missionary periodical was positive about the school because of its non-interference in politics.<sup>164</sup>

Riḍā, however, had no more funds from Turkey, and his project was consequently suspended. The reason was possibly Riḍā's sympathy and activism for Syrian Arab nationalism.<sup>165</sup> According to Riḍā, 'plots' of British authorities and *Bahā'ī* groups in Egypt were behind closing down his seminary.<sup>166</sup> He attempted to revive his project by appealing to the Egyptian Ministry of Religious Endowments to resume its funding to the school, but failed.<sup>167</sup> In 1931, Riḍā himself was requested by Al-Azhar to give advice about the establishment of its new department of al-Wa'z wā al-'Irshād (Preaching and Guidance). In the same year, he made a similar attempt during the General Islamic Congress in Jerusalem, when he was nominated as a chairman of its (sub)Committee of Guidance and Preaching. In that congress, a report on missionary work in the Muslim world was read before the attendants.<sup>168</sup> Through this committee he tried to revive his seminary project by presenting his suggestions to constitute a society under the same name in Jerusalem.<sup>169</sup> The society could have its own college committed to train Muslim preachers. He also suggested that the congress should take speedy measures against Christian missionary activities by promoting Islamic education, encouraging the publication of works in different languages countering missionary doctrines, and circulating them for free in all Muslim countries, such as the works of the late Ṣidqī on Christianity. The Congress should also entrust a group of qualified scholars to write treatises refuting 'atheism', and promoting Muslim brotherhood. These works would also contain responses to missionary 'allegations' on Islam.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/3, pp. 239-240.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>165</sup> Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 125-126.

<sup>166</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 24/7 (Dhū al-Qi'ḍah 1341/July 1923), p. 559.

<sup>167</sup> Draft letter to Rushdī, *op. cit.*

<sup>168</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 32/3, 200-202; for more about the congress, see, H. R. A. Gibb, 'The Islamic Congress at Jerusalem in December 1931', in Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of international affairs 1934*, London, 1935, pp. 99-109; Uri M. Kupferschmidt, 'The General Muslim Congress of 1931 in Jerusalem', *Asian and African Studies*, vol. 21/1 (March 1978), pp. 123-162; Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled, the Advent of the Muslim Congresses*, New York: Colombia University Press, 1986, pp. 1931-1931; Weldon C. Matthews, Pan-Islam or Arab Nationalism? The meaning of the 1931 Jerusalem Islamic Congress reconsidered', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 35 (2003), pp. 1-22.

<sup>169</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 32/4 (Dhū al-Hijja 1350/April 1932), p. 284.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., pp. 203-209. When Riḍā read his proposals before the congress (Sha'bān 1350/December 1931), Sheikh Sa'id Darwish, an anti-Wahhābī participant from Aleppo, openly opposed Riḍā's proposals, describing him as 'tyrannical' president who did not give others their

### 3.7. Conversion to Islam versus Evangelization

Riḍā's ambitions of establishing Islamic missionary institutions were also expressed in his support for the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. After its victory in the war against Russia (1904), Japan, for instance, was held in the Muslim world as an example to be followed and was seen by many Muslims as a prospective good place for Islamic propagation.<sup>171</sup> Even before its victory, the Egyptian nationalist Muṣṭafā Kāmil wrote a monograph in which he catalogued the history of Japan and predicted the defeat of Russia. His treatise was proved to be popular, and attracted so much attention that it was translated into Malay by a group of Muslim reformers in Singapore who had strong educational connections with Cairo. Due to its political success, Tokyo was also seen be 'the *qiblah* of Muslims in the Far East just as the Sublime Porte was to the Muslims in the Near East.'<sup>172</sup>

In face of the Christian expansion in the Orient, Riḍā also hailed the need for dispatching Muslim missions to Japan as well.<sup>173</sup> He criticised Muslims for rushing to advocate the idea without taking into consideration the lack of financial resources and qualified candidates to carry out such a mission as well. Politics, in his view, were the reason behind the hope of Muslims for converting Japan to Islam. He believed that the Japanese people were ready to accept only a religion compatible with science and civilization. The lack of capable Muslim scholars would be an obstacle in the face of propagating Islam in a developed country like Japan. A group of rich Muslims approached Riḍā to sponsor a missionary association for taking up this task. But the committee was

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chance to utter their views. Other participants tried to calm the intense situation down by delivering speeches on the significance of Muslim unity and brotherhood. Cf. Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine*, Brill, 1987, p. 213.

<sup>171</sup> The idea of preaching Islam in Japan started as early as 1889, when the Turkish naval frigate Ertugrul sailed for Japan on the orders of Sultan Abdülhamid II, see, *al-Manār*, 'Da'wat al-Yāpān 'ilā al-'Islām (Inviting Japan to Islam)', vol. 8/18 (Ramaḍān 1323/13 November 1905, pp. 705). The Egyptian 'Alī Aḥmad al-Jirjāwī, the founder of *al-'Irshād* paper, was one of the early Muslims, who resolved to travel to Japan propagate Islam during the Second World Congress of Religions in Tokyo (1907). See his travelogue to Japan (1908), *al-Rihla al-Yābāniyya* (The Japanese Journey); Michael F. Laffan, 'Making Meiji Muslims: The Travelogue of 'Alī Aḥmad al-Jarjāwī', *East Asian History* 22 (December, 2001), pp. 145-170.

For more details, see, Muṣṭafā Kāmil, *al-Shams al-Mushriqa*, Cairo: al-Liwa, 1904; Michael Laffan, 'Waṭan and negeri: Muṣṭafā Kāmil's 'Rising Sun' in the Malay World', *Indonesia Circle* 69 (1996), pp. 156-75; idem 'Muṣṭafā and the Mikado: a Francophile Egyptian's turn to Meiji Japan', *Japanese Studies* 19:3 (1999), pp. 269-86. About Islam and Japan, see, Yuzo Itagaki, 'Reception of different cultures: the Islamic civilization and Japan', *The Islamic World and Japan: in pursuit of mutual understanding*. International Symposium on Islamic Civilization and Japan, Tokyo: The Japan Foundation, series 6, 1981, pp. 139-149; Bushra Anis, 'The Emergence of Islam and the Status of Muslim Minority in Japan', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 18/2 (October 1998), pp. 329-346.

<sup>172</sup> Laffan, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>173</sup> See his articles in *al-Manār*, 'Da'wat al-Yapān 'ilā al-'Islām', vol. 8/18, pp. 705-712; vol. 9/1 (Muḥarram 1324/February 1906), pp. 75-78.

very short-lived and unsuccessfully stopped all its work for no specific reason.<sup>174</sup> When the Japan Congress of Religions was announced (1907), Riḍā suggested to the Supreme Porte to delegate Muslim representatives, who had a vast knowledge of Islamic history and philosophy and a good knowledge of other world religions, such as Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity.<sup>175</sup>

Riḍā repeatedly used the conversion of European Christians to Islam as an argument for the expansion of Islam, despite the fact that Muslims, unlike Christians, had no organized missionary enterprise. In December 1913, he published at length the story of the conversion of the well-known Muslim fifth Baron Lord Headley (1855-1935), which drew the attention of the British public to Islam as a faith.<sup>176</sup> Riḍā hailed the conversion of Headley, even though he knew that he was a convert to Islam through the Lahore *Aḥmadiyya* sect.<sup>177</sup> *Al-Manār* quoted his interviews to British weeklies after he embraced Islam in November 1913.<sup>178</sup> Headley later developed some of his ideas of these interviews in his book, *A Western Awakening to Islam*.<sup>179</sup> In this book, he criticised 'zealous Protestants who have thought it their duty to visit Roman Catholic homes in order to make 'converts' of the inmates. Such irritating and unneighbourly conduct is of course, very obnoxious, and has invariably led to much ill-feeling – stirring up strife and tending to bring religion into contempt. I am sorry to think that Christian missionaries have also tried these methods with their Muslim brethren, though why they should try to convert those who are already better Christians than they are themselves [...] Charity, tolerance and broadmindedness in the Muslim faith comes nearer to what Christ himself

<sup>174</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Mu'tamar al-Adyān fi al-Yabān (Congress of Religions in Japan), vol. 9/4 (Rabi' al-Akhar 1324/24 May 1906), pp. 317-19.

<sup>175</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Al-Dawlah wā Mu'tamar al-'Adyān fi al-Yabān' (The State and the Congress of Religions in Japan), *Manar*, vol. 9/6 (Jumadā al-Thāniya 1324/23 July 1906), p. 480. A photo in Riḍā's archive of showing the gathering of the Islamic Society with Japanese notables in the Council of the Qur'ān and Dissimination of the Religion Islam in Tokyo (dates to July 1934) would indicate his aspiration in the spread of Islam in Japan, even shortly before his death (see, appendix M).

<sup>176</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Islām al-Lord Headley wā mā qālahū wā katabahū fi Sababī (The conversion of Lord Headley: What he said and wrote about its reason)', vol. 17/1 (Muharram 1332/December 1913), p. 34-40. See, Ali Köse, *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts*. London and New York, 1996, p. 14-18; cf. L. Tibawi, 'History of the London Central Mosque and the Islamic Cultural Centre 1910-1980', *Welt des Islams*, vol. 1/4 (1981), pp. 193-208; James Thayer Addison, 'The Aḥmadiyya Movement and Its Western Propaganda', *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 22/1 (Jan., 1929), pp. 1-32.

<sup>177</sup> About some of Riḍā's reactions to the Aḥmadiyya and the translation of Maulana Muḥammad Ali of the Qur'ān, see, Nur Ichwan, M., 'Response of the Reformist Muslims to Muḥammad Ali's Translation and Commentary of the Qur'an in Egypt and Indonesia: A study of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's Fatwa', Unpublished paper submitted to the Seminar 'Islam and the West: Their Mutual Relation as Reflected in Fatwa Literature', Leiden, 1998.

<sup>178</sup> Riḍā quoted *The Daily Mail* (17 November 1913) and the weekly *The Observer* (23 November 1913).

<sup>179</sup> Lord Headley, *A Western Awakening to Islam*, London: J.S. Philips, 1915. A softcopy of the work is available at: [www.aaail.org](http://www.aaail.org), which Riḍā reviewed in 1925 in his journal as a challenge to atheists and missionaries, vol. 26/1 (Ramadān 1343/April 1925), pp. 60-64.



taught.<sup>180</sup> Riḍā proudly confirmed Headley's statements and added that political and sectarian conflicts and superstitions among Muslims on the one hand, and the ill-information presented in the West on Islam on the other represent a big obstacle for Europeans to embrace Islam.<sup>181</sup>

Followed by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, the founder of the Woking Muslim Mission in London,<sup>182</sup> Headley went on Ḥajj in 1923. On their way, reception committees were formed in Port Said, Alexandria and Cairo, and Headley became the object of marked attention of the press in the country. Riḍā himself was not able to meet Headley personally during his stop in Egypt, but he again quoted his conversion story in an interview with the Egyptian newspaper *al-Siyāsa* (Politics).<sup>183</sup> In his comment, Riḍā again expressed his wish that 'if a group of knowledgeable Muslim missionaries would arise in England and the United States in order to 'uncover the swindle of politicians and [...] missionaries, who have caused enmity and animosity between Islam and Europe, the people of the two countries would in droves embrace Islam.'<sup>184</sup>

### 3.8. Al-Azhar Criticised

Riḍā always took pride in his journal as one of the few Muslim journals of his time that concerned themselves with defending Islam against missionary work.<sup>185</sup> His statements always carried the tone of criticism to religious official bodies, such as Al-Azhar, for their leniency. In 1913, he made an observation on the intensification of missionary work even among the students of Al-Azhar University.<sup>186</sup> He also criticised those students for their feeble knowledge of Islam, confirming that the curricula they were learning during their long schooling were not helpful enough to assist them to defend Islam. He expressed his worries that without establishing solid knowledge of Islam through renewing the teachings of Al-Azhar, some of those students would probably convert to Christianity and abandon their religion. Missionaries would therefore use that as a pretext to prove that the greatest religious institution had failed to refute the 'allegations' of Christianity. In order to enable them to achieve this task, Riḍā suggested two things: 1) the whole curriculum of *ʿIlm al-Kalām* (Sciences of Islamic Theology) should be changed, and 2) to appoint a leader to each group of students who would investigate their conditions. The university board should prohibit them from attending missionary meetings, and

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>181</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 17/1, pp. 39-40.

<sup>182</sup> About Riḍā's views of Kamal-ud-Dīn, see, *al-Manār*, vol. 33/2 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1351/April 1933), pp. 138-141.

<sup>183</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 24/7, p. 555-559.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 559. In 1928, Riḍā published Headley's critique of missionary writings on the Prophet of Islam, see, vol. 29/5 (Rabi' al-ʿAwwal 1347/September 1928), p. 344-351.

<sup>185</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'A'dā' al-ʿIslām al-Muhāribūn lahū fī Hādhā al-A'hd (The Combating Enemies of Islam in this Age)', vol. 29/2, pp. 115-117

<sup>186</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Al-Azhar wā Du'āt al-Naṣrāniyya (Al-Azhar and Missionaries)', vol. 16/11 (Dhū al-Qi'dah 1331/October 1913), p. 878.

any student who would get in touch with them without permission should be dismissed. An exception could be made for brilliant students, who would visit their meetings with the purpose of informing their colleagues about their activities.<sup>187</sup>

After the appearance of the first issue of the mouthpiece of Al-Azhar, *Majallat Nūr al-ʿIslām* (The Light of Islam, 1930), Riḍā commended it in his journal, wishing that the magazine would take the place of his *Manār* in propagating the Islamic values and fighting against the increase of missionary attempts among Muslims.<sup>188</sup> But Riḍā soon expressed his disappointment with the lax position taken by Al-Azhar and the Corps of its High ʿUlamā in that regard. His critique coincided with the anti-missionary press campaign against the observable increase of missionary work in Egypt culminated during the period 1931-1933 with the coming of the unpopular and undemocratic regime of Ṣiḍqī Pasha. The Egyptian government and official religious leaders (represented by Al-Azhar scholars) were heavily criticised for their weak reactions against missionary activities in the country.<sup>189</sup>

In his criticism, Riḍā claimed that although the Egyptian press was immensely preoccupied by the news of missionary events in the country, the Al-Azhar scholars, who were supposed to be the religious leaders of the community, had not taken a proper stance against missionary attacks on Islam. He strongly accused the institution and its then rector, the conservative Sheikh al-Aḥmadī al-Zawāhirī (1878-1944), of 'making a poor defense against unbelief and the attacks of the Christian West.'<sup>190</sup> Al-Zawāhirī had a conflict at that time with the reform-minded Azharī scholar Sheikh Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (1881-1945),<sup>191</sup> who was a good friend of Riḍā and a disciple of Muḥammad ʿAbduh as well. The newspaper *al-Siyāsa*, the voice of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party, depicted Al-Azhar scholars of immersing themselves in ritual matters, and turning their back against the Christian proselytization of Muslims.<sup>192</sup>

In 1931 the above-mentioned Sheikh Yūsuf al-Dijwī (see chapter 1),<sup>193</sup> became Riḍā's greatest opponent in his polemic with Al-Azhar. The debate

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 878.

<sup>188</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 31/2 (Rabīʿ al-ʿAwwal 1349/24 August 1930), p. 155, cf. Riḍā's *Azhar*, p. 15; Abdullāh al-Najdī al-Qusaimī, *Shuyūkh Al-Azhar wā al-Ziyādah fī al-ʿIslām*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1351 AH, pp. 12-13.

<sup>189</sup> Carter, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>190</sup> Crecelius, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

<sup>191</sup> More about his life, see, Anwar al-Jundī, *al-Imām al-Marāghī* (Cairo, 1952). Muḥammad ʿIzzat al-Tahtāwī, 'Muḥammad Mustafā al-Marāghī,' *Al-Azhar Magazine* (1414/1993), pp. 715-722; Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of Dār al-Iftā*, Leiden, New York, Cologne: Brill, 1997, pp. 152-53 (Quoted below, *Defining*). When al-Marāghī took the office for the second time in 1935, the name of the mouthpiece of Al-Azhar Sheikhdome was changed into *Majallat Al-Azhar*, which is still being published in Cairo under the same title.

<sup>192</sup> See, Charles D. Smith, *Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt: A Biography of Muḥammad Husayn Haykal*, New York: Sunny Press, 1984, pp. 112-113.

<sup>193</sup> About al-Dijwī, see, *Ziriklī, op. cit.*, vol. 8, pp. 216-217. Sheikh al-Dijwī is the author of *Rasāʾil Al-Salām wā Rusul Al-ʿIslām* (Epistles of Peace and Apostle of Islam), Cairo: Al-Nahdah Press,

between both Riḍā and Dijwī around many religious issues became very intense and serious, and later developed into hostility and serious friction between the two men. They exchanged insults, and Dijwī accused Riḍā of unbelief.<sup>194</sup> Al-Dijwī now recalled Riḍā's *fatwā* for the students of the American College in Beirut (mentioned above), which he interpreted as allegedly allowing Muslim students to attend Christian prayers.<sup>195</sup> According to him, Riḍā forgot that his permission 'would implant Christian rituals in the pure hearts [of Muslim students], and engrave what they would hear from missionaries and priests in their naïve minds'.<sup>196</sup>

By 1933 the anti-missionary press campaign reached its climax. Missionaries were charged of using methods, such as hypnotism, torture, bribery and jobs, enticing children by sweets, kidnapping, adoption of babies, abusing the prophet Muḥammad, burning the Qur'ān and using it as toilet paper.<sup>197</sup> As a result of the pressing need of the public opinion, Al-Azhar High Corps of 'Ulamā convened two consequent meetings (26 June, and 17 July, 1933) to discuss the matter.<sup>198</sup> In one of their manifestos Al-Azhar 'Ulamā requested the government to prescribe strict laws in order to root missionaries out of Egypt. Riḍā believed that this demand was 'peculiar and unreasonable'. The government would never accept it. He also wondered how could the committee 'entrust the Sheikh of Al-Azhar to carry out the suggestion, while he was following the government in its shade'.<sup>199</sup>

Riḍā, on the other hand, joined *Jam'īyyat al-Difā' 'an al-'Islām* (the Committee of the Defense of Islam), held in *Jam'īyyat al-Shubbān al-Muslimūn* (Young Men's Muslim Association) in Cairo and attended by more than 400 scholars. The Committee was headed by al-Zawāhirī's opponent al-Marāghī. It gained a wider popularity than Al-Azhar, and included many influential figures, such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haikal, the editor of *al-Siyāsa* and Hasan al-Bannā. In one of its reports, the British Residency noted that al-Zawāhirī and many other scholars felt that their role as the 'public defenders' of Islam was being undermined by al-Marāghī. The British Residency also intimidated the King by

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n. d.; the English text of the book is also included the supplement of *Nour El-Islam Review* (*Al-Azhar Magazine*), vols. 2-3, 1350-51/1932-33. It contains arguments of defense of Islam, and was originally written as guidelines of the Islamic faith for American converts to Islam.

<sup>194</sup> Creelius, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-15.

<sup>195</sup> Dijwī also gave a number of *fatwās* attacking the *Wahhābī* kingdom in Saudi Arabia. Skovgaard-Petersen, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-53.

<sup>196</sup> Dijwī, 'Sāhib', p. 337. Some other Azharīs had earlier pleaded that a committee from Al-Azhar should be established to study Riḍā's views and give the government its advice to close down *al-Manār*. See, *al-Manār*, vol. 20/1, pp. 6-7.

<sup>197</sup> 'Current Events: 'The anti-missionary Campaign in Egypt', *The Muslim World* 24 (1934), 84-86; 'Contro l'attività dei Missionari protestanti in Egitto,' *Oriente Moderno* 13,7 (1933), 373-375.

<sup>198</sup> See, Umar Ryad, 'Muslim Response to Missionary Activities in Egypt: With a Special Reference to the Al-Azhar High Corps of 'Ulamā (1925-1935)', in Heleen Murre-van Den Berg (ed.), *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Brill, 2006, pp. 281-307 (Quoted below, "Ulamā").

<sup>199</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Muqāwamat al-Mubashshirīn wā Takhādhul al-Muslimīn (Resisting missionaries and the laxity of Muslims)', vol. 33/4 (Rabī' al-'Awwal 1352/June 1933), p. 312.

stating that the British had the right to protect foreigners in Egypt and could well be pressed by other foreign governments to take action. As a result, the government forbade anti-missionary gatherings including the meetings of the Committee for the Defense of Islam. The High Corps of 'Ulamā was the only organization which could safely continue the work of collecting donations.<sup>200</sup>

At the proposition of the meetings, the members passed some recommendations to be carried out by Marāghī's committee: 1) to submit a petition to King Fu'ād about missionary activities, stressing the importance of diminishing the missionary attacks against Islam and the Muslim community; 2) to send another similar petition to the Egyptian government, asking them to take strict decisions towards the 'illegal' missionary work; 3) to send messages to the ministers plenipotentiary, to attract their attention to the danger and consequences of missionary activities and asking them to use their influence to stop the missionary arguments against Islam and Muslims; 4) to publish a public announcement to the whole Muslim community, warning the people against the enrollment of their children in missionary schools, as well as against entering their hospitals and orphanages; 5) to appeal for public subscription in order to establish Muslim institutions instead of that of missionary institutions; 6) to establish a committee, consisting of Muslim scholars and writers for the Islamic propaganda and publications; 7) to write messages to the Christian Patriarchs, stating that the resistance is only directed against missionary attacks on Islam, and that the Committee is keen on maintaining a good relationship between Muslims and other religious groups living in the same country on the basis of the national mutual understanding.<sup>201</sup> Riḍā believed that the resolutions of the Committee came as a 'thunderbolt on the heads of the [Western] governments which protected these missionary organizations.'<sup>202</sup>

### 3.9. Conclusion

We have studied *al-Manār's* anti-missionary responses on different levels. *Al-Manār* placed particular emphasis upon the necessity of counteracting their activities through establishing similar schools that could provide instruction in the doctrines of Islam. Its anti-Christian polemics were also 'an apologetic directed towards Muslim doubters.'<sup>203</sup>

Riḍā remained firm in his conviction of the espousal between Christian mission and colonialism. In the beginning, however, he was ready to criticise any 'overzealous and fanatic' reactions against missionaries, while considering his own writings as purely defensive. The political and religious changes of the Muslim world had major impact on the change of this calm tone. He became frustrated by the protection given to missionaries under the Capitulatory System. He regularly contrasted their freedom with the restrictions imposed

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<sup>200</sup> Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>201</sup> Ryad, "Ulamā", pp. 305-306.

<sup>202</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 33/4, p. 313.

<sup>203</sup> H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, Chicago, 1947, p. 53.

upon him not to write against them. He was also convinced that there was a missionary attempt of intervention in order to close down his journal by approaching Lord Kitchener. He felt that this 'collaboration' endangered his career and diminished his role as a Muslim scholar in defending Islam.

The diversity of missionary movements and their different religious and political backgrounds sometimes caused Riḍā's response to be undecided. However, he clearly differentiated between what he called 'paid preachers' and the 'wise and virtuous Christians'. The first category always depended on their salaries from missionary societies, seeking discord, attacking Islam and many times falsifying the facts about the number of converts among Muslims in order to gain more funds from their mother institutions in the West. The second group were those who had real zealotry for their faith, and were working for the good of all, such as the Danish missionary Alfred Nielsen (discussed below).

Regarding the influence of missionary schools, his views were not decisive either. He neither fully allowed Muslims to enter such schools, nor wanted them to abandon them entirely. In fact, he was inclined to recommend Muslims by way of selective borrowing from the West to make use of the scientific advances of such schools, while keeping the strength of Islamic traditions. Apparently, he was anxious of the ramifications of their establishment in the Muslim society, and feared that they would produce an antagonistic generation among Muslims. When Riḍā tried to make a balance by permitting enthusiastic Muslims to enroll their children in such schools for a better future, while firmly observing their articles of faith, some of Al-Azhar scholars led by al-Dijwī exploited his views in enflaming their polemics against him.

## Chapter Four

### False Allegations or Proofs? Riḍā's Formative Polemics on Christianity

In his annotated translation of Riḍā's above-mentioned monograph, *Shubuhāt*, Simon Wood argued that Riḍā's specific wording of the title of his earliest work on Christianity as *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā wā Ḥujaj al-'Islām* (Allegations of Christians and Proofs of Islam) was carefully chosen. It was no accident, Wood says, that the book was not entitled *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā wā Ḥujaj al-Muslimīn* (The Criticisms of the Christians and the arguments of Muslims) or *Shubuhāt al-Naṣrāniyya wā Ḥujaj al-'Islām* (the Obscurities of Christianity and the Clear Proof of Islam). Wood does not give any reason why he has given three different English translations for the two keywords, *Shubuhāt* and *Ḥujaj*, in Riḍā's title. He further argued that Riḍā's 'title reflected his understanding of an ideal or ultimate Christianity that was not opposed to Islam. Ideal Christianity, however, was not that represented by European missionaries or their local allies. In that sense, Riḍā felt that the majority of his contemporary Muslims had become an argument against their own religion.'<sup>1</sup>

Wood's argument is true when looking at how Riḍā understood the Christian Scriptures as a whole as well as their relation to Islam. But his analysis of Riḍā's wording of the title is far-fetched and not convincing. Wood only depended on Riḍā's monograph bearing this title, but nowhere mentioned that it was a collection of sixteen articles that had appeared earlier as a special section in a number of issues that Riḍā had compiled a few years later in a small volume. As a matter of fact, and in contradiction to Wood's argument, Riḍā headed eleven of these articles in *al-Manār* with the phrase, *Shubuhāt al-Masīhiyyīn* (sometimes *al-Naṣārā*) *wā Ḥujaj al-Muslimīn* (The Allegations of the Christians and the Proofs of Muslims).<sup>2</sup> As it was his initial work on the subject, Riḍā's *Shubuhāt* only represents, as I shall show in the coming chapters, a formative phase of its author's views on the Christian belief. Drawing a final conclusion on the basis of Riḍā's whole understanding of Christianity and his polemics with his Christian counterparts as a result of studying only this book would be misleading. The work itself should be evaluated in the light of Riḍā's subsequent writings in the historical context mentioned above. Besides, Riḍā published these articles from time to time as response to a variety of Christian Arab missionaries roughly between 1901-1904, a period when Western missionary literature in Arabic was not very widespread among Muslims. As we shall see, this treatise was a rather unsystematic book, sometimes of an inconsistent and rhetorical style.

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<sup>1</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> See, vol. 4/15, vol. 4/16, vol. 4/17, vol. 4/19, vol. 5/19, vol. 6/6, vol. 6/7, vol. 6/8, vol. 6/9, vol. 6/11, vol. 6/12.

In the present chapter, we will discuss Riḍā's responses as having been selected by him in the monograph, but we supplement them with other background ideas that appeared in the journal. Discussing the details of all articles under this section would, however, would fall outside the scope of the present chapter. Riḍā composed six of his articles in *al-Manār* (which were excluded in his monograph) under the same title as answers to the Egyptian Protestant Magazine. Some of these articles also did not directly deal with his views on Christianity, but were mostly devoted to refute Christian 'allegations' against the Qur'ān.<sup>3</sup> In a similar manner, Riḍā published four lengthy reactions to some other articles written in the above-mentioned Brazilian Arabic journal *al-Munāẓir* (see, chapter 2) by a Christian Syrian emigrant under the name of Rafūl Sa'ādeh. These articles were not included in the monograph either. They mainly contain refutations of Sa'ādeh's arguments that Islam had no success, except because of the Christian principles it bore; and that Muslims were not as wise as other conquerors of Syria (such as the Seleucids and Romans), who had never attacked the habits and feelings of the Syrians.<sup>4</sup> But the reason why Riḍā did not include these articles in the monograph is not known.

It is also worth noting that the last two articles of Riḍā's monograph were written as a reply to Farah Anṭūn's critique of Islam during his above-mentioned debate with 'Abduh (see, chapter 2). In these articles, Riḍā clearly put Anṭūn on an equal footing with missionaries. He argued that when the like of the editor of *al-Jāmi'a* saw the failure of evangelists in converting Muslims through purely religious methods, he embarked upon planting doubts in their minds through what he claimed to be scientific methods. He therefore exerted his effort to convince them: 1) that their religion, like other religions, is the enemy of reason and knowledge, 2) that their scholastic theologians denied causes; and 3) that combining of religious and civil political authority in the office of the Caliph harms Muslims, causing their social retardation'.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.1. A Muslim Doubting the Authenticity of the Qur'ān

It might be also interesting to know that in 1903 a certain 'Abdullāh Nasūhī, one of *al-Manār*'s readers from Alexandria, asked Riḍā to discontinue publishing the section of the *Shubuhāt*, which, in his view, had become a platform for the publicity of missionary allegations. According to Nasūhī, no Muslim would have ever known about their publications, had *al-Manār* not published regular sections rebutting their ideas. The reader also believed that missionary treatises and magazines were only read by the Christians

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, *al-Manār*, vol. 6/6 (Rabī' al-ʿAwwal 1321/June 1903), pp. 217-223; vol. 6/7, (Rabī' al-Thānī 1321/June 1903), pp. 252-255; vol. 6/8, pp. 294-298; vol. 6/9 (Jumāda al-ʿUlā 1321/July 1903), pp. 330-335; vol. 6/12 (Jumāda al-Thāniya 1321/September 1903), pp. 457-461.

<sup>4</sup> For more details, see *al-Manār*, vol. 7/1 (Muḥarram 1322/March 1904), p. 17-27; vol. 7/2 (Ṣafar 1322/April 1904), pp. 94-100; vol. 7/6, pp. 225-231.

<sup>5</sup> As translated by Wood, op. cit., p. 198.

themselves.<sup>6</sup> Riḍā replied that the editors of these publications frequently sent their magazine to the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar and other Muslim scholars, who took no initiative to respond to their contentions. He found it incumbent upon Muslims to counter their writings, otherwise they would be held sinful.<sup>7</sup> Another Egyptian subscriber informed *al-Manār* that one of his friends converted to Christianity only as a result of reading these missionary critiques of Islam.<sup>8</sup> In 1904, Riḍā decided to cease publishing the section. The judge of Bahrain, however, encouraged him to resume his refutations, describing *al-Manār* as a ‘shooting star burning the devils, and tearing down their allegations’.<sup>9</sup>

Riḍā embarked upon writing the section of the *Shubuhāt* after he had read an article in an Islamic newspaper by a Muslim journalist, who was affected by missionary writings and became doubtful about some Islamic teachings. Riḍā made it clear that he felt obliged to become directly involved in discussing these issues, although he was always keen on a peaceful attitude in his journal towards other religions, including Christianity. He stressed that *al-Manār*’s policy was neither to inflame the animosity between different religious groups, nor to invite people to defame each other’s belief, but missionaries were constantly attacking Islam.<sup>10</sup>

Riḍā was surprised that the Muslim writer had read any of missionary works, but did not try to study any Muslim works in response to them, such as *Izhār al-Haqq* or *al-Sayf al-Ṣaqīl*.<sup>11</sup> The doubts, which had emerged in his mind, were: 1) the divergence of some Islamic texts from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, 2) the silence of these Scriptures about many points which had been later mentioned in the Qur’ān and 3) the fact that many things mentioned in the ḥadīth and the Qur’ān contradict actual reality or the truths already established by modern sciences.

Riḍā argued that silence about something is not the same as its denial. It is not reasonable that one would believe in the Divine message of Islam on the

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/11 (Jumādā al-Thānya 1321 / August 1903), pp. 425-427. The same reader had criticised *al-Manār* for giving a special tribute for Pope Leo XIII after his death; see, pp. 434-440.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 426.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 426-27.

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/23 (Dhū al-Hijja 1321/18 February 1904), p. 919.

<sup>10</sup> First article, ‘Shubuhāt al-Masīhiyyīn ‘alā al-’Islam’, *al-Manār*, vol. 4/5 (Muḥarram 1319 / May 1901), pp. 179-183.

<sup>11</sup> Umar Tamīmī al-Dārī and Muḥammad Zakī Sanad, *Kitāb al-Sayf al-Ṣaqīl fī al-Radd ‘alā Risālat al-Burhān al-Jalīl* (The Polished Sword in Response to *al-Burhān al-Jalīl*), Cairo, 1895. It was a response to *al-Burhān al-Jalīl ‘alā Siḥḥat al-Tawrāh wa al-Injīl* (The Glorious Proof on the Reliability of the Old and New Testament), which was written by Rev. F. A. Klein, and was translated and published by The Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Jerusalem in 1893. The *Burhān* generated many Muslim works. See, my paper, ‘Muslim Response to Missionary Literature in Egypt: Varieties of Muslim Apologetics during the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century’, presented at The International Congress: ‘Religious Change in Pluralistic Contexts’, LISOR, Leiden, 28-30 August 2003. The Egyptian scholar Mustafā al-Rifā‘ī al-Labbān also wrote a response to a missionary treatise dealing with the same subject under the title: *Mawqif al-’Islām min Kutub al-Yahūd wā al-Naṣārā* (The positions of Islam towards the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians), Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Salafiyya, 1353/ 1934-1935.



basis of what the authors of Jewish and Christian Scriptures (whom Riḍā named *mu'arrikhūn* 'historians') had mentioned or neglected. The Muslim writer used the frequently used missionary argument, which attempted to prove the genuineness of the Old and New Testament on the basis of the Qur'ān. In this sense, he further argued that the Qur'ān made a declaration of truth of the revelation of the Bible; but if the revelation of the Bible were proved to be false in some points, would the testimony of the Qur'ān for false Scriptures bring the authenticity of the Qur'ān itself also into suspicion?<sup>12</sup>

In his reply, Riḍā maintained that the Qur'ān has testified to the Torah as a book of laws and precepts, not as a book of history borrowed from Assyrian and Chaldean mythologies. These mythologies were proved to contradict the sciences of geology and archeology. For example, it had been proved that serpents do not eat earth in contradiction with God's command in the Torah for the serpent: 'and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life' (Genesis 3:14).<sup>13</sup> The Qur'ān therefore bore witness to the authenticity of the Torah, as a book of legislation (al-Mā'idah 5:44),<sup>14</sup> but did not give any testimony for other historical books, such as those of unknown authors and written centuries after Moses. In Riḍā's view, any historical analogy between the Qur'ān and other Biblical books, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel or Daniel was baseless, as the Qur'ān had never borne witness to them. He asked the writer not to be dazzled by the claims of the Christians that all the books mentioned in the Old Testament were parts of the original Torah.<sup>15</sup> As for the New Testament, Muslims should believe that it was the revelation upon Jesus which included religious exhortations, rulings and wisdoms. All other books of the New Testament were nothing but a part of history, and in the same way as the Torah, they had been written down many years after Jesus' death with no *asānīd* (chains of transmission). The Qur'ān had testified that the Christians did not preserve all parts of the revelation upon Jesus (Al-Mā'idah 5:14).<sup>16</sup>

Riḍā added that the Qur'ān also rebuked the Christians and the Jews for having mingled the original Bible with other historical stories. Thus, Riḍā argued, Muslims have no definitive criteria to distinguish the originally revealed parts from other parts. However, Muslims hold the books of Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Leviticus as parts of the original Torah. Riḍā also favored the Sermon of Jesus on the Mount, and other sermons according to the Gospel of Matthew (chapters 5, 6 and 7), as parts of the original Gospel.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *A-Manār*, vol. 4/5, p. 80.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181

<sup>14</sup> 'It is we who revealed the Law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by Prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to God's will, by the Rabbis and the Doctors of Law'.

<sup>15</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 95

<sup>16</sup> 'Lo! We are Christians, 'We made a covenant, but they forgot a part of that whereof they were admonished'.

<sup>17</sup> Leirvik wrongly stated that Riḍā criticised the Sermon on the Mount as naïve. Leirvik, *Images*, p. 141. The Sermon on the Mount was a common stock of Gospel materials widely known in

Nevertheless, he made it clear that any report that might contradict the Qur'ān in these books must be totally rejected, since 'God speaks truthfully, whereas historians lie'.<sup>18</sup>

By the end, Riḍā requested the writer to visit him in his office, if his written answers were not sufficient. One month later, Riḍā maintained that he decided to stop publishing on the subject, as the writer visited him in his office and was convinced by his answers.<sup>19</sup>

## 4.2. Researches of the Diligent

Very soon Riḍā started to publish his replies against Christian writings once again. As we have mentioned (see introduction), his early replies were directed to the missionary treatise written by the Egyptian Niqūlā Ya'qūb Ghabriyāl. Riḍā held Christian writers responsible for attacking Islam. He felt compelled to react, even though he was still seeking harmony among different religious groups in society.<sup>20</sup> It was Ghabriyāl's 'unfavorable judgment' of Islam that made him return to polemics. The author tried to prove the authenticity of the Bible as based on Qur'ānic passages. It was also a direct message to Muslims to 'share with the Christians their salvage and the eternal life, which they have acquired through Jesus'.<sup>21</sup>

Riḍā evaluated the method of Ghabriyāl's *Researches* as 'decent', as it did not contain any 'profanity' against Islam as compared to other missionary works. Ghabriyāl personally gave a copy of his book to Riḍā, and requested him to give feedback in *al-Manār*. Salīm Pasha al-Ḥamawī, a Syrian Greek Orthodox and a friend of Riḍā, reviewed the book in his newspaper *al-Falāḥ*, and asked Riḍā to respond to it as well. Other missionary friends of Ghabriyāl made the same request to Riḍā. In the beginning, Riḍā expressed his hesitation, stating that 'the *mujādāla* (debate or polemics) is the job of those who live by it: 'as the seller seeks a buyer, the debater seeks another debater.'<sup>22</sup> Riḍā was

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Muslim literature, see, T. Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*, Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/7 (Ṣafār 1319/June 1901), p. 280

<sup>20</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/10 (Rabī' al-Thānī 1319 /July 1901), pp. 379-380. In *al-Manār*, Riḍā titled the article as: 'Shubuhāt al-Tārikh 'ala al-Yahūdiyya wā al-Naṣrāniyya (Doubts of History about Judaism and Christianity)'. In the collection of articles he subtitled it as: 'Muwāzana bayna al-'Anbiyā' al-Thalāthah (Comparison among the Three Prophets)'.

<sup>21</sup> Ghabriyāl, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/10, p. 380. Other contemporary Muslim scholars also refuted Ghabriyāl's treatise. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Sa'īd al-Baghdādī (d. 1911), the Iraqi head of the Commercial Court in Baghdad, systematically responded to its nine chapters. Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Sa'īd Baghdādī, (Bajah Ji Zadah), *al-Fāriq bayna al-Makhlūq wā al-Khālīq*, Cairo, 1904, pp. 31-83. The book was published in Cairo three years after the appearance of Riḍā's articles in *al-Manār*. Ghabriyāl's work was, in his view, nothing but a 'camouflage', which would swindle the fair-minded Christians and convince them with the authenticity of their Scriptures. In order to discover the deception of its author, Baghdādī advised his readers, Christians or not, to purchase a copy of Ghabriyāl's work, and put it beside him while reading his refutation. On the margin of Baghdādī's work, the author included al-Qarāfi's *al-Ajwiba al-Fākhira* and Ibn al-Qayyim's *Hidāyat al-Ḥayārā*.

worried that he would not be able to respond to the issues mentioned by Ghabriyāl without exceeding his boundaries and attack Christianity. As a result the authors of such works would charge him with religious fanaticism. For him, the lucidity of Islam would need no defender.<sup>23</sup>

#### **4.2.1. Three Prophets: Historical Doubts about Judaism and Christianity**

Riḍā contended Ghabriyāl that anyone who studied the Scriptures of the three religions and the biographies of their narrators would definitely reach the conclusion that Islam was the most ‘obvious’ and ‘soundest’ one. Once he had had a conversation with a Christian historian, whom he described as ‘not fanatically disposed towards one religion over another’. They imposed upon themselves the hypothetical condition that they did not believe in any religion in order to define who the greatest man in history was. Riḍā nominated Muḥammad, while the historian’s choice went to Moses and Jesus. They agreed that the three of them were the greatest and most influential in history, but did not agree on the criteria that made them greatest in terms of status and historical influence.<sup>24</sup>

As for Moses, Riḍā maintained that he was brought up under the custody of the ‘greatest king’ of his time. In the court of the Pharaoh, Moses rose up in the ‘cradle’ of royalty and power, and therefore became imbued with love of rule and authority. He witnessed the civilized world of Egypt, the universal sciences, *Funūn al-Ṣināʿah* (arts of industry) and magic. He grew up in the shadow of the Egyptian laws. The pride of the monarchy made him valiant. He turned against the Pharaoh, as he was conscious of the weakness and humiliation of the Children of Israel as a disgraced nation under the Pharaoh. He sought the partisan support (*ʿAṣabiyya*) of his people, and attempted to establish a kingdom like the one under which he grew up. He rebelled against the Pharaoh by using this *ʿAṣabiyya*. Riḍā did not consider Moses’ miracle of the passing of the sea to have been a matter of magic or supernatural power. Some historians stated that the Children of Israel had crossed the sea at a shallow point at the end of the tide’s ebb. When the Pharaoh and his people tried to cross, they drowned due to the increase of the high flow. Riḍā did not mention any historian by name. Here he alluded to theories like those of the Hellenistic Jewish historian Artapanus who pointed to the ebb as a possible explanation.<sup>25</sup> Riḍā compared the story to what, according to him, happened to the French political leader Napoleon Bonaparte (d. 1821) and his soldiers on their way back to the Egyptian shore, when they tried to cross the Red Sea at

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 99

<sup>25</sup> Artapanus explained the crossing of the sea by Moses and the Israelites as a consequence of Moses’ familiarity with the natural phenomena of the area. See, for instance, Stanislav Segert, ‘Crossing the Waters: Moses and Hamilcar’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 53/3 (July, 1994), pp. 195-203.

the time of the tide's ebb, and the water began to rise. This made their return very difficult. Bonaparte commanded his soldiers to get hold of each other till they were overpowered by the strength of the rising water.<sup>26</sup> All other miracles attributed to Moses were, in Riḍā's view, dubious in regard to their transmission, and of doubtful understanding.<sup>27</sup>

As for Jesus, Riḍā described him as a Jewish man who was brought up under the Mosaic laws, who was judging according to the Roman code, and who had read Greek philosophy. Therefore, he was well acquainted with the three great civilizations and their sciences; and was not keen on establishing a new law or nation. Riḍā also suggested that Jesus, as an eloquent preacher, had some knowledge of Greek philosophy of life, such as asceticism, which had been clearly expressed in the renunciation of worldly pleasures and the humiliation of the body for the sake of the soul and the entering of the Kingdom of the Heavens.<sup>28</sup> Some of the zealous poor followed him, as they found in his mission consolation and comfort. Riḍā argued that these followers embarked on reporting miraculous stories, just as common Muslims were attributing miraculous acts to Muslim Sufis. In his interpretation of the clash of his arguments with the Qur'ānic reports of the miraculous acts attributed to Jesus, such as his fatherless birth, Riḍā maintained that it was a claim that could never be proven, except after establishing the rational evidence of the authenticity of Islam.<sup>29</sup>

As compared to Moses, Riḍā saw that Jesus in many aspects did not accomplish noteworthy achievements regarding science, social reform or civilization. His sermons and exhortations, however, led to the demolition of civilizations, the ruining of prosperity, and the decline of humankind from its highest degrees to the lowest depth of animal existence. The sermons of Jesus would lift up human souls in humiliation and humbleness, encouraging people to discard any flourishing or progressive development in the world. Riḍā mentioned in that regard examples, such as: 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God' (Matthew, 19:24). He added that the doctrine of crucifixion also allowed 'permissiveness', since it taught the believers that any sin was forgiven through it. Riḍā concluded that the teachings of Christianity were derived from paganism and that it 'relinquished any light [produced by reflection]'. He attempted to refute the claim that Western civilization was based on Christianity. A civilization based on materialism, love of money and authority, arrogance and the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, does not match with the

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<sup>26</sup> Riḍā did not give this rationalist interpretation in his commentary on the Qur'ānic passages related to this story. He rendered stretching the sea for Moses to be a miraculous act caused by the Divine Providence. He gave his interpretation in light of Biblical narratives. He only quoted the story as mentioned in Exodus 13 and 14, which he considered to be a proper exegesis for the Qur'ānic story. See, *Tafsīr Al-Manār*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1999, vol. 9, pp. 91-92.

<sup>27</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/10, p. 381.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 382.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 382-83.

spirit of Christian asceticism. He strongly believed that the West reached its civilization only after it had entirely abandoned the Christian teachings.<sup>30</sup>

After having mentioned all these points, Riḍā reached his conclusion of the preference of the Prophet of Islam in human history. The prophet Muḥammad was born as an orphan, and was raised up in a nation of paganism, illiteracy and ignorance; one lacking laws, civilization, national unity, knowledge or craft. The highest degree of development attained in his time was that a group of people, who, due to their dealings with other tribes, had learnt to read and write. Neither he nor any of his followers was included in this group. However, he was capable of founding a nation, religion, law, kingdom and civilization in an unprecedented short period of time.<sup>31</sup>

Riḍā's counterpart in the discussion conceded that it was true that Muḥammad was the greatest man in history, but the sad status of Muslims nowadays was not compatible with the teachings of his religion. Riḍā answered that the Islamic civilization declined when Muslims abandoned their religion. The so-called Western civilization, on the other hand, began to exist after having come into contact with Muslims in Spain. The more the West would put Christianity aside, the more it advanced. Riḍā's Christian counterpart considered this answer to be an exaggerated statement.<sup>32</sup>

At the end, Riḍā returned to the Qur'ānic narration of the miracles of prophets. For him, the Qur'ānic narrative should be given preponderance as Divine revelation above all historical probabilities. He argued that the authenticity of any religion should be proven through supernatural acts, which are reported on the authority of its lawgiver. Riḍā favored the Muslim reports as the most reliable for many reasons. First of all, knowledge and oral transmission were known since the first century of Islam. It is not historically established that Muslims were conquered by an enemy, who burnt their books or demolished their entire religion and history. They were never persecuted nor obliged to conceal their belief and in the course of secrecy invented stories. Unlike other religions, Muslims initiated the science of *Tārīkh al-Rijāl* (Biography of Men) with which they examined the authenticity of narratives by means of studying their narrators.

#### **4.2.2. Islam & Christianity: Three Goals of Religion**

In a following article, Riḍā rebuked missionaries for their insistence on inviting Muslims to deny the Divine message of one of the three prophets, notwithstanding that his mission was established on the strongest rational proofs. He proposed a comparison between Christianity and Islam in the light of three general objectives that every religion should have: 1) soundness of doctrines, and therefore leading to the perfection of the human mind, 2) cultivation of morality leading to the perfection of the soul; and 3) the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 383.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 384.

goodness of acts facilitating welfare and interests of human beings, and therefore leading to the perfection of the body. This composition would demonstrate which one of the two religions really realizes these goals, and deserves to be followed.<sup>33</sup>

With regard to the first aspect, Riḍā argued that Muslims agree that beliefs should be derived from clear-cut proofs. Any sensible person would definitely judge the doctrines of Islam as sound. He did not agree with the author of the *Researches* that 'no one would grasp the essence of the Divine entity except God Himself, as Muslims and others agree'. Riḍā made a distinction between what the reason would prove on the basis of evidence without knowing its deepest entity, and what it would declare as impossible to know. Reason however does not attain knowledge of the true nature of any of the created things, but it comprehends external appearances and attributes. The Torah, in Riḍā's perspective, ascribes to God irrational attributes. Depending on early Islamic polemics, Riḍā maintained that telling about God in the Torah that God 'repented', 'grieved', or 'plotted to destroy man' (Genesis, 6:6-7) would indicate that He was ignorant and incapable.<sup>34</sup>

As for the second objective, Riḍā maintained that the Islamic teachings were the most adequate and perfect, as they were standing upon the foundations of justice and moderation. He was not restrained to say that the Christian teachings, on other hand, were based on 'excess' and 'exaggeration'. He referred to verses such as, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you' (Mathew, 5:44); 'But those mine enemies, [...] that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me' (Luke, 19:27). These verses made him convinced that its core message was a kind of excess in love, which human nature cannot stand.

In terms of the third objective, Riḍā argued that good deeds promote the human being spiritually and bodily, and in that sense all acts of worship in Islam are connected to a value. Prayer, for example, is obligated to prevent *Faḥshā'* (lewdness) and *Munkar* (reprehensible acts). He contended that it is hard to find these meanings of worship in other Scriptures. Worship in the Torah is substantiated only for the sake of 'worldly fortunes'. For instance, feasts in the Bible were only justified as a season of gathering, harvest, and agriculture (Exodus, 23: 14-16). The same holds true for his understanding of the Islamic precepts of transactions, which 'treat Muslims and non-Muslims equally'. Riḍā attempted to compare some of these Islamic precepts with their Biblical counterparts. He quoted that the Torah stipulates that people should not 'bear false witness against thy neighbour' (Exodus, 20: 16), while the Qur'ānic concept of giving one's testimony demands believers to 'stand firmly for justice and not be biased even against oneself, parents, kin, rich or poor' (al-

<sup>33</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/11 (Jumādā al-ʿUlā 1319 / August 1901), pp. 411-417; Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>34</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/11, p. 412; Wood, *ibid.*, p. 112. See, for instance, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Hidāyat al-Ḥayārā fī Ajwibat al-Yahūd wā al-Naṣārā*, edited by ʿIsām Farīd al-Harstānī, Beirut, 1994, pp. 219-221. Many Christian interpreters take these passages as metaphorical. See, for example, Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, Oxford University Press, 1988.

Mā'idah, 4:135). Riḍā further alleged that, unlike the Bible, the Qur'ān combines both faith and good deeds. Riḍā selected many Biblical examples to prove his point. In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul, for example, made it clear that 'Now to one who works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believeth in him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness' (4:4-5).<sup>35</sup>

#### 4.2.3. Judaism & Christianity Derived from Paganism?

In this part, Riḍā harshly criticised the Judeo-Christian Scriptures as being rehashed from pagan ideas.<sup>36</sup> In his view, the only means to evade what he considered as the 'objections' of Western scholars and historians against the authenticity of the Scriptures was to adhere to the Muslim belief by admitting the 'corruption' of many parts of them. Here he quoted the famous fictional work *'Alam al-Dīn* (The Banner of Religion) by 'Alī Pasha Mubārak (1823-1893), an Egyptian former minister of education.<sup>37</sup> The four-volume book described a journey to France by an Azharite Sheikh (named 'Alam al-Dīn) and a British orientalist, who hired him for Arabic lessons. When the Sheikh traveled with his English student to France, his view of the East and West drastically changed. As it was written for educative reasons, the novel contained accounts of the discussions between both men on various fields, such as geography, physics, zoology, religion, and intellectual schools. Riḍā was impressed with such works.<sup>38</sup>

In the *Shubuhāt*, Riḍā quoted from Mubārak's work an imaginary conversation between Sheikh 'Alam al-Dīn and a French philosopher, who visited Egypt during Napoleon's campaign, on the relation between Islam and Christianity, and on the Bible.<sup>39</sup> The orientalist was the interpreter, and introduced the French philosopher as one of the well-versed scholars in the field of theology. The philosopher was said to believe that 'the Old Testament is composed, and not one of the heavenly-divine books.' Mubārak mentioned that the philosopher relied on the statements of a person to whom he referred as 'Mary Augustus' and 'Origen'. He was probably referring to the church father St. Aurelius Augustine (AD 353-430) and to Origenes Adamantius

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 417. Other examples are: Galatians 3:10-13, Mathew 5:17, Acts 15: 28-29, and Ezekiel 20: 23.

<sup>36</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/12, pp. 448-453.

<sup>37</sup> 'Alī Mubārak, *'Alam al-Dīn*, Alexandria: al-Mahrūsa Newspaper Press, 4 vols, 1299/1883. About his life and works see, Saïd Zā'iyd, *'Alī Mubarak wā 'A'maluh*, Cairo: Anglo Bookshop, 1958.

<sup>38</sup> In the same year (of authoring the *Shubuhāt*) he wrote a similar fictional dialogue under the title: *Muḥawarāt al-Musliḥ wā al-Muqallid* (Debates between the Reformer and Traditionalist). See, Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Portrait of the Intellectual as a Young Man: Rashīd Riḍā's *Muḥawarāt al-Musliḥ wā al-Muqallid* (1906)', *Islam and Muslim-Christian Relations*, vol. 12/1 (January 2001), p. 99. Cf. Darrell Dykstra, 'Pyramids, Prophets, and Progress: Ancient Egypt in the Writings of 'Alī Mubārak', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 114/1 (January-March, 1994), pp. 54-65.

<sup>39</sup> Mubārak, *op cit*, vol. 3, p. 1079.

(probably AD 185-254). Mubārak maintained that Augustine would argue that it was not possible that the first three chapters [of Genesis] would have remained in the same form.<sup>40</sup> In his work, Mubārak maintained:

Origen also believed that what is mentioned in the Torah pertaining to the creation of the world was legendary [...] the word Hebrew word *Barrāh* – *fātha* on the *b*, doubling of the *r* and *sukūn* on the *h* – would actually mean ‘arrange’ and ‘order’. It was not possible for anyone to ‘arrange’ or ‘order’ something that did not really exist. Thus the application of this word to the creation of the world required that the material substance of the world was pre-existent and eternal; and the time and place are coeternal. Insofar as the substance was living, the soul was eternal as well, since it was the cause of life. As the substance is light, heat, power, motion, gravity and balance, both life and the substance were one thing, which is contradictory to the Torah<sup>41</sup>

There is no evidence that Mubārak had a good command of the Hebrew language. He did not mention any source on which he depended in the argument. Reading the general lines of the two ancient Christian writers on the creation narrative in the Book of Genesis, we find their theories more sophisticated than the way they are introduced by Mubārak. Augustine, born of a Christian mother and a pagan father, firstly attempted to expound the creation narrative in his commentary: *De Genesi contra Manichaeos libri duo* (388).<sup>42</sup> He tried to discover the literal meaning of every statement in the text of Genesis; but when he found that impossible, he resorted to an allegorical interpretation.<sup>43</sup> The first three chapters of Genesis contained a narrative of another sort as compared to those from the fourth chapter onwards which obviously contained a historical narrative. The first chapters were unfamiliar because they were unique. But that, according to Augustine, did not justify one in concluding that the events did not happen.<sup>44</sup> Origen’s approach to cosmology was philosophical rather than theological. He believed that the Bible was divinely revealed, which was established both by the fulfilment of prophecy, and by the direct impression which the Scriptures made on him who read them.<sup>45</sup>

Returning to Riḍā’s quotation from *‘Alam al-Dīn*, the author compared some Biblical notions and events with similar ones in ancient traditions. For

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 1096.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.; compare Wood’s translation.

<sup>42</sup> He wrote his work as a refutation to the Manichees who ‘completely reject [the Old Testament] with impious scorn’. See, *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, S.J., 2 vols., New York N. Y./Ramsey, N.J.: Newman Press, 1982, p. 1. See also, William Mallard, *Language and Love: Introducing Augustine’s Religious Thought Through the Confessions Story*, University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

<sup>43</sup> *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> See, *The Writings of Origen I: De Principiis*, trans. by Rev. F. Crombie, D.D., in the series *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. by Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871-1872, p. 127.



example, the Biblical story of creation in six days resembles that of the six ages of the Hindus, as well as the six Gahambars (holy festivals) of Zarathustra. The philosopher, moreover, criticised the Old Testament as containing ‘inappropriate’ things attributed to the Prophets, such as fratricide, adultery, and theft. In the same manner, the author turned to draw analogies between Christian doctrines and ancient Pagan cultures. Examples of these were the incarnation of God into a human body and the virginal birth, which had occurred according to Indian, Chinese and Egyptian ancient cults. The ancient Egyptians, for instance, believed that Osiris was virgin-born. The Christian doctrine that Jesus died, was buried, resurrected and elevated to heaven resembled the statements of ancient Egyptians about Osiris and the Greeks about the cult figure Adonis. Also it was said that the Germanic God Odin had sacrificed himself, killing himself of his own choice by throwing himself in a terrible fire until he burnt for the salvation of his worshippers.<sup>46</sup>

Riḍā argued that because the Western people (especially scholars and philosophers) became skeptical about Christianity, some governments, such as in France, started to declare that their states had no official religion.<sup>47</sup> Those philosophers and scholars, he went on, were still convinced that religion was necessary for humankind. Riḍā believed that the ‘truth’ of Islam, as the religion of the *Fitra* (the innate disposition), was concealed away from those scholars. Therefore some of them produced a poor translation of the Qur’ān which did not enable people to understand the truth of Islam.<sup>48</sup> In Riḍā’s view, the Russian and Spanish people persisted to be the strongest advocates of Christianity. However, the Spaniards recently suppressed their clergy. The Orthodox Church of Russia excommunicated its philosopher Tolstoy for his rejection of their doctrines. Riḍā was aware of the ‘Westernized’ group of Muslims, who followed the path of these Europeans in their attitudes towards Islam. In a generalization he stated that these individuals did never study Islam properly, either before studying European thought or after.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4.2.4. Qur’ānic Proofs for the Genuineness of the Bible

As we have already mentioned, it was typical of the missionary writings to prove the authenticity of the Bible on the basis of the Qur’ānic testimony to it as a divinely-revealed book. In his *Researches*, Ghabriyāl cited seven Qur’ānic

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<sup>46</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-122. About Odin, see, for example, Alby Stone, ‘Bran, Odin, and the Fisher King: Norse Tradition and the Grail Legends’, *Folklore*, vol. 100/1 (1989), pp. 25-38.

<sup>47</sup> Riḍā referred here to the French Law of Associations (1901). See, Riḍā’s conversation with the Sheikh Al-Azhar on the matter, *al-Manār*, vol. 4/4 (Muḥarram 1319/April 1901), pp. 157-160. About the law, for instance, Judith F. Stone, ‘Anticlericals and *Bonnes Soeurs*: The Rhetoric of the 1901 Law of Associations’, *French Historical Studies*, vol. 23/1 (2000), pp. 103-128.

<sup>48</sup> Riḍā mentioned as an example an English translation of Surat al-‘Aṣr: ‘Verily, by three hours after noon a man becomes bad or despicable’. He did identify the translator by name, but Wood argued that Riḍā’s paraphrasing looked like the translation of J.M. Rodwell (1862-1876), who translated it as: ‘Verily, man’s lot is cast amid destruction’. Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

verses discussing the character of the Bible. Riḍā ridiculed this method, and ironically named the whole book *Abhāth al-Jadaliyyīn* 'the Researches of the Disputants' instead of the *Diligent*. He also accused the author of trying to 'twist the meanings [of the Qur'ān] in the same way as his ancestors did with the Old and New Testament'.<sup>50</sup> It was, in his view, Paul who rendered the laws of the Old and New Testament worthless, and made Christianity permissive and attaching no good values to any good act by requesting people to believe in the salvation of Jesus only. By this Riḍā was on a similar line with many Muslim polemicists who saw Paul as a 'cunning and roguish Jew [...] who emancipated himself from the religious practices of Jesus and accepted those of the Romans'.<sup>51</sup> Riḍā put 'shame' and 'denigration' on Christian missionaries because they preached that 'this Jewish man [Paul]' could invalidate both the laws of Moses and Jesus, whereas they refused the message of Muḥammad, which came as confirmation of the Divine message of both prophets.<sup>52</sup>

In Riḍā's understanding, the missionary argument of proving the authenticity of the Bible from the Qur'ān was a 'quotation out of context' in order to distort the Qur'ān's real meaning. The Old and New Testament were earlier 'guidance for humanity', but after their followers deviated from its 'true' message and went astray, the texts had undergone alteration. Riḍā's premise did not go further than his pure conviction that Islam had later brought 'the greatest guidance' and 'glorious evidence'. If the People of the Book believed in it, they would gain 'prosperity' and become 'masters' of others.<sup>53</sup> Again, Riḍā was cynical in reproaching missionaries to concern themselves with non-religious Christians, who did not live according to the precepts of the Bible: 'why would they have sympathy and give their sincere advice to Muslims to follow the Bible, whereas they themselves are in need of advice and sympathy'.<sup>54</sup>

The same held true for the verse quoted by Ghabriyāl: 'Let the People of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein' (al-Mā'idā, 5:47), which he understood as a commandment to the Prophet of Islam to follow the Gospel. Riḍā maintained that the verse did not indicate any command that the Prophet Muḥammad should submit to the precepts of the Bible. The author, in Riḍā's words, sought to furnish any corroborating evidence by misconstruing the verse in a way that would support his desire, and would also corrupt the Qur'ān as they did with their own Scriptures. The verse pertained to the statement in the preceding verse: 'We sent him [Jesus] the Gospel; therein was guidance and light' (5:46). This means that God gave him the Gospel and ordered his people (the Israelites) to act accordingly. Riḍā understood the verse as a proof and objection against the Christians themselves that they did not act

<sup>50</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/14 (Jumādā al-ʿĀkhira 1319/September 1901), p. 538.

<sup>51</sup> See, S. M. Stern, 'Abd-al-Jabbār's account of how Christ's religion was falsified by the adoption of Roman customs, *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 19 (1968), pp. 128-185.

<sup>52</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/14, p. 538.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 539.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 538-39.

according to the Gospel. He concluded that ‘if it is possible for the Christian evangelists today to argue against Muslims that the Qur’ān commands them to believe and act according to the Old and New Testament and not see that this argument mandates their faith in the Qur’ān, then how can they assert that Muḥammad’s request to them to judge by the Gospel would mandate that he submitted to its ordinances?’<sup>55</sup>

Ghabriyāl argued that the Qur’ān confirmed that it would be an error for a Muslim not to believe in the Old and New Testament. He cited the verse admonishing the Muslims to believe in the preceding Scriptures (al-Nisā, 4: 136).<sup>56</sup> Riḍā immediately replied that the Muslim is required to believe in the previous Scriptures, but is never obligated to act according to their laws. According to Muslim exegetes, he argued, the verse was addressing the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*), who outwardly manifested their faith only, with no real conviction. Riḍā paraphrased the verse: ‘O you who profess faith in God, His Book and his Messengers’ – with their tongues and outwardly – ‘it is incumbent upon you to believe in them with your hearts and bring your outward profession to congruity with what you hold inwardly.’<sup>57</sup>

In Ghabriyāl’s view, the people of Mecca knew the Old and New Testament in the same manner they knew the Qur’ān. He cited the verse ‘And those who disbelieve say: We believe not in this Qur’ān nor in that which was before it’ (Saba’, 34:31). He interpreted the Arabic phrase, *bayna yadayhi* (lit. between his hands), as ‘before it’. This means that the verse directly refers to ‘the Old and New Testament’. Riḍā rejected this interpretation by arguing that it pointed to the rejection by the people of Mecca of the Qur’ān and its prophet. Riḍā again paraphrased the verse that the premise of the people of Mecca was to say: ‘we do neither believe in you Muḥammad and the book you claim from God, nor in the Scriptures you claim to have been revealed before you’. He argued that the verse neither indicated that the ‘illiterate’ inhabitants of Mecca during the time of the revelation knew the Old and New Testament, nor did it give any connotation that they specifically studied them. Only a few people among them were able to read and write well (Riḍā counted them as six individuals). However, Riḍā gave his preference to another exegetical interpretation: the phrase ‘*bayna yadayhi*’ referred to the Day of Judgment, not to the preceding Scriptures.<sup>58</sup>

Ghabriyāl’s following argument was that the Prophet himself verified the authenticity of the Scriptures and put them on an equal footing with the Qur’ān, as stated by the Quran itself: ‘Say (to them Muḥammad): ‘then bring a Book, which gives a clearer guidance than these two, that I may follow.’<sup>59</sup> The

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 539. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>56</sup> *Al-Manār*, ‘Fī al-’Ayāt al-Wārida bisha’n al-Tawrāh wā al-Injīl (In the related verses dealing with the Torah and the Gospel), vol. 4/15, pp. 574-78. The verse is: ‘O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His Apostle, and the scripture which He hath sent to His Apostle and the scripture which He sent to those before (him)’.

<sup>57</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>58</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/15, p. 577.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Qaṣaṣ (28: 49).

pronoun in *minhumā* (than these two), according to Ghabriyāl, would refer to the Qur'ān and the Gospel. For Riḍā, this quotation was 'dishonesty' and 'alteration' of the real meaning of the verse, and Ghabriyāl cited the verse with no reference to its previous passages. In his exegetical view, Riḍā considered the mention of Moses in the preceding verses as an indication that the verse referred to the Qur'ān and the Torah, but not to the Gospel.<sup>60</sup> But this interpretation, in Riḍā's view, does not indicate any approval that the Qur'ān recognized the Torah as equal in all aspects, nor the revelation to Muḥammad as equivalent to that to Moses. The verse pointed to the inability of the people of Mecca to produce a book similar to the Scriptures brought by Moses and Muḥammad, but it did not necessarily imply that the former was equivalent to the latter. As an example, Riḍā compared the case of the Qur'ān and the Torah with two works on the science of logic: 'Were it said to an individual, ignorant of the science of logic [...], 'Write me a book that is better than the book Isagoge [of Porphyry], and *al-Baṣā'ir al-Nuṣayriyya*,<sup>61</sup> would we say that this statement demonstrates that the two books are equal in every aspect?'<sup>62</sup>

Lastly, Ghabriyāl cited the verse indicating that the Torah contained God's ordinance or command (al-Mā'idā, 5:43). The verse was therefore a clear substantiation that the Torah was not twisted and that there was no need to follow any other law. Riḍā pointed out that the reason for the revelation of that verse was that a group of Jews intended to escape the punishment of stoning by asking the Prophet to be an arbitrator in a case of adultery committed by a highborn person among them, hoping that he would decide to flog the adulterer. Riḍā argued that the verse elucidated astonishment about the lack of confidence of the Jews in their religion by rejecting its judgement and yielding to another legislator. It was also amazing that they rejected the prophet's judgement, which was in agreement with their own law. Their lack of confidence was also extended to the message of Islam and all other religions.<sup>63</sup> Riḍā's very assertion of the corruption and the human features of the Bible permitted him to allege that although they contained 'the Command of God', the Scriptures were not purely divine in their entirety. He argued that the book

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<sup>60</sup> Riḍā supported his argument by referring to the preceding verses: 'If (we had) not (sent thee to the Quraysh) – in case a calamity should seize them for (the deeds) that their hands have sent forth, they might say: 'O Lord! Why didst Thou not send us a messenger? We should then have followed the signs and been amongst Those who believe!' But (now), when the Truth has come to them from Ourselves, they say, "Why are not (signs) sent to him, like those which were sent to Moses? Do they not then reject (the signs) which were formerly sent to Moses? They say: "Two kinds of sorcery, each assisting the other and they say: "For us, we reject all (such things)." (Al-Qaṣaṣ, 28: 47-48).

<sup>61</sup> *Al-Baṣā'ir al-Nuṣayriyya fī 'Ilm al-Mantiq* was written by Zayn al-Dīn 'Umar b. Sahlān al-Sāwī and dedicated to Nuṣayr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. 'Abī Tawbah (d. 503 AH). According to Brockelmann, al-Sāwī probably died in 540 AH. In November 1898, Al-Azhar Council chose *al-Baṣā'ir* to be a textbook on logic. 'Abduh wrote his commentaries on the text of the book. See, Rafīq al-'Ajam (ed.), *al-Baṣā'ir al-Nuṣayriyya li 'Ilm al-Mantiq*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnānī, 1993, pp. 1-22.

<sup>62</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>63</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/15, p. 578.

of *al-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyya*,<sup>64</sup> for instance, might contain the ‘Command of God’, but this did not mean that it was secure from corruption. It had also included the personal views of the author.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.2.5. Books of the Old and New Testament

Ghabriyāl devoted the second chapter of his book to discuss what he believed to be a rational proof of the authenticity of the Bible.<sup>66</sup> For him, God was omnipotent and wise to stipulate a constitution and to prescribe a law for human beings in order that they would comply with specific duties towards their Maker. The law was regulating the relationship among them, otherwise life would be in chaos with no deterrent or restrain. The people would also annihilate each other, and the good would be on equal footing with the evil, something God would never accept.<sup>67</sup> Ghabriyāl challenged Muslims: ‘if that constitution and law were not the Old and New Testament, would you tell me what are they? Is there any other ancient holy book that accomplishes the same objective, as do the two Testaments?’<sup>68</sup>

Riḍā made a low estimation of the logic behind the argument of his counterpart. He wondered why God let humanity without a law for thousands of years before the Torah, and why this wisdom of His did not appear except recently in the case of the Israelites. These question marks were enough for Riḍā to refute Ghabriyāl’s arguments. Muslims, on the other hand, believed that God sent down innumerable messengers and prophets to all nations.<sup>69</sup> He also contended that the people of China were not like ‘cattle’ trampling each other, or like ‘fish’, the big eating the small with no restrain. They had a civilization of their own, and values both before and after the existence of the Israelites. They were even more advanced than the Israelites in science, culture and order. Riḍā added that they were more advanced than the Christians themselves whose religion advanced them in nothing but animosity, hatred, disagreement, discord, war and murder during the so-called ‘Dark Ages’, while the Chinese lived in peace and harmony. The same was true for the Hindus. He argued that there is no harm for Muslims to believe the Chinese religion and Hinduism, just as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, were of divine origin, and that God had sent down messengers among them in order to guide them to ‘eternal happiness’. But they intermingled their religions with inherited pagan tendencies, the same the Christians did with their originally divine and monotheistic religion.<sup>70</sup>

Riḍā believed that when the Europeans replaced the law of the Old Testament with positive laws, and the customs of the Old and New Testament

<sup>64</sup> ‘Alī b. Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyya: al-Kitāb al-Musammā Insān al-ʿUyūn fī Sīrat al-ʿAmīn al-Maʾmūn*, 3 vols, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.

<sup>65</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/15, 579.

<sup>66</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/17 (Shaʿbān 1319 /November 1901) pp. 654-659

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 654.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp. 654-55.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 656.

with philosophy, they discarded ‘asceticism’ and ‘shook the dust of humiliation off their heads’.<sup>71</sup> By this the Europeans achieved more progress than during the time when they firmly followed the Bible. Riḍā believed at this time that in their good manners the Europeans were the closest people to Islam. These morals included their attachment to ‘pride, high motivation, seriousness in work, honesty, trustworthiness, and seeking knowledge according to the universal laws and abiding by rationality.’<sup>72</sup> Riḍā was persuaded that Ghabriyāl’s statement about the effect of the cultivation of the Divine laws on human beings was only evident in the case of Muslims, rather than that of the Jews and the Christians. Historically, when Muslims faithfully fulfilled their duties towards God and the people, they became refined, their morals became cultivated and their civilization advanced.<sup>73</sup> Riḍā ironically wondered if the needs of people were really to be fulfilled solely by the revelation of the Torah, why would God send down the Gospel on Jesus? However, this problem was not pertinent to Muslims, as they believed in the genuineness of the origin of the Bible.<sup>74</sup>

Ghabriyāl argued that it was impossible that both the Old and the New Testaments were distorted, as both Judaism and Christianity became widespread throughout the East and the West. In his words, ‘the scripture, especially the New Testament, was translated from the original Greek and Hebrew languages into the languages of the peoples among whom they were spread, including Arabic, Aramaic, Abyssinian, Coptic, and Latin.’<sup>75</sup> It was not logical, therefore, that these thousands of Christians had collaborated on altering the Scripture. Ghabriyāl repudiated the Muslim view that the Scriptures were corrupted. Muslims, in his view, definitely failed to pinpoint the altered passages, or to mention the real reasons behind this alleged corruption.<sup>76</sup>

In Riḍā’s opinion, the Qur’ān, unlike the Bible, was proven to be in a clear way transmitted orally and in writing. Thus, preference should be given to it above the Bible, as many ‘Christian scholars’ had admitted.<sup>77</sup> Riḍā quoted a work by the Coptic convert to Islam, Muḥammad Effendi Ḥabīb, a teacher of Hebrew and English in Cairo, which he wrote against the above-mentioned Gibāra (see, the introduction). Ḥabīb quoted J.W.H. Stobart, the principal of La Martiniere College in Lucknow.<sup>78</sup> In Stobart’s view, ‘we have ample proofs to believe that the existing Qur’ān is itself the original words of the Prophet

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<sup>71</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>72</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/17, p. 656.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 656-657. Riḍā concluded his arguments with the stanzas of the *lāmīyyah* by al-Būṣīrī on the character of Old Testament and its people. See the translation of Wood, pp. 156-157.

<sup>75</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/19 (Ramaḍān 1319/December 1901), pp. 743-749.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 743-744.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 744.

<sup>78</sup> Ḥabīb, *op. cit.* J.W.H. Stobart, *Islam and its Founder*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1876. The College was established by Major General Claude Martin in 1836. See, Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A very ingenious man: Claude Martin in early colonial India*, Delhi [etc.]: Oxford University Press (India), 1992.

Muḥammad, as learnt or dedicated[?] under his observation and instruction'.<sup>79</sup> Stobart's view was a quotation from Muir's work, *The Life of Mahomet*,<sup>80</sup> whom Habib described as the 'forceful enemy of Islam'.<sup>81</sup>

As for the alteration of the Bible, Riḍā argued that Muslims do not acknowledge that all these Scriptures were accurately transmitted from the prophets. They believe that the Jews and Christians subsequently altered them after dispersing throughout the East and the West, and each people embracing Judaism and Christianity had translated them into their own languages.<sup>82</sup> For him, investigating the origin, scribes and transmitters of these books before the great expansion would embarrass the People of the Book, as it would expose many shortcomings in their history. Riḍā repeated an often-cited example by Muslim polemicists that it is not possible to believe that it was Moses who had written the five books of the Torah because they speak about him in the third person, and mentioned his death and burial in one of the chapters.<sup>83</sup>

Riḍā cited from the Book of Deuteronomy that Moses was reported to say: 'Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord' (31:26). For him, this phrase was enough evidence to argue that Moses wrote a particular book, which must have been lost. The next passages would also conclude the alteration of the Torah. Moses said: 'For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you' (31:29).' Riḍā defined the word 'Torah', as *sharī'a* or law, whereas the existing five books are historical, even though they contain some rulings. He compared it with the example of the Qur'ānic verses of rulings, included by Muslim historiographers in the works of the *Sīrah* (the Prophet's Biography) containing sound and unsound narratives. Muslims do not consider the books of *sīra* as Qur'ān or as part of the revelation. The same holds true for the stories on Moses and other Israelite prophets. Riḍā pointed out that the authors of these books did not examine their narratives as Muslim scholars did in their investigation of biographical works on the prophet.<sup>84</sup>

Riḍā's attempted to invalidate the claim of Ghabriyāl that the Scripture was preserved among thousands of people in various languages. As vindication for his conviction, Riḍā quoted an anonymous Christian Arabic work which acknowledged that the original copy of Moses' book disappeared at some moments when paganism prevailed among the Israelites till it was rediscovered in the Kingdom of Hosea the Pious. The Christian author maintained that it is impossible that the original version of Moses had survived until the present time. It was also plausible that it was lost along with the ark when Nebuchadnezzar the Great destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. This was

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<sup>79</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/18, p. 744. Compare: 'There are ample and sufficient grounds for believing that the existing Qur'ān consists of genuine words, and is the original composition of the Prophet as learnt or transcribed under his own instruction. Stobart, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>80</sup> William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, 4 vols., London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1861.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>83</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/18, p. 745. See, Jawziyyā, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 741.

therefore the reason why it was reported among the Jews that the priestly scribe Ezra was the one who had regained it by collecting the fragmented copies of the holy books and correcting their mistakes.<sup>85</sup>

Riḍā severely reproved the ‘People of the Book’ for their belief that Ezra had corrected and edited the Torah, while discarding the belief that the prophet Muḥammad had the ability to restore the whole Divine message. He moreover did not accept the idea that Ezra re-wrote the Scriptures as they originally had been. He even went further to argue that it was not true that Ezra wrote the Torah on the basis of Divine revelation to him. Riḍā held a view in this regard similar to many of early Muslim exegetes (such as Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurtubī, al-Ṭabarī) and polemicists. In his *al-ʿAjwiba al-Fākhira* (The Unique Replies), the Egyptian jurist Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684 AH/1285 AD), for instance, maintained that Nebuchadnezzar murdered the Jews and burnt the Torah. Ezra had collected it after many years. One should not be sure about its authenticity, since it might have contained lots of najasāt (impurities).<sup>86</sup> In that regard Riḍā cited chapter seven of the Book of Ezra in which it was stated that Ezra had ‘set his heart to study the law of the Lord’ as a result of a letter given to him (Ezra 7:10-12). Riḍā interpreted this Biblical passage that Ezra was merely one of the scribes of the revealed law, just as any scribe of the revelation during the early age of Islam: ‘If we [Muslims] assume that the Qurʾān was lost, and was never preserved by heart, and then say that Muʾāwiya was inspired to write it only because he was one of the scribes – would the People of the Book accept this argument from us?’<sup>87</sup>

### 4.3. The Glad Tidings of Peace

#### 4.3.1. Muḥammad’s Superiority above all Prophets?

When the Egyptian missionary magazine *Bashāʾir al-Salām* (*The Glad Tidings of Peace*) praised the Israelites as ‘the blessed family tree’, Riḍā portrayed its editor as someone ‘swimming in the sea of illusions’.<sup>88</sup> In its own words, the *Glad Tidings* said that: ‘is it not amazing that the Creator of the heavens and the earth was alone with the Children of Israel in the wilderness, where He addressed them and they addressed him [...]. Moses amongst them was in deep conversation with Him, addressing various topics, just as two intimate

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 747. The work is titled: *Khulāṣat al-ʿAdilla al-Saniyyah ʿalā Ṣidq ʿUsūl al-Diyāna al-Masīhiyya* (The Essence of the Superior Evidences on the authenticity of the Christian Religion). Wood incorrectly translated the word *khulāṣat* as *summary*, and concluded that the work was an abridgement of another work. Wood, *op. cit.*, footnote, p. 163.

<sup>86</sup> Al-Qarāfī, *al-Ajwiba al-Fākhira*, on the margin of al-Baghdādī’s *al-Fāriq*, p. 211. See also the attitudes of al-Juwaynī in his *Shifāʾ al-Ghalīl*, edited by Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, Cairo, n.d., p. 59. See also the treatise of al-Jāhīz, *al-Mukhtār fī al-Radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā*, edited by M.A. al-Sharqāwī, Beirut and Cairo, 1991, p. 86.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 749.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.



companions or close friends'.<sup>89</sup> The writer addressed his Muslim readers saying that the Prophet of Islam did not deserve to talk to God directly, listen to His voice, nor witness His majesty the same as the general folk of the Israelites did, let alone the elite among them. Muḥammad also had not had the privilege to speak to Gabriel. He was rather overcome with the feeling of fainting and trance, and by sweat appearing on his forehead on a day of severe cold.<sup>90</sup>

Riḍā considered this argument as a severe sacrilege against the Divine. For him, Muslims reported that their prophet ascended to the Heaven and witnessed some of 'the greatest miracles of God' during his journey by night (*al-Mi'raj*). He also saw God and talked to Him without intermediary. Riḍā rejected the writer's view concerning Moses. According to the Book of Exodus, Moses and those among the Children of Israel saw lightning and heard thundering, the noise of a trumpet, and the mountain smoking (Ex. 20:18). The Israelites 'said unto Moses, speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we would die' (20:19). These passages, in Riḍā's opinion, disproved of the author's statement that the laymen of the Children of Israel were talking to God directly and heard His voice. In his comparison between the two cases of *ru'yah* (vision), Riḍā relied on the Qur'ānic narratives. In the case of Moses, he 'fell down senseless' (al-'A'raf, 7:143), while Muḥammad 'saw one of the greatest signs of his Lord.' (al-Najm, 53: 18).<sup>91</sup> Riḍā stressed that the Israelites, who were honored and dignified by God, became rebellious and ungrateful to Him later. They also deserved 'aversion' and 'loathing', and were deprived of God's favor and mercy. The Arabs were given a 'blessing' through the removal of paganism. Riḍā found it strange that the writer quoted Qur'ānic verses to prove God's blessing on the Israelites, while ignoring the verses manifesting their rebellion and disbelief.<sup>92</sup>

On another level, Riḍā went on discussing his theological attitude towards anthropomorphism as contrasted to Biblical concepts. For Muslims, he argued, their fundamental basis of belief was the absolute dissociation from any resemblance between God and the created beings. Any Qur'ānic passage that might indicate anthropomorphism should be subjected to metaphorical interpretation. In comparison to the 'anthropomorphism' and 'paganism' of others, Riḍā maintained that Muslims believed that God is far above having [a] voice, place or direction, and that all of His attributes in the Qur'ān are merely a form of divine proclamation. Riḍā reproached the writer of the *Glad Tidings* for saying that God was in deep conversation with Moses as intimate friends: 'It is no surprise that those who say that Jesus is a god would say that God met alone with Moses, addressing various topics in His conversation with him'.<sup>93</sup>

Like contemporary Muslim periodicals, missionary papers had a separate section in which they used to answer questions of their readers. These queries

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<sup>89</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/16, p. 619.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 621.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-145.

mostly dealt with theological issues, and were sometimes raised by Muslim readers. A Muslim ‘friend’ and reader of his journal, for instance, once raised the question: Can we consider Peter, Paul, John and other New Testament authors as messengers of God? Is there any prophecy on their message in the Old Testament, just as that on the coming of Jesus?<sup>94</sup> Riḍā was certain that the question was a novelty, and could not be asked by a faithful Muslim. Muslims believed that messengers were those who received the revelation of an independent religion, and were commanded to preach it. Muslims never used the word ‘prophecy’ to mean ‘glad tidings’. Riḍā was thus convinced that such a question was invented by the magazine in order to give a false impression and to delude their readers, or they were sent by a ‘cultural’ Muslim who had nothing to do with Islam, except his name [...], nationality and lineage’.<sup>95</sup> Another query was raised by another ‘friend’: Why it is only the Christians who are constantly involved in dispatching missionaries since the appearance of Christianity until the present day? The editor of the *Glad Tidings* answered: ‘because Christianity is verily the guidance, and so far as guidance is in one’s heart, he cannot restrain himself and conceal it from his fellow human beings.’<sup>96</sup> In his reaction, Riḍā repeated his aforementioned point of view that no religion was established without mission (see, chapter 3). However, Riḍā added that ‘the true *da‘wa* was that of the disciples of Jesus, which was based on their strong faith; nevertheless, few joined them whereas the Islamic *da‘wa* continued to gain millions: as soon as a Muslim trader would enter an Asian or African city, it would convert to Islam immediately’. It was only the European supremacy, Riḍā went on, that made missionaries ‘loudly speak and write’. The true answer, which the Christian writer should have given, was that ‘the Christians preached their religion because politics motivated them, followed by money and protected by weapons’.<sup>97</sup>

#### 4.3.2. Fear and Hope

In another article, the *Glad Tidings* asserted that ‘many Muslims die on the carpet of hope to enter Paradise and enjoy its pleasures as based on the magnificent promises in their Qur’ān [...] The only reason for that is nothing but their ignorance of the reality of themselves and the perfections of the Almighty’.<sup>98</sup> It further argued that Muslims of knowledge and mental faculties would seek relief from the burden of their sins through extravagant asceticism, devotion, supplication, and prayers to God. The magazine reckoned among these the fearfulness expressed by the Companions of the prophet, such as Abū Bakr and ‘Alī. The *Glad Tidings* alluded that ‘if these Companions had known

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp. 623-624.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 624.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 626.

<sup>98</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 5/3, p. 98.

and believed in the doctrine of Salvation, they would have lived safe from God's stratagem and punishment.<sup>99</sup>

Riḍā harshly criticised the writer's knowledge of Islam. According to him, the missionary writer incorrectly included the ḥadīth scholar Sufyān al-Thawrī as one of the Companions. He was infuriated by what he considered as 'offenses' against the Companions and Muslim rightly-guided *imams*. He furthermore asserted that Muslims have a higher esteem of the prophets than the Jews and the Christians who portrayed them as cruel, unjust, drunk, and committing adultery or murder. Riḍā was convinced that if a Muslim were required to believe in the collection of the books of the Old Testament, and his religion permitted him to elevate anyone above prophets, he would give his preference to those rightly-guided *imams* above the prophets of the Torah'.<sup>100</sup>

Back to the concept of 'fear' and 'hope', Riḍā believed that they represent the basis of the true religion. In his view, the author disparaged the Islamic perception with regard to these two concepts only in order to attract people to his religion. He indirectly tried to promote the doctrine that salvation and the eternal life in the Kingdom would be solely obtainable through the belief that God would save people through becoming incarnate in a human body.<sup>101</sup> Riḍā extended his above-mentioned argument by stipulating that the Christian message would encourage people to be more libertine through murder, committing adultery, getting drunk, and be a source of spoil to the creation while being convinced that they would be saved by means of this doctrine. He also criticised the writer for ignoring that his own Scriptures were not devoid of passages referring to biblical prophets and saints, who were also fearful to God and hopeful for His blessings.<sup>102</sup> Riḍā made it clear, however, that many 'fair-minded' Christians were on the same line with Muslims in their belief that all prophets and upright believers adhered to the absolute monotheism. Their fear of God was to keep them abreast from sins and evils, while their hope was to stimulate them to do righteousness.<sup>103</sup> In conclusion, Riḍā reminded his missionary opponent of the various examples of fear mentioned by al-Ghazālī, such as fear of revoking repentance, and the incapacity to fulfil obligation.<sup>104</sup>

#### 4.3.3. Faith and Acts of Muslims

Under the title, '*Imān al-Muslimīn wā A'māluhum* (Faith and Acts of Muslims)', the *Glad Tidings* wrote that 'it is possible according the school of *ahl al-Sunna* that one could truly believe in Islam, while persisting in evil action'.<sup>105</sup> Citing various Biblical verses, the writer raised two points of objection to Islam: 1)

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp. 99-100.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-101.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 101. For more, see, chapter 4 of *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 4, 'Kitāb al-Khawf wā al-Rajā'; various editions.

<sup>105</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 5/11, p. 436.

Islam was a false and valueless faith, as it did not impress the sense of repentance and good endeavour upon the mind of the believer, while abandoning him when his sins outweigh his good acts. It also denigrated the majesty of the Creator and amplified the misery of the created, 2) the Muḥammadan religion was also incapable of bringing the complete salvation for humankind.<sup>106</sup>

In his reply, Riḍā maintained that his ‘disputant’ did not perceive that his own argument could turn against him. He reiterated that the New Testament is the only way of redemption and that inheriting the Kingdom could be only achieved by the belief in Jesus, even when the believer was an evildoer or libertine. He also pointed out that faith was closely associated with good deeds in 75 Qur’ānic verses.<sup>107</sup> Riḍā argued that Islam stipulated that faith should produce sound deeds, while acts had no value in Christianity. But it was the missionary ‘net’ with which the magazine attempted to ‘catch’ the ignorant into accepting Christianity through his allegations against Islam. At the same time, however, he completely forgot that preaching that salvation was confined to the doctrines of trinity and crucifixion only would never motivate its followers to do good and avoid evil. The ‘ignorant’ would therefore be deluded by the missionary argument, since he would be more inclined to choose the faith which would not obligate or burden him with additional religious duties.<sup>108</sup>

Riḍā agreed with the statement of the *Glad Tidings* that any faith that does not aim at perfection and piety is false. Its writer, however, criticised the concept of punishment according to some Muslim traditions that sinful Muslims will be ‘imprisoned in the Hellfire for a period not less than seven hundred years and not more than seven thousand years.’<sup>109</sup> Riḍā rejected his assertion that such reports are not mentioned in the Qur’ān or in sound ḥadīths. They were only related in some unsound and unacceptable ḥadīths of no binding proofs. Riḍā followed ‘Abduh’s view that the affairs related to the Day of Judgement should be taken from the Qur’ān and the *mutawātir* ḥadīths. To make the point clear, the *Glad Tidings* quoted the Qur’ānic verse: ‘There is not one of you but shall approach [hell] (Maryam, 19:71).’ Riḍā interpreted the verse as not addressing Muslims. According to one exegetical view, the verse, in connection with the whole context of previous passages, was meant to address the unbelievers. Another view indicated that it generally referred to all people (believers and unbelievers). But believers would quickly pass alongside the Hellfire in order to appreciate God’s blessing when they would enter the Paradise.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Riḍā cited Qur’ānic verses such as, 4:123-124, 8: 2-4, and 103:1-3.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 437.

<sup>109</sup> As quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 438.

#### 4.3.4. Absurd Treatment

The *Glad Tidings* also attacked Islamic doctrines and practices as inferior to the *Jāhiliyya* Arab pagan society. It saw that Islam added six new elements of paganism to its pagan characteristics, which Riḍā considered as an absurd treatment.<sup>111</sup>

First of all, Muslims hold Muḥammad in the second place after God in the formula of *shahāda*, which they claim to be written on the Throne of God even before the Creation. Riḍā explained the general Muslim point of view that the Muslim must believe in the prophethood of Moses and Jesus, just as his belief in the prophethood of Muḥammad. As for the connection of the two names of Allah and Muḥammad in the *shahāda*, it had been narrated in some traditions that the Muslim should also utter the word *‘Abduhu* (his servant) in the formula. The *shahāda* being written on the Throne, in Riḍā’s mind, was not one of the essential doctrines of Islam. ‘And if the formula was really written down there, this would imply no form of paganism, since ‘the servant remains servant, and the lord remains lord’.<sup>112</sup>

The *Glad Tidings* alleged that Muslims raise the status of the ḥadīth to the Qur’ān, and for this reason the Sunnīs became angered by the *Shī‘ī* rejection of ḥadīth. Riḍā considered both claims as false. The Qur’ān was the fundamental basis of religion, while the *sunna* was giving additional clarity. The Muslim is fully requested to believe in the Qur’ān and recite it in his worship. But disbelief in any one of the ḥadīths will not harm his faith as a Muslim. Riḍā further explained that the Muslim is not obliged to follow the ḥadīths related to worldly affairs (*dunya*), such as the one on cultivating the palm-tree. Muslims, he went on, can distinguish between the Qur’ān, as a direct revelation, and the indirect revelation, which the prophet was reported to have uttered in his own words.

The missionary magazine, on the other hand, pointed out that the name of Muḥammad was connected with the name of Allah in many places in the Qur’ān as an associate in matters such as command and prohibition, and the obligation of obedience and love. It also maintained that Muslims take him as their master and intercessor. Taking a created being as an intercessor was identical to pre-Islamic Arab polytheism. The writer defended himself as a non-polytheist. The Christians believe in Jesus as the eternal word of God, and as the creator, not the created. Muslims, on the other hand, are polytheists, since they know perfectly well the status of their prophet as a human being, while insisting on having him as an intercessor.<sup>113</sup> In the Qur’ān it is also stated that God and the angels perform *ṣalāh* (prayer) over the Prophet (33:56). But Muslims exaggerate in their perception of his pre-existence to the degree that

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<sup>111</sup> ‘Sakhāfat Bashā’ir al-Salām fī al-Jāhiliyya wā al-Islām (The absurdity of Bashā’ir al-Salām concerning the Jāhiliyya and Islam)’, *al-Manār*, vol. 5/13, p. 517.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 517.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 520.

they state that he was eternal light and pre-existing to humanity. Riḍā replied that the prophet of Islam was nowhere in the Qurʾān or in the *sunna* described as master. Riḍā criticised the writer for his misunderstanding of the verse. Muslim scholars interpreted the *ṣalāh* as ‘mercy and compassion’. For Riḍā, the magazine’s assumption was not logical: ‘were every individual from whom we ask mercy and anybody whom we call ‘master’ like a god of ours, then we and the writer would have uncountable deities.’<sup>114</sup> Riḍā expressed a puritan view by stating that the exaggeration in honouring the prophet in that way ensued from the books and narratives of *mawālid*, and the faith of the common folk. In his reply, Riḍā added that the concept of intercession (*shafāʿa*) in Islam merely meant ‘supplication’. In that sense, every Muslim was an intercessor, and similarly every believer summoning upon God for himself and others. The comparison between Jesus and Muḥammad in this manner was, in Riḍā’s view, absurd. He cynically said: ‘it means that polytheism is the Muslim belief in their prophet as God’s servant and his intercession as supplication to God, while the pure monotheism is the Christian belief that their prophet, who was born 1902 years ago, is God, the Pre-existent, the Eternal, the Creator of all things before and after him.’<sup>115</sup>

#### 4.3.5. Exceeding the Borders of Politeness

We have mentioned that Riḍā did not include all articles under the section of *Shubuhāt* in *al-Manār* in his later compiled treatise, which Wood has translated. In this part, two of these articles were written as replies of the *Glad Tidings*, which clearly display his increasing frustration with what he called ‘exceeding the borders of politeness’. Riḍā was shocked by what he saw as anti-Islamic views uttered by its newly-appointed editor-in-chief, Niqūlā effendi Rafāʿil (or Raphael), whom he formerly knew as a ‘decent’ person.<sup>116</sup>

In the *Glad Tidings*, Rafāʿil published one of his debates with a Muslim at the Protestant library in the city of Suez. The Muslim objected to the doctrine of the crucifixion of Jesus using Qurʾānic verses. But Rafāʿil asked his Muslim adversary whether he would believe in the crucifixion if he were a contemporary to Jesus, and personally witnessed it. The Muslim replied in the affirmative that he would have definitely believed in it just as other attendants. Then Rafāʿil argued that it was more reasonable to believe in an incident as an eye-witness than to have faith in the story as had been told by an illiterate man in Mecca nearly seven hundred years later. The Muslim’s reply was challenging in saying that he would definitely believe in the illiterate man, who was proven

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 519.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 520; Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>116</sup> *Al-Manār*, ‘Daʿwā Ṣalb al-Masīḥ (the Claim of Jesus’ Crucifixion)’, vol. 6/2 (Ṣafar 1321/May 1903), pp. 62-67. Niqūlā Rafāʿil was the founder of another Christian bi-monthly magazine under the title: *al-Isḥāḥ al-Maskūnī* or *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī* (1 June, 1906). See the index of Dār al-Kutub, *op. cit.*, p. 562. He was also the author of *al-Daʿwā al-Waṭaniyya ʿilā Tabshīr al-ʿUmma al-ʿIslamiyya* (The National Call for Doing mission among the Muslim Community), Alexandria, 1900. See, Nuṣayr, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

to be a messenger of God, while rejecting his eyesight and that of other people as well. Rafā'il re-contended that Muḥammad's words might have been the teachings of the Satan, but not of God. The great miracles achieved by Muḥammad were again enough evidence for the Muslim to believe in the Divine origin of his prophet's message. Rafā'il, however, contested that while the Qur'ān rejected the reality of crucifixion, the Holy Scriptures, historical narratives, while the majority of the people still believed in it. According to Rafā'il, the Muslim, unable to reply, was defeated by this argument and left the place. Rafā'il added that the Qur'ānic view on the crucifixion was quoted from the belief of *al-Dustiyūn* (Docetics) that the physical body of Jesus was an illusion, as was his crucifixion. Jesus was in reality incorporeal, and he only seemed to have a physical body and could not physically die. Rafā'il argued that Muḥammad had copied their belief in the Qur'ān (4:156) that the Jews: 'did not kill him, and they did not crucify him, but a similitude was made for them'.<sup>117</sup>

Riḍā had not expected that Rafā'il would attack Islam in this manner. In Riḍā's evaluation, Rafā'il's Muslim counterpart was definitely a common person who lacked deep religious knowledge; and the missionary must also have exaggerated by adding or deliberately perverting the words of his partner in the dialogue. Riḍā even doubted the Muslim's replies as real. He did not imagine that the faithful Muslim, who was confused by this argument, would leave such a debate without giving any explanation of the Qur'ānic report concerning crucifixion. Riḍā was convinced that the story of crucifixion had become a controversial issue among the Christian themselves. It was Riḍā's first time to mention the Gospel of Barnabas, which he described as one of the Gospels where there was no mention of the story, even though the Christians tried to destroy it.<sup>118</sup>

Regarding the miracles achieved by the prophet Muḥammad, Riḍā held the classical point of view that the Qur'ān was his most significant miracle. He drew an analogy between the prophet and the author of many valuable medical books, who also proved to be a clever physician after many successful and useful treatments. The performance of miracles was never his evidence to be a good doctor. Muslims similarly believed that the Prophet was also given many miraculous acts, but, due to their less value, he never made them the cornerstone of his mission. The prophet, on the other hand, 'came to address minds, to support science, to explain reasoning, and to abolish witchcraft [...] and swindle by encouraging man to promote himself through knowledge and work'.<sup>119</sup>

Rafā'il's assertion that Islam was copied from Docetism was, in Riḍā's opinion, baseless. He argued that when missionaries objected to a Qur'ānic story related to a prophet or a nation known to them, they would immediately

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-64. It was the argument of many Western scholars that the Docetic views of Jesus looked like the Qur'ānic concept of non-crucifixion. See, for instance, H. Gregoire, *Mahomet et le monophysisme*, in *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, Paris 1930, i, 107-119.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

claim that Muḥammad plagiarized it from such-and-such false or heretical sects. But if their Scriptures gave no mention to a story mentioned in the Qur’ān, they would draw the conclusion that it was no revelation. In plain words, Riḍā confirmed that the prophet never learnt thoughts of other nations, and had no knowledge of other languages than Arabic.<sup>120</sup>

In conclusion, Riḍā asked his Christian compatriots to understand that he never intended to start attacking Christianity. But it was his duty as a scholar to defend his religion against any attacks and offenses. Missionaries, according to him, were not seeking the truth. He also demanded fair-minded Christians not to blame him. They should help him to bring the missionary attacks to an end.<sup>121</sup>

According to *al-Manār*, the editor(s) of the *Glad Tidings* soon dismissed Rafā’il. He also failed to find any other job as a journalist. Therefore he started to publish his own missionary publications, and toured Egyptian towns and villages to preach Christianity among Muslims. He sent Riḍā a letter with copies of his publications. In his letter, he wrote: ‘Because I noticed that your magnificent journal is zealous in defending Islam, I am sending this letter to you in order that you would reply to it according to your knowledge, and publish the reply in your journal. And if you were not able to give reply due to its solid evidences, I would earnestly request you to pay it some of your attention.’ Riḍā refused to give any answer, as it was logical for him that he only aimed at using *al-Manār* as a channel for making publicity for his writings. Riḍā furthermore qualified Rafā’il’s ‘evidences’ as ‘childish fantasies’.<sup>122</sup>

#### 4.4. The Standard of Zion

##### 4.4.1. Sinlessness of Prophets and Salvation

Riḍā received the missionary periodical *Rāyat Ṣuhyūn* (The Standard of Zion) with the editor’s request: ‘I request a reading of the article on the sinning of prophets and a reply to it’.<sup>123</sup> The article maintained that ‘Muslims say that God sent many prophets to the world. The greatest among them were six: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. Many [Muslims] say that all of these prophets were sinless, and therefore were competent to grant salvation to their followers. If they had been sinners, it would have never been easy for them to do that, since the sinner can not grant his salvation from the sin to

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. A few weeks later, Riḍā received a letter from one of his readers in Suez in which he reacted to Rafā’il’s concept of crucifixion. He cited a few passages from the Gospel, which he saw as an indication that the disciples of Jesus were also confused in recognising him even before his crucifixion: (Mathew, 26:34, cf. Marcus 14:30, Luke 22:34 and 13:38). See, vol. 6/3, pp. 116-117.

<sup>122</sup> *Al-Manār*, ‘al-Fidā’ wā al-Qadāsah (Salvation and Holiness), vol. 7/12 (Jumādā al-’Ākhira 1322/August 1904), pp. 453-457.

<sup>123</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/21 (Shawwāl 1319/26 January 1902), pp. 816.



others.<sup>124</sup> On the basis of stories from the Old Testament, the *Standard* argued that all these prophets, except Jesus, were sinners. Examples of these were Adam's disobedience to God and Noah's getting drunk. As for Abraham, it was reported that he 'lied twice because of his fear of the people'. Moses was commanded by God to go to the Pharaoh, but he showed great fear and increasing timidity, which would make God angry with him. When the Children of Israel were in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt, Moses uttered incoherent words. God, due to this sin, forbade him to return to the land Canaan, and ordained him to die of poverty.<sup>125</sup> In the Qur'ān, the *Standard* went one, it was also stated that all of them asked God's forgiveness, except Jesus.<sup>126</sup> This was exactly the same line of argument in the missionary writings of the late nineteenth century. The American missionary E.M. Wherry (1843-1927), for example, addressed the moral excellence of the Old Testament Major Prophets and Muḥammad. He further concluded that 'we nowhere find a single sentence or word, or even a shadow of a hint that Jesus was a sinner'.<sup>127</sup>

In his answer, Riḍā firstly explained that the author was incorrect in counting Adam among the five prophets of resolve (*ulū al-ʿAzm*) from an Islamic point of view.<sup>128</sup> Muslims do not believe that due to their infallibility prophets would be their saviors; they were only sent as preachers. It is only one's faith and good deeds that can save a person. Riḍā ridiculed the writer by stating that he did not understand the notion of infallibility (*ʿismah*) attributed to prophets according to Islam. Their infallibility merely means that they never committed any *kabīrah* (grave sin), and does not signify that they were different from all human beings, or that they never experienced pain and fear. As for the author's statement that wine-drinking was the only sin Noah committed, Riḍā stressed that in the New Testament it is related that Jesus drank wine as well. As Jesus committed the same 'sin', he would not have had the ability to save the people either. Riḍā interpreted the tale of Abraham's sinning by lying in an allegorical way. He intended to protect his wife by saying: 'she is my sister', which meant 'in religion'. He hid the truth only out of necessity, in order to get rid of evil and injustice by protecting his wife against slavery or capture.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 817.

<sup>125</sup> Wood incorrectly misread the word *faqr* (poverty), and translated the phrase 'caused him to die in the desert'. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>126</sup> As cited in *al-Manār*, vol. 4/21, p. 818.

<sup>127</sup> As quoted in, Alan M. Guenther, 'The Image of the Prophet as Found in Missionary Writings of the Late Nineteenth Century', *The Muslim World*, vol. 90/1 (2000), p. 58.

<sup>128</sup> The messengers of *ʿUlū-al-ʿAzm* in Islam were five: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. The prophet Muḥammad was asked to 'bear up [hardships] as did the apostles endowed with resolve bear up with patience' (Al-Aḥqāf: 35). They were called as such because they were resolve and arduous in facing the immense trial of their people.

<sup>129</sup> In his polemics with Samuel Ibn Nagrela, Ibn Hazm made it clear that the text of Genesis 20:12 on the tale specifically defined 'sister' in words attributed to Abraham himself, as 'daughter of my father'. The only way in which Abraham's marriage to his sister could be defended, Ibn Hazm said, would be by appeal to the Islamic principle of abrogation. See, Theodore Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Hazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures*, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1998, p. 60.

Neither did Riḍā accept the idea that the fear expressed by Moses should be a sin or violation of the law. It was his human feeling of fearfulness and of the sublimity of his Divine mission. It was also not appropriate, according to Riḍā, to consider the prophets seeking forgiveness as a mark of rebellion or violation of God's religion. It was only their perception of glorifying Him.<sup>130</sup>

#### 4.5. Conclusion

In the above-mentioned articles, we have shown that Riḍā discussed both Judeo-Christian and Muslim Scriptures on the basis of classical and modern interpretations. Riḍā's usage of Western sources in this specific period was not entirely absent. It is interesting to see that he quoted the Western critical study of the Bible from a work of fiction, such as *‘Alam al-Dīn*, and quoted the statements of a Christian convert to Islam.

Riḍā found the Egyptian magazine, *Glad Tidings of Peace*, the most obvious among the Christian missionary publications in their enmity towards Islam. All of these missionary publications reflected the general thesis that Islam was at many levels inherently inferior and irrational as compared to Christianity. Specific criticisms included the following: the Qur'ān was inconsistent and inharmonious; and Muḥammad was inferior to Moses and Jesus and therefore not a real prophet. Therefore, Muslims did not properly adhere to their Scriptures, which strongly commanded them to believe in the Bible.<sup>131</sup> In his answer, Riḍā's supposedly abstract comparison of Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad was not entirely based on Islamic sources. He went beyond these sources by restricting his arguments to some descriptive analysis of the characters of the two prophets in comparison to Muḥammad. In the case of Moses, it was his upbringing under the custody of the Pharaoh, which made him a diligent and proud person. Jesus was portrayed as a Jewish man, who was much influenced by the Roman and the Greek way of life.

In his answer, Riḍā was in the 'defensive arena', and his main objective was to refute the 'allegations' of the missionaries as much as he could. He was anxious that they would definitely affect the common Muslims who had no solid knowledge. Besides his critique of the textual authenticity of the Bible, Riḍā cynically attacked its content and the current interpretation of its message. The teachings of the canonical gospels were, for example, excessive in love and power in contrast to the Qur'ānic concept of moderation. He frequently attacked his Christian counterparts for their implicit propagation of 'evildoing' and of libertine behaviour among their followers through their confirmation that the only way of redemption was to believe in Jesus, whatever sins they might commit in their life. In comparison to that, he further argued, Islam required the believers that faith should produce sound deeds.

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<sup>130</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/21, pp. 819-820.

<sup>131</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.



## Chapter Five

### In Pursuit of a 'True' Gospel: Riḍā's Arabic Edition of the Gospel of Barnabas

Riḍā's Arabic edition of the Gospel of Barnabas should be seen as a continuation of an Islamic long-enduring search for a Biblical witness congruent with Islamic tenets of belief. Throughout history it has been a common phenomenon that Muslims maintained that the apostleship of Muḥammad had been foretold in Bible. On the basis of *al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya* of Ibn Ishāq and his citation from the Gospels (*Anājiḥ*), Alfred Guillaume tried to make a first reconstruction of the text of the Gospels, which was known in Medina in the early 8th century.<sup>1</sup> In a pioneering work, Tarif Khalidi collected the Arabic Islamic lore on the figure of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Muslim polemicists sometimes used apocryphal books, which fitted well in their arguments on the main trends of the Islamic tradition regarding Christianity. O. Krarup and L. Cheikho published fragments of Islamicised Davidic Psalters.<sup>3</sup> In order to prove that not Jesus, but another man was crucified, the *Mu'tazilī* theologian and chief Judge 'Abd al-Jabbār (935-1025), for example, quoted a few passages from an unknown apocryphal Gospel containing the story of the passion, alongside the canonical Gospels. Another unidentified apocryphal Gospel is quoted in the *Refutation of the Christians* by 'Alī b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī, a medieval Nestorian physician who converted to Islam.<sup>4</sup>

Much has been written on the controversial apocryphal Gospel attributed to Barnabas, whose Italian manuscript was discovered in the eighteenth century in Amsterdam. A number of these studies have argued that this anonymous Gospel was the work of Moriscos in Spain.<sup>5</sup> G.A. Wieggers has recently made a

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<sup>1</sup> A. Guillaume, 'The version of the *Gospels* used in Medina circa A.D. 700', *Al-Andalus*, no. 15 (1950), pp. 289-296.

<sup>2</sup> Khalidi, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Ove Chr. Krarup, *Auswahl Pseudo-Davidischer Psalmen*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, 1909; L. Cheiko, 'Quelques legendes islamiques apocryphes', *Melanges de la Faculté Orientale* (Beirut), vol. iv (1910), pp. 40-3. See, also, 'Some Moslem Apocryphal Legends', *The Moslem World*, vol. 2/1 (January 1912), pp. 47-59. See also, S. Zwemer, 'A Moslem Apocryphal Psalter', *The Moslem World*, vol. 5/4 (1915), pp. 399-403; Suleiman A. Mourad 'A twelfth-century Muslim biography of Jesus', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 7/1 (1996), pp. 39-45. Cf. I. Goldziher, *Polemik*, pp. 351-377.

<sup>4</sup> S.M. Stern, 'Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in 'Abd al-Jabbār', *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 18 (April 1967), pp. 34-57. Cf. D.S. Margoliouth, 'The use of the Apocrypha by Moslem writers', *Moslem World*, vol. 5/4 (1915), pp. 404-408; Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabbān to Ibn Hazm*, Brill, 1996. More about al-Ṭabarī's polemics, see, David Thomas, 'The Miracles of Jesus in Early Islamic Polemic', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, vol. 39/2 (1994) p.221-243.

<sup>5</sup> Luis F. Bernabé Pons, 'Zur Wahrheit und Echtheit des Barnabasevangeliums', in R. Kirste (ed.), *Wertewandel und Religiöse Umbrüche. Religionen im Gespräch*, Nachrodt, vol.4, 1996, pp.133-188; Mikel de Epalza, 'Le milieu hispano-moresque de l'évangile islamisant de Barnabé (XVI<sup>e</sup>-

link between the Gospel and the so-called *Lead Books* by arguing that it was an Islamically inspired work and a pseudo-epigraphic piece of anti-Christian polemics in the form of a gospel. He argued that the authorship of the Gospel would fit in the profile of a Morisco scholar and physician under the name of Alonso de Luna, who knew Latin, Arabic, Spanish and Italian, the languages used in the oldest manuscripts of the gospel.<sup>6</sup>

The Gospel of Barnabas reached the Muslim world for the first time through al-Qairanāwī's polemical work *Izhār al-Haqq*.<sup>7</sup> He had derived his information from George Sale's Introduction to the Qur'ān (1734), who had known of a version of the Gospel in Spanish. But the Gospel gained much more diffusion among Muslims after Riḍā's publication of the Arabic text. As soon as he had received a complimentary copy of the Raggs' bilingual Italian-English edition from the Clarendon Press in Oxford, Riḍā spoke with Khalīl Sa'ādeh, who immediately approached the editors for permission to translate their work into Arabic.<sup>8</sup>

In 1982, Ghulam Murtaza Azad, the director general of the Council of Islamic Ideology in Pakistan, tried to follow Riḍā's line by writing his own introduction to the Barnabas Gospel from an Islamic point of view.<sup>9</sup> Azad also cited Sa'ādeh's introduction at length in Arabic, followed by an English translation of some of his conclusions. He disagreed with Sa'ādeh on many points, and concluded: 'Christians should rest with peace of mind. This Gospel was not contrived by any Muslim, because according to the Holy Qur'ān Jesus predicted the advent of a messenger, Aḥmad. The Muslims, therefore are still in search of that Gospel wherein the name of their prophet is clearly mentioned as 'Aḥmad'.<sup>10</sup>

Christine Schirrmacher is not precise when she remarked: 'Auf dem Deckblatt der arabischen Edition hat der Herausgeber zwei Seiten des italienischen Manuskripts in Faksimile reproduziert und die arabische Edition mit dem Titel 'al-ingil as-sahih' versehen, woraus Rashīd Riḍā's Anspruch,

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XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle)', *Islamochristiana*, vol. 8 (1982), pp. 159-183; G. A. Wieggers, 'Muḥammad as the Messiah: comparison of the polemical works of Juan Alonso with the Gospel of Barnabas in Spanish', *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, LII, no. 3-4 (1995), pp. 245-292. Cf. Longsdale Ragg, 'The Mohammedan' Gospel of Barnabas', *Journal of Theological Studies*, VI (1905), pp. 425-433; Luigi Cirillo & M. Fremaux, *Evangile de Barnabé, recherches sur la composition et l'origine: texte et tr.*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1977; J.N.J. Kritzinger, *The Gospel of Barnabas: Carefully Examined*, Pretoria, South Africa, 1975; P.S. van Koningsveld, 'The Islamic Image of Paul and the Origin of the Gospel of Barnabas', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 20 (1997), pp.200-228.

<sup>6</sup> G.A. Wieggers, 'The Persistence of Mudejar Islam? Alonso de Luna (Muḥammad Abū l-'Asī), the *Lead Books*, and the *Gospel of Barnabas*', *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 12/3 (November, 2006), pp. 498-518.

<sup>7</sup> R. al-Qairanāwī, *Izhār al-Haqq*, Constantinople, 1867, vol. 2, pp. 146-206.

<sup>8</sup> Rashīd Riḍā, (ed.), *Injil Barnaba*, Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1325/1907. It actually appeared in 1908. The two included introductions, however, were dated on March/April 1908.

<sup>9</sup> Ghulam Murtaza Azad, 'An introduction to the *Gospel of Barnabas*', *Islamic Studies*, vol. 21/iv (1982), pp. 71-96.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

hiermit das ‘wahre Evangelium’ vorzulegen, bereits deutlich wird’.<sup>11</sup> Although Riḍā’s main interest in the Gospel emanated from the fact that it echoed the Qur’ānic image of Jesus and his servanthood to God, he did not mention the word ‘*ṣaḥīḥ*’ on the cover of his Arabic edition. He presented it merely as a literal Arabic translation of the English (and original Italian) text as appearing on the cover: ‘True Gospel of Jesus, called Christ, a new prophet sent by God to the world: according to the description of Barnabas his apostle’.<sup>12</sup>

The present chapter does not argue that Riḍā was convinced that the Gospel of Barnabas was a forgery. Neither does it claim that Riḍā was not in search for any newly discovered materials that would support his conviction of the corruption of the Scriptures, especially in his anti-missionary writings. It only tries to study what kind of change which might have occurred in Riḍā’s thoughts by looking at his introduction and the later use by *al-Manār* of the Gospel. Firstly an attempt is made to study Riḍā’s earlier initiative of using the Gospel of the Russian philosopher Tolstoy. Secondly, I will discuss Sa‘ādeh’s participation in freemasonry, linking that to his translation of the Gospel. Then we shall move to study his perception of the Gospel as a historical piece of work through a critical reconsideration of his introduction. Finally and most relevant to the whole study is the revisiting of Riḍā’s motivations as reflected in his introduction, and his later use of the Gospel in his journal and *Tafsīr* work.

### 5.1. Championing Tolstoy’s Gospel

According to *al-Manār* itself, Riḍā was apparently in search for a ‘true gospel of Christ’ that would confirm the message of Islam. As has been noted earlier, and before knowing of the Raggs’ edition, Riḍā referred to the Gospel for the first time in 1903 in his reply to the *Glad Tidings* in the work of the *Shubuhāt*. There he wrote: ‘The Christians themselves do not deny that there took place a dispute about the crucifixion; and that there were some Gospels excluded by the synods centuries after Jesus, which denied the crucifixion, such as the Gospel of Barnabas, which still exists despite the attempts of Christians to ‘obliterate’ it, just as other Gospels they had already obliterated’.<sup>13</sup> It is clear from this quoted passage that Riḍā at that moment knew about the existence of the Gospel of Barnabas (probably from al-Qairanāwī’s *Izhār al-Haqq*). A few pages later in the same issue of *al-Manār*, Riḍā, in one of his *fatwās*, referred to a certain Gospel ‘in the *Himyarī* script’ which was said to be found at the Papal Library in the Vatican (discussed below).<sup>14</sup>

In the same year, Riḍā published parts of an Arabic text of the Gospels according to the Russian writer and philosopher Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910),

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<sup>11</sup> Schirmacher, *Waffen*, p. 300.

<sup>12</sup> Raggs, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/2, p. 64

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67

which had been published in 1879.<sup>15</sup> We have already said that Riḍā was aware of the excommunication of Tolstoy from the Russian Orthodox Church because of his religious ideas (see, chapter 4). One of Tolstoy's contributions was his composition of what he saw as a 'corrected' version of the four Gospels. In his collection, he unified them into one account, excluding the reports on Christ's birth and genealogy, his miracles (such as his walking on the lake, and the healing of the sick), his mother's flight with him to Egypt, and the references to prophecies fulfilled by his life. He also left out most of the material about the birth of John the Baptist, his imprisonment and death. For Tolstoy, 'to believe in Christ as God is to reject God'.<sup>16</sup> Many of Tolstoy's works were available in Arabic for readers in Egypt. 'Abduh was fascinated by his ideas, believing that he 'cast a glance on religion which has dispelled the illusions of distorted traditions, and by this glance he has arrived at the fundamental truth of Divine Unity'.<sup>17</sup>

Following 'Abduh's steps, Riḍā championed Tolstoy, and frequently praised his thoughts and writings in *al-Manār*.<sup>18</sup> In three successive articles, he published Tolstoy's own introduction to his Gospels in Arabic under the caption 'The True Gospel: Introduction of the Russian philosopher Tolstoy known as 'the Gospels'',<sup>19</sup> which was prepared for *al-Manār* in a translation from French. Riḍā praised this 'true Gospel' as the result of freedom in religious research, which the Protestant thinking revived in Europe. Riḍā reckoned Tolstoy as one of the Western scholars, who sifted out the teachings of the Bible, and whom he described as having liberated their thoughts from the dogmas prescribed by the Church. Typically of Riḍā's views was that the conclusions reached by those free-minded scholars in that regard came closer to the Qur'ānic perceptions regarding the corruption of the Gospels. Riḍā moreover deemed their views to be a substantial proof on the truth of Islam.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For more details, see, David Patterson (ed. and trans.), *The Gospel according to Tolstoy*, The University of Alabama: Tuscaloosa & London, 1992, p. xvii.; Comte Léon Tolstoï, *Les Évangiles*, translated from the Russian text by T. de Wyzewa and G. Art, Paris: Librairie Académique Didier, 1896. Richard F. Gustafson, *Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger – A Study in Fiction and Theology*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986; David Redston, 'Tolstoy and the Greek Gospel', *Journal of Russian Studies* 54 (1988), pp. 21-33. Cf. other works of Tolstoy on religions, *A Criticism of Dogmatic Theology* (1880-83), *What I Believe* (1883-84), and *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893).

<sup>16</sup> As quoted in Patterson, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.

<sup>17</sup> Letter 'Abduh to Tolstoy, 8 April 1904; as quoted in the English translation in the diaries of Abduh's friend Blunt, *op. cit.*, pp. 455-456.

<sup>18</sup> His works were translated by Salīm effendi Qab'īn. These translations were also available for sale at Riḍā's bookshop. See, for example, *al-Manār*'s reviews of some of these works, vol. 5/24 (March 1903), p. 952; vol. 6/11 (August 1903), p. 427; vol. 7/23 (February 1905), p. 915; vol. 9/12 (January 1907), p. 946; vol. 10/4 (June 1907), p. 292; vol. 13/2 (March 1910), p. 131, vol. 16/1 (January 1913), p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> *Al-Manār*, 'Al-Injīl al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Muqaddimat Kitāb al-Faylasūf al-Rūsī Tolstoy al-Ladhī Sammāhu al-Anājīl', vol. 6/4 (16 Ṣafar 1321/14 May 1903), pp. 131-137. See also other following parts in, vol. 6/6, pp. 226-232; vol. 6/7, pp. 259-265.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Riḍā agreed with Tolstoy in his distrust of the four canonical Gospels. He further argued that these Gospels clearly indicated that Jesus' followers in his age were *'Awāmm Jāhilūn* (ignorant laymen). After his death they became dispersed and persecuted by the Jews and Romans until Constantine had adopted Christianity. When the Christian religion had acquired its authority, there emerged synods to collect all religious remains. A multitude of Gospels was collected from which these four were authorized, which only contained some of Christ's historical records and transmitted sermons.<sup>21</sup> But Riḍā did not take all of Tolstoy's arguments for granted, as they contained many things contrary to the Islamic narratives on the life of Jesus, especially his denial of Jesus' miracles. However, he saw the work of Tolstoy as a very useful tool in contesting the missionary allegation that the Qur'ān bore testimony to the canonical Gospels as the real word of God, a point that he had also challenged in his *Shubuhāt* earlier.<sup>22</sup>

## 5.2. Announcing another 'True' Gospel?

In July 1907, *al-Manār* started to announce its publication of the Gospel of Barnabas by printing some Arabic samples of Sa'ādeh's translation.<sup>23</sup> Riḍā also reminded his readers of his earlier publication of Tolstoy's Gospel, and once again quoted a lengthy passage from Tolstoy's introduction: 'The reader should remember that these Gospels in their present form do not entirely contain the testimonies of the disciples of Jesus directly [...], and the oldest copy that has come down to us from the fourth century was written in continuous script without punctuation, so that even after the fourth and fifth centuries they have been subject to very diverse interpretations, and there are not less than fifty thousand such variations of the Gospels.'<sup>24</sup> In line with the Tolstoy Gospel, Riḍā started to announce the whole Arabic edition of the Gospel of Barnabas by his publishing house in 1908. On the cover of *al-Manār* issue in which he announced that, Riḍā plainly wrote: 'This Gospel is the narrative of Barnabas [...] which he [himself] called the 'true Gospel', and whose privilege over other circulated Gospels is that it confirms monotheism, denies crucifixion, and gives elaborate prediction of our prophet Muḥammad'.<sup>25</sup> Riḍā's insistence on publishing the Gospel in Arabic was due to its conformity with the form and structure of famous canonical Gospels on the one hand, and its agreement with many Islamic conceptions on the other. A second objective was his intention to make this work available to Arab readers, just as the Westerners did in some of their languages.<sup>26</sup> As a promotion for his announcement, he quoted the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> 'al-Injīl al-Ṣaḥīḥ aw Injīl Barnabā', *al-Manār*, vol. 10/5, pp. 385-387, vol. 10/7, 8, 9 (September-November 1907), pp. 495-501 & pp. 621-625 & pp. 651-658.

<sup>24</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 10/5, p. 385.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 386



passages from the Gospel, which agree with Islamic concepts, among others that it was not Jesus who died on the Cross, but Judas instead.<sup>27</sup>

### 5.3. A Freemason

Saʿādeh's relation with Riḍā and his journal has been described above (see chapter 2). Based on Saʿādeh's testimony in his preface to the Arabic translation of the Gospel, it is obvious that he did not want to commit himself to the religious meaning of the text: 'I feel obliged to stress that I have been committed in my introduction to follow my research from a historical and scientific point of view only. [...] My translation is just to serve history. Therefore, I have avoided any religious discussions, which I leave for those who are more competent than I'.<sup>28</sup>

Saʿādeh was a born Christian who held secularist beliefs. Previous studies on Saʿādeh's role in the Arabic edition of the Gospel of Barnabas did not pay attention to his participation in Masonic activities, which can be considered as a justifiable interpretation for his cooperation with Riḍā in the translation work. His affiliation with the freemasons dates back to 1885, when he was a member of the lodge of Sulymān al-Mulūki during his four-year service as a medical advisor, and director of the English Hospital in Jerusalem. In this period, he became the secretary of the lodge, and later its president. According to Saʿādeh, the meetings of the freemasons took place in a cave, which was discovered by the American consul in Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup> Later in 1915, Saʿādeh made a description of the discovery of the consul of this cave, and what he named their 'historic meeting' in it. While he was hunting rabbits, the consul discovered a small hole covered with trees. The cave (which they thought to be the Temple of Solomon) was very wide, and had big pillars and huge rocks. Saʿādeh wrote:

In this dark cave our impressive meeting was held. It was attended by many British and American MP's. Police agents, who were freemasons as well, guarded the entrance. The number of attendants was not less than 200 people, most of whom were of high status. [...] In that dark cave, where nothing would spoil the spreading calmness, except the sound of water moving in the canal nearby, we had heard fascinating speeches. Some of them were the most beautiful I had ever heard in my life. The attendants sent a telegram of loyalty to King Edward VII, Prince de Galles and the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England; and in whose name we shouted three times. [...] We then went out, and took a picture in the front of the entrance of the cave

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<sup>27</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 10/12, pp. 947-948. On the cover of the Arabic edition it is mentioned that the Gospel was available at Al-Manār Bookshop for the price of 15-20 piasters exclusive posting costs (2 piasters); and the introduction was to be sold for 10 piasters.

<sup>28</sup> Khalīl Saʿādeh's introduction to the Arabic translation, 'Muqaddimat al-Mutarjim (the Translator's introduction)', p. 16.

<sup>29</sup> Hamie, *al-ʿAllāma*, p. 54.

besides our freemasonry logo. In this particular meeting, I was thinking of building a freemason lodge in Jerusalem, which I wished to be the Grand Lodge of the whole freemason world.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike Afghāni and ‘Abduh, there is no proof so far that Riḍā took part in freemason activities in Egypt or elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> During his stay in Egypt, Sa‘ādeh must have been a member of its Grand Lodge. In 1905 he dedicated one of his translated novels to Idrīs Rāghib, the grand master of the lodge in Egypt.<sup>32</sup> After his migration to Brazil, he remained active, and became the president of the freemason lodge *Najmat Sūriyya* (the Star of Syria) in Sao Paulo.<sup>33</sup> Sa‘ādeh quitted in May 1926, when he became convinced that Masonic teachings about liberty and the elimination of tyranny and despotism had no tangible results, and that the teachings of its rites were futile.<sup>34</sup>

One might consider Sa‘ādeh’s commitment to freemasonry as a clarification for his embarking on translating the Gospel, as part of his attitude towards the Holy Scriptures and religion in general. It would also suggest that he might have embraced the belief of the majority of freemasons that every scripture of faith of every religion is to be respected equally. The Baptist minister and Masonic author Joseph Fort Newton (1880-1950) put it clearly: ‘Whether it be the Gospel of the Christian, the Book of Law of the Hebrew, the Koran of the Mussulman, or the Vedas of the Hindu, it everywhere Masonically symbolizes the Will of God revealed to man’.<sup>35</sup> In the same vein, one would venture to argue that Sa‘ādeh had no strong commitment to one religious scripture above another; and this would accordingly make sense that somebody like him would accept the task of making the translation of that Gospel.

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<sup>30</sup> As quoted in *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance, A. Albert Kudsi-Zadeh ‘Afghānī and Freemasonry in Egypt’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 92/1 (Jan. - Mar., 1972), pp. 25-35; cf. Karim Wissa, ‘Freemasonry in Egypt 1798-1921: A Study in Cultural and Political Encounters’, *Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 16/2 (1989), pp. 143-161; Jacob M. Landau, ‘Muslim Opposition to Freemasonry’, *Die Welt des Islams*, New Ser., vol. 36/2 (July 1996), pp. 186-203.

<sup>32</sup> It was his *Asrār al-Thawra al-Rūsīyya: Riwāya Tārīkhīyya ‘Asriyya*. See, Hamie, ‘L’homme’, p. 110 & p. 255

<sup>33</sup> Schumann, *op. cit.*, p. 606. The official language of al-Mulūkī lodge was English See also, Mishāl Sab‘, ‘al-Masūniya fī Sūriya’, available at: <http://www.syria-wide.com/Abass.htm>, accessed on 23 July 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Hamie, ‘L’homme’, p. 261. His son Anṭūn became the secretary of the lodge. Three months later Anṭūn also resigned, see, Anṭūn Sa‘ādeh, *al-’Athār al-Kāmila: Marḥalat mā Qabla al-Ta’āsīs 1921-1932*, vol. 1, Beirut, 1975, pp. 198-202.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Fort Newton, *Religion of Masonry: An Interpretation*, Kessinger Publishing, 2003, p. 94. Cf. William Green Huie, *Bible Application of Freemasonry*, Kessinger Publishing, 1996, p. 72.

### 5.3.1. Critical Analysis of Sa'ādeh's Preface

Sa'ādeh was aware that scholars fundamentally differed around the historicity of the Gospel of Barnabas without reaching any satisfactory answer about its origin. Following the Raggs, he gave a detailed description of the Italian manuscript of the Gospel, which was firstly discovered in Amsterdam by J. F. Cramer, a Counselor of the King of Prussia. He also referred to the Spanish manuscript referred to by Sale that had been in the possession of Dr. Thomas Monkhouse of Oxford (d. 1793).<sup>36</sup>

Sa'ādeh was convinced that the Italian manuscript had been stolen from the Papal Library by the monk Fra Marino, who had by accident come across the Gospel of Barnabas in the library of Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590) among other scriptures, when the latter was asleep. The monk, who had managed to gain the Pope's confidence, discovered the manuscript and hid it in his sleeves.<sup>37</sup> Sa'ādeh accepted the possibility that the existing Italian manuscript was the very manuscript found by Marino in the Pope's library, arguing that by examining its water-mark researchers had discovered that it was dated to the second half of the 16th century during Sixtus' Papal office. He also added that its water-mark proved that it had been written on paper of clear Italian character on which there appears a picture of a 'anchor in a circle.'<sup>38</sup> In this regard, Sa'ādeh was selective, and did not elaborate on the point carefully. He actually accepted the description of M. Briquet, who had argued that its paper was 'distinctively Italian', which was also mentioned by the Raggs. But he left out other arguments referred to by other scholars, such as J. Toland, who described the paper as Turkish.<sup>39</sup> It should be added that L. Cirillo dated the water-mark of its paper to the second half of the sixteenth century. The binding of the manuscript was made of Turkish leather, decorated in the Ottoman style with a double gilt-edged frame and a central floral medallion on both covers. Although the main text was Italian, its lay-out showed that this manuscript was executed according to the Ottoman tradition.<sup>40</sup>

Sa'ādeh criticised the eighteenth-century European scholars who dealt with the Italian manuscript for their speculations in answering the question about the originality of the text, and whether it was the copy found by Marino or a later copy. These scholars, in his view, had not paid attention to the Arabic sentences and phrases on the margin of the text, which could be the clue to answer the question. He also blamed the orientalist David Samuel Margoliouth (1858– 1940) for not having dealt with the question in more details. Margoliouth had maintained that 'the Arabic glosses [...] cannot have been composed by anyone whose native language was a form of Arabic.'<sup>41</sup> He also

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<sup>36</sup> Sa'ādeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3; cf. Schirrmacher, *Waffen*, pp. 260-261 & 301.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 3. Cf. Jomier, *Commentaire*, p. 138; as referred in Slomp (1978), *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Raggs, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

<sup>40</sup> Cirillo, *op. cit.*; as quoted by Van Koningsveld, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>41</sup> Raggs, *op. cit.*, p. xlix.

pointed out that this fact had escaped the notice of Toland, as also of La Monnoye who had described the ‘citations arabes’ as ‘fort bien écrites’. Denis, on the other hand, had not failed to observe its mistakes and archaic style.<sup>42</sup> In Sa‘ādeh’s mind, although some of the Arabic expressions on the margin had correctly been composed and were well-structured, they apparently had been modified by the scribe of the manuscript. Some other phrases were difficult to understand, while others were very archaic. This would mean that the scribe tried to translate them literally and in the ‘narrowest’ and ‘silliest’ sense. For example, he incorrectly structured the genitive case by putting the muḍāf ‘ilayh (the second noun) in the place of the muḍāf (construct state) by saying: ‘there is no such an Arab [writer] who would make such a mistake under the sun.’<sup>43</sup>

Sa‘ādeh paraded some of these mistakes and reached the conclusion that ‘these Arabic glosses had been written by more than one scribe. He concluded that the language of the original composer had been correct, but then a following copyist had tampered with it. His lack of command of Arabic had resulted in many changes, and he corrupted much of what the first scribe had already written down. The scribe added to them many ‘silly expressions, archaic styles and foreign elements producing no meaning [...] Therefore, the Italian copy found in [...] Vienna is not the original one and is undoubtedly taken from another copy.’<sup>44</sup>

Regarding to the author of the Gospel, Sa‘ādeh literally quoted the Raggs’ views that the copying process had taken place in 1575 possibly by Fra Marino. He translated their words as follow: ‘Anyhow, we can surely say that the Italian book of Barnabas is original. It was done by somebody, whether a priest, secular, monk or layman, who had an amazing knowledge of the Latin Bible [...] And like Dante, he was particularly familiar with the Psalter. It was the work of somebody whose knowledge of the Christian Scriptures was exceeding his familiarity with the Islamic religious Scriptures. It was more probable, therefore, that he was a convert from Christianity.’<sup>45</sup>

There were congruent features between the Gospel and the famous ‘Divina Comedia’ by Dante in his description of hell, purgatory and paradise. These coincidences and quasi-coincidences in both accounts regarding the infernal torment were a good reason for some historians to carry back the Gospel to the fourteenth century and to believe that its author was probably a contemporary to Dante. Sa‘ādeh, however, maintained that the descriptions of hell in the Gospel of Barnabas were reminiscent of those of Dante only in its

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Cf. Sa‘ādeh, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 7. Compare the Raggs: ‘Thus much we may say with confidence. The Italian *Barnabas* is, to all intents and purposes, an original work. It is the work of one who, whether priest or layman, monk or secular, has remarkable knowledge of the Latin Bible – as remarkable, perhaps, as Dante’s – and like Dante, a special familiarity with the Psalter. It is the work of one whose knowledge of the Christian Scriptures is considerably in advance of his familiarity with the Scriptures of Islam: presumably, therefore, of a renegade from Christianity.’ Raggs, *op. cit.*, pp. xliii-xliv.

numbering of its seven circles. He argued that it was more plausible to believe that both authors did not live in the same age. It was just a matter of *Tawārud al-Khawāṭir* (telepathy). It was also possible that both of them, in different ages, had quoted from an earlier work depending on Greek mythology.<sup>46</sup> Saʿādeh's hypothesis did not depend on any further historical elaboration or linguistic analysis of both works. The Raggs were more systematic in their comparison between the Gospel of Barnabas and Dante. Although they pursued many examples of reminiscences and studied the 'common atmosphere' of both, they considered it a 'superficially attractive theory'.<sup>47</sup> All those who studied the similitude between the Gospel and Dante at this time did not pay attention to another probability that Dante himself might have depended on Islamic sources. It was until 1919 that the Spanish orientalist and Catholic priest Miguel Asín Palacios (1871-1944) compared the Muslim religious literature on the Prophet Muḥammad's *Mi'rāj* (ascension to Heaven) with Dante's story describing a spiritual journey among the various inhabitants of the afterlife.<sup>48</sup>

According to the Raggs, Western scholars in the eighteenth century were of the view that there 'lurked an Arabic original'.<sup>49</sup> They also argued that this suggestion was made by Dr. White in 1784, who wrote that 'the Arabic original still existed in the East'. His statement was based on Sale's statement that 'the Muhammedans have also a Gospel in Arabic, attributed to St. Barnabas, wherein the history of Jesus Christ is related in a manner very different from what we find in the true Gospels, and correspondent to those traditions which Mohammed has followed in the Qur'ān'.<sup>50</sup> Sale had not seen the Gospel, but had based his statement on the information of La Monnoye, who had never seen an Arabic original either.<sup>51</sup>

Saʿādeh's view in this respect is paradoxical. Having discussed the Arabic glosses, he in the beginning concluded that it would be quite unfeasible that the original text was Arabic for many reasons. First of all, it was not possible that a translator with such capabilities to translate the Gospel from Arabic would have committed linguistic mistakes. Most of the expressions used in the text would suggest that the original was Latin or Italian. It is more probable therefore that the scribe was from Venice, who had copied the manuscript from another

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<sup>46</sup> Saʿādeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>47</sup> Raggs, *op. cit.*, pp. xl-xli. See also, Lonsdale Ragg, 'Dante and the Gospel of Barnabas', *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 3/2 (January, 1908), pp. 157-165.

<sup>48</sup> See, for instance, Miguel Asín Palacios, *La Escatología musulmana en la 'Divina Comedia'*, Madrid: Real Academia Española 1919. Western scholars started to elaborate on the point after Palacios had published his theory. See, for instance, Louis Massignon, 'Les recherches d'Asín Palacios sur Dante', *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol. XXXVI (1919); Alfred Guillaume, 'Mohammedan Eschatology in the Divine Comedy', *Theology*, vol. 6 (1921); Paul A Cantor, 'The Uncanonical Dante: The Divine Comedy and Islamic Philosophy', *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 20/1 (April 1996), pp. 138-153; Theodore Silverstein, 'Dante and the Legend of the Miraj: The Problem of Islamic Influence on the Christian Literature of the Otherworld', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 11/2 (April, 1952), pp. 89-110.

<sup>49</sup> Raggs, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

<sup>50</sup> As quoted in *ibid.*, pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

Tuscan text, or from a Venetian text mingled with Tuscan expressions.<sup>52</sup> After having discussed the above-mentioned Western views on an Arabic original, Saʿādeh reached another conclusion:

Nevertheless [...] it should be declared that I am more inclined to believe in an Arabic original rather than any other [language]. [The fact] that it has never been found should not be taken as an argument that it has never existed. If not, it should be believed that the Italian was the original version because no other copy has been found except the aforementioned Spanish one, which was said to have been translated from an Italian version. The oriental reader would at first glance recognize that the writer of the Gospel of Barnabas had a wide knowledge of the Qurʾān to the degree that most of his phrases were almost literally or figuratively translated from Qurʾānic verses. I am saying this while being aware that I am opposing the majority of Western writers who immersed themselves in the matter.<sup>53</sup>

Saʿādeh did not agree with the Raggs that the writer of the Gospel had little knowledge of Islam. For him, many stories mentioned in the Gospel corresponded with the Qurʾānic narratives.<sup>54</sup> The Gospel of Barnabas also contained many statements, which could be traced in the ḥadīth-literature and ‘scientific mythologies’ which were only known to the Arabs. Saʿādeh digressed his main subject with the sweeping statement that ‘although there are a large number of orientalisks preoccupied by Arabic and the history of Islam, we do not find nowadays among Westerners those who are considered to be real scholars of ḥadīth.’<sup>55</sup>

Another proof for Saʿādeh’s assumption of an Arabic original was the style of binding of the Italian manuscript, which was, in his opinion, undoubtedly Arab. He furthermore disagreed with the view that it was the work of the Parisian binders brought by Prince Eugene of Savoy, as merely a presupposition.<sup>56</sup> It was again the conclusion of the Raggs, who closely studied the manuscript: ‘the binding is, to all appearance, oriental. If it be the work of the Prince’s Parisian binders (as no doubt the outer case is), then it is an astonishingly faithful copy of an oriental model.’<sup>57</sup> They compared the style of binding of the manuscript of the Gospel to another document, of 1575, in the Archive of Venice; and also based their argument on that of Lady Mary Wortley-Montague’s (1689-1762) remarks of 1717, that ‘the books were

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<sup>52</sup> Saʿādeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> He mentioned examples, such as the story of Abraham and his father (The Gospel of Barnabas, pp. 55-63) that resembles the Qurʾānic narratives (al-Anbiyā 21: 48-73 & al-Saffāt 37: 83-101). Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-10.

<sup>57</sup> Raggs, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

profusely bound in Turkey leather, and two of the most famous bookbinders of Paris were expressly sent to do this work.’<sup>58</sup>

In Sa‘ādeh’s mind, it was indifferent whether the writer of the Gospel was of Jewish or Christian origin. He was convinced in either case that he was a convert to Islam. Sa‘ādeh bemoaned the loss of the Spanish manuscript and the fact that the scholars who had witnessed it had not studied it meticulously.<sup>59</sup> He also stated that to speak of an Arabic original does not mean that the writer was of Arab origin. The most plausible argument, in his view, was that the writer of the Gospel was an Andalusian Jew who had converted to Islam, after he had been forced to adopt Christianity and had become very familiar with the Christian Scriptures. The writer’s remarkable knowledge of the Bible was hardly to be found among the Christians of this time, except among a small group of specialists. Sa‘ādeh corroborated his premise with the fact that many Jews in Andalusia had an excellent command of Arabic to the extent that some had belonged to the class of poets and literati. The passage of the Gospel of Barnabas concerning the obligation of circumcision and the ‘hurting’ report that Jesus had said ‘a dog is better than an uncircumcised man’ (Chapter 22, p. 45) were, in Sa‘ādeh’s eyes, another evidence that it had not been written by somebody of Christian origin. He again digressed his subject by arguing that the Arabs had never tried to persecute people of other religious denominations in the beginning of their conquest of Andalusia. The fact that the Jews of Andalusia had converted to Islam in droves, and had sustained Muslims in conquering Spain and their long-term establishment could also indicate, according to Sa‘ādeh, that the author of the Gospel was one of these converts.<sup>60</sup>

At another level, he wrote: ‘This was one of the incentives, which spurred the people of Andalusia to yield to the Muslim authority [...], except in one thing, namely circumcision. At a certain point in time, however, they [Muslims] compelled the people to do it and issued a decree obligating the Christians to follow the tradition of circumcision, like Muslims and Jews. This was therefore one of reasons which made the Christians ‘pounce’ on them’.<sup>61</sup>

Sa‘ādeh returned to confirm that the writer of the Gospel was an Arab. Another reason for that was his treatment of the philosophy of Aristotle, which was widespread in Europe in the early Middle Ages. As this philosophy had

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. xiii (footnote).

<sup>59</sup> Sa‘ādeh, *op. cit.*, p. 11. An eighteenth-century copy of the Spanish manuscript was discovered in the 1970s in the Fisher Library of the University of Sydney among the books of Sir Charles Nicholson, which was marked in English as ‘Transcribed from ms. in possession of the Rev. Mr. Edm. Callamy who bought it at the decease of Mr. George Sale and now gave me at the decease of Mr. John Nickolls, 1745’. See, J.E. Fletcher, ‘The Spanish Gospel of Barnabas’, *Novum Testamentum*, vol. 18/4 (October, 1976), pp. 314-320. The manuscript has been published in L.F. Bernabe Pons, *El Evangelio de San Bernabe; Un evangelio islamico espanol*, Universidad de Alicante, 1995.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

reached Europe through the Arabs in Spain, it would be definitely confirmed that its writer was an Arab, but not a Westerner.<sup>62</sup>

Sa'adeh did not accept the view that the milieu of the Gospel of Barnabas was Italian. This was the historical conclusion made by the Raggs that the style of the book and the atmosphere it breathed were Occidental, more specifically medieval Italian. They mentioned many suggestive parallels between passages in the Gospel and the manners and customs of people in Italy. For example, its picturesque eulogy of the 'bellezza' of the summer season of fruits voiced an experience that was almost worldwide; and had familiar parallels in the Old Testament.<sup>63</sup> The Raggs were of the view that *vendemmia* (Vintage in Tuscany) in the Gospel would give a 'realistic description' of the historical background in which the Gospel had been written. Its reference to the expert stone-quarriers<sup>64</sup> and the solid stone buildings<sup>65</sup> were also 'more suggestive of a nation of born *muraturi* than of tent-loving Arabs.'<sup>66</sup> Sa'adeh saw these examples as merely an indication of an oriental rather than an occidental environment. These manners and customs during the harvest time and stone-quarrying had also been known in the remote past among the peoples of Palestine and Syria.<sup>67</sup>

The Raggs corroborated their abovementioned theory on the relation between Dante and the Gospel of Barnabas by the incidental reference to the Jubilee as giving a definite date for the origin of the Gospel. The Jubilee year was a Jewish celebration occurring every fifty years (Leviticus 25:10-11). The first recorded Jubilee was that of Pope Boniface VIII in 1300. The Pope issued a decree that the Jubilee should be observed once every hundred years.<sup>68</sup> After his death, however, Pope Clemens VI decreed in 1343 that the jubilee year should be held once every fifty years as the Jews had observed it. Pope Urban VI later proposed the celebration of a Jubilee every thirty-three years as representing the period of the sojourn of Christ upon earth, while Pope Paul II had decreed that the Jubilee should be celebrated every twenty-five years. In the Gospel it was mentioned: 'the year of jubilee, which now cometh every hundred years, shall by the Messiah be reduced to every year in every place.'

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>63</sup> Raggs, *op. cit.*, chapter 185, pp. 391-400. 'Behold, then, how beautiful is the world in summer-time, when all things bear fruit! The very peasant, intoxicated with gladness by reason of the harvest that is come, makes the valleys and mountains resound with his singing, for that he loves his labours supremely. Now lift up even so your heart to paradise, where all things are fruitful with fruits proportionate to him who has cultivated it.'

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., chapter 116, p. 251. 'But tell me, have you seen them that work quarried stones, how by their constant practice they have so learned to strike that they speak with others and all the time are striking the iron tool that works the stone without looking at the iron, and yet they do not strike their hands? Now do you likewise.'

<sup>65</sup> Chapter 153, p. 327. 'Have you seen them that build [and] how they lay every stone with the foundation in view, measuring if it is straight [so] that the wall will not fall down? O wretched man! for the building of his life will fall with great ruin because he does not look to the foundation of death!'

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. xxxviii.

<sup>67</sup> Sa'adeh, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>68</sup> Raggs, *op. cit.*, pp. xli-xlii.



(chap. 82, p. 193). This was a convincing reason for some historians to conclude that the author of the Gospel knew of the decree of Boniface. It would be reasonable therefore to suggest that it had not been written earlier than the second half of the fourteenth century.<sup>69</sup> Sa'adeh argued that it was difficult to understand how somebody, who had such a wide knowledge of the Bible, would make such a naïve error which he excused as a spelling mistake made by the copyist. He gave the far-fetched argument that the writing of the word 'fifty' in Italian is almost identical to the word 'one hundred'.<sup>70</sup>

In one sub-section, the Raggs dealt with the Gospel of Barnabas as part of the question of the lost Gnostic Gospels, and whether the Italian Barnabas enshrined within its covers the lost Gnostic Gospel which bore that name. The so-called 'Gelasian Decree' mentioned an *Evangelium Barnabe* as a heretical book. The decree was an apocryphal text, which was generally to be dated in the century after Pope Gelasius; and this was a reason for some people to suggest that such an apocryphal Gospel survived during the time of the prophet Muḥammad. The Raggs further argued:

It is quite conceivable, then, that some of the apocryphal stories of the Qur'ān may be indirectly borrowed from this Gospel. If this be so, then a Christian student of the Qur'ān would at once be attracted by the Gnostic Gospel of Barnabas if it chanced to fall into his hands. Assuming, then, for the sake of argument, that an original Gnostic Barnabas, or a Latin version of the same, fell into the hands of a Christian renegade of the fourteenth or fifteenth century – just as the Spanish translation(?) fell into Fra Marino's hands in the last quarter of the sixteenth century – it would give him at once a title for his great missionary pamphlet, and a vast amount of material to work upon.<sup>71</sup>

On the basis of their arguments, Sa'adeh concluded that to say that the Gospel of Barnabas was entirely invented by a medieval writer was still debatable. The half or third of it would correspond with other sources than the Bible and the Qur'ān. If the Gelasian Decree was true, Sa'adeh added, it would be possible that the Gospel of Barnabas was existent long before the Prophet of Islam, albeit this would mean that it was different from its present form. The Gelasian Decree would also imply that it was well-known among the elite of scholars in this age, let alone the laymen. 'Therefore', Sa'adeh wrote, 'it was probable that any information about it must have reached the prophet of Islam (even by hearing), including the repeated and lucid statements and explicit chapters in which his name was clearly mentioned.'<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Sa'adeh, *op. cit.*, pp 12-13.

<sup>70</sup> The word 50 in Italian is 'cinquanta', while 100 is 'cento'. The two words are not almost identical as Sa'adeh argued.

<sup>71</sup> Raggs, *op. cit.*, pp. xlv-xivi.

<sup>72</sup> Sa'adeh, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Saʿādeh did not understand the Raggs' standpoint entirely. He mistakenly interpreted their sub-section on the Gospel of Barnabas as one of the Gnostic Gospels by thinking that there existed a Gospel under the name of the '*Gnostic Gospel*', which was completely lost. He totally misapprehended the argument of the Raggs, who only intended to put the Gospel of Barnabas in the context of other apocryphal Gospels and its deviance from the canonical ones, especially in its account of the 'valedictory denunciation of St. Paul' and the 'painless birth of Jesus'.<sup>73</sup> Saʿādeh was erroneous in his argument that 'this *Gnostic Gospel* was probably a father of the Gospel of Barnabas'.<sup>74</sup> By the end, he left aside the earlier-mentioned argument about an Arabic original copy of the Gospel. He reformulated the Raggs' views that a Jewish or Christian convert to Islam might have found a Latin or Greek version of this Gospel in the fourteenth or fifteenth century and made it up in its form, and therefore its origin had disappeared.<sup>75</sup>

#### 5.4. Riḍā's Introduction

Following Saʿādeh's introduction Riḍā wrote a few pages in which he described his personal attitude towards the Gospel and its significance as an apocryphal book. In the start, he reiterated Tolstoy's statement that Christian historians were unanimous that there had been a great number of Gospels in the early centuries after the coming of Jesus, but clergymen had selected four only. But he did not attribute the statement to Tolstoy this time. In his conviction, the Christian *muqallidūn* (imitators) followed the selection of their clergymen without any further investigation, while those who valued science and avoided *taqlīd* (imitation) were eager to study the origin and history of Christianity even by means of such rejected Gospels. He also maintained that the reason for the existence of multiple versions of Gospels was the interest of each follower of Jesus to write a *sīrah* (biography) and name it a 'gospel', which contained his sermons and history. Therefore, apocryphal books could be useful after comparing them with the other canonical books. Riḍā argued that their significance would lie in their giving information about other religious conceptions, which had not been officially stipulated by clergymen: 'Had these gospels survived, they would have been in their content the most affluent historical sources [...] You would have also watched the scholars of this age judging and deducing from them [conclusions] through the methods of modern sciences, as they have become safeguarded by the 'fence' of freedom and independence of thought and will: a thing which clergymen had never produced when they selected these four gospels only'.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 13; See Raggs, *op. cit.*, p. xlv.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Riḍā's 'Muqaddimat al-Nāshir (the publisher's introduction), p. 17, see also, 'Injīl Barnabā, Muqaddimatuna lahū', *al-Manār*, vol. 11/2 (Ṣafar 1326/April 1908), p. 114 (Cited below as, 'muqaddimatuna').

Riḍā stressed that Barnabas accompanied Paul for a long time. After his conversion to Christianity, Paul had been introduced on his return to Jerusalem by Barnabas to the apostles (Acts 9:27). Before making any attempt to review the arguments of Saʿādeh, Riḍā stated that because the belief of Paul became more dominant and became the pillar of Christianity, it was no wonder that the Church considered the Gospel of Barnabas as non-canonical or incorrect. But he was pleased that the Gospel had not been discovered in Europe during its medieval times: 'Had anybody found it in the medieval centuries – the centuries of the darkness of fanaticism and ignorance – it would never have appeared [...]. Its copy, however, appeared in the vivid light of freedom in these [Western] countries'.<sup>77</sup> In Riḍā's evaluation, the views of Western scholars concerning the paper of its manuscript, binding and language had been a result of painstaking and scholarly research, but their conclusions about its earliest writer and the time of its composition were merely reached by way of conjecture. Like any researcher basing his propositions on incorrect assumptions, while considering it as a valid postulate, those who studied the Gospel had assumed that the author was a Muslim, but became puzzled later and did not manage to define his origin.<sup>78</sup>

After this statement, and without further elaboration, Riḍā started to rephrase some of Saʿādeh's findings that its author was an Andalusian Jew, who had converted to Islam. He also mentioned an argument by an anonymous 'priest in a religious magazine', who had argued that most of the chapters of this Gospel were not known to any Muslim before. Riḍā was probably referring to Temple Gairdner, who had alluded to the 'strange' fact that none of the earlier Muslim writers had ever referred to this Arabic 'Gospel of Barnabas'.<sup>79</sup> Riḍā was initially persuaded that its reference to the year of Jubilee was the 'strongest' assertion that its composer had been a medieval writer, but Saʿādeh's argument and his illustration on the 'weakness' of this theory made him change his view. Saʿādeh's examination was, for Riḍā, meticulous enough, and there was no other evidence to depend on in this regard. The same held true for Saʿādeh's argument concerning Dante.<sup>80</sup> In line with Saʿādeh, Riḍā supported the viewpoint that Fra Marino probably was the writer of the Arabic glosses on the Gospel. He argued that conversion to Islam must have stimulated him to learn Arabic, but he had not been able to write in correct phrases. As he learnt a language in his old age, it was normal that he had made several mistakes. Most of his correct expressions, however, were literally quoted from the Qur'ān or other Arabic sources, which he might have read.<sup>81</sup> According to Riḍā, there was another possibility that a clergyman had found the Gospel, and started learning

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>79</sup> Selim 'Abdul-Ahad and W. T. Gairdner, *The Gospel of Barnabas: An Essay and Inquiry*, (foreword by Jan Slomp) Hyderabad: Henry Martin Institute of Islamic Studies, 1975, p. 15 (first published in Cairo, 1907), cited below as Ahad and Gairdner.

<sup>80</sup> 'Muqaddimatuna', p. 116.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

Arabic in order to determine any Arabic reference to which he might ascribe this Gospel. Neither native nor non-native (*a'jamī*) would say in Arabic, for example, '*Allah Subhān*' instead of '*Subhān Allah*'.<sup>82</sup>

Researchers rejected the Gospel's affirmation of the coming of Muḥammad by name. One of their arguments was that it was not logical that it had been written before Islam, as foretelling should come usually in a metonymical way. Riḍā maintained that it was probable that the translator of the Gospel into Italian had rendered the name Muḥammad from the word 'Paraclete'. However, deeply-religious people, in his opinion, would not see such things as contradictory with the Divine revelation. He quoted the Tunisian Muslim reformist Muḥammad Bayram al-Khāmis (1840-1889) who reported on the authority of 'an English traveler that he had seen in the Papal Library in the Vatican a copy of a Gospel written in the *Himyarī* script, which was dated before the coming of the Prophet Muḥammad. Bayram al-Khāmis did not define the Gospel by name, but this 'reliable' Gospel, according to him, literally corresponded with the Qur'ānic verse: 'And giving the good tidings of an Apostle who will come after me, his name being Aḥmad' (61: 6). Riḍā gave no reference for his information, but tracing Bayram's *Ṣafwat al-I'tibār* I have found that the author did not describe the Englishman as 'traveler'. Bayram also did not hear this report personally from him. It was an account which Bayram mentioned in the context of his description of the Vatican and its library, which he portrayed as containing thousands of books, including this Gospel in 'Arabic *Himyarī* script, which had been written two hundred years before the [Islamic] message'.<sup>83</sup>

Riḍā, however, admitted that it was never reported that any Muslim had seen a Gospel with such an evident prediction of the coming of Muḥammad. In his view, it seemed that the remains of such Gospels were still existent in the Papal Library in the Vatican with other banned books, which might have been dated to the early centuries of Christianity. The appearance of such works, he believed, would remove all assertions around the Gospel of Barnabas and other gospels.<sup>84</sup> By the end, Riḍā urged his Muslim readers not to think that Western scholars and Eastern Christian writers (such as Sa'ādeh and the above-mentioned founders of *al-Muqtaṭaf* and *al-Hilāl*) doubted the authenticity of this Gospel out of their fanaticism as Christians: 'the age when fanaticism used to incite people to obliterate historical facts has elapsed [...] Aside from its historical advantage and its judgment in our [Muslims] favour in the three issues of dispute; namely monotheism, non-crucifixion and the prophethood of

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>83</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Khāmis, *Ṣafwat al-I'tibār bi Mustawda' al-Amṣār wā al-Aqtār*, edited by Ma'mūn Ibn Muḥī al-Dīn al-Jannān, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmyya (2 vols.), 1997, vol. 2, p. 14.

<sup>84</sup> 'Muqaddimatuna', p. 119. In 1903, Riḍā mentioned the same argument about this Gospel in his answer to a *fatwā* by one of his readers in Cairo on the prediction of the Prophet Muḥammad in other scriptures. *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/2, pp. 67.

Muḥammad, it suffices us to publish it because of its sermons, wisdom, ethics and best teachings.<sup>85</sup>

#### 5.4.1. Later use by *al-Manār*

Riḍā scarcely mentioned the Gospel of Barnabas in his religious arguments against Christian missions. Four years later *al-Manār* for the first time mentioned the Gospel in its comment on an article published in the Russian journal *Shūrā*, which compared Ibn Taymiyya and Luther in sciences related to Christianity. (see, chapter 2).<sup>86</sup> In 1929, *al-Manār* published a critique written by a certain al-Yazīdī from Rabat on Emile Dermenghem's biography of the prophet Muḥammad.<sup>87</sup> Al-Yazīdī, among others, attacked the Church for having not well established the Divine revelation, and for the fact that its clergymen had not only corrupted their religion, but rejected the message of Muḥammad. As a comment on this article, Riḍā rebuked Dermenghem and requested him to call the Christians to convert to Islam, as this religion was the *muslih* (reformer) of Christianity. In a footnote, he confirmed that the Christians had lost the real Gospel. As Islam, in his view, came to abrogate all preceding laws, Christianity should return back to it, and not vice versa. Riḍā was now more outspoken: 'The Gospel of Barnabas is the truest in our point of view above all these canonical Gospels, as it utterly speaks of monotheism and its proofs, and the prophethood of Muḥammad.'<sup>88</sup>

Riḍā cited the Gospel of Barnabas again in the context of his exegesis of the verse: 'Those who follow the Messenger; the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures) – in their Torah and the Gospel' (Al-'A'rāf, 7: 157). In his discussion on the *Bishāra* (foretelling or glad tiding) of previous Judeo-Christian Scriptures of the coming of the prophet Muḥammad, Riḍā quoted lengthy passages (about 60 pages) of *'Izhār al-Haqq*.<sup>89</sup> After discussing what he deduced as *bishārāt* from the authorized Biblical books, al-Qairanāwī preferred to avoid quoting other prophecies mentioned in non-Canonical books, except the Gospel of Barnabas. Al-Qairanāwī pointed out that despite its exclusion by clergymen this Gospel included 'the greatest *Bishāra* on the Prophet of Islam.<sup>90</sup> He also believed that it was one of the most ancient Gospels, and even existed before the coming of Islam. Concerning the historicity of this Gospel, al-Qairanāwī noted that it had been mentioned in books dated back to the second and third centuries A.D.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Unlike Sa'ādeh, Riḍā praised people such as Margoliouth for his independent findings on the Gospel.

<sup>86</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/7, pp. 542-544.

<sup>87</sup> *Al-Manār*, Vol. 30/6 (Jumādā al-'Ākhira 1348/December 1929, p. 445 He was probably Muḥammad al-Yazīdī, a member of the Moroccan secret society al-Zāwiya. His name has been mentioned on the list of the society, Muhammed Azūz Hakīm, *al-Hāj 'Abd al-Salām Bannūna*, Rabat: al-Hilāl Press, vol. 2, p. 14. Émile Dermenghem, *La vie de Mahomet*, Paris : Plon, 1929.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 445.

<sup>89</sup> Al-Qairanāwī, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-206.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 206

This would mean that it had been written ‘two centuries before Islam’. Al-Qairanāwī did not accept the argument that it was a Muslim who had corrupted this Gospel either, since it had nowhere been reported that Muslims had ever attempted to make any change in the widely accepted scriptures, let alone the Gospel of Barnabas.<sup>91</sup>

In Riḍā’s view, there was ‘a clear mistake’ made by al-Qairanāwī in calculating the years, since the Prophet had received his message in the beginning of the seventh century. This meant that Barnabas had written his Gospel five centuries before Islam, and not two. Riḍā, however, supposed that Jesus had given Barnabas the order to write it down in the first century, although there was no earlier mention of it. The oldest version discovered in Europe, nevertheless, was dated to the 15th or the 16th century.<sup>92</sup> Riḍā in details quoted the *bishārāt* from the Gospel of Barnabas annexing to them some passages of his above-mentioned introduction.<sup>93</sup> He added another *Bishāra* from the book of Haggai (2:7-8): ‘For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet one little while, and I will move the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will move all nations: and *the desired of all nations* shall come and I will fill this house with glory: saith the Lord of hosts.’ Riḍā stated that the ‘desired of all nations’ was in its original Hebrew ‘*hemdat* (תְּהִמָּה)’, which directly means ‘praised’, and would consequently refer to the Arabic ‘Muḥammad’.<sup>94</sup>

By the end, Riḍā restated: ‘We believe that the Gospel of Barnabas is superior to these four Gospels in its Divine knowledge, glorification of the Creator, and knowledge of ethics, manners and values.’<sup>95</sup> He agreed with Sa‘ādeh that some of its ethical and cognitive notions had been derived from the philosophy of Aristotle. Riḍā argued that similar arguments had also been raised by ‘independent’ Western scholars concerning the Mosaic laws as derived from Hammurabi (which he had endorsed earlier), and concerning the ethics of the Gospels as emanated from Greek and Roman philosophy. Riḍā was straightforward in declaring his pragmatic approach in polemics by saying: ‘We might have agreed with the People of the Book and have accepted these *shubuhāt* (allegations) as well, but we establish proofs against them by exploiting them in [defending Islam] in this situation [of polemics].’<sup>96</sup>

## 5.5. Short-lived Like an Apricot: A Missionary Response

The appearance of the Gospel must have been a shock to many Christian believers.<sup>97</sup> Strangely, Riḍā never alluded to any Christian response to his

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>92</sup> *Tafsīr Al-Manār*, vol. 9, p. 245.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 249-250.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 250; italics mine.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>97</sup> Some available studies have examined a few evaluations made by Muslims and Christians afterwards, as well as some recent debates on the Gospel and their impact on Muslim-Christian

undertaking. He only told us one anecdote that happened a few months after its publication, when he was visiting his village in Lebanon. In one of his meetings with Muslims and Christians, one of the Muslim attendants shouted: 'Without you [Riḍā] the status of Islam would never be elevated!' A Christian fellow replied: 'Not only yours, he also published the Gospel for us' – meaning the Gospel of Barnabas. Riḍā and other people laughed. He ironically wrote: 'Ḥabbadhā hadhihī al-Sadhājah ma'ā hadhā al-'Itifāq bayna al-Muslimīn wā al-Naṣārā (how wonderful this naïveté is, as accompanied by harmony among Christians and Muslims)'.<sup>98</sup> 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Antākī (1874-1922), the Greek Orthodox proprietor of al-'Omrān journal in Cairo and a friend of Riḍā, expressed his interest in the Gospel.<sup>99</sup>

Then working in Cairo, Temple Gairdner and his Egyptian fellow-worker Selim 'Abdul-Wāhid wrote a refutation of the Gospel. The authors did not make a straight reference to Riḍā, but their treatise should be seen as a contemporary Christian description of the whole debate. In their own words, they contended:

The name (though not the contents) of this strange book had long been known in India, and was not unknown in Egypt. Though it was only by name, it has been freely cited in these countries by inserted parties, who cited a book they had never seen or read, and almost certainly never would have heard of, except for a chance mention of it in Sale's Introduction of the Qur'ān [...]. Moreover it has been triumphantly cited by the opponents of the Christian religion as the book which most of all confuted the New Testament and demonstrated all that our Muslim friends have alleged against the Christian Book and against Christianity in general. It would seem that such men, therefore, have been guilty of using as one of their valued weapons a book about which they knew nothing other than the name.<sup>100</sup>

As an active member in missionary circles in Egypt, the Muslim convert to Christianity 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Bajūrī sharply reacted to Riḍā's publication of the Gospel in a hitherto unnoticed polemical piece of work under the title *Khūdhāt al-Khalāṣ* (see, introduction). According to Bajūrī himself, he was taught Christian theology by Gairdner, and became keeper at the English missionary Library in Giza. His polemical treatise against the Gospel of Barnabas was

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relations later. See, Leirvik, 'Barnabas'; Goddard (1994); Jan Slomp, 'The Gospel in dispute. A critical evaluation of the first French translation with the Italian text and introduction of the so-called Gospel of Barnabas', *Islamochristiana*, vol. 4 (1978), pp. 67-111; id., 'The pseudo-Gospel of Barnabas, Muslim and Christian Evaluations,' *Bulletin Secretariatus pro non christianis*, vol. 9 (1976), pp. 69-76.

<sup>98</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 11/11, (Dhū al-Qi'ḍah 1326/December 1908), p. 879.

<sup>99</sup> Letter from Antākī to Riḍā, 8 May 1908. More about Antākī, see Sāmī al-Kayyālī, *al-Adab al-Mu'āsir fī Sūriyā*, Cairo, 1959, p. 81.

<sup>100</sup> Ahad and Gairdner, p. 1.

primarily a collection of articles, some of which he earlier published in the Egyptian Christian journals *al-Haqq* ('The Truth') and *Bashā'ir al-Salām* (see, chapter 4). After the publication of the Gospel in Arabic, he immediately approached a certain Ma'zūz Effendi Jād Mikhā'il, a notable Copt from the town Dīr Muwās (the province of Minia, southern Egypt), who showed his enthusiasm to finance the printing of a treatise against the Arabic edition of Riḍā on the condition that the profit should be used to publish another Christian rejoinder to Muslim attacks.

Throughout his whole treatise, Bājūrī did not refer to Riḍā directly by name, except at the end of his work.<sup>101</sup> Like many other Christian Egyptians, Bājūrī often called him the 'intruder Sheikh', whose objective was to enflame the animosity between Islam and Christianity. Besides his attack on the Gospel, he reported many interesting stories about his conversion and the conversion of other contemporary Muslims in Egypt. He maintained that he abandoned Islam after a long-term investigation of the Bible. As he committed himself to the 'service of Jesus', his treatise was a message to the Muslim umma. His intention was to give those 'arrogant' people a lesson if they dared to assault his new religion. In his view, Muslims turned their efforts to attack the essence of Christianity in their magazines instead of reacting to Cromer's writings on Islam.<sup>102</sup>

Bājūrī incorrectly thought that the publisher and translator of the Gospel in English was George Sale. As he had no anxiety that the Gospel would have impact on the English people, the translator published this 'mythical' work in order to teach his Christian fellow-citizens the superiority of their Gospel over such 'invented and futile' books. Unlike the English people, he went on, Muslims of Egypt believed that the authority of religion was above everything, including the freedom of individuals. They became excited when they saw the Gospel in Arabic; and it was, Bājūrī believed, part of the anti-Christian propaganda in the country. He scornfully attacked the 'intruder' by saying that his claim of publishing the Gospel because of its historical significance was only to escape the 'arrows of blameworthiness', as he did that due to the 'hidden fanatic hostility [...] boiling in his head' against Christianity and Paul.<sup>103</sup>

Bājūrī considered it his task to defend the Scriptures, like a 'soldier' in the Kingdom of Christ,<sup>104</sup> just like the Egyptian soldier who had sacrificed himself and saved the Khedive from an assassination attempt in Alexandria. In his view, four reasons must have been behind the 'horrifying evil' which Riḍā made by publishing the Gospel: 1) his conviction that Egyptian Muslims had a tendency to purchase whatever anti-Christian literature; he therefore wanted to gain money without paying attention to the problems which this '*Juḥanammī* (devilish)' work was to cause, 2) as reaction to his feeling of exclusion by Al-Azhar scholars, so he attempted to gain their affection by having published the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-24.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 121.



Gospel, and in order to persuade them that he was serving Islam, 3) his pretence that he was an honest servant of Islam so that the sultan would allow him to return back to his homeland, 4) or his desire to support anti-Christian nationalist papers in Egypt (such as *al-Liwā'* of Muṣṭafā Kāmīl), and to enhance them in their fanaticism and agitation.<sup>105</sup> Bājūrī mockingly described Riḍā as 'the hero of [propagating] discord among the two Egyptian races, Christians and Muslims', and his *Manār* was 'the theater of offenses against Christianity'.<sup>106</sup>

Bājūrī's first chapter firstly appeared in the fifth issue of *al-Haqq* (7 December 1907), which he signed as *Ḥāmīl 'Ār al-Masīḥ wā Ṣalībuh* (or the bearer of Christ's Disgrace and Cross). He believed that his treatise was an 'amputating sword and protective shield' for Christians against the Gospel of Barnabas. Under the title, 'Nazareth and Jesus', Bājūrī mentioned that he had many discussions with some 'dissident [Muslims]' in Giza, who were enthusiastic about the appearance of the Gospel. In his dispute, he used the arguments developed by Gairdner's magazine *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb* that its writer must have been a Westerner, since he was entirely ignorant of the geographical site of Syria and Palestine. The Gospel's notion of Nazareth was, for example, incorrect. In the Gospel, it had been stated that 'Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee, and having embarked in a ship sailed to his city of Nazareth (chapter 20). This picture would represent the city as a harbour on the lake of Galilee, whereas it was a town miles away from the Lake, surrounded by mountains'.<sup>107</sup> A Muslim once disputed Bājūrī and rejected such arguments, and accepted the portrayal of Barnabas, since the 'cursed Christians had changed the name of Nazareth and labeled it on this town surrounded by the mountains in order to contend the Gospel of Barnabas'.<sup>108</sup>

A few months later, Bājūrī published another article (his second chapter) in the above mentioned *Bashā'ir al-Salām*. For him, due to its 'fallacies', the publication of the Gospel would harmfully affect Islam, and its circulation could be a reason behind the conversion of many Muslims to Christianity. He praised Sa'ādeh for his scientific introduction, especially his doubts about the Gospel and its foretelling of Muḥammad by name. As for Riḍā's introduction, he found it 'immature' in 'philosophical' terms, and contained nothing but all kinds of provocation against Christianity. Interestingly, Bājūrī charged Riḍā of seeing no understanding for the significance of *Taqālīd* (customs) in Christianity, just as his resistance against the Islamic concepts, such as *Ijmā'* (consensus), *Taqīd* and *Tawātur*. It was no surprise therefore that he, in a similar sense, would rejoice the 'baseless' Gospel attributed to Barnabas, while

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-31.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-36. Bājūrī headed his chapter with the verse, 'And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong' (Luke 4:29). This was a direct message that Luke should be considered more reliable as it represents the city surrounded by a hill, not a sea.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45.

‘closing his eyes’ away from the fact that the Bible had been transmitted from one generation to another. Bājūrī consequently compared Riḍā’s denial of the Bible to the rejection of the *tawātur* in ḥadīth, the Qur’ān, and prophets. He moreover described Riḍā’s introduction as religiously ‘fanatic’, and based on the illusions of a lunatic Indian who superficially knew [...] the Holy Book [...], and whose fatal poison was the cause of discord among Christians and Muslims’.<sup>109</sup>

In Bājūrī’s opinion, the Gospel of Barnabas contained many contradictions with the Bible and Qur’ān. In the last part of his treatise, Bājūrī traced a hundred chapters (out of 222) from the Gospel and criticised them in the light of his own understanding of Christian and Islamic notions.<sup>110</sup> He complained that his constant shortage of financial resources was the reason why he was not able to publish the remaining chapters in his small book. He therefore requested zealous rich Christians to contact him for the funding of another treatise, if they were interested in seeing his criticisms of the rest.<sup>111</sup>

Bājūrī concluded that Riḍā was not aware of his ‘childish’ act and the grief it caused. According to him, the Gospel became an incentive for many Muslim teachers of Arabic, who spent most of their lessons in mocking at Coptic children in state schools.<sup>112</sup> He saw the publication of the Gospel as an integral part of what he considered as anti-Coptic sentiments in Egypt. In his view, by reviewing the Coptic mouthpiece *al-Waṭan* for the last three years (1905-1908) one would count more than 3000 incidents offending the Copts. Bājūrī warned Egyptian Muslims not to continue their assault on the Christians, as he believed that the British would persist to occupy Egypt and protect its Coptic minority against any aggression. He also expressed his unwillingness to offer any concession by pleading for independence, and leave more space for these nationalist voices to play with the Copts after the British departure.<sup>113</sup> He was therefore seeking for any kind of European protection by writing: ‘we the Copts are in need of the English or any other European state more than during the *Fitna* (strife) of ‘Urābī’.<sup>114</sup>

Bājūrī argued that the writer of the Gospel had inserted the idea that the ‘uncircumcised is worse than dogs’ after his conversion to Islam in order to satisfy Muslims: ‘why the disciples would be disappointed when hearing that [from Jesus], while they were circumcised Jews, and Jesus himself was circumcised!’<sup>115</sup> Another example was the story of Adam according to Barnabas: ‘as the food was going down, he remembered the words of God, and, wishing to stop the food, he put his hand into his throat’ (chapter 40). Bājūrī maintained that such a story had its Islamic origin. He had heard the

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-109.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 109-110.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-116.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

same account from his teacher of the Qur'ān, when he was still a young Muslim, twenty-nine years before the publication of the Gospel in Arabic. This was for him enough evidence that the author of the Gospel was 'hunting' for any common Islamic notions.<sup>116</sup> Bājūrī also compared verses from the Gospel of Barnabas with their Qur'ānic equivalents. Here Bājūrī was trying to find these equivalents by using Sa'ādeh's Arabic text. For example, he compared the verse of the Gospel of Barnabas which stated that 'the flesh [...] alone desireth sin' (chapter, 23), with a Qur'ānic passage maintaining that 'certainly the soul is indeed prone to evil' (Yūsuf, 55).<sup>117</sup>

Bājūrī concluded his treatise by making an interesting parallel that 'each lie [embodied] in the Gospel of Barnabas was a weapon against the simple-minded Christians, but we thank God that it was published out of agitation in the month of May: [... a month] in which flies are very short-lived; and the age of this Gospel will be shorter than flies. Also in May apricot grows up, which is the most short-lived fruit, and this 'deceitful' Gospel will be likewise!'<sup>118</sup>

## 5.6. Conclusion

The Gospel of Barnabas has been examined as part of a continuing Islamic literary tradition in looking for an 'Islamic Gospel' that supported the principal tenets of the Islamic faith. Four stages have been detected in *al-Manār's* search for this gospel: 1) Riḍā's explicit reference to the existence of the Gospel of Barnabas (May 1903), 2) his simultaneous allusion to a copy of a Gospel confirming the coming of the prophet Muḥammad, which had been written in the *Himyarī* script to be found in the Papal Library in the Vatican, 3) his declaration in the same month of the Gospel of Tolstoy as the true one, 4) finally his publication of the Arabic edition of the Gospel of Barnabas, after he had received the translation by the Raggs.

It remains an interesting aspect of the Arabic version of the Barnabas Gospel that it was the product of cooperation between a Christian (albeit with a secular spirit) and a Muslim scholar. We have seen that Sa'ādeh probably did not study any relevant materials related to the historicity of the Gospel, except the conclusions of the Raggs, whose views were deeper and historically more detailed. Riḍā rephrased Sa'ādeh's ideas most of the time without giving any elaborate explanation.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

## Chapter Six

### The Art of Polemics: Tawfīq Ṣidqī's Contributions to *al-Manār* and Riḍā's Use of Them

The present chapter will shed light on the contributions of the above-mentioned Egyptian physician Muḥammad Tawfīq Ṣidqī, who is considered to be the most prolific polemicist in *al-Manār*. In a general sense, the thrust of the approach of Ṣidqī in his polemics was not innovative in the subjects he dealt with. It did not differ much from the earlier Muslim tradition that considered the Holy Scriptures as falsified, but containing many parts which could be used as a source for apologetics in verifying Islamic tenets. Like all Muslim authors in the field, one of his major concerns was to find proofs of Muḥammad's prophethood in the Bible. He extensively selected Biblical passages, which he depicted as inappropriate, and raised many questions about them. From the bulk of these quotations we will select some salient features that are typically of his approach. His treatment sometimes stood apart from the tradition of Muslim earlier writers. The new dimension of his methods, as we shall note, was that he widely made use of the writings of the Rationalist Press Association.<sup>1</sup> In his analysis of Biblical Criticism, he also used his own medical expertise and scientific interpretations, especially on the Christian set of narratives of crucifixion and resurrection.

We have already mentioned that Ṣidqī's stridently articulated views against Christianity and missions brought him into conflict with the colonial authorities, and consequently endangered the existence of *al-Manār*. Ṣidqī's works did not please the contemporary missionary quarterly, *The Moslem World*. In reviewing Ṣidqī's *A View on the Scriptures*, Rev. R. F. McNeile of Cairo wrote that he was not in the least surprised, nor did he intend to complain that an educated Muslim used the methods and results of Biblical Criticism, which to him were wholly incompatible with the belief in an inspired book. He complained about his method, describing it as 'wholly out of date'. In his view, Ṣidqī was ignorant of living scholars, and not a single one of his long list of authorities was a highly recognized scholar of the New Testament. He was only fond of quoting agnostics [...]. In his evaluation, the first part of the book was 'disingenuous', the last part was 'far worse'. He concluded: 'we are ashamed to defile a printed page by repeating his statements [...] we are willing to grant originality to Dr. Ṣidqī in such points, and are tempted to ask whether they are not reflections of a society, or at least the state of mind, to which the uplifting of women, the casting out of devils, is unthinkable. [...] Dr. Ṣidqī is in government employ. What would be the result of a Copt in a similar position,

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<sup>1</sup> About its history, see, Bill Cooke, *Blasphemy depot: a hundred years of the Rationalist Press Association*. London: Rationalist Press Association, 2003.

who published articles one-tenth so revolting to the Moslem as these are to the Christian!”<sup>2</sup>

Riḍā, nevertheless, was proud of Ṣidqī’s polemical contributions. He always saw his replies to missionaries as unprecedented. No previous scholars, according to him, had ever dealt with similar subjects, especially the concept of *Qarābīn* (sacrifices) in previous religions, as his friend did. He constantly recommended Muslims, who used to read works of missionaries or to attend their gatherings, to study Ṣidqī’s works very carefully.<sup>3</sup> In a letter, he enthusiastically told Shakīb Arslān that one of the Chinese Muslim scholars had already translated the work of *‘Aqīdat al-Ṣalb wā al-Fidā*, which he wrote together with Ṣidqī, into Chinese. Without mentioning the Chinese Muslim by name, he added that the translation had been published in his Muslim journal as a response to missionary propaganda in their town.<sup>4</sup> The clue which allows us to identify this Chinese Muslim is Riḍā’s reference to him as one of his *mustaftīs*, who regularly sent *al-Manār* letters concerning the ‘shameful’ situation of Muslims in China. In *al-Manār*, we find a certain ‘Uthmān Ibn al-Hāj Nūr al-Haqq al-Sīnī al-Hanafī, who regularly lamented to Riḍā about the situation of Sino-Muslims and their lack of religious knowledge and piety. He was the director of an Islamic journal in the Chinese province Guangdong. His journal was much influenced by Riḍā’s thoughts, and sometimes published full chapters from *al-Manār* translated into Chinese.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that this al-Hanafī is the one who was committed to translate *‘Aqīdat al-Ṣalb wā al-Fidā*.

### 6.1. Al-Matbūlī of Cairo and the Resurrection of Jesus

When Ṣidqī started publishing his polemics in *al-Manār*, an interesting anecdote spread all over the Cairo of 1912. Both Riḍā and Ṣidqī used the anecdote on a regular basis as a point of departure, and compared it with the story of crucifixion. The Caiene story also appeared as an appendix on the back page of one of Ṣidqī’s works.

According to the Egyptian daily *al-Muqattam* (31 October 1912), a big number of men and women had crowded in the front of the recently built Greek Church downtown in Cairo. The crowds were shouting: ‘O, Matbūlī!’, and some of them were severely wounded. The police was immediately called, and ambulances were carrying people to hospital. The Governor of Cairo, ‘Ibrāhīm Pasha Najīb, came soon to the place. A rumor circulated among the people that Sheikh al-Matbūlī, a holy man buried in the center of Cairo, had been seen standing on the dome of his grave. He then had flown through the air and descended on the building of this Greek Church. A seventy-year old

<sup>2</sup> *The Moslem World*, vol. 4 (1916), pp. 215-216. About more missionary critique of Ṣidqī, see also, Jeffery, ‘Trends’, pp. 311-313.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/12 (Dhū al-Hijja 1330/December 1912), pp. 949-950.

<sup>4</sup> Arslan, *Ikhāṣ*, p. 570.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 31/1 (Muḥarram 1349/May 1930), pp. 75-76. About his questions for *fatwās* in *al-Manār*, see, Riḍā’s response on his questions concerning China as *Dār al-Ḥarb* or *Dār al-Islam*, vol. 31/4 (Jumādā al-‘Ūlā 1349/October 1931), pp. 270-278.

lunatic from Upper Egypt, whose name was Fāris Ismā'īl, had been seen running on the street, wearing green clothes and a turban, shouting: 'I am al-Matbūl'. Seeking his blessing, the people paraded behind him, and started kissing his hands and clothes. The police immediately arrested him, and dispersed the gathering. *Al-Manār* compared this anecdote with the story of the resurrection of Jesus. It drew the attention of its readers to the influence of illusions and false rumors on the minds of laymen and narrow-minded people, especially the women among them. Illusion could also affect the minds of people to the degree that they would see imaginary things.<sup>6</sup>

## 6.2. The Religion of God in His Prophets' Books

### 6.2.1. Jesus as Offering

According to Ṣidqī, the Christians used concepts and events taken from earlier religions in their narratives about Jesus, even though they lacked a historical basis. They tried to show that the 'former' was a proof to the 'later'. Ṣidqī reiterated the words of al-Afghānī that 'the authors of the New Testament tailored a dress from the Old Testament and put it on their Christ'.<sup>7</sup> An example of these was that the exodus of the Children of Israel was a sign of the return of Jesus: 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my son' (Mathew 2:15).<sup>8</sup>

In his understanding, Ṣidqī stated that some Christians used the practice of offerings and sacrifices in previous religions as a token for the crucifixion. He made a critical observation that sacrifices also existed in ancient pagan religions, which had neither known Jesus nor his religion. And since the Mosaic Covenant also included among sacrifices burnt offerings, he argued, did that also refer to the burning of Jesus? And would an animal sacrifice directly refer to the crucifixion? In John (19:32-33) the crucifixion had been described as follows: 'the soldiers [...] brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water'. Medically speaking, Ṣidqī contended, it was impossible that human beings bleed water. The symbolic resemblance between Jesus' death and offerings in previous religions was in that sense absent. Ṣidqī maintained that there was also no logic behind his hanging on the cross for six hours, and leaving him in pain and hunger. The same held true for having been pierced, something which is totally different from the way of slaughtering animals as an offering.<sup>9</sup> In pagan religions, people often brought offerings to please their gods. But 'true religions', according to Ṣidqī, never ordered offerings in order to please or to

<sup>6</sup> Appendix, Ṣidqī, *Dīn Allah fī Kutub Anbyā'ih*, Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1330/1912 (Quoted below, *Dīn*).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 4. Ṣidqī opened his book with some passages from the Bible, such as, 'Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life (John, 5: 39).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-6.

profit God. Their objectives have been stipulated, for instance, to feed the poor and needy or to expiate one's illegal acts.<sup>10</sup>

### 6.2.2. The Crucifixion and Divinity of Jesus in the Old Testament

We have seen that Şidqî renounced any claim or clarification of the crucifixion as having been foretold in the Old Testament. For example, the book of Daniel indicated the restoration and building of 'Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince' (Daniel, 9:24-27). According to Christian interpretation, the prophecy stated the primary mission of Jesus by giving several particulars. According to this passage, Daniel was told that 'seventy weeks' were required to fulfill his petition concerning the restoration of Israel. The seventy weeks, according to many Christian scholars, were seventy 'weeks' of years, which resulted in a period of 490 years, and these referring to the coming of Jesus.<sup>11</sup> Şidqî found this interpretation unconvincing, and placed the prophecy of Daniel in an Islamic context. He argued that as the Israelites had lost the authority on Jerusalem in 132 AD, adding to it 490 years it would mean that the period should have ended in 622, the year of the prophet's migration to Medina. Or it would refer to the year 636, when Muslims conquered Jerusalem. The period of 14 years according to this calculation was left out as an interval period during which the Jews were reposing from the 'injustice' of the Christians.<sup>12</sup> On the basis of the same calculation, Şidqî explained that the revelation to Daniel in the same book 'to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy' (9:24) was again a reference to the prophet Muḥammad as the seal of prophets. 'It was his Caliph Omar, who took authority upon Jerusalem, restored it to God's worship, and lifted up the injustice inflicted upon the Jews'.<sup>13</sup>

Another example was that many Christians argued that there were other prophecies of the crucifixion in the book of Isaiah (chapter 53). Şidqî interpreted the chapter in the same manner: they had no relation to Jesus whatsoever. He attempted to show the 'errors' of the Christians by citing many passages from this chapter, and compared them with other previous ones in the Bible. He concluded that the whole chapter clearly referred to the conquest of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Michael Kalafian, *The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks of the Book of Daniel: A Critical Review of the Prophecy as Viewed by Three Major Theological Interpretations and the Impact of the Book of Daniel on Christology*, New York: University of America Press, Inc., 1991, pp. 107-136; Edward J. Young, *The prophecy of Daniel: a commentary*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1949; William Kelly, *Daniel's Seventy Week*, Colorado: Wilson Foundation, n.d.; Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*. Revised edition, Chicago: Moody Press, 1977; Paul D. Feinberg, 'An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24-27,' S. John and D. Paul (eds.), *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1981, pp. 189-222; J. Randall Price, 'Prophetic Postponement in Daniel 9 and Other Texts,' in W.R. Willis, John R. Master (eds.), *Issues in Dispensationalism*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1994, pp.132-165.

<sup>12</sup> Şidqî, *Dîn*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-18. For further about his analysis of the book of Daniel, see, pp. 20-26.

Jerusalem. It was Jewish converts to Christianity, such as Paul, who had inserted such notions into their new religion by thoroughly applying them to the figure of Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

In the course of his observations, Şidqî turned to refute what he saw as Christian arguments of proving the divinity of Jesus from within the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> Şidqî saw that the Jews had an inherent inclination towards paganism. For instance, they worshipped the golden calf. Their 'affection of paganism' originated from their long-term residence among the pagans of Ancient Egypt and Babylon. This was the reason why they always held their expected Messiah to be a king, who would grant them victory over all nations. Şidqî moreover added that when Jesus declared his Divine mission, such 'pagan doctrines were grown in their hearts'. They tried to worship him in a similar manner, but Jesus constantly opposed them by saying, for example: 'depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Mathew 7:23)' and 'O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord' (Mark, 12:29). Jewish converts and the Romans, therefore, carried their pagan precepts into Christianity, and went on the extreme side by holding the divinity of Jesus as integral part of their new faith. In this context, Şidqî understood the 'exaggeration' in the account of the Jewish historian and apologist Flavius Josephus, who wrote about him: 'Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles' (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, chapter 3/3. Şidqî translated 'Gentiles' as 'Greek' in Arabic).<sup>16</sup> Another account of such exaggeration was of the 'greatest' Jewish convert Paul: 'Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they' (Hebrews 1:4). Şidqî believed that at this precise moment the idea of divinity had not been completely developed in Paul's mind, but he later made it much clearer by putting it bluntly that God had 'raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places [...] and has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church' (Ephesians 1: 17-22).<sup>17</sup>

Şidqî followed his usual procedure by selecting some examples from the Old Testament, which were alleged to implicitly support the belief of the divinity of Jesus. He totally discredited the Christian argument that Isaiah had predicted the divinity of Jesus as the one whose 'name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace', and that the same prophet had predicted that Christ was to order and establish his judgement upon 'the throne of David, and upon his kingdom' (Isaiah, 9: 6-7). Şidqî concluded that Isaiah's prophecy and the attributes he mentioned were only applicable to the prophet Muḥammad as the seal of the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp. 31-32.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-61.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 42-43.



prophets whose followers had ruled over the Holy Land. Supposing that the passage really referred to Jesus, and that people had called him already a ‘mighty god’, it was still not enough evidence for Şidqî on his divinity. It was rather the other way around that it had been a real prediction and warning by Isaiah that the people would contradict the notions of the genuine monotheism, and would turn to worshipping Jesus other than the One God.<sup>18</sup> Şidqî forgot, however, to give more clarification of the phrase ‘mighty god’ in the context of his Islamic interpretation, and how one could understand its application to the prophet Muḥammad from an Islamic viewpoint.

Şidqî argued that all these implicit passages used by the Christians could easily be explained as referring to the message of Islam. Prophecies in the Old Testament were not specific in defining persons by name.<sup>19</sup> Take for example the passage, ‘Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek’ (Psalm 110: 4). This was, according to Şidqî, an allusion to the prophet Muḥammad. Şidqî compared the blessing by Melchizedek of Abraham to the way the Qur’ân respected him. Muslims remember the name of Abraham during their daily prayers. As for the word ‘priest’, Şidqî interpreted it within an Islamic scope. It would directly refer to the prophecy of Muḥammad, since he was the ‘leader of Muslims and their greatest imam, who taught them the religion, judged among them, looked into all of their affairs, led them in their [...] prayers, pilgrimage [...] gatherings and feasts. They [Muslims] imitated him in their sacrifices and in everything [...] He was therefore their greatest ‘priest’ [...] forever.’<sup>20</sup> In Şidqî’s mind, Muḥammad deserved the prophecy, as Jesus had less status than he in regard to all these ‘priestly’ functions. He ironically added that Jesus never practiced any priestly job, but was only portrayed as ‘offering’ in the book of Revelation: ‘the Lamb that was slain to receive power’ (Revelation 5:12).<sup>21</sup> He added that in the same chapter we find testimony to the prophet Muḥammad. ‘The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion’ (110:2) showed that the real kingdom and prophethood would be given to Muḥammad after the Jews and Christians. Jesus himself said it clearly that: ‘the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof’ (Matthew 21:43).<sup>22</sup>

In his polemics, Şidqî was not always consistent. As we have noted, he made use of Josephus’ remark about Jesus as ‘a wise man’ and the conversion of many Jews and Romans to his religion. Now he fell back on accusing the Christians of interpolating many passages in Josephus’ *Antiquities* in order to serve their desires.<sup>23</sup> He followed the arguments of many seventeenth-century critics, who had doubted the authenticity of certain proofs of the *Antiquities* of Josephus (especially book 18) and its reference to Jesus by arguing that it had

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-53.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

been added by a later Christian copyist. There was no indication throughout that whole voluminous work, except this one passage. None of the early Christian Church Fathers, such as Origen, mentioned Josephus as having written about Jesus.<sup>24</sup> According to Şidqî, the situation of the Jews at that time was so fragile and they became 'humiliated' to the degree that the Christians were able to manipulate and change their scriptures.<sup>25</sup>

Şidqî maintained that the authors of the Gospels did not write everything about Jesus and his life. Jesus only spoke about previous prophecies and legislations, and never mentioned anything about history. Şidqî also wondered why Jesus did not rebuke the Jews for their additions in the version of Septuaginta, but reproached them for nullifying the Mosaic Law through their traditions: 'you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down' (Mark 7:13). Şidqî labelled their legislations as temporary, and to be replaced by Islam. Jesus had already alluded to Muḥammad's coming by saying: 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come' (John 16:12-13).<sup>26</sup>

Şidqî intended to prove that the corruption of the scriptures had been dominant since the earliest history of Christianity. Peter, for example, confessed that 'in them there are some things hard to understand that the ignorant and unstable distort to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures' (Peter 2, 3: 16). Paul said the same in Galatians, viz. that 'evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ' (1:7). Şidqî again wondered which 'one was among all these numerous gospels the favourite of Paul to the degree that he called it gospel of Christ: it might have been one of the apocryphal gospels.'<sup>27</sup>

Şidqî made an attempt to reconcile his rejection of the divinity of Jesus with his miraculous birth without a father, which the Christians used as a proof for his supernatural power. In his view, his birth in this way was one of God's countless miracles in His creation. The Divine omnipotence was meant to remove the 'illusions' of Greek philosophy, and to show human beings their inability and to warn them that they should not boast their power. Şidqî argued that people always believed in the impossibility of creating animals without father, but God made the matter different by the creation of Jesus. Modern scholars, he went on, investigated many creatures and found that there are tiny animals, such as aphides (plant lice), which are often found to be parthenogenetic in many generations. It is theoretically possible that the process of parthenogenesis in the same way could produce human beings and mamals. 'It

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<sup>24</sup> Much has been written about 'Testimonium Flavianum'. For the controversy on his testimony of Jesus, see, for example, Alice Whealey, *Josephus on Jesus: the testimonium Flavianum controversy from late antiquity to modern times*, New York, N.Y., [etc.]: Lang, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Şidqî, *Dîn*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

would be crazy', Şidqī wrote, 'to hold such odd examples of creatures as deity. It is just as considering a lady with more than two breasts as a goddess, and worshipping her only because one did never see or hear about someone alike. Or like worshipping a virgin woman who delivered without any intercourse.'<sup>28</sup>

Elsewhere Şidqī gave another medical interpretation of the fatherless birth of Jesus. There was no *Naqlī* (traditional) or *'Aqlī* (rational) objection against making a comparison between the pregnancy of Mary and the exceptional case of somebody like Catherine Hohmann, a masculine hermaphrodite who in her life was said to have a sort of menstruation.<sup>29</sup> However, Şidqī did not mean that Mary was not a feminine: 'it was probable that she had male and female genitals, but her female structure was exceeding [the other]. She bore Jesus, delivered and fed him, if we believe in what the New Testament claimed that she got married after his birth and had children (Matthew 1: 25 & 13: 55)'.<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that the thirteenth-century Qur'ān exegete Abū Bakr al-Qurtubī made a similar portrayal of Mary, which J.I. Smith & Y.Y. Haddad interpreted as that of a kind of hermaphrodite. According to Qurtubī, 'the truth is that when God created Adam and took the covenant with his progeny, He made some of the liquid in the back of fathers and some in the uterus of mothers. When the waters join, a child is formed. God made both waters in Mary, part in her uterus and part in her back. Gabriel blew in order to arouse her desire. A woman cannot conceive unless her desire is aroused. When her desire was roused with the blowing of Gabriel, the water in her back descended to the uterus, and became mixed and then became fertilized.'<sup>31</sup>

Şidqī offered a separate presentation of the Qur'ānic description of Jesus as *kalīma* (Word of God) and its relation to the Christian concept of *logos*. He understood the term as metaphorically pointing to all God's creatures, including Adam and Jesus, as God's *Kalīmāt*. Islam portrayed Jesus in particular, but not Adam, as God's *Kalīma* in order to show the way of his creation, and to rebuff the Christian 'allegation' concerning his divinity and the Jewish 'accusation' of him as an illegitimate child. Another reason, according to Şidqī, was that he, unlike Adam, did other miracles, such as talking in his infancy, and curing the sick. In that sense, Şidqī blamed the Christians that they incorrectly grasped the figurative meaning of the word *logos*. They exaggerated the concept of Jesus by understanding his place as God's *logos* and therefore the creator of all things (John 1:3). Şidqī agreed with the common argument that the Christian tenet of identifying Jesus with the *logos* was derived from Stoic ideas as incorporated in Judaic and Christian thought in the first and second century.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-88.

<sup>29</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 18/4 (Jumadā al-Ākhirā 1333/May 1915), pp. 300-301. See, Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sexual Anomalies*. New York, Emerson Books, Inc., 1944.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>31</sup> J. Smith & Y. Yazbek Haddad, 'The Virgin Mary in Islamic tradition and commentary', *The Muslim World*, 79/3-4 (1989), p. 167. For other Muslim views, see, for example, N. Robinson, 'Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the virginal conception', *Islamochristiana* 14 (1988), 1-16.

<sup>32</sup> About Christianity and Stoicism, see, Ralph Stob, 'Stoicism and Christianity', *The Classical Journal*, vol. 30/4 (January, 1935), pp. 217-224.

Şidqî compared the Islamic rejection of the crucifixion with that by earlier Christian sects, such as the Cerinthians, Carpocratians, Basilidians, and Arians. He did not define his source at this point, but made it clear in the book *‘Aqīdat al-Şalb wā al-Fīdā*, discussed below. He directly quoted the Qur’ān translation by George Sale, who elaborated on this point. Şidqî, however, quoted an anonymous book under the title, *Rihlat al-Rusul* (Travels of the Apostles), which included the acts of Paul, Peter, John, Andrew, and Thomas. He asserted that the account of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople that Jesus was not crucified, but another person instead, was based on that book.<sup>33</sup> It is difficult to trace this source. But it is interesting to know that it was Photius who preserved a fragment from a lost work by the Jewish historian Justus of Tiberius, a native of Galilee, who made no reference to the appearance of Jesus.<sup>34</sup>

### 6.3. The Doctrine of Crucifixion and Salvation

Şidqî mentioned his main arguments about the crucifixion and salvation in Christianity in the book of *‘Aqīdat al-Şalb wā al-Fīdā*, which he co-published with Riḍā. In that work, he expressed his presupposition that some narratives in the Gospels related to the story of the crucifixion were correct. But he tried to make his own reconstruction of the story as an attempt to remove the ‘blur’ from the eyes of his missionary opponents.<sup>35</sup> Instead of propagating Christianity outside Europe, he advised them to go and save their religion from the critique of the rationalistic attacks of their fellow-citizens. If they did not save their religion there, he cynically said, Europe would once entirely leave Christianity aside.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout his statements, Şidqî championed the controversial anonymously published work *Supernatural Religion*, which was later attributed to the above-mentioned English literary figure Walter Richard Cassels.<sup>37</sup> This work attracted wide attention after its publication in 1874. Many scholars began to speculate about the identity of its author. Others heavily responded to its criticism of Christianity. The two Victorian scholar-critics J.B. Lightfoot and Matthew Arnold were among its strongest opponents. Its ‘author managed to maintain his anonymity through more than a decade of wild conjectures, until, finally, in 1895, the *Manchester City News* announced that a Manchester poet,

<sup>33</sup> Şidqî, *Dīn*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Flavius Josephus and Steve Mason, *Life of Josephus*, Leiden: Brill, 2003; Tessa Rajak, ‘Justus of Tiberias’, *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, vol. 23/2 (Nov., 1973), pp. 345-368.

<sup>35</sup> Riḍā-Şidqî, *‘Aqīdah*, p. 88.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91. Cf., Cassels, *op. cit.*; see, W.C. van Manen, *Bovennatuurlijke godsdienst*, Sneek: Brouwer, 1876. More about Cassels, see Alan H. Cadwallader, ‘Male Diagnosis of the Female Pen in Late Victorian Britain: Private Assessments of Supernatural Religion’, *Journal of Anglican Studies*, vol. 5/1 (2007), pp. 69-88. The book is also available at, <http://www.ftarchives.net/cassels/bio.htm>, accessed on 15 September 2007. Şidqî must have made use of the popular edition London: Watts & co., 1902.

Walter R. Cassels, has now avowed himself the author.<sup>38</sup> Being a lay theologian, Cassels drew much from British and continental Biblical scholars past and present, including the works of such German scholars as Eichhorn and Baur.<sup>39</sup>

Most of the classical Muslim commentators understood the Qur'ānic clause *wā lākin shubbiha lahum* (4:157) that the person who was killed was made to resemble Jesus in their eyes. Putting the likeness of Jesus on another person happened according to these interpretations in a miraculous way. They depended mostly on the Prophetic Traditions claiming that it was a loyal disciple of Jesus who volunteered to die in his place. Other Traditions suggested that God caused Judas Iscariot or one of those who were sent to arrest Jesus to appear like Jesus as a punishment for their betrayal.<sup>40</sup>

Şidqī did not follow the lines of the classical *Tafsīr*, and proposed that Judas looked very much like Jesus. He accepted most of the details of the story of the Gospels, but filled in some other details according to his own logic, and to Islamic traditions. Şidqī broached it as a historical matter that the Jewish chief priests became 'jealous' of Jesus, when his message began to attract the people of Jerusalem. They made a deal with Judas to lead the soldiers to arrest him, during his last visit to the city (Mark, 14:43-48). All the disciples of Jesus fled away, except Peter, who later denied his relation with Jesus (Mark, 14:50). Pilate, who presided the trial of Jesus, hesitated to condemn him, but he failed to retreat. After his arrest, Jesus was able to escape, either in a miraculous way or not. (Acts 12:6-10 & 16:25). He probably went to the Mount of Olives (John 8:1, 59; 10:39) in order to hide. As Judas regretted his act, he decided to go and hang himself (Mathew, 27:3-10). Due to their similar physical appearance, the soldiers arrested Judas and led him to prison. They thought that he was Jesus. As they were afraid of punishment, they completely concealed his escape. As it were his last minutes before committing suicide, Judas had become very hysterical. He yielded to death, and decided not to tell the truth about his identity wishing that by saving his master this time his sin would be forgiven. As he was awake the whole night, Judas became very pale and tired, and was not able to carry his cross. For this reason, they ordered Simon to carry it. None of Jesus' disciples was present during the time of the crucifixion, 'except some women beholding afar off' (Mathew, 27:55). Şidqī preferred the explanation that these women failed to recognize the real Jesus because it is always the habit of women to become emotional and tender-hearted in such situations. He rejected the narrative of the fourth Gospel that Mary and John were standing there (John 19:26). Şidqī quoted Renan's critique that it is

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<sup>38</sup> Jerold J. Savory and Matthew Arnold 'The Author of "Supernatural Religion": The Background to God and the Bible', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 16/4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn 1976), p. 681.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, K. Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim. An exploration*, London 1985; M. Ayoub, 'Towards an Islamic Christology II: The death of Jesus, reality or delusion', *The Muslim World*, vol. 70 (1980), pp. 91-121; E.E. Elder, 'The crucifixion in the Qurān', *The Muslim World*, vol. 13 (1923), pp. 242-58.

difficult to ‘understand how the Synoptics, who name the other women, should have omitted her [Mary], whose presence was so striking a feature.’<sup>41</sup> Besides, Şidqî went on with his reconstruction of the story that the standing people were also not well-acquainted with Jesus, as he was not a native inhabitant of the city. Even those who were close to the scene could not grasp Judas’ dissimilarity with him. They must have thought that it was his exhaustion and distress that might have changed his face. According to his medical knowledge, Şidqî argued that many comparable examples occurred, and people became confused when identifying their dead relatives. Such cases could be explained by forensic medicine.<sup>42</sup>

In the evening Joseph of Arimathaea, a disciple of Jesus, secretly asked Pilate for permission to bury the body of Jesus after the crucifixion (John 19:38). In Şidqî’s view, Joseph did not know Jesus before in person. He could not recognize the identity of the crucified man. Even Nicodemus, who helped Joseph during the burial, had seen Jesus only once at night (John 19:39), three years before the crucifixion (John 3: 1-10). In order to remove the humiliation attached to them and render the Jews saddened, Şidqî continued, one or two of the disciples decided to get the corpse of the dead body out of the grave and hid it in another place. In the same way, they also alleged that their Saviour was taken to the heaven.<sup>43</sup> It was until Sunday when Mary Magdalene had told Peter and John that Jesus’ dead body was not in his grave. People consequently started to believe that the body had been raised to the heaven. Şidqî stressed that Mary Magdalene was the only woman who had seen him and spoken to him. Şidqî was certain that the story of the ‘seven devils’ cast upon her after having witnessed Jesus’ rising meant that she became very hysterically nervous (Mark 16:9). She only imagined that there had been two angels talking to her. Such ‘illusive imaginations’ would sometimes occur in the minds of women, who would become emotional and hysterical; especially at the graveyard in the darkness (John 20:1). Şidqî argued that she was not able to determine the right place of his grave. He compared these ‘illusions’ to the above-mentioned Matbûlî incident. The two angels were, in his view, probably the two disciples, dressed in white, who were trying to take the dead body away. This was in agreement with the other report that ‘two men stood by them in shining garments’ (Luke 24:4). The differences between the reports of writers of the Gospels, he went on, lied in their entire dependence on the ‘circulated unorganised rumours’ after the death of Jesus. The disciples became haunted by ‘illusions’ and ‘obsessions’ to the extent that they thought that everybody whom

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<sup>41</sup> Riḍā-Şidqî, *‘Aqīdah*, pp. 104-105. See Chapter XXV: ‘Death of Jesus’. Renan’s work is also available at:

[http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/ernest\\_renan/life\\_of\\_jesus.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/ernest_renan/life_of_jesus.html); &  
[http://www.lexilogos.com/document/renan/life\\_jesus.htm](http://www.lexilogos.com/document/renan/life_jesus.htm); accessed 20 August 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Riḍā-Şidqî, *‘Aqīdah*, pp. 102-103. He quoted William A. Guy & David Ferrier, *Principles of Forensic Medicine*, London 1895.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 113-116.

they had met or with whom they had eaten was Jesus (Mark 16:12, Luke 24:16 and John 21:4-7).<sup>44</sup>

To support his arguments, Şidqî quoted similar examples of illusions mentioned by European psychologists. William Benjamin Carpenter (d. 1885), an English psychologist, reported about the Scottish historical novelist Sir Walter Scott (d. 1832) that, while having been deeply engaged in reading, he had seen his friend Lord Byron, after the latter's death. When he stepped onwards towards the figure, there had been merely a screen occupied by great-coats, shawls, plaids and such other articles.<sup>45</sup> A similar incident also occurred after a fire had broken out in 1866 in the Crystal Palace in London. People fancied an ape trying to escape, but finally they realized that there was nothing.<sup>46</sup>

Returning to his hypothesis on the crucified person, Şidqî maintained that people must have wondered where Judas Iscariot had been. But as they had already known that he was planning to hang himself, it was probable that they had found a dead body whose 'bowels were gushed out (Acts 1:18)' outside Jerusalem. Şidqî believed that it was also possible that this dead body was of Jesus himself, if it were true that he died a natural death after his escape. In that case, God must have raised him up only in the spiritual sense. Şidqî stressed that his disciples, due to their extreme love to him, never thought of his death, just as the companions of the prophet Muḥammad had done after his death.<sup>47</sup> He moreover argued that it was impossible that people would recognize the one to be crucified, as they 'arrayed him in a gorgeous robe' (Luke 23:10) and Jesus 'came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe' (John 19:2). When they crucified him, they divided his garments (Mark 15:24 & Matthew 27:35-36). The fact that he was unclothed at the moment of the crucifixion must have made it more difficult for the attendants to recognize him.<sup>48</sup>

Şidqî suggested yet another scenario of the burial moments of Jesus. It was also probable that Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus became anxious that the Jews would abuse the dead body or leave it to wild animals. After having pretended that they had buried his body, they returned back to the graveyard in order to relocate the body in another grave after having become sure that everybody had already departed. They had made a pledge that they should keep it highly confidential.<sup>49</sup>

The story of his rising up to heaven in the beginning was only confined to his disciples in Jerusalem (Luke 24:33). They would only assemble for a period of eight days while the doors were shut for fear of the Jews (John 20:19 and 26). It was only 50 days later when they were able to publicly gather when the Day of Pentecost had come (Acts 2:1). Şidqî concluded that if they had really

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 101

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 102. William Benjamin Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology with Their Applications to the Training and Discipline of the Mind and the Study of its Morbid Conditions*, New York, 1889. 207-208.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 97-98.

found a dead body, it would have been impossible to identify it after having been decayed.<sup>50</sup> Şidqî rejected the Biblical claim that there were 3,000 souls who ‘gladly received his word and baptized’ (Acts 2:41). The house where the disciples were gathering could only include 120 persons (Acts 1:15). Peculiar to him was the quick reporting to the public from various communities about the Holy Ghost, which began to speak with other tongues. He wondered why the disciples had not written the Gospels in these world languages that were familiar to them so that they would have made it easy for the people to accept the message without translation. It would have also been an eternal miracle to them.<sup>51</sup> Şidqî doubted the reports on the locality of Jesus after his rising. He raised the question if Jesus had really told his disciples that he would go before them into Galilee after his rising (Matthew 26:32 & 28:10), how come that they had met him in Jerusalem (Luke, 24:36-37)? What was the wisdom behind sending them to Galilee?<sup>52</sup>

Şidqî knew of the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (AD 55-120) and his discussion on the crucifixion. For him, Tacitus’ report had been based on the already circulated rumours without any investigation.<sup>53</sup> He was also aware of the ideas of the English humanist F.J. Gould (1855-1938) who denied the story of Tacitus as a forgery.<sup>54</sup> Most of the Roman historians, in Şidqî’s view, had poor knowledge of the history of Jesus. The Romans had never heard of him, except after the spread of Christianity in Italy. Some of them had looked down upon Christianity. For a long time, they had not been able to distinguish between the Jews and Christians, and had been convinced that the god of the Jews was a donkey, or donkey-headed.<sup>55</sup> Şidqî compared the value of such ‘pagan’ works on Christianity with Western writings on Islam in the Middle Ages. He concluded that Muslims should not take these histories into account, as ‘they were valueless and should not be taken as a correct history. They were all based on rumours, inventions, illusions and lies without taking the least trouble in investigating [Christian] history.’<sup>56</sup>

#### **6.4. Şidqî’s View on the Scriptures of the New Testament and Christian Doctrines**

Şidqî published his last polemical work in 1913. Under the title *A View on the Scriptures*, he repeated the testimony made by some early Christian writers, such as Papias, Irenaeus and Eusebius on the history of the four Gospels. Irenaeus of Lyons, for example, mentioned that Matthew wrote his Gospel in

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 132-133.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. See, Frederick James Gould, *A Concise History of Religion*, 3 vols., London, Watts & Co., 1893-1897, vol. 3, p. 22.

<sup>55</sup> See, for instance, Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician: Charlatan or Son of God?*, London, 1978, pp. 81-82.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.



Hebrew or Aramaic. According to him, an anonymous translator took this version and arranged the Greek version.<sup>57</sup> The circulation of these Gospels, in Şidqī's view, did not inhibit the Christians to attempt to twist many parts of them. Although the concern of many of these translators was to prove ancient prophecies on Jesus, they were not aware that their insertion of such elements would make them 'blind' about other problematic issues. For example, they had inserted the statement of Jesus 'saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matthew, 27:46), only in order to apply to what they saw as a prophecy in the Psalms: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (22:1). They did not take into account that this would be a sign of weakness, inability and despair. Şidqī developed his ideas on the basis of a study of the Protestant writer W.T. Turton, who, in his eyes, was a defender of the truth of Christianity.<sup>58</sup> In his work, Turton wrote: 'it would have weakened the force of Prophecy enormously, since, in the absence of ancient manuscripts, the assertion that the old Jewish prophecies had been tampered with, to make them suit their Christian interpretation, would be difficult to disprove.'<sup>59</sup> Şidqī added that the reason why the Christians did not reform these mistakes was the dominant ignorance in ancient times, and the belief that without these matters one's belief would have been invalid. In his words, it was 'only because of their fear of disgrace and shame that they did not dare to change all these mistakes in their scriptures nowadays. This would also have saved them *al-Qīl wā al-Qāl* (prattle)'.<sup>60</sup>

Şidqī rendered the vast majority of the material in the New Testament as inauthentic. He maintained that the Twelve Apostles did not write important things on the history of Jesus. Eight of them had never reported anything on his life. He belittled the contribution made by the other four. For instance, Peter was, in his view, a man of weak personality, and because of many negative incidents he could not be trusted. Jesus, for instance, rebuked him 'saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men' (Mark 8:33). Paul blamed him for having faltered the Jews and having lived after their manner (Galatians 2:11-14). Above all, during the Last Supper, Jesus foretold that Peter would deny association with him three times in that night.<sup>61</sup>

Like all other Muslim polemicists, Şidqī held the common view that the prophecy of the Paraclete had a direct relation to the prophet Muḥammad. In addition, he quoted the theory of the *Pagan Christs* of the British rationalist journalist John M. Robertson (d. 1933), who had pointed to the emergence of the concept of Paraclete in Christian circles in Asia Minor. The figure of Mani was declared to have called himself the Paraclete promised in the Christian

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<sup>57</sup> Şidqī, *Nazrah*, pp. 2-12.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>59</sup> Turton, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

<sup>60</sup> Şidqī, *Nazrah*, p. 51.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-54.

gospel.<sup>62</sup> Another, Montanus, in Asia Minor had claimed to be inspired by the Paraclete.<sup>63</sup> The critique of Robertson and others, in Şidqī's view, would support the argument of al-Qairanāwī that the Christians during the time of the Prophet were expecting the coming of another prophet who was to confirm the message of Jesus.<sup>64</sup>

Şidqī detected that the Gospels sometimes exaggerated the limits of power of the disciples. They ascribed to them a certain Divine capacity or supernatural powers. Jesus was reported, for example, to have addressed them 'Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained' (John 20: 23). Şidqī repeated Riḍā's above-mentioned stance that such instructions in the Gospel could be an indirect call to the believers to commit sins lavishly, while resting assured that they would be forgiven. It was also impossible that those human disciples would have the power to get into the intention of everybody to ascertain his sincerity of repenting. This promise given to them by Jesus, in Şidqī's polemics, indicated that the will of the disciples was more effective than anybody else, including God himself. He went further by attacking these notions to be the *raison d'être* why 'clergymen' in the European Middle Ages had systematically murdered people during the period of Inquisition. The sacralization of such doctrines was the cause of their corruption and tyranny. Şidqī recapitulated his astonishment that these notions contradict the other verses in which Jesus himself made it clear that he had no capacity to forgive, except 'for whom it is prepared of his Father' (Matthew 20: 23). Likewise absurd to Şidqī were the accounts on Jesus' promise to the disciples that they 'shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you' (Matthew 17: 20). This meant that they left nothing for God to carry out in the universe. According to him, the spread of such concepts among people was the direct motive behind the urgency of sending the Prophet Muḥammad with his message in order to bring people back to the real conception of monotheism.<sup>65</sup>

Şidqī challenged his opponents by saying that the Divine wisdom behind the difference of opinions among the Christians and the various sects before Muḥammad was to satisfy human minds with reasonable investigation and thinking, which would promote their readiness to accept the Islamic doctrine after a long period of longing for the truth. As it was the final message, the Muslim umma was never to go astray from the truth. If it were misled, he contended, a new revelation should be needed. But it was the Divine will to send Muḥammad as the seal of prophets as the climax of progress of the human mind.<sup>66</sup> Had God willed that their scriptures would continue to be the

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<sup>62</sup> John M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs: Studies in Comparative Hierology*, London, 1903, p. 268. Cf. for more critical study on the concept of Paraclete according to these sects, see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 62-69.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>64</sup> Şidqī, *Nazraḥ*, pp. 77-78. Cf., al-Qairanāwī, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 149-150.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 108-110.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 113-115.

criterion, he went on, He would have preserved them unimpaired like the case of the Qur'ān. However, God had ordained that some parts should remain in them, which contained true doctrine, sermons and high values.<sup>67</sup>

Medieval Muslim polemicists developed some linguistic analysis in understanding the Christian concept of the Sonship of Jesus. They repeatedly attempted to explain to their Christian counterparts that Jesus' Sonship was a metaphor.<sup>68</sup> In the same manner, Ṣidqī ascribed the Jewish and Christian usage of the words 'Father' and 'Children of God' to the fact that people in the historical context of revelation had been feeble-minded. They would have never understood the logic behind the Divine message except by means of allegories and similes. Their scriptures used such terms in order to describe God as merciful and forgiving. Soon after the death of Jesus, Ṣidqī went on, people had begun to believe in the Sonship in the literal sense. He referred to the early Christian and apologist Justin Martyr, who justified the worship of Christ on the basis of certain passages from the Old Testament.<sup>69</sup> This 'erroneous' understanding of the metaphoric meaning of the word 'Son' was, in Ṣidqī's mind, substantiated by the fact that early Christian theologians had mixed their doctrines with ancient foreign philosophies.<sup>70</sup> Ṣidqī added a new Islamic concept to the discussion by stressing that God did not metaphorically use such words as father and son in the Qur'ān because it became well-known among people that they were harmful from a doctrinal point of view. It became therefore useless to use them again, as it might have got 'silly-minded' people back to the doctrine of paganism once again. God, therefore, replaced the word 'Father' in the Qur'ān with many other words and phrases that closely portray the reality of His entity, such as *Ra'ūf* (compassionate) and *Raḥīm* (merciful). The prophet put it clearer in one of his ḥadīths by metaphorically saying that all created human beings are God's *Iyāl* (children), and that God is more compassionate to his creatures than the mother to her children. Ṣidqī was convinced that people in the time of the Prophet were more advanced than earlier generations, and could easily grasp the meaning of God's mercy without the instrument of allegory.<sup>71</sup>

Ṣidqī maintained that when the Church seized power in the Middle Ages, it saw that any rational investigation would endanger its position and lead people to discard specific Christian doctrines. For this reason, it tried to dishearten the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 116-117.

<sup>68</sup> Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, 'Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics against Christianity', *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 89/1 (January, 1996), pp. 79-80.

<sup>69</sup> Much has been written about Justin Martyr, see, for example, George H. Gilbert, 'Justin Martyr on the Person of Christ', *The American Journal of Theology*, vol. 10/4 (October, 1906), pp. 663-674; Otto A. Piper, 'The Nature of the Gospel According to Justin Martyr', *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 41/3 (July, 1961), pp. 155-168; Charles H. Cosgrove, 'Justin Martyr and the Emerging Christian Canon. Observations on the Purpose and Destination of the Dialogue with Trypho', *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 36/3 (September, 1982), pp. 209-232; J. E. Morgan-Wynne, 'The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience in Justin Martyr', *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 38/2 (January, 1984), pp. 172-177.

<sup>70</sup> Ṣidqī, *Nazrah*, pp. 137-146.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 147-149.

human *Fiṭrah* (nature) by forbidding reading some religious texts. In his view, people were able to read these banned books only thanks to Protestantism. He believed that those Western scholars, who studied the Bible critically, were a product of Protestantism. He expected that although there would remain some defenders of Christianity in Europe, the critical scholars of the Bible would one time reject the authenticity of the Scriptures altogether.<sup>72</sup>

## 6.5. Riḍā's Reflection

Riḍā published his reflections on the same subjects together with Ṣidqī in the above-mentioned *‘Aqīdat al-Ṣalb wā al-Fidā*. According to him, the Qur’ānic reference to the crucifixion was meant to be a severe censure of the claims of the Jews. Their offence and rudeness with regard to Jesus had originated from the fact that he declared himself a new prophet. For Riḍā, the Gospels explicitly mentioned that Jesus repeatedly confirmed his prophecy and the oneness of God: ‘Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent’ (John 17: 3).<sup>73</sup>

In his interpretation of the passage *wā mā qatalūh yaqīnan* (for sure they killed him not), Riḍā argued that the Gospel of Barnabas made it clear that it was Judas Iscariot upon whom God put the likeness with Jesus. Riḍā used Ṣidqī’s argument that there was no dispute that the soldiers did not know Jesus in person either, but he gave another metaphoric interpretation to the word *qatala*. It did not mean ‘kill’ or ‘slay’, but should be seen as comparable to the Arabic usage of the word in the phrase, *qaltu al-sha’ya baḥṭhan* (I have studied something thoroughly). The verse could therefore denote that they followed their uncertainty without trying to reach any kind of sure knowledge. Riḍā did not entirely reject the Muslim interpretation that it had been Judas or another person who got the likeness with Jesus. In collecting their arguments, Muslim exegetes depended mostly on the narratives of Jewish and Christian converts to Islam, but did not pay any attention to the premises of the story told in the Christian scriptures.<sup>74</sup>

Regarding the Qur’ānic reference to the ‘raising’ Jesus, Riḍā drew upon ‘Abduh’s exegesis of the verse, ‘When God said, ‘O Jesus, I am the One who will take you and raise you to me and cleanse you from those who disbelieve’ (Al-‘Imrān, 3:55). ‘Abduh’s interpretation of the Arabic phrases *innī Mutawāffika wā rāfi‘uka* differed much from most of the early Muslim commentators. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, explained that Jesus was taken by God in his sleep. He hinged on the ḥadīth in which the Prophet was reported to have said: ‘Jesus did not die and he will not return to you before the Day of Judgement’. The whole passage would thus mean: ‘I am the One who collected

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Riḍā-Ṣidqī, *‘Aqīda*, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

you (*mābiḍuka*) from the earth and raised you from among the idolaters and those who disbelieved in you.<sup>75</sup>

In her *Qur'ānic Christians*, J.D. McAuliffe studied the interpretation of 'Abduh (which Riḍā followed) on that Qur'ānic verse. Her analysis can be accepted in a general sense, but she has sometimes failed to understand the technical language of *Tafsīr al-Manār*.<sup>76</sup> 'Abduh maintained that some commentators interpreted *mutawaffika* as 'causing you to sleep', others explained the phrase that Jesus was collected from the earth to heaven alive in body and spirit; but the majority of the commentators paraphrased it as 'I rescued you from those aggressors so that they could not kill you. Rather I caused you to die a natural death (*umītuka ḥatfā anfik*) and then raised you to Me.'<sup>77</sup> The key to a more proper interpretation, according to 'Abduh, lies in the conjunctive *wā*, which does not point to the order of the actual event (*al-Tartīb fī al-Wujūd*). Both 'Abduh and Riḍā tended to accept the alternative interpretation that *al-Tawaffī* overtly meant causing to die in the usual sense of death. The *raf'* (raising) afterwards denoted a 'raising' of the soul: 'it is not odd to speak of an individual, meaning only his soul. Because the soul (*al-Rūḥ*) is the true essence of a man, while the body is like a borrowed garment. It increases and decreases and changes. But the human being is human because his soul persists.'<sup>78</sup> 'Abduh explained the ḥadīth referring to the bodily raising of Jesus and his eventual return before the Last Day to preach the message of Islam and judge among people with Islamic law into two ways. First of all, all prophetic traditions referring in this regard had been transmitted in an *aḥād* (narrated by a small number people) way; and *al-'Umūr al-'Iṭiqādiyya* (the doctrinal matters) should not be taken on the basis of such traditions. As a doctrinal issue, the raising or the return of Jesus should be only taken through the *mutawātir* ḥadīth.<sup>79</sup> Secondly, the verse could be understood as referring to the spiritual triumph (*al-Ghalaba al-Rūḥiyya*) of Jesus:

The Messiah did not bring a new law to the Jews: he brought them something which would prize them from their inflexibility over the external signification of the words of the Mosaic Law and set them to understanding it clearly in its real meaning. He instructed them to observe this true essence and to do whatever would draw them to the

<sup>75</sup> McAuliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 131. For more interpretations, see, pp. 132-141.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 142. Take for example her translation of the Arabic term *Nuktaḥ Balāghīyya* as 'joke'. Although the word *nuktaḥ* means in another context 'joke', it refers here to a technical term in the science of *Balāghah* (Arabic rhetoric). It is any word specifying the hidden meaning of the phrase or the sentence.

<sup>77</sup> *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol. 3, p. 261. Translation is McAuliffe's, *ibid.*, p. 142. A.H.M. Zahner, 'The forms of *tawaffī* in the Qur'ān, a contribution to Christian-Muslim dialogue', *The Muslim World*, vol. 79 (1989), 14-24.

<sup>78</sup> McAuliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>79</sup> *Tafsīr al-Manār*, p. 261. McAuliffe skipped this point altogether.

world of the spiritual by paying great heed to the complete fulfilment of religious obligations.<sup>80</sup>

Riḍā shifted to give an interpretation of the verse: ‘And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before *his* death; and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them’ (al-Nisā’, 159). Some exegetes defined the pronoun *his* in the verse as referring to Jesus. This meant therefore that all of them would believe in Jesus before his death because he would be still alive in heaven. In Riḍā’s view, the pronoun referred to the person who would believe in Jesus, but not to Jesus himself. In other words, everybody among the People of the Book, before his own death, would witness the truth about Jesus. Riḍā’s understanding of the verse in this manner was closely related to the Muslim eschatological point of view that everybody would witness his final destination of *al-Thawāb* (reward) or *al-‘Iqāb* (punishment) during the last moments before his death. Riḍā quoted the prophetic traditions that clearly pointed out that the believer will receive the good tidings about God’s contentment before his death, on the other hand the unbeliever will be told about God’s torture and punishment. The angels consequently will address those who are about to die about the truth of Jesus. Riḍā attempted to prove his interpretation in the light of the Qur’ānic verse indicating that when Pharaoh was overwhelmed with the flood, he confessed his belief (Yūnus, 90).<sup>81</sup>

Riḍā made it clear that the belief in the murder and the crucifixion of Jesus at the outset is not needed for Muslims. Disbelief in it would not decrease Muslim knowledge of Christian ethics or history. It were the Christians who took it as the basis of their faith. Riḍā only criticised it because the Christians made it a point of departure in their attacks against Islam, especially when they found the Qur’ān abhorrently condemning it.<sup>82</sup>

### 6.5.1. Riḍā Discussing Crucifixion in a Missionary School

In his commentary on these verses, Riḍā recalled his early contact with missionaries, when he arrived in Cairo. Once he passed by the above-mentioned English Missionary School (situated at Muḥammed ‘Alī Pasha Street). A missionary was standing at the entrance of the school asking people to come in and listen to the word of God. When Riḍā was invited in, he saw many people sitting on wooden benches. A missionary preacher stood up and started to address his audience by dwelling on the question of Crucifixion and the Original Sin.<sup>83</sup> Riḍā related the words of the preacher without giving any elaboration on the Christian theological interpretations of the concept of the Original Sin as such. In the missionary’s words, human beings were born sinful and deserve punishment because of the Adamic guilt. It was a ‘dilemma’ for

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<sup>80</sup> McAuliffe, p. 143.

<sup>81</sup> Riḍā-Ṣidqī, *‘Aqida*, 12-14.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 18-19.

God, Who was supposed to be characterized by justice and mercy. If He were to punish Adam and his offspring, it would contradict His mercy. If not, it would not correspond with His justice. Since the creation of Adam, God had been ‘thinking’ of solving the problem by finding a way to combine mercy with justice. It was only 1912 years ago (from the year Riḍā wrote his treatise), when He found this solution by incarnating His only son in the womb of a woman from Adam’s offspring. This son was destined to live and bear the pain of crucifixion in order to salvage human beings.<sup>84</sup> As soon as the missionary finished his sermon, Riḍā stood up and asked: ‘If you have gathered us in this place in order to convey to us this message out of mercy and compassion to us, would you allow me to clarify the effect of your sermon on me?’ The preacher allowed him. Riḍā took the position of the preacher and started to refute the contents of the sermon by raising six points for discussion. According to Riḍā, his missionary counterpart was not able to give any answer, but made it clear that their school was not a place for debating. Those who were interested in debating were asked to go to their library. Riḍā proudly relates that the audience was shouting: ‘There is no God, but Allah and Muḥammad is His messenger!’<sup>85</sup>

During this discussion, Riḍā identified some theological problems surrounding the man’s sermon. He recapitulated his amazement at how it was possible that the Maker of the world would be failing to find a solution to this predicament for thousands of years. Those who believe in this doctrine, he went on, do not seek the least of rationality behind their faith.<sup>86</sup> Riḍā was dismayed that the Maker of the universe would be incarnated in the womb of a woman, who had the tiniest place in His kingdom. The outcome was a human being, who was eating, drinking and being tired to the extent that he was slain in humiliation with thieves.<sup>87</sup> Likewise scandalous to Riḍā was the suggestion that God had to leave Jesus to his enemies who tortured him and stabbed him, even though he was guiltless. The divine toleration of their acts would significantly contradict the concept of mercy and justice, which the Christians sought behind the doctrine.<sup>88</sup> For Riḍā, the concept of forgiveness never contradicted the Divine justice and perfection. Riḍā made a parable that any master who forgives his guilty slave is never described as unjust. Forgiveness is, on the other hand, one of the most excellent virtues.<sup>89</sup>

### **6.5.2. Reward and Salvation in Islam**

After having recalled this discussion in the missionary school, Riḍā recurred to discuss the infallibility of prophets, which he had already discussed in the *Shubuhāt*. It was again a reaction to the missionary claim that the prophet

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 17-18.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 20-21.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-23.

Muḥammad took the place of Jesus in Islam as redeemer for Muslims. Riḍā was frustrated by their propaganda among the simple-minded Muslims that Jesus had never committed a sin. As in the case of Muḥammad, we are left with some reports that he did make mistakes. According to him, the sinful was never capable of saving his followers from any sin.<sup>90</sup>

Riḍā argued that Islamic instructions in this regard were superior to the Christian doctrine of the crucifixion. In his words, as it never encouraged its followers to exert efforts towards good deeds in order to be saved, this doctrine made people lax in blindly relying on something that had ‘corrupted their minds and ethics. He stressed that the light of knowledge and independence, which was originally taken from Islam, liberated the whole Europe from it.<sup>91</sup> Despite Riḍā’s deep belief in the sinlessness of all prophets (including Jesus and Muḥammad), he was convinced that his Christian addressees were not able to produce any *‘Aqlī* (rational) or *Naqlī* (traditional) proofs from within their religion. Very suspicious about their way of transmission, Riḍā maintained that the Christian scriptures had no explicit texts telling us that a big number of the followers of Jesus had accompanied him in every minute of his life so that they could have given their testimony that he never lapsed in sin in his whole life. In accordance with Islamic theology, Riḍā differentiated between the Arabic usage of *Khatī’ah* (guilt or fault) and *Dhanb* (sin). As for the former, it never happened from the part of prophets, since it included all acts of divergence by committing what God prohibits, and shunning from what he commands. The latter concept was derived from *Dhanab al-Ḥayawān* (the tail of animal) because it refers to any act that entails unpleasant and opposing results. All prophets would have made this kind of mistakes. An example of these was the prophet Muḥammad’s permission to the Hypocrites not to join him in the Expedition of Tabūk (or the Expedition of Distress, circa 630 AD), when they decided to stay behind in Medina. In Riḍā’s view, such acts – even though a *dhanb* in the literal sense – could not be considered as a *khatī’ah*, which might prevent human beings from deserving the Kingdom of God and His eternal reward.<sup>92</sup> However, he pointed out that such issues did not represent the core of the Islamic doctrine; and their rejection would bring no harm. For Riḍā, the Muslim criterion of salvation and eternal pleasure in the Hereafter was only accomplished by means of purifying one’s soul from all ‘false’ pagan dogmas and performing good and virtuous acts in this world.<sup>93</sup> This kind of purification does not mean that the believer should be fully infallible from committing any mistake; but he should always wipe off these mistakes by showing remorse: ‘It is like one’s house which one regularly sweeps and wipes by using all cleaning methods. Whenever any dust or filthiness touches it, one would immediately

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 27.



remove it away [...] Clean houses have sometimes little dust and filthiness, which could be easily removed.<sup>94</sup>

### 6.5.3. A Pagan Nature of the doctrines of Crucifixion and Salvation?

Riḍā remarked that many Christians had personally confessed to him that such doctrines as the crucifixion, Salvation and Trinity could never rationally be proved. Their mere support originated from the Holy Scriptures with which they must comply regardless their rationality or irrationality. In Islam, he further argued, there was no fundamental doctrine that did not conform to rationality, except some reports on the ‘unseen world’, which cannot be proven by means of human reason independently. But their occurrence cannot be denied, as they are considered as *Mumkināt* (possibilities).<sup>95</sup>

Riḍā reiterated the arguments of the above-mentioned Ṭāhir al-Tannīr verbatim. As we have mentioned, Tannīr drew parallels between various Christian doctrines and other doctrines held in antique religions. As for the crucifixion, he also quoted other sources, such as a piece of work by the nineteenth-century rationalist Thomas William Doane who argued that ‘the idea of salvation through the offering of a God as a sacrifice is very ancient among the pagan Hindus and others.’<sup>96</sup>

### 6.5.4. An Illusive Crucifixion?

As continuation to his reflection on the crucifixion, Riḍā occasionally drew from the arguments of Ṣidqī, sometimes with no differentiation between Ṣidqī’s and his. Riḍā doubted the soundness of the Christian narratives on the crucifixion as lacking the quality of *tawātur*. Riḍā took pride in the status of the *tawātur* in Islam. For him, historical reports acquire this specific attribute, when they are related after the agreement of a large group of narrators, whose collusion to lie over the narration is impossible. In order to avoid any doubt, the absence of collusion and error should be also testified from the side of this multitude of informers.<sup>97</sup> The fact that Mary Magdalene and other women, for example, had been in doubt about the crucified person violated the conditions of *tawātur*.<sup>98</sup>

Riḍā challenged the Christians to prove the *tawātur* of their Scriptures in that sense. He also distrusted the reliability and the holiness, which the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 32. ‘The idea of expiation by the sacrifice of a god was to be found among the Hindoos even in Vedic times. The sacrificer was mystically identified with the victim, which was regarded as the ransom for sin, and the instrument of its annulment. The Rig - Veda represents the gods as sacrificing Purusha, the primeval male, supposed to be coeval with the Creator.’ T. W. Doane, *Bible myths and their parallels in other religions*, New York : Commonwealth Co, circa 1882, p. 181.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-36

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

Christians ascribed to their Scriptures. He found no evidence whatsoever on their internal infallibility or the infallibility of their writers. The same held true for the synods which had been established to authorize them. The fact that the Qur'ān has been narrated by the way of *tawātur* was a more reliable foundation for faith than their non-*mutawātir* books. Riḍā warned Muslims not to believe in the missionary propaganda that their Scriptures had been transmitted without interruption since the time of Jesus, and that all Christian sects had accepted them with no difference. Riḍā drew the attention of common Muslims to the fact that Islam, unlike Christianity, was born in the 'cradle' of power, civilization and culture. In that milieu the Qur'ān was preserved.<sup>99</sup>

Riḍā retold Ṣidqī's arguments regarding the alleged prediction in the Old Testament of the crucifixion.<sup>100</sup> He also repeated his ideas concerning the confusion of the soldiers, who had led Jesus to his prison. Riḍā used his own experience as an argument. Often, he would greet strange people confounding them with his friends. But after having talked to them, he would recognize that they were not his friends. Riḍā quoted from the same medical work used by Ṣidqī. Besides, he cited another incident mentioned in the afore-mentioned educational French work, *L'Émile du dix-neuvième siècle*, that it has been attested that people would sometimes be confused in recognizing others who have similar appearance.<sup>101</sup> Unlike Ṣidqī, who mainly interpreted the confusion about the crucifixion from a medical and scientific point of view, Riḍā repeated the classical Muslim view that it was primarily caused by a Divine supernatural act, when God put the likeness of Jesus upon another man and changed his appearance. For this reason, he was able to escape unseen.<sup>102</sup> Riḍā tried to substantiate this Islamic viewpoint on the basis of passages from the New Testament. He alluded, for example, to Jesus' words to his followers that 'a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world' (John 16:32-33). This was a prediction of what Matthew stated when he said that 'all the disciples forsook him, and fled' (Matthew 26:55) (See also, Mark 14:50).<sup>103</sup>

The preferable alternative, in Riḍā's eyes, was the narrative of the crucifixion as told in the Gospel of Barnabas. He added that if it were true that Judas Iscariot had plans to commit suicide and had later completely disappeared, Riḍā argued, it could mean that it was him who had been crucified. Giving up himself to the soldiers must have been much more undemanding than to commit suicide. In Riḍā's mind, it was also reasonable that when Judas

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-39. Riḍā mentioned many examples of why Muslims should not take the reliability of these Scriptures for granted. Most of these examples were quoted from Ṣidqī's arguments. There is no need therefore to repeat them. See, pp. 39-44

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 44

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 46

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-49.

witnessed the Divine Providence having saved his master, he must have instantly perceived how grave his infidelity was. He therefore submitted himself to death in order to have his sins wiped off. Riḍā compared the escape of Jesus with that of the prophet Muḥammad before his migration to Medina, when the Meccans fell asleep in front of his house and did not perceive him passing by.<sup>104</sup>

Riḍā held the same view as Ṣidqī that the whole event of the crucifixion was based on illusions and rumors. It was only the ‘hysterical’ Mary Magdalene, who was touched by the ‘seven devils’, who had witnessed the Resurrection and claimed to have talked to Jesus. After having heard the story, the disciples circulated it among the common people. Riḍā clarified all that happened as something that normally occurs to people in the situation of ‘nervous excitement’, such as fear, sorrow or thirst. In these circumstances people sometimes imagine that other persons are talking to them. This could also be compared to things happening in dreams and visions.<sup>105</sup>

Similarly to Ṣidqī, Riḍā made the interesting remark that all reports related to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus looked much like the supposed imaginary visions appearing to *sūfī* figures occasionally. An example of these was the occurrence, which took place in the Moroccan city Fez, and was narrated by the writer of the well-known eighteenth-century influential *sūfī* work *al-Dhahab al-ʿIbrīz*.<sup>106</sup> The author related a story on the authority of his master that a butcher lost one of his most beloved children, and remained overwhelmed by the presence of that child in his thoughts day and night. He once went to Bāb al-Futūḥ (a famous gate in Fez) in order to purchase sheep. While he was thinking about his dead son, he saw all of a sudden the boy standing beside him. The man claimed that he was really asking his son to seize the sheep till he would buy another one. When the surrounding people asked him about whom he was speaking to, the butcher retrieved his consciousness once again. The son disappeared. ‘None knew exactly’, the author concluded, ‘what occurred inside him out of longing to his child, except God the Almighty.’<sup>107</sup>

Riḍā mentioned another example about an elderly lady from his hometown al-Qalamūn who often saw the dead and talking to them. A brother of hers, who had drowned, was her most habitual companion in conversation. Riḍā and others were almost sure that the lady was not lying or swindling her story, for

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-57.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>106</sup> Riḍā did not define the writer by name. But it is obvious that he referred to *al-Ibrīz min Kalām Sayyidī al-Ghawth ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dabbāgh*, which was authored by the Mālikite jurist Aḥmad ʿIbn al-Mubārak al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1742). In his unpublished work, ‘al-Ḥikmā al-Sharʿiyyā’, Riḍā criticized many points of this work. See, *al-Ibrīz*, edited by Muḥammad ʿAdnān al-Shammā, 2 vols, Damascus, 1st edition, 1986. See also the French translation of Zakia Zouanat, *Paroles d’or Kitāb al-Ibrīz, enseignements consignés par son disciple Ibn Mubārak al-Lamī, du Relié*, 2002. More about al-Ibrīz, see, Valerie J. Hoffman, ‘Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 31/3 (Aug., 1999), pp. 351-369.

<sup>107</sup> Riḍā-Ṣidqī, *Aqida*, p. 65. Riḍā quoted the story from Sijilmāsī’s, vol. 2, p. 72.

she was overwhelmed by that experience.<sup>108</sup> Adding to these examples, Riḍā now glossed long citations from the Arabic translation of Gustave Le Bon's work *Psychologie des foules*,<sup>109</sup> especially on the author's ideas concerning 'the suggestibility and credulity of crowds'. In his works, Le Bon put more emphasis on mass movements in general, and appealed more directly to the sensibilities of the middle class.<sup>110</sup> Riḍā quoted his particular ideas on how the community thinks in images, and the image itself instantaneously calls up a series of other images of no connection with the former. The ways in which a community distorts any event which it witnesses must be manifold, since the temperaments of individuals composing the gathering are very different. The first perversion of the truth affected by one of the individuals of the gathering is the starting-point of the contagious suggestion. The miraculous appearance of St. George on the walls of Jerusalem to all the Crusaders was certainly perceived in the first instance by one of those present, and was immediately accepted by all.<sup>111</sup> Another example of these 'collective hallucinations' had been related by Julian Felix, a naval lieutenant, and was cited by the *Revue Scientifique*. The French frigate, the Belle Poule, was cruising in search for the cruiser Le Berceau, from which she had been separated as a result of violent storm. It was daylight and in full sunshine. Everybody on board signaled a disabled vessel with many officers and sailors, who were exhibiting signals of distress. But it was nothing but a collective hallucination. When Admiral Desfosses had lowered a boat to rescue the wrecked sailors, they saw masses of men in motion, stretching out their hands and screaming. Finally, they discovered that it was only a few branches of trees covered with leaves, which had been carried from the neighboring coast.<sup>112</sup> Le Bon mentioned another example, which he read in the newspapers about the story of two little girls, who had been found dead in the Seine. Half a dozen witnesses recognized both of them. On the basis of these affirmations, the *juge d'instruction* had the certificate of death drawn up. During the procession of their burial, people discovered that the supposed victims were alive. They also had remote resemblance to the drowned girls.<sup>113</sup>

Riḍā argued that if it were possible in the opinion of those psychologists (which he called philosophers) that people can be affected by their imagination to this extent, it should be accepted that those who witnessed the crucifixion and resurrection (such as Mary Magdalene and others) were also affected by this kind of illusions.<sup>114</sup> Some Sufis whom Riḍā personally knew claimed many times to him that they visioned the spirits of many prophets. One of these acquaintances was an *a'jamī* (non-Arab Western) Sufi, who confessed to Riḍā

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>109</sup> G. Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, various editions, Paris. Riḍā used the translation by A. Fathī Zaghlūl, *Rūh al-Ijtīmā'*, Matba'at al-Sha'b, Cairo, 1909.

<sup>110</sup> See, Jaap van Ginneken, *Crowds, Psychology, and Politics, 1871-1899*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 130ff.

<sup>111</sup> Riḍā-Ṣidqī, *Aqida*, pp. 66-67. Zaghlūl, ibid., pp. 28-29.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., pp. 31-32.

<sup>114</sup> Riḍā-Ṣidqī, *Aqida*, pp. 73-74.

the same thing, and that these prophets who came to him used to read with some religious sciences in Arabic.<sup>115</sup> Parallel to the appearance of St. George on the walls of Jerusalem, Riḍā again mentioned the story of Sheikh al-Matbūlī of Cairo and another analogous account reported about a certain Rāghib from Syria. This Rāghib was training himself in mystical disciplines to the degree that he was overpowered by numerous imaginations. It was said that he memorized many parts of the Gospels after having lived among the Christians in Damascus. As a result, he started to imagine the story of the crucifixion. Once he claimed that he envisioned Jesus as nailed in accordance with the image mentioned in the Gospels. After having told his Christian fellows about that, they believed him and declared him a saint. The famous Syrian reformer Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī (d. 1920)<sup>116</sup> visited him and began to discuss with him the story from an Islamic point of view without any direct reproach about his mistake until he established another vision in his mind. Rāghib consequently stated that he envisioned Jesus once again standing in front of him, but without any trace of the crucifixion whatsoever. In his vision, Rāghib began to ask Jesus about the reality of his crucifixion. Jesus informed him that his image was placed upon Judas; and they therefore had crucified him. When telling them his new vision, his Christian fellows declared him to be a lunatic.<sup>117</sup>

## 6.6. Conclusion

We have provided a detailed synopsis of the contents of Ṣidqī's polemical treatises. Like his missionary counterparts polemicizing against Islam, Ṣidqī was not very charitable in his criticism of the Bible. His approach was typical of the Muslim response to missionary work in its spirit of combativeness. We have seen that he attached great value to the European rationalistic attacks on the credibility of the miracles of the Bible and its supernatural ethical authority. On the other hand, he paid little attention to the classical Islamic sources. It was clear that he agreed with earlier Muslim polemicists that the Jewish and Christian sacred texts cannot boast any prophetic authorship even though they were supposedly based on the life stories of their prophets. At almost every point, Ṣidqī established the principal lines of his inquiry by sorting out various ideas already accepted in some Western circles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We have also noticed that his choice of words and tone was bolder and more startling than that of Riḍā. Though not a specialist, he tried to enter upon the province of Biblical criticism giving it an Islamic flavour. His zealotry in defending Islam against missionary attacks made his arguments

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>116</sup> About his life, see, Joseph H. Escovitz, 'He Was the Muḥammad Abduh of Syria' a Study of Ṭāhir al-Jazairi and His Influence', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 18/3 (August 1986), pp. 293-310; Itzhak Weismann, 'Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism: A Reappraisal of the Origins of the Salafiyya from the Damascene Angle', *Die Welt des Islams*, New Ser., vol. 41/2 (July, 2001), pp. 206-237.

<sup>117</sup> Riḍā-Ṣidqī, *Fidā*, pp. 74-75.

an impoverished imitation of these Western writings. His medical knowledge was one of the most salient features of his polemics.

In his joint contribution to *‘Aqīdat al-Ṣalb wā al-Fidā*, Riḍā generally set forth his ideas on the basis of his religious knowledge. Riḍā’s attitude towards the crucifixion was, to say the least, surprising. He was clearly not concerned with analyzing the wide range of narratives developed by early Muslims. In the course of his arguments, he stepped sometimes outside the established Muslim interpretations, squarely mentioning many stories related in Sufi traditions of visionary occurrences, and comparing them to the Christian narratives. The story of the Egyptian old man playing the role of al-Matbūlī, who was envisioned by people in the sky above the Greek Church, was one of the favorite stories quoted by Riḍā and Ṣidqī. As Riḍā was known for his heavy critique of the extreme forms of Sufism, we can plausibly conclude that his comparison of these stories with the crucifixion was an indication of his belittling of their miraculous aspects as ‘illusive’. These interpretations took a new turn in the force with which they insisted on the understanding of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as illusive events, which had nothing to do with the reality of his last moments on earth. Riḍā replicated many of his arguments from the same Western rationalist sources, which had been mentioned by Ṣidqī. Besides, he tallied many examples of comparable ‘illusions’ in some of the available Western works on ‘Crowd Psychology’, such as the ideas of his favourite French physician, Gustave Le Bon.



## Chapter Seven

### Recapitulation of Ideas: Christianity as Reflected in Riḍā's *Fatwās*

We have already discussed the polemics of *al-Manār* on Christianity on different levels. In chapter three we have seen that Riḍā had opened the pages of his journal to some of his readers by publishing their reactions to missionary activities. As early as 1903, *al-Manār* published a poem by an anonymous reader under the title of *Su'ālun fī al-Tathlīth* (A Question on the Trinity). Signing his poem *sīn nūn*, the poet challenged the Christians to prove that this doctrine was *qadīm* (primordial). The fact that it had never been explicitly mentioned in the teachings of previous prophets (especially Moses) proved that it was *hādīth* (newly innovated).<sup>1</sup> We have also pointed out that missionary activities in Egypt reached its peak in the beginning of the 1930s. In June 1933, another reader under the name Hasan al-Dars, a police officer and a journalist in Cairo, wrote a poem which he titled as *Muhārabat al-Mubashshirīn lil-'Islām fī Miṣr* (Missionaries fighting Islam in Egypt), which Riḍā never published in his journal. In his long poem, al-Dars accused missionaries to be 'charlatans', who used all means, such as hypnosis, to convert people. He was grieved by the 'laxity' of the government in combating their work.<sup>2</sup>

Riḍā's interaction with his readers is best exemplified in his *fatwā* section.<sup>3</sup> In this section, he illustrated many of his reflections on many a great deal of theological, scholarly, religious, and social issues. Beginning in 1903, firstly under the title 'Questions and Answers' (*Su'āl wā Jawāb*), and later '*Fatāwā al-Manār*', he responded to a wide variety of queries from all over the world. This collection indicates that *al-Manār* was a remarkable record of interests and preoccupations of the Muslim world.<sup>4</sup>

It should be stressed that most of these petitions were submitted by Muslim readers; but there were also questions raised by Christians and missionaries. As we shall discuss, Riḍā's answers to the Danish missionary Alfred Nielsen represented his only reaction to queries directly sent by an active missionary in the Middle East. We also encounter the name of the above-mentioned Coptic lawyer Akhnūkh Fanūs (see, chapter 2), who sent Riḍā a long message in which he discussed the differences between some Qur'ānic

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/6, pp. 225-226.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Riḍā, Hasan al-Dars, 15 June 1933, Cairo, Riḍā's private archive.

<sup>3</sup> The whole collection of his *fatwās* has been collected in six volumes in 1970-1971 by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid and Yūsuf al-Khūrī, 6 vols., Beirut, 1976-77.

<sup>4</sup> Dudoignon, 'Echoes', pp. 85-116. More studies about Riḍā's *fatwās*, see, Jajāt Burhanudin, 'Aspiring for Islamic Reform: Southeast Asian Requests for Fatwas in *al-Manār*', *Islamic Law and Society*, Leiden: Brill, vol. 12/1 (2005), pp. 9-26. Cf. Charles Adams, 'Muḥammad 'Abduh and the Transvaal fatwa', in *The Macdonald presentation Volume*, Princeton University Press, 1933, pp. 13-29; John O. Voll, 'Abduh and the Transvaal Fatwa: The Neglected Question', in T. Sonn (ed.), *Islam and the Question of Minorities*, Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1996, pp. 27-40.



narratives and their equivalents in the Old Testament. We should remember that Fānūs was one of the pivotal figures behind the Coptic Congress, which Riḍā had strongly resisted in 1911. Riḍā published his brief reaction to his message as a *fatwā* in 1913.<sup>5</sup> He sharply reacted that the Qur'ān is the Word of God and more trustworthy than the Biblical narratives authored by Jewish historians. He divided Jewish narratives into two types: 1) divine as they contained the history of Prophets, and 2) non-divine, such as the historical account of the Jewish historiographer Josephus. Riḍā stated that the Christian views of the narratives of the Old Testament were not always coherent, especially those on the stories of prophets. Muslims were therefore required not to trust their Scriptures, neither in the 'literal', nor in the 'figurative' sense. They should be merely seen as historical records.<sup>6</sup>

### 7.1. Early Encounters

The first pertinent question was raised as early as 1902. In the minds of one of Riḍā's readers there were some theological problems as to the narratives on the *nuzūl* (descending) of Jesus before the end of the world. And would his return as a prophet contradict the concept of the Prophet Muḥammad as the seal of prophecy?<sup>7</sup>

Riḍā confirmed that Muslims were not required to believe in the return of Jesus because there was no related *qat'ī* (definite) Qur'ānic text. All ḥadīths related to this issue, mostly from Abū Hurairah, were *aḥād* (narrated by a small number people) or *gharīb* (odd). In matters of *'Aqīda* (doctrine), one should depend on definite and *mutawātir* traditions. Riḍā furthermore disagreed with those who quote the Qur'ān in order to support this element of doctrine. He gave different interpretations to the two verses related to this issue. The verse: 'And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death' (al-Nisā', 4:159) was actually mentioned in the context of the claims of Christians about Jesus as the Son of God. In the *fatwā*, Riḍā employed the same arguments he used in the *Tafsīr* as we have already discussed in the previous chapter. The verse refers to a group of the People of the Book who will revert to the true belief in Jesus as God's prophet immediately before their death. To take the verse as proving the descending of Jesus, and that people will believe in him before his natural death before the Day of Resurrection, in his view, inaccurate. The narratives concerning the coming of Jesus became

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 16/7, (Rajab 1331/July 1913), p. 520. In 1904, Riḍā published a poem by Fanūs on the Russo-Japanese War, and the reason behind Japan's progress in many fields. *Al-Manār*, vol. 7/19 (Shawwāl, 1322/December 1904), p. 752. See also Riḍā's criticism to Fanūs and his role in the Coptic Congress in 1911; *al-Manār*, vol. 14/3, pp. 216-17.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 16/7, (Rajab 1331/July 1913), p. 520.

<sup>7</sup> Aḥmad effendi 'Abd al-Ḥalīm from Shibīn al-Kūm (Egypt), 'Nuzūl al-Masīḥ', vol. 5/4 (Ṣafar 1320/May 1902), pp. 135-138. Riḍā gave a similar answer on the ascension of Jesus to Heaven to a question raised by a certain Aḥmad Ismā'īl al-Qutb, a subscriber to *al-Manār* from Lebanon, see, 'Ṣu'ūd al-Sayyid al-Masīḥ 'ilā al-Samā', vol. 14/7 (Rajab 1329/July 1911), p. 507.

only known after the circulation of the manuals of the two *Shaykhs* (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).<sup>8</sup>

Despite his refusal to accept the return of Jesus on the basis of the Qur'ān, Riḍā insisted on making his own comparison between the concept of the Messiah in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Jews, in his view, expect their messiah who would renew the kingdom of Israel. Riḍā alluded that as they are desirous for wealth, the Jews predict somebody who would consolidate their 'materialistic' aspirations on earth. The Christians expect the return of theirs in order to re-establish his Kingdom and the Cross. But Muslims believe that Jesus will return and 'break the cross, kill the swine, put an end to the payment of the *jizyah* (the poll tax on the People of the Book), establish the Islamic *Shari'ah*, and observe the Muslim prayer in order to make it clear that Islam is the true religion.'<sup>9</sup> Riḍā however argued that some Christians believed in the return of Jesus not in the physical sense. They interpreted his 'return' as referring to his 'good attributes and sermons of love, peace and brotherhood'. In the same sense, Riḍā metaphorically elucidated the word *Nuzūl* in the ḥadīth as that the descending of Jesus will be exemplified in the propagation and loftiness of Islam as the true religion of God. The Christians would also comprehend the nature of Jesus to be a man, the same as the Muslims believe in Muḥammad.<sup>10</sup> Concerning the second point of the question, Riḍā confirmed that the notion of the Prophet Muḥammad as the seal of prophecy was confirmed by means of *mutawātir* and definite traditions; and there was no need to interpret it in the light of other *aḥād* narratives such as that about the return of Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

In 1903, a habitual *mustafī* (petitioner) of *al-Manār* under the name Aḥmad Muḥammad al-'Alfī, a regional scholar in the town of Tūkh nearby Cairo, wondered why many Christians, despite being highly qualified and having significantly contributed to the Arabic language, would still insist on disbelieving in the Qur'ān as the final and true revelation. Some of them, he went on, already admitted its miraculous nature, but rejected its divine nature out of 'stubbornness': Why did eloquent Christian men of letters adhere to Christianity, and ignore the 'contradictions, the broken chain of transmission, and the opposition to logic in the Christian Scriptures? Why did they leave the Qur'ān with its 'wise' message and 'beautiful' style aside?<sup>12</sup>

Riḍā answered that those Christians insisted on adopting their religion only as a matter of 'nationality' and socio-political bond. They preserved its religious symbols of doctrines, traditions in order to keep their national and religious unity intact. In Riḍā's thinking, they did not fairly study Islam in order to

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 137-38.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 138-139.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> 'Bayān al-Qur'ān wā Balāghatuh wā mā yuhimu dhālik', *al-Manār*, vol. 6/12, pp. 461-466. About questions by the same person see, vol. 4/6 (Ṣafar 1319/May 1901), pp. 221-22; vol. 4/7, pp. 256-57; vol. 4/8 (Rabī' al-'Awwal 1319/June 1901), p. 303; vol. 6/10, pp. 373-74; vol. 6/12, pp. 461-62; vol. 14/2, pp. 99-100.

understand its origins. However, the ‘vices’ widespread among Muslims made the ‘merits’ of Islam invisible to the fair-minded among them. Riḍā moreover spelled out that most of the well-versed Christian Arab linguists hardly looked at the Qur’ān in an objective way. Their ‘ethnic enmity’ against Islam, he further argued, frequently prevented them from saying the truth about the Qur’ān’s miraculous (*mu‘jiz*) nature. However, he excluded the group of those who reached another conclusion, viz. that the language of the Qur’ān is miraculous, such as the above-mentioned Christian Lebanese linguist Jabr effendi ʿDumīt in his book *al-Khawātir al-Ḥisān*.<sup>13</sup> Riḍā assured his petitioner that most of the educated and rational Christians did not believe in the Trinity, and a group of them had frequently informed him that they were entirely sceptical about their religion.

In 1904, an unnamed Tunisian questioner asked Riḍā whether a Muslim was allowed to read non-Muslim scriptures, such as the Torah, only for the sake of acquiring knowledge about their contents. Suppose that Muslims were to be prohibited to read other scriptures, non-Muslims would be more knowledgeable and stronger than Muslims, since they were not discouraged by their religion to study the Qur’ān.<sup>14</sup> For Riḍā, reading other scriptures for the purpose of supporting the truth of Islam and refuting the allegations of others was highly recommended. He even considered this act as a matter of *‘Ibādah* (worship); and in many cases this should become a duty. As early Muslim scholars had been reading other scriptures in order to deduce proofs from them, Riḍā deemed it an obligation upon himself and other contemporary scholars to combat missionary writings on Islam by reading Christian scriptures and disproving them. In order to avoid disturbance in their beliefs, Riḍā discouraged common Muslims and young students to read the books of other religions. He compared the state of those Muslims with a ‘crow’ who tried to learn the way of walking of a ‘peacock’. As soon as the crow acquired the peacock’s way of walking, it would totally forget its former nature.<sup>15</sup>

## 7.2. Are Christians Unbelievers?

Muḥammad Effendi Ḥilmī, a secretary at the Prisons of Ḥalfā (Sudan), put a question to Riḍā concerning the eternal abide of unbelievers and Christians in the Fire.<sup>16</sup> Riḍā expounded that the Qur’ān is clear-cut in stating that the *Kāfirūn* (unbelievers) and *Munāfiqūn* (hypocrites) are eternally abiding in the Fire, except whom the Lord wills to be saved. The scholars interpreted the concept of *Khulūd* (eternity) in this case as *Mukth* (eternal residence) in a similar way as in the other verse: ‘If a man kills a Believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein for ever’ (al-Nisā’ 4:93). Muslim

<sup>13</sup> Jabr Dumit, *al-Khawātir al-Ḥisān fī al-Ma‘ānī wā al-Bayān*, Cairo, 1896.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Mutāla‘at Kutub al-Milal Ghayr al-‘Islāmiyya’, vol. 7/7, pp. 262-263.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Khulūd al-Kāfir fī al-Nār’, vol. 7/7, pp. 258-259; questions by the same person, see, vol. 6/13 (Rajab 1321/September 1903), p. 510; vol. 6/17, p. 672, vol. 7/4, p. 141

theologians were also of the opinion that anyone who knew about Islam on a sound basis that would stimulate his contemplation, while he did not believe out of stubbornness and rigidity, was eternally destined to the Fire. However, they excluded those who had not received the message properly or those who studiously and seriously investigated Islam, but did not manage to discover the truth before their death.

Another petitioner had some doubts about the authenticity of the ḥadīth of the *Fiṭra* (God's way of creating or His plan): 'Every infant is born according to the *Fiṭra*, then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian'.<sup>17</sup> Riḍā explained that every infant is born ready to 'promote' himself by accepting Islam as agreeable with God's original nature of creation. The infant later will be taught other psychological and physical behaviors which might influence his nature. When parents (or anybody playing their role) bring up their child according to beliefs other than Islam, they will be creating in the character of their children other traditions opposing the *Fiṭra*. Riḍā concluded that Christian parents, for example, raise their children to believe that all human beings had been created by nature with 'evil' and 'sin'. They also learn them that salvation and happiness could be reached if they believe in the crucifixion, which Riḍā defined as a change in their *Fiṭra*.<sup>18</sup>

In another *fātwā* on the belief of the People of the Book, Riḍā made his points clearer. He gave the example that their belief was like a group of slaves whose master left them his farm in order to reconstruct it and avail themselves from its crops. Later he sent them a more educated and well-informed slave with a manual of other instructions and duties. They followed that manual, but soon abandoned it after the death of the slave. They were 'tempted' to discard their work according to his manual, replacing it by extravagant veneration of the slave instead of exerting efforts to keep the farm cultivated. Riḍā followed the line of 'Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) who maintained that those who died after having conducted deep investigation, but did not reach the truth of Islam before their death, would be forgiven in the Hereafter. Such people are excused until they have a real opportunity to learn about the 'truth' of Islam.<sup>19</sup>

### 7.3. A Kuwaiti Petitioner on Slavery in the Bible

In the Gulf region, there were slave-holding areas even until the 1950s, despite official out-lawing of the slave trade. In their writings, missionaries in Kuwait and Bahrain were critical of the institution of slavery.<sup>20</sup> In response to many

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 8/1 (Muḥarram 1323/March 1905), pp.18-20; a certain 'Abdullāh Sulaymān sent the question from Suez. In his comment, based on the question, Riḍā found him a 'strange man'.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 13/8 (Shā'ban 1328/September 1910), pp. 572-574. See, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Faysal al-Tafriqah Bayna al-Islām wā al-Zandaqah*, edited by Sulaymān Dunyā, Cairo, 1961, pp. 206-208.

<sup>20</sup> Eleanor Abdella Doumato, 'An 'Extra Legible Illustration of the Christian Faith': Medicine, Medical Ethics, and Missionaries in the Arabian Gulf, in Eleanor H. Tejirian & Reeve Spector

questions, Riḍā published opinions on slavery. Sulaymān al-ʿAdasānī (d. 1957), *al-Manār*'s agent and Riḍā's informant in Kuwait, requested Riḍā to dwell upon the concept of captivity and slavery in the Bible. The reason for the query was to respond to the objections against Islam as an 'anti-humane' and 'barbaric' religion.<sup>21</sup> Al-ʿAdasānī had several debates with Christian missions in his homeland. In a letter to Riḍā, he mentioned a well-circulated missionary pamphlet in Kuwait entitled: *Husn al-Ijāz fī Ibtāl al-ʿIjāz* (The Best Refutation of the Unapproachable Eloquence) by a certain Nusair al-Dīn al-Zāfirī, whose aim was to disapprove the Qur'ān's claim of eloquence.<sup>22</sup>

In his answer, Riḍā did not cite any specific sources. His reply was based on lengthy quotations from the Bible which he saw as encouraging slavery. He continued to elucidate that there were ample evidences that captivity and slavery were permitted in ancient legislations. He pointed for instance to the Biblical narrative that Abraham's brother had been taken captive (Genesis 14:14). Mosaic Law had also allowed the Israelites to take 'the children of the strangers' as their 'bondmen forever' (Leviticus 25:46). Riḍā argued that these Biblical passages stated that it had not been permitted to free any foreign slave. The Israelites, on the other hand, were requested to free their Hebrew slaves during the year of Jubilee, except those who showed as their desire to remain in eternal slavery. Riḍā went further and applied his analysis of these biblical passages to the Zionist movement. He expected that once they completely seized Palestine and established their laws, they would 'root out' all native inhabitants and put them under slavery forever. In his view, the Israelites were likewise asked not to set a king over themselves who was 'a stranger' and not a 'brother' (Deuteronomy 17:15). Riḍā referred to another passage as responsible for the subjugation of female captives. According to Deuteronomy, when an Israelite saw among the captives a beautiful woman, and had a desire unto her as his wife, he should bring her home. She had to shave her head, and pare her nails (21:11-14). As for the Gospel, Riḍā pointed out that it endorsed slavery in the same manner as the Romans. It neither demanded masters to free their slaves nor to be lenient with them. In many places it was stressed that servants should be submissive to their masters 'with all fear' and 'according to the flesh, with fear and trembling' (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25; I Peter 2:18-20).

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Simon, *Altruism and Imperialism: The Western Religious and Cultural Missionary Enterprise in the Middle East*, Middle East Institute, Colombia University, 2002, pp.167-182; G.E. Dejong, 'Slavery in Arabia,' *The Muslim World*, vol. 24 (1934), pp. 127-31. More about slavery in Kuwait, see, Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, Rowman Altamira, 2003, pp. 164-172.

<sup>21</sup> 'Al-Saby wā al-Riqq fī al-Tawrāh wa al-ʿInjīl', vol. 17/9 (Ramaḍān 1332/August 1914), pp. 658-661.

<sup>22</sup> Al-ʿAdasānī was the founder of the first public library in Kuwait. He later became a member of the Kuwaiti Legislative Council. See, [http://www.moe.edu.kw/schools-2/mobarak\\_alkabeer/moqararatschools/boys/Wchool/nbza.asp](http://www.moe.edu.kw/schools-2/mobarak_alkabeer/moqararatschools/boys/Wchool/nbza.asp); accessed on 25 January 2008.

In Riḍā's archive, I found about 30 letters sent by the petitioner to Riḍā. The treatise was published by the American Press in Cairo (Bulaq, 1912, 24pp). The title is to be listed in the *Summer 1914 Edition*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

In this *fatwā*, Riḍā did not exemplify the Islamic rules of slavery in details, but he referred the questioner to other articles in *al-Manār* on the subject.<sup>23</sup> Suffice to him to rebuke those who criticised Islam as an unjust religion towards slaves. Unlike Judaism and Christianity, he argued, Islam never made slavery an obligation, but allowed it for specific reasons. Riḍā looked at the role of slaves in that sense in a positive way. In the case of war and the murder of most of the male members of the clan, slaves had always been of great benefit in taking care of children and women. Islam always demanded masters to treat their slaves on an equal footing, even in giving them the same food and clothes; and never to humiliate or afflict them with heavy work.<sup>24</sup>

#### 7.4. An Aḥmadī Petitioner

In 1915, Shir ‘Alī, the director of the *Aḥmadī* quarterly *Review of Religions* (firstly published in 1902) in Punjab, made a statement that *al-Manār*’s interpretation of the phrase *muṣaddiqan lima bayna yadayhi* (lit. confirming which is between his hands) was an eye-opener for him. This phrase is often mentioned in the Qur’ān as a testimony to other holy books. *Al-Manār* made a distinction between ‘*saddaqa lahu*’ (a non-transitional verb with the preposition *lām*) and ‘*ṣaddaqa bihi*’ (a non-transitional verb with the preposition *bā*). The former refers to ‘verification and confirmation’, whereas the latter means ‘completion, or implementation of the purport of something’. The usage of the concept by the Qur’ān referred to the former meaning of verification, only. According to Shir Ali, this interpretation would remove the misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians concerning the testimony of the Qur’ān to their scriptures. Shir Ali had heard about this interpretation, but did not read *al-Manār* himself. The significance of it lay in the fact that he, as a Muslim missionary in India, was indebted to Riḍā whose arguments regularly endorsed his debates with Christian missionaries.<sup>25</sup>

Riḍā explained to Shir Ali that the interpretation was not his own, but had been formulated earlier by Tawfīq Ṣidqī in one of his polemical treatises. Riḍā added to the interpretation more linguistic analyses of some theological connotations. The verb *ṣaddaqa* could be used in the Qur’ān as *muta‘addī bi nafsihī* (transitional form in itself) and has two meanings: 1) the Prophet verbally conveyed the truth of the Jewish and Christian messages, or 2) his mission, supported by his ‘merits and deeds’, confirmed his prophecy on the

<sup>23</sup> Riḍā dealt with the issue of slavery in *al-Manār* in many other places. In 1910, for example, he received a group of questions on the issue from a certain Muḥammad Mukhtār from Paris, see vol. 13/10 (Shawwāl 1328/November 1910), pp. 741-744.

<sup>24</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 17/9. Later in 1922, Riḍā clung to the notion that Muslims were obliged to retain slavery if their enemies did so, to improve their bargaining position. Towards the end of his life, he even opined that servitude could be a refuge for the poor and weak, notably, women, and could give all women a chance to bear children. See, William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, Hurst (London), Oxford University Press (New York), 2006, pp. 205-206.

<sup>25</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 18/3 (Jumāda al-ʿUlā 1333/14 April 1915), pp. 178-180.

coming of other scriptures. Riḍā agreed that the non-transitional verb *muṣaddiqan limā* was only used for confirmation, but the other way around, viz. the other scriptures contained clear prophecies, which confirmed the coming of the prophet Muḥammad and the message of Islam.

### 7.5. A Lutheran Danish Missionary in Riḍā's *Fatwās*

Riḍā was never reluctant to publish his own debates with missionaries in his *Manār*, and opened its pages for their questions. He thought that this was the best way to raise the Muslims' awareness of the missionary movements of his time. He published three *fatwās* on Christian missions, whose questions had been raised by the Danish missionary Pastor Alfred Julius Nielsen (1884-1963), a Lutheran missionary in Syria and Palestine.<sup>26</sup>

It is worthy noting that Nielsen had worked for some time in Riḍā's village, and was a subscriber to *al-Manār*.<sup>27</sup> He was also keen on having correspondences with other Muslim scholars in Palestine, in which he discussed many theological aspects of the Bible and the Qur'ān. He was much interested in promoting tolerance and the free exchange of opinions relative to Christianity and Islam.<sup>28</sup> As a liberal theologian, Nielsen argued that 'the Christians of the Near East were to lose nothing, if they would abandon Christianity and become Muslims'.<sup>29</sup> It was not important for him that Christians and Muslims might reach an ultimate conclusion with each other as regard to the concept of Salvation; but they should live as 'brothers'.<sup>30</sup> In its review of one of his Arabic treatises, the Jesuit magazine *al-Machreq* severely criticised Nielsen for his overzealous goals by 'treading a wicked road'. It also considered his views 'a slap in the face of Christians'.<sup>31</sup>

Riḍā's three *fatwās* for Nielsen contained interesting arguments, which can be scarcely found in the Muslim-Christian controversy of that time. They were

<sup>26</sup> For more details, see, Ryad, 'Nielsen'. See also, Nielsen's articles and the reviews on his Danish works, 'Koranen og Biblen (Book Review, by S. Zwemer)', *The Moslim World*, vol. XII (1922), p. 210; 'Skildringer af Syriske Medarbejdere (Book Review, by S. Zwemer)', *The Moslim World*, vol. XXI (1922), p. 21; 'Bag Libanons Bjerger (Book Review)', *The Moslim World*, vol. XII (1922), p. 211; 'Damascus as a Mission Center', *The Moslim World*, vol. XIII, no. 2 (1923), pp. 160-166; 'Difficulties in Presenting the Gospel to Moslems', *The Moslim World*, vol. XIX, no. 1 (1929), p. 41-46; 'Moslem Mentality in the Syrian Press', *The Moslim World*, vol. XX, no. 2 (1930), pp. 143-163; *Muhammedansk Tankegang i vore Dage*, (Copenhagen, 1st ed., 1930); 'Muhammedask Tankegang I vore Dage (Book Review, by Zwemer)', *The Moslim World*, vol. XX (1930), p. 426; 'The Islamic Conference at Jerusalem', *The Moslim World*, vol. XXII, no. 4 (1932), pp. 339-354; 'Colloquial Arabic', *The Moslem World*, vol XXXIV, no. 3 (1944), pp. 218-219; 'Comparison', *The Moslem World*, vol. XXXIX, no. 1 (1949), pp. 1-5.

<sup>27</sup> Letter, anonymous to 'Abd al-Rāziq Ḥamzah, Damascus, 15 Rabī' al-Thānī 1343, Riḍā's archive in Cairo.

<sup>28</sup> *The Muslim World*, 25 (4), 1935, pp. 411-422. He also co-published a treatise entitled as, *Atkāf Mu'minīn fi Ḥaqā'iq al-Dīn: li-mādhā Atba'u Dīnī dūna Ghayrih*, with a certain Abdallah al-Qayshāwī of Palestine. See, W. Bjorkman, *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 20 (1938), p. 139.

<sup>29</sup> As quoted in, *al-Machreq*, vol. 33 (1935), p. 470.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 470-471.

unique in the sense of being a face-to-face debate between a Muslim theologian and a Christian missionary. Riḍā's answers did not only deal with his conception of the missionary work, but contained some reflections on a few theological issues as well.

The first *fatwā* (1924) dealt with Nielsen's questions on several points, such as the Muslim perception of decent missionary work without attacking Islam, and learning the Bible as it is the basis of Western civilization. In his answer, Riḍā amply vindicated that the Muslim, with the knowledge and reason given to him, can distinguish between good missions whose work was fair and included no defamation or obscenity of other religions. The Muslim, according to him, could differentiate between zealous Christians and most missionaries who exploited it in politics and retained religious fanaticism. Riḍā evaluated all missions working among Muslims as corrupting and indecent due to their 'bad' behaviour, which had been attested. A decent missionary approach, however, was acceptable. His own experience convinced him that there were some individuals who preached their religion on the basis of manifesting its values, standing up for their convictions on the basis of solid knowledge, and keeping abreast of honesty and blamelessness. He lived among such Christians in his hometown. He had many debates with them, and they used to respect each other.<sup>32</sup>

As for the point of learning the Bible, Riḍā stated it was not true that it is the duty of every enlightened person to know the Bible. It was only the duty of the scholars specialised in religious sciences. He also rejected Nielsen's statement that Western civilisation is based on the Holy Book. This allegation, according to him, was absurdly formulated by the missionaries in order to win over those who were dazzled by the European civilisation. The association between Western civilization and the Bible was not plausible. In his mind, Western laws had no connection whatsoever with the legislation of the Torah. Nor did the morals of Western people have any relation whatsoever with the body of ethics included in the Gospel. The civilisation of the West, he believed, was lusty and materialistic, and mainly based on arrogance, conceit and the adoration of money, covetousness, and extravagance in embellishment and lusts. On the contrary, the principles of the Gospel were founded on modesty, altruism, asceticism, truthfulness, the renunciation of embellishment, and the renouncement of lusts. The dissemination of sciences and arts in the West was not due to the spread of missionary groups there. Riḍā stressed that the impact of religion on nations was at its strongest and most complete in the early stages of guidance. Once a nation reaches its full blossoming, religion gradually becomes weaker. For many centuries, even after the spread of Christianity, the West remained without the application of any principle of the sciences and arts. All these concepts were originally transferred from the Arabs and Muslims to Europe. 'It should be borne in mind that', he wrote, 'the propagators of these concepts in Europe were tyrannised and ill-treated by 'the Holy Group' and its

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<sup>32</sup> Ryad, 'Nielsen', pp. 96-99.



defenders in the courts of Inquisition. Had the West acquired the religion of the Arabs from the East, just as it had acquired their knowledge and wisdom, it would have been perfect in both religious and worldly matters, and it would not have been entirely materialistic as it is today.<sup>33</sup>

Riḍā was persuaded that the Bible was not a ‘virtue’ which everybody should appreciate. Appreciation should be only given to things of real benefit. Missionary activities have been proved to be tragic and catastrophic wherever they worked. He challenged Nielsen to bring him any justification necessitating the gratitude of Muslims to Christian missions. The high esteem Riḍā gave to the Qur’ān stimulated him to maintain that ‘if any Muslim, who is aware of the true nature of Islam, studies the Bible, he will be more convinced that the Qur’ān is given priority over all books, superior to them, and has the soundest judgement among them all’.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Riḍā predicted a total fiasco for missionary work among Muslims. The real Muslim believing in his religion on the basis of true knowledge and firm belief should not fear any ‘call’ for any other religion. Riḍā quoted al-Afghānī who said that the Muslim could never become a Christian because Islam is Christianity with additions. Having decided on something perfect, Riḍā added, one would never accept a subordinate alternative.<sup>35</sup>

He attempted, for instance, to hit straight at the doctrine of Trinity: one of the most vulnerable spots, which Muslims always took into account in the opposition with Christian dogma. His very premise started from the argument that Muslim theologians are of the agreement that there is no logical impossibility in Islam (*muḥāl ‘aqlan*), what means: a Muslim is never required to believe in anything that is logically impossible. If he once encounters anything which seems to be in rational or practical conflict with a definitive proof, it should be interpreted as an attempt of reconciliation between the rationale and the text on the basis of the Qur’ānic passage: ‘On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater that it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and suffers every ill that it earns’ (al-Baqara, 2: 286). Riḍā argued that other religions rather than Islam required people to believe in what is rationally impossible, i.e., the reconciliation between the two antitheses or opposites, such as the real Unity and the real Trinity. In other terms, that God is truly one, and truly more than one at the same time.<sup>36</sup> Putting in mind that he was in debate with a Christian missionary, Riḍā argued that unlike the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, there was little historical information about previous Prophets, including the record of the life of Jesus in the four Gospels.<sup>37</sup>

Riḍā’s due respect for Nielsen was explicitly noted in the *fatwās*. One rarely met in missionary circles, he commented, someone who would write in such a confident way like this Danish missionary. Riḍā had no respect for

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Christians with extravagant evangelistic ideas. Those who preached their religion with firm conviction and submission, such as Nielsen, were to be respected by any sensible person.<sup>38</sup>

Only one year later (1925), Riḍā published an answer to another question sent by Nielsen, who bluntly challenged Riḍā by asking why he repudiated the ‘call of Christianity’, despite being quite aware of Christian sources. In his reply, Riḍā gave a brief outline of the reasons why he firmly upheld Islam as the true religion. He maintained that it had been proved to him that the Prophet Muḥammad was *ummī* (illiterate). He was never a disciple of any scholar of theology, history, law, philosophy, or literature. Neither was he an orator, nor a poet. Thereupon Riḍā proceeded to speak about the qualities of the Prophet Muḥammad:

Unlike the people of his age at Mecca, the prophet Muḥammad was not keen on leadership, fame, pride or eloquence. He was very renowned for his good disposition, truthfulness, honesty, decency, austerity, and all other kinds of good morals to the degree that they used to call him *al-ʿAmīn* [the honest]. At his maturity of age he maintained to be a prophet sent by Allah for all people. His message was to preach the same message of other prophets before him.<sup>39</sup>

In view of these reasons, Riḍā underlined that he was firmly convinced of the message of Islam. The Qurʾān foretold many things, which had been unknown among the people of Mecca during that time. The most important among these things, he argued, was the corruption and alterations made by the Christians and the Jews in their Books. It had been revealed in the Qurʾān that the Jews and the Christians had twisted the truth by corrupting their Scriptures, a fact which was verified by modern Western scholars.

The controversy around the book of the Egyptian Ṭaha Ḥusayn on *Pre-Islamic Poetry* (1926)<sup>40</sup> and his understanding of the place of the prophet Abraham in Islamic history was a turning point in the Riḍā-Nielsen discussion. Nielsen’s inquiries centred upon the Muslim-Christian critique of each other’s scriptures as understood in the term *ṭaʿn* (defamation). Nielsen pungently blamed Riḍā for his rooted hostile attitudes to missionaries when he stated that it was always their duty to defame Islam. He raised the important question whether it was possible to declare the Muslim, who would still be committed to Islam in both religious and moral aspects, as unbeliever, if he (such as in the case of Ḥusayn) reached a conclusion that might contradict the Qurʾān and the Islamic creed through his scientific methods and research.

Nielsen raised his questions to Riḍā because he did not want to put any other argument against Islam than what Muslims themselves would agree upon. At the same time, he believed that enlightened Muslims were expected very

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 99-100.

<sup>40</sup> Ṭaha Ḥusayn, *Fī al-Shiʿr al-Jāhilī*, Cairo: Matbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1st ed., 1926.

soon to change their attitudes towards the Qur'ān by distinguishing between religious and moral matters, on the one hand, and scientific and historical ones on the other. Imbued by his Lutheran background, Nielsen insinuated that this would lead to the same conclusions reached by the Christians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The belief of those scholars of the infallibility in the Bible was different from those of the eighteenth century, despite the fact that both Christian generations shared the same belief in Jesus as the only Saviour mediator between God and mankind. In addition, Nielsen predicted some changes in the Muslim world. He saw, for instance, the coming of modernist movements and magazines in Turkey and elsewhere in the Muslim world as a signal for a new and similar trend within Islam in the near future.<sup>41</sup>

Riḍā clearly pointed out that the Christian scriptures were not binding for Muslims. He lexically defined the word *Ṭa'īn* as originally used to mean, 'to thrust or stab a spear or a lance', which was also designated to mean 'to rebuke, insult, deny, and orally disregard'. The parallel between both definitions was that the latter spiritually hurt the person, just like the former did in a material sense. What Tāḥa Ḥusayn (a Muslim himself) wrote in his book 'painfully hurt' Muslims, so it was valid to say that he rebuked Islam. But Riḍā made it clear that it would be no *Ṭa'īn* if any Muslim, Christian, or Jew attempted to deal with the Book(s) of the others. The same would hold true, according to him, for the things in which they did not believe and what they might see as contradictory to their own religion, so long as they did not go beyond 'moral obligations' in their critique. For example, he deemed neither what Nielsen wrote about Islam in formulating his questions, nor his reply to them as *Ṭa'īn*.<sup>42</sup>

Recurring to Nielsen's comparison between the changing attitudes of enlightened Christians and Muslims, Riḍā did not accept the very concept that enlightened Muslims, like the Christians in the passage of time, might change their belief in the Qur'ān. He strongly disagreed that they would ever make distinction between the religious and moral matters as infallible on the one hand, and the historical ones as vulnerable to criticism, on the other. Such a comparison sprang to Nielsen's mind, Riḍā believed, because of his interest of drawing an analogy between Islam and Christianity, and the Qur'ān and the Bible.

Regarding the denial of the historical existence of Adam, Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl, Riḍā consistently maintained that the existence or the non-existence of anybody, who was said to have lived in long past eras, was not to be proved by scientific methods, in so far as this was not logically impossible. Nobody could deny the existence of someone called Ibrāhīm, as far as it was not logically impossible. At any rate, the very premise of the possibility of his existence, Riḍā contended, was supported by the Revelation according to both the Children of Israel and the Arabs. In support of his argument, Riḍā discussed at considerable length the denial of the existence of some generally recognised men in history. He, furthermore, lamented that suspicions that had been expressed against the

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<sup>41</sup> Ryad, 'Nielsen', p. 101.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 102

existence of famous persons, for instance by those who denied the existence of Jesus on the ground of the historical account of the Jewish historiographer Josephus, who was contemporary to Jesus. He did not allude to him in his writings on Jewish history, though he paid much attention to less important events. Riḍā refuted this suspicion by pointing out that Josephus must have concealed this fact in his writings fearing that he would have been considered as a preacher of the Christian message. He deliberately did not want to give his readers any suggestion that he was a believer in the message of Jesus. The other two examples were Homer, the Greek poet, and Qays, the Arab poet. Homer was asserted to have been an imaginary mythical character, to whom the Greeks attributed many eloquent poems. As for the second example, it was said that the poetry of Qays was composed during the Umayyad Empire, but that somebody had attributed it to him. Apparently Riḍā intentionally referred to the example of the pre-Islamic poetry of Qays, as it was the core of Ḥusayn's book.<sup>43</sup>

In Riḍā's vocabulary, Muslim scholars were unanimous, the same as the 'People of the Book', on the point that there must be a distinction in religion between the principal theological matters, the rituals and legislations on the one hand, and what was mentioned in the Scripture about the secrets of the Creation on the other. The former were intended to reform and cultivate human beings, and prepare them for the best of their life. In contrast, the latter were mentioned as a manifestation of the Divine signs of the Creation, which indicate the Divine oneness, mercy and power. The latter category, Riḍā argued, is not used by scientists and historians in their methods of scientific research. Allah, on the contrary, let human beings use their own capabilities to reach specific scientific conclusions through research without depending on the Divine Revelation. And yet if there were any accurate scholarly conclusion, which might not be agreeable with the literal meaning of the Qur'ān, the subjects in question should be interpreted in the light of the concept of *Ta'wīl*.

In his concluding remarks, Riḍā stressed that one of the characteristics of the Qur'ān was that there is no *qaṭ'ī* (definite) passage which can be violated by definite logical and scientific proofs. The People of the Book, on the contrary, never hold such a claim with regard to their Scripture. Indignantly criticising Muslim doubters, Riḍā expounded that ignorance of the Qur'ān in both spiritual and social matters had dominated some Muslim minds, though the Qur'ān in fact is agreeable to logic and science: 'Unlike many Westerners who were ready to raise funds for the spread of their religion, despite the contradictions their Scriptures contain', Riḍā said.<sup>44</sup>

## 7.6. An Egyptian Debater in Gairdner's Magazine

Due to his polemical contributions against missionary writings, a certain 'Abd al-'Azīz Nuṣṣī 'Abd al-Majīd was known to the readers of *al-Manār* in the late

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-106.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

1920s. Very little is known about him, but he always signed his contributions to Riḍā's journal as 'a warden of the storeroom of the Royal Agricultural Cooperative Society in the city of Ashmūn' (Northern Egypt). In *al-Manār* we read that he wrote a treatise entitled: *al-Qawl al-Ṣaḥīḥ fī Tarjamat Muḥammad wā al-Masīḥ* (The True Statement concerning the Biographies of Muḥammad and Jesus), which was also available for two Egyptian piasters in al-Manār Bookshop in Cairo. The treatise was a brief summary of the histories of both prophets. Riḍā showed his appreciation to Nuṣṣī's small work, describing it as: 'nicely written and well-styled in its discussion on the authors of the Gospels'.<sup>45</sup>

During further research, it appeared that Nuṣṣī had a correspondence with the above-mentioned missionary periodical *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb* of Temple Gairdner. In June 1923, for instance, he asked the editorial board of the magazine to explain the genealogy of Moses and that of Jesus from the side of their mothers.<sup>46</sup> Nuṣṣī's tone reflected the challenge of a Muslim reader who tried to cast doubts on Biblical narratives.<sup>47</sup> Later in March 1924, he raised two more questions in relation to the concept of polygamy in the Bible; and whether there was any obvious statement in the Bible prohibiting slavery.<sup>48</sup> It was apparent that Nuṣṣī's aim was to oblige the missionary magazine to give an implicit refutation of its own allegations on Islam regarding these points, which they also used in their critique of Islam.

Nuṣṣī also turned to Riḍā with a query (1928) on the concept of Original Sin in Christianity. He mentioned that he had had regular gatherings with Christian missionaries in his hometown. Once he had discussed the matters of the Original Sin and the crucifixion with a missionary, who adamantly challenged him that those who did not believe in Jesus as the saviour would continue to carry this sin. 'Without shedding blood', the missionary went on, 'one's sins would never be forgiven. Muslims themselves sacrifice [animals] on behalf of themselves, including the Prophet who himself offered sacrifice.' Nuṣṣī asked Riḍā how true the missionary claim was about Adam's Sin as attached to his offspring.<sup>49</sup>

In his answer, Riḍā articulated many elements of his anti-missionary polemics mentioned above. He repeated that the 'missionary enterprise is a part of the Western penetration in Eastern lands'.<sup>50</sup> He quoted again Lord Salisbury's statement that 'missionary schools are the first step towards

<sup>45</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/5, p. 400.

<sup>46</sup> See, *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb*, vol. 19/7 (July 1923), pp. 212-214.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 212-214 In their answer, the editors of the magazine referred Nuṣṣī to the Biblical passages on the genealogy of Moses in Exodus (6:16-20), and to that of Jesus in Mathew (1:1) and Luke (3:23). The magazine added that, as he was concerned with availing the Jews with his writings, Mathew intended to prove that Jesus had the full right to be called 'the offspring of David'. And as he wrote his Gospel for the 'nations', Luke's intention was to prove the progeny of Jesus from David from the side of his mother.

<sup>48</sup> *Al-Sharq wā al-Gharb*, vol. 20/3 (March 1924), p. 86.

<sup>49</sup> 'Nazariyyat al-Naṣārā fī Khatī'at 'Ādam (The View of Christians concerning the Sin of Adam)', *al-Manār*, vol. 29/2, pp. 100-104.

<sup>50</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/2, *op. cit.*, p. 102

colonialism [...] that they cast strife and animosity among the inhabitants of the one country'.<sup>51</sup> Riḍā warned people like Nuṣḥī neither to read missionary literature, nor to waste their time in debating with them. He stated that those missionaries - except a few - were 'soldiers hired to carry out mischief on earth'.<sup>52</sup> He harshly attacked the Christian concepts of salvation and Trinity as 'ancient pagan creeds', referring to the work of Tannīr. Again, he praised the 'independent' Western Christian intellectuals in the West, who rejected these doctrines.<sup>53</sup> In conclusion, Riḍā totally rejected that offering animals as sacrifice was prescribed in Islam as a 'pagan practice', like in other religions. It was only stipulated in order that a Muslim would show his gratitude to God in his sharing with other poor fellow-Muslims in the society.<sup>54</sup>

## 7.7. A Muslim Facing Missionaries in Tunisia

On a similar level, a certain 'Umar Khūja from Tunisia became confused about some theological issues due to his debates with Protestant missionaries in his region.<sup>55</sup> One of the issues they dealt with was the creation of the universe and the explanation of the cosmic structure in light of the Qur'ān, such as in the verse: 'Allah is He Who created seven Firmaments, and of the Earth similar ones' (Al-Talāq, 65:12). It was difficult for Khūja to understand that the heavens are spanned out as seven layers in the context of modern scientific discoveries. The second problem in the Tunisian petitioner's mind was the status and place of Jesus after death. If it were really true that he is still living on 'earth', how could he get food or drink? But if he survived in the heaven, where would he descend at the end of time? What about the Muslim who does not believe in his present survival in Heaven?

Riḍā mentioned that there are tens of Qur'ānic verses speaking about the creation of heavens and earth. The word *arḍ* (earth) is always found in the singular form, except in the verse quoted by the petitioner. Riḍā described it as *mutashābih* (ambiguous). He considered all interpretations of the verse describing the length or breadth of heavens as unreliable because they were based on the lore of *Isrā'īliyyāt*. Riḍā referred to the ḥadīths related by Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ā'isha and 'Abū Hurairah in this regard as indefinite and not *marfū'*, which means a ḥadīth effectively elevated to the Prophet (As for the second point, Riḍā contended that there was no *qaṭ'ī* (definitive) tradition which indicated that Jesus had been lifted to Heaven and was still alive with his soul and body.<sup>56</sup> As for the verse: 'O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself (Al-Imrān: 3:55), Riḍā was more inclined to accept the interpretation of Ibn 'Abbās that God made him really die. He rejected the commentary of Wahb

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/2, *op. cit.*, p, 103

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>55</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 28/10 (Rajab 1346/January 1928), pp. 747-757.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp.753-54.

Ibn Munabbih (b. 34 AH/654-5 AD) that ‘God had made him die three hours at the beginning of the day after which he was lifted to Heaven’. The reason for his rejection was that such interpretations contradicted the apparent meaning (*dhāhir*) of the verse, let alone the role of Ibn Munabbih in disseminating Israelite tales, which Riḍā totally denounced.<sup>57</sup>

The same held true for the return of Jesus before the Day of Resurrection, which we have already discussed in the first of the *fatwās* selected in the chapter. This notion was, in Riḍā’s evaluation, the basis on which the Christian belief lies, but it has no foundation in Islam. Riḍā also doubted the traditions indicating that Jesus will descend before the end of the world being on to the white arcade of the Eastern gate at Damascus, or being on to a hill in the Holy Land with a spear in his hand to kill the *Dajjāl* (Antichrist). He highlighted that most of the traditions on the second return of Jesus were narrated in the context of the *’ahād* traditions on *’Alamāt al-Sā’ah* (Signs of the Hour), on which one should not depend in matters of belief.<sup>58</sup> The belief of Jesus’ being alive in Heaven, Riḍā added, was no part of the fundamentals of the Islamic creed. Therefore, if a Muslim rejected it, he would be no apostate. But he was hesitant to leave his statement open, and stipulated that if a Muslim reached the conclusion after his investigation that the prophetic traditions in this respect were to be regarded as sound, he must believe in the return of Jesus on the basis of them. His doubt of the Prophet’s sayings in that case, Riḍā asserted, might lead to apostasy. In other terms, it was no harm to refuse or to accept his return on the basis of what he believed to be *zannī* (subjective) traditions, but this became prohibited when he would discredit what he had concluded to be definite traditions. The Muslim should rather maintain the Prophet’s sayings as trustworthy, and leave all other details to God. At the end, Riḍā summarized:

A Muslim should not cling to such traditions, since they were no article of the Islamic faith. It is also no harm for one’s doctrine to suspect their authenticity [...]. What could really harm him is his scepticism or rejection of these traditions after having recognised their authenticity [...]. In this case he is discrediting the Prophet [... by thinking of] his erroneousness in delivering God’s revelation.<sup>59</sup>

## 7.8. Fatherless Birth of Jesus: non-Qur’ānic?

In the early 1930s, a student in Indonesia wrote a long article in which he denied the virgin birth of Jesus. He argued that the matter was totally in contradiction with the Qur’ānic verses which stressed that there would never be *tabdīl* (change) or *taḥwīl* (turning off) in God’s order or system of the universal laws (al-Aḥzāb, 62 & Fāṭir 43). The editors of the magazine contended those who believed in the fatherless miraculous birth of Jesus to bring Qur’ānic

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 754.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.756.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 757.

verses or authentic prophetic traditions which would prove the contrary. The above-mentioned Basyūnī ‘Imrān of Java (see, chapter 1) brought the issue to *al-Manār* to say its word, since he was persuaded that its commentary on the relevant verses could put an end to this controversy. Riḍā briefly elaborated on the issue by saying that Muslim scholars on the basis of many Qur’ānic verses have unanimously agreed on the fatherless birth of Jesus. If anyone denied its truth, he harshly concluded, he should be deemed to be an unbeliever.<sup>60</sup>

## 7.9. Missionary Doubts on Qur’ānic Narratives

A certain ‘Alī al-Jundī, a teacher at al-Nāṣiriyya School in Cairo, had religious debates with Christian missionaries, who had raised doubts on some Qur’ānic narratives. He eagerly requested Riḍā for his clarifications on such ‘allegations’ in order that he could sustain his arguments with solid arguments.<sup>61</sup> The first point focused on the *ḥawārīyyūn* (disciples) of Jesus, who were constantly praised in various places in the Qur’ān, but were also mentioned in the Christian scriptures as believing in the Trinity and crucifixion. Al-Jundī was also confused that some Christians portrayed some figures in the Qur’ānic tales as being Christians. The Qur’ān, for instance, described *Ahl al-Kahf* (the People of the Cave) as monotheists, but they had existed 250 years after Jesus. This might suggest that they had believed in a ‘corrupted’ Christianity. Al-Jundī once read that the Jesuit scholar L. Cheikho had argued that the People of the Cave were believers in ‘the Cross’. The commentators of the Qur’ān explained the story of *Ahl al-Qaryah* (the People of the Village)<sup>62</sup> as a tale about the disciples of Jesus, including Paul. Forthly, the questioner had many ‘moderate’ Christian friends who believed in Jesus as a prophet and saw Islam as a ‘true’ religion, but still believed in the crucifixion. They argued that the story had been mentioned by the Jews and witnessed contemporary people and scribes. What were the differences between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures? Were the Jews closer to Muslims in monotheism than the Christians? If so, what was the reason for their ‘inherited’ hostility to Muslims as related in the Qur’ān? Were there any Christian religious men other than Barnabas who had propagated pure monotheism and rejected the crucifixion? Did such people also exist after the message of the prophet Muḥammad? Could Muslims rest assured that Islam would win over Christianity, even though Christian missionaries were more vigorous in propagating their religion?

In the beginning, Riḍā explained that there was no mention of the names or genealogy of Jesus’ disciples in the Qur’ān. But the Christian Scriptures narrated that they were twelve. He argued that it was only John who decried them as believing in the Trinity. He saw that there were discrepancies among the four Gospels concerning the story of the crucifixion. Riḍā demanded his questioner not to believe entirely in the narratives mentioned in the works of

<sup>60</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 32/9 (Jumāda al-‘Ākhira 1351/October 1932), pp. 671-672.

<sup>61</sup> Vol. 33/7 (Shawwāl 1352/November 1933), p. 507-512.

<sup>62</sup> Yāsīn, 36: 13-32.



*Tafsīr* regarding the People of the Cave. He also accused Cheikho that as a Jesuit he had either based his story on such ‘invented’ Israelite tales, or had made it up himself. He confirmed that Jesus had been dispatched to preach montheism. All Muslim commentators maintained that the People of the Cave were not Christians, except ‘Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373) who attributed them to the religion of Jesus. However, Riḍā believed that they had existed a long time before Christianity. He rejected that they had been Christians, who believed in the Cross. Riḍā’s only proof was that such a claim should have contradicted the Qur’ān, which he deemed impossible.<sup>63</sup>

The same held true for the Prophetic traditions on the story of the People of the Village. They were related by the converted Jews Ka‘b al-Aḥbār and Wahb ibn Munabbih, who dissiminated most of these ‘mythical’ tales on the authority of Ibn Abbās. Riḍā depended on ‘Ibn Kathīr’s view, who had interpreted that the People of the Village were messengers sent by God and not by Jesus.<sup>64</sup>

Regarding the Christians who firmly believed in the crucifixion and accepted Islam as true, Riḍā explicated that the Qur’ānic verse negating Jesus as having been slain (al-Nisā, 3:157) did not indicate the rejection of the story completely, but rebuffed his death in the way explained by Christian Scriptures. Riḍā was less clear in judging those Christians than his above-mentioned *fatwās* on those who search for the truth. One would also expect Riḍā to repeat his interpretations of the crucifixion as ‘illusive’, which he had uttered earlier in his aforementioned treatise in 1913 (see, chapter 6). After twenty years, he now put emphasis in this *fatwā* on his conviction that the story of the crucifixion was not reliable, and there was no consensus among the early Christians about it.<sup>65</sup>

Riḍā admitted that the concept of the Messiah according to the Torah was a complex issue. He only repeated his point mentioned in the first *fatwā* that the Jews believed in the Messiah as a coming king who would revive the kingdom of Solomon, but not as a prophet. For him, the Christians considered his coming kingdom as a spiritual one, while the Jews would expect it as a political and financial one. Riḍā explained the verse regarding the animosity of the Jews and the friendship of the Christians as revealed in the case of the Jews of Ḥijāz and the Christians of Abessynia in particular. It should not be understood as part of the realm of the Islamic belief. He also rejected the view that the animosity between Jews and Muslims was intrinsic. He insisted that it was the Jews who had first shown animosity against Muslims, especially in Palestine. In the same sense, Christians had also founded their hostility with Islam in the form of the crusades in the past and the continuation of European colonialism and Christian missions in the present. Without colonialism and missionary activities, he went on, Christians would have been much closer to Muslims than the Jews. However, he explained that the conflict between

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 508-09.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 510-11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 511.

Muslims and Western Christians would result in many advantages for Muslims, viz. that all Western nations would one day convert to Islam.<sup>66</sup>

### 7.10. Mihrāb and Altar

In 1932, Riḍā received a question concerning the *mihrāb* (niche) in the mosque and its similarity with the altar in the church.<sup>67</sup> The questioner cited the ḥadīth where the Prophet was reported to have said: 'My nation remains in a good status as far as they do not turn their mosques into altars like the Christians.'

Riḍā maintained that the *mihrāb* was embedded in the *qibla* (direction of prayer) wall for the practical reason that the imam would not occupy a whole row in the mosque. The niche of the Christians and Jews known as altar was a shrine and place for worship. The altar was known in ancient religions as the place where men used to give their offers to God. He cited the Old Testament 'And Noah built an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar' (Genesis, 8:20). Stories about the altar of burnt offering and that of incense are also mentioned in details in the chapter of Exodus. Riḍā issued the *fatwā* in the period when he had intense conflict with *Nūr al-Islām*, the mouthpiece of Al-Azhar at that time (see, chapter 3). He suspected the authenticity of the ḥadīth quoted by the questioner, accusing Al-Azhar scholars of propagating such doubtful narratives in their magazine.<sup>68</sup>

### 7.11. Don't Recite the Qur'ānic Verses on Christians in Public!

In chapter three, we have seen that Riḍā's views on allowing Muslim children to attend Christian schools had led to a rigorous dispute with Al-Azhar scholars in the early 1930s. In 1934, he had another dispute with a regional scholar under the name of Sheikh Maḥmūd Maḥmūd, the deputy of *Jam'īyyat Makārim al-'Akhḥlāq* (Society of Best Moralities) and a high school teacher in Cairo. The society was situated in Shubrā, in the outskirts of Cairo. Upon his arrival in Egypt, Riḍā became an active member of the society, where he used to deliver many lectures. One of the main objectives of this society was to combat missionary organizations in the neighbourhood. It had its own primary school and printing house. Besides it published two magazines, one was named after the society, and the other bore the name *al-Muṣliḥ* (The Reformer).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 512-13.

<sup>67</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 32/4 (Dhū al-Hijja 1350/April 1932), p. 268.

<sup>68</sup> In 1935, a certain Umar al-Jundī, teacher at Alexandria Religious Institute, sent *al-Manār* an article on the history of the *mihrāb* in Islam. He traced the Prophetic Traditions on it and the difference with altars. See, Umar al-Jundī, 'Maḥārīb al-Masjid wā Madhābih al-Kanā'is', *al-Manār*, vol. 34/9 (Dhū al-Hijja 1353/April 1935), p. 708-710.

<sup>69</sup> The society was founded by Sheikh Zakī al-Dīn Sanad during the late nineteenth century in Cairo. See, *al-Manār*, vol. 2/27 (Jumāda al-'Ūlā 1317/16 September 1899), p. 430; vol. 2/45, (Ramaḍān 1317/January 1900), p. 537. The activities of the society waned after the death of

According to the Cairine newspaper *al-Waṭaniyya*, Sheikh Maḥmūd maintained that broadcasting Qur'ānic recitation on radio should be stopped. He argued that the Qur'ān contains certain verses opposing the People of the Book. The reasons for their revelation were not existent anymore. 'Since the People of the Book have become under our protection (*Dhawī Dhimmatina*)', Maḥmūd argued, 'their feelings should not be hurt any longer by letting them listen to such verses.'<sup>70</sup> He further explained that he himself hated *Surat Yūsuf* being recited inside Muslim houses because he worried that women would suspect Yūsuf's chastity, when they regularly listen to the story. Also people, according to Maḥmūd, should not recite the Qur'ān in public as far as they did not grasp its inner meanings.

Ayyūb Sabrī, the editor of *al-Waṭaniyya*, referred the question to Riḍā, requesting him to deal with the issue as soon as possible.<sup>71</sup> Riḍā did not hesitate to express his total rejection of Maḥmūd's *fatwā*. In his primary answer, Riḍā preferred not to mention the name of the mufti, hoping that he would recant his opinion or would send a clarification to *al-Manār*. He strongly declared that the Qur'ān as 'the true word of God' must be propagated and any concealment of its verses was sin; any acceptance of this sin as lawful would lead to infidelity.<sup>72</sup>

Two years earlier, we read in *al-Manār* that Riḍā highly commended Maḥmūd because of 'his religious knowledge and enthusiasm'.<sup>73</sup> But his religious views in this regard turned this enthusiasm into total frustration. Riḍā attempted to convince his readers that there was no difference between 'knowledgeable' or 'ignorant' reciters of the Qur'ān in public occasions. All Qur'ānic verses speaking about the People of the Book negatively or positively were suitable to each age and place. Riḍā plainly asserted there were many among the People of the Book in his time, who were more hostile to Islam than those contemporary of the time of revelation. He saw that Maḥmūd's attempt of 'abrogating' these verses was only to satisfy the Christians and Jews, giving them priority above the Qur'ān.

Five months later, Riḍā mentioned the name of the person, who issued the *fatwa*. Having read *al-Manār*, Sheikh Maḥmūd started to defend his point of view. The discussion quickly turned into a hot polemical attack on Riḍā's character as a scholar. In his commentary on the Qur'ānic verse: 'Revile not ye those whom they call upon beside Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance' (Al-An'ām, 6:108), Maḥmūd concluded that Muslims were prohibited to insult the 'gods of the Christians'.<sup>74</sup> He intensified his assault upon Riḍā by saying that the Qur'ān was dearer and more beloved to him than

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Sanad, but it revived again in 1920s-1930s. See Riḍā's article on the society, vol. 32/8 (Jumada al-'Ūlā 1351/September 1932), p. 634.

<sup>70</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 34/1, p. 33.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-38.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 32/8 (Jumādā al-'Ūlā 1351/September 1932), p. 634.

<sup>74</sup> As quoted in, *al-Manār*, vol. 34/5, p. 383.

the founder of *al-Manār*. He depicted Riḍā of having grown old and his memory weakened. He had also started to forget what he himself said in his *Tafsīr* regarding the same verse.<sup>75</sup> He reminded Riḍā of what he had already stated years ago in his commentary on the verse that it was prohibited to call the *ḍimmīs* ‘unbelievers’ if it would lead to hurting them.<sup>76</sup> He also concluded that any abuse of the gods or saints of the Christians on radio should be forbidden, especially when Muslims were divided, humiliated and weakened while the unbelievers were more strong and unified. Muslims should especially avoid this when it would also lead to the disintegration and ruin of the umma.<sup>77</sup>

Riḍā contested the *fatwā* by cynically maintaining that he held higher esteem for the Qur’ān than the mufti of *Makārim al-Akhlāq*. He was deeply disappointed by Maḥmūd’s remarks on his ‘weak memory’ and ‘old age’. He counterattacked by saying that due to his ‘young age’ Maḥmūd was not able to understand *al-Manār*’s views. He moreover argued that the Qur’ānic verses on Christians contained no offending passages for their gods, cross or saints. The Qur’ān on the contrary recommended cooperation and concord with them. At the end, Riḍā promised to put an end to the conflict if Maḥmūd would discontinue to publish his ‘absurdity’ on the Qur’ān.<sup>78</sup>

### **7.12. A Muslim Copyist of Missionary Books and Crafting the Cross for Christians**

In 1930, Riḍā issued an interesting *fatwā* concerning a Muslim calligrapher, who was hired by Christian missionaries in Algeria to copy their books.<sup>79</sup> Riḍā considered that any assistance to missionaries by reproducing such ‘repulsive’ books would lead to participating in spreading ‘infidelity’. Those ‘geographical Muslims’ should be called back to repent from earning money through ways of infidelity and enmity of God and the Prophet. To continue working with missionary institutions would lead to apostasy. His Muslim fellows should not give their daughters to him in marriage, nor should they bury him according to Muslim rites. Riḍā urged that if there were a *Shar‘ī* court in the province, a case of apostasy must be suited against him in order to separate him from his Muslim wife.

Riḍā’s last *fatwā* (July 1935), a few months before his death, came as an answer to a similar petition by a certain Muḥammad Maṣṣūr Najātī from Damascus, whose craft was probably printing, on the religious ruling concerning printing books of other religions and engraving the cross on copper, zinc and on covers of those books.<sup>80</sup> In the same line of his previous

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol. 7, p. 550. Riḍā published this view for the first time in the first issue of *al-Manār* in February 1898. See, vol. 1/1 (Shawwāl 1315/February 1898), p. 17.

<sup>77</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 34/5, p. 383.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 31/4, p. 276.

<sup>80</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 35/2 (Rabī‘ al-Akhar 1354/July 1935), pp. 134-35.

*fatwā*, Riḍā deemed printing or giving any assistance to print or propagate ‘false’ books as totally forbidden. This work might lead to infidelity in case he admitted its contents as accurate. In Riḍā’s view, the cross was a symbol of a non-Muslim religion; and Muslims should not help its followers to spread it. However, nobody should protest against the will of the Christians to display it in the Territory of Islam. To engrave it on metals for commercial reasons was not considered sinful as far as there existed no verification for their beliefs in the heart of the Muslim doing that.

### **7.13. Conclusion**

The chapter has proved that Riḍā’s *fatwās* are a mine in tracing his theological and polemical views on Christianity. The questions raised in these *fatwās* were diverse. This medley of *fatwās* echoed synopses of some of the major elements of Riḍā’s analysis of Christological doctrines, such as the Trinity and the Original Sin, from an Islamic point of view. The questions show a significant dimension of the Muslim encounter with missionary attacks on Islam in various regions at the micro-level. Raising these questions was not only related to the theological challenges to Islam put forward in missionary writings, but was also connected to social problems, such as the question of slavery in Kuwait and to the petitions of Muslim copyists and printers of missionary works in Algeria.

Riḍā’s *fatwās* for Alfred Nielsen were unique. It has been noted that both sides were ready to come close to each other, each trying their best to show the merits of their own belief. As religious men, both Riḍā and Nielsen were keen on giving their views on several subjects. The discussions do not only reflect an Islamic view on missions, but clearly represent Nielsen’s understanding of Islam as a missionary as well. Nielsen’s questions took the form of a missionary challenge to Islam. He attempted to probe the Muslim perception of missions through Riḍā’s views. Nielsen’s questions also reflected a strand of self-critical liberal Christian thought which many conservative Christian thinkers, at that time and still today, would have found objectionable: the idea that doubt-grappling with one’s faith rather than accepting it without thought- is necessary for faith, for a Christian’s faith as well as for a Muslim’s.

## Conclusion

The study has offered an important example of Muslim-Christian contact in the modern age as highlighted in 1) *al-Manār*'s views of Christianity, 2) its founder's relations with his fellow Arab Christians and most significantly 3) his responses to Christian missionary writings on Islam. In his responses, Riḍā clearly proclaimed his religious and political doctrines with all the fervour of a Muslim scholar and activist. He was 'an indefatigable writer [...], whose views carried weight with friend and foe alike'.<sup>1</sup> However, his views were sometimes ambivalent. His early writings on Christianity seem to be rational and calm. But this position underwent a marked change with the passage of time. Riḍā was immensely provoked by what he deemed as the social and political decadency of Muslims of his time. Intertwined with this spirit of despair and his pan-Islamic outlook, his pen (especially in his later years) started to produce harsher apologetic literature, which expressed his frustration with all forms of the Western penetration in Muslim societies.

Besides these distinct reversals in his thought, there was one area in which he remained unchanged, viz. that he did not reject Christianity as such, but attempted to interpret the Holy Scriptures in the light of the Qur'ān by rejecting all passages which would indicate any contrary notion to the Islamic principles of belief. In consolidation of his interpretations, and in an attempt to demonstrate the 'irrationality' of the faith of his Christian adversaries, he eagerly utilized the works of historical criticism, first developed by Christian theologians, philosophers and writers. Riḍā's very motivation of using such Western studies in his polemics was to vindicate the authenticity of Muslim scriptures vis-à-vis the Bible and to fulfill his aim of *da'wa*.

The *first* chapter has argued that Riḍā's polemical tone against Christianity should be studied against the background of his general understanding of the West. In many places of his journal, he praised the progress of the West, which he ascribed to 1) its independence of thought, 2) the eradication of political oppression, and 3) the foundation of social, political and scientific associations.<sup>2</sup> But his writings exposed also his feelings of parallel vexation, which focused more on those Western Christians, who tried to ridicule Islam and relate the socio-political failure among Muslims to the tenets of Islam.

Throughout the chapter we have seen how complex and diverse Riḍā's network of associates was. Riḍā's ignorance of Western languages did not hinder him to follow the path of proving the authenticity of Islam by exclusively quoting positive findings or remarks made by European writers,

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<sup>1</sup> See, A.L. Tibawi, 'From Rashīd Riḍā to Lloyd George', in Khurshid Aḥmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (eds.), *Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Sayyid Abū al-A'ālī al-Mawdūdī*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1980, pp. 335-342.

<sup>2</sup> 'Manāfi' al-'Urubiyyīn wā Maḍāruhūm fī al-Sharq (The Benefits and Harms of the Europeans in the East)', *al-Manār*, vol. 10/3, pp. 192-199; Shahin, *Eyes*, p. 46.

which he always described as 'fair-minded'. In that way, the translation movement and Riḍā's circle of associates always proved to be rich sources for his journal in accumulating knowledge from and on the West. Studying such sources has helped us to understand the value of these contributions in buttressing the shape of his journal especially regarding his anti-Christian polemics, studied in details in the ensuing chapters. The contributors to *al-Manār* were selective in their approach. Nevertheless, an intact and identifying characteristic of their writings was that they did not see a problem in accepting modern thinking when they found it compatible with Islam, and that, consequently, should not pose a problem to the Islamic identity.<sup>3</sup>

Arslān's contributions in Riḍā's journal on the Christian theological developments in Europe represented an integral part of their common belief in pan-Islamism and their broad efforts of anti-imperialism. Those articles indirectly attempted to argue that European politicians were ready to collaborate with religious clergymen and invoke religious fanaticism against non-Christians. One should also not underestimate the importance of hitherto unknown figures, such as Kirām. From Berlin, he was a useful informant for Riḍā, although he was on the periphery of the 'first class' group of Muslim luminaries in *al-Manār*'s circle. On writing his book *al-Wahy*, Riḍā was interested in reading some Western biographies on the prophet Muḥammad. As an example, he requested Kirām to make an Arabic summary of Tor Andrae's work, as mentioned above.

It was characteristic for Riḍā to lend himself Western positive views in his defence of Islam. But he also tried to use a combination of his religious knowledge and these Western scholarly critiques of the Bible as an instrument to prove his conviction of the conformity of their findings on the Bible with the Qur'ānic reports, especially the 'corruption' of Jewish and Christian scriptures. But he was much upset about the critique voiced by Western scholars about the established Muslim theories on Biblical figures in the Qur'ān, such as the case of his response in 1933 to Wensinck's article on Abraham in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Although he was not directly involved in the affair, Riḍā was provoked by Wensinck's article to the degree that he discredited the Dutchman's meticulous investigation in indexing the ḥadīth. The observation of Elissa-Mondeguer was right that Riḍā's understanding of the West (especially in the 1930s) should be seen as part of his program of reform in which he tried to envisage that Western civilization was in need of the guidance of Islam, which he presented as the religion of 'brotherhood, mercy, and peace'.<sup>4</sup>

The *second* chapter examined Riḍā's multi-dimensional relation with his contemporary Arab Christians. Due to his political bent, which was coupled

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<sup>3</sup> Haddad, 'Manrists', p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Shahin (1989), p. 115; Nadia Elissa-Mondeguer, 'Al-Manār de 1925 a 1935: la Dernière Décennie d'un Engagement Intellectuel', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, n°95-96-97-98 - *Débats intellectuels au Moyen-Orient dans l'entre-deux-guerres*, April 2002, pp. 205-226.

with his uncompromising religious convictions, his relations with many of them were fluctuated. In his discussions, he outlined specific attitudes that varied according to the intellectual, political or religious background of his counterpart in question. In the course of our discussion it has been observed that the editor of *al-Manār*, in its process of evolution over more than three decades, tried to integrate many political ideas to his religious aspirations. His Christian fellow-citizens, mostly educated in their homeland at missionary schools, provided a whole generation with many journals. With a heart turned to Syria, Riḍā directed his political activism towards those compatriots, and very rarely had the chance to develop any political ambition in Egypt. While Riḍā, as a reformer, had a role in Syrian nationalism, his main role was neither in Syria nor in Egypt but within the world of *al-Manār* and the ideas it propagated in the Muslim world.<sup>5</sup>

These diverse relations with Syrian Christians did not go all along the line smoothly. His frictions with them should be understood within the context of the great controversy on science, politics and religion in the Arab world. As far as his Arab Christian counterparts would carry forward his investigations either on religion (Islam in particular) or politics in a way that was in conformity with *al-Manār's* worldviews, Riḍā had no tendency whatsoever to draw negative conclusions. But their criticisms of Islam aroused a wide range of replies of an intense nature in his journal. The political and socio-cultural upheaval in the Muslim World also directly affected his discourse with them to the extent that he became sometimes unpredictable in his responses, especially in his debate with some of the Arab Christians. A typical confrontation was his dispute with Farah Anṭūn. His critics see him as the 'assassin' of Anṭūn's journal *al-Jāmi'a*, but it has also been noted that he was a key figure in organizing the ceremony of Anṭūn's tribute after the latter's death. Riḍā's reaction to the type of secularism the Syrian Christians were propagating was temperate as compared with his treatment of the views of Muslim secularists, as we have seen in the case of the Iraqi poet al-Zahāwī. He was vexed by the abolishment of the Caliphate and its repercussions on the Islamic identity, and that might explain his later impassioned rejection of secularism, which he perceived as insidiously creeping into the Arab World.

Chapter *three* sketched *al-Manār's* evaluation of Christian missions. Its polemics contain indirect responses to the belittling remarks of Europeans about Eastern civilization and Islam. Just as many previous Muslim thinkers, Riḍā's vehement refutation of the Christian belief and scriptures was to affirm his conviction of the inherent superiority of Islam to other religions. Characteristic of his style was his bemoaning of the sad state of Muslims which made it possible for the opponents of Islam to depreciate it in its own home. Muslims had become powerless, so that Europeans lorded over them everywhere.<sup>6</sup> Riḍā's anti-Christian polemics involved his critique of their attempts to win over Muslim 'souls' as well. He was sometimes emotional and

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<sup>5</sup> Adal, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>6</sup> Ayoub, 'Views', p. 54.



showed bitterness and stern tones towards the missionary work in the Muslim world. However, he was initially positive about the efforts of missionary schools, and admitted their role in achieving some social and technical developments in the Muslim world, especially the American College in Beirut. But this positive tone was soon muted. When he became embroiled in intensive polemics with his Azhari opponents, and the 'saddened' news he received from his Muslim readers, Riḍā started to recognize the other side of the coin; namely, that these schools were established to achieve the 'colonial covetousness'.

As part of his anti-missionary campaign, Riḍā tried to develop some ideas on the nature of religious propaganda. Cole described Riḍā's approach as pragmatic and secular.<sup>7</sup> In his early years, he was of the view that successful religious propaganda grew out of his struggle against Christian missionary activity among Muslims. He began by rejecting an explanation of success in mission through governmental support. He went on that success in mission could be enhanced by practical techniques adopted by the missionaries, and that these techniques could be used to promulgate any religion, true or false.<sup>8</sup> But looking at the development of his thoughts one finds that he was always convinced of the propaganda of Islam as the only true mission. Giving the Qur'ān a higher esteem than the Bible, he was convinced that Islam would expand on its own with no need of any missionary effort. A proof of that was, according to him, the higher social status of Muslim converts (such as Headley) than those Muslims who changed their faith. However, Riḍā was aware of the fact that he was lacking official religious institutions to support him in his religious aspirations, like the Church in the Christian case, which was ready to spend a huge amount of money in spreading its religion. Riḍā tried to put his ambitions into practice by words and actions. His words had great impact on the Muslim thought, but his religious missionary project of *da'wa* was short-lived.

Against this background of Riḍā's network and activities, chapter *four* carried the discussion forth by specifically examining *al-Manār*'s early mode of polemical thoughts as expressed in his series of articles on the 'shubuhāt (or allegations)' of Christians on Islam, which he later compiled in one small volume. Riḍā's book was of an unsystematic character, due to the fact that it was a compilation of sporadic issues that he raised from time to time in his disputes with certain Christian writings on Islam. Writing these articles in 1903-1904, Riḍā imposed a condition upon himself to defend Islam without attacking Christianity and going no further than addressing Muslim readers' questions.<sup>9</sup> Later, in 1931, and amidst his polemics with al-Azhar scholars (mentioned above), he clarified that after an experience of three decennia, it was sometimes unavoidable for him to counterattack missions by using harsh words; and his 'journal, despite its cautiousness in decency and politeness,

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<sup>7</sup> Cole, *op. cit.*, 291.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

could not defend Islam only by responding to missionaries with statements they did not hate.<sup>10</sup>

The core of these articles was to discuss the textual authenticity of both the Torah and the Gospel from an Islamic point of view. He directed his most detailed discussions in that regard against the claims of the Egyptian missionary writer Ghabriyāl (whose book is still widely used on Christian websites nowadays) on the Qurʾānic testimony for Jewish and Christian scriptures. It has been properly remarked that Riḍā did not discuss the doctrine of Trinity in details.<sup>11</sup> Neither did he discuss other key concepts in Christianity, such as the birth, crucifixion and salvation of Jesus. This was not because he had nothing to say about them. In the *shubuhāt*, Riḍā rejected these doctrines as ‘irrational’, but the ideas of *al-Manār* on them were more clearly put forward later, especially after the appearance of Tawfiq Ṣidqī on *al-Manār*’s stage.

In his *Shubuhāt*, Riḍā was convinced that it is no harm for a Muslim to believe in a Chinese religion or in Hinduism as part of God’s revelation. More than twenty years later, he further developed the idea by making it clear that ‘all people of ancient religions, such as Buddhism and Zoroastrianism belonged also to the People of the Book and were followers of prophets, but paganism and polytheism crept on them to the extent that we do not know [the reality] of their scriptures.’<sup>12</sup>

In the *fifth* chapter, we have seen that Riḍā, in order to put his pursuit of a ‘wishful’ Gospel supporting the Islamic message into practice, first published fragments of the work of Tolstoy on the four Gospels, and in the end published a full Arabic translation of the Gospel of Barnabas. It has been observed that despite his faith in its authenticity, Riḍā in his introduction was somehow cautious in declaring this in an explicit manner. It was only in 1929 that he overtly voiced that the Gospel of Barnabas was more authentic than the four canonical Gospels. Bājūrī’s anti-*Manār* piece of work is a remarkable example of the Coptic reaction to this Gospel. As a Muslim convert to Christianity, considering himself a ‘soldier of Jesus’, he was not only sarcastic about *al-Manār*’s printing of the Gospel of Barnabas, but also critical of Riḍā’s views on Islam. He must have felt compelled to express his disdain for this Gospel with vehemence, proving beyond doubt his devotion to his new faith. Bājūrī did not see Riḍā’s publication as part of an Islamic, anti-colonial discourse, but a part of the Muslim polemics against Christian minorities in the Muslim world, especially the Copts.<sup>13</sup> Strangely enough Riḍā neither reacted to Bājūrī’s treatise, or to any other polemical work against the Gospel of Barnabas. The treatise should be read as an illustration of the reaction of other Christians of his age; and these reactions deserve to be carefully studied in further research.

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<sup>10</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 31/6, p. 479.

<sup>11</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> *Al-Manār*, vol. 25/3, p. 227.

<sup>13</sup> See, Leirvik, *Images*, p. 139.

The *sixth* chapter examined *al-Manār's* change of strategy by giving Ṣidqī a principal position in its polemics. Why Ṣidqī? As part of Riḍā's network of associates, we have studied Ṣidqī's place in the world of *al-Manār*. The very reason why he came into contact with Riḍā was his intense discussions with his classmate and Christian convert to Islam 'Abduh 'Ibrāhīm. More importantly, Riḍā was also impressed with his knowledge of natural sciences and medicine, as well as his ability to apply this kind of knowledge to Islamic sources. Infuriated by what they saw as 'unsympathetic' critique of the West and Westerners on the basis of Biblical passages, some missionaries approached Lord Kitchener, who attempted to convince the Egyptian authorities to ban Riḍā's journal. Riḍā did not give many details about the affair, but his diaries help us know more about its background. Although the Egyptian authorities did not attempt to ban *al-Manār*, it seemed that this protest had its effect. It is observable that Riḍā directly stopped publishing Ṣidqī's anti-Christian articles. But his tone of grief about this incident reflected the 'underneath' feeling of an 'oppressed' colonized person in face of his 'colonizing oppressors.'

Our analysis of Ṣidqī's works included a survey of the sources accessible to him. Besides a limited knowledge of some Western rationalistic books on Christianity and Jesus, Ṣidqī's medical knowledge was more overriding than his knowledge of Islamic sources. However, we indicated that his medical interpretation of the fatherless birth of Jesus that Mary was probably a 'masculine hermaphrodite' came close to the portrayal of Mary by the thirteenth-century Muslim exegete of the Qur'ān al-Qurṭubī. Ṣidqī and Riḍā shared many ideas, and the most noteworthy of these was their common belief in 'illusive' happenings around the event of the crucifixion. Although their interpretation agreed with the classical Muslim exegesis that Judas (or another person) was killed instead of Jesus, it diverged in its rationalistic argument that the crucified man really looked like Jesus, and that the Roman soldiers arrested him by the way of mistake. It was interesting to read that Riḍā depended in his analysis of the theory of 'Crowd Psychology' according to the medical popularizer Le Bon who believed that crowds generate specific emotions. According to this theory, the anonymity of facts and the creation of clichés in the minds of the people is a natural result. Riḍā drew a parallel and argued that those who witnessed the event of the crucifixion became emotional, and therefore did not recognize any difference between the real Jesus and the one resembling him.

In the *seventh* chapter, the discussion came to an end by a recapitulation of *al-Manār's* ideas on Christianity through Riḍā's lively contact with his readers. The presence of the missionary work in the Muslim world was a breeding ground for many Muslim readers to ask questions, which Riḍā included under the section of *fatwās*. Some of these questions focused on christological issues, with which Riḍā had already dealt in many other places in his journal, such as the fatherless birth of Jesus, his natural and physical death, as well as his return before the Last Day. Besides, Riḍā's Muslim readers were curious to know his perceptions on other issues which resulted from their daily

contact with missionaries. The most visible among those was the Egyptian Muslim ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Nuṣṣī, who was boldly challenging missionaries by sending inquiries to their journals. His participation in *al-Manār* and the subjects of his inquiries to *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb* of Gairnder pointed to his critique of the missionary work and the views of missionaries on Islam. An obvious rupture is noted in Riḍā’s answer to the Danish missionary Nielsen. He did not consider Nielsen’s discussions on the case of Tāha Husayn as ‘defamation’ of Islam. Riḍā’s general views on this case were harsh. But addressing Nielsen, as an ‘outsider’, he dared to accept discussing such issues with non-Muslims. It can be also concluded that Riḍā’s anti-Christian polemic was ‘an apologetic directed towards Muslim doubters.’<sup>14</sup>

Riḍā’s *fatwā* that Jesus died a natural death after having been saved from the Cross, and then was taken up to the Heaven, deserves a special concluding observation. Even though he was in line with ‘Abduh in this regard, the view comes close to the interpretations of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, who denied the belief that Jesus is alive and awaiting in the Heaven for an eschatological return to earth. In his view, the idea that Jesus is alive was nothing but a Christian invention, designed to demonstrate that the living Jesus is superior to the deceased Muhammad.<sup>15</sup> In his *fatwā* to the Tunisian Umar Khūja on the rejection of Jesus as having been taken alive in the Heaven, Riḍā was more cautious in leaving it open. He boldly stated that a Muslim, who would reject the relevant traditions after having reached the conclusion of their soundness, was an apostate.

It is nowhere mentioned in *al-Manār* that the views of ‘Abduh and Riḍā in this respect caused any Muslim repercussions in their time. But in 1942 the then member of the High Corps of Al-Azhar ‘Ulamā’ and later Sheikh of Al-Azhar Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1893-1963), who was influenced by the spirit of *al-Manār*, issued a similar *fatwā* in which he maintained that Jesus died and was taken in soul and body to God.<sup>16</sup> In support for his arguments, Shaltūt quoted the views of ‘Abduh, Riḍā and al-Marāghī after his analysis of classical interpretations of the relevant Qur’ānic verses. It is interesting to know that Shaltūt specifically cited Riḍā’s *fatwā* for Khūjā. It was ironical that the questioner of Shaltūt was an Indian officer of Ahmadi background, and the *fatwā* remains one of the sublime specimens which the Ahmadiyya publications still use as a sign of

<sup>14</sup> H.A.R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, Chicago, 1947, p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> Much has been written in this regard. See, for instance, Y. Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background*, University of California Press, 1989, pp. 114-115; N. Klatt, ‘Jesus in Indien’, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, 1987, 267-272.

<sup>16</sup> Shaltūt’s *fatwā* was firstly published in the Egyptian weekly *al-Risālah*, vol. 10/462 (11 May 1942), pp. 515-517. The *fatwā* and Shaltūt’s later reactions were also published in his collection, M. Shaltūt, *al-Fatāwā*, Cairo: Dār al-Qalam, second edition, n.d., pp. 59-83. See, the translation of the fatwa by C. C. Adams, ‘A fatwa on the ascension of Jesus’, *The Muslim World*, vol. 34/3 (1944), pp. 214-217.

triumph for their founder's pioneering analysis of the subject.<sup>17</sup> However, Shaltūt's opponents were among his colleagues within Al-Azhar, who accused him of issuing the *fatwā* in a 'Qadiyānī spirit'.<sup>18</sup> Shaltūt was very upset about the critique, which he considered as an implicit 'accusation' of 'Abduh, Riḍā and al-Marāghī.<sup>19</sup> O. Leirvik correctly observed that the christological discussions of the school of *al-Manār* remained mostly within the tradition of apologetics and polemics towards Christianity, but the discussions of the forties around Shaltūt's *fatwā* were an internal Muslim affair.<sup>20</sup>

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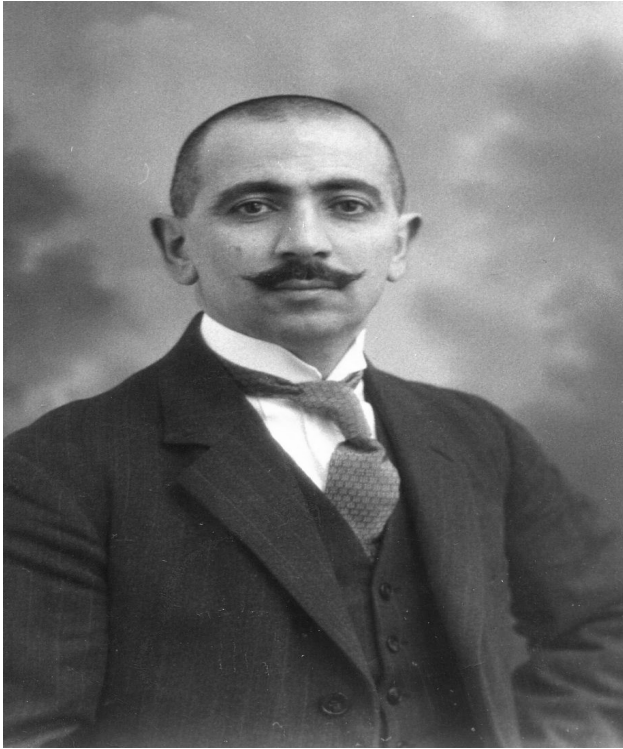
<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, 'The Ulama of Egypt on the Death of Jesus Christ -- A Fatwa: Exaltation of Jesus by Prof. Mahmud Shaltut', <http://www.ahmadiyya.ws/text/books/others/misc/ulamaegyptdeathjesuschristfatwa.shtml>, accessed on 7 January, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> See, Shaltūt's reply, *al-Risālah*, vol. 11, no. 513, pp. 363-363.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 364.

<sup>20</sup> Leirvik, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

## Appendix I



Zakī Hishmat-Bey Kirām  
A photo from family archive, no date

الخميس ١٣ أكتوبر (ت ١) ١١ صفر ١٣٤٠ هـ

Oct. 13 Thursday el khamîs

تفحصنا من عند الدكتور دينا . وقد حضرنا جللا نكثري فغير ان قطرا من طيور غلوم  
بعد ذلك انشأ برسم قمره همارك ادرمان وكنا ندره فدخلنا ومكنا بجول مع محمد بننا كثر  
رؤساء ساعتين في حجرة الخيف التي هي القسم التي في الطرف فحدثنا مما راينا من الرية  
والزخرف والنفوش فاجبر رؤس السقف واليحت القديمة والي شية من حلال والي  
وأية وماعون وسط وزراي وارائك ومنها جوج واسعة للآثار الاكبر من عر  
ومارية وركية ومنها بعض مصحف وكتب وأية انه ليه وسط وسجاد فوجد  
وادرنا بعد الانوار من الزجج زكي ايضا كرام الله مستقي في مكتبته وهو في وسط  
اصيب برجله في الحرب اضره فخرج في الماية ثم تزوج مهرضته وفي مكتبته يسر في مكتبته  
وهو الآن يدرس الطب ونفسنا عند البارون اويناييم وكتب اعظم في ردها الدكتور  
فقد قرأ في بعض شي في صحننا بجور وقد علمت منها ان في يها ان المارسة لا  
فلا هو الا في ديكلم فانت بالنفس لا بالجسم انسان من

Ridā's diary on his first meeting with Kirām (13 October 1921)

شيخنا الأكرم واستاذنا الأعظم السيد رضا الموفّر وأمه الله !  
 السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته . واجدنا في الدلق بمقامكم وبعد اخذت كتابكم الكريم وشكرت ذكركم هذا العجز المذلل وللمسلمين  
 حياة عالم المرشد . عنت لهماكم كلمة التي شرها الله جعلها حصنا حصينا للمسلمين لتستذكروا فيها بشؤون العالم الإسلامي تحت سماها الحرم .  
 زجوا لئلا يأخذ بكم ويجعلكم مناد يهتدى بكم . ورجال يقومون بحماية الدين واهله المنتشرين بأفحاء الأرض .  
 وحيث انكم العدة التي يتكلمون في العالم العربي والإسلامي احببت ان اخبركم ببعض مشغولين في بيرون ان يستمعوا غيرهم من اجل انهم هذه  
 الشريعة خمسة الفار في برلين مجاونا كما صحتها دوى كدوى الطبل الالانه فارغ . وهذا الاسم هو (الجماعة الإسلامية) اي ان هذا الاسم  
 هو اسم الجمعية قد أسست من عدة سنوات ثم تفرقت الوعيت واستبدلت ههنا العنصر الإسلامي يعرفه الكثيرون وكسبوا  
 الكثيرين ومنهم لا يتركيها سدا . قد اقبلت المسلمون في برلين خمسة الفار من الشيوعية التي اكل التعصب بالهم من ذاكرة بشاروا  
 بيرون كل حلة حسة هي الشيوعية واليهما . الانهم بيرون ان يجعوا ما لا من اي وسيلة تكون ومن اي جهة كانت . انجلوا اسم الجماعة  
 الإسلامية وصاروا يطبقون الاصول كلها وكل عضوهم اصد نفسه فيهم معية قصد استبدال هذا الاسم الضخم بقصد بعضهم  
 الى السلطان المخلوع وحيد الدين قبل وفاته بايام ثم ذاك الزمان توجه الى محمد السادس المخلوع وقبلا كان قد بايعوا الحسين واليوم اردوا  
 رابعهم الملة لاجل . . . . . وبعد ايام تالوا ليا فر احدكم الى الروم الى . فلهذا انما لا اعلم هل هؤلاء هم بالنيابة عن الحاشية كلها حاشية  
 (الحاشية) لم تعرف الشيوعية ولم تعرف بالاسلامية ، اما المسلمون الموجودون في برلين فاعلم يعود الى شعورهم كما يصعب بين والامثال والفرس  
 وغيرهم . اذن هذا السهم الذي توجه اليكم هو بالنيابة عن شخصه في ليس . ليس في برلين احد من المسلمين كالحاشية الذي هو لا خمسة  
 الذين يحملون اسم الجماعة الإسلامية وهم مجا برون مسلمي برلين . بن والمسلمين اجمع كما يعلم الامر شكيب وقد كتب عنهم بالشورى .  
 فغيره على المسلمين خصوصا الذين هم مجتمعون في مكة للنظر في الشؤون الإسلامية احببت ان اكتب اليكم نبذة عن هؤلاء المشغولين  
 واليعصم . ولقد تكون عن المسلمون مثلة في يد اعيانها والمجاين منا . ان القادم اليكم على سوري ارسله الله التحصيل في برلين  
 فافنده بعض عشيائهم الهند واستغوا بالاعيب ناهم فاحذروه وان ائجي ذقنه وسوالهم ولقب نفسه بالوهابي فانه لفرابة  
 بان عمل هذا القرب ليس مع اطاعهم من ورا القاكم . وانى احقق ان البروقم الذي سنوه اذ اسدت في وجههم لم يحيل على عمل حكة ولم تطل  
 على صاحب الجلالة الملك ابن السعود شيخه والرجال ليوامم كي وان لم ضيع جمع الى الادريس والحسين واسألها المخلصين  
 هذا مع كال شرف والمسلمين الى السيد اقدم هذه التذكرة واعلم علم اليقين بانه سيدك كل شي وان لم يستلم هذه .  
 وبالاخر انما اجعل لكم ولادم الله تقادكم .  
 اخيكم المطيع الأصغر  
 ذكي كرام

برلين ٢ يونيو ١٩٢٦

Kirām to Ridā, Berlin (3 June 1926)



Dr. Zeki KIRAM

Berlin NW6, Karlstraße 10  
Fernruf: Sammel-Nr. D 1 Norden 1580  
Telegramm-Adresse: Zekiram Berlin  
Code: Rudolf Mosse

برلين ١٤ نوفمبر ١٩٢٩ Berlin, 14

استاذ الاساتذة وسنام الجهادية منار الاسلام ومرشد المسلمين سيدى السيد رشيد رضا  
حفظه الله آمين

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد مرسل لفضيلتكم طيه نبذة عن احتجاج ثان من اليهود  
الالمان ضد الحركة الصهيونية. وهذه الاحتجاجات منى سلاح يهودى نستعمله ضد الصهيونية المعلومه لدينا .  
واظن ان به نفع كبير لمذيعاتنا لكونه من اقوال اليهود انفسهم وخير السلاح هو سلاح العدو نفسه . واسيوع  
القادم ساقدم لكم كلمات خلدلة لليهود انفسهم وقد اتسلت جمعياتهم الليبيرال الذين يتاربون الصهيونية  
والاسيوع القادم الامل ان يكون لي موقف عندهم يرفع الرأس . واننى وضعت كتاب بشأن السياسة الاوربية  
الشرقية وخصوصا الفلسطينية والصهيونية واننى انتظر اليوم نتائج مقررات وتحقيقات الهيئة التحقيقية المرسله من لوندو  
لادرجها بالكتاب ليكون كاملا . ولا شك لي بأن الله حليف الحق والحق حليف الاتحاد والاتحاد حليف النصر ، واتحادنا  
الذى ظهر على اثر اعتداء الصهيونيين سيتوج ان شاء الله بالنصر وهو المعين لنصرة دينه القويم .  
سيدى ، ان اطلعى الواسع وصلاية تدينى المبني على العلم والمعرفة يخولونى بالقيام بحركة قوية  
في سبيل الاسلام والشعوب الاسلامية والعربية واننى اعظم حرب عوان نقوم به لقتل مذيعات الصهيونية  
والمسيحية ، والجزويتية ، والماسون . هي نقل كتب منتخبة من اقلام هذه الخوائف بذاتها التي هي السلاح الماضي  
لمحاربة العدو وقتله به ويوجد كتب سهام مسمومة فتاة وهذه الكتب دفعت عليها هذه الجمعيات ليلالين لترفعها  
من بين ايدي القراء وتمنع طبعها لما بها من السموم القتالة ولكن حالتى تطابق المثل العامى " ~~لله المثل العامى~~  
" المعين بصيرة واليد قصيرة " . والله لو تان لي ثروة لصرفتها في سبيل الدفاع عن حقوقنا ولكن أن لي هذا ودرهماتى  
القليلة لايسمحون لذلك ووقتي الذى مضى ان اصرف منه الكثير لاكتسب المعاش لصد باب الاحتياج .  
الامل من الله ان يقوى جمعياتنا ويرشدنا للطريق القويم لتقوم بالاعمال التى لابد منها والتي  
هي لباب الحركة الاسلامية .

مذا والزجركم ان تنفضلوا بغيرل هذا الاخ الاصغر الذى يحترمكم اجل الاحترام وادامكم الله

المخلص

أحمد

يكنتم ارسال كلمة الى اهل الملة طيه لخدمة الحق التى ارجوها من سبته  
امر سيدى رشيد رضا

Letter to Ridā, Berlin (14 November 1929)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

سیدی واستاذی ومرشدی وفارسی السید الحلاۃ الاکبر السید رشید رضا حفظه الله آمین  
السلام علیکم ورحمة الله وبرکاته ارجوکم عفوا اننی تأخرت بتقديم الشکر الواجب لما اهدیتموه  
نحو ولدکم هذا وذلك لطولة سباحتی فی اوربة والاشغال المتراکمة التي وجدتہا بانتظاری . فاننی دوما  
لافضالکم ذاکر وسمو اخلاکم شاکر ابقاکم الله مرشدا للمسلمین ومنیرا للحق المبین ومعاظدا لخدام الدین .  
وبمعدہ قد کتبت سلمت حسب اشارتکم يوم کتبت فی القاهرة ای منذ ۳۹ يوما مذكرا لادوية الی  
الاخ عاصم انقذی ثم الکتاب الذی ترجمته من الالمانية الی العربية . وقد رجوتہ ان یطبع المذکرة عقب السید  
مباشرة وینت لحضرته اہمیتها ومستجلیتها . وقد وصلنی الی الیوم من احد طالبی الادوية مکتوبین وتلغراف  
یطلب اخباری له تاریخ ارسال الاوراق والادوية . فعلمتها اضطررت ان اکتب کل شیء یدی واستبدل حروف  
الطبع بکلیشة . والآن خلصت الکلیشة وادعتها المطبعة وغدا تخرج من المطبعة وادعها بعد غد  
للمعمل لیلصق الاوراق علی الادوية ویرسلها حالا . وساقدم لسااحتکم منها شیء ربما اتمكن من خدمتکم حتی  
فی الصحة . فلهذا لیس لایم بعد من طبع المذکرة المذكورة .  
امل ان تكونوا وجدتم الرسالة المترجمة طبق المرغوب وکم قررتم ادخالها فی المتار الفريد .  
وبمعدہ تطلبوا بطبع کرسالة مستقلة .

اما البرنامج الذی تکلفنا عنه ان شاء الله ساعمله واقدمه لمتصدیقکم علیه أو تصحیحه وبعدہ تعمیجه .  
ارجو من سااحتکم ان تکررتموا بأرسال رسالة امیر الہیان التي بین فیها سباب تأخر مسلمین لانه  
لنجد منی الامیر الجزء الاول منها وقت وجودہ فی برلین واخذہ منه احد الطلبة ولہی یرجمہ کما هی عادة  
کتابین استعارشی . وكذلك ارجوکم ان ترسلول کتاب یحوی بمئة نینا محمد علی الله علیه وسلم واعمالہ  
کصورة تأسيس الدین وتوطید اركان حکومته لاننی الآن مشغول بتحرير رسالة عنوانها محمد بالالمانية  
ربما اجد فی الکتاب الذی ترسلونه شیء لاعرفه أو سهوت عنه واکون لکم من الشاکرین . اما ثمن الکتاب  
فاننی اقدمه بکل شکر وامتنان . فوالله النبوی عندی وليس به شیء یفید غایتی ولذلك یجب ان یکون کتاب فیض  
تلفی عہدہ ختاماً ارجوکم ان تنکسوا موا بقبول فائق احترام  
ولدکم الاصح ویمترکم الاکبر

الدکتور زکی کرام

برلین ۱۹ محرم ۱۳۵۰  
موافق ۵ یونہ ۱۹۳۱

عنوا لجدید اعلامہ والماء لا زال درجہ الی العنوان  
القديم . المرجو ان تأمرهم لتقیي العنوان

Letter to Ridā, Berlin (5 June 1931)

بسم الله والحمد لله

بيننا وبيننا ورثنا العروة الوثقى واليه رجعنا حفظ الله آتينا  
السلام على فضلكم ورحمة الله وبركاته. وبعد  
القيت هذا بعض المحاضرات الإسلامية وكتبت عنها الجريدة التي كان  
محمودون بالمحاضرة كتابة حنة ، وقد فني الله لنا آذان القوم عن أمر  
لهذه المحاضرات ورغم ان الحكومة الحاكمة ترفض كل شيء غير مسيحي  
فان الله وفقني بحسب الاسلوب الذي امكن ان ياه من عنده لتوسيع فهمه ليعمل  
ووجدت من كبار القوم من يجذب انتباه محاضرات قيمة عن الاحكامات  
الإسلامية ، ولما ان الت محاضرة عن المرأة بالاسلام ، وقد كتب  
في الأوفى الدير شبيب قبل القاء المحاضرة بموجبه الاطلاع على  
كتب صدرتكم تحت عنوان «الجنس اللطيف» أو ما أشبه بهجده  
طبع ذلك الكتاب عنكم ، وها أنا عملاً بنصحة الدير أوفى الدير  
ارحبكم ان تذكروا بهذا الكتاب من محلة حقيقة ان لا قيمة .

أي رأيي اقبلاً مجيئاً مع تعاليم الاسلام وانني تحققت ان تأخرات  
الاسلام في أوربة هو أولاً من عدم فهم اسلوب التفهم لأن لكل محيط  
عقلية خاصة واصول خاص وثانياً تفضل بعض الاطفال بعدد قاتل مسيحية فيظنون  
انهم يخدمون الاسلام وفي الحقيقة يفرعون بالاسلام من حيث لا يعلمون ومفهوم  
الذي ظنوا مكان المجاورة بالاسلام وثالثاً بعض الوعيات الفاسدة  
ككلمات البابية والبرانية والاحمدية . فجميع هؤلاء ينتشرون وينشرون  
تعاليم الفاسدة تحت ولاء نقاب الاسلام قاتلهم الله . واما بعض  
الاضطرابات دبت في روح النشأ وبعثت في الاول .

استل الله التوفيق وفضلكم الدعاء .  
كنت سلتكم رسالة ترجمتها من الاطانية والاسقف الالبيس لم ترجموها . الال  
ان ترسل مع كتاب المرأة الذي نصحتي الوصير حفظه الله بمطالعة  
هنا ما ارهبكم ان تذكروا يقول فائقه اهراس وتعدوا على باني محمد  
وفياؤكم بولاسلام  
برلين ٤ ذي الحجة ١٣٥١  
صلواتكم واتم بخير

Letter to Ridā, Berlin (3 Dhū al-Hijja 1351/ circa 1933)

سيدى العلامة الاكبر والمرشد الاعظم واستاذنا المحترم السيد رشيد رضا  
نفعنا الله بحلمه وجهاده آمين .  
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته - وصلى تداً الجنس اللطيف واستقيمتين هذا المنهل  
الحبيب ابد الله بحياتكم .

من خصوص الكتاب الذى اخبرتمونى عنه  
Fr. Andrea , Mohammed,  
sein Leben und seine Glaube

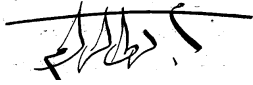
ارسلت لاشتره وساطعالم بكل كلماته وحروفه واخبركم عنه . ولا اعرف المحرر ولا اظن انه مستشرق .  
اظن اننى اعلمتكم انه صدر كتاب نيف الف صفحة بالقطع الكبير ضعف ابعاد صفحة المنار . تحت عنوان  
الانقلابات التاريخية العالمية منذ ٢٠٠٠ سنة . وقد حرر هذا المجلد الضخم ٣٦ محرر من اقطاب بحرين اورية  
وكنتانا من جملتهم . انا اعترف باننى لا اعد من اقطاب المحررين واننى ضئيل حتى لا يرانى احد ولو كنت واقف  
اباه . ولكننى والحمد لله من اقطاب اهل الايمان والمبشرين بالدين الاسلامى . وقد كتبت بهذا المجلد  
الضخم الانقلاب الذى جاء به محمد عليه الصلاة والسلام وهيئة التحرير المسئولة اقربت بان الموضوع الذى  
حرره خادكم هذه الاحرف هو احسن موضوع فى المجلد . وقد كتبت هذا الموضوع تحت عنوان  
" محمد رسول الله " . واننى درجت فيه المرب قبل الاسلام ووقت محمد وكيفية الدعوة وسبب امتشاق الحسام  
والاساسات التى تستند عليها التعاليم الاسلامية واقوال بعض كبار اورية بالاسلام واهمية الكعبة والحجر  
الاسود وكيف تنظر اليه المسلمين اعتقادا وثقافة لغيره ومعنى الصلاة والحج والهجرة بمعارات وجيزة علمية  
فلسفية فالقارى لا يرى تعظيم او مقال او عمل مبالغ به بل يقرأ تاريخ وحقائق وعلم وكذا لا يجد من المنجزات  
التي والحالة هذه لا يمكننا انما اثباتها الا بالاعتقاد فانه يقرأ بمحلبها المنجزات العلمية التى لا يمكن جرحها .  
فاننى والحمد لله قد وضعت باعظم أثر صدر فى اورية وتطالعة ملايين العلماء والمتبحرين للاطلاع على  
الانقلابات التاريخية واخذ درس منها كلمة تشليل واستل الله ان يرسل لى من يهد ازرى ويماضنى لاتوفى لوضع  
امثال هذا الاثر التاريخى فهكون درعا يقي صدمات الاجانب والمبشرين .

وقد اتى الى عندى احد البروفسورات يستأذننى الفاء الموضوع بالراديو فرحبته وهو يرى آذن الفرصة  
لبلفيه . فهذا البروفسور يسمى فينسر قد كان سفين طويله فى افريقيا . واليوم البلاد فى هياج وضد كل شىء شو  
مسيحي ولذلك لا اعرف كيف ومتى يتوقف لالفاء المحاضرة ومتى الفاها اشرككم عن ما نقوله الجرائد .  
ولى نية ان اتوسع بالموضوع وان ترجمه للانكليزية لانه وجد هنا اقبالا من علماء اورية يسر كل مسلم صميم .  
والله لو لا اضطرارى لتحصيل المعاش والكيد ليلا ونهارا لتحصيل المعيشة لحضرت جميع اعمالى للتبشير لان المتطبلين  
على الاسلام كثيرين والانقلاب الضخمة والاسماء الغضة تجلس فى حيرة حيث لا يعلمون من هو الصادق .  
والاوربيين ايضا احتراروا بامرهم لما يسمعون من تعاليم الاسلام التى ينصبها كل متطبل على قدر عقله .  
كنت الفيت محاضرة وصار لها رنين جيد بعد المحاضرة قام احد المستمعين وقال الامر الذى سمعناه من فلان

( هنا يعنى احد المسلمين . . . ) ان التعاليم الاسلامية هى لاتوافق الا العرب القاطنين بالصحراء  
واما نحن الانان لاتوافقنا الا افكار الالمانية القديمة . . . فانا بقيت بحيرة هل اسخط بهذا المتطبل  
او ماذا افعل . ولكننى لاجل ان ارفع كل نزاع قلت له انت فهمت غلط واجبت على مقاله بهدوء .  
تسمعون لاشك اسما شمة جماعة اسلامية ومعهد اسلامى وثقافة اسلامية وورود والله كلها كذب  
ومرتزق لعدم الرغبة فى السعى والكذب لتسبب المعاش بالطرق المشروعة . مع كل هذا استل الله ان  
يهدى المسلمين ويهدينا معهم .

ختاما ارجوكم ان تتكرموا بقبول فائق احترام

اشيكم الاصغر و بجلكم الانهر



برلين ٨ محرم ١٣٥٢

Letter to Ridā, Berlin (8 Muḥarram 1352/circa 1934)



Dr. ZEKI KIRAM  
Berlin NW6, Karlstraße 10  
Telefon: Sammel-Nr. D 1 Norden 1580  
Telegramm-Adresse: Zekiram Berlin  
Code: Rudolf Mosse

Berlin, den ٩ أكتوبر

سيدي ومحترمي منار الاسلام والمسلمين السيد رشيد رضا حفظه الله آمين  
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته اما بعد فقدم لسماحتكم طيه مقاتلين من اهم ما وجدته بالجرائد  
الامانية التي تتبعها واطالعتها بكل دقة وامعان لانتكن من الوقوف على الموقف الذي نرى ارباب السياسة  
والدفاع عن حقوقنا بموجبها وانني بذات الوقت ارسلتها الى الفتح العراء والمقصود ايصال الحوادث  
للجميع بأسرع ما يمكن لتقابل الصهيونيين والاعداء الباقين الذين يصرفون الملايين لازاعة الاشبار لجميع الجرائد  
للمخالطة الرأي العام ، ونحن للأسف ليس لدينا من المال الاشعورنا الاسلامي وقلبتنا العربي الشرقي اللذان  
يتخبطان بالذب عن حقوقنا المهضومة .  
ارجو من فضيلتكم ان تنقلوا بقبول فائق احترام اخيكم الاصغر وموعدنا ان شاء الله البريد القادم  
ودمتم درعا منيعا للاسلام والمسلمين

اخيكم الذي يجلكم

أدستور  
زكي كرام

Kirām to Ridā, Berlin (9 October, no year)

لا يخفى ان لفظة جزيوت هي من الأفعال الأجنبية التي  
 غلب استعمالها في لغة العربية في هذه المدة الأخيرة  
 في معنى الخيال والدسيسة مع كون العجوز في الأصل  
 كناية في اللغة الفرنسية

والفعل والكسرة تروى في اللغات ان الطريق المنسوبة الى  
 زانة الشريعة ينبغي ان تكون ايضا متجاذبة للفرق والأصوات  
 الفاضلة الحسنة لكن ترى انه يوجد فرق بين عنوان هذه  
 الطريق وأعمال اربابها كالفرق المعلوم بين أفعاله المدللة  
 وأربابها

واما الفرق الذي بين معناه الحقيقي والجاري فهو كالفرق  
 بين الرأيا والرأي  
 فان لفظة (جزيوت) باللغة الفرنسية في الأصل بمعنى  
 يسوع ومعنى لفظة (جزيوت) يسوع فالزائد معنا  
 كلام أفلون السبع عبد السلام وما أتى به من الحكم  
 ثم هذه الطريق مع كونها معقولة عند جميع ارباب الاربابان  
 والمذاهب هي في مكان الحق عند ابناء مذاهبها ايضا  
 الخاطئة لفظة جزيوت لا يظنون انه الا معنى <sup>جزيوت</sup> مدركه  
<sup>أشبهه بالرومان</sup> ~~بمعنى~~ <sup>بمعنى</sup> فهم ان ارباب هذه الطريق المدللة  
 هم من ادهي المذاهب واشد فسادا من الواقع في عظمته  
 وان الله في الشيطان في تسلطهم على الناس بوساطة ارباب

First page, Arabic Translation of a piece of work on the Jesuits (probably made by Kirām), no date.



## Appendix II

١٤ أكتوبر ١٩٥٥

عنوانی :

Adil Luepster,  
133, Boulevard Bonne 14<sup>e</sup>  
Paris - France

سیدی و مولای الانساز الکبر :

[illegible][illegible]

Letter from 'Adel Zu'aytar to Ridā, Paris (24 October 1922)





### Appendix III



Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī

Photo: Family archive, Meknes (Morocco)

MUHAMMAD ABDUL KADIR  
EL-HILALY,  
@ Dorah,  
P. O. F A O, (Iraq),  
(Persian Gulf.)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

محمد بن عبد القادر الهلالي  
بالدوره  
بوسته فاو (العراق)

مكة  
المكورة في ١٠ ربيع الاول سنة ١٣٤٦

سيد رضا رافت سادات

الى حضرة الفاضل الامام العبد وحيد العصر السيد محمد السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

اما بعد فقد بلغني هواكم الكريم فسرتي كثيرا ما اشتغل عليه من الكلام الحسن وفتنكم بي ايها الاله  
المختبر لكم اخذتكم وكما لفتكم والده يحمل محبتنا لكم خالصة نوجهه الكريم وعتبتم على عتبا الطفل  
من المسيم واحسن العمل المصطفى لاني لم افصل اشرقي السابقة لكم وفي عذر في ذلكم وهو  
خوف من الوثايت بين الاخوة وخوف لحاق ضرر رتبوي ايضا من اغضب بعض الناس ومردي  
ان بعض الناس ما زال يقتل في الذروة والغارب الشيخ عبد الله بن حسن حتى طعن صدره من شدة كره  
كم يظنون الغزالي وماخذون بقوله وانكم تقولون سوفاة المسيح وغير ذلك ثم جاءت  
مسألة المسيح انه جالس تحت عني باله وكان يسوء في ذلك فاشترت مرة بلطف الى الشيخ عليه  
ان القول سوفاة المسيح مروي عن ابن عباس وغيره رواه ابن جرير ثم رجعت المسألة في ابن جرير  
فرايت كما كنت فاورت ان حملت الكتاب ولا ليراه فتمنني بعض الاخوان مخافة ان يظن اني انا ايضا اخذت  
ذلك ثم شرعت ابيته مردكم في احاديث الدجال بلطف فوجدت غيري قد دعا قلبه وانما احب ان تبقى  
مرتبكم ومكانكم العلمية محفوظة عنده وعند سائر علماء نجد فذلكم الذي جعلني على ما كنيتكم  
وما سميت ان افترج عليكم كتحصيل الكلام في مسألة الدجال كتحصيل ما ينطبق مع فهم الناس ويرضونهم  
ولذلك قدت ونظركم اوسع من الاخبار المفضولة ان الشيخ عبد الله بن علي بن عبد الله بن علي بن  
محمد يكون فيه مرتب واقر ينفيه عن اخذ الاجرة على المسئلة فلولو العضوية فيه في المرافقة فلا يولاه  
وجد معنى ذلك انه يقوم بالافتاء على مذهب الشافعية فناء بهذا اجل الثقل وعامجه اياما فلم ...  
فاستقال فاقبل وقد بيضت جزءا اورد على الشيعة وغيرت فيه العبارة من الخطاب بصيغة الجمع  
الى الاخبار بقال القزويني كذا واقول في جواب كذا وخشيت العبارة كتيلا وحذفت السلام والثناء  
الذي في اوله وبعض العبارات الدينية كقوى والعلوكم عذرا لم نطلع عليه وهو اللفظ الذي استعملتم  
عليه وانما عندكم وصدركم بمضيدة اهداء ودمج للامام مطلعها يا ايها الملك الذي سرور

اي وبني اما ما كان

Letter to Ridā, Mecca (10 Rabi' al-Awwal 1346/ circa 1928)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

A  
HIGH CLASS  
Arabic Periodical  
AL-DHIA,  
LUCKNOW (INDIA).

No. ....

الضياء  
مجلة علمية أدبية تعليمية  
تبحث عن الآداب العربية والإسلامية  
تصدر في كهنؤ (الهند)

Date 1352 ربيع 8

حضرة امام العصر مولانا السيد محمد رشيد رضا زاد الله في معناه وبارك في حياته  
اذخرنا وحزنا للاسلام السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته اما بعد فاهنئ المسلمين  
الارلاء اصفكم على عود المنار المنير للظهور ثم على من الله على المؤمنين بهذا الكتاب  
الجليل الذي هو مغفرة جديرة من مناقم التي لا تحصى القلب دائما معكم وذكركم  
ذنية لمجالس هذا الحقير وقد سافرت الى افغانستان واقتضت هناك ٥٥ يوما وكنت  
اذكركم كثيرا فكان انبه العلماء هناك الشيخ سيف الرحمن بوجه اعتراضات في مسائل  
من المنار فكنت اجيب بما يناسب والمقصود ان ذكركم انيس في الحل والترحال  
ولكن ماذا يقفنا الذكر وفي النفس حسرة على اهل هذا الجيل الذين عمت ابصارهم  
والذي يسلبني ان عمي بصائرهم لم يضر انواركم شيئا فلم تنزل مشرقه في العالم وتلك  
غاية وجود الائمة والمصلحين كيفما كان اهل ازمنتهم وانى اعد نفسي من اعقابنا  
المنار للمنار ولكن اضطرارا لا اختيارا وعسى ان تكفر عني عفو قى  
مع هذا كتاب للاستاذ بدر الدين الصيني المدرس الثاني للغة الانكليزية بدوة العلماء  
وهو شاب عصامي كله نشاط وعمل يرجو من كرمكم نسخة من كتاب الراجي المحمدى  
ليترجمها الى لغة الصينية ولعلكم متحفوه بها وسلامى على السيد عاصم والآل  
الاكرمين جميعا والسلم

صكوة افغانستان اليوم هي بالامس والخطوة واحدة ولم يتبدل الا الملك والطريق  
فالطريقة التي تسلكها الحكومة الافغانية اليوم هي طريق مصطفى كمال وبفتح از مير  
وقد احدثت ان افكرنا الفارسية المتعلقة بقضية البربر فلم يمكن حتى في مجلة جمعية العلماء  
واما الكلام في الدلائل فلا يجرك عليه امره

Letter to Ridā, Lucknow (Rabī' al-Awwal 1352/ circa 1934)

الى حضرة الفاضل الامام الحجة السيد محمد رشيد رضا السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته  
منع الله المسلمين بطول بقائه

اما بعد فقد وردت على رسالكم في الوحي والا الهام وانا مريض رعين الفراش فلم  
اقدر على اجابتكم عنها في الاسبوع الماضي وقد من الله بالشفاء وصار عني من القوة  
وله الحمد ما يمكنني من الكتابة ولو قليلا في كل يوم ورايت على ظهر الغلاف هذه العبارة  
"ارسلوا الجبل متى المترجم" فلم اجزم بالمراد منها لاني اخبركم اني كتبت حواشي بالعربية  
على جيل متى حين قرأته وبعثت بالانكليزية وبعد ما كتبت أكثر الحاشية وقعت لي سحنة من مجموعة  
العهد الجديد بالعربية فيها الانا جيل الاربعة واعمال الحوار بين ورسائل بولس ولم اقرأها  
وانما قابلت بعض المواضع من متى بالفصح الانكليزي فوجدت الترجمة مختلفة وعلى كتبت  
لكم ايضا اني اني ان ترجم الانا جيل والذي ارفقني في الاستشكال ظني مجموعة الانا جيل  
العربية تكون في مصر كثيرة جدا ولا يمكن ان تكون مقصودة لكم بقيت الحواشي التي ذكرتم  
في نشرها و ترجمتها الانا جيل التي هي من جملة منى ولا وجود لها في الخارج فارجو ان كان  
مقصودكم مجموعة الانا جيل بالعربية ان تيسر لها في وانا كان مقصودكم الحواشي والمباحث  
التي كتبت انا على متى وسميتها حواشي متى على الجبل متى ان تيسر ذلك واذا اردتم ان لا  
تخسروا اجرة مكتوب فابعثوا في ظرف مفتوح اي شيء مطبوع يوضع عليه طابع بعلين  
واكتبوا الى على ظهر الغلاف احدى هاتين العبارتين - ابعت حواشي متى - او ابعت مجموعة  
العهد الجديد - ابعت لكم ايها السيدون وسامحوني في هذه المراجعة فاني فعلتها خفلا من  
الغلط في ارسال كتاب غير مراد وقد جاءني كتاب من الامير شيكيب ارسلاني اطل بقاءه  
وحفظه اخبرني ان جنابكم اشركم في كتاب اليه بما اخبركم به من امر افغانستان والتعريف ان اكتب  
اليه متى من احوالها بغير تشاؤم او تفاؤل فكتبت اليه ما حضرني موجزا وقلته له اني لا اشاء  
اليوم ارفاقا لالا في شأن العرب الذين هم في الدرجة الاولى واما غيرهم فلا يعني امرهم  
حتى انقضاء اوانشاءم لان هذا زمان العصبيات القومية فالويل لامة قتل منها نصيبهم والسلام

Letter to Ridā, Fao (Iraq), (28 Jumādā al-Thāniya 1352/ circa 1934)

MUHAMMAD ABDUL KADIR  
EL-HILALY,  
@ Jorah,  
P.O. FAO, (Iraq),  
(Persian Gulf.)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

محمد بن عبد القادر الهلالي  
بالدوره  
بوسنة فاو (العراق)

كنتار  
البحر في ١٤ جمادى ١٣٥٢ هـ سنة ١٣٤٠

الى حضرة الفاضل الامام العلامة السيد محمد رضا  
ادام الله نور وجوده بحجده  
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

اما بعد  
فلقد تشرفت بحكم كتابكم وبشراف خطاكم منسباً تاريخي مؤتمراً بالكتب الثلاثة  
المرسلة ليدرك الدين الحسيني فمررت به انواع ضرورية لانه يصف مشاهدكم السلام سبحانه  
بالحسين الحسيني ان يبارك في محكم قضاها للاسلام واعلم وشها باراجه لا عداء الحق  
من الكافرين والمنا فحين الذين هم شر من الكافرين ولا خير اما انفسنا فذكرت لكم  
وماد عاني الى تحشم السفر اليها لاجب وحسن الظن بها وكنت سالت عنها الشيخ حسين  
احمد احد ارکان ديوبند واحد زعماء الهند سينا سينا فاعني هو اسمي فيقال ان نادر شاه  
احد اصابع الانكليز وخرقت بهذا القول ولكني اقول على تفسير زعماء الهند المعهدة  
التي بنى الانكليز ونادر تفسير السيف ولقيت بعد اجتماعي الغزوي فاعلمت بان مدير  
الحارف بلخوزيرها علق صورة الحسين في مكتبته فسلم اسماعيل عن ظف فقال له اني احب  
بهذا الرجل ثم لقيت احكم بيد العزيز البدوي فتكلم في نادر بكلامه شنيع فاقبل ما ذكره  
حينئذ احمد فجادلته في ذلك ولم اقبل منه وكنت اصلي بمضيق بان الوجهة الدينية بمحفوظ وان ضمت  
لوجهة السفيه مع علمي ان من الانبياء لله الدين له افهاما وطقا الى كماله واطلعت على  
الحقائق وحديث السور الخطا انما هي كان في غير محله اما الامور الظاهرة كالصلاة والجهاد  
والموالاة وحفلات الطرقيين وعلام ظهورهم من السكر او الفجور والتبرج وقلعة جزاة  
في المحامي على اظهار مكنتهم في المجالس العامة فكل ذلك موجود اليوم واما كون الوزراء  
كلهم ملائكة الا وزير الخزانة فاعلم بانهم الحادة ففقدوها وجمهور الموظفين وتعود اعتماد  
الحكومة بالعلوم الدينية وتبذروا الاموال العظيمة في زخارف المهندسة الارضية وزواجر  
فهم لا يحتاج اليه البلاد اليوم وان احيا دكا السخدا فلو صحت تلك الغاية فهو كذا كذا

وأما سفير أفغانستان في مصر فقد لقيت أخاه صاحب السجادة المبرمج على عرش المملكة الروحية  
 في أفغانستان مرارا كثيرة وكان وزير العدلية فاستعفى لأنه رأى أن زيارة الرئيس بالنسبة إلى سرته  
 لا ترفع بل تنقصه وهو الآن الحاكم الحقيقي في أفغانستان وجميع رجال الحكومة يخضعون له ويذهبون  
 إلى زيارته حتى الملك ولا مراما جديح قصيرا أنه وقد أخبرني مولانا منصور الانصاري وهو رجل عظيم  
 وعالم كبير وسياسي بحك أن كان معتمد سفارة أفغانستان في أنقرة أيام بداية مصطفى كمال آن  
 هذا الطاغوت كان يحمل سبعة في يده ويدور في الاسواق ويسال اصحاب الدكاكين عن حالهم ويسلم على  
 عامة الناس ويسالهم عن حالهم وكان موافقا على الصلاة في الجماعة ولكن من يحمل الموالد وكان يحاسب  
 اسد العقاب من يدهونه شيء من المعاصي وإذا اردت ان تعلم ان الحكومة افغانستان سالته على  
 طريقه القطب المربي مصطفى كمال فاسال عن سفارتها في أنقرة فوسكو فان كانت الصلاة تقام  
 فيها دل ذلك على قلته رياء هذه الحكومة. بلغني ان سفيرها في أنقرة من كبار الزنادقة وهو داية  
 الى الكفر وبلغني ان الطبيب يستكر ذواته بالسفارة ولكن كونه ان الخلق لا يمكن عزله امره  
 الملك ان ينجي ففعل كيري الناس انه يدين ولما زرت وزير المعارف زيادة رسمية بواسطة وزير الخارجية  
 كانه معي مولانا منصور فلم ياذن له بل لقيني وحدي وهو ومعاونيه الذي تاليم (تفصيل عارف) من الكفر خلق  
 انه اما علماء أفغانستان فهم صم كهمي وليس فيهم احد يفكر ان يقرأ المثار لوتوهم وكل من يلعب  
 بالوهابية فهو عندهم كف من اليهود والنصارى ومولانا سيف الرحمان لسان الوقوف الأفغاني الى  
 ابن سلو ولا يفهمون هذا بل يسلطه عارب الانكليز سينزل وطارب الروس سينزل وهو في الحقيقة  
 بعد عالمنا وصرته يعتقد ان صاحب الميثاق وشيخته محمد عبده الى الانحطاط اقر به عنده الى الاسلام  
 فقامت عليه ومخبرته لم الحقيقة ووجدته يعتقد ان اهل علم ديني هائل مخبر في العقائد والامال  
 فبرهنت له على خطاه ولا حذر رجل مخبرية نقايس بين ابن سموتد وفصطفى كمال فطعنت انا وقلت  
 وهو في حال لا يمكن المسلمين كالمجرمين ما لم كيف فكلمون ثم يست بعد ما بين الرجلين لا محبة في  
 ابن سموتد الذي ظلمني وعزاني جزاء عنده ولكن فيما ما بالحق والمال لكان يدركه فقد لقيته سرا  
 ودعاني الى منزله للطعام مرارا مع اصحابي من اهل كابل ومرايا وط وحدى وانجني خليفه ولكن لا  
 اذن بانه حكدين وامر بجاني «كتاب منه يو قد سعي مولانا شفيق الرحمن في تدوين جملة في كابل وكلم الصدر  
 الاعظم ووزير الخارجية وسليح الطريق «صبر صاب» مولانا بلقي والحمد لله على كلهم وعده  
 بذلك ولكن لم اقبل البضعة عن الامتياز حتى لا يكون في اعلم ان وزير المعارف يكره ذلك فان الزعيم  
 يعنتي كقره واسلامي وكنت اود العمل هناك لولا ان الحاد الحكومة واضطرت وزير المعارف ومعه  
 الملعب محمد الممد نيلان «بؤز كورخ» يعني نيلانهم ويسا على بانكاركم فلا استمر شيئا عن افغانستان  
 وقد فرج الصلبي بالكف وساعده ان شاء الله على ترجمتها وهو يقرأ على يومين واربعاء يكون منه خير كثير  
 وقد بلغ في اللغة العربية في شهرين ما لا يبلغه الا في سنين والف كتابا في احوال الدين با ردو نفيس  
 وقد ترجم منه القسم الثاني وصححه له في دروس الانشاء

ذهبت الى قسيس اميركي اعلم عنده الانكليزية منذ سنة اشهر وكان قبل الغاية بالدين ولكني اجتمعت  
بقسيس آخر في ارساليته فما عرف على حقيهم على الاعتراض على محمد فوفقت بيني وبينه مناظرات  
شفاهية وكتابية وعاب على عدم فرائده لا ناجيل فاقبت على درسها وقد انتهيت من درس مني وظهر  
لي فيه عالم يكن في حسابي من الادلة العاطفة على بطلان النصرانية وصحة الاسلام ورايتني فرائده  
ايماننا وقد علمت على مواضع كثيرة منه ثم شرعت في كتابة مباحث كالحاشية على الانجيل اظن انها تعجبكم  
وانا ترجم تلك ما يتعلق بتلك المباحث من الايات من الانكليزية الى العربية ثم اكتب ما يتعلق بها  
واذا اتهمتم اعلمكم لتفكروا في نشره ان كان فيه خير وسئلت عن هذا المحاب الحاضر للمرأة فذكرت انه محرم  
ولا يصلح في الدين ورايت ان جميع المتفرجين في اوروبا يرون هذا المحاب عقبة كونها في سبيلهم  
والمرتبون والملاحدة يعيبون الاسلام به والحج على السائل ايضا ان اكتب له شيئا فكتبت كتيباً صغيراً  
واخذته الرجل وشرع في طبعه فاحضر بعض الناس حب الدين الخطيب فكتب الى وانا في طريقى الى افغان فاستاد  
يسألني عدم نشره فاجبت بانه كاد ينتهي طبعه وليس فيه شيء يخالف اصلا ولا فرعاً وادرايت فيه  
شيئا فاحضرني ارجع عنه علانية على صفحات الصحف واظن ان هذا الجواب لم يعجبه لانه من حين وصله  
جوابي امتنع من نشر مقالتي في الفتح وكتب اتاول عنه بنشاط فحمله ليرسكيب وفريد وجدي ثم بقتعة  
النصارى في مصر لكثرة حسن ظني به ولكن تبين ان الامر على خلاف ذلك وسأطلب منه مقالتي في هذا  
البريد ولا اسالهم لم ولا علام وكل يعمل على شاكلته واني قد من اخواننا من ينظر الى ما قيل لاي من قال  
ولو ونحن ننقل اقوال النصارى والمشركن في تأييد الاسلام فهنا عوملت مقالتي معاملة مقالته تتم  
على فرض انني خرجت من الاسلام وكلما كتبت في ذلك الكتاب من الاحكام رآه الشيخ محمد الشافعي  
رحمه الله ووافق عليه ولا اظن عالماً يخالف فيه وارجو ان يكون هذا سرا عندكم فاني عزمت على ان لا اضع  
بهذا الاياكم والامر سلكي فقط ولو بقي المنازكا كان لاسب ان تنشر فيه تلك المباحث  
في الانجيل فان بدا لكم نشرها في مجلة هناك فاحبروني فاني لا اعرف حقائق الصحف الدينية هناك  
وقد اتخذت الجامعة الاسلامية عوضاً عن الفتح فاشترى بيدي من المقالات لكن المباحث المذكورة  
بالمجلات البقية اما تقرير كتاب الوحي المجدى في علمي فلا اظنه يفيد الا اذا ترجم الى الانكليزية فان جاء  
عليكم لم يبق فيها من الصبغة الاسلامية الا اطلال كباقي الوشم واخفى وسال الاستاذ المسمى مكانه  
واخبركم واما ديوبند فاولى من يكتب اليه في ذلك الشيخ حسين احمد وقد اخبركم فيما اظن بان السيد  
سليمان اصاذه في ترجمة كتاب الوحي والجنس الطيف وكتاب ثالث لكم واخبرني انه سيكتب لكم  
بنفسه في ذلك ولما بينت له فريته هذا الكتاب اعني الوحي المجدى قاله ربما كان ذلك في بلاد العرب  
واما في الهند فقد فرغ الناس من هذه المسألة وتلقوها بحفا من زمان ولكن ترجمه على ذلك لانه من  
تأليف عالم من مصر والاسلام

محمد تقي الدين الهادي

Letter (3 pages) to Ridā, Fao (Iraq), (18 Jumādā al-ʿUlā 1352/ circa 1934)



سيدى الاعلام السيد محمد رشيد رضا ادام الله بركاته السلام عليكم ورحمة  
الله وبركاته اما بعد فقد ورد على سوانك الكريم معشر اسلامكم الذى هو عندى  
من اعظم الاماني بل لا يساويه عندى شئ اداها الله لكم نعمة على المسلمين  
والوصايا التى جاءت في هذا الكتاب كتبت منتبها لها ومستعدا لمساعدة الصيبي  
وهو يعرف على يد ما اما الجامعة النظامية او غيرها من مدارس الهند فاني لا انوى ولا استطيع  
ان افصح في الهندى فاني عجز من الاعراض لا ينهم على صفاتهم التى تافوا العلمين فيها  
محتقرون العرب ويغضونهم جدا ولا ينظرون اليهم الا بعين الازدراء وانا واقف  
لهم بالمصدا اذ افصح ما استطعت فكيف يليق بي ان التمس وظيفة منهم وقد مللهم  
وعزمت على الاقامة في بلاد العرب وما يخص في بلادنا المغرب ان يسر الله ذلك  
وقد بلغت امر لم يعد نشر اخبارنا سنان بالسمع والطاعة اذ ليس لي عرض  
شخصي في نشرها ولكن كنت مرردا لا ادري ان نشرها اكثر ام حيرة فلما رايت ان عدم  
النشر خير فليس للا لالامثال واما الازهر يون فاني لا زال ارى ان الصغى عنهم اولى مع  
الاستمرار في نشر ونشر الحق من دون اشارة الى اسمائهم وغيرهم الخ مئة الى لا تقدر الاسلام  
لان ذلك يجلب سخط الناس عليهم ويجلي خزيهم وعوارهم ويقلل نشاطهم للجهاد  
واي شدي الحق على هذا الدجال الرجوى فانه شيطان ماره فقال الله ان يكنى الاسلام سره  
بشهاب ثاقب يرسله عليهم واما الاخ محب الدين الخطيب فقد نشر بعد فترة مقالات ولا اعرف  
حقيقة ما عنده وربما كان السبب في تأخير مقالاته شيئا لم يعرفه الى الآن ولم ابث له  
بعد رجوعي من كابل الا مقالين احدهما ذكره الا ولم ينشر ولكن اظن بلا جزم ان مقالات  
بعضها لاهل قدما لا تزال موجودة عنده الا ان تكون صاغت ولكنه اشار اليها في بعض  
اعتدائه العام وقد بعث الى الجامعة الاسلامية عدة مقالات ولا زال ابث اليها  
اسبوعيا وقد جادني في البريد الاخير كتاب من مديرة معتمد بالسكر والا طراء حتى اخلصني  
وسالني ان ادله على الصحف الهندية والكتب التي تبحث في الاسلام باللغات الأجنبية وانا جاد

في ذلك واسأل الله العصمة في القول والعمل واني خاف ان يكون جميع ما عملته محيطا لعدم الاخلاص  
لكن الراجح العمل وجهاد النفس والامر بعد ذلك الى الله وقد تم ما كتبه على منى فمادكم اهدى  
الى الشيخ محمد نصيف لطيف في جزء صغيرا لم فيه رأي آخر وهو ليس بكثير فذلك يمكن  
نشره في مجلة ثم جمعه في جزء لكن ما منه مهمة وان كانت قصيرة اذ المقصود بيان ما في  
ذلك الا خيل من الخطل وساقوا بقة الانا خيل وافعلوها كذلك ان شاء الله والبرامج العربية  
وكيفية ومحرفة زيادة على التعريف الاصلى ولم ادر نسخة عربية الا بعد ما اشرفت على اتمام  
ما كتبت بعث الى فريد ويليام سميت الاميركي نسخة مطبوعة في لندن  
واود ان تقي احدى جمعيات المسلمين بترجمة الانا خيل ترجمة فضيحة صحيحة وتعلق عليها  
الموائى الكاشفة للنفس النضارى كما فعلوا بكتا بنا لكننا نحن لا نجارهم في نفسهم بل تقتصر  
على بيان الحقائق وهذا العمل اذا تم يكون فيه فوائد المسلمين عظيمة وربما يعقل بسبب نصارى  
العرب على الاسلام اقبالا عظيما ويقل الوقوع في صيائهم ولكن اين من يعقل مثل هذا ولو  
وجدنا وقتا لترجمتها ترجمة فضيحة مطابقة للاصل الانكليزي وقد كتبت لكم في الكتاب  
الذى قبل هذا ببعض الاخبار وارجو ان يكون وصلكم وسلامى على السيد معاصم وسائر  
الادل الكرام والسلام 52 / 5 / 24 محمد تقي الدين الاملاني

Letter to Ridā (2 pages), no place (24/5/1352/ circa 1934)

الى الامام الحجة السيد محمد رشيد رضا ادام الله عنه وله الرضا وسلام عليكم ورحمة الله  
وبركاته اما بعد فقد ورد على كتابكم الكريم بعد تسليم هديتكم الثمينه - نسخة من كتاب الوحي  
المحمدي في علمه الثانيه فاضلكم بهذه النعمه والله يشكرها لكم ويزيدكم توفيقا لامثالها  
والاخ السيد الرضا هو كما ذكرتم ذو عظمة مصحوبه بعقل وتأييد الهي حتى انه يخافه كبار  
ذوي المناصب وتحفون فآكرهم اذا غشي بالهمم وهو في ذلك منقطع النظر ولكنه يحتاج  
الى العلم بقواعد الاسلام عامة وتميز ما كان عليه السلف من الطيب العقد والعمل مما حدث بعد  
وهو ضد الكثر اصل العصر فان علم الواحد منهم وان قل الكثر من علمه وانما فهم اساء العفو  
وكثرة اعمال الرجل وكونه كاتباً عند تاجر وقله توجهه للتعلم تحول دونه ودون ما يجب ان يكون  
عنده من العلم وقد تكلمنا انا وهو مع ميرزا محمد خان بهادر (فارسي الاصل وهو الان عراقي الناصية  
ومن سيرة البصرة كاتب بالانكليزية في الدرجة الاولى من ادباء الشرق) ان يترجم «الوحي المحمدي»  
الى الانكليزية وهذا نحن نجعل هناك احد يستعمل ترجمته الى اللغة المومنا اليها ام لا فطلب  
منى عرض الكتاب عليه فامرت ابا حيدر طه ان يعطيه اياه لانه الان عنده وسنظر ما يجب به  
بعض النظر فيه وانما ارى نشره بالانكليزية النفع حسا ومعنى من نشره بعدة لغات شرقية او غربية  
خامدة فهذه اللغة البرم هي حروف الفراء ومن اهم ما يؤسفني اني فاقد وسائل انما تعلم حتى ابذل  
الى الكتابة والخطابة وقد ضاع سعيي في ذلك ولادري الا خبركم بان نظارة مدرسة النجاة الخراسانية  
الشيخ محمد الشنقيطي رج سالتني بالجامع التدريس بها بعد عاراني عازلا عن العمل وسألتني اني اريد  
استعفاي من العمل في ندوة العلماء فرايت قبول ذلك واجبا واخذت ادرس فيها منذ شهرين ونصف  
الان معاشها لا يزيد على ما قد نير ونصف لعله ما تحصله ولما كان المقصود بالذات غير المعاش  
فقلت ذلك والاخلاق في هذه البلاد في اسفل سافلين بغير استثناء والقادر لاحكم له وقد بعثت انكم  
مقاله كتاب انكليزي بخطي في التاريخ قبل ورود كتابكم المشير الى قلعة غناء الرد على الطاعنين في  
الاسلام الا ان هذا لم يقعد الى الطعن في الاسلام ولا ردت عليه انا من تلك الناحية كما ترون  
ان شاء الله فان لم تروا نشره في المنار وجوب تسليمه الى ادارة مجلة الشبان المسلمين بالقاهرة  
هذا ما تيسر به اليكم الآن وسلامي على السادة الابرار والاخوان ودمتم في الجهاد في سبيل الله  
والصلىم 28 محرم 1353  
محمد رضا الرضا الهادي

Letter to Ridā, no place (28 Muḥarram 1353/ circa 1935)



## Appendix IV

MAGALLAT-UN-NAYEDAT  
THE LADIES' REVIEW  
(ARABIC MAGAZINE)  
KHOUFRA, CAIRO, EGYPT  
TELEPHONE 5234

مجلة السيدات والرجال  
عدد ١٢٣٤  
العنوان القاهري الماريني  
Nickel

Cairo (Egypt) ..... 152

عدد ١٢٣٤ - ١٩٢٣

حضرة نوري الدين كرمي محمد رشيد دقا المحترم

انني اتي جئت لكم اخذكم الى ابدنوه من الخلف والامام  
والشرفه فوافي فرج وانا التي كنت موزيه لاجني في كل  
سكانه وعمرنا حتى في ذوق دقيقه في حياته اعلم جيد  
ما كان لكم في سبوا المنزله عنده وكم كيف كان يعبركم  
وعاينكم انكم ترضون الى ما عرضته في مكاسر اخذكم  
مكروه جوده واني انسى انكم كنتم اول من وقع عليه  
ظري بين مستمعين - واول من سبوا محمد بن عبد الله  
فمنكم هذه عندي وشعوري بعد طعنكم في الشرفه  
سبوا نوري عنى المهمات - ونفوا بنود نوري في  
وعليكم السلام والرحمة  
روز انجون هواد

Letter from Rose Anjūn to Riḍā, Cairo (24 February 1923)

## حفلة تأبين

المرحوم فرح انطون

تألفت لجنة في القاهرة من اصدقاء فقيد  
العلم والادب المرحوم فرح انطون صاحب مجلة  
الجامعة المعجيين بآثاره ومبادئه غايته اقامة  
حفلة تأبين تذكّر فيها آثاره ومناقبه وتاريخ  
حياته واهتمامه وهي مؤلفة من حضرة الفاضل  
السيد محمد رشيد رضا رئيساً والسيد محمد علي  
الطاهر كاتباً وعضواؤها حضرات الباذة الالية  
اسماءهم وهي سرية بحسب حروف الهجاء :  
احمد حافظ بك عوض والياس افندي عيساوي  
وجبر افندي شومط وجورجي افندي ابراهيم  
حنّا و خليل بك مطراش و خليل افندي  
السكاكيتي وعبد القادر افندي حزمه ومحمد  
لطفي بك جمعه . وسيعلم مكان الحفلة وموعدها  
بوزير تاجها قريباً كاتب المراجعة

محمد علي الطاهر

The members of the committee of Anṭūn's ceremony of tribute, Riḍā's archive,  
Cairo.

D<sup>r</sup> S. Schmeil

Caire, le.....

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الى غزالي رحمه الله السيد رشيد رضا صاحب المحارر .  
 انت تتكلم في محبة كبريت وتجعله عظيماً وان انظر اليه برجل واحد  
 أعظم . ونحن واثقون في الاعتقاد (الدين أو المبدأ البشري) على  
 طريق نقيض فالحاج بيننا العقل الواسع والاعتقاد في  
 القول وذلك اوثق كقول المودعة . نه صديقتك الشريفة .

الحق اول ان يقال

دع من محبة في سدى قرآنهم <sup>كما قد نضاه</sup> للجنة الفيات  
 اني وان اردت فكنزت بدنيهم <sup>هل القرن</sup> بحكم الآيات  
 او ما حوت في ناصع الفاظ من <sup>حكم روادع</sup> للهموس وعظمت  
 وشرايح لانهم عقلا بها <sup>لم يعقلوا</sup> القرآن يا عبادات (١)  
 نعم المديون والحكم واثم <sup>رث النعمة</sup> من عظم الكليات (٢)  
 رجل المحبة رجل النعم والرحمة <sup>بطلن</sup> حيلهم انهم في الفارات  
 يبدونهم القوم آتاهم قلب النور <sup>وسيقم</sup> انهم على الهامات  
 من دونهم اوطال في كل الورى <sup>منه سابق</sup> ولا حق وآت

(١) انما لوخ الذين يستحقون به ويجعلونه كمالاً غداً في صف العمران  
 (٢) انما ردة الى كلمة السادة المصود بها هو وحدة من بين  
 البشر والكل من الباقين كما لا يخفى عليك هما : الموجد  
 والمنتقون . فترى ان صرت بارقاً في اللاهوت .

(٣) لا ارف كمن وقفت عند العقلة هذا كالمزور والمزور  
 به سراً قالوا انه انما اول المنز ويلمح انه يكون اول المنز

Letter from Shibli Shumayyil to Riḍā, Cairo, n.d.



## الحزب الاجتماعي السني

عرض الحزب

(١) الغرض من هذا الحزب ترقية الشؤون المراسية  
في المملكة السنية على اختلاف عناصرها وتحسين  
حالة العمال والفلاحين وإعطاء الحرف اليدوية  
(٢) صيانة الدولة السنية والمحافظة على سيادتها  
المحلية

(٣) المحافظة على الدستور بالمعنى الحقيقي لا الاسمي  
فقط

(٤) فصل السلطة المدنية عن الدين

(٥) إطلاق الحرية أثناء مجمع الأديان

(٦) السيادة الشاملة بين جميع عناصر الدولة دون  
تمييز

(٧) إحياء كل عنصر ولغة الحية لا إعدامه

(٨) تعبر كل لغة كل ولاية لغة رسمية للدولة

مع لغة الدولة الرسمية

(٩) يجب على جميع عمال الحكومة في كل ولاية ان يعرفوا



## تأسيس الحزب

مؤسسو الحزب هم الدكتور جميل درفوع  
بيك الفطيم والدكتور حنا و والدكتور خليل  
سعاد

كان اجتماعهم الاول في اديس ١٩٠٩ في  
بيت احمد هم الدكتور شبل شبل وكم  
شبل وفتي بيك الكندر وفتي ب حجة  
وقد انتخب في هذا الاجتماع الدكتور شبل  
جميل رئيساً والمكتب عاقاً والدكتور خليل  
سعاد سكرتيراً عاقاً

وقد انتخب احدهما الدكتور حنا وكم لوضع  
قوانين الحزب ففعل ذلك ثم صار  
مراجعة وتقديمه وفتي مع احدهما الدكتور  
خليل سعاد

و تقر في الاجتماع المذكور خارج اجتماعين  
في ادربا و اميركا بعد انشأ وثائق الحزب  
وان تكون خطة الحزب معتمداً على ما  
حاله الشريف في  
الدكتور سعاد  
السكرتير العام

Ms of the charter of the Ottoman Socialist Party  
(first and last pages)

# Appendix VII

بيروت في ٢ تشرين الثاني ١٩٢٨  
سيد الأستاذ العلامة صاحب مجلة المشرق  
بعد ثنؤتي واجباً أكرامه صلوات الله عليه وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين  
والعدد الرابع من مجلتيكم الغزير نفيساً قد علمتكم معنا... هذه المرة على  
أنا نأبى إلا الحصول على الأداة التي لم نضعها حرصاً على المجلة الثمينة  
وعلى قرائها المكثرة السرفنة وهي متأخر بعض فتوحات القرائم أو سلاوة  
على قرائكم من أعانني ووطنيتي على أمتي أكرامهم ومناكم أن حالة المشرق  
العام المشرق في هذه الفترة... وأنا أظن من هذا العالم حاشي تفتكم  
أسرتمنا على قرائكم وأن حالته الزلازل دون أرقابنا نأملنا سعيكم في  
السبيل الأمل من أجمع أوقاتنا بوجه من الوجهة و... منكم

AL-MACHRIQ

REVUE ORIENTALE MENSUELLE

Imprimerie Catholique — BEYROUTH

إلى إدارة مجلة المشرق ومكتبه في بيروت  
يطيباً جزاء المصارف (٢٤) و١٠٠

إلى الأستاذ العلامة السيد محمد رشيد رضا

دا- المشرق


ش- مع الانشاء رقم ١٤ عمارات المشرق  
مستقبل

La Caire  
Egypte

Letter al-Machreq to Riḍā, Beirut (2 November 1928)



# Appendix VIII

  
 بيروت  
**CHEIKH & LADKI**  
 BEYROUTH  
 تليفوناً : شيخ لادكي  
 TÉLÉPHONE : CHEIKH LADKI



بيروت في ١٦ مايو ١٩٣٤

لعل سيدنا الشيخ العلم الفاضل السيد محمد رشيد رضا حفظه الله  
 السلام عليكم ورحمة وبركاته وبعد، فذنا العدد الوافر من مجلة المنار التي قد صدرت في شهر رجب سنة ١٣٥٢ هـ  
 وكل علم وانتم قد قدري الطبعه الثانيه من كتاب الوحي المحمدي عنده عليه وسيله لم. جبريت. على الروايات تركه  
 لنا بهم كتب من الطبعه الثانيه الوحي المحمدي لتوزعهم للدارس وبعض الوصفاً في الدعي له عز وجل ان يحفظكم ذمراً للعالم  
 الاسلامي ويصير لافنا مجله ما نوليكم ندي (المشرف) بلونه بالكلية القديس يوسف ناشت روي الوحي المحمدي روي عليه  
 من السنة الحادي عشر وثلاثون العدد تاريخي، ١٩٣٤ هـ. كما نذكر في علمنا ان يروى عليه ولنا نعت لهم الوحي صاحب الكتاب اولى  
 بارو منه ولا علم عليه كتابه  
 عودنا على انفسكم وصدقنا هذا الخبر على الغيب سوي علم الناجي القوي الحج اننا الله منكم في المسكنه وفنكم  
 احد الاقربان فكلني باستغفاركم بالصوره التي رويها عليه ان امرئ ان تشرعوا في الجواب وترسلها لنا بدون  
 ان تشرروها بالمرأ الاخره لنا تشرهتكم العلم  
 والله يا سيدنا الشوق لرؤيتكم والتمني والنفدي باحدوكم الطبعه الحفنه انا الله وكرمهم على حسن  
 حاله واني احبهم وهذا العلم الواسع يرفقون الحب الجزير بيننا هكده فكانت مقالكم العدد الوافر بلنا  
 هيا لب الالباب فكلهم الوافور من هذا الموضع في العلم الله الحار ونتم هذه الحاشية على حسن مد وجوه على المسكنه  
 لابه في الدنيا والدينه والسلام عليكم ورحمة وبركاته المخلص

Letter, Cheikh & Ladki to Riḍā, Beirut (16 May 1934.)



## Appendix IX



Muḥammad Tawfiq Ṣiḍqī  
His family archive, Cairo<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks are due to Mr. Hishām Ṣiḍqī, his grandson, for sending me this photo. I have been able to trace them through the telephone directory of Egypt. Unfortunately there are no remaining papers of Ṣiḍqī, except some photos and one booknote of his handwriting, which is photocopied above.

<p>الاربعاء ٥ نوفمبر (٢) ٦ ذي الحجة ٢٦ بابه</p> <p>الجمعة ٧ نوفمبر (٣) ٨ ذي الحجة ٢٨ بابه</p>	<p>تابع ما كتب على ايسر يدي يوم السبت</p>
<p>قلت ان ارضنا الطاهرة ان البشرين يريدون حمل الذنوب على اطفال المسلمين في حرسهم الذين بعد ما كان من امر الكوفة السياسة ليخولهم احوالهم. وكان حاصلا كلام الرئيس انه هو ملاك الامر هذه المرة وتكون بايدي الناس مثل ذلك الكلام الذي ورد وانه يجمع جرد الناس من قتلته انه وزع منه اسره. وقال انه يجب السكوت الان لئلا ينشأ العزل وضع حرمه وان البشرين لم يطلبوا اكثر من ذلك لانهم لم يردوا انه لا ينبغي ان يكون في هذا من كان ولا بد فدايته به باسمه على ما كان وقال ان هذا هو الجواب فانعمه ويطبقه في هذا نحن واباه حراسه ويطبقه. فقال اباه وكان حاضرا انه يكتب حسنة هذه الى الله. وقال عبد الكافي بان ان</p>	<p>الجمعة ٦ نوفمبر (٢) ٧ ذي الحجة ٢٧ بابه</p> <p>ابن قرا الحار فقال ان كانا كتب فيه صحيح. ولكن يجب ان نأخذ الحال العام. واعتبر ان اكثر ما كتب ما كتب من هذا من طاهر الرتبة في القرآن والرسول (ص) وانصت كما في تلك البند التي تسمى الجاهل في ايام حرب المسلمين وجوب الدول التي في بلادهم السماج بتغير عريضة المسلمان لا رأيت ان المسلمين يبنوا نهر واحدا فاما كان يظن هذه الكوفة لم انظر فيها</p> <p>وما اختلفت به الرئيس والناصب من كلامي انه لا جرح لنا في بلادنا كحرية السجادة على بلادنا في الدين ولا في غير الدين. وانهم يعصبون عينا ويستفيدون من ما يريدون بالقرآن مع ادعائهم</p>
<p>السبت ٨ نوفمبر (٣) ٩ ذي الحجة ٢٩ بابه</p> <p>ذهبت بالذئب صدمت ارجحه الادار رئيس النظا رديرا بالذئب وما بالذئب اسس فطنتي ولا اوسا من الذئب من هو وما له وكيفية شرب الذئب العالم ما جسدني ما كنت اجبت به ويخاف بان من ان ما كنت وشرب في الار على السجادة من فرض مسري لان المسلمين يهاجروننا ويطعنون في ابناء الزمان طعننا شدة ما في قلوبهم وجرارهم وخطهم فاذ لم نزل عليهم ما لم يمسح المسلمين فقال ان لا نرى سحر لانه لا يرد على جاح البشرين فاصبر عليه الحار فطنت مكون مع ان الذئب كسبا كذا في هذا ان اجاب السجادة تخفف حمل البشر (د) اطلال كجدة التي التي تخدع اهلها من عدمه لا تخفي طعن في (د) عزل الذئب من وطعن في مخبره موافقا مع ما (التم على الجرح)</p>	<p>٧ ذي الحجة ٢٧ بابه</p>

Diary of Riḍā, (7-8 November 1913), Riḍā's family archive, Cairo

كالبيوتفور والدرما تولى ومركبات الزنك وغير ذلك ويمنع الضغط عن  
تقلب المريض من جهة إلى أخرى وأنفسه ببعض الأدوية  
المسكنة المصونة

Bee Poison وهو عبارة عن حاضن النملكة  
(الفرميكه) الذي يؤذي كثير من الحشرات الأرضية كالنمل  
وغيره وقد انفع أخيراً استعمال العقاقير الصغيرة من طبيائهم  
العضلات

شلل بل وهو شلل يصيب من Bell's Paralysis  
الوجه لمرض بالعصب الوجهي وهو العصب السابع من  
أعصاب الدماغ ويسمى هذا بالعربية اللقوة فيقال  
لغى الرجل سابعاً فهو ملقو أى أصيب بشلل وجهه  
(facial paralysis) وتقبل اسم لرجل إنكليزي جراح  
عاش بين سنتي ١٧٧٢ أو ١٨٤٤ الذي  
أسماه - الورام والحراجات والارتخيات التي تحدث  
بالقرب من العصب السابع كالتنقصب الخ أو الودني أو  
الغنى وكذلك العوارض الجراحية كالتضيق والجروح والكسور  
وتحرقها وبالاحتضار كل ما يؤذي هذا العصب وأحوال  
اللقوة تحدث بدون سبب في هذه الأسباب المذكورة  
وقد يكون بعضنا غنى تعرض الوجه للبرد الشديد  
ومن الأسباب أيضاً الزهرى والفتيريا وقد تكون اللقوة

A sample of Sidqī's handwriting. Probably a scientific glossary  
His family archive, Cairo





المدرسة العلمية بيروت ٢٥ أكتوبر ١٩٠٣  
 سيدي وهديتي الفاضلة العمة السيد محمد رشيد الله دامت  
 لكم الكرم تاريخ ٢٥ رجب ١٣٢٢ ساعظ لاعتزال  
 من مملكتي اوديتي وديت مع الشهاد والودود  
 وكرم الاخلاق وما هو بسفر - شكك من منافع  
 الادب وان لم يكن منكم كلام الاخلاق ولا فضيلة ياك  
 ابنتي الكرم فممن تكون ؟  
 كنت في من ابي - ما اذكر من شيا مع اوطاف  
 حلو - من ابي - ما اذكر من شيا مع اوطاف  
 اوتريش ليحيى في ذاكري واضحا مع ابي كافي  
 احسن في نفسي باثر طفيف وهو هذا لما كنت  
 اليك من الاسكندرية لتكتب في المدرسة فحوت ان  
 تكون نفسي خدعتني فطبت منك ان تكتب ما نبي  
 تنفع لخصي وانما خدعتني ان الله للنعم العام فلهي  
 كنت ما يلف عن هذه الحاسة لكن تعليمي رغبتي  
 وعرض لا قصد - واحق يا سيدي اسأل « اني اخاف  
 دائما خدعتني نفسي ارحم الله ارواح الغوالي رحمة  
 واسعة وجعل الله لدمتي في هذا العصر كما كان هو  
 الا في عصره فانه تركني اخذ ما اكون من خدع

انتي كريمة الشقيق في عا سبها  
 كنت بكتبنا المراسل في المدرسة في اننا رشا لمصحات اجد كذبتا مد فاح  
 بشكره عنة ولكن الرشا به تكفي والعجز في هذا التمام بعزتي مني اليك  
 انما ما لبت في المدرسة فمما يصعب علي ان اجيب عني بقا ان اجيبك  
 اجيبك انت ومهين ان لا اوابيكم في ابي ولو فعلت ذلك لكتب ما  
 سبقت ولا يسر في « وكنت اصبحت اكون المدرسة ربيته في شوقي اعني  
 ادرته بعزتي اولا حبيبة « وكنت كما في انشيتي واما على انكم وتعمل في  
 هناك في واحد يستفيد اليكم من سكران الصن لسم تعليم ما يشاء  
 وكما في به ربيته ولا في تها في « وانما الروايت ليعلم في ربيته  
 ما دلت ما يعلم - هذه الصن في « وهو فون ما استحق واستحق  
 انما كنت في « هذه الصن في « وهو فون ما استحق واستحق  
 المدرسة والاقول قد رايته مع طائفة من طائفة ما كنت في « وهو فون ما استحق واستحق  
 كاشمير سبتي يا صفت - « وهو فون ما استحق واستحق

Letter from Jabr Dumit to Ridā, Beirut (25 October 1903)



## Appendix XI

من  
الدار  
مجلّة العلم  
في النجف، بالعراق  
العماني  
بتاريخ ١٦ شهر ربيع الثاني ١٣٣٥ هـ  
موافق ١٩ م

العلم  
نمره

مجلّة عربيّه شهريّه تخدم العلم والدين بقلم جرح فلسفي ديني وتقاوم الاوهام  
والبدع وتقوم بالاصلاحات المهمه الاسلاميه والاجتماعيه وتحجب عن  
المشكلات الدينيه وغيرها . وتستنبط الاراء الجديده من ظواهر الكتاب  
سيا في علم الهيئه والفلك والسنه وتحتوي الكشفيات والمعارف الجديده  
ثمها السنوي ٣٠ غرثاً في السلاسل الثمانيه و ٢٠ قرناً في ايران  
و ٦ روبيه في الهند و ١٠ فرنكا في غيرها وتهدى ادارتها مطبوعاتها  
الصغيره لمن قدم البدل بالمجان

حضرة العلامة الكامل شيخ المصلحين الفاضل سماحة الأستاذ السيد محمد سعيد أفندي ضياء المظلم  
بعد اهداء اسنى سلام واذكى تحية الى تلك الحضرة القديسه ادا مهارب البريه وبث الاشواق الخالصه القلبيه  
ترجو امن سيادتكم اولاً ان تفضلوا علينا بالاخبار عن صحتكم وسلامه مزاجكم الوهاج وبشرونا باستقامه احوالكم  
وطيب خاطركم العاطر وثانياً اننا بعد وقت حطوت بمشرككم المورخ ١٩ ربيع الاخر فتناولت سيد المشرق ولا يخفى  
ونظائر قلبي فرحاً من اشعاره بتشرّفكم في رحلتكم هذه ليميزه البلاد نازلاً بارث اجدادكم واخوانكم وان هي الا بشأ  
عظيم ولا شك ان محلتنا يشرف بزيول اجلالكم فيه اذهو في تحقيق حلم والمخلص خادكم مادتم مشرفين وينبغي  
لساذه الأستاذ دام ظله ان لا يقطع عني خبره ويدشّر في زمان تشرّف الا فطرنا ان استقرّ عليه رايه وهذه والله  
نعمه غير مشرقبه تستوجب شكر الجليل  
وحيث ان رفيقكم المزاشر شرفني في اول امس ولا يبلغكم الجواب حسب الظاهر الا في اوسط الشهر المقبل فلا شك ان  
كتابتي اليكم فيما يتعلق برحلتكم في الهند غير محدير ولكن احاول الفرض فان ابا جهالي التوفيق فلربما افتر  
الى البصر مستقبل تشرّفكم اذا تحقق انتم  
ولو صرفتم النظر (فرضاً) عن تشرّف العراق فغرفني عن ذلك ايضاً فان ذلك يعني كالمعنى معرفه زمان وردكم

لا الفاهم ولقد نزلت بعد حين من الدهر العدد ١٢ من مجلتي المقدسة وتشكرت فضلكم في درج  
 مثالي احتجاجي مع دعاة النصرانية ببغداد وكلما انكم العاليه في السند يد على المبدعين الخرافيين بسبله  
 نقل المجازير فدعوت لسيادة الاستاذ من صميم القلب وهذه يد منكب لا ينساها العلم وجعل لا يشكر  
 غير الدين اجل ذلك هو المامول من يادكم وانتم اكرم صلي الاسلام واقدم محارب البديع والخرافات  
 العصر لكن قولكم في صفحه ٩٤٤ من هذا الجزء (( فخذ اعالم مرث فانه يثني على دعاة النصرانية  
 ويتمنى لهم النجاح ويدعوهم به وهو يعلم انهم لا يقصدون من التطبيق الادعوة المسلمين الى دينهم  
 هذا والحالة التي ما نقلت وما نشرتها المطالب الا لاستنهاض المسلمين وتحريك افكارهم وليس في مقالتي  
 تدريء لهم بالنجاح (والعيادة لله) غماني ذكرت هناك ما هذا انصه )) فليس المولى لطلاب الخير كل عسير  
 وقابل اهل المعروف بكل جميل وهو الهادي السوار اسبيل )) ولا يخفى على فطنة تلامذتكم ان هذا دعاة  
 دعاة نوعي وعلى وجه عام كلي ينصرف الى ما هو اهل في الحقيقة ولا يختلف فيه اثنان وجب به في هذا المقام  
 لمحرر الختام ~~وهو~~ حيث لا ذكرت قبله اعالم التي تضر المسلمين ديانة وسبلته كي يتنبه المسلمون  
 وبالاجمال فان تلك الفقرة في تعليقكم الزاهر ما يتخذة اعداؤها والخرافون ممكناً يشدقون به وان كان صدوره  
 عنكم لمجرد الاحتجاج على متعصب كتاب الضمائر ولا تشهاد بتسامح كتاب المسلمين فلا نقار ليس غرضنا  
 اذ هو مقدس عندي معلوم  
 ومن طرف اشتراك محمد زهدي افندي تار بار في در بند بوسنه حولته الى ادارتكم الزاهية بمصر وحولته  
 غيره ايضا من المشركين الذين علم انهم اربابهم بكم كي تستوز ادارتكم صاحبها معنا وان نظري او قصدي يتردد  
 بين امرين اما تعطيل العلم والاجتماع بخدمتكم كي اخدم دين جدي هناك تحريرا وتقريرا متى تيسر والا  
 فان لم يتيسر لي ذلك فاجعل ادارته (العلم) في النجف شعبه من ادارتكم بمصر وبلد الاصل وعليه يتوكل  
 والسلام عليكم والرحمة  
 تحرير اقل خدام الاسلام السيد هبة الدين الاسلامي

Letter (2 pages), Hibat al-Dīn al-Sharhrīstānī to Riḍā, Iraq, 16 Rabīʿ al-Thānī  
 1330/4 April 1912, Riḍā's archive, Cairo

من أنا بالهند ٢٤ رمضان سنة

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

سيدنا العلامة المصلح دامت أفاضته

بعد اهداء سني السلام والرحمة الخيرة وبث الاشواق الخالصة العلية <sup>الحضرة</sup> المحترمة  
فان هذا المشاق شرف من عهد بعيد بزيارة كتابك الكريم وقد اشغله عن <sup>المواظبة</sup>  
على الراسل جلة امور منها لوازم السفر ومهمات الحل والترحال حيث ان  
لا اقيم في بلد اكثر من اسبوعين ومنها عرض الاسقام والحميات غالباً بسبب <sup>اختلاف</sup>  
اهوية البلاد ومغايرة البيئة الهندية لطواهر البيئة العراقية ومنها اشتغال  
بالمذكرات والتفريعات الخصوصية العمومية الدائرة على قطبي الارض العام نحو  
الاصلاحات والمحدث على تقوية امر الدعوة الاسلاميه دحضاً لمساخي  
دعوات النصارية ومنها مخبري لاجوبة المسائل الواردة عليّ علاوة على  
اشتغالي ببحر المقالات الفارسية تحت عنوان (فغان اسلام) ولا مقصد  
فيها غير الحق على الدعوة ومعارضة الدعوات النصارية بقوة اجتماعية اسلامية  
تتجلى في كسوة المدارس والجالس والمطبوعات والمجتمعات وقد شرع الاخوة  
في طبع تلك المقالات في كتاب مستقل بالفارسية كما شرعوا في ترجمتها الى اللغة  
الهندية وسوف اهديها الى ادارتكم الزاهرة بعد فجازها  
مضافاً الى انشائها في المقالات في بعض صحف الهند الفارسية <sup>والله اعلم</sup>  
وبالحيلة ليس الغرض من ذكر هذه الامور اظهار حذمان الاسلامي لانه اعدا  
يخدمون باطلهم اكثر من هذا بل المقصود ان يعذرني حضرتك السامي

أذا انما اطباء في المكاشفة  
ثم في مقدم المجلد العزاء كتاب في اجوبة مسائل اخر لها على جلالة الملك  
السيد فيصل بن تركي سلطان عظيم دام في غنى واطمان عسى ان يلقى بالقبول  
فيتم نشر على صفحات المنار الزاهية وتطبع مع ذلك رسالة مستغلة نظراً  
الى ما فيها من المسائل المستظرفة والايجات التفسيرية المناسبة لمحة المنار الاخرى  
ومنى طبعه كماً مستغلاً فاخبرني عنه سريعاً عني اشترى من نسخة نحواً  
من نسخة نسخة لاول وهله او من غيرها على طالبه من احبني الهندية  
ولكنه لم يرد في نسخة في البريد المتعهد بهذا العنوان  
(بمجي ناكرا سيدهنال توسط اغا على اصغر الناجر الشيرازي الاطباء)

وما استظرف ذكره لكم من حمل دعوات النصرانية في مررت ~~بمجلس~~ مجمع عظيم في  
منزله (بارابنكي) واذا بقى يدعو الى اعتناق المسيحية ثم خرج من المجامع رجل فزري  
اروي و ذكر للناس انه جاب البلاد وفتش عن الأديان فلم يجد غير من النصرانية ثم بايع  
ذلك القس وجلس بحجبه ثم خرج من المجامع رجل فزري العرب ~~وكان~~ ذكر للناس انه رجل  
من اهل مكة على مذهب الخنفة قد ساح البلدان طلباً لاصح الأديان فلم يجد كالنصرانية  
نطق بهذه الشهادة و بايع القس وجلس بحجبه ثم خرج من المجامع رجل فزري الحنبل  
وذكر للناس انه شيعي خرج من كربلاء فيفتش الدين الصحيح من اديان العالم فلم يجد  
مثل دين المسيح نطق بهذه الشهادة و بايع القس وجلس بحجبه ثم خرج من المجامع  
رجل هندي و ذكر للناس انه وثني خرج من بلده (اجودھيا) ونصيح المذاهب فلم  
يجد كالمسيحية ثم بايع القس وجلس بحجبه ولما رقت النظر في امرهم وجدت ذلك  
منهم حيلة يريدون اغتيال العامة البسطاء بذلك والأربعة كانوا جميعاً هندو  
منهم من من من طول اذ لم يكن الذي ادعى انه عربي حقيقي يعرف شيئاً من  
العربية ولا فيه سأل العرب ولذا يدعى الذي ادعى انه شيعي اعجمي لم يكن عارفاً  
بالعجمية ولا فيه شأنهم ولو كان معي اصحابي او كنت ماهراً في اللغة الهندية  
لعارضتهم اثم المعارضه لكنني خشيت الفتنة مع غربي وانفرادي وعدم معرفتي  
محاورات الهندوكاملة غلب علي الذهول والتجبر من هذه الحيلة المحجبة التي  
تقصير عنها دهاء ابليس

بسم السلام التام عليكم وعلى الاخ السيد صالح رضا ورحمة الله وبركاته

تحريراً لخدم الاسلام  
الشهيد تاج الخنفة صاحب مجلة

## Appendix XII



اجتماع الجمعية الإسلامية مع كبار اليابانيين  
في مجلس نشر القرآن وتبليغ دين الإسلام  
١٩٣٤ ربيع الأول ١٠

٢١٩

The meeting of the Islamic Society with Japanese notables in the Council of the Qur'ān and Dissimination of the Religion Islam, July 1934, Riḍā's archive, Cairo.





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## Samenvatting en conclusies

Dit proefschrift bestudeert de interactie tussen islam en christendom in de moderne tijd, aan de hand van de polemische geschriften over het christendom van de vooraanstaande Syrisch-Egyptische moslimgeleerde Mohammed Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935) en van andere publicisten in zijn reformistische tijdschrift *al-Manār* ('de Vuurtoren').

Naast *al-Manār* is gebruikgemaakt van andere gepubliceerde werken van Riḍā en van een drietal familiearchieven. Het eerste betreft Riḍā's privé-archief, dat in bezit is van zijn familie in Cairo. Dit archief bevat onder andere zijn correspondenties binnen en buiten de Arabische wereld, zijn dagboekantekeningen, ongepubliceerde stukken, zijn diploma's en documenten die betrekking hebben op zijn uitgeverij en tijdschrift. Gedurende mijn onderzoeksperiode ben ik er verder in geslaagd twee andere archiefcollecties op te sporen: het archief van een zekere dr. Zekī Ḥishmat-Bey Kirām, die – zoals uit nader onderzoek bleek – een van Riḍā's vrienden en vertalers in Berlijn was en het familiearchief van een andere belangrijke contactpersoon uit Riḍā's kring, de beroemde Marokkaanse Salafi geleerde Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī. Dit tot dusver onbekende bronmateriaal biedt nieuw inzicht in de wereld waarin Riḍā leefde en de personen met wie hij samenwerkte.

In de *inleiding* wordt de achtergrond van de probleemstelling kort uiteengezet. Centraal staat dat het missionarissenwerk meestal vanuit een christelijk perspectief bestudeerd wordt. Dit heeft een tekort aan relevante informatie van islamitische zijde met zich meegebracht en een onduidelijk beeld gecreëerd over de situatie waarin de christelijke missionarissen en moslims zich destijds bevonden. Hoe keken bijvoorbeeld de moslims, in diverse regio's en onder verschillende omstandigheden, aan tegen de activiteiten van de christelijke missionarissen en hun publicaties? Hierbij worden de polemische werken van Riḍā als uitgangspunt genomen, zodat inzicht kan worden verkregen in de interactie die destijds tussen moslims en christenen heeft plaatsgevonden. Het belang van dit onderzoek ligt in het feit dat er tot nu toe nog geen volledige wetenschappelijke studie is verschenen over de ontwikkeling van Riḍā's opvattingen over het christendom en de in *al-Manār* gepubliceerde reacties van hemzelf en anderen op het zendingswerk.

Het *eerste* hoofdstuk schetst de historische achtergrond van Riḍā's polemieken over het christendom als onderdeel van zijn uiteenlopende visies ten opzichte van het westen. Riḍā ontleende zijn kennis van het westen aan verschillende bronnen. Getracht wordt inzichtelijk te maken hoe Riḍā, zonder enige beheersing van westerse talen, informatie uit allerlei bronnen in zijn publicaties verwerkte. Hij verklaart dat hij zijn kennis over de moderne ontwikkelingen in

het westen primair heeft verworven door zijn discussies en het persoonlijke contact dat hij onderhield met, zoals hij hen aanduidt, ‘liberale christelijke denkers’ in Libanon, met name de Amerikaanse zendelingen in Beiroet. Centraal punt van dit hoofdstuk is dat de kritiek van islamitische zijde op het christendom in deze periode mede beïnvloed werd door de nieuwe golf van bijbelstudie die in de 19de eeuw was ontstaan. Aan Europese universiteiten werden vraagtekens geplaatst bij de wonderen zoals die vermeld staan in het Oude en Nieuwe Testament, historische gebeurtenissen werden in twijfel getrokken; hetzelfde gold voor de drie-eenheid, de vergoddelijking van Jezus en zijn kruisiging en wederopstanding. Deze kritische vragen ten aanzien van het christendom bereikten de islamitische wereld, vooral na het beroemde debat te Agra (India) in 1854 tussen de Duitse zending Karl Gottlieb Pfander en de Indiase islamitische theoloog Rahmatullāh al-Qairanāwī. Al-Qairanāwī maakte gebruik van de kritische werken over het christendom van bekende westerse theologen die onder invloed stonden van liberalisme en historische kritiek. De wijze waarop al-Qairanāwī het christendom met zijn eigen wapens bestreed, vond navolging onder andere islamitische critici.

Welke informatiebronnen over het westen had Riḍā tot zijn beschikking? In deze periode nam het aantal vertalingen van westerse werken in het Arabisch een enorme vlucht. Dit was een prettige bijkomstigheid voor Riḍā, die door gebruik te maken van dergelijke vertalingen zijn gebrek aan kennis van de westerse talen wist te compenseren. In zijn polemische discussies haalt Riḍā dikwijls passages aan uit dergelijke bronnen. In dit hoofdstuk wordt een aantal voorbeelden aan de orde gesteld. Hieruit blijkt dat het moeilijk valt te achterhalen waar de bronnen precies vandaan komen, omdat Riḍā de gewoonte had om titels en namen van de oorspronkelijke auteurs over te zetten naar Arabische transcripties. Desalniettemin is het grotendeels gelukt een en ander in de westerse bronnen te traceren. Daarnaast wordt aandacht geschonken aan twee belangrijke casussen. In zijn polemieken tegen het christendom gebruikte Riḍā de analyse van de archeologische ontdekkingen die leidden tot de door de Duitse professor Friedrich Delitzsch aangevuurde ‘Babel-und-Bibel-Streit’ (1903). Deze casus wordt vergeleken met zijn op het eerste gezicht ambivalente reactie op de in 1933 verschenen Arabische vertaling van de *Encyclopædia of Islam (EI)* en in het bijzonder het lemma van de hand van de Nederlandse oriëntalist Arent Jan Wensinck over Ibrāhīm. Het is overigens aannemelijk dat sommige westerse werken voor Riḍā vertaald werden door vrienden en studenten die kennis hadden van westerse talen. Zijn netwerk bestond verder uit diverse schrijvers in de islamitische wereld en daarbuiten. Hieronder vinden wij de namen van de Syrische prins Shakīb Arslān, de bovengenoemde Zekī Kirām, ‘Ādel Zu‘ayter, Muḥammad Tawfiq Ṣidqī, Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Tannīr, en de eerdergenoemde Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī.

Het *tweede* hoofdstuk bestudeert Riḍā’s betrekkingen met christelijke Arabische intellectuelen. Gekeken wordt naar zijn samenwerking, conflicten en

met name naar zijn religieuze en politieke confrontaties met hen. De eerste groep wordt gevormd door de Syrisch-christelijke nationalist, die hun politieke ideologie met Riḏā deelden. Deze intellectuelen waren meestal secularisten en namen een kritische houding aan tegenover hun oorspronkelijke religie, inclusief de christelijke geestelijkheid. Riḏā's relaties en debatten met intellectuelen als Farah Anṭūn, Jurjī Zaidān, Shiblī Shumayyil en Khalīl Saʿādeh zijn belicht. Riḏā heeft zich sterk ingezet om zijn politieke ideologieën aan zijn religieuze opvattingen te relateren. Dit 'evolutieproces' heeft meer dan dertig jaar geduurd en was bedoeld als antwoord op de christelijke Arabieren die de islam op een negatieve manier bekritiseerden. De politieke en sociaal-culturele ontwikkelingen in de islamitische wereld hadden direct invloed op zijn discussies met deze christelijke groepering, waardoor hij onvoorspelbaar werd in zijn reacties en men zijn relaties met hen als kan fluctuerend typeren. Ten tweede wordt de polemiek van Riḏā tegen de Syrische katholieke groepering bestudeerd, met als in het oog springend voorbeeld het Jezuïtische tijdschrift *al-Machreq*. Zijn op het eerste gezicht inconsistente reactie op de twee Syrische groeperingen wordt in verband gebracht met zijn kritische houding ten opzichte van de Koptische gemeenschap in Egypte, in het bijzonder tegen het Koptische Congres van 1911. Dit congres werd georganiseerd in het zuiden van Egypte als protest tegen de moord op de toenmalige Koptische premier Buṭrus Ghālī Pasha door een lid van de Nationale Partij, Naṣīf al-Wardānī. De Koptische gemeenschap beschouwde deze moord als het dieptepunt van de antichristelijke campagne door de moslims.

In het *derde* hoofdstuk wordt onderzocht op welke wijze Riḏā en zijn medestanders reageerden op de sociale en theologische effecten van het zendingswerk in de islamitische wereld. Geconcludeerd kan worden dat de werken van Riḏā over het christendom een antwoord wilden bieden op de aanvallen van missionarissen op de islam en haar doctrines. In zijn anti-missionarise campagne ontwikkelde Riḏā ook ideeën over het belang van religieuze propaganda. De propaganda van de islam was het enige juiste missiewerk vanuit zijn oogpunt. Hij plaatste de koran boven de bijbel en concludeerde vervolgens dat de islam dankzij de in de koran verkondigde 'ware boodschap' geen missionarissenwerk nodig had. Hij probeerde desondanks zijn ambities wat betreft het verspreiden van deze boodschap te verwerkelijken in zowel woord als daad. Het oogmerk van Riḏā bij de bestudering van kritische westerse werken was het verdedigen van zijn geloof tegen de aanvallen op de islam in de geschriften van de zendelingen. En andere reden voor het gebruik van kritische westerse werken was om de *Daʿwah* ('islamitische missie') uit te dragen. Hiertoe richtte hij ook Dar al- Daʿwah wā al-ʿIrshād ('Huis van Missie en Begeleiding') op, waar jonge moslims werden opgeleid om de islam te verdedigen en te verspreiden en de activiteiten van de zending tegen te gaan. Het idee om een dergelijke school te stichten kwam voor het eerst bij hem op toen hij nog in Tripoli (Syrië) studeerde. Als student bezocht Riḏā de Amerikaanse zendingsinstituten en verdiepte hij zich in hun publicaties; hij

wenste dat de moslims ook dergelijke verenigingen en instituten zouden stichten.

Evenals andere islamitische geleerden onder zijn leeftijdgenoten was Riḍā van mening dat het werk van de christelijke missie in het verlengde lag van het Europese kolonialisme. Hij beoogde door middel van een felle weerlegging van het christelijke geloof en haar heilige geschriften, de superioriteit van de islam ten opzichte van andere religies te bewijzen. De deplorabele toestand waarin de moslims zich bevonden, vormde volgens Riḍā de aanleiding voor tegenstanders van de islam de aanval te openen. Riḍā's liet zich vaak op emotionele wijze uit met een onmiskenbare ondertoon van bitterheid. Soms velde hij echter een positief oordeel over de inspanningen van missionarissenscholen, zoals over het Amerikaanse College in Beiroet. Zulke scholen leverden zijns inziens een positieve bijdrage aan de ontwikkelingen op sociaal en technologisch gebied in de islamitische wereld. Gaandeweg werd Riḍā zich er echter van bewust, met name naar aanleiding van de negatieve ervaringen van moslimstudenten op dergelijke scholen, dat deze instituten onlosmakelijk verbonden waren met de 'koloniale hebzucht'. Zo groeide bij hem het besef dat harde woorden tegen het zendingswerk onvermijdelijk waren. De in zijn ogen 'slappe houding' van de schriftgeleerden van Al-Azhar tegenover het zendingswerk, leidde tot een intensieve polemiek met zijn Azhari-opponenten.

In het *vierde* hoofdstuk wordt ingegaan op Riḍā's kritische denken aan de hand van een uitgebreide analyse van zijn eerste polemische werk, *Shubuhāt al-Naṣraniyya wā Hujaj al-Islām* ('De beweringen van het christendom en de bewijzen van de islam'). Dit was tevens de titel van een rubriek die regelmatig verscheen in *al-Manār* in de periode mei 1901 tot 1904; 16 artikelen uit deze rubriek werden later gebundeld en gepubliceerd. De artikelen waren bedoeld als antwoord op christelijke polemieken over de islam, zoals die verschenen in het Egyptische christelijke tijdschrift *Bashā'ir al-Salām* ('Blijde boodschap van vrede'). Geconcludeerd kan worden dat dit werk een onsystematische indeling had: het betrof een compilatie van diverse debatten die hij met christelijke schrijvers was aangegaan. De kern van zijn artikelen lag in het vanuit islamitisch gezichtspunt analyseren van de tekstuele authenticiteit van de bijbel. Opmerkelijk is dat Riḍā slechts in geringe mate aandacht besteedde aan de doctrine van de drie-eenheid en aan andere belangrijke concepten in het christendom, zoals de geboorte van Jezus, de kruisiging en de verlossing.

Riḍā legde een bijzondere interesse aan de dag voor publicaties over het Evangelie. In het *vijfde* hoofdstuk wordt onderzocht in welke mate Riḍā heeft getracht het 'ware' Evangelie te achterhalen, door zijn publicatie van de controversiële Arabische versie van het Evangelie van Barnabas. In 1903 publiceerde hij onder de titel 'Het ware Evangelie' de in het Arabisch vertaalde inleiding op het Evangelie dat de beroemde Russische schrijver en filosoof Tolstoi naar eigen inzicht had bewerkt en ontdaan van wat hij beschouwde als

fictieve elementen. Tolstoi had de vier evangeliën samengevoegd tot een boek. In 1907 publiceerde Riḍā eveneens de eerste Arabische vertaling van de hand van een orthodoxe christen, Khalīl Saʿādeḥ, van het Evangelie van Barnabas. Het Italiaanse manuscript van Barnabas werd in 1709 in Amsterdam ontdekt. Later verdedigde Riḍā dit Evangelie als het enige betrouwbare overgeleverde geschrift uit de tijd van Jezus, en achtte zijn authenticiteit sterker dan die van de andere vier canonieke Evangeliën. In de loop der jaren verschenen verschillende vertalingen van het Evangelie, waaronder in het Urdu, Engels, Perzisch, Indonesisch, Nederlands en Duits. Tot op de dag van vandaag wordt de Arabische vertaling van het Evangelie van Barnabas door islamitische polemici beschouwd als een standaardwerk dat gebruikt wordt in hun discussies over het christendom. De vraag die in dit hoofdstuk aan de orde gesteld wordt is waarom Saʿādeḥ, met zijn christelijke achtergrond, met Riḍā heeft samengewerkt aan de vertaling van Barnabas. Geloofde Saʿādeḥ in de authenticiteit van het Evangelie van Barnabas? Een ander belangrijk aspect dat eveneens opviel, is dat er nooit eerder onderzoek was verricht naar de achtergrond van de publicatie van deze vertaling. Hoe was de houding van de oosterse christenen in de islamitische wereld tegenover zijn vertaling? En hoe was de receptie van Riḍā's Arabische editie? In *al-Manār* treffen we geen bijdragen aan die dit beeld verhelderen. In dit hoofdstuk komt een tot nu toe onbestudeerd werk naar voren, dat in het licht van Riḍā's relatie met de Koptische gemeenschap in Egypte gezien moet worden. Dit anti-Barnabas werk werd door een moslimbekeerling tot het christendom geschreven, die de christelijke naam Iskandar Effendi ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Bājūrī gebruikte en zichzelf 'de Missionaris van Giza' noemde. Volgens al-Bājūrī maakte de publicatie van Riḍā deel uit van de islamitische polemiek tegen de christelijke minderheden in de islamitische wereld, waarbij hij vooral doelde op de Koptische gemeenschap.

Het zesde hoofdstuk onderzoekt de positie van Tawfīq Ṣiḍqī's polemieken in *al-Manār*. De vraag die hier aan de orde wordt gesteld, is waarom Riḍā's keuze viel op Ṣiḍqī. Riḍā was onder de indruk van Ṣiḍqī's kennis over de natuurwetenschappen en geneeskunde en de manier waarop hij de islamitische bronnen benutte. In zijn polemische artikelen voerde hij een kritische toon tegen het christelijke geloof. Een interessant voorbeeld van zijn medische toepassingen gekoppeld aan theologische vraagstukken was zijn opvatting dat Maria waarschijnlijk een overwegend mannelijke hermafrodit was. Verder onderzoek bewees dat dit idee dicht bij het gedachtengoed van de dertiende-eeuwse geleerde al-Qurṭubī kwam. Ṣiḍqī en Riḍā deelden dezelfde opvatting over de kruisiging van Jezus. Hun ideeën stemden overeen met de klassieke interpretatie door islamitische geleerden, namelijk dat Jezus niet werd gekruisigd, maar dat God zijn lichaam met dat van Judas had verruild. Judas zou ten gevolge hiervan abusievelijk door de Romeinen gekruisigd zijn. Riḍā baseerde zich hierbij op de theorie van de massapsychologie van de Franse psycholoog Gustave Le Bon. In deze theorie wordt ervan uitgegaan dat menigten specifieke emoties genereren. Volgens Le Bon is de anonimiteit van

feiten en de creatie van clichés in de geest van de mens een natuurlijk proces. Riḍā probeerde hiermee een vergelijking te maken door te stellen dat degenen die getuigen waren van de kruisiging, hierdoor emotioneel zo geraakt waren dat ze het verschil tussen de echte Jezus en de degene die op hem leek, niet meer opmerkten.

In het *zevende* hoofdstuk wordt onderzoek gedaan naar de mate waarin Riḍā de besproken uitgangspunten over het christelijke geloof in zijn *fatwā's* heeft opgenomen. *Fatwā's* zijn niet uitsluitend een richtsnoer op het gebied van de geloofsbeoefening en de sharia, maar vormen ook een belangrijke bron voor de studie van polemische discussies. Opvallend is het open karakter van de discussie in de vorm van *fatwā's* tussen Riḍā en de Deense lutherse zendeling Alfred Nielsen, waarbij allerlei controversiële onderwerpen aan de orde werden gesteld in *al-Manār*. Dit hoofdstuk beschrijft de *fatwā's* als een dynamische inspanning tussen Riḍā en zijn lezers. Om inzicht te verwerven in de aard en omvang van deze *fatwā's* worden twee vragen behandeld: Welke vragen waren belangrijk in de ogen van de mustaftin (vraagstellers)? Welk effect hadden de zendingsactiviteiten en de polemieken over de islam op het onderwerp van deze vragen? Riḍā's lezers waren nieuwsgierig naar zijn percepties van bepaalde kwesties die voortkwamen uit hun dagelijkse contact met het zendingswerk. In dit hoofdstuk wordt ook een interessante *fatwā* van Riḍā over de dood van Jezus nader bestudeerd. In zijn antwoord op een vraag vanuit Tunesië over de dood van Jezus beklemtoonde Riḍā dat het theoretisch mogelijk is dat Jezus een natuurlijke dood was gestorven, nadat hij door God gered werd. Deze lijn van denken sluit aan bij het gedachtengoed van zijn leermeester Muhammad 'Abduh en in beperkte mate ook bij de uitgangspunten van de Ahmaddiya-beweging. De invloed van deze *fatwā* strekte zich uit tot 1942, het jaar waarin de latere Sheikh Al-Azhar Maḥmūd Shaltūt een *fatwā* afkondigde die qua inhoud aansloot op die van Riḍā.

## Curriculum Vitae

Umar Ryad was born in 1975 in the village of Godaiyydat al-Hālā, nearby the town of al-Manṣūra in Egypt. He obtained his secondary school diploma from the Al-Azhar religious institute in the same town. He received his BA in Islamic Studies in English from the Al-Azhar Faculty of Languages and Translation (1998), and an MA degree in Islamic Studies from the Faculties of Arts and Theology of the University of Leiden (2001, Cum Laude). In 2002-2003 he worked as a teacher of Arabic within the program *Onderwijs in Allochtone Levende Talen* (OALT, Education in Foreign Modern Languages). In 2003-2005 he was working as an *AIO* (assistant-in-training) at the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR) of the Faculty of Religious Studies (formerly the Faculty of Theology), Leiden University. Since 2005 he has been working as a lecturer and researcher of Islamic Studies at the same faculty.

### Select Publications

- ‘Rashīd Riḍā and a Danish Missionary: Alfred Nielsen and Three *Fatwās* from *al-Manār*’, *Islamochristiana*, Rome, vol. 28 (2002), pp. 97-107.
- ‘From an officer in the Ottoman army to a Muslim publicist and armament agent in Berlin: Zekī Hishmat Kirām (1886–1946),’ *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 63/3-4 (2006), pp. 235-268.
- ‘Muslim Response to Missionary Activities in Egypt: with a Special Reference to the Al-Azhar High Corps of ‘*Ulamā*’ (1925-1935)’, in Heleen Murre-van den Berg (ed.), *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Brill, 2006, pp. 281-307.
- ‘The Dismissal of A.J. Wensinck from the Royal Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo’, in Willem B. Drees & Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld (eds.), *The Academic Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe: Religious and Academic Freedom*, Amsterdam: Leiden University Press, 2008, pp. 91-134.
- ‘«Aussi éphémère que l’abricot». La réponse d’un converti égyptien au christianisme à la publication de l’Evangile de St Barnabé en arabe’, in Laure Guirguis (ed.), *Conversions religieuses et mutations politiques. Tares et avatars du communautarisme égyptien*, Paris: Editions Non Lieu, 2008 (forthcoming).
- ‘A Prelude to *Fiqh al-Aqalliyāt*: Rashīd Riḍā’s *Fatwās* for Muslims under non-Muslim Rule’, in *Christian and Muslim Minorities in Europe and the Middle East*, Antwerpen & Amsterdam: IMISCOE-AUP, 2008 (forthcoming).