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The Impact of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Intellectual Project on his Views on Christianity

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Abstract

This thesis explores Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s (d. 606/1210) views on Christianity to answer the question: How does al-Rāzī’s intellectual project impact his examination of Christianity? The use of the term ‘intellectual project’ refers to the positions adopted by the Muslim thinker to structure his or her understanding of Islam itself which includes issues of epistemology, philosophical theology, and hermeneutics. While al-Rāzī did not write a dedicated work on Christianity, his views on the Christian tradition are among the most debated and cited in the history of Christian-Muslim interactions. A study exploring al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity and how this relates to his broader intellectual project is thus essential and contributes to the field of Muslim perceptions of Christianity in three ways: Firstly, the first extensive treatment of al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity, drawing on an extensive reading of the primary sources and the most recent secondary scholarship. Secondly, exploring how does al-Rāzī’s understanding of Islam itself impact his examination of Christianity. Thirdly, shedding light on the breadth and diversity of Muslim perceptions of Christianity. This thesis traces al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity with a particular focus on four key texts which have been written in two phases; his late fifties’ famous Qur’anic commentary Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb (keys to the unseen) and Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya Min al-‘Ilm al-Ilāhī (Sublime issues) on philosophical theology. His late twenties’ work on Islamic legal theory al-Mahṣūl Fī ‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh (the utmost conclusion) and Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl fī Dirāyāt al-Uṣūl (The furthermost reach of intellect) on philosophical theology. The other works of al-Rāzī’s will be consulted throughout the discussions where necessary. Accordingly, this thesis is comprised of five chapters. Chapter One gives an overview of al-Rāzī’s intellectual project. Chapter Two focuses on his position vis-à-vis the Crucifixion. Chapter Three concerns his views on the Bible. Chapters Four and Five address the Trinity and Christology, respectively.
Chapter One explores three aspects of al-Rāzī’s intellectual project that shaped his views on Christianity: epistemology, philosophical theology, and hermeneutics. On the former, al-Rāzī’s views on the issue of transmission of reports (akhbār) will be shown to have shaped his views on the authenticity of the Crucifixion and the Bible. On philosophical theology, al-Rāzī’s views on the Divine attributes (Ṣifāt Allāh) shaped his views on the Trinity and Christology. On hermeneutics, his famed theological law, known as al-Qānūn al-Kullī Fī al-Ta’wil (The general law of interpretation), shaped his views on the Qur’anic representation of the Christian tradition. Chapters Two to Five explore al-Rāzī’s views on the major themes of Christianity. Each chapter comprises four sections. This first section examines the reported views of the first three generations of Islam with an overview of the relevant secondary literature on the topic such as on the availability of the Bible in Arabic and the Christology of groups in Arabia. It aims at constructing the apparent meaning (ẓāhir) of the relevant Qur’anic verses on each topic. This is because al-Rāzī connects the apparent meaning with both the ordinary use of terms and the first three generations of Islam throughout his discussions. The second section examines al-Rāzī’s views in his commentary through raising one question: How does al-Rāzī’s approach the apparent meaning of the relevant verses if it contradicts reason; what he calls a rational decisive evidence (al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī) as a response to the Christian objections? The third section examines al-Rāzī’s epistemology (Chapters Two – Three) and his philosophical theology (Chapters Four – Five). The main concern of these sections is to engage al-Rāzī’s corpus and to trace the impact of al-Rāzī’s intellectual project on contested issues namely the concept of successive transmission of reports (tawātur) and abrogation (naskh) for (Chapters Two – Three) and the nature of attribute (Ṣifah), God’s speech (kalām Allāh), and Incarnation (Hulūl)- hypostatic union (Ittiḥād) for (Chapters Four – Five). Each chapter has a concluding remarks section which locates al-Rāzī’s views within the intellectual history of each topic. A conclusion would summarize the findings of this study.
Lay summary

The thesis explores the breadth and diversity of Muslim perceptions of Christianity by highlighting two important themes in the field of Christian-Muslim relations. It first examines how Muslim scholarly conceptions of the Islamic tradition have shaped philosophical and theological perceptions of Christianity. From this, the thesis sheds light on the diversity of the Muslim perceptions of Christianity, which are shown to reflect the richness of the Islamic tradition itself. In so doing, this thesis raises deeper questions as to the nature of any inter-faith encounter. How do thinkers engage with the religious ‘other’ not as a genuine theological interlocutor, but as a tool for an internal conversation with one’s own religious tradition? To what extent is the external religion used to serve internal theological polemics? These two themes serve to demonstrate that the real challenge for a Muslim thinker who rejects a Christian doctrine such as the Trinity is not, in fact, the Trinity itself. Rather, the real challenge is to reject the Trinity while balancing this against one’s own Islamic understanding of the attributes of God so as to distinguish the latter from the notion of the hypostases. These two themes are explored through a close reading and analysis of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s (d. 606/1210) views on Christianity. Al-Rāzī is one of the most influential thinkers in Muslim intellectual history. While he did not write a separate work on Christianity, his views on the Christian tradition are among the most debated and cited throughout the history of Christian-Muslim interactions. This includes his views on the corruption of the Bible and the historicity of the Crucifixion. That al-Rāzī critically approaches these Christian doctrines and yet, in so doing, also condemns the views of rival Muslim thinkers demonstrates the two key themes of this thesis. This study contributes to the field of Christian-Muslim relations in providing the first extensive treatment of al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity, drawing on an extensive reading of the primary sources and the most recent secondary scholarship. In so doing, it seeks to highlight the ways in which al-Rāzī uses Christianity as a foil for an intra-Islamic critique.
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This and everything would not have been possible without the blessings of my lovely mother, Wisal al-D’ajah, who passed away on the eve of my studies. I cannot thank you enough for such precious presence as I hope this humble gift would make you happy and pleased with me having raised me up to more than I can be… Allah Yirhamik! This extends to my great father, Mansour, without whom nothing would have been accomplished since the very first day I entered primary school to the day I submit my PhD thesis forty years after yours! I hope parallel universe me is writing your 1982’s Digital Communication Over Nonlinear Fiber Optic Channels rather than being stuck with “qīl wa-qālū”. I am very grateful to my siblings (Omar, Eman, Elham, Osama and Zaid) for being the Ta ‘wīl of Spacetoon’s song Anā wa-Akḥī to their little brother. I am grateful as well to my relatives, teachers at the Faculty of Sharia, and friends in Jordan and Scotland for their kindness. Finally, I would like to thank the University of Jordan for funding my doctoral studies all these years of “Zamān Ghashūm wa-Ghuyūm Wābiluhā Ghumūm...”
Dedication

To my parents,

“And lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness and say, ‘Lord, have mercy on them, just as they cared for me when I was little’” (17:24)
Transliteration

The guidelines of International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES) are followed for the Arabic transliteration. The Qur’anic citations are taken from M. A. S. Abdel Haleem’s *The Qur’an: A New Translation* (Oxford University Press: 2004) with the relevant Arabic terms.
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Introduction

The field of Christian-Muslim studies has been growing recently as a part of the general interest in religion. Zhange Ni captures this as she writes: “In the undergraduate religious studies courses that I teach, I often ask students why they show up, if not just for the sake of required credits. The answer is always, “I want to understand what’s going on in the news”.

One of the main reasons behind having such interest is the global dramatic events such as 9/11. Noel Malcolm shares his personal story: “I gave the (Carlyle) lectures in February and March 2001. Six months later, on 11 September, the world changed. Friends and colleagues then argued me to turn my lectures into a book as quickly as possible, as there now a hunger for works that might cast some light on the history relations between Islam and the West”.

Thus, many aspects of Christian-Muslim studies have been explored systematically such as the series Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. This includes the theological issues which have been relatively absent in this modern context compared to the early classical texts of engagement between Christians and Muslims. Therefore, scholarship on the mutual perceptions have become essential in order to explore contested topics such as Sharīʿa, the prophet Muhammad, the Bible, and salvation. Accordingly, this study contributes to the Muslim perceptions of Christianity through analysing the views of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210).

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3 Published by Brill (2009 - present) as a sub-series of The History of Christian-Muslim Relations book series.
“Glory to God! has any man in the world reached his degree of abundance of critical scholarship and scrutiny, multitude of compositions, and penetrating thought, and then gone this distance away from the truth?”.¹ These words of Mullâ Şadrâ (d. 1050/1640) captures four hundred years of the Râzian ‘commendation-condemnation’ controversy.² One wonders why such figure would be a subject of this interest even though he died five centuries after the emergence of Islam with apparently no new intellectual framework that would necessitate the study of his views.³ That is to say, it is understandable to trace controversial thinkers in early Islam since almost nothing was formed in a systematic way, and thus any thinker could have engaged with any non-scriptural source of knowledge to establish a new school of thought.⁴ However, this gets limited by the time these schools of thought are structured and systemized in addition to the fact that the non-scriptural sources of knowledge or frameworks would have already been examined and integrated into the Islamic thought such as logic.⁵

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² This has been recorded by the time al-Râzî left the world in which Bar ‘Ebrûyô (d. 1286) writes: “In this year, Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî died at the age of sixty-three lunar years, an intelligent man and a great investigator among the Muslims. By him and by the many books which he composed, the Muslims in every land were and are being enlightened to this day. I would compare this man to Origen. Although the teachers of the Church were enriched and enlightened by his books, they nonetheless called him a heretic. So also the Muslims call this man an unbeliever (kûtfûrî) and a follower of the teaching of Aristotle”. See: Bert Jacobs. “Unveiling Christ in the Islamicate World: Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî’s Prophethology as a Model for Christian Apologetics in Gregory Bar ‘Ebrûyô’s Treatise on the Incarnation” Intellectual History of the Islamicate World Journal 6 (2018), p. 211.

³ For instance, this applies to ‘Abdallâh b. Yazîd al-Fazîrî (d. after 179/795) (See: Wilferd Madelung. “Al-Fazîrî, ‘Abdallâh b. Yazîd” in: Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krâmer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson (eds.) Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE, 2016) whose writings are a unique source of information about Ibâdî teachings on ‘îlm al-Kalâm and the early development of this branch of religious knowledge. This is because they demonstrate how its respective theological debates already took place at the beginning of the second/eighth century and how associated ideas, as well as related sects and treatises, remained current for some time afterwards, thereby contradicting earlier claims that these debates started in the third/ninth century. (See: Abdulrahman Al-Salimi (ed), Early Ibâdî Theology: New Material on Rational Thought in Islam from the Pen of al-Fazîrî (2nd/8th Century). Brill: 2021). This is of course assuming that even these debates in the second-eighth century are also influenced in a way or another by the transformation of the Greek philosophy to the Islamicate world.

⁴ This excludes thinkers who have initiated controversial issues that are common through the intellectual history of religions such as anthropomorphism as it has been probably addressed by Jahm b. Šafwân (d. 128/745-6). See: Cornelia Schôck. “Jahm b. Šafwân (d. 128/745-6) and The ‘Jahmiyya’ and Dirâr b. ‘Amr. (d. 200/815)” in: Sabine Schmidtke (ed.) The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology (Oxford University Press: 2016), pp. 55-81.

This is roughly the case of al-Rāzī in Islamic intellectual history; a thinker who was born after influential figures such as al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. c. 560/1165), having influential fellows such as Shihāb Al-Dīn Suhrāwārdī (d. 586/1191) and Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) all aiming at wielding the “one ring of power” forged by Avicenna (d. 427/1037).\textsuperscript{11}\textsuperscript{12} This led to the emergence of two roads taken by thinkers within that context: First, the twin emerging intellectual trends of “traditional Avicennists” and “counter-Avicennists”\textsuperscript{13} who have accepted the two main dominant positions at least in the Islamic East.\textsuperscript{14} The second one is the ‘leaps of faith’ trends that is “Philosophical Sufism”.\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, I would suggest that what has made this controversy is al-Rāzī’s attempt to revise the clashes between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ in its ‘traditional sense’.\textsuperscript{16} In other words, what seems to be ‘flogging a dead horse’ had apparently led to this controversy.

\footnotesize{14} This is to exclude the contributions of thinkers in the Islamic West such as Averroes (d. 595/1198). On his legacy, see: Peter Adamson and Matteo Di Giovanni (eds.) \textit{Interpreting Averroes: Critical Essays} (Cambridge University Press: 2018). On his views on reason and revelation, see: Catarina Belo. “Averroes (d. 1198), The Decisive Treatise” in: Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.) \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy} (Oxford University Press: 2016), pp. 278-296.
\footnotesize{15} This was mainly structured by Suhrāwārdī and Ibn ‘Arabī which aimed at ‘Kantinizing’ this issue through limiting the role of theoretical reasoning (nazar). See: Mukhtar H. Ali. \textit{Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction to the School of Ibn al-‘Arabī} (Routledge: 2022); Jari Kaukua. \textit{Suhrāwārdī’s Illuminationism: A Philosophical Study} (Brill: 2022). Although al-Ghazālī did start this through his well-known spiritual journey, he nevertheless did not philosophize it to the extent that it could form a new intellectual movement such as al-Ishrāqiyyah or al-Akbariyyah. This appears to be upsetting for al-Rāzī as he harshly calls one of the Sufis arguments regarding the finite (al-Mutanāḥī) inability to fully know (yuḥṣū) the infinite (ghayr Mutanāḥī) that it is a complete disaster (Tāmmaḥ). See: al-Rāzī. \textit{Nihāyat al-Uṣūl fī Dirāyat al-Uṣūl} (Beirut: Dār al-Dakhāh’ir, 2015), vol. 3, p. 220. See also: Yusuf Daşdemir. “Akbarian Scepticism in Islam: Qūnawī’s Sceptical Arguments from Relativity and Disagreement” \textit{Theoria} (2021), pp. 202-225.
\footnotesize{16} It might be argued that this is applicable to Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī as he continued this line of engaging this issue in its traditional sense and had heavily influenced al-Rāzī. However, approaching this issue as an “outsider” (See: Griffel. \textit{The Formation of Post-Classic Philosophy in Islam}, p. 203) would be less controversial rather than approaching it as a traditional Muslim Ash’ārite. That is why al-Rāzī used to complain about being accused of “heresy” as he insists that he still a part of Sunnism. See: Al-Rāzī. \textit{I’tiqādāt Firāq al-Muslimūn wal-Mushrikhīn} (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1982), p. 91-93. Note that the originality of al-Baghdaḍī is well-established, but it does not necessarily mean it had fully shaped al-Rāzī’s methods such as his views on logic. On this point, see: Tony Street. “Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdaḍī and the Traditions of Arabic Logic” \textit{Studia graeco-arabica} 11:2 (2021), pp. 41-66. Note that this phenomenon is also found through other traditions such as the mainstream Christian perception of some antitrinitarians in which Irena Backus writes about Leibniz’s (d. 1716) views on Islam: “Contemporary Antitrinitarians, such as Ferencz David, are close to Islam in their refusal to worship Jesus at all. David and his like are therefore more dangerous to the church, spreading confusion from within, than are Moslems who are outside the church”. See: Irena Backus. \textit{Leibniz: Protestant Theologian} (Oxford University Press: 2016), p. 194.}
Al-Rāzī’s biography itself is a part of this controversy due to the turns and twists that al-Rāzī had in his life. His full name is Fakhr al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī. Born on 25 Ramaḍān 544 - 26 January 1150, in Rayy, today a suburb of Tehran. The family was of Arab origin and claimed descendence from the second Caliph Abū Bakr. Fakhr al-Dīn’s great-grandfather still lived in Mecca during the mid-fifth/eleventh century. Either he or al-Rāzī’s grandfather moved from there to Ṭabaristān. Al-Rāzī started his career with his father Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Makkī (d. 559/1163-64), a prominent Ashʿarī theologian and Shāfiʿī jurist. This allowed him to gain a theological and juristic scholarly chain (silṣila) with both Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936) and Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) respectively. This is why he spent most of his career having crucial debates with other Muslims parties such as Muʿtazilites, Karramites through his travels in Central Asia and Northern India. However, it appears that what was occupying his interest is the interactions between Kalām and philosophy, having revised many of his views in his late career.26

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24 On this aspect, see: Ahmad Muhammad El-Galli, The History and Doctrines of the Karrāmiyya Sect with Special Reference to ar-Rāzī’s Criticism (M.Litt. thesis at the University of Edinburgh: 1970).


26 On theology, his critic Naṣır al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) claims that al-Rāzī’s works on theology or ʿIlm al-Kalām are the foremost according to the majority of scholars. See: Abdullah al-Ghīzī. Al-Maṣādir Al-ʾĀṣliyyah al-Maṣāḥīḥ ‘alā al-ʿAṣīrā fī Ṭabāṣir al-Fāqīh, n. 2, p. 114.

27 On philosophy, al-Rāzī claims in his treatise on the indivisible part that he has been studying philosophical discourses since the age of ten. See: Al-Rāzī, Iḥbāt Juz’ Lā Ṭatāṣaṭṣa’ (Tehran: Markaz Isnād, 3933, manuscript num. 399), p. 124.

28 It would seem that al-Rāzī’s interest in Islamic legal theory remained the same since writing his al-Maḥṣūl Fī ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Fiqh having revised it in his late Al-Muntakhab min al-Maḥṣūl Fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh and Al-Maʿālim Fī ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Fiqh. However, he did not write a new comprehensive work in this field similar to his late Al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliyyah on philosophical theology. On al-Rāzī’s departures in his Al-Maʿālim, see: Khālid al-ʿUbaydāt, “Al-Maṣāʾil al-ʾĀṣliyyah Allātī Ikhtilafat Fīhā Ārā’ Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī Min Khīlāl Kitābāyīh Al-Maḥṣūl wa Al-Maʿālim - Jamʿīan wa-Dīrāsāḥ” Majallat al-Jamʿiyyah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Suʿūdiyyah 50 (2020), pp. 453-515.
Al-Rāzī had wide-ranging influence on the Islamic thought which can be roughly noted in two ways: First, he had influenced almost all disciplines of Islamic Studies as he was arguably the main reason behind the phenomenon of systematically ‘philosophizing’ the traditional sciences of Islam such as theology, Qur’anic commentary and legal theory except for Sufism and Hadith sciences. Secondly, al-Rāzī’s students and the post-Rāzian thinkers started to write on various disciples such as logic rather than being limited to the ‘traditional’ science of Islam. This is because his contributions extended to other fields shaped by the Avicennian method, including logic, medical theory and even cosmology and psychology.

31 Al-Rāzī’s contributions to on Hadith might fall under the category of epistemically examining reports as a part of engaging legal theory. Therefore, ‘philosophizing’ Hadith in this sense is already found in the writings of Muslim theologians and legal theorists. This is because the Avicennian philosophical tradition does not apparently add to the Kalām tradition on the epistemology of reports. See: Al-Rāzī. Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-Ḥikmah, vol. 1, p. 208; Al-Rāzī. Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wal-Tanbihāt (Tehran: Anjuman Athār wa-Mafākhīr Farhangī, 1383 A.H), vol. 1, p. 254-255; Al-Rāzī. Al-Mahṣūl Fi ‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1992), vol. 4, p. 227-476.
32 Ben Hammed notes that “the philosophical orientation of Rāzī’s students is immediately apparent. Qūṭb al-Dīn al-Miṣrī, a direct student of Rāzī, wrote a commentary on the Kulliyāt of Ibn Sīnā’s al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb, and taught Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī in medicine and philosophy (ḥikma) in Nisābūr. A significant portion of the students attributed to Rāzī did not focus on Ash‘arite theology or jurisprudence, but rather became known for their works in medicine, logic, and philosophy. Some, including al-Abhari and al-Khūnajī, were central to the development of logic in the Arabic tradition”. See: Nora Jacobsen Ben Hammed. Knowledge and Felicity of the Soul in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (PhD dissertation at the University of Chicago: 2018), p. 11.
34 Fancy writes: “prior to Fakhr al-Dīn, Arabic medical commentators had followed Galen’s model by restricting themselves to clarifying the content of the source text and abstaining from verifying every single claim found therein. Fakhr al-Dīn, on the other hand, proceeded to do just that: verifying medical theory by engaging in philosophical argumentation and bringing materials from Ibn Sīnā’s philosophical works into his Canon commentary, even if (for the most part) Fakhr al-Dīn agreed with the underlying theoretical claims. Subsequent medical commentators who used Fakhr al-Dīn’s commentary and adopted his verification style, such as Ibn al-Nafis, proceeded to undertake their own systematic investigations into medical theory against Ibn Sīnā’s injunction”. See: Nahyan Fancy. “Verification and Utility in the Arabic Commentaries on the Canon of Medicine: Examples from the Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) and Ibn al-Nafis (d. 1288)” Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences 75:4 (2020), p. 381.
Al-Rāzī wrote one hundred and thirty-nine works which cover almost one hundred fields of knowledge in his time.36 What would be essential for this study is to locate his four key texts;37 his famous Qur’anic commentary Maṭāḥī al-Ghayb (keys to the unseen),38 his huge work on philosophical theology Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya Min al-’Ilm al-Ilāhī (Sublime issues - Henceforth: Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya), his major work on Islamic legal theory that is al-Maḥṣūl Fī ‘Ilm Usūl al-Fiqh (the utmost conclusion - Henceforth: al-Maḥṣūl),39 his major work on Islamic philosophical theology that is Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl fī Dirāyat al-Usūl (The furthermore reach of intellect – Henceforth: Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl). Both Maṭāḥī al-Ghayb and Al-Maṭālib al-

37 I will consult Altasar’s study in this thesis (see: Esref Altasar. “Fahreddin er-Razi’nin eserlerinin kronolojisi” in: Ömer Türkler and Osman Demir (eds.) İslam düşüncesinin dönümüş çağında Fahreddin er-Razi (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2013), pp. 91-164). Frank Griffel notes that “both Kaplan and Altasar, however, have a tendency to over-determine the absolute date of al-Razi’s compositions, meaning they narrow the time for the likely production of certain works to one, two, or three years, where we have no evidence for such a narrow window. By checking cross references in texts, however, Kaplan and Altasar produce a fairly convincing relative dating of the entire corpus of Fakhr al-Din”. See: Griffel. The Formation of Post-Classiclcal Philosophy in Islam, p. 264.
39 Note that al-Rāzī wrote an abridgment of this work entitled Al-Muntahā al-‘Uṣūl al-Maḥṣūl (Kuwait: Asfār li-Nashir Nafī’s al-Kutub wal-Rasā’il al-Jāmī’iyyah, 2019). This publisher has started a series of publications entitled al-Maḥṣūl ‘Uṣūl (The Maḥṣūl-based legal works) which identifies the importance of this work on the history of Islamic legal theory as its methods had shaped the field. See: David Johnston. “A Turn in the Epistemology and Hermeneutics of Twentieth Century ‘Uṣūl al-Fiqh” Islamic Law and Society 11:2 (2004), p. 241. Al-Rāzī’s insights in general were noted by one of the most distinctive commentors on his work that is Shīhāb al-Dīn Al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285) in which he states that he has never come across these ten issues although he had studied more than thirty works in this field to write his commentary. See: Al-Qarāfī. Nafā’is al-‘Uṣūl Fī Sharḥ al-Maḥṣūl (Mecca: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafa al-Bāz, 1995), vol. 2, p. 980.
‘Āliya were written through al-Rāzī’s final phase namely (1196-1210) - (1207-1209) respectively.⁴⁰ Both al-Mahsūl and Nihāyat al-'Uqūl were written in al-Rāzī’s early phase namely (1179-1180) - (1179-1180) respectively.⁴¹ This does not necessarily mean that he adopts the same views in each;⁴² a point that has already been noted by several critics such as Ibn al-Wazīr (d. 840/1436) on the issue of free will as he states al-Rāzī wears the hat of Ash’arites on one occasion and would neglect it through the other.⁴³

Al-Rāzī had several significant departures throughout these phases that made his works a difficult read. This includes the self-referential nature of al-Rāzī’s works at face value as it requires an explanation of exactly how his views changed over the course of his career. For instance, al-Rāzī is known for refraining from affirming any one doctrine of creation in his late phase although it might be argued, as Laura Hassan notes, that Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya could support creation ex nihilo.⁴⁴ The same point is made by Mullā Ṣadrā as he argues that al-Rāzī followed the mainstream Ash’arite conception of God due to his commitment to scripture.⁴⁵ Here we have a case study of what al-Rāzī would say about his own reading of Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya in his late Dhamm Ladhdhāt al-Dunyā and what could be understood from reading Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya independently. This is because al-Rāzī mentions al-Maṭālib several times affirming that this issue ends with obscurities.⁴⁶ This will be found in this study too since al-

⁴² This is even within the work itself. Abdul Rahman Mustafa captures this ‘Rāzian’ phenomenon in which he writes: “Al-Rāzī’s jurisprudential masterpiece, al-Mahsūl, brings to light these tensions between Ash‘arī theology and Ash‘arī legal theory. At one point, al-Rāzī adopts, within the space of a few lines, two diametrically opposed positions on the possibility of God’s law being purposive, one attributed to the theologians and the other to the jurists”. See: Abdul Rahman Mustafa. “Innovation in Premodern Islam: Between Non-Religion, Irreligion and the Secular” Journal of Islamic Studies (2022), p. 24.
Rāzī asks the reader in his late works, such as Al-ṣaḥḥah Fi Ḥalāl wa Ḥaram,47 or Al-ṣaḥḥah Fi Ḥall al-Fiqh,48 to refer to his early works, such as Al-Ḥājīl, for a detailed discussions of tawāt’ur which includes the crucifixion of Jesus.

A growing body of scholarship has come to recognise al-Rāzī’s legacy.49 His views on Christianity are one such area of interest.50 While al-Rāzī did not write a dedicated work on Christianity, unlike other Muslim figures such as Ibn Taymiyyah,51 his views on the Christian tradition are among the most debated and cited in the history of Christian-Muslim interactions especially in the modern era.52 This includes his position on tahrīf (Corruption of the Bible),53 the historicity of the Crucifixion, among other topics.54 The reason for this is that al-Rāzī

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49 “Shihadeh argued in 2005 that al-Rāzī “transformed Islamic theology to the extent that previous kālām seemed irrelevant and obsolete” (2005, 179), and demonstrated the confluence of al-Rāzī’s influences with respect to his ethical theories in his 2006 The Teleological Ethics. Endress (2006) showed his importance in the transmission of Avicennan philosophy in the madrasa institution. Eichner has demonstrated how both al-Rāzī’s novel structuring of a metaphysical enquiry (2007), and his reading of Ibn Sīnā’s theory of essence and existence (2012) transformed the ongoing traditions of falsafa and kālām. Jaffer has studied al-Rāzī’s magnum opus in the field of tafsīr (2015), Jacobsen Ben Hammed has treated his theory of knowledge (2018), and Noble (2020) his developed theory of magic”.


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engaged in a critical and often controversial manner with almost all the intellectual sciences of his day. He has been described, for example, as the “the single scholar who went against the decidedly mainstream opinion that holds metaphor to be a type of majāz”,\(^{55}\) which is a part of his influence on the field of eloquence (balāghah).\(^{56}\) The same applies to other fields such as philosophy. For instance, al-Rāzī’s views on the mental existence of the objects of thought have caused controversy. As Fedor Benevich writes: “An overwhelming majority of post-Avicennian philosophers accepted it, and hence the problem of where to place the objects of thought that do not exist was solved for them. Yet there was one particular philosopher who did not accept the mental existence solution: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī”\(^{57}\) Al-Rāzī’s controversial views on Christianity, then, are consistent with wider themes and reflect a favoured methodology of addressing a topic by raising endless questions and counter-questions. As al-Rāzī famously affirmed in his final will and testament: “I only intended to increase research and sharpen the mind”.\(^{58}\) This allowed him to challenge aspects of mainstream Muslim perceptions of Christianity since the driving force behind having such controversial views is the clashes found through the intellectual projects of Muslim thinkers, and thus their examination of Christianity would be manifestation of their intellectual commitments.

\(^{58}\) See: Tony Street. “Concerning the life and works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī” in: Anthony Hearle Johns, Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street (eds.) *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought, and Society: a Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns* (Brill: 1997), p. 137. Al-Rāzī’s final will and testament has been a subject of debates mainly between mainstream Ash’arites and the other Muslim parties. This is because it has been argued that al-Rāzī had neglected the Kalam tradition namely what is related to the attributes of God by appealing either to entrusting the knowledge of its meaning to God (Tafwīḍ) or accepting the divine attributes (Ithbāt) according to the mainstream understanding of Ahl al-Ḥadīth. I argue that it is difficult to suggest one particular interpretation of al-Rāzī’s words as these kinds of testaments are not meant for philosophical discourse but rather to indicate general statements regarding faith. Thus, al-Rāzī’s final statements on many of these issues are found in his works *Al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya, Dhamm Ladhdhāt al-Dunyā, Al-Maʿālim* and *Sharh ʿUyūn al-Ḥikmah*. 

17
Scholarship on al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity has been largely shaped by his voluminous and influential Qur’anic commentary known as *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (keys to the unseen). This work had a deep impact on the history of Muslim exegesis up to late nineteenth century. A recent study by İskenderoğlu, for example, draws on several of al-Rāzī’s works and argues that his “most detailed discussions of issues related to Christianity come in his commentary, *al-Tafsīr al-kabūr***. In this thesis, too, al-Rāzī’s Qur’anic commentary is central to the analysis. Yet it will also be argued that a broader reading of other works from al-Rāzī’s corpus is useful for elucidating his attitude vis-à-vis Christianity. This is because al-Rāzī’s commentary is limited to the scope of the verses rather than the broader themes found in his systematic works. Therefore, his position on key aspects of the Christian tradition such as the Crucifixion can be found in his works on Islamic legal theory such as *al-Maḥṣūl*. Accordingly, this study contributes to the scholarship by exploring al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity in two

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63 Al-Rāzī’s commentary is roughly considered as an encyclopaedia of what the Qur’anic verses could provide regarding various topics. That is why he writes through the introduction of his commentary: “I have stated at various times that it is possible to extract as many as 10,000 enquiries (masā‘ala) from the precious and subtle teachings of this noble sūra”. See: al-Rāzī. *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 1, p. 11; Sohaib Saeed. *The Great Exegesis, al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr, Volume 1: The Fāṭihah* (The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought: 2018), p. 2.
ways: First, analysing his commentary on the Qur’an through a hermeneutical lens since this aspect is not covered in scholarship. This is because al-Rāzī’s views in this work have been analysed without constructing the alleged apparent meaning (ẓāhir) of the verses. Second, to engage al-Rāzī’s complete works with a special focus on hitherto-neglected works, namely his al-Maḥṣūl on Islamic legal theory and Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl - Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya on philosophical theology. Therefore, the structure of this thesis reflects the purpose behind it that is an attempt to have this scholarship as starting point to build on. That it is why it has a central focus on his commentary since the previous studies in scholarship would start examining his views through his commentary. That said, I will have to skip what has been covered in order to engage other helpful aspects namely the alleged apparent meaning and the rest of al-Rāzī’s corpus. This would serve as a ‘commentary’ on al-Rāzī’s commentary in order to have a bird’s-eye view of his views. This in turn would help understanding what was going in al-Rāzī’s mind while analysing these verses namely the fixed apparent meaning of these verses in early Islam and the imagined opponents whom he was responding to in his Qur’anic commentary. This is because these imagined opponents appear to be found early in his work on Islamic legal theory that is al-Maḥṣūl where he used to defend another view.

Having located the place of this study within scholarship, this thesis explores al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity in order to answer the question: How does al-Rāzī’s intellectual project impact his examination of Christianity? The use of the term “intellectual project” refers to the positions adopted by the Muslim thinker to structure his or her understanding of Islam itself. This includes issues of epistemology, philosophical theology, and hermeneutics. In this sense, the scholar’s ‘intellectual project’ impacts their analysis of any topic that is subject to enquiry. In the field of jurisprudence, for example, Sohaira Siddiqui notes that “it would not be an

64 Note that al-Rāzī had access to the first three generations of Islam through influential exegetes such as Abū al-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076). For a detailed study of al-Rāzī as an exegete, see: Muhṣen ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. Al-Rāzī Mufassiran (PhD thesis at Cairo University: 1972); Tariq Jaffer. Rāzī: Master of Quranic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning (Oxford University Press: 2015).
exaggeration to say that the entire vocation of the jurist was built on the theological assertions inherent in the answers given to these fundamental theological and epistemological questions”.65 Theological issues would also rely on cosmological assumptions in which Aydogan Kars notes that “apophatic speech affirms various cosmological or epistemological assumptions in order to operate. Ismāʿīlī apophaticism, for example, required the acceptance of its unique cosmology that deepened divine hiddenness”.66 Following this, it logically follows that the Muslim scholars ‘intellectual project’ invariably impacts their perceptions of other traditions especially the three Abrahamic faiths. This is because they have many common topics that can form a comparative study.67 Thus, one can trace what Joshua Ralston calls “Analogy across faith”68 due to the similar intellectual projects which emerged within the traditions even through the modern context on the relationship between science and religion69 such as the impact of liberal biblical scholarship on reading the Qur’an.70

The rationale behind the thesis’ argument is to demonstrate how the Muslim thinker’s conception of Islam shapes his or her examination of Christianity. This is because it has become a challenge for the Muslim thinkers to manage this complexity; The real challenge, in the Muslim thinker’s eye, is to reject the Trinity while balancing this against one’s own Islamic understanding of the attributes of God so as to distinguish the latter from the notion of the

hypostases. This includes topics in Islam that may not seem to be relevant to interreligious studies such as ‘delaying the elucidation’ (ta’khīr al-Bayān)\(^71\) in Islamic legal theory and its impact on the topic of abrogation (Naskh). This sheds light on an important theme in Christian-Muslim studies, namely, the richness and diversity of Muslim perceptions of Christianity.\(^72\) To give an example; we do not find a single argument throughout Ibn Taymiyyah’s critique of Christianity that is based on the issue of temporal events taking place in God’s essence (Ḥulāl al-Hawādith).\(^73\) This is because it already forms part of his philosophical theology\(^74\) and had shaped his defence of the anthropomorphic language of the Qur’an and the Bible.\(^75\) On the

\(^{71}\) On this issue, see: Robert Gleave. “‘Delivering the Elucidation’ (ta’ḥīr al-bayān) in Early Muslim Legal Theory: Theological Issues in Legal Hermeneutics” in: Gregor Schwarb, Lukas Muehlethaler and Sabine Schmidtko (eds.) Theological Rationalism in Medieval Islam: New Sources and Perspectives (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), pp. 59-81.

\(^{72}\) This would even help us predicting the views of those thinkers who did not present their examination. For instance, one might wonder about the views of Avicenna on Christianity since he does not mention it through his discussion of Islam and Judaism (See: Avicenna. Al-Adhwiyyah Fī al-Maʿād. Tehran: Shams Tabrizi, 1382 A.H, p. 99). It is difficult to suggest one firm view. However, I would argue that Avicenna will probably not approach Christianity the same way the adherents of Kalām have had. This is because he might use the same argument that he uses to reject the concept of Ta’wil (figurative interpretation) of the anthropomorphic language in Islam but within the Christian tradition. This argument is relied on the relationship between the original hearers and the terms used in scripture. Thus, he might suggest that the original hearers of Jesus must have understood his ambiguous words such as the son of God literally not figuratively. This is because this was common at that time to believe that someone has a divine aspect or being a son of God. However, he would further suggest that although these words are understood literally, nonetheless they are a part of his conception of symbolic representation of truths (takhyīl) the same way he argued regarding the anthropomorphic language in the Bible and the Qur’an. The takhyīl of the philosophical concept of God is justified as being above the intellectual capacity of ordinary people. However, it would be different in the case of Christianity as it might be argued that this – calling Jesus son of God - was necessary because of the prophet-killing charge against the Jews (See Matthew 23:31 and Luke 11:47; Gabriel Reynolds. “On The Qur’ān and The Theme of Jews as ‘Killers of The Prophets’” Al-Bayān Journal of Qur’ān and Hadith Studies 10:2 (2012), pp. 9-32). Therefore, God had to send this time a person who is more than a prophet that is His son in order to call the Jews. In addition, Avicenna is clever enough to use this argument - again - against the adherents of Kalām - within the Christian context – to suggest that they twisted the Biblical texts by applying the figurative interpretation in cases that do not allow them to do so due to the necessary relationship between the original hearers and these scriptural terms. This is only a speculative theory relying on Avicenna’s hermeneutics. However, it shows how the impact of the intellectual project of the Muslim thinker on his/her views on other religions could open new ways of understanding them.


other hand, the majority of Kalām scholars have attacked the Old Testament for having an anthropomorphic deception of God which is known as Taṣīm or Tashbīh.76 The same applies to Ibn Ḥazm’s (d. 456/1064) critique of Christianity as the impact of his Zāhīrī hermeneutics is evident; Whittingham notes that “the importance of Zāhīrī hermeneutics for Ibn Ḥazm is to deny his opponents any escape by means of re-interpretation of terms”.77 On the other hand, Sufis such as ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 805/1424) would argue that “Christians’ error consists in their reading the Trinitarian formula too literally”7879 according to their hermeneutics based on esoteric (Bātin) meaning.80 Accordingly, this diversity within the Muslim perceptions of Christianity – and the non-Muslim perceptions of Islam81 – is manifested through the title of this thesis that is ‘The Impact of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Intellectual Project on his Views on Christianity’.82

76 See: Al-Rāzī, I’tiqādāt Firaq al-Muslimīn wal-Mushrīkīn, p. 82. Ascribing anthropomorphism (tashbīh) to the Jews is found in the very early writings of Kalām theologians such as ‘Abdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Fāzārī (d. after 179/795) who states that the Jews described God being similar to human beings (Yashbih al-Bashar). See: Abdulrahman Al-Salimi (ed). Early Ibāḍī Theology: New Material on Rational Thought in Islam from the Pen of al-Fāzārī (2nd/8th Century) (Brill: 2021), p. 85.


79 The same applies to adherents of Kalām such as Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233) in which he argues that the methodological issue of Christians is their attempt to adopt the apparent sense of scripture. See: al-Āmidī. Abkār al-Afkār fī Ḫuṣūl al-Dīn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wal-Wathāʾ iq al-Qawmiyyah, 2004), vol. 2, p. 60.


82 Note that you could replace the term “intellectual project” with any term that can illustrate the content of this concept such as “perception of Islam” or “school of thought”. However, I have intentionally used this term since al-Rāzī had various departures from his mainstream school of thought.
The theme of interpreting positions according to broader intellectual projects is present in the works of Muslim thinkers. A common phrase used to describe this is: “Hādhā Mabniyyun ‘Alā Qā’idatihim” (‘This view is justified according to their principle of so and so’). It is usually found after demonstrating the view of a rival party as a means to answer the question: ‘What are the bases that had led this party or thinker to adopt this view?’ Al-Rāzī himself applies this in his presentation of the views of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1085), who belonged to the Mu’tazilite tradition. Al-Rāzī states that al-ṭabarī adopted four theological positions that relied on the intellectual rule of ‘the absence of proof’ (‘adam al-dalīl). In this, al-Rāzī is not only presenting al-ṭabarī’s views. Rather, he is interpreting them according to what he sees as al-ṭabarī’s broader intellectual project. Al-Rāzī does this by mentioning the bases that led al-ṭabarī to adopt his views. Furthermore, sometimes these bases may be unclear and require some speculation. Al-Rāzī claims, for example, that one of al-ṭabarī’s views on the knowledge of God ‘may’ be dependant upon on a particular theological principle in his intellectual project. This means that this methodology is roughly an attempt to present what was possibly going in the thinker’s mind in order to locate his or her views within broader themes in their intellectual projects. This would be helpful in determining the other choices that he or she has excluded within these discussions. For instance, I have argued elsewhere regarding the Biblical verse: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19) that “Ibn Taymiyyah has mentioned this verse so many times through his voluminous work, aiming to refute it through biblical criticism rather than an argument from reason since he is aware that

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84 Note that Abū al-Ḥusayn al-ṭabarī had influenced al-Rāzī’s thought since most of al-Rāzī’s discussions are mainly responding to him even through issues related to his views on Christianity as shown throughout this thesis. Schmidtke notes that “Abū al-Ḥusayn’s writings were also closely studied by the Ash’arite theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) who subsequently adopted many elements of Abū al-Ḥusayn’s thought which he interpreted in the light of the doctrine of his own school”. See: Sabine Schmidtke. “Abū al-Ḥusayn al-ṭabarī on the Torah and its Abrogation” Mélanges de l’Université Saint Joseph 61 (2008), p. 562.
this verse is widely spread throughout the Christian world. This is in accordance with his epistemological position regarding the acceptance of the Prophetic narratives that do not fulfil the conditions of the Qur’ānic transmission”. 86 On the other hand, the adherents of Kalām such as al-Rāzī would simply doubt its transmission if they do not have proper reinterpretation since they have already doubted many aspects of the reports ascribed to the prophet. 87

This is the central theme of my thesis. In what follows, I present an overview of al-Rāzī’s intellectual project, with a particular focus on those aspects that are relevant to his views on Christianity. Secondly, I explore al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity as this would be the main part of this study since they have been controversial especially those on crucifixion and the Bible. Thirdly, I interpret these views according to the most probable aspects of al-Rāzī’s intellectual project with a particular focus on hermeneutics as it has been seemingly absent in scholarship. Fourthly, I foreground the main findings and then locate al-Rāzī’s views within the intellectual history of each topic. For this reason, this thesis can be broadly categorised into two parts. The first part overviews al-Rāzī’s intellectual project. This consists of only Chapter One and serves as the theoretical foundation for the rest of the thesis. The second part examines various aspects of al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity. This second part comprises four chapters, namely; the Crucifixion; the Bible; the Trinity, and Christology. Chapter One analyses three

86 See: Abu Shareea. “How Could Early Christians Be Wrong, p. 206. This could be interpreted with a different concern as Jon Hoover notes that “other polemists are less severe and allow that the original Torah and the original Gospel may survive in some form within the biblical texts. The prominentDamascene theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), for example, cautions in his massive refutation of Christianity, The Correct Response (al-Jawāb al-saḥīḥ), against alleging corruption of the extant Bible to avoid accidently rejecting a report of authentic revelation”. Jon Hoover. “Law, Justice, and Grace: Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) on the Gospel’s Relation to the Torah” Entangled Religions 13.2 (2022), p. 2.

aspects of al-Rāzī’s intellectual project. These include epistemology and how this shapes his views on the Crucifixion and the Bible; philosophical theology and how this shapes his views on the Trinity and Christology; and; hermeneutics on reason and revelation and how this shapes his views on the Qur’anic representation of the Christianity.

Each of chapters Two to Five comprise four sections: The first section examines the reported views of the first three generations of Islam\(^\text{88}\) with an overview of the relevant secondary literature on the topic such as on the availability of the Bible in Arabic and the Christology of groups in Arabia.\(^\text{89}\) It aims at constructing the most probable apparent meaning (\(\text{zāhir}\)) of the relevant Qur’anic verses according to al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics. This is because the main aspect of his hermeneutics is to reject the apparent meaning of a verse if it seen to contradict reason as shown in chapter one. Yet, the alleged apparent (\(\text{zāhir}\)) meaning of a verse is, in fact, highly subjective, leading to the endless disputes in theology and law\(^\text{90}\) even through

\(^{88}\) This issue is known through the Muslim debates as \(\text{Fahm al-Salaf}\) (Understanding of the predecessors). On this debatable issue, see: Sa’d al-‘Ajmī. \(\text{Hujjiyat Fahm al-Salaf: Al-Nazariyyah wal-Tahbīq}\) (Riyadh: Dār Madārik lil-Nashir, 2018). On other aspects of these debates, see: Emad Hamdeh. \(\text{Salafism and Traditionalism: Scholarly Authority in Modern Islam}\) (Cambridge University Press: 2021). I will refer to them as “early Muslims” through consulting the recent encyclopaedia \(\text{Mawsū‘at al-Tafsīr al-Ma‘thūr}\) being the most comprehensive work since Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī’s (d. 911/1505) one \(\text{al-Durr al-Manthūr fi al-Tafsīr al-Ma‘thūr}\) since the editors have added forty five thousand account to it. See: Markaz al-Dirāsāt wal-Ma‘lūmāt al-Qur‘āniyyah. \(\text{Mawsū‘at al-Tafsīr al-Ma‘thūr: Akhar Jāmī‘ li-Tafsīr al-Nabyy Ṣallā Allāh ‘Alaih wa-Salām wal-Saḥābah wal-Tābī‘īn wa-Atbā‘ ỉhim}\) (Beirut: Dār Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmiz, 2017), vol. 1, p. 12 (footnote).

\(^{89}\) On this point, see: Rahel Fischbach. \(\text{Politics of Scripture: Discussions of the Historical-Critical Approach to the Qur’an}\) (PhD dissertation at Georgetown University: 2017); Nicolai Sinai. “Historical Criticism and Recent Trends in Western Scholarship on the Qur’an: Some Hermeneutic Reflections” \(\text{Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies}\) 38:1 (2020), pp. 136-146. These sources could also examine issues in mainstream Islamic scholarship such as the presence of the prophet while taking possession of the Holy Land. Stephen J. Shoemaker writes: “At least eleven non-Islamic sources from the seventh and eighth century report this information, in almost every case independently”. See: Stephen J. Shoemaker. \(\text{A Prophet Has Appeared: The Rise of Islam Through Christian and Jewish Eyes, A Sourcebook}\) (University of California Press: 2021), p. 30. This includes the growing field of inscriptions in Arabia, see: Ahmad Al-Jallad. \(\text{The Religion and Rituals of the Nomads of Pre-Islamic Arabia: A Reconstruction Based on the Safaitic Inscriptions}\) (Brill: 2022).

the writings of al-Rāzī himself. This is because there are two overlapping questions that shape this issue; the first whether ẓāhir is the same as naşṣ; the second is defining the criterion for tracing this difference since the definitions of both terms have relative statements such as claiming that naşṣ is the probable meaning with no possibility of having another further one (rājiḥ māni` min al-naqīḏ) while it is not the case with ẓāhir.91 That is why al-Rāzī approaches this controversial issue throughout his discussions by referring to the use of terms (majī` musta`mal)92 in which he connects it to the views of the first three generations of Islam.93

Therefore, constructing the apparent meaning would help us understanding further hermeneutical aspects of al-Rāzī’s views.94 This is because it will be shown, for instance, that al-Rāzī would start examining the Qur’anic verses on crucifixion being occupied by particular narratives that prevent him from having a neutral vis-à-vis the linguistic meaning of this verse. However, his examination of the issue of taḥrīf (Corruption of the Bible) is totally different due to the ambiguity of the first three generations of Islam.

91 See: Al-Rāzī, Al-Maḥṣūl, vol. 1, p. 231; vol. 3, p. 152. It is not my intention to enter at length into the discussion of ẓāhir. However, I have mentioned this brief discussion here rather than being within the section on al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics in chapter one since this aspect forms the structure of this thesis itself. Thus, it has to be addressed at the beginning in order to make the key arguments easy to follow at the outset of this thesis.
94 This is not to say that he consistently follows this line of argument but rather to note that he is aware of it and even applies at some point. In other words, I am applying one of the rules of Kalām, that is, al-Dāll / All āl-Wuqū’ Dāll ‘ālā al-Imkān (its existence is a proof for its possibility to exist). See: ‘Ādud al-Dīn al-Ījī. Al-Mawāqif Fi ‘Ilm al-Kalām (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1999), p. 342.
The second section focuses on al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics to trace al-Rāzī’s approach to the apparent meaning of the relevant verses. The third section concerns epistemology (Chapters Two and Three) or philosophical theology (Chapters Four and Five). On epistemology, al-Rāzī’s position on the Crucifixion and the Bible are shown to be based on the issue of reports that includes discussions of both the concept of successive transmission of reports (tawāṭur) and abrogation (naskh). On the latter, his critique of the Trinity and Christology are based on issues related to his conception of God in Islam which includes the nature of attribute (Ṣifah), God’s speech (kalām Allāh), and Incarnation (Ḥulūl)- hypostatic union (Ittiḥād).95 The fourth section is ‘concluding remarks’ which aims at foregrounding the main findings and then to locate al-Rāzī’s views within the intellectual history of each topic.96 This is because I will divide his contributions to each topic through two aspects namely hermeneutics and epistemology-philosophical theology. This would allow us to have further inspection of al-Rāzī’s views as an exegete too and he did reconstruct the apparent meaning of these verses to address these challenges.97 Now we turn to the intellectual project of al-Rāzī.

95 I should note at the outset of this thesis that al-Rāzī’s views on both the Trinity and Christology are not as controversial as those on the crucifixion and the Bible. This is because he apparently follows the mainstream Muslim perception of theses issue with a slight modification related to his intellectual commitments as shown later. This justifies not being cited extensively to the Christian-Muslim intellectual history.


97 In other words, locating al-Rāzī’s views within this intellectual history entails tracing his sources of al-Tafsīr bi al-Maʾālīḥūr (tradition-based commentary) and al-Tafsīr bi al-Raʾy (opinion-based commentary). Note that the construction of these classification has been examined as Walid Saleh notes regarding some implications of this phenomenon: “This division of the tradition into two forms was meant to convey the notion that one part of the tradition was authority-based and hence authentic and reliable (tafsīr bi-l-maʾālīḥūr), and the other whimsical and capricious, using personal opinion as its guide and hence unreliable (tafsīr bi-l-raʾy).” See: Walid A. Saleh. The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qurʾān Commentary of al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035) (Brill: 2004), p. 16. See also: Pieter Coppens. “Did Modernity End Polyvalence? Some Observations on Tolerance for Ambiguity in Sunnī tafsīr”. Journal of Qur’anic Studies 23:1 (2021), pp. 36-70.
Chapter one: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s intellectual project

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s intellectual project has been a subject of great interest to scholars of Islamic intellectual history. The breadth and depth of his thought, the longevity of his career, and his engagement with many of the intellectual sciences of his day makes al-Rāzī a difficult thinker to place. His precise intellectual identity is contested. Peter Adamson, for example, says of al-Rāzī’s relationship with philosophy that “the protean and multi-faceted thought of al-Rāzī cannot be classified as belonging exclusively to the Kalām or philosophical traditions”.98 For instance, this is evident through his views on the Platonic account of time.99 Thus, the complex nature of al-Rāzī’s thought is thus well-established since since Muḥammad Sāliḥ Al-Zarkān’s study100 up to Frank Griffel’s one.101 Therefore, it is not the focus of this thesis to discuss these developments throughout his career.102 Rather, this thesis analyses al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity within a specific period of his career, namely, the time of his writing both al-Maḥṣūl, Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl and Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya. Except for his Qur’anic commentary which is meant for in this study for his approach to the hermeneutical question of the apparent meaning of verses, it is in these works that al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity are seen most clearly. The other works of al-Rāzī’s will be consulted throughout the discussions where necessary. In what follows I present aspects of al-Rāzī’s epistemology, philosophical theology, and hermeneutics, focusing on those most relevant to our discussion.

Al-Rāzi’s epistemology:103

I present one aspect of al-Rāzi’s epistemology, namely, his views on the transmission of reports (akhbār)104 as found in his work on Islamic legal theory, al-Mahṣūl. This will be done through briefly analysing his views on three issues: the concept of Tawātur (successive transmission of reports),105 his sceptical position towards the certitude of scriptural texts, and his views on the concept of abrogation (naskh). Each of these three aspects impact his evaluation of the historicity of the Crucifixion and the authenticity of the Bible. We see this in three ways. Firstly, both the historicity of the Crucifixion and the transmission of the Bible are based on the concept of Tawātur. Secondly, al-Rāzi’s interpretation of the Qur’anic verses regarding the Christian tradition are heavily influenced by his sceptical position towards allegedly clear meaning of Qur’anic terms. This derives from his views on the origin of language. Thirdly, the alleged abrogation of the Bible due to the emergence of Islam is a central issue discussed in Islamic legal theory. Accordingly, this section sheds light on these aspects that each reappear in later discussions of al-Rāzi’s views on the Christian tradition.


Let us start with al-Rāzī’s discussion on the transmission of reports.¹⁰⁶ Most issues in Islamic jurisprudence are based on the principle that the transmission of reports is a main source of knowledge.¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸ Al-Rāzī starts by tracing the various definitions of the term ‘akhbār’, concluding that it cannot be defined since its conception is realised in our minds immediately (badīhī).¹⁰⁹ From this, al-Rāzī moves to discuss the most important type of reports; successive transmission of reports (Tawātur), an issue of which is known to have had “twists and turns”¹¹⁰ throughout his career. Al-Rāzī classifies the discussion into five issues. The first is the issue of definition in which he defines the concept of tawātur according to the standard view, namely, that it refers to a report transmitted by such a large number as to preclude the possibility of fabrication.¹¹¹ The second issue is the dispute over the validity of tawātur for providing knowledge. Here al-Rāzī mentions three parties: a majority of thinkers that claim it does provide firm knowledge, whether these reports relate to past or present; the Indian philosophical school of thought known as Sumaniyya,¹¹² which is known for having argued


¹⁰⁷ See: Al-Rāzī. Al-Maḥṣūl, vol. 1, p. 167-168; Al-Rāzī. Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl, vol. 1, p. 215-216. The reason behind finding epistemic topics through the Muslim legal works is the attempt to conduct legal rulings that are based on certainty especially when it comes to the reports. This extends to the structure of the report itself which would determine its epistemic strength as Sohaira Siddiqui writes: “Standard books of usūl al-fiqh begin with extensive linguistic and hermeneutical inquiries, signalling that law rests on a robust theory of language and interpretation that serves as the foundation to legal derivation. One of the basic tenets is that the epistemic strength of a legal ruling is connected to its linguistic clarity as well as its linguistic form. This means that explicit scriptural prescriptions or proscriptions hold a higher epistemic value than do vague or ambiguous ones. Given the importance of the scriptural sources, their correct interpretation and epistemic weight were subjects of extensive debate”. See: Sohaira Z. M. Siddiqui. Law and Politics under the Abbasids, p. 135.


that *tawātur* provides knowledge of past but not present events, as the latter are based on conjecture rather than certain knowledge; a third unidentified group that claims *tawātur* provides knowledge of present but not past events. Al-Rāzī supports the first group, arguing that objections to this view are based on conjecture rather than reality itself in which he relies on the notion of immediate knowledge. The third issue is the question whether knowledge that comes from *tawātur* is necessary (derūrī) or speculative (naẓarī) as the central difference between these notions, according to al-Rāzī, is the fact that derūrī entails an immediate belief once it is conceived while the other is not although both could share the same status if they absent from the perceiver. Al-Rāzī takes the majority position that is necessary, while claiming that others such as Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and al-Ghazālī hold that it is speculative. He mentions al-Sharīf al-Murtḍā (d. 966/1044) as adopting a third agnostic position on the issue. The central argument that al-Rāzī invokes to support his view is the ability of children to acquire knowledge even though they are unable to construct intellectual premises.

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113 It has been argued that “at a very early stage – a full century before al-Kindī, who is usually recognized as initiating philosophy in the Islamic world – there was at least fleeting awareness of Indian ideas about the sources of knowledge. See: Peter Adamson and Jonardon Ganeri. *Classical Indian Philosophy: A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps, Volume 5* (Oxford University Press: 2020), p. 334.
114 See: Al-Rāzī. *Al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 4, p. 227-230; al-Rāzī. *Nihāyat al-ʿUqūl*, vol. 3, p. 449. This is one of the common themes through al-Rāzī’s writings which is to show the defects of all possibilities on a particular topic in order to demonstrate its relativity, and then to cut this by claiming the evident or the intuitional aspect of a notion. For instance, Fedor Benevich writes regarding al-Rāzī’s concern of the issue of definitions: “He states that all our scientific definitions, all intentional acts of conceptualization of things around us, do not reach the essences of things in themselves. Should we, however, conclude that Rāzī believes that we cannot know the world as such at all? I do not think so. One should remember that Rāzī’s aim is a very specific one. He wants to argue against the possibility of voluntarily acquired conceptualization of things. This kind of knowing the world does not reach the essence of the worldly things, according to Rāzī’s analysis. There are, however, different types of knowledge that remain intact from Rāzī’s criticism of definitions. First and most important is that which we saw him calling “immediate knowledge”. See: Fedor Benevich. “Meaning and Definition: Scepticism and Semantics in Twelfth-Century Arabic Philosophy” *Theoria* (2021), p. 12.
Rāzī here refutes the position that claims even children have internal intellectual premises that develop throughout their lives, thus allowing them to use speculative thinking to acquire knowledge.\(^{118}\) The fourth issue is the question of trustworthiness (Ṣidq) of those who transmit reports (khabar Ahl al-tawātur). Al-Rāzī rejects the argument that tawātur would authenticate those who transmit this report in which he relies on the darūrī conception of tawātur.\(^{119}\) This issue is discussed in the following chapter his views on the Crucifixion.\(^{120}\)

The fifth issue is the conditions of tawātur. Here we find two relevant points on epistemology that come to impact his views on the Christian tradition. Al-Rāzī first writes that those who receive reports must have had a neutral position before receiving them. For this may impact their evaluation of these reports and thus any acceptance or rejection would come from a subjective and partisan, rather than objective, position. The second relevant point is the number of people necessary to have reached the status of tawātur. This is a subject of debate in the Islamic tradition. Al-Rāzī rejects the need for a standardised number, arguing that it is based on sensibility (wijdān)\(^{121}\) and connecting it to the issue of circumstantial evidence (qarā‘in).\(^{122}\) Al-Rāzī - similar to other Ash‘arite thinkers such as al-Juwaynī\(^{123}\) - supports the


\(^{119}\) While he relies on it through most of his discussions to skip objections, al-Rāzī uses this to accuse the other parties mainly the Muʿtazilites arguing that they always claim the darūrī aspect of any argument once they do not find an answer. See: al-Rāzī. Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl, vol. 2, p. 44+434; Al-Rāzī. Al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya, vol. 9, p. 258.

\(^{120}\) See: Ibid, vol. 4, p. 234-257.


\(^{122}\) El-Tobgui notes that “part of the reason for this variation in number is that circumstantial evidence (qarā‘in al-aḥwāl) available able to one person but not to another might affect the number of independent reports at which certainty regarding the reported content is attained. Indeed, though number is fundamental to tawātur, it is typically number in conjunction with circumstantial evidence that engenders knowledge in the mind: knowledge-inducing tawātur may obtain sooner through a lower number of reports accompanied by strong circumstantial indicants than through a larger number of reports but with less or weaker concomitant evidence”. See: Carl Sharif El-Tobgui. “From Legal Theory to Erkenntnistheorie: Ibn Taymiyya on Tawātur as the Ultimate Guarantor of Human Cognition” Oriens 46:1-2 (2018), p. 16.

\(^{123}\) Siddiqui notes that “though al-Juwaynī’s emphasis on external indicators is directly linked to his ten grades of knowledge, he was not the first to grant external indicators an important role in the verification of reports. Though al-Naẓẓām was frequently attacked for his scepticism regarding ḥadīth and his rejection of ījmā‘, al-Juwaynī adopted his argument for external indicators”. See: Sohaira Siddiqui. Law and Politics under the Abbasids: An Intellectual Portrait of al-Juwayni, p. 155.
view of the Muʿtazilite Ibrāhīm al-Naẓẓām (d. 221/836) that these indicators (qarāʿin) are in fact the central bases for accepting reports in general\textsuperscript{124,125} and even the claimed certitude in scriptural texts\textsuperscript{126} as noted by al-Kawtharī (d. 1371/1952).\textsuperscript{127}

Beyond his position on the concept of tawātur, the second epistemological issue is his controversial views on the certitude of scriptural texts.\textsuperscript{128} Al-Rāzī is known for having a distinctive view on the matter.\textsuperscript{129} He lays out ten conditions required to acquire certain knowledge from the scriptural text as this would allow him to present alternative interpretations of the Qur’anic verses that, in turn, represent Christian doctrines in different ways such as the doctrine of worshipping Jesus and Mary to a certain Christian sect, such as Collyridianism.\textsuperscript{130}

The ten conditions are the following:

“Textual evidence (dalāʾ-il naqliyya) does not impart certain [knowledge], because it is based on the transmission of language, the transmission of grammar and rules of inflection and conjugation; it depends on the absence of synonymy, the absence of figurative usage, the absence of ellipsis (iḍmār), the absence of new usages [of expressions], the absence of advancement or postponement [of a command], the absence of specification (takhṣīš), the

\textsuperscript{125} See: Ibid, vol. 5, p. 401-402.
\textsuperscript{129} Note that al-Rāzī may not the first one to present these conditions as it is argued it could be ascribed to Ibn Nawbakh (n.d.). See: al-Ghizzī. Al-Maṣādir Al-ʿAṣliyyah, p. 83-84 (footnote).
\textsuperscript{130} Juan Cole notes that “The Quran does not refer to these Mariolaters as Christians, but is apparently describing a faction of Christianity that held that Mary and Jesus were gods, possibly having assimilated them to the Arab goddess Allāt and to one of the male North Arabian gods, respectively. This group resembles the sect that Epiphanius in his Πανάριον (Lat. title, Adversus haereses) calls Arab Collyridians, who allegedly mixed Christian motifs with Nabataean religion in the fourth century. Some have challenged this interpretation, whether because Epiphanius appears to have had an active imagination or because they wished to emphasize the Quran's polemical techniques. Recent work on the apocrypha of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, written in the sixth and seventh centuries but incorporating much earlier material, has, however, lent credence to some of Epiphanius's assertions”. See: Juan Cole. “Infidel or Paganus? The Polysemy of Kafara in the Quran” Journal of the American Oriental Society 140:3 (2020), p. 631-632. See also: Stephen Benko. The Virgin Goddess: Studies in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology (Brill: 2004).
absence of abrogation, and the absence of contradicting rational evidence (‘adam al-muʿārid al-‘aqlí). The absence of these things is probable and not based on certain knowledge and that which depends on probable knowledge is probable. If that is established, it becomes apparent that textual evidence is probable and that rational evidence is certain and that which is the probable does not contradict the certain.”

The last epistemic issue is the issue of abrogation. This is commonly discussed in the context of the relationship between the Qur’an and the Bible. Al-Rāzī affirms abrogation through his al-Maḥṣūl, commentary on the Qur’an, and Al-Maʿālim Fi ‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh (the theme of Islamic legal theory) which is his latest work on Islamic legal theory. The topic that is related to al-Rāzī’s discussions of abrogation is delaying the elucidation of revelation’s address (ta’khir al-bayān ‘an waqf al-khītāb) being connected to the topic of ta’bīd (permanent obligation). This is al-Rāzī because asks the reader to refer to these topics through his examination of the abrogation which will be evident through his views on this topic

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138 See: Al-Rāzī. Al-Maḥṣūl, vol. 3, p. 328-330. Zysow concludes on the performance of the commanded act regarding its two main questions; “how often is the act commanded to be performed? Only once (al-marrā) or repeatedly (al-tārīkh)? And is the act to be performed immediately (al-fawr, al-hidār) or may performance be postponed (al-tārīkh, muhāla)? On both of these questions, three positions may be distinguished: 1. The minimalist position holds that the act commanded by a simple imperative is to be performed only once and that its performance not need be immediate. 2. The maximalist position understands the imperative to demand repeated performance of the act commanded. This answer in itself determines that performance must begin at once, for as Abū ʿIṣḥāq al-Shirāzī puts it: “if we say that the imperative requires repetition of the acts as long as one is able, the act is immediately obligatory because the first instance is one of ability and one must not let it pass without performance”. Finally, there are the hesitators who deny that the imperative by itself determines either of these issues; more information is required”. See: Zysow. The Economy of Certainty, p. 74.
in the third chapter.\footnote{See: Al-Rāzī, Al-Mahṣūl, vol. 3, p. 302-303.} Thus, al-Rāzī accepts delaying the elucidation as his central argument is based on the previous position on the certitude of scriptural texts. He states that once we accept God’s speech is meant to give probable belief (\textit{i’tiqād rājīh}) rather than firm belief (\textit{al-qāṭ’ wa-lyaqīn}), this allows for a further meaning of the text without ascribing purposelessness (\textit{jahl wa-’abath}) to God.\footnote{See: Ibid, vol. 3, p. 211-212.}

Al-Rāzī’s second line of argument regarding this point is based on rejecting the human mind unaided qualification of knowing things as good or bad (\textit{al-Taḥsīn wa-Taqbīh al-’Aqlī}).\footnote{Ahmed Izzidien concludes on the disputes regarding this issue: “For the Mu’tazilis, Maturidis and Atharis, acts are either \textit{ḥasān} (pleasant) or \textit{qabīh} (unpleasant) either in and of themselves, or due to an inseparable characteristic, or due to other considerations. For the Mu’tazilis, textual revelation is solely to make clear those characteristics of \textit{ḥasān} (pleasant) and \textit{qabīh} (unpleasant). This view was also taken up by the Karamiyya and a number of Shi’a and Yazidiyya. It is often attributed to Jahm b. Safwan (d. 128/746), who opined that elements of knowledge (\textit{ma’ārif}) can be known with the ‘\textit{aql}’ (intellect) before revealed texts appear (the Shar’), that the intellect is able to discern ‘good’ from ‘bad’, and \textit{ḥusn} (pleasantness) from \textit{qubḥ} (unpleasantness) without revelation. The Ash’arists, on the other hand, took the position that nothing is inherently good or bad. God only makes things fall into either category based on His Will and not because anything necessitates such allocation. They believed that the ‘\textit{aql}’ (intellect) does not indicate the \textit{ḥusn} nor \textit{qubḥ} of anything. Thus, for example, to the Ash’arists, being unfair is not inherently definable as bad or good but only has the label of being ‘bad’ after God revealed that qualification to His Prophet. Legally, they held that there was nothing that obliged humans to anything without revelation. The Atharis and Maturidis took the position that human reason had an ability to discern \textit{ḥusn} (pleasantness) and \textit{qubḥ} (unpleasantness), however, they also held that people cannot be judged according to this distinction until revelation had its say on the matter”. See: Ahmed Izzidien. “‘Shari’ah, natural and original state” in: Khaled Abou El Fadl, Ahmad Atif Ahmad and Said Fares Hassan (eds.) Routledge Handbook of Islamic Law (Routledge: 2019), p. 50.}

Al-Rāzī’s views on this issue had a minor departure from earlier Ash’arites\footnote{Shihadeh concludes regarding this development at this phase of his career Shihadeh writes: “Thus in his \textit{Nihāyat al-’Uqūl} and mid-career works, al-Rāzī says that goodness and badness, defined respectively as agreement or disagreement with the disposition, are rational concepts (’\textit{aqlī}), in that the agent apprehends the subjective value of an act through reason. Defined, respectively, as ‘not deserving of punishment’ and ‘deserving of punishment’, they are by contrast ‘religious’ (\textit{sharī’ī}), because acts become punishable only through God’s command, which is received through a divinely-revelation. That, in contrast to earlier Ash’arīs, al-Rāzī characterises introspective knowledge of emotions as ‘\textit{aqlī}’ is not a trivial shift of usage, but reflects a departure from the classical-Ash’arī conception of intellect. Whereas ‘intellect’ (’\textit{aql}) was earlier defined as a body of immediate knowledge correlated to facts about external world, al-Rāzī defines it as an innate capacity (\textit{gharīf}) through which knowledge is gained. The scope of ‘\textit{aql}, thus conceived as the capacity of cognition, accordingly encompasses all immediate and non-scriptural inferential knowledge, including introspective knowledge. An agent will therefore be able to apprehend the pain (or pleasure) that an act causes him and accordingly make a value judgement on the act in the form of a proposition, ‘That act is bad (or good)’, where ‘bad’ and ‘good’ are defined respectively as a direct or indirect cause of pain, or of pleasure”. See: Ayman Shihadeh. “Psychology and Ethical Epistemology: An Ash’arī Debate with Mu’tazīlī Ethical Realism, 11th-12th C.” Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies 20 (2020), p. 18.} in his ‘early’ career too at the time of writing his \textit{Al-Mahṣūl}\footnote{See: Al-Rāzī, Al-Mahṣūl, vol. 1, p. 123-139.} \textit{Nihāyat al-’Uqūl}.\footnote{See: Al-Rāzī, \textit{Nihāyat al-’Uqūl}, vol. 3, p. 288.} The main
implication of rejecting this notion\(^{145}\) within al-Rāzī’s discussions of abrogation is to refute the counter argument regarding the intentional deception (\(\text{Talbīs}\)) by God. This is because the mainstream objections against the concept of abrogation are mainly related to the possibility that God would legislate something at a particular time and then to change it or having an intentional deception by God to the original hearers. The argument in this sense is denying God’s ability to act purposelessly which is considered unsound (\(qabīḥ\)).\(^{146}\) The Mu’tazilites are basically the main Islamic party that would be in al-Rāzī’s mind while approaching this topic due to their views on \(\text{al-Taḥṣīn wal-Taqbiḥ al-‘Aqlī}\).\(^{147}\) Thus, the counter arguments by both Jews and Christians would be applicable to them according to al-Rāzī and mainstream Ash‘arites.\(^{148,149}\) What would be essential in this discussion is how they would address these questions and challenges having in mind the diversity even within these schools.\(^{150}\)

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\(^{147}\) One of the contested issues in this topic is labelling the Ash‘arites school of thought as being against ‘rationalism’. Farahat writes: “Natural law, I maintain, is an adequate characterization of this influential theological-ethical school. However, natural law does not necessary entail – and should not be equated with – “rationalism.””. See: Omar Farahat. The Foundation of Norms in Islamic Jurisprudence and Theology (Cambridge University Press: 2019), p. 27-28.

\(^{148}\) This is the mainstream response within Ash‘arī’s line in which Cucarella writes on al-Qarāfī’s parallel examination: “The Ash‘arī solution to this dilemma was insisting that abrogation was no evidence of deficient knowledge, but rather the unfolding in time of a divine plan in which God knows from eternity what regulations would be announced by which prophets and when they will be replaced by other regulations. This is exactly the view that al-Qarāfī adopts in his reply to the above objection, denying that abrogation implies a change of mind or an act of regret on God’s part, something that only happens when a person learns something he did not know before: for instance, a traveler who changes his mind and regrets his previous decision upon realizing that there is a greater benefit in not pursuing his trip. This is not the case with God, insists al-Qarāfī, who knows from eternity when eating the fat of animals will be pernicious and when it will be beneficial, and therefore when he will forbid it and when he will allow it. In other words, the fact that God’s law varies does not reflect the mutability of the divine essence but only the contingent nature of human existence”. See: Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella. Muslim-Christian Polemics Across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb Al-Dīn Al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285) (Brill: 2015), p. 164-165.

\(^{149}\) This is to say that the Ash‘arites have approached the issue of abrogation without being influenced by the Mu’tazilites-based lines of arguments on abrogation. This is because this has been noted through the writings of some Ash‘arites thinkers who have used and developed elements of Mu’tazilite tradition. On this aspect, see: Binyamin Abrahamov. “Some Notes on the Notion of \(\text{Naskh}\) in the \(\text{Kalām}\)” in: Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven (eds.) Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Dijker (Brill: 2008), pp. 3-21.

\(^{150}\) For instance, al-Rāzī states that Abū al-Husayn is the only Muslim thinker to argue that God must have demonstrated that this text will be abrogated in the future through an indication (\(\text{ish‘ār}\)) otherwise it would be \(\text{Talbīs}\) (deception). See: Al-Rāzī. \(\text{Al-Maḥṣūl}\), vol. 3, p. 302-303.
Al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology:

I present one aspect of al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology. This is his views on the Divine attributes (Ṣifāt Allāh)\(^{151}\) as seen in his work on philosophical theology, Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl.\(^{152}\) This is through a brief analysis of three points: the nature of the Divine attributes; the concept of attribute (Ṣifah),\(^{153}\) God’s speech (Kalām Allāh),\(^{154}\) and Incarnation (Ḥulūl)- hypostatic union (Ittiḥād). Each of these aspects impact his evaluation of both the Trinity and Christology due to three reasons. First, a common theme in the history of Christian-Muslim relations is the debate over the alleged parallels between the Divine attributes of God in Islam and the Christian notions of hypostases, as seen through contested notions such as the multiplicity of eternal beings (ta‘addud al-Qudamā).\(^{155}\) Second, the issue of the (un)/createdness of God’s speech is another central theme that has shaped Christian-Muslim interactions, often compared to the Christian notion of the Divinity of Jesus as the word of God. Third, the issue of incarnation and union have often been compared to Muslim groups such as Sufis, Ḥanbalites and Shi‘ite.\(^{156}\)


On the Divine attributes, al-Rāzī adopts the mainstream view of his Ashʿarite school. He states that attributes of God are “known and perceived by the virtue of itself” (maʿlūmatan fī nafsīhā mawjūdatan fī dhātīhā), in which they have been perceived by other parties as Ṣifātiyyah (Attributionists). He presents three lines of argument for this. The first argument is that the attribute of God would be either a negation (salb) or factual existence (thubūt). The former is invalid since it would mean the concept of non-existence (ʿadam) is applied to the knowledge of God itself. Secondly, the attribute of God would be either the essence itself (nafs dhātīh) or not; the first is not valid because one cannot distinguish between two qualities of God such as the knowledge and the power to act. Thus, this must be something superadded to the essence (zaʿid ʿalā dhātīh). Thirdly, this addition would be either relational (iḍāfī) or not; the former is invalid as it entails that the knowledge of God is dependent on the object of knowing (al-maʿlūm) and vice versa, which leads to circular reasoning (dawr). This leads to the formulation of the attribute of God as “neither other than God nor identical with Him” (lā Huwa walā Ghayruh) which is the mainstream view of his Ashʿarite school.

However, al-Rāzī departs from this position in his late career as he would conceptualize God’s attributes as mere relations (nisab wa-iḍāfāt) noted by late Ashʿarites such as Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Tilmasānī (d. 658/1260) and Aḥmad al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1156/1743). This is evident in his works Al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya, Maʿālim Uṣūl al-Dīn, and Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-Ḥikmah.

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157 Kars notes that “Al-Shahrastānī’s genealogy of the phrase “Attributionists” [Ṣifātiyya] shows that the phrase was invented by their Muʿtazilite adversaries, but he also acknowledges that many who fall under this category from early on were actually anthropomorphists. “Attributionists” was the name of a broad, heterogeneous spectrum of theological approaches; only some of them were overtly anthropomorphist, while all of them accepted the reported [khabar] attributes of “two hands,” or “face” of God prima facie, without interpretation. Al-Shahrastānī acknowledges that the Ashʿarites, along with the overt Anthropomorphists and Karrāmites, embodied the three groups of “Attributionists”. See: Kars. Unsaying God: Negative Theology in Medieval Islam, p. 224.


Yet the main concern for al-Rāzī that relates to this interpretation and its relationship with the Mu'tazilites is the aforementioned issue of ta'addud al-Qudamā'. This is because the term “other” (ghayr) is ambiguous. Al-Rāzī states the proper understanding of the term is that it refers to “entities with realities that differ from the reality of the essence but are not dependent on it” (mawjūdāh mukhālifah fī ḥaqīqatīhā li-ḥaqīqat al-dhāt qā'imatin bil-dhāt).

In this, he denies the possibility that an attribute could exist by the virtue of itself. Al-Rāzī suggests this having in mind that he allows the possibility that both the essence (dhāt) and the attribute (Ṣifa) could share the quality of eternity (Qidam) despite their difference in terms of reality (Haqiqah) and Quiddity (Māhiyyah) since these attributes do not exist by the virtue of itself (Qā'imah bi-Nafsīhā). This goes in line with his rejection of the argument that every two entities that share some aspects must share all other aspects too.

On God’s speech, al-Rāzī follows the conclusion of the previous analysis. He states that God’s speech is an eternal attribute of God. Al-Rāzī argues this is not what opponents would

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166 Note that al-Rāzī became less ‘sensitive’ towards this issue throughout his career in which al-Sharqāwī notes that “he was not so obsessed by the idea as to make it the central theme in his controversies with the philosophers as some theologians had done before him”. See: ‘Eflāt al-Sharqāwī. Religion and Philosophy in the Thought of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: The Problem of God’s Existence (PhD thesis at McGill University: 1970), p. 232. This is evident for instance through his views on the Platonist account of the essence of time.


168 Abrahamov writes on its relationship with the knowledge of God’s essence: “In his view, there is a direct connection between these two perceptions. The problem begins with God’s essence. If we judged that God’s essence equals the objects of our senses, soul, and intellect, God would be possible existent by virtue of Himself (mumkin li-dhātihī), for these objects are possible existents by virtue of themselves. Since God is necessary existent by virtue of Himself, it is inconceivable that He should be possible existent by virtue of Himself. On the other hand, to regard God as totally different from the objects that we perceive by our intellect will lead to perplexity and to inability to know something about God. To sum up, the two ways which relies on the equality between the objects perceived by man and God’s essence, and the second which denies any equality between God and these objects do not yield knowledge about God’s essence”. See: Binyamin Abrahamov. “Falḥ al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Knowability of God’s Essence and Attributes” Arabica 49:2 (2002), p. 223-224.


171 See: Ibid, vol. 2, p. 303. Nader El-Bizri writes on this intellectual line: “Ashʿārī asserts in his Remarks that “God’s speech is uncreated and is coeternal with His essence.” However, as noted earlier, he posits a controversial problem regarding the actual enunciation (laẓiyya) of the divine words. He consequently differentiates the createdness of utterances (ḥudūth al-alfāz) from the beginninglessness of their meanings (qidam al-maʿānī). God’s speech is inherent in Him, and in itself it is neither a sensory sound (ṣawt) nor a graphical trace that is manifested in the form of a letter (harf). Being of the order of human doings, sounds and letters are created expressive traces of the uncreated divine word”. See: Nader El-Bizri. “God: essence and attributes” in: Tim Winter (ed.) The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology (Cambridge University Press: 2008), p. 130-131. The counter argument comes mainly from the Mu'tazilites; “If the Qur’an is God’s speech, then it is either coeternal with God, and thus uncreated, or it is not coeternal with God. To maintain pure monotheism, one must concede
understand from terms such as letters and voices (Ḥurūf wal-Âswāt), self-imagination (Taṣawwur Fī al-Nafṣ) and will (al- Irādah). Rather, it is what he describes as commanding the other to do something (Ţalab al-Fi ‘l min al-Ghayr).\textsuperscript{172} Al-Rāzī essentially relies on the premise that the quiddity (mâhiyyah) of God’s speech is based on the fact that God has the ability of commanding (al-amr wal-nahy), which is different from other main attributes such as the knowledge of God.\textsuperscript{173,174}

This leads us to the issue of incarnation (Hulūl) and hypostatic union (Ittiḥād). This has long been linked in the issue of God’s speech in Christian-Muslim debates.\textsuperscript{175} Al-Rāzī relies on three lines of argument in his rejection of the incarnation. The first is the question whether the incarnation has been into one part or all parts arguing that the former is impossible. This, he writes, is because if the incarnation had been into one part, it would entail having two different incarnations in two different parts. This would lead to division (inqisām) of God’s essence. The second possibility would entail limiting God’s essence which means that He would be the least (aqal al-qalīl).\textsuperscript{176} The second line of argument is the question of whether God has always been incarnated into that part. Both possibilities, he writes, are invalid since this entails either eternity (qidam) or origination (Hudūth) of the subjection of God’s incarnation (al-Maḥall) itself. The other possibility is having an emerged incarnation in which the process of incarnating itself would be either necessary (wājib) or not. If it is necessary, the necessity itself would be either attributed to the subject of God’s incarnation (al-Maḥall), the incarnated (al-Ḥall) or another third factor. Al-Rāzī argues the first possibility is invalid since bodies are equal in terms of quiddity arguing that this entails having an incarnation in each

\textsuperscript{175} See: Al-Rāzī. Maʿālim Uṣūl al-Dīn, p. 363.
case. The same applies to the second possibility as it entails having a necessary relationship between the existence of the subject of incarnation in the sense that He would have been incarnated unto that part even before its existence if the condition is based on its non-existence or He would have been incarnated in any part as mentioned before if the condition is based on its existence.\textsuperscript{177} \textsuperscript{178} Third is the question of whether God necessarily needs to be incarnated into that part. This entails His contingency; if that part does not necessarily need the incarnation of God, it would be a necessary existent (\textit{wājib al-wujūd}); it is impossible for this to apply to more than One.\textsuperscript{179} \textsuperscript{180}

Al-Rāzī’s lines of argumentation against hypostatic union follows the same themes as that against the incarnation. This is because the two notions are closely related in the history of Muslim anti-Christian polemics.\textsuperscript{182} He states that once one accepts the union of two things, this leads one of three possibilities. This first is that both things did exist at the time of union. The second is that one of them did exist at the time of union. The third is that one of them did exist and the other is non-existent (\textit{ma’dūm}). If both already existed at the time of union, al-Rāzī argues, this means they have always existed. If they had already been non-existent, however, another thing must have produced this union. If one of them already existed and the other was non-existent, there is no union in the first instance: for how can an existent thing unite with a non-existent thing?\textsuperscript{183} \textsuperscript{184}

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\bibitem{179} See: Ibid, vol. 3, p 187-188. The possibility of having two Necessary Existing (\textit{Wājib al-Wujūd}) has been one of the most contested questions in post-classical Islam which is why it is termed as ‘Pride of the Devils’ (\textit{Iftikhār al-Shayātīn}). See: Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke. \textit{A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ‘Izz al-Dawla Ibn Kammāna (d. 683/1284) and His Writings} (Brill: 2006), p. 43.
\bibitem{182} For instance, Najib Awad notes on al-Ghazālī’s conception of incarnation that he “is not dismissive of the notion of \textit{ḥulūl} (indwelling) in itself. He only disagrees with its interpretation as a state that leads to a union between the divine and the human. For al-Ghazālī, it seems, \textit{ḥulūl} is a valid way of understanding the relation between the human and the divine, insofar as it means that the divinity reflects, or mirrors itself in the hearts and spiritual lives of human subjects, without ever uniting with them”. See: Najib George Awad. \textit{Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abu Qurrah’s Theology in Its Islamic Context} (De Gruyter: 2016), p. 367.
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Al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics:

A key aspect of al-Rāzī’s hermeneutic is his theological law known as the general law of interpretation (al-Qānūn al-Kullī Fī al-Taʾwīl).185 This law states that in cases of apparent contradiction between reason and revelation, one interprets the revelatory texts figuratively.186187 Al-Rāzī writes,188

“Know that if rational decisive evidence establishes something to be true, but then we find scriptural evidence whose apparent sense imparts the contrary of that, then there can be only one of four alternatives. Either [1] one affirms the implications of reason and scripture, but this is impossible because it requires the affirmation of two contradictory propositions, or [2] one rejects both as false, but this is also impossible because it requires the denial of two contradictory propositions, or [3] one affirms scriptural evidence and denies the rational evidence. Since the falsity of the three alternates has been proven, there remains only one [possibility], which is to affirm what the decisive rational evidence requires with respect to these scriptural evidences. Either one claims that they are not correct or one claims that they are correct but that their intended meaning is not their apparent sense. Now, if we permit taʾwīl then we devote ourselves to the method of discussing those figurative (or allegorical) interpretations in detail. But if we do not permit the nonliterator, then we entrust knowledge of its [meaning] to God. This is the general rule to which one should refer in the case of all the ambiguous verses (mutashābihāt)”189

187 Note that the most well-known treatment of this law is found in al-Rāzī’s work Taʾsīs al-Taqādis which has been written as refutation of Ibn Khuzayma’s (d. 311/924) work Kitāb al-Tawḥīd (The book of Monotheism). See: Livnat Holtzman. Anthropomorphism in Islam, p. 303.
189 Note that entrusting the knowledge of its meaning to God (Tafwīd) is related to the issue of God’s attributes, and thus it would not be a part of our concern for this study.
Let us begin with the notion of the alleged apparent meaning (ẓāhir) in this law according to al-Rāzī’s thought. This notion is, in fact, highly subjective, leading to the endless disputes in theology and law as mentioned in the introduction. That is why you would find this subjectively even within even al-Rāzī’s writings himself. This is because there are two overlapping questions that shape this issue; the first whether ẓāhir is the same as naṣṣ; the second is defining the criterion for tracing this difference since the definitions of both terms have relative statements. For instance it is claimed that naṣṣ is the probable meaning with no possibility of having another further one (rājīḥ māniʿ min al-naqīḍ) while it is not the case with ẓāhir. That is why al-Rāzī approaches this controversial issue throughout his discussions by referring to the use of terms (majīʿ mustaʿmal) in which he connects it to the views of the first three generations of Islam. This is because the ‘hidden agenda’ of any thinker does not really appear unless they are traced through one of the hot and debated topics. That is why you would find thinkers like al-Rāzī that would structure an ambiguous definition of ẓāhir while its manifestation is found through the practical sense of applying it. This is because there is a conflicting issue in Islamic hermeneutics regarding the relationship between linguists (al-lughawiyyūn) and the first three generations of Islam (al-Salaf). The question that has always been addressed in this case is the priority between these two sources assuming that we have come across a text that would allow the linguist to question the reports of these generations. Thus, al-Rāzī does have this question in his mind as he is a linguist too. Therefore, he does recognize both the authority of linguists and the first three generations of Islam in constructing the apparent meaning of these verses.

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192 This includes the Arab grammarians’ (al-Nahawiyyūn) critical views regarding aspects of the Qur’anic language. On this issue, see: Khalif al-Hassun, Al-Nahawiyyūn waal-Qurʾān (Amman: Maktabat al-Risālah, 2002).
This aspect of al-Rāzī’s intellectual project remained constant throughout his career. This is because this law is not limited to issues relating to scripture. Rather, it is evident in any case of two conflicted views from two sources of knowledge. For instance, al-Rāzī attempts to harmonise Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʻī’s (d. 204/820) criticism of the scholastic tradition (kalām) with his own appreciation of theology. To do this, he interprets al-Shāfiʻī’s criticism as referring only to the use of kalām for bad purposes.195 Another example is his attempt to justify the resemblance of a materialist concept (maḥsūs) through mental one (maʿqūl) in Arab poetry which is not sufficient according to mainstream Arabic poetry. Yet, this has been done by great poets. He thus applies figurative interpretation (tawʿīl) to harmonise the two.196 This shows that al-Qānūn al-Kullī is one of the manifestations of al-Rāzī’s method of harmonising contradictory sources of knowledge. It is thus rare to see him depart from this and adopt other laws of interpretation, such as Avicenna’s take on the symbolic representation of truth (takhyīl) or Ibn Taymiyyah’s affirmation of the evident meaning of scripture (ithbāt). This is because while he shares with Avicenna the Greek-based philosophical conception of God as al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī, he is still committed to positing scripture as a source of knowledge in a manner akin to Ibn Taymiyyah and the rest of Muslim theologians.197

197 See: Yahya Michot. “Philosophical Exegesis in Context. Some Views by Ibn Taymiyya” The Muslim World 109:4 (2019), pp. 582-594. I would argue that the other Muslim thinkers who have different hermeneutical method such as Avicenna and Ibn Taymiyyah had initially applied this law in a speculative sense but ended up with different results that would question the law itself. As for Avicenna, he traced the attempts of the adherents of Kalām to interpret the anthropomorphic language of the Qur’ān and argued that some verses cannot be interpreted figuratively due to the relationship of language and the original hearers, and thus he suggests his hermeneutical approach known as Takhyīl. As for Ibn Taymiyyah, he agrees with Avicenna regarding this point but adds further point which is the issue of defining reason itself; While Avicenna agrees with the adherents of Kalām regarding the Greek-based philosophical concept of God to question the Qur’ānic one, Ibn Taymiyyah doubts this authority and argued that “reason” is what he calls al-ʿAql al-Ṣārīḥ (Sound reason) which is probably include only the three classical laws of thought only. This means that both thinkers have already applied this law but argued for different results. This is a part of the never-ending debate on reason and revelation which was structured as both being “the gift of God, and that therefore there can be no conflict provided reason is properly used and revelation properly interpreted” (See: Harry Wolfson. Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Harvard University Press: 1947. vol. 1, p. 141-3). However, the critical question would be: What does “properly” mean? Here lies all the disputes.
A brief outline of the history of this theological law is essential in order to understand al-Rāzī’s contribution to its development. The origin of this law is found in the writings of early Ashʿārites such as Ibn Mahdī al-Ṭabarī (d. 380/990) who pre-dates al-Juwaynī since the latter is often described as the first Ashʿārite to apply this notion to God’s revealed attributes.  

In other words, these were rational objections against particular topic being influenced by the other Muslim parties namely the Muʿtazilites without having a specific framework.  

Yet the systematic exposition of this law started with al-Ghazālī’s treatise Qānūn al-Taʾwil (‘The law of Interpretation’) and his Fāysal al-Taʾfriqa bayn al-Īslām wa al-Zandaqa (‘The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing Islam from Masked Infidelity’)200. His main contribution is to go beyond having a seeming contradiction between a text and rational decisive evidence through analysing existence itself by breaking it into five degrees.201 Sohaib Malik summarizes this as he writes:

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201 His interpretive strategy has five layers, which seems to break down existence into five degrees. One is supposed to start with the first level, the most apparent reading (ẓakhir) until there are convincing reasons to go down to lower levels. These include: 1. Ontological (al-wujūd al-dhāli) – In this level, Islamic scripture is understood according to the terms’ apparent meaning, and devoid of any figurative interpretation. For these entities exist in their own right regardless of whether the senses or the imagination apprehend them or not. In other words, these are understood nomenclally. One example that al-Ghazālī uses is the mention of seven heavens in the Qurʾān (20:25). It may not be clear what they may be, but they can be accepted at face value since there is nothing inherently contradictory in them. 2. Sensory/phenomenological (al-wujūd al-kissī) – In this layer, things
“Al-Ghazālī devised this hierarchal scheme to ensure that it would not lead to hermeneutic anarchism and relativism, i.e. when scripture is interpreted erroneously or arbitrarily. When reading scripture, the verse or ḥadīth need to be taken as-is on the apparent level and then judged in accordance with this schema. One starts with the highest tier, which is the ontological level. If a reading doesn’t make sense in this category, then one should move to the phenomenological tier. An interpreter should keep on descending until a reading concords with a tier in the list. He believed that if one wanted to move away from a literal interpretation towards a figurative one, which in this schema means descending from the ontological level towards the analogical level, the interpreter would need to provide logical proof (burhān) for doing so.”

are conceived as empirical sense impressions. For instance, an image formed of a man in our minds by actually seeing a man in front of us. In contrast to the ontological layer, this second level treats scriptural references phenomenally. As an example of this kind, al-Ghazālī quotes a ḥadīth in which the Prophet claimed that paradise was presented to him in a wall he was looking at (Bukhārī 6468). Al-Ghazālī argues that such a statement cannot be taken at face value, i.e. the first level, because the size of paradise cannot be fitted into a limited wall. Accordingly, what the Prophet may have seen was an image of paradise in the wall. 3. Conceptual (al-wujūd al-khayālī) – This layer refers to the images of the things that can normally be perceived through the senses but do not have an immediate physical correlation. An example would include imagining an elephant in your mind which you can’t actually see in front of you. Al-Ghazālī gives the example of a ḥadīth in which the Prophet Muhammed sees Prophet Jonah enact something (Muslim 166a). Since the ḥadīth mentions “as if …,” it indicates that the Prophet Muhammed didn’t actually see Prophet Jonah, but rather it was an even that was being played out in his mind. He further argues for this interpretation’s sensibility given the fact that Prophet Jonah didn’t exist in Prophet Muhammed’s time. 4. Noetic (al-wujūd al-ʿaqlī) – This level signifies mental extractions of the essence of objects which can be understood beyond their physical forms. For example, a pen has a specific physical form, but its essence can be understood as being the recorder or holder of knowledge. As a scriptural example, al-Ghazālī discusses a ḥadīth which goes to the effect of relaying that anyone who exits Hellfire (after being punished and cleansed for their sins) will be given a portion of paradise that is equivalent to ten times the size of the world (Bukhārī 806). This isn’t meant to be a literal understanding in terms of height, breadth, and width, but rather a value judgement. Since paradise is the most sought thing by Muslims, its value essentially supersedes anything. Hence the reference to ten times the size of the world, which implies that whatever portion an individual gets of paradise will be worth a lot. 5. Analogical (al-wujūd al-shabāhī al-majāzī) – This final level refers to instances wherein a thing itself does not strictly exist ontologically and neither as an image as such. Rather, it has an analogus structure that possesses some quality or attribute that can be related between two things by the mind. In other words, this isn’t an analogy based on the essences of what is being compared like the fourth level, but rather one based on accidents or properties that two things might possess. An example of this type of analogy would include calling a person a lion in connection with his braveness. Since braveness is not essential to a lion nor a person, i.e. you can have cowardice in both, it is a quality or attribute that they could possess but don’t necessarily have to. Al-Ghazālī uses the example of God’s anger (e.g. Qur’ān 20:81) to make this point. Anger, at least how al-Ghazālī defines it, represents a boiling of the blood to seek out vengeance. This is impossible for God since He isn’t equivalent to a human being, and hence cannot have emotions like human beings. It is why the previous levels are inapplicable to such ideas. But we can understand it to imply that God’s anger may have connotations like punishing. Hence there is an analogical crossover from what we can understand of God in human terms without committing to complete isomorphism”. See: Shoaib Ahmed Malik. Islam and Evolution: Al-Ghazālī and the Modern Evolutionary Paradigm (Routledge: 2021), p. 280-282.

Al-Rāzī’s contribution to this theological could be understood as an attempt to examine its other branch that is the scriptural evidence (naql). In other words, while al-Ghazālī focused on examining the rational decisive evidence (‘aql) through analysing existence itself and breaking it into five degrees, al-Rāzī would seem to do this but through the text itself. This has been done through heavily examining not only the types of apparent meaning that are common through the writings of legal theorists but to go further in examining language itself. This led him to go beyond the mainstream Muslim view regarding revelation as a source of knowledge in which Griffel writes: “Al-Rāzī believed, for instance, that scriptural evidence (dalā’il naqliyya) - meaning revelation - is generally inconclusive (zannī) and never certain. He says so in one of his works on kalām. Philosophy, however, claims to be a certain field of knowledge, or at least one that strives for certainty (yaqīn, qaṭṭiyya). This study shows that in his philosophical books, al-Rāzī does not consider revelation a source of knowledge”.

This justifies al-Rāzī’s extensive use of the rational decisive evidence (al-Mu’ārid al-‘Aqlī) against the apparent meaning of verses. This rational decisive evidence extends to any source of knowledge that questions the apparent meaning of the verse, including philosophical discourses on the nature of God, empirical evidence, or the argument from historical scholarly consensus. This is seen in his Qur’anic commentary in which it is rare to see him not question the apparent meaning of the verse if it seems to contradict what he considers ‘reason’.

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204 Al-Rāzī’s expansion and extensive use of al-Mu’ārid al-‘Aqlī could be understood comparatively with the role of Origen of Alexandria (d. 253) in expanding Philo of Alexandria’s (d. 50) allegorical interpretation which is noted by Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428). Adam Kamesar writes: “in a fragment of his *Treatise against the Allegorists*, preserved in Syriac translation, Theodore identifies Philo as the master of Origen, the most influential allegorical exegete of Christian antiquity. However, in the course of his discussion, Theodore makes some other comments about Philo’s exegetical stance that are quite revealing. He indicates that Philo, in contrast with Origen (or so it is implied), ‘was nevertheless obliged to respect’ a part of the historical sense of the text”. See: Adam Kamesar. “Biblical Interpretation in Philo” in: Adam kamesar (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge University Press: 2009), p. 73.

This extensive use of rational decisive evidence led to a restriction of the role of scripture as a source of knowledge. This in turn allowed al-Rāzī to re-examine topics that were considered “commonly acknowledged matters of Islam known by necessity” (al-ma’lūm min al-dīn bil-Ḍarūra), such as his controversial views on the eternity of the world. Griffel suggests that “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī settled on a double-truth theory that conceded the truth of Aristotle’s position in philosophy but maintained that in theology the true position is that of the world’s temporal creation”. It would seem that al-Rāzī’s “double-truth theory” is inside philosophy itself. This is because he states in his latest work al-Maṭālib that the statement “creation ex nihilo” cannot be found either in the Qur’ān and the Bible. This would be another case study of his al-Qānūn al-Kullī that allows him to reinterpret all related matters to this issue. Therefore, although al-Rāzī might have started his inquiry on this issue as a debate between philosophy and theology, he nonetheless transferred it to be a one between philosophy and philosophy by developing the Kalām tradition itself to be a philosophical one. That is why he doubts all these positions from a philosophical perspective in his Dhamm Ladhḍāt al-Dunyā which apparently serves as his own reading of al-Maṭālib and probably his Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-Ḥikmah. Furthermore, it seems to me that al-Rāzī would not have had this scepticism if the case has been only limited to a philosophy-theology conflict as he could have managed it by demythologizing scripture as he did through other issues. This indicates that what was probably occupying al-Rāzī’s mind is the contradictory proofs inside philosophy itself.

211 Note that I have mentioned this point to also note that al-Rāzī could have re-examined the Qur’anic apparent rejection of the Crucifixion the same way he re-examined the Qur’anic apparent affirmation of creation ex nihilo through the same lines of argument, but he did not as is shown in the following chapter.
This will be evident in al-Rāzī’s attempt to question the apparent meaning of the Qur’anic representation of Christianity. The rational decisive evidence in this sense applies to objections from Christianity that are based on history, including, for example, the miraculous speech of Jesus in the cradle (19:29-33)\(^2\) as this is one of the common issues throughout the history of Christian-Muslim interactions. For instance, one of early thinkers who have examined this is al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868) in which Gibson writes:

“He starts out by addressing the last of the Christian attacks he had mentioned in his introduction - that Jesus’ speaking in the cradle is neither known in Christian tradition nor recognized by any other religious group besides Muslims. Al-Jāḥiẓ rebuts the Christians’ arguments about this in reverse of the order they raised them in the introduction. First, he makes the case that the Christians’ attempted appeal to neutral third parties is irrelevant since these third parties do not acknowledge Jesus’ miracles anyway. Then he asserts the unreliability of the Gospel writers, a point that serves not only as a specific rebuttal explaining why the Christians have no knowledge of Jesus’ speaking in the cradle, but also as a counterargument striking at the roots of Christianity itself”\(^2\)

As for al-Rāzī, he affirms it is a problematic issue, noting that both Jews and Christians deny this story. He claims that Muslims counter this objection in two ways. The first is to argue that the number of people who were present at this event is a small, and thus it would not qualify as *tawātur*. The second is to argue that Jews did not apply the law of adulterer (*zinā*) to

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\(^2\) “She pointed at him. They said, ‘How can we converse with an infant?’ [But] he said: ‘I am a servant of God. He has granted me the Scripture; made me a prophet; made me blessed wherever I may be. He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live, to cherish my mother. He did not make me domineering or graceless. Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again.”


Mary because Jesus denied this through his miraculous speech. He elsewhere states that the Jews would have accused those who attended the event of lying, also stating that not all Christians deny this since al-Najjāshī, the ruler of Ethiopia at the time of the Prophet, reportedly affirmed it. This shows how Jewish-Christian history plays a role in his use of rational decisive evidence especially the argument from silence which is evident in in several verses such as (5:64), (5:18) and most notably (9:30) on Ezra being son of God in which he questions its apparent meaning but nonetheless answers this by suggesting that it could be one of the ancient Jewish sects. However, this does not necessarily mean that he would rational objections that comes through the argument from silent. Rather, it shows the manifestation of his hermeneutics namely his al-Qānūn al-Kullī. This will be evident throughout the following chapters on the main themes of Christianity.

217 Al-Rāzī’s justification might have happened according to the intellectual context of Roman Palestine. Steven Pound writes: “in the pericope adulterae (unlikely to stem directly from the life of Jesus but perhaps reflective of the general situation in Roman Palestine), a woman caught in adultery is threatened with the stoning prescribed by Torah”. See: Steven Pounds. The Crucifiable Jesus (PhD dissertation at the University of Cambridge: 2019), p. 149. This line of argument has been used elsewhere relying on two similar premises; the survival of Jesus’ disciples and the evidence from secular sources on the Romans’ law to crucify the leaders without the followers. See: John Mowbray. “Why Did Jesus Surrender to the Cross? The Historical Evidence” Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus 18:3 (2020), pp. 244-266.
219 See: al-Rāzī, Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb, vol. 12, p. 43-44. “The Jews have said, ‘God is tight-fisted,’ but it is they who are tight-fisted, and they are rejected for what they have said. Truly, God’s hands are open wide: He gives as He pleases. What has been sent down to you from your Lord is sure to increase insolence and defiance in many of them. We have sown enmity and hatred amongst them till the Day of Resurrection. Whenever they kindle the fire of war, God will put it out. They try to spread corruption in the land, but God does not love those who corrupt”.
219 See: Al-Rāzī, Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb, vol. 12, p. 196. “The Jews and the Christians say, ‘We are the children of God and His beloved ones.’ Say, ‘Then why does He punish you for your sins? You are merely human beings, part of His creation: He forgives whoever He will and punishes whoever He will. Control of the heavens and earth and all that is between them belongs to Him: all journeys lead to Him’”.
220 See: ibid, vol. 11, p. 307-308. “The Jews said, ‘Ezra is the son of God,’ and the Christians said, ‘The Messiah is the son of God’: they said this with their own mouths, repeating what earlier disbelievers had said. May God confound them! How far astray they have been led!”.
221 Reynolds suggests regarding this issue: “it is possible that the Qur’an does not mean Ezra with ‘Uzayr. One possibility is that ‘Uzayr is the name of an angel. The Book of Watchers (the first part of 1 Enoch; see 8:1-2) accuses an angel named Azaz’el (‘z’zl) or Azael (‘z’l) of teaching impious things to humans. It is possible that the Qur’an is accusing the Jews of having recourse to this (evil) angel, the name of which was emended from something like azayl to Arabic ‘uzayr, assuming that the ‘I’ misread, or misheard, as ‘r’”. See: Gabriel Said Reynolds. The Qur’an and the Bible: Text and Commentary (Yale University Press: 2018), p. 307-308.
Concluding remarks:

As can be seen from the above discussion regarding these aspects of his intellectual project, al-Rāzī had various departures from mainstream views of his school of thought that is the Ashʿarites. Thus, my question in this section would be whether al-Rāzī was really committed to the Ashʿarite perception of Islam throughout the course of his career. This is because I have mentioned through the introduction that you could replace the term “intellectual project” with any term that can illustrate the content of this concept such as “perception of Islam” or “school of thought”. However, I chose the term “intellectual project” due to al-Rāzī’s departures not only from his school of thought but also the mainstream Kalām tradition. This entails the question whether there is a ‘stable’ and ‘consistent’ conception of the Ashʿarite school of thought as noted by many critics such as Ibn ‘Arabī,225 not to mention that al-Ashʿarī himself does not seem to have one strict identity due to the controversy regarding some his works such as *Istihsān al-Khawd Fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām*226 having in mind the variety of the sources that structured such as Ibn Kullāb (d. c.240/854-5), al-Muhāsibī (d. 243/857), and al-Qalānisī (fl. c. 2nd half of third/ninth century).227 Therefore, it would seem that the Ashʿarites, similar to the Muʿtazilites and other Muslim parties, are basically *Maqālāt* (theses) or ‘*Aqāʿid* (doctrines) rather than fully and consistent intellectual projects.

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226 Richard M. Frank notes regarding George Makdisi’s thesis that “he concludes, then (ibid, p. 23) that (the theologian who wrote the *Ibānah* could not have written *Istihsān al-Khawd* [sc., al-Ḥatt] and claim allegiance to both lines of thought at one and the same time. For the latter work is a refutation of all that for which the former stands”. See: Richard M. Frank. *Early Islamic Theology: The Muʿtazilites and al-Ashʿarī: Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalam, Vol. II* (Routledge: 2007), p. 143.

227 Harith Bin Ramli notes that “While it is hard to establish in detail how exactly the three influenced the rise of Sunnī kalām theology, it is clear that they played a significant role alongside other semi-rationalist scholars in creating the right conditions for it to develop and establishing foundations that al-Ashʿarī and his successors could build upon. Among these was the formulation of an elaborate ontological framework that supported the idea of the eternity of the divine attributes, an elaboration of the mechanics behind divine predestination of human action, and a definition of human reason that did not clash with the traditionalist approach to revelation”. See: Harith Bin Ramli. “The Predecessors of Ashʿarism: Ibn Kullāb, al-Muhāsibī and al-Qalānisī” in: Sabine Schmidtke (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford University Press: 2016), p. 224.
This is not to say that these thinkers have not constructed projects that aim at achieving certainty philosophical purposes. Rather, this is to say the school itself is not based on standard epistemic, theological and hermeneutical aspects. This apparently was the reason behind having many phases with the emergence of “classical-Ash‘arism” and “neo-Ash‘arism.” Thus, what seems to be the reason behind the emergence of these schools is these doctrines themselves such as affirming the reality of the beatific vision (Ru‘yat Allāh).

This doctrine, for instance, is probably the most evident one to show how a school of thought would define itself by ‘doctrines’ rather than ‘intellectual projects’. This is because all arguments regarding the hermeneutics of these related verses (75:22-23) and the philosophical conception of God that support denying this vision are already a part of the mainstream Ash‘arites commitments to ‘reason’ which they share with the Mu‘tazilites. Yet, the Ash‘arites had to deny it even though it would lead them to be the one party that had accepted visioning (Ru‘yat) what is not located (Mā Lays Fī Jihāh) noted by al-Rāzī.

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228 For instance, see Solaira Siddiqui’s discussions of al-Juwaynī’s project to attain certainty and continuity: Law and Politics under the Abbasids: An Intellectual Portrait of al-Juwaynī.

229 Ayman Shihadeh captures this as he writes: “By “classical Ash‘arism”, I refer to the earlier phase that drew mainly on Başra Mu‘tazilism and Traditionalist theology, in contrast to neo-Ash‘arism, which took its cue chiefly from classical Ash‘arism and Avicennan philosophy. Classical Ash‘arī thus include, first of all, members of the school who lived in the fourth/tenth century and the first three quarters of the fifth/eleventh century, including al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/936), al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015), ‘Abd al-Qāhir ibn al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1038), al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and al-Fūrākī (d. 478/1085). In post-Juwaynīan Ash‘arīsm, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) marks the beginning of the transformation that culminates eventually in the rise of neo-Ash‘arism, which is given its definitive formulation in the thought of al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210). However, the classical Ash‘arī tradition continues, largely unaffected by al-Ghazālī, until the third quarter of the sixth/seventh century, and is represented by several extant sources. These include: the works of two of al-Juwaynī’s most important students of kalām, Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. 512/1118) and al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī (d. 504/1110); a recently-discovered summum by al-Anṣārī’s student and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s father Diyyā’ al-Dīn al-Makkī (d. 559/1163–64); what appears to be the earliest kalām work by al-Rāzī, which is based closely on al-Juwaynī’s Irshād and Shāmil and perfectly representative of classical Ash‘arī theology; and an early commentary on al-Juwaynī’s Irshād by the Andalusian al-Fazārī (d. Granada, 552/1157 or slightly later), which contains much material from earlier Ash‘arī sources, including al-Bāqillānī’s Hidāya, and is used here for the first time. Al-Rāzī’s other extant works exhibit greater engagement with philosophical theories and are hence unrepresentative of classical Ash‘arism”. See: Ayman Shihadeh. “Classical Ash‘arī Anthropology: Body, Life and Spirit” The Muslim World 102:3-4 (2012), p. 434-435.

230 “On that Day there will be radiant faces, looking towards their Lord”.

That is why al-Rāzī’s intellectual project, or his perception of Islam, seems to have developed over the course of his career arriving at Maqālāt (theses) that apparently ‘excludes’ him not only from his school of thought but also the mainstream Kalām tradition such as his platonist account of time and his more far-reaching and controversial sceptical position regarding the certitude of scriptural text (al-Dalā‘īl al-Naqliyya Zanniyah) that led to reject revelation as source of knowledge. This was a result of his methods of enquiry that shaped his examination of any topic that he covers in his works. This in turn has widened the boundaries of his school of thought – or Ma‘ālim al-Ash‘ariyyah - to include elements from the other parties such as the Mu‘tazilites. Thus the major doctrines of each party have relatively become interchangeable. This has limited the phenomenon of using them as a ‘boogeyman’

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232 Ayman Shihadeh writes: “Al-Rāzī develops a distinctive dialectical method of enquiry, characterized by two salient features... the first feature is al-Rāzī’s methodological opposition to philosophical and theological dogmatism and partisanship (which should not be taken to imply, naïvely, that he himself was an impartial thinker). This stance is advocated in the preface to the Mahākīth (1, 3–4), where al-Rāzī denounces two opposing parties (fariqān). He admonishes traditional Avicennists for their blind following (taqīd) of intellectual authority to the extent that they prohibit any departure, no matter how minor, from the received philosophical tradition. He then turns to career critics of the philosophers, who think themselves competent to expose Avicenna’s errors, but “only succeed in exposing their abundant stupidity.” Al-Rāzī’s antipathy to the latter movement is at its most vivid in his account of debates in which he engaged with al-Masʿūdī and Ibn Ghaylān, whom he characterizes as being involved in mere disputation (judal) as opposed to methodical rational inquiry in search of knowledge (baḥth) (Shihadeh 2005; 2016, 31–33). The second feature is what al-Rāzī terms systematic gleaning (taḥṣīl) and critical investigation (taḥqīq). Al-Rāzī advocates a third position, which commits to both understanding and critiquing earlier systems, above all Avicenna’s, and therefore steers clear of both the traditional Avicennists’ uncritical imitation and the counter-Avicennists’ fixation on refutation. The criticism that in his philosophical works he directs at earlier philosophical sources is overall not refutative or apologetic, but methodical”. See: Ayman Shihadeh. “Al-Rāzī’s (d. 1210) Commentary on Avicenna’s Pointers: The Confluence of Exegesis and Aporetics” in: Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy (Oxford University Press: 2016), p. 299.

233 This has been even noted as early as the writings of his students such as Shams al-Dīn al-Khuwayyī (d. 637/1247) who expresses his disappointment with al-Rāzī’s discussion of the inimitability of the Qur‘ān: “I have seen Fāhr al-Dīn say: the miraculous nature of the Qur‘ān lies not in taqīnīs, nor in tarṣī; the miraculous nature lies in God’s preventing (ṣarf) those possessing intellect from [producing] anything like it”. See: Nasr Sarsour and Y. Tzvi Langermann. “The Qur‘ān Commentaries of Šams al-Dīn al-Huwayyī (583/1193-637/1247)” Arabica 67 (2020), p. 296.

234 One might suggest that al-Rāzī’s legacy through the Ash‘arites-Mu‘tazilites history is the fact that it has been the first time in which the Ash‘arites are accused of using ‘reason’ in an extremist sense. This is because the Ash‘arites have always been accused by the Mu‘tazilites as being ‘traditionalist’. However, al-Rāzī’s close engagement with philosophy and its integration into the Ash‘arites corpus has allowed a critical reception even from the Mu‘tazilites themselves such as Ibn Abī al-Hāḍīd (d. 656/1258). See: Hassan Ansari, Sabine Schmidtke and Elsas Mousawi Khalaklai (eds.) A Mu‘tazilite Commentary on a Seminal Ash‘arite work: Ibn Abī l-Hāḍīd’s Critique of the ‘K-Muḥāṣṣal’ by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: A Critical Edition and Study (Brill: 2019); See: Abdullah al-Ghızī. Al-Muṣādīr Al-Āṣiyah al-Muḥbī ‘al lil‘ Aqīdah al-Ash‘arīyyah (Beirut: Markaz Nam‘āl lil-Buhūth wal-Dīrāsāt, 2018), p. 114.

235 This phenomenon is already found such as Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī’s (d. 478/1085) adoption of theory of ‘States’ (ahwāl). See: Jan Thiele. “Abū Hāshım al-Jubbārī’s (d. 531/933) Theory of ‘States’ (ahwāl) and its
to frighten the others such as the issue of temporal events taking place in God’s essence (Ḥulūl al-Ḥawādith) being exclusively ascribed to the Karramites.\(^{236}\)

Therefore, it might be argued that al-Rāzī’s attempt to widen the boundaries of his school of thought – *Maʿālim al-Ashʿarīyyah* – entails widening the boundaries of Islam itself (*Maʿālim al-Islām*). This is seen in al-Rāzī’s most notable contribution to the Islamic thought which is completing the synthesis between Kalām and philosophy which had deeply shaped the nature of post-classical Islam.\(^{237}\) His impact is found in two ways: Firstly, the post-Rāzian standard works on Islamic theology or *Kalām* would engage with the logical, natural

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\(^{239}\) See: Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele (eds.) *Philosophical Theology in Islam: Later Ashʿarism East and West* (Brill: 2020), p. 4. One of the interesting points to be noted is how the ‘religious’ would move closer to the ‘secular’ at the end of the day despite the clashes when they first met. This is because one might suggest more broadly that the role of al-Rāzī within the development of the Ashʿarites share similarities with the one of the Turkish president Erdoğan within the Muslim brotherhood at least in a practical sense. This is because the context of both movements is a response to a new framework namely philosophy in the case of al-Rāzī and secularism in the case of Erdoğan. Both the Ashʿarites and the Muslim brotherhood have initially approached these two frameworks in a negative sense. However, these clashes have been revisited again and again by many thinkers such as Rāshid Al-Ghannūsī who had influenced Erdoğan (See: Azzam Tamimi. “Rashid Al-Ghannushi” in: John L. Esposito and Emad El-Din Shahin (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*. Oxford University Press: 2013, pp. 212-222). Therefore, both al-Rāzī and Erdoğan allowed to exchange ideas between two conflicting frameworks; theology and philosophy in the case of al-Rāzī, Shariʿa and secularism in the case of Erdoğan (On Erdoğan’s political ideology: Ibrahim Kalin. “The Ak Party in Turkey” in: *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, pp. 423-440). I am suggesting this because both schools share one common notion which is the ambiguous role of scripture as a source of knowledge philosophically or politically respectively. This was the reason behind having many phases ending with the fact that the philosophy has been integrated into Muslim theology and modern secularism has been interpreted alongside the concept of ‘Islamic state’. Critiques of al-Rāzī and Erdoğan share similarities too as the later has been accused of unbelief (*Kafir*) by the well-known Jihadist Abū Muhammad al-Maqdisī (See: Joas Wagemakers. *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi*. Cambridge University Press: 2012) who traced Erdoğan’s views on secularism through his treatises entitled *al-Tābusṣūr Bi-Ardoğān Baʿd Fawāt al-Awān* and *al-Awjibah al-Zakīyyah ‘Alā al-Asʿīlah al-Turkīyyah* published in 2018 and 2014 respectively. On this issue, see: Joas Wagemakers. “Al-Qīʿīda’s Post-Arab Spring Jihad: Confirmation Or Re-Evaluation?” in: Mustafa Bağ and Robert Gleave (eds.) *Violence in Islamic Thought from European Imperialism to the Post-Colonial Era* (Edinburgh University Press: 2021), pp. 186-210. I think that the methodological issue comes from defining the term ‘*Aql*’ (reason) exclusively within the Greek philosophical thought in the classical period or the Western political thought in the modern one. That is why I would suggest re-writing the intellectual history of ‘*Aql*’ the same way ‘history’ itself has been re-written by Marshall Hodgson in his magnum opus *The Venture of Islam* as this has already been noted by Abū Saʿīd al-Ṣīrāfī (d. 368/979) on deficiencies of the Peripatetic logic. See: Manuela E.B. Gilioło and Wilfrid Hodges. “Syntax, Semantics, and Pragmatics in al-Ṣīrāfī and Ibn Sinā” in: Georgine Ayoub and Kees Versteegh (eds.) *The Foundations of Arabic Linguistics III: The development of a tradition: Continuity and change* (Brill: 2018), pp. 115-145. This has been partially done by Peter Adamson’s *A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps*.\(^ {237}\)
philosophical and metaphysical content of philosophy. The most well-known example on this is ‘Aḍūd al-Dīn al-Ījī’s (d. 756/1355) al-Mawāqif Fī ʿIlm al-Kalām. The second way is the formation and the systematic emergence of works on Ḥikmah (philosophy) in post-classical Islam. Frank Griffel writes:

“This study ends with the conclusion that Fakhr al-Dīn wrote books of ḥikma wherein he teaches different things from the books he wrote in kalām. Unfortunately, he did not leave us a text explaining the relationship of his philosophical books to those he wrote in kalām. It has already been said that neither he nor any other post-classical philosopher in the Islamic East wrote a book like Averroes’s Decisive Treatise (Faṣl al-maqāl), where he deals with the connection between philosophy and more religious genres of literature, such as kalām and tafsīr. The books that al-Rāzī wrote in kalām and in ḥikma were most probably employed in madrasa education, where the context would have contributed much to clarify that relationship. Al-Rāzī believed, for instance, that scriptural evidence (dalāʾil naqliyya) - meaning revelation - is generally inconclusive (ẓannī) and never certain. He says so in one of his works on kalām. Philosophy, however, claims to be a certain field of knowledge, or at least one that strives for certainty (yaqīn, qaṭʿiyya). This study shows that in his philosophical books, al-Rāzī does not consider revelation a source of knowledge.”

I would argue that the issue here is not about al-Rāzī’s own choices regarding the relationship between theology and philosophy but rather a matter of redefining Islam (Maʿālim al-Islām). That is to say, the context behind this phenomenon is related to hermeneutics which apparently has been neglected in the discussion. This is because there two factors that have

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238 Note that aspects of natural philosophy are already found through the writings of Kalām which has been arguably termed Daqīq al-Kalām in contrast to Jallī al-Kalām that is mainly related to theological issues. See: Alnoor Dhanani. The Physical Theory of Kalām: Atoms, Space, and Void in Basrīan Muʿtazīlī Cosmology (Brill: 1994), p. 3-4; Saʿīd Fūdah. Risālah Fi Bayān Jallī al-Kalām wa-Daqīqih (Beirut: Dār al-Dhakhāʾir, 2015).


significantly changed the discourse regarding this issue: First, the partial adoption of Avicenna’s symbolic representation of truths (takhyīl) within the circle of Muslim theologians.\textsuperscript{241,242} Secondly, the impact of al-Rāzī’s sceptical views on the certitude of scriptural proofs (al-Dalāʾil al-Naqliyya Zanniyyah) that had restricted the role of scripture as source of knowledge through the writings of Muslim theologians.\textsuperscript{243} In other words, al-Rāzī had his own way of restricting the role of scripture as a source of knowledge since he adopted aspects of Avicenna’s attempt while supporting it with his views on language itself. These two factors allowed more ‘tolerant’ perception of philosophy especially its conclusions – or ‘philosophical doctrines’ (‘Aqāʾid al-Falāsifah) - without necessarily adopting them.

This allowed al-Rāzī – and the post Rāzian thinkers in general - to re-examine topics that have been considered ‘commonly acknowledged matters of Islam known by necessity’ (al-maʿlūm min al-dīn bil-Ḍarūra), such as his controversial views on the eternity of the world mentioned before. This in turn has redefined the boundaries of Islam (Maʿālim Islām) that has been constructed by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) which excluded the doctrines of Muslim philosophers.\textsuperscript{244} In other words, Muslim philosophers became a part of al-Mutasharriʿa\textsuperscript{245} just like any other Muslim sect through calling them al-ḥukamāʾ having previously been termed as al-Mutafalsifah in a negative sense.\textsuperscript{246} This justifies the fact that these works would have a

\textsuperscript{245} A term that has been coined to address Muslim theologians in order to exclude the Muslim philosophers.
\textsuperscript{246} This would help addressing some contemporary issues that have roughly the same context of hermeneutical challenges such as evolution. See: Shoaib Ahmed Malik and Elvira Kulieva. “Does Belief in Human Evolution Entail Kufr (Disbelief)? Evaluating the Concerns of a Muslim Theologian” Zygon 55:3 (2020), pp. 638-662.
place in madrasa education standard textbooks in Islamic institutions up to this day.\textsuperscript{247,248} Despite the critiques by his fellows as noted by Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328).\textsuperscript{249} In other words, al-Rāzī’s attempt to wisely challenge the authorities allowed for an environment of appreciation (\textit{Taqdīr}) rather than blind imitation (\textit{Taqdīs}), and thus known as “\textit{Imām al-Mushakkikīn}” (Leader of the doubt-casters).\textsuperscript{250} This in turn has widened the boundaries of Islam itself (\textit{Ma‘ālim al-Islām}) by allowing the post-Rāzian Kalām thinkers to safely adopt ‘philosophical doctrines’ having eliminated this ‘sensitivity’ towards adopting them. However, this has been criticised by fellow Ash’ārite thinkers such as Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490)\textsuperscript{251} for both theological and political reasons in the early sixteenth century,\textsuperscript{252} allowing for a transformation back to the classical Ash’ārite in Egypt, Syria, Hejaz and the Ottoman Turkey.\textsuperscript{253}

\textsuperscript{247} Jaffer notes that “after his death in 606/1210, Rāzī’s works became standard textbooks in Islamic institutions of higher learning in Rāzī’s immediate environs of Iran, Iraq, and Central Asia, and also in India, North Africa, and Malaysia and Indonesia. Rāzī’s commentary on the Qur’ān, too, greatly influenced Baidāwī’s d. 716/1316 Qur’ān commentary, which is still one of the core textbooks within the religious curriculum at the Azhar, the foremost center of learning in the Sunnī world. Rāzī’s works of philosophy and theology (and the commentarial tradition that they engendered) are part of the curriculum of contemporary Shi‘ī institutions of higher learning (\textit{madāris}) in Qom (Iran). See: Tariq Jaffer. \textit{Rāzī: Master of Quranic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning} (Oxford University Press: 2015), p. 2.


\textsuperscript{252} Mehmet Kalaycı notes that “for nearly a century philosophical theology dominated the Ottoman madrasas tradition. Two important political developments that took place in the early sixteenth century brought this domination to a standpoint. The first of these was the fact that Selim I brought the Mamluks’ political existence to an end and Egypt and Syria became Ottoman territories… The second important political development was seen after the Ottoman-Safavid struggle. In Khorasan, where the Safavids ruled, there was a considerable Ash‘āri population. For three centuries the Ash‘āriyya was represented there in a form of philosophical theology”. See: Mehmet Kalaycı. “Dissociation of Theology from Philosophy in the Late Ottoman Period” in: Sebastian Günther (ed.) \textit{Knowledge and Education in Classical Islam: Religious Learning between Continuity and Change} (Brill: 2020), vol. 2, p. 990-992.

Chapter two: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Crucifixion

This chapter analyses Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s views on the Crucifixion and explores how this derived from his broader intellectual project, particularly his understanding of hermeneutics and his epistemic position towards testimony or historical reports. The historicity of the Crucifixion plays a vital role in al-Mu’ārid al-‘Aqlī, which appears to challenge the Qur’anic verses on the Crucifixion of Jesus. This seeming contradiction reflects a broader theme on the differences between history in the Qur’an and history according to non-Qur’anic sources. Therefore, we will see how al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics, namely, his al-Qānūn al-Kullī, shape his views on the Crucifixion. The question for al-Rāzī is as follows: Does the historicity of the Crucifixion reach the level of being al-Mu’ārid al-‘Aqlī that would necessitate the rejection of the Qur’an’s apparent denial of the Crucifixion? This is the first part of the chapter. The second part illustrates al-Rāzī’s epistemic position towards reports in his evaluation of the historicity of the Crucifixion. Central to this argument is the impact of his understanding of the argument from tawātur. From this, this chapter interrogates how this view of tawātur as relating to the Crucifixion compromises al-Rāzī’s commitment to his broader intellectual project while also taking into consideration the claims made by the other religious traditions that also use the argument from tawātur.

254 The question of the relationship between scriptural accounts of history and non-Scriptural ones is also a recurring challenge in Judaism and Christianity when they face contradictory sources. For instance, Gersonides (d. 1344), a Jewish philosopher, presents a case study as he questions the ability of humans in achieving so much scientific knowledge in this relatively short time between creation and his own day? In his Genesis commentary, which was completed 5,090 years after creation according to the traditional Jewish calculation, he answered that the early human forebears were extraordinarily long-lived and that longevity permitted individuals to accrue much more scientific knowledge than we may acquire now in our abbreviated lifetimes. See: Stephen D. Benin “The Search for Truth in Sacred Scripture: Jews, Christians, and the Authority to Interpret” in: Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering (eds.) With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Oxford University Press: 2010), p. 21. What is worth noting is Gersonides’ attempt to question the objection itself rather than the apparent meaning of scripture since the objection did not reach the level of being Mu’ārid ‘Aqlī according to him, and thus it would not question the apparent meaning which is the traditional Jewish calculation. However, this would be different from the historical argument of crucifixion since it is based on history itself rather than a speculative analysis of history. This is important to have in mind since the Kalām attempts to reject the crucifixion are basically based on the second category that is a speculative analysis of history which will be evident through this section.
Constructing the apparent meaning (ẓāhir):

The death of Jesus is mentioned in four places in the Qur'an. Only one verse explicitly mentions the Crucifixion. The remaining three speak only of the death of Jesus. Yet the four are often studied together to give an overview of the Qur'anic account of what happened to Jesus.

1. “And said, ‘We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God.’ (They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear like that to them (shubbiha lahum); those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him (4:157) God raised him up to Himself. God is almighty and wise (4:158).

2. “When God says, ‘Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people, “Take me and my mother as two gods alongside God”?’ he will say, ‘May You be exalted! I would never say what I had no right to say- if I had said such a thing You would have known it: You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You, You alone have full knowledge of things unseen” (5:116) I told them only what You commanded me to: “Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.” I was a witness over them during my time among them. Ever since You took my soul (tawaffaytanī), You alone have been the watcher over them: You are witness to all things (5:117).

3. God said, ‘Jesus, I will take you back (mutawaffīk) and raise you up to Me: I will purify you of the disbelievers. To the Day of Resurrection I will make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieved. Then you will all return to Me and I will judge between you regarding your differences (3:55)

4. “Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again” (19:33).
The Crucifixion of Jesus in the Qur’an is a central dispute in the history of Muslim-Christian relations. This is because the event of the Crucifixion was rarely denied before Islam, except for in few gnostic texts. Furthermore, we find no sufficient motive to reject the historicity of the event in the pre-Islamic era, whether from the Jewish, Christian, or any other tradition. The historical argument for the Crucifixion led some Muslim thinkers such as ‘Abd al-Jabbar (d. 415/1025) and Najm al-Din al-Ţuﬁ (d. 716/1316) to creatively develop an argument for the prophethood of Muḥammad that relied on the concept of “preaching strategy”. This reveals how Muslim thinkers indirectly accepted the fact of a consensus on

255 The historical argument includes the post-Crucifixion part of the story. For instance, although it does not reject the crucifixion itself, the theory that Jesus escaped death on the cross and fled to Kashmir challenges the reports that Jesus died there after being crucified. James M. Hanson writes: “This post-crucifixion argument differs from the “lost years” argument. It has Jesus surviving a Roman persecution, leaving India for no obvious reason, living for more than one hundred years, and so on, and it contradicts numerous sources and testimonies that Jesus did die on the cross. The argument that Jesus went to India as a young man encounters none of these difficulties and contradicts nothing except vague references”. See: James M. Hanson. “Was Jesus a Buddhist?” Buddhist-Christian Studies 25 (2005), p. 81. This applies to the Muslim attempts to present information regarding the end of Jesus’ life due to the lack of Muslim sources regarding it. Al-Sharaﬁ writes having examined this issue through the Muslim sources: “The information regarding the end of Jesus’ life in the Islamic scholarship are based on two sources: First, to mention the Biblical narrative and then to deny the crucifixion as what al-Ya’qubi (d. 284/897) and ‘Abd al-Jabbar (d. 214/1025) did. Second, to misinterpret the Biblical narrative so it would be compromised with the denial of the crucifixion as what al-Tabari (d. 839/923) and his sources did”. See: ‘Abd al-Majid Al-Sharaﬁ. Al-Fikr al-Islami Fi al-Radd ‘Ala al-Naṣārā Iʿlā Nihayat al-Qurʾan al-Ṭabi’/al-ʿAshir (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūmustiyah lil-Nashir, 1986), p. 382.


257 This extends to modern studies that seek to explore the historical Jesus. As Steven Pounds writes, “why a Roman crucifixion would have been fabricated for a mythical and later historised royal messiah figure. The self-defeating nature of the combination is obvious. The crucifixion itself is thus a falsifier of this position”. See: Steven Pounds. The Crucifiable Jesus, p. 151-152. Note that the case for the crucifixion is different from the one of Jesus being raised on the third day. This is because the later entails the issue of miracles in addition to its relatively questioned historicity compared with the crucifixion. This is not to say that it is not based on a historical argument since N. T. Wright argues that “the narratives contain core areas of agreement and numerous details that militate against their being simply invented”. See: Matthew Levering. Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? Historical and Theological Reflections (Oxford University Press: 2019), p. 58.

258 Lejla Demiri notes that “this argument against the crucifixion is related to preaching strategies. Would a wise man, such as the prophet, jeopardise his position before his listeners by narrating something that is not true? Thus, the denial of the crucifixion actually illustrates the degree of the prophet’s certainty on this matter and his reliability”. See: Lejla Demiri. Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo: Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī’s (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures (Brill: 2013), p. 233 (Footnote). This line of argument has been demonstrated within a different context such as Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s (d. 1905) interpretation of the verses “If you have doubts about the revelation We have sent down to Our servant, then produce a single sura like it - enlist whatever supporters you have other than God - if you truly [think you can] (2:23) – If you cannot do this - and you never will - then beware of the Fire prepared for the disbelievers, whose fuel is men and stones” (2:24). He argues that why a wise man like the prophet would make this claim that you will never bring a chapter like the ones in the Qur’ān. See: Muḥammad ‘Imāra. Al-ʾAʾmāl al-Kāmilah lil-ʾImām al-Shīkh Muḥammad ‘Abduh (Cairo: Dār al-Shurfūq, 1993), vol. 4, p. 99.
this issue even within the intellectual context of pre-Islamic Arabia. Ibn Taymiyyah argues that although the disciples of Jesus wrongly believed that Jesus was crucified, they are nevertheless excused for this in the Hereafter for it is found in the Gospels.\footnote{See: Ibn Taymiyyah. \textit{Al-Jawāb al-Ṣahīḥ Li-Man Baddal Dīn al-Masāḥīḥ} (Riyadh: Dār al-ʾĀṣima lil-Nashir wal-Tawzī′, 1999), vol. 2, p. 302.} This has accordingly become a major theme in Christian-Muslim interactions since the time of John of Damascus (d. 749), who first encountered Islam’s apparent rejection of the historicity of the Crucifixion.\footnote{See: Todd Lawson. \textit{The Crucifixion and the Qur’an: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought} (Oxford: Oneworld Publications: 2009), p. 7. On John and Islam, see: Peter Schadler. \textit{John of Damascus and Islam: Christian Heresiology and the Intellectual Background to Earliest Christian-Muslim Relations} (Brill: 2018); Najib Awad. \textit{Umayyad Christianity: John of Damascus as a Contextual Example of Identity Formation in Early Islam} (Gorgias Press: 2018). This justifies the relatively absence of discussing the historicity of the crucifixion in the Christian apostate literature compared with the other Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the incarnation. See: Clint Hackenburg. \textit{Voices of the Converted: Christian Apostate Literature in Medieval Islam} (PhD dissertation at the Ohio State University: 2015), p. 339.}


Juan Cole doubts this, arguing that placing the relevant verses in their historical context of late antiquity suggests that, by the 620s, the Qur’ān is citing Nehemiah 9 as a form of political polemic against pro-Iranian Jews.\footnote{See: Juan Cole. “‘It was made to appear to them so’: The Crucifixion, Jews and Sasanian war propaganda in the Qur’ān” \textit{Religion} (2021), p. 3.} Both Ian Mevorach and Peter Laffoon note the context of the verse in the Qur’an as a response to the Jews. Mevorach reads this as a Talmudic counter-narrative, while Laffoon argues that “these melodies are the defending of Jesus from the boast of the Jews, declaring the triumph of \textit{rūḥ Allāh} (the spirit of God) over the strength of man, and proclaiming God’s
control over life and death.”

Gabriel Said Reynolds confirms that the broader context of these verses is “comparable to those passages in the Acts of Apostles where the Crucifixion is presented as the climax of a long history of Israelite infidelity.” Accordingly, current scholarship suggests there are various ways of tracing the Crucifixion verse through non-Islamic sources, either by connecting it to historical religio-political contexts or by reading it in parallel to Biblical texts. What is important for this study is the possibility that early Arab Christians – who would be a part of the scope of the following section - who had interactions with the prophet might have understood the Crucifixion verse through Docetism or Near Eastern Christianity.

Moving to the views of early Muslims, the main question explored is as follows: How did the early Muslims and even early Arab Christians at the time of the Prophet understand these verses? This is an essential step towards understand the most likely apparent meaning of these verses, as structured through the first interactions with the text. Yet it is interesting to note that there seems to be no account from the early Islamic period of any interaction between

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264 See: Gabriel Said Reynolds. The Qur’an and the Bible: Text and Commentary, p. 181. Oliver Leaman notes regarding the difference between Jesus and ‘Īsā in Reynolds’ argument that “gets around this by saying that in fact the Qur’an says the Jews were wrong, they did not kill Jesus, God caused him to die and took him up to heaven since God is the person who gives life and death. The Jews were guilty of trying to kill him, and their prophets in general, but they were prevented from doing so by God, who killed him instead. This is a strange argument”. See: Oliver Leaman. “Gabriel Said Reynolds, The Qur’an and the Bible: Text and Commentary (Book review)” Journal of Qur’anic Studies 21:2 (2019), p. 159. I think that these lines of arguments would fall under the issue of al-Taḥsīn wal-Taqīb al-‘Aqūl (The human mind’s unaided qualification of things as good or bad). Thus, it is difficult for anyone who rejects this notion to present a polemical question that starts with: “Why would God do so and so?”. For instance, this would question ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī’s (d. 870) argument in which he writes: “It is the most amazing thing that the eternal Creator should be forced to send down His eternal Son from heaven, and then hand him over to Satan through his holy victorious Spirit so that Satan could tempt him and humiliate him. Who is it that forced Him to do this? What was the achievement for Him or His creation in it?”. See: Rifaat Ebied and David Thomas (eds.) The Polemical Works of ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī (Brill: 2016), p. 104-105. That is why al-Rāzī states that the only Muslim school of thought that would accept the concept of God’s deception is the Ash‘arites due to their intellectual project. See: Al-Rāzī, Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl, vol. 3, p. 425.
Arabian Christians and the early Muslims on the matter of the Crucifixion. We do have other reports of interactions and objections from Arab Christians against the Qur'anic claim that Christians worship their rabbis and monks (9:31), as seen in the famous story of ‘Adī Ibn Ḥātim al-Ṭā’ī (d. 68/688). This suggests the Qur’anic denial of the Crucifixion may not have been understood by Arab Christians as a denial of the historicity of the Crucifixion; for if so, why would they reportedly object to less significant points – such as the worship monks and priests – while ignoring the major issue of the alleged denial of the Crucifixion? This, in turn, suggests early Arab Christians may have interpreted the Qur’an through pre-existing theological categories. There has been much speculation about possible docetic and gnostic influences; the Chalcedonian distinction between natures, for example, may have also allowed a reading of the verse as a denial of the killing not of Jesus’ Divine nature (lāhūt), but his human nature (nāsūt). This allows for a theological interpretation of the event in the Qur’an that avoids the issue of a historical denial. In addition, this would question the validity of the argument from “preaching strategy” since early Arab Christians would have challenged the prophet regarding the crucifixion.

265 “They take their rabbis and their monks as lords, as well as Christ, the son of Mary”.
267 For instance, Paul of Antioch’s reading; “The dogma of the two natures of Christ was the means through which Paul again transforms an Islamic accusation against Christians into confirmation of Christian faith. The Qur’ān denies the crucifixion of Christ (cf. Q 4:157). Stating however, that Christ was crucified in His humanity and not in His divinity is in agreement, according to Paul, with the Qur’ān’s doctrine in this regard. In other words, the Qur’ān, according to Paul’s Christian reading, rejects not the crucifixion itself but the consideration that Christ was crucified according to His divinity, a doctrine refused also by Christians. In this way our author was able to see in the Qur’ān a confirmation to this important Christian faith and not a rejection or a scandalous doctrine”. See: Bishara Ebeid. “Can the Qur’ān be read in the light of Christ? Reflections on some Melkite authors and their use of the Holy Book of Islam” Collectanea Christiana Orientalia 18 (2021), p. 63-64.
Returning to the early Muslims, the controversial issue in the verse (4:158) is the term “was made to appear like that to them” (*shubbiha lahum*). This is well covered in scholarship. This term is a response to the Jewish claims to have killed and crucified Jesus. Yet the verse does not indicate any detailed description as to what exact happened at the Crucifixion event; the Arabic grammar used in the verse allows for more than one scenario and there are no reports from the Prophet that would support one reading and exclude another.\(^{268}\) That is why the influential exegete Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿĀshūr (d. 1973) states the following: “Jesus was not killed nor crucified because he was saved and raised by God regardless of the possible details of the event”.\(^{269}\) It is apparent that this view is shaped by mainstream Muslim views on the Crucifixion and that he avoids taking a firm stance on the linguistic ambiguity in the verse. What supports the idea that the term “*shubbiha lahum*” does not necessarily mean casting the likeness of something is its other usages in the same context. One of Prophet’s companions, ‘Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn (d. 52/673), for example, is reported to have claimed that he was hesitant to narrate accounts from the Prophet due to the mistakes of other narrators in which this term was used.\(^{270}\) This means the apparent meaning of the Crucifixion verse would have been understood in various ways without the involvement of non-Islamic religious sources found in Arabia, such as the *Isrā’īliyyāt*.\(^{271}\)

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\(^{268}\) This could be understood comparatively with the finality of prophethood verse: “Muhammad is not the father of any one of you men; he is God’s Messenger and the *Khātam* (seal) of the prophets” (33:40). This is because both verses have the same structure of denying particular claims and then to present alternative ones using ambiguous terms namely *Shubbiha* and *Khātam*. However, there are many accounts from the prophet that limits the meaning of *Khātam* to be the final prophet while this is not found through the case of crucifixion. The translations of the Qur’an have been shaped by these theological commitments. See: Burcuğ K. Mustafa. “Ambiguity, Ideology, and Doctrine Propagation in Qur’an Translation” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 21:1 (2019), pp. 21-49; M.A.S. Abdel Haleem. “The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur’an” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 20:1 (2018), pp. 47-66.


The *Isrā’īliyyāt* play a crucial role in supporting the theory that the verse refers to someone who was made to resemble Jesus and crucified in his place. This is because there are no narratives from the Prophet himself on this topic. The Islamic narratives are traced back to the following sources: Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687), Mujāhid Ibn Jabr (d. 104/722), Wahb Ibn Munabbih (d. 114/738), Qatāda ibn Di‘āma (d. 118/735), al-Qāsim ibn Abī Bazza (d. 124/742), Ismā‘īl al-Suddī (d. 127/745), Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767), Muḥammad ibn Ishāq (d. 151/768), Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767). These are classified through the following two narratives. The first narrative is narrated by Wahb in two variations. The first variation states that all the companions of Jesus had the likeness of Jesus, and thus the Jews killed someone else. The second variations states that only one of Jesus’ companions had the likeness of Jesus and it was this companion who was crucified.\(^{272}\) It would seem the early Muslims could not be neutral vis-à-vis the linguistic meaning of the Crucifixion verse due to the impact of these narratives. The apparent meaning of the verse was thus structured by these narratives even if both the structure and the context of the verse itself allows for more than this. This would question one of the common arguments regarding the first three generations of Islam which states that any interpretation found through the first three generations of Islam and does not violate the Arabic grammatical systems would by default suit the context of the verse.\(^{273}\) This is because accepting the historicity of the crucifixion is a case study of rejecting the interpretation of the first generations, but it is still valid through both the Arabic grammatical systems and the context of the verse. Therefore, it could be argued that these narratives shaped the text of the Qur’ān itself, not in the sense of expanding the Qurānic corpus after the death of Prophet,\(^{274}\) but through limiting the meaning of the Qur’ānic text to a single possibility to


\(^{274}\) Note that I am not suggesting Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann’s controversial thesis in which Nicolai Sinai writes: “In this context it may be appropriate to briefly review a recent monograph by the Biblical scholar Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, who argues that scribal circles consisting of Jewish and Christian converts continued to shape and expand the Qur’ānic corpus after the death of Muḥammad. In support of the claim that the Qur’ān underwent a
the extent that its denial would be tantamount to unbelief (\textit{kufr}), as seen in Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). Accordingly, this would question the intellectual line that relies on \textit{Isrāʾīliyyāt} by way of attestation not as a basis for doctrine the statement (\textit{lil-Istishhād Lā lil-I’tiqād}).

The impact of these narratives on the apparent meaning of the Crucifixion verse is also found in the other three verses on the end of Jesus’ life. This is because of the other ambiguous term, \textit{mutawaffīk} (take you back), and the question of whether this refers to a physical death. Put differently, the verse on the Crucifixion becomes the hermeneutical key to read the other verses on Jesus’ death and the exact meaning of his being raised to God. In sum, the dominant interpretation of the early Muslims quickly became that Jesus was not killed but was raised to God. Accordingly, the ‘apparent’ meaning of these verses with which al-Rāzī deals is that Jesus was raised bodily - not spiritually - before the Crucifixion and that he did not die. The term \textit{mutawaffīk} was read by the early Muslims as Jesus’ being taken from earth and thus the Qur’anic references elsewhere to the death of Jesus are said to relate to his death after his Second Coming. This, again, confirms the central role of these narratives to the extent that Muslim exegesises claimed that while the term “raising” in the Qur’an comes after “taking” Jesus from the earth, this was a mere change in word order or hysteront-proteron (\textit{taqdīm wa-ta’khīr}), a common ploy in Arabic grammar.

\[\text{significant degree of post-prophetic editing, Pohlmann cites two observations: first, he underlines the far-reaching familiarity with Jewish and Christian traditions that is displayed by many Qur’ānic passages; secondly, he points to what he sees as a pervasive presence in the Qur’ānic corpus of later additions that have been woven into their textual environment by means of literary techniques familiar from Biblical literature… it is true that we ought to remain open-minded about the possibility that the Qur’ānic corpus could have undergone a certain amount of redactional work after the death of Muhammad. Yet we should also resist the temptation of simply transferring the conclusions of Biblical scholarship to the Qur’ān}.\]


Al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics:

Al-Rāzī starts the discussion of the Crucifixion verse by engaging the same critical linguistic question on the meaning of the term “shubbiha.” This has been demonstrated by the Mu’tazilite al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) on the reference and subject of ‘likeness’. Al-Rāzī raises this question since the person who was crucified is not mentioned within the previous verses. In addition, he writes, Jesus would be the comparatum (mushabbah) not the secundum comparatum (mushabbah bih) according to the apparent meaning of this verse. He suggests this could be justified linguistically through claiming that the likeness of Jesus had seemingly occurred according to their point of view only, and thus the term shubbiha would be structured in Arabic as wa-lākin waqa’ lahum al-shabah. The second linguistic justification is to claim that the term refers to the crucified person – not Jesus – in the sense that since the previous verse states that Jesus was not crucified, it means that someone else has been crucified, and thus this person is indirectly mentioned in the previous verse. It is evident by how al-Rāzī starts the interpretation of this verse that he is shaped by the Isrā’īliyyāt narratives instead of having a neutral linguistic examination. This is why he does not even mention the possibility that the term shubbiha may refer to the entire event of killing and crucifying, instead of having Jesus or the other person as the subject. This is to say that al-Rāzī could have mentioned the third possibility, that is, “wa-lākin Shubbiha lahun Dhālik”, in which “that” (dhālik) refers to the killing and the Crucifixion of Jesus in the sense that while they witnessed the killing and

279 Oakes writes: “Seemingly dissatisfied with substitution legends, al-Zamakhshari turns to his field of expertise, grammar, to tackle a question that nobody else has asked, a question that is central to understanding the ambiguous phrase shubbiha lahun, which occurs only once in the Qur’an. He asks, (Then, if I say), ‘To what (is shubbiha) subject?’ This means ‘what is the subject of shubbiha lahun?’ Since al-Zamakhshari is critiquing substitution legends, the question behind the question is ‘who or what person or event was the subject that was made to appear differently than he or it actually was?’ That this is the question becomes evident from the answers he provides. Since shubbiha is a form II causative verb, it could be useful to know the identity of who is the ‘causer’ of shubbīha, but that seems to lie outside the scope of his inquiry. The various possibilities that al-Zamakhshari discusses include the following: [1] The subject of shubbiha is Jesus. [2] Shubbiha refers to Judas. [3] Shubbiha lahum means ‘It seemed so to them’. See: W. Richard Oakes Jr. The Cross of Christ: Foundational Islamic Perspectives (Lexington Books: 2020), p. 216.

Crucifixion of Jesus, he nevertheless survived death as he was raised by God later, according to the next verse. This confirms the point in the previous section on the role of *Isrā ’ilīyyāt*-based ‘apparent’ meaning, and how this became the standard understanding even if the textual language and broader context allows for other possibilities.

The second part of al-Rāzī’s discussion is philosophical and theological. It sheds light on the consequences of accepting the theory that the likeness of Jesus’ face was cast onto another person. Al-Rāzī rejects this interpretation due to *al-Mu’ārid al-‘Aqlī*, which, in this case, would entail doubting senses as a source of knowledge; he argues this would lead to sophistry for we would start to doubt each person that we come across; are they the true person or has their likeness been cast onto another? This would lead to numerous issues including the legal trustworthiness of marriage. In addition, it would mean the notion of *tawātur* would be invalid for it is centrally based on having something sensible (*maḥsūs*) at the beginning of the chain. This would, in turn, lead one to question the origin of religions for it rejects the prophethood of all the prophets. Al-Rāzī further rejects the claim that this could have happened at the time of the Prophet only, arguing that this would have been possible if people had firm proofs and evidence that allowed them to do so. Since this is not found, however, then they would doubt sensible things (*maḥsūsāt*) and even reports that are based on *tawātur*. He additionally counters this by arguing that even if we no longer have miracles, the miracles of saints (*al-karāmāt*) could play the same role. It would thus make these objections applicable to all times.

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281 See: Al-Rāzī. *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*, vol 11, p 101. He also presents this objection through the story of Mary in which he questions the theological notion of having an angel being dwelled in a human body since this would lead to the same philosophical and theological consequences. See: Ibid, vol. 21, p. 198. Note that this line of argument has been demonstrated by his fellow Shīhāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 586/1191) through his work *Al-Tanqīḥāt* on Islamic legal theory. See: Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī. *Al-Intiṣārāt al-Islāmiyyah Fi Kashf Shubah al-Naṣrānīyyah* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-‘Ubaykān, 1999), vol. 1, p. 355-356.

282 See: Al-Rāzī. *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*, vol 11, p 101. This is one of the theological issues on the differences between *Mu’jīzāt* (Miracles of the prophets) and *Karāmāt* (Miracles of the saints). This is because the Ash’arites accepts *Karāmāt* while the Mu’tazilites rejects it due to the lack of any firm difference between the two notions according to the later. The Ash’arites counters this objection by claiming that the difference is in terms of the context of these supernatural events in which the prophet would claim that he is a prophet sent by God but the saint would
Having mentioned his rejection of the apparent meaning of the term *shubbiha* according to the early Muslims, al-Rāzī suggests an alternative narrative which he ascribes to the adherents of *Kalām* and which seeks to avoid the aforementioned philosophical and theological consequences. He seems unsatisfied with the other option that is based on *Isrāʾīliyyāt* narratives. This is due to both the previous objection and the various contradictory views within them. Al-Rāzī seems to support the narrative of *kalām* that states that as the Jews attempted to kill Jesus, God raised him up unto Himself; the Jews thought that if the ordinary people knew of this miracle, they would believe in him. Thus, the Jews brought someone else and crucified him, claiming that he was the Messiah. Al-Rāzī claims this speculative analysis of the event is possible because Jesus was not known by people; this, he writes, would solve the many of the issues around the verse. He further argues that the argument from *tawātur* is invalid in this case for it is inaccurate to claim that Christians narrate by *tawātur* that they saw Jesus die on the cross because the number of Christians who witnessed the event was small and thus did not fulfil the conditions of *tawātur*. It is possible, he writes, that they may have agreed upon a lie which the mainstream Muslim view on this issue.

Al-Rāzī elsewhere presents four objections to the theory that the likeness of Jesus was cast onto another, as seen in the *Isrāʾīliyyāt* narratives: First, he writes, the angel Gabriel would have stopped the Jews from killing Jesus due to his strength; this also applicable to Jesus himself, he adds, who was able to perform miracles such as raising the dead. Second, al-Rāzī asks why God would allow the killing of an innocent person if He could have raised Jesus? Third, he writes that this would lead to the theological problem of the deception of God. Fourth,

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the person crucified in place of Jesus would have shown a fear of death and may have shouted to convince people that he was not, in fact, Jesus. After mentioning these objections, al-Rāzī answers the first and the second by suggesting that the involvement of Gabriel or raising Jesus without the issue of likeness would lead to the theological problem of constraint (iljā').

As for the third issue, he states that the disciples of Jesus would have been present and thus were able to clarify this issue for people. As for the fourth, al-Rāzī states that this person may have accepted the fact that he is doing it for Jesus and thus did not say anything about himself. Al-Rāzī concludes these objections and counters by using the mainstream argument that is based on the Qur'an being the miraculous word of God, and thus presumes a priori that it is telling the truth, rejecting any possible objections. The use of this argument in al-Rāzī is in line with his use of the argument from immediate knowledge. He uses this argument elsewhere in his works, as seen in his rebuttals to objections raised by a Christian scholar.

As for the second part of the verse, on those who had disputes regarding Jesus (4:157), al-Rāzī suggests this could be understood as a reference to two parties: the first is the Christological disputes of the three main sects of Nestorians, Melkites and Jacobites as to whether the Crucifixion reached Jesus’ Divine nature (lāḥūt) or only his human nature (nāsūt). He focuses on the Nestorian view that the Crucifixion was limited to the nāsūt because Jesus’ soul had reached a heavenly level similar to that of the angels. The second is that it could refer to the Jews. Here, he mentions two narratives: that when the Jews killed the person with the likeness of Jesus, they found the likeness was limited to the face but not the whole body. The second narrative states that one of the Jews came with the intention of killing Jesus, but God put the likeness of Jesus upon him. The other Jews then came – without knowing what

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happened - and killed this man. They missed the Jew that was earlier with them, and said, “If we have just killed Jesus, where is our friend?”

It seems through the first line of narratives that al-Rāzī has been influenced by the views of The Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān Al-Ṣafāʾ) on the Crucifixion, which focuses on the theological aspect without apparently rejecting its historicity. Al-Rāzī, however, does reject the historicity of the Crucifixion.

As for the part of the verse that says, “they certainly did not kill him” (4:157), al-Rāzī suggests this may be understood in one of two ways. The first is that the speech is intended for the Prophet Muhammad in the sense that God already told him that they had disputes regarding Jesus’ death, and thus this verse confirms that he did not die. Second, the speech describes the event through the eyes of those who thought that they had killed Jesus, and thus the verse indicates that they already had doubts regarding whether or not they had killed Jesus; this is because when they killed him, they were not firmly sure that he was in fact Jesus. Al-Rāzī supports the first interpretation and has in mind the next part of the verse - “God raised him up to Himself” (4:158) - as the confirmation. For the fact Jesus was raised by God must confirm that he was not killed.

He concludes by stating that Jesus was raised by God, connecting it with the other verse; “Jesus, I will Mutawaffik (take you back) and raise you up to Me.” (3:55).

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288 See: Al-Sharafi. Al-Fikr al-Islāmī Fī al-Rād ’Alā al-Naṣārā, p. 382. This already had an influence on the pseudo al-Ghazāli’s work al-Radd al-Jamīl. Todd Lawson writes: “Massignon’s conclusion was that Ghazālī, in the process of studying the writings of one of his main theological opponents, namely the Isma’īlī preachers and intellectuals from Abū Hātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/935) to Nāṣir Khusraw (d. 481/1088) had become persuaded of the correctness of some of their beliefs. As Massignon points out, Ghazālī had been studying these works long before his sojourn in Jerusalem and Alexandria (ca. 1095-97) and it had already been widely known by this time that the Isma’īl-inspired Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ (10th century) taught that Jesus had really been crucified”. See: Todd Lawson. The Crucifixion and the Qur’an, p. 77. Elsewhere al-Rāzī states while arguing that Jesus foretold the coming of Muhammad that it is narrated through the end of the Gospels that Jesus came to the disciples after the crucifixion and did not teach them any new rulings as he only told them that he is the Messiah and that he is not dead. See: al-Rāzī. Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb, vol. 29, p. 314-315. What is worth noting here that al-Rāzī mentions this narrative from the Gospels without making any critical comment regarding its historicity although it affirms the resurrection and generally the story of crucifixion as they are from the same source. On the sources of al-Rāzī’s use of the Biblical material, see: Sabine Schmidtk. “Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Ṭabarī and his transmission of biblical materials from Kitāb al-dīn wa-al-dawla” from Ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī: The evidence from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb” Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 20:2 (2009), pp. 105-118.
This leads us to the second ambiguous term of the Crucifixion in the Qur’an: 

*mutawaffīk*. According to the early Muslims, this is understood as referring to Jesus’ being taken and raised from earth. Al-Rāzī suggests there are two ways of understanding this verse. The first is to accept the chronological order of the events, that is, to take up and raise up (*mutawaffīk wa-rāfiʿ uk*). This, he writes, is the apparent meaning of the verse. The second is to apply the linguistic notion of change in word order (*taqḍīm wa-taʾkhīr*), meaning the verse would be “raising” and “taking”. Al-Rāzī presents nine possible interpretations of this term “*mutawaffīk*”. First, to complete one’s predestined age by raising Jesus up so they will not be able to kill him. Second, to cause death to Jesus by not allowing the Jews to come and kill him, as he has already been raised up. Al-Rāzī ascribes this to Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Isḥāq and mentions the dispute whether the period of his death was three or seven hours. Third, that God caused death to Jesus while being raised to Him citing the verse: “God takes the souls of the dead and the souls of the living while they sleep” (39:42). He ascribes this to Al-Rabīʿ ibn Anas (d. 139/757). Fourth, relying on the conjunction “and” (*wāw*), al-Rāzī states that Jesus is between the hands of God as God is able to do anything to him but we cannot specify this except by evidence through scripture (*dalīl*), in which case we would rely on the prophetic account regarding the Second Coming of Jesus, as Jesus will die after it. Fifth, to have a mystical understanding of the verse – citing the Ṣūfī scholar Abū Bakr al-Wāṣīṭī (d. 320/932) – that God will purify Jesus from his human defects and that he will be one of the angels in terms of their highly position. Sixth, to fully take something in the sense that God has raised Jesus both bodily and spiritually since some people think the verse applies only to his soul. Al-
Rāzī says this having in mind the claim that Jesus may be harmed bodily. This is why he connects this interpretation with other verses regarding the Prophet Muhammad, such as: “a party of them would have tried to lead you astray; they only lead themselves astray and cannot harm you in any way” (4:113). Seventh, to make Jesus akin to a dead man in the sense that nobody will know anything about him after God raises him up, like the absence of the person after death. Eighth, to understand the verse as taking possession (qabḍ) in contracts in the sense of finishing a deal. Ninth, to understand it as the acceptance of deeds (mutawaffī ‘amalak), citing the Qur’anic verse: “good words rise up to Him and He lifts up the righteous deed.” (35:10).291

Having mentioned these nine interpretations for those who accept the apparent meaning of the verse, al-Rāzī finishes the discussion by mentioning the other approach, which is to accept the view of a change in word order (taqdīm wa-ta’khīr). It has been argued that there must be change in order because the apparent meaning of ‘raising up’ means that Jesus will be raised alive, not dead. This means this group of commentators have indirectly accepted that the term mutawaffīk typically means death. Thus, they had to apply a change in word order so the verse would mean that Jesus was raised by God, had been saved from the Jews, and will only die in his Second Coming. Finally, al-Rāzī ends the discussion by claiming that there is no need for this second approach because the nine mentioned ways of understanding the apparent meaning of the verse are valid.292 It is evident that al-Rāzī was shaped by the Isrā‘īliyyāt narratives as seen in his views on the term shubbiha. For the term could also mean that Jesus was crucified and only then raised by God without violating the Arabic grammar.293

293 Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī (d. 1954) rightly notes that al-Rāzī affirms Jesus was raised by God bodily not spiritually through his discussion of the second coming of Jesus as it has been questioned by Muslim thinkers namely Maḥmoud Shaltūt (d. 1963) (See: Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī. Mawqif al-‘Aql wal-‘Ilm wa-‘Ālam Min Rabb al-‘Ālamīn wa-‘Ibādiḥī al-Mursalīn, vol. 4, p. 240). However, there is no logical necessity between affirming the second coming of Jesus and accepting the mainstream narrative of casting the likeness of Jesus’s face upon the other person. This is because it is possible to affirm the second coming of Jesus while accepting that Jesus was crucified and then was raised by God according to the historical aspect of the Christian narrative.
It is worth noting the impact of al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics, namely, his al-Qānūn al-Kullī, on this verse through his theological dispute with the ‘anthropomorphists’ (mushabbihah). He states that the latter relied on the apparent meaning of this verse, that is, that Jesus was raised to God, to argue that God is above His creation and in a certain location. Thus, he states that since we have already structured by firm proofs that God is not located in any place, we must apply figurative interpretation (ta’wīl) to the apparent meaning of this verse. This means that al-Rāzī has in mind an al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī that is structured through his philosophical conception of God. When it comes to the issue of Crucifixion, however, the al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī that comes from the historical testimony of Christians vis-a-vis their own tradition is absent. That is why the impact of his hermeneutics was limited to the rejection of casting the likeness of Jesus’ face – the Isrāʾīliyyāt-based apparent meaning. This is not because of the historical authority of the Jewish-Christian testimony but rather for the theological issues that has been previously mentioned. Yet, this is critical according to al-Rāzī’s intellectual project. The question here would be: If history had turned out differently, and there the New Testament narratives had been dominant in understanding these Qur’anic verses, instead of the story of casting the likeness of Jesus upon another person, would these Isrāʾīliyyāt narratives have been considered by al-Rāzī as al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī that would then question the New Testament-based apparent meaning of the verse? I ask this because al-Rāzī acknowledges the lack of historical bases for many Isrāʾīliyyāt narratives on the basis that the name of Abraham’s father is Terah according to genealogists and Āzar according to the Qur’ān (6:74) and even the question whether Abraham believed that God had a son as he questions the tawāur of Jews and Christians. Al-Rāzī supports the Qur’anic name, questioning both the scholarly consensus (ijmāʾ) of genealogists and the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih and Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. 34/652)

to argue that such consensus is always traced back to one or two persons who are followed blindly by the others to construct a consensus. This, by default, would be applicable to the issue of Crucifixion which is based on these sources too. That is why al-Rāzī was able to reject these narratives and adopt the kalām narrative. Rejecting these narratives thus suggests that al-Rāzī questions their historical bases in the same way that he questions the number of people who witnessed the Crucifixion. This suggests that Isrāʾīliyyāt narratives were not a priority for al-Rāzī because of their historical authority but rather through other factors such as the prophetic accounts on using them.

To sum up, the alleged apparent meaning of the term shubbiha lahum has been overwhelmingly shaped by the Isrāʾīliyyāt sources. This is because the first three generations of Islam could not be neutral vis-à-vis the linguistic meaning of the Crucifixion verse due to the impact of these narratives. According to al-Rāzī, it cannot mean the current interpretation namely that some other person literally transformed in body to appear as Jesus and become crucified in his stead. Rather, admitting such a possibility would open a Pandora’s box of all kinds of methodological and theological issues, including the possibility that all the eyewitness accounts concerning the Prophet Muhammad might have been statements about some other person. Such a possibility would inevitably endanger the foundation of Islam itself. As such, rather than choosing for the current interpretation based on the Isrāʾīliyyāt sources, al-Rāzī prefers the interpretation espoused by the scholars of Kalām who argue a case of mistaken identity namely that the Jews brought someone else and crucified him, claiming that he was the Messiah, rather than a person taking on the appearance of Jesus in actuality. This account would avoid these challenges mentioned before at least within the circle of Muslim writings but would probably face the historical challenge of the Jewish-Christian reports.

However, it might be argued that al-Rāzī could have had a more far-reaching view on this issue through re-examining the Qur’anic apparent rejection of the Crucifixion the same way he re-examined the Qur’anic apparent affirmation of creation *ex nihilo* mentioned in chapter one. I am suggesting this since al-Rāzī had questioned both the apparent meaning that has been structured in early Islam and the historical authority of *Isrāʾ īlīyāt*. Further discussion of this point falls outside the scope of my thesis. However, it could be one of the ways to demonstrate how some controversial issues - such as the eternity of the world between Muslim philosophers and theologians or the crucifixion of Jesus between Christians and Muslims – have been shaped by a long history of controversy. Therefore, such attempts to revise the bases of these hot topics could open various ways to approach them. The first step is to exclude the impact of such views on doctrinal issues as Sohaib Saeed notes through different case study that “there is no point of creed established independently by this verse such that the traditional reading must be defended; for example, if there was no miracle here, there are plenty of other miracles. If the Ahmadiyya adopted this reading to support some of their beliefs, that does not preclude others from agreeing with it on its own merits and for divergent purposes”.\(^{299}\) This is because Muslim writers have already examined the theological implications as Joshua Ralston notes that “muslims present much stronger judgments on Christian ideas about the meaning of the cross than its bare historical fact. Even if a persuasive reading of Sūra al-Nisā’ could be made that affirms Jesus’s death, this is far from an affirmation of its saving significance”.\(^{300}\) Accordingly, it might be argued – at least from a hermeneutical perspective according to the mainstream methods of Muslim exegesis – that accepting the historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus does not necessarily entails unbelief (*Kufr*).

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Al-Rāzī’s epistemology:

Al-Rāzī’s views on the crucifixion of Jesus cannot be fully understood without going further in analysing his corpus. This leads us to aspects of his epistemology having illustrated his hermeneutics. This section explores the question of trustworthiness (Ṣidq) of those who transmit reports (khabar Ahl al-tawātur). This is the fourth issue in al-Rāzī’s discussion of this concept in his work, al-Maḥṣūl. This is the place in which al-Rāzī examines aspects on the historicity of the Crucifixion, which had become a theme in Muslim works on legal theory.301 This is because the transmission of reports in Islam shares commonalities with the transmission of reports on the Crucifixion in the Christian tradition; each party would argue and structure an argument that guarantees an authentication of the reports. One such issue is the parallel status of the disciples of Jesus and the companions of Muhammad as both are the essential source of reports for the teachings.302 Accordingly, these parallels made works of Islamic legal theory a rich source for discussing interreligious issues. This includes the transmission of reports, examined in this chapter, and the theory of abrogation, in the following one.

301 The concept of Tawātur has also become a theme in the writings of Jews and Christians through their perceptions of Islam. Suheil Laher writes: “With kalām effectively having become a common language for interreligious debates, Jewish and Christian apologists also appealed to the concept of tawātur; both to support their own beliefs, and to attack Muslim beliefs. Saadya, a pioneer in Medieval Jewish philosophy, while discussing how miracles – which are essential for proving prophethood – are to be transmitted to subsequent generations, writes that “wrong idea and wilful distortion.... cannot occur in a large collective group.” And Christians – more so than Jews, but not exclusively – tended to stipulate geographical dispersion and multiple languages as conditions for the validity of tawātur, as illustrated by David Ibn al-Muqammiṣ (mid-3rd century H) mentioning, among the conditions for veracity of a Prophet, that “the tradition about him should not come from one direction, but rather from several quarters.” These claims, in turn, drew responses from Muslim apologists, such as al-Bāqillānī and Qāḍī ‘Abdu’l-Jabbār’. See: Suheil Laher. Twisted Threads, p. 44-45. This has also been integrated into the Syriac systems of thought such as the writings of the influential Christian theologian Bar ‘Ebrōyō (d. 1286) in which Bert Jacobs writes: “Bar ‘Ebrōyō proceeds by outlining his apologetic methodology in the second chapter, which carries the title That the union has already taken place in Christ Our Lord. The first step he undertakes in this short chapter, is to establish the basis on which he intends to demonstrate that Christ is the locus of the union between God and man. This basis is the principle of reliable transmission of reports about past events, which he calls “continuity of testimonies” (tākbūt sōhdwōtō). The concept described above probably rings a bell to those familiar with hadīth sciences, legal methodology (uṣūl al-fiqh), or Islamic theology (’ilm al-kalām). As Khoury had already rightly pointed out, tākbūt sōhdwōtō is nothing other than the Syriac rendering of the Arabic tawātur”. See: Bert Jacobs. “Unveiling Christ in the Islamicate World: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Prophetology as a Model for Christian Apologetics in Gregory Bar ‘Ebrōyō’s Treatise on the Incarnation” Intellectual History of the Islamicate World Journal 6 (2018), p. 194-195.

This is seen through al-Rāzī’s attempt to critically examine Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s views on *Tawātur* being speculative (*naẓarī*) not necessary (*ḍarūrī*). Elsewhere through his work *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl*, al-Rāzī confirms that those who conceive *Tawātur* as *naẓarī* would have to accept all questions and doubts regarding this issue as he asks the reader to in his *al-Maḥṣūl* to refer to *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl*. The same point is made in his *Al-Arbaʿīn*. Al-Rāzī’s goal is thus to examine the claim that *tawātur* authenticates the reports of narrators (*al-mukhbirūn*) through allowing the possibility that people could have transmitted false reports by intentionality (*‘amd*) or forgetfulness (*sahū*). This is because Abū al-Ḥusayn argues that those who transmitted the reports cannot present false information (*kadhib*) because they have either known that they are presenting false information or not, with both possibilities allegedly invalid. This is structured as the following:

“Inference (istidlāl) is the ordering of knowledge to arrive at further knowledge. Everything whose existence depends on the ordering of knowledge is inferred. The knowledge that follows upon a *mutawātir* report occurs in this way. For we know what has been reported to us only when we know that the reporter has not reported on the basis of his opinion but on the basis of what is not at all doubtful and that there is no motive for him to lie. Thus we know that he has not lied intentionally because we know that he has no motive for lying, and we know that the report cannot be unintentionally false because we know that it is a matter of clarity with no doubt. Once its being false is excluded, it follows that it is true. When one of these conditions is not met, we do not know the soundness of the report.”

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Abū al-Ḥusayn rejects the first possibility of those who transmit reports while knowing that they are false. This, he writes, is either based on having purpose (gharaḍ) and preponderance (murajjiḥ) or not, with the latter allegedly impossible. Thus, he proceeds to discuss the first possibility, starting with the possibility of transmitting false information due to murajjiḥ. Abū al-Ḥusayn states this would be invalid since any act cannot happen in a certain time without it having murajjiḥ that makes it happen. He further states that presenting false information itself is something that in unsound (qubh), and thus it would be by itself a counter-motive (Ṣārif) rather than a motive (Dāʾ). As for having an action due to gharad, Abū al-Ḥusayn states this gharad itself cannot be based on the desire to present false information because it is by itself Ṣārif. Thus, he argues that this gharad would be either based on desire (raghbah) or fear (rahbah). As for raggbah, Abū al-Ḥusayn argues that it would be either based on a religious motive (dīn) or worldly motive (dunyā). Both are impossible, he writes, because it is prohibited to present false information, including for a worldly motive; most people would not accept to present false information even with big offers. As for rahbah, Abū al-Ḥusayn argues that this would have happened with the engagement of the governor having pushed people to transmit false reports, but this is, again, he writes, impossible.311 As for the second possibility about those who transmit reports having not known that they are transmitting false information, As for the second possibility on those who transmit reports having not known that they are transmitting false information, Abū al-Ḥusayn also rejects. He argues this would not have happened except through doubt (ishtibāh) in the evident perceptions (darūriyyāt). Yet this, again, is impossible according to him as he connects it with the concept of tawātur which is based sensible things (al-Maḥsūsāt).312

As for al-Rāzī, he counters this by stating that he aims at proving that Abū al-Ḥusayn’s arguments would only lead to probably belief (Zann Qawī) rather than firm belief (yaqīn). Thus, he picks up Abū al-Ḥusayn’s central arguments as the following: First, Abū al-Ḥusayn’s claim that “an act without a murājīh is impossible” is false since this would lead to compulsion (al-Jabr) according to Abū al-Ḥusayn’s own philosophical theology. Second, Abū al-Ḥusayn’s claim that “lying would prevent people from this” since this is based on accepting the human mind unaided qualification of knowing things as good or bad (al-Taḥsīn wal-Taqūḥ al-‘Aqlī) according to al-Rāzī. Third, Abū al-Ḥusayn’s claim that “lying is prohibited” is invalid since many clerics permit lying for the benefit of religion, as seen when they manufacture reports to urge people to be pious. Fourth, Abū al-Ḥusayn’s claim that “huge groups cannot agree upon having the desire to lie due to religious or worldly motives” is invalid, allowing for the possibility that ten up to one hundred people could present false information. He mentions the example of a pandemic in a certain country; the wise people in this country lie about it to the people of other countries in order to save their economy, which would be an act of raghbah. He additionally applies the same line of argument regarding the act from rahbah, claiming the governor could push people to transmit false reports.313

At this point al-Rāzī discusses the Crucifixion, specifically the possibility that people could have transmitted false reports by forgetfulness (sahū) due to the issue of doubt (ishtibāḥ) in sensible things (al-Maḥṣūsāt)314 noted by the two Urmawī’s commentators on his al-Maḥṣūl namely Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 682/1283)315 and Tāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 656/1258).316 This, he adds, is proven through reason (‘aql) and scripture (naql). As for reason, al-Rāzī states there are two ways to prove this: First, God can create remarkably similar species, whether humans or animals, to the extent of doubting the person that we know. People could thus have

313 See: al-Rāzī. al-Maḥṣūl, vol. 4, p. 238-244.
mistakenly thought someone to be someone else. Second, the observer’s weaknesses in observation is a daily occurrence; you could see something moving, but it is, in fact, not moving. As for scripture, al-Rāzī mentions several cases. What is related to the discussion is his claim that the image of Jesus has been cast upon another person. In this, he follows the mainstream Muslim narrative. The reason for adopting this position is to force Abū al-Ḥusayn to accept that this is a case study in which people have transmitted false reports mistakenly. That is why al-Rāzī mentions Abū al-Ḥusayn’s objections which are the following: First, violating natural laws (kharq al-‘Ādah) occurs only at the time of prophets. Second, the image of the crucified person changes significantly, and those who crucified him were a small number who may have agree upon a lie. Third, they saw the crucified person from a long distance.\(^317\)

Al-Rāzī responds to these three objections through the following: First, if we accepted the presence of Kharq al-‘Ādah at the time of the prophets then it could extend to the times of other prophets too, such as Muhammad, and thus we would doubt his identity as the one who preached us religious matters. Furthermore, al-Rāzī argues that miracles of saints (al-Karāmāt) could play the same role of Kharq al-‘Ādah, noting that Abū al-Ḥusayn accepts the existence of saintly miracles against his mainstream Mu’tazilite school of thought.\(^319\) Second, the image of the crucified person changes significantly after being crucified, not before, and thus they would have identified Jesus and distinguished him from the other person. Third, those who had crucified this person were too close to him to be able to witness his identity. Al-Rāzī adds a controversial claim as he argues that Christians narrate by tawātur that they had seen the crucified person for a couple of hours before and after the Crucifixion while being on the cross.\(^321\) Al-Rāzī’s affirmation of this argument regarding the tawātur of Christians who

\(^317\) See: Al-Rāzī. al-Maḥṣūl, vol. 4, p. 244-246.
witnessed the Crucifixion departs from mainstream Muslim examination of this issue – including al-Rāzī’s statement in his commentary – as it has always been argued that the number of Christians do not fulfil the conditions of Tawātur. This is why the commentators on al-Rāzī’s al-Maḥṣūl\(^{322}\) such as Shihāb al-Dīn Al-Qarafi, questioned the validity of this argument, since the disciples and other companions of Jesus are reported to have fled, except one who was bribed by the executers, and thus could number less than ten persons. Thus, it is not valid to structure an argument from Tawātur in this case, according to al-Qarafi.\(^{323}\) The same applies to Shams al-Dīn Al-Iṣfahānī (d. 653/1256) who argues that the conditions of tawātur are not applicable in this case.\(^{324325326}\)

The second place in which al-Rāzī mentions the Christian tradition is in his attempt to question the validity of tawātur itself in providing knowledge. This is evident later in his career at the time of his writing Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya where explicitly presents his concern regarding this notion.\(^{327}\) One of his arguments is the fact that all traditions around the world transmit reports regarding their own history by tawātur, and these reports contradict Muslims claim. Thus, the argument from tawātur is invalid. Al-Rāzī demonstrates this by illustrating that Muslims who reject tawātur reports from other traditions have relied on evidence that could be known by reports (al-naql). Thus, he argues that since Muslims claim that they had such tawātur of their own tradition, then the other traditions have the lines of argument which have been evident throughout their history. Therefore, accepting one of them requires necessarily the acceptance of the other. It seems to me that al-Rāzī has in mind the concept of circumstantial evidence (Qarā’īn) to focus on core sense of conceding knowledge rather than the number.\(^{328}\)

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\(^{323}\) See: Al-Qarafi. Naṣīṣ is al-Uṣūl Fi Sharḥ al-Maḥṣūl, vol. 6, p. 2838.


\(^{328}\) See: Al-Rāzī. al-Maḥṣūl, vol. 4, p. 256.
In his *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl*, he doubts the authority of the *Tawātur* of the other traditions.³²⁹ Relying on this line of argument, al-Rāzī suggests another controversial claim on *tawātur* made by Christians. He argues that if the number of Christians at the emergence of Christianity was not sufficient to be considered *tawātur*, their religion would not have been accepted from the time of Jesus up to the time of Muhammad.³³⁰ The same point is made in his *Muḥaṣṣal*³³¹ as he rejects this in *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl* arguing that it is well-known that the number of Christians at the beginning was small.³³² This has also been traced by al-Qarāfī in which he transfers the discussion on the *tawātur* to be based on scripture (*shar‘ī*), arguing that God has the authority of providing knowledge (*‘ilm*) that relies on context. Thus, he is arguing that violating natural laws (*kharq al-‘Ādah*) would allow God to do so.³³³ In this sense, al-Qarāfī relies on the emergence of Islam itself to suggest another condition for accepting what happened in early Christianity. He suggests the Prophet could not send the number of people which reaches *tawātur* to the other tribes to call them to Islam, as was necessary in that context. He therefore states that if this is possible in the context of Islam, it would be possible for other religions too. He further notes that Jesus was not obliged to fight, nor did his call spread before Jesus left his fellow Christians who numbered around seventy in addition to several disciples.³³⁴ Other commentators, namely and Najm al-Dīn al-Naqshuānī (d. 651/1253), states in his discussion on abrogation that Christians did not fulfil the condition of *tawātur* even at the birth of the movement. It seems he does not have an answer to al-Rāzī’s objection nor a justification as to whether Christianity would be valid until the time of the prophet.³³⁵

The context of these controversial arguments regarding the early history of Christianity is al-Rāzī’s attempt to examine both Abū al-Ḥusayn’s view on tawātur as naẓarī (speculative) and his own views on tawātur as ẓarīrī (necessary) to doubt tawātur as a source of knowledge. He aims to doubt the possibilities and then cut to the argument from immediate knowledge, which is likely evident in many of his works. Therefore, he still accepts at this part of his career the validity of tawātur being ẓarīrī rather than naẓarī, noting that he had mentioned many counterarguments to prove that it would lead to endless and unanswerable questions. He thus argues that relying on obscure premises for structuring an evident thing is invalid. Therefore, he states that his epistemological position that tawātur must be ẓarūrī is correct, confirmed in his latest work on Islamic legal theory, Al-Ma‘ālim Fī ‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh, in which he asks the reader to refer to his al-Maḥṣūl. The same is found through in his work Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl as he skips these questions by the argument from ẓarūrī.

Accordingly, while al-Rāzī rejects the Crucifixion in his Maḥṣūl and his Qur’anic commentary, he nevertheless allows for the possibility of affirming aspects of the historical argument for the Crucifixion. Al-Rāzī’s views has been evident in two arguments: First, his rejection of the Isrā’īliyyāt narratives in his commentary which goes in line with the Kalām alternative narrative of the event. Second, his affirmation of the possibility of having tawātur of aspects of early Christianity in his Maḥṣūl which is a departure not only from early Muslims, but also mainstream Kalām view of early Christianity. In other words, al-Rāzī is deeply shaped in both cases by mainstream Muslim views that were structured in early Islam on the rejection of the Crucifixion. This allowed him to question aspects of this view namely conceiving

339 See: Al-Rāzī. Al-Maṭḥūlib al-‘Aṣīya, vol. 8, p. 79
tawātur as nazarī and his more far-reaching position that is doubting the validity of tawātur to provide knowledge since its roots are found in his Mahṣūl and demonstrated later through his Al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya. Whittingham summarizes this as he writes:

“Here, al-Rāzī expresses a low view of the certainty afforded by tawātur, implying that his use of the term in his comments on Q 5:13 is not as significant as it seems. He argues that the false reports of Jews, Christians and others prove that large groups can settle on an error, and therefore the number of reporters involved gives no guarantee of accurate reporting. In relation to the crucifixion, he writes concerning the idea that God cast the likeness of Jesus onto someone else, ‘This is one of the greatest charges (ṭa’n) against tawātur as objectionable’ (Rāzī, 1987, p. 78). In other words, the widespread reporting that God made someone look like Jesus demonstrates that widespread reporting cannot automatically be trusted, since this idea of appearance change is so flawed. As in his commentary on Q 4.157, he adds that it leads to sophistry. Al-Rāzī uses the same term, ṭa’n, as he uses in his commentary on Q 4.157, but it is important to note that his concern here is very different. In his Tafsīr he argues that God’s changing of someone’s appearance would undermine the possibility of providing mutawātir reports (because they are based in part on accurate sense perception), and implies that this would be a bad thing. Yet in Maṭālib he contends that the widespread reporting of God’s changing of someone’s appearance goes to show that large numbers of reporters are not always to be trusted. His concern to protect the high status of tawātur in the comments in his Tafsīr seems to have disappeared in Maṭālib, to be replaced by a dismissal of the reliability of mutawātir reports. So the argument in his commentary on Q 5.13 that he regards the biblical text as mutawātir is not as significant as might at first appear.”

It would seem that al-Rāzī’s views in his *Tafsīr* and *al-Maṭālib* are already found in his *al-Maḥṣūl* not as his own choice but rather as rhetorical. This is because his concern in all cases is to argue in support of *darūrī* (necessary) aspect of *tawātur*. That is why he seems to answer these questions against the validity of *tawātur* in his *al-Maṭālib* by the *darūrī* argument. This is because the context of this passage in his *al-Maṭālib* is presenting the views of those who deny the possibility of prophethood (*nubuwwāt*) which are six parties according to al-Rāzī: First, the philosophers who conceptualize God as necessitator by way of its essence (*Mūjib bil-Dhāt*) as this entails that He does not know the particulars (*al-Juz’iyyāt*).\(^{344}\) Second, those who conceptualize God as free agent (*fā’il Mukhtār*) but deny an imposition on the part of God of obligations on his creatures, of subjecting them to a law (*Taklīf*).\(^{345}\) Third, those who allowed *Taklīf* but through reason only. Fourth, those who doubt the validity of miracles to certify the prophethood. Fifth, those who doubt the ethical authority of prophets. Sixth, those who argued that God must have sent an angel with endless firm miracles rather than sending a human being.\(^{346}\) What would be related to our discussion is the fourth party who have doubts regarding the miracles. This is because al-Rāzī mentions that one of its aspects is doubting the transmission of these reports since it does not provide firm knowledge (*'Ilm Yaqīnī*) but rather a conjecture (*Ẓann*).\(^{347}\) Therefore, he presents three foundations (*Uṣūl*) for refuting these parties. The one related to our discussions is the second one in which he states that although something might be possible through contingency (*Ma’lūm al-Jawāz wal-Imkān*), it nevertheless could be fully disregarded using the argument from *darūrī*. Accordingly, although he does not specially mention the issue of *tawātur*, it would rather be a part of it.\(^{348}\)

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\(^{344}\) For more about this issue, see: Binyamin Abrahamov. “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on God’s Knowledge of the Particulars” *Oriens* 33 (1992), pp. 133-155.


Concluding remarks:

Al-Rāzī’s views on the crucifixion of Jesus have been a subject of long-standing debates that allowed researchers to present various interpretations. These interpretations have helped understanding several aspects of this issue. However, there still some overlooked questions that would contribute to our understanding such as the groups that al-Rāzī was responding to in this commentary and the place of early Muslims in his evaluation of this topic. Therefore, I have attempted to fill these gaps in this chapter through two main points: First, constructing the most probable apparent meaning (ẓāhir) of the verses through consulting the first three generations of Islam. This allowed me to trace him regarding one specific point which is his attempt to start examining the term shubbiha lahum being overwhelmingly shaped by the Isrā’īliyyāt sources which have already shaped the reports of the first three generations of Islam. This is because it prevented him from having a neutral vis-à-vis the linguistic meaning of this verse. I have suggested this having in mind that al-Rāzī and his fellow Kalāmists would allow any linguistic possibility – as an alternative to the apparent meaning - to avoid ascribing anthropomorphic language regarding the concept of God. This is because they consider the later as a rational decisive evidence (Muʿārid ʿAqlī) that has been constructed through their philosophical discourse, and thus it would even question reports found in al-Bukhārī according to al-Rāzī.349

The second point that has been done in this chapter is engaging al-Rāzī’s corpus to address his views in his commentary in the Qur’an. This point is very important to trace the development of al-Rāzī’s views. This is because it would seem that al-Rāzī had three phases regarding this issue with apparently one concern that is defending the necessary (ḍarūrī) of tawātur. The first phase is roughly the dominant one in his early career namely his late twenties which is the time of writing al-Mahṣūl. I argue that al-Rāzī adopts two views at this phase: First, being shaped by the mainstream Muslim views – or the first three generations of Islam -

regarding the crucifixion which is the substitution theory. Secondly, accepting that tawātur would provide knowledge (‘Ilm) as he doubts it in his discussions for the sake of argument to refute Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s views. This is not to say that the other choice for him would be rejecting the crucifixion itself but rather the Kalām-Mu‘tazilites version who argue a case of mistaken identity namely that the Jews brought someone else and crucified him, claiming that he was the Messiah, rather than a person taking on the appearance of Jesus in actuality. In other words, examining the crucifixion at this phase of al-Rāzī’s career is mostly a part of the Ash‘arites-Mu‘tazilites debates. This is because al-Rāzī’s main concern is to examine Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s views on Tawātur being speculative (naẓarī) not necessary (ḍarūrī). This phase seems to continue shaping al-Rāzī’s views for a long time that includes his writing of Al-Arba‘īn in his late forties.350 This is because he follows the same arguments made in his al-Maḥṣūl regarding tawātur being necessary (ḍarūrī) not speculative (naẓarī).351

The second phase is the time of writing his commentary where the main departure is being close to the Kalām-Mu‘tazilites version without explicitly saying this. This is because he presented both the substitution theory and the mistaken identity without picking any of them. However, his early objections in his al-Maḥṣūl against the Kalām-Mu‘tazilites version are absent in his commentary as this suggests that he was probably adopting it. This is because he is still arguing for the validity of argument from tawātur through questioning the number of Christians who witnessed the crucifixion. The third phase is the time of writing his Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya namely the eight volume on al-Nubuwwāt written in 1209.352 This means that is has been written ten years after his commentary on the fourth chapter (al-Nisā’) written in 1199 that includes the crucifixion verse.353 In this phase al-Rāzī presents his more far-reaching view that is doubting the validity of tawātur itself to provide knowledge. This means that his concern

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352 See: Eşref Altaş, “Fahreddin er-Râzî’nin eserlerinin kronolojisi”, p. 139.
is not anymore regarding the conflicting issue of *tawātur* being speculative (*nażarī*) or necessary (*darūrī*) but rather the concept itself. This is because he ends this discussion without adopting the *darūrī* aspect of *tawātur* but rather by asking the reader to refer to his early works such as *al-Maḥṣūl* and *Al-Arba‘īn* to show the weakness (*da‘f*) of this concept. Therefore, it would seem that his early objections against Abū al-Ḥusayn al- Başrī are now used for another purpose. Accordingly, we might suggest here that al-Rāzī does not have a final explicit word regarding the crucifixion of Jesus. Rather, it is a final word regarding the concept of *tawātur*.

This is because the context of this is presenting the views of those who deny the possibility of prophethood (*nubuwwāt*). Yet, al-Rāzī does not seem to present explicit answer regarding the concept of *tawātur* while he was refuting all these objections that he presents in this volume on *al-Nubuwwāt*.\(^{354}\) Accordingly, this might be solved by suggesting that al-Rāzī’s insistence on the validity of *darūrī* aspect epistemically would include the concept of *tawātur*.\(^{355}\)

Having foregrounded the main findings of this chapter, I shall now locate al-Rāzī’s views within the intellectual history this topic. There are two areas to be explored in this history: First, hermeneutics in which the question would be regarding the Muslim attempt to reinterpret the crucifixion verse to be compromised with the rational decisive evidence (*Muʿārid ‘Aqlī*) that comes from the Christian testimony regarding their own history. Second, epistemology in which the question would be regarding the issue of *tawātur* and how did the Muslim thinkers who reject the crucifixion address this challenge. As for the first part on hermeneutics, it has been explored through this chapter as there is roughly three phases: First, the first three generations of Islam in which the Muslim thought has been overwhelmingly shaped by the *Isrā‘īliyyāt* sources to adopt the substitution theory. This is having in mind that there are no accounts from the prophet himself regarding this issue. Secondly, the Kalām-

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Mu'tazilites version who argue a case of mistaken identity. This has been firstly demonstrated by Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/916). Thirdly, the Ismaʿīlī version who accept the crucifixion of Jesus. This has been firstly demonstrated by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/935). All these parties seem to have interpreted the term Shubbiha lahum in different ways; the first one would be: *Shubbiha lahum ʿĪsā bi-Ghayrih* (Another person had the appearance of Jesus). The second one would be: *Shabbah al-Yahūd lil-Nās Qatl ʿĪsā wa-Ṣalbah* (The Jews had intentionally deceived ordinary people regarding the death of Jesus by killing another person and claiming that he was Jesus). The third one would be: *Shubbiha lahum Mawt Lāhūtih* (They mistakenly thought his divinity aspect died not only his humanity). Accordingly, we can locate al-Rāzī’s hermeneutical views within the first two phases as he apparently moved from adopting the substitution theory to the mistaken identity. Therefore, it does not seem that al-Rāzī had contributed to this area except being an Ash’arite who adopted the Mu'tazilite narrative and its epistemic-theological consequences.

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356 Lawson writes: “The meaning of the error (waじh al-tashbīh) is that the leaders of the Jews took a man, killed him and crucified him on a hill. They prevented anyone from examining him until his body had decomposed beyond recognition. Then they claimed they had killed Jesus; thus they misled their people because they were afraid that if the Jews knew that Jesus had been raised by God from the house that they had entered in order to arrest him, that divine intervention would cause the Jews to believe in Jesus. Those who crucified this man were not the ones who disagreed about it”. See: Todd Lawson. *The Crucifixion and the Qurʾan*, p. 92. 357 See: David Thomas and Alexander Mallett (eds.) *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 2 (900-1050)* (Brill: 2010), p. 200-209. Lawson writes: “Quite apart from some minor discrepancies in the exact wording and numbering of verses from the Gospels, Abū Ḥātim thus demonstrates that both the Qurʾan and the Gospels agree that Jesus was crucified when the problematic phrase wa lakin shubbiha lahum is properly understood. That which appeared to be crucified was precisely the body while the spirit or true reality of Jesus was “raised” to his Lord. Thus according to Abū Ḥātim, “these passages from the Gospels are consistent with the Qurʾan in terms of their inner meaning, since both the scriptures attest that Jesus could not be killed in the full sense, that is, in both body and soul.””. See: Todd Lawson. *The Crucifixion and the Qurʾan*, p. 125. 358 ʿAbd al-Jabbār accepts this narrative with a slight modification which is that claim that Jesus was raised by God at the time the Jews had crucified somebody else, and thus this strengthened their claim that they had killed him (See: ʿAbd al-Jabbār. *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wal-ʿAdl*. Cairo: al-Mu’assasah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Taʿlīf wal-Anbāʾ) wal-Nashr, 1965, vol. 5, p. 143-144). It is not clear whether he meant that the claim that Jesus has been crucified through the eyes of Jews themselves or the lay people, but the end result is rejecting the substitution theory due to its epistemic impact on reports. 359 Adopting this reading by the Ismaʿīlī authors is in fact another manifestation of how the intellectual project of the Muslim thinker impacts his or her examination of other traditions. This is because they had approached this verse in this way according to their typological commitment. Lawson writes: “But it is only amongst the Ismaʿīlī authors that we find during this early period a reading of Qurʾan 4:157 that can not only agree but bear explicit witness to the truth of Christian salvation history. We saw, of course, that such bearing witness is also a way of propagating their own typologically iterative view of salvation and eschatology”. See: Todd Lawson. *The Crucifixion and the Qurʾan*, p. 94.
The second area is epistemology where al-Rāzī seems to have presented some interesting arguments. The issue regarding this area would be the Muslim attempt to examine the tawātūr of crucifixion itself rather than exploring alternative interpretations of the Qur’an verses. In both cases the Muslim thinker has the Qur’an as the ultimate proof that would question any other source of knowledge including historical accounts. However, what makes this diversity of views is the relative strength of this rational decisive evidence (Muʿāriḍ ʿAqlī) through the eyes of each Muslim thinker as it is connected to their intellectual projects. In other words, the one who considers the Jewish-Christian historical argument in a highly sense would prefer to deal with this issue in hermeneutical rather delving into the complexity of tawātūr. Therefore, the efforts to question the Christian argument for the tawātūr of crucifixion can be categorized through three main overlapping ways: First, to cast doubt regarding the reports of non-Muslims as this would exclude their ability to provide sufficient reports. Secondly, to question the validity of Gospels themselves to provide tawātūr since they are only four.
Gospels.\textsuperscript{364}\textsuperscript{365}\textsuperscript{366} Thirdly, to reinterpret the Gospels themselves to reject the crucifixion through the substitution theory.\textsuperscript{367} Sometimes a thinker would use all these together. For instance, Diego Cucarella writes regarding Shihāb al-Dīn Al-Qarāfī’s views:

“Rather than suggesting that the Qur’ān is at odds with the principle of tawātur, what is really problematic in al-Qarāfī’s eyes is invoking the Gospel as a reliable witness for the crucifixion of Jesus. Christians are not able to provide an unbroken chain of oral transmission going back to Jesus for the books which they have, still less to prove that these books satisfy the requisites of tawātur. Moreover, many passages in them indicate that Jesus was not crucified but God raised him up to himself, something that probably happened during Jesus’ transfiguration on the mountain, as al-Qarāfī, following al-Ja‘fārī, affirms. Thus, whereas the person who was crucified asked for something to drink (Jn 19:28), the real Jesus could abstain from food and drink for forty days and forty nights (Mt 4:1-2). Likewise, the person on the cross cried out in despair (Mt 27:36), showing an unwillingness to accept God’s designs that is inappropriate in a prophet, and even less in someone said to be the son of God.”\textsuperscript{368}

These three frameworks seem to dominate the Muslim epistemic perception of crucifixion with the exception of those thinkers who had their own distinctive intellectual projects or views that allowed them to present different interpretations such as al-Nazzām and his fellow Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d. 227/841) who belong to the “heroic”\textsuperscript{369} period of Mu’tazilites school of thought. It is no wonder to find such views within the writings of early Mu’tazilites as they were pioneers in various interreligious issue due to their debates with world religions within that context. This means that they were trying to structure a consistent account

that can address these Jewish-Christian objections. Therefore, al-Nazzām’s view on the crucifixion comes as a manifestation of his scepticism regarding both *tawātur* and the consensus (*IJmā’*) of jurists.  

This means that he is not even obliged to address any of these claims made by non-Muslim since his intellectual project allows to cast doubts regarding any community or transmission which he ‘feels’ that its circumstantial evidence (*Qarā’in*) does not support the claim.  

On the other hand, his Abū al-Hudhayl seems to have a different approach, as pointed out by Van Ess, that his stipulations of twenty narrators including one Friend of God were directed at finding a way to discredit Christian reports of the crucifixion”.  

It would seem that their attempts to address the Christian-Jewish objections is similar to their ones to address the philosophical objections against their Kalām-scriptural conception of God being eclectic without forming a consistent account.

Moving from the Mu‘tazilites to the Ash‘arites where there has been a shift in approaching this issue as Suheil Laher notes: “Bāqillāni later found a simpler answer; rather than casting doubt on the reports of non-Muslims, he points out that the crucifixion was

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370 Josef Van Ess summarizes al-Nazzām’s view in which he writes: “Consequently Nazzām added a number of provisos. Bodies, he said, cannot be recognised through *akhbār*; i.e. they are only accessible to the senses – it is not possible to describe the taste of milk. When it comes to information accessible to the intellect, *akhbār* are not relevant, either; this is for the intellect only. This includes, as hinted earlier, the fundamentals of faith. If a tradition is our only source of knowledge in the area appropriate, it does not matter how well attested it is. Nazzām was not interested in numerical criteria of the kind Abū l-Hudhayl had tried to determine; in his view, the relevant factors are sensory perceptions and rational conclusions accompanying the statement and imbuing it with conviction. He intended to say that reports and statements always have a context and are understood in relation to a particular situation. If someone tells us of a death, we will believe him if we know that the person mentioned was fatally ill, and if we see a coffin brought to his house. In this case it would not matter whether the person giving the information was a Muslim or not; this is only relevant if his faith is the determining attendant circumstance, i.e. if points of faith are transmitted: in these cases a Muslim deserves a higher degree of trust. It is not, however, proof of the truth of the information; but considering it to be true (*taṣdīq*) becomes easier”. See: Josef van Ess. *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra. Volume 3* (Brill: 2018), p. 415-416.

371 Note that there has been attempts to modify al-Nazzām’s theory in order to address the issue of crucifixion while having faith in these notions. Van Ess notes that “The Christians’ false consensus was their belief in the crucifixion, while the Jews erred in their conviction of the impossibility of abrogating the law. The Mālikite jurist Bājī (d. 474/1081) still considered Nazzām’s argument to be valid, modifying it only to say that a large group of people could not agree on a deliberate lie. Nazzām had not claimed this in any case. Jāḥiẓ shared Nazzām’s scepticism; citing some instances of such errors occurring in the Islamic community – such as when in Maṣṣūr’s time all the inhabitants of Bahrain performed the Friday prayer on a Thursday. The Ḥanafite Jaṣṣāṣ had already pointed to Jews and Christians before Bājī. Ibn ‘Aqīl also discussed this question. See: Josef Van Ess. *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra. Volume 4*, p. 418.

transmitted only by the four gospel writers, a number clearly insufficient for *tawātur*”. 373 Here comes the role of al-Rāzī whose views belong to the mainstream three frameworks mentioned before. However, he allowed through his discussions of *tawātur* - especially in his *al-Mahṣūl* - to question aspects of these frameworks in three ways: First, questioning the Muslim argument on casting doubt regarding the reports of non-Muslims. Although this might be common through the writings of other Muslim theologians, it was nevertheless distinctive in this case of crucifixion. Secondly, allowing *tawātur* to be provided by the four Gospel writers. Thirdly, his argument that if the number of Christians at the emergence of Christianity was not sufficient to be considered *tawātur*, their religion would not have been accepted from the time of Jesus up to the time of prophet Muhammad.

Accordingly, I would argue that al-Rāzī’s main epistemic contribution is his attempt to question the Muslim seeming ‘eclecticism’374 while approaching this issue through heavily relying on the circumstantial evidence (*Qarā’in*) in its broader sense.375 This, however, was not meant for affirming the crucifixion itself but rather his own intellectual project namely conceiving the concept of *tawātur* being necessary (<em>ḍarūrī</em>) not speculative (<em>naẓarī</em>). Needless to say, al-Rāzī follows the mainstream Muslim frameworks in his *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl* namely to cast doubt regarding the reports of non-Muslims and to question the validity of Gospels themselves to provide *tawātur*.376


[374] I mean by eclecticism is the mainstream Muslim attempt to accept aspects of the Christian narrative while rejecting others due to the doubts related to their testimony regarding their own history as noted by Al-Rāzī. See: See: Al-Rāzī. *al-Mahṣūl*, vol. 4, p. 256.

[375] There might be overlapping arguments between the concept of the circumstantial evidence (*Qarā’in*) and the contemporary methods such as the criterion of “Emarrassment”; “This criterion positis that a tradition about Jesus that is embarrassing or uncomfortable for his later followers is less likely to have been invented by them and thus stands a greater chance of being authentic to Jesus. As John Meier explains, “the point of the criterion is that the early Church would hardly have gone out of its way to create material that only embarrassed its creator or weakened its position in arguments with opponents.” Perhaps Jesus’ crucifixion is the prime example of this logic. Crucifixion was a form of execution used by Rome to shame inferior people who had (seemingly) risen above their social class or attempted to do so. Crucifixion was an ironic political statement that “lifted people up” who thought they should be higher in status than their social class afforded them. In other words, it was a device used to shame inferiors”. See: Sarah E. Rollens and Anthony Le Donne. “The Historical Jesus” in: Patrick Gray (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the New Testament* (Cambridge University Press: 2021), p. 63.

Chapter three: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Bible

This chapter analyses the views of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Bible, interpreting them according to his hermeneutics and epistemology that form part of his intellectual project. In relation to al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics, this chapter analyses the role al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī in questioning the apparent understanding of Qur’anic verses on the corruption of the Bible (taḥrīf). This is because the Qur’an appears unclear as to the nature of the alleged corruption of the Bible; a division and debate reflected in the tradition between corrupt interpretation (taḥrīf maʾnawī) or textual corruption (taḥrīf lafẓī). The question that al-Rāzī engages is this: Since Jews and Christians claim their sacred books are uncorrupted according to the concept of Tawātur, how may we understand the verses that suggest the Bible is corrupted textually?

In relation to al-Rāzī’s epistemology, this chapter analyses the question of the abrogation (al-naskh) of the Bible. We see this in his discussion on the concept in his work of on Islamic legal theory, al-Maḥṣūl. Al-Rāzī here considers the question that if the Bible was valid for only a temporary period, this would have been illustrated at the time of its revelation, and it would have been transmitted by tawātur. These themes would be his main concern in this chapter.

Note that the epistemic aspects of examining the Bible have already been discussed in the previous chapter on the crucifixion. Al-Rāzī himself does not mention any epistemic concerns when he discusses the issue of tahrīf whether through his commentary on the Qur’an or the rest of corpus. However, the serious epistemic concerns are related to the issue of abrogation having the same theme of tracing Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s intellectual project. These themes have been through the intellectual history of abrogation as it entails having a critique of the previous readings of scriptures. For instance, see: Irven M. Resnick. “The Falsification of Scripture and Medieval Christian and Jewish Polemics” Medieval Encounters 2:3 (1996), pp. 344-380; David Rokeah. Justin Martyr and the Jews (Brill: 2002), p. 43; Robert J. Miller. Helping Jesus Fulfill Prophecy (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2016); Martin C. Albl. “Ancient Christian Authors on Jews and Judaism” in: Hagit Amirav and Riemer Roukema (eds.) The ‘New Testament’ as a Polemical Tool: Studies in Ancient Christian Anti-Jewish Rhetoric and Beliefs (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 2018), p. 35. This is a part of the theme of this thesis which is the impact of the intellectual projects on the perceptions of other traditions. For instance, John Zaleski writes regarding the hermeneutical complexity of reading the Hebrew Bible by Christians and Muslims: “One suspects that the Muslim exegesis of Deuteronomy 18:15 was particularly problematic to a Christian apologist precisely because of the passage’s use in Christian sources as a prophecy of Jesus. A reader who interpreted the verse Christologically could not so easily dismiss the Prophetic interpretation offered by Muslims as violating historical and literary context, in the way that Timothy suggests when discussing Isaiah 21:7. To put it another way, if Deuteronomy 18:15 is understood as pointing forward to a prophet who postdates the Hebrew Bible but who is not explicitly named therein, then the verse becomes susceptible to the Muslim exegesis offered by al-Mahdī”. See: John Zaleski. “Who Is the Man On the Camel? Historical Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and Christian-Muslim Debate” Medieval Encounters 26:1 (2020), p. 69.
Constructing the apparent meaning (ẓāhir):

In what follows, I focus on several Qur’anic verses that directly relate to the question of the abrogation of the Bible. I classify these verses into three categories. The first category, on the origin of corruption, illustrates the first attempt to corrupt in the Bible by the Jews according to the Islamic narrative. The second category, on the difference of corruption between the Torah and the Gospel, sheds light on how the Qur’an uses specific terms to describe each. The third category concerns the abrogation of the Bible by the Qur’an.

1. The origin of corruption in the Bible: “So can you [believers] hope that such people will believe you, when some of them used to hear the words of God and then deliberately twist (yuharrifūnah) them, even when they understood them?” (2:75) “When they meet the believers, they say, ‘We too believe.’ But when they are alone with each other they say, ‘How could you tell them about God’s revelation [to us]? They will be able to use it to argue against you before your Lord! Have you no sense?’” (2:76) “Do they not know that God is well aware of what they conceal and what they reveal?” (2:77) “Some of them are uneducated, and know the Scripture only through wishful thinking. They rely on guesswork” (2:78) “So woe to those who write something down (yaktubūn) with their own hands and then claim, ‘This is from God,’ in order to make some small gain. Woe to them for what their hands have written! Woe to them for all that they have earned!” (2:79).

2. The corruption between the Torah and the Gospel: “But they broke their pledge, so We distanced them [from Us] and hardened their hearts. They distort the meaning of [revealed] words (yuḥarrifūnah) and have forgotten some of what they were told to remember: you [Prophet] will always find treachery in all but a few of them. Overlook

this and pardon them: God loves those who do good” (5:13) We also took a pledge from those who say, ‘We are Christians,’ but they too forgot \textit{(nasū)} some of what they were told to remember, so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them until the Day of Resurrection, when God will tell them what they have done” (5:14) – “We revealed the Torah with guidance and light, and the prophets, who had submitted to God, judged according to it for the Jews. So did the rabbis and the scholars in accordance with that part of God’s Scripture which they were entrusted to preserve, and to which they were witnesses. So [rabbis and scholars] do not fear people, fear Me; do not barter away My messages for a small price; those who do not judge according to what God has sent down are rejecting [God’s teachings]” (5:44) “We sent Jesus, son of Mary, in their footsteps, to confirm the Torah that had been sent before him: We gave him the Gospel with guidance, light, and confirmation of the Torah already revealed- a guide and lesson for those who take heed of God” (5:46) “So let the followers of the Gospel judge according to what God has sent down in it. Those who do not judge according to what God has revealed are lawbreakers” (5:47) “You [Prophet] are sure to find that the most hostile to the believers are the Jews and those who associate other deities with God; you are sure to find that the closest in affection towards the believers are those who say, ‘We are Christians,’ for there are among them people devoted to learning and ascetics. These people are not given to arrogance” (5:82).

3. The abrogation of the Bible:\footnote{Note that I chose these verses on the abrogation of the Bible since the other well-known verses on abrogation (2:106; 16:101) are related to internal abrogation; “early Muslim writers on abrogation as a technical subject do not focus on the abrogation of previous scriptures. Instead, the focus in discussion of previous faiths is on the phenomenon of supersession”. See: Whittingham. \textit{A History of Muslim Views of the Bible}, p. 41.} “People of the Book, believe in what We have sent down to confirm (\textit{muṣaddiq}) what you already have” (4:47) We sent to you [Muhammad] the Scripture with the truth, confirming (\textit{muṣaddiq}) the Scriptures that came before it, and with final authority over them (\textit{muhaymin})” (5:48).
Scholarship on the Bible in the Qur’an is a wide ranging one. A major issue in the field of Christian-Muslim relations is the Islamic position on the corruption of the Bible (tahrīf). Most relevant to constructing the apparent meaning are two questions that can be traced through non-Islamic sources: Was the Bible available to early Muslims in Arabic? Could the Qur’anic charge of corrupting the Bible have roots in another source from within that historical context? On the former, it has been argued that the gospels appeared in Arabic in around the early eighth century CE in the milieu of Palestine and Syria, while the Hebrew Bible seems to have appeared in Arabic slightly later in 9th century translations that were written initially in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written with Hebrew letters). Furthermore, it has been argued that “simultaneously with biblical works, a vast corpus of patristic works, as well as other Christian works of diverse content (biblical apocrypha, hagiography, hymnography, history, canon law, etc.), was translated as well. The earliest translation that we can securely date is from 772 AD”. On the latter question of having a source for the Qur’anic focus on tahrīf, Gabriel Said Reynolds suggests that “the Qur’an’s fascination with Jewish perfidy is rooted in the tradition of Syriac typological exegesis”. Accordingly, it would seem that early Muslims would have mainly encountered Biblical sources and literature orally.

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382 On Tahrīf in Western academic discourse, see: Ryan Schaffner. The Bible through a Qur’ānic Filter: Scripture Falsification (Tahrīf) in 8th- and 9th-Century Muslim Disputational Literature (PhD dissertation at The Ohio State University: 2016), p. 14-77.


Moving to the views of early Muslims, the crucial term that shapes the discussions of early Muslims on the corruption of the Bible is *Yuharrifūn* (to distort). This serves as the hermeneutical tool that shapes understanding of other terms that relate to the corruption of the Bible, such as *ghayyar* (change), *baddal* (exchange), *katam* (conceal), *akhfā* (hide), *labas* (cover up), *lawā* (twist) and *katab* (write down). It is possible to understand this comparatively with how the term *shubbiha* shaped early Muslim understandings of crucifixion; both terms are linguistically ambiguous and cannot be neatly defined without context or indication. It is also important to be noted in what follows that the firm technical distinction between the two types of corruption, that is, interpretive or textual, is a product of later Muslim discussions of the issue. Any reading of these texts of early Muslims through this lens entails conjecture as seen, for instance, in reading the views of Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) on this issue as it has been debatable.\(^{386}\)

On the first verse on the origin of corruption (2:75), there is a consensus in the works of early Muslims that this verse was revealed in relation to the story of the Prophet Moses and his seventy companions who asked to listen to the words of God. The dispute regards whether they listened to the words of God directly or through the Torah. The importance of the dispute for our present purposes is in tracing the origin of the doctrine of the corruption of the Torah according to early Muslims; for if the Jews corrupted only what they heard, it would suggest the text of the Torah is preserved. Another point is the early attempts to limit the doctrine of the corruption of the Bible at the beginning to legal issues.\(^{386}\)

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\(^{386}\) See: Ahmad Sanusi Azmi, “Exploring the Bible Through Qur’ānic Lens: An Analysis of Ibn Qutayba’s Approach in *Dalā’il Nubuwwa*” *The Muslim World* 109:3 (2019), pp. 362-374. This is in line with the intra-faith debates regarding God’s attributes as some early texts have been read with the lens of later technical terms such as ‘to entrust the knowledge of its meaning to God’ (*Tafwīḍ*) even though the context itself is not meant for this. See: Muḥammad Maḥmoud Āl Khuḍrī. *Maqālat al-Tafwīḍ Bayn al-Salaf wal-Mutakallimīn* (London: Markaz Takwīn, 2016); Philipp Bruckmayr. “Salafi Challenge and Māturīdī Response: Contemporary Disputes over the Legitimacy of Māturīdī kalām” *Die Welt des Islams* 60 (2020), p. 300. At some point this would lead to cite Bruno Mars’ song “Just the way you are” to support accepting the revealed attributes (*ṣifāt al-khabariyyah*).


As for the verses 2:76-78, early Muslims mostly limited its meaning to the issue of their hiding the prophethood of Muhammad, without mentioning the exact source of this corruption; it could be ascribed to Jewish scholars directly or to ordinary Jewish people who listened to scholars without having the ability to read the Torah and critically examine these claims. This is also applied to the verses related to this without mentioning a specific procedure of hiding the prophethood of Muhammad in the Torah such as (2:89) (2:101) (2:159) (2:180) (6:91). This limitation is expected as the verses move from discussing the origin of corruption to the contemporary situation at the time of the Prophet; the Qur’ān makes an analogy between the two situations to warn Muslims. Verse 2:79 is the first to suggest textual corruption (taḥrīf lafẓī) ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās that Jewish scholars erased the descriptions of the Prophet Muhammad in the Torah. The point here is to mention the term “to erase” (maḥā) is the same term that is mentioned by Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 767). Both Whittingham and Nickel have noted the importance of using this term in the study of Muqātil. The former suggests “this would be a clear indication of belief in textual alteration, albeit attributable to the specific Jewish leaders in question.” This term was used by the Prophet himself in the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyah (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī – 3184) as he asked his cousin, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), to erase his description as “the prophet of God.” This indicates that the use of this term within its linguistic context means to erase something. It is used in this sense elsewhere in the Qur’ān in the verse that states, “God erases or confirms (yamḥū) whatever He will” (13:39) on issues regarding destiny. The remaining narratives imply Biblical corruption as to the prophethood of Muhammad through terms such as ghayyar (change) or baddal

397 See: Whittingham, A History of Muslim Views of the Bible, p. 36.
(exchange). This is mentioned by Ibn ‘Abbās.\(^399\) The term *Baddal* has been used elsewhere by Ibn ‘Abbās to argue that the legal ruling (*Hukm*) might be changed but not the text in regard to the Qur’an namely the issue of abrogation (*naskh*).\(^400\) This confirms Ibn ‘Atiyyah’s (d. 541/1146) note that Ibn ‘Abbās adopts the corrupt interpretation (*tahrīf ma‘nawī*).\(^402\)

On the second category of verses regarding the corruption between the Torah and the Gospel, early Muslims mention two results on the covenant that was given first to the Jews and then to Christians. What is worth noting is the usage of the term *yuharrifūn* for the Jewish context only. On the other hand, the only description that is related to the Christian one is the term *nasiya* (to forget).\(^403\) This verse is important as it is a direct comparative analysis of the positions of both Jews and Christians. Verses 5:44-47 support this as the Qur’an asks both Jews and Christians to apply their respective laws. However, in relation to the Jews, narratives tend to focus on the issue of stoning in early interactions between Muslims and Jews. As for the Christian context, the narratives do not mention a specific context between early Muslims and Christians except for the issue of forgiving the murder.\(^404\)\(^405\) This is also seen on the issue of whether the prophethood of Muhammad is mentioned in the Torah and Gospel (7:157); the narratives regarding these verses mostly focus on the Torah, not the Gospel. In addition, these narratives provide a general description of the Prophet Muhammad in the Bible, namely, on issues related to his ethical authority\(^406\) which is applied to the verse (48:29).\(^407\) Yet the only place in the Qur’an in which a specific description of the Prophet Muhammad is ascribed to the Gospels is the verse 61:6 in which Jesus refers to a prophet that will come after him called


“Aḥmad”; Muqātil ibn Sulaymān here mentions the issue of the Paraclete.⁴⁰⁸ Accordingly, these three indications suggest that while early Muslims seem to believe that both texts had been preserved, the doctrine of corruption was more often applied to the Jewish tradition.

It would therefore seem from these narratives that early Muslims were closer to the position of corrupt interpretation (tahrīf maʾnawī), rather than textual. This is because they are asked in the Qur’an to refer to these texts to find the prophethood of Muhammad which is the most contested topic regarding the applied sense of corruption.⁴⁰⁹ This is not to say the early Muslims accepted everything in the text of the Torah and the Gospels, as seen previously in our discussion on the Crucifixion.⁴¹⁰ Therefore, I argue that the logical conclusions of adopting the position of corrupt interpretation (tahrīf maʾnawī) in the Muslim thought in general lead to accept the historicity of the Crucifixion – based on the analysis of the previous chapter - and to reject its theological implications, namely, the doctrine of atonement.⁴¹¹ This is because this specific point leads to various questions on the need for a firm distinction between the two

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⁴⁰⁸ See: Ibid, vol. 21, p. 608. Carlos A. Segovia suggests that: “أحمد aḥmad (lit., “most praised”) is likely a misreading of παράκλητος paráklētos, possibly due to the inherently ambiguous Syriac transliteration parqlyṭ (= [a] παράκλητος paraklētos [Paraclete, “comforter”] or [b] περίκλυτος peryklytos [“most praised”], indistinctly) of the original Greek term ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΤΟΣ PARAKLĒTOS mentioned in John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1. It is commonly identified with Muḥammad, which shares the same verbal root (ḥ.m.d.) and therefore has a similar, though less emphatic, meaning (the “praised one”)”. See: Carlos A. Segovia. The Quranic Jesus: A New Interpretation (De Gruyter: 2019), p. 53.


⁴¹⁰ This includes the most contested terms such as Katab (write down) as it might apparently suggest that there had been a corruption in the text. However, it could be read that “the Qur’an does not accuse Jews or Christians of changing the Bible. Instead, it argues against those who treat the words of humans as revelation, while neglecting the words of God”. See: Gabriel Reynolds. “On the Qur’anic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (tahrīf) and Christian anti-Jewish Polemic” Journal of the American Oriental Society 130 (2010), p. 193.

⁴¹¹ The critical point that has been noted regarding this issue is the reliance on Isrāʾīliyyāt while neglecting the Biblical text although the Qur’an does apparently refer to the Bible itself. This continued to dominate the Muslim thought in which Samuel Ross writes having surveyed more than 150 representative commentaries from the Sunni and Shiʿite Arabic tafsīr traditions: “The neglect of the Bible by Qur’an commentators is striking not only for the aforementioned reasons. It is also striking in light of historical Muslim praxis. Even as commentators neglected the Bible, they drew heavily upon a parallel body of Jewish and Christian material: the orally-transmitted exegetical material originating with Jews and Christians (isrāʾīlyāt)”. See: Samuel Jonathan Ross. The Biblical Turn in the Qurʾan Commentary Tradition (PhD dissertation at Yale University: 2018), p. 79.
types of corruption while approaching those are known to have accepted the corrupt interpretation.  

As for verse on the abrogation of the Bible by the Qur’ān, the narratives agree that these relate to Jews who know the prophethood of Muhammad was mentioned in the Torah. The same applies to Christians. Narratives focus mainly on the priests who were sent by al-Nadjashī to the Prophet Muhammad and heard the Qur’ān from him. The Qur’ān in this sense is understood by early Muslims as attempt to correct the disputes that happened between Jews and Christians. Accordingly, the doctrine of the abrogation of the Bible by the Qur’ān is based upon belief in the prophethood of Muhammad. These topics are often mentioned together in relation to the charge of hiding the prophethood of Muhammad with some exceptions, such as the verses on changing the direction of prayer (qiblah) or stoning (al-Rajm). Having analysed the views of early Muslims, I conclude by illustrating the importance of this discussion as a criterion to examine the views of the later Muslim tradition. It is crucial to distinguish reading these texts of early Muslim as they are from reading them through the lens of other fields that have constructed later such as tawātur and Biblical criticism. This is one of the points for questioning Ibn Ḥazm’s own reading of the views of

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412 Whittingam writes: “The wider question of the meaning of tahrīf ma’nawī also requires attention. When some version of tahrīf ma’nawī is sincerely adopted as an approach to the Bible, as in the case of Ibn Khaldūn, this is not necessarily enough to overturn his assessments of core Christian doctrines and of those who hold them, which are more typically associated with what is called tahrīf lafẓī. It is therefore necessary to question the usefulness of the category of tahrīf ma’nawī as an analytical tool. It would appear that the main distinction that Ibn Khaldūn raises in approaching the biblical text is between deliberate or accidental corruption. In both cases, a form of textual corruption is involved. This contrasts with the common approach of distinguishing corruption either of the text or of its interpretation. The preceding discussion of Al-radd and Ibn Khaldūn indicates that neither author should be classified as upholding the view that only the interpretation and not the text of the Bible is corrupted. A more refined classification needs to be developed, perhaps based on the distinction between accidental and deliberate error”. See: Martin Whittingham. “The value of tahrīf ma’nawī (corrupt interpretation) as a category for analysing Muslim views of the Bible: Evidence from Al-radd al-jamīl and Ibn Khaldūn” Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, 22:2 (2011), p. 220.

early Muslims. As Whittingham writes: “One of Ibn Ḥazm’s key concerns in this work is deliberately to oppose the more lenient view of some Muslims that Biblical corruption consists only of wrong interpretations, not corrupted text”.420 I therefore think what is questionable regarding Ibn Ḥazm’s method is not his scholarly criticism of the Bible, but rather his attempt to ascribe this position to early Muslims. This is because this criticism shapes his understanding of the term yuḥarrifūn to refer to textual, not corruption interpretation.421 The same applies to Ibn Taymiyyah’s attempt to revive the term yuḥarrifūn through his socio-political assessment. Joshua Ralston writes: “what has largely gone unnoticed in studies of Ibn Taymiyya’s assessment of Christianity is the way that he extends his scriptural critique into the beginnings of a trenchant sociopolitical one. Ibn Taymiyya’s move of tying the Christian corruption of scripture to corruption in Christian theo-legal practice is largely unique in the medieval period”.422 This would question his hermeneutics; Ibn Taymiyyah adopts the view that there is a small amount of corruption of the Biblical text in many manuscripts. Yet he does not ascribe this to any certain figure of the first three centuries of Islam known as fahm al-Salaf in his terminology.423 Accordingly, I suggest there has been a shift not only regarding how to read the Qur’anic view of corruption424 but also how to read the views of early Muslims.

424 This is also evident in other fields such as the works of Arab philologists. This is because the first Arabic dictionary by al-Khallīf ibn Ahmad al-Farāḥīdī (d. 1757/91) states that Yuharrifūn means changing the meaning of a word only as he notes that this is the way Jews used to alter the Torah citing the Qur’anic verse. See: Al-Fāryhidī. *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2002), p. 305. On the other hand, al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1410) defines this term as to change the text not the interpretation being influenced by the Muslim critiques of the Bible. See: Al-Jurjānī. *Al-Ta’rīfāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Faḍila, 2004), p. 48.
Al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics:

Debates over the apparent meaning of the term *yuḥarrifūn* among the early Muslims allows al-Rāzī to adopt any view which he considers compatible with *al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī*, namely, the Jewish-Christian argument that the Bible is transmitted by *tawātur*. This is because we have seen in the previous chapter that al-Rāzī was able to reject the *Isrāʾīliyyāt*-based meaning of the verse even though this was accepted as the apparent understanding by early Muslims. But the case of corrupting the Bible is different. This is due to the complexity of the apparent meaning of *yuḥarrifūn* as mentioned before. This means he has in mind a debatable apparent meaning that would shape his analysis of the topic which is different from the example of the Crucifixion. The analysis of al-Rāzī’s views in this section will include three points: The origin of corruption in the Bible, the corruption between the Torah and the Gospel, the abrogation of the Bible.

As for the origin of corruption in the Bible (2:75), al-Rāzī opens the discussion with a point that he illustrates various times throughout his commentary. This is the argument from similarities between Biblical and Qur’anic stories; since the Prophet was illiterate, the argument follows, he could not have had access to them. On this basis he uses them as a reference to affirm the Qur’anic stories to argue for the prophethood of Muhammad. On the Qur’anic affirmation that the Jews will not believe in the prophethood of Muhammad, al-Rāzī uses three terms relating to the corruption of the Bible. These are: *baddal*, *ghayyar*, and *yuʿānidūnah* (to disbelieve out of rejection). These terms are ambiguous and do not indicate whether he meant textual or corrupt interpretation. He further questions the identity of the referents of the verse: are they the same group as at the time of the Prophet or another group from the time of Moses. Al-Rāzī suggests that it applies to those with the Prophet Muhammad, not Moses.

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This is the starting point for his discussion on *yuḥarrifūn*. Al-Rāzī cites Al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (d. 365/976) for his linguistic analysis of this term, stating that it is means going astray from the proper way, which would make the term a synonym for *taghyīr* (change) and *tabdīl* (exchange). Al-Rāzī then cites Muʿtazilite figure al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024) as a central source for distinguishing the different types of corruption. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s concern relates to their theological implications such as the claim that God would have prevented the corruption if it would question *Qiyām al-Ḥujjah* (affirmation of God’s proof). Al-Rāzī states that if the corruption relates to the time of Moses, it would not refer to hiding the prophecy of Muhammad. On the other hand, if it relates to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, it would relate to his prophethood for the Jews corrupted his description in addition to other legal issues such as the punishment of stoning. He then makes an important point, claiming the ambiguity of the idea of *Ẓāhir al-Qur’ān* (the apparent meaning of the Qur’an) regarding that which has been corrupted. This confirms the aforementioned point that al-Rāzī does not have in mind one fixed understanding of the verse that could be questioned by *al-Muʿārid al-‘Aqlī*. What is worth noting here is the attempt to repeat the term ‘*inād*’ (disbelief out of rejection) when discussing this verse. He discusses three issues on the nature of corruption: First, that it was done by the Jewish scholars not the ordinary Jews. Second, they have done it for their own self-interest. Third, Jewish scholars must have been small in number as it is not possible for huge number of people to agree on concealing

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428 Tariq Jaffer writes regarding the presence of the Mu'tazilite thought in al-Rāzī’s commentary: “Rāzī absorbed much of this material through Zamakhsharī’s Qur’ān commentary, a work that represented the last outspoken voice of the Mu'tazila in Central Asia. The prominent Mu'tazilites who feature in Rāzī’s commentary include Abū ʿAllī l-Jubbāfī (d. 303/915), Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāfī (d. 321/933), Abū Isḥāq al-Naẓẓām (d. 230/845), ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024) and Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ḡaṣfī (d. 436/1044), whose doctrines seem to have been current in Khwarazm. But it is likely that he was aware of their views as quoted in a Mu'tazilite tafsīr”. See: Tariq Jaffer. *Rāzī: Master of Quranic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning*, p. 57.


something. To this point, al-Rāzī does not present a fixed understanding of the term yuḥarrifūn, quoting from other thinkers and making critical comments.

Al-Rāzī moves to the second part of these verses in which the practical sense of the corruption relates to interactions between Jews and early Muslims on the prophethood of Muhammad. This, he writes, is because Jews reportedly told Muslims that Muhammad is mentioned in the Torah; when they met each other privately, however, they would accuse the other of spreading an argument that Muslims could use against them; al-Rāzī here uses the term katam (conceal). Al-Rāzī classifies such Jews into four groups: First, he uses the term yuḥarrifūn for those who intentionally corrupt the Bible and transmit this corruption to people. Second, the hypocrites. Third, those who argue with the hypocrites. Fourth, the ordinary illiterate Jews who accept their religion by taqlīd (The subscription to a position without evidence). Al-Rāzī states that these acts by the mentioned groups would be the same case in the divisions of Islam. This impacts his ultimate views on the corruption of the Bible in which he posits an analogy between the corruption of the Bible and the corruption of the Qur’an by the false interpretations of some Islamic parties.

This leads us to his discussion of yuḥarrifūn in the verses 4:46. Al-Rāzī describes the corruption of the Bible as a manifestation of Jewish scholars’ attempt to misguide the laity for the sake of having social status. This is because accepting the prophethood of Muhammad would threaten the status of these Jewish scholars. Thus, he states there are two ways of understanding the meaning of tahrīf: a corruption of the text by erasing and replacing terms, such as changing Muhammad’s description in the Torah from Rab’a (neither short or tall) to be Adam Ṭāwīl (a tall black person) or by putting al-Jald (flogging) instead of al-Rajm.

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436 See: Ibid, vol. 11, p. 239.
(stoning). At this point al-Rāzī presents his al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī, which is the Jewish-Christian argument that the Bible is transmitted by tawātur. Al-Rāzī suggests three answers to this objection: First, this type of corruption may have occurred due to the small number of people, especially scholars, at the time. Second, the corruption relates to deliberate misinterpretation of the text. He then compares this to some Muslim parties who twist the meanings of verses to support their doctrines. A third possibility is to read the issue of corruption within the context of Jewish interactions with the Prophet; he states that Jews would come to the Prophet to hear and then twist his words. Al-Rāzī supports the second possibility. He confirms in his commentary on verse 5:41 that Jews changed the rule of stoning to flogging. However, al-Rāzī adds a linguistic analysis to verses 4:46 and 5:13 in which he states the former is ‘An Mawāḍi’ih (replacing words) and the latter is Min Ba’d Mawāḍi’ih (distorting the meanings) with the latter, he writes, suggesting textual corruption. Nevertheless, al-Rāzī confirms or corrects his own reading in his commentary on 5:13 in which he states that corruption is by interpretation only since the Bible is transmitted by tawātur. He says the same in his commentary on 2:89. He supports this in his commentary on 5:44 by suggesting that righteous Jewish scholars have preserved (Ḥifz) the Torah from corruption. This is in the context of a discussion on legal issues (ahkām) that uses the terms taghyīr and tahrīf, which confirms that it is not about changing the text.

441 See: Ibid, vol. 16, p. 31. This would correct some contemporary attempts to revisit al-Rāzī’s views through the Christian-Muslim dialogues namely the official response from Al-Azhar institution by Muḥammad ‘Imāra to a Christian apologetic work that was spread in Egypt entitled Musta’iddīn lil-Mujāwabah by Samīr Murqus (On the broader context of these polemics, see: Sebastian Elsässer. The Coptic Question in the Mubarak Era. Oxford University Press: 2014, p. 190-213). This is because the latter mentions al-Rāzī on the issue of corrupting the Bible citing his views in his commentary on Qur’ān. However, ‘Imāra’s interpretation of al-Rāzī’s views seems to be not accurate since he presents al-Rāzī’s notes namely the issue of ‘An Mawāḍi’ih and Min Ba’d Mawāḍi’ih without mentioning his other one namely the verse (5:13) in which al-Rāzī states that the corruption is by interpretation only since it is transmitted by Tawātur. See: Muḥammad ‘Imāra. Taqrīr ‘Ilmī (Al-Azhar journal: 2009), p. 138-143.
This leads to the issue of distinguishing the corruption of the Torah from the Gospel. The context of his discussion appears to relate only to the Jewish scripture. This is because al-Rāzī seeks to analyse the central differences between Jews and Christians through his interpretation of verse 5:82. Christians, he writes, are much softer by nature than the Jews. Christians do not allow harming the others through religious rulings while Jews permit the killing of others. Christians are also known for being pious and not interested in worldly desires such as social status, while this does not extend to Jews. Here al-Rāzī cites the verse: “[Prophet], you are sure to find them clinging to life more eagerly than any other people” (2:96). Thus, he suggests Christians can affirm the truth more than the Jews even if their unbelief is greater due to their conception of God. I mention this as it may impact al-Rāzī’s views on the corruption of the Gospels; if Christians are not involved in worldly desires, why would they corrupt the Bible? It is for this reason that he presents elsewhere in his commentary on verse 9:30 a critical question, which he calls Ishkāl Qawī (A difficult question). He asks how all Christians could have adopted the doctrine of the sonship of Jesus while neither Jesus nor his disciples preached this. He answers this by suggesting that Christians interpret terms like “son” literally in response to the Jewish negative view of Jesus, as this suggests that al-Rāzī adopts corrupt interpretation (tahrīf ma’nawī).

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445 It is evident that al-Rāzī is relying on a speculative analysis of the issue rather than a sufficient historical source. That is why I have suggested elsewhere that modern studies on early Christianity could fill the gap in the Muslim scholarship such as the emergence of the doctrine of Jesus’ divinity. See: Mohammad Abu Shareea. “How Could Early Christians Be Wrong? The Role of Fahn al-Salaf in the Biblical Hermeneutics of Ibn Taymiyyah and Michael Servetus” Ilahiyyat Studies 10:2 (2019), p. 220. Note that I should have added Hurtado’s work Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity (Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003) alongside Edward Burton’s one in this article. This is because it serves as a manifestation of these testimonies in the first century through his concept of “Jesus-devotion”. See: Larry W. Hurtado. “The New religionsgeschichtliche Schule at Thirty: Observations by a Participant” in: Matthew V. Novenson (ed.) Monotheism and Christology in Greco-Roman Antiquity (Brill: 2020), p. 15.
446 This passage is essential to question some contemporary attempts such as the one of Muhammad Abu Layla who argues that al-Rāzī supports textual corruption through his Al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya in which he writes: “Imam ar-Razi in his book Al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya in the section on Prophethood says: “The influence of the original teachings of Jesus was very limited because he never preached the doctrine which the Christians ascribe to him. The idea of Father and son and the notion of Trinity are the worst kind of atheism and polytheism and are certainly
This line of argument suggests the Christian attempt to corrupt the Gospels according to al-Rāzī is a “misunderstanding” rather than a “misinterpretation.” The former indicates unintentionality while the latter suggests an intention that is based on benefiting from worldly desires. This is because the reason for the corruption of the Torah in the Jewish context is to obtain worldly desires; as mentioned previously, Jewish scholars had to defend their reputation by denying the prophethood of Muhammad in the Torah. On the other hand, al-Rāzī writes, Christians are not like this. This justifies the fact that the term tahrīf is never used against Christians in the Qur’an. Furthermore, al-Rāzī presents elsewhere the main aspects of guidance in the Injīl (Gospel) noting that the Qur’an asks Christians to adhere to the Gospels. He says that this indicates that the text of the Gospels is preserved. Therefore, it would seem that al-Rāzī’s adoption of corrupt interpretation (tahrīf ma’nawī) covers both the Torah and the Gospels with the sole difference being that of the intention behind the corruption.

the result of ignorance. Such heretical teachings can’t be ascribed to a great prophet like Jesus who was free of all such sinful errors. We are therefore certain that Jesus could have not preached this impure doctrine. He originally taught monotheism but not Trinity as the Christians assert. These teachings of Jesus did not (widely) spread owing to many historical factors. His message thus remained very limited. Ar-Razi indirectly attacked the scriptural passages of which Christians regard as the cornerstone of their doctrine.” (See: Muhammad Abu Laylah. The Qur’an and the Gospels: A Comparative Study. Cairo: Al-Falah Foundations for translation, publication and distribution, 2005, p. 114; Rahmatullah al-Hindi. Izhar al-Hasq. Riyadh: al-Ra’sah al-‘Āmmah lil-Buhāth al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1989, vol. 1, p. 395; Al-Razi. Al-Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb, vol. 8, p. 121-122). It would seem that the context of al-Ra’s words is not meant for the discussions of tahrīf. This is because he is arguing for the superiority of the prophet Muhammad namely that his preaching has spread widely while Jesus’ one was limited. Thus, this argument is not meant for whether there has been a textual corruption or not since al-Ra does not even mention anything related to the concept of Tawātur. This passage should be understood within al-Razi’s overall evaluation of this topic namely this similar passage in his commentary. He clearly mentions in this context that the Christian corruption of the term “son” was a response to the Jewish negative view of Jesus. This means that he is suggesting a corrupt interpretation in that case, and this would be applicable to this one too as it seems that he is condemning interpreting terms such as Father to be real father rather than the metaphorical sense of this term. This is because he argues in other works such as Nihayat al-Uqul in this way. In other words, the theme of both passages is to deny that Jesus had preached these doctrines such as the Trinity rather than questioning the text itself.


449 Elsewhere, he mentions that neither the Torah nor the Gospels can be corrupted as he discusses the signs of the prophethood of Muhammad. This indicates that he generally refers to both texts when discussing this issue. See: Al-Razi. Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wal-Muta’akhkhirīn, p. 211.
This clarifies some earlier views found in other works regarding the type of tahrīf, including his attempt to question some texts in the Gospels. He states, for example, in his early *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl*, that New Testament verses that support the divinity of Jesus may be questioned on the bases of transmission or could be interpreted figurately, such as the verse “I am ascending to my Father and your Father” (John 20:17).\(^{450}\) It seems his questioning the transmission is part of a Kalām theme in which a thinker indicates his suspicions regarding the text to then apply *ta’wīl* (figurative interpretation). This theme could fall under the category of *tawaqquf* (suspension of judgement).\(^{451}\) However, does this mean that al-Rāzī fully adopts the position of corrupt interpretation of the Bible? Here we come to the issue of Crucifixion, which, as previously mentioned, questions the validity of reading the Muslim thinkers according to this classification. This includes what one may suggest that al-Rāzī’s departure from the substitution theory to the mistaken identity in his evaluation of the crucifixion would suggest a departure here too. This is because al-Rāzī used to support the argument from *tawātur* of early Christianity in his *Al-Mahṣūl* while rejecting it later in his commentary on the Qur’an. This argument makes sense but again it is a part of the complexity of engaging his views on the crucifixion with his views on the corruption of the Bible, not to mention his statement in his commentary too. In this case we have two contradictory statements in his commentary; One suggests that the Bible is transmitted by *tawātur* and the other one doubts the *tawātur* of early Christians. One might suggest that the second later is not al-Rāzī’s statement but rather his representation of the Kalām theme. This would be one possibility to solve this issue. Another possibility is to claim that al-Rāzī changed his mind throughout the course of writing his commentary. This is because the date of his statement regarding the *tawātur* of the Bible in his commentary is not clear while the one on the crucifixion is written in 1199.\(^{452}\) Accordingly, I


\(^{452}\) See: Eşref Altas. “Fahreddin er-Râzî’nin eserlerinin kronolojisi”, p. 144.
would argue that engaging the issue of the crucifixion with the evaluation of al-Rāzī’s views on the corruption of the Bible would make problematic since it does not serve as an explicit statement but rather as a speculation.

As for the abrogation of the Bible by the Qur’an, al-Rāzī is primarily concerned with the ambiguous term *muṣaddiq* (confirming), which is used both for the relationship between the Qur’an and the Bible and the Gospel and the Torah. The term could indicate that it is a full confirmation of the text in the sense that there would be no other text after it. Al-Rāzī presents this critical question regarding the case of Jesus and his views vis-a-vis the Jewish law for this has an impact on both the legal rulings and the *Bishāra* (prophecy) of Jesus in the Torah. However, al-Rāzī does not see any contradiction between Jesus’ confirmation of the Torah and its abrogation at the same time. Thus, he quickly moves to discuss another topic, namely, the nature of the abrogation of the Torah by Jesus. He mentions three possibilities that are illustrated by other Muslims such as Wahb bin Munabbih and others. The first is that Jesus did not abrogate anything in the Torah as he came to neglect the ‘invented’ legal rulings. The second that Jesus came to reset the legislation back to its origin after it has been hardened by God as a punishment. The third is that Jesus abrogated many parts of the Jewish law in line with the notion of abrogation in Islam. Al-Rāzī thus presents the same interpretation of the term *muṣaddiq* as in the case of the prophet Muhammad, in which he quotes Jesus as saying that the prophet after him will be a *Muṣaddiq* like himself. Yet there is another term that is specifically used in the Qur’an in these verses: *Muhaymin* (the dominator). Al-Rāzī says it means “the preserved one which cannot be abrogated neither be corrupted”.

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with the verse 7:158 on the universality of Islam; al-Rāzī here mentions the objections of one of the Jewish sects known as al-ʾĪsawiyah, the followers of Abū ʿĪsa al-Iṣfahānī (d. 750), who argued the Prophet Muhammad was sent to Arabs only. Al-Rāzī rejects this by relying on both Ẓāhir al-Qurʾān (the apparent meaning) and tawātur to reject this claim.461

Having analysed al-Rāzī’s views on the corruption of the Bible in his Qur’anic commentary, I argue the impact of al-Rāzī’s intellectual project, specifically his hermeneutics, was limited in comparison with the Crucifixion. This is because the apparent meaning of the Qur’anic verses on the corruption of the Bible is mostly understood by early Muslims as corrupt interpretation (tahrif ma’nawi), which is in line with the argument of tawātur for the Biblical text. This allowed al-Rāzī to safely adopt the view of corrupt interpretation. In other words, if early Muslims understood Yuḥarrifūn as a textual corruption, then the Jewish-Christian argument from tawātur would have been a serious Muʿārid ʿAqlī against this apparent meaning in al-Rāzī’s eyes. However, the only Muʿārid Aqlī which impacted al-Rāzī’s views is the issue of the Prophet being foretold in the Bible. This is because he argues that Jewish scholars could not have known that he was a prophet without his performing miracles. The reason behind this, al-Rāzī suggests, is the general signs of prophecy which could be applicable to any of the Arabs at the time.462463 Thus, the miracles themselves would have been recorded as ‘magic’ had they not understood through the argument from prophecies.464465 Therefore, al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī in this context is al-Rāzī’s historical analysis of the Arabian context, which led him to question the self-evidently of the argument from prophecies.466

464 See: Ibid, vol. 6, p. 60
466 This line of argument for the relationship between the prophecy and miracles is found through the Christian arguments for Jesus’ fulfilment of prophecy. For instance, Lactantius (d. 320) argues that “the fulfilment of prophecy is essential evidence for belief in Christ. If Jesus had not fulfilled prophecy, then his miracles could be written off as magic”. See: Robert J. Miller. Helping Jesus Fulfill Prophecy, p. 268.
Al-Rāzī’s epistemology:

I will discuss in this section al-Rāzī’s views on the abrogation of the Bible as seen in his work on Islamic legal theory, Al-Mahṣūl. The theme of abrogation is also an intra-Muslim topic of discussion.467 This theme is present through his works on philosophical theology and Islamic legal theory whether his earlier career or latest one.468469470 Al-Rāzī discusses this under the question of whether abrogation is valid through reason (‘aql) and scripture (sam‘). His discussion is directed at two groups that denied abrogation.471 The first group is the Jews, among whom the subject of abrogation was discussed along very similar lines. Samuel ben Hofni (d. 403/1013), for example, “explained the divisions as follows: Karaites rejected abrogation on rational grounds, due to a belief that all commands are pre-existent; Rabbanites rejected it scripturally grounds; and an unnamed third group held it to be possible.”472 The second group is rival Muslims with controversial views on the issue. He has in mind the Mu’tazilite

467 Faisal Abdullah notes that “the discussions on naskh, however, were frequently also used to expand on an interreligious point of contention between Muslims and Jews on whether Mosaic law could be abrogated... the issue certainly had a theological component to it that was debated from at least the 3rd/9th century and was featured in literature outside the realm of Muslim legal theory in addition to Jewish writings... One of the first to address this topic in a work of usul al-fiqh was the Hanafi al-Jasāṣ (d. 370 AH).” See: Faisal Zain Abdullah. Pre-Muḥammadan Law and the Muḥammadan Sharī‘ah: Muslim Theories and Implementation of Biblical Law and the Laws of Prior Religious Communities (PhD dissertation at University of California: 2020), p. 321-322.


471 See: Ramon Harvey. “Al-Māturīdī on the Abrogation of the Sharī‘a in the Qur’an and Previous Scriptures” in: Bilal Arpagus, Hatice K.; Ümit, Mehmet; Kirimli, Bilal; Kir (eds.) Imām Māturīdī ve Te’vîlâtü’l-Kur’ân (Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı: 2019), p. 514. On this theme, see: Sabine Schmidtk and Camilla Adang. “Mu’tazili Discussions of the Abrogation of the Torah: Ibn Ḥallād (4th/10th century) and His Commentators” Arabica 60 (2013), p. 709; Camilla Adang. “A Polemic against Judaism by a Convert to Islam from the Ottoman Period: Risālat Ilzām al-Yahūd fīmā za’amū fī l-Tawrāt min qibal ’ilm al-kalām” Journal Asiatique 297:1 (2009), pp. 131-151; al-Ṭūfī. Dar’ al-Qawl al-Qabīḥ, p. 122. Note that Muslim writers from Jewish background such as al-Samaw’al al-Maghribī (d. 1180) have been aware of the value of the abrogation through different sense that is based on their understanding of the core of Judaism. Cucarella writes: “As Perlmann points out, Jewish faith and religious practice are based on the twofold belief in the reliability of the Hebrew Bible as a record of God’s salvific dealings with his people and in the permanent validity of the divine promises. The main polemical strategy of al-Samaw’al consists precisely in attacking these two premises by trying to show that the scriptures now possessed by the Jews are lacking from the point of view of their reliable transmission, and by establishing God’s abrogation of previous religious dispositions”. See: Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella. Muslim-Christian Polemics Across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb Al-Dīn Al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285) (Brill: 2015), p. 96.
thinker Abū Muslim al-Īṣfahānī (d. 322/934). These lines of argumentation include the Christian tradition. The reason for not mentioning Christians in the discussion is the fact that they accept the doctrine abrogation. Some Christians even view the Muslim belief in the abrogation of Mosaic law as implicitly supporting Christian claims of supersession, which shows signs of an “Islamicization of Christian apologetics” according to Sidney Griffith. Accordingly, al-Rāzī’s examination of abrogation includes by default both the Torah and the Gospels, similar to his views on corrupt interpretation as mentioned previously.

Al-Rāzī accepts abrogation both through reason and scripture. His central argument is that the prophethood of Muhammad itself is based on scholar consensus (Ijmā’). Muhammad would not have been a prophet without the doctrine of abrogation. He additionally argues that abrogation applies to the legislation in the Torah itself, stating that the prophet Noah was allowed to eat many types of animals that were later prohibited for Moses (Genesis 9:1-4). The same applies for marriage between brothers and sisters at the time of prophet Adam. However, al-Rāzī mentions the possibility of the prophethood of Muhammad without relying on the notion of abrogation. He argues that both Moses and Jesus may have asked people to follow their laws until the time of Muhammad, and this would not be abrogation but rather a completion in which connects it to sample of completing the fasting until sunset (2:187). Al-Rāzī argues that Muslims who deny abrogation in the Qur’an could apply this line of argument


474 This is evident through some debates between Muslims and Christians since the same lines of argument regarding the abrogation of the previous scriptures are mentioned. See: ʿUmar al-Sakūnī. ʿUyūn al-Munāẓarāt (Tunis: Manshūrāt al-Jāmiʿah al-Tūnisiyyah, 1976), p. 299-300.


476 This has already been evident through the writings of Ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. 870); “It was Jesus who openly abrogated many Jewish laws: circumcision, sacrifices, feasts, the law of retaliation, its decisions, the priesthood, the altars, etc. If, Ibn Rabban says, such things are acceptable coming from Jesus, so the new rules, the additions to, and the subtractions from, the rules of the Torah and the Gospel, which the prophet has innovated, are not to be reprobated or blamed”. See: Camilla Adang. *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Brill: 1996), p. 195.

to justify Biblical abrogation by relying on the argument that the prophethood of Muhammad is in the Bible. This argument, he adds, could also be claimed by the Jews to skip aforementioned objections. Nevertheless, this point has been traced by the commentators namely, al-Qarāfī, by suggesting that Adam may have done this before receiving revelation from God, and thus it would not be an example of abrogation. In addition, he argues that the argument from the prophethood does not necessarily entail an abrogation since it might be affirmation and additions. He also states that Jews cannot use this line of argument since they do not affirm it.

Having mentioned this, al-Rāzī proceeds to mention two lines of argumentation that could be presented by those who reject abrogation either through reason or scripture. As for reason, the main argument is the argument from *al-Taḥṣīn wal-Taqbīḥ al-‘Aqlī*, which is structured as the following: if a certain act has been valid and sound, changing it would lead to having a corruption and vice versa, and thus it is *Jahl* and *Safah* (acting purposelessly). He elsewhere mentions the issue of *Badā’* (versatility of God), arguing that it is only applicable to those who accept *al-Taḥṣīn wal-Taqbīḥ al-‘Aqlī*. As for scripture, those who reject abrogation are said to present three possibilities: First, the possibility that God added to the verse of the binding nature of Mosaic Law an indication that it would be abrogated in the future; this, they argue, is a contradiction itself. For how could God state that it would be both binding and abrogated? They further argue that God must have allowed this indication to be transmitted by *tawātur* otherwise this would lead to doubts around Islam, namely, whether Islam could

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479 See: Al-Qarāfī, *Nafā’is al-‘Uṣūl Fī Sharḥ al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 6, p. 2432.
also be abrogated or whether the Arabs won the challenge regarding bringing a text similar to the Qur’an (2:23).\textsuperscript{486} The second possibility is to allow that God did not add any indication in this verse regarding its abrogation in the future. This, they argue, is impermissible for it entails three issues: 	extit{talbīs} (deceiving), the fact that it too could be applied to Islam and the doubting of all aspects of God’s speech. The third possibility is to allow that God did give a permanent application to this verse, relying on the linguistic argument that 	extit{al-Amr} (command) may indicate 	extit{Takrār} (repetition).\textsuperscript{487,488}

Having mentioned these objections against abrogation, al-Rāzī counters them. As for the objection from reason, he states it does not necessarily lead to acting purposelessly or an evidence of deficient knowledge of God since God may have decreed through His foreknowledge that this act is good for this context and not good for another. As for the objection from scripture, al-Rāzī states that Muslims have a consensus that God revealed the verse regarding the binding nature of the Mosaic Law in a permanent sense according to its apparent meaning, but the dispute between Muslims occurred as to the way in which it has been abrogated.\textsuperscript{489} Al-Rāzī proceeds to trace the views of Abū al-Ḥusayn on this issue as he is the only Muslim thinker to argue that God must have demonstrated that it would be abrogated in the future otherwise it is 	extit{talbīs} (deception). Thus, Abū al-Ḥusayn argues that there must be 	extit{ishʿār} (indication) in the Biblical text itself, such as the prophecies of Muhammad, to avoid deception. Al-Rāzī questions Abū al-Ḥusayn’s method and transfers the discussions to issue of

\textsuperscript{486} On this issue, see: Lara Harb. \textit{Arabic Poetics}, p. 203-251.
\textsuperscript{487} See: Al-Rāzī. \textit{Al-Maḥṣūl}, vol. 3, p. 298-301
\textsuperscript{489} These lines of arguments have been transferred to the Jewish literature Ezra Blaustein writes: “In late thirteenth-century Catalonia, Solomon b. Abraham ibn Adret (Rashba) wrote his Treatise on the Ishmaelite, a response to a Muslim polemical work, probably by ibn Ḥazm, that had been shown to him. In addressing the claim of abrogation, ibn Adret twice cites Deuteronomy 11:21. First he simply alludes to it in an argument similar to Saadya’s in the commentary to Genesis. Ibn Adret explains that abrogation of a law might be possible if there is no accompanying statement that it will not be abrogated. But if “a particular law or a particular Torah” is said to be in effect “generation after generation, ‘as the days of the heavens on the earth,’” that law or that Torah cannot be abrogated. He then explicitly invokes this verse when he says that God has indeed made such a promise about the Torah of Moses”. See: Ezra Blaustein. \textit{Cataloging Revelation: Echoes of Islamic Legal Theory in Maimonides’ Sefer ha-Mitsvot [Book of Commandments]} (PhD dissertation at the University of Chicago: 2019), p. 184-185.
delaying the elucidation (Ta’khār al-Bayān ‘An waqt al-Khiṭāb) that is based on al-Rāzī’s sceptical position on the certitude of scriptural text (al-Dalā‘īl al-Naqīlyya Zanniyyah).

Abū al-Ḥusayn’s argument is the same as those who rejected abrogation; it is to argue that God must have allowed this indication to be transmitted by tawātur otherwise it would raise doubts as the origins of Islam too. Al-Rāzī counters by two lines of arguments. He first argues for the possibility that God may have demonstrated that the Mosaic Law would be abrogated but that this indication was not transmitted by tawātur. This is due to the incident of Nebuchadnezzar, which is not applicable to Islam. Both al-Rāzī and al-Qarāfī agrees on this point in their discussions of abrogation while al-Rāzī doubts this point in his discussion of the Crucifixion.

The second line of argument for al-Rāzī is the issue of Ta’būd (permanent obligation). He argues that it does not necessarily mean permanence as such, citing verses from the Torah (Exodus 21:2-6 / 12:1-12 / 29:38-39, 42). This follows the theme of his likely source Sadīd al-Dīn al-Ḥimmaṣī al-Rāzī (d. after 600/1204).

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494 See: Al-Rāzī. Muḥṣal al-Aḍār, vol. 3, p. 302-306; al-Busrī. Al-Mu’tamad, p. 402-403; al-Ḥimmaṣī al-Rāzī. Al-’Uṣūl, vol. 6, p. 435-436. Schmidtke demonstrates these verses which are the same as al-Rāzī’s ones: “The first is an abbreviated paraphrastic rendering of (i) Exod. 21, 2-6 (“If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for no . If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife and she has borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever [le-‘olam]”) which runs as follows: [innahu] yustakhdamu sitt sinīn thumma yu’taq fi al-sābi‘a fa-fa-in abā [al-’itq] fa-l-yutqab udhmahu wayustakhdam abadan. So as to further qualify the meaning of “forever” (le-‘olam here translated as abadan), both authors then refer to another Biblical passage that is rendered as “he shall serve for fifty years” (yustakhdam khamsin sana), a reference to the fiftieth year, the year of jubilee as laid down in Lev. 25, 8 sqq. Neither Ḥimmaṣī nor Ibn al-Malāḥimī offers any explanation for the passage, but replacing the term “forever” by the period of fifty years so as to allow for the possibility of abrogation was well attested in Jewish literature, as for example in Sa’ada Gaon’s Kitāb al-Amānāt wa-al-I’tiqādāt (The Book of Beliefs and Opinions), written about a century before Abū al-Ḥusayn’s lifetime. The next scriptural examples are the instructions for the Passover sacrifice as laid down in (ii) Exod. 12, 1-12 (and Num 9, 11 sqq.), again for eternity (abadan), while this was later on qualified, in the absence of the Temple, 50 The last scriptural passage adduced by Ḥimmaṣī but not by Ibn al-Malāḥimi is a paraphrase of (iv) Exod. 29, 38-39, 42 (“Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually [Miṣṣa al-Nayyah]. [The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: … This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations [at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord ....]”) - a passage that is correctly identified as belonging to al-sifr al-thānī (= Exodus) of the Pentateuch. The term
Accordingly, it is evident that al-Rāzī’s intellectual project have significantly shaped his views on abrogation and that these arguments are based first and foremost on Muslim intra-faith dialogues and debates. This is because the core argumentation that he presents to avoid both the Jewish and the Mu'tazilites objections is based on his sceptical position regarding the certitude of scriptural text. This had centrally shaped his attempt to suggest the possibility that a scriptural text may not be fully elucidated at the time of addressing revelation. Thus, he made this line of argumentation to avoid the mainstream objection against his school of thought namely the Ash‘arites which basically based on two notions; Firstly, that God may have decreed through His foreknowledge that this act is good for this context and not good for another. Secondly, the argument from *al-Tahsīn wal-Taqbīḥ al-'Aqlī*. This is not to say that he does not use both arguments. Rather, it seems that he is wearing the hat of his school of thought at some point and at another one he builds his own distinctive intellectual project.

What is worth noting in al-Rāzī’s discussions - keeping in mind his discussion on the Crucifixion - is his twists and turns on the argument from *tawātur*. Here it is essential to counter Abū al-Ḥusayn’s argument on the inclusion of an indication within the Biblical text for abrogation. This is because on the one hand al-Rāzī rejects the validity of Nebuchadnezzar’s incident to argue against those who conceive *tawātur* as *nazarī* (speculative). On the other hand, he accepts the validity of this incident to skip Abū al-Ḥusayn’s objection. What makes this more contested is his attempt to question permanent terms (*Ta'bīd*) used in the Bible in relation to the binding nature of the Mosaic Law; he could have questioned its transmission by relying on the same argument as that used for Nebuchadnezzar’s incident. This occurred in the same work: *Al-Maḥṣūl*. In his later Qur'anic commentary, however, he accepts the transmission

of the Bible through the argument from *tawātur*. It is not clear how to reconcile or explain this. It is common, however, that al-Rāzī would affirm an argument within a certain topic and rejects it in another, even if this is in the same phase of his intellectual career.

The other aspect that is present in al-Rāzī’s discussions is his views on Natural Law that relate to his position regarding *al-Tahṣīn wal-Taqqīḥ al-`Aqlī*, which are criticised by al-Qarāfī. This is also applicable on al-Qarāfī too as he mentions that he had a debate with some Jews in which they argue that forty people survived the incident of Nebuchadnezzar, and thus they would serve as *Tawātur*. Al-Qarāfī rejects this arguing that these forty people may not be well-versed in the Jewish tradition and thus, they do not form the argument from *Tawātur*. It would seem that al-Qarāfī’s notion that God would allow *`Ilm* (knowledge) through various ways rather than *tawātur* due to the necessity of the context could be used in this context by the Jews since there is no firm criterion to determine what kind of context is considered as *darūrī* (necessary). I am suggesting this because al-Rāzī would have probably countered this objection the same way he had through his examination of the crucifixion. It again shows us that the diversity of responses depend on the intellectual project of each Muslim thinker in their legal theory and hermeneutics even though they may seem from the same school of thought.

As a result of this, the impact of al-Rāzī’s and Abū al-Ḥusayn’s intellectual projects is evident through their different perception of the Biblical text namely the verse on the binding nature of the Mosaic law in which they had engaged all related arguments in the Islamic sciences to re-interpret this verse.

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495 Anver M. Emon writes: “Al-Qarāfī also agreed that God is wise. But he disagreed with al-Rāzī’s two arguments above out of concern that al-Rāzī opened the door to the Hard Naturalist presumption that God only acts justly. Al-Qarāfī wrote that when Hard Naturalist said that God is *ḥakīm*, they meant that God upholds the good (*yurā’ī al-maṣāliḥ*). However, al-Qarāfī rejected that theology of God. God acts voluntaristically, pursuant to His will (*irāda*). He needs no rationale to animate or direct His actions”. See: Anver M. Emon, *Islamic Natural Law Theories* (Oxford University Press: 2010), p. 148.

496 See: Al-Qarāfī. *Naḍāʿ is al-Uṣūl*, vol. 6, p. 2434-2435

Concluding remarks:

Al-Rāzī’s views on the corruption of the Bible have also been a subject of long-standing debates that allowed researchers to present various interpretations. It is evident that his views on the historicity of the crucifixion and the corruption of the Bible are well-connected despite his seeming inconsistency regarding how to compromise the acceptance of corrupt interpretation (tahrīf ma’nawī) while rejecting the crucifixion of Jesus. This point in specific, in addition to some unclear passage through his corpus, have justifiably allowed some researchers to suggest that he adopts the doctrine of textual corruption (tahrīf lafzī) as mentioned before. However, I have argued through this chapter that al-Rāzī does probably adopt the doctrine of corrupt interpretation (tahrīf ma’nawī). This has been done through three main ways: First, reading al-Rāzī through al-Rāzī himself as I have compared any ambiguous passage with the rest of his corpus and the developments during his career. This is essential as two thinkers may use the same term and even same statements but with different meanings. Secondly, constructing the most probable apparent meaning (ẓāhir) to understand why would al-Rāzī suggest such firm statement about the corruption of the Bible. This is because his most explicit statement regarding the corruption of the Bible in his corpus is the one in his commentary, and thus it requires exploring its hermeneutical context. Thirdly, engaging the very early analysis of al-Rāzī’s corpus made by thinkers who have grasped both his commentary and his Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya. This is because they serve as a supporting argument if we have contradictory issues through the first two ways.

498 For instance, the term al-‘Aql al-Ṣarīḥ has been used by different thinkers with different meanings since ‘Aql and Ṣarīḥ are general terms. This is the case through its use in the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah and Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī (d. 381/992). This is because it seems that first is using it in technical sense according to his own terminology while the latter is apparently using it to mean ‘being rational’. Note that the use of this term in Ibn Taymiyyah’s corpus is arguably the three classical laws of thought (the law of contradiction, the law of the excluded middle, and the principle of identity) for the first since he always starts his evaluation of the ideas with these laws and accuses the other intellectuals as adherents of Kalam or as the Bāṭinīs, who rejected the law of the excluded middle as he regarded them. See: Ibn Taymiyyah. Sharḥ al-‘Aqidah al-‘Iṣlahiyyah (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd lil-Nashir wal-Tawzī’, 2001), p. 143-144; Miriam Ovadia. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes: Rationalized Traditionalistic Theology (Brill: 2018), p. 154; Al-‘Āmirī. Kitāb al-‘Āmad al-‘Alā al-Abād (Beirut: Dār al-Kindī, 1979), p. 162.
As for the first way, I have interpreted al-Rāzī’s statements in both his early *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl* and his late *Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya* through his one in the Qur’anic commentary. This is because al-Rāzī is ambiguous through these other statements as they have different contexts.

As for his *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl*, I have argued that this is a common Kalām approach to the Bible which is to either to question its transmission or to reinterpret it without explicitly pointing out any issue regarding the concept of *tawātur* as seen in the writings of Abū al-Fath al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153)499 and Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī.500 This, however, does not seem to be a firm statement but rather a rhetorical one in which al-Rāzī, for instance, would say: “An namna’ *sihhat al-Naqf*” (we might doubt the transmission of these reports),501 as it might fall under the category of *tawaqquf* (suspension of judgement).502 Therefore, it cannot be used as the reference to interpret the others. As for his late *Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya*, I have interpreted his statement regarding the limited influence of the original teachings of Jesus through his firm statement in his commentary on the Qur’an.503 This is because we have a similar passage in which al-Rāzī questions the fact that all Christians have adopted the doctrine of the sonship of Jesus while neither Jesus nor his disciples preached this. He clearly mentions in this context that the Christian corruption of the term “son” was a response to the Jewish negative view of Jesus.504 This suggests the doctrine of corrupt interpretation (*tahrīf ma’nawī*) in both cases.

This is because the two contexts are arguing regarding the influence of Jesus’ teachings. Therefore, al-Rāzī’s passage in *Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya* should be interpreted in the sense that Jesus’ preaching did not shape the writings of Gospels namely these terms that have two meanings for the divinity and the humanity of Jesus such as “Son” and “Father”.505

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505 One of the interesting areas to be explored is the overlapping arguments between Muslim thinkers who adopted corrupt interpretation (*tahrīf ma’nawī*) and Unitarianism. This is because share the preservation of the Biblical text while rejecting the interpretation that led to mainstream Christian doctrines such as the Trinity.
The second way is constructing the most probable apparent meaning (ẓāhir) of these verses. This is because the debates over the apparent meaning of the term yuḥarrifūn among the early Muslims allow al-Rāzī to adopt any view which he considers compatible with al-Muʿāriḍ al-ʿAqlī, namely, the Jewish-Christian argument that the Bible is transmitted by tawātur. This hermeneutical issue cannot be fully understood without having in mind what occurred in his evaluation of the apparent meaning of the crucifixion. This is because while there has been a fixed apparent meaning in that case which shaped al-Rāzī’s overall views on the crucifixion that is to reject its historicity, the case of corruption is essentially different since the first three generations of Islam seem to have ambiguous views regarding this issue, not to mention that they have been read as being close to corrupt interpretation (tahrīf maʾnawī). In other words, had early Muslims constructed a fixed apparent meaning that supports textual corruption (tahrīf lafzī), al-Rāzī would have questioned the Jewish-Christian argument from tawātur the same way he questioned the case of crucifixion. That is why this topic in specific had diverse views without having ‘harsh’ condemnation made by the other parties. For instance, Ibn Taymiyyah mentions these types while discussing the issue of God resting on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3) without apparently condemning any Muslim party that adopted any of these.506 This includes constructing the position of tawaaqquf (suspension of judgement) while it is not the case regarding the crucifixion.507 Accordingly, it is evident how this analysis of the views of the first three generations of Islam has shown the role played by the apparent meaning (ẓāhir). This in turn problematizes the issue of the scholarly consensus (Ijmāʾ) on things that were not explicitly demonstrated by the prophet.508

507 See: Roy Michael McCoy III. Interpreting the Qurʾān with the Bible (Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Kitāb): Reading the Arabic Bible in the Tafsīrs of Ibn Barraḏān and al-Biḥāṣi (Brill: 2021), p. 126.
508 There is a dispute among the Muslim thinkers regarding the issue of having a later consensus regarding a certain topic, although there was a dispute regarding it in early Islam. See: Muḥammad al-Shawkānī. Irshād al-Fuhūl Ilā Tahqīq al-Ḥaqq Min ʾIlm al-Uṣūl (Riyadh: Dār al-Fuḍūlah lil-Nashir wal-Tawzī‘, 2000), vol. 1, p. 405.
As for the third way, it is the very early analysis of al-Rāzī’s view that has been made by thinkers who have grasped his corpus such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 752/1350) who points to two names that support the view of corrupt interpretation: Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and al-Rāzī.509 This is because Ibn al-Qayyim had heavily relied on al-Rāzī’s work Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya in authoring his work Kitāb al-Rāḥ.510 This includes both the modern ‘academic’511 and exegetical literature512 on al-Rāzī’s which has cited him not only as a supporter of corrupt interpretation (tahrīf ma’nawī) but also his categories.513 Therefore, these readings would support the first two ways that I have applied in this chapter to read al-Rāzī’s views. Furthermore, I think that one of the points that might have impacted the analysis of al-Rāzī’s views on the corruption of the Bible is reading it alongside al-Baydāwī’s one514 as supporters of corrupt interpretation (tahrīf ma’nawī).515 However, al-Baydāwī does not support

511 Let me be clear, I am not citing ‘academic’ works as an ‘authentic’ and ‘neutral’ source opposing to ‘apologetic’ and ‘polemical’ one as my concern is only related to the content itself. However, I have intentionally excluded any book that appears to be written in an ‘apologetic’ sense to avoid any sensitivity regarding this topic. Note that this issue in specific opened a controversy in other fields such as the historical-critical study of the Qur’an as Fischbach notes regarding Andrew Rippin’s views: “In that context, Rippin underlines the difference between polemics and ‘true scholarship’. The former seeks to undermine Islamic core truths, sometimes by means of historical-critical scholarship, while the latter (“true scholarship”) refrains from such truth claims”. See: Rafel Fischbach. Politics of Scripture: Discussions of the Historical-Critical Approach to the Qur’an (PhD dissertation at Georgetown University: 2017), p. 5-6.
512 For instance, Sirry notes regarding the sources of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1914): “With this reference to various sources, Qāsimī’s discussion of the falsification of previous scriptures seems to be more nuanced. Rāzī offers a brief review of the Muslim scholarship on the nature of tahrīf. Rāzī asserts that tahrīf could take place in three ways. First, the People of the Book altered the word of the Bible with another word. Second, they manipulated and interpreted the Bible wrongly and turned the word from its correct meaning to the wrong one. This is similar to the way that Muslim innovators (ahl al-bid‘a) manipulated and interpreted Qur’ānic passages to support their views. Rāzī contends, “This is the meaning of tahrīf in the Qur’ān.” Third, the tahrīf verses refer to a specific event taking place at the time of the Prophet, namely, when the People of the Book met the Prophet and asked a question related to their matter, but later on they distorted his statement”. See: Mun‘im Sirry. Scriptural Polemics: The Qur’ān and Other Religions (Oxford University Press: 2014), p. 103.
513 Schaffner notes that “as far as I have been able to tell thus far, it is the work of Caspar and Gaudeul that first introduces the specific terms tahrīf al-ma’na/ma’anī, which they define as “une fausse interprétation des textes authentiques,” and tahrīf al-naṣṣ, which they define as “fausse interprétation du texte”, in order to explain more clearly what scholars since Goldziher had been referring. Although their definitions for tahrīf are drawn from the works of Fakhir al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) and Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), the categories are applied across the range of historical disputational literature”. See: Ryan Schaffner. The Bible through a Qur’ānic Filter, p. 52-53.
corrupt interpretation (tahrīf ma’nawī). This seems to have confused the analysis of both figures especially these two similar passages that they have.

According to these three ways, I argue that al-Rāzī seems to have adopted the same views in the course of his career regarding the corruption of the Bible having compromised these seeming contradictory statements. The strict criterion in this context is tracing al-Rāzī’s use of the term tawātur alongside the Bible as it seems to be the most direct one to the issue rather than using unclear statements. However, once al-Rāzī’s views on the crucifixion are engaged with the corruption of the Bible, then it gets problematic. This is because one might suggest that al-Rāzī’s departure from the substitution theory to the mistaken identity in his evaluation of the crucifixion would suggest a departure here too. This is because al-Rāzī used to support the argument from tawātur of early Christianity in his Al-Maḥṣūl while rejecting it later in his commentary on the Qur’an. This argument makes sense but again it is a part of the complexity of engaging his views on the crucifixion with his views on the corruption of the Bible, not to mention his statement in his commentary too. In this case we have two contradictory statements in his commentary; One suggests that the Bible is transmitted by tawātur and the other doubts the tawātur of early Christians. One might suggest that the latter is not al-Rāzī’s statement but rather his representation of the Kalām view. This would be one possibility to solve this issue. Another possibility is to claim that al-Rāzī changed his mind throughout the course of writing his commentary. This is because the date of his statement regarding the tawātur of the Bible in his commentary is not clear while the one on the

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517 This includes the issue of abrogation since al-Rāzī’s twists and turns on the argument from tawātur are evident. Here it is essential to counter Abū al-Ḥusayn’s argument on the inclusion of an indication (ish‘ār) within the Biblical text for abrogation. This is because on the one hand al-Rāzī rejects the validity of Nebuchadnezzar’s incident to argue against those who conceive tawātur as nazarī (speculative). On the other hand, he accepts the validity of this incident to skip Abū al-Ḥusayn’s objection.
crucifixion is written in 1199. Accordingly, I would argue that engaging the issue of the crucifixion with the evaluation of al-Rāzī’s views on the corruption of the Bible would make it problematic since it does not serve as an explicit statement but rather as a speculation.

Having illustrated al-Rāzī’s views on the corruption of the Bible, I move now to his views on the abrogation. Al-Rāzī follows mainstream Muslim perception of this issue with the exception of two hermeneutical and epistemic arguments that seem to be original. As for his hermeneutics, al-Rāzī follows the standard interpretation since Islam itself is centrally based on it. That is why you cannot think of something unusual through the views of the first three generations of Islam as the apparent meaning (zāhir) is constructed in a clear way. Therefore, al-Rāzī’s interpretation of the ambiguous term muṣaddiq (confirming) is structured by his views on the case of Jesus vis-a-vis the Jewish law for this has an impact on both the legal rulings and the Bishāra (prophecy) of Jesus in the Torah. This is because the term could indicate that it is a full confirmation of the text in the sense that there would be no other text after it. Al-Rāzī does not see any contradiction between Jesus’ confirmation of the Torah and its abrogation at the same time, and thus he applies to the case of Muhammad. However, the issue that seem to be original through al-Rāzī’s hermeneutical perception is the Prophet being foretold in the Bible. This is because he argues that Jewish scholars could not have known that he was a prophet without his performing miracles. Al-Rāzī in this sense is reinterpreting these prophecies to be general signs of prophecy which could be applicable to any of the Arabs at the time. In other words, al-Rāzī’s historical analysis of the Arabian context in addition to the argument from the Jewish-Christian regarding the absence of the Prophet’s detailed prophecies led him to develop another argument regarding prophecies not being self-evident. As for al-Rāzī’s epistemology, his core argumentation regarding the issue of abrogation is based on his sceptical position regarding the certitude of scriptural text (al-Dalā’il al-Naqliyya Ẓanniyyah)

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to address the issue of delaying the elucidation (Ta’khīr al-Bayān). This had centrally shaped his attempt to suggest the possibility that a text may not be fully elucidated at the time of revealing it, and thus the Biblical verses on the binding nature of the Mosaic Law should be interpreted as a source of (i’tiqād rājiḥ) rather than firm belief (al-qat’ wal-yaqīn).

Having foregrounded the main findings of this chapter, I shall now locate al-Rāzī’s views within the intellectual history this topic. There are two areas to be explored in this history: First, hermeneutics in which the question would be regarding the Muslim attempt to reinterpret the term yuḥarrifūn to be compromised with the rational decisive evidence (Mu’ārid ʿAqlī) that comes from the Jewish-Christian testimony regarding their own history. Secondly, epistemology in which the question would be regarding the issue of abrogation and how did the Muslim thinkers address the challenge of the binding nature of the Mosaic law. As for al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics, it would seem that interpreting the term yuḥarrifūn to suggest corrupt interpretation (taḥrīf ma’nawī) falls within the two lines of mainstream Muslim perception of this issue according to mainstream scholarship. This is because Ibn Qayyim mentions that this view has been adopted by several notable figures (A’immah) of Ḥadīth, Fiqh and Kalām. He elsewhere mentions specifically the Nuẓẓār (Theoreticians) as adherents to the doctrine of

521 Note that the epistemic aspects of examining the transmission of the Bible have already been discussed in the previous chapter on the crucifixion. Al-Rāzī himself does not mention any epistemic concerns when he discusses the issue of taḥrīf whether through his commentary on the Qur’an or the rest of corpus. However, the serious epistemic concerns are related to the issue of abrogation having the same theme of tracing Abū al-Ḥusayn al- Başfī’s intellectual project.

522 Schaffner writes: “An important step in the development of the understanding of taḥrīf comes from the work of Ignazio Di Matteo, who wrote the first article dealing specifically and solely with taḥrīf and further cemented the categories Goldziher had established in his work… Di Matteo follows Goldziher’s categories of misinterpretation and textual corruption as the two ways scripture falsification had been articulated and notes that they have been referred to as taghyīr al-laẓf and taghyīr al-ma’nā, although he considers taḥrīf to be reserved for alteration of words rather than sense. He finds, however, that a great number of the polemicians assert that the Christian and Jewish scriptures have both misinterpreted and textually corrupted. He does not draw out the significance of polemicians utilizing both tactics in their respective works, but it is worth noting that there he presents a more nuanced view of taḥrīf than simply labelling polemicians’ works as espousing one or the other. He considers the following polemicians as those who believe taḥrīf is primarily due to misinterpretation: al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm, al-Mas’ūdī, Hasan b. Ayyūb, Shahrarāstīnī, Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Khaldūn, al-Bīqāʿī; and he considers the following polemicians to articulate taḥrīf in their respective works as primarily textual corruption: Bīrūnī, Ibn Hazm, Qarāfī, Sa‘īd b. Hasan of Alexandria, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and al-Hindi”. See: Ryan Schaffner. The Bible through a Qur’ānic Filter, p. 43-46.

corrupt interpretation (*taḥrīf ma‘nawi*) which would seem to pointing out either al-Rāzī himself or his Kalām fellows.\[^{524}\] This means that al-Rāzī’s hermeneutical contribution to this issue falls within this mainstream perception including the underlying epistemic concerns regarding the concept of *Tawātur* such as the impossibility of Jews and Christians conspiring together across vast distances in order to corrupt the Bible\[^{525,526}\] as it has been noted by Avicenna.\[^{527}\]

As for al-Rāzī’s epistemology, it would seem that he had two significant departures from the mainstream Muslim perception of this issue: First, the argument that the Jewish scholars would not have known that Muhammad is the prophet had he not performed miracles due to the general prophecies that could be applicable to any Arabs of the day.\[^{528}\] This is because it has become a standard theme through to argue for the prophethood of Muhammad relying on these prophecies.\[^{529}\] That is why Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī has traced al-Rāzī’s view arguing that this is sophistry since the context of claiming the prophethood of any person would lead to the belief that he is prophet.\[^{530}\] However, it is worth noting that one of al-Rāzī’s

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\[^{527}\] Avicenna does present this line of argument but with a different concern: “One cannot say that that Book is entirely corrupted (*muḥarraf*), for how can this be the case with a book disseminated through innumerable peoples living in distant lands, with so different ambitions – like Jews and Christians with all their mutual antagonisms?” as Whittingham comments on this: “The impossibility of enemies conspiring together across vast distances in order to corrupt scripture is an argument previously set out by Christians. But while the idea is not original to Ibn Sīnā, he seems to be the first Muslim to express it”. See: Whittingham. *A History of Muslim Views of the Bible*, p. 128. This line of argument continued to be used through the Christian-Muslim interactions such as Jan Amos Comenius’ (d. 1670) letter to Mehmet IV (d. 1693) for translating the Bible into Turkish as he writes: “if anything had been added or subtracted, it would have been in those places which are controverted, either between the Christians and the Jews, or between the Christians among themselves, or the Jews among themselves. But no such case is found; in their disputes against one another both the Jews and the Christians refer to, and find in their books, the same places and the same words, disagreeing only about the meaning”. See: Noel Malcolm. “Comenius, the Conversion of the Turks, and the Muslim-Christian Debate on the Corruption of Scripture” *Church History and Religious Culture* 87:4 (2007), p. 484.


arguments for the prophethood of Muhammad is based on the seeming similarities between the stories in the Qur’an and the Bible. This is to argue that this familiarity with the Biblical stories cannot be done by someone who was illiterate and did not have access to the Bible. Nevertheless, these differences between the stories which al-Rāzī - and other Muslim thinkers in general - aim to address would question the validity of this argument. This has already been noted by several critics such as Ibn Kammūna (d. 1284). This is because once you put the Biblical stories as a reference to validate and to certify the prophethood of Muhammad then this entails that they are true otherwise the argument itself would be based on conjecture. Therefore, I think that dismissing this line of argument regarding the prophethood of Muhammad is essential to keep consistency having in mind that the Qur’an itself aims at correcting the disputes among the children of Israel (27:76). That is why it has been read in a different sense by some researchers, such as Robert Hoyland, who suggests that “the Qur’an is not borrowing, but creatively using this common knowledge for its own ends and giving its own take on current religious problems”. The second departure is al-Rāzī’s reliance on his sceptical position regarding the certitude of scriptural text (al-Dalā’il al-Naqliyya Zanniyyah) to address the challenge of the binding nature of the Mosaic Law. This is because his school of thought namely the Ash’arites has structured their mainstream views based on two notions; firstly, that God may have decreed through His foreknowledge that this act is good for this context and not good for another. Secondly, the argument from al-Taḥsīn wal-Taqbih al-‘Aqli. Although al-Rāzī applies these notions, he nevertheless relies heavily on his own scepticism.

533 “Truly, this Quran explains to the Children of Israel most of what they differ about”.
Chapter four: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Trinity

This chapter examines Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s views on the Trinity in relation to his broader intellectual project, specifically his hermeneutics and philosophical theology. On hermeneutics, what plays the role of al-Muʿāriḍ al-ʿAqlī for al-Rāzī in questioning the apparent meaning of Qurʾānic verses on the Trinity is the comparison between the Christian understanding of the Trinity and Qurʾānic terms such as ‘three’ (thālāthah) and ‘third of three’ (thālith Thālāthah). This includes the issue of worshipping Mary and Jesus ascribed to Christians according to the Qurʾān. It is unclear in the Qurʾān as to whether the Qurʾān’s polemic against the Trinity is directed at mainstream Christianity, as will be shown in what follows. As for al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology, it shapes his examination of the doctrine of the Trinity in that he explores the parallels between the attributes of God in Islam on the one hand, and the Christian concept of the hypostases on the other. As such, concepts which emerged in Muslim intra-faith dialogue and debate on the attributes of God, such as multiplicity of eternal beings (taʿaddud al-Qudamāʾ), serve as the essential philosophical bases for these discussions. These are the driving forces that guide and impact al-Rāzī’s views on the Trinity in this chapter.

536 As an overview of the intellectual history of these issues, Christian-Muslim debates on Trinity and incarnation would move from being scriptural-based discussion to a reason-based one due to the different commitments and departure points for both sides. Carlos Fraenkel captures this theme in the following manner: “consider a debate between a Christian and a Muslim on the question of whether Christ is God and incarnated in a human body. The Gospel of John affirms it, the Qurʾān denies it, but if the debate’s participants do not recognize the authority of each other’s religious texts, the appeal to reason as arbiter is again a way out of the impasse. The same holds for the doctrine of the Trinity, another signature Christian doctrine that the Qurʾān rejects”. Carlos Fraenkel, "Philosophy and Theology" in: Adam J. Silverstein and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of the Abrahamic Religions (Oxford University Press: 2015), p. 339-340. This entails having the same complexity through the Christian intra-faith discussions regarding the Trinity and how this does really have an impact on their views on the attributes of God in Islam due to the same challenges. For instance, Katrin König notes regarding Anselm of Canterbury’s (d. 1109) trinitarian theology: “This account had to face two challenges due to developments in philosophical education and early interreligious encounters. The logician and teacher of Peter Abelard, Roscelin of Compiègne, brought forward harsh criticism of Anselm’s exposition of the trinitarian faith (around 1089). This criticism was exactly the same as the standard objections of Muslim and Jewish thinkers of the period against the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation”. See: Katrin König, “Deepened Monotheism: Philosophical Reasoning on the Trinity in Western Early Medieval and Classic Arabic Theology” Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie 62:2 (2020), p. 238-239.
Constructing the apparent meaning (ẓāhir):

The Qur’anic account of the Trinity is a major topic in the field of Christian-Muslim interactions. The complexity of this issue has parallels with the Qur’anic verses on the Crucifixion. This includes absence of reports from the Prophet on the exact meaning of ambiguous terms such as thālāthah and thālith thālāthah, which is in line with previous ambiguous terms such as shubbiha and mutawaffik for the Crucifixion and yuḥarrifūn on the corruption of the Bible. There are three main verses related to the doctrine of the Trinity in the Qur’an:

1. “People of the Book, do not go to excess in your religion, and do not say anything about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than a messenger of God, His word, directed to Mary, a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not speak of a ‘Trinity’ (thālāthah)- stop [this], that is better for you- God is only one God, He is far above having a son, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him and He is the best one to trust” (4:171).

2. “Those people who say that God is the third of three (thālith thālāthah) are defying [the truth]: there is only One God. If they persist in what they are saying, a painful punishment will afflict those of them who persist” (5:73).

3. When God says, ‘Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people, “Take me and my mother as two gods alongside God”?’ he will say, ‘May You be exalted! I would never say what I had no right to say - if I had said such a thing You would have known it: You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You, You alone have full knowledge of things unseen” (5:116).

Scholarship on the Trinity in the Qur’an mainly focuses on connecting these verses to the intellectual context of pre-Islamic Arabia and referring the verses to non-Islamic sources. A common theme, for example, is to consider these verses as polemics against certain Christian sects found in Arabia. Elias of Nisibis (d. 1046) argues: “the Qur’an’s criticisms were meant for the heretical Christian groups in its audience, such as the Marcionites, Daysanites, Manichaeans and especially the Tritheists, who were active in the early seventh-century Arabian milieu”. This continues to influence Christian-Muslim interaction and the claim that the Qur’an “does not deconstruct orthodox Christian doctrine, but rather rejects what the historical church has always rejected,” as Martin Accad suggests. Others read this in a broader sense as “hard monotheism devoted to the supreme and only God with no competition, not even from an angel”. Accordingly, these verses could be traced through the non-Islamic sources. Yet, it would face the same challenge regarding the Qur’an’s concern with these issues even some terms used for the Trinity in Arabic such as Thālūth. This goes in line with aspects of Reynolds’ reading of the Christian material in the Qur’an. That the Qur’an was not concerned with these debates will be evident in the views of early Muslims.


541 This applies to Angelika Neuwirth’s note that the Muslim Basmala is “a clear reworking of the Christological formula of invocation “In the name of the Father and the Son and Holy spirit” (See: Angelika Neuwirth. The Qur’an and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage, Oxford University Press: 2019, p. 117+142). This is because the Qur’an’s concern may not be related to this since there are accounts of the Prophet in which he used to say: “In the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” in the period before revealing al-Naml chapter that mentions Solomon (27:30). See: Mawsū‘at al-Tafsīr al-Ma‘thūr, vol. 5, p. 251. On this issue, see: Iwona Gajda. “Remarks on Monotheism in Ancient South Arabia” in: Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (eds.) Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur’an (Oxford University Press: 2017), pp. 247-257; Aaron W. Hughes. “South Arabian ‘Judaism’, Ḥimyarite Raḥmanism, and the Origins of Islam” in: Carlos A. Segovia (ed.) Remapping Emergent Islam: Texts, Social Settings, and Ideological Trajectories (Amsterdam University Press: 2020), pp. 15-45.

Moving to the views of early Muslims, the crucial terms to be discussed are ‘three’ (thālāthah) and ‘third of three’ (thālith Thālāthah) relating to the Trinity since those relating to Christology are discussed in the next chapter. As for the verse 4:171, there is an absence of narratives on the meaning of the term “three” (thālāthah) except for Muqātil ibn Sulaymān’s attempt to interpret this verse in line with the other, namely “third of three” (thālith thālāthah). Muqātil is also unique in suggesting its connection to the issue of Islamic monotheism by mentioning the term tawḥīd (Oneness of God).\(^{543}\) As for the verse 5:73, we find four narratives from different sources. The first is from Mujāhid Ibn Jabr who suggests that some Christians claim Jesus is God and others claim he is the son of God; the correct position, he adds, is those who claim he is the servant of God and His spirit. He calls this group Muslimat Ahl al-Kitāb (Muslims of the people of the book). The second is from Qatāda ibn Di‘āma who suggests the term means the following: Jesus is God, his mother is God, and Allah is God. The third is from Ismā‘il al-Suddī who suggests that Christians claim that both Jesus and his mother are God, citing the verse 5:116.\(^{544}\) The fourth is from Muqātil ibn Sulaymān who suggests the term specifically refers to the Melkites.\(^{545}\) As for 5:116 verse on taking Jesus and Mary as two gods alongside God, it is not as debated as the previous verses. This is because of the absence of ambiguous terms such as thālāthah and thālith thālāthah as the central term here is evident namely Ilāh (deity).\(^{546}\) One might argue that the ambiguous aspect of this verse is the nature of this ‘Ittikhāth’ (taking). However, the common evident theme is ‘worshipping’ Jesus and Mary alongside God. Thus, the narratives of early Muslims do not specify or limit the doctrine of worshipping Jesus and Mary to a certain Christian sect, such as Collyridianism.\(^{547}\) Yet early Muslims do not question its verse in line with Christian self-understanding.

\(^{544}\) This would be related to the conception that the Trinity of thought of as “Father, Mother, and Son”. See: Gabriel SaidReynolds. The Qur’an and the Bible: Text and Commentary (Yale University Press: 2018), p. 208.
The absence of narratives on these verses suggests that connecting these verses to various Christian sects and self-understanding is a product of the later Islamic tradition, a milieu in which Muslims engaged in dialogue and debate with Christians. Therefore, I argue that early Muslims did not have a fixed apparent meaning of the verses compared with those on the Crucifixion. This is despite a general polemic against Christians on the topic of shirk (associating with God).\textsuperscript{548} This impacts al-Rāżī’s views on the apparent meaning of these verses for no fixed meaning developed in early Islam except for the claim that Christians worship Jesus and Mary. This also questions later Muslim attempts to interpret these verses through the lens of the Nicene creed. We see this in Ibn Taymiyyah’s claim that all Qur’anic descriptions of the Trinity are found in the Christian tradition, drawing on the Melkites to connect the doctrine of the Trinity to the Nicene creed. What is worth noting in Ibn Taymiyyah’s analysis is the absence of narratives on the Trinity from the early Muslims, except his citing al-Suddī as claiming that Christians worship Jesus and Mary. This suggests that Ibn Taymiyyah agrees with the above discussions on the apparent meaning of the terms \textit{thālāthah} and \textit{thālith thālāthah} and relies on later authorities such as Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923).\textsuperscript{549} This line of connecting the Qur’anic verses with the Nicene creed continued into later Christian-Muslim interactions, as seen in the work of ‘Alī al-Ṣallābī.\textsuperscript{550} In other words, both Elias of Nisibis/Accad and Ibn Taymiyyah/al-Ṣallābī share the same methodology of connecting verses to a certain context. This can be challenged, however, due to Qur’an’s use of ambiguous terms to define the doctrine, the lack of accounts from the Prophet, and the absence of any fixed or stable apparent meaning among the early Muslims.


\textsuperscript{550} See: ‘Alī al-Ṣallābī. \textit{Al-Masīḥ ’Isā Ibn Maryam ‘Ala’ih al-Salām: al-Ḥaqiqah al-Kāmilah} (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2019), p. 177. I think that the proper way of reconstructing the Qur’anic verses is by arguing that the Qur’an’s concern – or its \textit{Maqāṣid} (the higher objectives) - is against going astray from the roots and genuine beginnings of Christianity. However, this entails that the Nicene creed itself or the Trinitarian formula does not represent the genuine Christianity which would be encountered by mainstream Christians. This by default would lead to the Christian intra-faith debates on early Christianity.
Al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics:

Christian objections to the Qur’anic representation of the Trinity challenged al-Rāzī’s views on the Trinity in the Qur’an. Since there is no standard apparent meaning to these verses, however, he was able to reinterpret the verses to dismiss these objections. As for the verse 4:171, al-Rāzī approaches it with two lines of analysis namely theological and linguistics aspects. As for the theological one, he states that thālāthah means ‘one in substance threefold in hypostases’ (wāhid bil-Jawhar thālāthah bil-Aqānīm). He rejects the notion that hypostases are the same as the Divine attributes (Ṣifāt) in Islam, arguing that Christians allow for incarnation (Hulūl) of these hypostases, and thus they – the hypostases - are, in fact, essences (dhāt).551 As for the linguistic analysis of the verse, al-Rāzī states that this verse could be understood in two ways. The first is: “Do not say our Aqānīm (hypostases) are three”. The second is: “Do not say Ālihtunā Thālāthah (our Gods are three).” He then cites other verses regarding the Christian worship of Jesus and Mary (5:116).552 Elsewhere al-Rāzī questions the second line of interpretation and argues the statement “Do not say Ālihtunā Thālāthah (our Gods are three)” means the problem is not about accepting several Gods. Rather, it is about accepting a certain number of Gods. This is why he suggests that the best linguistic understanding of the verse is the statement: “Do not say Lanā Ālihtun Thālāthah (we have three

551 It would seem that al-Rāzī limits the meaning of Islam in this context to the Kalām tradition instead of all parties of Islam. This is because it is a common theme in the Kalām tradition to suggest overlapping arguments between Ḥanbalītes and Christians in regard to the issue of incarnation even through the writings of al-Rāzī himself who states that some Ḥanbalītes who adopt the notion that the “letters and sounds” (Ḫurūf wal-ʾAṣwāt) of the Qur’an are eternal are criticized by the adherents of Kalām. For this would means that God is incarnate in everyone who reads the Qur’an. This disbelief, he writes, is greater than Christian disbelief since the latter claim incarnation only in Jesus (See: Al-Rāzī. Maʿālim Usūl al-Dīn, p. 363; Al-Rāzī. Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb, vol. 1, p. 39; Ibid, vol. 16, p. 30). The same applies to the Shi’ite tradition in which Amir-Moezzi notes that “Shi’ite imamological doctrines in general, and within them the nature of the Imam, have always been the main charges of Sunni heresiographers, who blame their Shi’ite opponents for applying to their guides, and to ‘Allī in particular, the same exaggeration (ghulū) as that practiced by Christians about Jesus. From the fourth / tenth century and the rationalist turn of the Twelver Shi’ism that brought to power the Baghdad School, the followers of this legal-theological current attributed these doctrines, which they now denounced, to their esoteric coreligionists, accused of same extremism or exaggeration”. See: Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi. “Divine Attributes of ‘Allī in Shi’ite Mysticism: New Remarks on ‘Heresy’ in Early Islam” in: Carlos A. Segovia (ed.) Remapping Emergent Islam: Texts, Social Settings, and Ideological Trajectories (Amsterdam University Press: 2020), p. 177-178. This will be explored in the next chapter.

“Gods).” This would reject other Gods regardless of their number. As for the verse 5:73, al-Rāzī states that *thālīth thālāthah* can be understood in two ways: First, some exegetes say it means God is one of three Ālihah (Gods) because the verse ends with “there is only one Ilāh (God).” The second is the interpretation of adherents of Kalām, which argues that it is impossible to reconcile that each of the three hypostases is God with the claim that there is only one God. As for the verse 5:116, al-Rāzī accepts that there is Muʿārid Ḵālī against the apparent meaning of this verse since Christians do not worship Jesus and Mary. This is one of the crucial points that was not questioned by the first three generations of Islam in line with Christian self-understanding. Yet al-Rāzī dismisses this objection, arguing that since Christians claim that Jesus and Mary create miracles by their own volition, rather than through God, this could have led them to believe they are gods.

This leads us to an issue that is closely related to the Trinity, that is, the accusation of *shirk* (associating with God). The question explored by Muslims is whether the unbelief (*kufr*) of Jews and Christians is considered a form of *shirk*. Al-Rāzī states that some Muslims do not consider the Christian belief as *Shirk* and note that the Qurʾan mentions the people of the book and polytheists separately. The majority of Muslim scholars, however, he adds, do consider it *shirk* for five reasons. The first is that Qurʾanic verses on Jewish and Christian belief do use the language of *shirk*. He connects this to the Prophet Abraham and the verse (2:135) in which he states that Abraham did not accept neither Trinitarianism (*Tathlīth*) nor anthropomorphism (*Tashbīh*). The second reason, he explains, is that if the unbelief of Jews

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555 See: Ibid, vol. 12, p. 142. Elsewhere he mentions this verse but does not question the apparent meaning regarding whether or not Christians had done this since the context is about the infallibility (*ʿIṣmah*) of Jesus. See: Al-Rāzī. *ʿIṣmat al-Anbiyāʾ* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Diniyyah, 1986), p. 135.
558 "They say, ‘Become Jews or Christians, and you will be rightly guided.’ Say [Prophet], ‘No, [ours is] the religion of Abraham, the upright, who did not worship any god besides God.’”. For more about this, see: Josef Linnhoff. “Associating with God in Islamic thought”, p. 22-26.
and Christians is not considered shirk, it would be forgiven by God. This, he says, is false, citing the verse “God does not forgive the joining of partners with Him: anything less than that He forgives to whoever He will, but anyone who joins partners with God has concocted a tremendous sin” (4:48). The third reason is that Christians adopt the Trinitarian understanding that God is thatlīh in the sense of three eternal dhawāt (essences). This is because God would not have accused them of unbelief (Kufr) had they believe in three attributes (Ṣifāt). The fourth reason is that the Prophet used the term shirk in reference to Jews and Christians and connected this with the term dhimmī (non-Muslims under the protection of Islamic law). The fifth reason is that the rejection of the prophethood of Muhammad entails committing shirk since the miracles performed by him could not have come through other than God Himself. Thus, those who reject his prophethood have indirectly ascribed these miracles to other entities rather than God, which leads to shirk according to him.

Furthermore, al-Rāzī frequently connects the doctrine of the Trinity with shirk such as the verse (3:64). Al-Rāzī states that these three commands are mentioned because Christians have committed three types of disbelief: worshipping Jesus, shirk through positing the Father, the son, and the Holy spirit as three eternal beings, and blindly following their priests and monks in legal rulings and even prostrating to them. He elsewhere suggests a theological analogy when interpreting the verse (4:126). Al-Rāzī states the commonality between polytheists, naturalists, Jews, Christians and even the Mu’tazilites is that they attempt to gain power from things other than God, which is against the concept of submission to God alone. This is because the polytheists ask idols, naturalists ask Aflak (spheres), Jews claim that they

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561 “Say, ‘People of the Book, let us arrive at a statement that is common to us all: we worship God alone, we ascribe no partner to Him, and none of us takes others beside God as lords.’ If they turn away, say, ‘Witness our devotion to Him.’”


563 “It is to God that everything in the heavens and earth belongs: God is fully aware of all things.”
will not be punished in the hereafter because they are the sons of prophets, Christians believe in the Trinity or the thālith thālāthah, and, lastly, Mu‘tazilites take the theological view that human beings create their own acts.\footnote{See: Al-Rāzī, Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb, vol. 11, p. 57.} He also connects several religions under one notion in his interpretation of the term Aḥad (One) in the verse (112:1)\footnote{“Say, ‘He is God the One’.”} Here, he mentions al-Thanawiyyah (dualists), Christians, and the Sabians.\footnote{See: Ibid, vol. 32, p. 185.} Accordingly, al-Rāzī supports that view that Christians are committing Shirk as he that this is the proper one (al-Mukhtār).\footnote{See: Ibid, vol. 6, p. 59.}

Having mentioned al-Rāzī’s views on the Trinity in the Qur’an, I argue that the impact of his intellectual project, specifically his hermeneutics, was limited to certain cases such as the examination of whether Christians really worshipped Jesus and Mary. This could be understood as a historical challenge – or Mu‘ārid ‘Aqlī - similar to the Crucifixion, which encouraged al-Rāzī to consider if this was historically the case. However, since the Trinity is more a theological rather than a historical question, it allowed al-Rāzī to approach the challenge differently. Therefore, his analysis of the terms thālāthah and thālith thālāthah relies on connecting the terms to what he considers to be the views of mainstream Christianity and the belief in three eternal Dhawāt (essences). He does not question whether Christians make this theological claim through their own self-understanding. Al-Rāzī’s views on these issues are probably influenced by two factors: First, the absence of any fixed or stable apparent meaning among the early Muslims. Secondly, his sceptical position regarding the certitude of scriptural text (al-Dalā‘īl al-Naqliyya Ẓanniyyah). There two factors would allow him to reinterpret the Qur’anic verses to address these challenges. Furthermore, the theological-based foundation of the Trinity would allow al-Rāzī to reinterpret it itself as this is crucially different from the case of crucifixion.
Al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology:

Al-Rāzī’s views on the Christian tradition through his works on philosophical theology reflect the longstanding use of Christianity as a polemical trope in intra-Muslim dialogue and debate. We see the same use of Islam in the Reformed tradition as a “Christian trope.” This is a product of the systematization of Muslim works on theology which impacted both the structure and content of these works. One aspect of these works is the comparative study of religious traditions based on shared philosophical and theological questions. For instance, the influential philosophical theologian, al-Āmidī, presents a brief analysis of the issue of the impossibility of changes taking place in God’s essence (Imtinā’ Ḥulūl al-Ḥadīth Fī Dhat al-Rabb) in which he states that there is a consensus among world thinkers on this point except al-Karrāmiyya and Zoroastrians. This means that Muslim theologians would discuss the major doctrine of any religion once it has a different view related to the current topic.

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566 This had influenced Jewish and Christian intellectuals in the Islamicate world. For instance, Stroumsa notes that “Jewish systematic rationalistic thought developed only later, as part of the wholesale Jewish immersion into Arabic culture”. See: Sarah Stroumsa. “Saāda’a and Jewish kalām” in: Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (eds.) The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 73. As for the Syriac Christian tradition, Takahashi writes regarding Bar ‘Ebroyo’s work Candelabra of the Sanctuary: “The idea of composing such a work as the Candelabrum, a handbook covering all the different areas of Christian theology, may therefore have come from outside of the Syriac tradition and, in particular, from the handbooks of Islamic theology”. See: Hidemi Takahashi. “Reception of Islamic Theology among Syriac Christians in the Thirteenth Century: The Use of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in Barhebraeus’ Candelabrum of the Sanctuary” Intellectual History of the Islamicate World 2 (2014), p. 173.

570 An analogy with the method of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī might be helpful as it is said that Fiqh al-Bukhārī Fī Tārājimīmun (al-Bukhārī’s jurisprudence is his headings). This statement is used to show that al-Bukhārī’s distinctiveness is found through his way of sorting the prophetic accounts in which he chooses a particular account under several titles to present different arguments regarding jurisprudence. This would also be applicable on classifying the Christian tradition under several topics within these systematic works in which it is examined comparatively through each case with different Islamic sects that shares a certain notion with it. On al-Bukhārī’s method, see: Muḥammad Zakarṭa’yāl al-Kāndahlawī. Al-Abwāb wal-Tārājīm li-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmīyyah, 2012), vol. 1, 103. For more about Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, see: Jonathan Brown. The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunni Hadith Canon (Brill: 2007); Scott Lucas. “The Legal Principles of Muhammad b. Izmāʿīl al-Bukhārī and their Relationship to Classical Salafi Islam” Islamic Law and Society 13:3 (2006), pp. 289-324. On the intellectual context, see: Christopher Melchert. “The Theory and Practice of Hadith Criticism in the Mid-Ninth Century” in: Petra M. Sijpesteijn and Camilla Adang (eds.) Islam at 250: Studies in Memory of G.H.A. Juynboll (Brill: 2020), pp. 74-102.
Al-Rāzī, inherits this theme in his examination the Christian tradition and includes it in his work *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl*, in which he examines its major doctrines if he thinks a key Christian doctrine relates to the topic under discussion. That is why he does not mention Christianity in the first four philosophical principles, which are: *Al-Muqaddimāt* (The epistemic premises), *al-Nazar* (Reasoning), *Hudūth al-Ajsām* (Temporal origination of bodies), *Ithbāt al-‘Ilm bil-Ṣāni‘ Ta‘ālā* (Proving the existence of creator). On these, he does not believe that Christians differ from Muslims on these topics. He does, however, mention other religions that have different views or objections vis-à-vis one of these principles. For instance, he mentions the objections of the Manicheans (*al-Mānawiyyah*) on the origination of bodies.\(^{572}\) Al-Rāzī discusses Christianity under the fifth principle: *Bayān Kawnīh Qādiran* (On the nature of God’s power to act). He claims that Christianity does have a different view regarding God’s power encompassing all contingent beings (*mumkināt*) in which he states that this is applicable to all non-Muslim thinkers including the philosophers, *al-Thanawiyyah* (Dualists), Sabians, Christians, Zoroastrians besides the majority of Mu'tazilites.\(^{573}\) Al-Rāzī here has two objectives in mind: he presents a critique of the Christian understanding of God while also critiquing the intellectual project of the Mu'tazilites. That is why the second place in which he mentions Christianity is under the same principle but through the fourth issue that is *Lā Mūjid Illa Allāh* (There is no sole creator except God) comparing this again with the Mu'tazilites. He states that most non-Muslims including the philosophers, Sabians, astrologists, dualists, *Tabā’i’yyah* (Naturalists), Christians, and the Mu'tazilites accept that there is Cause (*mu’aththir*) other than God and that each school has a special conception of this Cause. Al-Rāzī states that Christians and Mu'tazilites share the notion that this Cause is a living entity; Jesus for Christians and the human being for the Mu'tazilites, since


they claim human beings create their acts.\textsuperscript{574} Thus far, al-Rāzī locates the Christian tradition within broader, systematic discussions of various theological topics. This leads us to his discussion on the Trinity.

Al-Rāzī opens the discussion by noting that the adherents of Kalām agree upon understanding the Christian conception of God as being one substance (jawhar) and threefold in hypostases (aqānīm). He further states that there is no issue regarding the term jawhar itself since this dispute mainly relies on its linguistic understanding. This is because Christians believe that God is transcendent and not spatially located. Yet the crux of the issue relates to the term aqānīm; he says that he will present all possible interpretations so as to not be accused by Christians of ignorance of what they mean by the term.\textsuperscript{575} In other words, al-Rāzī aims to demonstrate a perennial theme, that is, the limits of reason or the nature of Ṣarīḥ al-‘Aql (sound reason).\textsuperscript{576} This is because the concept of ‘aql (Reason) in this context is structured and shaped by the main themes of Kalām. Yet the attempt to structure Kalām-based ‘aql is questioned by

\textsuperscript{576} This is a part of the relativity in defining the themes of ‘rationality’ within a specific intellectual framework. This is because “the term ‘rationalism’ does not generally designate a single precise philosophical position. There are several ways in which reason can have precedence, and several accounts of knowledge to which it may be opposed. Furthermore, the very term ‘reason’ is not altogether clear. The term might thus be applied to a number of philosophical positions from the ancients down to the present”. See: ‘Rationalism’ in: Robert Audi (ed.) The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy (Cambridge University Press: 2015); Christoph Markschies. “Introduction: Rationalization in Religions” in: Yohanan Friedmann and Christoph Markschies (eds.) Rationalization in Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam (De Gruyter: 2019), pp. 1-5. This is already found through the Muslim intra-faith dialogues such as the project of Ibn Taymiyyah in which Sherman Jackson notes: “Ibn Taymīya’s opposition to “Islamicized” Greek thought should not be seen as some sort of fideistic opposition to reason per se. His complaint was, rather, that rationalist forces had succeeded in identifying their particular system of reasoning with reason itself, such that only those who paid homage to the former could lay any legitimate claim to the latter. This had the effect of either binding believers to doctrines that defied their perception of the world and the fundamental dictates of scripture or of disabusing them of their otherwise demonstrably sound beliefs”. See: Sherman Jackson. Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking Toward the Third Resurrection (Oxford University Press: 2005), p. 11. This is also found through the Christian intra-faith dialogue when it comes to examining notions that do not go with the mainstream Neoplatonic Christianity in which Stephen Webb states in regard to the Mormons views on the corporeal God: “Not being Platonic is not equivalent to not being rational”. See: Stephen H. Webb. Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter (Oxford University Press: 2011), p. 251.
Christians in the Islamicate world who have also developed a concept of ‘aql that allows them to interpret and defend key Christian themes.\(^{577}\)

Al-Rāzī presents seven possible interpretations of the hypostases, arguing that they must be related either to Mahḍ Dhātih (Simple essence), Mujarrad Dhātih (Abstract essence), or be Mawjūdāt (Exist independently) or not. Thus, he suggests the following according to this classification:\(^{578}\) First, hypostases are the essence itself; he rejects this and argues it is impossible to accept hypostases as the same as the Dhāt (Essence). Second, the “Father” hypostasis is the same as the essence and thus the wujūd (existence) of God is the same as His Dhāt. Third, the hypostases are the same as Şifāt Allāh (Attributes of God). Fourth, the hypostases are three independent beings; here, he has in mind the issue of ta’addud al-Qudamā’ (multitude of eternal beings). Fifth, they are the same as Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s conception of God’s attributes, which are known as aḥkām (Characteristics).\(^{579}\) Sixth, the hypostases are the same as the philosophers’ al-Sulūb wal-Iḍāfāt (Negations and relations). Seventh, they are the same as Abū Hāshim’s aḥwāl (states).

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\(^{578}\) See: *Nihāyat al-‘Uqūāl*, vol. 1, 541-542.

\(^{579}\) Sabine Schmidtkle writes: “Abū al-Ḥusayn denied the Bahshamite doctrine that accidents (a’rāḍ) were entitative beings (maʿānī or dhawāt) inhering in the bodies and producing their qualities. For him, accidents constitute mere descriptive attributes (ṣifāt), characteristics (aḥkām), or ‘states’ (aḥwāl) of the body, a position that was clearly influenced by his earlier study of Aristotelian philosophy. This led him to negate the well-known Bahshamite notion of ‘states’, a conceptual framework to rationalize the ontological foundations of the attributes of the Divine and of created beings, as well as the related doctrine that essences (dhawāt, sing. dhāt) are ‘real’ or ‘actual’ (thābit) in the state of non-existence, that the ‘non-existent’ (maʿālīm) therefore is a ‘thing’ (shay̲). In his view, the existence of a thing is rather identical with its essence, both with respect to God and created beings” See: Sabine Schmidtkle. “The Mu’tazilite Movement (III): The Scholastic Phase” in: Sabine Schmidtkle (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, p. 170-171.
After presenting these possibilities, al-Rāzī supports Abū Hāshim’s *Aḥwāl* (states) as the best interpretation of the hypostases. Abū Hāshim’s *aḥwāl* (states) is one of the most significant theories of interpreting God’s attributes in Islam.\(^{580}\) It was developed by Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāṭī, a leading figure of the Mu’tazilite school of thought,\(^ {581}\) as “a new view opposed at once to that of the Attributists and to that of the Antiattributists”.\(^ {582}\) This theory is considered the first Kalām attempt to criticize the Aristotelian logic, namely the law of excluded middle.\(^ {583}\) For this it has been challenged by thinkers even outside the Kalām tradition such as Avicenna.\(^ {584}\) That is why it is known as one of the three wonders of Kalām tradition (‘Aja’il al-Kalām) alongside al-Ash’arī’s notion of *Kashb* and al-Nazzām’s notion of *Ṭafra*.\(^ {585}\) This, however, caused controversy to the extent that is claimed that he had been accused of unbelief (*kafr*) by his fellows.\(^ {586}\) Despite these issues, Abū Hāshim’s theory has been one of the most successful and original attempts regarding the issue of God’s oneness.\(^ {587}\)

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580 More broadly, Fedor Benevich notes that “In his recent study “Essence and Existence in the Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century” Robert Wisnovsky argues that the famous post-Avicennian dispute regarding whether essence and existence are distinct in reality or only as two concepts in the mind can be fruitfully interpreted in face of another metaphysical debate: whether the entities called *aḥwāl* (states/modes) in the kalām-tradition are additional to the essences (*dhawāt*) of the things they belong to. According to Wisnovsky, the dispute over the reality of the essence-existence distinction may be regarded as a case study within the dispute about *aḥwāl*. For instance those who believe in the reality of *aḥwāl* would accept that existence is such a *ḥāl* which is additional to the essence of a thing”. See: Fedor Benevich. “The Metaphysics of Muhammad b. Ḥāfiz al-Karīm al-Sahrastānī (d. 1153): *Aḥwāl* and Universals” in: Abdellkader al Ghouz (ed.) *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century* (Bonn University Press; 2018), p. 327.


584 Damien Janos notes that “one of the main problems from Avicenna’s perspective was that the Bahshamite theory of *ḥāl* conflicts with the law of excluded middle. Avicenna does not recognize an intermediary ontological state or mode between existence and nonexistence. As a result, the idea that the Attribute of the Essence can be intellectually grasped but indicates merely a subsistent state that does not truly exist does not square with Avicenna’s ontology and especially his ontologization of mental objects”. See: Damien Janos. *Avicenna on the Ontology of Pure Quiddity* (De Gruyter; 2020), p. 611.


587 Jan Thiele captures this in which he writes: “Abū Hāshim’s theory was highly successful in that it became a central pillar in the theological system of his followers for many centuries. Over the course of this time, the theory of *aḥwāl* was modified and elaborated in various aspects, so that theologians applied it with different focuses of interest, including merely epistemological approaches”. See: Jan Thiele. “Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāṭī’s (d. 321/933) Theory of ‘States’ (*aḥwāl*) and its Adoption by Ash’arite Theologians” in: Sabine Schmidtke (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, p. 383.
The central controversial and ambiguous statement that distinguishes Abū Hāshim’s notion of God’s attributes from the one of his father Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī is ‘Limā Huwa ‘Alayh Fī Dhātihi’ (by His essence in a state) since the latter conceptualizes it as ‘Li-Dhātihi’ (by His essence). In brief, the theory is summarized through the following:

“There was a dispute about the status of God’s attributes (such as “knowing” or “powerful”) since the early beginnings of the Islamic theology. One group of theologians claimed that they are additional (Zā’id) to God’s essence (Ash’arites), the other rejected it (Mu’tazilites). In order to keep the attributes distinct in their meanings but to avoid stating them as real additional objects some Mu’tazilites (Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī (d.933) was the first) introduced a new kind of entity: ahwāl. Next to a knowing subject (‘ālim) and its attribute of knowledge (‘ilm) there are two more entities: “being knowledgeable” (kawn ‘āliman) predicated of the subject and “being knowledge” (kawn ‘ilman) predicated of the attribute. This distinction gave rise to a metaphysical debate about whether there are such entities at all, i.e. whether we can accept not only in God’s case but also in general that in addition to e.g. instances of the accident “black” (sawād) there are such generic notions as “being black” (kawn sawādan) i.e. “blackness”, “being a color” and “being an accident”.

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588 See: ‘Abd al-Jabbār. Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1996), p. 182; Al-Shahrastānī, Al-Mīlāl wal-Nīḥal (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rifāh, 1993), p. 92; Al-ʿĪjī. Al-Mawāqif Fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1999), p. 269. Al-Ḥākim al-Jishmī (d. 494/1101) notes regarding the complexity of its terminology: “Abū Hāshim, and those followed him, upheld the view that knowledge of His being knowing, powerful, and living is neither derived from (yataʿallaq bi) His essence only, nor from an entitative determinant that is other than Him, but rather it is correlated to His essence in a state (bi dhātihi ʿalā ḥalatin)… Abū ʿAlī [al-Jubbā’ī] upheld this position in [some] instances. However, though he upheld the term ḥāl (laẓf al-ḥāl) in his [work] Jawāb al-Khurāṣānīyyah [Response to the Khurāṣānīs], he mentions a divergent term (bi-khulāf ḥālāk)”. See: Racha El Omari. The Theology of Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī/al-Kābi (d. 319/931) (Brill: 2016), p. 104. This includes the Ash’arites modification of this theory; “the Ash’ari theory used ahwāl (modes/states) to establish both what different concrete objects in the world have in common and what is specific to each one, i.e., what makes them distinct. The whole discussion of the ahwāl turned around the questions of whether we need to admit them in our ontology alongside atoms and accidents in order to make the world knowable (an expression of what I will call ‘ontological pragmatism’). The ahwāl proponents insist on the reality of the ahwāl for this very reason, in the face of their opponents, who maintain that ahwāl are merely verbal”. See: Fedor Benevich. “The Classical Ash’ari Theory of Ahwāl: Juwaynī and his Opponents” Journal of Islamic Studies 27:2 (2016), p. 136-137.

As for al-Rāzī, he suggests the following comparative analysis of this theory and the Christian hypotheses:

“Abū Hāshim’s aḥwāl cannot be described as multiplicity (ta‘addud) nor oneness (wiḥdah), nor being knowable (ma’lūmah) or unknowable (majhūlah). Instead, the essence (dhāt) can be described by either multiplicity or oneness if it is relatively considered with the states (aḥwāl). Similarly, Christians reject describing the hypostases by multiplicity. Instead, they argue that the essence itself is one, and that it is three if it is relatively considered with the hypostases. That is to say; if the essence is considered through its relationship with the existence (wujūd) hypostasis – that is the attribute of existence – it would be one. If the essence is considered through its relationship with the knowledge (‘Ilm) hypostasis – the attribute of knowledge – that it is something else. This is because the first relation (essence-existence) is different from the second (essence-knowledge). The same applies with the life (Ḥayā) hypostases. To sum up, the essence is one, and the hypostases are not multiple by default. If the essence is relatively considered with the hypostases, however, they are three. Accordingly, the three conditions which Christians adopt for the nature of the hypostases are as follows: accepting the oneness of the essence, rejecting the multiplicity of hypostases, and arguing for threeness of the hypostases if they are relatively considered with the essence. These could only be interpreted through Abū Hāshim’s notion.”

Having interpreted the Christian conception of the hypostases according to one of the Muslim theories of God’s attributes, al-Rāzī then categorizes these possibilities according to the rest of the topics of his work, Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl. First, if these hypostases are meant as multitude eternal beings, it will be discussed through the oneness of God. Second, if they are meant as the Divine attributes of Islam, Abū al-Ḥusayn āḥkām, Abū Hashim’s aḥwāl or al-

Sulūb wal-Īḍāfāt of the philosophers, it will be discussed through the attributes of God.\(^{591}\) In other words, al-Rāzī is no longer concerned with the Trinity as a part of the Christian tradition but rather as a philosophical or a theological notion. Al-Rāzī proceeds to examine three possible objections against his interpretation of the hypostases: The first concerns the reason for limiting the number of the hypostases in three (Existence, knowledge, and life). He argues that Christians can response to this by the fact there is a dispute regarding the number of God’s attributes in the Islamic context. That is to say, the Ash’arites limit them to seven, eight or more. In addition, the Mu’tazilites, namely the school of Abū Hāshim, limit them to four.\(^{592}\) Elsewhere he presents the same line of argument and argues that the disputes regarding the attributes of God within this school of thought does not entail Kufr (Unbelief) as it is related only to the attributes not the essence of God itself. Thus, he states that those who believe that God has a body or has been incarnated unto a body have committed Kufr as he applies this to Jews, Christians, and some Muslims who believe in incarnation.\(^{593}\)

The second is the objection that Christians must accept the hypostases of al-Qudrah (the power to act) since they believe that God is a Free agent (fā’il mukhtār). Al-Rāzī states that Christians probably interpret this issue in the same way as the philosophers, that is, in terms of God’s knowledge of contingent beings as creational (fī ‘lī) which would be the reason behind its existence in the world similar to the knowledge of the engineer. Furthermore, he states that it could be as Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s conception of God’s power to act, who claims that that God’s power to act is the same as His essence. Thus, al-Rāzī suggests that their denial of al-Qudrah as a fourth hypostasis does not mean a denial of His power to act. The third is the objection regarding adding Hearing (al-Sam’) and Seeing (al-Baṣar) hypostasis. Al-Rāzī states that the Christian position on this issue is probably the same as that of the

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philosophers in which accepting these hypostases leads to a corporeal God for it relies on *idrāk* (sensory perception), which Christians do not adopt.

The impact of al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology is seen in his attempt to keep the consistency of his conceptualization of the attribute of God. This is through having in mind two parties that could be using the same lines of arguments against him: the Mu‘tazilites and Christians. The Mu‘tazilites would accuse him of accepting “nine Gods” because those who ascribe eight attributes to God are in fact, according to the Mu‘tazilites, saying that God is the ninth of nine (*Tāsi‘ Tis‘ah*), citing the Qur’anic verse 5:73; their unbelief, the argument goes, is three times greater than Christian unbelief. A theme that centrally shapes his examination throughout the course of his career through his works such as his *Al-Arba‘īn Fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* and *Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya*. That is why he counters this by arguing that those who accept the attributes of God as characteristics of the essence (*khawāṣṣ dhātiyyah*) are closer to the Christian concept of the hypostases. On the other hand, Christians would accuse al-Rāzī of having similar conceptualization namely that they are not identical with Him nor different from Him. As outlined by his fellow Ash‘arites al-Bāqillānī: “If one of them (Christians) says: “But do you yourselves not say about the attributes of the Creator, blessed be He, that they are not identical with Him nor different from Him? So then why do you deny that the substance is not identical with the hypostases and not different from them? Say to them: “We have only asked you about this because of your teaching that the substance is other than the hypostases. We ourselves do not say that God, Great and Mighty, is other than his attributes, so what you say is not constraining”.

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Concluding remarks:

Al-Rāzī’s views on the Trinity are not as controversial and significant as his ones on the crucifixion and the Bible. As for his hermeneutics, it has been argued that the impact of his hermeneutics on his examination of the apparent meaning of these verses is limited. The apparent meaning of these terms used for demonstrating the doctrine of the Trinity such as thālāthah and thālith thālāthah are ambiguous except for worshipping Mary and Jesus. That is why early Muslims did not have a fixed apparent meaning of the verses. Furthermore, connecting these verses to various Christian sects and self-understanding is a product of the later Islamic tradition, a milieu in which Muslims engaged in dialogue and debate with Christians. Therefore, his analysis of the terms thālāthah and thālith thālāthah relies on connecting the terms to what he considers to be the views of mainstream Christianity and the belief in three eternal Dhawāt (essences) in his commentary. Thus, he suggests that the best linguistic understanding of the term thālāthah is ‘one in substance threefold in hypostases’ (wāḥid bil-Jawhar thālāthah bil-Aqānim) while the term thālith thālāthah is ‘Do not say Lanā Ālihtun Thālāthah (we have three Gods)’ as this would reject other Gods regardless of their number. As for the issue of worshipping Mary and Jesus, al-Rāzī accepts that there is Muʿārid Ḫaqī against the apparent meaning of this verse since Christians do not worship Jesus and Mary. This is one of the crucial points that was not questioned by the first three generations of Islam in line with Christian self-understanding. Yet al-Rāzī dismisses this objection, arguing that since Christians claim that Jesus and Mary create miracles by their own volition, rather than through God, this could have led them to believe they are gods. It is evident that al-Rāzī focuses on reinterpreting Christian theological concepts and not tracing these doctrines to certain Christian sects. This might be one of the indirect influences due to his sceptical position regarding the certitude of scriptural text (al-Dalāʾil al-Naqliyya Ṣanniyyah).
As for al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology, he compares the Christian hypostases with Abū Hāshim’s states (āhwāl). This is because the three conditions which Christians adopt for the nature of the hypostases are only applicable to this theory which the following: Accepting the oneness of the essence, rejecting the multiplicity of hypostases, and arguing for threeness of the hypostases if they are relatively considered with the essence. This is based on the attempt to maintain the consistency of his intellectual project. However, al-Rāzī interprets the Christian hypostases in a different way in his commentary. This is because he rejects the notion that hypostases are the same as the Divine attributes (Ṣifāt) in Islam, arguing that Christians allow for incarnation (Hulūl) of these hypostases, and thus they – the hypostases - are, in fact, essences (dhāt). It is not clear why would al-Rāzī interpret the Christian hypostases in two ways in his commentary on the verse 4:171 written in 1199 and Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl although he accepts the mainstream Ash’arites conception of God’s attributes in them namely that they are not identical with Him nor different from Him. This is because al-Rāzī’s departures occurred in his late career namely in his works al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya, Ma‘ālim Uṣūl al-Dīn and Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-Ḥikmah having conceptualized them as mere relations (nisab wa-idāfāt) following the footsteps of Islamic philosophers.

600 This would be applicable to the Arab writing Christian theologians who had constructed their own intellectual projects as a response to the Muslim critiques. For instance, ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s (d. c. 850) attempt to interpret the Trinity according to his intellectual project rather than mainstream Christianity in which David Thomas writes: “from what can be told, this ingenious comparison, though it was ultimately insufficient, remained the best attempt in the Islamic world to explain the Trinity for centuries, as though Christians were unable to find a better way to satisfy their critical opponents, or, which is more likely, were not interested in making the attempt”. See: David Thomas. “The Doctrine of the Trinity in Early Islam: Misperceptions and Misrepresentations” in: David Bertaina, Sandra Toenies Keating, Mark N. Swanson, Alexander Treiger (eds.) Heirs of the Apostles: Studies on Arabic Christianity in Honor of Sidney H. Griffith (Brill: 2019), p. 223. See also: Mark Beaumont. The Theology of ‘Ammār Al-Baṣrī: Commending Christianity Within Islamic Culture (Gorgias Press: 2021). 601 See: Altuṣ. “Fahreddin er-Rāzī’nin eserlerinin kronolojisi”, p. 144. 602 See: Al-Rāzī, Ma‘ālim Uṣūl al-Dīn, vol. 3, p. 123. 603 See: Al-Rāzī, Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya, vol. 3, p. 223-234, vol. 8, p. 94. 604 See: Al-Rāzī, Ma‘ālim Uṣūl al-Dīn, p. 327-340. 605 See: Al-Rāzī, Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-Ḥikmah, vol. 3, p. 123. 606 This departure does not seem to have an impact on his evaluation of the Trinity in his late Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya as he does not discuss it except issues related to Christology. See: Maha El Kaisy-Friemuth. “God and the Trinity in Fakhr al-Din al-Razi” Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 22:2 (2011), p. 117; Muammer İskenderoğlu. “Fakhr al-Din al-Razi” in: David Thomas and Alex Mallett (eds.) Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 4 (1200-1350) (Brill, 2012), p. 62.
Having foregrounded the main findings of this chapter, I shall now locate al-Rāzī’s views within the intellectual history this topic. There are two areas to be explored in this history: First, hermeneutics in which the question would be regarding the Muslim attempt to reinterpret the terms *thālāthah* and *thālith thālāthah* in addition to the question whether Christians did really worship Jesus and Mary in order to be compromised with the rational decisive evidence (*Mu‘ārid ‘Aqli*) that comes from the Christian self-understanding. Secondly, philosophical theology in which the question would be regarding the Muslim attempt to conceptualize the Christian Trinity without sharing similar features through their conceptualization of God’s attributes. As for al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics, he follows the mainstream Muslim perceptions of the terms *thālāthah* and *thālith thālāthah* through reinterpreting the Christian doctrine itself to be three eternal *Dhawāt* (essences). However, his attempt to address the issue of Jesus and Mary being worshipped by Christians could be a contribution to the intellectual history of Muslim perceptions. This is not due to his reinterpretation of the Christian doctrine itself but rather his ‘indirect’ engagement of his sceptical position regarding the certitude of scriptural text (*al-Dalāʿil al-Naqliyya Zanniyyah*). That is why you would find other adherents of Kalām such as the Muʿtazilite ʿAbd al-Jabbār ascribing his reconstruction of this verse to some Christians sects as he argues that since Mary had received the divine essence, then she had become God too as this has been presented by some Christians according to him.\(^{607}\) The same applies to his fellow Muʿtazilite Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāṭī as he argues that the apparent meaning of these verses is accepted since some

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607 See: ʿAbd al-Jabbār. *Tathbīt Dalāʿil al-Nabuwwah* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿArabiyyah, 1966), p. 145-146. Reynolds notes that “ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument is a response to Christian apologists, who, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār himself, point to this verse and say, “This is a lie. For we said about [Christ] that he is a god but we did not say about his mother that she is a god”. ʿAbd al-Jabbār takes great pains to build a number of retorts to this affront. He points out that the Qurān nowhere explicitly says that Christians believe that Mary is a god. He cites a Syriac letter where a Nestorian accuses a Jacobite of holding this doctrine. Finally, in the passage above he describes the Christian “pantheon,” as it were. According to him, Christians portray Mary on “the throne, sitting to the left of the Lord, the Father of her son, and her son is on His right”. That is, they do in fact treat her as a god. ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s approach to this question seems to have won him some distinction, as Ṣafadī mentions it in his biography of the Qāḍī”. See: Gabriel Said Reynolds. *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu: ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Critique of Christian Origins* (Brill: 2005), p. 120.
Christians believed in this doctrine. My point here is the fact that although these Mu'tazilites who are adherents of Kalām have mostly the same theological commitments regarding scriptural hermeneutics as the ones of al-Rāzī, they approached this issue by ascribing these doctrine to Christian sects. However, al-Rāzī does not seem to be satisfied with historical accounts in general as he relies on his own reconstruction of the text. That is why he explicitly mentions the term Ta’wīl at the end of this discussions to suggest that this is the best way of reinterpreting this Qur’anic verse in line with Christian self-understanding.

As for al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology, his interpretation is a part of a long history of the Mu'tazilites-Ash’arites reinterpretations of the Trinity as a polemical tool against each other as mentioned before. This, however, does not necessarily mean that some of these interpretations had some genuine aspects to have a ‘neutral’ approach to the doctrine of the Trinity such as al-Rāzī’s one whose source is probably Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153). This is because he explicitly states that he really would want to know the reality of this doctrine through putting all possibilities that he considers ‘reasonable’. Al-Rāzī’s attempt reinterpret the Christian hypostases could be termed as ‘Kalāmization’ which means


609 This might have overlapping arguments with some modern attempt to read the Qur’an in rhetorical sense. Linnhoff notes that “This approach is rooted in a basic assumption that the Qur’an gives an accurate, objective record of the Christian doctrines and communities that it encounters. But there is another way of reading these verses. A more recent trend of scholarship argues for a deeper appreciation of the creative use of rhetoric, polemics and hyperbole in the Qur’an’s treatment of Christianity. The search for Christian heresies to explain certain verses overlooks, perhaps, the role of argumentation in the Qur’an, its ability to exaggerate, caricature and even satirise the views of Christians”. See: Josef linnhoff. “Associating” with God in Islamic thought: A Comparative Study of Muslim Interpretations of Shirk (PhD thesis at the University of Edinburgh: 2020), p. 29.


611 Harry Wolfson writes: “Shahrastānī goes on to report that, unlike the Malkites and the Jacobites who believe that “the substance [that is, the essence] is other than the hypostases,” the Nestorians believe that “God is one possessing three hypostases (aḵānīm), existence and knowledge and life, but these hypostases are not superadded to the essence (al-dhāt) and they are not it (huwa), that is to say, they are neither other than the essence nor the same as the essence, which means that they are neither existent nor nonexistent. This conception of the hypostases in their relation to the essence is compared by him to the conception of the modes (ahwāl) of Abū Hāshim from among the Mu’tazilites”. See: Harry Wolfson. The Philosophy of the Kalam (Harvard University Press: 1976), p. 338-339; Al-Shahrastānī. Al-Mītal wal-Nīhal (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1993), p. 269.

to interpret the themes and doctrines of world religions through one of the theological theories found in the tradition of Kalām. This distinguishes it from “Philosophization” in the sense that the latter would include any interpretation of these doctrines regardless of its compatibility with Kalām-based understanding of Islam such as al-Rāzī’s attempt to ‘philosophize’ astral magic. However, this Kalām-based conception of reason (‘aql) has been question by Christians in the Islamicate world and beyond. That is why there has been little reception to al-Rāzī’s views on the Trinity in Christian-Muslim dialogue and debate. This may be explained by the fact that mainstream Christians would likely not accept his interpretation suggest that it reflects a heretical understanding, such as modalism. This is why al-Rāzī’s views on the Trinity in Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl have been challenged in the Syriac tradition, as seen in the reception of Al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl (d. 1260). Accordingly, we can conclude, as mentioned through the introduction, that al-Rāzī’s views on the Trinity are not as significant and controversial as his ones on the crucifixion and the Bible.

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615 Schwarb writes: “In chapter 3 (ed. 30) al-Ṣafī quotes a short passage from Rāzī’s refutation of the Christian doctrine (al-Faṣl al-thāmin fi al-Radd ‘Alā al-Naṣṣārī) in K. Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl wa dirāyat al-uṣūl (hakadha qāla Ibn al-Khatīb fi kitāb Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl), introducing Rāzī as “one who writes on philosophical topics as well as the fundamentals and branches of their religious doctrine (wa-huwa muṣannīf fi l-falsafa wa uṣūl dinihim wa-furu’ī). In response to Rāzī’s critique of the trinity doctrine, he writes: “Just as it is possible to say of a person that he is perceiving, thinking and speaking, without that this turns him into three separate beings and just as philosophers like Ibn al-Khatīb say of God that He is being, knowing and omnipotent, the Christians cannot be blamed for describing the divine as being Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is difference in wording (Lafẓ), but not in meaning (Ma’nā)” See: Gregor Schwarb. “The Coptic and Syriac Receptions of Neo-Ash’arite Theology” in: Sabine Schmidtke (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, p. 554.
Chapter five: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Christology

This chapter examines al-Rāzī’s views on Christology by interpreting them through his intellectual project namely his hermeneutics and philosophical theology. On hermeneutics, what plays the role of al-Mu’ārid al-‘Aqlī is Christian objections to Qur’anic verses that claim Christians believe Jesus is God. This chapter also explores debates over the Qur’anic use of terms to describe Jesus, including “Word” (kalimah) and “Spirit” (Rūḥ). The challenge for al-Rāzī is to question the apparent meaning of these terms since Christian thinkers draw on their presence in the Qur’an to argue for the Divinity of Jesus.616 On philosophical theology, this chapter explores parallel issues between Christianity and Islam on the nature of Christology. This includes the question of God’s speech (kalām Allah) and whether it is incarnated through letters and sounds (Ḥurūf wal-‘Aṣwāt”). This draws on the key theological issue of the createdness of the Qur’an (khalq al-Qur’ān). This analysis engages the issues of incarnation (Hulūl) and hypostatic union (Ittiḥād) as these notions have been arguably adopted by some Muslim groups. Al-Rāzī’s presentation of his own position, then, is no less a way to critique rival Muslims parties by highlighting their alleged similarities with Christian doctrine.

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616 This theme of debating two apparent meanings is already found through the Jewish-Christian interactions. For instance, Daniel Lasker writes: “The Jewish polemicists also employed the New Testament to point out the contradictions between this textual source of Christianity and Christian doctrines which sprang up later and became established in the Church. Whereas in the discussion of the Hebrew Bible the Christians accused the Jews of taking the text too literally, here it was the Jews who said that certain passages must be understood figuratively. When Christians read Matt. 26:26-23 (“This is my body ... This is my blood”), they understood it to mean that the Eucharist really became the body and blood of Jesus. The Jewish polemicists, for their part, maintained that these verses were obviously only a parable and were not meant literally.” See: Daniel J. Lasker. Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages: With a New Introduction (Cambridge University Press: 2007), p. 5. This is because these apparent meanings would be read in a different way once they are put in a different context. James Paget writes: “Cyprian spoke for many Christian writers when he wrote ‘That the Jews could understand nothing of the scriptures unless they first believed in Christ’”. See: James Carleton Paget. “Christianity and Judaism” in: Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation (Oxford University Press: 2019), p. 340. This is in general one of the challenges for the field of “comparative theology” since different traditions do not mean the same thing by words appearing in English such as ‘God’. See: Francis X. Clooney SJ. “Comparative Theology” in: Kathryn Tanner, John Webster, and Iain Torrance (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology (Oxford University Press: 2007), p. 667. For instance, Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. 820) argues that “if one took literally the remark in the Torah that “God is a consuming fire”, one should convert to Zoroastrianism”. See: Serafin Seppälä. “Torah in the Christian-Islamic Polemics of Theodore Abū Qurrah and ‘Abd al-Jabbār” in: Antti Laato (ed.) The Challenge of the Mosaic Torah in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Brill: 2020), p. 242.
Constructing the apparent meaning (ẓāhir):

The Qur’an and later Islamic tradition discuss the issue of Christology more than any other aspect of the Christian tradition. This is because there are direct interactions of the prophet in which he clarifies the ambiguous terms used in the Qur’an. In one report, for instance, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb narrates: “I heard the Prophet - peace and blessings be upon him - saying, ‘Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians praised the son of Mary, for I am only a Slave. So, call me the Slave of God and His Apostle’.” This indicates that Christology in Islam includes any act that could be understood as praising a Divine figure.

For this reason, there is much speculation as to how to articulate Jesus’ image without him being referred to as a Divine figure such as an “angelic Jesus” or “to reshape Jesus into the image of Muhammad”. In what follows, I focus on three groups of controversial verses:

First, on Jesus as God or the son of God: Second, on Jesus as the “Word” (kalimah). Third, on Jesus and the “Spirit” (rūḥ).

1. On Jesus as God or the son of God: “Those who say, ‘God is the Messiah, the son of Mary,’ are defying the truth. Say, ‘If it had been God’s will, could anyone have prevented Him from destroying the Messiah, son of Mary, together with his mother and everyone else on earth? Control of the heavens and earth and all that is between them belongs to God: He creates whatever He will. God has power over everything.’ (5:17);
“Those who say, ‘God is the Messiah, son of Mary,’ have defied God. The Messiah himself said, ‘Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord.’ If anyone associates others with God, God will forbid him from the Garden, and Hell will be his home. No one will help such evildoers (5:72); “And the Christians said, ‘The Messiah is the Ibn (son) of God’: they said this with their own mouths, repeating what earlier disbelievers had said. May God confound them! How far astray they have been led!” (9:30); “In God’s eyes Jesus is just like Adam: He created him from dust, said to him, ‘Be’, and he was” (3:59); “It would not befit God to have a walad (child). He is far above that: when He decrees something, He says only, ‘Be,’ and it is” (19:35).

2. On Jesus as the “Word” (kalimah). “The angels said, ‘Mary, God gives you news of a Kalimah (Word) from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, who will be held in honour in this world and the next, who will be one of those brought near to God” (3:45); “People of the Book, do not go to excess in your religion, and do not say anything about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than a messenger of God, His Kalimah (word) (4:171).

3. On Jesus and the “Spirit” (rūḥ). “And a Rūḥ (spirit) from Him” (4:171); “We gave Moses the Scripture and We sent messengers after him in succession. We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear signs and strengthened him with the Rūḥ al-Qudus (Holy Spirit)” (2:87); “Then God will say, ‘Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favour to you and to your mother: how I strengthened you with the Rūḥ al-Qudus (Holy spirit)” (5:110); “Remember the one who guarded her chastity. We breathed into her from Rūḥinā (Our Spirit) and made her and her son a sign for all people” (21:91); “And Mary, daughter of Imran. She guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her from Rūḥinā (Our spirit) (66:12).
Scholarship on Qur’anic Christology mainly attempts to understand these verses within the Qur’an’s historical and intellectual context. This includes exploring the presence of Jewish Christian groups, such as “Ebionites”, “Elkasaites”, and “Nazarenes”, and seventh century Christian denominations, such as the “Melkites”, “Jacobites”, and “Nestorians,” whom are posited as possible references of the verses. Others understand Qur’anic Christology as a polemical tool against pro-Chalcedonian bishops. Others see these verses as products of a “sectarian milieu” in which Islam formed its confessional identity. Stephen J. Shoemaker, for instances, writes: “These were not positions that Muhammad or the Qur’an took from some shadowy, historically improbable group of Judeo-Christians hiding somewhere in the Hijaz. Rather, the Qur’an’s Christology emerged from mixture of monotheisms shared among the early believers”. Accordingly, scholarship varies as to the meanings, audiences and influences that underpin the Qur’an’s account of Christology. However, what is important for this study is the relationship between the Christology of groups in Arabia and the Christian groups who met the prophet in early Islam namely the early Christians of Najrān. They are reported to have told the Prophet that they see in the Qur’an affirmation of their belief.

623 Carlos A. Segovia writes: "If the ecclesiastical authorities, in particular the pro-Chalcedonian bishops and the priests loyal to them, were the target of the Quranic authors, then the best way to undermine their authority was to eliminate their alleged institutional role by rejecting the very basis on which their delegated authority was grounded: the sacraments as a means to salvation; and the best way to make this fully effective, he adds, was to deny Jesus’s divine sonship and his role in the economy of salvation, so as to disprove the very notion of soteriological mediation”. See: Carlos A. Segovia. The Quranic Jesus: A New Interpretation (De Gruyter: 2019), p. 118. This applies to Griffith’s point on Qur’anic “prophetology”, which, he argues, seeks to undermine the understanding of the Biblical narratives of the patriarchs and prophets proposed in the Syriac mêmrê. See: Sidney H. Griffith. “Late Antique Christology in Qur’anic Perspective” in: Georges Tamer (ed.) Die Koranhermeneutik von Günter Lüling (De Gruyter: 2019), p. 39-43.
Moving to the views of early Muslims, we find one report, ascribed to Muqātil in which he states that verse 5:17, is meant for the Christians of Najrān. There are two reports for verse 5:72. The first, which is again found in Muqātil, repeats the claim that the verse is meant for the Christians of Najrān. The second, by Muhammad bin Ka‘b al-Quraṣī (d. 726), narrates a story of four scholars of Banū Isrā‘îl (People of Israel) who disputed after Jesus was raised. They took four positions: that Jesus must be God due to his miracles; that Jesus is the son of God; that Jesus is a child of adultery; that Jesus was the servant of God, His spirit, and His word sent to Mary. As such, the report continues, the Qur’an mentions these four views in four verses (5:72; 5:73; 4:156; 5:66). Accordingly, the final verse is meant for the fourth group which argued that Jesus is the servant of God, His spirit, and His word that was sent to Mary.

As for 9:30, there is one account ascribed to Muqātil in which he does not present any information beyond stating that the Messiah is Jesus. On 3:59, we find a consensus in the narratives that this verse speaks to the Christians of Najrān who reportedly asked the Prophet: “Who is the father of Jesus?” On verse 19:35, both Muqātil and Ismā‘īl al-Suddī do not say anything beyond what is understood from the apparent meaning of this verse, namely, that God cannot have a son. It is worth noting that early Muslims did not distinguish between the terms Ibn and Walad in all verses that have mentioned the term walad ascribed to God whether in relation to Jesus or the angels namely (2:116), (3:47), (6:100), (23:91), (37:149-153), (43:81). This issue is not limited to this case study but rather to most terms used in the Qur’an. This is because the Qur’an itself is quite unclear regarding the use of these terms.

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for specific meaning. This is because you might sometimes trace a certain term in a thematical sense to indicate that it does have one particular meaning. However, you would then find a verse that uses this term in a different sense, and thus this would question this hypothetical understanding. That is why al-Āmidī, for instance, states through his thematic study of the term Īmān (belief) that the majority of the apparent meanings of scripture is not meant (mukhālifah) as he notes the complexity of tracing one meaning for one term through Islam.637

As for verse 3:45, on Jesus being the “Word”, we find three different accounts of the meaning of the verse. The first, ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās, simply states that Jesus is the Word from God. The second is ascribed to Qatāda ibn Di‘āma in which he states that it is Kun (Be!), which relates to God’s creation of Jesus. The third is ascribed to Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq in which he claims that Jesus was born to no father, and thus he is called the “Word” (Kalimah).638 In this third, Aḥmad bin Sinān al-Wāṣiṭī reports that he heard Shādhdī bin Yahyā saying that the “Word” has not become Jesus, but Jesus was made by the Word.639 In each report, one sees a desire to connect the Qur’an’s use of “Word” (kalimah) to God’s creative power, Jesus’ identity as a creature of God, and a resistance to any sense of understanding the term in terms of higher Christology.

We now move to the views of early Muslims on Jesus as “Spirit” (Rūḥ). There are five accounts. The first is from Ubayy ibn Ka‘b in which he states that the soul of Jesus has already been created, citing the verse “And when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves” (7:172). The second is from Mujāhid ibn Jabr in which he states that the term means “prophet” (rasūl). The third is from Ismā‘īl al-Suddī in which he states that it means a created being. The fourth is from Muqāṭīl in which he states that Jesus came “not from a human being” (min Ghayr Bashar). The

fifth is from Shādhdh bin Yahyā in which he states that Yazīd ibn Hārūn suggests that the term means love (maḥabbah).⁶⁴⁰ On the verse 2:87, the term rūḥ is connected to the term for “holiness” (al-Quḍus). Most narratives state that the Qur’anic term rūḥ al-Quḍus refers to the angel Gabriel (Jibrīl). The exception is two narratives that state it is either the greatest name of God (Ism Allah al-Aʿẓam) or the Gospel (Injīl).⁶⁴¹ As for verse 5:110, an account by Muqāṭīl repeats the claim that it is a reference to Gabriel).⁶⁴² This applies to verses 21:91 and 66:12.⁶⁴³ It therefore seems that attempts to understand Qur’anic terms such as Kalimah (Word) and Rūḥ (Spirit) against the backdrop of Christian teachings on the Divinity of Jesus began with the Prophet himself and continued with the early Muslims.

What is worth noting regarding the views of early Muslims on Christology is the fact that it is the only topic which has been addressed well. That is to say that the ambiguous terms namely Kalimah and Rūḥ have been clarified and located within a clear theme against mainstream Christianity namely the core doctrine of Jesus being a divine figure. This is because of a central factor that has been absent in the previous topics which is the direct interactions of the Prophet with early Arab Christians. This is evident through comparing the impact of this fact on understanding the terms shubḥiha for the crucifixion, yuḥarrifūn for the corruption of the Bible, thālāthah and thālith thālāthah for the Trinity on the one hand and kalimah and rūḥ on the other. In other words, each term could have more than one apparent meaning due to the linguistic aspects in addition to the context that is read within. This has been excluded in the case of Christology once the Christians of Najrān have indicated their understanding of it. Accordingly, this would shape al-Rāzī’s views as he follows these mainstream lines of arguments.

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Al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics:

Al-Rāzī’s attempt to question the apparent meaning of Qur’anic verses on Christology against the historical al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī is limited to the Qur’anic treatment of the Christian doctrine that God is Jesus. Al-Rāzī questions the apparent meaning of the verse 5:17 since Christians do not directly claim that God is Jesus. He presents two ways of solving this issue. The first is to draw an analogy with rival Muslim parties who accept the doctrine of incarnation (Hulūl) as a premise for allowing the possibility that some Christians do in fact believe this. He elsewhere confirms this, claiming to have come across Muslim clerics who used to preach this with their disciples which led to these doctrines.645 The second approach is to interpret Christian belief itself, suggesting that to say “God is Jesus” is the true belief of Christians on the following basis: since Christians believe the Kalimah (Word) hypostasis has been incarnated in Jesus, this incarnation would be one of two: an incarnation of the Dhāt (essence) or an incarnation of the Šifah (attribute). If the first possibility, it does make sense to say that God is Jesus. If the second possibility, it does not make sense because an attribute cannot be transferred from one essence to another. Even if we assume the hypostasis of ʿIlm (knowledge) was transferred from God to Jesus, he writes, it means God would have become without knowledge for Jesus is the one who is God. This line of argument, al-Rāzī suggests, confirms that Christians do believe God is Jesus even if they do not affirm it.646 Al-Rāzī applies this line of argument throughout his commentary. As noted previously, he uses the same argument for verses that say that Christians worship Jesus and Mary. Elsewhere through his commentary on the verse (5:72), al-Rāzī ascribes this doctrine to the Jacobites arguing that they believe that Mary gave birth to God.647

On verse 9:30, al-Rāzī presents a critical question: How could all Christians believe in the sonship of Jesus even though we know that Jesus did not preach this doctrine to people? He first gives the answer of Muslim exegetes such as Abū al-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076) who point to the role of Paul. Yet al-Rāzī seems unsatisfied with this. He therefore offers the following: since Christians have scriptural terms as “son” (ibn) which convey a sense of glorification (tashrīf), similar to the Qur’anic term for Abraham as “friend” (khalīl), it is possible that Christians (mis)understood the term literally in response to Jewish belittlement of Jesus. As for verse 3:59, al-Rāzī confirms the consensus seen among the early Muslims that the verse refers to the Christians of Najrān. He counters this by arguing that their argument would equally apply to Adam; indeed, the creation of Jesus from blood is far more acceptable than creating Adam from dust as one of the common themes through the Muslim writings is to show that Jesus was in need even through his creation.

650 See: Ibid, vol. 8, p. 82; Elsewhere, he presents a ‘scientific’ justification for the possibility that a woman could give birth without being fertilized. He suggests that the imaginations (al-Takhayyulāt al-Dhihniyyah) could produce physical consequences such as feeling hot when someone gets angry. Thus, it is possible, he argues, that Mary might have imagined Jesus in a way that led to this fertilization arguing that naturalists, physicians, and philosophers would never be able to deny this possibility since their argument is based on induction. See: Ibid, vol. 8, p. 53; Ibid, vol. 21, p. 196-209. This is a part of al-Rāzī’s sceptical philosophy of science as Özgür Koca writes: “Rāzī’s philosophy of science is marked by scepticism apropos the ability of the scientific theories to tell us the reality of the world in an exhaustive way. The reality of the world is far too complex to be encapsulated in its totality by the dominant scientific models of his time”. See: Özgür Koca. Islam, Causality, and Freedom: From the Medieval to the Modern Era (Cambridge University Press: 2020), p. 81. This project is understood as a reconstruction of the Greek worldview, Bilal Ibrahim notes: “Given his extensive critique of Aristotle’s cosmology and natural philosophy, Rāzī’s alternative should be one that sets aside the essentialist view of nature in Greek philosophy, with the necessary connections between natures and their properties that it entails, in favor of a contingent world that is more compatible with his Ash’arite theological stance. Here, in contrast to the essential kind of Aristotelian philosophy, Rāzī’s examples of substances are often artifacts and the compounds of medicine and alchemy. In other words, Rāzī seems to view external reality not as the independently existing Nature of the Greek tradition, but as artifacts of God”. See: Bilal Ibrahim. “Beyond Atoms and Accidents: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the New Ontology of Postclassical Kālām” Oriens 48 (2020), p. 108-109. Note that al-Rāzī’s views on the Qur’an as a source of philosophical discourse is quite unclear as he sometimes uses it for his philosophical inquiry such as his discussion of ‘The reality of non-existent entities’ (Shay‘iyat al-Ma’dīm) (See: Al-Rāzī. Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb, vol. 30, p. 52) or the ‘spheres’ (Aflāk) (See: Al-Rāzī. Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya, vol. 6, p. 115-116). Sometimes he would claim that the Qur’an is not meant for such “contentious questions as causation, which only very few people are able to figure out in the first place”. See: Hannah C. Erlwein. “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Question ‘Why Worship God?’” Journal of Qur’anic Studies 21:2 (2019), p. 51.
On the verses that speak of a “Word” (*Kalimah*, 3:45), al-Rāzī notes two main positions. The first is that it refers to a “book” (*kitāb*) from God, noting the poetic style was to call a long poem a book. The second is that this is a reference to Jesus himself. This is the view of most Muslim exegetes. Al-Rāzī mentions five reasons for the Qur’an calling Jesus the “*Kalimah*” (word). The first is that Jesus was created directly by God through “*Kun*” (Be!) without any intermediary, namely, a father. The second is that Jesus both spoke and received the book through his childhood. The third is that since the *Kalimah* (word) always conveys truths, Jesus must be called *Kalimah* (word) for he guided people to the truth. The fourth is that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the ancient prophets; people thus started to say “This is the *Kalimah*” as a metaphorical way of affirming what has been foretold. The fifth is that Jesus can be called *Kalimah Allah* (‘the word of God’) in a way that is similar to the name *Faḍl Allah* (‘grace of God’). The impact of al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics is evident here as he states that *Kalimah Allah* (‘the word of God’) is the same as *Kalām Allah* (‘God’s speech’). Al-Rāzī clearly has in mind the Christian argument on the analogy between the Christian conception of Jesus and the Qur’an. As such, he argues that Jesus can be neither the Ash’arite view on God’s speech as an “eternal attribute” (*Ṣifah Qādīmah*) nor the Mu’tazilite view on “created sounds” (*ašwāt makhlūqah*). He thus affirms that this previous counter argument is rational decisive evidence (*Muʿārid ʿAqlī*) against the apparent meaning of the verse, suggesting that the use of figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) to avoid this. He applies this arguing that *minh* (from) in *Kalimah minh* (a word from Him) should not indicate the literal understanding since this would lead to believe that God is composed of parts, and thus he is *Ḥādith* (originated) having in mind both Christians and Muslims who believe in *Ḥulūl* (Incarnation).

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As for verses that relate Jesus to the “Spirit” (rūḥ), al-Rāzī suggests five interpretations of the term. The first is that the term refers to the purity and cleanliness of Jesus since Jesus was born by Gabriel’s breath instead of a father’s drop of seed. He adds that minh (‘from’) conveys a sense of his being honoured by God. The second is that Jesus was the reason for reviving the religious tradition, and thus he must be called rūḥ like the Qur’an itself, citing 42:52. The third is that the term denotes mercy since Jesus guided people to what is most beneficial for them in their earthly duties and, thus he was called rūḥ like the Prophet Muhammad. The fourth is that the term is similar to “breadth” (nafkh), and thus it means here the breath of Gabriel. The fifth is that the term rūḥ is mentioned as an indefinite noun to indicate the greatness of his soul. For the term “holy spirit” (rūḥ al-Qudus), al-Rāzī gives four interpretations; that it refers to Gabriel, the Gospel, John the Baptist who used to raise the dead, or, finally, that it is a means of glorifying Jesus. He argues that the term is a reference to Gabriel for four reasons; Gabriel is created from wind and light; an apparent reading of the verse seems to apply the term to Gabriel; the use of the term in the verse is meant to convey a sense of support for Jesus, which would only be applicable to Jesus; Jesus is the only prophet that had a special relationship with Gabriel, who was with him from his time of birth after breathing into Mary and accompanying him when he was raised to heaven. Al-Rāzī here follows the same lines of argument that are found in the works of early Muslims and shares the common theme of articulating a distinct Qur’anic Christology, against Christian claims. This continued to dominate the Kalām-based conception of Islam while other Muslim parties have departed partially from this position such as Sufis through suggesting several understandings of Christology.

The impact of al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics on his views on Christology in the Qur’an can be seen on two issues. The first issue is the fact the Qur’an appears to portray Christians as believing that God is Jesus. Al-Rāzī acknowledges that the apparent meaning of these verses is problematic because Christians do not say that God is Jesus. Yet he does not apply figurative interpretation (Tā’wīl) to harmonise this. Instead, he argues for the possibility that this belief is in fact found in the Christian tradition by comparing it to Muslim groups who believe in incarnation (Hulūl). He further reinterprets the Christian doctrine itself, arguing that it does mean that God is Jesus. The reason for choosing not to interpret the text figuratively is the fact that he is dealing with a theological, not purely historical, issue. We know that theological issues offer a broad space for various interpretations, however valid, whereas this is less applicable for historical issues. Therefore, al-Rāzī was able to indirectly follow the methodology of Ilzām (argument ad hominem) as a means of reinterpreting Christian doctrines. This is one of the indirect influences due to his sceptical position regarding the certitude of scriptural text (al-Dalā‘il al-Naqliyya Ṭanniyyah). The second issue is the debatable apparent meaning of verses on Kalimah (word) and Rūḥ (Spirit). Here, al-Rāzī follows the method of early Muslims to reject any understanding of higher Christology. It important to note, however, that this verse does have two apparent meanings depending on whether it is read through the lens of a Qur’anic or New Testament Christology; the theological presuppositions of both communities impact their reading of the text. Al-Rāzī has in mind these two apparent meanings which leads him to apply figurative interpretation on the verses to avoid the apparent meaning that has been understood by Christians, including Christians of Najrān, John of Damascus and later through the controversial letter of Paul of Antioch.665

Al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology:

This section continues al-Rāzī’s examination of Christianity in his work *Nihāyat al-ʿUqūl*, which is his second major treatment on Christology. Al-Rāzī follows the same methodology of classifying Christology according to related philosophical and theological topics. His major lines of argumentation against the Incarnation are the Kalām-based theme which is also evident found through the writings of non-Christian intellectuals in the Islamicate world such as Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284). Salam Rassi writes:

“Although written from a Jewish polemical perspective, Ibn Kammūna’s (d. 1285) arguments against the Incarnation follow the pattern of earlier Muslim refutations of Christianity. In conformity with such works, he outlines the Christological creeds of the three main sects: the Jacobites believe that the union (ittiḥād) of the Word with Jesus took place through the mingling (imtīzāj) and mixture (ikhtīlāt) of the two natures, resulting in a single nature (jawhar wāḥid); the Nestorians maintain that the Word ‘made Christ’s humanity a temple and clad Itself in his humanity’ (jaʿalathu haykalan wa-iddaraʾ athu ʾiddirāʾ an), resulting in two natures and two uqnūm; and the Melkites believe the union to have taken place in the Universal Man (al-insān al-kullī), resulting in an incarnate Christ who was two in nature and one in uqnūm”

Following this theme, al-Rāzī first asks Christians to take a position on the philosophical issue of whether the human being is only the physical body (*al-Binyah al-Makhṣūṣah*) or if there could be an incorporeal entity known as the “rational soul” (*al-Nafs al-Nāṭiqah*) as this will impact his ‘Kalāmization’ of the personhood of Jesus. The issue is not limited to his discussions with Christians for it has an impact on various related topics due to

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its complexity which al-Rāzī compares with the debatable concept of time.\(^{667}\) He elsewhere wonders about those who reject the concept of al-Nafs; whether they solve all the issues regarding the punishment of the grave (‘Adhāb al-Qabr) and resurrection if they accepted this notion.\(^{668}\) For this reason, he states that the doubts of the Greek physician Galen (d. 210) on resurrection is based on his doubts on al-Nafs\(^ {669}\) as he elsewhere states that Galen is the only authority who was sceptical regarding resurrection.\(^ {670}671\)

Relying on the answers to this question, al-Rāzī presents fifteen possibilities for interpreting Christology: First, we have four possibilities that result from the assumption that God or His attributes are incarnated (Hulūl) in Jesus’ body or his rational soul. The other four possibilities are from the assumption that God or His attributes are united (Ittiḥād) in Jesus’ body or rational soul. He adds other four possibilities by assuming that Jesus’ body or his rational soul are created through Tawallud (engendered act) by God or His attributes. Finally, in addition to these twelve possibilities, he states that we have another two possibilities. The first is to assume that God gave Jesus’ body or his rational soul abilities that allowed him to perform miracles. The second is to assume that God Himself could have performed these miracles as a way of honouring Jesus, to provide a proof of his prophethood, and to show Jesus as God’s son figuratively like His honouring of Abraham as his “friend” (khalīl).\(^ {672}\) A theme that is recurring throughout his writings such as his Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb,\(^ {673}\) Al-Masā‘il al-Khamsūn Fī Uṣūl al-Dīn,\(^ {674}\) Al-Arba‘īn Fī Uṣūl al-Dīn.\(^ {675}\) This is because it is already a common theme in Kalām arguments.

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\(^{668}\) See: Al-Rāzī. Kitāb al-Nafs wa-Rūḥ wa-Sharh Qawāhumā, p. 44.
Al-Rāzī presents these possibilities to understand the personhood of Jesus, which is similar to his approach to interpret the Trinity. He starts the next step by classifying these possibilities into the topics of his work. As for the first eight possibilities, that which relates to the issue of Ḥulūl and Ittiḥād, al-Rāzī states that he will refute these under the topic of “What is philosophically impossible to be ascribed to God” (Mā Yastahīl ‘Alā Allāh Ta’ālā), as previously mentioned. As for the “engendered act” (tawallud), he states that upon examination this ultimately leads to Ḥulūl and Ittiḥād, and thus the previous refutation applies. As for the possibility that God gave Jesus these abilities, al-Rāzī states that this in itself does not initially indicate that he is God, as will be discussed under the topic of “createdness of acts” (Khalq al-A’māl). He says it is impossible that any being apart from God has the power of origination (Ījād), comparing this to the Mu’tazilite position on God’s Qudra (power to act). As for calling Jesus “Son of God”, he states that these terms should be understood within the context of scripture; this term cannot mean what Christians claim it means, then, since the prophet Muhammad had already rejected this.676

From this, al-Rāzī briefly examines the views of key Christian sects including Melkites, Nestorians, Jacobites, Arianism, and the thought of Yahyā Ibn ‘Adī. He first states that there is a consensus among Christians on the doctrine of “union” (ittiḥād), albeit there are disputes as to the nature of this union. The first dispute concerns the question of whether or not this union took place within al-Insān al-Kullī (Universal human) or al-Insān al-Juz’ī (identifiable human being). He writes that the Melkites are the only Christian sect that accept union through al-Insān al-Kullī (Universal human), connecting it to the Platonic concept of universals. The remaining Christian sects had further disputes after accepting that union took place through al-Insān al-Juz’ī (identifiable human being). Al-Rāzī summarizes their six views in the following manner: First, the Jacobites claim that union occurred through admixture (mumāzajah) that led

to a production of a third thing, similar to what happens through fire and coal; they claimed that Jesus is a substance of two substances (jawhar min jawharain), a hypostasis of two hypostases (uqnūm min uqnūmain), and Divine and human (lāhūtī wa-nāsūtī). Second, the Nestorians claim that Jesus has become subject to indwelling (mahall) for the word (kalimah), and thus they believe that Jesus is two substances and two hypostases (jawharān Uqnūmān).

Third, an unnamed group of Christians who believe union occurred without transferring (intiqāl), similar to the relationship between a face and mirror. Fourth, an unnamed group of Christians who believe the features of the kalimah appeared on Jesus’ acts. The fifth view is the thought of Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Adī (d. 974) who presents a well-known trinitarian understanding of intellect (‘aql), intellecting (‘Āqil), and intellected (ma’qūl). 677 Sixth, the Arian view that Jesus was a servant (‘abd) of God chosen by Him as a ‘son’ in terms of honouring him (tashrīf), similar to Abraham’s status as a khalīl. 678

Al-Rāzī then examines these views. 679 As for the Melkites, he relates their doctrine to the Platonic concept of universals. Al-Rāzī presents two objections to the philosophical bases of this position: the first is that al-Insān al-Kullī (Universal human) does not exist for it would lead to contradictory characteristics such as a person who is both knowledgeable and ignorant.

The second is that an identifiable human being does not necessitate the existence of a universal

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677 König writes: “Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī finally arrives at the definition of ‘one’ as ‘a being in which there is no difference in so far as it is one.” In this sense God is one by identity. According to this definition of “one” he explicates the division of this concept by unfolding six different senses of “one” and six modes of being “one”, which also do not contradict threeness. Finally he proves in which sense the concept of “one” can be applied to the first cause: by definition in an essential way, so that being and being one is essentially the same in the first cause. By his nuanced philosophical analysis of the meaning of “one”, he encounters the charge of tritheism or polytheism and emphasizes that Christians share with other monotheists – in their genuine specific way – the belief in the one God. Thereby, he establishes rational and monotheistic grounds for the doctrine of the Trinity as “deepened monotheism”. He points out that God is one in the subject, by unity of essence, by unity of essential attributes and multiple in the definition by relational properties and hypostases. Thereby he tries to defend the trinitarian creed as rational “deepened monotheism”; which should be tolerated on ground of reason and the belief in one God”. See: Katrin König. “Deepened Monotheism: Philosophical Reasoning on the Trinity in Western Early Medieval and Classic Arabic Theology” Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie 62:2 (2020), p. 255-256. See also: Peter Adamson. “Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī against al-Kindī on the Trinity” Journal of Early Christian Studies 72 3:4 (2020), pp. 241-271; David Thomas (ed.) “Naqḍ al-tathlīth ‘alā Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī” in: Christian-Muslim Relations 600-1500 (Brill: 2010).


one; the latter is a condition that exists only through minds, not realities. Al-Rāzī further states for the sake of argument that even accepting the existence of the Universal human would contradict the Melkites for in this case the Kalimah (word) must have had union with every human being, not only Jesus. As for the Jacobites, al-Rāzī states that admixture (mumāzajah) does only occur in corporeal bodies (ajsām) and the Kalimah is not, according to them, a body. As for the Nestorians, al-Rāzī delays the discussion to the topic of incarnation (Ḥulūl). As for the first unnamed Christian sect, he states that it is impossible because the originated body cannot be an eternal transcendent being. As for the second unnamed sect, he states that he has discussed this previously, referring to the issue of the createdness of acts (khalq al-Aʾmāl), and that this does not necessarily mean Jesus would be God. As for Yahyā Ibn ‘Adī, al-Rāzī presents two lines of arguments: the first is based on philosophical theology in which he states that this will be discussed under the topic of God’s attributes since it is impossible to claim that God’s knowledge is the same as his essence. The second line of argument is hermeneutical; here, he argues that Yahyā Ibn ‘Adī’s philosophical interpretation cannot be accepted for there is a well-known Christian prayer which states the Father is different from the Son; the admixture of Jesus thus cannot be initially accepted as it is another entity. Upon examining the Christian tradition, al-Rāzī writes that much of the confusion on the personhood of Jesus is based on two sources: his miracles such as raising the dead and Biblical verses which appear to indicate his Divinity, such as “I am ascending to my father and your father” (John 20:17). Al-Rāzī responds to the first that this is no different to the miracles of other prophets; it thus in no way proves Divinity. On the second, al-Rāzī states that one may reject the transmission of this text or interpret it figuratively to mean honouring (tashrīf), that is, that the term “Father” should not be interpreted literally.

Al-Rāzī continues this discussion elsewhere in his Qur’anic commentary as he argues that the sources for this doctrine in the Christian tradition are two points: arguments that are based on *muqaddimāt mushāhadah* (Premises based on observance) and arguments that are based on *muqaddimāt ilzāmiyyah* (Premises based on *ad hominem*). 682 As for the former, al-Rāzī states that they relate to two types of acts that have been done by Jesus: *ʿilm* (knowledge) and *qudra* (power). On knowledge, al-Rāzī states that Jesus used to foretell things. On power, he states that Jesus would raise the dead, heal the blind, and perform other miracles. Al-Rāzī thus examines the two claims to prove that neither necessarily suggests that Jesus is God. The ability to foretell events, for example, could be through revelation from God, and Jesus could not have known everything for he was afraid at some point of death and unable to escape. This, al-Rāzī writes, means that he was not God for God must have full knowledge. He cites the verse (3:5). 683 Al-Rāzī applies the same line of argument to the issue of power. 684 He argues that Jesus performed miracles by the will of God; Jesus cannot independently perform more complicated procedures such as creating the human beings inside the womb. He cites the verse (3:6). 685 As for the second category of arguments that is *muqaddimāt ilzāmiyyah* (Premises based on *ad hominem*), al-Rāzī states that there are two lines of arguments. The first is that Christians say that since Muslims believe that Jesus was born without a father, he must be the son of God. The second is that Christians say that since Muslims believe that Jesus is the “word” of God and a “spirit” from Him, he must be a son of God. Al-Rāzī then states that these

683 “Nothing on earth or in heaven is hidden from God”
685 “It is He who shapes you all in the womb as He pleases. There is no God but Him, the Mighty, the Wise”
verses should be understood metaphorically, as these themes are also dominant in his works such as Kitāb al-arbaʿīn and Al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya.687

The impact of al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology is found in his attempt to target the other Muslim parties who share aspects of these philosophical and theological notions. For instance, he states that some Ḥanbalites who adopt the notion that the ‘letters and sounds’ (Hurūf wal-Aṣwāt) of the Qur’an are eternal are criticized by the adherents of Kalām. For this would mean that God is incarnate in everyone who reads the Qur’an. This disbelief, he writes, is greater than Christian disbelief since the latter claim incarnation only in Jesus.688690 Al-Rāzī’s line of arguments follow the mainstream Kalām tradition as they have been mainly targeting Muslim groups such as Sufis, Ḥanbalites and Shi’ite under a wider category that is anthropomorphism.691

686 “In a kalām work entitled Kitāb al-arbaʿīn, al-Rāzī’s critique is predicated on an atomistic conception of created reality. Accordingly, indwelling, or inherence, is understood as the inherence of an accident (ʿarad) in a physical substrate (mahall). He begins by ascribing a theory of ḥulūl to all Christians, and considers that had God inhaled in something, it would either imply the temporal creation of an inherer (ḥudātāh al-ḥall) or the pre-eternity of a physical substrate (qidam al-mahall). Both are absurd because God is neither subject to temporal creation nor can a physical substrate pre-exist Him. He then turns to the doctrine of uniting (ittihād), arguing that if two definitive entities (ḥābītayn) unite, then they are two [in number], not one. If they cease to exist (adamāt), then the result (hāsīl) is something other than them (i.e., a tertium quid). If one remains and the other ceases to exist, then uniting is impossible, because the existent would not be the same as the nonexistent (lā yakāmū ʿayn al-maʿdūm). See: Salam Rassi. Christian Thought in the Medieval Islamicate World, p. 140-141.

687 “For the impossibility of incarnation, al-Rāzī just repeats the famous objection put forward by many before him, notably al-Ghazālī, which runs as follows: if God incarnates in another then this incarnation is either necessary or temporary. If it is necessary, it expresses a need for this incarnation which is eternal and makes the place of the incarnation infinite since God needs it eternally. But if God incarnates only temporarily, how could he change from being self-sufficient and fully self-autonomous (ghāniy) to be in need and requiring incarnation? In addition, al-Rāzī explains that incarnation could only take place in two respects. The first is a reason of nature, like the inhering of colour in a body, when the body needs the colour and the colour needs the body in order to be seen. This expresses mutual need: the body for the colour and the colour for the body. The second is by the inherence of the accidents of power or knowledge in a person (following the theological theory of atoms and accidents), in which case the person would be fully dependent on the inherence of these attributes such that they were incarnate in the person. Both types of incarnation are inappropriate for God, al-Rāzī declares”. See: Maha El Kaisy-Friemuth. “God and the Trinity in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī” Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 22:2 (2011), p. 117-118.


691 One of its most well-known manifestations is al-Rāzī’s well-known criticism of Ibn Khuzayma’s (d. 311/924) work Kitāb al-Tawḥīd (The book of Monotheism) as he calls it Kitāb al-Shirk (The book of Polytheism). See: Al-Rāzī. Maṭālib al-Ghayb, vol. 27, p. 151. Note that al-Rāzī wrote his Taʾsīs al-Taqdis as refutation of this work. See: Livnat Holtzman. Anthropomorphism in Islam, p. 303.
Concluding remarks:

Al-Rāzī’s views on Christology share many similarities with his ones on the Trinity. Both seem to be following the mainstream Muslim perceptions of the two Christian doctrines whether the Kalām tradition or the views of early Muslims. This justifies the fact that there has been a limited reception in both cases. However, it has been argued in this chapter that the case of Christology is different. This is because there is a seeming ambiguity regarding the Qur’anic terms used for the crucifixion, the corruption of the Bible, and the Trinity (shubbiha lahum, Yuḥarrifūn, Thālāthah and Thālīth Thālāthah) on the one hand while having a strict understanding against the divinity of Jesus regarding Christology namely the terms kalimah and ṭūḥ on the other. This is only case in which you would find clear interactions by the Prophet regarding their meanings namely the Christians of Najrān.

As for al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics, it has been argued that the impact of his intellectual project on his examination of the apparent meaning of these verses can be seen on two issues: The first issue is the fact the Qur’an appears to portray Christians as believing that God is Jesus. Al-Rāzī acknowledges that the apparent meaning of these verses is problematic because Christians do not say that God is Jesus. Yet he does not apply figurative interpretation (Ta’wīl) to harmonise this. Instead, he argues for the possibility that this belief is in fact found in the Christian tradition by comparing it to Muslim groups who believe in incarnation (Ḥulūl). He further reinterprets the Christian doctrine itself, arguing that it does mean that God is Jesus. The second issue is the apparent meaning of verses on Kalimah (word) and ṭūḥ (Spirit). Here, al-Rāzī follows the method of early Muslims with a slight modification. This is because this verse does have two apparent meanings depending on whether it is read through the lens of a Qur’anic or New Testament Christology. Al-Rāzī has in mind these two apparent meanings which leads him to apply figurative interpretation on the verses to avoid the apparent meaning that has been understood by Christians.
As for al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology, he follows the mainstream Kalām tradition through lines of comparison and overlapping arguments between rival Muslim parties and Christian doctrines. This is rooted in, and reflect, the breath and diversity of the intellectual project of each Muslim thinker. Al-Rāzī who opposes the theory of incarnation, argues once more that certain positions held by other Muslim thinkers cannot be correct as they resemble the Christian outlook. In this case, it concerns, for instance, the Ḥanbalī position that God’s Word is embodied by the letters and sounds (Ḥurūf wal-ʿAṣwāt) of the Qur’an. However, al-Rāzī is quick to note that this position bears great similarity to the Christian position of Jesus being God’s Word incarnate. Al-Rāzī’s line of arguments against both the incarnation and the hypostatic union follow the mainstream Kalām tradition that have been mainly targeting Muslim groups such as Sufis, Ḥanbalites and Shi’ite who accepted aspects of this notion.

Having foregrounded the main findings of this chapter, I shall now locate al-Rāzī’s views within the intellectual history this topic. There are two areas to be explored in this history: First, hermeneutics in which the question would be regarding the Muslim attempt to reinterpret the terms kalimah and rūḥ to be compromised with the rational decisive evidence (Muʿārid ʿAqlī) that comes from the Christian self-understanding. Secondly, philosophical theology in which the question would be regarding the Muslim attempt to conceptualize the Christian Christology without sharing similar features. As for al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics, he does not seem to have significantly contributed to the understanding of the terms kalimah and rūḥ including the issue of Kalimah Allah (‘the word of God’) and Kalām Allah (‘God’s speech’) where he argues that Jesus can be neither the Ash’arite view on God’s speech as an “eternal attribute” (Ṣifah Qādīmah) nor the Mu’tazilite view on “created sounds” (aṣwāt makhlūqah), suggesting that the use of figurative interpretation (ta’wīl) to avoid this.

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As for al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology, his contributions are also limited since his lines of arguments are ever-present in Muslim intra-faith debates in which the Muslim thinker polemically compares rival Muslim parties that accept aspects of incarnation to the doctrines of Christians. Al-Juwaynī, for example, writes on those he calls al-Ḥashawiyyah, which is a pejorative term for some Ḥanbalites: “Their principle that eternal speech becomes incarnate in bodies although it does not separate from its essence makes idle sport out of religion, loosening the tenets of the Muslims, and imitating the doctrine expressed by the Christians in their holding that the word inheres in the Messiah, who is equipped in human form”.\textsuperscript{695}696 This is also seen, for instance, in al-Āmidī’s attempt to examine these doctrines comparatively in which compares the doctrine of incarnation through the writings of Christians, Nuṣayrīs and al-Ishāqiyyah of Shi’ite, and the Muslim ‘anthropomorphists’ (mushabbiḥah).\textsuperscript{697} That is also why Ibn Taymiyyah writes that all objections against his understanding of God’s speech are based on their rejection of the issue of ‘originations taking place in God’s essence’ (Ḥulūl al-Ḥawādith) as he notes that al-Rāzī’s sceptical position regarding this issue had prevented him from relying on it in his work Nihāyat al-‘Uqūl.\textsuperscript{698}699 This applies to some adherents to Sufism who make similar claims, as has been mentioned before through his commentary on the verse “God is Jesus” (5:17). That is why Ibn Taymiyyah compares the philosophical theology of Ibn ‘Arabī with the Christian Melkites, arguing that the Melkite interpretation of the nature of Jesus is similar to Ibn ‘Arabī’s cosmology.\textsuperscript{700} This also applies to the philosophical theology of some Ḥanbalites like Ibn Taymiyyah, who faces the same challenge due to their acceptance of

\textsuperscript{698} See: Ibn Taymiyyah. \textit{Majmū’ Fatāwā}, vol. 6, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{699} Note that one of the central differences between Ibn Taymiyyah and mainstream Ḥanbalites is the fact that the latter rejects ‘originations taking place in God’s essence’ (Ḥulūl al-Ḥawādith) and accepts the eternity of ‘the attributes of action’ (Ṣifāt al-ʿAf’āl).
doctrines that appear to indicate the concept of incarnation, such as God’s “descent” (nuzūl), on the basis of the well-known argument of Bilā Kayf (without quality).

This is no less the case in the intellectual history of the three Abrahamic faiths as transferring these debates between these traditions is the norm. Adam Afterman, for example, writes of the thought of Yehuda Halevi (d. 1141): “Here we have a remarkable moment in which the Christian term for incarnation is used critically in Ismaili writings, and then apparently adopted in a positive and transformed sense into the heart of Jewish theology.” In other words, comparative analyses led to relativize the concept of ‘reason’. A common theme in these discussions is to argue that a Muslim or Christian party has accepted a certain philosophical or theological position, such as the incarnation, and thus it applies equally to both parties, as noted by the anonymous Christian thinker who debated al-Rāzī. This includes the communality of intellectual premises made for constructing these doctrines such as the influence of al-Rāzī on Bar ‘Ebrōyō’s (d. 1286) apologetic program.

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705 “These observations lead only to one conclusion: Bar ‘Ebrōyō’s argument from miracles, as well as the principle of ‘continuous testimony’ which underpins his entire apology, are modelled after Rāzī’s prophethood. Moreover, a comparison of both scholars’ discussions of what miracles are and of how they function shows the indebtedness on the part of Bar ‘Ebrōyō. Yet, the most telling indication of this modelling is without a doubt his Christological adoption of a short allegory depicting how it is that miracles confirm authentic prophecy. In it, Rāzī compares the divine confirmation of Muhammad’s prophethood with a man (rajul) standing up among a crowd claiming to be the messenger of this king (rasūl hādhā l-malik). If the messenger pleads for the king to rise from his throne to affirm his assertion, and the king responds positively, Rāzī says, then all are obliged to believe that this man truly is his rasūl. Bar ‘Ebrōyō revisits the allegory and moulds it according to his own purposes. In his version, the logic is similar, but he writes instead about a child (ṭalyō) claiming to be the son of the king (breh d-malkō). If the king confirms the child’s claim by answering his plea, everyone knows that he spoke the truth”. See: Bert Jacobs. “Unveiling Christ in the Islamicate World: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Prophetology as a Model for Christian Apologetics in Gregory Bar ‘Ebrōyō’s Treatise on the Incarnation” Intellectual History of the Islamicate World Journal 6 (2018), p. 203.
Conclusion

Having finished writing the thesis, I present the conclusion through the main challenge that shapes its structure and content. The first question that came to my mind when I started writing this thesis: What is the contribution that could be added to this topic? A quite well-established topic that has been explored by both ‘academics’ and ‘polemicists’ due to its importance. This led to various interpretation of al-Rāzī’s views namely his ones on contested topics such as the crucifixion and the corruption of the Bible. Yet, we do not find one study that has been dedicated to exploring al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity. Thus, this was the main reason behind writing this first extensive treatment of al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity, drawing on an extensive reading of the primary sources and the most recent secondary scholarship. This allowed for both analysing al-Rāzī’s views themselves and to ‘correct’ some interpretations found in the scholarship to best of my knowledge. The second challenge is the way this thesis should be written. That is to say that the main content is in simple words: “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity”. Gathering and understanding al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity demanded a multi-layered journey through different genres and works of al-Rāzī. Unlike other known critics of Christianity such as Shihāb al-Dīn Al-Qarāfī and Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Rāzī had not written a solemn treatise dedicated towards explicating the theological status of various Christian tenets. In other words, this has made it difficult to suggest a contextual study of these views similar to the studies that have been done on other thinkers. Nevertheless, despite its inherent fragmentation, al-Rāzī’s views have reverberated throughout the history of Islamic intellectual discourse on Christianity up to the modern times. It was this latter reason that motivated me to undertake a thorough analysis of these foundational and influential views. Not only by themselves but in holistic relation to al-Rāzī’s broader intellectual project. That is why I chose this theme itself as a title of the thesis ‘The impact of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Intellectual Project on his views on Christianity’.
The fact that al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity were tightly interwoven with his broader intellectual project, presented a twofold opportunity.\textsuperscript{706} Firstly, to broaden the scholarship on al-Rāzī by analysing aspects and works ignored in the discussions pertaining to al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity. This has been done in two ways: to analyse al-Rāzī’s views in his commentary on the Qur’an by comparing them with the views of the first three generations of Islam since the latter serves as the alleged apparent (\textit{zāhir}) meaning of the verses. This is because al-Rāzī connects it with both the ordinary use of terms and the first three generations of Islam. This allowed to help us understanding further hermeneutical aspects of al-Rāzī’s views. This is because it has been shown, for instance, that al-Rāzī would start examining the Qur’anic verses on crucifixion being occupied by particular narratives that prevent him from having a neutral vis-à-vis the linguistic meaning of this verse. However, his examination of the issue of \textit{taḥrīf} (Corruption of the Bible) is totally different due to the ambiguity of the first three generations of Islam. The second way is to engage al-Rāzī’s complete works with a special focus on hitherto-neglected works, namely his \textit{al-Maḥṣūl} on Islamic legal theory and \textit{Nīḥāyat al-‘Uqūl - Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya} on philosophical theology. This would serve as a ‘commentary’ on al-Rāzī’s commentary in order to have a bird’s-eye view of his views. This in turn would help understanding what was going in al-Rāzī’s mind while analysing these verses namely the fixed apparent meaning of these verses in early Islam and the imagined opponents whom he was responding to in his Qur’anic commentary. This is because these imagined opponents appear to be found early in his work on Islamic legal theory that is \textit{al-Maḥṣūl} where he used to defend another view.

\textsuperscript{706} A third indirect opportunity is the analysis made regarding the views of the first three generations of Islam on Christianity through consulting the recent encyclopaedia \textit{Mawsū‘at al-Tafsīr al-Ma‘thīr} (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2017). This allowed me to note some crucial points such as the ambiguity of the Qur’anic terms used for the crucifixion, the corruption of the Bible, and the Trinity (\textit{shubbiha lahum}, \textit{Yuḥarrīfūn}, \textit{Thālāthah} and \textit{Thālith Thālāthah}) on the one hand while having a strict understanding against the divinity of Jesus regarding Christology namely the terms \textit{kalimah} and \textit{rīḥ} on the other. In other words, each term could have more than one apparent meaning due to the linguistic aspects in addition to the context that is read within. This has been excluded in the case of Christology once the Christians of Najrān have indicated their understanding of it.
The second opportunity is to demonstrate how an understanding of Christianity is shaped by foundational issues in the Islamic sciences which shape the intellectual project of each Muslim thinker. This has been done by interpreting al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity according to his intellectual project which includes the following in chapter one: epistemology, philosophical theology, and hermeneutics. On the former, al-Rāzī’s views on the issue of transmission of reports (akhbār) are shown to have shaped his views on the authenticity of the Crucifixion and the Bible. On philosophical theology, al-Rāzī’s views on the Divine attributes (Ṣifāt Allāh) shaped his views on the Trinity and Christology. On hermeneutics, his famed theological law, known as al-Qānūn al-Kullī Fī al-Ta’wil, shapes his attempt to answer the Christian objections against the Qur’anic representation of the Christian tradition since the first serves as rational decisive evidence (al-Muʿārid al-ʿAqlī). Throughout this thesis, four topics, namely crucifixion, the Bible, the Trinity, and Christology were analysed in reference to these two goals. In the following paragraphs I will highlight the key findings of each chapter.

Chapter two on the crucifixion concludes the following: Firstly, on al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics: The alleged apparent meaning (ẓāhir) of the term shubbiha lāhum (was made to appear like that to them) has been overwhelmingly shaped by the Isrāʾīliyyāt sources. According to al-Rāzī, it cannot mean the current interpretation namely that some other person literally transformed in body to appear as Jesus and become crucified in his stead. Rather, admitting such a possibility would open a Pandora’s box of all kinds of methodological and theological issues, including the possibility that all the eyewitness accounts concerning the Prophet Muhammad might have been statements about some other person. Such a possibility would inevitably endanger the foundation of Islam itself. As such, rather than choosing for the current interpretation based on the Isrāʾīliyyāt sources, al-Rāzī prefers the interpretation espoused by the scholars of Kalām who argue a case of mistaken identity as leading Jews to believe that they had killed Jesus, rather than a person taking on the appearance of Jesus in
actuality. Secondly, on al-Rāzī’s epistemology: al-Rāzī’s discussion of the crucifixion is more indirect. In *al-Mahṣūl* which has been written in his early stage in which he is adhered to the mainstream Muslim view that somebody else transformed to look like Jesus, al-Rāzī primarily deals with the methodological question of the status of reports transmitted by mode of *tawātur*. Al-Rāzī’s goal is to examine the claim that *tawātur* authenticates the reports of narrators (*al-mukhbirūn*) through allowing the possibility that people could have transmitted false reports by intentionality (‘amd) or forgetfulness (sahū). This is to question Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s conception of this notion being speculative (naẓarī) instead of necessary (ḍarūrī). Al-Rāzī brings up the crucifixion to argue that people could have transmitted false reports. While al-Rāzī rejects the crucifixion in his *Maḥṣūl*, he nevertheless allows for the possibility of affirming aspects of the historical argument for the Crucifixion, which departs from the mainstream Muslim rejection of the validity of early Christianity to construct or to fulfil the conditions of *tawātur*. This has been evident in his affirmation of the possibility of having *tawātur* of some aspects of early Christianity. This has been a significant departure not only from early Muslims but also the mainstream Kalām view of early Christianity.

Chapter three on the Bible concludes the following: Firstly, on al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics: The alleged apparent meaning (ẓāhir) of the term *Yuharrifūn* (to distort) is ambiguous although it would seem to be closer to corrupt interpretation (*taḥrīf ma’nawī*) rather than textual corruption (*taḥrīf lafẓī*). This allowed al-Rāzī to safely adopt the view of corrupt interpretation. This is because if early Muslims understood *Yuharrifūn* as a textual corruption, then the Jewish-Christian argument from *tawātur* would have been a serious *Muʿārid ʿAqlī* against the apparent meaning. Secondly, on al-Rāzī’s epistemology: The core argumentation that al-Rāzī’s presents to avoid both the Jewish and the Muʿtazilites objections against his intellectual project is based on his sceptical position towards the certitude of scriptural text (*al-Dalāʾil al-Naqliyya Ẓanniyyah*). This had centrally shaped his attempt to suggest the possibility that a scriptural
text may not be fully elucidated at the time of addressing revelation (ta’khīr al-Bayān ‘an waqt al-Khiṭāb). Thus, he made this line of argumentation to avoid the mainstream objection against his school of thought namely the Ash’arites which basically based on two notions; Firstly, that God may have decreed through His foreknowledge that this act is good for this context and not good for another. Secondly, the argument from al-Taḥṣīn wal-Taqbiḥ al-‘Aqlī.

Chapter four on the Trinity concludes the following: Firstly, on al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics: The alleged apparent meaning (ẓāhir) of the terms Thālāthah (three) and Thālith Thālāthah (the third of three) is ambiguous due to the absent of narratives since connecting these verses with mainstream Christianity or Christian groups in general started later on in the Islamic history. This is with the exception of the Qur’anic note that Jesus and Mary were worshipped as gods. This has been the only serious objections against the apparent meaning of the Qur’anic verses. Yet he dismisses this objection, arguing that since Christians claim that Jesus and Mary create miracles by their own volition, rather than through God, this could have led them to believe they are gods. This applies to the Trinity namely the terms thālāthah and thālith thālāthah in which he connects them to what he considers to be the views of mainstream Christianity and the belief in three eternal essences (dhawāt) without questioning whether Christians make this theological claim. Secondly, on al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology: It is from the angle of theology that we see an interesting function of Christianity in al-Rāzi’s works. It is in his theological discussions that we discover how a presumed Christian tenet arbitrates between the right and wrong position held amongst Muslim groups. In other words, al-Rāzi refers to Christianity in order to demonstrate how some theological positions will lead to the same kind of erroneous convictions found in Christianity. Accordingly, when Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī proposes his view of God’s attributes as constituting the states (aḥwāl) of God, al-Rāzi retorts by drawing parallels with the Christian explanation of the Trinity via the hypostasis theory. The power of al-Rāzi’s argument lays in its implication: as a Muslim one cannot hold
the *ahwāl* theory, since one would share a Christian conviction and thereby lose a degree of Islamic particularity that differentiates Muslims from Christians. The same line of argument would be applicable to his views on the attributes of God being “neither other than God nor identical with Him” (*lā Huwa walā Ghayruh*). These kinds of discussions in al-Rāzī’s works also illustrate how the aforementioned dialectics is bilateral: al-Rāzī’s intellectual project does not only inform his views on Christianity, but his views on Christianity also inform his intellectual project. More specifically, we see an instance in which Christianity is instrumentalized as an arbiter in intrareligious discussions. To reiterate, a certain position on a fundamental intellectual issue, such as the quiddity of God’s attributes, cannot be held because it resembles Christian convictions.

Chapter five on Christology concludes the following: Firstly, on al-Rāzī’s hermeneutics: The alleged apparent meaning (*zāhir*) of the terms *kalimah* (Word) and *rūḥ* (Spirit) has been the only case in this study to have a clear meaning due to the direct interactions of the prophet with Arab Christians regarding its apparent meaning which led to the rejection of the divine aspects of Jesus. The only aspect that has been absent in early Islam is questioning whether Christians say that God is Jesus according to the apparent meaning of the Qur’an. Al-Rāzī acknowledges that the apparent meaning of these verses is problematic because Christians do not say that God is Jesus. Yet he does not apply figurative interpretation (*Ta’wil*) to harmonise this. Instead, he argues for the possibility that this belief is in fact found in the Christian tradition by comparing it to Muslim groups who believe in incarnation (*Ḥulūl*). He further reinterprets the Christian doctrine itself, arguing that it does mean that God is Jesus. The other issue is the apparent meaning of verses on *kalimah* and *rūḥ*. Here, al-Rāzī follows the method of early Muslims. However, al-Rāzī acknowledges that this verse does have two apparent meanings depending on whether it is read through the lens of a Qur’anic or New Testament Christology. Thus, he had to apply figurative interpretation to avoid the apparent
meaning that has been understood by Christians, including the Christians of Najrān. Secondly, on al-Rāzī’s philosophical theology: Al-Rāzī who opposes the theory of incarnation, argues once more that certain positions held by other Muslim thinkers cannot be correct as they resemble the Christian outlook. In this case, it concerns the Ḣanbalī position that God’s Word is embodied by the Letters and sounds (Ḫurūf wal-ʾAṣwāt) of the Qur’an. However, Al-Rāzī is quick to note that this position bears great similarity to the Christian position of Jesus being God’s Word incarnate. Al-Rāzī’s line of arguments against both the incarnation and the hypostatic union follow the mainstream Kalām tradition that have been mainly targeting Muslim groups such as Sufis, Ḣanbalites and Shi’ite who accepted aspects of this notion.

While al-Rāzī’s views on Christianity might not be too unconventional, his works have illustrated that an understanding of Christianity by a Muslim intellectual is much more layered than a mere scriptural reasoning. Certain elements of his view on Christianity stem from his disambiguation and clarification of the Qur’an’s discourse on anything related to Christ and Christianity. Other elements, however, stem from his desire to safeguard the fundamentals of method and theology. Accordingly, he actively seeks certain interpretations of Christianity that do not compromise these fundamentals. I expect this kind of multifunctional understanding of Christianity and its accompanying dialectics to also be present in the works of other thinkers especially those who did not write a dedicated work on Christianity. This is because their discussions of the Christian tradition have been absorbed through their systematic works on philosophical theology and legal theory.707

707 Al-Rāzī himself is probably the most cited Muslim thinker on both social media and academia when it comes to the issue of crucifixion in his commentary. Yet, his works on Kalām or legal theory are rarely engaged in these discussions. I am suggesting this since it has an impact on reading Islamic intellectual history. For instance, Mustafa Shah questions Todd lawson’s argument regarding the Muslim perception of crucifixion in which he writes: “despite the impressive range of exegetical works referred to between these periods, there are discussions on the subject of the crucifixion which feature in non-exegetical literature and this material would impinge upon the idea of there being some sort of a reversal or change in attitudes with regards to views on the crucifixion within Islamic scholarship. For example, the standard theological summae authored within the Ash’arī school reveal that a denial of the crucifixion remained axiomatic among luminaries of that school”. See: Mustafa Shah. “Todd Lawson: The Crucifixion and the Qur’an: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought (Book review)” Journal of Qur’anic Studies 12 (2011), p. 195.
Accordingly, this suggests that a comprehensive study in the field of comparative religions cannot be properly conducted unless the views on certain religions are contextualized within a broader intellectual project and its inherent epistemic and theological foundations. This could be applicable to the Christian perception of Islam and how the intellectual project of each Christian thinker impacts his or her views.\(^708\) In other words, the field of “comparative religions” could be approached as “comparative intellectual projects”. This would help finding new ways of approaching and even revisiting contested issues between religions. On a personal level, I have attempted to do this through two case studies: First, transferring the issue of *Fahm al-Salaf* to the Christian context namely through the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers on the divinity of Jesus. Secondly, combining the philosophical theology of Joseph Priestley-Ibn Taymiyyah (Ontological materialism) with the hermeneutics of Avicenna-Bultmann (Demythologization) to address the two common themes in science and religion namely how God acts in the world and the ‘scientific’ data in scriptures having already worked on aspects of their intellectual projects.\(^709\) This is one of the merits of being exposed to the writings of Fakhr al-Dīn wal-Dunyā\(^710\).

\(^{708}\) For instance, Joshua Ralston writes regarding Francis Turretin’s (d. 1687) views on Islam: “Given the systematic nature of Turretin’s theological writing and the fact that he displays an awareness of Islam, Turks, Persians, and others, his work offers a key window into the place and function of Islam in Reformed scholastic dogmatic theology. Throughout the twenty topics examined in his elenctic theology, Turretin occasionally discusses or references both Muhammad and the Turks… Francis Turretin offers a number of passing references to Islam, Muhammad, and Islamic Theology. In every instance, the mention of Islam is used to clarify internal Christian theological claims and to advance or justify Christian and distinctly Reformed protestant argumentation. It is a religious tradition that must be classified apart from Christianity, but also somewhat ironically at times, Islam is deployed as a source to buttress and justify certain Christian and Reformed ideas that are shared with it”. See: Joshua Ralston. “Islam as Christian Trope: The Place and Function of Islam in Reformed Dogmatic Theology” *The Muslim World* 107:4 (2017), p. 760.


\(^{710}\) I remember being introduced to his writings in my first-year bachelor’s degree namely his commentary on the Qur’an, and then I went directly to the library to check his works as I spent the next few days reading his *Al-Mabāḥith al-Mashrīqiyah Fi ‘Ilm al-Ilāhīyyāt wa-Tābī‘īyyāt* and got fascinated not only by the content but also his very own vivid imagination.
A tribute to this “lover of knowledge” who had spent his career being sincerely committed to what his critic, Ibn Taymiyyah, describes as “an ultimate independent investigation” (al-Baḥth al-Muṭlaq bi-Ḥasb mā Yaẓhar lah). This was manifested in one of his touching life scenes which Ibn ‘Arabī records: “It has been reported to me from one of your brothers - whom I trust, and who is amongst those sincerely disposed towards you - that he saw you weeping one day, and so he and those present asked you why you were weeping. You replied, ‘A position to which I have adhered for the past thirty years has become clear to me thanks to a proof which has just dawned upon me. It turns out that the truth of the matter is contrary to my previous position. So I cried and said to myself, perhaps that which has occurred to me is also like the first position!’”. This goes back to the age of ten when he picked up the Ring of ‘seeing things as they are’ not knowing “how way leads on to way” to that day; “I wish the Ring had never come to me! I wish none of this had happened!” Having had an epistemic renunciation (zuḥd) of “participating” in Sufism which had cost him the intellectual pleasures (al-Ladhdhāt al-‘Aqliyyah) that is “when the medieval farmer looked up into the night sky from his place on earth, the centre of the cosmos, he simply saw the light of heaven shining down through the openings in the ‘dome of the heavens’”. I hope the first words he heard in the next world: “You bow to no one…”.

716 “Would that we had remained in primordial non-existence! Would that we had never seen this world! And would that the soul had never become attached to this body!”. See: Al-Rāzī. Dhamm Ladhdhāt al-Dunyā, in: Shihadeh. The Teleological Ethics, p. 187.
717 “For human beings, truth is inaccessible and unknown. If it is possible for one to know such truth, then it must be a matter of participation in the eternal, and of faith that such participation is possible, because it can never be demonstrated”. See: Catherine Pickstock. Aspects of Truth: A New Religious Metaphysics (Cambridge University Press: 2020), p. 283.
720 “Did I not tell you that I know what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you reveal and what you conceal?” (2:33).
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