Ibn Taymiyya’s Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics in *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (The Correct Response)

Zeynep Yucedogru

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Abstract

This thesis analyses how the renowned Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) interprets quotations from the Bible in his voluminous *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ* (*The Correct Response to Those who Changed the Religion of Christ*). Ibn Taymiyya wrote *Jawāb* to refute the anonymous Christian *Letter from the people of Cyprus*. The thesis also investigates the use of biblical quotations in the works of five major Muslim authors of refutations of Christianity, al-Ṭabarī's (d. 865), Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), Pseudo-Ghazālī (active around 1200), al-Qarāfī (d. 1285), and al-Dimashqī (d. 1327) as a backdrop against which to assess the extent to which Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics is similar to and different from mainstream Muslim biblical scholarship.

The key conclusion of this thesis is that for biblical interpretation, Ibn Taymiyya employs a contextual theory of meaning that is inspired by the hermeneutics of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), and guided by his wider theological principles. Ibn Taymiyya's contextual biblical hermeneutics clearly distinguishes him from the other five Muslim scholars who use a theory of literal-nonliteral meaning for biblical interpretation.

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Introduction

This research focuses on the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 1328) polemical work, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ* (*The Correct Response to Those who Changed the Religion of Christ*), hereafter *Jawāb*.[1] Ibn Taymiyya wrote this polemic as a response upon receiving the *Letter from the people of Cyprus* (hereafter the *Letter*) from an anonymous Christian in 1316.[2] Ibn Taymiyya's *Jawāb* and the Christian author's *Letter* are not only significant literary compositions representing fourteenth-century interreligious polemical correspondences but, most importantly, these two polemics provide important insights into how late medieval Christians and Muslims understand and read each other scriptures.[3] The Christian author of the *Letter* cites extensively from the Qur'ān to argue that Islam is a religion for only pagan Arabs and Christianity is still a valid religion, and that the Qur'ān confirms the soundness of Christian beliefs and doctrines. Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand, uses biblical citations both to refute these claims of the Christian author and to argue that Christians misinterpret the Bible. According to the expediency of their argumentation, both of the authors use the Bible and the Qur'ān with an intertextual approach forming a scholarship that primarily focuses on appropriating the other's scripture in the light of their own theological outlooks. Analysed in the context of this particular scriptural scholarship, the *Jawāb* and the *Letter*, might reveal interesting insights into the hermeneutical character of interreligious polemics, which often remains in the shadow of polemical and apologetic characters of these works. By means of reflection on this interest, this study sets out to analyse the use and interpretation of biblical quotations in the *Jawāb*, with the purpose of understanding the hermeneutical character of Ibn Taymiyya's biblical scholarship.

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[1] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawāb al- ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, ed. ʿAli b. Ḥasan ibn Nāṣir and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ibrāhīm al-ʿAskar and Ḥamdān b. Muḥammad al-Ḥamdān, 7 vols., (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿAṣimā, 1999).

[2] Rifaat Ebied and David Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades Letter from the People of Cyprus, and Ibn Abi Talib Al-Dimashqi's Response* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). David Thomas, '*Letter from the People of Cyprus*,' in *CMR4* (Brill, 2012), 769-772.

[3] David Thomas, 'Early Muslim Relations with Christianity,' *Anvil* 6, 1 (1989): 23-31. See also *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, E. Grypeou, D. Thomas, and Mark N. Swanson, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 2006), and Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *Encounters & Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History* (Roma: Pontificio istituto di studi arabi e d'islamistica, 2000). For a historical account of Medieval Muslim-Christian interaction, see Herman G.B. Teule, 'Christian-Muslim Religious Interaction 1200-1350: A Historical and Contextual Interpretation,' in *CMR4* (Brill, 2012), 1-16. For an earlier account of Muslim-Christian encounter see, W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions* (London: Routledge, 1991), and Hugh Goddard, *Muslim Perceptions of Christianity* (London: Grey Seal, 1996). For a recent work on the theme, see Douglas Pratt et al., eds., *The Character of Christian-Muslim Encounter: Essays in Honour of David Thomas* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

Following the Islamic conquests and invasions, Christians had to face the challenge of living under Islamic rule and learning to communicate their faith in Arabic.[4] The Christians entered a new era in which they not only translated traditional Christian theological works into another language but also formed a new theological framework for Arabic Christian *kalām* (theology).[5] The Christian scholars borrowed and adopted Islamic theological concepts and terms that were already in use.[6] In the meanwhile, on the Muslim side, the challenge was to advance an Islamic theological discourse in a way that should be distinct from the earlier non-

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[4] For ʿAbbāsid period of the translation process, see, Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998). For an historical overview of the Arabic translation of Greek Church tradition, see, Alexander Treiger, 'Christian Graeco-Arabica: Prolegomena to a History of the Arabic Translations of the Greek Church Fathers,' *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 3, 1-2 (2015): 188-227.

[5] Sandra Toenies Keating, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period: the Christian Apologies of Abū Rāʾiṭa* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Keating offers a good summary of the initial emergence and context of Muslim-Christian polemics since the rise of Islam up to the time of Jacobite Christian scholar Abū Rāʾiṭah (d. 755-835). Sidney H. Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic: Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

[6] David Thomas, 'Christian Borrowings from Islamic Theology in the Classical Period: The Witness of Al-Juwaynī and Abū l-Qāsim Al-Anṣārī,' *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 2, 1-2 (2014): 125-142.

Islamic faiths.[7] In such a context, while Muslims and Christians confronted these challenges they also created an intellectual environment that flourished and enriched an interreligious polemical literature by which they mutually exchanged arguments, terms, and theological questions that concerned the believers of both religions, such as the nature of God's relation to humans, the divine attributes, and the problem of theodicy.[8]

Since the earliest interactions, each of these two religions were primarily concerned with an apologetic defence of their faith by mainly theological arguments but also by intra and intertextual proofs from the Bible and the Qur'ān, by which Christian and Muslim scholars generated a particular scholarship of scriptural intertextuality.[9] While the Christians refer to and cite from the Qur'ān to prove the validity of Christianity against Muslim accusation of abrogation of Christian religion (*naskh*), Muslims use the Bible mainly to argue for the continuity of revelations and support the claim that Islam is the last religion.[10] Although in some early Christian works, such as that of John Damascus (d. 749), the references to the Qur'ān were not always necessarily made with positive remarks, the Christian scholars, nevertheless inclined to read and quote from the Qur'ān when defending the primary Christian doctrines.[11] For instance, the earliest Arabic Christian apology and polemic *On The Triune Nature of God* (*Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid*) refers to qur'ānic verses to argue that the Qur'ān clearly approves the validity of Christianity.[12] To name among many, we may briefly refer to prominent early Arab Christian theologians such as Theodore Abū Qurra (ca. 755-830), Abū Rā᾿iṭa (d. 851), and ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī (ca. 850) who all wrote influential Arabic apologetics and polemics against their Muslim counterparts.[13]

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[7] David Thomas, 'Dialogue with Other Faiths as an Aspect of Islamic Theology,' in *Religious Polemics in Context: Papers Presented to the Second International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (Lisor) Held at Leiden, 27-28 April, 2000*, (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2004), 93-109. Thomas rightfully notes that the concern of Muslims for being distinct from other faiths contributed to 'the precision and comprehensiveness' of Islamic theology.

[8] David Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). See also by the same author, 'Christian Theologians and New Questions,' in *Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. M. Swanson, E. Grypeou and D. Thomas, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 257-276.

[9] For a general overview of themes in theological controversies between Christians and Muslims, see Mun'im A. Sirry, 'Early Muslim–Christian Dialogue: A Closer Look at Major Themes of the Theological Encounter,' *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 16, 4, 1 (2005): 361-376. Sidney H. Griffith, 'Arguing from Scripture: The Bible in the Christian/Muslim Encounter in the Middle Ages,' in *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in the Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 29-58.

[10] Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, 'Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics against Christianity,' *The Harvard Theological Review* 89, 1 (1996): 61-84.

[11] Sidney H. Griffith, 'Christians and the Arabic Qur'ān: Prooftexting, Polemics, and Intertwined Scriptures,' *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 2, 1-2 (2014): 243-266. See also J. Scott

On the other hand, the early Muslim scholars were not interested in establishing intertextuality between the Bible and the Qur'ān. Rather, the primary interest of Muslim scholars of the eighth and early ninth centuries was to invoke the Bible for proof texts in order to prove the authenticity of Muḥammad's prophetic mission. The historian Ibn Isḥāq (d. 767) is one of the earliest Muslim scholars who used biblical testimonia in his *Sīra* (*Life of Muḥammad*).[14] Ibn Isḥāq quoted corrected versions of the passages from the Gospel of John where 'the Paraclete' is mentioned.[15] This early interest in finding proofs of Muḥammad's prophecy in the Bible, generated a particular genre in Islamic tradition known as *a᾿lām al-nubuwwa* (sings of prophecy) or *dalā᾿il al-nubuwwa* (proofs of prophecy). ʿAlī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī's (d. 865) *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* (*Book of Religion and Empire*) which is written to prove the veracity of Muḥammad's prophethood, is one of the earliest and most important examples of this

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Bridger, *Christian Exegesis of the Qur'an: A Critical Analysis of the Apologetic Use of the Qur'an in Select Medieval and Contemporary Arabic Texts* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015).

[12] Samir Khalil Samir, 'The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity,' in *Christian Arabic Apologetics During the Abbasid Period*, eds., S. K. Samir, and J. S. Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 57-114. This work contains different works on early and medieval Christian apologetics.

[13] For a recent study on these three Christian authors and their theology of the Trinity, see Sara Leila Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God: Three Christian Scholars and Their Engagement with Islamic Thought (9th Century C.E.)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

[14] For Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīra al-nabawiyya* as recension of Ibn Hishām (d.833), *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī, 3rd ed. 4vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1990), 1. 262. See, For English translation of Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīra*, see A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥāq's Sirāt Rasūl Allāh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955).

[15] Sidney H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the 'People of the Book' in the Language of Islam* (Princeton University Press, 2013), 190-191. See, Guillaume, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 103-104. Griffith, 'Arguing from Scripture,' 36-37.

genre.[16] The biblical *testimonia* used in Al-Ṭabarī's *Kitāb* constituted an important source of biblical material for later Muslim writings.[17] Similarly, al-Ṭabarī's earlier work, *al-Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā* (*Refutations of the Christians*) which is written after his conversion to Islam defending the superiority of Islam against Christianity, is an important example of 'refutation of Christians' (*radd ʿalā-n-Naṣārā*) genre and of early Muslim use of biblical texts.[18] Ibn Qutayba's (d. 889) *Aʾlām al-nubuwwa* is also one of the well-known examples of this genre providing a list of biblical testimonia briefly interpreted in support of Muḥammad's prophethood.[19] It has been argued that the primary interest of this first phase of Muslim use of biblical text lies in 'biblicizing the Islamic prophetic claims.'[20] This early Muslim interest in the Bible later is evolved into a nuanced form of scholarship that adapted and incorporated biblical information into Islamic tradition.[21] This line of Muslim biblical scholarship is particularly associated with Muslim exegetes (*mufassirūn*) and historians who reinterpreted the biblical material within an Islamic framework such as to enrich the content of qur'ānic narratives with biblical information, which generated a genre called *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, tales of the prophets. This line of Muslim interest in the Bible is described as 'affirmative' biblical scholarship.[22] Griffith has also noted that the primary purpose of this second phase is to Islamicize the biblical material.’[23] The Muslim historian al-Yaʿqūbī’s (d. 907) *Taʿrīkh* is a good example of the second phase of Muslim biblical scholarship with his use of Jewish and Christian sources especially when narrating pre-Islamic history.[24] Equally important example of this genre is al-Thaʿlabī’s (d. 1036) *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* where the story of Jesus is told based on both qur’ānic and biblical narratives.[25] Griffith, furthermore, argues that the emphasis put into ‘Islamicizing’ from the ninth century onwards was also considerably motivated by interreligious polemics, which led Muslim scholars to search for biblical proof texts in order to ‘argue from scripture’ against their Christian opponents.[26] In this period, Muslim scholars also effectively ‘appropriated’ biblical texts, which involved emending and correcting the wordings of the biblical passages when producing counter-arguments from the Christian scripture. Although not all Muslim scholars regarded the Bible as an authoritative scripture, presenting and arguing with scriptural proofs in the form of quotations or allusions to biblical text appears to become an important part of interreligious polemical works.[27] The Ashʿarī scholar al-Bāqillānī’s (d. 1013) *Kitāb al-tamhīd* (Book of the Introduction) and the Muʿtazilī scholar ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s (d. 1025) *Tathbīt dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* (The Confirmation of the Proofs of Prophecy) can be seen as examples of early eleventh century Muslim interest in biblical texts. Al-Bāqillānī uses biblical texts considering it reliable to support his argumentation on the humanity of Jesus.[28] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, on the other hand, both rejects the reliability of Christian scriptures and quotes extensively a wide variety of biblical passages to refute the divinity of Jesus.[29]

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[16] For a latest edition and translation of *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla*, see R. Y Ebied and D. Thomas, eds., *The Polemical Works of ʿAlī Al-Ṭabarī* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 199-473. See also, D. Thomas, 'ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī,' in *CMR1* (Brill, 2009), 672-674.

[17] For Muslim polemicists who used al-Ṭabarī's *Kitāb* as a source, see Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 194-197.

[18] For a latest edition and translation of *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, see Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 61-169. See also, D. Thomas, 'ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī,' in *CMR1* (Brill, 2009), 671-672.

[19] Sabine Schmidtke, 'The Muslim Reception of Biblical Materials: Ibn Qutayba and His Aʾlām Al-Nubuwwa,' *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 22, 3 (2011): 249–274. Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (New York: Brill, 1996), 30-36.

[20] Sidney H. Griffith, 'Arguing from Scripture,' 29-58. See also Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 189.

[21] Seppo Rissanen, *Theological Encounter of Oriental Christians with Islam During Early Abbasid Rule* (Åbo: Åbo Akademis Förlag, 1993).

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[22] J. D. McAuliffe, ‘The Qur’ānic Context of Muslim Biblical Scholarship,’ *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7, 2 (1996): 141-158. Andrew Rippin, ‘Interpreting the Bible through the Qur’an,’ in *The Qur’an and Its Interpretative Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2001), 249-259.

[23] Griffith, ‘Arguing from Scripture,’ 31; Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 189.

[24] Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 192-203. Griffith here analyses al-Yaʿqūbī’s *Taʾrīkh* as a case example of Muslim integration of biblical knowledge into Islamic tradition. Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 36-39. See also, David Thomas, ‘Al-Yaʿqūbī,’ in *CMR2* (Leiden, 2010), 75-78.

[25] This work is translated by W.M. Brinner, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ, or ‘Lives of the Prophets’ as Recounted by Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Thaʿlabī* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). See also, D. Thomas, ‘Muslim Regard for Christians and Christianity, 900-1200,’ in *CMR2* (Brill, 2010), 15-27.

[26] Griffith, ‘Arguing from Scripture,’ 33-35.

[27] David Thomas, ‘The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic,’ *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 7, 1 (1996): 29-38. See also by the same author, ‘The Bible and the *Kalām*,’ in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 175-191.

On the Muslim scholars' part, the growing interest in using biblical texts for polemical purposes is developed into a Muslim biblical scholarship that is more 'attentive' than before by means of examining and analysing biblical passages similar to Bāqillānī and ʿAbd al-Jabbār as noted above, either directly from biblical texts available to them or indirectly from an intermediate source which are mainly earlier Muslim works.[30] This latter approach to the Bible paved the way for an active Muslim biblical scholarship although this scholarship was not always motivated by a positive approach.[31] An important example of active but critical Muslim approaches to the Bible is the systematic biblical textual criticisms conducted by the Andalusian scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064).[32] His strong criticism and textual analyses of the Bible are considered as a turning point in Muslim biblical scholarship that had a negative impact on the way in which subsequent Muslim scholars engaged with the biblical scripture.[33] Another Andalusian Muslim scholar al-Khazrajī's (d. 1187) *Maqāmiʿ al-ṣulbān* (*Mallets for Crosses*), which is written as a response to a Christian monk's arguments to Muslims, represents a twelfth century example of the Muslim refutation genre (*Radd*).[34] Similar to Ibn Ḥazm, al-Khazrajī harshly criticises the major Christian doctrines such as the Trinity, and treats the problem of *taḥrīf* (alteration of the Bible) in exactly the same way to that of his predecessor, Ibn Ḥazm by pointing out the contradictions and inconsistencies claimed to be found in the Bible.[35] This observation concurs with the argument that after Ibn Ḥazm, the Muslim interest in the Bible focused mostly on proving inaccurate information, inconsistencies, and contradictions claimed to be found in the Christian scripture. It is true to some extent that Ibn Ḥazm's harsh biblical criticism affected and shifted Muslim interest in the Bible from employing biblical text for expanding on their arguments related to polemical matters to searching biblical texts for examples of altered (*muḥarraf*) parts. Nevertheless, recent studies on Muslim engagement with the Bible show that after Ibn Ḥazm, there are two different Muslim approaches to the Bible especially between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The first Muslim approach focuses on using the Bible without polemicising against its reliability. An example of this approach can be observed in a refutation entitled *al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat ʿIsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Injīl* (*A fitting refutation of the divinity of Jesus from the evidence of the Gospel*), which is attributed to the prominent Muslim scholar al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), also known as Pseudo-Ghazālī.[36] In this presumably twelfth century Muslim refutation,

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[28] Thomas, *Christian Doctrines*, 119-203. Thomas provides here edition and translation of a section where the Ashʿarī scholar criticises Christian doctrines in *Kitāb al-tamhīd*. See also, D. Thomas, 'Al-Bāqillānī,' in *CMR2* (Brill, 2010), 446-450.

[29] Gabriel Said Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian in a Sectarian Milieu ʿAbd Al-Jabbār and the Critique of Christian Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 95-107. For the edition and translation of *Tathbīt*, see Gabriel Said Reynolds and Khalil Samir, eds., *Critique of Christian Origins* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2010). On ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his *Tathbīt*, see also in *CMR2* (Brill, 2010), D. Thomas, 'ʿAbd al-Jabbār,' 594-604, and G. S. Reynolds, '*Tathbīt*, 'The Confirmation,'' 604-609. Also, Thomas, *Christian Doctrines*, 205-377.

[30] McAuliffe, 'The Qur'ānic Context,' 148. Rippin, 'Interpreting the Bible through the Qur'an', 251-252. See also where McAuliffe explains how the post-Qur'ānic attitude to the biblical texts is formed in two different approaches, J. D. McAuliffe, 'Is There a Connection between the Bible and the Qur'an?' *Theology Digest* 49 (2002): 303-317.

[31] McAuliffe, 'Is There a Connection,' 309-310.

[32] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 109-110 and 130-141. See also Griffith, 'Arguing from Scripture,' 57-58.

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[33] Martin Accad, 'The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table (Part I),' *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, 1 (2003): 67-91. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 35, 66, and 130-141.

[34] Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, 'Al-Khazrajī,' in *CMR3* (Brill, 2011), 526-528.

[35] Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 90-93. Monferrer Sala, 'Al-Khazrajī,' 527.

[36] For the latest edition and translation in English, see Ivor Mark Beaumont and Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, eds., *Al-Radd Al-Jamīl: A Fitting Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

Pseudo-Ghazālī uses biblical texts extensively and reinterprets them with a positive approach. The second Muslim approach uses biblical texts by intersecting with the different lines of the Muslim biblical scholarship highlighted above. That is to say, some of the Muslim scholars use the Bible for both simultaneously 'rejecting' its reliability and substantiating their arguments by reinterpreting the biblical passages. The Mālikī scholar al-Imām al-Qurṭubī (d. 1258) and the Egyptian scholar al-Jaʿfarī (d. 1270) are two thirteenth century Muslim polemicists who combined two approaches 'rejecting' and 'reinterpreting' when dealing with biblical texts.[37] In his *al-Iʿlām*, al-Qurṭubī uses biblical citations to produce counter-arguments yet he also denies the veracity of the Bible. Likewise, in his *Takhjīl*, al-Jaʿfarī is interested in biblical texts for both pointing out the mistakes and errors in the Bible and searching proof texts of Muḥammad's prophecy. Similar to al-Jaʿfarī and al-Qurṭubī, the Mālikī jurist al-Qarāfī (d. 1285) also rejects the soundness of biblical texts while he also polemically uses some of biblical passages to strengthen his arguments in his *al-Ajwiba al-fakhira ʿan al-asʾila al-fājira* (*The Splendid Replies to Insolent Questions*), which is written as a response to *Letter to a Muslim Friend*, penned by Paul of Antioch, a Melkite Bishop in early thirteenth century.[38] The Damascene scholar Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī (d. 1327) likewise adopted the paradoxical approach both 'rejecting' the authencity of the Bible and 'using' it as a source of proof texts in his *Jawāb Risālat Ahl Jazīrat Qubruṣ* (*Response to the Letter of the People of Cyprus*) while responding to *the Letter of the People of Cyprus* which is a reworked version of Paul's *Letter*, by an anonymous Arabic-speaking Christian against whom Ibn Taymiyya also reponds to.[39]

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[37] Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, 'Al-Imām al-Qurṭubī,' *CMR4* (Brill, 2012), 391-394. See also, Lejla Demiri, 'Al-Jaʿfarī,' in *CMR4* (Brill, 2012), 480-485. For both, al-Qurṭubī's *Iʿlām* and al-Jaʿfarī's *Takhjīl*, see Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 74-90.

[38] As for al-Qarāfī's *Ajwiba*, Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*. For Paul's *Letter*, see Paul Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche, évêque melkite de Sidon (XII^{e}s)* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1964). For French translation, see pp. 169-187, and for Arabic text, see pp. 58-83. See also, S. Khalil Samir, 'Notes Sur La "Lettre à Un Musulman de Sidon" de Paul d'Antioche,' *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 24 (1993): 180-190. On the date of Paul's *Letter*, see, David Thomas, 'Paul of Antioch's *Letter to A Muslim Friend* and *Letter from Cyprus*,' in *Syrian Christians Under Islam. The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 201-204. For English translation of Paul's *Letter to a Muslim Friend*, Sidney H. Griffith, 'Paul of Antioch,' in *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700-1700: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. S. Noble and A. Treiger (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014), 219-234. See also, D. Thomas, 'Paul of Antioch,' in *CMR4* (Brill, 2012), 78-82. For the Arabic texts and translations of both Paul's *Letter* and *Letter from the people of Cyprus*, see Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 54-147. For the time of the *Jawāb*'s composition, see Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 5, and Thomas F. Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawab al-sahih* (Delmar, NY: Caravan, 1984), 7-9. Michel identifies the year in which Ibn Taymiyya receives the *Letter* as 1317. He also offers a comparison between the *Jawāb* and Ibn Taymiyya's other work on prediction of Muḥammad in the Bible analysing the manuscripts of these two works to identify that which work is written earlier. For this, see pp. 370-382.

There are also other examples of Muslim biblical scholarship that are considerably less interested in rejecting biblical texts in comparison to the examples explained above, but more impressive with their endeavour to exegete the Christian scripture. The Mamlūk Ḥanbalī scholar Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 1316) for example, compiled a specific commentary on selected biblical books entitled *al-Taʿlīq ʿalā al-Anājīl al-arbaʿa* (*The Critical Commentary on the Four Gospels*) while a later Mamlūk scholar al-Biqāʿī (d. 1480) penned his qur'ānic commentary, *Naẓm al-durar* using the Bible extensively in interpretation and also wrote a treatise entitled, *'al-Aqwāl al-qawīmah fī ḥukm al-naql min al-kutub al-qadīmah* (*The Just Verdict on the Permissibility of Quoting from Old Scriptures*) on the permissibility of the use of the Bible in qur'ānic exegesis.[40] Concluding this brief survey on Muslim interest in the biblical text, it is important to note that the Muslim use of the Bible is not considered as an exegetical activity that generated a particular literary genre; rather, the Muslim scholars' use of biblical citations as supporting evidence to their argumentation, are considered 'instrumental' without genuine interest in understanding the texts.[41]

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[39] Ibn ʿAbī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risālat Ahl Jazīrat Qubruṣ* in, Ebied and Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 149-497. David Thomas, 'Christian-Muslim Misunderstanding in the Fourteenth Century: The Correspondence between Christians in Cyprus and Muslims in Damascus,' in *Towards a Cultural History of the Mamluk Era*, ed. M. Haddad et al. (Beirut: Orient-Institut; Würzburg: Ergon, 2010), 13-20. See also, David Thomas, 'The Letter from Cyprus or Letters from Cyprus,' in *Cultures in Contact: Transfer of Knowledge in the Mediterranean Context: Selected Papers*, ed. Sofia T. Tovar and J.P. Monferrer Sala (Córdoba: CNRERU; Beirut: CEDRAC; Oriens Academic, 2013), 263-274. On the identity of the Cypriot editor, see Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 14-19. On the question of which denomination he belongs to, see Alexander Treiger, 'The Christology of the Letter from the People of Cyprus,' *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 65, 1-2 (2013).

[40] Lejla Demiri, *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), see especially, chapter one and two. For al-Biqāʿī's works, see Walid A. Saleh, 'A Fifteenth-Century Muslim Hebraist: Al-Biqāʿī and His Defense of Using the Bible to Interpret the Qurʾān,' *Speculum* 83, 3 (2008): 629-654, and by the same author, *In Defense of the Bible: A Critical Edition and an Introduction to al-Biqāʿī's Bible Treatise* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); 'Sublime in Its Style, Exquisite in Its Tenderness : The Hebrew Bible Quotations in Al-Biqāʿī's Quran Commentary,' in *Adaptations and Innovations: Studies on the Interaction between Jewish and Islamic Thought and Literature from the Early Middle Ages to the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. Joel L Kraemer, Tvzi Y. Langermann, and Jossi Stern (Paris: Peteers, 2007), 331-347.

Seen in the literary context of the Muslim polemical works ranging from the ninth to the fifteenth century as explained above, Ibn Taymiyya's *Jawāb* holds a significant place with its massive content, especially with the sections where Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets biblical verses.[42] As noted previously, the Ḥanbalī theologian Ibn Taymiyya wrote the *Jawāb* after receiving the *Letter* from Cyprus in 1316 from an Arabic-speaking Christian, who revised Paul's *Letter*. In his *Letter to A Muslim Friend*, Paul of Antioch narrates a dialogue between himself and Christian scholars whom he claimed to meet during a visit to Byzantine and European lands and questioned about what they think of Muḥammad and Islam. In this dialogue, while Christian scholars accept Islam as a valid religion albeit with a limited target, pagan Arabs, namely, they defend the major doctrines of Christianity such as the Trinity and divine unification with many scriptural quotations arguing that even Muslims' scripture, the Qur'ān confirms the validity of these doctrines.[43] The Christian editor remains loyal to the main structure of Paul's *Letter* but transmits this dialogue with some important additions to the biblical and qur'ānic verses Paul originally cited.[44] The purpose of the Cypriot editor in revising especially scriptural quotations is to soften the polemical tone of Paul's

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[41] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 109-110. Thomas, 'The Bible and the *Kalām*,' 190-191. Griffith, 'Arguing from Scripture,' 57-58.

[42] Ibn Taymiyya's *Jawāb* is examined for the first time in English by Michel in his *Response*.

[43] Griffith, 'Paul of Antioch,' 217-218. For a brief outline of Paul's *Letter*, see also, Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 69-74 and Appendix B.

[44] For a summary of the *Letter*'s outline, see Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 19-21.

Letter and strengthen one of the primary arguments of the *Letter* that the Qur'ān affirms the major doctrines of Christianity and the veracity of the Bible.[45] It is the biblical quotations used in the *Letter* that initiated Ibn Taymiyya's interest in reinterpreting biblical texts in order to prove his opponent that neither the Bible, as a Christian scripture, nor the Qur'ān approve the Christian doctrines.

It is the biblical quotations utilised in the *Jawāb* that are the focus of this research. This thesis is interested in understating how Ibn Taymiyya deals with biblical text while responding to and arguing against the claims of the Christian of the *Letter*, which is a question that has not been studied so far. As one of the longest and the most comprehensive Muslim refutations of Christianity, the *Jawāb* has attracted scholarly attention and been examined in several studies. Yet, existing research on the *Jawāb* often focuses on the polemical and apologetic nature of this work in order to understand the main argument, focus, and the content of this refutation. So far, very little attention has been paid to the role of Ibn Taymiyya's interpretive methodology that is employed in exegeting biblical passages in the context of the *Jawāb*. In fact, no previous study has investigated in a systematic way how Ibn Taymiyya utilises biblical texts in his major refutation of Christianity.

Michel's study, for example, as the first and only monograph study in English on the *Jawāb*, examines this refutation closely and provides a partial translation of the Arabic text and a very informative introduction to both the *Jawāb* and Ibn Taymiyya's wider apologetic theological framework.[46] Investigating polemical and apologetic dimensions of Ibn Taymiyya's arguments against the Christian author of the *Letter*, Michel notes that Ibn Taymiyya meticulously reworks arguments against

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[45] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 9-13.

[46] Michel, *Response*, 5-135 for introduction on Ibn Taymiyya's polemics against Islamic groups, anti-Christian writings, and the *Jawāb*.

Christianity that are already well-known in the Islamic tradition. He describes the *Jawāb* as 'a comprehensive view of mankind's response to revelation.'[47] Moreover, considering Ibn Taymiyya's severe critique of not only Christians but also major Islamic groups, such as Sufis, *kalām* theologians, Shīʿīs, and philosophers, Michel argues that the primary audience of the *Jawāb* is not merely Christians, but in fact primarily Muslims, which is a view shared by many others who have worked on the *Jawāb*.[48] This study certainly provides important insights into the significance and content of the *Jawāb* and constructs a base for further research on this medieval Muslim polemic. Yet, as the first study on such a long refutation of Christianity, it does not deal with how Ibn Taymiyya interprets biblical passages. Yet, I should note here that Michel mentions very briefly Ibn Taymiyya's accusation that Christians abandon unambiguous (*muḥkam*) and apparent (*ẓāhir*) meanings of the scripture and prefer metaphorical and figurative interpretation, thereby distorting the meaning of the Bible by misinterpretation and creating a Christian interpretive tradition that has no link to the Bible itself.[49] These are basic but primary features of Ibn Taymiyya's approach to biblical exegesis, and the present study concurs with this observation. Nevertheless, despite the importance of Michel's study, this brief analysis is not sufficient for us to comprehend the full extent of Ibn Taymiyya's engagement with the biblical text.

Moreover, there are also a few small-scale studies that analyse the theological debates of the *Jawāb* related to the Trinity and unification. Abdullah, for example, offers a comparative analysis of only the Islamic doctrine of God's unity (*tawḥīd*) and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Roberts similarly includes the discussion on these doctrines but with more detail on Ibn Taymiyya's exposition of the use of specific terms such as 'son' in biblical texts.[50] Nevertheless, these works contain very few references to the biblical passages that are integrated into the theological and rational arguments of the *Jawāb*. In other words, although we have one large study and several small studies on the *Jawāb*, there is still no full study of Ibn Taymiyya's interpretive explanation of biblical passages. This gap in the literature even misled Beaumont and Elkaisy-Friemuth to argue that Ibn Taymiyya like other Medieval Muslim scholar such as al-Ṭūfī (d. 1316) and Pseudo-Ghazālī, advocates a nonliteral or metaphorical interpretation of the Bible whereas Ibn Taymiyya in reality opposes to nonliteral interpretation of divine texts rejecting the literal-nonliteral distinction.[51]

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[47] Michel, *Response*, 99.

[48] Michel, *Response*, 7-8, and 99-103. David Thomas, 'Apologetic and Polemic in *Letter from Cyprus* and Ibn Taymiyya's *Jawāb Al-ṣaḥīḥ Li-Man Baddala Dīn Al-Masīḥ,'* in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Ahmed Shahab (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 255-259. Jon Hoover, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' in *CMR4*, (Brill, 2012), 835. David Thomas, 'Idealism and Intransigence: A Christian-Muslim Encounter in Early Mamluk Times,' *Mamluk Studies Review* 13, 2 (2009): 86-103. See pp. 95.

[49] Michel, *Response*, 116-117.

Moreover, the earlier study on the *Jawāb* by Thomas focuses primarily on theological argumentation of Ibn Taymiyya and concluded that he does really not engage with the arguments of the *Letter*. Focusing on the polemical tone of the *Jawāb*, Thomas has argued that while the Christian author attempts to lighten the critical tone of Paul's *Letter* and thus, opens a way of dialogue, which might help a Muslim reader to consider Christian doctrines with a more sympathetic attitude, Ibn Taymiyya on the other hand does not respond to this positive attempt 'in any constructive manner.'[52] In a second study, Thomas has suggested that Ibn Taymiyya, portraying a certainly noticeable sense of apology, does not 'examine Christianity through Biblical and qur'ānic teachings.'[53] Thomas, in his two studies referred above, concentrates on Ibn Taymiyya's strong criticism of Christianity which considerably differs from his positive approach to the Christian scripture. Based on this difference, this thesis shows from the hermeneutical character of the *Jawāb* that refutation of Christianity is not the only purpose of Ibn Taymiyya; rather, he offers a constructive interpretation of biblical texts. He reinterprets biblical texts by referring to the syntactical-grammatical structure of the biblical verses in question.[54] Considering the fact that the Arabic language is the common ground on which Christians and Muslims established an interreligious polemical and apologetic literature, it is not wrong to say that Ibn Taymiyya's arguments made on linguistic and grammatical analyses might appeal to an Arabic-speaking Christian.[55] In other words, I argue that Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of the biblical passages is in a way 'responsive' and opens a door for dialogue or interactive debate on the grammatical-linguistic reading of the passages with Arab Christians, who already adopted and integrated Arabic into their theological and scriptural framework.

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[50] Ismail Abdullah, 'Tawḥīd and Trinity: A Study of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Al-Jawāb Al Ṣaḥīḥ,' Intellectual Discourse* 14, 1 (2006), 89-106. Nancy Roberts, 'Reopening the Muslim-Christian Dialogue of the 13-14th Centuries: Critical Reflections on Ibn Taymiyyah's Response to Christianity in *Al-Jawāb Al-ṣaḥīḥ Li Man Baddala Dīn Al-Masīḥ,' The Muslim World* 86, 3-4 (1996): 342-366. See also, Muzammil Siddiqi, 'Muslim and Byzantine Christian Relations: Letter of Paul of Antioch and Ibn Taymīyah's Response,' *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31, 1 (1986): 33-45.

[51] Beaumont and Elkaisy-Friemuth, *al-Radd Al-Jamīl*, 78. Based on Michel's *Response*, it has been argued that similar to the Ḥanbalī scholar al-Ṭūfī's advocating of metaphorical reading of the Bible, Ibn Taymiyya also defends that the sayings of Jesus about his union with God should be understood metaphorically, see especially pp. 78. Yet, this is not the case with Ibn Taymiyya's perception of literalness and non-literalness of a text. The present study will argue against this observation above noted.

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[52] Thomas, 'Christian-Muslim Misunderstanding,' 22.

[53] Thomas, 'Apologetic and Polemic,' 262-263. For Ibn Taymiyya's use of a Christian source in the *Jawāb* see, Mark Swanson, 'Ibn Taymiyya and the Kitāb Al-Burhān: A Muslim Controversialist Responds to a Ninth-Century Arabic Christian Apology,' in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Haddad (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 95-107. Swanson here notes to very similar remarks to that of Thomas agreeing on that Ibn Taymiyya fails to see the Christology and theology of the work, which he quotes in the *Jawāb*.

[54] Mark Swanson, 'What Dialogue? In Search of Arabic-Language Christian-Muslim Conversation in the Early Islamic Centuries,' in *Christian-Muslim Relations in the Anglican and Lutheran Communions: Historical Encounters and Contemporary Projects* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2-10. Swanson here notes that although Christian apologetics refer to Christians as a primary audience and Muslim apologetics consider Muslims to be the actual audience, these apologetics nevertheless are examples of an indirect conversation between Muslims and Christians. See esp. pp. 8-9. I also read Ibn Taymiyya's arguments, particularly the scriptural arguments in a similar way to Swanson's analysis. Despite the fact that the *Jawāb*'s primary intended audience is Muslims, it still offers argumentative analyses that might captivate the attention of a Christian audience.

[55] David Bertaina, *Christian and Muslim Dialogues: The Religious Uses of a Literary Form in the Early Islamic Middle East* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011). See especially Chapter seven and eight where Bertaina explains that Muslims and Christians reinterpreted each other's scripture for looking new perspectives and arguments and 'in the process of re-interpretation they made religious others and their scriptures part of their own identity,' see pp. 195. Bertaina also explains that the use of biblical and qur'ānic texts was an important part of the polemic discourse and 'some Muslim writers used the Bible as a means to discuss theological truths with Christian interlocutors,' see pp. 244.

This study makes a contribution to in the fields of Christian-Muslim polemical literature, Muslim biblical scholarship, and Taymiyyan studies, by examining Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of biblical verses found in the *Jawāb* with a view to understanding his interpretive strategies. In order to assess the extent to which Ibn Taymiyya's biblical interpretation is similar to or different from mainstream Muslim biblical scholarship, this thesis also investigates five Muslim scholars' polemical works written against Christianity with a particular focus on their use of biblical texts. The most important factor in selecting the works to be examined in this research is to find the polemics that use biblical quotations extensively in their argumentation. Equally important is to consider a wide variety of types of Muslim biblical exegesis that would fit in the scope of this research.

Among the polemical works mentioned earlier, al-Ṭabarī's *al-Radd* and *Kitāb* are two of the earliest examples of Muslim apologetical-polemical writings that use a great number of biblical passages and provide a context of ninth century Muslim biblical scholarship. Therefore, the investigation of the use of biblical texts in al-Ṭabarī's *al-Radd* and *Kitāb* is remarkably important and relevant to the present study. Likewise, Pseudo-Ghazālī uses biblical texts extensively in *al-Radd al-jamīl* thoroughly analysing and interpreting Johannine texts along with other Gospel passages. Pseudo-Ghazālī's hermeneutical interest in reinterpreting biblical texts and positive attitude to biblical scripture presents a different approach and emphasis for this thesis. al-Qarāfī's *Ajwiba* and al-Dimashqī's *Response* are particularly relevant to the present research as they respond to the same Christian apologetic with Ibn Taymiyya. The fact that these three Muslim scholars respond to the same Christian letter creates a common literary context by which they produce similar theological and scriptural arguments. They, nevertheless, shape their approach to biblical interpretation differently in the context of their individual intellectual framework. Ibn Ḥazm's *Faṣl* constitutes a backdrop for this study against which the change in other Muslim polemicists approaches to biblical interpretation can be reviewed. These five Muslim scholars' polemical works will be representatives of Muslim biblical scholarship between the tenth and fourteenth centuries creating a context in which this thesis will situate Ibn Taymiyya to reveal the similarity and distinctiveness of his biblical exegesis.

The principle text of investigation of Ibn Taymiyya's use of the biblical passages is the *Jawāb* excluding his other writings on Christianity.[56] The *Jawāb* is the largest and the most comprehensive work of Ibn Taymiyya on Christianity and its content constitutes a sufficiently large body of material for a thorough analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's use of biblical text. Similarly, it is beyond the scope of this research to examine Ibn Taymiyya's use of biblical text in his other works which are primarily on theological matters of Islamic discourse such as fatwas and short commentaries.

The present study does draw on hermeneutcical discussions in other works of Ibn Taymiyya and analyses some of applicable texts from Ibn Taymiyya's major works, such as his *Majmūʿ fatāwā* to acquire information on the use of specific terms of Islamic legal theory like *ḥaqīqa-majāz* (literal-nonliteral), *ẓāhir* (apparent), and *muṭlaq-muqayyad* (unqualified-qualified). This analysis plays an important role in providing an accurate understanding of how Ibn Taymiyya uses these hermeneutical terms in interpreting the Bible. Moreover, as a result of this analysis, this research provides preliminary information regarding Ibn Taymiyya's perception of these key terms based on the contexts of his theological writings. Since the printed edition of the *Jawāb* consists of Ibn Taymiyya's two works the *Jawāb* and the *Tahkjīl* in every edition, they are generally considered as one single work of Ibn Taymiyya. For our purpose here, we only refer to the biblical quotations in the *Jawāb* without including the references in the *Takhjīl* which are primarily interpreted to prove the validity of Prophet Muḥammad.[57] The selection of the biblical verses analysed in this thesis, also does not include biblical quotations used in the parts of the *Jawāb* where Ibn Taymiyya extensively cites from other sources, such as Muʿtazilī scholar al-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb's (10th century) *Risāla ilā akhīhi ʿAlī b. Ayyūb* (*Letter to ʿAlī b. Ayyūb's Brother*), and Melkite Patriarch Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq's (n.d.) *Naẓm al-jawhar* (*the Annals*).[58] By limiting the analysis only to biblical passages that Ibn Taymiyya himself adds to the discussion and to ones that he quotes directly from the *Letter*, I aim to determine the extent of Ibn Taymiyya's familiarity with biblical scripture and its exegetical tradition and the extent of the originality of his biblical hermeneutics.

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[56] For a brief biographical analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's writings on Christianity and modern literature on these works, see, Hoover, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' 824-878. See also, Michel, *Response*, 68-86.

The categorisation of biblical passages around the major themes of the exegetical discussions in the *Jawāb* was one of the most challenging tasks of the present research. The discursive and digressive Taymiyyan discourse in the *Jawāb* did not allow us to categorise the passages in the order of biblical books, such as the Book of Genesis and Deuteronomy, and so on. Further work on the categorisation of the biblical quotations showed that Ibn Taymiyya's exegetical framework and methodology already offers a structure that brings out his hermeneutical method more clearly than before. Following this structure, the biblical passages are divided into two groups: the first group is the passages that Ibn Taymiyya interprets by employing the specific key hermeneutical terms and concepts of Islamic interpretive tradition, particularly in Islamic legal hermeneutics (Chapter Three). For the exegesis of these passages, Ibn Taymiyya develops grammatical and linguistic arguments and focuses on key words in the passages. The second group of passages consists of the biblical quotations that Ibn Taymiyya primarily uses while producing theological and philosophical arguments against the Christian author of the *Letter*, (Chapter Four). The classification of Ibn Taymiyya's interpretive strategies into two parts not only will provide a clear picture of how he performs hermeneutical manoeuvres according to the expediency of his argumentation in the *Jawāb* but also will reveal that his biblical hermeneutics, regardless of whether it is advanced by linguistic-grammatical analyses or theological-philosophical arguments, is motivated, and guided by his wider theological-intellectual framework.

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[57] In the edition of the *Jawāb* (1999), *Takhjīl* is in the 5th volume and starts from pp. 146. See also for *Takhjīl*, Hoover, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' 845-847. For Ibn Taymiyya's *Takhjīl*'s relation to the *Jawāb*, see, Michel, *Response*, 370-382, and S. M. Stern, 'The Oxford Manuscript of Ibn Taymiyya's Anti-Christian Polemics,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22, 1 (2009): 124-128.

[58] For the quoted parts of Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb's *Risāla* in the *Jawāb*, see 4:88-182, and for the quotation of *Naẓm al-Jawhar*, 4:182-373. For the references to these works in the context of the *Jawāb*, see, Hoover, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' 838.

An investigation of the interpretive strategies employed in the *Jawāb* will provide a better and fuller understanding of the scope, content, purpose, and method of Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics. This study adds to current literature of Muslim-Christian polemical interactions in general and of Muslim biblical scholarship in particular in closely examining a late medieval Ḥanbalī scholar's hermeneutical interest in Christian scripture. This analysis will provide new insights that advance our understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's exegetical interest in biblical texts that is not only polemically motivated but also has a specific purpose in showing the significance of biblical expressions. Undoubtedly, Ibn Taymiyya's discourse in the *Jawāb* is initiated by a polemical urge in the first place in order to refute and respond the arguments of the Christian *Letter*. Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya's biblical exegesis represents a Muslim scholar's diligent attempt in explaining what God might mean in biblical revelation. It is, of course not surprising to see that Ibn Taymiyya's explanation of God's intended meanings in biblical revelation reflects the fundamental Islamic teaching, which would have limited appeal to a Christian audience. Yet, his attempt remains important as it represents how a Muslim scholar adapts the hermeneutical dynamics of his own divine scripture and his theological position and applies it to reading another scripture, which is not a common strategy among medieval Muslim scholars.

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One examines one of the most debated themes of Muslim-Christian polemics, *taḥrīf* or alteration of the Bible. In particular, the first part of the chapter explores how the problem of *taḥrīf* is elaborated in al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm's polemical works, while the second part presents a detailed discussion on Ibn Taymiyya's perception of this controversial term. The purpose of this chapter is to set a backdrop based on these six Muslim scholars' epistemological positions regarding the veracity of biblical scripture, to find out how their views on *taḥrīf* affect their approach to interpreting the biblical texts.

Chapter Two investigates the use of biblical quotations in the polemical works of five major Muslim scholars: al-Ṭabarī's *al-Radd* and *Kitāb*, Pseudo-Ghazālī's *al-Radd al-Jamīl*, al-Qarāfī's *Ajwiba*, al-Dimashqī's *Jawāb Risāla*, and Ibn Ḥazm's *al-Faṣl*, as highlighted previously. In light of the overall finding of Chapter One, this investigation will provide a context where the impact of *taḥrīf* on their use of biblical texts can be measured. Most importantly, the Muslim scholars' use of biblical texts is examined with the purpose of determining general patterns of exegetical techniques, and content of arguments utilised in these works. Based on this examination, the primary role of this chapter is to create a background against which to assess the similarity and difference of Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics in comparison to that of other five Muslim scholars.

Chapter Three and Chapter Four constitute the main body of this research and analyse Ibn Taymiyya's use and interpretation of biblical verses in the *Jawāb*. Chapter Three explains Ibn Taymiyya's exegesis that is primarily supported with linguistic and grammatical analyses of biblical texts by means of employing the hermeneutical terms and principles of Islamic hermeneutics. I shall first introduce a brief background on how technical key terms of the chapter are utilized in Islamic tradition and the Taymiyyan exegetical framework. This, then will be followed by sections presenting how Ibn Taymiyya methodically applies these terms into the interpretation of the biblical texts in question. Chapter Four analyses Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation that is constructed on the basis of theological and philosophical argumentation which seems to be derived from various sources and adapted and modified into Taymiyyan theology. Ibn Taymiyya carefully uses the theological background of the *Letter* and creates an interactive contrast in which he criticises and refutes the Christian doctrines but also offers his reinterpretation of the biblical texts that are traditionally used as proof texts in the Christian exegetical tradition. The parallel concepts, terms, and methodologies between Christian and Muslim *kalām* theology operate in these theological discussions to allow Ibn Taymiyya sometimes rhetorically and sometimes at a theoretical level to decontextualize the Christian doctrines from their traditional theological contexts.

Chapter Five ties together the most important findings of the research providing a final comparative analysis of Ibn Taymiyya and the other five Muslim scholars' biblical hermeneutical strategies. This detailed analytical discussion situates Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics in the context of early and late medieval Muslim biblical scholarship where the originality of his approach to biblical exegesis will be more clearly seen. Of all five scholars to be examined in this research, Ibn Taymiyya will be closer to al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī than the other three scholars in terms of treating the Bible with high regard whereas he will be fundamentally distinct from all five of them by virtue of the hermeneutical methodology he applies to unfold the meaning of the Christian scripture.

This thesis aims to demonstrate that the Ḥanbalī theologian Ibn Taymiyya employs a contextual theory of meaning in interpreting the Bible based on a hermeneutical methodology that is inspired by Islamic Legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), and guided by Taymiyyan theological principles. This thesis will argue that Ibn Taymiyya's contextual biblical hermeneutics is significantly different from the other five Muslim scholars' interpretation of the Bible. It will be shown that the originality of Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics lies in his use of the technical apparatus of Islamic Legal theory and qur'ānic exegesis, and in the modification of this hermeneutics to make it accord with his wider theological and intellectual framework. It will become apparent that in relying on this modified version of Islamic hermeneutics, Ibn Taymiyya reads and interprets the Bible in a similar way to his reading and interpreting the Qur'ān.

Chapter 1 *Taḥrīf*: Ibn Taymiyya and Other Muslim Scholars' Perception of the Alteration of the Bible

The alteration of the Bible, known as *taḥrīf* in Islamic literature, has always been a controversial and central issue in Muslim-Christian polemical writings, especially between the ninth and fifteenth centuries. The majority of Muslim polemicists accuse Christians of misinterpreting their scripture, or *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (alteration of the meaning). However, there were other Muslim scholars, such as al-Maqdisī (active around 966), questioning the soundness of biblical texts and accusing Christians of distorting the text, or *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (textual alteration), in the tenth century. A century later, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) categorically denies the reliability of Christian and Jewish scriptures and generates a systematic textual criticism of the Bible that is unparalleled in Islamic tradition. After Ibn Ḥazm, the discussion on *taḥrīf* has played a more prominent role in Muslim polemics, considerably affecting the way in which Muslim scholars deal with biblical texts.

The focus of the present chapter is on the problem of *taḥrīf* in the selected polemical writings from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. The chapter first features the use of *taḥrīf* as a polemical argument in al-Ṭabarī's *Radd* and *Kitāb*, Pseudo-Ghazālī's *al-Radd al-jamīl*, al-Qarāfī's *Ajwiba*, al-Dimashqī's *Jawāb Risāla*, and Ibn Ḥazm's *Faṣl*. The next area of investigation is Ibn Taymiyya's discussion on the alteration of the Bible, as elaborated in the *Jawāb*. In this chapter, the presentation of the five Muslim scholars follows a typological order rather than a chronological one, according to the degrees of perceiving *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (textual alteration). In other words, the first part of the chapter provides a typological survey of how the term *taḥrīf* is elaborated in the works of these five Muslim polemicists, ordering them from least hostile towards biblical texts to most, and thus introducing Ibn

Ḥazm last. The same typological presentation is used in the next chapter, with the aim of providing a more comprehensive analysis of how these scholars interpret biblical texts.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight how these Muslim polemicists understand this controversial concept in order to assess the extent to which they consider the Bible as a reliable scripture. This chapter presents a context for the subsequent chapters of the research in order to understand how the theory of *taḥrīf* affects the way in which these five Muslim scholars interpret the Bible, and how they differ from or are similar to Ibn Taymiyya's position on this matter. The primary point of argumentation throughout this chapter is that the Muslim scholars who uphold a positive stance on the reliability of the Bible engage more fully and attentively in interpretation of biblical texts.

1.1 ʿAlī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. 865)

ʿAlī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. 865) mainly accepts the textual authority of the Bible. In his works written after his conversion to Islam, *al-Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā* (*Refutations of the Christians*) and *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* (*The Book of Religion and Empire*), al-Ṭabarī extensively quotes from the Bible and employs biblical texts to support his argumentation. While he considers the Torah as a book informing about genealogies of the nation of Israel and their historical journey, starting with the exodus from Egypt, he regards the Gospels as the accounts of Jesus' life and parables. He distinguishes the content of the Torah from that of the Gospels and Psalms, arguing that the former contains laws and customs, whilst the latter two do not have legal content, but rather, only moral teaching and wisdom (the Gospels) or historical accounts and hymns of praise and prayers (the

Psalms).[1] Moreover, he accepts the Torah as a revealed text, which is observable, for example, when he cites Genesis 17.20, where Ishmael is prophesised. Accepting the passage as an indirect *testimonium* of the prophecy of Muḥammad, al-Ṭabarī explicitly says that God revealed (*awḥā*) this prophecy.[2]

He also accepts the Gospels as mostly reliable historical accounts, with some exceptions of textual inconsistencies. Al-Ṭabarī, for instance, refers to the biblical verses where Jesus seems to confirm his messengership and humanity in texts that plainly reflect 'the truth' without even needing further interpretation, such as John 17.3, 'You are God, the one, the true, and that you have sent Jesus Christ.'[3] For him, this passage openly acknowledges the oneness of God and the prophetic mission of Jesus. Yet, there are some passages from the Gospels that al-Ṭabarī considers inconsistent. He does not clearly express his doubt about the texts or reject the biblical passages, but he does strongly imply that these passages cannot originally belong to Jesus. An illustration of this is John 5.31-32, where Jesus denied his own witness for himself as one's testimony to himself would not be valid. al-Ṭabarī argues that contrary to this statement, Jesus said that he witnesses for himself, and God witnesses for him as well.[4] al-Ṭabarī argues that the attribution of contradictory statements to Jesus is not acceptable. Here, he does not explicitly reject the text, but certainly infers that it could not originally belong to Jesus.

The allusion to *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (textual corruption) occurs in the *Radd* in later sections. Al-Ṭabarī refers to John the Baptist's witnessing the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove and calling him 'the Son of God' in Matthew 3.16-17. Then, he notes that John the Baptist, contrary to his experience explained above, sent his disciples to inquire about Jesus, asking 'Are you the coming one?', as narrated in Luke 7.19.[5] From al-Ṭabarī's point of view, if John the Baptist witnessed the Holy Spirit's sanctifying of Jesus and calling him 'the Son of God,' he would not have later suspected him and made inquiries about him. This is a clear contradiction for him. Here, he again does not manifestly deny the passages or make the accusation of textual change, but it is clear that al-Ṭabarī does not consider this Gospel account reliable.

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[1] ʿAlī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla*, in R. Y. Ebied and D. Thomas, eds., *The Polemical Works of ʿAlī Al-Ṭabarī* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 199-473. See pp. 284-285.

[2] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 327 n. 199.

[3] ʿAlī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *al-Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā*, in R. Y. Ebied and D. Thomas, eds., *The Polemical Works of ʿAlī Al-Ṭabarī* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 61-169. See pp. 70-71.

[4] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 84-85.

While al-Ṭabarī does not argue for deliberate textual change in the Bible, he nevertheless believes that the biblical text was subjected to change due to translation and transmission. The biblical verses explained above, where al-Ṭabarī expresses his doubt about the texts, can be accepted as examples of textual changes that he assumes to have occurred at the behest of translators and scribes of the Bible. In fact, al-Ṭabarī explains what he considers as *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (the corruption of text) in the *Kitāb*. When discussing the miracles of Jesus, he cites Matthew 12.39, in which Jesus replies to the Jews, who asked for a sign from him, that he will not give one.[6] Al-Ṭabarī goes on to explain that Jesus not only said that he would not show a sign to the Jews, but also, that he condemned them for asking this and described them as 'a wicked and adulterous tribe.' From al-Ṭabarī's point of view, this narrative demonstrates inconsistent behaviour by Jesus. For, contrary to Jesus saying in Matthew 12.39 that he would not produce a sign for Jews, he later performed signs. For al-Ṭabarī, in this specific example, Jesus acted inconsistently, denying what he said earlier, which is not appropriate for a prophet. Consequently, he considers this inconsistency in the text as an example of *taḥrīf* (corruption) and *fasād* (error), which occurred through translators and scribes.[7]

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[5] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 138-139.

[6] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 438-439.

Apart from the biblical passages that al-Ṭabarī treats with suspicion, as explained above, he mainly considers the Bible as intact and accuses Christians of misinterpretation. He argues that for those who seek the truth, it is evidently present in the texts and that they methodologically misinterpret the text by following unusual (*shādh*) and ambiguous expressions (*mushkilāt*), whilst ignoring the clear ones (*wāḍiḥ*). For al-Ṭabarī, the clear passages (*wāḍiḥāt*) constitute the majority of the scripture and are the bases (*uṣūl*), while unusual texts are few and function as branches (*furūʿ*). It is clear that for al-Ṭabarī the problem lies in misinterpretation of the Bible. He believes that the Christian scripture consists of mainly unambiguous clear texts; yet, Christian interpretive tradition focuses on unclear and ambiguous parts. With this approach, al-Ṭabarī appears to be suggesting that the meaning of the biblical text is primarily clear and the obscure passages can be interpreted through unambiguous texts. In other words, Christian scripture can be interpreted through its own context, which can also be described as reading the Bible by the Bible.[8] While al-Ṭabarī's approach is very similar to that of Pseudo-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya, who also claim that the biblical text mainly contains clear expressions that lead to straightforward interpretations, he certainly differs from al-Qarāfī and Ibn Ḥazm, who categorically argue for textual corruption (*taḥrīf al-lafẓ*). For al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm, the Qur'ān is the corrective scripture for the Bible. However, this is not to say that al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya do not accept the superiority of the Qur'ān over the Bible. They only differ from the others in accepting the interpretation of the Bible by the Bible as a first step of biblical exegesis. It becomes clear from the discussion above, that al-Ṭabarī primarily considers biblical texts reliable and believes that the textual changes in the Bible are mainly due to undeliberate mistakes of translators and scribes.

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[7] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 440-441.

[8] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 122-125.

1.2 Pseudo-Ghazālī

Similar to al-Ṭabarī, the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* (*A Fitting Refutation*), which is a refutation attributed to al-Ghazālī, does not accuse the Bible of textual change, and mainly accepts the reliability of biblical scripture. As will be explained in the next chapter, the author uses Gospel passages to support his argument throughout his refutation that Jesus is not divine. Moreover, he appeals to the Letters of John and Paul to support his interpretation, which are not common sources among Muslim scholars.[9] The author selectively uses the biblical passages as proof texts to underline his argument. He for example cites verses from the Gospels to prove the humanity of Jesus, such as John 8.40 (a man) and Matthew 27.46 (Why have you forsaken me?), without questioning the authority of the Bible.[10]

Pseudo-Ghazālī, however, differs from al-Ṭabarī in not explicitly revealing his position on the problem of *taḥrīf* (corruption of the Bible). Al-Ṭabarī makes his position clear by affirming undeliberate textual changes in the Bible, as explained above. However, some uncertainty in Pseudo-Ghazālī's perception of *taḥrīf* notwithstanding, he appears to be confining the term *taḥrīf* mainly to *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (the corruption of misinterpretation). This is evident in his interpretation of John 1.14, 'The word became flesh.' The author argues that this text is not properly interpreted by Christians, for they failed to re-examine Coptic terminology.

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[9] Beaumont and Elkaisy-Friemuth, *Refutation*, 52-53. The editors of *al-Radd al-jamīl* note that the author's use of Johannine texts is more thorough than that of any previous Muslim scholar. See pp. 77-78 for the author's impact on subsequent Muslim writings.

[10] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *Al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilahiyyat ʿĪsā bī-ṣarīḥ al-Injīl* in Ivor Mark Beaumont and Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, eds., *Al-Radd Al-Jamīl: A Fitting Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 83-193. See, pp. 122-123.

He explains that the word *afer* means 'he made' in Coptic, and charges Christians with not interpreting the text accurately in accordance with correct interpretive rules. From the author's perspective, the word *afer* is used equivocally (*mushtarak*) to signify two meanings: made (*ṣanaʿa*) and became (*ṣāra*). He argues that in Christian interpretation, the meaning 'became' is taken to be the intended one, despite the fact that it contradicts reason. In other words, Christians are wrong to divert the meaning to the least probable meaning (i.e. became) by depending on weak evidence.[11] For this very reason, the author accuses the Christians of practising *taḥrīf*, which is mentioned only once throughout the entire refutation.[12] In this context, the author presumably uses the term *taḥrīf* to mean the corruption of meaning (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*), which is evident from his claim that he could resolve the obscurity (*shubha*) created by Christians through interpretation. He argues that the meaning 'made' should be given priority over 'became' simply because the latter meaning conflicts with reason and is thus not reliable.[13] Furthermore, even if the meaning 'became' is preferred over 'made,' then it becomes clear that the literal (*ẓāhir*) meaning of this word contradicts reason. This contradiction requires diverting from literal meaning on the basis that God cannot be the word (John 1.1) if He later became flesh (John 1.14).[14] In the discussion, the author carefully builds a case to claim that Christians use incorrect hermeneutical rules to exegete biblical passages. Explaining the probable meanings of expressions or words by relying on Arabic linguistic rules is very similar to Ibn Taymiyya's method as will be fully explained in chapter 3. Likewise, the author's meticulous approach in not denying any text and only arguing for misinterpretation of the Bible has close parallels to Ibn Taymiyya's emphasis on *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (the corruption of meaning).

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[11] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 164-165.

[12] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 166-167.

[13] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 166-167.

[14] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 168-169.

In addition to the examples noted above, the only instance where the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* appears to express doubt about the authenticity of the biblical text is the event of the crucifixion. When referring to the crucifixion of Jesus, the author persistently uses the phrases 'in their [Christians] opinion' and 'according to them [Christians],' which are interpreted as an indication of his refusal to accept the Christian report on it. Reynolds, for example, defines the author's attitude as the denial of the biblical account of Jesus' crucifixion.[15] Whittingham, on the other hand, considers the author's use of 'in their opinion' as indicating his aim to distinguish his position from Christian belief that Jesus died on the cross.[16] Elkaisy-Friemuth interprets the author's position questioning the Christian interpretation of the biblical narrative of crucifixion and not the reliability of the report itself.[17]

In her study, Elkaisy-Friemuth's observation that the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* never shows any inclination to reject or deny biblical texts throughout the entire refutation, except for the crucifixion is supported. When referring to the crucifixion, the author *al-Radd al-jamīl* seems to point out that the Christians could have failed to recognise that the person who died on the cross was not Jesus, but rather, was someone else who, as the Qur'ān says, 'Was made to resemble him to them' (Q4.157).[18] This is a classical Muslim argument regarding the crucifixion of Jesus emphasising that he was not killed on the cross.[19] The author does not deny the biblical text reporting this event, but rather, he holds the view that the Christians mistakenly believed that the person who died on the cross was Jesus and hence they reported the event as they believed they had witnessed it. This position is very similar to that of Ibn Taymiyya, who also does not deny the biblical text about the crucifixion, but believes that Christians wrongly assumed that Jesus was crucified and narrated this as their having witnessed it.[20] However, Ibn Taymiyya notes that the event of crucifixion was not transmitted through an uninterrupted multiple transmission chain (*tawātur*). For this reason, the mistake could not be realised by Christians as they were confused by what they had witnessed.[21] Pseudo-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya apparently do not deny the biblical text that narrates the crucifixion of Jesus, but rather, they reject the way Christians understand this event.

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[15] Gabriel Said Reynolds, 'The Ends of Al-Radd Al-Jamīl and Its Portrayal of Christian Sects,' *Islamochristiana*, 25 (1999): 45-65. See pp. 62-63.

[16] Martin Whittingham, 'The Value of Taḥrīf Maʿnawī (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): 209-222. In this study, Whittingham analyses the author's strategy in using biblical passages and explains that he sometimes reconciles the Bible with the Qur'ān and sometimes reinterprets the texts out of their original contexts, redefining the key terms of Christian beliefs. See pp. 210-214.

[17] Beaumont and Elkaisy-Friemuth, *Refutation*, 8-10 and 19-20.

[18] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 112-113, 120-123, and 146-147. In these pages, the author uses the phrases 'in their opinion' and 'according to them,' when he refers to the event of crucifixion and Jesus' suffering, which clearly implies that he does not believe that he suffered and died on the cross.

The elaboration above shows that the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* accepts the biblical texts. He only implies his doubt about the Christian interpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus, but he does not deny the biblical account of this event. It has been argued that the author only accuses Christians of misinterpreting the Bible not of deliberate textual change. Yet, it has been suggested that his approach to the biblical text is not a sincere conviction that treats the Bible as an authentic scripture.[22] Rather, he is thought to use it with an approach targeting only Muslims, without an explicit confirmation of the reliability of the biblical scripture.[23] It is true, to some extent, that the author utilises the biblical passages pragmatically to support his interpretation as will be illustrated in the next chapter. Moreover, the author clearly accepts the integrity of the Bible, which is evident in his strategic reading of the biblical text with intra-scriptural proofs. In other words, Pseudo-Ghazālī, similar to al-Ṭabarī, treats the Bible as a scripture that reveals the truth when interpreted with the correct methodology. It is not surprising to see that this methodology is motivated by Islamic interpretive rules, as the majority of Muslim scholars read the Bible through the lens of their own scripture and religious beliefs. As will be explained in the next chapter, the author mainly focuses on reinterpreting the biblical text with a metaphorical reading of the passages and accuses Christians of misinterpreting the Bible by relying solely on literal meaning.

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[19] Mahmoud M. Ayoub, 'Towards an Islamic Christology, II: The Death of Jesus, Reality or Delusion,' *The Muslim World* 70, 2 (2007): 91-121. For an argument against the conviction that the Qur'ān denies Jesus' death on the cross, see Gabriel Said Reynolds, 'The Muslim Jesus: Dead or Alive?,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 72, 2 (2009): 237-258.

[20] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2.302-303; Michel, *Response*, 194-195.

[21] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2.419-420; Michel, *Response*, 225.

[22] Reynolds, 'The Ends of *Al-Radd Al-Jamīl*,' 62-63.

[23] Whittingham, 'The Value of Taḥrīf Maʿnawī,' 214.

1.3 Al-Qarāfī (d. 1285)

Contrary to al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī's response to Paul of Antioch's *Letter to A Muslim Friend* presents an extreme position on the matter of *taḥrīf* (corruption of the Bible). Arguing that both types of *taḥrīf* - *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (textual corruption) and *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (corruption by misinterpretation) - occurred in the Bible, he categorically claims that the Torah and the Gospels are not divinely inspired scriptures. Al-Qarāfī's purpose is to refute Paul's claim that the Qur'ān confirms the authority of Christian scripture. He explains that the Qur'ān only confirms what was revealed to Moses and Jesus, and this revelation is not the same as the Gospels and the Torah that Jews and Christians possess.[24] For al-Qarāfī, the Gospels consist of narratives that are not even transmitted from persons who heard these words directly from Jesus. He insistently argues that the Gospels do not originally belong to Jesus and are corrupted by transmitters who added narratives to the texts. He further claims that the Gospels are full of inconsistency (*tanāquḍ*), contradiction (*taʿāruḍ*), and lies (*takādhib*).[25] As will be examined in the following parts of this chapter, al-Qarāfī's arguments against the soundness of the Torah and Gospels are closely parallel to Ibn Ḥazm's rather severe criticism of the Bible.

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[24] Aḥmad ibn Idrīs al-Qarāfī, 'Al-Ajwiba Al-Fākhira ʿan Al-Asʾila Al-Fājira' (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis: Umm al-Qurā University, 1985), 182.

To prove his case, al-Qarāfī refers to fifteen biblical passages that he considers as being examples of contradictions and inconsistencies of the Gospels. Cucarella explains that al-Qarāfī borrows these biblical citations from al-Jaʿfarī's *Takhjīl*, which is a source that al-Qarāfī relies on heavily in *Ajwiba*.[26] Al-Qarāfī's main purpose is to show that the Gospels differ from each other, especially in providing different information, such as in Matthew 1.16, where Mary's husband Joseph's father's name is Jacob, whereas his name is Heli in Luke 3.23.[27] He claims that some information that one of the Gospels provides is absent in the others. To exemplify his case, he cites Luke 22. 43-44, 'An angel appeared to him to strengthen him. He prayed consistently and his sweat became ordinary blood,' pointing out that the other three Gospels do not mention this information.[28] For al-Qarāfī, the other Gospels' omission strongly indicates that they do not believe in this information. As he goes on, if the omission of this information in the other three Gospels is correct then, this invalidates the truthfulness of this information in the Gospel of Luke and deems it a lie.[29] Al-Qarāfī accepts the different information given in the Gospels as evidence of *taḥrīf* (corruption) and *tabdīl* (alteration), whilst not treating these differences in the reports as if they complement each other.

Al-Qarāfī treats the Torah with the same level of suspicion regarding its textual reliability. Similar to his argument regarding the authenticity of the Gospels, he claims that the Torah, which Jews possess, is not the book originally revealed to Moses. Explaining the historical process of the Torah's survival, al-Qarāfī accuses Ezra of corrupting the texts by introducing anthropomorphic elements to the Torah when rewriting the book, which is a classical Muslim charge regarding Ezra, who is thought to have reproduced the Torah.[30] Similar to his claim regarding the Gospels, al-Qarāfī argues that the Torah also contains contradictions. To prove this, he cites some biblical verses which constitute a list of quotations borrowed from his two major Muslim sources, al-Qurṭubī's *Iʿlām* and al-Jaʿfarī's *Takhjīl*.[31] These quotations are mainly from the book of Genesis and used here to point out the inappropriate expressions attributed to God such as His being regretful for creating a man [Adam] on earth (Genesis 6.8), and as a means of divine punishment, God's sending a flood to the earth (Genesis 7.17-23) and being regretful about this, whilst confessing that He will never do again (Genesis 8.21).[32] Al-Qarāfī also cites biblical verses that attribute inappropriate acts to the Prophets, like Jacob's marrying two sisters, which is contradictory to the legal regulations of the Torah (Genesis 29.16-30)[33] and Abraham's will that he would leave everything he had to Isaac and not to Ishmael (Genesis 25.5,6), which contradicts the legal ruling of the Torah, whereby the first-born sons have the right to two portions, while any others receive just one (Deuteronomy 21.17). Al-Qarāfī describes this difference between the texts of Genesis as alteration (*tabdīl*) and change (*taghyīr*).[34] He argues that these expressions from the Torah are neither God's speech (*kalām*) nor Moses' and that it is not permissible to trust the book since it was subjected to significant change.[35]

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[25] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 193-195.

[26] Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 128 n. 81.

[27] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 202.

[28] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 198.

[29] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 198.

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[30] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 394-395; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 166-167. For a survey on the history of Muslim argument on Ezra as the person who corrupted the Torah, see Martin Whittingham, 'Ezra as the Corrupter of the Torah? Re-Assessing Ibn Ḥazm's Role in the Long History of an Idea,' *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 1, 1–2 (2013): 253-271.

[31] Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 167 n. 81.

[32] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 407.

[33] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 406-407.

[34] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 409-410.

This discussion above has shown that, for al-Qarāfī, the Gospels and the Torah are not reliable scriptures. This approach contrasts with al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī's position that the biblical texts are mostly reliable and thus, interpretable with the correct method. However, there are some exceptions for al-Qarāfī too. Despite him categorically claiming that the biblical text cannot be used to argue anything, al-Qarāfī, nevertheless, utilises the Bible to prove his case. Citing Deuteronomy 32.39, 'There is no God besides Me,' and Exodus 20.3, 'You shall have no other gods before Me,' al-Qarāfī argues, contrary to what he has claimed earlier regarding the reliability of the Torah, that there are many verses declaring the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*).[36] As for the Gospels, he similarly argues that the oneness and unity of God is also confirmed in the Gospels, as stated in Matthew 19.17, 'There is no one good except the one God,' and in John 17.3, 'You are the one God.'[37] Moreover, al-Qarāfī also uses the biblical texts, without any implication of denying the reliability of the text, when arguing that Jesus is only depicted as a human messenger and that Muḥammad is proclaimed in the Bible, which are the arguments that will be fully elaborated upon in the following chapter.

Al-Qarāfī attempts to justify his ambivalent approach to the Bible, which is invoked to adduce proof texts on the one hand, and is rejected as an unreliable source on the other. He argues that there are 11 verses from the Gospels and 8 from the Torah that are preserved from *taḥrīf* (corruption) and *tabdīl* (change), which are the biblical *testimonia* he borrows from another Muslim work.[38] This explanation for al-Qarāfī's epistemologically paradoxical attitude in using the Bible covers only the biblical texts used to prove the proclamation of Muḥammad in Christian scripture. As noted earlier, he also confidently utilises other passages to prove his claims that Jesus is only a human prophet and that the Christian Creed contradicts the Bible, without giving any explanation regarding how he considers these texts as reliable, while rejecting the rest of the Bible as corrupted. This clearly indicates that al-Qarāfī's use of the Bible is mainly for polemical purposes and that he even does not fully trust those texts considered 'preserved by God.' He claims that biblical *testimonia* are not necessary in proving the truthfulness of Muḥammad's prophecy as this is already confirmed by his miracles. Rather, he notes that he uses them to compel Christians and Jews to accept the prophethood of Muḥammad since they believe in these scriptures.[39]

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[35] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 419.

[36] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 486-487.

[37] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 487.

[38] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 724; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 235-236.

Al-Qarāfī's perception of the *taḥrīf* of the Bible, as explained so far, is vital for understanding why he does not really engage in reinterpreting its texts. His distrust of the authority of biblical texts leads him to invoking it merely for polemical use and he does not show any interest in understanding it. This point will become clearer in the next chapter, where it will be explained that while al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya provide alternative Islamicised reading of biblical passages without rejecting the text as corrupted, al-Qarāfī, with a similar approach to Ibn Ḥazm, accuses the majority of it of corruption (*taḥrīf*). Replying to Paul's argument that the Qur'ān, like the Bible, also contains anthropomorphic expressions about God, he contends that God revealed these ambiguous (*mutashābih*) expressions about Himself and that these are transmitted with unbroken multiple transmission chains (*mutawātir*), unlike the Bible, the transmission process of which was disrupted many times. Muslims, being certain that the ambiguous expressions are God's words, strive to understand them. Christians, on the other hand, innovate many expressions and terms, such as

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[39] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 774-775; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 230-231.

aqānīm (hypostases) and *jawhar* (substance) independently of divine revelation. Al-Qarāfī, therefore, claims that the Bible cannot be used to adduce a proof for even an unimportant legal matter. It is clear from this discussion that he does not endeavour to reinterpret the Bible because the text does not contain the original revelation. Thus, any attempt to reveal the intended meaning of the Bible would be pointless. This approach significantly contrasts with that of Ibn Taymiyya, who believes that the Bible still contains the judgment (*ḥukm*) of God. This point also arguably answers, to some degree, the question as to why al-Qarāfī, as a legal theorist himself, does not use the interpretive strategies of Islamic legal theory in understanding the Bible, unlike Ibn Taymiyya, who uses specific hermeneutical terms of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) in reinterpreting the Christian scripture.

1.4 Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī (d. 1327)

Al-Dimashqī, following a similar approach to that of al-Qarāfī on the problem of *taḥrīf*, argues that the Bible is corrupted by textual alteration and misinterpretation. He does not consider Jewish and Christians scriptures divinely inspired. Rather, he argues that the Torah consists of reports of one single narrator, i.e. Ezra, who rewrote the Book, which includes inappropriate and appalling narratives about prophets.[40] To explain this, he alludes to the incident that happened between Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19.30-38).[41] Having said this, he also notes that the Torah, nevertheless, contains the word of God (*kalām Allāh*), but in a corrupted

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[40] Ibn ʿAbī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risālat Ahl Jazīrat Qubruṣ* in, Ebied and Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades: The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī's Response*, (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 149-497.

[41] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 25-27. Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 242-243.

(*muḥarraf*) form. Hence, a Muslim cannot be sure which parts of the Bible are preserved and which parts are changed.[42]

Similarly, al-Dimashqī considers the Gospels as a collection of historical reports transmitted by Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John.[43] Demonstrating his knowledge of the Gospels, he remarks that Luke and Mark provide parallel information, while John starts with a different chapter on the Word of God and subsequently, follows the accounts of the other three Gospels, not without additions, omissions, and contradictions.[44] The different narratives of the Gospels about Jesus' life, especially about post-resurrection events, is the main reason for al-Dimashqī's approach towards the Bible. Relying on a classical Muslim argument, he argues that the Gospels were not transmitted by a multiple transmission chain (*tawātur*), which is the main reason for textual discrepancies.[45] Al-Dimashqī also contends that the Gospels contradict each other by giving different narratives of Jesus' life as well as his different depictions. He claims that Jesus sometimes defined himself as human or son of man (Mark 10.45), whilst at other times as the son of God (Luke 3.21-22).[46] This is a clear contradiction from al-Dimashqī's perspective. Having said this, it is also important to note that although al-Dimashqī considers the depictions of Jesus as 'son of man' and 'son of God' to be contradictory to each other, he nonetheless reinterprets these names, arguing that they metaphorically signify the honorary status of Jesus as a prophet, as will be highlighted in the next chapter.

The arguments regarding the reliability of Jewish and Christian scriptures explained above are well-known objections widely used against the People of the Book in Muslim polemics. In addition to these arguments, al-Dimashqī explains why Muslims do not attentively examine the Bible. He argues that a group of Christian scholars, who he calls 'canonical experts' (*aṣḥāb qawānīn*), divided the Gospels into parts that are to be read during liturgical practices and prayers. This way of using the scripture, as al-Dimashqī asserts, gradually deemed the Gospels a scripture only read during liturgical ceremonies accompanied by music, which prevented the believers from hearing the message of their scripture and comprehending the inaccuracy of expressions. The point he emphasises here, is that, for those who listen to the words and expressions of the Bible with accurate reasoning, it is clear that it is not a revealed scripture. For this reason, Muslims perceive the Bible as only a collection of historical reports, the soundness of which is not totally confirmed, and thus, are reluctant to show any interest in exegeting it.[47] This, of course, is a polemical argument used to undermine the authority of Christian scriptures and to emphasise the superiority of the Qur'ān over all earlier scriptures. According to Al-Dimashqī, the Qur'ān is the corrective scripture that reconstructs the correct version of extant biblical information.[48]

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[42] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 242-243.

[43] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 258-259.

[44] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 246-247.

[45] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 268-269.

[46] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 380-381.

As noted earlier, al-Dimashqī uses the term *taḥrīf* (alteration) to mean that Christians changed the Bible through both textual alteration and misinterpretation. Similar to the accusations of literal reading of the scripture that al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī level at Christians, al-Dimashqī also criticises literal interpretation of the Bible. He argues that the Christians immoderately follow apparent meanings of the scripture, which inevitably leads them to exercise misinterpretation. He further argues that the literal reading of the scripture results in a reductionist exegesis. To exemplify this, Al-Dimashqī refers to the Christian belief that Jesus is the incarnate Word of God, which he considers as an innovated doctrine based on the interpretation that the word of God is refined into Jesus, whereas the word in reality signifies an honorary status and distinction for Jesus as a prophet. In other words, al-Dimashqī emphases here the point that 'the word of God' is used in connection with Jesus so as to remark about his creation without a father.[49] Here, he appears to criticise applying literal interpretation to the Bible, but in reality he is sceptical about the originality of expressions. This position distinguishes al-Dimashqī from al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, because the latter two scholars do not question the reliability of biblical expressions and argue that the metaphorical interpretation may reveal their intended meanings. Al-Dimashqī, however, claims that the biblical expressions do not have original meanings any more since they have been translated from various languages into Arabic and replaced by new words and terms chosen by translators. Depending on this argument, he argues that it is inevitable for the Christians to arrive at incorrect interpretations when they rely on the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meanings of these unoriginal expressions.[50] The main crux of his argumentation is that neither biblical expressions nor their literal (*ẓāhir*) meanings are reliable. This necessarily leads to the conclusion that for al-Dimashqī, biblical interpretation would not be correct unless corrected by qur'ānic information. However, it will be explained in the next chapter that despite this, al-Dimashqī uses the Bible to adduce proof texts, especially in proving the prophethood of Muḥammad, and he reinterprets many biblical passages to underline his argumentation throughout his response to the Christian *Letter*.

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[47] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 264-265.

[48] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 248-249.

One of the clearest examples of how al-Dimashqī's perception of *taḥrīf* reflects upon his biblical interpretation is his elaboration of Matthew 28.19, 'Go to all the world and baptise them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'[51] He categorically argues that this biblical passage is an invented lie against Jesus, who would not command association (*shirk*) of any other entity with God. The main strategy of al-Dimashqī in dealing with Matthew 28.19 is straightforward rejection of the text and his objection to this verse mainly depends on qur'ānic criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity. This is apparent in his inaccurate citation of the verse where he interpolates qur'ānic expressions into the text. He, for instance, replaces the trinitarian names, 'Father, Son, Holy Spirit' with the word the Trinity (*al-thālūth*) and adds the expression 'one God' (*ilāh wāḥid*) into the text.[52] Al-Dimashqī's emendation of Matthew 28.19 presumably is affected by the qur'ānic criticism of the Trinity.

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[49] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 340-341.

[50] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 362-365.

[51] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 291 and 338-341.

Al-Dimashqī's discussion on Matthew 28.19 will be fully explained in Chapter Two. For now, it suffices to note here that, while he is not primarily interested in interpreting the verse, he, nevertheless, attempts to explain that the terms 'father' and 'son' signify metaphorical meanings independently of the context of Matthew 28.19. Al-Dimashqī, with this way of reading the terms, appears to decontextualise them from the trinitarian context. This ambivalent approach to the biblical verse clearly distinguishes him from Ibn Taymiyya, who interprets the verse and its technical vocabulary using the wider context of the Bible. The difference between these two scholars' attitudes clearly stems from their perception of *taḥrīf*. The interesting point, however, is not their different positions on the problem of *taḥrīf*, but rather, it is the fact that they both eventually arrive at similar interpretations despite the distinction between their positions regarding the reliability of Matthew 28.19 and interpretive strategies. To sum up, al-Dimashqī's acceptance of *taḥrīf* is in great contrast with that of al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya, who mainly confirm the soundness of the texts of the Bible. Following similar arguments by al-Qarāfī and Ibn Ḥazm, al-Dimashqī contends that Christian scripture underwent a textual change and its meaning was also altered by misinterpretation.

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[52] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 291, 336-339, and 442-443.

1.5 Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064)

Ibn Ḥazm wrote his well-known work, the *Faṣl* primarily to demonstrate contradictions, errors, and misinformation that he claims to be found in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Unlike the other four Muslim scholars of this chapter, who endeavour to provide the true interpretation of the Bible for at least some texts, Ibn Ḥazm's main purpose is not to reinterpret, but straightforwardly to refute the text. He dedicates two major parts, also known as *Iẓhār*, in the *Faṣl*, to explain his biblical textual criticism with numerous citations from the Bible. However, given the focus of this chapter, the aim here is just to explain briefly how Ibn Ḥazm understands and uses the term *taḥrīf* as well as how this reflects on his approach to biblical texts.

Ibn Ḥazm is generally regarded as the first Muslim scholar who developed systematic biblical textual criticism. His arguments against the authority of the Bible and unprecedentedly strong defence of *taḥrīf* are thought to have had a great impact on subsequent Muslim polemics against Jews and Christians.[53] The analysis provided here also supports the wide-spread opinion regarding Ibn Ḥazm's stance on the matter of *taḥrīf* that, despite the similarities and parallel arguments of five Muslim scholars which this study is focused upon, he differs from them in terms of his rather more extreme and harsher tone against the reliability of biblical scripture.[54]

Starting with Jewish scripture, Ibn Ḥazm's primary argument is that the Torah is neither a revealed book nor a message brought by a prophet, nor even a book written by a wise man.[55] He provides a historical account of the Torah's formation starting from the death of Moses to Ezra's reconstruction of Jewish revelation.[56] Unlike some earlier positive Muslim acceptance of Ezra, as the scribe who revived the lost Jewish scripture, such as historian Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d.923), Ibn Ḥazm accuses him of being the one who corrupted the Torah when he wrote it from the memory by adding or omitting some parts that are not originally to be found in the revelation given to Moses.[57] In Ibn Ḥazm's eye, the textual changes crept into the text due to an interrupted transmission chain, which is a Muslim argument widely used in polemical works to undermine the credibility of the Bible.[58] However, in Ibn Ḥazm's case, this argument is not merely used as a polemical response levelled at Jews and Christians to heat the debate. Rather, it is employed as a tool to reject the majority of the biblical text on the grounds that such reports are not an epistemologically reliable source due to lack of an uninterrupted multiple transmission chain. As evidence, Ibn Hazm alludes to biblical passages which he considers not only contradict the scripture itself, for they also go against sound reason.[59]

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[53] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 26. Accad, 'Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible,' 88. Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering*, 23. Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 55-56. While Lazarus-Yafeh, Accad, and Pulcini, see Ibn Ḥazm as the first Muslim scholar who exposed the Bible to systemic textual criticism and changed the way that Muslim scholars understood the term *taḥrīf*, Nickel notes that before Ibn Ḥazm, Maqdisī (was active around 966) defended the argument that the Torah is corrupted.

[54] Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 44-54.

[55] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.216-217.

The biblical verses Ibn Ḥazm cites as examples of *taḥrīf* (alteration of the texts of the Bible) mainly refer to the themes of the attribution of inappropriate expressions to God as well as degrading behaviours and deeds to prophets, arithmetical-geographical inaccuracies, along with historical mistakes in biblical reports. He considers Jacob's wrestling with God, as depicted in Genesis 32.22-32, as irrefutable evidence of the Torah's alteration. He argues that this passage not only attributes anthropomorphism to God, but also degrades Him by stating that Jacob prevailed over God.[60] Expanding on the use of blaspheming expressions used for God, Ibn Ḥazm cites Exodus 32.10-14, which depicts an inconsistent God who changed his mind upon Moses' plea for his people and forgave them.[61] Another example Ibn Ḥazm refers to as an anthropomorphic text is Genesis 1.26, 'Let us make (*aṣnaʿu*) the body of Adam like our image (*ṣūratinā*) and our resemblance (*shabahinā*)'.[62] He rejects the text as it makes God resemble his creatures. This interpretation clearly distinguishes him from Ibn Taymiyya, who reinterprets the passage without denying the soundness of the texts, as will be fully explained in the next chapter.

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[56] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.287-299.

[57] Whittingham, 'Ezra as the Corrupter of the Torah?' 261-262. Whittingham argues that Ibn Ḥazm is not original in accusing Ezra of corrupting the Torah. He explains that Maqdisī (was active around 966) also shows subtle suspicions about the revived version of the Torah by Ezra and claims that one of Ezra's disciples tampered with it. As for Maqdisī, see Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 233-234.

[58] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 41-47.

[59] Samuel M. Behloul, 'The Testimony of Reason and the Historical Reality: Ibn Ḥazm's Refutation of Christianity', in *Ibn Ḥazm of Cordoba: The Life and Works of a Controversial Thinker*, ed. C. Adang, M. Fierro, and S. Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 457–83.

Similar to the criticism of inappropriate expressions about God, Ibn Ḥazm condemns ascribing unethical and audacious behaviours to the prophets. To exemplify, Ibn Ḥazm points to the indecency between Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19.30-38),[63] which al-Dimashqī also noted as an example of *taḥrīf*, and Jacob's taking two sisters as wives, which was contrary to the legislation of the Torah (Genesis 29.16-30), as also used by al-Qarāfī.[64] Ibn Ḥazm adduces many examples similar to the biblical verse presented above to argue that the Bible is irrecoverably altered and filled with lies. Relying on this claim, he categorically rejects the authority of the Torah and explicitly asserts that the majority of Jewish scripture is corrupted (*ḥarrafa*) and altered (*baddala*).[65] Having explained this, it is also important to note here that Ibn Ḥazm accepts that the Torah contains true (*ḥaqq*) and false (*bātil*) parts. Similar to al-Qarāfī, he notes that whilst false parts should naturally be rejected, the true parts are confirmed by the Qur'ān, as stated in Q 4.47.[66] It is certainly this conviction that later led Ibn Ḥazm paradoxically to invoke the Torah and the Gospels to adduce proof texts for the prophecy of Muḥammad, which will be investigated in Chapter 3. Ibn Ḥazm, being aware of his dual approach to the Bible, maintains that there are some parts in the Torah that are preserved from alteration as evidence (*ḥujja*) against Jews.[67]

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[60] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.232-233. For the translation of Ibn Ḥazm interpretation of this biblical verse, see Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 238-239. Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 84-85.

[61] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.258-259.

[62] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl* 1.202.

[63] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl* 1.223-225. See also, Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 32-33.

[64] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl* 1.230-231. See Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 239-240.

[65] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl* 1.305-306.

[66] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl* 1.317.

He uses this justification above noted as a counter-argument against the People of the Book, who object to the use of the Bible by Muslims to adduce biblical proof texts for Muḥammad. On the other hand, Ibn Ḥazm has a warning for fellow Muslims as well. He argues that if Muslims accept some of the biblical reports and not all, then they necessarily have to confirm the rest of these reports too. For him, it is not possible to accept some of the information and reject other parts, if the information is transmitted from one single source.[68] He contends that Muslims should affirm that Jews and Christians tampered with their scripture; otherwise they would deny the Qur'ān. Furthermore, Ibn Ḥazm claims that even if the Qur'ān did not inform Muslims about this alteration, they would nevertheless be aware of *taḥrīf* with certain knowledge (*yaqīn*). However, Muslims already know that the alteration occurred in the Bible through two different ways of information: revelation (*naṣṣ*) and observation (*mushāhada*) supported by human senses (*ḥawās*). Then, Ibn Ḥazm resorts to a well-known ḥadīth text that commands neither rejecting nor confirming anything from earlier revelations. Ibn Taymiyya also uses this ḥadīth text, but to position himself on the matter of *taḥrīf* in the middle. Yet, Ibn Ḥazm refutes many Biblical passages he finds irreconcilable with Islamic beliefs or contradictory to sound reason. This ambivalent approach does not cloud Ibn Ḥazm's bold textual criticism and sharp polemical tone, but certainly shows his inconsistent approach to the biblical scripture.

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[67] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl* 1.314.

[68] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl* 1.317-318.

Ibn Ḥazm's examination of the Gospels focuses on arguments that are closely parallel to his criticism of the Torah. Similar to his claim against the Torah that it is not a revealed book, he argues that the Gospels neither are divinely inspired scriptures nor the books brought by Jesus. He hastens to add that even Christians accept that the Gospels are four historical (*tawārīkh*) books written by four authors who were not even contemporary with each other. Then, he offers a historical survey of the origins of the Gospels including the specific details of these books, such as when and in which language they are written. He explains that while the Gospel of Matthew is written nine years after Jesus ascended to the heavens in Hebrew, the Gospel of Mark was written after twenty-two years of Jesus' ascension in Greek. While a physician called Luke, as Ibn Ḥazm continues to explain, wrote the third Gospel, the fourth Gospel was written sixty years later than Jesus' ascension which was in fact a translated version of the Gospel of Matthew.[69] As for the possible time of *taḥrīf* that he claims to have occurred in the Gospels, Ibn Ḥazm points out how the time period falls between the ascension of Jesus and Constantine's proclamation of Christianity as a state religion. He notes that before Christianity became a state religion, Christians suffered prosecution and lived discreetly. This is exactly when the Gospels were altered with omissions and addition by each writer to the true teaching of Jesus, which proves, for Ibn Ḥazm, that the Gospels, like the Torah, did not have accurate textual transmission.[70]

Ibn Ḥazm's textual criticisms of the Gospels focus on the points that can be summarised as follows: interrupted transmission of the texts, false and inaccurate historical information, the attribution of blasphemy to God, the ascription of inappropriate expressions and lies to Jesus as well as the contradictions between and within the Gospels. To exemplify these points, Ibn Ḥazm argues, for example, Matthew 1.1-7 attributes a wrong genealogy to

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[69] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.13-14.

[70] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.16-17. Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 102-103, and Behloul, 'The Testimony,' 461-462.

Jesus linking him to Joseph as his father, which invalidates both Christian and Muslim belief that Jesus was created without the interference of a father. Moreover, these passages, as Ibn Ḥazm goes on to claim, give misinformation on the number of generations between Abraham and David, counting this as fourteen generations, whereas there were in fact only thirteen.[71] Ibn Ḥazm considers the title 'son of God' as a lie attributed to Jesus by the Gospel writers. Since this discussion will be fully explained in the next chapter, it suffices here to note that unlike the other four scholars covered in this chapter, Ibn Ḥazm does not accept metaphorical interpretation of this title and rejects naming any human as being the 'son of God.' The biblical verses that mention Jesus with this title are invented lies against Jesus and the examples of *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (textual alteration) for Ibn Ḥazm.[72]

The differences between the Gospels' accounts of post-resurrection events, such as the time of Mary's visit to the tomb where Jesus was buried and whether she was alone or with other people, clearly show the contradictions between them, from Ibn Ḥazm's perspective.[73] He, moreover, claims that the Gospels have inner-contradictions and cites John 1.18, 'No-one has ever seen God,' which contradicts John 1.14, 'The word is God and it became flesh and blood and dwelt among them.' For Ibn Ḥazm, while the latter passage clearly indicates that God became visible, the latter certainly denies the possibility of seeing God.[74] In addition to the examples given here, Ibn Ḥazm further cites more than sixty biblical verses to argue that the Gospels consist of lies, inaccuracies and contradictions. Yet, there are some Gospel passages that are exceptionally preserved from *taḥrīf*, as he claims.

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[71] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.29-30. Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 120. Accad, 'Corruption and/or Misinterpretation,' 89.

[72] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.51-53, 171-173, 193-194, 307, and 313. Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 105-108; Behloul, 'The Testimony,' 475-478.

[73] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.127-132. Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 117-118.

[74] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.167. Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 119.

According to Ibn Ḥazm, God preserved some of the texts contained in the parts of the Gospels before their circulation among Christians following Constantine's public annunciation of his conversion. He considers these texts as evidence (*ḥujja*) reserved for Muslims to be used against Christians, such as Deuteronomy 33.2, which is used as a *testimonium* of the Prophet Muḥammad, as will be analysed in the following chapter.[75] Here, it is sufficient to highlight Mark 16.15 as an example that Ibn Ḥazm accepts as the text that is partially saved from change. Ibn Ḥazm cites this biblical verse, when he argues that the Gospel originally given to Jesus is no longer extant. He claims that Jesus used the word 'gospel' in singular form in Mark 16.15, 'Go into all the world and preach the people with the Gospel (*Injīl*),' which evidently shows that Jesus was given only one Gospel, but it has been lost.[76] As can be understood from this explanation, it is clear that whilst this text, for Ibn Ḥazm, retains some original words, it is not totally authentic and reliable.

In sum, Ibn Ḥazm, in comparison to the other four Muslim scholars, has the most extreme position on the problem of *taḥrīf*. He categorically denies the authority and reliability of the Bible, significantly differing from al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya, who consider the majority of biblical texts as being reliable. One other hand, the impact of Ibn Ḥazm's strong defence of *taḥrīf*, especially *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (textual corruption) is evident in al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī's discussions of the term. These three scholars do not consider the Bible sound and merely use the texts for polemical purposes.

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[75] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.17.

[76] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.139-140. Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 127.

1.6 Ibn Taymiyya's Perception of Textual Alteration of the Bible

Ibn Taymiyya bases his position on *taḥrīf* principally on a well-known ḥadīth report that informs Muslims that they should neither deny nor confirm anything narrated from the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*).[77] This is mainly interpreted as Ibn Taymiyya holding the middle position on this most debated matter of Muslim-Christian polemics, which has typically been taken as a sign that he neither attests to nor disapproves of the occurrence of *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* in the Bible. Whilst recent studies agree that Ibn Taymiyya explicitly states and accepts *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (misinterpretation of text) in the Jewish-Christian scriptures, there are various views on how Ibn Taymiyya understands *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (textual corruption).

Thomas Michel presents a comprehensive analysis of *taḥrīf* in Ibn Taymiyya's thought. He notes that Ibn Taymiyya does not intend to demonstrate the claim of textual corruption regarding the Bible, for he rather seeks to define the boundaries of what is acceptable and unacceptable in Islamic belief.[78] Michel argues that Ibn Taymiyya mainly focuses on the corruption of meaning (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*).[79] Likewise, Jon Hoover has also pointed out that 'Ibn Taymiyya sees no way of demonstrating or verifying whether Jews and Christians also altered the very words of the texts.'[80] In another study, Hoover notes more clearly that Ibn Taymiyya affirms minor textual changes in the Bible.[81] Martin Accad gives Ibn Taymiyya's approach as an example of being in the middle on the discussion of *taḥrīf* despite Ibn Hazm's negative impact. However, he does not explicitly state whether Ibn

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[77] Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, 'Shahādāt,' 30.

[78] Michel, *Response*, for Michel's analysis on *taḥrīf* see, pp. 112-120, and for the translated part of *Jawāb*, where Ibn Taymiyya discusses *taḥrīf* see, pp. 210-240.

[79] Michel, *Response,* 113-114.

[80] Jon Hoover, 'The Apologetic and Pastoral Intentions of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Polemic against Jews and Christians,' *The Muslim World* 100 (2010), 478-479.

[81] Hoover, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' in *CMR3* (Brill, 2012), 836.

Taymiyya accepts or rejects *taḥrīf al-lafẓ*[82] and argues that his position has room for dialogue between Christians and Muslims.[83] When presenting Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Abraham's intended sacrifice, Younus Mirza draws attention to the fact that Ibn Taymiyya confirms that there are textual changes in the Bible, which possibly occurred due to the transmission and translation process. Mirza exemplifies this with Ibn Taymiyya's argument that Ishmael was Abraham's intended sacrifice, not Isaac. He contends that the occurrence of Isaac's name is an addition to the text of the Bible, which is a rare example of *taḥrīf al-lafẓ* that Ibn Taymiyya implicitly points to in the *Jawāb*.[84]

In addition to what has been already underlined in the studies mentioned above, the aim of the present study is to argue that whilst Ibn Taymiyya confines the concept *taḥrīf* mainly to *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (corruption of meaning), he, nevertheless, states that textual alterations occurred in the Bible. Yet, he considers these changes as unintentional mistakes that do not fundamentally distort the content of the Torah or the Gospels. In the present study, the aim is also to show that Ibn Taymiyya does not polemicise by using the theme of *taḥrīf* as a counter-argument against his Christian opponent. On the contrary, he intends to provide the correct interpretation of the Bible. Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyya carefully neutralizses the classic Muslim approach to the issue of *taḥrīf* and does not completely reject any text from the Bible.

1.6.1 *Taḥrīf* in *Jawāb*

The author of *the Letter from the People of Cyprus* claims that the Qur'ān confirms the validity of the Gospels and denies any distortion or alteration in Christian scripture. This claim prompts the discussion of *taḥrīf* in the *Jawāb*.[85] Unlike al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī, who only reveal their opinion in passing remarks, Ibn Taymiyya thoroughly discusses the problem of *taḥrīf* and strongly argues that the Qur'ān does not approve of Christian beliefs such as the Trinity and divine indwelling, only confirming the revelations given to Moses and Jesus in which all Muslims believe.[86] Ibn Taymiyya further claims that the Qur'ān straightforwardly disapproves of earlier scriptures without considering whether they are textually corrupted, calling upon every human and *jinn* to believe in Muhammad and his revelation.[87]

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[82] Martin Accad, 'The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table I,' *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14 (2003), 72-75.

[83] Accad, 'Corruption and/or Misinterpretation,' 67-97.

[84] Younus Mirza, 'Ishmael as Abraham's Sacrifice: Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr on the Intended Victim,' *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 24, 3 (2013), 284-287.

Next, Ibn Taymiyya presents three different Muslim approaches to the term *taḥrīf*. He explains that the first Muslim group accepts the Bible as textually altered (*tabdīl*) and hence, does not consider it a reliable scripture. The key issue in the argument of this Muslim group is that the Bible lacks a multiple transmission chain (*tawātur*).[88] As explained earlier, al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm also use this argument. Contrary to the first group, as Ibn Taymiyya explains, the second group of Muslims argues that the alteration only occurred in interpretation of the texts.[89] As noted earlier, al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī's position is close to this group. Ibn Taymiyya lastly refers to a third group of Muslims who hold the strictest position regarding the reliability of the texts. This group argues that textual corruption occurred in the wording of these books, so there is nothing sacred in them and they cannot be regarded as divine scripture.[90] Ibn Ḥazm apparently belongs to this third group in the categorisation of Ibn Taymiyya, as already explained in the foregoing parts of this chapter.

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[85] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian* Polemic, 70-71; Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2.368-452.

[86] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2.371.

[87] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.375-376; Michel, *Response*, 212.

[88] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.395-396; Michel, *Response*, 215.

[89] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2.408; Michel, *Response*, 219.

[90] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.418-420; Michel, *Response*, 225.

Having provided a historical survey of Muslim scholars' diverse opinions on the term *taḥrīf*, Ibn Taymiyya moves on to elaborate upon the possible time of *taḥrīf*. As explained earlier, Ibn Ḥazm claims that textual changes were made to the Gospels when Christians had to live discreetly after the ascension of Jesus. Ibn Taymiyya similarly, but without giving a specific time as Ibn Ḥazm does, argues that the changes most likely were made to the copies of the Torah and the Gospels before their wide circulation.[91] He argues that there were many copies of the Bible before, during, and after the time of the Prophet Muḥammad. For him, it is impossible to think that anyone would collect and change all of them. Hence, Ibn Taymiyya argues that if there were changes to the biblical texts, this would have been a momentous occasion, which would be known through multiple chains of transmission.[92] Here, Ibn Taymiyya interestingly uses the theory of *tawātur* (multiple transmission) as a reverse argument to claim that a substantial change to the biblical text would have been known through many reports. However, this argument should not lead one to think that Ibn Taymiyya considers the Bible as an accurately transmitted scripture. On the contrary, he argues, similar to al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm, that the biblical scripture does not have a reliable multiple transmission chain (*tawātur*). It should also be noted here that Ibn Taymiyya is equally concerned about the transmission of the prophetic tradition on which the interpretative tradition is built. Accordingly, he defends the view that textual soundness of the scripture does not provide benefit to Christians since they do not properly interpret their books. This approach is very similar to Ibn Taymiyya's attitude regarding the interpretation of the Qur'ān. He claims that re-interpretation of the Qur'ān independently from Muḥammad's tradition of interpreting it and the teaching of the Companions and Successors (i.e. Salaf) cannot be reliable. Ibn Taymiyya believes *tafsīr* (interpretation) is not a constantly developing branch of Islamic interpretive tradition, but rather, is inherited knowledge that must be transmitted from the Prophet and will provide the true meaning of the scripture. As Saleh notes, interpretative knowledge cannot be obtained independently from the fundamental tradition in which the revelation took shape, and 'the interpretation is not a repeatable process or approach.'[93]

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[91] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 3.23-25.

[92] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.423.

Following closely commonly held Muslim knowledge of the Gospels, Ibn Taymiyya explains how four authors wrote the books that consist of Jesus' parables and teaching.[94] He does not consider the Gospels as a separate revelation. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya argues that Jesus commanded his followers to embrace the Torah, and that he only abrogated a small part of it.[95] He claims that when Jesus was sent to the people of the Hebrew Bible, there was no need for a scripture, but instead, a messenger to teach and guide them.[96] As can be understood from these remarks, the Torah is a more authoritative scripture than the Gospels for Ibn Taymiyya. Whilst he clearly states that the textual differences between the Torah and the Gospels prove the alteration (*tabdīl*) that occurred in many of their copies, he nonetheless claims that the former is the soundest of these books.[97] As highlighted earlier, al-Ṭabarī and al-Qarāfī also point out the difference between the Torah and the Gospels in terms of reliability considering the former scripture more reliable than the latter.

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[93] Walid A. Saleh, 'Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics: An Analysis of An Introduction to the Foundations of Qur'ānic Exegesis,' in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 123-162. See also; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 'Ibn Taymiyya: Treatise on the Principle of Tafsīr,' in *Windows on the House of Islam: Muslim Sources on Spirituality and Religious Life,* ed. John Renard (London: University of California Press, 1998), 35-47.

[94] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.395-397.

[95] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.382-382.

[96] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.383. The supportive qur'ānic verses 4.150-151, 2:85. Ibn Taymiyya gives his answers for the claim that the qur'ānic praise and Muhammad's confirmation of the Gospel and the Apostles as an obvious proof for the true belief of Christians.

[97] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.450-452.

Ibn Taymiyya regards the possible errors in the texts mainly as unintentional mistakes, which do not cause textual confusion or ambiguity for the readers. Furthermore, he claims that the textual alteration (*tabdīl*) is only minor and that many parts of the Bible have not been changed. He argues that in these unchanged parts, the intended meaning of these correct wordings is clear (*ṣarīḥ*) and delineates the errors. Also, some of the passages confirm one another, and the corrupted wordings are so minimal and clearly contradict the rest of the Bible.[98] In other words, Ibn Taymiyya's point is that ambiguous passages can be interpreted through the wider context of the Bible. As will be explained in Chapter 3, Ibn Taymiyya employs this methodological reading of the Bible using intra-textual material, which in this study is described as interpreting the Bible through the Bible. Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya uses this method for interpreting the Qur'ān. As noted earlier, al-Ṭabarī also accepts that the Bible can be interpreted by the Bible, which differs from al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm's attitude, who primarily accept the Qur'ān as the corrective scripture of biblical revelation.

It has been explained so far that Ibn Taymiyya on the one hand is similar to al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī in confirming *taḥrīf* as mainly misinterpretation of the Bible. On the other hand, he accepts that the biblical texts unintentionally were changed. Nevertheless, for Ibn Taymiyya, the Bible contains the judgment (*ḥukm*) of Allah, as stated in Q 5.43, 'In which [there] is the judgment of Allah' even though the text was altered as mentioned in Q 5.41, 'They distort the word.'[99] For Ibn Taymiyya, while Q 5.41, is, on the one hand, the qur'ānic affirmation of *taḥrīf*, Q 5.43, on the other, is the confirmation that the Bible still contains some parts of the revelation originally given to Moses. Now, it will be shown how Ibn Taymiyya, by relying on this qur'ānic verse, endeavours to determine the scope of *taḥrīf*.

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[98] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2.442-443.

[99] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2.421-422 and 428-430.

The primary purpose of Ibn Taymiyya's discussion as above explained is to note that the legal content of the Bible has been abrogated to some degree, but nevertheless, contains God's commands. To explain this better, he argues that the Bible consists of two bases (*aṣlayn*): imparting information (*ikhbār*) and command (*amr*).[100] In other words, the Christian scripture consists of two kinds of material which was inevitably subjected to textual change either through transmission or translation into different languages. However, for Ibn Taymiyya, these changes most likely pertain to those parts imparting information (*ikhbār* pl. *akhbār*), while the section of commands (*amr*) contains almost no textual changes.[101] The categorisation of the biblical content into these two kinds is rather interesting to encounter in a Muslim polemical work since this division in fact is a method principally applied to the content of the Qur'ān in order to classify divine speech.

The classification of divine speech into two main kinds is employed in Islamic hermeneutics as a tool to make connections between divine and human language. In other words, when Muslim scholars, *uṣūlīs* (legal theorists), and kalām theologians attempt to understand how and what God's speech signifies, they investigate many aspects of divine language, such as the semiotic, semantic, linguistic and grammatical structure of a sentence.[102] Schwarb explains that when analysing the use of a sentence in divine speech, they primarily classify the sentence into kinds (*aqsām al-kalām*): *khabar*, declarative, propositional sentences and *amr* (also, *nahy*) non-declarative, non-propositional sentences.[103] While for Muslim scholars from the abovementioned fields this classification might be useful to determine, for example, the probative value of an *amr* (command), it seems to be practical for Ibn Taymiyya to claim that textual changes only occurred in the section of *khabar* or *ikhbār* (imparting information), which is highly likely due to the translation and transmission of the biblical text. By claiming so, Ibn Taymiyya is able to say that God's commands and prohibitions (*amr* and *nahy*) are largely unchanged, except for slight alterations due to abrogation (*naskh*), in all revelations, in such a way that any textual change would be recognisable.[104] As for those parts that impart information (*ikhbār*), where Ibn Taymiyya claims that textual changes occurred, he apparently intends to detect these changes, particularly when there is a contradiction between the Qur'ān and biblical scripture.

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[100] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.410-411.

[101] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2.422-424.

[102] Gregor Schwarb, 'Capturing the Meanings of God's Speech: The Relevance of Uṣūl Al-Fiqh to an Understanding of Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr in Jewish and Muslim Kalām,' in *A Word Fitly Spoken. Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'ān Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*, ed. Meir M. Bar-Asher et al. (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2007), 111-156. See also, Bernard Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf Al-Dīn Al-Āmidī* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), pp. 334-336.

[103] Schwarb, 'Capturing the Meanings,' 133. I have adopted Schwarb's translation for the terms *khabar* and *amr* above to maintain the technical meanings of the terms, yet when I explain Ibn Taymiyya's use of the terms, I will translate them as imparting information (*khabar*) and command (*amr*).

The question here is what is the practicality of classifying the biblical texts into two kinds for Ibn Taymiyya? In his perception of *taḥrīf*, there is a noticeable tension due to neither rejecting the texts nor completely affirming the textual soundness. A similar tension is also observed in al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm's attitude, as noted earlier. These three scholars strongly defend the textual alteration of the Bible, but also paradoxically utilise proof texts adduced from the biblical scripture. To justify this paradoxical attitude, while they reject the texts that appear contradictory to their belief, they argue, on the other hand, that the texts which they use as evidence are from the parts of the Bible that are preserved from *taḥrīf al-lafẓ*. In the case of Ibn Taymiyya, however, the situation is more complex. He accepts, on the one hand, that the biblical text was changed. On the other hand, he closely examines the biblical passages. In fact, he interprets these passages sometimes by focusing only on the grammatical-linguistic structure of a sentence and sometimes only on a key word or term in them. In this case, the reliability of the texts and, most importantly, whether a word is translated close to its meaning in the original language become the most important hermeneutical matters for interpretation. Ibn Taymiyya uses the categorisation of biblical content into two kinds as an alternative way of solving this paradox. While he claims that there are no textual changes in the section of commands (*amr*) of the Bible, according to him, minor discrepancies occurred in the sections imparting information (*khabar* or *ikhbār*), due to the translation and transmission process in its history. For Ibn Taymiyya, the addition of Isaac's name to the Bible as the intended sacrifice of Abraham is an example of textual change that occurred in the section of *khabar*.[105] Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya considers the word *mithl* (similarity) in Genesis 1.26 as a textual change that most likely occurred due to translation. For this reason, he emends the words of this biblical verse and argues that the word *mithl* (similarity) should be replaced with the theologically more appropriate term *shibh* (resemblance), as will be fully discussed in Chapter Four. Nevertheless, for Ibn Taymiyya, these minor changes do not create textual ambiguity for true interpretation and do not put the real meaning into question.

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[104] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb,* 2:422-423.

1.7 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has shown that the accusation of *taḥrīf*, or alteration of the Bible, considerably affects the way in which Muslim scholars engage biblical texts. The chapter has featured an explanation of how al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī do not question the soundness of biblical scripture. These two scholars criticise Christians for misinterpreting their scriptures. In particular, Pseudo-Ghazālī levels this charge more systematically against Christians, arguing that they heavily rely on the literal or apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of biblical texts. Al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm, on the other hand, strongly contend that the Bible is not a reliable scripture, since it is irrecoverably altered. In contrast to al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, these three Muslim polemicists use the theme of *taḥrīf* polemically to support their argumentation against their Christian counterparts. Of all five of these Muslim scholars, Ibn Ḥazm particularly stands out with his harsh criticism of biblical texts, which has had an impact on subsequent Muslim polemical writings.

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[105] Mirza, 'Ishmael as Abraham's Sacrifice,' 284-287.

The Muslim scholars' position on the reliability of the Bible appears to create a distinction between them guiding their interest in biblical texts in different directions. Al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī closely follow Ibn Ḥazm's line of criticism and arguments, focusing on exposing contradictions in biblical texts. Al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, on the other hand, are more interested in searching for proof texts to underline their position, and reinterpreting these biblical texts in light of Islamic teaching. However, despite the different opinions of these five Muslim scholars regarding the soundness of biblical texts, they agree - apart from Pseudo-Ghazālī, who does not address this matter in his refutation - that the Christian scripture has biblical *testimonia*, which are unaltered, announcing the coming of the prophet Muḥammad.

In contrast to al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī and Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Taymiyya, with a similar approach to that of al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, does not polemicise the reliability of the Bible. He argues that there are some minor textual changes in the Bible that alter the transmission and translation of the text. Yet, these textual changes do not obscure the overall meaning of biblical texts. However, Ibn Taymiyya differs from al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī by classifying the content of the Bible into two kinds: imparting information (*khabar*) and command (*ḥukm*). The undeliberate textual changes occur in the imparting information section, whereas there is no alteration in the command (*ḥukm*) section. Ibn Taymiyya employs this classification as a solution to the exegetical conundrum caused by his close reading of biblical texts, relying on the syntactical and grammatical structure of the text, on the one hand, and on the other hand the acceptance that biblical texts do not retain the original expressions which are subjected to change.

This chapter has provided a background to determining the extent to which these six Muslim scholars consider the Bible as a reliable scripture. The next chapter will contribute to this by showing the practical aspects and highlighting how al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī and Ibn Ḥazm's positions on the problem of *taḥrīf* impact their hermeneutical strategies in their reading of Christian scripture.

Chapter 2 Muslim Interpretation of the Biblical Text

The previous chapter explained how the five Muslim scholars and Ibn Taymiyya understand the problem of alteration of the Bible, known as *taḥrīf*. The purpose was to create a context for the present chapter to assess the extent to which the issue of *taḥrīf* impacts on their approaches to biblical texts. In order to address this question, this chapter examines the polemical works of al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm against Christianity with particular attention to their use of biblical quotations. The analyses on the use of biblical texts in these Muslim polemical works are by no means exhaustive in depth and scope. Rather, this research examines these polemics in terms of determining their general interpretive strategies, and the content of their scriptural argumentation.

This chapter explains the differences and similarities in interpretive strategies of these five Muslim scholars. The investigation of their biblical interpretation will set the stage for the comparison of Ibn Taymiyya with that of the others. This comparison plays an important role in assessing the extent to which Ibn Taymiyya is similar to and different from mainstream Muslim biblical scholarship.

The polemical works to be examined in this chapter, al-Ṭabarī's *al-Radd* and *Kitāb*, Pseudo-Ghazālī's *al-Radd al-jamīl*, al-Qarāfī's *Ajwiba*, al-Dimashqī's *Jawāb Risāla*, and Ibn Ḥazm's *al-Faṣl*, namely, represent the ninth to the fourteenth century Muslim apologetic and polemical works and Muslim interest in biblical interpretation with their considerably extensive use of biblical texts. Similar to Chapter Two, the order of the presentation of the five Muslim scholars in this chapter does not follow a chronological order. Instead, the chapter introduces the Muslim scholars and their works based on the typological variation of their attitude to the Bible. Thus, from a typological perspective, al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī are considered to follow an interpretive approach that does not reject the veracity of the Bible. On the other hand, al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm present a mostly polemical approach to biblical exegesis focusing on the exposition of textual inconsistencies. In particular, Ibn Ḥazm's attitude to biblical texts is considerably different to the other four Muslim scholars He, for example, does not use biblical texts that al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī employ to support their claims and produces new counter-arguments against these texts to argue that they are altered and thus not reliable. Therefore, the presentation of Ibn Ḥazm last in the chapter provides a perspective against which the characteristics of the other four scholars' hermeneutical activity can be contrasted and analysed.

2.1 ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī's (d. 865) *al-Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā* and *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla*

ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī was born around 810 in Marv into a Syriac-Christian family.[1] During his service to the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861), al-Ṭabarī converted to Islam and died around 865.[2] His two religious apologetic works, *al-Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā* (*Refutations of the Christians*) and *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* (*The Book of Religion and Empire*) are believed to be written after his conversion to Islam.[3] In this section, the focus will be on these two apologetic works written to defend his new faith.[4] More specifically, I will investigate how al-Ṭabarī uses biblical quotations in these two works. First, each work will be briefly introduced and then, in the remainder of this section al-Ṭabarī's interpretation of selected biblical quotations as well as his general strategy and method employed in his exegesis will be probed.

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[1] For the latest work that provides a detailed biography, see Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 1-24. See also, Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 23-20. See also, Alphonse Mingana, trans., *The Book of Religion and Empire* (Manchester: Longmans, Green, 1922); Alphonse Mingana, ed., *Kitāb Al-Dīn Wa-l-Dawla* (Manchester: Longmans, Green, 1923), 11-16. For a quick summary of Ibn Rabban's biography, see D. Thomas, 'ʿAlī l-Ṭabarī,' in *CMR1* (Brill, 2009), 669-674; Ronny Vollandt, *Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch: A Comparative Study of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Sources* (Brill, 2015), 91-92 .

[2] Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 25. See also a detailed account of Ibn Rabban's conversion to Islam, Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 17-21.

[3] Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 26-27; Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 7.

2.1.1 *Al-Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā* (*Refutation of the Christians*)

Al-Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā, hereafter the *Radd*, is the first refutation of al-Ṭabarī as a Muslim scholar after converting to Islam. He explains that the *Radd* is written as 'advice to all Christians,' with the aim of revealing 'the truth' for his ex-coreligionists.[5] At the beginning of the *Radd*, al-Ṭabarī explains the content of his work and informs his readers that he is starting with an elaboration of the religion of Islam. He then continues with seven questions to Christians, which he calls 'silencers' (*muskitāt*). Later, he highlights seven contradictions that he has found between the Gospel and the Christian Creed. Lastly, he reports that he will explain the meaning of the terms fatherhood (*ubūwa*), sonship (*bunūwa*), and divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*).[6]

The primary purpose of the *Radd* is to demonstrate that the Christian Creed has no scriptural base and contradicts the Bible. To prove his claim, al-Ṭabarī cites a wide range of biblical verses to argue that Christ was a human messenger sent by God, being contrary to the creed, which depicts Jesus as 'the eternal Creator.' Al-Ṭabarī further argues that God's oneness is confirmed in the Bible and cites selectively the texts that clearly states the oneness of God. He quotes, for example, Exodus 3.14-15, 'I am the God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob,' and 20.2-4, 'I am the Lord your God, and you shall not worship any god other' as well as Deuteronomy 32.29, 'You should know that I am the only One.'[7] These passages, for al-Ṭabarī, attest explicitly the unity and oneness of God. Then, he quotes Matthew 1.1 where Jesus is described as 'the son of Abraham,' which is clearly an attestation for him that Jesus' disciple confirmed that Jesus was created and temporal, thus not able to be the Creator or a divine being. This set of biblical quotations has probative value for al-Ṭabarī underlining that the Christian scripture unambiguously clarifies the oneness of God and the humanity of Jesus.[8]

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[4] For other works of al-Ṭabarī, see Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 14. For his book *Firdaws al-ḥikma* (*The Paradise of Wisdom*) on medicine, see Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 24 n. 3 and Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 5-6 .

[5] ʿAlī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *al-Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā*, in R. Y. Ebied and D. Thomas, eds., *The Polemical Works of ʿAlī Al-Ṭabarī* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 61-169. See pp. 62-63.

[6] Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 45-46. I.A Khalifé and W. Kutsch, 'Ar-Radd ʿalā-n-Naṣārā de ʿAlī Aṭ-Ṭabarī,' *Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph* 26 (1959): 115-148. Ebied and Thomas explains that the lost parts however, are recoverable to some extent from al-ʿAssāl's work, see *Polemical Works*, 45-48. For Ibn al-ʿAssāl's work, see Ibn al-ʿAssāl, al-Ṣafī, *Kitāb al-ṣahāʾiḥ fī jawāb al-naṣāʾiḥ*, ed. Murqus Jirjis, Cairo, 1926/27. See also, S. Khalil Samir, 'La Réponse d'Al-Safi Ibn Al-Assal à La Réfutation Des Chrétiens de Ali Al-Tabari,' *Parole de LʿOrient* 11 (1983): 281-328.

Al-Ṭabarī next turns to prove that the creedal faith not only contradicts the scripture but also the teaching of Jesus. He argues that Jesus confirms in the Gospels that he was sent by God and submitted only to God's will. Al-Ṭabarī cites John 20.17, 'My God and your God,' and Matthew 10.40, 'Whoever receives me receives the One who sent me,' and John 6.38, 'The will of the One who sent me,' which are textual proofs, for al-Ṭabarī, that Jesus is not God, but rather, he was sent by God.[9] As will be explained later in this chapter, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī also use John 20.17 to argue that Jesus was a human messenger but with more emphasis on the point that Jesus did not distinguish himself from other humans saying, 'My Father, your Father, and my God and your God.'

Al-Ṭabarī's next strategy in proving the humanity of Jesus is to cite biblical texts that depict Jesus as a human and attribute human feelings to him. The use of the texts in which the human characteristics of Jesus are mentioned is a common polemical strategy among Muslim writers and also used by Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī. Al-Ṭabarī cites Matthew 12.18 where Jesus is defined as a 'servant (ʿ*abd*) and Matthew 27.46, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' in which the vulnerability of Jesus, hence his humanity is confirmed, and Matthew 26.26-28, 'This is my flesh and this is my blood' where Jesus clearly stated that he had flesh and blood, which are again the features of a human body.[10] For al-Ṭabarī, something that has flesh and blood is measurable and thus, cannot be divine and eternal, and therefore finite.[11] Al-Ṭabarī then moves on explaining that Jesus himself acknowledges having a God (Matthew 27.46), being a servant (Matthew 12.18) to his Father (Matthew 11.25, 12.50) and that this Father is the only God (Matthew 23.9), whereas he is a prophet (Matthew 13.37).[12] Next al-Ṭabarī cites the biblical verses stating that during the crucifixion Jesus felt fear, and doubt (Matthew 26.37-39), which are human feelings.[13] Al-Ṭabarī further argues that even Simon Peter affirms the humanity and servanthood of Jesus in Acts 2.22-24, 'Jesus the Nazarene was a man who appeared to you from God with power, support, and miracles which God caused to happen through him.'[14] Al-Ṭabarī's point here is to highlight the fact that the leader of the disciples testified that Jesus was a man chosen and sent by God.[15] All the biblical verses al-Ṭabarī quoted earlier serve to point out that Jesus acknowledged his Father's superiority and that he was a human messenger sent by God.[16]

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[7] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 68-71.

[8] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 70-71. The biblical quotations explained above are highlighted in the first *silencer*, see pp. 68-71.

[9] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 72-73. Here, al-Ṭabarī also quotes John 6.38-39 in which Jesus says that he follows the divine will and not his own way. This discussion appears in the second silencers, see pp. 72.

As will be observed with the other four scholars of this chapter, another strategy in using biblical texts in favour of the argument that Jesus is not divine is to use the biographical information on Jesus' life given in the Gospels. Al-Ṭabarī particularly cites Matthew 2.1 and argues that the birthplace of Jesus is marked as 'Bethlehem of Judea' in the text, which, for him, affirms that Jesus was born in a place or locality and in time, like any other created entity, which in turn disapproves the creedal doctrine that Jesus is God.[17] To illustrate this point further, al-Ṭabarī moves on to analyse the meaning of the word *masīḥiyya* (Christianity) in order to argue the word *masīḥ* (anointed) is used in the scripture and the tradition of the prophets to signify that Jesus is chosen and anointed by God, like any of the earlier prophets before him.[18] Al-Ṭabarī's purpose is to demonstrate that the word *masīḥ* does not refer to 'a heavenly, divine name,' thus connoting a specific meaning unique to Jesus.[19] He quotes Psalms 45.2 and 45.7, 'God has anointed (*massaḥa*) you,' and claims that in these verses the word *masīḥ* is used to signify that Jesus is chosen, honoured, and anointed by God.'[20] Al-Ṭabarī basically offers an interpretive analysis on the words *masīḥ* and *masīḥiyya*, explaining their meaning in Arabic so as to impose the idea that the words are used in the Bible in accordance with their Arabic lexical meaning and thus, they cannot be interpreted in any other way.

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[10] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 76-77.

[11] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 78-79.

[12] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 146-147.

[13] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 148-149.

[14] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 148-151.

[15] Al-Ṭabarī here also quotes Acts 2.36, 5.30; Luke 24.13-20.

[16] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 80-81.

Al-Ṭabarī's next strategy to refute the divinity of Jesus is to use his miracles. In fact, the use and comparison of Jesus' miracles with earlier prophets against the divinity of Jesus appears to be initiated by al-Ṭabarī.[21] Subsequent Muslim scholars also made use of theory of miracles to argue that the miracles Jesus performed do not confirm his divinity. He explains, for example, that the prophet Elisha performed similar miracles to those of

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[17] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 82-83 and 84-85.

[18] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 120-121. The word *masīḥiyya* is translated as 'Christianity' by Ebied and Thomas. I use their choice of translation for this word.

[19] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 122-123.

[20] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 122-123.

[21] David Thomas, 'The Miracles of Jesus in Early Islamic Polemic,' *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 39, 2 (1994), 221-243.

Jesus such a raising a dead person (2 Kings 4.32-37).[22] Al-Ṭabarī also compares Jesus' feeding thousands of people with 'some loaves' with Moses' feeding his people with a little food for forty years (Exodus 16.2-8).[23] As will be highlighted in the following sections, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī also employ the miracles of Jesus in comparison with those of earlier prophets as an argument against his divinity.

So far, al-Ṭabarī has created a scriptural context in which he has persistently argued that the statement of the creed, 'Jesus is the eternal creator,' is not in accordance with the biblical teaching. He has extensively quoted from the Bible, particularly the verses confirming the humanity and servanthood of Jesus. Now, al-Ṭabarī discusses how the words God and Lord should be understood in the biblical context. He affirms that Jesus is sometimes named 'God' or 'Lord' in the Bible, yet other entities are also described with the same names in different parts of the scripture. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, refers to Genesis 6.2, 'The sons of God,' Exodus 7.1, 'I have made you a god to Pharaoh,' and Psalm 82.6, 'I thought you were gods and all of you sons of God.' These verses show that the terms 'gods' and 'sons' are used for human beings.[24] Similarly, ʿAlī also refers to the name 'Lord' and explains that it is also used for human beings, especially to describe leaders in the Bible.[25]

Al-Ṭabarī, when giving an outline of the *Radd*, notes that he will examine both the literal (*ḥaqīqa*, here) and nonliteral (*majāz* and *ishtiqāq*) meanings of the names, 'father' and 'son.' This discussion on the interpretation of the terms 'father' and 'son' is important in terms of providing a relevant context for the current study, thereby enabling a comparison between al-Ṭabarī's interpretation and that of Ibn Taymiyya's.

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[22] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 142-145.

[23] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 144-145. Al-Ṭabarī also alludes to biblical passages where previous prophets' miracles are mentioned such as, 2 Kings 4.32-37; 13.21; 1 Kings 17.17-23, 17.8-16; Exodus 16.2-8; Matthew 8.24-26; Exodus 17.6, 7.8-13, 7.14-25, 8.16-19, 8.20-32.

[24] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 152-153.

[25] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 152-153. Here, al-Ṭabarī cites the passages Isaiah 1.3; Psalm 8.5-6; Hebrews 2.7 to give textual examples from the Bible in relation to the use of the word 'lord.' However, he does not provide interpretation of these texts, but simply quotes them.

Al-Ṭabarī's explains that the word 'father' is understood either literally (*ḥaqīqa*) or nonliterally (*majāz*).[26] While the literal meaning of father is the person who begets a child, the nonliteral one refers to a close relation of somebody to that person such that he might call him 'father.' He also notes that the word 'father' could also be used for the person who does not have biological relation to a child but cares for, educates, and raises him up. Al-Ṭabarī next explains that the word 'son' similarly signifies two meanings: either having a son through birth or by adoption. Interestingly, he argues that the application of nonliteral meanings of these two terms is permissible, which is exactly opposite to Ibn Taymiyya's position, whereby the latter scholar does not allow nonliteral interpretation of the scripture. Al-Ṭabarī argues that the nonliteral (metaphorical) interpretation of these terms is not in agreement with the doctrine of the Christian creed since Christians believe that these names also signify literal meanings (*haqāʾiq*) to some degree and they are not merely figurative.[27] Next, al-Ṭabarī notes that the nonliteral meaning of father does not signify God as the real progenitor (*wālid*) of Jesus, which in turn makes the terms 'fatherhood' and 'sonship' meaningless. In other words, al-Ṭabarī here aims to establish that the metaphorical interpretation of the term 'father' does signify the ontological relation between God and Jesus, as Christians interpret. On the other hand, if God is *wālid*, the generator (begetter), in the literal sense of the word, then what God generates should be either eternal or not. However, al-Ṭabarī argues that this option contradicts the Creed since what is eternal cannot be generated. Yet, if what God generates is temporal, then Jesus is a temporal being generated by God, which again is contrary to the teaching of the creed. Al-Ṭabarī's point here is, as Ebied and Thomas explain, to show that the names 'father' and 'son' regardless of whether they are used to signify a literal or nonliteral meaning, do not refer to any meaningful signification in the theological context of the Creed. In sum, the purpose is, once again, to demonstrate the contradiction between the Creed and the scripture.[28]

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[26] Al-Ṭabarī here also uses the Arabic term *ʾistiʿāra* here, which is also used to refer to nonliteral meanings of a word by Arab grammarians as a subcategory of *majāz*. One important point is that al-Ṭabarī uses the terms *majāz* and *ʾistiʿāra* interchangeably here, and this may be considered as that he does not strictly stick to the vocabulary of Arab grammar or use it as an interpretive tool.

[27] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 154-155.

Al-Ṭabarī also cites the biblical verses that describe Jesus as the Son of God. He, for example, quotes Luke 1.35, 'The child who is born from you will be holy and will be called the Son of God,' and argues that the text explicitly refers to Jesus as the 'is born' (*mawlūd*), 'honoured' (*mukarram*), and 'son of God.'[29] Similarly, al-Ṭabarī quotes Matthew 3.16-17, 'This my beloved Son whom I have chosen,' where God declared that He chose Jesus and called him 'Son.'[30] Al-Ṭabarī even further contends that Jesus explained the meaning of the word 'son' in John 20.17, 'Now, I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God,' thereby stating that he is a being other than God.[31] For al-Ṭabarī, the significance of the last biblical passage is that Jesus affirmed his servanthood and did not distinguish himself from other human beings.[32] Similar to al-Ṭabarī's use of John 20.17, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī use this text when they explain that the term 'father' does not signify a parental relationship between Jesus and God, as will be highlighted in the following sections of this chapter.

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[28] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 156-159. After the last discussion of the *Radd* explained above, the flow of the debate is interrupted and continues with a list of biblical quotations reconstructed from Ibn al-ʿAssāl's *Kitāb al-ṣaḥāʾiḥ* (see pp. 161–169).

[29] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 129-131.

[30] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 132-133.

[31] Al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 132-133.

[32] Martin Accad, 'The Ultimate Proof-Text: The Interpretation of John 20.17 in Muslim-Christian Dialogue (Second/Eighth-Eight/Fourteenth Centuries),' in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 199-214, see especially pp.208-209; Mark Beaumont, 'Muslim Readings of John's Gospel in the Abbasid Period,' *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 19, 2 (2008): 179-197, see pp. 182-184.

From the beginning, al-Ṭabarī has attempted to build an argument that Christian doctrinal beliefs and the Creed contradict the Bible. He has selectively used biblical quotations and especially quoted the texts where Jesus is depicted as a human messenger. He has cited many biblical proofs to underpin his argument, yet he has not provided detailed interpretation. His main strategy in the *Radd* is to cite biblical quotation(s) and give a brief explanation. This way of interpreting these texts to his readers is somewhat cursory. As a result, it is difficult to see the association of his arguments with his scriptural proofs quoted in the *silencers*, which are supposed to prove his exegesis. That is, he uses his former scripture extensively, but his textual interpretation is mainly dependent on the general meaning of some words. He is not necessarily interested in reinterpreting the biblical text assuming that the plain meaning of the passages supports his argumentation. In the *Radd*, al-Ṭabarī mostly focuses on providing detailed information on Christian beliefs, narratives as well as biblical quotations but less interested in providing elaborate interpretation of the verses he cites. Although the emphasis of al-Ṭabarī's biblical interpretation is different in his *Kitāb* which is next to be examined in this chapter, his interpretive strategy remains to be the same.

2.1.2 *Kitāb al-Dīn wa-l-dawla* (*The Book of Religion and Empire*)

In this section, al-Ṭabarī's *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* (*The Book of Religion and Empire*), hereafter only the *Kitāb*, which was written to defend the authenticity and validity of the prophethood of Muḥammad, is analysed. [33]

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[33] *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* (*The Book of Religion and Empire*) was first translated into English in 1922 and then edited in 1923. For a brief survey of the authenticity of the work, see Ebied and Thomas, *Polemical Works*, pp. 171-175. See also Sabine Schmidtke, ''Abū Al- Ḥusayn Al-Baṣrī and His Transmission of Biblical Materials from Kitāb Al-Dīn Wa-Al-Dawla by Ibn Rabban Al- Ṭabarī: The Evidence from Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī's Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb,' *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 20, 2 (2009): 105-118. Some of modern works have shown that the *Kitāb* and its list of biblical quotations were used either as a direct or intermediary source by subsequent Muslim scholars, and most importantly, al-Ṭabarī's name is acknowledged in some of them. See Sabine Schmidtke, 'Biblical

The examination of biblical quotations used in the *Radd* has highlighted how biblical texts are reinterpreted through an Islamic teaching in a ninth century Muslim polemic to refute the creedal belief that Jesus is divine. The analysis of biblical quotations employed in the *Kitāb* will present an early Muslim attempt and interpretive techniques in invoking the Bible for biblical *testimonia* to prove that Muḥammad is foretold in the Christian scripture.

Al-Ṭabarī wrote the *Kitāb*, as he acknowledges himself, five years after he wrote the *Radd*.[34] It is one of the early examples of *dalā'il al-nubuwwa* (proofs of the prophecy) genre and focuses on Christian arguments that the prophethood of Muḥammad is not valid and that he was not predicted by earlier prophets.[35] The *Kitāb* comprises an introduction and ten chapters. The main theme of Chapters 1-8 is the validity of Muḥammad's prophecy (*nubuwwa*). Al-Ṭabarī first argues that Muḥammad's teaching was in accordance with earlier Prophets' teaching and tradition (Chapters 1-2). Then, he aims to demonstrate that Muḥammad also performed miracles that were fulfilled either during his lifetime or after his death (Chapters 3-5).[36] He claims, for example, the unique literary character of the Qur'ān, which is superior to the Bible, and that the Prophet's successes in wars are among his miracles (Chapters 6-7).[37] Al-Ṭabarī also argues that the close Companions of the Prophet, especially the first four caliphs' devotion and loyalty to him, is a sign of the truthfulness of his message (Chapter 8).[38] In the remainder of the *Kitāb*, al-Ṭabarī objects to the claim that Muḥammad is not proclaimed

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Predictions of the Prophet Muḥammmad among the Zaydīs of Yemen (6th/12th and 7th/13th Centuries), ' *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 293 (2013): 221-240. Schmidtke explains that Yemeni Zaydī scholar Aḥmad al-ʿAnsī (d. 1269) refers to al-Ṭabarī by name. See also, Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 174 n. 15 and 175.

[34] Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 177.

[35] Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 24-25.

[36] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 232-247 and 248-281.

[37] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 282-301.

[38] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 302-25.

in the Bible. He quotes extensively from the Hebrew Bible, especially from the Pentateuch. He interprets all prophecies about Ishmael and Hajār and argues that these prophecies were fulfilled only with the coming of Muḥammad (Chapters 9).[39] In the last and longest chapter of the *Kitāb*, al-Ṭabarī uses an extensive range of biblical quotations from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. As demonstrated in what follows, the main technique of al-Ṭabarī in interpreting biblical *testimonia* is to refer to the root *ḥ-m–d* and its derivatives both in Arabic and Syriac, such as in *maḥmud*. He argues with surprising confidence that Muḥammad's name is explicitly foretold in the Bible.

Al-Ṭabarī states that there were other Muslim attempts to demonstrate the validity of Muḥammad's prophethood without acknowledging any earlier work. However, he notes that these attempts were not successful since they did not offer proofs and arguments that Jews and Christians would accept.[40] He compiles his own list of biblical proof texts most likely relying on some earlier sources.[41] It is also highly likely that he contributes to the list of biblical proof-texts by using Syriac sources as well as Arabic translations circulated in his former Christian community.[42] It is al-Ṭabarī's extensive list of biblical quotations that influenced later Muslim writings and provided solid material for the works of the *dalā'il al-nubuwwa* genre. Whilst *Kitāb* as a whole work does not seem to have had an impact on subsequent Muslim works, it is certain that the biblical verses quoted were used and circulated either depending directly on the *Kitāb* itself or some intermediary sources.[43]

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[39] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 326-339.

[40] For a detailed account of al-Ṭabarī's sources, see Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 189-194. For Ibn Layth's letter, see *Risālat Abī-l-Rabī ʿ Muḥammad ibn al-Layth allatī katabahā li-l-Rashīd ilā Qusṭanṭīn malik al-Rūm*, ed. and trans. Hadi Eid, *Lettre du califfe Hârûn al-rašîd à l'empereur Constantin IV*, (Paris, 1992).

[41] Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 192-193. See also, pp. 326-327, 354-355, and 360-361.

[42] Vollandt, *Arabic Versions*, 93-97. See also, Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 193-194.

[43] Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 194-197. See also, Vollandt, *Arabic Versions*, 95-97.

Al-Ṭabarī uses and interprets around 130 biblical passages in the *Kitāb* to demonstrate that the Prophet Muḥammad is announced in the Bible.[44] Despite this extensive list of verses, only the selected ones are considered here such as, Deuteronomy 33.2, which a biblical *testimonia* also used by other four scholars of this chapter. As will be clear in the following elaboration, al-Ṭabarī does not interpret the biblical passages in detail apart from giving brief references to a few key words, specific names, or places. Rather, he seems to simply create a catalogue of biblical *testimonia*. Al-Ṭabarī starts with Genesis 17.20, 'I will make him [Ishmael] a mighty nation,' which became a widely used biblical prediction among later Muslim scholars. [45] Al-Ṭabarī, without any hesitation, reads these prophecies about Ishmael as they are the indirect biblical proclamation of Muḥammad and fulfilled only by the coming of the Prophet. He continues listing biblical *testimonia*s with Deuteronomy 18. 18, 'I will raise up for them a prophet like you among their brothers' and explains that the prophet promised in this verse is Muḥammad, since Jesus, who is of the children of David, whilst other earlier prophets were from themselves, not from their brothers.[46]

Next, al-Ṭabarī further cites Deuteronomy 33.2, 'The Lord came from Mount Sinai and appeared to us from Seir and became manifest from Mount Paran,' which become one of the most favoured biblical proof texts for subsequent Muslim polemicists. Al-Ṭabarī relates Mount Paran with Ishmael and the city of Mecca and argues that since Ishmael dwelt in Paran God mention him in Genesis 21.20-21, 'He [Ishmael] learned archery in the desert of Paran.' Al-Ṭabarī further explains that in the statement, 'The Lord appeared from Paran,' the word 'lord' alludes to the Prophet Muḥammad as this word is also used both for God and humans. He also argues that 'lord' is used both in Arabic and Syriac, which is *mār* (lord/master), to signify an honorary status, such as ‘lord of the house.’[47] Al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm also use Deuteronomy 33.2 as a biblical *testimonium* and provide more comprehensive interpretation explaining how the verbs used in the text indicate the successive relations of three revelations, The Torah, the Gospels, and The Qur’ān.

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[44] For an elaboration on the biblical proof texts al-Ṭabarī cites from the Hebrew Bible, see Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 144-148. For a full list of biblical verses cited in the *Kitāb*, see Appendix 2.

[45] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 326-327.

[46] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 340-341.

After explaining the biblical verses, which will later become the most-widely quoted predictions of Muḥammad among Muslim scholars, al-Ṭabarī then cites biblical verses from mainly Isaiah and Psalms, which contain the word *ḥamd* (praise) or its derivatives. In general, three strategies can be observed in al-Ṭabarī’s use of these verses. First, he quotes them almost verbatim and then, with a brief explanation, refers to the word ‘praise’ (*ḥamd*) or ‘praised’ (*maḥmūd*) originating from the root *ḥ-m-d*. He basically accepts all the derivative occurrences of the word, such as *maḥmūd* (praised), as referring to Muḥammad and argues that the names *maḥmūd* and *muḥammad* are linguistically the same. For instance, al-Ṭabarī cites, as the prophecies of David, Psalms 45.2-5 ‘praise’ (*al-ḥamd*), 48.1-2 and 50.2-3 ‘praised’ (*maḥmūd*) and claims that *maḥmūd* and *muḥammad* have the same meaning in the language.[48] He accepts these verses as a clear proclamation of the Prophet.

The second strategy is to take this approach a step further and to claim that the Prophet’s name was explicitly acknowledged in biblical verses. Accordingly, he quotes Isaiah 24.16-18, which does not have any particular key words like *ḥamd* or *maḥmūd* and claims determinedly that in the original text (in Hebrew) it was, ‘We heard from the ends of the earth the strain ‘Muḥammad.’[49] Next, he also quotes Isaiah 35.1-2 in which the name Aḥmad is mentioned and argues that this passage is particularly a clear

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[47] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 342-343.

[48] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 344-345.

[49] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 360-361. Here, al-Ṭabarī also mentions that these biblical passages are in the exegesis of Marcus (*tafsīr Marqūs*). Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 145. Adang explains that the root word *ḥ-m-d* and its derivatives also are also used by Ibn al-Layth.

testimonia since the name is explicitly stated.[50] From al-Ṭabarī's perspective, the mention of the name *maḥmūd* (praised) should suffice for one who seeks evidence in the Bible. Isaiah 55.4-7 is one of the examples, where al-Ṭabarī claims, without any hesitation, God named the Prophet, 'Your God, the holy one of Israel, who had you praised (*aḥmadak*).' He reads this statement from the verse as 'God has made you Muḥammad' and explains that Aḥmad and Muḥammad have the same meaning.[51] Similarly, he quotes from Psalms in which the name *Muḥammad* is explicitly stated, 'I have had your name greatly praised [*Muḥammad*], O Muḥammad' (Psalm 72.17) and, 'In his holy mountain is a holy one and Muḥammad' (Psalm 48.1).[52] Here, al-Ṭabarī argues that the name Muḥammad is mentioned twice in these prophecies, which thus makes the biblical passages clear proof-texts and evidence for anyone. It is really interesting to see that al-Ṭabarī quotes confidently the biblical texts that contain the name Muḥammad and accepts the texts as originally using this name without the slightest hesitation.

The third strategy is simply to interpret the characteristics of the Prophet's community or geographical features of his region mentioned in the biblical passages. For instance, while Isaiah 42.11-13 explains that the Prophet's community possessed 'the desert' and 'the land of Kedar' belonged to the descendants of Ishmael, who are Muḥammad's people. Whilst Isaiah 21.7, on the other hand, depicts Muḥammad as a 'rider on a camel,' which is a widely known Muslim argument.[53]

Perhaps one of the most interesting interpretations al-Ṭabarī produces in the *Kitāb* is the exegesis of the name Paraclete (*al-Fāraqlīṭ*). He quotes a well-known biblical verse, John 14.26, 'The Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, whom my Father will send in my name will teach you all things.'[54] For al-Ṭabarī, the biblical passages clearly announce the coming of Muḥammad as the Paraclete, with the confirmation of Jesus. However, ʿAlī also explains an alternative way of understanding or decoding the meaning of Paraclete in order to prove that the name refers to Muḥammad. He employs a numerical system, which calculates the numerical value of the letters of the word 'Paraclete.' From this calculation, he claims the name Paraclete's numerical value is equal to the name 'Muḥammad son of 'Abd Allāh, prophet, guide.'[55]

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[50] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 360-361.

[51] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 376-377.

[52] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 388-389.

[53] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 356-357.

The discussion elaborated above has shown that al-Ṭabarī throughout the last chapter of the *Kitāb* uses many biblical passages to prove that Muḥammad is announced in the Bible. While some of the biblical verses he quoted in the *Kitāb* such as Deuteronomy 33.2, Genesis 17.20, and Deuteronomy 18.18 later become the most favoured biblical proof texts in Muslim works, other passages in which he persistently claims that the name Muḥammad or its variants, such as *maḥmūd* (praised), are explicitly mentioned are not widely used in subsequent *dalāʾil nubuwwa* genre. Especially, the numerical system that he employed to argue that the name 'Paraclete' means Muḥammad is not a common argument in later Muslim works. He accepts these passages as clear and unambiguous proof-texts of the biblical proclamation of the Prophet. However, as one may notice, he does not provide sufficient interpretation of the texts, appearing basically to presume that the reader will follow his brief citing of the biblical passages.

2.2 Pseudo-Ghazālī's *al-Radd al-Jamīl*

The second work that is investigated in this chapter is *Al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat ʿIsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Injīl* (A fitting refutation of the divinity of Jesus from the evidence of the Gospel), hereafter *al-Radd al-jamīl*, which is attributed to renowned Muslim scholar al-Ghazālī (d. 1111).[56] The primary aim of *al-Radd al-jamīl* is to rebut the divinity of Jesus. To do so, the author reinterprets the biblical passages that are accepted as proof texts of Jesus' divinity in Christian tradition. The author's main conviction is that the Gospels do not support the divinity of Jesus. On the contrary, the biblical texts, when interpreted with correct exegetical principles, depict him as a human messenger, who is distinct from God. The authorship of this refutation has been widely discussed in many modern studies. While earlier studies on *al-Radd al-jamīl* mainly accepted that Ghazālī was the author or his lectures were the main source of the refutation, this assumption was subsequently questioned and challenged by other studies.[57]

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[54] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 424-425.

[55] Al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb*, 426-427.

Al-Radd al-jamīl can be divided into three main sections, in addition to the introductory part, where the author explains why Christians were misled into the belief that Jesus was divine.[58] The first part comprises interpretation of six biblical passages mainly from the Gospel of John, whilst the second is critical explanation of three Christian sects' understanding of divine union and the third is interpretation of Jesus' titles, such as God and Lord. Given the scope of the present study, the first section, explaining how the author reflects on biblical verses, is only covered briefly. The main focus will be on the author's interpretation of the words, 'lord' and 'god' from the third section of *al-Radd al-jamīl*.

From the outset of the refutation, the author asserts that there are two exegetical principles which are necessary for correct exegesis. First, if the biblical verses in question are in agreement with sound reason, then they should be understood according to their apparent (*ẓawāhir*) meanings. However, if they seem to contradict reason then, they should be interpreted metaphorically (*majāz*). Second, if some of the biblical verses sound contradictory while others do not, then the contradictory meaning should be removed, if one is capable of doing so.[59] This exegetical principle draws a clear distinction between Ibn Taymiyya and Pseudo-Ghazālī with the former's categorical rejection of a prior literal meaning, as will be explained in the next chapter.

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[56] For an Arabic edition, see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilahiyyat ʿĪsā bī-ṣarīḥ al-Injīl*, ed., M. al-Sharqāwī, (Cairo, 1986). It is also translated in French; Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilahiyyat ʿĪsā bī-ṣarīḥ al-Injīl*, ed., and trans., R. Chidiac, (Paris, 1939). For the latest edition and translation in English, see Ivor Mark Beaumont and Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, eds., *Al-Radd Al-Jamīl: A Fitting Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). This edition is the main source of this section and the translated text is used unless otherwise stated.

[57] Beaumont and Elkaisy-Friemuth, *Refutation*, 26-28.

[58] For a detailed outline of *al-Radd al-jamīl*, see Beaumont and Elkaisy-Friemuth, *Refutation,* 33-42.

The first part of *al-Radd al-jamīl* is devoted to the interpretation of six biblical passages, with the first three being used to argue that Jesus intended merely a metaphorical union between him and God. Whilst the other three are utilised to prove that Jesus is a human messenger, which in turn confirms that divine union is only metaphorically intended in the Gospels. Referring to the dialogue between Jesus and Jews, who accused him of blasphemy, in John 10.30-36, the author explains that they understood Jesus' words, 'I and the Father are one,' (John 10.30) as being literal, thus accusing him of claiming to be God.[60] However, Jesus denied this accusation, pointing to how the word 'god' is used in Jewish scripture for other humans to signify that they have received God's word.[61] The author fundamentally argues that Jesus only referred to a metaphorical union (*ittiḥād*) in this text and distinguished himself from other humans only by virtue of his prophethood. He explains further that Jesus acknowledged in his saying, 'The word has come to you and I share that with you' that he had a higher rank above others merely due to his messengership, without implying a divine union with God. The author here also refers to a hadith text, 'I am your hand with which you have struck,' which signifies that God helps and supports obedient servants. With this intertextual reading of John 10.30, he is empathising that like the Bible, Islamic Law also contains similar expressions that are not intended literally.[62] The purpose is to demonstrate that in the biblical verses where Jesus appears to be claiming a divine union with God, he did not mean this literally and instead, the expressions are to be interpreted metaphorically to reveal his intended message.

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[59] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 96-97.

[60] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 98-99.

[61] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 98-103. Mark Beaumont, 'Appropriating Christian Scriptures in a Muslim Refutation of Christianity: The Case of *Al-Radd Al-Jamīl* Attributed to Al-Ghazālī,' *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 22, (2011): 70-71.

Similar to Pseudo-Ghazālī's interpretation of John 10.30, Ibn Taymiyya also uses this text when he reinterprets the terms *ittiḥād* (union) *ḥulūl* (indwelling), which will be explained in Chapter Four. Ibn Taymiyya arrives at a similar interpretation to that of Pseudo-Ghazālī's, explaining that Jesus' words, 'I and the Father are one' only indicate God's support and guidance to his messengers. Ibn Taymiyya claims that the divine guidance and support constitutes a union between God and his messengers, who only obey God's will and submit to Him.[63] Apparently, these two Muslim scholars understand Jesus' union with God as a sense of submission in the light of John 10.30. However, while Pseudo-Ghazālī arrives at this interpretation through a metaphorical reading, Ibn Taymiyya, who opposes metaphorical interpretation (*majāz*), arrives at the same exegesis through contextual reading of the Bible.

Next, the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* interprets John 17.11 and 17.17-22 and explains how Jesus metaphorically referred to a union when he prayed to God for his disciples and believers to be one with God. In John 17.11, 'So that they may be one with you as we are' Jesus prayed and asked for a union with God for his disciples because being one or in union with God means obedience and submission only to Him.[64] Otherwise, Jesus would be praying for his disciples to be divine as well. Similarly, Paul meant a nonliteral union with God in I Corinthians 6.17, 'Whoever, clings to our Lord becomes one spirit with Him,' by virtue of obedience to Him.[65] The author further explains that Jesus likewise metaphorically intended that his believers would be one when they united in obeying Jesus and God, by citing John 17.22, 'I have given them the glory (*majd*) that you gave me, so that they may become one as we are.'[66] He explains that the word 'glory' (*majd*) should be interpreted as the prophethood and guidance God gave to Jesus.

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[62] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl,* 96-103.

[63] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.342-344.

[64] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 102-103.

So far, how Pseudo-Ghazālī interpreted three biblical passages from the Gospel of John, has been explained, with the emphasis that Jesus only meant a metaphorical union with God. Now, with the second set of the other three biblical verses, the author argues that the Gospels confirm that Jesus is a human messenger. The author quotes Mark 13.32, 'Concerning that day, no-one knows, not the angels that are in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father alone,' which is used to argue that Jesus did not have knowledge of the Hour, meaning he did not share divine knowledge.[67] Hence, he cannot be divine, as a divine union requires that Jesus shares God's attributes, such as knowledge. He then explains that God sending Jesus as a messenger gave Him the authority over everybody, as stated in John 17.2-3.[68] The author advances his interpretation by referring to 1 Corinthians 15.28, 'The Son will be subject to God,' and in Ephesians 1.16-17, 'The God of our Lord Jesus Christ,' where Paul also distinguished Jesus from God, thus acknowledging his servanthood and prophethood. As other scholars have already noted, the author's use of apostolic texts to explain the biblical verses is rather interesting because Apostolic letters are not a common source of biblical references among Muslim scholars.[69] Al-Ṭabarī, for example does not use the biblical texts that depicts Jesus divine rather he prefers to cite the texts that clearly mention the humanity of Jesus when arguing that the creedal teaching contradicts the Bible. Pseudo-Ghazālī however reinterprets metaphorically the biblical passages that describe Jesus as 'God' as explained above.

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[65] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 104-105.

[66] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 106-107.

[67] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 116-117.

[68] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 118-119.

[69] Beaumont, 'Appropriating,' 77-80.

The author also refers to the biblical verses that Muslim scholars use to argue against the divinity of Jesus, such as Matthew 26.39, 'Take this cup from me,' and Matthew 27.46, 'My God, why have you forsaken me?'[70] Al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī and Ibn Taymiyya also use the last set of biblical quotations as these texts confirm that Jesus experienced humanly feelings, such as fear and vulnerability. Lastly, the author quotes John 8.40, 'A man who has told you the truth that he heard from God.'[71] With this last quotation, the author focuses on the word 'man' and claims that it refers to the humanity of Jesus. He also quotes John 8.26, 'What I heard from him [God],' and John 12.50, 'What I say is what the Father commanded me,' to support his argument.[72] For the author, these passages confirm that Jesus was only a man who obeyed God's will and conveyed what God commanded him. In refuting the divinity of Jesus, Pseudo-Ghazālī employs the theory of miracles which is a common Muslim argument used to claim that the miracles Jesus performed are not signs of his divinity, rather Jesus produced the miracles with God's support and help which is also granted to other prophets. Like al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī compares the miracles of other prophets with that of Jesus to argue that others performed greater miracles but they were not regarded as divine beings. He explains for example that Moses' turning his stick into a snake is a greater miracle than Jesus' reviving a dead person because Moses made an inanimate object alive while Jesus only revived a human into his earlier state.[73] This explanation clearly shows the continuity of polemical arguments used against Christians in Muslim polemical works. In following sections, it will be shown that al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī also use the miracles while arguing against the divinity of Jesus.

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[70] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 122-123. For the use of the same biblical passages by al-Qāsim. al-Rassī, and ʿAbd al-Jabbār, see Beaumont, 'Appropriating,' 72-73.

[71] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 122-123.

[72] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 122-125.

[73] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 90-93.

Regarding the textual clarity of the Bible, the author argues that biblical texts contain unambiguous, literal, and metaphorical expressions, which should be explained in accordance with the intended meaning. Yet, Christians fail to consider these different kinds of expressions when they exegete the scripture.[74] In the author's eye this is a major flaw in interpreting biblical texts. He further clarifies that Jesus, as the founder of his law, has permission to use metaphorical expressions, while this is not allowed in Islamic law since each divine law has different rules, expressions, and regulations. Having said this, the author also meticulously notes that when Jesus intends something he signifies his intention by an example, which is a rather interesting emphasis. On the one hand, he persistently argues for metaphorical interpretation of the biblical text on the grounds that Jesus used metaphorical language. On the other hand, he feels the need to legitimise his argument by noting that Jesus was allowed to use metaphorical expressions, while Muḥammad did not have permission for such language. This emphasis in differentiating the hermeneutical reading of the Bible and the Qur'ān arguably implies that the author, in reality, does not favour metaphorical reading of qur'ānic scripture, or alternatively, he is well aware of the controversial difference in literal and nonliteral (metaphorical) interpretation among Muslim scholars.[75] The distinction that he makes here is an interesting approach when compared to the other four scholars whose biblical interpretation will be explained in the rest of this chapter. Al-Qarāfī, for instance, opts for metaphorical interpretation when explaining the terms ‘father’ and ‘son’, without making such distinction regarding interpretive rules for divine language.

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[74] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 108-109.

[75] Muhammad M. Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics Sunni Legal Theorists' Models of Textual Communication* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013); R Gleave, *Islam and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012). David R. Vishanoff, *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics: How Sunni Legal Theorists Imagined a Revealed Law* (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 2011).

In refuting the divinity of Jesus, the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* also interprets the titles of Jesus, such as God and Lord, which are accepted as confirmation of his divinity and union with God in the Christian tradition. As explained earlier, the author’s interpretive method categorises expressions into two kinds: metaphorical and literal. As for the titles of Jesus, similar to al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī relies on the same argument that these titles should be interpreted metaphorically. Then, the author goes on to explain the term ‘lord’ as being an equivocal (*mushtarak*) term that is used for both God and humans. When it is used for humans, the meaning is ‘owner’ such as ‘lord of the house.’ The term ‘god’ on the other hand, is applied to signify greatness of a thing in the Gospel. To explain this, the author quotes ‘I have called you all gods, and sons of the most high (Psalm 82.6), and ‘I have made you a god to Pharaoh and your brother Aaron your messenger’ (Exodus 7.1). In these passages, he explains, the word ‘God’ is used only for those who are worshipped. In other words, despite worshipping to humans being theologically false, the word ‘god’ still signifies a divine being that is worshipped. In order to strengthen his argument, the author refers to Paul’s letter, ‘Although there are things that are in heaven and on earth that are called gods, and since many gods and many lords are found, we have only one God,’ (I Corinthians 8.4-6).[76] He takes this passage to be evidence that the word ‘god’ is used for both God and humans even though human beings are not entitled to be worshipped. The author interprets the passages as Paul distinguishing between the words ‘lord’ and ‘god’ by announcing the oneness of God, who is the creator of everything and denying any other divinity. Then, the author explains that Paul used the word ‘lord’ for Jesus to signify the meaning ‘owner’ (*mālik*) rather than a divine being. The author understands Paul’s use of different words for God and Jesus, whereby Paul intentionally opted for the word 'lord' in referring to Jesus and did not attribute any attributes of God to him. With this argument, the author intends to demonstrate that the title 'lord' does not signify the meaning 'divine' when it is used for Jesus. According to him, while the title 'god' is used only for God, who is entitled to be worshipped the title 'lord' is used equivocally (*ishtirakān*) for both God and humans to signify the meaning 'owner.'[77]

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[76] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 150-151.

Next, the author explains how the concepts 'fatherhood' and 'sonship' should be understood in the context of the Bible. He criticises Christians for claiming a special relationship between God and Jesus by relying on the literal meanings of these terms. He then cites biblical verses in which the term 'son' is used for other beings other than Jesus, starting with Exodus 4.22, 'My first-born son, Israel,' and Psalm 82.6, 'You are all sons of the most high,' in which the term 'son' is used to signify the nation of Israel.[78] He further explains how Jesus also applied metaphorical use of these terms in John 20.17, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God,' in a similar way to I John 5.1, 'Whoever recognises that Jesus is the Messiah is born of God.'[79] In these two examples, the author aims to prove that while the term 'father' metaphorically means that God is merciful towards his messengers, they are obedient to God as a son would be to his father. The author argues that Jesus also used the terms 'father' for God and 'son' for himself to mean that God was 'merciful towards him, and he was obedient to God.'[80] He notes that the application of metaphorical meaning to some expressions is permissible for some of the prophets as long as they explain the intended meaning and avoid misunderstanding. The author adds that Christians still use the term 'father' for monks to show respect towards and admiration of them. With the explanation above, the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* concludes that the use of the term 'son' for Jesus does not prove his divinity or 'distinguish him from other people' connoting a divine status to him.

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[77] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 152-153.

[78] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 150-151.

[79] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 154-155.

[80] Pseudo-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 156-157.

In his interpretation of the biblical passages explained above, the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* primarily contends that the sayings of Jesus and, hence the biblical language, contain metaphorical expressions since Jesus was allowed to use metaphorical language. Therefore, if the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning, which is also the literal (*ḥaqīqa*) meaning, of a text contradicts reason then, it should be interpreted metaphorically. Relying on this strategy the author uses Johannine texts, differing from al-Ṭabarī, as well as the rest of the Bible, also show that Jesus was a human messenger and did not claim divinity. He interprets the biblical verses that appear to support the divinity of Jesus with the passage where Jesus acknowledged his humanity, messengership and the oneness of God. The author's overall interpretative strategy is reading the Bible metaphorically.

2.3 Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 1285) and *al-Ajwiba al-fākhira* (*The Splendid Replies*)

The Mālikī scholar, Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Idris al-Qarāfī, was born in 1228 in Bahfashīm and moved to Cairo for his education, living for the rest of his life, until his death in 1285.[81] In this section, the focus is on al-Qarāfī's *al-Ajwiba al-fakhira ʿan al-asʾila al-fājira* (*The Splendid Replies to Insolent*

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[81] For the most detailed account of al-Qarāfī's biography in Western language, see Sherman A. Jackson, *Islamic Law and The State: The Constitutional Jurisprudence of Shihāb Al-Dīn Al-Qarāfi* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1-32. Cucarella offers a section on al-Qarāfī's biography reflecting on both primary and secondary sources; Diego R. Sarrio Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics Across the Mediterranean : The Splendid Replies of Shihab Al-Din Al-Qarafi (d. 684/1285)* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 36-40, hereafter only *The Splendid Replies*. For al-Qarāfī's works, see Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 273-280 (Appendix A). For al-Qarāfī's work written on Christians and Christianity, see Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, 'Al-Qarāfī,' *CMR4* (Brill, 2012), 582-587.

Questions), hereafter the *Ajwiba*, written as a substantive reply to Paul of Antioch's *Letter to a Muslim Friend*.[82]

The *Ajwiba* is the first Muslim response to Paul of Antioch's *Letter*. Subsequently, Ibn Taymiyya wrote his *Jawāb* to the reworked version of Paul's *Letter*, and al-Dimashqī's *Response* is the third Muslim work responding to the same version, as will be explained in the next section.[83] As Cucarella indicates, al-Qarāfī wrote the *Ajwiba* to inform and benefit Muslims regarding Muslim-Christian interreligious polemics.[84] The *Ajwiba* consists of four main chapters. The first part is the explanation of the qur'ānic verses that Paul quotes in his *Letter*, whilst the second, seeks to answer the questions that the people of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) commonly ask.[85] The third part offers counter-arguments to the questions of the *Letter*. Lastly, the fourth part pertains to demonstration of the biblical confirmation of Islam and the prophethood of Muḥammad.[86] Now, analysis of selected biblical quotations from each chapter of the *Ajwiba* is provided.

In the first chapter of the *Ajwiba*, al-Qarāfī, responding to Paul's claim that the Qur'ān confirms the Christian scripture and doctrines, polemically argues that the Qur'ān does not confirm the soundness and the authority of the Gospels.[87] In order to show this, he cites fifteen passages from the Gospels and argues categorically that they are contradictory to each other. He quotes, for example, Matthew 1.16, where Mary's husband Joseph's father's' name is Jacob and Luke 3.23, where his name is Heli.[88] As for the Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection, al-Qarāfī claims those of Matthew and John narrate different information and explains that one of them refers to the day of resurrection as Sunday, whilst the other writes about after the Sabbath. Moreover, in the first account Mary was alone on that day and in the other she was with other people.[89] Similar to these two examples, al-Qarāfī carries on citing passages from the Gospels and explains the contradictory points from his perspective. The use of biblical passages in the first chapter of the *Ajwiba* is to show that the Gospels have been altered and that they present information that is contradictory. As will be explained in the last section of this chapter, this argumentation of al-Qarāfī closely follows Ibn Ḥazm's primary objection to the Gospels based on textual inconsistencies and historical-factual inaccurate information.

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[82] For an earlier study on the *Ajwiba*, see Wadi' Z. Haddad, see 'The Crusaders Through Muslim Eyes,' *The Muslim World* 73, 3-4 (1983): 234-252. Haddad explains here, in the context of the *Ajwiba*, how al-Qarāfī sees the Crusades as a witness. Cucarella's work, *The Splendid Replies*, is the latest and the most comprehensive work so far on the *Ajwiba*. As for Cucarella's exposition on the content and composition of the *Ajwiba*, see Chapter 2, 60-99. For a brief introduction to the *Ajwiba*, see also Elkaisy-Friemuth, 'Al-Qarāfī,' 585-587.

[83] Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 61. Aḥmad ibn Idrīs al-Qarāfī, 'Al-Ajwiba Al-Fākhira ʿan Al-Asʾila Al-Fājira,' ed. Nājī Muḥammad Dāwūd. PhD diss (Umm al-Qurā University: Mecca, 1985), 129. Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 62. Here, Cucarella translates a long quation from the *Ajwiba*.

[84] Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 68.

[85] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 128-292. For a detailed analysis of the discussion of the first chapter of *Ajwiba*, see Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 100-140. For the second chapter of the *Ajwiba*, see Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 292-466 and Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 141-177.

[86] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 129-130; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 65-67.

[87] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 182-184; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 127-128.

In the second chapter, al-Qarāfī, when defending the qur'ānic account of the crucifixion, uses Gospel verses to show that the biblical version of the crucifixion contains contradictory elements and information. He explains this with the quotation from John 19.28, where Jesus said, 'I thirst' and argues that this contradicts Matthew 4.1-2, which informs us that Jesus could live without drink and food for forty days. Moreover, Al-Qarāfī argues that the person who died on the cross was not Jesus, as can be understood from Matthew 27.46, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' which is a sign that this person does not submit to God's will and command.[90] This is a reaction that cannot be attributed to Jesus as a prophet who obeys and submits to God's will. For al-Qarāfī, these biblical passages confirm the qur'ānic account of the crucifixion that Jesus did not die on the cross, but Christians failed to understand that he was replaced by someone else.[91] As explained earlier in this chapter, the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* uses Matthew 27.46 to underline the argument that Jesus was a human messenger who experienced humanly feelings. Al-Qarāfī here, instead, uses this text as an example of a contradiction showing that the biblical account of the crucifixion is incorrect. It will also be demonstrated in the next sections how Ibn Ḥazm uses Matthew 27.46 to argue polemically that the biblical verse depicts a god, i.e. Jesus, crying for help. Similar to al-Qarāfī, for Ibn Ḥazm, this text is an example of *taḥrīf* (alteration of the Bible), yet these two scholars differ in terms of how the biblical verse refers to false information.

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[88] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 202.

[89] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 205-206.

[90] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 305-307; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 146.

Similar to al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī cites the biblical verses in which Jesus appears to be manifesting his humanity. He quotes Matthew 12.18, where the word *fatā* (servant) is used for Jesus instead of the word 'son,'[92] which is similar to Jesus' proclamation of God's unity and oneness in Matthew 19.17, 'Why do you call me god? There is no god but the one God.'[93] Likewise, Jesus acknowledges, as al-Qarāfī proceeds to elucidate, that he is 'the son of man' (*ibn al-insān*) in Luke 9.57-58.[94] Al-Qarāfī also cites Mark 14.36, 'Father, everything is in your power; take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.' He interprets this passage as Jesus attributing human weakness to himself by asking God to delay his death. Here, Jesus also clearly distinguishes between his own will and that of God, which indicates that he is not divine.[95] Similar to al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī also uses the miracles of Jesus, arguing that they cannot be used as evidence for his divinity. Other biblical prophets, such as Moses and Ezekiel, also demonstrated similar miracles, yet the Christians do not attribute divinity to them.[96] Then, al-Qarāfī cites Matthew 21.18-22 in which Jesus explains to the disciples that with a strong faith they can perform miraculous deeds similar to Jesus. For al-Qarāfī, this passage proves that Jesus does not distinguish himself from others, which is a point, for al-Qarāfī, that emphasises the humanity of Jesus.[97] Having cited and explained the biblical passages abovementioned, he maintains that the miracles of Jesus are rational proofs (*al-burhān al-ʿaqlī*) confirming only his prophethood and cannot be used as the confirmation of his divinity.[98]

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[91] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 292-304; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 142-147.

[92] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 345-346; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 148-149.

[93] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 353.

[94] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 358-359.

[95] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 359-360. Cucarella explains how al-Qarāfī borrows these biblical verses from al-Jaʿfarī's *Takhjīl*, where he presents such verses to prove the humanity of Jesus, see *The Splendid Replies*, 149 n. 29.

In the third chapter of the *Ajwiba*, al-Qarāfī criticises the Christian creed as being innovated and not divinely inspired, contending that the creed contradicts the Bible, by closely following his two major Muslim sources, al-Qurtubī's *Iʿlām* and al-Jaʿfarī's *Takhjīl*, hereafter *Takhjīl*.[99] Citing the creed in full verbatim from *Takhjīl*, al-Qarāfī offers a critique of its content in a very similar way to al-Ṭabarī questioning the creedal text with rational reasoning. Al-Qarāfī argues, for example, that in the creed Jesus is described as 'born of His father,' which makes him originated in time (*ḥudūth*). Yet, this contradicts the Christian belief that Jesus is also eternal.[100] In an attempt to show the contradiction between the creed and the Christian scripture, al-Qarāfī claims that, while Jesus, according to the former, is 'A true God from the true God, a substance (*jawhar*) from His Father,' Matthew 24.36 invalidates this by declaring that Jesus did not know the Hour and hence, he does not possess divine knowledge.[101] Similarly, al-Qarāfī notes that, in the Creed, Jesus is 'the Creator of all things,' which implies for him, that Jesus must be the creator of his mother. This also denies Matthew 1.1, 'the Messiah is born of David' since it is impossible for Jesus to be both the creator and the son of David.[102] To advance his argumentation, al-Qarāfī cites Matthew 3.13-16, where the disciple John witnessed that the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in the appearance of a dove. Contrary to this narrative, he claims, the creed maintains that Jesus became embodied by the Holy Spirit. Al-Qarāfī interprets this as a contradiction between the creed and the Gospels and points out that this is an example of the alteration Christians are responsible for.

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[96] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 341, 344; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 147-151.

[97] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 354-356.

[98] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 361-362.

[99] On the sources al-Qarāfī uses for the composition of the *Ajwiba*, see Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 69-96.

[100] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 518-519; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 180-184.

[101] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 519-520; Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 181-182.

The fourth chapter of the *Ajwiba* is dedicated to the presentation of biblical predictions of Muḥammad.[103] Al-Qarāfī uses 51 biblical passages to demonstrate his claim that Muḥammad is foretold in the Jewish-Christian scripture even though the People of the Book altered the text to conceal His name stated therein.[104] The first *testimonium* is a well-known Muslim biblical proof-text Genesis 17.20, 'I will make him [Ishmael] a great nation.' This is usually interpreted as an indirect prediction of Muḥammad. In a very similar way to al-Ṭabarī, Al-Qarāfī claims that Muḥammad is the only prophet descending from Ishmael.[105] The second biblical verse is Psalm 48.1-2, 'Our Lord, greatly praised, in the city of Our God, Holy One and Muḥammad.' Al-Qarāfī takes the text as explicitly stating the name of the Prophet and his city. Both al-Qarāfī and al-Ṭabarī consider this Psalm passage to be a clear proclamation of Muḥammad, leaving no doubt about the explicit mention of his name. As highlighted earlier in the section on al-Ṭabarī's *Kitāb*, both of these scholars do not hesitate to cite this and other biblical passages where Muḥammad's name is interpolated into the text. If this proves one thing, it is that Muslim polemicists are mainly interested in biblical passages for detecting the Prophet's name and the description of his nation to produce counter-arguments to Christian challenges, rather than interpreting the text or investigating what the biblical passages mean for readers. In particular, al-Qarāfī uses biblical testimonias just to produce textual evidences for Christians. he argues that as believers Christians must believe in these proof texts. Yet he claims that these biblical proof texts are not necessary in establishing the veracity of Muḥammad's prophethood since it already is validated by the prophet's miracles. In other words, these proof texts have probative value only for Christians not for Muslims.

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[102] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 520-521.

[103] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 690-776.

[104] For the list and interpretation of the biblical predictions, al-Qarāfī also heavily relies on the list of biblical quotations from Jaʿfarī's *Takhjīl*, as Cucarella has already pointed out. Cucarella offers a detailed analysis of the *Ajwiba*'s fourth chapter with a thorough comparison with al-Jaʿfarī's *Takhjīl*. For the table of the biblical predictions, see *The Splendid Replies*, Appendix D, 291-302.

[105] Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 237 n. 71. For the use of Genesis 17.20 in Muslim polemics, see also, Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, 107 n. 103.

Similar to Ibn Ḥazm, al-Qarāfī argues that some biblical passages are preserved from alteration and change, such as, Deuteronomy 33.2 and John 14.26, which are also widely used in Muslim writings as clear biblical *testimonia* of the Prophet Muḥammad.[106] As noted earlier in this chapter, al-Ṭabarī has also used these biblical verses as prooftexts. Yet, al-Qarāfī here will provide more detailed interpretation of the texts. In Deuteronomy 33.2, 'God came from the Sinai and became manifest from Seir; and he appeared from Mount Paran,' al-Qarāfī interprets Sinai as the mountain where God spoke to Moses, Seir as the mountain in al-Shām, where Jesus prayed and worshipped his Lord, and Paran as the mountain of Banī Hāshim, where Muḥammad worshipped God. Further, al-Qarāfī notes that, while God is coming from Sinai means the coming of prophetic revelation and His manifestation from Seir refers to His grace by sending Jesus and by reviving the content of the Torah, God's appearance from Paran, which is Makka, means the appearance of Muhammad's prophetic message to all creatures. Al-Qarāfī's main point is to argue that the biblical prediction explains the successive history of revelations and religions and that Islam is the last religion. Ibn Taymiyya also interprets Deuteronomy 33.2 in the *Jawāb* but not as a biblical proof text of Muḥammad's prophecy. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets the passage focusing on the word *ḥallā* (indwell) when arguing against the Christin doctrine of divine indwelling and the incarnate Word of God in Jesus Christ.[107] The second well-known Muslim *testimonium* is John 14.26, 'The Paraclete (*al-fāraqlīṭ*), who will teach you everything.'[108] Al-Qarāfī explains that 'Paraclete' means 'praised one' and 'saviour' (*mukhalliṣ*) for Christians, contending that this is a reference to the Prophet Muḥammad since he saves humans from unbelief (*kufr*) and teaches everything as stated in the passage.[109] As noted earlier, these biblical proof texts are also used by al-Ṭabarī with almost the same interpretation which shows the continuity of the circulation, especially of the well-known *testimonia* among later Muslim scholars.[110]

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[106] Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 240 n. 83. See also, Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined* World, 109 n. 110.

So far, the aim has been to demonstrate al-Qarāfī's use of biblical quotations in the context of responding to Paul of Antioch's *Letter*. It has been noted that al-Qarāfī utilises biblical verses sometimes to underline his argument when he sees a relevant point, whilst at other times, he uses them to demonstrate that textual alteration occurred in the Bible. This paradoxical approach to biblical texts shows that al-Qarāfī's main purpose in using it is clearly apologetic, as Cucarella has already pointed out.[111] His approach to biblical interpretation also reflects that al-Qarāfī is more willing to explore the traditional Muslim interpretation of Christian scripture than the content and the signification of the text itself.

Al-Qarāfī, in the third chapter of the *Ajwiba*, where he poses one-hundred questions challenging Christian beliefs and doctrines, also uses biblical verses to show that Jesus did not claim divinity, but rather, constantly emphasised his humanity. He claims that Jesus distinguished himself from God, as he stated in John 20.17, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' For al-Qarāfī, in this text, Jesus equates himself with other humans in terms of sonship (*bunuwwa*) and fatherhood (*ubuwwa*), referring to God's favour, grace, and mercy to His creatures similar to fathers' favour to their sons, but God's grace and favour surpasses that of fathers.[112] Al-Qarāfī argues that being a 'son' is a shared characteristic between Jesus and others servants of God similar to the Jews' expression mentioned in Q 5.18, 'We are the sons of God.'[113] He, at this point, accuses the Christians of understanding the term 'sonship' by virtue of begetting. For al-Qarāfī, Jesus used the words 'your Father' and 'my God' in John 20.17, to signify that God is not just Father to Jesus, but also to other beings and that Jesus is a created being (*makhlūq*) and educated (*marbūb*). The word 'my God' in the biblical verse confirms that Jesus has a God who he worships, and a Lord who commands him.[114] The basic interpretation and the arguments produced based on John 20.17 are very similar to that of al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī as explained previously.

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[107] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3. 145, 326, and 361.

[108] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 701.

[109] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 701-704. Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 242-244.

[110] Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 217-221.

[111] Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 218.

At this point, al-Qarāfī begins to interpret the words 'father' and 'son' by referring to the intra-textual context of the Bible. He maintains that both are used to refer to other beings, as Jesus also refers in Matthew 6.9, when telling people pray to God, 'Our Father in heaven, the Holy One.' He clarifies that Jesus in this passage attributed 'fatherhood' to God in connection with other humans. This is the use of the word 'father' through a metaphorical (*majāz*) expression, as al-Qarāfī explains, similar to the disciples' usage for the Apostle Paul, 'His Father.'[115] Ibn Ḥazm also uses Matthew 6.9, yet this is to argue that Jesus would not call God 'father' or advise to people to do so. Arguing that the use of the word 'father' for God cannot originally belong to

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[112] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 469-470.

[113] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 470.

[114] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 470-471.

[115] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 470.

Jesus, Ibn Ḥazm concludes that this text is an example of textual alteration (*taḥrīf al-lafẓ*).

Next, al-Qarāfī cites Genesis 45.8, 'God sent me before you, made me a father to Pharaoh,' and interprets 'father' in this context as a guide (or teacher), mentioning how the disciples also called the Messiah 'father.'[116] Claiming that the term 'father' is repeatedly used in relation to other beings in the Bible, al-Qarāfī carries on presenting his textual proofs and cites Exodus 4.22, 'Israel, my first-born son,' where God addresses the people of Israel, 'my first-born son,' by exalting them. Likewise, al-Qarāfī explains that the people of faith are called 'the sons of God,' in John 11.52.[117] He emphasises the fact that Jesus is not uniquely named 'son' in the Bible and thus, his sonship does not refer to his divinity. To al-Qarāfī's mind, Christians failed to understand that Jesus utilised metaphorical language (*majāz*), thus making a distinction between Jesus as 'the Son' and other humans as 'sons of God.' He notes that, Jesus, however, did not distinguish himself from others, which is evident from Matthew 12.46-50, where Jesus addresses his disciples, stating that whoever obeys God's will are His brothers, sisters, and mother.[118]

Al-Qarāfī further criticises Christians for misinterpretation of the words 'lord' and 'god,' explaining that the intended meaning of the former is the one who educates (*murabbī*), whilst the latter signifies 'ruler' or 'master' (*musalliṭ*). To illustrate this, al-Qarāfī quotes Exodus 7.1, 'I have made you a god to Pharaoh,' which means God made Moses a master/guide to Pharaoh.[119] It is clear from the examples above that al-Qarāfī perceives that Jesus used the terms 'son' and 'father' metaphorically rather than literally. This point becomes clearer when he explains the expression 'You are my son' in Psalm 2.7, claiming that 'my son' refers to the Prophet Muḥammad. Al-

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[116] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 471.

[117] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 471.

[118] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 472-473.

[119] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 475.

Qarāfī also clarifies how the use of the word ‘son’ is appropriate by arguing that Muḥammad was named son in the traditional way of naming ‘the obedient’ (*al-muṭi*ʿ) ‘son,’ as stated in the Hebrew Bible, ‘You are my firstborn son’ (Exodus 4.22).[120]

To sum up, al-Qarāfī’s scriptural argumentation in the *Ajwiba* incorporates biblical texts and interpretations used by earlier Muslim scholars. Similar to al-Ṭabarī, and Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī uses the biblical passages portraying Jesus as a human messenger and argues that the creedal faith contradicts the Christian scripture. On the other hand, al-Qarāfī closely follows Ibn Ḥazm’s polemical discourse, as will be highlighted later, in using biblical texts to expose the inconsistent and contradictory passages he claims can be found in the Torah and the Gospels as examples of *taḥrīf* (alteration of the Bible). He differs from Ibn Ḥazm however when he argues that the terms, ‘father’ and ‘son’ should be interpreted metaphorically. This exegesis will also distinguish al-Qarāfī from Ibn Taymiyya, as will be explained in Chapter Three, with the latter scholar’s opposition to literal-nonliteral distinction in language.

2.4 Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī (d. 1327) and *Jawāb Risālat Ahl Jazīrat Qubruṣ* (*Response to the Letter from the People of Cyprus*)

Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Abī Ṭalīb al-Anṣarī al-Ṣūfī al-Dimashqī, also known as Ibn Shaykh Ḥittīn, was born in 1256 in Damascus.[121] He received the *Letter from the People of Cyprus*-the reworked version of Paul Antioch’s *Letter*- precisely on 11 March 1321 through a

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[120] Al-Qarāfī, *Ajwiba*, 729-730. See also Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 240-241.

[121] D. M. Dunlop, ‘Al-Dimas̲h̲ḳī’, in *EL2*. David Thomas, ‘Ibn Abī Ṭālib Al-Dimashqī’, *CMR4* (Brill, 2012), 798-801. Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 23-25.

Christian merchant, named Kilyām, as he explains.[122] As a response, he wrote *Jawāb Risālat Ahl Jazīrat Qubruṣ* (*Response to the Letter of the People of Cyprus*), hereafter *Jawāb Risāla*, where al-Dimashqī ambitiously answers his opponents' arguments with detailed information and objections.

In this section, it is explained how al-Dimashqī engages with biblical quotations in the *Jawāb Risāla*. He divides the contents of the *Letter* into thirteen sections in which he deals with the main themes of Muslim-Christian polemics: the universal character of Muḥammad's prophethood, the qur'ānic confirmation of Christianity, the alteration of the Torah and the Gospels, the criticism of the Trinity and Incarnation, and the crucifixion.[123]

Al-Dimashqī's argumentation is ambitiously apologetic without leaving any unanswered points of the *Letter*, as has been already noted. Yet, in comparison to al-Qarāfī and Ibn Taymiyya, al-Dimashqī's argumentative discourse lacks scholarly depth, instead reflecting an argumentative style of 'a popular preacher.'[124] This observation becomes also apparent in his use and interpretation of biblical scripture. Although he refers to a wide selection of biblical passages and narratives, which surpasses the numbers used in al-Qarāfī's *Ajwiba* and Ibn Taymiyya's *Jawāb* his interpretation of biblical verses is not elaborate. He briefly explains what the biblical text signifies without offering any linguistic analysis as one encounters in Ibn Taymiyya's exegesis. In other words, al-Dimashqī's use of the Bible is impressive in providing great deal of information on Christian worship practices and prayers, which makes the *Jawāb Risāla* an important source for understanding the scope of Muslim knowledge regarding Christian beliefs and practices but lacks of depth of intellectual argumentation and reasoning.[125]

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[122] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 25-27. Ibn ʿAbī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risālat Ahl Jazīrat Qubruṣ* in, Ebied and Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 149-497. See, pp. 154-155.

[123] For the full elaboration of the thirteen sections, see Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 27-32.

[124] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 32-33. Michel, *Response*, 257.

Al-Dimashqī starts the *Jawāb Risāla* with the *Letter*'s claim that Muḥammad is not announced by earlier revelations and not a universal prophet, being only for pagan Arabs. He devotes the first section to biblical predictions of Muḥammad. He claims that his name is mentioned in seven places in the Torah and the Gospel and, similar to and al-Qarāfī's position, al-Dimashqī does not hesitate to use the biblical text as evidence of Muḥammad's prophecy, while also arguing that the Bible has been altered, as explained in Chapter One. Al-Dimashqī first quotes Deuteronomy 33.2, 'God came (*jāʾa*) from Sinai; he shone (*ashraqa*) from Seir and towered over (*istaʿlā*) the Mount Paran', which is also used by al-Ṭabarī, and al-Qarāfī.[126] Al-Dimashqī explains that Sinai is Moses and the Torah, and where God addressed Moses; Seir is Jesus and the Gospel and the town of Nazareth where Jesus was announced; and Paran is Muḥammad and the Qur'ān since it is Mecca. Similar to al-Ṭabarī and al-Qarāfī's use of this passage to explain the successive history of the revelations, as highlighted earlier, al-Dimashqī quotes the biblical verse to argue that the earlier revelations announced Muḥammad and that his prophethood ended the successive line of the revelations.[127] Al-Dimashqī, quoting the passage a second time, explains further that in Deuteronomy 33.2 'the coming' (*majīʾ*) refers to Moses' law and rule that lasted a long time, whilst 'shining' (*ishrāq*) is about the short period of Jesus' rule and 'towering' (*istiʿlāʾ*) means the arching of the top of a building and refers to the coming of Muḥammad, who towered over the rulings and revelations of Moses and Jesus.[128] Furthermore, al-Dimashqī, adding the expression, 'coming from the myriads of holy ones' to the end of

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[125] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 32-33. See also, Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 188-189 n. 45.

[126] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 162-163.

[127] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 162-163.

[128] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 192-193.

Deuteronomy 33.2 when quoting the second time, explains that each prophet belongs to royalty and nobility. While Moses was from the house of the king of Egypt, Jesus was a descendant of King David, and the Prophet Muḥammad was from the noblest family of Arabs. It is clear from the interpretation of Deuteronomy 33.2 above explained, al-Dimashqī follows the conventional exegesis of the passage, which is also very similar to that of al-Qarāfī. Both of the Muslim scholars interpret Deuteronomy 33.2 to argue that the Bible not only announced Muḥammad's prophethood, but also placed him at the end of the prophetic line, thus announcing him as the last prophet.

Al-Dimashqī continues with other well-known Muslim proof texts, such as Deuteronomy 18.18, 'God will raise up from your brothers a prophet like me,' explaining that the people of Ishmael are the only brothers of the people of Israel. Similar to al-Ṭabarī' and al-Qarāfī's understanding of the passage, al-Dimashqī considers the annunciation of a prophet descending from Ishmael is, in fact, the proclamation of Muḥammad. He underlines this interpretation with Genesis 17.20, 'I will make him [Ishmael] a great nation, *mudhmad* will beget twelve princes' and explains very briefly that Muḥammad is the only prophet who was blessed with a great nation and called *mudhmad*, and 'very greatly praised.'[129] Moving on to the predictions from the Gospels, al-Dimashqī cites another popular proof text which is also used by al-Ṭabarī and al-Qarāfī, John 14.26, 'God will send to you the Paraclete who will teach you all things.' He explains that Paraclete means messenger (*rasūl*) whose characteristic is explained in John 16.7-8, 'He will rebuke the world about justice.'[130] For al-Dimashqī, this messenger is no one other than Muḥammad since Jesus himself announced his coming in John 15.16, 'The Paraclete, who will come after me.'[131]

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[129] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 164-165. On the origin of the word *mudhmad*, see pp. 165 n. 9.

[130] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 166-167. See also pp. 192-193, where al-Dimashqī repeats his interpretation of the Paraclete.

So far, how al-Dimashqī uses the Muslim biblical t*estimonias* and modifies the interpretation and arguments to present his own exegesis has been elaborated upon. Now, examples that he uses to refute the divinity of Jesus are presented. Similar to other Muslim scholars, al-Dimashqī makes use of the Gospels' account of Jesus' childhood and miracles in refuting his divinity. Al-Dimashqī, referring to the Gospels, explains that Jesus slept in a boat and then, was awakened by his disciples (Matthew 8.23-26); he also ate and drank at a wedding as well as sleeping in the house of Simon Peter (Matthew 8.14-15).[132] Furthermore, al-Dimashqī argues that the Gospels are witnesses to the fact that Jesus was a human messenger sent by God, as stated in John 5.30, 'This word is not from me but the One who sent me;' John 7.8, 'They know that you are the One who sent me;' John 8.16, 'The One who sent me;' John 8. 18, 'I witness to myself and God who sent me;' John 5.36, 'It was God who sent me;' Luke 18.19, 'Do not call me good, for the one who is good is God alone;' Luke 22.42, 'Take the cup of this death from me;' and Luke 13.33, 'A prophet (*nabī*) cannot meet his end anywhere but Jerusalem.'[133] All these biblical references, for al-Dimashqī, apparently show that Jesus himself acknowledges that he is God's messenger, especially with the emphasis on the word 'prophet' (*nabī*) as stated in the last biblical quotation. Then, al-Dimashqī cites further biblical verses where Jesus explicitly states that he is the Son of man (Matthew 20.28) and his closeness to death (Matthew 26.38) along with his experience of human feelings, such as distress, strain and anxiety (Matthew 26.41). These biblical passages, for al-Dimashqī, demonstrate that Jesus had experiences like ordinary humans which in turn proves that he cannot be God.[134]

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[131] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 166-167.

[132] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 346-347.

[133] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 378-379.

Similar to al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, and al-Qarāfī's use of Jesus' miracles as proofs of his humanity al-Dimashqī uses and compares the miracles of Jesus with other Prophets in refuting the uniqueness of his miraculous actions. Muslim scholars use the theory of miracles to argue that other Prophets performed miracles, sometimes even more miraculous than those of Jesus' but they were not accepted 'divine.' Similarly, al-Dimashqī contends that whilst earlier prophets demonstrated miracles similar to, even greater than Jesus, they were not considered 'divine' or 'God.' He explains that, for example, the prophets Elijah, Elisha and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37.1-10) raised dead people as Jesus did.[135] Similar to Jesus' feeding a thousand people with eight loaves and two fish (Matthew 14.17), al-Dimashqī points out that Elijah fed people with a small amount of flour and Elisha fed a hundred prophets with a little porridge and bread (II Kings 4.42-44), whilst Moses turned the rivers into blood and parted the sea.[136] The comparative elaboration of the miracles of Jesus explained above shows that the theory of miracles, which possibly is initiated by al-Ṭabarī in the ninth century, is still used in Muslim polemics in the fourteenth century.[137]

Now, al-Dimashqī's interpretation of Genesis 1.2 and 1.26, which Ibn Taymiyya also exegetes in the *Jawāb*, is considered. The biblical verses, Deuteronomy 32.6, 'Your Father who made you,' and Exodus 4.22, 'You are my son,' and Genesis 1.2, 'The Spirit of God was hovering over the water,' are used in the Christian *Letter* to prove that the Trinitarian names originally belong to the biblical language. Arguing against the *Letter*'s defence of hypostatic names 'Father,' 'Son', and 'Holy Spirit', al-Dimashqī reinterprets the biblical passages briefly explaining that 'Father' signifies the meaning of 'Lord' and that Genesis 1.2 should be understood in the light of Q 11.7, 'And His throne was upon the water.'[138] Al-Dimashqī does not elaborate upon these biblical and qur'ānic verses further. However, for al-Dimashqī, Genesis 1.2, 'The Spirit of God was hovering over the water,' presumably refers to God's creation of the world, as explained in the rest of Q 11.7, 'And it is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days.' He also reinterprets Genesis 1.2 by reconceptualising the term 'spirit' in the *Jawāb*. Similar to al-Dimashqī's interpretation, Ibn Taymiyya explains that the biblical verse refers to the initial process of the world's creation. Yet, in comparison to al-Dimashqī's exegesis of the text, he presents a more detailed interpretation, arguing that the word *rūḥ* (spirit) in the text is, in fact, not originally 'spirit;' rather it is *rīḥ* (wind). As will be explained in Chapter Four of the present study, Ibn Taymiyya uses an earlier Muslim interpretation of Genesis 1.2 with an analysis on the Hebrew origin of the words *rūḥ* (spirit) and *rīḥ* (wind).

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[134] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 380-381.

[135] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 384-385.

[136] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 386-387 n14. As already noted by Ebied and Thomas, al-Dimashqī says that Jesus fed people with eight loaves and two fish but this is five loaves and two fish in Matthew 14.17 or seven loaves in Matthew 15.36.

[137] David Thomas, 'The Miracles of Jesus,' 221-223.

When refuting the *Letter*'s explanation of the Incarnate word of God, al-Dimashqī reinterprets Genesis 1.26, 'We intended to create a human (*khalqān*) according to our resemblance (*shibh*) and likeness (*mithāl*).'[139] He explains that the word 'human' (*khalqān*, in al-Dimashqī's quotation) does not refer to Jesus, but rather means that God creates a successor (*khalīfa*). As for the likeness (*mithāl*) and resemblance (*shibh*) mentioned in Genesis 1.26, al-Dimashqī explains that this successor will resemble God only by means of having 'full responsibility' on Earth and with attributes such as, existing, living, knowing, powerful, hearing, and so on. Having said that, al-Dimashqī also carefully notes that there is a clear distinction between the attributes of humans and God. The former has limited (*muqayyid*) ones, while God has the most elevated, eternal, and unlimited (*muṭlaq*) attributes.[140] Al-Dimashqī's point here is that Genesis 1.26 unequivocally refers to the creation of first human rather than a reference applying uniquely to Jesus, with the allusion to his divinity. However, an interesting omission in this interpretation is the ḥadīth text, 'God created Adam in his own image (*ṣūratihi*),' which Ibn Taymiyya uses as an additional intertextual proof in the interpretation of Genesis 1.26. Ibn Taymiyya, similar to al-Dimashqī's interpretation, argues that the word 'human' does not specifically refer to Jesus, but rather, to the creation of the human. However, there is a notable contrast between Ibn Taymiyya and al-Dimashqī's exegesis. While al-Dimashqī focuses on the likeness of the created human to God, with a rigorous emphasis on the distinction between the attributes of God and humans, Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand, strictly notes that there is no 'likeness' between the Creator and created beings. Accordingly, to emphasise this distinction, he analyses the words likeness (*mithāl*) and resemblance (*shibh*), arguing that the former word is not an appropriate expression since it signifies a similarity between God and His creatures and thus, should be replaced by the word 'resemblance.' In other words, the word *mithāl* (likeness) does not constitute a hermeneutical problem for al-Dimashqī as long as one knows that the attributes of the humans are limited and different from those of the divine. Ibn Taymiyya, however, is greatly concerned with the signification of the word *mithāl* (likeness) and argues that the word does not originally belong to the biblical text, which is one of the rare instances where he points to textual change in the Bible. As will be explained in the next section, Ibn Ḥazm also interprets Genesis 1.26 with a similar approach to Ibn Taymiyya, yet he arrives at an almost completely different interpretation. Now, it is sufficient to say here that for Ibn Ḥazm, the words likeness (*mithāl*) and resemblance (*shibh*) are problematic as they signify anthropomorphic meaning in relation to God.

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[138] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 354-355.

[139] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 412-413.

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[140] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 412-413.

Returning to al-Dimashqī's discussion of the terms 'father' and 'son,' he accuses 'the canonists' (*aṣḥāb al-qawānīn*) of introducing doctrinal beliefs (the Trinity and hypostatic union) that are contradictory to both reason and scripture. Al-Dimashqī explains that the Christians rely on John 20.17, 'I am ascending to (*ṣāʿid*) to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God;' Matthew 4.9, 'Our Father who is in the heavens;' and Deuteronomy 32.6, 'Your Father who made you,' to legitimise the theology and terminology of the trinitarian names. He argues that the word 'father' is used in these biblical verses to mean 'lord,' which signifies master, owner, and governor.[141] To illustrate his point, al-Dimashqī notes that the Christians also use the word 'father' for similar meanings when they say, for example, 'O! Father' (*yā abūnā*) to show respect for clergy. Al-Dimashqī further cites the beginning section of the Creed referring to the expressions, 'One God, Governor (*ḍābiṭ*), Creator (*khāliq*) and Maker (*ṣānīʿ*).' He claims that these words clearly signify the meaning of the word 'father,' in that God creates, governs and makes every living thing; yet the Christians use the word 'son' in connection with the word 'father' to describe God 'begetter' and Jesus 'begotten.'[142] Al-Dimashqī further cites Deuteronomy 32.6, 'Your Father who made you,' and maintains that the Christians have erroneously understood the term 'father' as referring to fatherhood in reality, in which case God must be the physical begetter, since God otherwise would not call Himself 'Father,' as al-Dimashqī claims.[143] As can be sensed from the interpretation explained above, he thinks that the Christians interpret these biblical texts focusing on the apparent meaning of the terms 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' without considering the nonliteral signification of the terms, which led them to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity. In fact, al-Dimashqī explicitly states this criticism when he interprets Matthew 28.19, as will be explained below.

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[141] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 212-213 and 332-333.

[142] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 334-335.

[143] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 334-335.

Al-Dimashqī's attitude towards the text of Matthew 28.19 is rather paradoxical. For, while he clearly argues that the biblical verse is 'a lie' against Jesus, he, on the other hand, appears to have an inclination in explaining, albeit very briefly, that the word 'father' means owner, governor, and creator. As explained in Chapter one on the problem of alteration of the Bible, (*taḥrīf*), he cites Matthew 28.19 by replacing the trinitarian names, 'Father, Son, Holy Spirit' with the word the Trinity (*al-thālūth*). Al-Dimashqī argues that the statement, 'Baptise the world in the name of the Trinity (*al-thālūth*),' do not originally belong to Jesus, but rather, it is innovated and attributed to him later.[144] What al-Dimashqī refutes in Matthew 28.19 is the immediate implication of the text that Jesus ordered his disciples to associate (*shirk*) other beings with God. Therefore, he is not necessarily interested in reinterpreting the biblical verse or the terms 'father' and 'son' in the context of Matthew 28.19. In fact, when al-Dimashqī cites Matthew 28.19 for the second time in the *Jawāb Risāla*, he firmly suggests that this biblical verse is an example of the corruption of Jesus' teaching.

When interpreting Matthew 28.19 for a second time, al-Dimashqī interpolates a part from Q 5.73, 'Say the third of three' into the biblical verse. On al-Dimashqī's part, the primary purpose of this interpolation seems to show that what Matthew commands here is, in effect, 'a lie and false mission.'[145] This is a very blunt explanation of Matthew 28.19 in comparison to the interpretation of the terms 'father' and 'son' given by al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, and Ibn Taymiyya, who exegete the terms either with literal (*ḥaqīqa*) or nonliteral (*majāz*) meanings, without rejecting the text or claiming textual corruption. The paradoxical situation noted earlier occurs particularly when al-Dimashqī interprets the terms 'father' and 'son' even though he does not consider the teaching of Matthew 28.19 as originally belonging to Jesus. He explains that 'father' and 'lord' means governor and creator and that fatherhood is only a figurative reference to God's authority as the Creator and Governor over Jesus. He contends further that the sonship of Jesus is only a reference to his humanity since he is 'the son of man' (Matthew 20.28). In other words, Jesus did not claim divinity and acknowledged that he was a human messenger.[146] This is a very basic summary of the well-known Muslim interpretive argument explaining the meanings of the terms 'father' and 'son' metaphorically. Following the traditional argument, al-Dimashqī interprets the term father as signifying that God is the Creator of everything, but he does not relate the term 'son' with that of 'father' in this metaphorical interpretation. In other words, Jesus is named 'son' only to signify his humanity. This brief interpretation lacks the fine details and scrutiny that are present in the discussion of Ibn Taymiyya. As will be highlighted in Chapter Three, Ibn Taymiyya's overall interpretation of the terms 'father' and 'son' is nearly the same as those of al-Qarāfī and Pseudo-Ghazālī in understanding 'father' as God, who is merciful, caring, providing for His messengers and servants, and 'son' as the messenger and prophets, who obey God's will. However, the interpretive strategies of Ibn Taymiyya and the others differ from each other in the other three scholars' calling the terms metaphorical.

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[144] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 290-291 n. 7 and 338-339.

[145] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 430-431.

When reading biblical texts, particularly Matthew 28.19, al-Dimashqī favours the metaphorical (*majāz*) over the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning. This approach is almost the same as that of al-Qarāfī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, although al-Dimashqī does not provide the technical details of the discussion. At this point, al-Dimashqī's main argument, similar to Pseudo-Ghazālī, is that Christians have followed the apparent meaning of the scripture which has led them to misinterpretation.[147] In fact, he claims that the biblical text was translated into Arabic from different languages and during this process the technical language of the Bible was altered. In other words, he argues that terms and names - possibly implying the trinitarian names and terms - were translated into Arabic with the words that the translators chose. Hence, the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meanings of the terms and names do not reflect the original intended meaning.[148] Al-Dimashqī, referring to the literary style of the qur'ānic text, explains that the Qur'ān, similar to the Bible, also contains similes (*amthāl*) and metaphorical expressions (*istiʿārāt*), which are used as intermediaries to reveal God's intended meaning. He notes that these expressions should not be interpreted with their apparent meanings. Drawing parallels between the qur'ānic literary style and that of the Bible, he emphasises that the technical language of the scriptures, either the Bible or the Qur'ān, should not be interpreted merely relying on the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning. This approach sounds similar to Pseudo-Ghazālī's emphasis on not relying solely on apparent meaning for interpretation. However, in al-Dimashqī's discussion, this conviction does not seem to be supported with an exegetical principle as it is the case with Pseudo-Ghazālī, who principally argues that when the apparent meaning of an expression contradicts reason it should be interpreted metaphorically or nonliterally. Al-Dimashqī seems to argue randomly using a well-known reading strategy among Muslim scholars without relying on a theoretical background. An alternative suggestion would be that he does not follow a consistent strategy in reading the biblical text due to his determination to undermine the textual reliability of the Bible, which is noticeable, for example, when he interpolates the words 'Trinity' and 'third of three' into Matthew 28.19. Moreover, his plain interpretation of the terms, 'father' and 'son' is not necessarily different from that of al-Qarāfī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya. However, their uses of the Bible and strategies are distinguished from each other according to their purposes for drawing upon the biblical text.

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[146] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 380-381.

[147] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 338-339.

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[148] Al-Dimashqī, *Jawāb Risāla*, 362-363.

2.5 Ibn Ḥazm and *Kitāb al-Faṣl al-Milal wa-l-ahwāʾ wa-l-niḥal* (*The Book of the Section on Religions, Sects, and Heresies*)

Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd ibn Ḥazm, a Ẓāhirī theologian, jurist, and controversial-individualist thinker, was born in 994 in Cordoba and died in Labla (Neibla) in 1064.[149] In this section, the biblical quotations in Ibn Hazm's work, *Kitāb al-Faṣl al-Milal wa-l-ahwāʾ wa-l-niḥal* (The Book of the Section on Religions, Sects, and Heresies), hereafter *Faṣl*, are analysed. In this massive refutation, which is an unparalled work in Islamic tradition, he not only attacks the Jewish and Christian scriptures, but also, harshly criticises heterodox groups in Islam.[150] Despite the vast scope of the *Faṣl*, the analysis here is limited to biblical verses that are selected from two long sections, also known as *Iẓḥār tabdīl al-yahūd wa-l-naṣāra* (Exposition of the Alteration of [the Torah and the Bible] by Jews and Christians), through which Ibn ḥazm claims to expose textual contradictions in the Bible.[151]

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[149] R. Arnaldez, 'Ibn Ḥazm,' in *EI2*. José M.P. Vílchez, 'Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Ḥazm: A Biographical Sketch,' in *Ibn Hazm of Cordoba: The Life and Works of a Controversial Thinker*, ed. C. Adang, M. Fierro, and S. Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 3-24. Vílchez's study is a recent and detailed account on Ibn Ḥazm's biography and is translated into English by Jeremy Rogers. For other studies on Ibn Ḥazm's life, see Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl al-Milal wa-l-ahwāʾ wa-l-niḥal,* eds., Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUmayra (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1996), 1-5, 3-12; Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, 'Ibn Ḥazm,' *CMR3* (Brill, 2011), 137-139; Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 59-64; Theodore Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Ḥazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1998), 1-11; Ghulam Haider Aasi, *Muslim Understanding of Other Religions: A Study of Ibn Ḥazm's Kitāb Al-Faṣl Fī Al-Milal Wa Al-Ahwā' Wa Al-Niḥal* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 2004). For the Ẓāhirism of Ibn Ḥazm, see Ignaz Goldziher, *The Ẓāhirīs: Their Doctrine and Their History: A Contribution to the History of Islamic Theology*, trans. W. Behn (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 109-155; Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 146-174; Adam Sabra, 'Ibn Ḥazm's Literalism: A Critique of Islamic Legal Theory', in *Ibn Ḥazm of Cordoba: The Life and Works of a Controversial Thinker* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 97-160.

[150] *Faṣl* is partially translated into Spanish in M. Asín Palacios, *Abenházam de Córdoba y su ʿhistoria crítica de las ideas religiosasʾ*, 5 vols. (Madrid, 1927). For the *Faṣl*, see also, Monferrer Sala, 'Ibn Ḥazm,' in *CMR3*, 141-143.

[151] For Arabic text of *Faṣl*, I use Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl al-Milal wa-l-ahwāʾ wa-l-niḥal*, eds., Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUmayra, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1996), 1-5. Also, I have been following a very recent edition of *Faṣl* with a Turkish translation, see Ibn Hazm, *el-Fasl: Dinler ve Mezhepler Tarihi*, tr. Halil Ibrahim Bulut, 3 vols. (Istanbul: Turkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Baskanligi, 2017), 1-3. For Ibn Ḥazm's critique of Jewish scriptures, see *Faṣl* 1.201-329; Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 57-95. As for the critique of Christian scripture, see Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl* 2.13-210; Pulcini, *Exegesis*, 97-128; and

Ibn Ḥazm’s biblical interpretation, which is, in fact, mostly criticism, focuses primarily on exposing inter and intra-textual contradictions, historical and geographical mistakes in the narratives as well as anthropomorphic and blasphemous elements in the Bible. To explain briefly, the main point in Ibn Ḥazm’s exegesis of the Bible is to build the foundations such that it can be argued that biblical scripture is irrecoverably corrupted. However, there are some parts in the Bible, for Ibn Ḥazm, that are preserved from alteration, as already explained in Chapter One on the problem of *taḥrīf* (alteration of the Bible). In this part of the chapter, Ibn Ḥazm’s interpretive explanations on these preserved biblical passages are elucidated upon as well as other selected biblical verses that exemplify the contrast in his approach to biblical interpretation. In the selection of the biblical verses the strategy adopted here is to find similar or the same verses that Ibn Taymiyya also interprets in the *Jawāb* as well as contrasting points between the other four scholars’ and Ibn Ḥazm’s interpretations of the Bible, which it is anticipated will reveal the different features of their biblical interpretation.

Before proceeding with Ibn Ḥazm’s interpretation of biblical verses, there is a question that needs to be addressed. Does Ibn Ḥazm apply his method of Ẓāhirism when he critically analyses the Bible, in particular, to support his argument that biblical texts are contradictory? A thorough answer to this question, of course, is beyond the scope of this section, but it might be useful to mention briefly a few points in light of recent studies that have investigated Ibn Ḥazm’s perception of *ẓāhir*. He is a strong defender of *ẓāhir* (apparent or literal) meanings of words or expressions, arguing that they should be interpreted according to their apparent meaning unless these *ẓāhir* meanings contradict reason. That is to say, if there is no evidence for metaphorical meanings, such as another text from the Qur’ān and ḥadīth or

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Behloul, ‘The Testimony of Reason,’ 457-483. For the structure of the section on Christianity in *Faṣl*, see pp. 460-464.

contradiction of reason, the literal meaning should be considered as the intended one by a speaker.[152] It is important to bear in mind that these rules in determining whether the literal meaning is the intended meaning or not operate in the context of qur'ānic revelation, which, for Ibn Ḥazm, exclusively consists of words and expressions chosen by God. As for biblical revelation, it is clear that these rules do not apply to interpretation since, for Ibn Ḥazm, first of all, the text is not a scripture that is divinely inspired. Yet, a question comes to mind: does Ibn Ḥazm's Ẓāhirism have an underlying effect on his reading of the Bible, not in the way that he reads the Qur'ān, but as a strategic way of eliminating the factual and historical elements of biblical text and serving well his polemic against Christians in the *Faṣl*?

Behloul explains, for example, that Ibn Ḥazm's critical reading of the biblical text is based on two steps: first, reading and interpreting the text literally (i.e. based on *ẓāhir* meaning), 'as it is presented to the eyes' and then, second, 'verify the truthfulness of its message against common sense.'[153] It could be reasonably argued that there are some points in the analysis of Ibn Ḥazm's interpretation of biblical verses that closely parallel Behloul's argument. When Ibn Ḥazm interprets, for example, the definitions of Jesus in John 1.29 and 1.30 as 'lamb' and 'son' of God, he understands the word 'lamb' based on the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning and argues that an animal cannot be attributed to God, only to a human who owns and feeds it for different reasons. It is clear from this explanation that Ibn Ḥazm does not even consider that the word 'lamb' might refer to a metaphorical (nonliteral) meaning here. This point also is observable in his criticism of the biblical text, where Jesus explains to his disciples that they may also perform miraculous deeds like him, if they believe and have faith. As will be explained in what follows, Ibn Ḥazm argues that these texts do not tell the truth regarding Jesus since he really would not mean that his believers would be able to perform miracles even if they did believe, for otherwise he would be a liar. The observation here on Ibn Ḥazm's reading of the biblical verses with a Ẓāhirīst approach is not conclusive, but does serve to illustrate his stance with regard to his strategy in criticism of biblical scripture. Next, there is consideration of Ibn Ḥazm's interpretation of biblical passages.

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[152] Sabra, 'Ibn Ḥazm's Literalism,' 104-105. See also, Goldziher, *The Ẓāhirīs*, 123-14; Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 167-168.

[153] Behloul, 'The Testimony,' 466. In this study, Behloul attempts to link Ibn Ḥazm's wider intellectual framework and his textual criticism of the Bible by questioning the nature of Ibn Ḥazm's thought and the reason of his polemic against the Christian scripture, see pp. 463-464. To do so, Behloul analyses Ibn Ḥazm's another work, entitled *al-Taqrīb li-ḥadd al-manṭiq* (The Approach to the Definition of Logic), on logic to make connection between his perception of 'truth' and 'false' based on Aristotelian logic and the application of this mode of logical reasoning to the reading of biblical text in the *Faṣl*. Brann also makes a connection between Ibn Ḥazm's Ẓāhirism and his critique of Jewish scriptures and its interpretive tradition. See Ross Brann, *Power in the Portrayal: Representations of Jews and Muslims in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 57 n. 17.

The first biblical quotation analysed here is Genesis 1.26, which Ibn Ḥazm uses in the section where he aims to prove that the Torah contains contradictions and divergences. Accordingly, he first quotes Genesis 1.26, 'Let us make (*aṣnaʿu*) the body of Adam like our image (*ṣūratinā*) and our resemblance (*shabahinā*).'[154] He explains that if the word 'our image' were used in the text of the verse alone, then the biblical passage would refer to a correct meaning (*maʿnā ṣaḥīḥ*). He maintains that the word *ṣūratina* (our image) could be interpreted in connection with God by virtue of possessing (*mulk*) and creating (*khalq*) in a similar way to saying, 'This is the work (creation) of God.' For, all created beings, as Ibn Ḥazm continues to explain, including the beautiful and ugly ones, are, in a way, the images of God since God possesses and creates everything. However, the word *shabahinā* (our resemblance), Ibn Ḥazm argues, prevents reinterpretations (*taʾwīlāt*) since this word requires necessarily that Adam, the created being, must resemble God. For Ibn Ḥazm, even rational thinking proves clearly that this exegesis is wrong. He further explains that the words *shibh* (resemblance) and *mithl* (likeness) signify the same meaning. Yet, these words are, in terms of signifying 'resemblance' and 'likeness', not appropriate for using in relation to God. Accordingly, he argues that nothing can resemble or be similar to

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[154] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl* 1.202.

God. He argues that while the word *ṣūratinā* (our image) does not constitute a problem for interpretation, *shabahinā* (our resemblance) is hermeneutically problematic as it implies a likeness between the creator and created beings. Hence, for Ibn Ḥazm, the inappropriate use of the word *shibh* (resemblance) is an example of textual corruption in the biblical text.

Ibn Taymiyya also interprets Genesis 1.26 in a similar way to Ibn Ḥazm by focusing on the words likeness (*mithl*) and resemblance (*shibh*). However, for the former, only the word likeness (*mithl*) problematically refers to a similarity between God and humans in every aspect, whereby it is not theologically appropriate, as stated in Q 42.11, ‘Nothing like unto Him.’ Consequently, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the word resemblance (*shibh*) should be used in the biblical verses instead of the word *mithl* since resemblance indicates only a few similar aspects between the two things. Regarding the difference between the meanings of resemblance and likeness, Ibn Taymiyya explains that some Muslim scholars accept *mithl* and *shibh* as signifying the same meaning, like Ibn Ḥazm, as explained above, while others contend that these two words have different meanings. This will be covered in detail in Chapter 4, but it is now sufficient to say that Ibn Taymiyya insistently argues that the word *mithl* (likeness), in Genesis 1.26, should be replaced with the word *shibh* (resemblance), while for Ibn Ḥazm both of the words are obstacles in the way of interpretation. It is also important to note that for both of the scholars the word *ṣūratinā* (our image) is susceptible to interpretation and does not necessarily imply an inappropriate meaning in relation to God. Yet, while Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Ḥazm arrive at almost the same interpretation by different methods, the latter uses Genesis 1.26 as an example of textual alteration, thus not being interpretable, whilst the former does not see a problem in the wording of the passage as long as the word *mithl* (likeness) is replaced with *shibh* (resemblance). They are similar in analysing the significances of the words but differ in understanding the text.

As explained in the earlier sections, al-Ṭabarī, al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī include the theme of Jesus' miracles in their work when rebutting his divine status. The crux of their argument is that the earlier Prophets performed miracles even greater ones than those of Jesus and thus, his miraculous deeds cannot be used as proofs for his divinity. Otherwise, this requires other prophets to be considered as being also divine like him.[155] Ibn Ḥazm, however, unlike the other four scholars, uses the biblical verses where Jesus' miracles are mentioned to point out the contradictions in them. He refers to the biblical verses in which Jesus calls the disciples to the faith. For example, he cites Matthew 17.20-21, where Jesus explains to his disciples that they could move mountains with the power of faith. Similarly, he quotes Matthew 21.21-22, where Jesus says to a fig tree, 'Let no fruit grow on you ever again' (Matthew 21.19) and the tree withers away.[156] Jesus tells his disciples, as Ibn Ḥazm explains, if they have strong faith without any doubt they could perform the same miracle and even greater ones (John 14.12).[157] Ibn Ḥazm claims that if the disciples believed in Jesus, then he would be lying since his disciples would never able to perform the deeds mentioned above. On the other hand, if the disciples did not believe in him, then they would become unbelievers, in which case it would not be permissible to believe in what was transmitted from them.[158] Here, Ibn Ḥazm's primary purpose is to reject the biblical verses as the disciples of Jesus never performed such miracles. Otherwise, accepting these passages as reliable texts requires Jesus to be a 'liar', which is an inappropriate attribute for a prophet, as Ibn Ḥazm claims. This reading, of course, seems to be based on the apparent meaning of Jesus' expressions in the verses when these are taken at face value. Here, Ibn Ḥazm, appears to interpret Jesus' words as that he literally meant that his disciples in reality could move mountains, if they had faith.

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[155] Thomas, 'The Miracles,' 221-243.

[156] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.97-98.

[157] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.98.

[158] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.98-99.

In terms of using Jesus' miracles as proof of his prophethood, there is a clear distinction between Ibn Ḥazm and al-Ṭabarī, al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Taymiyya. As noted earlier, while the others use biblical verses in which the miracles of Jesus are mentioned to prove that he was a human prophet performing miracles similar to earlier ones, Ibn Ḥazm cites the same and other passages to argue that the biblical verses been altered and thus, questions the reliability of the texts. The above has shown how Ibn Ḥazm and the others independently put the biblical texts in use in accordance with their argumentation. Regardless of the conclusions at which Muslim scholars try to arrive, they either reinterpret the biblical verses to argue for the humanity and prophethood of Jesus or reject the verses, arguing that the divinity of Jesus a corrupted belief based on an altered scripture.

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated that Ibn Ḥazm, unlike the other scholars, does not necessarily rely on biblical passages to strengthen his arguments. However, the following discussion will show how he cites some biblical passages to prove that Jesus is a human prophet. This will highlight the contrasting points in Ibn Ḥazm's attitude towards the biblical text. Whilst he mainly treats the biblical verses with very strong criticism. he occasionally utilises them in accordance with his purposes. Citing Matthew 24.36, 'No-one knows about this [the Hour] neither the angels nor anyone except the Father,' and Mark 13.32, 'From today till the Hour no-one knows after this, neither the angels in the heaven nor the Son of man, except the Father,' Ibn Ḥazm argues that these verses necessarily require that Jesus is a being distinct from God.[159] For him, Jesus here acknowledges that he does not know the Hour when God does. This indicates decisively, for Ibn Ḥazm, that the Son is a different being and distinct from the Father. In his eyes, this necessitates two gods and one of them is imperfect in terms of not knowing the time of the Judgment Day. He contends that this interpretation proves Jesus to be distinct from God, which necessarily requires that the former is a created (*makhlūq*) and educated (*marbūb*) being. From Ibn Ḥazm's perspective, these biblical passages disprove the Christian belief that Jesus is divine.

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[159] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.119-120.

Moreover, Ibn Ḥazm cites Luke 24.13-25, which narrates the dialogue between Jesus and two disciples after the resurrection. According to his version of the narration, when Jesus asked the disciples what they were speaking about, they responded, 'The things (reports) about Jesus of Nazareth who was a (human) prophet' (Luke 24.19).[160] Ibn Ḥazm argues that in this narrative, Jesus heard his disciples saying that he was a prophet and did not deny this. The significance of his interpretation comes from Ibn Ḥazm's willingness to utilise the biblical verses as textual proofs. Contrary to his common attitude of arguing for textual corruption, Ibn Ḥazm, in this case, interprets the biblical text without any explicit or implicit accusation of scriptural corruption (*taḥrīf*). When arguing that Jesus is not divine, but a human, Ibn Ḥazm further cites Matthew 26.39, 'O my Father! Everything is possible for you; release this cup [death] from me but I do not ask my will, I do ask your will' and Matthew 27.46, 'My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?'[161] Ibn Ḥazm argues that it is inappropriate to attribute these depictions to a divine being since a god would not pray or cry for help, or there would not be a god who is left by God. He tries to demonstrate the incompatibility between the content of the biblical passages and the Christian belief that Jesus is God.[162] Here, the verses that Ibn Ḥazm adduces to prove his arguments and the final interpretation he arrives at is markedly similar to that of, al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn

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[160] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.157-158.

[161] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.159.

[162] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.159-160.

Taymiyya. All these scholars employ biblical verses, where Jesus is described as having weaknesses or human feelings like other ordinary humans. Similar to the preceding examples, Ibn Ḥazm here cites the biblical verses to underline his claim and interprets the texts without questioning the soundness of the passages. In these specific examples, Ibn Ḥazm and the other four Muslim scholars use the same or similar biblical passages and conclude with the same exegesis that the Bible acknowledges that Jesus is a human prophet. In addition to the biblical verses cited above, like Pseudo-Ghazālī, Ibn Ḥazm quotes John 8.40, 'I am a man who come to you with the truth I heard from God,' and explains that this passage clearly confirms that Jesus was a man who brought what he received.[163] He also cites Matthew 12.18, 'This is my chosen boy (*ghulām*) and the beloved one I have chosen,' and maintains that this passage is textual evidence of Jesus' prophethood and servanthood.[164] As the last example of this discussion, Ibn Ḥazm's exposition on Luke 4.24 is put forward as one of the rare examples of the biblical verses preserved from textual alteration. He argues that, in the passage, 'I tell you, none of the prophets are well accepted in their homeland,' Jesus clearly asserts his prophethood and that God preserved this text as a counter-proof against Christians.[165] With this interpretation, Ibn Ḥazm presents the biblical verse as textually intact serving God's will of saving messages in Jewish and Christian revelations as a warning.

The examples presented so far have shown that Ibn Ḥazm uses some of the biblical passages as they certainly have probative value, and thus support his argumentation. It has also been demonstrated that Ibn Ḥazm mainly rejects the biblical text claiming it is an unreliable source of information. The next example, shows a different way in which he chooses to use the Bible to the ways illustrated above. In the section where Ibn Ḥazm explains the details of life after death in heaven, he notes that he had a debate with a Christian jurist, who used to come to his lectures, regarding whether there would be drink, such as water and wine for humans in heaven. When he argues that humans will be rewarded with clothes, the variety of drinks and foods in an environment surrounded by trees and rivers in heaven, the Christian judge opposes this. Ibn Ḥazm challenges his Christian opponent by quoting Matthew 26.29 in which Jesus tells his disciples, when dining with them, 'I will not drink this [wine] with you ever again until the day you will drink it with me in the kingdoms of God,' and Luke 16.24, 'O! my Father, O! Abraham, send Lazarus to me with some water so I can moisten my tongue.'[166] Ibn Ḥazm argues that these verses prove that there will be drinks, such as water and wine in heaven. He also notes that upon his response with citing the biblical verses, the Christian judge became silent and withdrew from the discussion.[167] In this interpretation, Ibn Ḥazm neither rejects the biblical verses nor approves the textual reliability as he has done with other passages in the examples shown above. Rather, he seems to employ these texts this time as proofs on the grounds that they are evidential for a Christian even though he apparently does not consider them reliable proofs. This kind of strategic and pragmatic use of biblical texts clearly demonstrates his strategies for employing the Bible in the wider framework of his biblical exegesis.

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[163] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.191.

[164] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.191.

[165] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.151.

Now, Ibn Ḥazm's argument that the Prophet is foretold in the Bible is considered.[168] This contention reflects, once more, Ibn Ḥazm's ambivalent approach to the biblical text similar to his interpretations of biblical passages explained so far. Whilst he explicitly argues in the further sections of the *Faṣl* that the Torah and any other Jewish writings cannot be used to prove the validity of a religion, the proper transmission (*naql*) of a miracle, and the affirmation of a prophet, he, nevertheless, cites a few passages to demonstrate biblical proofs of Muḥammad's prophecy.[169] As explained earlier, Ibn Ḥazm's justification for adducing the Bible for textual evidence is that God preserved these biblical *testimonia* from corruption as they are proofs (*ḥujjāt ʿalā*) against Jews and Christians.[170] Unlike his detailed elaboration on biblical proofs of Muḥammad's prophethood in *al-Uṣūl wa-l-furūʾ* (*The Roots and the Branches*), Ibn Ḥazm cites just three biblical verses that are widely used in Muslim writings.[171] Adang explains the reason for the paucity of verses in the *Faṣl* as Ibn Ḥazm's intention to prove to Muslims the unreliability of the Bible, thus preferring to avoid extensive quoting of biblical *testimonia* even though he does use them in *al-Uṣūl*.[172] It is most likely the case that he relies on Ibn Qutayba's (d. 889) list of biblical *testimonia*.[173] He first cites Deuteronomy 18.18, 'I will raise a prophet for the people of Israel from among their brothers,' and explains that the description given in the passage undoubtedly points to Muḥammad, since the brothers of the nation of Israel are the nation of Ishmael.[174] Here, Ibn Ḥazm's brief interpretation of Deuteronomy 18.18 is exactly the same as that given by the four other scholars, as highlighted earlier in this chapter. Similar to these Muslim scholars, Ibn Ḥazm understands this prediction as referring to the Prophet Muḥammad, as he is the only descendant of Ishmael who fulfilled this prophecy.[175]

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[166] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.261.

[167] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.261.

[168] For this section see Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.177-200.

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[169] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.303-305. See also Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 247.

[170] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.314-315.

[171] Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 59-66. See also pp. 159-162. For an investigation on Ibn Ḥazm's use of biblical quotations in his *al-Uṣūl wa-l-furūʾ* and the translation of some passages, see Camilla Adang, 'Some Hitherto Neglected Biblical Material in the Work of Ibn Hazm,' *Al-Masāq Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 5, 1 (1992): 17-28.

[172] Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 159-160. For the comparative list of the biblical verses cited both in Ibn Ḥazm's *Uṣūl* and *Faṣl*, see pp. 264-266 (Appendix Two). Adang, 'Some Hitherto,' 18.

[173] Adang notes that there is a link between Ibn Ḥazm' biblical proof texts and Ibn Qutayba 's ʿAlām al-*nubuwwa*. Adang, 'Some Hitherto,' 17-18.

[174] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.194.

[175] For the interpretation of Deuteronomy 18.18 in *Uṣūl*, see Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Uṣūl wa-l-furūʾ*, ed., ʿAbd al-ḥaqq al-Tarkamānī, (Beirut: Dār al-Ibn Ḥazm, 2011), 124-125. See also Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 160; Adang, 'Some Hitherto,' 19.

Ibn Ḥazm quotes another well-known Muslim *testimonium* Deuteronomy 33.2, 'God came (*jāʾa*) from Mount Sinai; He shone (*ashraqa*) from Seir; He became manifest (*istaʿlana*) from Mount Paran.'[176] Again, Ibn Ḥazm, following the traditional interpretation of this *testimonia*, maintains that Sinai is the place where Moses was sent; Seir is the place to which Jesus was sent; Paran, without doubt, is Mecca, where Muḥammad received his prophetic mission. Following the same argument used by al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Ḥazm further contends that the clear signification (*bayān*) of this text is that Abraham settled Ishmael in the region of Paran (Genesis 21.21). For Ibn Ḥazm, it is an undisputable fact that Ishmael lived in Mecca, which unambiguously proves that Muḥammad is the one predicted in Deuteronomy 33.2.[177]

Ibn Ḥazm further cites a prayer attributed to Jesus, 'O my God! Send a Paraclete [to these people] so that the people may know that the Son of Man (*Ibn al-bashar*) is a human (*insān*)', which, for Ibn Ḥazm, is an utmost clarification (*qhāyat al-bayān*) of not only the prediction of Muḥammad, but also, the humanity of Jesus.[178] He maintains that Jesus knew that his nation might exaggerate in claiming the sonship of Jesus, thus he prayed to God and asked Him to send a prophet who would explain to the world that Jesus was not God, but only a human born from a woman. The prophet Muḥammad, as Ibn Ḥazm claims, is the only Prophet that came after Jesus and explained that the latter was only a human messenger.[179]

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[176] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.194.

[177] Ibn Ḥazm, *Uṣūl*, 124; Adang, 'Some Hitherto,' 19, and by the same author, *Muslim Writers*, 160.

[178] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.195-196.

[179] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.195-196. In *Uṣūl*, Ibn Ḥazm devotes a small section on biblical predictions of Muḥammad in the Gospels. He cites the verses from John's Gospel that mention the name 'Paraclete' such as John 14.15-21 and 15.26-27. For Ibn Ḥazm's other quotations from the Gospels, see *Uṣūl*, 127-132. For a recent study that investigates the emergence of biblical *testimonia* text with the name Paraclete in Muslim writings through the example of Ibn Isḥāq's use of John 15.23 and 16.1, see Sean W. Anthony, 'Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete: New Light on Ibn Isḥāq's (d. 150/767) Arabic Version of John 15: 23–16: 1 1,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79, 2 (June 2016): 255-278.

The last discussion of the present section is Ibn Ḥazm's interpretation of the terms, 'son' and 'father.' As explained so far, the other four Muslim scholars of this chapter attempt to interpret these terms metaphorically and use biblical verses as intra-textual proofs for their discussion. In doing so, these scholars rely on the biblical text without rejecting the use of the word 'father' in relation to God even though some of them categorically argue for *taḥrīf* (textual alteration) for the majority of the biblical text. Unlike this approach, Ibn Ḥazm strongly criticises, as explained next, the attribution of fatherhood to God regardless of whether the term is interpreted metaphorically (nonliterally) or literally. In dealing with the trinitarian names, the Son, and the Father, Ibn Ḥazm's main purpose is to demonstrate the inappropriateness of this terminology rather than proposing a reinterpretation as the others and Ibn Taymiyya do.

Ibn Ḥazm allocates a very brief section of the *Faṣl* to the discussion on naming God as 'father' and he specifically cites the biblical verses in which Jesus himself refers to this.[180] The primary objection is to show that these verses are contradictory and that the text was altered since Jesus would not call God 'father.' He quotes Matthew 6.9, 'Our heavenly (*samāwī*) Father, Glorified be your name,' Matthew 6.32, 'Your Father knows that you will need all these,' and John 20.17, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'[181] Then, Ibn Ḥazm, without giving any particular interpretation of these texts, argues that there is no difference between the sonship of other beings and that of Jesus. Here, he implies that Jesus used the word 'father' not only for himself, but also, for other beings. He claims that God is exalted above being a Father to anyone and having a son, whether this son is Jesus or other beings.[182] Furthermore, Ibn Ḥazm attests that in the Gospels Jesus repeatedly named himself as 'the Son of man' (*ibn al-bashar*), which negates the biblical verses where he is depicted as either God or the Son of God.[183] As can be seen from this elaboration, Ibn Ḥazm straightforwardly rejects the use of the terms father and son in relation to God. He seems to argue that the sonship of Jesus is not unique to him, but rather, he is the son of God by means of being a servant to God like any other created being, Ibn Ḥazm, nevertheless, does not employ the biblical verses as a proof text with some sense of textual reliability. This observation becomes clearer in his use of John 20.17, 'My Father, your Father and my God and your God.' Al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, Al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Taymiyya use this particular biblical verse in their discussion of the sonship of Jesus to prove that he did not distinguish himself from other beings in terms of being a son to God or God being a father to humans. John 20.17 is a strong proof text for these four Muslim scholars to reinterpret the terms 'father' and 'son' in the context of the Bible. However, this is not the case with Ibn Ḥazm. He cites John 20.17, again with an individual standpoint, to strengthen his argument that such vocabulary for God, is not theologically and rationally appropriate. Thus, he argues that the biblical texts that use the words 'father' and 'son' in connection to God are examples of *taḥrīf al-lafẓ*, textual alteration that occurred in the Bible.[184]

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[180] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.51.

[181] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.51.

[182] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.51.

Ibn Ḥazm's objection to the use of the terms 'father' and 'son' in connection with God, is more apparent when he interprets Matthew 23.9, 'You are brothers, you cannot be genealogically affiliated with a father since your heavenly Father is only one'.[185] He explains that God is described in the passage as the Father of Jesus' disciples, which indicates that they are equally sons of God just as Jesus is and hence, sonship does not uniquely apply to him. This argument, in fact, sounds very similar to that of the other Muslim scholars who metaphorically interpret the sonship as a general characteristic of prophethood. Yet, Ibn Ḥazm here only polemically employs this argument, for in reality, he strictly opposes the attribution of fatherhood to God.[186]

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[183] For his claim, Ibn Ḥazm does not provide any biblical references, see *Faṣl*, 2.53.

[184] Martin Accad, 'The Ultimate Proof-Text: The Interpretation of John 20.17 in Muslim-Christian Dialogue (Second/Eighth-Eight/Fourteenth Centuries),' in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 199–214. Here, Accad investigates the use of John 20.17 in various Muslim works.

[185] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.113.

In Ibn Ḥazm's critical elaboration on the use of the terms 'son' and 'father', it can be seen that unlike other scholars, he does not refer to the similar vocabulary in the Hebrew Bible. Al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī interpret these terms in the light of the biblical verses even though they hold the same view as Ibn Ḥazm that the biblical text has been altered. With intra-textual proofs, al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī point out the link between the vocabulary of the Jewish and Christian scripture and cite, for instance, Exodus 4.22, 'Firstborn son,' and Psalm 2.7, 'My son.' Ibn Ḥazm, however, uses Psalm 2.7, 'You are my son, today I have begotten you,' to argue that the biblical text is an example of Jewish unbelief similar to that of Christians.[187] For Ibn Ḥazm, the depiction of Jesus as 'the Son' is not consistently used throughout the context of the Bible. He explains, for example, that Jesus is described as 'the lamb (*kharūf*) of God' in John 1.29 and 'the Son of God' in John 1.34.[188] He argues that describing Jesus, who is also God, as lamb and son at the same time is irrational and that these two biblical verses are contradictory to each other.

For Ibn Ḥazm, one of the main contradictions of the Gospels regarding the sonship of Jesus is that they ambivalently depict Jesus as 'Son of God' on the one hand, and 'Son of Man,' on the other. In comparison to the other four Muslim scholars, Ibn Ḥazm prefers to point out these two different titles of Jesus as proofs of textual alteration. As has been explained so far, al-Qarāfī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, Dimashqī, and Ibn Taymiyya also use the contrast between the titles of Jesus as the Son of God and of man. Yet, they differently argue that while the Son of God metaphorically - with the exception of Ibn Taymiyya on this point - refers to an honorary status of Jesus before God and that this is misinterpreted by Christians as referring to the divinity of Jesus. The title 'the son of man,' on the other hand, is textual evidence found in the Bible that underlines the metaphorical interpretation of 'the Son of God.' In other words, for the other Muslim scholars, these two titles do not contradict each other.

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[186] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.113.

[187] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 1.307.

[188] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.171-173.

Ibn Ḥazm not only objects to the use of the term 'son' for Jesus, but also, for any other beings particularly when the word is used in relation to God. Referring to John 10.30, where Jesus explains to Jews, who accused him of claiming to be God, that the word 'son' is used also for other humans in the Torah (Psalm 82.6), Ibn Ḥazm challenges Christians as to whether Jesus is not the only Son of God.[189] For him, other humans, as Jesus explicitly stated in John 10.30, are also the sons of God. Ibn Ḥazm further claims that if other humans' sonship is to be interpreted metaphorically, then that of Jesus should also be interpreted in the same way. However, this is only rhetorical questioning as Ibn Ḥazm favours neither metaphorical (nonliteral) nor literal interpretation of this term. For him, naming any other human as 'son of God' in terms of connecting created beings to God in a specific relation, is theologically inappropriate, leading to blasphemy and unbelief. Again, Ibn Ḥazm here differs from other scholars' strategy in interpreting the titles 'son' and 'father.' While the other four Muslim scholars use the argument that other beings are also named 'son' in the Bible and thus, this title is not uniquely ascribed to Jesus. Ibn Ḥazm, on the other hand, claims that these titles connote an anthropomorphic meaning regardless of whether they are used to signify a literal or metaphorical one.

To sum up, Ibn Ḥazm, like al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī, argues that there has been substantial textual alteration in the Bible. Yet, he defends this position more strictly than the other two scholars. Having said that, Ibn Ḥazm also uses some biblical passages as textual proofs to underline his argumentation in the *Faṣl*. In terms of using biblical texts to prove that Jesus was only a human messenger and that Muḥammad was foretold in the Bible, he, al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī have similar approaches. They all paradoxically use the Bible as a supporting text, while they also claim that the Bible has been altered and not a reliable source of information. Ibn Ḥazm differs from them, on the other hand, when discussing the terms, 'father' and 'son.' He rejects the reinterpretation of these terms in relation to God as signifying any meaning regardless of whether this is literal or nonliteral, while al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī are inclined to claim these terms as being nonliteral (*majāz*), which should be interpreted nonliterally. Ibn Taymiyya, of course, presents a different position on this matter, arguing for a contextual reading of the Bible, as will be explained in the next chapter.

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[189] Ibn Ḥazm, *Faṣl*, 2.193-194.

2.6 Conclusion

This investigation of the polemical and apologetic works of five different Muslim scholars from ninth to fourteenth centuries has shown that the Bible has a central place in Muslim-Christian polemics, regardless of whether the Christian scripture is a text that has an authority for Muslim polemicists. As one of the earliest scholars that composed a refutation against Christianity, in fact against his former religion, al-Ṭabarī quotes extensively from the Bible in his *Radd* with the purpose of demonstrating that the Christian creed has no organic relation to Christian scripture. To deny the deity of Jesus Christ, he selectively uses biblical passages describing Jesus as a 'servant' (Matthew 12.18), 'son of Abraham' (Matthew 1.1), especially the ones where Jesus himself appears to confirm that he was distinct from (Matthew 26.39) and dependent on God (Matthew 27.46) and that a human messenger (Matthew 13.37) sent by (John 6.38-39) and subordinate to God (John 20.17 and Matthew 10.40-41), who is the only deity

(Matthew 23.9). In his selection of biblical texts, al-Ṭabarī does not address the biblical passages, where Jesus is depicted as divine, that are reinterpreted with a metaphorical reading by Pseudo-Ghazālī in *al-Radd al-jamīl*.

Most of the arguments used by al-Ṭabarī such as using biblical texts mentioning human needs like sleeping, eating, and feeling vulnerable that Jesus experienced, reoccur in Pseudo-Ghazālī's scriptural argumentation. Likewise, Pseudo-Ghazālī uses the miracles of Jesus in a similar way to al-Ṭabarī, as signs of his prophecy, not divinity. He differs, on the other hand, from al-Ṭabarī with his elaborate interpretation of many passages from the Gospel of John in which Jesus appears to confirm his unity with God (John 10.30), along with other Johannine texts where Jesus is described as 'God' (Ephesians 1. 16-17). Pseudo-Ghazālī reinterprets these texts metaphorically to show that Jesus' union with God is only meant figuratively in the Bible to refer to his submission and obedience to God. The primary purpose of Pseudo-Ghazālī's exegetical activity in *al-Radd al-jamīl* is to demonstrate that creedal teaching describing Jesus as 'God' contradicts the Bible. Pseudo-Ghazālī is also different from al-Ṭabarī and the other three Muslim scholars in not employing biblical proof texts for the prophecy of Muḥammad in his *al-Radd al-jamīl*. It is likely that this might be due to the author's purpose of limiting his discourse to refuting the divinity of Jesus. Likewise, this also might be connected to the author's neutral position on controversial matters, such as *taḥrīf* (alteration of the Bible).

Al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī, in a similar way to al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, appeal to biblical texts where Jesus' lack of strength and dependence on God, and human feelings he experienced, like other ordinary humans, are mentioned to show that God and Jesus are not equal and Jesus is distinct from God, and thus, he cannot be divine. Likewise, al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī, following the argument initiated by al-Ṭabarī, use the miracles of Jesus as confirmation of his prophecy. Al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī also are interested in biblical proof texts and use some widely circulated ones which are also present in al-Ṭabarī's testimonia list in his *Kitāb*. The main characteristic of al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī's scriptural argumentation is polemical focusing on producing counter arguments against their Christian opponent whom they both respond to. Al-Qarāfī's interest in biblical texts is largely shaped by his Muslim sources on which he heavily relies for both biblical quotations and interpretation. Al-Dimashqī's interest in biblical exegesis focuses mostly on providing a great number of details on Christian prayers, liturgies, and festivals, which are not present in such detailed form in other four scholars' discussions, as well as in that of Ibn Taymiyya.

Ibn Ḥazm, on the other hand, shows a different scriptural argumentation by employing the majority of biblical texts to expose altered passages in the Bible. However, he occasionally uses the same or similar biblical texts as the other four scholars to argue that the humanity of Jesus is clearly expressed in some parts of the Bible and that Muḥammad's prophecy is announced in the scripture, which are the texts preserved from alteration (*taḥrīf*).

The synopsis of the five Muslim scholars' use of biblical texts in selected polemical and apologetic works has shown that there is a continuity in the arguments used, texts, and exegesis. It is also observable that there is a progression in Muslim exegesis of biblical texts from a brief explanation of the texts to a more elaborate and detailed interpretation. This is most obvious in the interpretation of the well-known biblical proof text, Deuteronomy 33.2. Al-Ṭabarī gives a brief interpretation linking Mount Paran mentioned in the verse with Ishmael and claiming the text as an indirect prophecy for Muḥammad. Later scholars, such as Ibn Ḥazm, al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī give a more detailed interpretation explaining the verbs used in the text as indicative metaphors of successive history of the three religions and arguing that Muḥammad is the last prophet and Islam is the last religion.

The most apparent feature of these five Muslim scholars' biblical interpretation is that they eclectically use texts in accordance with the expediency of scriptural argumentation. They utilise biblical texts with minimal attention to what the texts might signify when considered within the wider context of the scripture. One of the main interpretive strategies used in these polemics is to decontextualise biblical quotations and reinterpret within an Islamic framework. This strategy especially is apparent in the Muslim scholars' interpretation of the terms, 'father' and 'son.' Al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī argues that the title 'son' should be interpreted nonliterally whereas Ibn Ḥazm categorically opposes the use of these two titles in connection to God. An analytical discussion on this matter will be provided in Chapter Five but, it suffices now to note that Ibn Taymiyya is considerably different from all five Muslim scholars in his interpretive strategy even though he arrives at almost the same interpretation as they do.

Chapter 3 Philology and Context Oriented Interpretation

The previous chapter investigated the five Muslim scholars' interpretations of biblical passages used in their polemical works. In doing so, it has been shown that all of these scholars, except Ibn Ḥazm, advocate a nonliteral reading of the Bible, particularly of the terms, 'father' and 'son.' Differing from the other four scholars, Ibn Ḥazm, as a Ẓāhirī scholar, primarily reads biblical texts with a literalist approach based on the apparent meanings of the passages and rejects the majority of biblical verses arguing that they sound irrational and contain historical misinformation. The foregoing chapter has had an important role in forming a framework for understanding Ibn Taymiyya's different and individual approach to the Bible.

This chapter analyses Ibn Taymiyya's use of biblical quotations and specifically focuses on linguistic and grammatical exegesis. The present chapter is important in showing that Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutical strategy is different from that of the five Muslim scholars whom this study has focused on so far. He uses and modifies the hermeneutics of Islamic legal theory in order to apply this strategy to his biblical interpretation. To demonstrate this, the chapter investigates key terms and concepts, such as *ḥaqīqa-majāz* (literal-nonliteral), *ẓāhir* (apparent), and *muṭlaq-muqayyad* (unqualified-qualified), and *iẓhār-iḍmār* (explicit-ellipsis) that Ibn Taymiyya borrows from Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and utilises as interpretive tools. Therefore, I will first analyse how the terms are employed in the Islamic hermeneutic tradition in general and then in the Taymiyyan interpretive framework in particular. This will be followed by the presentation of how Ibn Taymiyya applies the terms to the interpretation of biblical texts. This chapter will reveal that Ibn Taymiyya explains and interprets biblical texts in a significantly similar way to his strategy in reading qur'ānic texts.

3.1 Matthew 28.19: Equivocal-Univocal (*mushtarak- mutawāṭi'*) Terms in the Context of the Trinity

Matthew 28.19 is the primary text of Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of the Trinity in the *Jawāb*. He aims to subvert Christian interpretation of Matthew 28.19, 'Go and baptise in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit' by rational arguments and scriptural proofs. For Ibn Taymiyya, context-based reading of the verse will reveal the true interpretation for Christians, who altered the meaning by deeply engaging in metaphorical and allegorical exegesis of the text, or *taʾwīl*, as he puts it. He claims that the textual and contextual readings of Jesus' statements will lead Christians to see their erroneous interpretation. Primarily based on the claim that biblical texts do not support the tri-theism of Christians (Ibn Taymiyya's accusation), Ibn Taymiyya makes use of Matthew 28.19 as an example of the corruption of meaning, *taḥrīf al-maʿnā*.

This part of the present work will explain Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Matthew 28.19, with a particular emphasis on the linguistic implications of the verse, which leads to investigation of the function of the technical terms *mushtarak* (equivocal) and *mutawāṭi'* (univocal) in the context of the Trinitarian formula. I will also provide brief background information on the well-known dichotomy *ḥaqīqa-majāz* (literal-nonliteral) in Islamic discourse to understand the reason behind Ibn Taymiyya's rationale in choosing the terms *mushtarak-mutawāṭiʾ* as a counter argument against the allegorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of Christians.

3.1.1 The Application of Equivocal-Univocal (*mushtarak and mutawāṭi'*) Terms to Exegesis as an Alternative way for the Application of Literal-Nonliteral (*ḥaqīqa-majāz*) Terms

In the following, I explain the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* and their related pair *mushtarak-mutawāṭiʾ*, which are used in Islamic legal and qur'ānic hermeneutics. I set out how Ibn Taymiyya utilises these hermeneutical pairs when he engages with biblical texts in general and the interpretation of the Trinitarian names in particular. Muslim exegetes employ the theory of *ḥaqīqa-majāz*, particularly when textual ambiguity does not allow the reader to determine the intended meaning of the speaker. The rationale behind the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* theory is to identify new possible meanings by relying on the context when the literal meaning does not sufficiently reveal the intention of the speaker. Distinguishing between literal and nonliteral meaning, based on conventional use of the word in question, introduces a certain distinction between the meanings of a word. This distinction then necessarily requires a diversion from the immediate sense of the word in the interpretation process, which is exactly why Ibn Taymiyya strictly opposes the well-established *ḥaqīqa-majāz* dichotomy.

He does not accept that a word has one primordial language-based meaning called literal (*ḥaqīqa*), while all other meanings may be regarded as nonliteral (*majāz*). Accordingly, he informs us that when a word is used more than once in a single context, its meaning should be understood within that given context, regardless of whether the word is used to signify *ḥaqīqī* or *majāzī* meaning. That is to say, the context and other extra-linguistic factors (i.e. the speaker's habitual speech) convey the intended meaning, and then the *ḥaqīqī* meaning (literal meaning in the mainstream terminology; intended meaning in Ibn Taymiyya's terminology) will become apparent. However, if one encounters the multiple use of a word in a single context and does not have any contextual and extra-linguistic indicator to divert the meaning to other meanings, then this should be probably considered as signifying a univocal meaning (*mutawāṭi'*). Otherwise, assigning different meanings to the word in each instance, whilst accepting the word as *majāz* (nonliteral), or *mushtarak* (equivocal) - a subcategory of *majāz* -, might result in textual ambiguity and thus, leads the reader into allegorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*). For Ibn Taymiyya, this is the main reason that led to Christians misinterpreting scripture or in other words, *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (corruption of meaning). This part of the study will show that for Ibn Taymiyya, there is no distinction between literal and nonliteral (*ḥaqīqa-majāz*) meanings of a word in divine speech. Consequently, there is no room for metaphorical or figurative exegesis of scripture. The context is the primary element that determines the intended meaning.

The *ḥaqīqa-majāz* dichotomy has a long history in Islamic discourse. *Majāz* (nonliteral) as an independent term already had a reputation among Muslim scholars well before its emergence as one of the pairs of literal-nonliteral meaning paradox. Whilst the term *majāz* gained slightly nuanced meanings in the context of the fields of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islamic Legal theory), *tafsīr* (qur'ānic exegesis) and *ʿilm al-lugha* (lexicography), it became an inseparable partner of the term *ḥaqīqa* (literal) in theoretical discussions.[1]

In fact, one detailed account of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* distinction comes from Ibn Taymiyya, who critically emphases the non-traditional origins of the term *majāz*. In his *Kitāb al-Imān*, he explains how speech or expression has been divided into different kinds and the term *majāz* as one of these has gradually evolved from a basic linguistic postulate to a functional exegetical tool for Muslim scholars, especially for Muʿtazilite *kalām* theologians after the early 11th century.[2] Referring to early usage of the term in Abū ʿUbayda's (d. 815) work *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, Ibn Taymiyya rejects the conviction that the language has an original distinction between literal and nonliteral meanings of a word that Arab linguists and early grammarians also established and approved. Moreover, he points out the neutral usage of the term *majāz* that was devoid of any exegetical and theological purposes as well as the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* controversy in early Muslim works.[3]

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[1] Wolfhart Heinrichs, 'On the Genesis of the Ḥaqîqa-Majâz Dichotomy,' *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 111-140. Heinrichs offers a detailed survey into the emergence of *ḥaqīqa-majāz* paradox by mainly relying on Ibn Taymiyya's account of the historical information about the development of this dichotomy. Heinrichs compares two early sources, namely, Abū ʿUbayda's and al-Rummani's perceptions of the term *majāz*, particularly in the Qur'ānic context, and the way they employed this term and the manner of their acceptance of it had an impact on later theoretical discussions of *ḥaqīqa-majāz* distinction.

The distinction between the literal and the nonliteral meaning of a word or expression is determined by its primordial assignment (*waḍʿ*) in language. That is to say, while literal (*ḥaqīqa*) refers to a language-based meaning that is assigned to 'one established' meaning, nonliteral (*majāz*) indicates some meaning other than the established one. Accordingly, the term *ḥaqīqa* is associated with the literal and immediate meaning of an expression or utterance, and *majāz* is linked to the non-literal meaning of a word. To clarify briefly how a meaning can be classified as *ḥaqīqa* or *majāz* from a Muslim linguists and legal theorists' perspective, it is sufficient to say that if a word signifies its meaning in isolation from any context, then it is *ḥaqīqa*, which will give the same meaning in any context. Conversely, if there is a contextual indicator that points out the need to divert the literal meaning of the word to a new meaning, then it is *majāz*. To explain this with a well-known example, take the word 'lion.' While it may refer to a predatory wild animal as its literal meaning, it can also refer to a fearless person as its nonliteral meaning in a given context, that is, when the word is applied to a fearless person.[4]

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[2] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Īmān*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, (Al-Maktab al-Islāmī: Beirut, 1996); it is reproduced in *Majmūʿ fatāwā shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad 37 vols. (Madina: Mujammāʾ al-Malik Fahd, 2004), 7.5-460. Ibn Taymiyya also examines the history of *haqīqā-majāz* controversy in more detail in his *Majmū*, where he argues that *majāz* is actually a terminological term rather being a rational (*ʿāqlī*) and religious based (*sharʿī*) or a linguistic and lexicographic (*lughawī*) term; see MF, 20.400-487.

[3] Mustafa Shah, 'The Philological Endeavors of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *Tawqīf-Iṣṭilāḥ* Antithesis and the *Majāz* Controversy - Part I,' *Journal of Qur'ānic Studies* 1,1 (1999): 27-46; and Part II (2000), 43-66. Shah also notes that Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the *majāz* controversy was merely developed from theological perspectives to prevent Muʿtazilī interpretations of God's attributes and the qur'ānic texts that *kalām* theologians employed in favour of *taʾwīl* (reinterpretation).

Ibn Taymiyya's first objection to the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* division is centred on the lack of ancient precedent for this distinction. He says that it has no clear link to early linguists or lexicographers (*ahl al-lugha*), such as al-Khalīl (d. 791) and Sībawayhī (d. 799),[5] and particularly scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of Law), such as al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820), who Ibn Taymiyya thinks to be one of the first Muslim scholars writing on legal theory. Ibn Taymiyya notes that al-Shāfiʿī did not mention the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* distinction and he even did not name anything '*majāz*' in his works despite his vast knowledge and demonstration on revelation-based proofs (*al-adilla al-sharʿiyya*).[6] Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya argues that there is no language-based or conventional distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, and most importantly, that such a claim cannot be proved or verified.

Ibn Taymiyya develops a further argument against the claim of the defenders of *majāz*, which is that a word is regarded as *ḥaqīqa* if it signifies the same meaning independently of any context and as *majāz* if it does not signify the same meaning when separated from the context. He objects to this distinction underlining the fact that all entities are qualified in some way (i.e. in a context), so there would be no expression that is unqualified in language to assign a meaning to it. In other words, if there is no pre-assigned meaning of a word, which is (*ḥaqīqa*) as it is commonly accepted, then there is no *majāz* nonliteral meaning of a word, which can only be identified in a given context. That is to say, if the word 'lion' is taken out of any context and decontextualised, it is impossible to define either of its meanings as *ḥaqīqa* or *majāz*, since it would be meaningless out of context. Thus, meaningfulness is dependent on context. Yunis Ali argues that this is the fundamental principle of Ibn Taymiyya's contextual theory of interpretation.[7]

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[4] Weiss, *The Search*, 130-146. Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 24; 36-44; 177-184.

[5] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 20.404-405. Vishanoff, *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics*), 46-47.

[6] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 20.403. He further claims that the only reason to believe in the existence of the *majāz* controversy in the origins of *uṣūl al-fiqh* is the lack of knowledge, as is the case with late *mutaʾakhirīn* (late Muslim theologians), such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Sayfaddin al-Āmidī and Ibn al-Ḥājib.

That is not to say, however, that Ibn Taymiyya denies the existence of *ḥaqīqa* (literal) expressions. On the contrary, he does not reject a chronological relationship between two meanings of a word, which means one meaning would be sequentially prior to another. The point here is that there is no reliable criterion to determine which meaning of a word is more suitable than the others to be categorised as *ḥaqīqa* (literal), such that the other meanings would be *majāz* (nonliteral). At this point, Ibn Taymiyya attempts to subvert the so-called distinction between the literal and the nonliteral meaning of a word. For him, distinguishing between literal and nonliteral meaning is not hermeneutically functional since the intended meaning of the speaker is immediate to a hearer in a given context, without necessitating a literal or nonliteral reading. Ibn Taymiyya's main purpose is to convey the intention of the speaker by mainly relying on contextual indicators, rather than diverting the meaning of a word from its literal meaning to its nonliteral one, which is, for him, basically a form of *taʾwīl* (reinterpretation).[8]

Having explained that the distinction *ḥaqīqa-majāz* is neither linguistically nor rationally established, Ibn Taymiyya has a task to clarify how to overcome textual ambiguity, especially when a word seems to have multiple meanings. Since Ibn Taymiyya denies the existence of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* distinction, he draws attention to the different meanings of a word in a single context, which are explained by the terms *mushtarak* (equivocal) and *mutawāṭi'* (univocal). These terms have a pertinent connection to the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* controversy, and they are primarily used in the field of theoretical jurisprudence as well as theological interpretation.

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[7] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, see particularly Chapter 4, where Yunis Ali explains how Ibn Taymiyya fundamentally does not oppose the idea that language has so-called *majāz* expressions in the sense of 'unnatural expressions.' However, Ibn Taymiyya rather insists that there are no reliable criteria to determine which meaning is conventionally assigned to a word first; it is thus worthier to be entitled as *ḥaqīqa* than any other meanings, see pp.110.

[8] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 108-110.

As Yunis Ali explains, when a word seems to have more than one possible meaning in a given context, from the traditional Arab linguistic perspective, various terms then are assigned to each meaning, depending on the connection between these meanings. If there is a connection (semantic or conventional) between the different meanings of a word, then it is categorised as either *manqūl* (polysemy) or *mustaʿār* (metaphor), whilst if there is no relation between them, then it is classified as *mushtarak* (equivocal).[9]

An equivocal (*mushtarak*) term is coined many times to have different meanings that apply differently to each of its referents, whereas an univocal (*mutawāṭiʾ*) term, to the contrary, is, by a single act of coinage, deemed to have one meaning, whilst it equally points to different referents that have things in common in an abstract sense. To explain these terms more clearly, the word 'existence' (*wujūd*) is extensively used by *kalām* theologians and Muslim philosophers as a language-based theological postulate in the discussion of how God's existence differs from that of creatures. For Ibn Taymiyya, the term 'existence' univocally (*tawāṭuʾ*) applies to the existence of both God and creatures. That is to say, existence signifies the same meaning for God and humans; yet, this does not necessarily mean that God and creatures share the same kind of existence.

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[9] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 106-107. Ali also explains that on the *uṣūlīs* (legal theorists) agenda, the distinction between meanings of a word is established by virtue of act of coinage. In other words, if a word has different meanings assigned to it by more than one act of coinage, then it is *mushtarak*. If the word has one primordial meaning, and other meanings are gradually assigned to the word, then it is either *manqūl* or *mustaʿār*, as the word itself implies a gradual process of gaining a meaning.

Rather, the only shared thing between them is being described by the word 'existence' in an abstract sense.[10]

Ibn Taymiyya clarifies that when a word has two meanings or more, it is regarded as equivocal (*mushtarak*) or nonliteral (*majāz*) by virtue of common degree (*al-qadr al-mushtarak*) or common expression (*lafẓ mushtarak*) between the meanings. However, he states that these meanings are indeed univocal *mutawāṭi'* names. The common degree or sense between the univocal (*mutawāṭi'*) nouns is only in the mind since these names are never used in an unqualified (*muṭlaq*) sense. He explains that black and white, for example, are always used in connection with blackness and whiteness in a qualified (*muqayyad*) sense. One might refer to the blackness of ink and of coal and in both of the examples, the colours of the objects are described in connection with blackness in a qualified meaning. In this example, while blackness is a univocal (*mutawāṭi*ʾ) name preserving the same meaning (i.e., black), it refers to different objects. For instance, the blackness of coal and ink are not the same blackness in the sense that they are at least different tones of the same colour. Yet, the blackness refers to one single meaning for a hearer so that s/he knows the colour in question is black.[11]

The examples of the word 'existence' and 'blackness' explained above have shown that Ibn Taymiyya, in a similar way to his rejection of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* distinction, clearly does not favour the use of *mushtarak* expressions in exegetical activity, as he regards them as contrary to the *aṣl* (ultimate original meaning).[12] He objects to the use of *majāz* (nonliteral) expressions, as he thinks that nonliteral interpretation uncontrollably allows the reader/hearer to interpret the speaker's intended meaning in a way that suits most the reader's intention. In other words, with a nonliteral interpretation, the speaker is not the determiner, but rather, the listener. For Ibn Taymiyya, the term equivocal (*mushtarak*) similarly gives more freedom to the reader to apply any meaning to a word since *mushtarak* is accepted as signifying different meanings that apply differently to each reference. He, accordingly claims that *mushtarak* (equivocal) and *majāz* (nonliteral) expressions should be treated as *mutawāṭiʾ* (univocal). He argues that the term *mutawāṭiʾ* encompasses all words that seem to have more than one meaning, but in fact, only refer to different referents with one single meaning.[13]

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[10] Alexander Treiger, 'Avicenna's Notion of Transcendental Modulation of Existence (Taškīk Al-Wuğūd, Analogia Entis) and its Greek and Arabic Sources,' in *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, ed. Felicitas Opwis and David Reisman (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 327-363; also see, Jackson, 'Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial,' 80-83. Jackson illustrates how Ibn Taymiyya defends himself by claiming that the word 'existence' applies univocally to both the creator and creatures at his trial, without entailing any danger of anthropomorphic interpretation.

[11] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Īmān*, 90-91.

[12] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Īmān*, 90-91.

To sum up, Ibn Taymiyya opposes the claim that there are established literal (*ḥaqīqī*) expressions in language that should be interpreted nonliterally or metaphorically (*majāzan*). Based on this reasoning, he criticises the categorisation of expressions as nonliteral (*majāz*) and equivocal (*mushtarak*), particularly in divine language, in order to oppose those who utilise these expressions to signify multiple meanings in one single qur'ānic word.[14] For Ibn Taymiyya, the divine language is revealed in a clear form (*al-bayān*) to convey the intended meaning of the revelation. Although he accepts the idea that the language has linguistic ambiguity, he, nevertheless, contends that the context is functionally operative in identifying the intended meaning. He proposes a broad method to read revealed texts, either the Qur'ān or the Bible, based on linguistic and extra-linguistic factors without binding a word to a coined meaning. Context is the primary determiner when a reader faces the dilemma of choosing among different meanings of a word, particularly when it is not used in its usual or apparent (*ẓāhir*) sense.[15] It is not the purpose of this section to achieve a decisive conclusion on whether Ibn Taymiyya purposely develops a contextual interpretive theory. Nevertheless, it does become clear enough from the analysis of the topic above explained that Ibn Taymiyya's way of understanding the nature of language of revelation and its relation to the interpretation of the scripture, both the Qur'ān and the Bible focus on the context. It is also true, to an extent, that Ibn Taymiyya's rejection of *majāz* is developed from a theological perspective to prevent involvement of allegorical reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) in theological matters.[16] Nevertheless, arguing that *majāz* is a matter of use (*istiʿmāl*) rather than a primordially coinage (*waḍʿ*), Ibn Taymiyya's theory of contextual interpretation indeed provides a broader perspective for the reader to determine the intended meaning of a word, particularly when multiple meanings are involved without recourse to any division between the literal and nonliteral of an expression. As the following section will explain, in Ibn Taymiyya's contextual theory, the intention of the speaker will be manifested by contextual clues. Textual and contextual indicators serve here as a tool to assist the reader to receive the intention of the speaker without facing the dilemma as to whether the expression is used in the literal or nonliteral sense.

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[13] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 108. Yunis Ali notes the fact that there is an actual difference between *mushtarak* and metaphor (*mustaʿār*), although both of them are classified under the *majāz* category in the broad sense. While *mushtarak* (equivocal) is accepted as a language-based term, metaphor is regarded as a matter of linguistic use.

[14] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Īmān*, 89-90. Ibn Taymiyya firmly states that there are no *majāz* expressions in the Qur'ān and Sunna, which is contrary to defenders of *majāz* claiming all expressions are literal *ḥaqīqa* in the revelation-based sources. On pages 94-95, he reiterates that there is no *majāz* in the Qur'ān and that the division between *ḥaqīqa-majāz* is invention.

3.1.2 The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as Univocal (*mutawāṭi'*) Names in the Context of the Bible

The previous section was aimed at constructing a background for understanding how Ibn Taymiyya's uses the hermeneutical terms of Islamic legal theory, literal-nonliteral (*ḥaqīqa-majāz*) and equivocal-univocal

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[15] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics,* 87-140.

[16] Mustafa Shah, 'The Philological Endeavours II,' 44-47; and Heinrichs, 'On the Genesis,' 113-115.

(*mushtarak-mutawāṭi*ʾ) for scriptural exegesis. This section will explain how he applies these terms to interpretation of Matthew 28.19, particularly the Trinitarian names ‘the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.’ The following will demonstrate that for Ibn Taymiyya, the Trinitarian names are univocal terms that signify only one single meaning in the biblical context.

Matthew 28.19 is used in the *Letter* to affirm that Jesus himself used the Trinitarian names, ‘the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.’ With this argument, the author of the *Letter* emphasises the scriptural authority for the Trinity by pointing to Jesus’ statements and the interpretation of these Trinitarian names in Christian tradition.[17] The doctrine of the Trinity, as the most debated theme of Christian-Muslim polemical encounters, is naturally at the centre of the theological debate of the *Letter* and the *Jawāb*. Yet, the author of the *Letter*’s defence of the doctrine, with a clear reference to the scripture without any detailed explanation to the theology behind it, might be seen as being a way to overcome the difficulty in explaining the doctrine to a Muslim audience.[18] The emphasis on the authority of the scripture with a reference to textual proofs of the Trinitarian names is also driven by the classic Muslim accusation that the Christian doctrines are not scripturally based. In either case, the Christian author’s motivation to prove that the names of the Trinity have scriptural authority leads Ibn Taymiyya to reinterpret these names in the context of the Bible, with a particular aim to underline how the interpretation of the names in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity is based on a misinterpretation of the scripture. He argues that despite these names belonging to the biblical terminology, they do not signify meanings to be interpreted in a dogmatic sense.

Ibn Taymiyya claims that Muslims believe in the tradition of Jesus without denying any part of it. He argues that Jesus’ words should be interpreted in accordance with previous prophetic traditions and most importantly in the overall context of Jesus' terminology:

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[17] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 94-95.

[18] Sirry, ‘Early Muslim–Christian Dialogue,’ 361-736.

> Christians transmit from Jesus that he said, 'Therefore go and baptise nations in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit' [Matthew 28.19]. If Jesus said this, then it should be interpreted in accordance with his language and tradition, and also with the traditions of the previous prophets. [However] neither in the teaching of Jesus nor in the teaching of the prophets, it is stated that the eternal and self-subsistent Word of God is named the Father or the Holy Spirit. Similarly, no eternal attribute is named the Holy Spirit or the Son in the tradition of the prophets, and the name of Son is used only for created human beings.[19]

Having no verbal expression similar to the biblical terms, 'son' and 'father' in the Qur'ān, Ibn Taymiyya focuses on the terminological language of the Bible. The primary point here is to emphasise that the true meaning of the verse can be derived from the scripture and to demonstrate that the doctrine of the Trinity has no organic relation to the Bible. The first principal, for a close reading of the verse, is that the exegesis should be in accord with the former traditions and the terminological language of Jesus.

Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyya cites supporting verses from the Bible, Exodus 4.22, Psalms 2.7, and John 20.17, that are commonly used in the Islamic interpretive tradition. It has been explained in the foregoing chapter how relying on the same and similar texts, al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī claim that the terms 'son' and 'father' should be figuratively (*majāzan*) interpreted. Despite the fact that these four Muslim scholars, including Ibn Taymiyya, cite the well-known biblical texts in Islamic tradition used against the Christian interpretation of the Trinity, Ibn Taymiyya certainly differs from them in rendering the terms univocal (*mutawāṭi'*) instead of nonliteral (*majāz*), since he is categorically against nonliteral interpretation of the scripture. Ibn Taymiyya contends that the intended meaning of these terms in the biblical terminology is that 'son' is chosen and loved by God. To explain that the word 'son' is also used for other referents, he quotes Exodus 4.22, 'You are my firstborn (*ibnī bikrī*),' and notes that God addressed the nation of Israel as 'son' in the Torah. Ibn Taymiyya then quotes Psalms 2.7, 'You are my son, my beloved one (*ibnī wa ḥabībī*)' where God addressed the Prophet David 'my son.' Ibn Taymiyya notes that in these biblical verses, the addressees of the word 'son' are created beings. Relying on these proof texts, he argues that the term 'son' used for Jesus, should also refer to a human being, in contrast to the Christian interpretation of the term, that in reality, it refers to a pre-eternal and eternal divinity born from the uncreated God.[20] Lastly, he cites John 20.17, 'My Father and your Father,' emphasising that Jesus, here used the word 'father' not only for himself but also for other believers. This proves, for Ibn Taymiyya that Jesus did not distinguish himself from others and attribute a sonship that is unique to him. He explains that the term 'father' is used in a universal and general sense describing God as the Father to all created beings, which disproves the claim that Jesus has a particular relation to God above all created beings. The primary point of the biblical quotations is to emphasise that the terms of the Trinity should be understood in the context of the Bible and in the framework of Jesus' terminology.

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[19] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.133.

For Ibn Taymiyya, the verses explained above are not only axiomatic textual proofs to verify that these terms certainly belong to the language of the biblical books, for they are also intra-textual proofs to claim that the words 'son' and 'father' should be interpreted relying on only one meaning throughout the Bible. Ibn Taymiyya relies on the textual relations between this set of passages (Exodus 4.22, Psalms 2.7, and John 20.17) to disprove the Christian metaphorical interpretation of the verse, by referring to the contextual meanings of the names the Son and the Father interpreted in the context of the Trinity.

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[20] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.133.

Now, how Ibn Taymiyya explains each person of the Trinity is considered. There has been apparently no controversy over the meaning of the term 'father' that is used to signify God in the biblical text from both the Islamic and Christian perspective. However, the most controversial term is 'son.' According to Ibn Taymiyya, the word has only one single meaning and solely refers to created human beings throughout the text of the Bible, as stated earlier. In other words, an analysis of the various contexts in which these names 'father' and 'son' are used will reveal that these names do not have multiple meanings in the scripture at all. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya claims that, in particular, the term 'son' has a single meaning with multiple references. Hence, it cannot theoretically refer to the sonship of Jesus in its Christological sense in one place and to the sonships of other prophets, such as David, signifying a different meaning in other parts of the Bible. He, thus, argues that 'father' and 'son' should be understood as 'lord' and 'servant' respectively, which would be a reading that is consistent with the wider context of the biblical scripture.

As for the third person of the Trinity, Ibn Taymiyya contends that the Holy Spirit is primarily known in the traditions of the earlier prophets as a messenger that God sent down to His prophets in the form of an angel that brings revelation or divine support.[21] Consequently, he reiterates the thesis that the term 'holy spirit' also signifies one meaning similar to the terms 'father' and 'son' in the Bible. At this point, it should be noted that Ibn Taymiyya does not reject that the Holy Spirit also indicates a spirit created by God and commanded to bring God's support, yet appearing in human form, as happened in the case when he becomes visible to Mary. He explains this point here to argue against the Christian interpretation that associates the Holy Spirit with the attribute of life (*ḥayāt*), as mentioned in the *Letter from the People of Cyprus*. He thinks this interpretation results from assigning a new equivocal (*mushtarak*) meaning to the term 'holy spirit' in different contexts, without considering the wider context of the Bible. Having explained each of the Trinitarian names, according to the biblical context, Ibn Taymiyya now proceeds with interpretation of Matthew 28.19. His exegesis is as follows:

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[21] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2.151-152.

> The intended meaning of [Matthew 28.19], 'Go baptize people in the name of Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' is to command people to believe in God and his messenger to whom He sent an angel by which He sent revelation to them. Thus, it is a command (*amr*) for them to believe in God, His angels, books, and messengers. This [understanding] is the truth to which clear reason (*ṣarīh al-maʿqūl*) and sound revelation (*ṣaḥiḥ manqūl*) refer. The interpretation of this inerrant statement by this exegesis, which corresponds to the rest of terms of the Books that they possess and to the Qur'ān and reason (*al-ʿaql*), is more appropriate than its exegesis [i.e. the Christian interpretation] that contradicts clear reason and true tradition.[22]

Ibn Taymiyya further argues that the interpretation he explained above is apparent (*ẓāhir*) to any reader since the text does not have an unnatural sense (*takalluf*). He contends that the text does not require *taʾwīl* (reinterpretation) and that the interpretation provided above is in accordance with the terminology of Jesus and other Prophets. Ibn Taymiyya's explanation of the Trinitarian names has shown that even though he does not point to the same or similar verbal expressions in the Qur'ān, he tends to follow the technical language of the Bible to derive the contextual meaning of the concepts from the scripture. Whilst Ibn Taymiyya makes intertextual relations between the Bible and the Qur'ān and ḥadīth collections searching for an underlying subtext between the revealed texts, he certainly, at this point, relies on the core of the biblical scripture. The primarily functional way for Ibn Taymiyya to understand the meaning of the text, is apparently, to relate the terms in question to the wider context of the Bible and examine whether the meanings that they signify in each context are the same. That is, simply explaining the Bible by the Bible, which is a technique that he also applies to the Qur'ān. That is, he explains the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān. On this basis, Ibn Taymiyya draws attention to the conceptual and contextual correlation between the passages of the Bible by claiming that the integrity of the text must provide consistent interpretation.

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[22] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.197-198; 3.257-258.

To explain this better, Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of the term 'son' needs to be considered. He explains that 'son' is utilised in the Bible not only for Jesus, but also for the Apostles and other prophets. From his perspective, the problematic interpretation of the term in the Christological context of the Christian interpretive tradition is that the term 'son' is considered as equivocal (*mushtarak*) or nonliteral (*majāz*) by referring to two different meanings: 'sonship of other creatures' and 'sonship of Jesus.'[23] Ibn Taymiyya's argument is as follows:

> Since the Christians name Jesus 'son' in the books they possess, and name others 'son' among [the earlier] prophets, as [stated] in Exodus 4.22, 'You are my firstborn,' and name the Apostles 'sons,' they claim that Jesus is the Son [of God] by nature (*bi-l-ṭabʿi*), while the others are the Sons [of God] by the conventional use of the word (*bi-l-waḍʿi*). [To do so] they render the term 'son' equivocal (*mushtarak*) between the two different meanings and affirm a nature for God that renders Jesus the Son [of God] by virtue of this nature. This acknowledges the opinion of [some people among Christians], who perceive this sonship to be [the sonship] known among created beings, and that Mary is God's spouse.[24]

The discussion above clearly points out to a hermeneutical technique that misled the Christians about the use of the term 'son' in the scripture. In other words, he argues that the Christians did not take the wider context of the Bible into consideration (i.e. the passages quoted above) and misinterpreted the term by assigning two different meanings, when the word refers to Jesus and the other referents in different passages. He apparently assumes that the term ‘son’ is regarded as either *majāz* or *mushtarak* to render it to signify two independent meanings. As has already been explained in an earlier section, Ibn Taymiyya does not accept the existence of *majāz* expressions that divert the literal meaning (*ḥaqīqa*) when the context indicates. Therefore, he eliminates the option that the expression might be nonliterally interpreted. Yet, there is the term *mushtarak* (equivocal) that might prove that the word ‘son’ is used to signify two different meanings. Similar to *majāz* expressions, he does not favour *mushtarak* (equivocal) expressions, which are sometimes categorised as a sub-category of *majāz* expressions in Islamic linguistics. How can one be sure that the son is not used equivocally (*mushtarakan*) in the Bible? The main answer for Ibn Taymiyya is to claim that there is no single passage that uses the word ‘son’ for any other entity or referent other than a created human. The lack of any other example to argue that the term signifies two different meanings in the Bible serves Ibn Taymiyya well so he can claim consistently that ‘son’ is a *mutawāṭiʾ* (univocal) term in the biblical scripture.

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[23] Alternative translations of the terms, *mushtarak* (denotative) and *mutawāṭi'* (connotative), are employed by Sherman Jackson in his article, 'Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial,' pp. 54-55. Jackson illustrates how Ibn Taymiyya differentiates between denotative and connotative terms, particularly for the theological discussion on the divine attributes of God. The same terms are translated into English in Yunis Ali's book as homonyms (*mushtarak*) and accordant (*mutawāṭi'*).

[24] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.198.

In this analytical reading of the Trinitarian names, there is one significant point that should be mentioned. Ibn Taymiyya does not accept the distinction between literal and nonliteral meanings of a word and thus eliminates the option of nonliteral interpretation. He, however, implicitly affirms that there might be a textual tension or ambiguity, particularly when a word is used more than once in a given context (in our case, that is the wider biblical context). By doing so, he points to the dichotomy between the terms *mushtarak* and *mutawāṭiʾ*. For a solution to this hermeneutically paradoxical situation, he explains that accepting the word as univocal (*mutawāṭiʾ*), rather than considering it as equivocal (*mushtarak*), is always to serve the function of revealing the intended meaning. In particular, one can be sure that the word is used univocally (*mutawāṭiʾan*) when there is no contextual indicator referring variously to other meanings as well. Thus, he claims that there is no single example of the use of the terms the Holy Spirit and the Son in the traditions of the earlier prophets to prove that these terms are used equivocally (*mushtarakan*) in the scripture. To explain this better, a return to Ibn Taymiyya's clarification is insightful:

> It is known that *majāz* (nonliteral) and *ishtarāk* (equivocal) are contrary to the ultimate original meaning (*aṣl*) [of a word]. Thus, when a word is used in multiple places, rendering it *mutawāṭiʾ* (univocal) is more appropriate (*awlā*) than rendering it *mushtarakan ishtirakan lafẓiyyan* (an equivocal-homonym term) by virtue of common degree (*al-qadr al-mushtarak*) [between them], or than rendering it a *majāz* (nonliteral) [term]. If it is assumed that the terms the Son and the Holy Spirit are used in the place of the speech and life of God [respectively], as Christians claim, then why is there nothing in the traditions of the Prophets to prove that the meanings of the Son and Holy Spirit are referring to the attributes of God. To the contrary, they can find in the tradition that the term 'son' is only used to indicate a created being (*makhlūq*).[25]

As can be seen above, Ibn Taymiyya insistently claims that the terms 'father,' 'son,' and 'holy spirit' are univocal (*mutawāṭiʾ*) terms relying on the linguistic and contextual reading of the passages in question. Whilst it is not completely certain that he applies here a consciously constructed methodology to cover all possible principles of contextual theory, it still is safe to argue that the context is the major determiner for Ibn Taymiyya to argue that the Trinitarian names are *mutawāṭiʾ* names. As for the rationale behind this methodological reading of the terms, it would appear that the principle difference between the terms *mushtarak* and *mutawāṭiʾ*, both pragmatically and hermeneutically, advances Ibn Taymiyya's exegesis. In other words, while a *mushtarak* term, for example might refer to different meanings, a *mutawāṭiʾ* expression might signify one meaning for different referents. With this principle in mind, Ibn Taymiyya explicitly claims that the term 'son' is *mufrad mutawāṭiʾ* (only univocal), having one meaning coined by a single act of coinage. Hence, each time when this word is used in the Bible, it should be noted that it entails different referents, not different meanings, as a result of a common degree (*al-qadr al-mushtarak*) between different referents. According to this reading, whilst the term 'son' refers to different referents, such as Jesus, the Prophet David, and the nation of Israel, the meaning of this term is assigned to only one type of entity, created human, so it cannot indicate a divine entity in one place and created beings in another place. As he explains:

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[25] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.199.

> When we have interpreted (*tafsīr*) the term(s) [the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son] by means of sonship educated/sustained [by God], and 'the Holy Spirit' as an angel sent down to the prophets, [by this interpretation] we make the term only univocal (*mufrad mutawāṭi'*). Christians argue for one of the two meanings by rendering the term *mushtarak* (equivocal) or *majāz* (figurative). Therefore, their interpretation is contradictory to the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of the language by which they had been addressed [by God], and to the apparent meaning of the books they possess. Our interpretation is in accordance with their language and the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of the books they possess. Therefore, it is obvious that they have no proof for the Trinity, either scriptural (*samʿiyya*) or rational (*ʿaqliyya*). On the contrary, the Trinity is rationally and traditionally invalid.[26]

Ibn Taymiyya confidently states that his hermeneutics and interpretation are methodologically correct based on linguistic and contextual reading. With the cited biblical texts of Psalms 2.7, Exodus 4.22, and John 20.17, as the scriptural proofs, he argues that the level of textual clarity (*ẓāhir*) of Matthew 28.19 also underpins his interpretation. For Ibn Taymiyya, univocal (*mutawāṭiʾ*) expressions have priority over equivocal (*mushtarak*) ones, especially when there is no contextual and textual indicator to the contrary. In other words, in Ibn Taymiyya's model of interpretation, the univocal mode of language (univocality) has preponderance over the equivocal mode of language (equivocality). He emphasises that using a word in *mushtarak*

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[26] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.198-199.

(equivocal) and *majāz* (nonliteral) modes will only convey the opposite meaning of the speaker's intention. While the primordial assignment of a word (*waḍʿ*) to a meaning does not operate in his linguistic analysis of text, the context is crucial to identify the intended meaning. In other words, the term *ḥaqīqa* (literal) means no other than the intended meaning that the speaker coins in the moment of utterance in an actual communication, contrary to the acceptance of the term as a predetermined literal meaning in mainstream Islamic hermeneutics.

To sum up, so far, Ibn Taymiyya presents a linguistic and hermeneutic analysis of the names of the Trinity, and he clearly is certain that they belong to the technical language of the Bible. This clearly contrasts with al-Dimashqī and Ibn Ḥazm's use of Mathew 28.19, who straightforwardly reject the text, deeming it as a lie invented by Christians. Ibn Taymiyya, however, interprets Matthew 28.19 independently of its Christological context and argues that his interpretation offered above agrees with the Bible. Moreover, this methodological reading apparently is advantageous for him since it allows him to interpret the text without denying any word or any part of the whole biblical scripture, as explained in Chapter 1. On the other hand, this interpretation also allows him to criticise the doctrine of the Trinity. This argument is also similar to the approach presented by al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, who opt for nonliteral reading of the name 'son', without denying the veracity of the biblical text. However, Ibn Taymiyya differs from them in not interpreting the text nonliterally. With contextual interpretation, Ibn Taymiyya argues that each Trinitarian name only signifies one meaning throughout the Bible, which gives him the chance to claim that these names do not refer to any underlying meaning. Hence, the text reveals the intended meaning without recourse to any *majāzī* (nonliteral) interpretation or *taʾwīl* (reinterpretation).

As clarified in the foregoing chapter, even though Ibn Taymiyya affirms that the Bible has textual discrepancies due to translation and transmission, he nonetheless claims that these textual changes do not distort the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of the biblical texts. He argues that the Christians, however, misinterpreted the scripture by relying on methodological mistakes, such as reading the Trinitarian names nonliterally. In other words, conversely to Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, and al-Dimashqī's accusation of Christians for a literal reading of the Bible, Ibn Taymiyya severely criticises them for nonliteral or metaphorical interpretation.

On Ibn Taymiyya's part, the success of the contextual exegesis of Matthew 28.19 is, of course, open to question and criticism from a Christian perspective. Nevertheless, it is important to note here that Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation and argumentation, which are based on Arabic grammatical and linguistic tradition, might be an appealing perspective for his Arab Christian contemporaries who also adopted Arabic as a scriptural language long before the composition of the *Jawāb*. The significance of Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation neither lies in the argument that the word 'son' should be interpreted as a sonship supported by God nor in the textual proofs. That is because the interpretation and biblical quotations he proposed are also used in other Muslim works to argue that 'son' is only a reference to the humanity of Jesus. Rather, the significance of Ibn Taymiyya's approach lies in a contextual reading of the Bible by referring to the wider biblical context and to intra-textual proofs. Equally important is his hermeneutical methodology that is derived from Islamic legal hermeneutics in a very parallel way to his qur'ānic interpretive methodology. The fact that Ibn Taymiyya modifies these legal hermeneutical rules in a compatible way to his theological framework also contributes to the significance of his interpretation of Matthew 28.19. The latter point becomes very clear when he does not accept the theory of *majāz* for the biblical texts, just as he strictly denies the same theory for qur'ānic interpretation. Hence, he concludes that the core of the biblical scripture reveals the intended meaning when interpreted through a correct methodological and linguistic reading without requiring *taʾwīl* (reinterpretation) or assigning multiple meanings to the key expressions.

3.2 Isaiah 6.3 & Exodus 3.15: Apparent (*ẓāhir*) Meaning of the Text

In this part of the study, the aim is to explain Ibn Taymiyya's exegesis of Isaiah 6.3 and Exodus 3.15, which are quoted in the *Letter* as the textual proofs referring to the Trinitarian names by a threefold repetition. For the Christian author of the *Letter*, the triple repetition of the word 'holy' in Isaiah 6.3, 'I heard the angels giving praise and saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, all the heavens and earth are filled with your glory," is a strong scriptural sign to support the Trinity, as each word 'holy' indicates each one of the persons in the Trinitarian formula.[27] Similarly, Exodus 3.15, 'I am the Lord God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Jacob', also refers to the very presence of the holy names in the Bible as God clearly expresses 'lordship' three times in the verse. Ibn Taymiyya, contrary to this reading of the biblical verses, accuses Christians of reinterpreting (*taʾwīl*) the verse without any proof, either scriptural or rational. He, thus, claims that the intended meaning of Isaiah 6.3 and Exodus 3.15 can unequivocally be understood from the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of the verse. Hence, the texts do not need any further theological reading or reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*). In this part of the present study Ibn Taymiyya's application of the term *ẓāhir* to exegesis will be explained. He uses *ẓāhir* to determine textual clarity and oppose to reinterpretation of the text (*taʾwīl*). He argues that, while *tafsīr* (interpretation) is a prophetic exegetical activity, *taʾwīl* is an innovated alternative for producing new intended meaning.[28]

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[27] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 118-121.

[28] Saleh, 'Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics,' 123-162. See pp. 130-131, for Saleh's explanation on how Ibn Taymiyya considers *tafsīr* as a 'prophetic Sunna, and Qur'ānic interpretation that has its origins with Muhammad.'

3.2.1 The Application of the Term *ẓāhir* to Exegesis as a Meter of Clarity

The term *ẓāhir* (apparent) has dominated the agenda of Muslim scholars, primarily from the fields of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and qur'ānic interpretation. It is accepted as a first step in determining the intention of a speaker regarding whether he/she has conveyed the message literally (*ḥaqīqa*) or nonliterally (*majāz*). Legal theorists, linguists and exegetes consider the term *ẓāhir* as the apparent meaning of an expression that immediately reveals its obvious sense in a given context.[29]

Ẓāhir serves as a textual tool to Muslim scholars to determine the level of textual clarity for interpretation.[30] Whilst there are variations in Muslim scholars' perception of *ẓāhir*, it is basically accepted that it indicates a presumptive intended meaning that has yet to be subjected to an analytical consideration to determine its closeness to the speaker's intention. It is important to note here that Muslim scholars differ on whether apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) is different from literal meaning (*ḥaqīqa*). As already noted in Gleave's work, Muslim scholars, who affirm language-based meanings, detect a functional contrast between *ẓāhir* and literal meaning (*ḥaqīqa*).[31] This contrast allows them to analyse whether the meanings acquired from *ḥaqīqa* and *ẓāhir* concur with each other, and to what extent these acquired meanings might be close to the intended one. In other words, literal meaning is a parameter in this case for detecting whether the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning corresponds to that intended. Gleave considers this contrast between *ẓāhir* and *ḥaqīqa* as a mechanism in legal theorists' works to compare the literality of an expression with its clarity or 'explicitness'.[32] On the other hand, Weiss categorises *ẓāhir* as one of the literal meanings, among others. Explaining the prominent Muslim scholar of legal theory al-Āmidī's (d. 1233) definition of *ẓāhir*, Weiss notes that it is considered as an independent category that is situated between literal (*ḥaqīqa*) and intended meaning.[33] This is because al-Āmidī accepts *ẓāhir* as established by a primordial act of coinage and thus, the speaker's usage is not involved. As for the literal meaning (*ḥaqīqa*), however, the speaker's usage is referred to in order to determine whether he/she uses the expressions literally or nonliterally.

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[29] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 44-50. Gleave points to the widespread classification of technical terms and calls them 'exegetical pairings' in legal theory, such as famous pairs *ḥaqīqa-majāz* (literal-nonliteral) or *ẓāhir-muʾawwal* (apparent-non-apparent). Gleave has suggested that the rationale behind these 'exegetical pairings' is the concern of early legal theorists regarding the nature, function and usage of language, though later, only the usage becomes the main concern to determine hermeneutically functional strategies to interpret text.

[30] Vishanoff, *The Formation*, 4-5. Vishanoff groups the 'hermeneutical issues' or tools through which legal theorists and exegetes provide explanation when they analyse language, particularly divine language, and its relation to law: clarity-ambiguity, ways of meaning, scope of reference, modes of speech, and verbal implication. He notes that these categories function for Muslim scholars as a mechanism for determining the grades of clarity and ambiguity in revelatory texts. Particularly pointing to 'law-oriented' legal theorists, Vishanoff adds that this mechanism for grading clarity and ambiguity assists them in extracting 'default legal meaning' and having 'maximum interpretive flexibility.' The latter, in particular, is the reason Ibn Taymiyya opposes the classification of these terms in connection with scriptural interpretation, as these categories, indeed, necessitate linguistic rules to employ them in exegesis.

[31] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 50.

To sum up, regarding the difference between *ẓāhir* (apparent) and *ḥaqīqa* (literal), it is appropriate to say that, whilst the latter is an expression that signifies a meaning independent of context, the former is a meaning that signifies before context. Recall that for the majority of Muslim scholars, *ḥaqīqa* signifies the same meaning in any context, which in turn makes it an established meaning that does not change according to the speaker's intention or context.[34] The term *ẓāhir* differs from *ḥaqīqa* for two reasons. First, *ẓāhir* has a priority for signifying before context. Second, *ẓāhir* has preponderance over all other literal meanings. Similar to Weiss, Vishanoff also regards the term *ẓāhir* as an independent category of speech. Yet, it has one and single meaning, which is the most apparent one. Accordingly, *ẓāhir* is the first meaning that is applied to interpretation, thus being regarded as the default meaning.[35]

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[32] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 20-21. Gleave also notes that the link between *ẓāhir* and *ḥaqīqa* renders the former a 'default meaning' or 'presumed meaning.' Therefore, all other literal meanings, 'are to dislodge *ẓāhir*.' See p. 51-52.

[33] Weiss, *The Search*, 134-135. Here, Weiss notes that Muslim scholars distinguish between *ẓāhir* meanings and *ẓāhir* expressions. He clarifies that he prefers to translate *ẓāhir* as 'apparent,' when it refers to meanings and as 'univocal,' when it refers to expressions. With this distinction between meanings and expressions, it is very practical to understand what the term *ẓāhir* means for the Muslim scholar, particularly in regards to comprehending *ẓāhir*'s relation to literal meaning (*ḥaqīqa*).

[34] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 106-125.

Having explained the function of *ẓāhir* as a technical term in Muslim legal exegetical discourse, the central question of the present section is returned to: what does *ẓāhir* mean for Ibn Taymiyya? Is it different from *ḥaqīqa* (literal), and most importantly, from intended meaning? In other words, how does *ẓāhir* independently function in an exegetical activity for him? Considering the fact that he has an alternative way to understanding the literal meaning - *ḥaqīqa* is not necessarily a meaning conveyed by a primordial act of coinage - the difficulty here is to explain whether for Ibn Taymiyya, literal (*ḥaqīqa*) and intended meaning are distinct from the apparent (*ẓāhir*) one.

Ẓāhir is a considerably challenging term for Ibn Taymiyya, especially when it comes to theological discussions on affirming apparent meanings of God's attributes, including the attribution of human features to God, such as face and hand. A brief discussion on this matter will provide the grounds to pose a critically important question for the present study: is there any *ẓāhir* expression in the Qur'ān that can be diverted (*ṣarf*) to a meaning other than its apparent one? There is no exact answer to this question from Ibn Taymiyya. However, his elaboration on understanding the revelation in accord with its *ẓāhir* meanings involves a detailed discussion on how *ẓāhir* should be considered in the context of the Qur'ān to comprehend what is intended by these *ẓāhir* meanings.[36]

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[35] Vishanoff, *The Formation*, 195-195.

[36] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 6.351-373; 20.165-166. See also *al-Īmān*, 306-307. There is no independent discussion on the term *ẓāhir* from Ibn Taymiyya that provides a clear picture about what *ẓāhir* means for him. Hence, for the present study his primarily theological discussions have been revisited, where he speaks of what the term means relating to the well-known debate over God's attributes. This discussion also involves a linguistic consideration of the term. While the first point of the discussion explains how Ibn Taymiyya employs *ẓāhir* so as not to reject God's attributes, the second matter is

Ibn Taymiyya explains that *ẓāhir* might mean two things: the one is related to what is apparent to human comprehension (*mafhūm al-nās*), and the second, is what the expression signifies. *Zāhir*, for Ibn Taymiyya, is not only linked to the ability of a human to comprehend meanings, but also to what verbal expressions signify. That is to say, determining what is apparent from an expression is mutually dependent on both human comprehension and the expression itself, which in turn, makes the *ẓāhir* meaning less relative since it is not restricted to only human comprehension or to the primordial assignment of language.[37] For him, what an expression signifies is strongly connected to different factors such as a hearer's knowledge of the language, and of the speaker's habits of speech as well as his/her vocabulary.[38]

As noted earlier, affirming *ẓāhir* meanings of the Qur'ān, as they are the intended meanings, puts Ibn Taymiyya in a position where he was accused of being a literalist. Similarly, when he insisted that God's attributes, including hand and face, should be understood in accordance with their *ẓāhir* meanings, albeit not knowing their modality (*kayfiyya*), he was accused of being an 'anthropomorphist literalist' for affirming that God has hands and a face.[39] However, there is a nuanced point in his

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that he does not necessarily link *ẓāhir* to *taʾwīl* to convey the intention of the speaker. The discussion has two significant points that are relevant to the present study: First, Ibn Taymiyya discusses whether the intended meanings of the qur'ānic verses mentioning God's attributes, including 'hand and face,' are different from their apparent meanings or not (*ẓāhiruha ghayr murād*). Second, he refutes the claim that these attributes should be reinterpreted (*taʾwīl*) since *ẓāhir* meanings of the attributes, particularly 'face' and 'hand,' cannot be applied to God.

[37] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 20.166.

[38] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 69-77 and 114-115.

[39] Jackson, 'Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial,' 41-85. See especially, pp. 51-53 where Jackson highlights the historical background of Ibn Taymiyya's trial and the debate on the interpretation of God's attributes and reinterpreting (*taʾwīl*) them. Also, Jon Hoover, 'Early Mamluk Ashʿarīs against Ibn Taymiyya on the Nonliteral Reinterpretation of God's Attributes (*ta'wīl*),' (forthcoming). Hoover analyses Ibn Taymiyya's and four Ashʿarī figures' arguments on whether God's attributes are to be interpreted literally or nonliterally. In his fatwa, entitled al-*Ḥamawiyya al-kubrā*, Ibn Taymiyya, strongly argues that the meanings of God's attributes are to be affirmed without knowing their modality. Hoover describes this approach as a 'double perspective' and argues that Ibn Taymiyya is in a paradoxical situation by affirming these attributes, whilst also denying modality. See also, Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 5.5-120.

argumentation, which saves him from being literalist or anthropomorphist. He argues that there is a difference between *ẓāhir* meanings of the attributes of God and humans. That is to say, when the words 'hand' and 'face' are used for humans, they denote a limb of the human body. However, when these words are attributed to God, one should know, with an epistemological presumption - that is there is nothing like Him (Q 42.11) - that *ẓāhir* meaning of hand or face is not the same as the words' *ẓāhir* meaning when they are used for humans.[40]

Rejecting some *ẓāhir* meanings, if not all, in the Qur'ān, would compel Ibn Taymiyya to search for alternative meanings. In other words, when the intended meaning appears to be different from its apparent one, then it is necessary to look for alternative meanings in the light of a proof. This activity is accepted as reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) among Muslim scholars. The problem at this point is that when one looks for a new meaning other than the *ẓāhir* meaning independently of Prophetic tradition, his epistemological stand has been changed.[41] In fact, this is the very reason for Ibn Taymiyya's opposition to *taʾwīl*.[42] In the process of reinterpreting (*taʾwīl*), *ẓāhir*, as a probable pre-meaning, leaves its place with the emergence of a proof (*dalīl*) to a new meaning (*muʾawwal*) via *taʾwīl*, where this new meaning seems to be the worthiest, to be preferred over the apparent one, in order to convey the intention of the speaker.[43] This is the reason why Ibn Taymiyya accuses Christians of reinterpreting (*taʾwīl*) Isaiah

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[40] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 6.355-356.

[41] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 181-184.

[42] Jon Hoover, 'Theology as Translation: Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa permitting theology and its reception into his *Averting the Conflict between Reason and Revealed Tradition* (Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa al-naql),' *The Muslim World*, 108, 1 (2018), 40-86. Hoover explains how Ibn Taymiyya claims the permissibility of kalām (theologising) on the principles of religion (God's attributes) based on his conviction that the Prophet and Salaf provided the explanation of expressions (*alfāẓ*) and meanings (*maʿānī*) of the Qur'ān. Similarly, Saleh's study also notes that despite 'the variation on themes,' which is seen as disagreement on interpretations that has come down from the Salaf, these interpretations are inherited from the Prophet, who taught meanings of the Qur'ān; see Saleh, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' 130-136.

[43] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 51-52. See also, Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 127-130; Vishanoff, *The Formation*, 194-195 and 240-242; Weiss, *The Search*, 459-472.

6.3 and Exodus 3.15, thus dismissing the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) of these texts.

It has been explained, so far, that Ibn Taymiyya is opposed to diverting apparent meanings to other meanings when interpreting divine language. However, he has an exception and allows some room for the idea that there might be some *ẓāhir* meanings in the revelation that could be diverted to other meaning depending on a proof. His perception of the revelation is based on the conviction that it was sent down in the clearest (*faṣīḥ*) language. It, thus, has a perfect nature to guide humans with its apparent (*ẓāhir*) meanings, which are conveyable partly through human comprehension and the significance of expressions.[44] Nevertheless, he strategically does not say that the qur'ānic expressions or meanings are all *ẓāhir* or too apparent to leave room for an uncovered meaning. Rather, his claim that the Qur'ān is clear elucidation (*bayān*) and guidance is firmly established on the grounds that there is the true interpretation of the Qur'ān transmitted through the Prophet and his companions, including the explanations of verbal expressions and their meanings. Accordingly, he does not state that there are no non-apparent meanings in the Qur'ān, which would be tantamount to saying that all qur'ānic meanings are *ẓāhir*. Instead, he prefers to emphasise that there cannot be a contradiction between qur'ānic *ẓāhir* meanings and what the Prophet and the Salaf explained about these *ẓāhir* meanings.[45] In other words, for Ibn Taymiyya the Qur'an has *ẓāhir* meanings regardless of whether they are the intended meanings or not. Yet, it should be noted that what was meant by these *ẓāhir* expressions is known to Muslims through the Prophet's interpretation. With this position, Ibn Taymiyya neither affirms solely *ẓāhir* meanings of the revelation in a way that Ẓāhirīs do, nor approves of reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) as a sound method to understand meanings that might be occasionally slightly different from the intended ones.[46]

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[44] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 6.360. This is related to the prerequisite one for *ta'wīl*, which is 'Considering the fact the Qur'an and prophetic tradition (Sunna) came in Arabic language so it is not possible to intend a meaning that is contradictory to this language. When a word is linguistically used in *majāz* meaning, then this must be what the expression (*al-lafẓ*) intends. If not, then it would be possible for anyone who invalidates the meaning by interpreting (*tafsīr*) it with a meaning that occurs to his mind, though it has no origin in the language.'

[45] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 165-166.

To put his discussion into perspective, Ibn Taymiyya explains, with qur'ānic examples, *ẓāhir* is either rationally apparent meaning (*ʿaqliyyan ẓāhiran*) to human comprehension or revelation-based apparent meaning (*samʿiyyan ẓāhiran*). As for the first kind, he cites Q 27.23, 'She has been given of all things' and explains that the intended meaning of the verse is that she has been given something among the kinds of things that have already been provided. Secondly, he cites Q 6.102, 'The Creator of all things,' which certainly leads the hearer to know that the Creator is not included in this category of 'all things.' With these examples, Ibn Taymiyya seems to accept that meanings can be interpreted to arrive at the intended meaning within the corpus of revelation. As implied in his example of Q 27.23, it can be understood that the intended meaning is 'she has been given amongst what have been already given as worldly rewards' since the hearer most likely comprehends the intended meaning through the verse's rationally apparent meaning (*ʿaqliyyan ẓāhiran*). Hence, this additional apparent meaning is not to give a new meaning to the verse, but rather, is just to expand the extant meaning by an apparent proof. As for revelation-based apparent meaning (*samʿiyyan ẓāhiran*), Ibn Taymiyya does not provide any qur'ānic examples. Yet, he notes that there are proofs (*dalālāt*) in the Qur'ān and the Sunna, which divert (*ṣarf*) some of the *ẓāhir* expressions (*ẓawāhir*).[47]

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[46] Vishanoff, *The Formation*, 88-108. Vishanoff explains Ẓāhirism with particular emphasis on the most famous ẓāhirī figure Ibn Ḥazm, who accepts God as 'the creator of language,' which eventually leads to the affirmation that God's speech is necessairly clear. There is also another important point regarding the *ẓāhir* meanings of God's names. Ibn Ḥazm claims that God's names do not reveal their true meanings, and they should be accepted as God denotes them for Himself, without adding any further meaning. However, if there are additional meanings that are clearly expressed and befit to God's majesty, then these should also be affirmed without attributing any sharing or similarity between God and creatures. Despite Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Taymiyya having fundementally different approaches to divine language, it is clear that they are in agreement that these names should be confirmed in the way God uses them in the revelation. See also Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 146-174. Although Gleave does not consider Ibn Ḥazm and his Ẓāhirī school as 'literalist' in the modern sense of the term, he explains clearly that *ẓāhir* for them is a meaning that can be obtained through application of linguistic rules so that it is not necessarily linked to only hearer's comprehension (immediacy) or only speaker's usage. For Ibn Ḥazm, God consciously denotes words in umambiguous ways in accordance with the wise purpose of revelation, which is to reveal intended meanings. Yunis Ali also provides a similar explanation of the Ẓāhirīs' perception of apparent meaning, with much more emphasis on their dismissal of extra-linguistic factors for interpretation. See Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 44-45; 130-131.

It has been clear from Ibn Taymiyya's discussion on the clarity of the qur'ānic text that, *ẓāhir*, as a technical term, refers to a level of textual clarity for him. He clearly affirms that the qur'ānic text has different degrees of textual clarity, which means that it does not always necessarily provide the intended meaning. It should be noted here that this idea does not harm Ibn Taymiyya's perception of perfect revelation, which is the idea that the Qur'ān is revealed as a clear elucidation (*bayān*). The variations of degrees of clarity do not cause uncertainty in achieving the intended meaning, they only allow hermeneutical rooms for additional dimensional meanings to expand the speaker's intention.[48]

In sum, Ibn Taymiyya makes it clear that he considers *ẓāhir* a level of textual clarity that is functional for identifying the intention of the speaker.[49] In Ibn Taymiyya's thought, there is a system in which *ẓāhir*, *ḥaqīqa* and *murād* (intended meaning) operate together, but with each of them having a distinct task. *Ẓāhir* meaning, in other words, the clarity of text, can be used as a hermeneutical tool to investigate whether apparent meaning is enough to determine intended meaning by analysing the context and the speaker's habits of speech and customary language. For Ibn Taymiyya, *ẓāhir* is an indeterminate probable meaning that simultaneously moves with the intention of a speaker, and a departure point at the beginning of interpretative activity, which might involve changing or retaining the same meaning. On the other hand, *ḥaqīqa* (literal, in the terminology of mainstream Muslim scholars), for Ibn Taymiyya, becomes a final point that should be reached at the end of the interpretation process. After evaluating all the factors to convey the intention of the speaker, *ḥaqīqa* seemingly can be nothing else for him than what is intended by the speaker.

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[47] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 6.361.

[48] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Imān*, 306-307.

[49] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Imān*, 306-307.

3.2.2 Application of the Theory of Apparent Meaning (*ẓāhir*) to Isaiah 6.3

Moving on to Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Isaiah 6.3, 'Holy, holy, holy (*quddūs*) is the Lord of hosts, all the heavens and earth are filled with your glory,' which is used in the *Letter* to prove that the Prophet Isaiah affirms the Trinity.[50] The editor of the *Letter* suggests that, in the verse, whilst the threefold repetition of the word holy refers to 'the reality of the three hypostases,' the statement 'the Lord of the hosts' indicates the oneness (*waḥdāniyya*) of God's substance (*jawhar*).[51]

The Christian author aims to underpin that the belief in one God and the three hypostases certainly has textual proofs in the Bible, where God sometimes clearly states the names of the persons of the Trinity and sometimes implicitly refers to only plurality in the Godhead, as is the case in Isaiah 6.3. The primary point of the author is to establish that the Trinitarian names have been originally produced by God and placed in the divine text.

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[50] A. Joseph Everson, 'A Bitter Memory: Isaiah's commission in Isaiah 6:1-13,' in *Desert Will Bloom: Poetic Visions in Isaiah*, eds., A. Joseph Everson, and Hyun Chul Paul Kim (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 60-75. In this study, Everson remarks that Isaiah 6.3 involves the prophetic vision of Isaiah and his appearance before the Divine. Whilst this study does not refer the verse's threefold ascription to the Trinity, it is still important to understand that the emphasis on the conception of holiness in the verse (Isaiah 6.3) affected the way that later generations understood the verse and interpreted it with the emphasis being on the holiness in connection with the holiness of the three hypostases.

[51] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 118-121. The author of the *Letter*'s methodology is mainly to quote several sets of biblical passages to underpin his arguments with brief explanations of the points that he wants to demonstrate. Accordingly, he lumps the proof-texts together in order to prove to Muslim opponents that Christians have actually textual evidence for the primary Christian dogmas, contrary to the Muslim accusation that these doctrines have no scriptural base. Despite the Christian author having succeeded, to some extent, in demonstrating his points with the biblical passages, the shortage of explanation leaves little room for expansion of each biblical proof-text to highlight the significance of his biblical citations in the context of the *Letter*. However, the general themes of the *Letter* provide a context in which the probable purposes of the Christian author in employing his proof-texts can be located, with examples from earlier or contemporary Arab Christian writings.

This is an attempt to persuade Muslim readers that the names of the Trinity are not innovated, as it is claimed in Muslim polemical works.[52] The Christian author also emphasises that whilst Jews read these texts without any rejection, 'they do not know how to interpret (*taʾwīl*/ reinterpretation)' the scripture.[53] The Christian author's terminology caught Ibn Taymiyya's attention, and he seizes upon the technical term *taʾwīl* to construct his argument. As is explained in the following, Ibn Taymiyya claims that the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) of Isaiah 6.3 is clear enough to the readers, such that they can comprehend the intended meaning without recourse to reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) or even to *tafsīr* (interpretation).

Explaining the Trinity to Muslims with the doctrine of the Triune God that is three hypostases and one substance is very common among early and medieval Arab Christian apologetic and polemical works regardless of which sect they belonged to.[54] The important point of the term 'Triune' is to allow Christians to defend plurality in the Godhead without violating the unity and oneness of God against Muslims, although Muslims seem to never agree that the belief of Triuneness confirms unity (*waḥdāniyya*) in any form.[55] Whilst Christian authors use Islamic concepts and terms to explain the Trinity and to construct a common ground in order to illustrate that the Christian perception of hypostases is not completely different from Muslim understanding of God's attributes, at least in some Christian writings, this purpose only functions to spark new disputes among the two, which eventually leads to them polemicising over each other's doctrines on God's unity and oneness.[56] Abū Rāʾiṭa al-Takrītī (d. 835), one of the ninth century Arabic-speaking Christian scholars, also uses Isaiah 6.3 in a similar way to the author of the *Letter* to emphasise the scriptural reality of the divine hypostases. In his *Risāla al-ūlā* (*The First Epistle*), Abū Rāʾiṭa regards the triple repetition of the holy as a deliberate restriction to the number three and explains that the three times repetition of the word 'holy' is a mystical liturgy for the angels to praise the hypostases, 'The angels give praise three times, and their restriction to this, without adding or subtracting, is the *mysterion* (*sirr*) for their praise of three *hypostaseis*, one Lord.'[57] In a similar vein to Abū Rāʾiṭa's exegesis of Isaiah 6.3, his contemporary ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī (d. 840) interprets, in his *Kitāb al-masāʾīl wa-l-ajwiba*, the threefold repetitions and the use of the plural personal noun, also known as the royal 'we' or majestic plural in the sacred texts, as scriptural indicators of the plurality in the Godhead, albeit God who is one in essence.[58]

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[52] Early Muslim refutations of the Trinity mainly focus on the relation between God's substance and the hypostases. One of the early Muslim authors who writes against the doctrine of Triune God is ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. 838) and his contemporary Abū Muḥammed al-Qāsim b. Ibrahim al-Ḥasanī al-Rassī (d. 860), who criticise the belief in God's being three and one in their *Radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā*, by claiming that there is no specific relation between God and the three hypostases and that the Trinitarian names 'do not refer to God in his actuality.' See, David Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abū ʿĪsā Al-Warrāq's Against the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 31-50. Thomas explains al-Warrāq's criticism of the Trinity and earlier Muslim scholars' opposition to the plurality in God's unity. Despite the Christian authors' efforts in explaining the Trinity with Islamic terminology, such as *jawhar* and *ṣifā* and in a parallel manner to Muslim understanding of God's attributes, Muslim scholars could not compromise God's unity, since they took the view that the doctrine of the Triune God implies the composition in God's essence.

[53] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 118-121.

[54] Mark Beaumont, 'Speaking of the Triune God: Christian Defence of the Trinity in the Early Islamic Period,' *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 29, 2 (2012): 111-27.

[55] Nancy Roberts, 'Trinity vs. Monotheism: A False Dichotomy?' *The Muslim World* 101, 1 (2011), 73–93. With a claim that 'the concept of God as triune is found nowhere in the New Testament,' Roberts explains how the concepts of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Bible are brought together to compose a conceptualised 'trinity.' Roberts' point here, of course, is to note that before that conceptualisation of the Triune God, Christians believed in the Trinity without knowing concisely the terms substance, hypostases, and persons, see pp. 76-79.

In fact, the use of Isaiah 6.3 as a proof-text goes back to the ancient Christian writings. Seemingly, the passage has a textual continuity throughout the history of Christianity. While Isaiah 6.3 constitutes its status as a textual proof of the Trinity, with the threefold repetition of the word 'holy' even before the canonisation of Christian scriptures,[59] the text also continues to maintain its place in later Christian traditions either as a liturgical chant (also known as the Trisagion) in Byzantine churches in the early 5th century and Eucharistic rhyme in Greek, Coptic and Roman sacraments, or as a testimonium proof-text first in early Patristic writings[60] and in Arab-Christian apologetics written against Muslims later on.[61]

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[56] Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*. In this study, Husseini anaylses the three Christian author's theological discourse on the Trinity, namely Theodore Abū Qurra (d. 750-830), Abū Rāʾiṭa al-Takrītī (d. 835) and ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī (d. 840). As Husseini explains, despite the minor differences in their methodology and vocabulary for explaining the triad of the Godhead, these 9th-century Christian authors commonly employ biblical proofs and interpret them in a way that Muslim minds can also engage with their argument. They complement the textual proofs with Greek philosophy and logic, which adds perspective into Muslim-Christian theological debate since all *kalām* discussions in Muslim circles of that time relating to God's attributes are also intermingled with philosophical arguments.

[57] Keating, *Defending*, 206-207. See also Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, 95-96.

[58] Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, 130-131. Husseini explains the exgetical method of the Christian authors regarding the use of the text in which the plural sense is emphasised as 'plural argument,' and notes that this is a very common type of polemical argument among Arabic-speaking Christian scholars.

An 8th century Melkite apologetic work, entitled *Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid* (on the Triune nature of God)[62], exemplifies the first use of Isaiah 6.3 as a textual evidence of the Trinity in Arab-Christian writings. As one of the earliest apologetic writings among Arab Christians, *Tathlīth* offers insights regarding how Isaiah 6.3 survived in early ancient and patristic traditions, having been gradually transmitted into polemical works through testimonia collections.[63] As Swanson points out, the anonymous author of the *Tathlīth* refers to Isaiah 6.3 when explaining the Trinity and accepts the verse as proclamation of the oneness of God, with the threefold ascription of holiness to Him, as stated in the hymn of the seraphim in Isaiah's vision, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of the hosts.'[64] As can be seen, Isaiah 6.3 was used in almost the same way in the *Letter*'s exegesis to support the Trinity by referring to threefold repetition as the sign of the Triune nature of the divinity.

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[59] John Sawyer, 'Isaiah,' in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, eds., Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, and Hugh Pyper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 329-330. Sawyer notes the similar use of Isaiah 6.3 in the first century by Clement, Justin and Tertullian in support of their understanding of the Trinity, and he points to the scriptural authority of Isaiah and the other prophetic books in the history of Christianity and the Church.

[60] Martin C. Albl, *And Scripture Cannot Be Broken: The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 247. Early Arabic apologetic works that include several sets of biblical quotations mainly from the Hebrew Bible rely on *testimonia* collections. Albl explains how these early Christian written collections are constructed around the thematic structures of Christological events. Isa.6.3 is one of the main texts that not only serve as angelic proclamation of Jesus' divinity, but also as a prophecy of coming of the Christ.

[61] For explanation of the hymn of the seraphim in Christian traditions as a liturgical chant that refers to 'tri-hypostatic divine unity,' mainly in Byzantine tradition during 8th and 14th centuries, see St Germanus of Constantinople, *St Germanus of Constantinople on the Divine Liturgy*, ed. Paul Meyendorff (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 75-77; and Nicolaus Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. P.A. McNulty and J.M. Hussey (London: S.P.C.K., 1960), 59-61. Moreover, one of the early examples of the use of Isaiah 6.3, both as a liturgical hymn and proof-text is John of Damascus' explanation of the verse, which clearly highlights the continuous traditional exegesis of this biblical verse. John of Damascus explicates that the hymn of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6.3 or 'Thrice-Holy hymn,' as he calls it, is taught by God via the angels to the prophets, and it 'expresses the Godhead in the three persons.' See John of Damascus, F*athers of the Church: St. John of Damascus Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase (Baltimore, USA: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 287-285. I am indebted to Dr. Mary Cunningham for these references and her insightful comments on the textual history of Isaiah 6.3 in early Christian history.

[62] Mark Swanson, 'Beyond Prooftexting (2): The Use of the Bible in Some Early Arabic Apologies,' In *the Bible in Arabic Christianity*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 91-112.

[63] Swanson, 'Beyond Prooftexting (2),' 99-105. Swanson examines how the quotations from the Hebrew Bible have been organised to structure a *testimonia* collection for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and that these collections have had a great impact on early Arabic apologetic and polemic

Ibn Taymiyya's counter-argument against the Christian author's exegesis of Isaiah 6.3 and explaining how he challenges the continuous traditional interpretation of the passage are considered next. First of all, he notes the customary language of divine scriptures, which are the Bible and Qur'ān here, and claims that the threefold repetition of the word 'holy' does not signify multiplicity in the sense of the Christian's interpretation of Isaiah 6.3. On the contrary, Ibn Taymiyya argues that:

> Repetition (*tathniyya*) of the Lord's name with reference to a created being is a kind of repetition in the books of the prophets, and it does not necessarily refer to the multiplicity of the lords or gods. Therefore, when the word is repeated two or four times, the divine being has not become two or four.[65]

Likewise, he argues that when the word 'holy' has been expressed three times, this repetition does not refer to three Lords. Ibn Taymiyya is well aware that Christians also do not interpret the threefold repetition as the proof of three divinities. Nevertheless, he considers the Christian author's explanation self-contradictory since one cannot believe in one God, while

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writings among Christians, particularly Melkite writers. Swanson also notes that the anonymous Arabic Christian treatise was initially entitled 'An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles from an Eighth or Ninth Century MS. in the Convent of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, with a Treatise "*On the Triune Nature of God*"' by Margaret Dunlop Gibson. The treatise has been also examined by Samir Khalil, 'The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity,' in *Christian Arabic Apologetics During the Abbasid Period*, eds., S.K. Samir, and J.S. Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 57-114. Additionally, J. Render Harris published an article on this Apology entitled; 'A tract on the triune nature of God,' in *American Journal of Theology*, 1901, and reprinted in his work *Testomonies* (London 1916).

[64] Swanson, 'Beyond Prooftexting (2),' 109.

[65] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.461-462. The editor of the *Jawāb* notes that the word *tathniya* is *tasmiya* (naming) in two other copies of the *Jawāb*. However, I think that the word 'tathniya' or repetition is more appropriate in this context since the argument of the Christian author also centres on the repetition of the word 'holy' in Isaiah 6.3.

clearly announcing three gods.[66] It is clear that Ibn Taymiyya does not regard the Triune doctrine compatible with *waḥdāniyya* (the oneness of God).

As has been mentioned earlier in the present section, Ibn Taymiyya focuses on the term *taʾwīl* (reinterpretation) that his Christian opponent used to emphasise possible interpretation of the text. While the Christian author refers to this term to claim that Jews do not know the intended meaning of Isaiah 6.3, Ibn Taymiyya uses the term to prove that the meaning of the verse is apparent (*ẓāhir*) enough to reveal its intended meaning to any reader from any religious background. This provides Ibn Taymiyya sufficient grounds to expand upon his argument that the apparent meaning of the verse does not refer to the Trinitarian names in any sense. He also notes the distinction between the terms *tafsīr* (interpretation) and *taʾwīl* (reinterpretation). This distinction is important for Ibn Taymiyya to advance his claim. Accordingly, he explains that, if the author of the *Letter* intends by *taʾwīl* a meaning that differs from the *lafẓ* (what the expression signifies), then this kind of interpretation is only needed - if it is really needed - when the apparent meaning is false and what is intended by it is not appropriate. However, he firmly claims that the verse is not that kind of expression. Whilst for Christians the passage's *ẓāhir* meaning does not indicate the intended meaning of the text, for Ibn Taymiyya, the signification of the expressions and the apparent meaning correspond to the intended meaning (*murād*).[67]

Ibn Taymiyya further explains how it can be comprehended that the apparent meaning of the verse, particularly the threefold repetition, does not refer to the persons of the Trinity. He offers a grammatical analysis of the text to advance his claim that the syntactical structure of the sentence supports the text's apparent meaning, whereby it is possible to grasp quickly that the three times sanctification is a common liturgical praise or hymn, not only in Christian sacraments, but in Islamic tradition as well. However, this liturgy, of course, is only the veneration of the Divine by repeating the holy words without adding any mystical interpretation to the text's meaning. Ibn Taymiyya's explanation is as follows:

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[66] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.462-463.

[67] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.463-464.

> Likewise, their saying, 'Holy, holy, holy (*quddūs*)' [means to] sanctify Him [i.e. God] three times. He [the Christian author] said, 'We sanctify you, we do three times threefold sanctification (*taqdīs*).' Then, the *tathlīth* [it is the threefold sanctification: *taqdīs*] has been put in the accusative by the infinitive (*maṣdar*), which puts the verb 'sanctify' (*taqdīs*) in the subjunctive. Therefore, it is said, 'We sanctify you with threefold sanctification (*taqdīsan muthallathan*).'[68]

Ibn Taymiyya clearly emphasises that even the grammatical reading of the verse does not support the interpretation that the verse mystically refers to the persons of the Trinity. He notes that even the explanation of the Christian author does not underpin this interpretation since the infinitive, which is *taqdīs* in this context, certainly refers to the verb to 'sanctify.' That is to say, the compatibility between the verb and its infinitive, from a grammatical perspective, proves that this liturgical praise of the angels means only three times the sanctification of God, as is the case with the Islamic liturgy, 'I glorify (*sabaḥtuka*) you with three times praise.' Moreover, he notes that the author's statement, 'We call three times to you (*nuthallithu laka*)' means 'We sanctify you three times,' which is definitely not to praise three Lords or three hypostases. It seems that Ibn Taymiyya was also well aware that whilst Christians do not praise three Lords, the meaning that they do attribute to the threefold sanctification is beyond the apparent meaning of the verse and implies multiplicity in God's unity. He, thus strives to prove his point that that style of liturgical praises, which contains repetition of words regardless of numbers, has a place in the religious traditions both in Christianity and in Islam.[69] Hence, searching for the implication to God's attributes or Trinitarian persons is methodically and theologically false, since God's names and attributes cannot be restricted to three.[70] Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyya accuses Christians of reinterpreting (*taʾwīl*) Isaiah 6.3 since they dismiss the *ẓāhir* meaning of the text and attribute new meanings to the expression in order to arrive at the interpretation that would be applied to the doctrine of the Trinity and divine hypostases.

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[68] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.465. It might be useful to refer to a technical discussion that is sparked among early and medieval Arab linguists to keep Ibn Taymiyya's rather dense and technical dispute clear and comprehensible. *Maṣdar* (infinitive) is a fiercely discussed term between two famous groups of Arab lexicographers, namely, the Kufans and the Basrans. While the first group argues that the *maṣdar* is derived from the verb, the latter claims that the infinitive precedes the verb. The central point of this discussion is to set a hierarchical position between a verb and its infinitive so that their positions can allow them to function in grammatical analysis in order to determine where the emphasis has been put in text. See Kees Versteegh, ed., *The Explanation of Linguistic Causes: Az-Zağğāğī's Theory of Grammar* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 1995), 72-94.

3.2.3 Application of the Theory of Apparent Meaning (*ẓāhir*) to Exodus 3.15

Now, how Ibn Taymiyya uses the term *ẓāhir* to argue that the biblical verse in question is textually clear leaving no room for further interpretation is explained. The verse Exodus 3.15, 'I am the Lord God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Jacob' is used in the *Letter* in a similar vein to the use of Isaiah 6.3 to emphasise the scriptural proof for the Trinity by indicating that God has proclaimed Himself three times as the Lord of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The threefold repetition of the word 'Lord' in the verse is an explicit sign of the Trinity and of the equity of each hypostasis (*uqnūm*) in the Trinitarian formulation. The Christian author of the *Letter* argues that otherwise, God would have stated, 'I am the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.'[71]

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[69] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.465-466. Ibn Taymiyya quotes a ḥadīth text transmitted from Ibn Mas'ūd that Muslims praise God three times in prayer during two prostrations (*rukūʿ* and *sujūd*).

[70] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.466-467.

[71] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 118-119.

In response to the Christian interpretation of Exodus 3.15, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the author's argument for the divine hypostases is an utmost falsity and that the interpretation of the text is highly rhetorical and figurative. He offers an alternative rhetorical interpretation, by which he plays with the expressions to demonstrate that the meaning of the text is clear such that there is no room for additional exegesis. That is to say, the verse's intended meaning is conveyed in a transparent sense for the reader. Then, he provides a grammatical analysis in order to prove that the verse's apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning is also the intended one:

> First of all, if the intended meaning, with the expression 'Lord', was the hypostatic Existent (*uqnūm al-wujūd*), and with the second use of the expression 'Lord' [the intended meaning] was the hypostatic Word (*uqnūm al-kalimat*), and with the third [use of the expression 'Lord' the intended meaning] was the hypostatic Life (*uqnūm al-ḥayāt*), then the first hypostasis would be God of Abraham and the second hypostasis would be God of Isaac and the third hypostasis would be God of Jacob. Thus, each of the hypostases would be God for each of the three Prophets. However, the hypostases are not gods. This even would be unbelief for them [Christians]. This belief also necessitates three gods, but Christians say that God is one. However, they then also say that each *uqnūm* is one God. [Accordingly] when it is argued with this unambiguous text (*naṣṣ*), it is necessary to render a God for each prophet. However, it is not true.[72]

As can be seen, here, Ibn Taymiyya reads the verse closely. This is a strategic move that allows him to argue that if the *ẓāhir* meaning is to be diverted to another, then one can argue for alternative interpretations which are not even compatible with Christian theology. Then, he explains how the repetitions of the word 'lord' in Exodus 3.15 should be understood. He claims that this passage is an unambiguous (*naṣṣ*) text that reveals the intended meaning without leaving any possibility for another. To advance his argument, Ibn Taymiyya quotes Q 87.1-2, 'Your Lord, the Most High, who (*alladhī*) created and proportioned,' and Q 26.78, 'Who (*alladhī*) created me.'[73] He explains that that apposition (*'aṭf*) is used sometimes for replacing the beings (*dhawāt*) and sometimes for replacing their attributes or characteristics. In the verses, the word *alladhī* (who) is used as an apposition (*'aṭf*) to refer to God and a replacement for the word 'he' or God. The main point is that the repetition of the word 'lord' in Exodus 3.15 and the use of appositions in the qur'ānic examples cited above, are clearly parts of stylistic and rhetorical divine speech. He notes that the names or titles of God sometimes might be repeated for a strong emphasis, whereas appositions sometimes might be repeated by replacing God's names or the personal pronoun (Him).[74] Ibn Taymiyya further adds that that style of repetitions does not signal or particularise any meaning related to the Trinity. In fact, according to the intention of the speaker, words can be repeated two, four or five times by virtue of a plurality of the attributes that the speaker wishes to indicate.[75]

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[72] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.457-458.

Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya explains that the self-evident meaning of Exodus 3.15, without engaging in any interpretation, is that He (the Lord) is the Worshipped of the three. For Ibn Taymiyya, the verse indicates that each Prophet worships God with a specialised form of worship.[76] Hence, the repetition of the word *ilāh* can only be indicative that each prophet individually, as the servant (*ʿabd*) of God, has an obligation to worship Him. That is to say, each time when the word is repeated, this refers only to God in the same manner as a rhetorical emphasis on the divinity of God, not to the persons of the Trinity.

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya takes a further step to explicate how the word *ilāh* exclusively connotes worship in the context of Exodus 3.15, by a linguistic analysis, arguing that the word 'God' inherently refers to worship.

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[73] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.459

[74] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.458.

[75] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.460.

[76] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.460.

It is a meaning inherited in the word. Reiterating that the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of 'God' signifies that *ilāh* is the Worshipped of each of the three (prophets), he further expands his discussion on the term *dalāla*, which means signification, or what a word signifies.[77] The important point regarding signification (*dalāla*) is the distinction between signifying by expressions (*al-dalāla bi-l-lafẓ*) and the signification of expressions (*dalālat al-lafẓ*).[78] As Yunis Ali explains, this distinction is first introduced by al-Qarāfī to distinguish between the intention of a speaker and the interpretation of a hearer.[79] For a successful communication, this fundamental distinction between 'intended meaning' and 'interpreted meaning' leads to Islamic scholars, both legal theorists and linguists, to categorise the two types of signification. Rather than engaging in extensive discussion of this categorisation, I shall reflect only on the category of signifying by expressions (*al-dalāla al-lafẓ*) since Ibn Taymiyya uses this to interpret Exodus 3.15.[80]

Muslim scholars divide signification (*al-dalāla*) into two kinds: verbal signification (*dalāla lafẓiyya*) and non-verbal signification (*dalāla ghayr lafẓiyya*). For the present study, the focus is on the first category, which is divided into three: equivalence signification (*dalālat muṭābaqa*), incorporational signification (*dalālat taḍammun*) and implicational signification (*dalālat iltizām*).[81] In the remainder of this section, Ibn Taymiyya's writing is drawn upon to explain how the word 'God' inherently signifies worship in relation to these categories. He asserts that the word

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[77] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.460.

[78] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 46-52.

[79] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics,* 46-47.

[80] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics,* especially pp. 46-52 for types of signification and pp. 141-154 for ways of signification. See also pp. 159-187, for text-based classification of signification and the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī usage of this.

[81] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 142-143. All of the Arabic technical terms and their translation into English are adopted from Yunis Ali's book for just this section. Note that the three-part division of signification category mentioned above is not the only one, for there are alternatives, as Yunis Ali has explained; see 143-145.

‘God’ (*ilāh*) indicates that its verbal signification (*dalāla lafẓiyya*) is worship (*‘ibādat*), which signifies the intended meaning of a speaker without needing its implication (*lāzimihi*). His reasoning is as follows:

> *Ilāh* signifies worship by a signification via a word incorporating worship (*bi-l-alfaẓ al-mutaḍammun*). In this [expression], there is no implicative signifier (*dalāla al-malzūm*), and the appearance of the meaning and its concomitant(s) (*tafarru‘hu*) [meanings] to the hearer is [inherent] in the word, leaving no room for further thinking.[82]

That is to say, the word ‘God’ (*ilāh*) already reveals the meaning by an incorporational signification such that the intended meaning is clearly apparent (*ẓāhir*) in the first place. Thus, the communication becomes successful without recourse to any other category of verbal signification. Ibn Taymiyya considers *ilāh* as an expression that incorporationally (*dalālat taḍammun*) signifies *‘ibādat* (worship).[83] This is because incorporational signification is an essential part of the word and defines it in a way. For this reason, Ibn Taymiyya claims that the meaning ‘worship’ is incorporationally signified for the hearer and thus, there can be no room for other interpretations, suggesting that signifying is the act of the speaker here, which in turn, will lead the hearer to reconstruct the intended meaning via these significations.[84]

As has been mentioned earlier, he considers Exodus 3.15 as being unambiguous (*naṣṣ*), which indicates that the text has one single clear meaning. It might be useful to recall here that *naṣṣ* represents the utmost level of textual clarity in a Muslim framework that supersedes the status of *ẓāhir* (apparent). Depending on this perspective, Ibn Taymiyya contends that the intention of the speaker is certainly the determinate, who has manifested his intention through signifying by expressions and thereby rules out other possible explanations of the biblical passage. On the assumption that the speaker signifies the expressions in the clearest sense, Ibn Taymiyya seemingly considers that the potential signification of the word *ilāh* should be incorporational (*taḍammun*), which defines the essential part of the expression, that is, worship, rather than implicational (*iltizām*), which might signify all possible meanings of the expression. This strategy seems to be very advantageous for Ibn Taymiyya as he is able to corroborate that the word 'God' only signifies a worshipped divinity in each time repeated in Exodus 3.15, contrary to the possibility that the word *ilāh* could signify an implicational meaning, instead of its essential one. According to his reading regarding the level of clarity of the verse, it is, in fact, not possible to argue that each repetition is a scriptural sign for each person of the Trinity. Hence, he renders Exodus 3.15 an unambiguous passage (*naṣṣ*) giving the text absolute clarity on the conviction that the word 'God' necessarily and inherently signifies a divinity that is worshipped, above all meanings, which is supported by an incorporational signification.

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[82] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.460.

[83] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics,* 149.

[84] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics,* 150-151.

In conclusion, it has been shown that Ibn Taymiyya's main technique in interpreting Isaiah 6.3 and Exodus 3.15, is primarily to simplify rather complicate interpretations of the passages that he considers misinterpreted or overly interpreted to extend the meaning in accord with the Christian doctrines. To prove this point, he explains that while Isaiah 6.3 has a *ẓāhir* meaning that is also eventually the intended meaning of the text, Exodus 3.15 similarly is a clear passage devoid of any confusion and demonstrates the textual clarity for the reader with incorporational (inclusive) signification.

3.3 Deuteronomy 32.6 & Isaiah 40.8 and Psalms 110.1: Unqualified and Qualified Expressions (*muṭlaq-muqayyad*) in Divine Speech

In this section, the purpose is to present Ibn Taymiyya's exegetical reading of the biblical verses Deuteronomy 32.6 and Isaiah 40.8 along with Psalms 110.1. The primary method that he utilises here is to read the passages in light of their wider biblical context and to determine the key words and their textual relations to another passage or context in the corpus of the Bible. On the one hand, Ibn Taymiyya claims, for example, the word 'father' (*ab*) is never used to signify a decontextualised absolute unqualified meaning (*iṭlāq*) in the Bible. That is to say, the term 'father' has an established meaning in the Bible, which signifies the same meaning in every context where the term is used. He argues, on the other hand, that 'Lord' (*Rabb*) refers to God in its unqualified (*muṭlaq*) sense as well as to a 'master' in a given context as a qualified (*muqayyad*) meaning.

3.3.1 Application of the Terms *muṭlaq-muqayyad* to Exegesis

The terms *muṭlaq* and *muqayyad* are primarily explained in relation to the discussion of clarity of God's speech in the Muslim framework along with other technical terms, such as *ḥaqīqa-majāz* and *ẓāhir*, which have been explained earlier in this chapter. The principle of *bayān* (elucidation) proposes that God has explicated the Qur'ān in a lucid way. The conviction that God manifested His intended meaning either by particularising utterances and expressions or qualifying them, led Muslim scholars to focus on the categories of expressions, such as unqualified-qualified (*muṭlaq-muqayyad*) expressions that are primarily connected to the discussion of the general (*ʻāmm*) and particular (*khass*) in divine speech.[85] This principle has become the primary ground on which the scholars of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) theorise about expressions and their relation to each other in the wider context of the Qur'ān. The utmost purpose of relating the texts to each other is to determine the intended meaning of God's expressions. The rationale behind this systematic approach to the qur'ānic text, of course, is primarily to extract legal meanings from the revelation. The main proposition for this exegetical activity is that the meaning of a passage might be clarified by another text, although this does not always necessarily require the first to be obscure or ambiguous. That is to say, God might wish to clarify or extend his intended meaning of a given text by particularising (*takhṣīṣ*) or qualifying (*taqyīd*) it with another text in the Qur'ān.[86]

As the first Muslim scholar who noted the link between qur'ānic expressions and their meanings, forming an exegetical methodology to determine jurisprudential meanings of the texts, al-Shafiʿī also regards the theory of *bayān* as 'the Qur'ān elucidates itself,' which could be rendered as a textual mechanism that serves well to legal theorists to create a strategic reading of the Qur'ān and to spot the probative value of passages.[87] While in some early juristic works, the clarification of one unclear text by another is limited to that which is particularly closely related to the passage, the extent of this relevancy gradually is expanded by some scholars to include any text in the wider corpus of revelation, that is, the Qur'ān and Hadith collections. As for the hermeneutical nature of the technical terms or hermeneutical exegetical pairs, as Gleave calls them,[88] the whole discussion is, indeed, linked to a major debate: the literalness of God's speech. Muslim scholars are primarily concerned with the issue as to whether God's expressions should be taken in the literal meanings that the utterances signify, or God might wish to convey a qualified meaning through an unqualified one.[89] Ibn Taymiyya agrees with the mainstream of Muslim scholars that God might elucidate an unqualified meaning by another text, and that the context is the primary determiner for the new meaning. He strongly disagrees, on the other hand, that God's further elucidation or extension of a meaning can be regarded as *majāz*. [90]

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[85] Whilst the discussion of general and particular expressions is widely elaborated in *uṣūl al-fiqh* works, the terms *muṭlaq-muqayyad* seem to be treated as a subcategory of this major debate. This lesser attention to *muṭlaq-muqayyad* is also evident in the modern studies that have analysed these particular two pairs of terminological expressions.

[86] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 47-49 and 99-101; Vishanoff, *The Formation,* 42; 53-56 and 165; Weiss, *The Search*, 453-459.

[87] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 99-101. Vishanoff, *The Formation,* 42. Vishanoff and Gleave both explain how al-Shafiʿī lists the types of *bayan,* all of which are based on the presupposition that the Qur'ān makes the meanings clear regardless of how ambiguous the language is.

In Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of the biblical passages, the use of the term *muṭlaq* is explained in connection with the correlative term *iṭlāq* (de-contextualisation) for the word 'father' in the context of biblical verses, the terms *muṭlaq-muqayyad* as a pair, are used to explain the term 'lord' in the Bible. In other words, it is clarified how Ibn Taymiyya analyses the biblical passages by connecting the term 'lord' to the wider context of the Bible, whilst also assigning a new unqualified meaning to it, namely 'lordship.' Moreover, he argues that the word 'lord' is used as a qualified (*muqayyad*) expression in connection with other subjects.

While the signification of the terms *muṭlaq* and *iṭlāq* may vary from context to context, it would be safe to say that for Ibn Taymiyya *muṭlaq* refers to an unqualified meaning, i.e. one that is not restricted with any other, while *iṭlāq* pertains to abstracting or decontextualising an utterance or expression from any meaning or context in a broad sense. It is the latter term that Ibn Taymiyya strongly opposes since, for him, abstract expressions only exist in the human mind.[91] Accordingly, he argues that an expression always is uttered in a context and therefore, there cannot be an abstract meaning.[92] Rather, every utterance signifies a context-dependent meaning, as elaborated earlier in this chapter on the distinction between *ḥaqīqa-majāz*. Moreover, he claims that an expression is never used in an abstracted or decontextualised sense, for it is always, to the contrary, restricted, or qualified in a sentence by the speaker. Once the speaker's usual speaking habits are known, the intended meaning can easily be clarified.[93]

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[88] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 44-55.

[89] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 75-77. Yunis Ali highlights that al-Taftāzānī and a few other Muslim scholars consider that the speaker determines the connection between literal and nonliteral meaning. Thus, a speaker can produce many new meanings through using the words and making relations between his expressions and meanings that he wishes to assign to the words. Consequently, they regard those new meanings as *majāz*-meanings, which led them to argue that God might 'utter the general (*al-ʿāmm*) and intend the particular (*al-khāṣṣ*), whilst also uttering the unqualified (*al-muṭlaq*) and intending the qualified (*al-muqayyad*).'

[90] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 120-121. Yunis Ali argues that the *muqayyad* and *khāṣṣ* expressions 'are context-dependent expressions' for Ibn Taymiyya.

Nevertheless, there is an important distinction between a decontextualised (*iṭlāq*) and an unqualified expression (*muṭlaq*) in Ibn Taymiyya's framework.[94] While an active communication makes it practically impossible for an expression to be decontextualised, it can make, however, an unqualified expression meaningful during an oral or textual communication. That is to say, a speaker might intentionally prefer not to qualify his expression and thus, leave it as an unqualified meaning; yet, it is most likely to be recognised by the hearer. Ibn Taymiyya explains this as two states of speech: one is that the speaker might prefer to be silent and his speech becomes discontinuous. In this case, the intended meaning is not explicitly stated. The second state of speech is that a speaker might connect his expressions with other statements that have different meanings. These two different states of the speaker's speech are regarded as his habits.[95]

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[91] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Īmān*, 88-100.

[92] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 98-101.

[93] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 20.412.

[94] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 99-100. Yunis Ali explains here that abstract expressions have a particular technical meaning for Ibn Taymiyya, 'a completely decontextualized meaning, which, can never be part of language.'

[95] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 20.413.

Another equally important difference is between the terms *muṭlaq* and its pair *muqayyad*. As shall be seen, Ibn Taymiyya certainly confirms that God qualifies unqualified (*muṭlaq*) expressions in the revelation. He describes this as the Qur'ān interpreting itself or interpreting of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān.[96] He notes that God mentions His act of creating in an unqualified (*muṭlaq*) sense in Q 87.2, 'The one who created, then proportioned,' without explaining what it is He created and proportioned, which is similar to the use of unqualified expression in Q 87.3, 'The one who measured, then guided' without referring to what God measured and guided. Ibn Taymiyya further clarifies that these two unqualified (*muṭlaq*) texts could refer to anything that is created by God. Then, he cites Q 82.7, where God's acts of creating and proportioning are associated with the human, 'The one who created you, then proportioned and balanced you,' in a qualified (*muqayyad*) sense. This is also an example showing that God sometimes speaks in an unqualified (*muṭlaq*) (Q 87.2, 'The one who created') and a qualified sense (*muqayyad*) (Q 82.7, 'Who created you').[97]

The discussion above has shown that, for Ibn Taymiyya, every expression is only meaningful in the context where it is uttered. Decontextualising (*iṭlāq*) an expression from any meaning or context and then reassigning a new meaning to the expression requires other textual evidence. Ibn Taymiyya's major concern here is to emphasise that purifying a meaning from the earlier ones that were attached to an expression in a context can only be affirmed when other textual evidence supports the presumption that the speaker uttered the same expression and yet intended a different meaning in the context in question. It has been also noted that the nature of revelation or divine speech necessarily requires the text to be clear (*bayān*) or clarified. In the case of the Qur'ān, the dimensional aspects of a text, which might have juristic or solely theological meaning, could be extended by another passage in a different part of the Qur'ān. Ibn Taymiyya utilises this methodological reading to interpret the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān. This is the same methodological reading that he applies to the biblical text, as will be explained in the following.

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[96] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 15.442-449.

[97] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 16.129-130.

3.3.2 Deuteronomy 32.6 & Isaiah 40.8: Decontextualising (*iṭlāq*) the Trinitarian Names

The author of the *Letter* cites Deuteronomy 32.6, 'Is He not your Father, who formed you? Has He not made you and established you?' and Isaiah 40.8, 'The bush dries up and the grass withers away, but the Word of the Lord remains forever,' as textual proofs against the Islamic criticism of the Trinitarian names.[98] He argues that these biblical verses prove the originality of the Trinitarian names, contrary to the Muslim accusation that they are innovated terms and that God used them to reflect 'His divine nature.'[99] Additionally, he quotes the qur'ānic verses that use similar terms, such as 'Our Word' (*kalimatunā*) in Q 37.171 and 'Holy Spirit' in Q 5.110, which are considered as allusions to the names of the Trinity.[100]

While Ibn Taymiyya rejects the Christian interpretation of these biblical passages and argues that they do not support the Trinity, he clearly accepts the Christian argument that the Trinitarian terms inherently belong to the language of the Bible. Reading the biblical verses in question through a linguistic and contextual approach, Ibn Taymiyya strongly contends that the intended meaning of these texts is not to affirm the hypostatic relations of the persons of the Trinity.[101] It has been already noted that he mostly considers the biblical text as being unchanged; however, he raises doubt about the veracity of the text in the *Jawāb* on several occasions. This is as if he wishes to remind his reader that there is always epistemological concern for the certainty of the transmitted knowledge of the biblical lore. I consider this reminder as his strategic purpose in being clear, particularly to a Muslim reader, that he is well aware that the biblical texts do not have a multiple transmission chain (*tawātur*).[102] Yet, I also regard his recurring attempts to mention this particular concern as a strategic and theoretical move in order to be one step ahead of his Christian opponent for the present discussion. He firmly asserts that the biblical citations cannot be evidence (*ḥujja*) unless the texts have a reliable transmission chain (*isnād*).[103] Additionally, the true translation (*tarjama ṣaḥiḥā*) from Hebrew to another language, such as Greek, Arabic or Syriac, needs to be verified.[104]

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[98] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 94-95.

[99] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 92-95. See also, pp. 94-95. It appears that the use of the scripture in order to prove the textual history of Trinitarian names and the command of Jesus for the teaching of the Trinity is a method that is commonly applied. See Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, 128-129 and 155-156.

[100] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 96-97; see Bridger, *Christian Exegesis of the Qur'an*, 65-104.

[101] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.238.

Next, Ibn Taymiyya informs the readers that he, nevertheless, will interpret 'the statements (*kalimāt*) of Moses' when he addressed the son of Israel, 'Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?' in Deuteronomy 32.6. He contends that the word 'father' is used in connection with a referent other than Jesus in the verse. Moreover, he notes that the words 'father' and 'son' are also used for other entities in the Bible. To exemplify this claim, he cites Exodus 4.22, 'You are my firstborn' and Psalms 2.7, 'My son, my love' as well as John 20.17, 'My Father and your Father,' where the words 'father' and 'son' are used in relation to different referents.[105] The interpretation above, is the same as with Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Matthew 28.19, as explained earlier in this chapter. However, there is a major mistake here that leads Ibn Taymiyya to argue that the word 'father' in Deuteronomy 32.6 does not refer to Jesus.[106] The author of the *Letter*, however, does not use this biblical passage to provide evidence that the title 'father' (*Ab*) is used for Jesus. Rather, the author cites a set of passages that contains the Trinitarian names to argue that these names have a scriptural base, as already clarified earlier. Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya assumes, mistakenly, that the term 'father' is understood to prove the divinity of Jesus in the *Letter*. This misreading leads him to finding an alternative reading of the passages to show that the term 'father' is exclusively used for God in the Bible.

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[102] It is the Prophetic *tafsīr* tradition that Ibn Taymiyya fundamentally places at the core of theory of *bayān* in connection with qur'ānic interpretation, as highlighted earlier in this section. It would appear that Ibn Taymiyya feels the need to remind the Christian reader that the text of the Bible does not have a reliable transmission chain as well as the Prophetic tradition that explains the expressions and their meanings.

[103] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.238.

[104] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.239.

[105] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.239.

To do so, he explains that 'father' can be regarded either as a context-free (*mujarrad ʾiṭlāq*) term or an unqualified one (*muṭlaq*). Then, Ibn Taymiyya adds that if 'father' is considered a context-free name, thus signifying an unrestricted meaning, then this necessarily requires continuity (*al-dawr*). In other words, he argues that there should be another example in the Bible that names Jesus 'father' to confirm that this is used as an unqualified term (*muṭlaq*) that could signify any referent. He aims to prove, with this argument, that Christians do not have the textual evidence to confirm that the term 'father' can be applied to both Jesus and God in the Bible.[107]

To conclude, Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Deuteronomy 32.6 as a counter-argument is not pertinent to the Christian author's interpretation. Apparently, he does not understand that the author did not use the word 'father' for Jesus. Yet, there might be a reason that led Ibn Taymiyya to misunderstand the Christian interpretation. As explained in an earlier section, Ibn Taymiyya is well aware of the fact that divine titles are used for Jesus both in the Bible and in Christian interpretative tradition. For this reason, he might think that the title 'father' is used as another title of Jesus in this particular context. Thus, he asserts that the title 'father' is never used for any entity other than God in the Bible. He claims that the word 'father' never has a decontextualised (*iṭlāq*) meaning throughout the biblical scripture. On the contrary, 'father' always refers to God, which is an argument any Christian would not oppose. Whilst a misreading of the text triggers Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Deuteronomy 32.6, this discussion, nevertheless, is important to see the underlying strategy that shaped his hermeneutical approach to the Bible. In a similar way to the strategy of the section on *mushtarak-mutawāṭi*ʾ, it has been seen that every utterance, especially of the key technical words of the Bible, is hermeneutically bound to the wider contexts of the scripture. In order to divert the meaning from the so-called literal meaning of the text, when necessary, there has to be a contextual indicator. Moreover, the new interpretation should strictly be in accordance with the previous revelations and interpretative traditions.

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[106] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.239.

[107] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.240.

3.3.3 Psalm 110.1: Application of Unqualified-Qualified (*muṭlaq-muqayyad*) Expressions to the Exegesis

Similar to the use of Deuteronomy 32.6 in the *Letter*, the author cites Psalm 110.1, 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I cast your enemies beneath your footstool",' to argue that the hypostases are explicitly mentioned in the Bible and that the previous prophets also acknowledge the reality of the Trinity.[108] Even though the author does not provide a detailed interpretation of the passages, it could be reasonable say that in the statement, 'The Lord said to my Lord', the first 'lord' means God, while the second refers to Jesus.[109] In fact, the use of Psalm 110.1 as a single *testimonium* both in pre-Christian Jewish and early Christian writings, shows close parallels to the use of this passage in the *Letter*. One of the early studies on the use of Psalm 110.1 in Christian writings suggests that the text was used due to its strong allusion to Christological interpretations, such as the glorification of Jesus after his death with the title 'lord.'[110] Albl also explains that Psalm 110.1 is interpreted as a messianic *testimonium*, since it not only refers to the divinity and the exaltation of Jesus, but also, to his two natures by implicitly referring to Christological events: the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.[111]

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[108] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 118-119.

[109] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 118-119.

Contrary to the traditional Christian interpretation of Psalms 110.1 as a textual proof of Jesus' glorification with the title 'lord,' Ibn Taymiyya argues that this title does not refer to Jesus in this specific context. Referring to the Christian theology (*kalām*) explained earlier in the *Letter*, where Jesus is associated with a divine attribute, Ibn Taymiyya claims that this interpretation of Psalm 110.1 is even contradictory to the Christian theological doctrines.[112] He strategically reminds the reader that Jesus is also accepted as an attribute in the Trinitarian formulation. Hence, it is not permissible to refer to anything among the attributes of God with the word 'lord,' such as 'with my Lord,' (*bi-rabbī*). At this point, what invalidates the Christian interpretation, for Ibn Taymiyya, is the wider context of the Christian *kalām* theology, where Jesus is one of the divine attributes. He contends that a divine attribute is never called 'lord' in any religious tradition, including Christianity. It is clear that, for Ibn Taymiyya, theologically speaking, it is not permissible that the intended meaning of the word 'lord' is Jesus, who is also an attribute of God. According to him, when reading Psalms 110.1, interpreting the word 'lord' as referring to the divinity of Jesus is tantamount to distinguishing the divine Jesus from the human Jesus, which is not even acceptable for Christians.[113]

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[110] David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 45.

[111] Albl, *And Scripture Cannot Be Broken*, 216-236.

[112] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.452.

[113] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.452.

Next, Ibn Taymiyya analyses the linguistic structure of the expression, 'The Lord said to my Lord' and argues that this is an example of verbal exaggeration that Christians tend to use to strengthen the rhetorical feature of expressions. He refers to the part of the Creed, 'a true God from the true God,' as an example of a rhetorically exaggerated expression, where the title 'God' is used for Jesus.[114] He then explains that the title 'lord' does not signify the meaning of a divine being in both of these contexts. Ibn Taymiyya highlights how in Psalms 110.1, the word 'lord' is used with a reference to the second word 'lord' in a way that distinguishes between the two meanings. That is to say, whilst the same word is used twice in a single sentence, the semantic structure of the verse technically allows the reader to comprehend that the same word (i.e. lord) signifies two separate meanings in the same sentence. To advance this argument, Ibn Taymiyya explains that the word 'lord' is used at the beginning of the sentence without indicating a semantic link to the second use. For him, in its first appearance, 'lord' refers to God and then, to a created being in the second. Therefore, 'lord' is used for an honorary title for Jesus when it is expressed the second time in Psalms 110.1.[115]

To add a linguistic methodology to what he has already argued above, Ibn Taymiyya explains how one should arrive at the conclusion that the word 'lord' signifies two variant meanings in the same verse. He claims that in the statement, 'The Lord said to my Lord,' the word 'lord' simultaneously designates both qualified and unqualified meanings. The difference between qualified (*muqayyad*) and unqualified (*muṭlaq*) expressions should be recalled here to comprehend Ibn Taymiyya's argument in full. For him, there are no unqualified expressions except for abstract ones, which have no reality in the external world. An expression can only be used in a qualified or an unqualified manner. That is to say, as Yunis Ali explains, while the word

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[114] This is a reference to the Nicene Creed that Ibn Taymiyya quotes in a few places in the *Jawāb*.

[115] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.452-453.

‘man’ might refer to all male humans in an unqualified manner, it also might indicate Zayd, as he is a man in a qualified manner. In other words, an expression might refer to a general or specific referent in a given context by which the intended meaning can be determined without any textual obscurity.[116]

According to the explanation above, Ibn Taymiyya claims that while the word ‘lord’ in the first appearance is used in an unqualified (*muṭlaq*) meaning, which only denotes God, in the second appearance, it is used in a qualified (*muqayyad*) sense, which just means ‘*sayyid*’ (master or lord). Likewise, Joseph says in Q 12.23, ‘He is my master (*rabbī*) who has made good my residence,’ and Q 12.42, ‘Mention me before your master (*rabbika*), but Satan made him forget the mention to his master (*rabbihi*).’ Relying on the qur’ānic verses that have relevant linguistic structure with Psalms 110.1, Ibn Taymiyya strongly asserts that the text should be read, ‘God said to my master (*sayyidī*); God, the Lord of the universe, said to my master (*sayyidī*).’[117] In this reading, he takes the word ‘lord’ as a literary or poetic expression in which David was named ‘humble master’ and he adds that naming David ‘lord’ does not mean that he is nobler than God.[118] The latter point is to make clear that even though a divine title is used for a human, the meaning of the word has been re-signified in this context and has no relation to the earlier meaning. Hence, using the title ‘lord’ for a created being does not violate the Taymiyyan principle that one always should be very cautious when speaking about God in terms of the theological language used. This interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya is similar to al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, and al-Qarāfī’s interpretation. These three scholars also point out that the title ‘lord’ is used for both humans and God in the Bible. The main strategy of their interpretation of ‘lord’ is to argue that it should be interpreted nonliterally or metaphorically, which is the same argument they used for the interpretation of the terms, ‘father’ and ‘son.’ Ibn Taymiyya, however, defines the word ‘lord’ as a qualified (*muqayyad*) term. This serves him well to argue that when ‘lord’ is used for humans this does not mean that it signifies two different meanings. Rather, it demonstrates that the word ‘lord’ is used to signify a meaning that is deliberately qualified to reveal the intended meaning of a speaker.

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[116] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 120-125.

[117] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.453.

[118] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.453.

3.4 Genesis 19.24: The Theory of Making Explicit (*iẓhār*) and Ellipsis (*iḍmār*)

This section, as the last part on Ibn Taymiyya’s linguistic analysis of biblical text in this chapter, provides grammatical-linguistic analysis of Genesis 19.24, ‘Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord, out of the heavens.’ Ibn Taymiyya’s explanation leads to the two well-known concepts *iẓhār* (making explicit) and *iḍmār* (ellipsis) of Islamic hermeneutics, which are explained in what follows. Ibn Taymiyya’s claim that Genesis 19.24 features a linguistic style of divine language, which is also used in the Qur’ān, creates a contrasting setting in which the theory of *iẓhār* is applied to both qur’ānic and biblical texts. Whilst he does not mention the term *iḍmār* in his brief comment, the qur’ānic examples given to explain his argument hint at the theory of *iḍmār*. Accordingly, an introductory summary on the use of *iḍmār* with its opposite pair *iẓhār* is provided.

Iḍmār, which is usually translated as ellipsis, technically means eliding, hiding, or omitting a word or phrase in a sentence, while *iẓhār*, to the contrary, refers to an explicitly or overtly stated word or expression. Solimando explains that the term *iḍmār* emerged in early exegetical works and remained a non-technical tool to understand textual ambiguities in the Qur’ān until grammarians and linguists, such as Sībawayhi (d. 793), discussed the term in a new form as a linguistic concept.[119] In Islamic hermeneutics, *mufassirūn* (exegetes) were primarily concerned with the message of an utterance. The main function of *iḍmār* is to reconstruct a missing meaning, which is not syntactically present in the utterance, but rather, semantically there. The process of recovering the omitted meaning of a sentence operates within a certain framework of linguistic and grammatical rules, which are not detailed here.[120] Instead, a brief explanation is provided on how the theory of *iḍmār* and *iẓhār* works as a hermeneutical tool for Muslim commentators and legal theorists to convey the intended message of a speaker in its full sense.

Ellipsis (*iḍmār*) and making explicit (*iẓhār*) are two terms that might replace one another in a context depending on the linguistic and grammatical structure of the sentence.[121] That is to say, it is technically permissible to use only an anaphorical or personal pronoun in a sentence as a *muḍmar* (or *ḍamīr*), instead of explicitly stating the noun in a sentence. Ellipsis (*iḍmār*) is considered as intentionally being operated by the speaker without permitting any ambiguity for his/her addressee so that s/he might reconfigure the intended meaning. Making explicit (*iẓhār*) is also a deliberate act of the speaker, when s/he wishes to emphasise or strengthen the message for clear communication. For grammarians, *iẓhār* and *iḍmār* are both applicable to a sentence. Yet, there are some exceptions that should be taken into consideration to be sure that the ellipsis of a noun or making the noun overtly explicit in the same sentence is technically permissible. Sībawayh, for example, explains that the use of *ism al-ẓāhir* (explicit noun) in a sentence instead of a personal pronoun, especially when repetition is needed, is grammatically permissible. When the *ism al-ẓāhir*, on the other, does not need to be expressed, then any equivalent anaphorical pronoun (*muḍmar* or *iḍmār*) should be used in the place of *ism al-ẓāhir*.[122] This grammatical rule, which allows using variable rhetorical expressions for different purposes in daily commutative language, is significantly relevant to Ibn Taymiyya's technique, by which he reads and explains the double use of the word 'lord' in Genesis 19.24. He opposes the Christian interpretation of the second word 'lord' in the verse, as it refers to Jesus and emphasises his divinity. Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the second use of the title 'lord' in Genesis 19.24 unambiguously conveys its referent when the grammatical structure of the sentence is analysed. The main thrust of his technique is to omit *ism al-ẓāhir* (that is 'lord' in Genesis 19.24) and replace it with an anaphorical pronoun (*hu*/*hi* in Arabic), which eventually reveals that the word 'lord' signifies only God in both places, in order to strengthen rhetorically the meaning of the text in question.

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[119] Cristina Solimando, 'Ellipsis in the Arabic Linguistic Thinking (8th–10th Century),' in *The Word in Arabic*, ed. Lidia Bettini and Giuliano Lancioni (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 69-82.

[120] Solimando, 'Ellipsis,' 71.

[121] Georgine Ayoub, 'De Ce Qui "Ne Se Dit Pas" Dans Le Livre de Sībawayhi: La Notion de Tamṯīl,' in *Studies in the History of Arabic Grammar II*, ed. Kees Versteegh and Michael G. Carter (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1990), 1-15.

3.4.1 The Application of The Theory of Making Explicit (*iẓhār*) and Ellipsis (*iḍmār*) to Genesis 19.24

The author of the *Letter* uses Genesis 19.24 'Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord, out of the heavens' while presenting the textual proofs for the doctrine of three hypostases and one God. He cites this passage to claim that God uses the title 'lord' for His son, Jesus. He, accordingly, interprets the double use of the word 'lord' in Genesis 19.24 as a clear expression of two 'lordships' (*rubūbiyya*): the lordship of the Father and the lordship of the Son.[123]

Ibn Taymiyya explains why the word 'lord' cannot be interpreted as two lordships. From his perspective, it has been already known that the Lord, who rained, would be the God that has the rain. That is to say, considering the fact that there are two lords, according to Genesis 19.24, it is not possible for one of them to have no rain and the other Lord to create the rain for Him. To add another consideration to this, Ibn Taymiyya points out that, if there are two divine powers, as the Christian author claims and the meaning of two lordships require, it is not possible to speculate that one of the Lords has no rain and thus, has to have rain from the other Lord's clouds.[124] When the intention of the Christian author is considered, it is easy to think that Ibn Taymiyya simply misses his opponent's point. It has been made clear that the author of the *Letter* does not use the expression 'two lordships' to signify two divine beings that are equal in power. Rather, the lordship of the Son apparently refers to a different meaning. Hence, it is true, to some extent, that Ibn Taymiyya presents a rather odd argument that sounds almost solely rhetorical and logical. Yet, he develops a linguistically structured manoeuvre to argue that, if the double use of title 'lord' in Genesis 19.24, is to be interpreted as two lordships, one for God and one for Jesus, the implication of this interpretation should be that both of them have divine powers, including the power to create rain or natural disasters. However, the one Lord has no power and needs the support of another Lord for such a natural activity. For Ibn Taymiyya, this entails the danger of violating the absolute power of the Divine. Strategically limiting the meaning of the lordship to absolute divine power, Ibn Taymiyya eliminates the option of two lordships. Hence, the second use of the title 'lord' in Genesis 19.24 should indicate a different meaning, which is certainly not the divinity of Jesus, for Ibn Taymiyya.

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[122] Sībawayh, ʿAmr ibn ʿUthmān. *Kitāb*, eds. al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAbd Allāh Sīrāfī and Yūsuf ibn Sulaymān ibn Īsā al-Shantamarī. 2 vols., (Būlāq: Al-Maktaba al-Kubrā al-ʾAmīriyya, 1898-1990),1.62 n. 1-2, and 1.296.

[123] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 118-119.

He next focuses on the linguistic-grammatical analysis of the verse by claiming that the syntax formation of the sentence clearly signifies the intended addressee of the title 'lord.' He purposely omits the second 'lord' in the verse and replaces it with the personal pronoun 'him' (*hu*), by adding the Arabic preposition *ʿinda* (at, or near). By doing so, he aims to show that his emended version of the verse, 'The Lord rained from Him' has the same (*bi manzila*) grammatical and syntactical structure as the original version of the verse, 'The Lord rained from the Lord.' The technique that Ibn Taymiyya uses to understand the potential reference of the second title 'lord' here is to use *muḍmar* (anaphorical pronoun). His extremely brief, one-sentence interpretation of Genesis 19.24, presents a clue to his proposing that he employs the theory of *iẓhār* as a reverse method to signify the intended reference of the title 'lord.' His explanation is as follows:

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[124] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.450.

> This [The Lord rained from the Lord (Gen 19.24)] is very similar to His expression, 'The Lord rained from Him (*'indahi*).' However, *ism al-ẓāhir* (explicit noun) [that is the second title Lord] makes *muḍmar* (anaphorical pronoun) [already] explicit (*iẓhārān*).[125]

The methodological strategy that Ibn Taymiyya employs here is to read the second title 'lord' as anaphora, which can be omitted or made explicit by an explicit noun (*ism al-ẓāhir*), according to the theory of *iḍmār* and *iẓhār*. To explain how ellipsis applies to the interpretation of Genesis 19.24, it is worth briefly mentioning that as a technical and methodological way of determining or even reconstructing the meaning of an omitted part of an expression, the use of *iḍmār* (ellipsis) theory has been developed in the works of early Qur'ān commentators.[126] According to the ellipsis theory, a speaker can purposely omit or elide one word and yet, it is recoverable thorough several factors, such as immediate context, extra-linguistic material or the semantic elements of an expression.[127]

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[125] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.451. To avoid confusion, it might be useful to refer to Versteegh's explanation that Sībawayh uses the word *muḍmar* for both; personal or anaphronic pronoun and an omitted or hidden word. See Kees Versteegh, 'The Notion of "Underlying Levels" in the Arabic Grammatical Tradition,' *Historiographia Linguistica* 21, 3 (1994): 271-296.

[126] Solimando, 'Ellipsis,' 69-82. Solimando systemically investigates the theory of ellipsis in classical Arab linguists' works, with particular focus on the term *ḥaḏf* (omitting) as a modern substitution for *iḍmār*. Whilst Ibn Taymiyya's application of the term *iḍmār* has different purposes than Arab linguists, this work is important for understanding the technical dimension of Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation regarding the word 'lord,' as the theory of ellipsis also applies to his qur'ānic texts cited above along with Genesis 19.24.

[127] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 87-92. See pp. 86-87, where Gleave notes the use of *iḍmār* by Sulayman ibn Muqātil in a technical sense (that comes from Sībawayh's exposition of the term, as Gleave

It seems that Ibn Taymiyya conducts a linguistic experiment, so to speak, and considers that the explicit (*iẓhār*) form of a word can be replaced with an elided form (*iḍmār*) to recover the intended referent of the word 'lord' since it is utilised as an anaphoric noun.[128] He explains how the theory of *iḍmār* applies to the qur'ānic texts that have a pertinent linguistic style to Genesis 19.24, such as Q 69.1-2, 'The inevitable reality, what is the inevitable reality?' and Q 101.1-2, 'The striking calamity, what is the striking calamity?' Unfortunately, Ibn Taymiyya does not explain how these qur'ānic verses are similar to Genesis 19.24.[129] Hence, a brief discussion is provided here to highlight the connection that Ibn Taymiyya makes between the qur'ānic and biblical texts.

The qur'ānic citations Q 69.1-2 and Q 101.1-2 have the same grammatical structure. The first sentences of these verses are not complete sentences, whilst the second sentences start with an interrogative noun *mā* (*ism al-istifhām*). Relying on the explanations of early and contemporary *ʿIrāb al-Qur'ān* (Grammar of the Qur'ān) works related to the sūras aforementioned, it can be said that Ibn Taymiyya makes textual relations between the qur'ānic verses and Genesis 19.24 by pointing out the linguistic structure of the texts and their unexpressed semantic meanings. Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālib from the 11th century analyses the syntactical-grammatical structure of Q 69.1-2 and Q 101.1-2. He clarifies that the word *al-ḥāqqa* (the inevitable reality) in Q 69.1-2 does not have a predicate (*khabar*), which is the second fundamental element of a nominal sentence in Arabic grammar.

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explains) to explain the dual use of words in a sentence as meaning only repetition from a linguistic-grammatical point of view. This small note is relevant to Ibn Taymiyya's presupposition that the dual use of the title 'lord' in the verse in question is also a repetition, albeit being expressed in full expression (*iẓhār*).

[128] What Ibn Taymiyya offers here by omitting the second use of the word Lord can be regarded as syntactic *iḍmār* which can be reconstructed through grammatical-linguistic considerations, and rules and clues as Solimando suggests. See, for the difference between semantic and syntactic ellipsis and their function in reconstructing omitted meaning, 'Ellipsis,' pp. 69-70. Considering the ellipsis as a syntactical one in Ibn Taymiyya's emended version of Genesis 19.24, it would appear that his strategy is at least technically valid or legitimate, since the reconstructed meaning of the Lord through syntactic ellipsis is approved by the linguistic and semantic implications of the verse.

[129] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.451.

While the statement, ‘What is the inevitable reality?’ (*mā al-ḥāqqa*) in the second verse, constitutes the *khabar* in a complete sentence form, in order to clarify the first incomplete sentence. It does not have, however, a grammatically necessary element, which is the personal pronoun (*hiya*/she), by which the question would be asked as, ‘*Mā hiya al-ḥāqqa*?’ (what is she the inevitable reality?).[130] Makkī explains the omission of the personal pronoun ‘she’ in the second verse with the elliptical (*iḍmār*) mechanism that also operates with its opposite that is *iẓhār* (making explicit). According to Makkī, the nouns *al-ḥāqqa* in Q 69.1-2 and *al-qāriʿā* in Q 101.1-2 are used in the place of the personal pronoun (she) and thus, it is more explicitly expressed in its full expression with the purpose of exalting (*taʿẓīm*).[131] ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥusayn al-ʿUkbarī (from the 13th century) and Ibn Muḥammad al-Safāqusī (14th century) also provide similar explanation of the *iʿrāb* of the qur’ānic expressions mentioned above by referring to the intentional ellipsis of personal pronoun and the double use of the noun to emphasise the message given in both sūras.[132]

It becomes clear from the discussion above that Ibn Taymiyya links the syntactical structure of Genesis 19.24 to the qur’ānic verses that have similar structures. Analysing the linguistic and grammatical structure of the biblical verse, he argues that the word ‘lord’ does not refer to Jesus as a sign of his divinity, but rather, that the double use of ‘lord’ is only for rhetorical emphasis to strengthen the intended meaning. He argues that by replacing the noun ‘lord’ with the personal pronoun ‘he’ confirms the truthfulness of his interpretation since this replacement does not change the meaning of Genesis 19.24.

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[130] Abū Muḥammad Makkī Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Qaysī, *Mushkil Iʿrāb al-Qurān*, ed. Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ al-Dāmin (Beirut: Kulliya al-Ādab, 1984), 753.

[131] See also for his very similar explanation on the sūra, al- Qāriʿāh, Makkī, *Mushkil*, 838. Fakhr al-Dīn Razī and linguist, Qur’ān commentator al-Zamakhsharī apply the grammatical theory to Q 69.1-2 and Q101.1-2 that the original (*aṣl*) version of the verse in its full expression would be: ‘mā hiya al-ḥāggah or qarʿīah’.” However, the personal pronoun is elided for clearer expression and rhetorical purposes. See, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī: Tafsīr al-Kabīr wa Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 30.102-103; see also, Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmār al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa- ‘uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl* (Riyād: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 1998), 6.194-195; 421-422.

[132] Abī al-BaqāʾI ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥusayn al-ʿUkbarī, *al-Tibyān fī Iʿrāb al-Qur’ān*, ed., ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Cairo: ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1976), 1236 and 1301. for the sūra al- Qāriʿā, see also, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Safāqusī, *al-Mujīd fī Iʿrāb al-Qur’ān*, ed., Ḥ Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ al-Dāmin (Dar Ibn Jawziyya, 2009), 203.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Ibn Taymiyya employs a contextual reading of the Bible with terminology and conceptual categories derived from Islamic legal theory and qur’ānic hermeneutics. He determines the key words in biblical verses and analyses these words with technical terms such as univocal (*mutawāṭi*ʾ) and apparent (*ẓāhir*) and unqualified (*muṭlaq*), which are specifically deployed in the Islamic interpretive tradition to extract meaning from qur’ānic expressions. Each term has a role in identifying the intended meaning (*murād*) of a word based on a rule that is linked to Arabic linguistic principles. Ibn Taymiyya combines these hermeneutical and linguistic rules and readjusts them to make them compatible with his wider intellectual framework. This is more apparent when he rejects the literal-nonliteral distinction in divine language in contrast to the acceptance of this division among mainstream Muslim scholarship. He instead contends that the contextual reading should be the primary strategy in interpretation rather than a literal or nonliteral reading. This argument is strongly emphasised in his interpretation of Matthew 28.19. Arguing that the word ‘son’ for example is used to signify only one univocal (*mutawāṭi*ʾ) meaning, which is a divinely supported and guided sonship, throughout the whole context of the Bible, Ibn Taymiyya aims to purify the Trinitarian names from their Christological meanings established in Christian *kalām* theology. For this task, while there is no hermeneutical hindrance, for Ibn Taymiyya, to interpret the term ‘father’ as God in each single context of the Bible, the terms ‘son’ and ‘holy spirit’ however, are the challenging ones. To be consistent in his rejection of *ḥaqīqa-majāz* distinction and to be able to interpret these terms when they seem to signify different meanings and referents, Ibn Taymiyya claims that both ‘son’ and ‘holy spirit’ should be regarded as *mutawāṭi*ʾ (*univocal*) terms that signify one unambiguous meaning although they might refer to various referents in the Bible. The main purpose of this claim, of course is particularly to prove that the word ‘son’ is used to refer to other prophets, which in turn invalidates for Ibn Taymiyya the Christian interpretation of ‘sonship’ that is specially attributed to Jesus by virtue of his relation to God that particularizes him with divinity. Therefore, the Trinitarian terms the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit should be accepted as *mutawāṭi’* (univocal) names and interpreted in conjunction with other biblical contexts where the terms are also used for different referents. By doing so, he intends to close the gate of interpretation for any figurative or metaphorical exegesis of the Bible texts, which is exactly what operates in Christian interpretation of the Bible scripture, from Ibn Taymiyya’s perspective.

It has also been introduced that Ibn Taymiyya uses the theory of *ẓāhir* (apparent) meaning to argue that the divine language of the Bible is apparent enough for any reader. *Ẓāhir* meaning in Taymiyyan hermeneutical framework is the first step of interpretation that mainly conveys the intended meaning of a speaker, particularly when a hearer is familiar with usual communicative habits of the speaker. Ibn Taymiyya has identified some biblical passages as *ẓāhir* in order to argue that the intended meaning of the passages is too apparent to require reinterpretation (*ta*ʾ*wīl*) and even interpretation (*tafsīr*). These passages are mainly the texts that do not contain any contradictory element to qur’ānic teaching and Islamic tradition. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya is content to identify the biblical passages as *ẓāhir* (apparent) without recourse to developing any further argument or interpretation.

This chapter has also explained that for Ibn Taymiyya, although the Bible contains unqualified (*muṭlaq*) expressions such as ‘lord’, an expression nevertheless can be used as a qualified (*muqayyad*) expression referring to a specific meaning that is determined in a given context. With this reading, Ibn Taymiyya has been able to argue that the word 'lord' and 'god' are mainly used as *muṭlaq* (unqualified) expressions that only refer to God in the Bible. However, these words are also used to refer to humans to signify 'mastership' or the authority of a person (i.e. Prophet) over other humans. The use of the terms *muṭlaq-muqayyad* has enabled Ibn Taymiyya to contend that in divine scriptures ambiguous expressions can be clarified by unambiguous expressions in other parts of the scripture. This is originally a principle of qur'ānic exegesis, and also known as 'interpreting the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān.' In a similar fashion, Ibn Taymiyya proposes interpreting some parts of the Bible by other biblical passages.

Lastly, it has been illustrated that Ibn Taymiyya makes connections between the linguistic and liturgical characters of the Bible and the Qur'ān by arguing that the repetitive literary style of some biblical verses is similar to the qur'ānic literary style. He interprets the repetition of the word 'lord' in Genesis 19.24 with the theory of *iẓhār* as a rhetorical emphasis that is used to make expressions stronger and effective. Ibn Taymiyya considers the Bible as a scripture that shares similar liturgical and linguistic features with the Qur'ān.

Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutical strategy that is shown in this chapter has particular techniques that are not encountered in the other five Muslim scholars' interpretation of biblical texts studied in Chapter Three. Ibn Taymiyya differs from them in employing hermeneutical pairs of Islamic legal theory and qur'ānic interpretation. Unlike al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī, and Ibn Ḥazm, he develops a methodological reading of the Bible and proposes alternative interpretations without denying the veracity of biblical passages. He is similarly distinguished from al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, who also accept the soundness of biblical text, in interpreting the Bible with a contextual approach while these two scholars opt for a nonliteral (*majāz*) reading of biblical scripture. Ibn Taymiyya's biblical interpretation clearly demonstrates the difference and originality of his biblical hermeneutics by putting the context at the centre and by analysing the text with the analytical tools of Islamic legal theory and qur'ānic exegesis.

Chapter 4 Theology and Philosophy-Oriented Interpretation

The previous chapter has shown that Ibn Taymiyya constructs a contextual biblical hermeneutic that adopts the premises of Islamic legal and qur'ānic hermeneutics. He offers a linguistic analysis of biblical passages and argues that the plain and apparent meaning of the Bible should be considered as a departure point for interpretation. This chapter will feature an explanation of the second aspect of Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of biblical passages in the *Jawāb*. It will be shown that in addition to the philological and linguistic arguments, he also advances his biblical exegesis with philosophical and theological arguments that are cleverly infused into the Taymiyyan theological framework. This chapter contributes to the overall thesis argument by showing that Ibn Taymiyya's contextual biblical hermeneutics is guided by his theological principles.

4.1 Divine Indwelling (*ḥulūl*)

This section is an examination of the major Christian doctrine of the indwelling (*ḥulūl*) of God in Jesus Christ, in the context of the intertextual proof texts that Ibn Taymiyya employs in the *Jawāb*. While the first part of this section features Ibn Taymiyya's analysis and reinterpretation of the term *ḥulūl* in a biblical context, the second part expands the discussion with an analysis of pertinent terms such as 'appear' (*ẓahara*) and 'manifest' (*jallā*). This two-fold discussion on the theme of divine indwelling will show that Ibn Taymiyya decontexualises *ḥulūl* from its Christian interpretative tradition and reinterprets it as the presence of God's knowledge and guidance in a believer's heart. This section most importantly reveals a Hanbali scholar's endeavour in appropriating a Christian term in order to make it plausible within his own theological framework, in which God has no ontological connection to created beings.

4.1.1 Psalms 5.11: Divine Indwelling (*ḥulūl*)

Ibn Taymiyya presents a very lengthy discussion on *ḥulūl* and *ittihād* (unification) in the *Jawāb*. He, of course, severely criticises both of the doctrines, but also proposes a theory of *ḥulūl* that relies on an alternative reading of the term in the context of biblical and Islamic sources. He intends to purify the Christian connotations of the term as well as the meanings given by pantheistic Sufis. Accordingly, he uses Psalms 5.11, 'And let those rejoice who trust in You forever; let them shout for joy, and You dwell (*taḥillu*) in them and they will be joyful,' as a textual proof to develop a counter-argument against the Christian interpretation of *ḥulūl*.[1] Ibn Taymiyya argues that even though the word 'indwelling' (*ḥalla/yaḥillu*) is used in the Bible, it nevertheless does not signify God's indwelling Jesus. On the contrary, this passage informs us that God also indwells messengers, prophets, and righteous believers. Yet, the biblical text also emphasises that God's essence does not dwell in any created beings in the sense that Christians claim for Jesus. Ibn Taymiyya's purpose is to reinterpret the verse in light of the biblical and qur'ānic verses as well as the authentic hadith texts. He offers an alternative reading of *ḥulūl* as a response to the arguments of the *Letter*. He emphasises that God's indwelling or appearance (*ẓuhūr*) in humans cannot be restricted only to Jesus. Rather, as Psalms 5.11 suggests, God dwells in humans other than Jesus as long as one is a true and righteous believer. As for the nature of this indwelling, he explains that *ḥulūl* can only be interpreted as the presence of God's knowledge, love, and guidance in a believer's heart. This presence is a 'cognitive similitude' (*al-mithāl al-ʿilmī*) of God's love and support for humans. A brief exposition of the arguments of the *Letter* will be provided, and then Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Psalms 5.11 will follow.

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[1] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.332.

The Christian author's explanation of God's appearance (*ẓuhūr*) in Jesus is a significant attempt to make the Christian doctrine more appealing to a Muslim audience. The author argues that the doctrine of indwelling has scriptural proofs not only in the Bible but also in the Qur'ān. The main qur'ānic text is Q 42.51, 'And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil (*ḥijāb*).' Relying on the qur'ānic vocabulary, the Christian author employs the veil analogy that early Christian writers also use to explain the divine indwelling of the Word of God in Jesus to their Muslim counterparts.[2] The author claims that 'refined things (*laṭāʾif*) only become apparent in physical (*kathāʾif*) things.' Therefore, he argues, the word of God (*kalimat Allāh*) only becomes visible in a *laṭāʾif* (human being). Hence, the Word of God becomes apparent in Jesus, since he is the noblest creature on earth. In other words, the author uses the word 'veil' here as a metaphor, which exemplifies how God speaks to the creation through Jesus.[3]

The use of the 'veil analogy' in Christian theology has a well-grounded history in the Greek and Arabic Christological exegesis of the Bible.[4] As Swanson's investigation on the original source of the 'self-veiling' metaphor and the emergence of the Arabic word *iḥtijāb* (veiling) or *ḥijāb* (veil) in early Arab Christian works has highlighted, the use of the 'self-veiling' analogy originally comes from Gregory of Nyssa, who asserts that the veil hides God's divinity. When this metaphor is explained with Arabic terms in the apologetic writings of Arabic Christians, it is supported with the qur'ānic verse Q 42.51 to explain the divine indwelling of the Word of God in Jesus to Muslims.[5] Similar to this traditional interpretation of the veil analogy, the Christian author argues that divine indwelling is one of the alternative ways in which God reveals the divine message to humans, as stated in Q 42.51: 'By revelation or from behind a veil (*ḥijāb*) or that He sends a messenger.' With this analogy, the Christian author correlates the divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*) as the divine appearance (*ẓuhūr*) in Jesus, with the Muslim perception of revelation.[6]

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[2] Mark N. Swanson, 'Beyond Prooftexting: Approaches to the Qur'ān in Some Early Arabic Christian Apologies,' *The Muslim World 88*, 3-4 (1998): 297-319; Sidney H. Griffith, 'Answers for the Shaykh: A 'Melkite' Arabic Text from Sinai and the Doctrines of the Trinity and the Unification,' in *Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. Mark N Swanson Grypeou, David Thomas, and Emmanouela, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 277-309; see also Griffith, 'The Melkites and the Muslims: The Quran, Christology, and Arab Orthodoxy,' *Al-Qantara* 33, 2 (2013): 413-43.

[3] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 98-99.

[4] Swanson, 'Beyond Prooftexting,' 297-319.

Ibn Taymiyya clearly comprehends the implications of the Christian author's argument to make the doctrine of divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*) more appealing to his Muslim opponents by a comparison of the doctrine of incarnate Word of God with Islamic revelation. This comparison triggers a significant discussion on how God reveals Himself to us, both from the Christian and the Muslim point of view. Ibn Taymiyya strategically takes advantage of the comparison between revelation and the incarnate Word of God, and argues that if the appearance of the Word of God in Jesus is the same kind of manifestation as the revelation in Abraham, Moses, and Muhammad, then this appearance (*ẓuhūr*) is only the appearance of God's light and knowledge. Most importantly, as Ibn Taymiyya asserts, this manifestation is different from His essence's unification with or indwelling in a human. It is clear that the Christian author's simplification of a rather theologically complicated doctrine of indwelling and unification gives an advantageous position to Ibn Taymiyya to focus only on the nature of the appearance of the Divine being. In doing so, he argues that the manifestation of revelation is a commonly shared prophetic characteristic between Jesus and other prophets, and thus cannot be understood as the manifestation of God in Jesus.[7]

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[5] Swanson, 'Beyond Prooftexting,' 297-302. In this section, Swanson examines the use of the exemplar of *ḥijāb* (veil) in early Arabic Christian writings, namely an anonymous work *Fī tathlīth Allāh al-waḥid* (On the Triune Nature of God) and *al-Jāmi*ʿ*wujūh al-īmān* (The Compilation of the Aspects of the Faith), and a ninth century work titled *Kitāb al-Burḥān* (The Book of Demonstration).

[6] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 98-99; Bridger, *Christian Exegesis*, 80-85. Bridger explains the deep implications of God's veiling Himself in Jesus in Christian theology.

Although Ibn Taymiyya rejects the doctrine of indwelling, he nevertheless confirms that the term *ḥulūl* (indwelling) is frequently used in the Arabic translation of both in the Torah and the Gospels, and hence it belongs to biblical terminology. However, he argues that the intended meaning of *ḥulūl* in the context of the Bible does not refer to the unification of the very essence of God with a human being who becomes a partly human and a partly divine being after the unification, such as the sun and its rays, and fire and iron, or water and milk, which Christians claim to be the representative examples of unification and indwelling.[8] What is interesting in Ibn Taymiyya's attempt is that although he does not accept the doctrine of *ḥulūl*, regardless of whether it is a pantheistic Sufī belief or a Christian doctrine, he nonetheless proposes a re-interpretation of the term in a biblical context. This endeavour would appear even more interesting when it is considered that Ibn Taymiyya strictly emphasises that the word *'ishq* (passionate love) should not be used for God on account of the inappropriate connation of the word.[9] Likewise, *ḥulūl* should not be used in connection with God for the same reason. In this case, however, Ibn Taymiyya reads the term *ḥulūl* independently of the word's Sufī or Christian use, by reinterpreting the meaning with inter-textual proofs. While the key text in this discussion is Psalms 5.11, Ibn Taymiyya advances his exegetical explanation with sound hadith texts and John 10.30, which will be explained later in this section. It has been shown so far that the term *ḥulūl* (divine indwelling) does not have an enigmatic connotation in the Bible from Ibn Taymiyya's view point. He has carefully noted that one can comprehend the intended meaning of *ḥulūl* without rejecting it at all. In addition to this, he underlines that *ḥulūl* is used to explain both correct (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and corrupt (*fāsid*) meanings. Therefore, a correct interpretation is important to understanding how God may indwell in a form that is manifest to humans.[10]

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[7] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb* 3.332.

[8] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb* 3.333; Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 122-123. The analogies such as fire and heat or iron, and the sun and its rays, are well-known metaphors, which have Patristic origins, used by Christian scholars to explain the nature of the Unification of the Word of God with Jesus. See Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic*, 66-69, and for Paul of Antioch's text see Cucarella, *The Splendid Replies*, 133-134. For John of Damascus, Theodore Abū Qurra, Abū Rā'iṭa, and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī's use of the same analogy, see Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, 28-30, 68-70, and 93-95, and 120-123, and finally for the analytical discussion of the use of analogy in Arab Christian writings, see the same work pp. 143-154.

[9] Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 74-76. See also Joseph Norment Bell, *Love Theory in Later Ḥanbalite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 80-82. For the comparison between love (*maḥabba*) and passionate love (*'ishq*), see Ibn Taymiyya, *Amraḍ al-qulūb wa shifā'uhā* in MF, 10.91-137, and for the translated parts of this treatise, see Aḥmad Ibn-'Abd-al-Ḥalīm Ibn-Taimīya, *Against Extremisms*, ed. Yahya M. Michot (Beirut: Dar Albouraq, 2012), 105-113.

Now, Ibn Taymiyya's discussion on the best analogy to explain the Divine presence or appearance in humans will be presented. He argues that *ḥulūl* can only be interpreted as believing in God, and in His knowledge, love, light, and guidance. As for the nature of this indwelling, he claims that *ḥulūl* should only be comprehended as the presence of God's knowledge, love, and guidance in a believer's heart. However, the question which arises at this point is, 'How can God be present in a believer's heart?' The ontological, anthropomorphic, and even mystical implications of this claim are controversial considering Ibn Taymiyya's concern for using the best theological language when speaking about God. As is expected of Ibn Taymiyya, a believer can only comprehend God's indwelling as the cognitive or intellective presence of God's knowledge and love, since there is no ontological connection between the Creator and creatures. To explain this better, Ibn Taymiyya coins a new term for this cognitive presence: *al-mithāl al-ʿilmī* (cognitive similitude). *Mithāl* (similitude) is a very important technical word that implies a connection between the spiritual or physical being in a broad sense for Muslim philosophers and Sufis.[11] However, for Ibn Taymiyya, *mithāl* is only an intermediate term to explain the way in which God relates Himself to creatures. He explains the function of the term

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[10] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.339.

[11] Fazlur Rahman, 'Dream, Imagination and *Āʿlām aL-Mithāl*,' *Islamic Studies* 3, 2 (1964): 167-80.

‘cognitive similitude’ (*al-mithāl al-‘ilmī*) in his new interpretation of *ḥulūl* with a theory of the fourfold modulation of being. This is a well-known theory in Islamic philosophy regarding the ontological discussion of existent things.[12]

Ibn Taymiyya informs us that a thing (*shay’*) has four modes of existence: *al-wujūd al-ʿaynī* (the existence of a thing in itself, also known as concrete being or real being); *al-wujūd al-dhihnī* or *‘ilmī* (the existence of a thing in the mind); *al-wujūd al-lafẓī* (the existence of a thing in verbal expression); and *al-wujūd al-rasmī* (the existence of a thing in script or writing). This fourfold scheme is very important, since it shows how Ibn Taymiyya borrows, skilfully modifies, and adopts the theory of four modes of being which is described as an originally Neoplatonic paradigm ‘that is filtered into Islamic philosophy’.[13] As Rizvi explains, major figures, such as Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), Suhrawardī (d. 1191), and later Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640), apply the theory of hierarchical degrees in a singular reality to their ontology, and employ the ‘pyramid of being’ to set a hierarchy between existences. This is, most importantly, to reconcile the primary doctrine of the One Necessary Being, or in the case of Ibn ʿArabī, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, with the existences of all other contingent beings.[14] For each scholar, this theory has its own characteristics that are adjusted and customised according to their theological-philosophical frameworks. Yet, for all of them, modulating a being by different factors, for example, by intensity for Mullā Ṣadrā, efficiently functions to place God at the highest level whilst still maintaining an emanational and unitarian relation between God and creatures.[15] Characterising an existence by degrees of its reality is purely a solution to the problem of adjusting and neutralising the pluralism of existents [all beings] in one singular existence [God's existence]. However, there is no such problem for Ibn Taymiyya. Then, the question that should be asked at this point is, 'How does the theory of modulation of being fit into Ibn Taymiyya's ontological framework?' While the answer to this question is rather complicated, I shall limit my explanation primarily to the concept of 'mental being' in the fourfold scheme of beings, to make the matter as simple as possible.

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[12] Ibn Taymiyya employs the term *al-mithāl al-‘ilmī* in his other writings in different contexts and themes, which seem very helpful for him to refute the Avicennan essence-existence distinction and affirmation of things outside the world. See, for example, his interesting discussion on ‘form’ (*ṣūra*), in which he explains the hadith text, ‘God created Adam like His image,’ where he claims that the word ‘image’ does not refer to an image which exists outside the world; Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿihim al-Kalāmiyya*, ed. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad Al-Hunaydī, 10 vols. (Medina: Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-tibaʿāt al-muṣḥaf al-sharīf, 1426), 6.472-473. He also highlights how God is in the hearts of believers with the mediator *al-mithāl al-‘ilmī* in *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-Shīʿa al-Qadariyya*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, 9 vols. (Riyadh: Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad b. Suʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1986), 5.376-377 and 383-384. For the use of the term *al-mithāl al-‘ilmī* in Ibn Taymiyya’s other writings, see MF, 5.249-251.

[13] Sajjad H. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being* (London: Routledge, 2009), 38-53. Rizvi offers great information on the history of the theory of modulation of being that goes back to Greek sources.

[14] Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā*, 38-39. For Ibn ‘Arabī’s use of the four degrees of being, see Ibn ‘Arabī, Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya, 4 vols., (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir n.d.), 2.309-310. See also William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989), 79-96, and Samer Akkach, ‘The World of Imagination in Ibn “Arabī’s Ontology,’ *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24,1 (1997): 97-113.

Relying on the Avicennan essence-existence distinction, Muslim scholars argue that things mainly have two existences: one, in our minds, which is mental being; and the other in the extramental world, which is concrete being. For Ibn 'Arabī and Suhrawardī, who is the founder of the Isrāqī (Illuminist) school, and its later representative Mullā Ṣadrā, mental beings are identical to concrete beings either in their essences and realities, or only in their existences. However, for Ibn Taymiyya, who does not make the essence-existence distinction, mental beings are only a cognitive similitude or resemblance for human cognition.[16] Therefore, mental beings only function to correlate human cognition to real beings that exist in the concrete world. The relation between existing things and psychological cognition is 'actualised only through knowledge of things.'[17] While this presupposition is also true for Ibn Sīnā and others, Ibn Taymiyya differs from them by claiming that when people acquire knowledge of something, neither its essence nor existence obtains any kind of existence.[18] On the contrary, the mental being is only an intermediary or a cognitive resemblance for human comprehension that does not have any ontological or metaphysical connection to the concrete being (*al-wujūd al-ʿaynī*). That is to say, what people imagine in their minds for a thing is only an image that does not have any reality in the physical world. On the other hand, for Muslim philosophers, mental beings are either essences or existences that have realities but have not yet been actualised in the concrete world. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya applies the fourfold scheme without accepting the essence-existence distinction. For him, the cognitive existence (*al-wujūd al-'ilmī*) is the same as and interchangeable with the mental existence (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*), which is only a cognitive reality for human comprehension, not a real external existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqīqī al-khārijī*).[19]

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[15] Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā*, 134-135. Rizvi argues that Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of modulation is a working theory to find the middle way between 'Ibn 'Arabī's monorealism' and 'Ibn Sīnā's metaphysical pluralism,' although the theory is only 'persuasive not demonstrative.'

[16] Michel, *Response*, 125-127 and 288-297 (trans.). See also Wael B. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 22-23.

Ibn Taymiyya argues that the difference between the mental and the concrete existence of a thing can only be affirmed (*thābit*) in the existent itself, since such a difference does not exist externally.[20] In other words, contrary to Ibn Sīnā and others, Ibn Taymiyya claims that there is no such reality as a mental being. He claims that people cannot affirm any kind of prior existence before that thing comes into existence in the world. The mental being is only what we conceptualise about things that already exist.

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[17] Mustafa Sayyid Muhaqqiq Damad, 'Some Notes on the Problem of Mental Existence in Islamic Philosophy,' in *The Passions of the Soul in the Metamorphosis of Becoming* (Netherlands: Springer 2003), 113-18.

[18] Ömer Mahir Alper, 'Avicenna on the Ontological Nature of Knowledge and its Categorical Status,' *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 2, 1 (2006): 25-35. See also Yasin Ceylan, 'Mullā Ṣadrā's Theory of Knowledge in Its Islamic Peripatetic Background,' *Islamic Studies* 29, 1 (1990): 43-55.

[19] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 2.156-157.

[20] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 2.158-159.

Ibn Taymiyya explains the difference between essence and existence as follows:

> There is no difference between the terms, 'existence' and 'essence.' One of the terms refers to what is in the mind (*dhihnī*) and the other to what is outside the mind (*khārijī*). The difference occurs by virtue of the locus (*al-maḥall*) not by virtue of the essence and the existence.[21]

Ibn Taymiyya strongly emphasises here that if a distinction were to be made between the essence and the existence of a thing, then the existence is only the thing that is affirmed (*thābit*) in this world, while the essence (*māhiyya*) is only what is conceptualised in people's minds. Therefore, what is affirmed as a thing in the concrete world through cognition is indeed exactly the same thing as what is conceptualised as a cognitive similitude (*al-mithāl al-ʿilmī*) in people's minds.[22] Thus, the link between a thing's cognitive existence (*al-wujūd al-ʿilmī*) and the concrete existence (*al-wujūd al-ʿaynī*) is only epistemologically empirical. Hence, each mode of being bears no ontological or metaphysical relation to other modes of being.

With the discussion explained above, Ibn Taymiyya here again subverts one of the primary characteristics of the fourfold scheme, which is that each mode is ontologically or metaphysically connected to the other mode in a hierarchical order. For example, a thing's written being (*al-wujūd al-kitabī* or *al-rasmī*) has the lowest degree in the pyramid of being, while mental being has the closest rank to the concrete being (*al-wujūd al-ʿaynī*). In fact, Ibn Taymiyya also affirms a hierarchical order between the modes of being. However, the hierarchy between the degrees are not due to any ontological or metaphysical distinction. Rather, each mode has been necessarily ranked according to their epistemologically empirical status that is a supposition upon which Ibn Taymiyya builds a new theory of the nature of knowledge. Most significantly, he claims that this theory has a qur'ānic foundation. In sūra Q 96.1-2, 'Recite in the name of your Lord, who created. He created man from a clinging substance,' God states that He created all beings with their concrete beings (*al-wujūd al-'aynī*). He then particularised this creation with the creation of humans. Then, in verses Q 96.4-5, 'Who taught by pen; taught the human that which he did not know,' God first mentions teaching (*taʿlīm*) in a general sense before particularising the teaching by the pen for humans. For Ibn Taymiyya, Q 96.1-2 highlights two important points: first, God explicitly states teaching by the pen simply because the script is necessary for teaching verbal expressions, and the script, which is *al-wujūd al-rasmī*, corresponds to *al-wujūd al-lafẓī* (the verbal expression); second, teaching by the expression is *bayān* (elucidation), which is also necessary for knowledge, since the expression (*lafẓ*) corresponds to the meaning (*maʿnā*). Therefore, he claims teaching (*taʿlīm*) by the pen is necessary for the three degrees of knowledge (*marātib al-'ilm*): *'ilmī* (cognitive), *lafẓī* (verbal) and *rasmī* (written).[23]

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[21] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 2.157.

[22] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 12.111-112.

We witness here that Ibn Taymiyya not only integrates the Neo-platonic theory of degrees of being into his ontology, but also produces a new theory of knowledge that suits perfectly his theological framework. He also highlights that the failure of philosophers and Sufis when they employ the fourfold scheme is not to realise that the affirmation of a thing's existence in itself - that is *al-wujūd al-'aynī* - and the affirmation of its existence in knowledge - that is *al-wujūd al-'ilmī* - is not the same. As Q 96.4-5 states, everything comes into existence after God's creation; therefore, there cannot be any mental being that exists prior to the existence of its concrete being. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya claims that there is only one existence, which is *al-wujūd al-'aynī* (the concrete existence).

Now, to return to Ibn Taymiyya's application of this theory of knowledge to his alternative theory of *ḥulūl* (divine indwelling). Having established that the mental or cognitive being (*al-wujūd al-ʿilmī*) has no ontological or metaphysical connection to its real or the concrete being (*al-wujūd al-ʿaynī*), he argues that God's indwelling in the human heart is only a cognitive representation of God's knowledge and love. By virtue of *al-mithāl al-ʿilmī,* God's presence in people's hearts is cognitively conceptualised, though such presence bears no resemblance or ontological relation to God Himself.[24] Here, Ibn Taymiyya appropriates the meaning of *ḥulūl* by arguing that it should be understood as a similitude of God's love and support for humans. For a further argument, Ibn Taymiyya expands the discussion by explaining the process of obtaining this knowledge. He clarifies how the knowledge of things can be obtained with the example of the sun:

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[23] Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 2.157-159 and 12.111-112.

> A thing that has an existence in itself, and has also an existence in the concrete world (*al-maʿlūm*) and in minds (*adhhān*), and has also an existence in verbal expression and language, and has also an existence in script and elucidation. [These are four modes of] the existence: an individual concrete existence (*wujūd ʿaynī shakhṣī*), cognitive and verbal existence (*al-ʿilmī wa-l lafẓī*), and written (*al-rasmī*) existence. Similarly, the 'sun' for example has an actualisation (*taḥaqquq*) in itself [a concrete existence]; and this is the sun in the sky. It can also be imagined by the heart [cognitive existence]. It can also be spoken in language with the expression 'sun' [verbal existence]. The [word] sun can also be written by the pen [written (*al-rasmī*) existence].[25]

Similar to the example of 'sun' as explained above, God, as an object of knowledge, does not obtain a new mode of being or unite with people, who are the subjects of knowledge. That is to say, when people have the love and knowledge of God in their hearts - that is, *ḥulūl* (divine indwelling), for Ibn Taymiyya - God does not have any ontological connection to people's hearts. God's love and knowledge can only be conceptualised through cognitive similitudes, which have no existence except in people's minds. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of *ḥulūl* as the presence of God's light and knowledge does not relate humans to God in any ontological sense. He further explains that there is an interaction between the phases of obtaining knowledge, but they do not relate to each other ontologically, only empirically. His explanation is as follows:

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[24] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.340-341.

[25] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:340; Michel, *Response,* 292.

> When a human sees the sun in a written book or hears someone saying, 'God made this sun a burning lamp. It is the sun that rises from the East and sets in the West', he refers to what he hears from the expression and what he sees in script. His intention is not the expression itself or the script since it [the verbal or written expression of the sun] is not the [actual] sun that rises and sets. What he intends is only what is meant by the expression and the script, and what is intended by the two of them, which is the signified meaning (*madlūl*) that only corresponds to the two of them [expression and script]. Similarly, if he sees God's name written in a book alongside an idol's name, and if he says, 'I believed in this [God] and disbelieved in that [idol],' what he meant is that he believed in God and disbelieved in the idol. He refers to His [God's] written name but the intended meaning is what is named (*al-musammā*) by this name.[26]

To elaborate on this better, Ibn Taymiyya further explains the difference between the modes of existence with the example of a reflection in a mirror or water. For instance, when a person sees the reflection of the sun on water or in a mirror, he or she refers to this reflection as 'the sun', although he or she knows, in fact, that it is not the sun itself. Likewise, the reflection of God's knowledge and love in the hearts of His servants is the cognitive representation (*al-mithāl al-ʿilmī*) that refers to *al-maʿrūf* (the known), that appears (*ẓuhūr*) and becomes manifest (*tajallā*) in people's hearts.[27] Ibn Taymiyya's use of the example of a mirror here is analogic to maintain the distance between the real existence of a thing and its reflection, which is the same in appearance yet ontologically different. In a similar sense, the conceptual or mental form (*'ilmī*), regarding the cognitive representation of God's love, support, and knowledge, is closer to Him than its verbally expressed (*lafẓī*) form, and the verbal form is closer to Him than its written form (*rasmī*). This example provides an alternative way to understand how 'cognitive similitude' applies to a correct understanding of *ḥulūl* in light of the inter-textual contexts of the Qur'ān and the Bible. Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya claims that these forms are intermediate to comprehending the intended meaning.[28]

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[26] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.340; Michel, *Response*, 292.

[27] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.341. He explains here that what people experience when they see the reflection of a thing in mirror or water is limited (*muqayyad*), since they see only the reflection via an intermediate (*waṣitā*).

As has been seen so far, Ibn Taymiyya's re-signification of the term *ḥulūl* is an interpretation based on both a conceptual analysis and inter-textual scriptural readings, which are composed of neutralised philosophical-theological arguments. This re-interpretation of *ḥulūl* also has some close parallels with al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) 'mirror Christology,' as Treiger calls it.[29] Treiger explains that Ghazālī interprets *ḥulūl* or *ittihād* as the divine reflection in Jesus' heart by using a mirror analogy, which is similar to the reflection of light in a mirror. Ghazālī argues that Christians, as well as Sufīs, misunderstand the reflection of the Divine in the heart of Jesus as if the reflection was God Himself. This is a critique of the doctrine of *ḥulūl* and *ittiḥād* that is significantly similar to Ibn Taymiyya's critique of divine indwelling.[30]

However, there is an important question that naturally arises for Ibn Taymiyya's coinage for God's cognitive presence, 'If there is no likeness between God and creatures, then, what should be the best way to understand the term *al-mithāl al-ʿilmī* and the modality (*kayfiyya*) of this concept?’ To explain this, he cites Q 43.84, ‘It is Allah who is the only deity (*ilāh*) in the heaven and the earth,’ and Q 30.27, ‘And to Him belongs the highest similitude (*al-mathal al-aʿlā*).’[31] The idea that God has the highest similitude (*al-mathal al-‘alā*) constitutes a significant feature in Ibn Taymiyya’s theology, particularly in his perception of God’s attributes. As Hoover explains, Ibn Taymiyya uses the qur’ānic argument of the highest similitude as a ‘rational criterion’ to clarify that there is no likeness between the Creator and creatures. Having rejected the use of analogy and syllogism in theological argumentation, Ibn Taymiyya strongly emphasises that God’s attributes must be understood by virtue of *a fortiori* (*qiyās al-awlā*) argument, since God’s attributes are not comparable with the attributes of creatures.[32] In a similar way to this discussion, he emphasises that a representational resemblance (*mithāl*) related to God should also be conceptualised based on the qur’ānic way. This is, as Hoover puts it, ‘Attributing all creaturely perfections to God and freeing Him from all creaturely imperfection because God is *a fortiori* worthy of being so qualified.’[33]

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[28] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.342.

[29] Alexander Treiger, 'Al-Ghazālī's "Mirror Christology" and Its Possible East-Syriac Sources,' *The Muslim World* 101, 4 (2011), 698-713. In this article, Treiger translates some of Ghazālī's texts on the notion of both Christians' and Sufis' *ḥulūl*. Treiger claims that Ghazālī's 'mirror Christology' is indeed originally from East-Syriac sources, and he particularly identifies an eighth century Nestorian Christian writer, John of Dalyatha, also known as '*messalians*,' as one of the sources. See also Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation* (London: Routledge, 2012), 31-33. Treiger also mentions al-Ghazālī's very cautious emphasis on the point that 'God does not appear in the heart but merely reveals Himself to it,' p. 33.

[30] Treiger, 'Al-Ghazālī's "Mirror Christology",' 700-703.

Following from that, Ibn Taymiyya next quotes John 10.30, ‘I and my Father are one; whoever sees me, sees my Father,’ along with the ḥadīth text, ‘My servant was sick and you did not visit me, and My servant was hungry and you did not feed me.’[34] With these quotations, he wants to argue that the expressions that appear to signify an ontological relation between God and humans may sound ambiguous at first, but they do exist in the revelation, as stated in Q 48.10, ‘Those who pledge allegiance to you are pledging allegiance to God.' Ibn Taymiyya cites these texts to show that there is a connection between God and His prophets, messengers, and believers, and that God only supports His messengers with guidance, power, and revelation, through which they obtain the knowledge of God. The revelation establishes a union between the messengers and God, and eventually between God and His servants.[35]

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[31] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.333.

[32] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy,* 57-58. Hoover explains in detail how Ibn Taymiyya constructs a theological argument regarding the discussion of God’s attributes through Q 16.20, ‘To God is the highest similitude,’ by denying any comparable connection between God and creatures.

[33] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy*, 57-62.

[34] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīh*, ‘Kitāb al-Birr wa-l ṣalah wa-l ādāb,’ 14.

It has been explained so far that for Ibn Taymiyya the term *ḥulūl* should be interpreted without violating the absolute unity and separateness of God. Referring to the biblical information that God indwelled righteous people, as stated in Psalms 5.11, he has claimed that the essence of God did not indwell any place or any human being. Rather, God's cognitive representation, which is in a form of God's knowledge and guidance, indwells righteous believers similar to the indwelling of God's remembrance a place where a servant worships Him. It has been clear that Ibn Taymiyya strongly criticises the Christian doctrine of indwelling as a particular *ḥulūl*, and *waḥdat al-wujūd* as a universal pantheistic *ḥulūl*. Yet, he appropriates the meaning of this technical term in the context of the scriptures based on a linguistic and conceptual analysis. He nuances the meaning of the word *ḥulūl* in a way that does not violate the absolute unity and unlikeness of God in accordance with his theological framework. Ibn Taymiyya's endeavour is to interpret or explain basically what Christians have misinterpreted regarding the concept of *ḥulūl* (divine indwelling), independently of their scripture, and Sufis under the impact of philosophical mysticism. Ibn Taymiyya's exegesis surely is limited to the perception of 'true knowledge of God,' and thus it might not correspond to the Christian doctrine of *ḥulūl* in any sense. However, as has been mentioned earlier in this section, Ibn Taymiyya's alternative theory of *ḥulūl* (indwelling) has close parallels to that of al-Ghazālī's 'mirror Christology,' which is in fact originally from the East-Syriac Christian tradition. The exposition of Ibn Taymiyya's acceptance of

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[35] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.342-344.

ḥulūl interestingly shows how Christians and Muslims share at least an individual experience of God's love and knowledge. In Ibn Taymiyya's emphasis that God dwells in righteous believers, as the people of the Book agree, there is a standpoint or perspective for Christians as well as for Muslims, at least to make an attempt to see how believing in God may bring them closer regardless of the fundamental and doctrinal differences in our beliefs, by which we may answer the question how God relates to people.

4.1.2 Deuteronomy 33.2: *ḥulūl* (Divine Indwelling) as a Concept in the Bible

This part of the study will feature an explanation of the doctrine of divine indwelling with an analysis that is complementary to the previous discussion on Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of *ḥulūl*. How Ibn Taymiyya makes use of Deuteronomy 33.2 and other biblical texts to underline his argument that the Bible does not support the Christian doctrine of divine indwelling will be explained. It shall also be seen that Ibn Taymiyya constructs inter-textual relations between qur'ānic and biblical passages through key common words, such as *ẓahara* (appear), *jallā* (manifest), and *ḥalla* (dwell), and persistently reaches the same conclusion that God's indwelling can only be interpreted as the presence of His knowledge and guidance for believers, regardless of the diverse contexts and terminology of the biblical texts in question. His only purpose is to clarify how a believer should understand terms such as *yaḥillu* (it indwells) and *tajallā* (become manifest) by contextualising them both inter- and intra-scripturally. A believer should not make the mistake of those who have chosen the extreme way of understanding God's relation to His servants as *ḥulūlist* Christians and pantheist Sufis, and should use the most appropriate way of the best theological language when speaking about God.

The main point in Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of divine indwelling is the impossibility of the indwelling of God's essence in any created beings. His strict theological stance regarding God's essence maintains a firm pre-understanding, which discards all complicated and detailed aspects of the Christian perception of *ḥulūl* (indwelling). Accordingly, he claims that the essence of God does not dwell in or unite with a created being.[36] To explain this, he cites Isaiah 66.18, 'When I appeared (*ẓahartu*) to the nations,' and argues that this passage is linguistically and semantically very similar to Deuteronomy 33.2, 'God came (*jā'a*) from Mount Sinai, and he shone (*ashraqa*) from Mount Seir, and he manifested (*istaʿlana*) himself from Mount Paran.' He, presumably relates the terminology of the texts, particularly the verbs, such as *ẓahara*, *jā'a* and *ashraqa*, that are used in the Bible, to *ḥulūl*. Yet, he claims that the intended meanings of the passages do not signify God's indwelling in Jesus. He then cites Q 9.33, 'It is He who has sent messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it (*li-yuẓhirahu*) over all religion,' where the word *ẓahara* (appear) is used again to refer to the modality of God's manifesting. Contrary to the argument of the Christian author that God becomes manifest in Jesus, Ibn Taymiyya argues that God manifests Himself by knowledge (*ʿilm*), proof (*ḥujja*), and elucidation (*bayān*).[37]

In the discussion above, Ibn Taymiyya questions the modality of the doctrine of the Unification, and points out the distinction between the Christian and Muslim perceptions of the Word of God. With the Islamic theological perspective in the background, he asks whether the Word of God is God's speech (*kalām*), which is also His attribute, or the essence of God that is *mutakallima* (speaking), or both of them. He has a purpose in asking this question, which is to clarify whether Christians mean that God has sent his word or speech (*kalām*) to Jesus by the incarnate Word of God - as He also sent to earlier prophets - or that God's speech, which is different from God's essence, dwells in Jesus. He firmly argues that while the first interpretation is the correct view on which both Muslims and Christians agree, the second interpretation is simply incorrect. Referring to Q 24.34, 'God is the light of the heavens and the earth… [like] a white star,' Ibn Taymiyya contends that God presents examples (*amthāl*) for people and guides them by His light. This passage, for him, elucidates how God relates Himself to humans and, most importantly, confirms the intended meaning of Deuteronomy 33.2 and Genesis 12.7, 'The Lord become manifest (*tajallā*) to Abraham,'[38] where God's appearing (*ẓahara*) or manifesting (*ishraqa*) is clearly mentioned. However, he notes that in these texts the notion of God's appearing or manifesting to humans is not strictly specified with Jesus.[39] The attempt in noting the textual relations between the qur'ānic and biblical terminology on God's appearing or manifesting Himself to humans is remarkably significant. For Ibn Taymiyya, while the qur'ānic texts provide both the pertinent terminology to the biblical terms, *ẓahara* or *tajallā*, which seemingly confirms the originality of the terms to some extent for him, and the best example – which is light, as stated in Q 24.34 – to clarify how God's indwelling should be understood. Similarly, the biblical narratives which hold that God appeared to other prophets, such as David and Abraham, provide biblical proof for Ibn Taymiyya to argue that God's manifestation or appearance to humans cannot be specified with only Jesus in a doctrinal sense, as Christians claim.[40] Furthermore, he challenges the Christians on the point that they do not have any textual proof to claim the possibility of indwelling of the essence of God in Jesus, as well as the occurrence (*wuqū*ʿ) of divine indwelling.

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[36] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.144-145.

[37] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.145-147.

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[38] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.327. Ibn Taymiyya here does not cite the exact verbatim quotation. He instead just refers to the text as 'He [God] became manifest (*tajallā*) to Abraham,' which gives the impression once more that he is quoting from memory.

[39] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.326-327.

[40] This argument is very similar to Ibn Taymiyya's strategy as discussed in Chapter Three, where he persistently argues that sonship, as one of the terms of the biblical terminology, cannot be specific only to Jesus. Rather, all prophets, messengers, and even apostles are guided and supported by God, thus they are also entitled to the sonship, as Jesus is.

As has been stated earlier, one of Ibn Taymiyya's major purposes is to establish that divine appearance (*ẓuhūr*) or indwelling cannot be restricted to Jesus. Accordingly, he strives to provide biblical examples to confirm that the Bible does not support the Christian doctrine, although it has equivocal terminology that might be interpreted in various ways. Similar to his interpretation of Deuteronomy 33.2, he uses other biblical passages that are also quoted in the *Letter*, to reach the conclusion that God only manifests Himself through His light, guidance, and knowledge to believers. He points out, for example, that the verbs 'come' (*atā*), 'appear' (*ẓahara*), and 'walk' (*mashā*) (in Isaiah 66.10-18) are used for God in a similar way to the use of the verb 'dwell' (*ḥalla*) in Deuteronomy 33.2.[41] He then cites further a set of passages that he thinks to be relevant to the discussion, both terminologically and contextually. He begins with Deuteronomy 1.29, where the verb 'fight' (*ḥāraba*) is used, and continues with Exodus 33.13-16, where Moses asks God to walk (*sayr*) with them, which is similar to the use of the word 'walk' (*sayr*) in Numbers 14.13-14.[42] Ibn Taymiyya refers to these passages to show that the Bible contains various terms, such as *mashā* (walk) and *sayr* (walk), in addition to the words *ẓahara* (appear) and *ḥalla* (dwell), which are associated with the doctrine of *ḥulūl*. He similarly cites Zechariah 2. 10-13 to point out the verbs 'come' (*atā*), 'dwell' (*ḥalla*), 'show' (*tarāʾā*) and 'reside' (*sakana*). He focuses on the term *yaḥillu* (indwell), and reiterates once more that these expressions (*'ibārāt*) certainly belong to the Bible, but do not refer to divine indwelling or unification (*ittiḥād*). His interpretation is as follows:

> Similar to this [Zechariah 2.10-13], there are others [other biblical verses] mentioned about Abraham and others [prophets] from the Prophets that God

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[41] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic* 100-103.

[42] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.361-362.

> manifested (*tajallā*) himself to him [Abraham], and he appeared (*istaʿlana*) to him [Moses], and He showed himself (*tarāʾā*) to him. These expressions and their alike do not indicate God's indwelling in or union with him [Jesus].[43]

Ibn Taymiyya consistently argues throughout the *Jawāb* that there is no one single passage in the Bible specifying Jesus with indwelling or unification, such that Christians might have scriptural proof to re-signify these expressions in support of the major Christian doctrines. At first sight, this attitude might be considered an ignorant approach to the texts and a blind rejection of the doctrinal interpretive relation between the scriptures. Yet, in the case of Ibn Taymiyya, one must consider his approach to the qur'ānic text, in which he always favours the plain sense of the scripture and avoiding nonliteral interpretation. It becomes clear that he applies the same reading technique to the Bible to maintain the Islamic meaning.

So far, Ibn Taymiyya has consistently rejected and criticised the Christian doctrine of indwelling and the Sufī perception of God, from which every created thing emanates. The only point that he attacks is the idea that the essence of God indwells any place or human, which is a mistake or misunderstanding that leads people to the extreme way of perceiving God's relation Himself to created beings. He explains the difference between God's *ḥulūl* and the *ḥulūl* of His knowledge with the example of a mirror or a reflection, as explained earlier in this section. This example provides the best way for Ibn Taymiyya to explain how God's light or knowledge dwells in the believer's heart, not God Himself or His essence. Ibn Taymiyya argues that the experience of seeing the reflection is a *muqayyad ruʾya* (restricted vision), since the vision is seen through an intermediate (*wāsiṭa*) that is the similitude (*mithāl*), which is represented in the mirror. Therefore, he argues that what a believer has in the heart related to God is not His essence; rather it is a *mithāl* (similitude) of His love and guidance and light in a cognitive (*ʿilmī*) form. Ibn Taymiyya strictly emphasises the importance of distinguishing between these two statements: 'God is in the heart,' and 'God's love and guidance are in the heart.' The second option apparently creates a free zone to accept a modified sense of God's indwelling the human. He then returns to the biblical verses and confirms the soundness of the meaning of the passages. However, he claims that these passages do not necessarily associate Jesus with divine indwelling. He accuses the Christians of making mistakes in leaving aside *muḥkam* (unambiguous) statements in the book, and preferring the *mutashābih* (ambiguous), which is the reason that led Christians to misinterpret the biblical text.[44] Lastly, Ibn Taymiyya refers to the Christian scholars' interpretation of *ḥulūl*, although he does not mention explicitly to which Christian sect these scholars belong. He argues that these Christian scholars also understand God's appearance (*ẓuhūr*) in Jesus as the appearance of God's love and guidance in a human's heart, and that they explain indwelling with the example of engraving the seal (*khātim*) on wax (*sham*ʿ) and on clay (*ṭīn*). Ibn Taymiyya's explanation is as follows:

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[43] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.364; Michel, *Response*, 298.

> The change or new state (*ḥāl*) on wax and clay is the similitude (*mithāl*) of the engraving of the seal. From the seal, there is nothing on wax and clay. Rather, the engraving of the seal appears on it.[45]

He clearly finds close parallels between his perception and this anonymous Christian interpretation of *ḥulūl*, and argues that in both interpretations Jesus is not particularised as the only referent of the biblical passages in question. Rather, other prophets have shared this characteristic. That is to say, the meanings of the biblical passages, which signify God's support and guidance to His messengers and prophets with particular key words, apply to all prophets with a holistic perspective on the texts. Contrary to the Christian belief that God dwells in Jesus, *ḥulūl* is not a term that indicates a specific relation between God and a human. God only relates Himself to humans through His light and guidance to messengers and prophets, and to believers in general.

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[44] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.397-398. Ibn Taymiyya also relates the Christian practices, such as the veneration of icons in churches like the paintings of Jesus and Mary, to the misconceived way to understand how God relates himself to humans or how humans should understand this connection. See *Jawāb*, 3.399-400.

[45] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.401.

4.2 *Ittiḥād* (Unification) in the Context of the Trinity

In this part of the study, the discussion between the Christian author of the *Letter* and Ibn Taymiyya on the hypostatic unification (*ittihād*) of the Incarnate Word of God in Jesus will be examined. Ibn Taymiyya's overall argument is to establish that the Word of God is only his command 'be' by which he creates. To some extent, he confirms the Christian belief that names Jesus as the Word of God in the sense that Jesus was created by God's word or command, 'kun' (be). Yet, he strongly rejects the hypostatic relation between the Word, the Spirit of God, and the Son, as the second person of the Trinity.

4.2.1 Genesis 1.1-5: 'Let it be thus' (*li-yakun kadhā*). Islamic word of God vs. the Creative Incarnate Word of God

This section presents Ibn Taymiyya's discussion on the Word of God, and his interpretation of the statements that he cites from the Book of Genesis. He explains how the biblical concept of 'the Word of God' should be interpreted independently of the doctrine of unification in the context of the Bible. Ibn Taymiyya cites the text as, 'Let it be thus,' (*li-yakun kadhā*) and proposes an Islamic reading of the Word of God in light of the biblical verses and the Qur'ān.[46]

The part where the author of the *Letter* explains the hypostatic relationship between the Son and the Word of God prompts a discussion that illustrates Ibn Taymiyya's reconceptualisation of the Word of God in an Islamic context. The *Letter*'s particular terminology, such as the creative Word of God, leads Ibn Taymiyya to focus on a contextual reading of the term 'the Word of God' in the Bible, with an intertextual reading of qur'ānic texts. Referring to a well-known qur'ānic passage among Arab Christian apologists, Q 4.171, 'His word which He conveyed unto Mary and a spirit from Him,' the Christian author points out the fact that the Qur'ān approves the Christology recognising Jesus as the Word of God.[47] Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyya centres on the meaning and function of the Word of God, both in the context of the Bible and the Qur'ān and the theology of God's speech. His primary concern is to prove that 'the Word of God' is not a hypostasis (*uqnūm*), and that the speech of God is an eternal attribute that certainly does not unite with Jesus.[48] Moreover, he argues that the nature of unification necessarily requires a change (*istiḥāl*), as happened in the examples given by the Christian author to exemplify the modality of the unification such as the combination of milk and water or steel and heat, which consequently makes a change in their physical features. In a very similar way to Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq's (d. 861) criticism, Ibn Taymiyya points out that the unification makes a change in the divine (*lāhūt*) attributes and reality. However, the pre-eternal necessary being simply does not befit any change.[49]

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[46] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.221-235.

Next, Ibn Taymiyya elaborates on why the term 'the Word of God' (*kalām Allāh*) cannot be applied to Jesus. His fundamental argument is that the majority of Muslims regard God's *kalām* as God's *kalimāt* (words). Yet,

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[47] Griffith, 'The Melkites and The Muslims,' 424-425. Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 98-99. Treiger, 'The Christology of the Letter,' 21-48. Treiger analyses the Christological stance of the *Letter* and argues against the established view that the editor of *Paul's Letter to A Muslim Friend* was a Melkite Christian. Contrary to this, Treiger claims that the editor was indeed a Nestorian, and supports his claim with some examples from the text, where especially the editor clearly implies two predicates that take part in the union yet are discernible after the union.

[48] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.308-309.

[49] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.310-311; Michel, *Response*, 286-287. For Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq's argument see, David Thomas, *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity: Abū 'Īsá Al-Warrāq's 'Against the Incarnation'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Jesus is not *kalimāt*. Rather, he is created by one of God's words, since God creates everything by His *kalimāt*, as stated in the Qur'ān (i.e. Q 3.47 and 59, Q 19.34-35, 36.83).[50] The purpose here is to create a conceptual distinction between God's word (*kalima*) and His speech (*kalām*). He wishes to preserve the latter as uncreated, eternal, and subsisting in God's essence. It appears to be that a concept of God's *kalām* that is purified from all philosophical and theological connotations allows Ibn Taymiyya to criticise others (i.e. Jaḥmiyya, Muʿtazila, and Christians), while providing him with the flexibility to move between the two ontological dimensions of God's speech: one subsists in His essence, and the other varies temporally from eternity according to God's will and command.[51] This is also the difference that Ibn Taymiyya applies to the present discussion when he claims that Jesus is neither the *kalām* nor the *kalima* of God, contrary to the Christian reading of Q 4.171: 'A word and spirit from Him.' He explains the qur'ānic Christology as a narrative that explicitly states the unusual creation of Jesus.[52]

Ibn Taymiyya also elaborates more on this debate in his treatise entitled *Al-qawl fī mas'alat 'Īsā kalimat Allāh wa-l-Qur'ān kalām Allāh* (The discourse on the matter of Jesus being the Word of God and the Qur'ān being the speech of God).[53] He explains that Jesus is called the Word of God because he is created through the Word of God upon His command. He compares the unusual creation of Jesus with that of Adam, who is created from dust (*turāb*), while the creation of Jesus started with God's saying (*qawlihi*). That is to say, for Ibn Taymiyya, Jesus is entitled to be called 'the Word of God', only because his creation differs from all created beings, since it was prompted by God's word 'be' (*kun*).[54] One can sense here that Ibn Taymiyya does not strictly object to calling Jesus *kalimāt Allāh*, but this does not mean, of course, that he agrees to signifying a meaning for this particular term in the way that Christians do for the qur'ānic text. He basically interprets the text as referring to the unusual means of God's creation, which proves God's power to create a thing out of nothing.

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[50] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.311-313. Here Ibn Taymiyya elaborates on the different opinions on God's Kalām, such as Muʿtazili, Jahmiyya and the Salaf, and the latter aptly affirms, for Ibn Taymiyya, that God's kalām is an eternal species (*qadīm al-nawʿ*).

[51] Hoover, 'God Acts by His Will and Power,' 55-77. Hoover clearly asserts, especially on pp. 55-56 and 74, that Ibn Taymiyya neither compromises the eternity of God's speech nor the close relation of His actions by His voluntary attributes to His essence, and he eventually claims that such 'attributes subsist in God's essence and depend upon God's will and power for their exercise.' See also Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's*, 95-96, and Jon Hoover, 'Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of This World,' *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, 3 (2004): 287-329.

[52] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.314-316.

[53] Ibn Taymiyya, *Tahqīq al-qawl fī mas'alat 'Īsā kalimāt Allāh wa-l-Qur'ān kalām Allāh*, (Ṭanṭā, Eygpt: Dār al-Ṣaḥāba li-lTurāth), 1992. For more information, see Jon Hoover, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' 852-853. This treatise, which has not been studied in any modern work to my knowledge, addresses the debate between a Christian and Muslim on the association of the Word of God with Jesus, to claim his divinity. Although the treatise does not offer a comprehensive analysis of the matter, it nevertheless highlights some points that are not mentioned in the *Jawāb*.

So far, Ibn Taymiyya has created a context for the debate on the unification of the Word of God with Jesus by analysing both the Christology of the *Letter* and the Qur'ān, within the scope of Islamic and Christian *kalām* (theology). He has basically argued that Jesus is not God's speech or word(s). Now, he will situate the debate in the biblical context to explain why Jesus is not the Word of God. Firstly, he focuses on the creative function of the Word of God, and claims that God's commands, by which He creates, are numerous and endless. This point again gives us a contrast between the *Letter*'s and Ibn Taymiyya's argumentation, where the former defines the Word of God as 'creative,' and as being united with a created human. In a similar fashion, yet with different purpose, Ibn Taymiyya also underlines the fact that the Word of God is involved in the creation process, but only has an intermediary role. God's commands 'be' (*kun*) – that is His word – and 'it was' just happened in the creation of Jesus and the world. Accordingly, he refers to scriptural proofs to underline that the divine books such as the Torah obviously state that God created things by His speech and His words. He gives an example from the first chapter of Genesis, and argues that it is expressed, ‘Let there be such and such,’ (*li-yakun kadhā*) when the narrative of the creation of the world is mentioned.[55] This verse appears at the end of the passages in Genesis 1-5, which Ibn Taymiyya interprets as the biblical affirmation that God creates through His word.

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[54] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Qawl*, 33-34 and 37-38. He explains here that God occasionally creates things in unusual ways, as happened when He created Adam without male and female origin, or Eve without female, or Jesus without male.

The next biblical verse is Psalms 33.6, ‘By the word of God were the heavens set fast, and by the breath of his mouth all their strength.’[56] Ibn Taymiyya argues that this passage does not support the Christian interpretation of the term *kalimat Allāh* (the word of God); rather, the apparent meaning indicates that God creates things by His word, as stated in the Book of Genesis: *li-yakun kadhā* ‘Let there be such and such,’ as noted above. There is also another point which he regards as paradoxical, which is relating the Word of God by which the heavens are created in Psalms 33.6 to Jesus, who is also the Creator (*khāliq*). The linguistic and grammatical analysis of this passage leads Ibn Taymiyya to argue that the expression *bi-kalimatihi* (by His word) requires the word *kalima* to be an adjective (*ṣifa*) for the verb. In that case, Jesus would be an adjective for the verb, not the Creator. *Kalima* here is used as one of the kinds of God’s words in a similar way to, ‘He made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of God – that is the highest,’ (Q 9.40) and the ḥadīth text, ‘Whoever fights for the Word of God, which is the highest, then he is on God’s path.’[57] Apparently, Ibn Taymiyya wishes to note the similar use of *kalima* in the Bible, the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth, where the word is used to refer to the saying of God (in the verses) and His command (in the ḥadīth). In each case, *kalima* grammatically functions as a generic noun, rather than a specific theological and doctrinal term. Relying on this context, Ibn Taymiyya again argues that the intended meaning of Psalms 33.6 is that God raises or manages the heavens and earth by his word, such as His word ‘be!’ (*kun*).

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[55] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.226-228; Michel, *Response*, 269.

[56] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 94-95.

[57] Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ‘Kitāb al ʿilm,’ 45.

Ibn Taymiyya then quotes Psalms 104.24, 'You have made (created) all of them by wisdom (*ḥikma*),' and interrelates this passage to Q 36.82, 'When He intends a thing, His command is only to say to it 'be! and it is.' With these references to the biblical and qur'ānic texts, he intends to underline one point: God's words that are related to God's creation of things (or the creative Word of God in the terminology of the *Letter*) are many, and should be interpreted as God's commands, which do not signify a specific doctrinal meaning in the contexts of both scriptures. Furthermore, he cites Isaiah 40.8, 'The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God (*kalimatuhu*) stands forever.'[58] He then offers three possible meanings of *kalimatuhu* (His Word) in the verse: either God's knowledge, presumably as a general meaning, or a specific word (*kalima muʿayyina*), or the Word of God as a generic noun. Ibn Taymiyya further quotes the qur'ānic verses Q 6.115, 18.109, and 7.137, as these passages have very similar meanings to Matthew 24.35: 'The heavens and the earth will pass away but my word (*kalāmī*) will not pass away.'[59] Within the contexts of these biblical and qur'ānic passages, he claims that the three potential meanings mentioned above do not indicate the Christian interpretation of the Word of God, since Christians regard Jesus to be pre-eternal (*ʾazaliyyun*) and everlasting (*ʾabadiyyun*). Moreover, he explains that Christians do not describe him with immortality or lasting (*baqāʾ*) without timelessness or pre-existence (*qidam*). Ibn Taymiyya further notes the Christian doctrine that the Word of God is begotten from the Father, who is eternal and pre-eternal. This already emphasises the eternity of the Word of God. Therefore, there is no reason to attribute continuity (*dawām*) and timelessness (*baqāʾ*) to it, contrary to the need to ascribe continuity and timelessness to mercy (*raḥma*) and benefit (*niʿma*) that God has promised, as expressed in 'Its fruit is lasting' (Q 13.35). Ibn Taymiyya expounds this interesting argument by referring to Psalms

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[58] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.253-256.

[59] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.255.

136.10, ‘They acknowledge the Lord, He is pious, and His mercy (*raḥmatuhu*) lasts forever,’ where God’s mercy again is described as lasting forever. From this point on, Ibn Taymiyya does not elaborate on these passages further, but one can recognise the pattern of this exegesis as discarding the Christian interpretation of the Word of God in the context of these particular passages with a rather rhetorical argument that the word of God is identified only as timeless. Therefore, it cannot refer to the eternal and pre-eternal Jesus. However, one cannot also neglect Ibn Taymiyya’s efforts in effecting textual relations between the Qur’ān and the Bible, where he sees a relevant context, sub-context, and terminology.

To summarise, Ibn Taymiyya contends that the Word of God does not signify the Christian doctrinal meaning, neither in the Bible nor in the Qur’ān, and he draws attention to the terminology of these divine Books, particularly the terms that he thinks refer to an intended meaning. This is certainly why he focuses on the use of the word *baqā’,* which is to emphasise exclusively timelessness without the intention to include eternity (*qidam*). The other point that Ibn Taymiyya also centres on is the eternity of the Word of God, regardless of which meaning the term signifies in the given context. To explain this better, he cites Matthew 24.35, ‘My word will not pass away,’ and argues that ‘my word’ in the text is the divine knowledge that was revealed to Jesus. He notes that this biblical verse proves that Jesus is a human messenger who received divine revelation that contained the Word of God, which is eternal.[60]

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[60] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.255-256. Ibn Taymiyya also offers a grammatical explanation regarding the use of one word in naming things, with a reference to Sībawayh as a critical response to the *Letter*’s use of Q 37.171, ‘Our word has already preceded for Our servants, the messengers.’ For further information, see *Jawāb*, 3.263-270.

4.2.2 Genesis 1.26: Resemblance (*shibh*) and Likeness (*mithl*) Referring to the Incarnate Word and Spirit of God in the Context of the Trinity

This part of the present study explains how the use of personal pronouns such as 'we' and 'us' are interpreted in the *Letter* to support the theology of the incarnate Word of God and the Trinity. This will be followed by the exposition of Ibn Taymiyya's objection to the Christian interpretation and his alternative exegesis of the expressions, 'resemblance' and 'likeness' in Genesis 1.26. Ibn Taymiyya, similar to his interpretive strategy highlighted in the previous chapter, uses a contextual reading when interpreting the biblical text as well as modifying this interpretation within an Islamic theological context.

The author of the *Letter* uses Genesis 1.26, 'Let us make man in our resemblance (*shibhinā*), according to our likeness (*mithālina*),' as the scriptural proof of the Trinitarian names, and points out the Christological interpretation of these names. He argues that the image and likeness referred to in the verse are God's Word and Spirit, respectively.[61] Although the link and allusion that the Christian author makes between the hypostases and the verse is not clearly explained, it might be appropriate to say that he primarily refers to the plural sense of 'us' as indicating the three hypostases.[62]

This kind of use of the personal plural pronoun, such as 'us' or 'we,' in apologetic works is not unusual. Similar use of the verse can be seen in early Arabic-Christian works. Abū Rā'iṭa (d. 810-840) in *Ithbat*, for example, and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (d. 840) in *Masāʾil*, also cite Genesis 1.26 to emphasise the plural sense of the text. Moreover, Husseini informs us that this verse is called the 'plural argument,' since the intention is to emphasise that God addresses Himself in the first-person plural form.[63] Keating also clearly explains how, as a Jacobite Christian, Abū Rā'iṭa makes use of Genesis 1.26 in his apologetic writings.[64] In his *Risālah on the Proof of the Christian Religion and the proof of the Holy Trinity*, he interprets 'our image' and 'our likeness' in Genesis 1.26 as referring to the Trinity. Similarly, in *The First Risālah on the Holy Trinity*, he explains that in Genesis 1.26 God did not say, 'I shall fashion [a human being] in My image and My likeness.'[65] The point that he makes is that God has spoken in the first-person plural form in the revelation sent to Moses, and this is an absolute proof-text for the Trinity. It is obvious that, for early Arab Christian apologists, Genesis 1.26 with its plural sense constitutes a good Trinitarian scriptural proof.

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[61] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 116-117.

[62] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic,* 412-413 n. 3. Thomas and Ebied also note that this verse is used for scriptural evidence of the Trinity in the *Letter*.

Similar to these two early Christian authors, the author of the *Letter* also formulises the plural sense of the verse as a textual sign of the Trinity. He explains that the word 'us' becomes meaningful when it refers to God as the Father, 'image' as the Word of God, and 'likeness' as the Holy Spirit. This exegesis not only proves the Trinity but also the interpretative connection between the Christian doctrine and scripture, which is a well-developed argument against Muslims who argue that the Trinity has no scriptural base.[66] As Swanson highlights, the anonymous author of the *Apology* also cites Genesis 1.26 and Genesis 1.1-3, in which the Trinitarian names such as the Holy Spirit and the Word of God are explicitly mentioned. The exegetical focus is on the word 'us' as a first-person plural form, which is an indicator of plurality in the Godhead.[67]

Having explained the interpretation of personal plural pronouns in the sacred texts of the Christian tradition, Ibn Taymiyya's exegesis of the biblical texts in question will now be discussed.[68] He rejects the Christian interpretation of the verse in which God's image and likeness are interpreted as His Word and Spirit. To explain that Genesis 1.26 only narrates the creation of Adam, he cites a well-known ḥadīth text, 'Allah created Adam similar to His own image (*ṣūratihi*).' Ibn Taymiyya here decontexualises Genesis 1.26 from the traditional Christian interpretation, and emphasises that the biblical verse and ḥadīth text only report that Adam was created in God's image. However, there is a problem for Ibn Taymiyya in this explanation: how can a human be created in the image of God? In other words, Genesis 1.26 and the ḥadīth text imply similarity between the Creator and created beings. He resolves this tension by emending the text of Genesis 1.26 and replacing the word *mithāl* (likeness) with a more appropriate equivalent *shibh* (resemblance), which will be explained in the following section. It should be noted here that this approach of Ibn Taymiyya to biblical texts is one of the rare occasions when he advocates a verbal change or emendation in the text of the Bible.

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[63] Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, 157 n. 61.

[64] Keating, *Defending*, 82-145.

[65] Keating, *Defending*, 200-201.

[66] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 116-117.

[67] Swanson, 'Beyond Prooftexting,' 109.

The key word in Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Genesis 1.26 is 'likeness' (*mithāl*). In Taymiyyan theology, the qur'ānic principle 'Nothing like unto Him' (Q 42.11) constitutes the most important point in understanding how God relates Himself to His creatures. In the framework of this principle, Ibn Taymiyya argues that there are three points regarding the interpretation of this verse that should be noted. Firstly, 'common degree' (*al-qadr al-mushtarak*) is the extent to which two things resemble one another.[69] That is the measurement by which we can compare two or more things that are similar. For Ibn Taymiyya, the common degree is a universal meaning (*maʿnā kullī*), which only exists in the knowledge of the knower. Ibn Taymiyya's point here is that when a human is defined with the attributes of life, knowledge, and power, which are also God's attributes, this does not mean that God shares the same attributes with humans. In other words, although we use the same words for both creatures and God, it is already known that it is not permissible to attribute to God any deficient meanings, which are certainly permissible to use for created beings. Therefore, the similarity between God and creatures, as mentioned in Genesis 1.26, does not necessarily convey the same meaning for the Creator or the creatures. For this reason, *ishtirāk* (having in common), especially only in the verbal definitions or attributes of God, does not constitute difficulty, from Ibn Taymiyya's perspective.[70]

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[68] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.440.

[69] Please note that I have translated the term *al-qadr al-mushtarak* as 'common degree' throughout the present study, except in the section above. Ibn Taymiyya frequently uses the term in a technical sense in the *Jawāb* and his other works as well. However, the term here is used to note the extent of similarity or resemblance between the two things. Hence, I used a loose translation of the term in this particular context.

With the explanation above, Ibn Taymiyya has tried to establish that there is no similarity between God and His servants in any sense of the word, even though the word *mithāl* is used in the scripture to signal a resemblance or similarity between the Creator and creatures. Yet, Ibn Taymiyya, as a theologian, who is very strict about the theological language used for God, clearly regards the word *mithāl* as inappropriate to be used in a revealed text. Accordingly, he emends the text of Genesis 1.26, relying on the terminology of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth. He claims that in Genesis 1.26 the words should read, 'We will create a human (*bashar*) in our image (*ṣūratinā*) which resembles (*yushabbihunā*) us.'[71] He strongly argues that the original statement in Genesis 1.26 cannot be 'our likeness' (*mithālinā*). Then, he cites an authentic hadith text in which the word *ashbahu* (resembles) was used instead of the word *mithālinā*. In the hadith, 'God created Adam in his own image (*ṣūratihi*).'[72] Ibn Taymiyya emphasises that the Prophet Muḥammad did not use the word *mithāl* in this context; rather, the word *shabbaha* (resemble) is utilised. It is certainly clear that having semantically and linguistically similar expressions, both in the biblical verse and in the ḥadīth text, serves Ibn Taymiyya well to propose alternative wordings to replace some of the biblical expressions. Although he tends to follow the apparent meaning of the texts (mainly, the word *mithāl*), he still pays a great deal of attention to the significance of the words, and explains why the word choice matters in this context. He opens a primarily linguistic discussion and gives details on how the words *mithāl* and *shabbaha* are accepted as the same by a group of Muslim scholars, while another group linguistically differentiates between these two words. His explanation is as follows:

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[70] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.443.

[71] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.444.

[72] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.444. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'Kitāb al-birr wa-l ṣalah wa-l ādāb,' 32-33.

> For the first group, they [the words, *shibh* and *mithl*] have one meaning. The word *mithl* (similarity) signifies, in a qualified (*muqayyad*) or unqualified (*muṭlaq*) sense, the same meaning with the word *shibh* (resemblance). For the second group, they [*shibh* and *mithl*] have different meanings in general language, especially in religious and rational matters. However, with confinement and semantic coherence, one of them can refer to the other's meaning, and this is also the view of many people. The difference between them [*shibh* and *mithl*] is based on rational matters. Is it possible for something to resemble another thing from only one perspective without others [without having any other resembling features]? There are two opinions about this matter. [The first], it is not possible since *shibh* and *mithl* are the same. [The second], on the other hand, it is possible because the difference only appears in general language. The second one [opinion] is the most commonly held one by the majority. Reason only knows the accidents, such as colours, which resemble each other in their being a colour, however; black is not the same or similar to white. Similarly, bodies and substances, for people, resemble by virtue of their denomination as a body and a substance, but their realities do not resemble each other just as the reality of water does not resemble the reality of a solid.[73]

By this explanation, Ibn Taymiyya intends to conclude that two or more things might resemble each other from several perspectives. However, this does not prevent them from also having differences. He explains the difference between *shibh and mithl* in the qur'ānic verses. He notes that while the word *mithl* is used to signify similarity in Q 2.118 ('their words', *mithla qawlihim*), the word *tashābahat* (resemble) is utilised to describe the resemblance of hearts ('their hearts', *qulūbuhum*) in the remainder of the verse.[74] To explain this better, the word resemblance (*shabbaha*) is used to describe the resemblance between hearts, since the hearts of humans cannot be similar to each other in every aspect. Rather, the hearts of humans can only resemble each other with a few mutual characteristics. Therefore, the similarity between the words (*qawlihim*) in Q 2.118 is emphasised with the word 'similar' (*mithl*), since the words people use can be similar in every aspect. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya intends to prove that when discussing the similarity between two things, which are God and humans in this case, it is first necessary to know whether the things are similar to each other in every aspect of their ontological or metaphysical features. If they are not, then to define the similarity between them the word 'resemblance' (*shibh*) should be used instead of 'similarity' (*mithl*). This is the very reason why Ibn Taymiyya insistently argues that the word *mithālinā* (our likeness) in Genesis 1.26 should be replaced with the word *yushabbihunā* (resembles us).

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[73] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.444-445.

As explained earlier in Chapter 2, Ibn Ḥazm also interprets Genesis 1.26, yet with a different approach to that of Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Ḥazm uses the text as an example of textual alteration, and argues that the words 'similarity' and 'resemblance' are both not appropriate expressions to use about God. Thus, he rejects the text, as it connotes anthropomorphic meanings, and thereby violates the divinity of God. Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand, implies that the biblical verse was textually changed, possibly due to transmission and translation of the Bible. However, he reinterprets Genesis 1.26 by emending the text. Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Taymiyya both show a concern for the theological language used about God, but while the former scholar considers the words ‘similarity’ and ‘resemblance’ the same and rejects them, the latter only finds the word ‘similarity’ problematic due to its anthropomorphic signification for God. He corrects the wordings of Genesis 1.26 by relying on the qur’ānic and ḥadīth vocabulary.

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[74] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.445-446.

4.2.3 Genesis 1.2 and Job 33.4: The Qur'ānic Holy Spirit vs. the Christian Holy Spirit

In this section, I will present Ibn Taymiyya’s interpretation of the term ‘Holy Spirit.’ As noted in the previous section, the author of the *Letter* explains the triad of the Trinity as Father-Son-Holy Spirit, and in this formulation the Holy Spirit is also the life of God. The Christian author argues that the substantial attribute *ḥayāt* (life) is essential to the essence of God; otherwise, God would not be living.

It is suggested that the idea of a spirit inspiring prophets was already held in pre-Christian times, which constituted a pre-understanding of the term ‘Spirit’ in Christian theology, in contrast to the Islamic perception of the same term.[75] The qur’ānic teaching of Spirit, on the other hand, presents a different perspective on the topic, which is regarded as challenging the critique of the Christian perception of the Spirit.[76] In his analysis of both the Christian and the Muslim understanding of the Holy Spirit, Beaumont points out three major qur’ānic references (Q 2.87, 253, and 5.110) to the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-qudus*) that mention God’s support (*ayyadnāhu*) of Jesus, along with one particular text (Q 16.102) that refers to the Holy Spirit which brought the revelation to the Prophet Muḥammad.[77] In the context of the four qur’ānic passages mentioned above, it is suggested that the Qur’ān consciously attempts to criticise and correct ‘the deifying language used by the earlier People of the Book in regard to the Holy Spirit’.[78]

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[75] Mark Beaumont, ‘The Holy Spirit in Early Christian Dialogue with Muslims,’ in *The Character of Christian-Muslim Encounter: Essays in Honour of David Thomas*, ed. Douglas Pratt et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 42-59.

[76] Sidney H. Griffith, ‘Holy Spirit’, ed. Jane D. McAuliffe, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur ʾān*, 2.443.

[77] Beaumont, ‘The Holy Spirit,’ 42-43.

The word ‘Spirit’ (*rūḥ*) is used in the Qur’ān without a reference to its holiness (*al-qudus*), mainly in connection with God’s command (*amr*), which suggests within a wider context that the spirit is an intermediate that acts upon God’s command.[79] While the Holy Spirit is mainly associated with the Angel Gabriel in Islamic discourse, the acceptance of the spirit or the Holy Spirit in Muslim works, as it supports the prophets and messengers somehow, is echoed in Arab Christian apologetic works with an allusion to Q 4.171, ‘A spirit from Him.’ Although there is no clear expression matching the Holy Spirit with the Angel Gabriel, the earliest Arabic Christian treatise on the Trinity confirms that the Holy Spirit brings ‘guidance and mercy from God’, relying on the qur’ānic context.[80] As Beaumont highlights in his analysis of four ninth century Arab apologists’ works, the early Christians are less concerned with the function of the Holy Spirit; rather, they defend and explain the dogmatic status of the third person of the Trinity. Only Abū Qurrā among these writers has explained the function of the Holy Spirit in a way similar to the Muslim understanding of the term, albeit with a completely different purpose, which is to interpret the term ‘Spirit’ so as not to violate the unity in the Godhead.[81] Abū Qurrā, for example, explicitly states that the Holy Spirit ‘disclosed what Christ had graciously accomplished for them through his cross.’ He apparently acknowledges the function of the Holy Spirit alongside Jesus’s mission in the context of the Trinity.[82] Although the *Letter* is a thirteenth century text, one can easily detect the similar pattern of these earlier Arab Christian works in referring to the Holy Spirit with less attention to its function and nature, and only an emphasis on the doctrinal characteristic of the term in the context of the Trinity with the biblical texts.[83] Despite the lack of emphasis on the Holy Spirit's function in the *Letter*, Ibn Taymiyya, as can be witnessed in what follows, re-conceptualises the term in the context of the biblical verses.

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[78] Griffith, ‘Holy Spirit.’

[79] D.B. Macdonald, ‘The Development of the Idea of Spirit in Islam,’ *The Muslim World* 22, 1 (1932): 25-42.

[80] Beaumont, ‘The Holy Spirit,’ 45-46. Gibson, *On the Triune Nature*, 77-78 (in Arabic) and 5 (in English).

[81] Beaumont, ‘The Holy Spirit,’ 46-54.

[82] John C. Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah* (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 51-53.

Genesis 1.2, 'And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water,' is cited in the *Letter* to prove that the Holy Spirit is the third hypostasis of the Trinity.[84] Ibn Taymiyya, however, uses this biblical verse to argue that the word 'Spirit' (*rūḥ*) in the text is originally 'wind' (*rīh*), and that the Holy Spirit is only an intermediary which is commanded by God. For him, Genesis 1.2 primarily provides an account of the beginning of the creation of the heavens and earth. Relying on the text, he explains that at the very beginning of the creation of the earth and the heavens, the earth was covered by water, and the wind of God (Spirit of God, in Genesis 1.2) was hovering over the water. He claims that the passage informs us about the nature of the universe before the creation process began, and he reports that the water was above the soil and the air was above the water before creation. It is interesting to see that Ibn Taymiyya confirms the biblical information in regard to the creation of the world without any hesitation about the veracity of the text. Yet, what is more interesting is his argument that the word 'Spirit' (*rūḥ*) in the passage was originally *rīḥ* (wind). For a further point, he claims that this interpretation is widely accepted among Muslims, Jews, and Christians.[85] Unfortunately, Ibn Taymiyya does not explain how he is so sure about the agreement between the People of the Book on the exegesis of Genesis 1.2. However, we can refer to a similar explanation of the passage in earlier Muslim works, which possibly might have led Ibn Taymiyya to believe that there is continuity in the traditional interpretation of Genesis 1.2

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[83] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 90-99.

[84] Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemics,* 94-95; Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.236, 241-242.

[85] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.241.

among the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*). Al-Maqdisī (d. 966) provides a similar narrative to that of Ibn Taymiyya:

> God first created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was a void and dark island (*jazīra*) on the abundant water (*ghamura*), and the wind of God (*rīḥ al-Allāh*) was hovering over the surface of the water.[86]

As can be seen, al-Maqdisī similarly notes that the thing that was hovering over the water is the wind of God, not the Spirit. Ibn Taymiyya is surely familiar with this traditional interpretation of the biblical verse among Muslim scholars. Moreover, he also gives information regarding the lexical root of the word 'Spirit' in Hebrew. His interpretation is as follows:

> The term 'spirit' in Hebrew is written with *ḍamma* on the letter *ra* and *tashdīd* on the letter *waw*. However, the term *rīḥ* (wind) is named 'spirit' (*rūh*) and the plural form of the term is *arwāḥ* (spirits or souls). In the verse, this term does not refer to the life of God, which was hovering over the water. This is a claim, which any intelligent person never says. Since the life of God is subsisting in Him [God], it cannot be separated or cannot subsist in something else. This also makes impossible that the spirit or the life of God subsists in the water or in something else, not to mention hovering over the water. The thing that was hovering over the water is a self-subsisting thing. This is information about the wind (*rīḥ*) that was moving over the water.[87]

With this explanation, it has become clear that Ibn Taymiyya uses the traditional Muslim interpretation of the verse to invalidate the Christian interpretation of Genesis 1.2 as a proof text of the third member of the Trinity. In fact, what he proposes here is a suggestion to emend the text, arguing that the word should be *rīḥ* (wind) rather than *rūḥ* (Spirit). Ibn Taymiyya's exegesis of this particular passage is important for two reasons. First, he does not hesitate to use biblical information to advance his knowledge of the creation of the world. He certainly knows the Jewish origin of this knowledge, but he somehow trusts the soundness of the interpretation. In fact, he also refers to this verse when he discusses the creation of the world in his other writings. In a treatise entitled *Sharḥ ḥādīth ʿImrān b. Ḥuṣayn,* Ibn Taymiyya composes a ḥadīth commentary on the eternity of God covering the creation and the existence of His throne before the creation of the world.[88] He refers to the Book of Genesis, and explains the account of Genesis 1.2 in a similar sense to his explanation in the *Jawāb*. He briefly mentions that before the creation there were water, dust, and air, and 'that water was covering over the earth and the wind was blowing over the water.'[89] Moreover, he also cites Genesis 1.2 in *Minhāj* on the matter of creation of the world in time. He claims a time prior to the creation of the heavens and earth, and notes the intertextuality of this debate in the Qur'ān, where it is mentioned that God created the heavens and the earth in six days (Q 7.54), as also stated in Exodus 20.11: 'For in the six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth.'[90] These various contexts in which Ibn Taymiyya refers to Genesis 1.2 and confirms the authority of the traditional exegesis of the texts illustrate once more his intertextual approach in reading and using the biblical text, particularly when he sees no contradiction between the biblical and the qur'ānic interpretive traditions. Second, the significance of Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation arises from the fact that he carefully utilises the prooftexts used in the *Letter* to create a new context in which he will re-conceptualise the term 'Holy Spirit,' independently of Christian theology.

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[86] Al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-bad' wa-l-Tārīkh*, (Port Said: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-dīniyya, n.d.), 1.145-146; and see also Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 126-127.

[87] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.241.

Ibn Taymiyya next interprets Job 33.4, 'The spirit of God created me, and he is the one who teaches me,' which is used as a second proof text for the term 'Holy Spirit' in the *Letter*. Ibn Taymiyya objects to the *Letter*'s interpretation, claiming that the Biblical verse does not relate the spirit of God to His life either implicitly or explicitly. For a further point, he notes that the text does not even say ‘the Holy Spirit,’ but ‘the spirit of God’ (*rūḥ Allāh*), which refers, as he claims, to the angel chosen and sent by God, as stated in the verse, ‘We sent to her our spirit.’ (Q 19.17-19). He reads the narrative of the text as God sending His spirit to Mary in the form of a human as a messenger, and God’s spirit here is presumably the Angel Gabriel. However, this interpretation might rightfully trigger a question: How can the spirit of God that was also sent as a messenger be related to God? Ibn Taymiyya explains that the Qur’ān provides examples of how physical objects (*aʿyān*), which God chooses and specifies with features that He loves, are attributed to Him. He refers, for instance, to ‘the she-camel of God (*nāqat Allāh*)’ in Q 91.13, and the verse ‘Purify my house (*baytī*)’ in Q 22.26, and ‘A spring of which servants of God (*‘ibād Allāh*) will drink’ in Q 76.6.[91] He then highlights that if the thing attributed (*muḍāf*) to God is an attribute that does not subsist in created beings such as His knowledge, power, speech and life, then it is an attribute of God. However, if the attributed thing (*muḍāf*) is a self-subsisting object (*‘ayn*), then it is a created (*makhlūq*), governed (*mamlūk*) thing, and thus, it is attributed (*muḍāf*) to its creator and governor. He, moreover, notes that attributing (*iḍāfa*) requires specifying the *muḍāf* with attributes that distinguish it from other things, to the extent that the *iḍāfa* is established. With this purpose, Ibn Taymiyya goes on to explain how the real objects, *kaʿba*, *nāqat* and *‘abd*, have been specified and attributed to God in the qur’ānic examples (i.e. *nāqat Allah*). In a similar way, God has therefore specified the chosen (*muṣṭafā*) spirit by naming it *rūḥ Allāh* (the Spirit of God).[92] As can be seen in this justification, Ibn Taymiyya, on the one hand, associates the spirit of God with an angel who has been sent to the earth in the form of a human. On the other hand, he considers this spirit as a created being that God has chosen and specified in relation to Himself. By doing so, he avoids relating a created being ontologically to God, but in the meantime maintains the meaning that he believes to be the intended meaning.

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[88] Ibn Taymiyya, 'Sharḥ ḥadīth 'Imrān b. Ḥuṣayn,' in MF 18.210-243, and MRM 5.172-195. See for the translation Hoover, 'Perpetual Creativity,' 287-329, esp. p. 291 n. 24.

[89] Hoover, 'Perpetual Creativity,' 304 n. 53. See also 'Imrān,' in MF, 18.214-215. As Hoover has already noted, Ibn Taymiyya gives the same biblical narrative in connection to the beginning of the creation of the heavens and the earth, albeit without an explicit reference to the Book of Genesis.

[90] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 88-91. See also *Minhāj*, 1.363, 'Similarly, [what] is in the Torah corresponds to what God has reported in the Qur'ān. And the earth was overflowed with water, and the air was blowing over the water.'

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[91] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.248.

[92] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.248-249.

Having established an inter-textual context in which to relate the function of God's Spirit to His command in a parallel meaning to the relation between God's Word and command, Ibn Taymiyya cites two other Biblical texts: 'You send (*tursilu*) your spirit, then they are created (*yukhlaqūn*),' (Psalms 104.30); and, 'He said, then they were there, and he commanded (*amara*), then they were created (*khuliqū*).' (Psalms 148.5). He explains that, in these two passages, creating (*khalq*) is ascribed to the angel in a similar way to Q 3.49: 'I, indeed, create (*akhluqu*) for you from the clay [that which is] like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it, then it becomes a bird by permission of God.' From Ibn Taymiyya's perspective, the biblical and qur'ānic verses demonstrate that both the angel and Jesus had the power to create or form things by the permission and will of God.[93] Ibn Taymiyya's purpose in relating the function of God's spirit to creating things is to disprove the relation between the Holy Spirit and the life of God affirmed in the context of the Trinity in the *Letter*. Then, he concludes with an interesting explanation of how and why the term spirit should be interpreted as an angel in an inter-textual context:

> When it is found that an expression (*lafẓ*) has a meaning in the teaching of some of the prophets, and [if] there is no contradictory meaning to the previous meaning in their teaching, then, it would be more appropriate to divert (*ḥaml*) the meaning upon [this meaning] than averting the meaning to another meaning that is contradictory to their [the prophets'] teaching. One cannot find in the prophets' teaching that the life of God is named 'spirit' (*rūḥ*), and that the attributes of God create the created beings (*makhlūqāt*).[94]

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[93] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.250-251.

[94] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.252.

With this clarification, Ibn Taymiyya emphasises the importance of adhering to traditional interpretation and to the wider context of the scripture, particularly if there is no other meaning that could be considered for a pluralistic approach to the text. This methodological rationale of interpretation assertively manifests itself throughout the *Jawāb*, and it is rhetorically convenient in arguing with an opponent who insists that the scripture supports the traditional Christian interpretation. This is why Ibn Taymiyya consistently points out the hermeneutical gaps between the Christian doctrines and the Bible, particularly the Biblical terminology. He argues, for example, that the Trinitarian names (i.e. the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) certainly do not conform to the holistic context of the Bible. Therefore, he claims that the interpretation of the terms, as hypostases, should be in accordance with the apparent (*ẓāhir*) and the unambiguous (*naṣṣ*) meaning of the scripture.

He further claims that, based on a contextual approach, one can easily recognise that the term 'Holy Spirit' is not conventionally used (*istiʿmāl*) in a sense that equates to and matches God's attribute of 'life' in previous prophetic traditions. Rather, as Ibn Taymiyya continues to explain, 'Holy Spirit' is only used to indicate a being that is sent down by God to righteous people and the prophets for support. To underpin his claim with Biblical verses, he refers to Psalms 143.10, 'Your Spirit is righteous (*ṣāliḥ*) and guides me in the land of uprightness,' and Acts 2.17, 'And in those days, I shall pour forth (*uskubu*) my spirit (*rūḥī*) upon each saint [holy or righteous people] (*qiddīs*).'[95] Undoubtedly, these Biblical verses match the qur'ānic perception of the Holy Spirit that is chosen and commanded by God, from Ibn Taymiyya's perspective. Moreover, it seems that the Biblical passages quoted above construct a context or perhaps a hermeneutical border that determines the extent to which the interpretation can be stretched. Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya quotes from the Creed (i.e. the Niceo-

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[95] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.257-258.

Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, ʾ*amāna*), which he criticises occasionally in the *Jawāb*, to make connections between the qur'ānic, biblical and creedal explanations of the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit.[96] He argues that these Biblical verses mentioned above are explained clearly in the Creed:

> Who, for the sake of us, we humans, and for the sake of our salvation (*khalāṣinā*), descended from the heavens and became corporeal (*tajassada*) [by taking flesh] from the Holy Spirit and from the Virgin Mary.[97]

Ibn Taymiyya argues that this part of the Creed as quoted above is an unequivocal manifestation of the function of the Holy Spirit in the creation of Jesus. He further claims that the qur'ānic highlight on the matter is very similar to the Christian creed, for example, where God mentions that He sent His Spirit to Mary and blew into her and then she conceived Jesus (Q 19.17-22). Moreover, he cites, 'We blew into her from Our Spirit, and We made her and her son a sign (*āyat*) for the worlds,' (Q 21.91), and explains that the spirit in the text is the messenger, as stated in 'He [the spirit] said, 'I am only the messenger of your Lord to give you a pure boy." (Q 19.19). For Ibn Taymiyya, these texts conform to the Christian creed by virtue of a similar account regarding the creation of Jesus. Both of the texts clearly explain that Jesus was created from this spirit and his mother.[98]

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[96] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2.405-406; Michel, *Response*, 218-219. Ibn Taymiyya's perception of the creed is very akin to other Muslim scholars' discourse on the matter. For example, 'Alī b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī (d. 855), and 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) cite the creed in their work and heavily criticise the content to underline that the creed has no organic relation to the original revelation of Jesus and the Bible. For 'Alī b. Rabbān's discussion on the creed, see the very recent study by Ebied and Thomas, *The Polemical Works*, 115-121. See also 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Tathbīt* Reynolds and Samir, *Critique of Christian Origins*, 5-7, and Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian*, 175-176 and 200-203.

[97] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.258. Michel, *Response*, 276-277. The source of Ibn Taymiyya's quotation of the creed is rather an important one for the present study. Although it is probably most likely that Ibn Taymiyya draws on Ḥasan b. Ayyūb's *Risāla* (10th century Muʿtazilī scholar), from which he already quotes larger parts in *Jawāb*, there are considerable differences in wording between the two texts, which might mean that Ibn Taymiyya has another source for the text of the creed. I have compared several medieval Muslim texts quoting the creed, but none of them matches Ibn Taymiyya's quotation. However, the version of the creed in al-Qarāfī (d. 1285) and al-Jaʿfarī (d. 1270) is considerably more similar to the wording of Ibn Taymiyya's text than Ḥasan b. Ayyūb's and 'Alī b. Rabban's versions, which in turn might mean that Ibn Taymiyya relies on an intermediate source on which these two authors also draw. For Qarāfī, see *Ajwiba*, 515-516; and for al-Jaʿfarī's text, 501-523, and Ṣāliḥ ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Jaʿfarī, *Bayān Al-Wāḍiḥ Al-Mashūd Min Faḍāʾiḥ Al-Naṣārā Wa-L-Yahūd*, ed. Amal bint Mabrūk ibn Nāhis al-Luhībī (Mecca: Umm al-Qurā University, 2011), 315-517. For the Muslim transmission of the Christian creed, see Pierre Maṣrī, 'Ṣīgha ʿarabiyya qadīma li-qānūn al-īmān yatanāqulu-hā al-muʾallifūn al-muslimūn bayna-l-qarn al-tāsiʿwa-l-thālith ʿashar al-mīlādī,' *Islamochristiana* 20 (1994): 1-26. Comparing six Muslim scholars' quotations of the creed, Maṣrī claims that the textual source of the creed in Arabic among Muslims is 'Alī b. Rabban's reproduction of the creed, which is his own translation from a Syriac-Nestorian creed. Similarly, Cucarella argues that the version of the Arabic creed quoted by Muslim scholars is not the Nicene Creed as they claim; rather, it is textually very similar to a fifth century Antiochene theologian, Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428). For this see Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics*, 80 n. 64; 180-184. For the Antiochene creed, see Alphonse Mingana, *Theodore of Mopsuestia, Commentary on the Nicene Creed* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1932).

Ibn Taymiyya attempts to construct an intertextual context here, including even a partial quotation of the Christian creed, which he primarily considers to be innovated with no scriptural origin.[99] On the one hand, he searches for a terminology that unequivocally signifies the same meanings in each context of the scripture. On the other hand, he accuses Christians of altering the meaning of the text by ignoring the conventional use (*istiʿmāl*) of the scripture and attributing new meanings to terms such as the Holy Spirit, Father and Son.[100]

Ibn Taymiyya's strategy is to refute the Christian doctrine in which Jesus is specifically associated with God's Spirit and Word. With this intention, he focuses on the texts where the Holy Spirit is related to other persons, for example, the prophet David in Psalms 51.11. This approach allows him to argue that the hypostatic formulation of the Trinity in which the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity is not necessarily based on scripture, as the Christian author of the *Letter* claims. Another advantage of this approach, for Ibn Taymiyya, is to have the option to refer to a variant context in which the term 'Spirit' is used to signify different meanings. This means, for him, that the Word and Spirit of God do not signify dogmatic meanings in the scripture. Ibn Taymiyya's primary goal is to affirm the relation of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to Jesus with an Islamic perception of these two qur'ānic concepts. Yet, he also makes great effort to build intertextual relations between the qur'ānic and biblical passages to identify the common terms and words, which seemingly serves as a methodological meter to identify to what extent the two scriptures agree on the nature and function of the Word and Spirit of God. With an analysis of the term 'Holy Spirit' in the qur'ānic and biblical contexts, Ibn Taymiyya concludes that the Holy Spirit is an angelic being that is created, chosen, and specified with some characteristics by God, and acts upon His command in a similar way to the function of the Word of God.

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[98] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.259-260.

[99] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 1.340-342. Ibn Taymiyya here quotes the full text of the creed and explicitly argues that it is contradictory to the revealed books and reason. He then paradoxically refers to the part of the creed as quoted above to clarify that the creedal explanation of how Jesus is created by mediation of the spirit in the womb of Mary complies with the biblical and qur'ānic verses. Although Ibn Taymiyya rejects the soundness of the creed and Christian rituals without hesitation, it should be noted here that he does not neglect that some parts might contain original knowledge of the teaching of Jesus. Therefore, he claims that the majority of the Christian beliefs are innovated after Christ by Christian leaders. See also, Michel, *Response*, 156-157.

[100] Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3.260-261.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has showed that Ibn Taymiyya's biblical interpretation is not only based on linguistic analyses but also supported by theological and philosophical exegesis. Specifically, Taymiyyan theological views are guiding Ibn Taymiyya's contextual interpretation (i.e. his hermeneutical choices) and his use of the hermeneutical terms of Islamic legal theory and qur'ānic exegesis. Although the most distinctive feature of Ibn Taymiyya's biblical interpretation is his use of hermeneutical terms and strategies of Islamic legal theory and qur'ānic exegesis, theological interpretation complements the wider picture of his biblical hermeneutics, and most importantly, presents important points of his intellectual scholarship. The discussion on the Christian doctrine of *ḥulūl* (divine indwelling) proposes a new interpretation of the term in the context of philosophical and theological discourse. Arguing that God does not dwell in and relate to any created beings, Ibn Taymiyya explains that humans can only experience sensing a cognitive similitude (*al-mithāl al-ʿilmī*) of God's knowledge and love. This cognitive similitude bears no ontological connection to God, and thus it is theologically permissible to use it to understand how God relates Himself to humans. Ibn Taymiyya's theory of *al-mithāl al-ʿilmī* (cognitive similitude) as an intermediary of the presence of God's knowledge and love in a believer's heart is inspired from both the Neoplatonic theory of modulation of being and the early East Syrian Christian belief of divine indwelling. He cleverly combines otherwise unrelated theories and beliefs to produce an explanation of *ḥulūl* that does not violate the unity and distinctiveness of God. Moreover, he analyses pertinent biblical vocabulary such as *ẓahara* (appear) and *jallā* (manifest) to argue that the word *ḥulūl* is never used in biblical context to signify God's indwelling and uniting with other humans. For Ibn Taymiyya, the context here again plays an important role in determining the univocal meaning of the term *ḥulūl* in the Bible.

This chapter has demonstrated that Ibn Taymiyya explains, for instance, the qur'ānic idea of the Word of God (*kalima*) in contrast to the Christian doctrine of the incarnate word of God, he carefully employs the Biblical passages where the expression 'the Word of God' is not necessarily used in connection with Jesus to decontextualize the expression from its theological implications. He simply equates the incarnate word of God with God's word (*kalima*). In doing so, Ibn Taymiyya, in accordance with his primary interpretive strategy of contextual reading, uses Biblical quotations to purify the Christian connotations of the concept 'the Word of God' and to show that the Word of God in fact is one of God's words through which God commands and creates. He similarly reinterprets the Christian concept 'the Holy Spirit' in Biblical context to claim that like His word, the Holy Spirit is only an intermediary which acts upon God's command to bring His message to prophets and messengers. The Biblical verses he uses depict a 'spirit' that does not have a special relation with Jesus; rather it is a being created, governed, and, commanded by God.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This thesis has examined Ibn Taymiyya's exegesis of biblical passages cited in the *Jawāb*, with a view to understanding how he deals with biblical texts. In order to assess the degree to which he is similar to or different from his early predecessors and contemporaries in interpreting the Bible, this research has also featured an analysis of five major Muslim polemical works against Christianity, with the particular purpose of examining their general interpretive strategies of biblical exegesis. This research has demonstrated that Ibn Taymiyya, rejecting the literal-nonliteral (*ḥaqīqa-majāz*) dichotomy, employs a contextual theory of meaning in his biblical exegesis that is significantly different from the mainstream Muslim biblical interpretation. The significance of Ibn Taymiyya's contextual biblical hermeneutics lies in its distinctive character in employing the apparatus of Islamic Legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*). It is also equally significant that Ibn Taymiyya's contextual interpretation is guided by his particular Islamic theological doctrine of God's ontological distinction or separation from the created world.

In Chapter One, it has been argued that the theory of *taḥrīf* (alteration of the Bible), which is a classical Muslim accusation of corruption of the Bible by textual changes and misinterpretation, has an impact on Muslim scholars' interpretative strategies. Al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī confirm the soundness of biblical scripture, and only accuse Christians of misinterpretation, whereas al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī and Ibn Ḥazm strongly defend the position that the actual text of the Bible is irrecoverably altered. Al-Ṭabarī expresses his doubt only with regard to the texts that attribute inconsistent behaviour to Jesus, while the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* mentions *taḥrīf* only once to note the misinterpretation of Christian scripture relying on excessive literal reading. In these latter two Muslim authors' works, the theme of *taḥrīf* is not polemically discussed, whereas al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī use it as a tool to produce counter-arguments against Christians. The attitude of al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī is surely a reflection of Ibn Ḥazm's unprecedented systematic criticism of biblical texts on subsequent Muslim polemical writings. Al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī closely follow Ibn Ḥazm's arguments, which focus on the attribution of inappropriate and anthropomorphic expressions to God and the prophets in the Bible, and historical misinformation and inconsistencies within and between the Gospels. However, Ibn Ḥazm at some points differs from these two scholars in rejecting some of the biblical verses that al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī utilise as textual evidence to support their argumentation. An illustration of this is Ibn Ḥazm's rejection of the biblical verses that narrate the miracles of Jesus, while al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī use them as textual proof of the prophethood and thereby the humanity of Jesus, following in the footsteps of al-Ṭabarī, who is one of the earliest Muslim scholars to interpret the miracles in this way. Despite the differences among these five Muslim scholars' positions regarding the extent to which the biblical text is a reliable source, they unanimously argue that the Bible contains proof texts that announce and confirm the prophethood of Muḥammad. To justify the paradoxical position of simultaneously rejecting the veracity of the Bible while adducing evidence from it, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī argue that the biblical passages adduced as evidence are miraculously preserved from textual alteration.

In comparison to the five scholars mentioned above, Ibn Taymiyya's approach to *taḥrīf* proposes a different angle on this problem by classifying the content of the Bible into two kinds, those imparting information (*khabar*) and those issuing a command (*ḥukm*). This is inspired by the classification of qur'ānic content into two different kinds by Muslim jurists and exegetes in order to create categories of God's speech with the hermeneutical purpose of extracting all possible meanings from the divine texts. The practicality of this classification for Ibn Taymiyya is to resolve the tension which stems from his methodology of reading biblical scripture. Although Ibn Taymiyya does not accuse the Bible of deliberate textual alteration, unlike Ibn Ḥazm, al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī, he nevertheless affirms that some changes have arbitrarily occurred in biblical texts. Accordingly, he occasionally emends some wordings that he finds to be problematic, especially when he finds similar vocabulary to the Qur'ān and ḥadīth texts. To some extent, this attitude clearly indicates epistemological concerns regarding the reliability of biblical texts on the part of Ibn Taymiyya, which in turn makes it impossible to say that he does not have any doubts regarding the soundness of the Bible. However, his hermeneutical strategy, which closely analyses the key words in biblical texts, indicates otherwise.

Ibn Taymiyya employs a contextual reading that adapts the hermeneutical rules of Islamic legal theory and a qur'ānic exegesis that operates with the principle that the expressions in the Qur'ān are chosen by God, and with purpose of revealing God's intended meanings. Therefore, this methodological-hermeneutical reading requires thorough linguistic and semantic analyses of the expressions, so as to extract exclusively all meanings that the expressions might signify. Considering the fact that Ibn Taymiyya is aware that the Bible has been translated from another language into Arabic and, thus, the Arabic vocabulary of the Bible does not reflect the expressions that God originally revealed, it is interesting to see that he nevertheless relies on specific words and expressions, even accepting some of them as key terms to a correct interpretation. At this point, Ibn Taymiyya's categorisation of biblical content into two kinds plays a crucial role in terms of understanding how he reconciles his confirmation of textual change in the Bible with a scriptural hermeneutic that closely follows the significations of expressions and words. With this categorisation, Ibn

Taymiyya allows undeliberate textual alteration in the section of imparting information (*khabar*), while he is absolutely certain that there is no distortion in the section of command (*ḥukm*), which leads to the conclusion that, for him, the biblical passages that he reinterprets without recourse to any emendation to the text should be from the section of command (*ḥukm*). Yet, this is not the case, and Ibn Taymiyya does not further elaborate on this matter. Depending on this outcome, it can be said that Ibn Taymiyya is only strategically using the theory of the categorisation of biblical content just to resolve the paradox highlighted above. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya's conviction that there is no substantial textual distortion in the Bible, but minor changes in the sections that transmit historical information, does not practically assist him in determining the exact extent of textual alteration (*taḥrīf al-lafẓ*). Rather, it serves him well by means of theoretical justification, which enables him pragmatically to use the key words and expressions in the biblical texts without falling into a paradoxical situation. In fact, Ibn Taymiyya's discourse on *taḥrīf*, in comparison to that of the other five scholars mentioned earlier in this thesis, is relatively the most consistent approach in terms of systematising the problem of *taḥrīf* to make it compatible with his biblical hermeneutics. Having said that, al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī are also equally prudent in their discussion on the alteration of the Bible, so as not to reject any biblical passages. Yet, their perception of *taḥrīf* is not theoretically well-advanced in comparison to Ibn Taymiyya, and they conventionally follow one of the traditional classical Muslim positions, arguing only for misinterpretation of the biblical scripture.

To show the practical aspect of how the Muslim scholars' understanding of *taḥrīf* (alteration of the Bible) affects their exegetical strategies, especially when using the Bible as a source of proof texts to underline their argumentations, Chapter Two has featured an analysis of five Muslim figures' polemical-apologetic works. As one of the earliest examples of Muslim polemicists writing against Christianity, al-Ṭabarī is primarily interested in proving the contradictions between the Christian creed and the biblical scripture in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* (*Refutation of the Christians*). He selectively employs biblical passages in which Jesus himself confirms that he was a human messenger who submissively obeyed God's will and command. Al-Ṭabarī particularly focuses on the texts from the Gospels where Jesus' human needs, such as feeling hungry, thirsty, vulnerable, and anxious, are explicitly mentioned. By doing so, he creates a context with scriptural foundation to argue that the creedal faith describing Jesus as 'a God from true God' has no relation to the Bible. In contrast to Pseudo-Ghazālī, who also primarily refutes the Christian belief that Jesus is divine, al-Ṭabarī is not interested in interpreting the biblical texts that appear to support the divinity of Jesus. The fundamental strategy in al-Ṭabarī's biblical interpretation is to cite a biblical verse and present a brief argument related to this text. In other words, in comparison to Ibn Taymiyya, al-Ṭabarī, who in fact is well acquainted with the Bible as a former Christian, does not present an elaborative analysis of the biblical verses; rather, he assumes that the text quoted proves his point to his readers. However, his biblical interpretation appears not to be driven purely polemically. Having said that, refuting other's doctrinal beliefs is polemical in many ways, but in comparison to al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī and Ibn Ḥazm, who utilise the biblical text when it supports their polemical stance and reject the text when it does not suit their purpose, al-Ṭabarī only intends to provide the correct exegesis of the Bible to lead his former coreligionists to the right path. In the *Radd*, the Bible is central to al-Ṭabarī's scriptural argumentation, and similarly it has a fundamental role in his *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* (*Book of Religion and Empire*), providing biblical *testimonia* for the veracity of the prophethood of Muḥammad. The main interpretive technique of al-Ṭabarī in the *Kitāb* is to use the root word *ḥ-m-d* and its derivates, which mean 'praise' (*ḥamd*) and 'praised' (*maḥmud*), as these words have the same meaning as the Prophet's name Muḥammad. The most interesting interpretive argument in the *Kitāb* is al-Ṭabarī's claim that the numerical calculation of the word 'Paraclete' matches with the calculation of the name 'Muḥammad,' which is an interpretation not widely used in later Muslim polemical works, especially in the *dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* (proofs of prophecy) genre. Similarly, al-Ṭabarī's brief interpretations of biblical *testimonia* were not used by later Muslim writers, although his extensive list of biblical proof texts became an important source for subsequent Muslim scholars.

In contrast to al-Ṭabarī's dismissal of the texts that are traditionally used as scriptural proof of Jesus' divine status in Christian theology, Pseudo-Ghazālī, in his *al-Radd al-jamīl*, reinterprets these texts without rejecting any part of them. His primary strategy is to read the biblical passages metaphorically in light of the biblical verses that depict Jesus as a human messenger. Most importantly, Pseudo-Ghazālī selectively uses the Johannine texts, along with other biblical verses, to construct a ground on which he argues that the divinity of Jesus is only meant in a metaphorical sense throughout the whole biblical corpus. This hermeneutical emphasis on the metaphorical sense of the scripture strongly contrasts with Ibn Ḥazm's literal reading of the Bible. Pseudo-Ghazālī principally argues that when the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of a biblical text contradicts reason, then it should be interpreted nonliterally. Ibn Ḥazm, on the other hand, also analyses the apparent meaning of the biblical text, but argues, finding the majority of biblical verses' *ẓāhir* meanings contradictory to reason, that the texts are altered (*muḥarraf*). In other words, Ibn Ḥazm's analysis of the apparent meanings of the biblical texts leads him to reject the majority of the texts that Pseudo-Ghazālī reinterprets metaphorically. Similar to the opposition between Ibn Ḥazm and Pseudo-Ghazālī's hermeneutical strategy, Ibn Taymiyya also differs from the author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* objecting to nonliteral interpretation. Yet, despite the stark contrast in their interpretive strategies, these two scholars sometimes arrive at almost the same interpretation, agreeing, for instance, that Jesus did not mean an ontological union with God after which he became a divine being; rather, he meant his submission to God when he appears to be claiming a special union between himself and God. The most obvious example of this is John 10.30, 'I and the Father are one,' which is interpreted by Pseudo-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya as Jesus' absolute submission to God's will. The author of *al-Radd al-jamīl* arrives at this interpretation with a claim that the union between Jesus and God is meant figuratively or nonliterally in the Bible, whereas Ibn Taymiyya does not call his interpretation 'nonliteral.' Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets John 10.30 in an intertextual context in which he employs qur'ānic texts and ḥadīth, while Pseudo-Ghazālī only engages in a biblical context.

A fundamentally different approach to that of al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya comes from the Mālikī scholar al-Qarāfī, who strongly argues that the Bible is not a divine scripture, and thus is not reliable. Al-Qarāfī closely follows the traditional polemical Muslim discourse on Biblical interpretation for both arguments and biblical texts. In fact, he relies heavily on other Muslim scholars' works, such as al-Jaʿfarī's *Takhjīl* and al-Qurṭubī's *Iʿlām*. This dependence makes al-Qarāfī's biblical scholarship less inventive in terms of introducing new perspectives and arguments into the biblical exegesis. Following closely Ibn Ḥazm's primary objection to the Gospels, al-Qarāfī firmly argues that the Gospels contradict each other. For al-Qarāfī, textual inconsistencies in the Gospels are clear examples of alteration (*taḥrīf*), especially textual alteration (*taḥrīf al-lafẓ*). An illustration of this is al-Qarāfī's interpretation of Matthew 27.46, 'My God, why have you forsaken me?' Al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya use this passage as textual evidence of the humanity of Jesus, arguing that Jesus felt vulnerable and anxious during the crucifixion, like an ordinary human would feel, and asked for help from God. Al-Qarāfī, however, claims that Matthew 27.46 depicts a human who does not submit to God's will, which is not appropriate behaviour for a prophet. For this reason, al-Qarāfī accuses this biblical passage of textual alteration, and for him it clearly has no probative value in proving the humanity of Jesus. Al-Qarāfī's interpretation of Matthew 27.46 is similar to that of Ibn Ḥazm, who also identifies the biblical passage as an example of *taḥrīf* on the grounds that it unreasonably describes a 'God' who cries for help. Nevertheless, al-Qarāfī uses other biblical verses that point out a human Jesus distinct from God, which are similarly utilised by al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya. Another line of scriptural argumentation that is common between al-Qarāfī and the other three Muslim scholars is to use the miracles of Jesus as proof of his prophethood, not of his divinity. The argument on this occasion distinguishes al-Qarāfī from Ibn Ḥazm, who does not consider the texts that mention the miracles of Jesus as evidence of his prophethood. Al-Qarāfī, on the other hand, closely follows al-Ṭabarī when showing the inconsistencies between the Christian creedal orthodoxy and the Christian scripture in the *Ajwiba*. From the comparison explained above, it becomes clear that the main feature of al-Qarāfī's biblical discourse is shaped by a huge dependence on earlier Muslim sources, which in turn makes it relatively discursive and dully polemical, especially in connection to al-Qarāfī's interpretive strategies. In other words, he might arrive at the same interpretation as that of al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, while his position on the veracity of the Bible clearly contrasts with their stances on *taḥrīf*. Similarly, his rejection of some biblical passages which are used by al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī as proof texts might be in line with that of Ibn Ḥazm. Despite the similarities and differences present in their biblical interpretations, al-Qarāfī nevertheless agrees with other Muslim scholars that the Bible contains proof texts that authenticate the prophecy of Muḥammad. He quotes widely used biblical verses, such as Deuteronomy 33.2 and 18.18, and John 14.16, and interprets them in exactly the same way as Al-Ṭabarī does. Yet, al-Qarāfī in reality is neither interested in biblical *testimonia* nor their probative value in proving the prophethood of

Muḥammad. He explains clearly in the *Ajwiba* that he employs the biblical *testimonia* as they constitute textual proof for the People of the Book, since the Bible is their scripture, and they believe in it. For al-Qarāfī, Muslims do not need the biblical verses to prove the soundness of Muḥammad's prophecy, which is already validated by his miracles. It has become clear that the biblical *testimonia* do not have textual authority for al-Qarāfī, even though he claims that they are preserved from alteration (*taḥrīf*). Al-Qarāfī here only polemically utilises the biblical proof texts to produce counter arguments for those who object to the validity of Muḥammad's prophecy.

Similar to al-Qarāfī's polemical discourse in the *Ajwiba*, al-Dimashqī's argumentation in *Response* is primarily polemically driven, and his biblical exegesis closely follows the patterns and content that are found in al-Qarāfī. Al-Dimashqī utilises the Gospel passages, for instance, to argue that Jesus himself clearly states that he was a human messenger sent by God. Al-Dimashqī likewise cites the biblical texts in which the childhood of Jesus and the humanly feelings that he experienced are mentioned, to refute the divinity of Jesus. Moreover, with a similar approach to that of al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī and al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī uses the miracles of Jesus as textual evidence of his prophethood, arguing that previous prophets also performed miracles, yet they were not regarded as 'divine beings.' Al-Dimashqī also cites the well-known biblical *testimonia* which are used by these four Muslim scholars to establish that Muḥammad was the universal and final prophet. The argumentation of al-Dimashqī throughout *Response* echoes a wide range of earlier themes and polemical responses developed by Muslim scholars to produce counter-arguments against Christians. Despite these similar patterns, al-Dimashqī's discussions appear to lack the intellectual depth that is found in Ibn Taymiyya's theological and scriptural arguments. This difference can be explained in part by al-Dimashqī's passion for possessing knowledge of a vast variety of themes and subjects, which makes it impossible to hold detailed information on every subject. Al-

Dimashqī is less inclined to engage theological arguments and inclusive reinterpretations of biblical passages, whereas he is deeply interested in providing very fine details of Christian worship, prayers, and liturgical and daily practices. The most distinctive feature of al-Dimashqī's biblical exegesis is the details provided of the historical narratives of Jesus' miracles and crucifixion, and of Christian prayers, festivals, and special events, which are not readily present in Ibn Taymiyya and al-Qarāfī's discussions. Based on this observation, it can be suggested that al-Dimashqī's biblical scholarship is inspired by a vast variety of sources and uses many widely circulated arguments, biblical citations, and interpretations of the earlier period, as well as of his time. Therefore, it is also not unusual to find similar approaches to that of Ibn Taymiyya in al-Dimashqī's *Response*. His interpretation of Genesis 1.2 (the Spirit of God) and 1.26 (similarity and resemblance) illustrates this point clearly. Al-Dimashqī interprets Genesis 1.2 as the text narrating one of the phases of the creation of the world, in a similar way to Ibn Taymiyya. Likewise, he reinterprets Genesis 1.26 as the words 'similarity' (*mithl*) and 'resemblance' (*shibh*) only meaning that humans resemble God by virtue of having 'responsibility' on earth, and similar attributes to that of God. Yet, in these two examples, al-Dimashqī's interpretation is not as advanced in terms of his linguistic and semantic analysis of the texts as that of Ibn Taymiyya. However, there is another point of similarity between Ibn Taymiyya's and al-Dimashqī's interpretations in terms of using intertextual proof. Yet, the former scholar employs intertextual proof in a system devised to indicate the similar liturgical patterns and rhetorical emphases in the Qur'ān and the Bible, whereas the latter scholar occasionally uses qur'ānic verses simply to expand on the interpretation of biblical passages. The major distinction in their approach to biblical interpretation, on the other hand, is the way in which they tackle the primary text of the Trinity. While al-Dimashqī strongly rejects Matthew 28.19, 'Go and baptise in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy

Spirit,' claiming that the text does not originally belong to Jesus but is rather an innovated passage, Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets the text as a call to humans to believe in God, His prophets, and the books revealed. This difference is caused to a large extent by their position regarding the reliability of the Bible.

Of all of the five major Muslim scholars on whom this study has focused, the Ẓāhirī scholar, Ibn Ḥazm, quite interestingly, is the closest one to Ibn Taymiyya in terms of applying a reading of the Bible that is developed with a unique approach, whereas he also is paradoxically the most distinct from the Ḥanbalī scholar by virtue of denying the reliability of the Christian scripture. The most obvious feature of Ibn Ḥazm's individualist approach is certainly related to his unprecedently systematic biblical textual criticisms, which are hugely affected by his Ẓāhirīst position in relation to scriptural exegesis and logical reasoning related to the determination of true and incorrect information. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyya's different approach to the Bible is shaped by his position on the contextual theory of reading for biblical exegesis, and the endeavour to make his biblical scholarship compatible with his wider intellectual-theological framework. It is their individually developed attitudes to the Christian scripture that creates a fundamental distinction in their interpretive and hermeneutical strategies, although it also occasionally leads them to the same interpretation. Ibn Ḥazm is primarily interested in proving inconsistent points, inaccurate information, and contradictory parts in the Bible, yet he occasionally utilises biblical passages to support his arguments. He resorts to the biblical verses that explicitly state the humanity of Jesus and that are taken as proof texts of Muḥammad's prophecy. He justifies his paradoxical position in simultaneously rejecting and utilising biblical passages with the claim that the texts he uses are preserved from *taḥrīf* (alteration of the Bible), which is also conveniently used later by al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī. This paradoxical position is also an important factor showing the extent to which Ibn

Taymiyya is more consistent than Ibn Ḥazm, although these two scholars appear to be relatively systematic in their treatment of the Bible. Unlike Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Taymiyya does not reject any textual element of the Bible, he only occasionally emends the texts. Ibn Ḥazm, on the other hand, appears to be less consistent in his rejection of biblical texts. Contrary to his claim that the Bible is not sufficiently reliable to adduce proof, he nevertheless uses a few biblical passages for both their argumentative and probative value. This approach of Ibn Ḥazm shows close similarity to al-Qarāfī's polemical use of similar verses from the Bible in order to produce counter arguments against his opponent. Yet, Ibn Ḥazm interestingly appears to be less polemical than al-Qarāfī, who clearly acknowledges that the biblical texts do not have the authority to be regarded as proof texts for him. In contrast to this, Ibn Ḥazm shows more openness and trust in the biblical texts that he invokes to adduce proof. In other words, for al-Qarāfī, the passages that he claims to be preserved from alteration, following in the footsteps of Ibn Ḥazm, do not necessarily require a dependence on scriptural argumentation, whereas Ibn Ḥazm genuinely believes that these preserved texts contain the truth. With this comparison, it becomes apparent that al-Qarāfī's argumentation in the *Ajwiba* is more polemically driven than that of Ibn Ḥazm, regardless of how severe the latter scholar's biblical criticism is.

Besides the differences and similarities between Ibn Taymiyya and the other five Muslim scholars' biblical interpretive strategies highlighted above, the most significant distinction lies in Ibn Taymiyya's application of contextual theory of interpretation to the Bible, while the others, excluding Ibn Ḥazm, who prioritises a reading based on apparent (*ẓāhir*) meanings, opt for a nonliteral (*majāz*) or metaphorical interpretation. In Chapter Three, it has been demonstrated that Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets biblical passages primarily with linguistic analyses, and in doing so he uses the technical apparatus of Islamic legal theory and qur'ānic exegesis. In order to explain what and how the biblical texts signify, he adapts and employs the main technical terms of Islamic sciences, such as *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *tafsīr*, that Muslim scholars developed in order to understand how God's speech signifies meanings to humans. Ibn Taymiyya criticises Christians for the nonliteral exegesis of the Trinitarian names 'Father' 'Son' and 'Holy Spirit,' deeming them either nonliteral (*majāz*) or equivocal (*mushtarak*), which are terms regarded as signifying two different meanings. To counter this Christian interpretation, Ibn Taymiyya claims that the names of the Trinity are indeed univocal (*mutawāṭiʾ*) terms that signify only one meaning throughout the Bible, but they can be used to indicate different referents. With this claim, he is able to propose an alternative interpretation of the Trinitarian names without recourse to any nonliteral (*majāz*) interpretation. In addition to his emphasis on a univocal mode of language for scriptural exegesis, Ibn Taymiyya also argues for a reading based on the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of texts, especially when the *ẓāhir* meaning, in a given context, unambiguously leads the reader to the intended meaning. With the theory of *ẓāhir* (apparent) meaning, Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets the threefold repetition of the word 'holy' in Isaiah 6.3 as a rhetorical emphasis, and denies the Christian interpretation that the repetition mystically refers to the Trinity. He similarly interprets the repetition of the word 'lord' three times in Exodus 3.15 as a rhetorical stress on God's lordship, arguing strategically that the *ẓāhir* meaning of the biblical verse in question corresponds to the intended meaning without requiring any further interpretation (*tafsīr*) or reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*). Ibn Taymiyya opts here for a reading relying on the apparent meaning of the texts to invalidate the Christian interpretation, which accepts the threefold repetitions in the verses as an underlying textual sign of the Trinity. Ibn Taymiyya furthermore uses the pair of unqualified-qualified (*muṭlaq-muqayyad*) expressions this time to maintain that the dimensional aspects of a text that sounds ambiguous in the first instance, and this may be clarified in other parts of the scripture. This argument assists Ibn Taymiyya in explaining the biblical passages in connection with other verses from different contexts of the Bible. Therefore, he confidently argues that the word ‘father’ is only used to signify an unqualified (*muṭlaq*) meaning, which means ‘God’ in the Bible. On the other hand, he claims that the word ‘lord’ is used in a qualified sense (*muqayyad*) when it refers to Jesus. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya also uses another pair of aspects of Islamic legal theory and qur’ānic hermeneutics, *iẓhār* and *iḍmār*, which are devised as a meter to understand the significance of God’s explicitly stated (*iẓhār*) and intentionally unstated (*iḍmār*) meanings. When refuting the Christian interpretation of Genesis 19.24 that the double use of the word ‘lord’ firstly refers to God and secondly to Jesus, Ibn Taymiyya contends that ‘lord’ only signifies one meaning and refers to a single referent in the context of the biblical passage, and that the twofold repetition of ‘lord’ serves only to make explicit (*iẓhār*) the intended meaning to the reader. Likewise, God also omits and conceals a textual element in the scripture, which is known as ellipsis (*iḍmār*), to make a reverse emphasis on the intended meaning. Ibn Taymiyya uses these four different categories of hermeneutical terms to strip away the Christian interpretation of the passages and reinterpret them in an Islamic context. Objecting to the nonliteral or metaphorical interpretation of divine texts, he insists that the plain sense of the scripture should be the departure point for exegesis on account of the fact that the language of revelation is developed to convey a message in a clear language that is comprehensible to humans. At this point, one remembers Ibn Taymiyya’s principles of qur’ānic hermeneutics. For him, the Qur’ān is revealed as ‘a clear explanation’ (*bayān*, or also known as ‘the principle of *bayān* in the mainstream Muslim exegetical tradition) so that the meanings of qur’ānic expressions are comprehensible for any reader. However, this does not mean that for Ibn Taymiyya there is no textual ambiguity in revelatory texts. In fact, he accepts that some parts of the revelation might contain texts that appear to be ambiguous (*mutashābih*), yet they are clarified in other parts of divine speech by unambiguous (*muḥkam*) expressions. This is exactly the reason why Ibn Taymiyya puts a strong emphasis on context for an exegetical activity, which is the approach that clearly distinguishes him from the other five Muslim scholars.

The context is similarly the determining factor in Ibn Taymiyya's theological and philosophical interpretations in the *Jawāb*. In Chapter Four, it has been explained that Ibn Taymiyya's contextual biblical interpretation is not only advanced by linguistic analyses that are inspired by Islamic legal hermeneutics, but is also complemented by theological arguments which are reflections of wider Taymiyyan theology. When reinterpreting the term *ḥulūl* (divine indwelling), Ibn Taymiyya argues that only God's love and guidance indwell a human's heart as a cognitive similitude. This interpretation is primarily based on the Taymiyyan theological principle of God's distinctiveness and separateness from any created beings. In order not to violate this principle, Ibn Taymiyya has to reinterpret the Christian doctrine of divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*) in a way that does not connect God to created beings. Accordingly, the only connection between God and humans can be the believers' awareness of God's knowledge as a result of their faith in God. For Ibn Taymiyya, this connection is only a cognitive similitude (*al-mithāl al-ʿilmī*), which is a term he innovates by combining the Neoplatonic theory of four modes of being and the qur'ānic principle, Q 30.27, 'And to Him belongs the highest similitude (*al-mathal al-aʿlā*).' Ibn Taymiyya advances his interpretation of divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*) with biblical texts and an analysis of similar terminology in the Bible. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya puts his reinterpretation of a Christian doctrine that is shaped by his theological views into a biblical context to show the compatibility of his exegesis with the Christian scripture. He likewise follows this method when explaining the qur'ānic idea of the Word of God (*kalima*) in contrast to the Christian doctrine of the incarnate word of God. Ibn Taymiyya carefully employs the biblical passages in which the expression 'word of God' is not necessarily used in connection with Jesus to decontextualise the expression from its Christian theological implications. In doing so, he simply equates the incarnate word of God with God's word (*kalima*) in accordance with the Taymiyyan theological framework. In a similar way, he takes the term 'Holy Spirit' out of its Christian theological context and attempts to reconceptualise it in a biblical context. The primary strategy is to cite biblical verses in which the word 'Spirit' is used in connection with other beings, so as to argue that the Holy Spirit has no specific connection to Jesus. Ibn Taymiyya re-signifies the terms 'the word of God' and 'the Holy Spirit' in a biblical context, yet in a way that is compatible with his theological position. Although the biblical context is the factor influencing his exegesis, albeit not so prominently as it is in his linguistic interpretation, Ibn Taymiyya's theological principles impact his contextual interpretive strategies.

In short, Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics principally operate with a contextual reading. It is the contextual interpretation that distinguishes Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics from those of the other five Muslim scholars. Specifically, the originality of Ibn Taymiyya's biblical exegesis lies in his use of the hermeneutical terminology of Islamic legal theory and qur'ānic exegesis in the interpretation of biblical passages in the *Jawāb*. In particular, the part in which Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets the Trinitarian names, specifically 'the Son,' is not only the most stimulating element of his biblical hermeneutics, in comparison to the other five Muslim scholars, but is also the point that exposes the distinctiveness of his approach in a crystal-clear way. Ibn Taymiyya argues that the word 'son' is only used to refer to created beings in the whole corpus of the Bible, and thus does not indicate a special sonship implying a divine status, as Christians understand. Indeed, al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī and Ibn Ḥazm similarly argue that Jesus is not the only one called 'son' in the Bible. These scholars also imply, though not so strongly as Ibn Taymiyya does, that 'son' does not have multiple meanings in the biblical context. Ibn Taymiyya differs from them in demonstrating the validity of this interpretation by using the terminology of Islamic legal theory. He explains that Christians have misinterpreted the term ‘son,’ considering it either nonliteral (*majāz*) or equivocal (*mushtarak*), since the word ‘son’ appears to signify two different meanings in the Bible. However, it in fact signifies one single meaning but is used to refer to various referents. He bases this explanation on a linguistic argument that ‘son’ is used as a univocal (*mutawāṭiʾ*) term in biblical scripture. With this claim, Ibn Taymiyya significantly differs from the other five Muslim scholars - excluding Ibn Ḥazm - who argue that the word ‘son’ should be interpreted nonliterally (*majāz*).

Arguing that the application of nonliteral meanings to the word ‘son’ is permissible, al-Ṭabarī explains that Jesus is called ‘the son of God’ because he is chosen by God (Matthew 3.16-17) as a servant and prophet. His interpretation of ‘son’ is analysed particularly in connection to the creed to show that neither a literal nor nonliteral interpretation accord with the creedal teaching that Jesus is ‘a God from true God.’ He claims that the sonship of Jesus is not meant literally, and uses John 20.17, ‘My father, your father,’ to contend that Jesus did not distinguish himself from other humans by attributing a special sonship to himself. A similar but more comprehensive interpretation of the term ‘son’ comes from Pseudo-Ghazālī, who principally argues for nonliteral interpretation, especially if the apparent meanings contradict reason. In addition to the biblical verses al-Ṭabarī uses, Pseudo-Ghazālī cites Johannine texts (I John 5.1), ‘Jesus is the Messiah is born of God,’ and argues that the disciple John also described Jesus as ‘born of God’ not literally, but rather nonliterally. He explains that the word ‘father’ here is a metaphor, since a father is kind and merciful to his son, who is equally respectful to his father. Interpreting ‘fatherhood’ as a metaphor, he contends that God’s favour, grace and blessings to his prophets certainly surpass that of a father to his son, and in return the prophets' respect and submission to God are superior to that of sons to their fathers. Relying on this nonliteral reading, Pseudo-Ghazālī argues that Jesus meant that God is merciful towards him when he called God 'father,' and that he glorified and submitted to God as 'the son of God.' This eventual interpretation Pseudo-Ghazālī arrives at is not fundamentally different from that of al-Ṭabarī, who also interprets 'son' in a nonliteral sense. Pseudo-Ghazālī's treatment of nonliteral interpretation is more comprehensive in terms of providing a hermeneutical principle regarding when to divert from a literal interpretation rather than that of al-Ṭabarī, who basically notes that the application of nonliteral interpretation is permissible. The permissibility of nonliteral exegesis is also a matter for Pseudo-Ghazālī. Despite his strong emphasis on the error of Christians in reading the Biblical text literally, he, for some reason, needs to justify this emphasis. Jesus, as the founder of his law, was allowed to use nonliteral language as long as he made his intention of using metaphors clear to readers, while this was not allowed in Islamic law. Al-Ṭabarī similarly notes that nonliteral exegesis is permissible. In the examples of al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, advocating a nonliteral interpretation is to resolve the textual obscurity which occurs for a Muslim reader in the expression 'son of God,' although there are some minor differences in their individual arguments that are shaped according to their purpose and the addressee against whom they argue.

The similar proof texts and interpretations found in al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī are not unusual when one considers their parallel attitude to the problem of *taḥrīf* (alteration of the Bible), and their acceptance of biblical scripture as a reliable source. Yet, it is interesting to see al-Qarāfī's use of similar texts and interpretation of 'son' (John 20.17 and Matthew 6.9) to that of al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī, when one recalls the fact that, for al-Qarāfī, the Bible does not have textual authority as an altered text, and thus is not reliable to be invoked for proof texts. Regardless of this fundamental difference in their epistemological stance on the veracity of the

Bible, al-Qarāfī argues that 'father' is metaphorically used to signify respect for God in a similar way to the disciples' use of 'father' for Paul out of respect, while 'son' means a created (*makhlūq*) and educated (*marbūb*) being. Al-Qarāfī further claims that 'sonship' is not unique to Jesus, and is used in connection with other beings such as the people of Israel ('my first-born son' in Exodus 4.22) and people of faith ('sons of God, in John 11.52). Similar to al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī accusing Christians of literal interpretation, al-Qarāfī argues that Christians do not understand the nonliteral expressions (*majāz*) of Jesus, and thus accept his sonship as different from that of others. Ibn Taymiyya also criticises Christians for creating a semantic distinction between the sonship of Jesus and of others, but the reason for this technical mistake, for Ibn Taymiyya, is the nonliteral reading of the Bible, while this error, for al-Qarāfī, arises from literal reading. The analysis explained above clearly shows the sameness of proof texts and the uniformity in interpreting 'son' as a characteristic shared between Jesus and other beings, and 'fatherhood' as a reflection of God's mercy, grace and support to the Prophets and believers by al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī and al-Qarāfī, and also highlights the difference in calling the correct interpretive technique nonliteral (*majāz*) or not.

Al-Dimashqī's interpretation of 'son' presents similar patterns of argumentation and exegesis found in the aforementioned three scholars. For him, 'fatherhood' is only a metaphorical reference to God's authority over His servants, while 'sonship' is indicative of Jesus' humanity. Similar to the earlier scholars' arguments, al-Dimashqī points out that other beings are also called 'son' in the Bible hence the title 'son' does not uniquely apply to Jesus. He argues that 'sonship' is a metaphorical denomination and does not necessarily relate to God in any sense. Notwithstanding the similarities mentioned above, in al-Dimashqī's interpretation, the terms 'father' and 'son' are not semantically correlated to each other, which is a slightly different approach from that of al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī and al-Qarāfī. In other words, while the others metaphorically interpret ‘father’ and ‘son,’ al-Dimashqī appears to try distinguishing between these two words by treating them as if they individually signify metaphorical meanings. The purpose here is to eliminate any hypostatical relation between the two terms that appears in the context of the Trinity. This becomes more apparent when al-Dimashqī strongly rejects Matthew 28.19, as he considers this text to be the base of the Trinitarian doctrine and an example of *taḥrīf* in the sense of textual alteration. Therefore, even though he reaches the same interpretation for ‘son’ and ‘father’ as that of the other three scholars mentioned above, the nuance in disassociating the hermeneutical relation between these two terms distinguishes al-Dimashqī from the other scholars.

Ibn Ḥazm’s discussion on the terms ‘father’ and ‘son’ is considerably different to the other four Muslim scholars and also to Ibn Taymiyya. In contrast to the nonliteral interpretation of al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī, Ibn Ḥazm argues that ‘father’ is an inappropriate term to be used in connection with God, regardless of whether it is interpreted literally or nonliterally. Referring to Matthew 6.9 and John 20.17, he claims that Jesus would not call God ‘father,’ since God is exalted above being a father to anyone. For him, this vocabulary is an example of textual alteration (*taḥrīf*). This approach, which is most likely a reflection of Ibn Ḥazm’s literal reading of the term, greatly contrasts with Ibn Taymiyya’s position, as he considers ‘father’ and ‘son’ to be part of biblical terminology, and reinterprets them in the context of the Bible. Ibn Ḥazm is similar to the other four scholars and Ibn Taymiyya in arguing that Jesus repeatedly refers to himself as ‘the son of man,’ and that other beings are also called ‘sons of God’, which invalidates the special sonship of Jesus. Yet, Ibn Ḥazm’s purpose is argumentative here, since he is more interested in showing that the two different titles, ‘son of God’ and ‘son of man,’ are indeed examples of textual alteration.

In comparison to all five scholars' interpretations of 'son' and 'father,' as explained above, Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of these terms is the most comprehensive one in terms of assigning a hermeneutical role to them based on a contextual reading of the Bible. Yet, Ibn Taymiyya is similar to other Muslim scholars in arguing that the word 'son' is used in connection with other beings in the Bible, which is an argument used to invalidate the Christian interpretation of 'sonship' as a unique divine status of Jesus. Ibn Taymiyya also closely follows the other five Muslim scholars in utilising the set of proof texts, such as Exodus 4.22 and John 20.17, to underpin his interpretation. Ibn Taymiyya also arrives at the same interpretation as the others in understanding 'sonship' as a prophetic characteristic and 'fatherhood' as a reflection of God's support. The biggest difference appears in the hermeneutical strategy that these six Muslim scholars use to arrive at this interpretation. While for al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī, the correct interpretive strategy is nonliteral (*majāz*) reading, for Ibn Ḥazm neither the literal nor nonliteral interpretation is correct, since the use of the words, 'father' and 'son' in relation to God is theologically inappropriate in the first place. Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand, objecting to the nonliteral interpretation of divine texts, argues that the nonliteral exegesis does not reveal the intended message. Therefore, 'father' and 'son' should not be accepted as *majāz* (nonliteral) expressions, rather they are *mutawāṭiʾ* (univocal) terms. Another equally important difference is the fact the other Muslim scholars' use of the term *majāz* (nonliteral) when arguing for metaphorical interpretation does not depend on a systematic strategy. They do not refer to any other technical terms that are found in Ibn Taymiyya's interpretive vocabulary, such as *ẓāhir*, *muṭlaq-muqayyad* and *iẓhār-iḍmār*. Rather, these Muslim scholars appear to use the argument of nonliteral interpretation as a polemical strategy. In other words, their use of the term *majāz* is not part of a wider hermeneutical strategy, as it is in Ibn Taymiyya's biblical interpretation.

Ibn Taymiyya's incorporation of specific terms borrowed from Islamic legal theory and qur'ānic exegesis into biblical hermeneutics is mainly related to his positive stance on the problem of *taḥrīf*, or accepting the Bible as an unaltered text. The fundamental motivation behind the hermeneutical activity of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islamic legal theory) is to understand the meanings of God's speech without excluding any element of it, both stated and unstated ones. Ibn Taymiyya applies the same hermeneutical reading to the Bible to show that biblical language is clear enough for any reader to reveal the intended meaning when the correct methodology is applied to it. The reason for al-Ṭabarī and Pseudo-Ghazālī not applying such a reading is clearly unrelated to their perception of *taḥrīf,* since they accept the Bible as a sound scripture. The reason however, for al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī and Ibn Ḥazm not employing the apparatus of Islamic legal theory is because they simply do not consider the Bible to be a text which can be analysed, understood, and from which meaning can be extracted, as is the case with the Qur'ān. They do not consider the biblical text as divinely inspired at all. This is more evident in al-Qarāfī's case. Even though al-Qarāfī is a Mālikī jurist himself, he does not see any point in applying the hermeneutical terms and interpretive strategies of *uṣūl al-fiqh or tafsīr* to a biblical interpretation in order to explain the intended meaning of biblical expressions. He argues that Muslims confirm the attribution of ambiguous expressions found in the Qur'ān to God and interpret them, since they are certain that these expressions are securely transmitted by multiple channels. The Bible, on the other hand, is altered and changed. Al-Qarāfī here appears to be saying that Muslims cannot be assured of the reliability of biblical text and of the attribution of obscure meanings to God, thus they do not engage in any interpretation of passages, especially of the ones that sound ambiguous. Al-Dimashqī also argues in a similar way to al-Qarāfī, explaining that Muslims really are reluctant to interpret the Bible, since they cannot confirm the soundness of the Christian scripture. Ibn Ḥazm likewise sets the purpose of his writing as showing the textual inconsistencies of the Bible rather than interpreting the texts, and thus is not interested in what the biblical text hermeneutically signifies. It has become clear that their understanding of *taḥrīf* affects the way they interpret the Bible. However, this, of course, does not prevent al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī and Ibn Ḥazm from citing biblical verses to show that Muḥammad is foretold in the Bible, which puts them in an epistemologically paradoxical position.

The comparative examination of all six Muslim scholars' biblical scholarship shows that Ibn Taymiyya's contextual biblical hermeneutics is more consistent and comprehensive than those of the others. It is consistent in the way in which Ibn Taymiyya reinterprets the biblical text without suggesting any deliberate textual alteration of the Bible, unlike al-Qarāfī, al-Dimashqī and Ibn Ḥazm. Al-Ṭabarī's and Pseudo-Ghazālī's approach are also consistent to some extent by virtue of their confirming the soundness of the Bible, but are less inclusive in terms of incorporating the characteristic features of their intellectual scholarship into their biblical scholarship. This is more obvious, especially when Pseudo-Ghazālī allows a metaphorical interpretation of biblical text, whereas he carefully notes that the use of metaphor is not allowed in Islamic scriptural language. This greatly contrasts with Ibn Taymiyya's incorporation of his principle rejection of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* distinction in his biblical exegesis. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya does not distinguish between the Bible and the Qur'ān in terms of how to read a revealed text. Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics is more comprehensive in comparison to the nonliteral interpretation of al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī, al-Qarāfī and al-Dimashqī in terms of giving the biblical context more authority. In fact, the others also use the biblical context by interpreting some passages through other biblical verses. Yet, the difference lies in the departure point that each scholar individually determines for exegetical activity. Al-Ṭabarī, Pseudo-Ghazālī and al-Dimashqī cite a similar set of biblical quotations when interpreting the term ‘son’ nonliterally. In this reading, they prioritise nonliteral interpretation and support it with additional textual evidence, while the context is subsidiary. Ibn Taymiyya, however, establishes the context as a priority in determining the intended meaning. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyya’s contextual biblical exegesis is more comprehensive than Ibn Ḥazm’s systematic engagement with biblical text by means of considering the possible meanings of texts that can be derived from a wider biblical context. Overall, Ibn Taymiyya’s biblical hermeneutics surpasses the other five scholars’ exegetical strategies by proposing a new way to understand and reinterpret the Christian scripture which is similar way to his exegetical techniques used for qur’ānic interpretation. Ibn Taymiyya’s approach stems from his understanding that God revealed His message to humans in clear language so that the Bible and the Qur’ān convey the intended message unambiguously. Based on this principle, Ibn Taymiyya attempts to uncover the meanings of biblical expressions, particularly keywords, and terms in the text by referring to other contexts in the Bible. This may be described as interpreting the Bible by the Bible. It is interesting to see that Ibn Taymiyya appears to be considering biblical expressions as originally revealed words even though he affirms that the Bible has been translated into different languages and underwent minor textual alteration. Seen from this point of view, Ibn Taymiyya’s technique for interpreting biblical texts does not depend on the conviction that the biblical text entirely comprises originally revealed expressions and utterances. From another perspective, it might be read as a strategy that enables him to produce counter-arguments against the Christian opponent. However, Ibn Taymiyya’s intention in reinterpreting biblical texts with the hermeneutical methodology he also applies to the Qur’ān stems from neither absolute trust in the reliability of the Bible nor solely polemical motivation. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya’s Islamicised biblical hermeneutics may be regarded as an intellectual strategy that provides him room to explore the intended meanings of biblical texts and to understand the scripture of the other using the dynamics of his own belief and scripture.

Ibn Taymiyya's contextual biblical hermeneutics is more significant than all five of the Muslim scholars in the way that he forms a biblical hermeneutic that borrows and adapts the premises of Islamic legal theory and qur'ānic hermeneutics. The terms that Ibn Taymiyya applies to biblical interpretation were originally linguistic technical terms of the Arabic language used to analyse the potential meanings of the uttered expressions and words in the qur'ānic revelation. In other words, terms such as *ḥaqīqa-majāz* (literal-nonliteral) and *ẓāhir* (apparent) signify the linguistic role that expressions play when revealing the intended meaning of revealed texts. Most importantly, it has been clear that Ibn Taymiyya attempts to identify these similar concepts, terms, and vocabulary, and even the similarities between the liturgics and linguistic characteristics of divine speech in the Qur'ān and the Bible. This hermeneutical exegesis of the Christian scripture enables Ibn Taymiyya to transfer the biblical content into an Islamic framework in which he can reinterpret the text and attach new meanings to key expressions. While doing so, he not only re-signifies the meanings and functions of this technical vocabulary of Islamic hermeneutics but also the meanings of key biblical terms through an Islamic context. By doing so, he forms an overlapping vocabulary between the qur'ānic and biblical scriptures, and even an Islamic biblical 'metalanguage' for interpretation of the Bible.[1] This reading also places him in a position in which he argues against his opponents on the grounds that the Christian interpretation of biblical texts fails to meet the requirements of Arabic linguistic rules. In other words, he can question the soundness of the Christian interpretation of biblical passages with propositions based on Arabic linguistic rules. This questioning and reinterpretation of biblical passages with linguistically and grammatically supported arguments opens a door for further dialogue in this polemical exchange. It is true that Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics presents an Islamicised reading of the Bible based on the interpretive premises of Islamic teaching. Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya's use of contextual hermeneutics when interpreting biblical texts might appeal to an Arab Christian counterpart on the basis of the fact that he substantiates his exegesis with linguistic and grammatical arguments. In responding to Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation, Arab Christians might argue for the soundness of literal or nonliteral (or, metaphorical) interpretation by supporting their position with linguistic counter-arguments.

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[1] Schwarb, 'Capturing the Meanings of God's Speech', 126-127. I owe the expression 'metalanguage' to Schwarb. He uses this expression when explaining how *kalām* theologians formed a language which draws on the hermeneutical techniques of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), which I have found very similar to what Ibn Taymiyya does. In a similar way, Ibn Taymiyya also forms a language adopted from Islamic legal theory, and applies it to his exegesis in the *Jawāb*.

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya uses different methodologies that are not necessarily originally Islamic. He borrows and adapts the method and terminology of different branches of Islamic sciences and other religious doctrinal beliefs and philosophical teaching to produce his own arguments. He re-signifies these terms and vocabulary by attaching new meanings to them. In doing so, Ibn Taymiyya modifies the methodology that he borrows to accord with his wider theological positions. The modification and change that he makes to the terms and methodologies, in a way, represent a different and new meaning and function that are almost entirely Taymiyyan even though the final position might have parallels in other Muslim scholars. For instance, Ibn Taymiyya's alternative interpretation of the term *ḥulūl* (divine indwelling) proposes a different answer to the question of how God relates to humans. His argument that a believer can sense God's knowledge, support, and love in his heart by a cognitive similitude appears to be very closely parallel to an East Syrian belief of divine indwelling. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya's proposed understanding of *ḥulūl* would appeal to a Christian audience on the basis that this alternative perception of divine indwelling is supported with non-Islamic philosophical arguments and theories.

The significance of Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutical methodology notwithstanding, the effectiveness or practicality of it is open to question. Although Ibn Taymiyya modifies these terms in accordance with the context of his argumentation to avoid inconsistency and contradiction he, nevertheless, cannot escape falling into situations that appear paradoxical. He has argued, for example, that the word 'son' appears to signify two different meanings in the Bible. Yet, it should be regarded as a univocal (*mutawāṭiʾ*) term signifying one single meaning to prevent textual confusion. He, on the other hand, contends that the word 'lord', which similarly seems to signify two different meanings in the Bible, should be understood as an unqualified (*muṭlaq*) term that signifies 'divine' when it is used for God, and as a qualified (*muqayyad*) term meaning 'master' when used for humans, which means that the word 'lord' is used in a qualified sense for one meaning restricted to only one referent. Ibn Taymiyya's choice of technical terms, however, is cleverly determined here in accordance with argumentative expediency. He does not define the word 'lord' as a univocal term, because this requires 'lord' to signify one meaning for different referents, which is not applicable. The word 'lord' cannot signify the same meaning for both God and humans. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya prefers to use 'lord' as term that can be used both in an unqualified and a qualified sense. The significance of Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutical methodology is not directly related to whether it is effective or not; rather, his hermeneutics is significant due to the fact that he modifies and employs the principles of Islamic hermeneutics to the interpretation of biblical scripture in a way that is different from that of the other five Muslim scholars.

Despite the distinctive characteristics of Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutical strategy, his exegesis of the Bible can certainly be defined as a classical Muslim approach to the biblical scripture: Islamicising the biblical text through the lens of a qur'ānic hermeneutic, and searching for the truths of Islamic religion in the Bible. However, this method is advanced in the framework of Taymiyyan theology and scriptural hermeneutics. In a similar way to his understanding of qur'ānic interpretation (*tafsīr*), biblical interpretation should not be an exegetical activity that performs independently of the biblical context and prophetic interpretive tradition in which the scripture should be understood. For instance, he makes intra-textual connections between biblical passages to understand the intended meaning. Moreover, he also refers to the texts and contexts of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth tradition, which again means that he intertextually connects the scriptures. To Ibn Taymiyya, in the case of qur'ānic interpretation, the Sunna is important for understanding the meaning of a text. Accordingly, he lists the sources in a hierarchal order, such as the Qur'ān, the prophetic tradition (the Sunna), and the traditions of the Companions and the Successors, respectively.[2] It can be observed that, in a similar way to this hierarchal categorisation of the sources by which the scripture is interpreted, Ibn Taymiyya interprets the Bible through the Bible, and then the Qur'ān, the Sunna, and lastly philology or language. The references to these sources are readily evident in Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation, which again indicates that his biblical hermeneutics is very similar to his qur'ānic hermeneutics.

According to Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of interpretation (*tafsīr*), in the contexts of the sources mentioned above, one can only recover the meanings that were intended by God through an interpretive tradition that has already been established by the Prophet Muḥammad. That is to say, a reader cannot re-interpret (*taʾwīl*) the scripture on his own by assigning new meanings to utterances. For Ibn Taymiyya, during interpretive activity, the context is the departure point, and the intended meaning of a text is the point at which the reader should arrive. Therefore, interpretation is a hermeneutical journey between the two points for a reader when recovering the intended meaning. This perception of interpretation on the one hand allows any reader to understand the message of revelation; on the other hand, it closes the door of scriptural exegesis to new interpretation, and rejects the open-endedness of a text. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya's contextual interpretation is more determinate than non-literal or metaphorical interpretation, and it could not leave the door open for different possible interpretations. From a Christian perspective, Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutics can be regarded as restricting the meanings of the biblical scripture to a certain level of scripturalist interpretation and imposing a Muslim understanding of the Bible on Christians. Ibn Taymiyya interprets the Trinitarian names 'father' and 'son' through a contextual biblical reading. Yet, this contextual hermeneutic is guided by Taymiyyan Islamic theology. All the same, the linguistic and grammatical aspects of the Taymiyyan hermeneutics that build on the features of Arabic language and Islamic hermeneutics create a common ground for exchanges, debates and arguments between Muslims and Arabic-speaking Christians, who in a way share Arabic as the language of the divine scripture. From a Muslim perspective, Ibn Taymiyya shows how the Bible can be read using the same methodology as the Qur'ān.

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[2] Saleh, 'Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics,' 144-148.

It is also worth noting that Ibn Taymiyya's argumentation used in the *Jawāb* reflects characteristics common to his dialectic regardless of whether this argumentation is levelled against Christians or Muslims with whom he disagrees. For example, Ibn Taymiyya applies his strong opposition to the distinction literal-nonliteral (*ḥaqīqa-majāz*), particularly in language about God, not only to biblical exegesis but also to qur'ānic interpretation. He criticises Muslims for interpreting the Qur'ān nonliterally to make the texts signify the meanings they wish to emphasise. In exactly the same way, he strongly criticises Christians for applying metaphorical readings to the Bible. Another example is Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of pantheist Sufīs who defend *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the oneness of existence) which he also directs against the Christian doctrine of divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*). For Ibn Taymiyya, Sufīs and

Christians made the same mistake, as Michel noted, in ontologically linking God to the created world and created beings. Ibn Taymiyya's alternative reading of the term *ḥulūl* neutralises both the Sufis and the Christians' understanding of how God relates to humans. Ibn Taymiyya's combination of qur'ānic teaching and the Prophetic Sunna with the Neoplatonic theory of being to avoid violating God's distinctiveness from the ontological world is important for two reasons. First, this new theory of *ḥulūl* might have the potential to appeal to a Christian audience. Second, it shows Ibn Taymiyya's diligent attempt to try to be consistent with his wider intellectual-theological positions.

This thesis has contributed to the fields of the study of Muslim-Christian polemics and Muslim biblical scholarship. In contrast to the widespread assumption that during the late medieval period Muslim intellectual interest in the Bible duly declined with a few exceptional Muslim works, as noted in the Introduction, the major result of the present study has proved that Ibn Taymiyya's biblical exegetical activity in the *Jawāb*, which has always been read and examined as a polemic and apologetic work against Christianity, contributes significantly to medieval Muslim biblical scholarship. One important implication of this study is that interreligious polemic literature contains significant material regarding the scriptural exegesis of religious others that is sometimes not motivated merely by polemics. Analysing the use of the biblical text in Muslim apologetics and polemics may unfold interesting aspects of these texts that are otherwise regarded only as controversial interreligious interventions. Muslim biblical scholarship has multiple dimensions, and eclectically draws on different traditions as well as on the Islamic hermeneutic exegetical tradition. To uncover the links between Christian and Muslim theological and scriptural argumentation that are not readily visible at first sight, further research, specifically on the use of scriptural quotations in religious polemical works, is required.

This study did not include an investigation into the use of biblical texts in wider Taymiyyan writings. This is mainly due to the enormous scale of Ibn Taymiyya's literary corpus, which makes it impossible to include a thorough investigation within the scope of the present study, and is partly due to the nature of Ibn Taymiyya's writings that are fundamentally centred on theological matters. Notwithstanding this limitation, the present study certainly adds to the understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's biblical hermeneutics based on his major work on Christianity. Based on one of the findings of this research, which is that Ibn Taymiyya's theological position shapes his argumentation and technical vocabulary - which earns him the credibility of being individually different - further research might explore whether his treatment of biblical texts changes according to the content, theme, and audience of his discourse in his other works. A natural progression of the present study may involve assessing the impact of Ibn Taymiyya's contextual hermeneutics on subsequent Muslim writings. Further research could analyse how Ibn Taymiyya's positive approach to biblical exegesis may affect modern studies that focus on interreligious scriptural reasoning.

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