

MUSLIM UNDERSTANDING
OF
OTHER RELIGIONS

A Study of
*Ibn Hazm 's Kitab al-Fasl ft al-Mila/
wa al-Ahwa' wa al-Nihal*

Ghulam Haider Aasi

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Foreword

Around the tenth century of the Christian era, perhaps knowledge was pursued nowhere with such zeal, nor did learning and scholarship flourish to the extent they did in the lands of Islam. This holds true not only for the different branches of Islamic learning but virtually for all fields of knowledge. During the current century we have gradually come to recognise—thanks to the works of scholars like George Sarton and Fuat Sezgin—the heights to which exact and natural sciences had once reached in *Dar al-Islam*. It is also becoming evident that Muslims not only richly contributed to different sciences but that they also played an even more vital and impactful role in the intellectual history of mankind: they made crucial contributions to the development of the scientific method.

In recent decades scholars have begun to examine the nature and extent of Islamic contribution in another area of intellectual enterprise—Comparative Religion. As scholarly efforts proceed, we discover that from the early centuries of Islam, Muslim scholars took keen interest in systematically acquainting themselves with the religions that they encountered—Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and so on. Quite often the major underlying motive to know about other religions was to demonstrate that they were flawed and that Islam was superior to all of them. It is remarkable, however, that despite this motive, the Muslim scholars concerned with studying religions exhibited two characteristics. First, they engaged in assiduously collecting facts about other religions. Second, they honestly stated the facts at which they had arrived. They doubtlessly refuted the doctrines of other religious traditions, but they were not wont to distort their doctrines or history. Ibn Hazm and Ibn Taymiyyah are among the best representatives of Islamic scholarship in the field of Comparative Religion under the impulse of the above-mentioned motive. Each of the two scholars was enthusiastic about refuting the doctrines of other religions. But this does not detract from the fact that the knowledge of each of them

pertaining to those religions was extensive, deep, and penetrating, and their perceptions about them, sharp and brilliant.

The above, however, was not the only model produced by Muslims scholars. For we also find another model for studying religions other than one's own, a model wherein the impulse to refute other religions is hardly evident. The scholars who followed this model were no less enthusiastic about Islam, no less confident about its intrinsic soundness or its superiority to other religions. Notwithstanding all this, when they entered the field of Comparative Religion, their attention remained focused on their task of studying the religions of their concern thoroughly and meticulously. These scholars did not attempt to prove that other religions were either faulty or inferior to Islam. Perhaps the soundness of Islam was far too evident to them to need marshalling a plethora of arguments to establish it. Be that as it may, these scholars established very high and exceedingly exacting scholastic standards, sparing no effort to collect and bring together all possible facts relevant to their subject.

Possibly the best representative of this model was Abu Rayhan al-Birfini, Al-Birfini wrote about several religions, but specially about the Indian religions. It is well known that the Muslim religious judgement about Hinduism has all along been quite negative. This is understandable because of the pivotal position of *taw~id* in the Islamic religious tradition. Nevertheless, al-Biruni studied Hinduism with great zeal and earnestness and did not allow any preconceived notions to close his mind, or slacken him in his pursuit of authentic information. In order to adequately study Hinduism, he learned Sanskrit, sat at the feet of Hindu scholars so as to understand the intricacies of their religious philosophy and develop an in depth comprehension of their intellectual tradition. He also strove hard to acquire the maximum number of works by Hindus. Thus, al-Biruni's academic work was based predominantly on the information directly derived from the original sources of Hinduism rather than hearsay or prejudiced statements of outsiders. It is astounding to know that the level of understanding which he aspired to achieve was to understand and expound the doctrines of other religions in such manner that they would be deemed by their own adherents to be fair and correct statements of their religious positions. In this regard al-Biruni anticipated some of the most highly perceptive methodological canons expounded in the second half of the present century by scholars such as Wilfred Cantwell Smith.

The present work is the first in our series entitled "Comparative Religion". We are launching this series with a view to highlight the ideas and approaches of Muslim scholars in their quest to understand other religions. The scholar and thinker to the study of whose work this book is devoted is the highly versatile and brilliant savant and thinker of eleventh century Islamic Spain—Ibn Hazrn. Ibn Hazrn, as we know, has distinguished himself at once for his contributions to poetry and belles *lettres*, to law and jurisprudence, to theology, sirali and history, and last, but not the least, for his significant work in Comparative Religion.

Ghulam Haider Aasi, the author of this book, is one of the few contemporary Muslim scholars who have taken a serious interest in Comparative Religion. He has benefited substantially from a number of scholars, including Tamara Sonn, who has obliged us by writing an illuminating 'Introduction' to this work. But the person who inspired Aasi most and guided his work for several years was Ismail R. al-Faruqi, the most dominant Muslim figure in Comparative Religion in the present century. Thanks to Aasi's intellectual endowments and excellent academic background, he has produced a work of major significance in a relatively virgin field—Muslim contribution to Comparative Religion. Doubtlessly, this book will bring to light a great deal regarding the Muslims attitude(s) to other religions. It will also bring into sharp relief the serious and painstaking efforts of Muslim scholars to systematically study other religions, and especially the significance of Ibn Hazrn as a pioneering figure in Comparative Religion who had a lasting impact on the development of that discipline. One of the major contributions of Ibn Hazrn was that he developed canons of a proper and critical study of religions. He not only spelled out these canons of criticism but also extensively used them. What could be a better tribute to the greatness of Ibn Hazrn as a Comparative Religionist than the fact that the critique of Christianity some seven centuries after him virtually remained confined to the points which had been raised by him.

Valuable as the present work is, a number of scholars have been attempting to study this field in recent years. Muzammil Husain Siddiqui, for instance, wrote his doctoral dissertation on Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Jawuib al-Safi'i li man baddala Din ol-Masii* for Harvard University. Likewise, a promising scholar from Nigeria, Isa Muhammad Maishanu, has recently completed his doctoral dissertation on "The Comparative Method in the Study of Religion: A Case

Study of al-'AmirI and al-BirunI" for the International Islamic University, Islamabad. While we feel honoured to publish Aasi's work as the first in the series, we also plan to publish several other significant works on the subject in due course of time. The purpose of the series is partly to set the historical record straight and make known the contributions made by Islamic scholarship to this field in the past. But that is by no means the only purpose. For we also wish to see Comparative Religion become a going concern of contemporary Muslim scholarship. This wish is also based on the confidence that Muslim scholars have not only enriched this field in the past, but will do the same in the near future. We are sure that the Islamic civilization which wrote many brilliant chapters in the cultural history of mankind in the past is destined to write many more chapters in the future, chapters that would be no less brilliant and profound than the previous ones.

The present work is a revised and edited version of Aasi's dissertation which he submitted to Temple University's Department of Religion in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Ph.D. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, especially his being several thousands miles away from us, Aasi was not in a position to provide much of an assistance in preparing his work for publication. We owe the edited version of this work, in the first instance, to the editorial skills of Pakistan's veteran scholar, Shariful Mujahid, who worked hard to tighten up the draft and weed out repetitions and unnecessary details. Subsequently a number of my colleagues, especially Imran Ahsan Nyazee and Azfar Saeed, devoted a great deal of their time on such technical matters as checking references and ensuring that the draft was purged of any inaccuracies that might have crept into it. The present text, however, was finalized by me and so the responsibility for any shortcomings that the book might have is mine. Thanks are due to all the friends whose names we have already mentioned for their valuable assistance. To these must be added, the name of our indefatigable computer operator, Alam Zeb, who worked extremely hard, typing and retyping the text several times. Last, but not the least, I owe very special thanks to my friend Tamara Sonn who contributed a very erudite 'Introduction' at my request. It is not only a highly informative and thought-provoking essay on the subject but also a piece that considerably enhances the value of the present book.

Zafar Ishaq Ansari

Introduction

Ghulam Haider Aasi's *Muslim Understanding of Other Religions* is a major contribution to our understanding of the history of Religious Studies. Religious Studies—the non-normative examination of the phenomenon of religion, the varieties of religion, and the history and sources of religious diversity—has generally been described as a product of Europe's modern era. The development of this discipline, out of the traditional discipline of theology, was as revolutionary intellectually as the rise of nation states was politically, and the concomitant separation of religious and political authority was theological. Ghulam Haider Aasi's introduction of the work of eleventh-century Muslim scholar Ibn Hazm to Western readers will allow recognition that, in fact, the history of the discipline is far longer than previously reckoned.

It will also allow comparison of the roots of Religious Studies in the two traditions. Religious Studies in the Christian West arose in the context of four historical developments: the introduction of the printing press, the Protestant Reformation, imperial explorations, and the development of Enlightenment thinking. The printing press was introduced in Europe in the mid-fifteenth century. In this deeply religious world, it was natural that the first printed book was the Christian Bible. The effort to produce a printed text, however, raised questions concerning which version of the Bible to use. The Bible had been passed on for the previous fourteen centuries through hand-lettered manuscripts. Not surprisingly, there were variations among the many texts extant at the time. Scholars, therefore, began the task of comparing the various manuscripts, determining the sources of their variations, and producing a text believed to be accurate according to the earliest available version. This activity raised further

questions concerning the sources and accuracy of some of the translations, the Bible having been put into Latin from its original Hebrew and Greek as early as the second century C.E., but officially in the fifth century C.E. It was recognized that there were several sources for even the earliest translations, and those also had to be examined. Moreover, the effort to recapture meanings of terms current at the time of the Bible's first commission to writing led to significant advances in the field of philology, including recognition that meanings of terms change over time—a first step away from the normative insistence on timeless meanings characteristic of theological studies.

The problems of establishing an authoritative text and philological questions were compounded by the Protestant Reformation. In the sixteenth century various reformers, led by Martin Luther, disputed the teachings of Roman orthodoxy. The Roman authorities based their teachings on their interpretations of scripture; it was up to the Protestants, then, to justify their innovative interpretations, demonstrating again that more than one interpretation of a text is possible. Eventually, the developing fields of textual (source and literary) criticism and philology, led by Protestant theologians, gave rise to philosophical discussion of hermeneutics (the study of interpretation), another significant step in the development of Religious Studies.

European states' explorations beyond their shores beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries gave further impetus to the development of the field. Until this time the only attention paid by European Christian scholars to religions other than their own had been efforts to demonstrate their errors. The paradigm of this genre was Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles*, written in the mid-thirteenth century.

But the explorers' mandate was not religious, as such. Their task was to find sources of wealth accessible to their European sponsors. In the process, however, they discovered entirely unfamiliar cultures, as well, and their reports spurred some scholars to describe religious differences and others to speculate on the very nature of religion. James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) and Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige* (1916) are classic examples of these efforts. The field of anthropology developed in this context, with the goal of understanding human beings, their cultures, languages, and religions. Early representatives of this discipline undoubtedly betrayed ethnocentrism, including preferences for their own religions; and their research methods were primitive. Yet the goal of describing others'

religions (among other aspects of culture) as objectively as possible, in order to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of religion as such—an inherently comparative method—became central to Religious Studies.

Ultimately, it was the development of modernity that established Religious Studies in the West as an independent discipline. In Europe's pre-modern era, political power was legitimated through religious authority. From the time Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne (800 C.E.), the church had theoretically been the source of political legitimacy. But as various regions gained economic independence from the central authorities, they demanded political autonomy. As with the Protestant Reformation, since the central authorities' power was legitimated based on official interpretations of scripture, it was up to the "seceders" to either reject religion or defend their positions with new interpretations of scripture. They chose the latter option. Henry VIII's legitimacy was based on his newly created Church of England, various Germanic states became Lutheran, Switzerland followed the interpretations of yet another reformer, John Calvin, and so on. By 1648, after decades of intercommunal strife, the Peace of Augsburg established the principle *cujus regio, ejus religio*: "To whomever belongs political authority [in a region, also] belongs religious authority".

Far from a separation of religion and politics, this was nonetheless a dismembering of the previously monolithic Eurochristian religio-political complex. It also demonstrated the fallibility of traditional faith-based interpretations. The existence of multiple and conflicting Interpretations highlighted the human element in interpretations of scripture, and encouraged thinkers to focus on how people reason. The need to demonstrate rules of careful reasoning became a serious responsibility. Thus, the preeminent modernist philosopher, Immanuel Kant, in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) undertook to demonstrate the circumstances under which reason could be trusted.

In this context, the very nature of political responsibility was examined seriously for the first time in European history. Under the pre-modern system, people's responsibility was to obey the clerks of **the realm, often the clergy (the two terms are etymologically related)** under pain of eternal punishment. Obedience was owed because the leader was under **divine** sanction. The modern age, by contract, is characterized as one in which sovereignty ultimately resides with the people, each of whom is endowed with dignity, freedom, and the wits to order their own lives under normal circumstances. Their efforts

are most effective collectively, however. It was determined, therefore, that it is to people's benefit to delegate some of their authority to a leader. As expressed in the United States' *Declaration of Independence* from Britain (1776), the source of human dignity was believed to be divine. It was considered "self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, [and] that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". Yet religion had legitimated sovereigns who denied many of these rights. The political thinkers of Europe's modernity, therefore, based their revolutionary thoughts on what they believed was valid human reason. This is the source of separation of religious from political authority (often indiscriminately called secularism) in the modern world.

The development of Religious Studies received major impetus from modernity's heightened confidence in human reason. As intellectual disciplines flourished, so did rational methodologies. Care was taken to examine subjects empirically, gather facts, be skeptical of traditional explanations, and to reason inductively, based on observable evidence. These methods were applied to the field of Religious Studies, and the wealth pouring in from the colonies—both information concerning different peoples and financial wealth—allowed for the full blown development of the field of Religious Studies in Europe.

Interestingly, Dr Aasi's book demonstrates that the development of Religious Studies in the Muslim world shares some similarities with its rise in the West. There was no concern about the accuracy of the text of the Qur'an, as there had been with the Christian Bible. From the beginning of Islam, the importance of accurate recitation (Qur'an) had been stressed as a theological issue. Because the Torah and the Gospels are described in the Qur'an as true revelation but defective in their present form, it was very important that the Qur'an be recorded quickly and accurately, before it fell victim to a similar fate. Initially, it had been transmitted orally by people who memorized the recitations delivered by Prophet Muhammad, but the Qur'an is widely believed to have been put in writing within the first year after the Prophet's death. By the time of 'Uthman (644-656 C.E.), the third caliph, an official text of the Qur'an had been established, one whose accuracy and authenticity is universally recognized. Nor was there a Reformation, as such. However, there were dissident movements that threatened and ultimately brought down of the Umayyad caliphate under which Ibn Hazm lived.

Ibn Hazm's world was Muslim Spain, at that time the most advanced culture in Europe. Islam had come into Spain in the eighth century with the recently converted Berbers and a number of families from the central Arab lands. Muslim Spain remained disunited, however; in fact, some initial conquests stretching into northern Spain were lost as Charlemagne made common cause with Christian kings in the North. With the arrival of Umayyad 'Abd al-Rahman, however, who managed to survive the 'Abbasid revolution in Syria, the Muslims secured their control in the fertile South. 'Abd al-Rahman was able to unite the various groups and maintain Umayyad control in Spain throughout the ninth century; by the early tenth century the amirate was fashioned a caliphate by one of 'Abd al-Rahman's successors.

But by the time of Ibn Hazm in the eleventh century, Umayyad rule was weakening under the combined effects of futile efforts to conquer the independent North, and factionalism within Muslim Spain itself. Repeated and destructive forays into Christian territories only strengthened the Christians' resistance; Slavic and Berber troops competed for dominance within the Islamic military forces. By the early eleventh century, Muslim Spain consisted of a group of factional kingdoms. Mid-century, an 'Abbasid family gained dominance in Seville, which became the *de facto* centre of Muslim Spain, but it never regained its original extent. By the late eleventh century, the Christians in the North began to retake the peninsula. The Berber Murabit (Almoravid) kingdom from North Africa assisted the Spanish Muslims, but were unable to prevail.

Despite these tensions, Islamic Spain produced a culture of unprecedented brilliance in the tenth and eleventh centuries. With the stability brought by Umayyad ascendancy, both the population and culture of Islamic Spain flourished. Education and the arts were patronized. Combining Spain's Latin heritage with Arab Islamic traditions resulted in some of the era's most noteworthy literary and intellectual works. Islamic Spain was highly pluralistic, as well. The Muslims had superseded rather harsh Germanic rule over the Latin Christian and Jewish population. Under Islamic rule, the Jews and Christians were protected from persecution and allowed to maintain their own institutions. Arabic became the literary language of both communities, and the Jewish community, in particular, thrived in a rare respite from the persecution characteristic of Christian rule.

It was in this atmosphere that Ibn Hazm worked. A scholar and poet himself, Ibn Hazm's intellectual concerns centred on orthodoxy

and stability. The two were no doubt related for him; displaying a distinctly modernist temperament, he believed clear, careful thinking would result in agreement among reasonable people and, therefore, in stability. In jurisprudence he supported the position of Dawiid al-~ahirī of Baghdad, in opposition to the dominant Maliki jurists of Spain. The ~ahirīs stressed the certain sources of Islamic law—the Qur'an and the Sunnah—over juristic reasoning or mere opinion. Politically, Ibn Hazm was a staunch supporter of Umayyad legitimacy, arguing long after the decline of their power for the necessity of the caliphate. Religiously, Ibn Hazm was convinced of the ultimate, obvious, and literal truth of the Qur'an, which he believed needed neither explication nor interpretation.

It is in this latter context that Ibn Hazm's *Kitūb al-Fasl fī al-Milal wa al-A~wü' wa al-Nihal* was produced. Because of the diversity characterizing Islamic Spain, Ibn Hazm was able to engage in intellectual disputation with scholars of other religious communities, especially Jewish and Christian. He studied their texts and made every effort to understand their positions, as well as those of other traditions with whose sources he was only indirectly acquainted. His *Kitāb al-Fasl fī al-Milal wa al-A~wa' wa al-Nihāl* is, in part, an effort describe those positions accurately and to categorize all the religious traditions of which he was aware according to their beliefs. Thus, he determines that there are six basic kinds of religious or ideological belief systems: (1) the denial of the possibility of determining truth altogether; (2) the belief in the eternity of the (non-created) universe; (3) the belief in the eternity of both the (non-created) universe and Providence; (4) the belief in a universe with more than one creator; (5) the belief in a universe with a single creator but with no prophets; (6) the belief in a universe with a single creator who sent prophets to humanity (see Chapter 5, "Principles and Methodology").

Secondarily, Ibn Hazm felt compelled to demonstrate the mistakes in the thinking of all religions other than his own. He was determined to correct the "malaise of pluralistic society and politics," and therefore undertook "to identify which of the religious traditions presented the most reasonable, rational, coherent, and consistent system of beliefs and practices so that it could serve as a guiding and binding law for human society" (Chapter 3). Interestingly, in this context the intellectual paths of Ibn Hazm and Thomas Aquinas actually crossed. It is reported that Aquinas wrote this *Summa Contra Gentiles* at the request of Ramond of Penafort, master general of the Spanish Dominican monks, who wanted a work to use "against the errors of

unbelievers, by which both the cloud of darkness might be dispelled and the teaching of the true Sun might be made manifest to those who refuse to believe." The "gentiles" referred to in the title are the Spanish Muslim and Jews.

What Ramond requested was not exactly what Aquinas produced, however, because of Aquinas' lack of understanding of Islam. He was familiar only with the Muslim philosophers, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. Thus, in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas' main target was the Muslim philosophers, particularly the Averroists (followers of Ibn Rushd), who based their work on Aristotle. Aquinas based his own philosophical theology on Aristotle, yet his source of Aristotle was not the original Greek texts but translations and commentaries made by the Muslim philosophers. The challenge of distinguishing between Aristotle and the Muslim interpretations of him was therefore critical. "To Christian thinkers, consequently, who were reading Aristotle across Arabian commentaries, the cause of Aristotle concentrated within itself the basic conflict between Christianity and the Arabs on the nature of philosophy and the philosophical picture of the universe." Therefore, there is a major difference between Ibn Hazm's and Aquinas' work, as well. Ibn Hazm is well acquainted with Jewish and Christian scriptures, having read them in translation. Aquinas, on the other hand, knowing only Islamic philosophers' **work** directly, demonstrates that his indirect knowledge of Islam was inaccurate. He informs his readers that "to proceed against individual errors... is a difficult business," among other reasons, "because some of them, such as the Mohammedans and the pagans, do not agree with us in accepting the authority of any Scripture, by which they may be convinced of their error. Thus, against the Jews we are able to argue by means of the Old Testament, while against heretics we are able to argue by means of the New Testament. But the Mohammedans and the pagans accept neither the one nor the other. We must, therefore, have recourse to the natural reason, to which all men are forced to give their assent. However, it is true, in divine matters the natural reason has its failings."

This ignorance on the part of Thomas Aquinas points to another major distinction between the respective approaches of Christianity and Islam to other religions. Christianity, as expressed by Aquinas, rejected outright the legitimacy of any religion other than itself. Through its scriptures it was aware of only one other religion, Judaism, and it believed it had superseded Judaism as the true religion,

rendering the latter defunct. In Islam, on the other hand, the existence of other religions is accounted for in its scripture. In fact, the Qur'an claims to be the culmination of monotheistic scriptures. It refers repeatedly to previous scriptures, the Torah and the Gospels, and claims that its message does not differ from them. Instead, it claims to confirm and clarify the messages delivered through earlier prophets, and to correct misinterpretations of those messages made by followers of the prophets who delivered them. Muhammad is the last in a long line of prophets; and the Qur'an, the final instalment in what has been a coherent plan of successive revelations of the divine will to humanity. For that reason, knowledge of Islam incorporates knowledge of Judaism and Christianity. Monotheism is a single tradition. But just as naturally, it is assumed that there can be only one authentic understanding of revelation. Those Jews and Christians who reject the Qur'an are misguided. Indeed, the Qur'an chastises those who divide "the *din*" into sects:

And they say, "Be Jews or Christians and you shall be guided." Say: "No, rather the creed of Abraham, a man of pure faith; he was no idolater." Say: "We believe in God, and in what has been sent down on us and sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and **what was** given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we surrender." {2:129-131}

The *din*, the monotheistic religion, therefore, was accurately revealed before, the Qur'an affirms, but those communities who received messages prior to the time of Muhammad became "doubtful and disconcerted" (42:13) about it. Some deliberately ignored or abandoned the *din*; others distorted it. The confirmation and clarification of the historic divine message was the mission of Prophet Muhammad: "This Qur'an narrates to the Children of Israel most of the matters about which they disagree. It is a guide and a merciful gift for believers." {27:78} Yet the Qur'an does not condemn those who continue to follow the previous scriptures. "Had the people of the Book [i.e., followers of earlier monotheistic scriptures, Jews and Christians, in particular] believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are believers, but most of them are disobedient." (3:111) Since some **of** them are righteous—"They believe in God and the Last Day, and enjoin good and forbid evil, competing **with** one another in good works" {3:115}, Muslims are enjoined to

discuss matters with them politely, rather than to judge them on the basis of their beliefs.

That discussion of disputed matters, in addition to characterizing the types of religious beliefs, is clearly Ibn Hszm's goal in this work. As Dr Aasi points out, Ibn Hazm perhaps overlooked the suggestion that non-Muslims should be engaged politely. He feels no qualms about referring to other religions' "lies" and "stupidity," for example, naming his section on Hebrew scripture "Section Concerning the Manifest Contradictions and Obvious Lies in the Book Named by the Jews as Torah and in the Rest of Their Books and in the Four Gospels, That Wherefrom Their Corruption and Alteration Is Manifest, and That They Are Other than What Allah, the Exalted and Sublime, Revealed" (Chapter 6). Nevertheless, Ibn Hazm took the message of the Qur'an concerning the validity yet corruption of earlier scriptures to heart, studiously setting out to demonstrate their weak spots. In the process, he points out many of the very weaknesses—contradictions and inconsistencies—which would be identified by modern European scholars of Religious Studies.

Because Jews, Christians, and Muslims view their respective scriptures differently, and because religious faith is not primarily an intellectual matter, Ibn Hazm's observations did not have the desired effect. They did not lead to mass conversions, anymore than the work of Thomas Aquinas did. Nor is Ibn Hazm's work characterized by a lack of concern for normative belief or practice, as are modern works of Religious Studies. Still, Ibn Hasm's work, made possible by the high culture of Islamic Spain and the tolerance of other religions characteristic of Islam, does demonstrate that Religious Studies is not solely a product of Europe's modernity. It is hoped that the introduction of this work to English readers, demonstrating shared interests and methods, will help break down the traditional barrier between the European and Islamic intellectual worlds.

Tamara Sonn
University of South Florida

ONE

The Qur'an and Other Religious Traditions

The distinguishing characteristic of a Muslim is his firm belief that the Qur'an is the Word of God; the Speech of Allah (*Kalüm Allah*) *verbatim*. The Qur'an, as Revelation from Allah, embodies His will and is Guidance *par excellence*. It provides man norms and basic principles relating to all aspects of life. Therefore, the Qur'anic teachings also play a very prominent role in shaping a Muslim's approach to the understanding of other religious traditions. Unless one grasps the Qur'anic approach to other religious traditions, it would neither be possible to evaluate Ibn Hazm's study of other religious traditions, nor to appreciate his approach to them. To delineate the Islamic approach to other religious traditions it is quite obviously necessary, therefore, to turn first to the Qur'an itself.

A. The Qur'anic Concept of Religion

"No Scripture in the world teaches such a 'comparative religion' as the Quran", wrote Stanton in his treatise, which is perhaps the first work of a non-Muslim in which the significance of the teachings of the Qur'an on the subject has been generously acknowledged.¹ Scarcely would any student of comparative religion and world's scriptures disagree with this conclusion.

The Qur'an mainly employs three words for the term religion as it is understood in the modern West— *din*, *millah*, and *ummah*. In the Qur'anic usage each of these terms is too comprehensive and rich in

¹H.U. Weitbrecht Stanton, *The Teaching of the Qur'an*, reprint (New York: Biblio and Tannen, 1969), p. 71.

meaning to be adequately expressed by a single word or phrase in English. However, in the light of the Qur'anic *weltanschauung*, the terms may generally be given the following meanings: *din* denotes religion in the generic sense of the term; *millah* roughly signifies what we presently tend to term religious tradition; and *ummah* is used to mean religio-moral and socio-political community.

It will be noted that all the three terms in their perfect senses have been identified with Islam—that is, Islam is 'the din', 'the last *millah*', and 'the most exemplary *ummah*'. This identification has led to some confusion on the part of non-Muslim students of Islam and of the history of religions. Since Islam was also identified with the religious tradition of Ibrahim (Abraham), the *~anff* (an absolute monotheist), the prototypical Muslim, it became all the more difficult to fully comprehend the significance of the three above-mentioned terms as well as Islam itself. Several Orientalists understood this identification of Islam with '*Din*' (the only true religion), with '*Millat Ibrahim Jani*' (the creed of Abraham, the absolute monotheist), and with '*khayru ummah*' (the best religious community), or '*ummah wasat*' (the model/median religious community) in the sense of the exclusivist attitude characterizing traditional Christianity (i.e., there is no salvation outside the Church), or the traditional Jewish concept of the 'chosen people'. Thus, there has been a tendency on the part of a number of scholars to explain the whole phenomenon of the Qur'an and, hence, of Islam, as an Arab syncretism of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In the persistent search of these scholars for the sources of the Qur'an elsewhere—for the notion that it was revelation from God was summarily dismissed—in the Middle Eastern milieu of the seventh century. This search for the sources of the Qur'an elsewhere included the Persian, the Hellenistic, and, to some extent, the pre-Islamic Arab streams of thought. So far scant serious attention has been paid to the Qur'anic statements regarding itself—that it is neither the work of Muhammad nor the work of any other human being. It is, instead, the direct revelation from Allah, sent down upon Muhammad (peace be on him), a revelation totally independent of his will and determination.² A student of the Qur'an is not necessarily required to presume it to be a revelation from God in order to understand its proper *weltanschauung*. It is absolutely necessary, however, that

²See Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago and Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), pp. 132ff.; also Malek Bennabi, *The Qur'anic Phenomenon* (Indianapolis: A.T.P., 1983).

one should not read one's own pre-conceived ideas into the Qur'an. Rather, one should make a serious attempt to heed the message of the Qur'an; that one should approach it with an open mind.

1. The Use of the Term *Dīn* (Religion) in the Qur'an

In the Qur'an the word *dfn*, with all its construct forms, occurs ninety-five times. It is used sixty six times in its verbal noun form, and twenty-six times in its possessive case with pronouns, denoting the sense of 'his religion', 'their religion', 'your religion' and 'my religion'. Only three times is it used in its verbal form, and nowhere it is used in its plural form, i.e. *adyan* (religions).

Three basic senses seem to be inherent to the use of the word *dfn* (a) religion; (b) judgment, retribution, or requital; and (c) custom, cult or law.³ However, the core of all these is the notion of obedience, servanthood and dependence. This, in turn, implies that man is dependent on some Being of Whom he is the servant and Whose commandments he is required to obey.

a. The Concept of *Dīn* (Religion) as Obedience

The semantics of the term *dfn* imply the sense of obedience, submission, service, and, hence, worship. In one of the earliest Malekan siirah», the term *dfn* is used in the sense of submission, service, worship, and hence, the following of a certain faith and the observation of its precepts. The Qur'an directs Muhammad (peace be on him) to tell those who deny the truth:

Say: O you who deny the truth! I do not worship that which you worship and neither do you worship that which I worship... Unto you is your moral (*dfnukum=your religion*) and unto me, mine. (109:1-3, 6)⁴

It would be interesting to note what Muhammad Asad has to say on the concept of *dfn*:

The primary significance of *dfn* is "obedience", in particular obedience to a law or to what is conceived as

³Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung*, reprint (New York: Arno Press, 1980), pp. 219-229.

⁴Unless otherwise, the translations of the Qur'anic verses are from Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an: Translated and Explained* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980). In the Qur'anic quotations, the parentheses () are ours and the square brackets [] are from the translator, i.e., M. Asad.

a system of established—and therefore binding—usages, i.e., something endowed with moral authority: hence "religion", "faith", or "religious law" in the widest sense of these terms....⁵

Commenting upon the application of the term *din*, Asad refers to the verse 2:256, which rules out all kinds of coercion or compulsion in matters of faith. He explains the term *din* succinctly as follows:

The term '*Din*' denotes both the contents of and the compliance with a morally binding law consequently, it signifies 'religion' in the widest sense of this term, extending over all that pertains to its doctrinal contents and their practical implications, as well as to man's attitude toward the object of his worship, thus comprising also the concept of 'faith'. The rendering of '*Din*' as 'religion', 'faith', 'religious law', or 'moral law'... depends on the context in which this term is used....⁶

The other commonly accepted senses, namely, 'custom' or 'moral law' and 'judgment' or 'requit', are, then, necessarily dependent on this semantic meaning of the term *dfn* as obedience, submission, and service or worship. One of the most explicit examples, where the term *dfn* denotes all the three senses, is to be found in the Qur'an 3: 83-85:

Do they seek, perchance, a faith other than in God
{ghayra dīn Allah—literally 'other than the religion

⁵Ibid., p. 981, n. 3.

⁶Ibid., pp. 57-58, n. 249. Explaining why Islam, the Qur'an, and their bearer represent the final and universal form of *Dīn al-Fitrah*, Muhammad Asad, commenting on the verse 5:3 says: p. 141. notes on Qur'an 5:3:

According to all available Traditions based on the testimony of the Prophet's contemporaries, the above passage (Qur'an, 5:3) which sets, as it were, a seal on the message of the Qur'an was revealed at 'Arafat in the afternoon of Friday, the 9th of *Dhū al-Fiġġah*, 10 **A.H.**, 81 or 82 days before the death of the Prophet. No legal injunction whatsoever was revealed after this verse: and this explains the reference to God's having perfected the Faith and bestowed the full measure of His blessings upon the believers. Man's self-surrender [Islam] to God is postulated as the basis, or the basic law of all true religion [Dfn]. This self-surrender expressed itself not only in belief in Him, but also in obedience to His commands. This is the reason why the announcement of the completion of the Qur'anic message is placed within the context of a verse containing the last legal ordinances revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him).

of Allah: obedience/submission/service/worship/ moral law/judgment other than that of God) although it is unto Him that whatever is in the heavens and on the earth surrenders itself, willingly or unwillingly, since unto Him all must return. Say, "We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed by their Sustainer unto Moses and Jesus and all the other prophets: we make no distinction between any of them. And unto Him do we surrender ourselves (*wa tuilmu lahu muslimiiti*), For, if one goes in search of a religion (*disi*) other than self-surrender unto God (*al-Islam*), it will never be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the lost." (3:83-85)

According to the Qur'an, reality is dual: the realm of nature and creation and that of the Transcendent and the Creator. The Creator is Transcendent, Unique, Independent, Infinite. He is the Sustainer and the Master while all else, being His creation, is dependent on Him.⁷

The One Creator created everything with a set pattern and imbued everything with His Laws, Commands, and Guidance so that everything functions according to His Plan. While He endowed nature with the so-called 'natural law', He bestowed upon man reason and His Divine Will so that he can act according to the moral law. This means that everything of nature obeys God's Law willy-nilly, that is, it is inherently bound by its nature to obey and has no volition or choice to do otherwise. On the other hand, man was created with a volition, a choice, and a will in order to obey God willingly—that is, he was granted the freedom to act or not to act according to God's Law. A person is thus responsible for his/her action and will be judged in the end.

However, God did not leave man with merely his natural reason and intuition which, in themselves, are not sufficient to enable man to stand up to this test of the realization of the moral law. Additionally, He bestowed upon man the grace of His guidance and the revelation of His will so as to make it easy for him to carry out the trust that

⁷Qur'an, 112:1; 113:1; 114:1; 108:1 and as well as numerous other occasions in the Qur'an.

was bestowed by God on man alone.⁸ This concept of God and of man defines man not only as *homo-religiosus* but also makes man homo-iheosophus.

b. *Dīn ol-Eitrah, Ur-Religion, Religio-Naturalis*

The Qur'an maintains that the Creator imbued man with the knowledge of His being as the only Creator and the Lord to whom alone man stands as servant *{'abd}*. This awareness has been bestowed upon man in the form of inborn knowledge. Thus, every human soul, at the time of birth, is born as an *'abd* and a 'Muslim' (one who submits to God) and a *ṭaniff* (one who turns away from all that is false and returns to God alone). This is what has been characterized by the Qur'an as *Fitrat Allah* (God's Religion) on which man is created.⁹

Most of the commentators on the Qur'an have identified this *Fitrat Allah* as *khalq Allah* (creation of Allah) and *al-dīn al-qayyim* (the ever-true, uncorruptible religion), with which God endowed every human soul, with man's inspired cognition of the one God and his inspired ability to discern between the true and the false.¹⁰ However, the scholars have tended not to make a clear distinction between man's innate awareness of the Creator and the human faculty of reason and intellect, although the former is different from the faculty of reason and intellect.

This instilling of the awareness and knowledge of the One God as the only *Rabb* (Lord, Master, Sustainer, and hence, the only deity), and then asking the souls of Adam's progeny to bear testimony to this awareness, are both different from, and in addition to, the faculty of reason and intuition. The latter faculty is identified with *sam'* (hearing), *basar* (seeing), and *fu'ad* (heart and mind), and not with *Fitrah*. On the other hand, *Fitrat* is used as an equivalent to *al-dīn al-qayyim* and to *khalq Allah*. (See Qur'an 30:30). Alluding to this fact, al-Tabari reports, on the authority of Ibn Zayd, that *Fitrat Allah allati* [atara al-niisa 'alayhü (the religion of Allah with which He created mankind) means the profession and testimony of mankind in its recognition of God as its sole Master worthy of submission, worship, and obedience (*yuqirruna bi dhülik*). To corroborate this Ibn Zayd recited and referred to the Qur'anic verses 7:172-173 and 2:213, which in translation, are respectively, as follows:

⁸Qur'an, 33:72.

⁹Qur'an, 30:30.

¹⁰Qur'an, 30:30; 9:36.

And whenever the Sustainer brings forth their offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam, He [thus] calls upon them to bear witness about themselves: 'Am I not your Sustainer?' to which they answered: 'Yea, indeed, we do bear witness thereto'. [Of this We remind you] lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Verily, we were unaware of this' or lest you say, 'Verily, it was but our forefathers who, in times gone by, began to ascribe divinity to other beings beside God and we were but their late offspring: wilt Thou, then, destroy us for the doings of those inventors of falsehoods? (7: 172-173) All mankind were once one single community (*ummah wal'idah*) then they began to differ. Whereupon God raised up the prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, and through them bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it might decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold divergent views. Yet none other than the self-same people who had been granted this revelation began, out of mutual jealousy, to disagree about its meaning after all evidence of the truth had come unto them. But God guided the believers unto the truth about which, by His leave, they had disagreed: for God guides onto a straight way him that wills [to be guided]. (2:213)

It is evident from these verses that God created mankind in one religion, i.e., with the full knowledge and awareness of the fact that there is only One God to Whom they owe their fealty and worship. In illustration of this fact the following authentic *hadith* may be quoted: "Every child is born in God's religion (*'ala al-fitrah*), It is only his/her parents that later turn him/her into a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian".¹¹

Thus, according to the Qur'an, all mankind at its creation was endowed with the knowledge of *Din al-Fitrah* besides the common human faculties of reasoning and thinking, and this one true religion was equally shared by all. As man is a creature of God who is endowed with freedom of action, he is required to live in conformity with this *Din al-Fitrah*, but it is not imposed upon him. As a consequence of man's freedom of choice and freewill, once he entered into interaction with nature and the universe, there emerged

¹¹Qur'an, 30:30.

a variety of attitudes divergent from *Din* al-Fitrah. This divergence is a natural consequence of the freedom of will and action bestowed upon him. It is this freedom and its realization in action that raised man to the dignified status of *khalifat Allah 'ft al-arl* (vicegerent of God on earth).¹² However, whenever man misuses this freedom, he is 'reduced to the lowest of the low'.¹³

Once again, God did not leave man to himself alone. Rather, He helped and guided him with the revelation of His Divine Will to remind him of his *raison d'etre*. God revealed His Will through prophets or messengers who summoned the people back to *Din al-Fitrah*.¹⁴ The prophets also provided mankind with models of its practice. They reclaimed mankind from their deviation from *Din* al-Fitrah, warning it of the grave consequences of such deviation. Some people followed the prophets' teachings and returned to *Din* al-Fitrah: These teachings constitute the revelation of the Divine Will and take the form of religious scriptures. Others persisted in their deviation, knowingly rejected the prophets and the revelation from God, and took their illusions and base desires (*ahwa'*) as their guiding principle in life.

With the passage of time, partly due to the new needs of the changing climes and times and partly due to the corruption of the earlier revelations, prophets continued to be raised until mankind reached a stage of maturity when the phenomenon of prophecy was brought to an end. The finality of prophethood was sealed with the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and God decreed that the revelation of the final version of God's Will embodied in the Qur'an be preserved and kept extant forever. It is in this context that the Islam of history was identified with *al-Islam* or *Din* ol-Fiirch and was declared to be the final, perfect, universal, and everlasting form of Islam: the *Din* al-Fitrah for all mankind, for all times and climes. Henceforth, no form other than that of *al-Islam* would be acceptable by God as the final or universal form of *al-Islam* or *Din al-Fitrah*.¹⁵

The Qur'an maintains that 'the [true] Religion' has been one and the same throughout all human history. By raising prophets with new revelations, God meant neither to cause 'the true Religion' to be suspended nor to be changed or replaced. Rather, every prophet

¹²Qur'an, 2:30.

¹³Qur'an, 95:4, 5.

¹⁴Qur'an, 30:30.

¹⁵Qur'an, 30:30.

emphasized the unity of 'the true Religion'. As the Qur'an says: 'And We never sent any apostle without having revealed to him that there is no deity save Me, [and that] therefore, you should worship Me [alone] (21:25). However, despite man having been blessed with Din ol-Fiirah, and periodically the revelation of the Divine Will through prophets, mankind still became divided in its realization of Din al-Fitrah, and in responding adequately to the chain of revelations. It is in this context that the other two Qur'anic terms denoting 'religion' came into use. These two terms, as noted earlier, are *ummah* and *millah*.

2. *Ummah* in the Qur'an

The word *ummah*, with all of its forms, occurs sixty-four times in the Qur'an: fifty-one times in singular and thirteen times in the plural form (*umam*). Although different views about its etymology have been proffered, the classical view—that the term *ummah* is derived from the word *umm* (mother) and thus denotes the unity of origin and the centre—still remains the most reasonable and valid.

With the exception of three instances (see Qur'an 11:8, 12:45, and 16:120), the Qur'anic usage of *ummah* or *umam* denotes a group of people who form a religious/moral/social/political community—i.e., a religious community. Sometimes *ummah* connotes 'a nation', 'a people', 'a culture', 'a civilization'; but basic to all these groups of people is the idea of one binding religio-moral system of law and values.

The third exception (Qur'an 16:120) referred to above is basically not an exception. Rather, it stands for the assertion and the exemplification of the proper sense of the word—i.e., the *ummah par excellence*. We will turn to this later, as it also relates to the term *millah*. The other two exceptions (Qur'an 11:8 and 12: 45) relate *ummah* with 'a time' or a 'period of time'. The Qur'an explicitly asserts that for every *ummah* a term or period of time, i.e. 'an age' in the modern sense, has been decreed. Even in these two exceptional cases, its sense of a 'period' or 'age' is closely related to its semantic meaning of a group of people.

Commenting upon the Qur'anic verse 16:36, where every *ummah* is said to have been granted its own messenger, Muhammad Asad suggests the translation of the term *ummah* in that context is 'at every period'. He argues: "Since the term *ummah* has this significance

as well, in its wider sense, it may also be taken to denote 'civilization,' thus comprising a human grouping as well as a period of time".¹⁶

a. *Ummah Wa-idah* (One Single Religious Community)

The Qur'an sometimes uses this phrase exactly in the sense of Din al-Fitrah. As indicated earlier, all mankind was in the beginning one single religious community, sharing in Din ol-Fitrah. [kiina *al-nasu ummah wa-idah*... 2:213, 10:19). The Qur'an further asserts that had God willed to keep mankind bound by the unity of religion in one form, He would have made all mankind a single religious community (*ummah wa-idah*), but He willed otherwise.¹⁷ Then God sent prophets to remind their people (*ummah*) of the true nature of the Din ol-Fitrah and also to provide it to them in its true form. Thus the prophets and the true believers make one single religious community (*ummah wa-idah*):

Verily [O you who believe in Me] this community of yours is one single community, since I am the Sustainer of you all: worship, then, Me [alone]. But men have torn their unity wide asunder, [forgetting that] unto Us they all are bound to return. (21:92-93. Cf. 23:52)

b. Every *Ummah* Receives Revelation from God

As mankind started differing in their practice of the Din ol-Fitrah, God endowed every people (*ummah*) with a human messenger to remind them of their obligations to God and to reclaim them from their deviation.

And indeed within every community (*ummah*= or at every period, to every people) We raised an apostle (Rasul=Messenger) [entrusted with this message]: Worship God, and shun the powers of evil (*taghilt*=any power or system or thing that is assumed as deity) and among those [past generations) were people whom God graced with His Guidance, just as there was among them [many a one] who inevitably fell prey to grievous error. Go, then, about the earth and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth. (16:36, 35:24)

God took to task every *ummah* that gave the lie to the truth and brought forth another *ummah* instead. On the Day of Judgment God

¹⁶Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ün*, p. 398, n. 33.

¹⁷Qur'an, 5:48.

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shall raise up a witness (*shahid*) out of every *ummah*, one from among themselves, against those who had been bent on denying the truth so that they would not plead their ignorance nor be allowed to make amends.¹⁸ The advent of every new messenger or prophet on the one hand instituted a new *ummah* and, on the other, marked the end of the previous *ummah*, thus abrogating the previous form of revelation and establishing the new one in its place. If the followers of the earlier revelation still adhered to their old and abrogated form and did not accept and follow the new prophet and his new form of revelation, then the older *ummah*, though now adhering to an obsolete form of revelation, may be a *de jure ummah*. This is how the different *ummahs* continued to exist along with the *ummah* that represented the true and valid form of the *Din al-Fitrah*,

Similarly, *ummahs* of contemporaneous messengers had co-existed simultaneously. Though different from one another, they were valid in their own forms. These different *ummahs*, still represented the *Din al-Fitrah* in their times. However, all these *ummahs* came to an end with the coming of the final Prophet, the final revelation, and the final form of *ummah*.

c. *Ummahs* of the Past

In all the thirteen verses in which the word *umam* (plural of *ummah*) is employed, with the exception of one verse where living creatures of the earth and the air are also called *umam* the sense of *ummahs* gone by is denoted. With the advent of the Prophet Muhammad the phenomenon of prophecy came to an end. The revelation of the Qur'an with regard to divine laws was sealed with the pronouncement that:

Today have I perfected your religious law (dinukum: your religion) for you and have bestowed upon you the full measure of My blessings, and willed that self-surrender unto Me (*al-Islam*) shall be your religion. (5:3).

The essential aspects of the *Din al-Fitrah* with regard to beliefs and doctrines were sealed with the pronouncement of the eternal reminder:

And be conscious of the Day on which you shall be brought back unto God, whereupon every human being

¹⁸Qur'an, 4:41.

shall be repaid in full for what he has earned and none shall be wronged. (2: 281)

By this pronouncement, the Islam of history, for which the Qur'an is the everlasting fountainhead, was declared the final, concrete and universal form of the Din ol-Fiirah. Those who adhere to the Qur'an and carry out its commandments and code of life are designated as a model *ummah* (*ummah uiasat*). They represent not only a model form of the Din al-Fiiral: for all mankind but are also a witness against all those who deny the truth out of arrogance or jealousy.

This *ummah uiasai* or *ummah Muslimah*, is neither a chosen group of people nor a saved community of faith, but is the *ummah wa-idah* of believers by virtue of practicing the final, concrete, and universal form of the Din ol-Fitroh, as the earlier *ummahs* of the past prophets were. This *ummah wasat*, however, differs from the valid *ummahs* of the earlier ages in the matter of *Shari'ah*. Its source is the Qur'an, which is guarded and preserved forever. Thus, this *ummah Muslimah* of the Prophet Muhammad stands as the final *ummah* and the last *millah*.

However, in no period of history do Muslims, as such, constitute the chosen people or a 'saved' community. The Qur'an vehemently rejects all notions of election and salvation whether based on descent or profession of faith alone, thus disputing the Judea-Christian claims. In this context, the Qur'an describes Ibrahim as an *ummah qanitaii* (an *ummah* obedient) to God and a *~anif* (absolute monotheist)—i.e. he stands as a Muslim *par excellence*, who actualized his Din *al-Fitrah* in its perfect form and represented an *ummah Muslimah* and a *millah* (religious tradition) which it is obligatory upon everyone to follow in principle. This brings us to the third term used for religion in the Qur'an, namely, *millah*.

3. Millah in the Qur'an

The term *millah*, in all of its forms, occurs in the Qur'an fifteen times: ten times in its verbal noun form, and five times with the possessive pronoun denoting the sense of 'our *millah*', 'your *millah*', and 'their *millah*'. Interestingly, in eight out of ten cases the term is related to Ibrahim (i.e. *millat Ibrahim*) and five times Ibrahim is further qualified as being *~aniff*. At eight places, it is asserted that

those devoid of sense and reason will not follow *millat Ibrühfm*.¹⁹ Although in its application *millah* is closer to *din* than to *ummah* when it refers to Ibrahim, it is closer to *ummah* than to *din* when it refers to the *millahs* of different groups of peoples.

a. The *Millah* and *Millahs*: Religion and Religious Traditions

Though mostly used with reference to Ibrahim, the term *millah* is also applied to denote different religious communities. Besides the Jews and the Christians (each of whom has a *millah*), even those who do not believe in God and in the Life Hereafter but simply follow the traditions and ways of their forefathers blindly, are also called a *millah*. (Such a group of people even threatened the messengers of God sent to reclaim them to revert to their *millah* on pain of death).²⁰ In this sense *millah* stands closer to the sense of a cult, which, to its followers, is as dear as a religion to its adherents.

In the sense of religious tradition, or a religious worldview and a system of faith, the term *millah* refers to followers of a prophet who brought revelation from God, and is equivalent to an *ummah*. Though in some cases, both *ummah* and *millah* are equivalent to the term *din*, the main difference between them is that *ummah* implies a religiously active community which has an independent socio-political system and religious moral laws, while *millah* implies mainly a system of doctrines, creeds and rituals followed by a group of people regardless of their socio-political status.

The implication of this connotation of the term *millah*, especially with reference to Ibrahim, has baffled all those who are wont to differentiate between faith and religious tradition as two forms of religion: non-reified and reified.²¹ The Qur'anic usage '*millat Ibrahim*' as the true religion, along with the qualification of '*~anf*' and the prototypical Muslim—has troubled many an Orientalist mind. As indicated earlier, Ibrahim as a '*~anf*' and '*millat Ibrahim*' as *al-Ifanfiyyah al-Snm-ü*' and their identification with Islam—these do not represent a borrowing from the Judeo-Christian concepts of religion,

¹⁹The Qur'anic verses in which the term "*millah*" has been used are as follows: 2:130,135; 3:95; 4:125; 6:161; 16:123; 22:78; 12:37,38; 38:7; 7:88,89; 12:20; 14:13; 2:120.

²⁰Qur'an, 7:88, 89; 12:37; 18:20.

²¹Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), see esp. ch. 4.

covenant, revelation, law, and community²². Rather, the emphasis in this identification is rejecting the Judeo-Christian claims of election and proprietorship over God's Guidance. Indeed, it is always in the context of refuting Judeo-Christian claims of belonging to or following Ibrahim that he has been described as *~anif* by the Qur'an.

Ironically though, the later Muslim tradition felt satisfied in seeing Ibrahim only as a father of the so-called monotheistic traditions. The Qur'anic characterization of Ibrahim is diagonally opposed to the Biblical one. According to the Qur'an, Ibrahim is not the first monotheist, some other prophets having preceded him--especially Nuh (Noah) whom the Qur'an describes as the leading monotheist, and to whose persuasion Ibrahim belonged (*min shf'atihi*).²³ However, Ibrahim's rational conviction of the absolute transcendence and unity of God, and his adherence to universal morality and justice that transcend all worldly affinities, made him a paragon of virtue and a beloved friend of God.²⁴ In the Qur'an, the term '*~anff*' (to qualify Ibrahim), is always contrasted with 'mushrik' (one who associates gods with God). In most of the 'Ibrahim *ifanff*' passages, the context is to admonish Jews, Christians and the Arab idolators directly, and other *millahs* indirectly, for having compromised monotheism and distorted Divine Law. Islam is identified with *ifanfiyyah* and with *Din al-Fiirali* in consideration of its restoration of monotheism and the preservation of the Shari'oh, Thus, representing the final form of the *Din ol-Fitroh*, Islam is essentially identified with the '*Millat Ibriihism ifanff*' and becomes the *millah* that abrogates and supersedes all earlier *millahs*. Here again, Islam being designated as '*al-millah*' {the *millah*}, does not by any means negate the existence of other *millahs*, even as its being the '*ummah wasat*' does not preclude the existence of other *ummahs*.

The foregoing analysis of the Qur'anic usage of the three terms for 'religion' indicates that the Qur'an maintains that the true religion is one and has always been one and the same. All historical religious traditions in their pristine forms had been, at some time and in some place, the concrete forms of the *Din al-Fiirali*, but they became distorted with the passage of time due to man's lapses. The scriptures, bestowed upon various *ummahs* and *millahs*, were either lost, misinterpreted, tampered with, or distorted. The Qur'an, being

²¹For a recent example of such-absurd claims, see F.E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham* (Princeton, NJ(Princeton University Press, 1982).

¹³Qur'an, 37:83ff.; 11:25-48.

¹⁴Qur'an, 6:73ff.

the final revelation from God, represents the criterion for distinguishing and determining the true from the false of the earlier millahs and ummahs:

And unto thee (O Prophet) have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein; judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto thee. Unto every one of you have We appointed a law and way of life (*shir'ah wa minhūj*). And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community (*ummah wā'idah*); but (He willed otherwise) in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ. (5:48)

B. The Qur'anic View of Unity of Religion and Diversity of Religious Traditions

It is significant that the Qur'an does not employ the terms 'din' and 'millah' in their plural forms while it uses the term 'ummah' in its singular as well as plural form. The explanation seems to be that the essence of religion is universal and immutable, but the form of religion is a composite of two elements: (a) doctrines and creeds, and (b) laws and rituals. While the doctrines and creeds which constitute the essence of religion are universal and unchangeable, laws and rituals **have** been different at different places and times for different peoples. This second element consists of shari'ali (Divine Law), *minhūj* (way of life) and *mansak* (ritual).²⁵

According to the Qur'an, every member of mankind falls into one of the two categories: religious or irreligious (*mu'min* or *kūfir*), grateful or ungrateful (*shūkir* or *kafūr*).²⁶ The religious ones either emphasize the first element of the form of religion to the neglect of the other, or *vice versa*. When people take their laws and rituals *as* the totality of

²⁵Qur'an, 5:48ff.; 22:34, 67.

²⁶Qur'an, 64:2; 76:3.

their religion, they are led to claim exclusivism and exalt themselves as the chosen ones. This results either in indifference, isolation, religious chauvinism or self-sufficiency. In this category fall Judaism and Christianity.

The Qur'an maintains that from the unity of God stem both the unity of mankind and of religion. The unity of religion is maintained in its essence, which comprises full consciousness of God and belief in Him, belief in the Hereafter, and the necessity to live a righteous and moral life:

Say, O followers of the Bible! You have no valid ground for your beliefs unless you (truly) observe the Torah and the Gospel, all that has been bestowed from on high upon you by your Sustainer. Yet all that has been bestowed from on high upon Thee O Prophet by the Sustainer is bound to make many of them yet more stubborn in their overweening arrogance and in their denial of the truth. But sorrow not over people who deny the truth: for, verily, those who have attained to faith in this divine writ [i.e., the Qur'an] as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Sabians, and the Christians—all who believe in God, and the Last Day and do righteous deeds—no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve. (5:68-69; cf. 2:62; 22:17)

The Qur'an designates all religious communities preceding the Qur'an as *Ahl al-Kiiab*, the people of the Divine writ, or the people who have been given revelation and messengers from God. Although the expression explicitly refers to the Jews and the Christians, implicitly it does refer to all the people who conceive to be the recipients of revelation through messengers of God. Since, according to the Qur'an, there has been no people who did not receive a messenger and revelation in their own language, it implies that all religious communities are included in the *Ahl al-Kiiib* category.²⁷

Although human beings received the one and the same true religion they received different *sharfahs*, *mansiks*, and *minhajis*. Due to their sectarian tendencies over the ages, they had become lax in maintaining the essence of religion in its pristine form and had also lapsed in maintaining the moral law. No wonder what they still observe, represents a mixture of truth and untruth.

²⁷Qur'an, 10:47; 14:7; 35:24.

Since the Qur'an embodies the final and universal revelation from God, it is obviously irrational to adhere to earlier revelations that have been abrogated by it. But since all the followers of earlier revelations, indeed all of mankind, cannot be expected to accept the Qur'an, it presents itself as a guide and invites a comparative study of religious scriptures.

According to the Qur'an, the followers of earlier scriptures had committed *tahrif* (alteration in text, context, meaning and import) and *talbis* (overlying the truth with falsehood and suppressing the truth and concealing it knowingly).²⁸ Hence what they presently possess does not represent their doctrines and creeds in their pristine form. This also explains their lack of comprehension of the essence of the true religion, with many of them even going to the extent of compromising monotheism.²⁹ However, these lapses cannot be rectified by force or compulsion. Instead, the human faculties of reason, intuition, and common sense perception should guide them toward the truth which, in its final form, is available in the Qur'an:

There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from the way of error: hence, he who rejects the powers of evil and believes in God has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way, for God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (2: 256)

The Qur'an also commands its followers to respect the beliefs and opinions of the followers of other religious beliefs:

But do not revile those whom they invoke instead of God, lest they revile God out of spite, and in ignorance: For, goodly indeed have We made their own doings appear unto every community. In time [however] unto their Sustainer they must return: and then He will make them [truly] understand all that they were doing. (Qur'an 6: 108)

Even so, the Qur'an does not countenance indifference or relativism to the truth nor isolation and exclusivism. Instead, it enjoins continuous exchange of views, and meaningful and healthy dialogue

²⁸Qur'an, 2:41-42, 58, 59, 75, 78, 146, 159, 174; 3:71, 78; 4:46; 5:13, 41; 6:91; 7:17, 161.

²⁹Qur'an, 4:170-174; 5:68-82.

among different religious communities. This command makes the learning of the history of religions imperative for its followers:

Call thou [all mankind] unto thy Sustainer's path with wisdom and good exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner: for, behold, thy Sustainer knows best as to who strays from His path, and best knows He as to who are the right guided. (16:125)

And do not argue with the followers of earlier revelation otherwise than in a most kindly manner—unless it be such of them as are bent on evil doing, and say, "We believe in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, as well as that which has been bestowed upon you: for our God and your God is one and the same, and it is unto Him that we all surrender ourselves." (29: 46)

Additionally, the Qur'an delineates the basic principles of meta-religion, a common ground for a meaningful inter-religious dialogue:

Say: "O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God." And if they turn away, then say: "Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves unto Him." (3:64)

TWO

Muslim Encounter with Other Religions

A. Religious Experience of the Prophet Muhammad

The Prophet Muhammad proclaimed his prophetic mission in the seventh century Makkah. His religious experience occurred in an age whose recorded history is available to mankind. He received the revelation in piecemeal for some twenty three years. He received, imbibed, lived, taught and transmitted the Qur'an as verbatim revelation from God. The Qur'an claimed itself to be the final revelation, and declared Muhammad as the last messenger sent for all mankind, sealing the line of messengers and prophets for ever.¹ Clearly, this claim was tantamount to questioning the continued legitimacy of earlier revelations and the status of the followers of other religious traditions.

Makkah, the pilgrimage city of the Arabian peninsula and the caravan-trade city on the route of ancient East-West trade, was not an isolated place. In addition to polytheists, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) encountered the Jews and the Christians of Arabia and of the neighbouring countries directly, and the followers of Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism indirectly. The Prophet (peace be on him) expected especially the followers of the earlier prophetic religious traditions to join the fold of Islam and to accept him as the final prophet and messenger. With the exception of some individuals, however, the majority of the contemporary Jews and Christians did

¹Qur'an, 5:44-48; 6:19; 7:158; 17:105-107, 33-40, 45-46; 34:28; 42:7-8.

not respond to his call positively. Rather, when Muhammad (peace be on him) moved to Madinah, no sooner had the Jews of Madinah realized that he was about to establish Islam as the universal religion, they engaged in hostile activities and started conspiring with the Makkan polytheists against the Muslims and their cause. The ensuing conflict ultimately resulted in purging Madinah, the first city-state of Islam, of the Jews. Similarly, in the course of time the hostile posture of the Christians of northern Arabia also led to conflict and bloodshed.

B. The Qur'anic View of Tahri]

In order to appreciate the nature of religious interaction between the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and his early followers on one hand, and the contemporary Jews and Christians of Arabia, on the other, two things need to be borne in mind. First, the Prophet (peace be on him) felt a high degree of kinship with them. This is evident from several verses in the Qur'an in which the *Ahl al-Kiib* have been assigned a distinct position, and have been placed on a higher pedestal than downright polytheists. This kinship goes to the extent of making the claim that the Muslims were the true inheritors of the heritage of the Biblical prophets. Secondly, notwithstanding its affirmation that these prophets had received revelation from God, the Qur'an severely criticized the *Ahl al-Kiib's* attitude toward the revealed scriptures in general and towards the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad in particular. Most important of all, the Qur'an charged the *Ahl al-Kiib* with tahri], and maintained that the Jews and Christians deliberately refused to accept the prophethood of Muhammad and the truth of the Qur'an out of jealousy and self-interest.² Support for this claim was provided by learned individuals from the Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian religious traditions who joined Islam. Several such cases are reported in the Hadith literature. The following two traditions may be cited by way of illustration.

Anas narrated: "When the news of the arrival of the Prophet at Madinah reached 'Abd Allah ibn Salam, he went to him [i.e. the Prophet] to inquire of him about certain things. He said: "I am going to ask you about three things that only a Prophet can answer: What is the first

²Qur'iin, 2:75; 3:16-21; 4:46; 5:13-15, 41; 6-92.

sign of The Hour? What is the first food which the people of Paradise will eat? Wherefore does a child attract similarity to his father or to his mother?" The Prophet replied: "Gabriel has just now informed me of that." Ibn Salam said: "He [i.e., Gabriel] is the enemy of the Jews amongst the angels". The Prophet said: "As for the first sign of the Hour, it will be a fire that will gather the people from the East to the West. As for the first meal which the people of Paradise will eat, it will be the caudate (extra) lobe of the fish-liver. As for the child, if the man's discharge precedes the woman's discharge, the child attracts similarity to the man; and if the woman's discharge precedes the man's, then the child attracts similarity to the woman." On this 'Abd Allah ibn Salam said: "I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, and that you are the Apostle of Allah," and added: "O Allah's Apostle! Jews invent lies that make one wonder, so please ask them about me before they know about my conversion to Islam." Thereafter the Jews came, and the Prophet said: "What kind of man is 'Abd Allah ibn Salam among you?" They replied "The best of us and the son of the best of us and the most superior among us, and the son of the most superior among us." The Prophet said: "What would you think if 'Abd Allah ibn Salam should embrace Islam?" They said, "May Allah protect him from that." Then the Prophet repeated his question and they gave the same answer. Then 'Abd Allah came out to them and said: "I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah!" On this, the Jews said: "He is the most wicked among us and the son of the most wicked among us." So they degraded him. On this, he [i.e. 'Abd Allah Ibn Salam] said: "It is this that I was afraid of, O Allah's Apostle."³

'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar narrated: "The Jews came to Allah's Apostle and mentioned to him that a man and a lady among them had committed illegal sexual intercourse. Allah's Apostle said to them: "What do you find in the

³Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Bukhari, *Sa~i~ al-Bukhari* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1979), vol. 5, pp. 189-190.

Torah regarding *rajm* (lapidation)?" They replied: "We only disgrace and flog them with stripes." 'Abd Allah ibn Salam said to them: "You have told a lie. The penalty of *rajm* is in the Torah." They brought the Torah and opened it. One of them put his hand over the verse of *rajm* and read what was before and after it. 'Abd Allah ibn Salam said to him: "Lift up your hand." When he lifted it, there appeared the verse of *rajm*. So they said: "O Muhammad! He has said the truth; the verse of the *rajm* is in the Torah." Then Allah's Apostle ordered that the two persons [guilty of illegal sexual intercourse] be stoned to death, and so they were stoned, and I saw the man bending over the woman so as to protect her from the stones."⁴

The word *tahrīj* occurs in the Qur'an four times in its verbal form. In these verses the Jews have been charged with distorting the revealed words (*yul'arrifūna al-kalima*), and taking them out of their context knowingly (*'an mawajjī'ihī* or *min ba'jī mawajjī'ihī* and *min ba'jī ma 'aqalūhu*).⁵ Such a distortion, it further maintains, is committed sometimes by forgetting a part of the original message sent by God (*nasū luizzar: mimmū dhukkirū bihī*), or by treating the Divine writ as mere leaves of paper, or by concealing most of the verities of the revealed scriptures. Some other terms used by the Qur'an for the distortion of the revealed scriptures are: *iabdil* (substituting the revealed words with human words—exchanging with what was not spoken—*qawlan ghayra alladhī qila lahum*), *lawū* (distorting the words of scriptures with their twisting tongues), *labs* (overlying the truth with falsehood), and *kiimīr*; (suppressing and hiding the truth).⁶

The followers of the Bible have been directly charged with *tahrīj* time and again in the Qur'an. To illustrate the charge of *iōhrīj* in the Qur'an, one may refer to two indirect and complex examples which illustrate that charge. One is when God graced the Children of Israel to enter the land, He commanded them to enter its gates

⁴Ibid., vol. 8, p. 550.

⁵Qur'an, 2:75; 4:46; 5:13 and 5:41.

⁶For *tabdil*, see Qur'an, 2:59; 7:162; for *lawa*, see Qur'an, 3:78; 4:46; for *labs*, see the Qur'an, 2:42; 3:71; for *kiimīn*, see the Qur'an, 2:42, 140, 146, 159, 174; 3:71, 187; for *nīsyān*, see Qur'an, 5:13-14; 7:53.

humbly saying *Ifittatun*, but they substituted another saying for it.⁷ The other example relates to the contemporary Jews of Madinah. They addressed the Prophet Muhammad so as to call his attention, and in so doing they used the same word [rii'ini] with which the Muslims addressed Muhammad out of respect. They, however, pronounced the word in a malicious way so that it became a means to deride and ridicule Muhammad (peace be on him). The Qur'an instructed the believers to use the word *unzurtui* (look at us) when calling the attention of Muhammad (peace be on him) instead of using the word *rii'itui* so as not to allow the Jews of Madinah to make fun of Muhammad while feigning respect for him.⁸ Another aspect of *ta-rff*, however, is described in the Qur'an with reference to the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). The Qur'an points out that the Tawrah and Injil (the Qur'anic terms for the revealed scriptures sent down upon Moses and Jesus respectively) had foretold the advent of the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an maintains that the People of the Book knew that he was the expected and prophesied final messenger of God with as great a certitude as they knew their own children. But many among them were given to suppressing this truth.⁹ Hence they deliberately refused to identify the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) with the one who was the prophesied and foretold messenger of God in their own scriptures.¹⁰ The same charge of *ta-rff* is maintained in the *Ifadth* as well. For instance, consider the following:

Abu Hurayrah narrated: "The People of the Scripture (Jews) used to recite the Torah in Hebrew and they used to explain it in Arabic to the Muslims. On that Allah's Apostle said, "Do not believe the People of the Scripture or disbelieve them, but say: "We believe in Allah and what is revealed to us". (See Qur'an 2: 136)¹¹

'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Utbah narrated: "Ibn 'Abbas said, "O Muslims! How do you ask the People of the Scriptures, though your Book [i.e., the Qur'an] which was revealed to His Prophet is the most recent

⁷Qur'an, 2:58-59; 7:161-162.

⁸Qur'an, 2:104; 4:46.

⁹Qur'an, 2:146; 3:81; 6:20; 7:157-158; 61:6.

¹⁰See especially Qur'an, 7:157-158 and 61:6.

¹¹Al-Bukhari, *Saḥīḥ*, vol. 6, p. 13.

information from Allah and you recite it, the Book that has not been distorted? Allah has revealed to you that the People of the Scripture have changed with their own hands what was revealed to them, and they have said [as regards their changed Scriptures]: "This is from Allah" in order to get some worldly benefit thereby." Ibn 'Abbas added: "Isn't the knowledge revealed to you sufficient to prevent you from asking them? By Allah, I have never seen anyone of them asking you [Muslims] about what has been revealed to you."¹²

'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas narrated: "They, the People of the Scripture, divided the Scripture into parts, believing in some portions of it and disbelieving in the others." (see Qur'an 15:91).¹³

'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'A~ narrated: "This verse--> 'Verily We have sent you (O Muhammad) as a witness, as a bringer of glad tidings and as a warner." (Qur'an 48:8)—which is in the Qur'an, appears in the Torah thus: "Verily We have sent you [O Muhammad] as a witness, as a bringer of glad tidings and as a witness, as a bringer of glad tidings and as a warner, and as a protector for the illiterates [i.e., the Arabs]. You are My slave and My Apostle, and I have characterized you as one who is neither hard-hearted nor of fierce character, nor one who shouts in the markets. You do not return evil for evil, but excuse and forgive. Allah will not take you unto Him till He guides through you a crooked nation on the right path by causing them to say: 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah.' With such a statement He will cause to open blind eyes, deaf ears and hardened hearts".¹⁴

C. Tolerance of Non-Muslims

Notwithstanding the emphasis on the charge of *ta-rif*, the Qur'an as well as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) never fore-closed the channels of religious dialogue, nor of cordial interaction with non-Muslims at the socio-economic and cultural levels. Rather,

¹²Ibid., vol. 3, p. 526.

¹³Ibid., vol. 5, p. 194.

¹⁴Ibid., vol. 6, pp. 345-346.

the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) exemplified in an excellent manner the Qur'anic norms of interaction between the followers of different religions. Thus, while the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and his Companions maintained the charge of *iahri*] they also provided an environment of religious freedom and tolerance unprecedented in history. The adherents of other religious traditions, particularly the Jews and the Christians, enjoyed religious and communal freedom as long as they did not attempt to undermine the Islamic polity or act with hostility towards Islam and Muslims. The protection of the lives, properties and honour of the non-Muslims living in the Islamic domain was laid down as a religious obligation for the Muslims. Such non-Muslim citizens of Islamic polity were known by the appellation *Ahl-al-Dhimmah* (the people whose protection is covenanted on behalf of Allah and His Messenger).¹⁵

The findings of studies by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars concerning the condition and status of non-Muslim communities under Muslim rulers, of course, differ as far as their views about the institution of *Dhimmah* vary. But the Muslim attitude of tolerance and religious freedom is well attested by the statement of Eliyya, the Metropolitan of Nasibin (1008-1049) which has been quoted by a Christian missionary hardly sympathetic to Islam. It runs as follows:

What we believe concerning the Muslims is that their obedience and love impresses us more than the obedience of the people of all other religions and kingdoms that are opposed to us, whether we are in their land or not, and whether they treat us well or not. And that is because the Muslims regard it as a matter of religion and duty to protect us, to honour us, and to treat us well. And whosoever of them oppresses us, their Master, i.e. their Prophet, will be his adversary on the day of resurrection. And their law approves of us and distinguishes us from the people of other religions, whether Magians or Hindus or Sabians or the others who are opposed to us..It is clear also that Muslims, when they have oppressed us and done us wrong, and then have turned to their law, oppressing us but people of other religions, when they honour us and do us good, and turn to their law, find that it does not praise them for this. So the wrongdoing of the Muslims toward us, and their enmity against us,

¹⁵ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, q.v. "*Ahl al-Kitab*" and "*Ahl al-Dhimmah*".

and their confession that in treating us thus they are acting contrary to their law, is better for us than the good treatment of others who confess that it is contrary to their law to treat us well.¹⁶

Many non-Muslim scholars acknowledge, some perhaps grudgingly, the illustrious instances of tolerance shown by Muslims. Emphasizing the status of *Ahl al-Dhimmah* as second class citizens, W. Montgomery Watt writes: "On the whole there was more genuine toleration of non-Muslims under Islam than there was of non-Christians in Medieval Christian states".¹⁷

The point being made here is not to absolve the Muslims from any injustices and persecutions they might have committed against the people of other religious traditions, nor to claim that Muslims are immune from acting wrongfully. Rather, the purpose here is to stress the historical fact of Muslims' interaction and their disposition to fruitful co-existence with people of diverse religious worldviews and philosophies, with adherents of various ideologies and persuasions, and to emphasize that the Muslims were obliged by the *Sharf'ah* to honour the civil, communal and religious rights of other religious communities.

As has been clearly shown in the preceding chapter, the Qur'an categorically prohibited coercion in matters of faith. According to Muhammad Asad, in keeping with:

...the categorical prohibition of coercion *{ikrüh}* in anything that pertains to faith or religion, all Muslim jurists *{fuqahü'}* hold that forcible conversion is, under all circumstances, null and void, and that any attempt at coercing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is a grievous sin; a verdict **whch** disposes of the widespread misconception that Islam has nothing else to place before the unbelievers except the alternative of conversion or the sword.¹⁸

The covenant of Caliph 'Umar is often cited to illustrate the nature of agreements made between Muslims and the conquered peoples

¹⁶Laurence E. Browne, *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*, reprinted (New York: Howard Fertig, 1967), pp. 48-49.

¹⁷William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 51.

¹⁸See comments on Qur'an, 2:256, in Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ün*, pp. 57-58.

of other religious traditions. When Jerusalem submitted to 'Umar in 639 C.E. he made the following covenant with the people of Jerusalem:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Companionate. This is the security which 'Umar, the servant of God, the Commander of the faithful, grants to the people of Aelia. He grants to all, whether sick or sound, security for their lives, their possessions, their churches and their crosses, and for all that concerns their religion. Their churches shall not be changed into dwelling places, nor destroyed; neither shall they nor their appurtenances be in any way diminished, nor the crosses of the inhabitants nor ought of their possessions, nor shall any constraint be put upon them in the matter of their faith, nor shall anyone of them be harmed.¹⁹

D. Internal Factors Stimulating Religious Disputations: the Birth of *Umm al-Kalim*

For a quarter of a century after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), Madinah remained the capital city of the caliphate up until the time of 'Uthman. By this time the Muslim rule had extended to Iraq, Syria, Egypt and North Africa. Due to many complex internal and external factors, there emerged an internal problem of politico-religious leadership and the first stirrings of dissension began to surface. Grievances against the administration led to political uprising which in turn resulted in a civil war that split up the Muslim community into different groups holding divergent views on the institution of *Khilifah*, or *Imiiman* (politico-religious leadership). Differences of political and administrative viewpoints further solidified the groupings. Each group tried to legitimize its political choices in theological terms. The three major groups which continued to struggle for taking over the leadership of the community based their political views, later came to be known as the Khawarij (Seceders), the Shi'ah (Supporters of 'Ali who subscribed to the theory of *Inuimah*), and the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa ol-Jamii'ah* (the followers of the Prophetic model and of communal unity).

¹⁹Thomas W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (Lahore: S. M. Ashraf, 1961), pp. 56-57.

Although this internal division did not stand in the way of the extension of Muslim power abroad, it brought into focus some perennial problems which every great religious community has had to address: the problems concerning the nature of faith, of evil, of sinners, of free-will and predestination, of the essence and attributes of God, of the nature of revelation, of the tension between reason and revelation, and so on. Disputation and argumentation on these problems gave birth to the Muslim science of discursive reasoning and argumentation commonly, though not necessarily correctly, known as *'Ilm al-Kaliim*, and is also called systematic rational theology or dialectical theology.

It is possible that this area of intellectual discourse might have been influenced, to some extent, by non-Muslim religious sources because many converts from other religious traditions (or their descendants) now wrote treatises as Muslim *Kaliim* scholars. These *Kaliim* scholars wrote treatises to argue that their views conformed to the tradition and were sound. They also refuted the views of their advertaries as deviations from, and innovations in, the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. In the course of such refutations and counter-refutations, and in the course of the attempts to support certain politico-religious attitudes by means of rational arguments reinforced by interpretations of the Qur'an and the Hadith; there emerged many intellectual trends and schools of thought which were later known as *firaq* (groups) or *ni~al* (philosophies or ideologies).

As soon as the *Mutakallimun* came in closer contact with the adherents of other religious traditions and had direct access to their scriptures, traditions and theological works, they tried to work out parallels between non-Muslim religious doctrines and the deviating or innovating religious positions taken by some Muslims. Reflecting upon the history of other religious traditions they inferred that all deviating religious groups, whether from within the Muslim community or from other religious traditions, are primarily deviations from the one true religion known by its generic term, Islam. This also provided them with a *modus operandi* to deal with the internal religious diversity in the Muslim community and the religious diversity of mankind.

The *mutakallimun* were the first to defend the Islamic doctrines against internal deviations, and to present Islam on grounds of reason and logical consistency. They were also the first generation of

Muslim religious scholars who engaged themselves in disputations with scholars of other religious traditions.²⁰

One of the main findings of this study is that the origins of the science of *Kalim* lay primarily in the reasoning and disputation of politically divergent Muslim groups which gave birth to diverse tendencies and schools of Islamic thought. As Louis Gardet points out:

The appearances of the three main politico-religious traditions, Khariji, Shi'i and Sunni, set before Muslim thinkers the problem of the validity of the Imama...and the "status of the believer" which the imam must possess. Thence arose the question of faith and the conditions of salvation and the question of man's responsibility or lack of responsibility; then, as parallel considerations, the nature of the Kur'an (created or not created) and hence the stress laid upon the divine attribute of the Word; then finally, the more general problem of the divine attributes, their existence and their connexion with the divine essence, and its Unity. Many other questions were added in course of time but already at this early period—the age of the Umayyads and the early 'Abbasids—the essential themes which were to constitute *'ilm al-kalam* had arisen. Whatever may have been the effect of external influences—discussions with Mazdean Zandika on good and evil in human actions or with the Christian theologians of Damascus on the Word of God, and the discovery of Greek science and philosophy—*Kalim* tended at first to take shape over specifically Muslim problems. The external influences probably had some effect as a result of the controversies, emphasizing some aspects of the subjects dealt with, giving direction to the choice of arguments and (still more, perhaps) the methods of argumentation. The fact remains, however, that *'ilm al-kalim* is certainly not an Arab adaptation of Mazdean or Christian theology but arose within the Muslim community, where it preserved its own originality.²¹

In course of time, when the science of *Kalim* developed its essential principle of harmony between reason and revelation, that the

²⁰ Ahmad Amin, *Fuṣūḥ al-Islām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 307-308.

²¹ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, q.v. " 'Ilm al-Kalām".

religious truth-claims should be verifiable by reason and common sense and be in conformity with historical facts, the *mutakallimun* became inclined to include in their treatises the data on other religious traditions. They tried to work out some basic structure behind all deviation from the truth and tried to correlate Muslim deviating tendencies with the views and doctrines of earlier religious traditions. The common religious categories they adopted for their analysis of deviating beliefs, whether internal or external, were the universality of revelation, religious scriptures, prophecy, and the consensus of the reliable witnesses and transmitters through an unbroken line of critically attested transmission (*naql mutawūtir; tawūtur*). It was on the basis of these religious categories, in addition to the principles of reason and consistency, that Muslim studies of other religious traditions were produced. This genre of Muslim literature is called *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (Religious Traditions and Philosophical Ideologies). In the following pages is sketched a brief history of the historical situation which stimulated the production of this literature, besides attempting an analysis of some specimen studies dealing with other religious traditions prior to Ibn Hazm.

E. *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*: External Factors

The spectacular expansion of Muslim rule over Iraq, Syria, Egypt and North Africa brought Muslims in close and direct contact with the members of other religious traditions, and with well organized and highly institutionalized religious communities. Within less than a century after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 C.E., Muslims had crossed the Indus river in the East and the straits of Gibraltar in the West, enabling them to enter into Spain. The Muslim expansion changed not only the political and religious map of the ancient world; it also opened avenues for cross-religious and cross-cultural fertilization of mankind.

Although they were rulers, the Muslims were neither in the majority nor as advanced in material culture as the conquered Persians and Byzantines. Their geographical and socio-economic proximity gave Muslims a unique opportunity to discuss all conflicting claims of truth. These discussions gave birth to written treatises of polemical, apologetical, and even of intent and content.

This unprecedented religious tolerance shown by the conquering minority provided the inquiring scholars with the opportune time to reflect upon the nature of religious diversity on its own terms. Muslim scholars were even more obliged to comprehend and explain

the fact of religious diversity in the light of their belief in the unity of Truth, the unity of mankind, and the unity of life. Their intellectual integrity and honesty compelled them to reflect upon the nature, scope, and function of religion on the one hand, and to understand the creeds, cults, customs, and conducts of the differing religious groups on the other. Since they could be ignored only at the cost of their own intellectual and existential advancement, the Muslims made a significant contribution to studying the religious history of mankind thereby augmenting the common fund of human knowledge.

This situation was not dissimilar to the Western scholars' encounter with other cultures and religious traditions during the period of Western colonization. Rather, Western scholars of religion were dependent for a longer time upon second-hand information and data provided to them by non-specialists. Often such data were inaccurate, if not entirely distorted. On the contrary, the Muslim scholars had the benefit of direct knowledge through close socio-economic interaction with peoples of other religious traditions. Second, the Muslim scholars of that age did not approach other cultures in the same way as the Western colonizers did during the last few centuries. The Muslims could not behave as curious observers, or as conquerors imbued with, a sense of civilizational superiority. In the religious environment of the time, they did not isolate themselves or shy away from the challenge of religious diversity.

Some scholars took this situation very seriously and stood up to the demand of objective analysis of the social-religious reality. Their criteria for the study of differing religious beliefs were based on reason, common sense observation, and on the **analysis** of socio-economic, political, and historical facts that brought about these religious differences. They studied the sacred scriptures and the original sources of other religious traditions, researched their meanings and interpretations, and observed their implementation as practiced by their followers. Some even learned the languages of nations other than their own, listened to the teachers of other religious communities and participated in their rituals when and where it was possible. They even confirmed and cross-checked the different interpretations and the differing levels of the understanding of the adherents of other faiths. They also tried to acquire a proper understanding of these religious traditions in order to comprehend the nature and purpose of

the religious diversity of mankind in the context of their belief in the unity of Truth.²²

This venture in the first millenium of Musiim history, especially from the third to the sixth century of *Hijrah*, resulted in the production of a unique and voluminous literature that still awaits the serious attention of its readers, analysts, critics, and translators. Mankind's debt to these scholars is, however, occasionally acknowledged by such scholars as Franz Rosenthal. He writes:

The comparative study of religion has been rightly acclaimed as one of the great contributions of Muslim civilization to mankind's intellectual progress. Bestriding the middle zone of the Oikeumene, Medieval Islam had contact with many religions and probably all conceivable types of religious experience.... There were also two possible ways to confront the challenge arising out of the mutiplicity of competing religions. It could either be blandly ignored or it could be met head on. Greatly to our benefit, Muslim intellectuals chose the second alternative.²³

Understandably, the Muslim studies dealing with other religious traditions were not altogether free of apologetics, polemics, and value judgements. It must be remembered, however, that comparative studies mostly take place in a climate of polemics and apologetics, are nurtured by tensions between traditionalism and change, or in the midst of acrimonious controversies between different religious views and ideologies. Many Muslim studies of religion were the direct result of the scholars' personal encounters with, and interest in, other religious traditions. One common element in their treatment of these religious traditions was, however, the scholars; firm belief in Islam and in the unity of Truth.

Broadly speaking, the literature they produced may be classified into four categories: (a) accounts of personal dialogues between a

²²Acknowledging Muslim scholars' search 'for books of non-Muslims, Franz Rosenthal writes: "Al-Biruni looked in vain for a copy of *Mün, 's Sifr al-Asrür* for over forty years, until he finally succeeded in his search". Franz Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1947), p. 18.

²³Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shaharastiinl on Indian Religions, Religion and Society* Series 4 (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1976), Preface, p. 5. Adam Mez admits this fact even with better documentation. See *The Renaissance of Islam*, repr. (New York: AMS Press, 1975), 210ff.

Muslim and a non-Muslim, a kind of participatory dialogue; (b) treatises aimed at persuading others and converting them to one's faith with an accent on religious disagreements; (c) refutation of other religious traditions, often by converts who sought to justify their own conversions, or responses to general polemical writings advanced against Islam, or writings seeking to inform the general public about these polemics; and (d) general studies of religions not motivated primarily by polemical or apologetic consideration, but which were concerned with the more serious business of comprehending the unity of Truth and the diversity of religious traditions, i.e., a systematic study of the nature and function of religious phenomena, the nature of truth-claims of diverse religious traditions, the division of religions into various sects, and the processes of religious development and change. The studies in the fourth category are generally known as *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*.

Interestingly, these scholars did not see world religions as epiphenomena, nor did they divide knowledge into watertight disciplines, *à la* modern Western scholarship. In view of the Islamic concept of the unity of knowledge and Truth, they saw religion as the mother of all sciences, the fountainhead and quintessence of all branches of knowledge. The present division of knowledge into humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences is a Western innovation, primarily based upon the postulates of anthropocentrism, evolutionism and materialism. This explains why the Western classical studies of religion, from the second half of the nineteenth century onward, were obsessed with the search for the origins and primordial forms of religion. They reduced religion to an element of culture, rather than looking at man as *homo religiosus* and treating the religious phenomenon as the very core of human culture and civilization.

In contrast, Muslim scholars conceived religion as the core and basis of all human culture and civilization, and saw all other branches of knowledge as directly related to, and dependent upon, the science of religion. That is why many Muslim works on history (whether biographical, local or universal), geography, *belles lettres*, law, theology, or philosophy, also contain some information pertaining to Islam and other religious traditions.

During the last three decades, those Muslim scholars who, for long, were relegated to the status of mere historians, heresiographers, or theologians by the Orientalists are being studied as the forerunners of the contemporary discipline—comparative study of religion. Thus, *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Nihal* of al-Shahrastānī is now being considered

as the first Muslim study of the history of religions in the West, and al-Biruni's contribution to this field has also come to be somewhat recognised. But systematic research on the *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* literature of which al-Shaharastani's work represents a high watermark, still remains to be undertaken.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that prior to both al-Biruni and al-Shaharastani, Ibn Hazm produced one of the most systematic and earliest works on the history of religious doctrines—viz. *Kitab al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwal wa al-Nihal*. Realizing the need for such a work Ibn Hazm prefaces his study with the following remarks:

Indeed, many people have written a great number of books on the differences of mankind's religions and world-views. Some of them lengthened their treatises with unnecessary details and long-windedness to an extent of prolixity, nonsense, and exaggeration, and thus, including incoherent and mistaken data which made them devoid of understanding and shorn of knowledge. Others summarized, shortened, and curtailed them to the extent of omitting significant points of their strength and thus their purpose was lost. So these religious views were not presented on their own terms. Thus, these studies do injustice to the proper study of the differing views and to their readers these stand no longer useful.²⁴

Ibn Hazm does not, however, mention any particular scholar or title, nor does he mention the sources of his information. Hence, in order to appreciate Ibn Hazm's remarks in its correct perspective, extant works which deal with other religious traditions in general and with Muslim studies of the Bible in particular are briefly surveyed below.

It is generally believed that the Muʿtazilites started their philosophical theology after their interaction with the Damascene Christian theologians such as John of Damascus and other Church Fathers who engaged them in theological issues such as those concerning the

²⁴Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwal wa al-Nihal*, 5 parts bound in 2; parts 1 and 2 in one and parts 3, 4, and 5 in the other with each part separately paginated (Cairo: al-Matba'ah al-Adabiyyah, 1317-1321A.H./1899-1903) pt. 1, p. 2. (This work, hereafter referred to as *Kitab al-Fasl*, will be cited by part and page numbers).

Word of God.²⁵ However, Ahmad Amin maintains that the *Kalüm* studies first struck their roots in Iraq when the *mutakallimün* began to engage in disputations with Manichaeans and Dualists. These treatises have been lost except for some excerpts in later works.²⁶

Among the earliest works extant today are brief treatises of al-Nashī al-Akbar (al-Nashī, the Elder, d. 293 A.H./906 C.E.). Joseph van Ess considers his *Masū'il al-Imūmah* and al-Kitiib *al-Awsat* among the first extant treatises. In these are discussed the problems of *Imūmah* — the question of succession to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) — although chiefly dealing with the deviating Muslim groups who are alternately dubbed as *niwā'il*, {philosophies or ideologies), 'irīi' (sing. *ra'y*), meaning personal rational opinion) and *ahwū'* (passions) as followers of erroneous traditions. These works, however, also include some data on the religious Dualists, Manichaeans, Jews and Christians, while discussing their differences with Islam. Al-Nashī, for instance, refutes the Dualists' doctrines about the creation of the universe and about good and evil, the Manichaeans' views on Light and Darkness, the Jews' theory of the abrogation of divine Law, of reality, and of the series of revelations from God (*naskh al-sharī'i'*), and the Christians' doctrine of the Trinity. Thus, from the outset, the main positions of the earlier religious traditions *vis-a-vis* Islam came to be outlined.²⁷

Another well-known author to set the norms in this genre of literature is Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi (d. 429 A.H./1037 C.E.). As an Ash'arite theologian, his principal concern was to prove the Ash'arite school as the authentic representative of orthodoxy and to refute the claims of others by correlating the 'deviating' Muslim groups' beliefs with the doctrines of the pre-Islamic religious traditions. This classification of Muslim and non-Muslim religious groups on the basis of their doctrinal similarities and their deviations from the truth became the norm of all Muslim studies of comparative religion. Al-Baghdadi classifies knowledge under four categories: (i) knowledge acquired through discursive reasoning, by analogy, and through

²⁵See, for example, the claim made by Morris Sigel Seale, *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers* (London: Luzac and Co., 1964).

²⁶Ahmad Amin, *Jullū al-Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 307ff.

²⁷See Josef Van Ess, *Frühe Mu'tazilitische Haresiographie* (Beirut and Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971), pp. 73-88. See also its review by George F. Hourani, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Aug. 1978), pp. 406-407.

the process of deduction; (ii) knowledge acquire through experiment and experience; (iii) knowledge received through revelation; and (iv) knowledge acquired by intuition.

To al-Baghdadi the creation of the universe, the existence and the unity of the Creator and the truth of the true prophets are knowable by reason and critical thinking, while the rituals and the divine laws become known through revelation. Hence, reward and punishment do not become due until after the revelation from God. (Ibn Hazm also accepts this viewpoint).²⁸

Al-Baghdadi, however, does not provide much data about other religious traditions. Rather, his references to them are always aimed at pointing out the similarities between the 'deviating' Muslim groups' doctrines **with** those of the Manichaeans, Jews, Christians, and Brahmans. The Mu'tazilah, for instance, are compared to the latter. The Mu'tazilah are like the Brahmans in so far as both consider reason sufficient to know what is beneficial and what is harmful, but unlike the Mu'tazilah the Brahmans do not believe in the prophets.²⁹

Two historians whose works contain some data on other religious traditions may be mentioned here. Of them, al-Ya'qubi (d. 257 A.H./872 C.E.) includes some data on the religious traditions of the earlier period in his universal history. He begins his history from Adam, continues through Biblical and non-Biblical history, and dwells briefly on ManI and his religious movement while dealing with Iran. His account of Jesus is derived from the four Gospels and other non-Qur'anic sources, but at times he challenges the accuracy of the Gospels, and criticizes their diverging reports, omissions and deficiencies. However, on the whole, he confines himself to only those aspects of other religious traditions and their patriarchs which are relevant to his main theme of universal history. He tends not to deal with them as systems in contrast with Islam.³⁰

The other historian, al-Mas'udi (d. 345 A.H./956 C.E.) had reportedly produced six works on non-Muslim religions, but unfortunately none has survived. However, his two extant works contain some data

²⁸ Abu Mansur 'Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi, *Kitāb Usūl al-Dīn* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthanna, 1963), p. 19.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26. See also his *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1970) p. 53, 82, 115; and his *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* (Cairo: Maktabah M. 'Aff Sabth, 1964), pp. 12-13.

³⁰ Ibn Wadih al-Ya'qubi, *Tū'rikh al-Ya'qubi*, 4 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), pt. 4, pp. 74ff.

on their beliefs and practices.³¹ He emphasizes the role of religion in higher civilizations, and on the basis of Persian and the Greek literature, he tries to prove that religion (*din*) and political authority (*al-mulk*) are indispensable for one another.³²

In dealing with religious traditions, al-Mas'udi applies a two-fold typology: (i) those which have a more or less clear concept of God, the prophethood, and the scriptures and have institutionalized the places of worship, and (ii) those which have no articulated religious principles, divine laws and a hierarchy of systematic religious administration. In the first category are included the major religions—Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Buddhism. On the pattern of the Sabi'un of Iraq, he identifies Hinduism and Buddhism in the category of Sabi'im (Sabaeans). This extension of Sabi'un to the Hindus and especially the Buddhists could later be adopted by both Ibn Hazm and al-Shahrastani. In the second category which he calls *Jahiliyyah* (religious traditions steeped in ignorance) are included peoples such as Turkic, Germanic and African tribes (Riis, Saqalibah, etc.).³³

Al-Mas'udi seems to be aware of two versions of the Tawrah in Arabic: the Arabic translation of Saadia Gaon and the Greek Septuagint, probably rendered into Arabic by Hunayn b. Ishaq, and the Samaritan Torah and the Targum used by the contemporary Jews. He was probably in contact with Jewish scholars including Saadia Gaon whom he met in Baghdad. Besides the Samaritans, he is aware of two main Jewish schools—Ashma'th, representing the great majority of the Jews and 'Ananiyyah, the Karaites. He makes no critique of the Hebrew Bible. Al-Mas'udi defines tahrīj in the manner of those scholars who consider it to consist of distortive interpretation of the text rather than distortion of the text itself.³⁴

Fully conversant with the four Gospels and other books of the New Testament, al-Mas'udi refers to the Acts of the Apostles and to the epistles of Paul. Notwithstanding his wide knowledge of Christianity, he is sceptical about certain details in the Gospels, but he does not attempt a systematic critique. Rather, as an objective historian, he

³¹ For a serious study on al-Mas'udi's knowledge and attitude to other religious traditions, see Ahmad M. H. Shaboul, *al-Mas'udi and His World: A Muslim Humanist and His Interest in Non-Muslims* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), ch. VII.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 285-286

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 285-295.

records information as given in the Christian sources. For instance, in his account of the crucifixion of Christ, as an objection historian, he follows the Christian sources with the mere addition of the phrase, 'according to the Christians'.³⁵

Interestingly, on Christian history, creeds, etc., Ibn Hazm's has many similarities with al-Mas'udi on several counts, but it is uncertain whether his works were available to Ibn Hazm.

Muslim awareness of the Bible, both Hebrew and Christian, owes itself to a very large extent to the Qur'an and the Hadith, Muslim studies on the Bible are abundant and extend from *Isrū'fiyyūt* (popular stories about the earlier prophets of Israelite origin) to virulent polemics and confutations. They are characteristically marked by the Qur'anic charge of *tahrīj*. Ahmad Amin characterizes Muslim understanding of *tahrīj* to be of three kinds. First, which claims that the extant Bible cannot be identified with *Zabūr*, *Tawrah* and *Injil* that were sent down upon David, Moses and Jesus respectively. This is because both the Jews and the Christians have changed the text of these books which they claim to be sacred scriptures but which are in fact their distorted human versions. Second, which claims that *ta-rif* did not occur in the text of the scriptures but in their interpretation and understanding. Third, which claims that although *ta-rif* is primarily confined to interpretations, it has also occurred at some places in the text and consists of the deletion or addition of some phrases. Thus, the extant Bible can not be identified with the *Zabūr*, *Tawrah*, and *Injil*, nor can the Jewish and Christian understanding of them be generally accepted.³⁶

Muslim studies dealing with the Bible prior to Ibn Hazm are numerous. Except for al-Jahiz (d. 255 A.H. 868 C.E.), no study even alludes to the first category of *tahrīj* before Ibn Hazm. Al-Jahiz refutes the concept of Trinity, alludes to *ta-rif* al-lafz, that is, corruption in the text of the New Testament, a charge that Ibn Hazm made and attempted to establish later. About the fallibility of the authors of the four Gospels, al-Jahiz says:

They do not believe these four to be capable of error or forgetfulness, or intending a lie or conspiring on matters, or agreeing to divide up the leadership with each one of them handing over to his companion the share which

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ahmad Amin, *ḥu-ḥ al-Islīm*, vol. 1, p. 328.

was stipulated for him. If they say: "They are too upright to intend a lie, and too heedful to forget a thing they are elevated beyond erring in the religion of God or leading astray those entrusted to them", we say that the differences in their narratives of the Gospel, the mutual incompatibility of the teachings of their books, their disagreement concerning Christ himself, as well as the lack of unanimity in their legal prescriptions—all this is an indication of the correctness of our view about them and about your [the Christians'] stupidity about them.³⁷

Al-Jahiz's attitude towards the Hebrew Bible is, however, different. He censures the anthropomorphic language and the terms used for God in the Arabic translations of the Torah in use among the Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians, but considers that the text in Hebrew remains undistorted.³⁸

There are numerous studies in respect of *taḥrīf* of the second category i.e., distortion in interpretation *{taḥrīf al-ma'nū}*. One study that stands as the earliest comprehensive specimen and sets the norm for this category of studies is *Kitāb al-Dīn wa al-Dawlah* (The Book of Religion and Empire) by 'Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabari (d. 232 A.H./847 C.E.). He makes a thorough study of the Bible with a view to demonstrating the prophecies for the coming of Muhammad (peace be on him). First, he argues that Muhammad (peace be on him) was a prophet and messenger of God who worked miracles and fulfilled all the descriptions of the predicted Messiah in the Bible. He interprets all Biblical passages that allude to the expected Messiah as referring to none other than the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). He identifies passages in which Jesus has referred to the coming of the Paraclete, and says:

Concerning that [the prophethood of Muhammad], Jesus said in the fifteenth chapter of John's gospel, "The Paraclete, the spirit of truth whom my Father sends in my name, will teach you everything". Thus, the Paraclete whom God sends after Christ, confirming the name of Christ, is he who teaches people all the things which

³⁷'Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahia, *Al-Radd 'ala al-Nasīrii* in *Thalath Rasa'il li al-Jalīlī* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah, 1963), p. 24.

³⁸Thomas F. Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawab al-Ṣalīfī: A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, Ph.D Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1978, pp. 35-36.

they previously had not known. But among the disciples of Christ up till the present time there has not been anyone who has taught people something other than that which Jesus had taught them. Thus, the Paraclete who has taught men what they did not know is the Prophet [Muhammad]. And the Qur'an is that knowledge which Jesus called "all things".³⁹

'Alf al-Tabarī served as the pioneer of this idea which has influenced most of the later Muslim Biblical studies. Ibn Hazm also mentions the Biblical prophecies about the Prophet Muhammad, but they do not form a part of his Biblical critique.

Muslim studies of *iahri* in the third category is best represented by Ibn Taymiyyah who seems to be influenced by Ibn Hazm rather than his predecessor, 'Abd al-Jabbar's *al-Muqlitii*. Arguing in favour of the unity of God, 'Abd al-Jabbar (d. 416 A.H./1025 C.E.) disapproves the Jews' and Christians' concept of God. His main concern is, however, to refute the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Christology (maintained by Nestorians, Jacobites and Melkites), and this he does by pointing out the inconsistencies and contradictions in the Gospels.⁴⁰

He shows how verbal changes might have occurred since each evangelist had tried to correct and improve the Gospels that preceded him, and thus the multiplicity of Gospels precludes textual accuracy:

These three groups of Christians do not believe that God handed down to Christ a Book in any respect; rather they hold that Christ created the prophets and sent down upon them the Books. They only have four gospels by four individuals, each one of whom wrote his gospel in his time. There came after him one who was not pleased with his predecessors' gospel, [and believed] that his gospel was better... Every one of these men had the notion that the writer who composed a gospel before him had precisely recorded certain things and omitted others, and that another [gospel] would be more knowing and precise.⁴¹

Ibn Hazm concurs with 'Abd al-Jabbar on several points especially in his philosophical arguments against the Trinity and Christology.

³⁹Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 52-54, 85-86.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 37.

But Ibn Hazm also differs with him on numerous points. For instance, 'Abd al-Jabbar constructs his own view of the crucifixion: Judas kissed the wrong man either because of darkness or in order to deceive the soldiers who did not know Jesus; that is why the man who was crucified denied being the Christ. This is why Judas also later denied that the crucified person was Jesus.⁴² In contrast, Ibn Hazm questions the veracity of the crucifixion and ascension of Jesus on the basis of the variant reports of the Gospels and their lack of unanimity on such an observable event.

Thus, prior to Ibn Hazm, works dealing with other religious traditions and especially the Bible were quite numerous, some of which were available to Ibn Hazm. Clearly, he inherited a rich interreligious and intercultural tradition, providing him with the background knowledge to enable him to build his own systematic analysis of other religious traditions. Additionally, Ibn Hazm's own milieu of al-Andalus provided him with the opportunity to have close contacts with Jewish and Christian scholars.

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

Ibn Ḥazm: His Life and Environment

t. Family Names and Origin

Ibn Ḥazm's full name is Abu Muhammad 'Alī ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'īd ibn Ḥazm ibn Ghalīb ibn Ṣalīlī ibn Khalaf ibn Ma'dan ibn Sufyan ibn Yazīd al-Farīsī, a *maulī* (client) of Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyan ibn Harb ibn Umayyah ibn 'Abd Shams. His *kunya* (surname) is Abu Muhammad, but he is generally known as Ibn Ḥazm. One of the biographers, al-Dhahabī, devotes a full section of his *Siyar al-Nubalī* to Ibn Ḥazm.

Most Muslim biographers, except for Ibn Ḥayyan, maintain and Ibn Ḥazm himself claims that his family was Persian in origin. Yazīd al-Farīsī, his great-great-grandfather, accepted Islam during the reign of 'Umar, becoming a *mawla* (client) of Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyan, the brother of Mu'awiyah, the latter being the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. His grandfather, Khalaf, came to al-Andalus during the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Dakhil, the first Umayyad ruler of Muslim Spain.¹

¹Besides the modern biographies of Ibn Ḥazm, we consulted the following historical and biographical dictionaries of the learned men in Muslim history (in chronological order):

- (1) Sa'īd ibn Ahmad al-Jayyānī (d. 463A.H./1070 C.E.), *Jabaqīt al-Umam* (Beirut, 1912).
- (2) Abī Marwan ibn Ḥayyan (d. 469A.H./1095 C.E.), *Jadhwat al-Muqtabī, fī Anbi' Ahl al-Andalus*, (Cairo: Lajnah, 1971).

Ibn Hayyan, Ibn Hazm's contemporary and the son of a rival family, considers his origin to be Spanish. The Orientalists, following Ibn Hayyan's report, except for Asin Palacios assert that Ibn Hazm belonged to a humble Spanish Christian family, that his grandfather, Sa'Id, was the first to accept Islam, and that his father, Ahmad, was the first to become well-known, having become a minister. Ibn Hayyan further claimed that Ahmad was the first to claim for himself and his family the title of Umawi ualii' (clientele of the Umayyads). However, since these claims do not stand up to critical historical tests, they have been rejected by almost all Muslim biographers.²

First, Sa'Id ibn Ahmad al-Jayyani and al-Humaydi have affirmed their Persian origin. Second, according to other Andalusian historians, Ibn Hazm's family was well-known because of its respected genealogy and the exalted position it acquired. Third, western Cordoba, which housed his family estate, was occupied by the Arabs, rather than by the Spaniards. Finally, Ibn Hazm, who was himself a

- (3) Muhammad ibn **Fattiili** al-Humaydi (488H./1095), *Jadhwat al-Muqtabis fi Dhikr Wulat al-Andalu.*, Turathuna. The Andalusian Library 3. (Cairo: Dar al-Misriyyah, 1966), pp. 308-311.
- (4) Al-Fatli ibn Muhammad ibn Khaqan, *Qali'id al-Iqyün fi Maliasin al-A 'yan* (Tunis: Al-Maktabah al-'Aniqah, 1966).
- (5) 'Ali ibn Bassam al-Shantarlnl, *al-Dhakhfrah fi Maliasin Ahl-al-Jazfrah*, ed. Ilisan 'Abbas, 2 vols., 4 parts in each vol. (Beirut: Dar al-Thaqafah, 1979), Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 132-180.
- (6) Khalaf ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn Bashkuwal, *Kitab al-Silah*, 2 vols. Turathuna. The Andalusian Library 5 (Cairo: Al-Dar al-Misriyyah, 1966), Vol. 2, pp. **415-417**.
- (7) Alimad ibn Yahya al-Dabbi, *Bughyat al-Multamis fi Ta'rikh Rijal Ahl al-Andalw*, Turathuna. The Andalusian Library 6 (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1967), pp. 415-418.
- (8) Yaqiit al-Hamawf al-Riiml. *Mu'jam al-Udaba'*, ed. Ahmad Farid al-Rifa'I Bek, 20 vols. Silsilat al-Mawdi'at al-'Arabiyyah (Cairo: Matba'at Dar al-Ma'mfin, 1938), vol. 2, pp. 235-255.
- (9) Alimad ibn Muhammad ibn Khallikhan, *Wafayüt al-A 'yün wa Anbü' Abnü' al-Zaman*, 8 vols. Ed. Ilisan 'Abbas (Beirut: Dar al-Thaqafah, 1972), vol. 3 **pp. 325-330**.
- (10) Shams al-Drn al-Dhahabl, *Siyar al-Nubalii'*. Ed. Sa'Id al-Afghanl (Damascus: **Ma-ba'at al-Taraqql, 1941**).

²Ibn Hayyan's statement has been quoted by both Ibn Bassam al-Shantarlni and by **Yiqiit al-Riiml**.

genealogist of no mean stature. believed his family to be of Persian origin.

B. Dates of Birth and Death

Ibn Hazm was born on Wednesday, the last day of Ramadan, before sunrise, in 384 A.H./November 7, 994 C.E. according to Sa'Id al-Jayyani, Ibn Hazm's disciple to whom he wrote in his own hand. Yagut al-Hamawi, however, places his birth in 383 A.H. leading Brockelmann to place it in 993 C.E. Since Yaqiit himself ascribed his statement to Sa'Id, the mistake probably occurred either because of the scribe's or of Yaqiit's error in writing it down.³ On the authority of Abu Rafi', Ibn Hazm's son, Sa'Id, places his death date on 28th Sha'ban 456 A.H./August 15, 1064 C.E.⁴

C. Childhood and Early Education

At the time of Ibn Hazm's birth, his father, Abu 'Amr Ahmad ibn Sa'Id, was minister to Hisham al-Mu'ayyad in the powerful cabinet of al-Mansur Muhammad ibn Abi 'Amir, known to the Christian West as Almanzar. Thus, Ibn Hazm came to be brought up in the midst of an easy and pampered harem household, characterised by the medieval Islamic etiquette. His father's house was situated in the east of Cordoba, in the neighbourhood of al-Madinat al-Zahirah, the administrative capital built by al-Mansur in order to enable him to appropriate all caliphal powers, while keeping the Caliph isolated. Paradoxically, this was both the peak, and the beginning of the fall, of the Muslim rule in Spain.

In his *Tauiq al-Hamiimoh* (The Ring of the Dove), a masterpiece on the nature and psychology of love and lovers, we get glimpses of his childhood, early education, and early life experiences.

I never sat with men until I was already a youth and my beard had begun to sprout. Women taught me the Holy Qur'an. They recited to me the poetry, trained me in calligraphy.⁵

³Yaqt al-Rumt, *Mu'jam al-Udabi'*, vol. 12, pp. 236-237. See also Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, Supplement vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937), pp. 692ff.

⁴Yaqt al-Rumt, *Mu'jam al-Udaba'*, vol.12, pp. 236-237.

⁵Ibn Hazm, *The Ring of the Dove: A Treatise on the Art and Practice of Arab Love*, trans. A.J. Arberry (London: Luzac 1953). p. 101. For the original Arabic

On reaching adolescence, Ibn Hazm's education and training were entrusted to pious men and women. He studied the Qur'an, *ʿĀdʿfih*, Arabic language and grammar, and the *Kolost*: (*ol-Kaliim wa al-Jadal*), under 'Abd al-Rahman ibn AbI Yazld al-Azdi al-Misri, in the care and company of Abu 'All al-Husayn al-Fasi, in Rusafah (Cordoba).⁶ His other teachers included Ahmad ibn al-Jassiir and Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Ishaq al-Hamadhani in Hadiih; 'Abd Allah ibn Dahhiin, Ibn al-Faradi (the Qaçil of Valencia), and Abu al-Khiyar Mas'ud Ibn Muflit in *Fiqh*, and Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan al-Madhhajr and Ibn al-Kattani in logic and philosophy. He acknowledges his indebtedness to Baqi ibn Makhlad ibn Umayyah al-Hijazf al-Shafi'I, and Mundhir ibn Sa'Id al-Dawiidi al-Zahiri, upon whose works he drew heavily⁷

D. Political Struggles

Ibn Hazm was barely fifteen when Cordovan life was thrown into internal political turmoil. His father continued as minister under al-Mansiir's son, al-Muzaffar, and remained faithful to the Umayyad dynasty because of his belief in the dynasty's legitimacy. With the fall of the 'Amirids, al-Madinat al-Zahirah was pillaged and plundered, and Ibn Hazm's family was forced to move to their old house in Balat Mughirah in western Cordoba, three days after Muhammad al-Mahdi succeeded to the caliphate in Jumada al-Akhirah 399 A.H./February 1009 C.E.⁸ The turmoil and the repercussions of the struggle among the claimants to the Caliphate further aggravated the strife among the various ethnic groups and social classes, leading to the fall of the Umayyad caliphate for whose restoration Ibn Hazm struggled throughout his life. He drew a vivid picture in his writing of the civil strife and disorder in Cordoba:

When Hisham al-Mu'ayyad succeeded to the throne, we were sufficiently preoccupied with the misfortunes which came upon us, thanks to the hostility of his ministers:

text see 'Au ibn Alunad ibn Hazm, *Tawk al-Hamiimoh*; ed. D.K. Petrof (Leidee: St. Petersbourg, 1914), p. 47.

⁶ Ibn ʿAẓm, *The Ring of the Dove*, p. 236, and *Tauik-al-Hamamah*, p. 118.

⁷ Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi, *ʿiyar al-Nubala'*, ed. Sa'id al-Afghani, pp. 16-17. See also ~uliammaa.Abu'Zahrah, *Ibn ʿAẓm: ʿfayatuhi wa 'A~ruhu, 'Ara'uhu wa Fiqhuh* (~airo: Dir **al-Fila** al-'Arabi, 1954), pp. 32-34.

⁸ Ibn Hazm, *The Ring of the Dove*, p. 212, and *Tauik al-Hamiimoh*; p. 104.

we were sorely tried by imprisonment, surveillance, and crushing fines, and were finally obliged to go into hiding. Civil war raged far and wide: all classes suffered from its dire effects and ourselves in particular. At last my father the Vizier died (God have mercy on him), on the afternoon of Saturday 28th Dhii al-Qa'dah, 402 A.H./22nd June 1012 C.E. our situation still being as I have described.f

Soon after the death of Ibn Haem's father, their houses in Balat Mughirah were plundered and destroyed when the Berbers sacked Cordoba in 404 A.H./1013 C.E.¹⁰. Ibn Hazm was forced to leave Cordoba on 1st Muharram 404 A.H./1013 C.E. and take refuge in Almeria for about three years. Then in 407 A.H./1016 C.E. when 'All ibn Hammiid al-Hasani al-Nasir replaced Sulayman al-Zafir, as Caliph, Almeira's Hammiidid governor, Khayran suspected and imprisoned Ibn Hazm for his sympathies with the Umayyads and later banished him. Accompanied by Muhammad ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hazm found shelter for several months with Ibn al-Muzaffar, the governor of Hisn al-Qasr. When Ibn Hazm learned that 'Abd al-Rahman IV al-Murtada, having proclaimed himself caliph, had gathered forces to fight against the Berbers in Granada, they left for Valencia to join him there. Ibn Hazm fought against Granada and reportedly served al-Murtada as vizier. Eventually Ibn Hazm was defeated, captured, and imprisoned.l'

Ibn Hazm was, however, back in Cordoba¹² in Shawwal 409 A.H./February 1019 C.E. during the reign of al-Qasim ibn Hammiid. In 414 A.H./1023 C.E. al-Qasim was overthrown and replaced by 'Abd al-Rahman V al-Mustashir, when Ibn Hazm served him as vizier. Seven weeks after Mustashir's assassination Ibn Hazm again found himself in prison, where he began writing his *Tawq al-Ifamümah*.¹³ According to Roger Arnaldez, Ibn Hazm started writing

⁹Ibn Hazm, *The Ring of the Dove*, p. 212.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 223-224 and *Tawq al-Homümah*, pp. 110-111. Reinhart Dozy states Hisn al-Qasr as "Aznalcazar, not far from Valencia" in his *Spanish Islam: A History of the Moslems in Spain*, trans. Francis Griffin Stokes (London: Chatto and Windus, 1913). Cf. Garcia Gomez that it "is not the present day Aznalcazar near Sanlucar, but was in the region of **Malaqa** or Murcia." See Roger Arnaldez, "Ibn Hazm", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, **newed**. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960—).

¹²Ibn Hazm, *Tawq al-ifamümah*, p. 104.

¹³Ibn Hazm, *The Ring of the Dove*, p. 19.

his Tosuq in 413 A.H./1022 C.E.¹⁴ while Nykl puts it in before 414 A.H./December 1023 C.E. since there is no mention of 'Abd al-Rahman V al-Mustazhir in the Tnuiq. Palacios holds the same view.¹⁵

Nykl, however, does not take into consideration other historical events which support the later date. First, Nykl's opinion that Ibn Hazm's hope for the restoration of the Umayyads was shattered after al-Mustazhir's assassination ignores the fact that Ibn Hazm again became vizier to Hisham who was proclaimed caliph in 418 A.H./April 1027 C.E. by the Cordoban Council. Second, Tauiq mentions the political struggle between Khayran, the governor of Almeria, and Mujahid, the governor of Dfenia, in 417 A.H./1026 C.E.¹⁶ This lends credence to the opposite view.¹⁷

At the abolition of the Caliphate by the Cordoban council in Dhii-al-Hijjah 422 A.H./1031 C.E. Hisham al-Mu'tadd, the last Caliph, was deported. This marked the end of the Umayyad caliphate and of a united al-Andalus; in fact it paved the way for the disintegration of the Muslim rule. The demolition of the caliphate led to political turmoil known as *Reyes de Tai'a* in Spanish (*Mulūk al-Tawai'f* in Arabic), resulting in the division of al-Andalus into small kingdoms. Ibn Hazm, who called this period a time of *fitnah* (anarchy), worked, wrote, and challenged the legitimacy of these kingdoms throughout his life.

As a sensitive Muslim scholar and experienced politician, Ibn Hazm believed that the root of the disintegration of the Muslim rule lay not merely in political opportunism, economic deterioration, and socio-racial divisions, but also in the erosion of the religious bases and ethical norms of the society.

With the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate Ibn Hazm's participation in politics came to an end. Isolated from his political goals, he acquired great intellectual vigour and unprecedented creativity. He incisively discussed and analysed the ideologies of rulers, politicians, philosophers, religious scholars, and even the masses of his time and

¹⁴Q.v. Arnaldez, "Ibn Hazm", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition.

¹⁵Ibn Hazm, T'awq Hamamah; tr. A.R. Nykl under the title *A Book containing the Risālah known as the Dove's Neck Ring About Love and Lovers*, based on D.K. Petrof's edited *Tauiq Jamūmah* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1931), p. lvii.

¹⁶Al-Dhahabi, *Sijar al-Nubali'*, p. 19. See also Yaqfit al-Rumi, *Mu'jam al-Udabū'*, vol. 12, pp. 238-239.

¹⁷Ibn Hazm, *Al-Taqrīb li Hadd-ai-Montiq wa al-Madkhal ilayhi bi al-Alfa' al-'Ammiyyah wa al-Amthilah al-Fiqhiyyah*, ed. Ihsan 'Abbas (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Hayah, 1959), Preface.

without fear or favour. As a critic, he was too rational and too radical in his thought and speech, teaching and writing, to be widely accepted or easily tolerated anywhere.

E. Intellectual Career

The troubles and travails of his time finally convinced Ibn Hazm that the re-establishment of a strong Muslim caliphate by resorting to political revolution was impossible. Since the masses were confused about, or ignorant of, the normative Islamic principles for political life—principles derived from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*—Ibn Hazm set out to draw the attention of the Muslim society to their duty to re-establish the caliphate. Since there could be no social justice, peace, or prosperity without caliphate, Ibn Hazm made it his academic mission to prove the indispensability of the Muslim caliphate. He also took upon himself to see that all branches of learning conformed to a normative Islamic basis. To this end, he wrote on almost every Islamic science thus analyzing and systematizing all extant knowledge according to an Islamic pattern.

Besides being a teacher and an ideologue, Ibn Hazm was a prolific writer. He wrote some four hundred volumes, comprising about 80,000 pages, in his own hand. None in Muslim history, except for Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, is credited with such prolificity. However, the number of his works, which were rewritten or recovered after they were burnt by Ibn 'Abbad in Seville, is not known.¹⁸

Not all of Ibn Hazm's works are extant. Thanks, however, to both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars of the last two centuries, some of his important works on *belles-lettres*, ethics, genealogy, history, jurisprudence, logic, and religion have been recovered. Some have been edited and published. Those on *Fiqh* and on the codification of the Zahiri school of Islamic law are recognized as masterpieces and he is unanimously acknowledged as the Imam of Zahiri *Fiqh*.

His contribution to *Fiqh* and ethics in particular, and to the socio-cultural history of Muslim Spain in general, has overshadowed that in other fields of knowledge. For instance, there has been little acknowledgment of his original masterpiece on the history of religions. Muslim scholars have engaged themselves in retrieving, editing, publishing, and introducing his works on Islamic jurisprudence, ethics,

¹⁸Ibn Hazm, *Al-Ihkim fi Usul al-'Alkam*, 2nd ed., 8 parts, 2 vols. (Cairo: Matba'at al-Imam, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 9, 16, 64, and passim. (See also Ibn Hazm's *Kitiib al-Fasl fi al-Mila' wa al-Ahwa' wa al-Nilal*, pt. 1, p. 4.

genealogy, and history, while the Orientalists have concerned themselves primarily with his *Tauīq al-Ḥamūmah* and his studies of the socio-political history of al-Andalus. To confine Ibn Ḥazm's contribution merely to these works, however, tantamounts to losing sight of one of his most significant contributions to yet another field of study, Comparative Religion, which represents an academic milestone.

Neglecting Ibn Ḥazm's other major and significant works has led the Hazmian scholars to a compartmentalization of his contributions and the identification of each of his works with a specific branch of knowledge. However, Ibn Ḥazm would not have thought nor approved of this approach since he produced his writings under a comprehensive scheme, relying on his encyclopaedic range of knowledge. As noted earlier, he attempted to analyze the malaise of the society and to re-orient it towards the interdependence between the *Shari'ah*; *Shari'ah* and the *Khilāfah*.

As the Andalusian society was a pluralistic one—ethnically, socially, and religiously—he devoted himself to an analytical and historical-critical study of the principles of common sense and of rationalism and logic, in order to bring out the essential role of religion and religious law in the society. His concern to identify which of the religious traditions presented the most reasonable, rational, coherent, and consistent system of beliefs and practices so that it could serve as a guiding and binding law for human society, led him to a study and analysis of different religious traditions. This is also corroborated by the fact that he produced his works on logic, philosophy, history of religions, *Fiqh*, and ethics in sequence. His treatise on logic and philosophy (*al-Taqrīb li Ḥadd al-Montiq wa al-Madkhal ilayhi*), was written sometime between 415 A.H./1023 C.E. and 425 A.H./1034 C.E. probably before he started writing *Kitāb al-Fasl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwū' wa al-Ni~al*.¹⁹ All his other works on *Fiqh* and *Zahirī* law were written later, and he refers to these works in *al-Ihkīm fī Usūl al-Ahkām* and in *al-Muhalla*.²⁰

Since Ibn Ḥazm did not believe that juristic, theological, and philosophical differences in society were merely heresy, schism, or religious deviation, he took upon himself to analyze the diversity of human faiths on a scientific basis, one based on rational, historical, socio-political, and psychological grounds.

¹⁹Yaqūt al-Rīmlī, *Muḥam al-Udaba'*, vol. 12 pp. 235-255. See also Ibn Khallikān, *Wa'ayat al-A'yan*, vol. 3, pp. 325-330, and al-Dhahabī's *Siyar al-Nubalī*,

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 4.

Although his understanding of feminine psychology has been acknowledged by the translators and analysts of Tauqi, his grasp of the religious psychology of mankind has either been under-estimated or ignored. However, he has been acknowledged as the Imam of the ~ahiri school of Islamic law, as the greatest scholar of his time in Muslim Spain, one of the greatest thinkers in the history of Islamic thought, and as the first truly distinguished Muslim historian of the religious ideas of mankind. Despite persecution, harassment, hostility, denigration of his ideas and charges of heresy, and despite confinement to his home village, Manta-Lisham, during the last years of his life, he indefatigably continued his scholarly pursuits, eliciting the attention and interest of young students.²¹ He was also known for his expertise as a muniizir who engaged himself in dialogues and disputations with the leaders of different schools of Islamic law, with philosophers, with Sufi leaders, and with the Jewish and Christian scholars. His sharp and incisive criticism supported by irrefutable reasoning and argumentation, directed against religious and political opportunists, the pretenders of *Khilifah*, and the usurpers of power, earned him the enmity of both political and religious ruling groups, who denounced him for his radical and uncompromising stance, and tried to suppress him by subjecting him to social and intellectual boycott. This resulted in indifference towards, if not non-recognition of, Ibn Hazm's ingenious intellectual contributions. Even after his death, those individuals who drew upon his thought and knowledge kept his works to themselves and did not have the courage to publicise them openly.²²

F. Socio-Religious Milieu

E. Garcia Gomez aptly describes Ibn Hazm's life, except for the first fourteen years, as corresponding to "the most tragic moments of Muslim Spain" and to the "decisive crisis of Islam in al-Andalus".²³

Ibn Hazm was hardly fifteen when he lived through the most crucial, tragic, and destructive events of Andalusian history. He

²¹Q.v. Arnaldez, "Ibn Hazm", op.cit.

²²Anwar G. Chejne, "Islamization and Arabization in al-Andalus: A General View" in *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages*, ed. Spiros Vronis, vol. 4, of Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1975), pp. 59-86.

²³Ibid.

witnessed the overthrow of the 'Amirid power, followed by the destruction of everything related to them. Once the institution of the *Khilāfah* was robbed of its function, role, honour and trust, dissension and disintegration took hold in every aspect of life. This, in turn, led to the end of the Umayyad caliphate and, finally, to that of Muslim presence in Spain.

Muslims had first entered the Iberian peninsula in 711 C.E. but it was with the Umayyad leadership, beginning with 'Abd al-Rahman I, that really changed the course of Spanish history. 'Abd al-Rahman not only transplanted the Arabian date palm onto the Iberian soil, sowed the seeds of Islamic culture and civilization, facilitated the growth and development of the Islamic tradition, reaching its climax during the reign of his great-great-grandson, 'Abd al-Rahman III, known as the Falcon of Spain. 'Abd al-Rahman established the Umayyad caliphate in 929 C.E. and brought all of al-Andalus under his *Khilāfah*, ensuring its political and cultural unity, and making it the greatest power in the West. His capital city, Cordoba, was second only to Baghdad as a centre of learning and culture and in trade and commerce.

The unprecedented peace and prosperity of Cordoba attracted people from far and near, friends and foes alike, and it became a melting pot for the arts and crafts, for diverse languages, cultures, philosophies and religious traditions. *The khilāfah* of 'Abd al-Rahman III welded the different Muslim ethnic groups and diverse social classes together and encouraged the religious communities to live together in an atmosphere mutual respect and tolerance. Although he was not given to bookish habits or to scholarly pursuits (as was his successor and son, al-Hakam II), he patronized poets, scholars, and learned men at his court. To this period also belong the architectural monuments in Cordoba.

After his death in 961 C.E. the power and glory of the *Khilāfah* continued unabated for some five decades. His son and successor, al-Hakam II, already in his forties, and no less proficient than his father, carried his father's mission further. Known to historians as a bibliophile, he patronised the academic lore and the sciences of his day and devoted himself to the establishment of a great library in Cordoba. A scholar of great stature, he made the collection and reading of books the fashion of his time, and inculcated a love of literature among the people. A great number of the works bolstering the prestige of al-Andalus as an international power was reportedly burned by al-Mansiir in order to appease the fanatic Maliki jurists,

who were against the presence and circulation of materials on Greek philosophy and of anti-Maliki juristic studies. Upon death al-Hakari's death in October 976 C.E. his eleven-year old son, Hisham II, was named caliph due to palace intrigues, in which his tutor, Muhammad ibn Abi 'Amir, played a major role.

Known as al-Mansiir, because of his victories against the adversaries of neighbouring Christian states at that time, 'Amir was endowed with exceptional political intelligence and insight; he was also ambitious, charming, and extremely ruthless. His detailed planning, prudent policies, statesmanship, and intrigues enabled him to overcome his adversaries, both within and without. In this connection he utilised sheer force, favour, or diplomacy, as the occasion demanded. While he raised al-Andalus to its political and cultural zenith by establishing peace and prosperity within the realm, Al-Mansur also made himself extremely powerful, arrogating to himself caliphal prestige and influence by usurpation. This enabled him to eliminate one power group after another and to make the Berber mercenaries predominate in governmental affairs. In setting the negative precedent of palace conspiracies, however, he undermined the trust and respect of the Khilijali among the masses in general, and the administrative and religious circles in particular. Of these the latter were offended to-the point of becoming vengeful.

Al-Mansur was succeeded by his capable and equally strong son, 'Abd al-Malik al-Muzaffar (1002-1008 C.E.), who, in turn, was succeeded by al-Mansur's younger son, 'Abd al-Rahman called Sanchol. His arrogance and high ambition exceeded all previous limits, leading to an upsurge of resentment among the Umayyad princes and the general public which manifested itself in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary insurrections among various groups—Berbers, Spanish, Slavs, and Arabs. All of them set about exchanging nominal caliphs who were mere tools, and in the melee that accompanied it, the 'Amirid power was finally washed out.

Cordoban peace and prosperity were displaced by successive internecine warfare, pillaging and plundering. Despite the strenuous efforts of Ibn Hazm and others to restore the Umayyad caliphate their surviving members had neither the capacity nor the good fortune to regain power. Ambitious and opportunistic courtiers played havoc with the institution of Khilijah through nominal and weak caliphs, and gave vent to dormant ethnic, racial, cultural, and class differences that gained prevalence in the society, dividing the community into several groups. In consequence, the socio-political and

religio-cultural unity that was based upon the Islamic principles of the unity of the *ummah* and a respect for pluralism, and which had been established through the central role of the *Khilafah*, were dismantled. Twenty-two years of turbulence finally led the Cordoban public to bring down the Umayyad caliphate in 1031 C.E. once and for all.

With the abolition of the Umayyad caliphate, al-Andalus was divided, primarily along tribal and ethnic lines, into embattled Arab, Berber, and Slavic kingdoms, eventuating finally in the success of the Christian Reconquesta. But even during the period of turmoil and anarchy, Arabic language, poetry and *belles-lettres*, and different sciences, and culture in general, continued to develop and flourish almost unabated. Each of these kingdoms had the Cordoban splendour, that had now ended for ever, was the model. The Arabization in these kingdoms was, however, severed from the basic core of Islam. *Shu'ūbiyyah* (ethnic conflict) was the first result of this split.

After Toledo fell to Alfonso in 1085 C.E. a reversal process was ushered in, one which brought about the Christianization and eventually Hispanization of the region. This period of *Mulūk al-'Awa'if* called *fitnah* by Ibn Ḥazm,²⁴ was an unfortunate period for al-Andalus, not since it became politically fragmentated, but also because some of its great characteristics such as socio-economic justice, religio-cultural integrity and such as tolerance were impaired. Each ruler, in order to perpetuate his rule, carved out a separate region on grounds of ethnic and tribal affiliation, and gathered mercenaries around him. During this period, irreligious elements became ascendant and Islam, its principles and injunctions, came to be publically ridiculed. Ibn Ḥazm's portrayal of the *fitnah* period is extremely revealing:

As for your query about the *fitnah* with which the people are afflicted due to their indifference to the worsening political situation, we are now its victims and subject to its test. We seek Allah's security from it. This is an evil *fitnah* in which religious norms are being destroyed, save for those who are protected by Allah. Its description needs a lengthy exposition. However, in the main it is that rulers of every city and fortress throughout al-Andalus of these days, from the beginning to the end, are enemies of Allah and His Messenger and are perpetrators

²⁴Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Radd 'alī Jbn al-Nagh'rih al-Yahudī wa Rasū'il Ukhrii*, pp. 173ff.

of corruption [jasiid] in the land. All that you see openly is that Muslims' properties are being robbed and taken away. It is due to such rulers' oppression. They permit their soldiers to commit highway robberies in the areas under their control. They have levied *jizyah* and excise tax even upon Muslims. They have appointed Jews as their tax-lords to collect *jizyah* and other taxes from the Muslims. They make excuses for the necessity of such un-Islamic taxes and to make legitimate what has been prohibited by Allah. Their sole end is to perpetuate their rule and impose their laws by replacing the laws of Allah. Also do not be deceived by the behaviour of the evil-doing self-claimed religious leaders who are wolves disguised in sheeps' clothing they adorn the evils of these evil-doers [rulers] with their own wickedness and support the rulers in their transgressions. By God, had these rulers seen that their rule would continue by worshipping the cross, they would have done so without hesitation. We see them that now they seek help from the Christians, make the Christians masters over Muslim men, women and children. They send Muslims as captives to their Christian masters, hand the Muslims' lands over to the Christians willingly where the symbols of Islam are being replaced by the symbols of Christianity.²⁵

The end of the central Cordoban *Khilafah* did not, however, represent a transition from Arabism to Islamism, as some secular Hispano-Arabists believe. Rather, it was a movement from Islam to tribal Arabism, from centralism to regionalism. The exponents of Andalusian unity and glory such as Ibn Hazm, were not Spanish nationalists. They did not belong to any anti-Islamic faction nor were they anti-Arab. They were rather loyal *Khilafatists* and centrists. Ibn Hazm stood for uncompromising Islamicity, for a strong central government, and Umayyad caliphate for al-Andalus, This has baffled many Orientalists and has led them to explain it in terms of Ibn Haem's Christian Spanish origin.

Ibn Hazm and other like-minded Andalusian scholars, whether of Arab or Spanish origin, who spoke and stood for al-Andalus' grandeur, were neither Shu'libis (ethnicists) nor nationalists, but patriotic Andalusians who decried and denounced the nationalistic,

ethnic, linguistic, and class tendencies and conflicts of their times. It was not "the decline of Arabism as a meaningful political force, and the rise in its place of Islamism", but the weakening of Islam as a cementing socio-political force and the simultaneous rise of tribalism and regionalism that produced Andalusian *Shu'ubiyyah* which, in turn, led to class conflicts and struggles.²⁶

Andalusian society consisted of diverse ethnic groups—Arabs, Berbers, Slavs, and indigenous Hispanics, i.e., Mozarabs or Arabized Christians, Muwalladim (children of Arab fathers by Hispanic, Slavic or other non-Arab mothers), and Mawali (Hispanic and Visigothic **Muslims**). In terms of religious traditions, there were Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Al-Andalus in general, and the cosmopolitan mother city of Cordoba in particular, comprised a truly pluralistic society, where these different groups co-existed with respect for each other. There was both tolerance and religious autonomy under *Pax Islamica*, from 'Abd al-Rahman III to 'Abd al-Malik al-Muzaffar,

Surprisingly though, the most devastating role in the disfigurement of the Umayyad caliphate was played by the religious leadership—i.e., the judges, jurists and jurisconsults of the Maliki school of Islamic law. While some, anxious to end the anarchy, acquiesced to almost every usurper; the ambitious ones if only to protect their vested interests, provided religious legitimacy for the usurpers. The laxity and corruption invited Ibn Hazm's severe criticism. To Ibn Hazm, the opportunism of the *fuqaha'* led the people to distrust the institution of *Khilafah*, to lose respect for religious traditions and laws and religious leaders, to become apathetic even in different towards religion and, finally, to indulgence in sensual pleasure and lack of faith in **reason.**²⁷

Besides the philosophies of skepticism, naturalism, and materialism, several esoteric and mystical cults emerged, which rejected the Greek sciences of logic and philosophy, and questioned the role of reason in religion. Relativistic tendencies to the extent of denying any positive value in religion, became prevalent.

In this anarchic situation traditional religious traditions were even ridiculed and attacked. The Maliki school was dominant in al-Andalus, and their thinkers were extremely rigid. They condemned

²⁶James T. Monroe, Trans. with intro, *The Shu'ubiyyah in al-Andalus, The Risālah of Ibn Garcia and Five Refutations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 1.

²⁷Ibn Hazm's many small treatises like *Risālat al-Talkhi* were written in response to this need and situation.

and declared other schools of Islamic law as heretic. Maliki judges and jurists used their political influence to suppress all those who differed with them, including brilliant and critical scholars like Ibn Hazm. The climate of internal dissension within Islam emboldened the non-Muslims and anti-religious groups to mount their assaults, thereby undermining the position Islam and religion in general. In this climate even intellectuals became opportunists, sectarian, parochial and intolerant when it came to differing points of view.

Ibn Hazm was a sensitive and original thinker, a centralist, a Muslim politician concerned with the implementation of the ideals and teachings of Islam, and a great historian of religious ideas. He could clearly foresee the far-reaching consequences of the crisis that had begun in his time. He had drunk deep at the fount of the Qur'anic philosophy of history, and had himself witnessed the fall of civilizations as a sequel to moral and religious subversion. He, therefore, addressed himself to the situation and wrote a religious history of mankind. He based his analysis of world-views, ideologies, and religious traditions from rational, historical, and critical perspectives. He also took upon himself the task of a religious and political reformer. Being intensely convinced of the truth of Islam, he set out to make a comparative study of religious traditions, their scriptures and historical role, so as to reassure the Andalusian society that its success and felicity lay only in acting on the principles of Islam. He also critically reviewed all streams of Muslim thought and challenged the rigidity and factionalism of the Muslim schools of law and theology. He called upon the Muslim *ummah* in general and the Muslim community of al-Andalus in particular to turn to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* and to re-establish the *Khilafah*, since without it neither peace and prosperity in this world nor success in the Hereafter could be attained.

Ibn Hazm's belief that the Qur'an is the only extant Word of God, and the socio-political context in which religion in general and Islam in particular were being ridiculed, prompted him to present the truth of Islam with a rational, historical and comparative approach. Such an approach required him to engage in comparative religious studies and led him to make a critical historical study of religious scriptures. As we shall see later, he made the following Qur'anic challenge as his basic criterion for testing the divine origin of any Scripture and its historical preservation and authenticity:

Will they not, then, try to understand this Qur'an? Had it issued from any but God, they would surely have found in it many an inner contradiction. (4:82).

FOUR

Study of Other Religions

Of Ibn Hazm's extant works that have been documented, edited, and published, *Kitab al-Fasl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwa' wa al-Nihal*, is the most monumental; it is the most systematic of his works on the history of religions and religious doctrines. His other studies on the subject are either primarily polemical, or limited in focus, and seem to be aimed primarily at presenting Islam. One of his works dealing with Biblical criticism has, however, not yet come to light.¹ According to Hitti:

The most valuable of his [Ibn Hazm's] surviving works, however, is *al-Fasl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwa' wa al-Nihal* (the decisive word on sects, heterodoxies and denominations), which entitles him to the honor of being the first scholar in the field of comparative religion. In this work

¹ *Kitab Izhiir Tabdil al-Yahud wa-al-Na-ürü li al-Tawrüh wa al-Injil*, which is commonly believed to be included in Ibn Haem's *Kitüb al-Fasl*, is not extant. So far, the best and most comprehensive study of Ibn Hazm's thought, with a detailed list of his extant and non-extant, published and non-published, works is by 'Abd al-Halim 'Uways: *Ibn Hazm. al-Andalusi wa Juhuduhu Hal-Ba'ith al-Ta'rikhf wa al-falüri* (Cairo: Dar al-'I'tisam, 1979). It became available only after the completion of the present study, but it was consulted thoroughly. However, its perusal did not add anything significant to warrant a modification of our analysis. 'Uways thinks that *Kitüb Izhiir Tabdil-al-Yahud wa al-Na-ürü li al-Tawrüh wa al-Injil* was probably the one that now stands as a section on Biblical criticism in his *Kitüb al-Fasl*, an opinion that has not been found sustainable. He also mentions some other brief works such as his *Ta'rif al-Radd 'alü Anüjil al-Na-üra* and his *Mukhta-ar al-Milal wa al-Nihal* as non-extant (p. 113). See also Il-siin 'Abbas, *Rasa'il Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi*, vol. 1 (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah li-al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, 1980), pp. 7ff. For detailed discussion, see n. 4, below.

he pointed out difficulties in the Biblical narratives which disturbed no other minds until the rise of higher criticism in the sixteenth century.²

Since Ibn Hazm himself refers to *Kitāb al-Faṣl* as being the most comprehensive, we have focused presently on this work although we also refer to his other works for details, or corroboration. It is, however, important to note that Ibn Hazm produced his scholarly works with an objective and in a logical sequence, dividing them subject-wise and classifying the contents into chapters and sub-chapters. Except for indices and notes, which are an exclusive feature of modern scholarship, his works are as scholarly in presentation as modern scholarly works.

A. *Kitāb al-Faṣl fī al-Mīl wa al-Aḥwāl wa al-Niḥāl*

There is a difference of opinion over the word, *al-Faṣl* which is read as *al-Fiṣl* by most scholars of Ibn Hazm. Abu Zahrah argues that because *Kitāb al-Faṣl* is a voluminous study, it is basically a compilation and combination of several small treatises which Ibn Hazm had first written separately and put them together later; hence the word should read as *al-Fiṣl*, the plural form of *al-ḥaṣīyah*: It means a "piece, part or a branch," like the word *nakhlah*, a date palm that can be moved or transplanted from one spot to another. In support of his claim Abu Zahrah mentions the separate and independent existence of Ibn Hazm's *Risālah fī al-Mufājahālah bayn al-Ṣaḥābah* (Treatise on the Excellences of the Companions of the Prophet), and later its inclusion in *Kitāb al-Faṣl*. However, the section entitled "*Wujūh al-Faṣl wa al-Mufājahālah bayn al-Ṣaḥābah*" ("Reasons of Excellence and Comparison in the Excellence of the Companions") follows the chapter "*Al-Imām wa al-Mufājahālah*" ("The Leadership and Comparison of Excellences"), and continues the main subject in part four of *Kitāb al-Faṣl*. Second, there is no evidence to prove its having been first written as a separate treatise and then included in *Kitāb al-Faṣl*. Hence, it seems more probable that this chapter was used later, either by copyists or by Ibn Hazm's students, as a separate treatise. However, despite this, it was never excluded from *Kitāb al-Faṣl*. Third, the comparison of *Faṣl* and *Fiṣl* with *qas'ah* and *qas'ū'* [as in the case of "*qas'at al-nakhlah*"] does not conform to the grammatical rules of standard Arabic lexicons. This claim was first

²Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 558.

made by a copyist when *Kitāb al-Faṣl* was first published without any proper editing. Almost all standard Arab lexicons give the plural form of [aslali (the moveable palm tree) as /aṣalat, rather than fisal, as claimed by Abu Zahrah and others.³

A similar claim is made by Jacques Waardenburg, who expresses the view that Ibn Hazm's treatise known as *Kitāb Iḥar Tabdīl al-Yahūd wa al-Nasīrī* had been inserted into *Kitāb al-Faṣl* and made a section entitled "Faṣl *fī* Munaqaḥat ḥāhirah...." (Part 1, p. 116, Part 2, p. 91).⁴

Although this treatise deals with the same subject (viz. Biblical criticism), as dealt with in the above-mentioned section of *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, they are two different treatises. First, they bear different titles. Second, till such time as Ibn Hazm's *Kitāb Iḥar Tabdīl al-Yahūd wa al-Nasīrī* is discovered, the claim that it comprise the above mentioned section of *Kitāb al-Faṣl* cannot be proved or disproved. Third, Ihsan 'Abbas, the editor of several of Ibn Hazm's works, also confirms that *Kitāb Iḥar Tabdīl al-Yahūd wa al-Nasīrī* had not been discovered and that it was not a section of *Kitāb al-Faṣl*.

Ibn Hazm wrote separate small treatises on subjects that he had dealt with comprehensively in his more voluminous works. The treatises are nearly the same, making small additions or deletions, to meet the cognitive needs of his audience. Indeed, prolific writers usually write more than one treatise on the same subject with minor changes or with some revisions. All of Ibn Hazm's biographers also list these small treatises separately from his *Kitāb al-Faṣl*. There are also some other small treatises which deal with the same subject, but

³See, for instance, *Lisan al-'Arab; al-Qamus al-Mulift;* *Taj al-'Arus*, and *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Edward W. Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole), and earlier lexicons. Muhammad Abii Zahrah, *Ibn Hazm: Ḥāyatuhu wa 'A,ruhu, Ara'uhu wa Fiqhuh* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1954), p. 253 and the note therein.

⁴Jacques Waardenburg, "World Religions as Seen in the Light of Islam" in *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*, eds., Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1979), p. 272, n. 26. Waardenburg's reference to the section under discussion is also misquoted. It starts on vol. 1, p. 116 of *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, and continues till vol. 2, p. 91 and makes about 200 pages. Perhaps his claim is based on Israel Friedlaender and Arthur S. Tritton's remarks about *Kitāb al-Faṣl*. The section Tritton refers to is the one that Ibn Hazm himself mentions as having written first as a separate work and then included it in *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt.2, p. 116. In regard to the section under discussion, Ibn Hazm does claim it to be first as his *Kitāb Iḥar Tabdīl al-Yahūd* and then included in his *Kitāb al-Faṣl*. For Tritton, see A.S. Tritton, "A Theological Tract", *BSOAS* 12 (1947), pp. 1-4. For Ihsan 'Abbas, see Ibn Hazm's *al-Radd 'ala Ibn al-Naghrih al-Yahūd wa Rasū'i; Ukhrii*, pp. 1-4.

have not been included in *Kitab al-Fasl*, Even if these small treatises have been incorporated into it, it still does not sustain the claim to call it *Kitab al-fiṣal*, since the plural form of [asl is /urul rather than *fiṣal*, and the plural form of [asloh. is [asolii: rather than *fiṣal*. The rules governing rhymed prose (*saj'*) are also not controverted by reading the word as al-jasl.

Kitab al-Fasl has not been edited properly. Despite its various printings, many mistakes have been left uncorrected, and its title has also not been properly checked. In the first print, the title was left without diacritical marks. In a separate line, however, it was suggested that it should read *Kitab al-Fasl*... because al-Fisal is the plural form of [aslah: on the pattern of *qaṣ'at al-nakhlah*. In the second print, the title was again left without diacritical marks and instruction regarding the reading of al-Fisal was left out. On the back of the title page, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Khalifah (who had perhaps supervised its printing) notes that his reviews of the major Arabic lexicons failed to yield the plural form of [aslah. as fisol: He, therefore, suggested that the word be read as al-Fasl, not al-Fisal. The third print was a photographic copy of the first print, and came out simultaneously from Cairo and Baghdad in 1964.⁵) The Cairo print had diacritical marks, allowing the word to be read both as ol-Fasl, and as al-Fisal, while the Baghdad one provided only the diacritical marks for the word to be read as ol-Fasl. Among the Orientalists, only Brockelmann and Hitti have cited this work as al-Fasl rather

⁵ *Kitāb* ol-Fasl *Jī al-Milal wa al-Ahwii' wa-al-Nihāl* has not been edited. Its edns. are: First edn.: 5 parts in 2 vols. Part 1 was printed from al-Matba'ah al-Adabiyah in 1317 A.H.; Parts 2 and 3 were also printed from there in 1320 A.H.; but part 4 was printed from Matba'at al-Mawsii'at bearing no date. This is now considered to be the first edition making five parts bound in 2 volumes, but each part is paginated separately. This one has been used for the present study. All later prints are basically its copies. Its publishing data such as the place, publisher and date are shown as: Cairo: al-Matba'ah al-Adabiyah, 1317-1321 A.H./1899-1903 C.E. This edition was published a second time from Maktabat Muhammad 'Ali Ṣabrij wa Awladuh, Cairo. The first 4 parts were printed in 1347 A.H. and the last one in 1348 A.H., but all the parts were bound in together. 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifah was its editor. It was published reprinted from Maktabat Muhammad 'Ali Ṣabrij wa Awladuh, Cairo in 1964. It was a photocopy of the first edition and its five parts were bound separate as well as in two volumes, the first volume comprising the first two parts and the second volume the last three parts. Like the first edition parts 1 and 2 made one volume and parts 3, 4 and 5 made the other volume. Simultaneously, a **similv** photocopy edition, bound in two volumes, was published from Maktaba-al-Muthanna in Baghdad in 1964. Another print came out from Dar al-Ma'rifah, Beirut, in 1975 bound in 3 volumes. In all these prints al-Shahrastani's *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-~vial* are on its margin.

than *al-Fiṣal*.⁶ On etymological, grammatical, and lexical grounds as well as the requisites of a systematic and logical treatment of the material presented therein call for reading its title as *al-Faṣl*. Moreover, since Ibn Hazm is always guided by the principles of logic, reason, and common sense,⁷ which he emphasises over and over again in his works, and since he is very particular about correct linguistic usage, it seems quite appropriate that he should have used the word *al-Faṣl* as a term of logic and not in its ordinary sense.

The use of the word *al-faṣl* as a term of logic signifies 'difference,' even 'specific difference'. It is the third of five predicates of Porphyry—*jins* (genus), *naw'* (species), *faṣl* (difference), *khūṣṣah* (property), and *'arfi* (accident).⁸ Ibn Hazm catalogues all known religious traditions, their sects and historical developments, philosophical ideas, various world-views and ideologies, in terms of their individual, universal, and transpositional differences. No wonder, then, that Ibn Hazm uses the word *al-Faṣl* in this sense.

B. When was *Kitāb al-Faṣl*: Written?

To document the exact date of the writing of *Kitāb al-Faṣl* seems impossible. Ibn Hazm neither states when he began its writing nor records the date of its completion. Usually Ibn Hazm refers his readers to his previous works when the need arises for reference, consultation, or additional detail. In his *al-Ihkīm fī Usūl al-'Aqūm*, for instance, he refers to his *al-Taqrīb* and *Kitāb al-Faṣl* for the basic principles of reasoning and their employment in the study of the religious traditions of the world.⁹

According to a passage in *al-Ihkīm*, Ibn Hazm wrote his *al-Taqrīb* before, and his *al-Ihkīm* after, his *Kitāb al-Faṣl*. However, in the third and following parts of *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, Ibn Hazm refers to his *al-Ihkīm*, which means that Ibn Hazm either wrote the first two parts

⁶Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur Supplement 1* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937), p. 696; Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 558.

⁷Although it is a fact that Ibn Hazm was an original mind in emphasizing and maintaining Logic and Philosophy as an inevitable science for the study of religion as alluded to by the following Orientalists' works, no serious study has been made so far. See Nicholas Rescher, *The Development of Arabic Logic* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1964), pp. 158-159. See also Robert Brunschwig, "Logic and Law in Classical Islam" in *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, ed., by G.E. Von Grunebaum, (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970), pp. 185-215.

⁸Q.v. "Faṣl" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed.

⁹Ibn Hazm, *Al-Ihkām*, pt. 1, p. 9.

of *Kitāb al-Faṣl* (which deal primarily with religious traditions of the world) before he started writing *al-Ihkīm*, or that he wrote the third and the following parts of «US» *al-Faṣl* along with his *al-Ihkīm*; or had by that time planned an outline of *al-Ihkīm*; which seems less probable.¹⁰

There is also other internal evidence which provides an indirect clue to the period of the books writing. At one place, Ibn Hazm states that the challenge of the Qur'an—that its like can never be produced—had remained uncontested for the past 420 years (*mundh arba' mi'ah wa ishrina 'aman*).¹¹ At another place, he refers to Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi's occultation (*ghaybah*) having taken place some 171 years ago. These statements place the time of writing in 430 A.H./1038 C.E..¹² At a third place, he writes:

And in the experience and witness of sense perception (*fi shahūdat al-hiss*) all the years up till this time, that is, the period of the *khilūfah* of Hisham al-Mu'tamid bi-Allah, make more in their number than their number up till the year of *Hijrah* of the Prophet Muḥammad.¹³

Caliph Hisham III al-Mu'tamid ruled during 418-422 A.H./1027-1031 C.E. but till late December 1029 in absentia. It seems more likely that Ibn Hazm's reference is to the period when Hisham III was physically present in Cordoba. According to Brockelmann, Ibn Hazm wrote the *Kitāb al-Faṣl* during the period 418 to 422 A.H./1027 to 1031 C.E.. And since he wrote *al-Taqrīb* before *Kitāb al-Faṣl* and after *Tasoq al-Jamūmah* (418 A.H./1027 C.E.), he most probably started writing *Kitāb al-Faṣl* in 421 A.H./1031 C.E.

¹⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 3, p. 76, pt. 5, pp. 114, 128.

¹¹Ibid., pt. 1, p. 106.

¹²Ibid., pt. 1, p. 16.

¹³Ibn Hazm, *Al-Ihkīm*, vol. 1, pp. 14-16.

FIVE

Principles and Methodology of the Study of Religions

A. Principles

1. The Statement of Principles in *Kitüb al-Fa-l*

At the outset, Ibn Hazm states the rationale for writing *Kitab al-Fasl*. He expresses intense dissatisfaction with the works on world religions and the religious history of mankind by the Muslim scholars who preceded him. Ibn Hazm feels that their works were marred either because of the inclusion of too many, even unnecessary details, or because at places they gave a bit too sketchy account. They also lack requisite objectivity, fairness and comprehensiveness. This provides Ibn Hazm the justification for writing *Kitab al-Fasl*.

2. Distinctive Human Faculties for Comprehending the *Truth: Observation, Sense-Perception, and Reason*

Ibn Hazm devotes some pages in the beginning of his work to explain the nature of reasoning, argumentation and proofs leading to the cognition of the truth. He succinctly summarises the main points on the role of distinct human faculties in comprehension of the truth he had already covered in detail in *al-Taqrīb*. According to Ibn Hazm:

The first thing that distinguishes a person *nītiq* from other animals (*layawan*) is comprehension and understanding attained through the five senses.¹ ... In addition

¹ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, p. 5.

to these sensory perceptions, human beings are also endowed with a sixth sense, the intuition of given principles of reason {*wa al-idriik al-siidis 'ilmuha bi al-badihat*}.²

Although there is no way to find out how and when a person is endowed with this sixth sense, it is inherent in every human being, providing the soul with the intuitive knowledge of the first principles of reason, which Ibn Hazm usually calls the given facts of reason (*al-badihat* or *badihat al-'aql*), or first principles of reason or intellect (*awa'il al-'aql*). These are identified as the principles of thought: identity, contradiction, and reason. The whole is greater than its parts; two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time; singular is less than plural; one cannot stand and sit simultaneously; an event happens at a time; an act implies an actor; no one has the knowledge of the unseen reality beyond human perception; everything has its own inherent nature (*li al-ashya' tabii'i' wa mahiyyah*), should etc. be used. The reasoning or discerning faculty (*quwwat al-'aql*, or *quwwat al-tamyfa*) is the distinctive trait that makes one rational and capable of symbolizing experience. This faculty which is natural, necessary, and un-acquired (*~arüri* and *i~jirari*), enables one to attain the cognition of the above mentioned axioms. None but those devoid of sense perception and reason may dispute the above-mentioned axioms.³

Ibn Hazm attributes a reasoning and symbolizing power to this faculty called *nuiq*.⁴ According to him, *nuiq* for us is the power to learn sciences and crafts and to comprehend things as they really are {*wa al-nutq 'indana huwa al-tasarruj fi al-'ulum wa al-situi'it wa ma'rifat al-ashya' 'ala ma hiya 'alayhi*}.⁵

Ibn Hazm's theory of knowledge is that knowledge is attained first through sensory observation and perception; second, through the first or given principles of reason; and, third, from the premises or proofs derived and attested to closely or remotely from observation, sense perception, and reason.⁶

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pt. 1, p. 4-7; pt. 5, pp. 108-109; *al-Iikam*, pt.1, pp. 17, 27, 59, 69; Ibn Hasm, *al-U-ul wa al-Furu'*, ed., Muhammad 'Atif al-Traqi, Suhayrah F. Abu WMiyah and Ibrahim Hila! (Cairo: Dar Al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 247-248; *al-Taqrüb li-Ifädd al-Mantiq wa al-Madkhal ilayhi*, ed., Ihsan 'Abbas (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Hayah, 1959), pp. 157-158.

⁴Ibn Hasm, *al-Taqrüb*, p. 170.

⁵Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, p. 80.

⁶Ibn Hazm, *al-Taqrüb*, p. 158.

In *al-Ihkiim*; Ibn Hazm emphasizes that: "Every matter is evidenced for its certitude either through sense perception or through the given principles of reason or through the premises derived, from and returning to them".⁷ He identifies the user of this faculty with the science of logic and its practical use. He sees logical reasoning as the only means to reach the truth or to the cognition of the reality. He believes reason to be the sole criterion for any knowledge. Thus, no statement is true or a standpoint valid unless it is supported by sensory observation, perception and primary reason, or is confirmed by proofs derived from such premises, whereas untruth and falsehood can never stand up under observation, sense perception, and primary principles of reason.⁸ Hence:

If there were no observation, sense perception, and reason, it would be impossible for us to have knowledge of God. If there were no reason, no one would have any knowledge of God. And he who denies reason has denied the unicity of God; and whoever denies the evidence of reason and discerning faculty, he has denied all realities of life and consequently has denied the Lordship and the unicity of God, the reality of prophethood and the divine law.⁹

Ibn Hazm is, however, aware that information attained through sense perception and observation is not always correct and that at times it might be mere imagination, illusion, or deception. But, to him, it is not because of any inherent defect in this faculty but due to some defect or incapacity of the observer; otherwise, they will always result in correct knowledge. Moreover, the faculty of intuitive reason (*al-'aql*) always affirms and confirms sense perception. Whatever is not established by sensory observation, perception, reason, and premises based on their principles is not true knowledge.¹⁰

"It is necessary", Ibn Hazm says, "for every seeker of factual truth or reality (*talib al-luiqiqoh*) that he must assent to what reason dictates and to what he observed and to what his sense data provided him with *{bi ma shihadc wa a(lassa)}* and to what their proofs

⁷Ibn Hazm, *al-Ihkiim*, pt. 1, p. 59.

⁸Ibn Hazm, *al-Taqrīb*, pp. 157-158; *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, part 5, p. 129.

⁹Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fasl.* pt. 1, p. 82; and *al-Taqrīb* pp. 157-158.

¹⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 4-7; pt. 5, pp. 113, 128, 134-135, and *al-Toorib*, p. 166.

(bariihin. sing. *burlian*) stand for".¹¹ Hence, the truth is evident in religious traditions according to reason and the manifest proofs of first principles of sense perception and intuition,"¹² since "the untrue breaks and falls down before it reaches reason and observation".¹³

These faculties make human beings not only rational, but also moral and religious.

Mankind is also provided with the grace of their Creator Who reveals His Will and sends His prophets and messengers. The proper exercise of these faculties aims at the same goal to which the divine guidance leads. Hence Ibn Hazm approves of the Greek sciences of logic and philosophy, and their use and validity in understanding the truth and for the refinement of souls. To him, the basic purpose of philosophy is to equip its students with a proper understanding of virtues, and the ability to distinguish virtues from vices. The science of logic and philosophy, in his view, refines, corrects, and purifies the soul, which "is precisely the purpose of Divine Law".¹⁴

Ibn Hazm refutes those who consider the Greek sciences a threat to religious knowledge and certitude of faith, and affirms that Aristotle's works dealing with rules of logic (*liudud al-kaliim*) are useful and beneficial:

All of these books are good and beneficial. They lead to the proofs of the uniqueness of God, the Exalted, and to His Omnipotence and power. These are of great value for the critical study of all sciences and are extremely profitable for clarifying the principles of religious norms. There are books among them that... treat of the principles of logic.... And the jurist (*faqih*) who exerts himself in search of the truth for himself or for his religious community cannot help without learning logic.¹⁵

Philosophy and logic sharpen one's faculty of reasoning and rational understanding; they are also necessary for the study of philology which, in turn, is indispensable for a proper comprehension of the scriptures and their application and practice. The natural sources of knowledge are primary reason, intellect and sense perception, while

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibn Hazm, *al-Radd 'ala Ibn al-Naghrih al-Yahudi'*, p. 114.

¹³Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb al-Fa-l*, pt. 5, p. 129.

¹⁴Ibid., pt. 1, p. 94.

¹⁵Ibid., pt. 2, p. 95.

the providential sources are revelation and tradition. But the necessity of the latter and their authenticity are determined by reason. Again, though the primary means of knowledge, reason and sense perception are created faculties, they are neither the fount of knowledge nor the creator of things and their nature and qualities. The power, function and role of these faculties must need be recognized, but reason by itself is not absolute:

The reality of the reason is that it makes distinction between things that are comprehended by means of senses and intuitive understanding and to have cognition of their qualities that constitute their nature like the necessary cognition of createdness of the universe, that the Creator is One, the Eternal, Uncaused cause of all beings, the authenticity of obedience to Him... and cognition of all other things in the universe except the Divine Law.¹⁶

And the truth is that the reason is the only faculty that distinguishes between the qualities of existent things. It apprehends the fact and conditions of matter, of the universe, of what is demonstrable of them and what is impossible of them.¹⁷

However, human faculties cannot create or prescribe value or the norms of right which are taught by Revelation. Once the existence of God, His unicity, His being the sole creator, and His sending of prophets and revelation as Guidance is established by reason as necessary knowledge, then obedience to His commands and prohibitions is a rational imperative. Reason, however, cannot create value nor can it comprehend the nature of its Creator, asserts Ibn Hazm:

Reason does not obligate its Creator, the Exalted One, of its decision but the Creator, the Exalted One is the Creator of reason out of nothing, and He is its organizer... so reason comprehends God's Will and distinguishes and discerns the characteristics of things that constitute nature.¹⁸

While discussing the various powers, such as justice, desire, wrath, understanding, ignorance, and intelligence, with which God has endowed human souls, he says:

¹⁶Ibn Hazm, *al-Ihkiim*, pt. 1, p. 27.

¹⁷Ibid. and *Kitab al-Faṣl*, pt. 5, p. 135.

¹⁸Ibn Hazm, *al-Ilkam*, pt. 1, pp. 63-64.

And among them is the power of discernment which Ancients have named logic. The Creator of the soul has made a way through this power for it to understand His address and to apprehend the things in their nature .¹⁹

3. Reason and Revelation

Ibn Hazm was well aware of the controversy on the primacy of revelation as against reason that was prevalent in this time. He disapproved the extreme intellectualism of Muslim philosophers who almost denied the reality of revelation by reducing it to a psychological and functional device to make the masses virtuous and claimed the self-sufficiency of reason and intellect to attain eternal happiness. Nor did he approve of the extreme stance of those puritans who considered the use of logic and philosophical sciences as detrimental to practising the precepts of revelation. He also criticises both the rationalism of the Mu'tazilah and the scholasticism of the Asha'irah who tried to build their respective systems at the expense of the apparent meanings of the revealed text of the Qur'an, He is also very critical of both the Shi'i and Sufi esoteric ideas. To him, the roots of the problem lay in the extremism of these strands of thought as well as in the narrow-mindedness and limited knowledge of the proponents of those trends of thought.

Ibn Hazm argues that the main source of all knowledge, whether philosophical or religious, is God alone. God alone had endowed Adam—from whom all generations of human beings proceeded — with knowledge. God chose some from among mankind as His messengers and bestowed on them the knowledge of His Will, which each of them taught to his people. Hence it is impossible to find a person who can prove the source of his knowledge, directly or by inference, otherwise. Besides making the traditional knowledge, which is primarily based on revelation, available to man God also endowed him with the faculties which enable him to know the things as they truly are and to discern the true from the false.

While accepting revelation and tradition as the basic sources of religious data, Ibn Hazm contends that the authenticity, historical transmission and accuracy of that data should stand up to the verification of reason. Ibn Hazm maintains tradition as a valid means of knowledge, like knowledge attained through observation, sense perception and intuition. However, all knowledge attained through

¹⁹Ibid., pt. 1, p. 6; *Kitāb al-Fasl*, pt. 5, p. 125.

tradition—knowledge of history, culture and ideas passed on by the preceding generations—is neither necessarily true nor false until verified by reason.²⁰

Ibn Hazm divides knowledge attained through human traditions into two categories. First, that which has been transmitted by overwhelmingly numerous reliable reports throughout generations without any interruption in the chain of transmission and without any change in the text of the information. In the Muslim science of *ifadth*-criticism, such a report is called *~adith* (or *khobar*) *mutauiiiiir*. The second kind consists of traditional knowledge which cannot stand up to objective verification. This sort of traditional knowledge is accepted as true without any valid evidence or demonstrated proof. Ibn Hazm places the latter in the category of superstition and blind imitation.²¹

Ibn Hazm tries to strike a balance between the two extremes of rationalism and dogmatism. He sees reason and revelation complementary to each other, both being indispensable for arriving at the truth and attaining happiness. While he argues that revelation has precedence and reason has limited validity, he also pleads for subjecting the claims of authenticity and accuracy of revelation to the dictates of reason since the latter's role is that of both affirmation and confirmation, of approval and rejection, and of analysis and explanation.

Indeed, the principles of logic and common sense enable one to verify the internal coherence and consistency of the scriptural texts, their conformity to both the universality of religious experience and its verities and to the norms of universal morality, as also to the reasonableness of their claims. Reason cannot, however, penetrate into the realm of divine laws. It cannot judge the obligation or prohibition of any divine commands, nor can it make anything lawful or unlawful.²²

The somewhat rationalist orientation of Ibn Hazm offended and startled his contemporaries, and has stood as a challenge throughout Muslim intellectual history. Secularists have labelled it as "theistic

²⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, p. 7; *al-U-ul wa al-Furü'*, p. 254 and *al-I-küm*, pt. 1, pp. 18, 59, 64.

²¹Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb ai-Fasl*, pt. 5, p. 129.

²²*Ibid.*, pt. 1, p. 37 and *al-Ihkiim*, pt. 1, pp. 27-28.

subjectism",²³ while the Orientalists have been at pains to reduce it to his literalist and Zahir! approach to theology, philosophy and logic.²⁴ Muslim scholars are only now beginning to recognize Ibn Hazm's contribution to philosophical sciences and to acknowledge the vigour of his thought and approach which have been labelled by Orientalists as "excesses of an extreme systematization that is wilfully aggressive".²⁵ A few Orientalists, however, could not help but concede his "remarkably independent mind" and his "deliberate major departure from, and criticism of, Aristotle—though on the whole admiring his work, his defence of logic and philosophy",²⁶ and his objective and scientific, analytical study of the Bible as well as his rational and objective approach to the history of religious ideas.²⁷ Beyond such glib remarks, there has been no systematic study of Ibn Hazm's stance on the primacy of reason, logic, and philosophy, nor on his contribution to the field of religious studies. Indeed, to see Ibn Hazm's contribution to religious studies only as a forerunner and precursor of the so-called rationalist theologians (such as al-Ghazali or Thomas Aquinas) means a gross depreciation of his work and a denial of his originality and independent approach.²⁸

Although believing in the primacy of reason, Ibn Hazm is neither a *fideist* nor a mystic, nor an absolute rationalist. He is also well aware of the limits of reason. To Ibn Hazm, it is not only Islamic Shari'oh and its prescriptions that remain unquestioned by reason; indeed all sharii 'i' (divine laws of all religious traditions) fall in the same category.²⁹

²³George F. Hourani, "Reason and Revelation in Ibn Hazm's Ethical Thought" in *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, ed., Parviz Morewedge (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1979), pp. 142-164, see especially p. 158.

²⁴See the studies of Ignaz Goldziher, Israel Friedlaender and Roger Arnaldez.

²⁵Robert Brunschvig, "Logic and Law in Classical Islam" in *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, ed., G.E. Von Grunebaum (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970), p. 19.

²⁶Nicholas Rescher, *The Development of Arabic Logic*, p. 158.

²⁷Alfred Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination Among the Hebrews and Semites* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), pp. 400-420.

²⁸Miguel Asin Palacios, *Abenhamud de Cordoba y su historia critica des las ideas religiosas*, 5 vols. (Madrid: Academia de la historia tip de la Rivista de archives, 1927-32).

²⁹Ibn Hazm, *Kiiib al-Fasl*, pt. 1, p. 37; pt. 3, pp. 107, 116; also al-Ihkiim, pt. 1, p. 27.

4. Faith and Knowledge

Ibn Hazm equates objective knowledge with true faith. Objective knowledge is true and identical with a cognition of the thing or matter as it is in its reality. And the definition of 'knowledge of a thing' is basically its cognition, so we can say that the knowledge (*'ilm*) and cognition (*ma'rifah*) are two names or nouns employed for the same meaning. It is this faith in a thing as it is in its reality and to be certain of it in such a way that all doubts about it are vanished with this certitude. This happens either by means of witness of senses and first principles of intellect or through the proof closely or remotely derived from them or just by chance or providence when that might be in concurrence with the true faith.³⁰

Although Ibn Hazm uses three terms—viz. *'ilm* (knowledge), *ma'rifah* (cognition), and *i'tiqid* (faith), identically or equivalently—it is *'ilm*, the true objective knowledge, that is basic for him. By making *'ilm* the foundation of *ma'rifah* and *i'tiqid*, he further clarifies that *i'tiqid* might not always be based on true and objective knowledge. If faith is in concurrence with true and objective knowledge, then it is identical with that knowledge; otherwise, it is a fake faith, and is always susceptible to doubts and is devoid of certitude. Thus, *'ilm* always constitutes the certain cognition of a thing as it is, and is always free from doubts and misgivings. The *i'tiqad* of a thing that is not derived through *'ilm* (as in the case of true faith attained by grace or providence) may be certain, if it is in agreement with the guidance of God or with *'ilm*, but otherwise, if it is not in such an agreement. Every *'ilm* is *i'tiqid*, while every *i'tiqid* is not *'ilm*.³¹

Such an understanding of *'ilm* characterizes Ibn Hazm's independent mind. He agrees neither with the extreme and absolute rationalism of idealist philosophers nor with the anti-rational dogmatism and traditionalism of theologians.

Reason being the first and foremost means of true and objective knowledge, religious traditions, philosophical world-views, sectarian beliefs, and ideological claims, all are subject to critique, examination, and verification by reason in their claims. To Ibn Hazm, an objective historian of religion is not different from a seeker of the

³⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt. 5, p. 109.

³¹Ibid. and *al-U-til wa al-Furii'*, p. 247 and *al-Ilkiim*, pt. 1, p. 34.

truth and is thus bound to analyze the tradition critically and accept only that part of it which stands up to the verification of reason and sense perception.³² In his own words:

Whether it is a historical event or a general matter, religious tradition or its belief system, sectarian ideologies or philosophical worldviews—all are subject to critical examination by reason and sense perception.

If there had not been reason, sense perception, and the faculty of discernment, we would not have been able to know the truth of anything (*mü 'arqfñü ~iḥ,~ata shay'in*) like one who is devoid of this faculty, namely an insane person.... For he who gives the lie to the witness of the reason and discerning faculty he has given the lie to all that is necessitated by given intuitions and their concomitants, consequently resulting in his denial of the lordship and unicity of God, His prophets, and His laws, and it occurs either because of some misgivings or defect of mind or because of mutual contradictions of an insane person.³³

To conclude, in his treatment of religious ideas and religious traditions, Ibn Hazm makes reason and sense perception the main criteria. He analyses each viewpoint according to these fundamental means of knowledge, and he subjects every truth claim to verification. He sharply criticises those theories that accept means other than reason and sense perception in this regard.³⁴

B. Understanding Religious Traditions: Ibn Hazm's Methodology

Ibn Hazm's study of the religious history of mankind is based on what may be called a dialectical-dialogical method. Both "dialectic" and "dialogue" are meant here in their generic as well as in their literal senses. He analysed religious data according to the rules of logic and dialectics, and engaged himself in dialogue with the leading scholars of other religious traditions in his time.

³²Ibn Hazm, *al-Radd 'alī Ibn al-Naghrih al-Yahudī*, p. 114; see also *al-Taqrīb*, p. 166.

³³Ibn Hazm, *al-Taqrīb*, pp. 157-58.

³⁴Ibn Hazm, *Kitiib al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 108ff.

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Ibn Hazm did not delve into the study of religious history merely with the intention of recording and reporting in the way present-day anthropologists are wont to do. His endeavour was a search after the truth, in the comprehension of which mankind has differed throughout history. To him, the true historian of religion is the seeker of the truth. To study the religious history of mankind is to comprehend man's perception, appropriation and living of the truth which makes all other aspects of one's life a meaningful coherent whole.

Man, for Ibn Hazm, is first and foremost *homo-religiosus*. Man's unique faculty of *nuiq* or *'aql* is primarily meant to comprehend the truth and reality, and he lives his life only in response to this comprehension and perception of truth. All creeds, cults, customs, and conduct stem from this response. Also because of the varied nature of the response have emerged various cultures and civilizations and took on their variegated forms in history.

Awareness of the truth is inherent in man and is intuited through the rational soul. This unique faculty of the rational soul equips man with the first principles of reason, which Ibn Hazm calls *badfhat al-'aql* or *awḍ'īl al-'aql*. Upon these principles are based all logical understanding, discerning power, and common sense perception. Thus, every human perception, comprehension and appropriation of the truth must be studied, analyzed, compared, and contrasted, according to these principles.³⁵

Every response to the truth, whether collective or individual, whether in terms of creed, ritual, or conduct, is necessarily expressed in communicative, linguistic, and verbal expression. Therefore, language stands as the main vehicle of every religious experience. Again, language is part and parcel of the human rational soul [*nuiq*] which has the power of communicating and symbolizing; (the term *nutq* in Arabic literally meaning "the language or speaking and communicating power"). Hence, all rules of common sense perception, observation, and the first principles of reason also apply to language.

Ibn Hazm argues that a word has a literal and apparent meaning, and on that basis, it acquires a metaphorical meaning. Both meanings are prescribed and fixed by linguistic tradition and are known to every conventional user of the language. Whatever that word stands for is generally known to every other speaker of that language, to which rule religious utterances and language are no exception. The analysis of religious language of a particular religious rule enables

³⁶Ibn Hazm, *al-flikam*, pt. 1, 6ff. and 56ff.; *al-Taqrīḥ*, pp. 157ff. and *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt. 5, p. 129.

one to discern the truth or the falsity of its claim. To Ibn Hazm, the analysis of religious language is an empirical and objective activity, an experimental scientific activity.³⁶

Because mankind shares in the essence of humanity and religiousness, Ibn Hazm argues, religious experiences and their expression cannot be mutually contradictory or radically different. Similarly, there can be no secret or unique religious experience that is given to some and denied to others. All religious knowledge, and all cognition of the truth, is public and is open to all human beings regardless of race, colour, time, or clime. As the truth is one and self-evident, so its knowledge and experience are open and accessible to every human being. Thus the application of the first principles of reason and logical rules to the analysis of religious language is the first scientific operation one performs to discern the validity and authenticity of any truth-claim of a religious tradition.³⁷

In Ibn Hazm's view man is fully capable of carrying and conveying the truth in its pristine linguistic expression, but he also has the capacity and power to use or misuse the language as well as the divine trust. Ibn Hazm, therefore, calls for applying to the religious language all the rules of reason and objectivity. On the basis of his critical study and close analysis of various religious texts of the major religious traditions, he demonstrates how the misuse of language has resulted, on the one hand, in the alteration of so-called scriptures and, on the other in the disintegration and splintering of the followers of a religion based on those texts. In doing his comparative religious studies, he employed his dialectical-dialogical method to these scriptures. To see his analytical study of the religious traditions as a *ʿahiri* (literalist) approach, or to judge it as his distrust of man and his use of language, is to see him only as a *faqih* (jurisprudent) and to miss his basic contribution as a historian of religion, compared to which his *fiqh* contribution might be considered secondary.³⁸

Ibn Hazm is not oblivious of the fact that a religious text or scripture, insofar as it makes a coherent whole, should not be self-contradictory and should not contradict the essential principles of

³⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 80ff. and *al-Taqrīb*, p. 170.

³⁷*Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, p. 116.

³⁸Roger Arnaldez's thesis in his *Grammaire et théologie chez Ibn Hazm de Cordoue* (Paris: J.Vrin, 1956), and Ignaz Goldziher's thesis in his *Die ʿahiriten* (Leipzig, 1884), English trans., ed. Wolfgang Behn, *The ʿahiris: Their Doctrine and Their History; A Contribution to the History of Islamic Theology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971).

the religious experiences of mankind. There can be an unfolding, a development, a progression, or a change in the explanation of those essentials of the truth, but any outright negation, rejection, contradiction, or digression of past experiences would be illogical. On the basis of this principle, Ibn Hazm accepts the theory of *naskh* (abrogation) in the Shari'ah, but rejects *bada'*. For him, abrogation implies a providential act of God and *bada'* implies the change of mind in God because of unknown and uncontrollable conditions and circumstances.³⁹

Ibn Hazm maintains that in the proper study of the scriptures, it is necessary to compare and contrast their contents as they are interpreted and carried out by their followers. To comprehend them properly, it is necessary to master the relevant languages as well as to interact with those who command expertise in such texts. For a committed search after the truth such mutual exchange is indispensable, and such an unbiased search after the truth calls for conversion to the truth, even at the expense of one's cherished tradition and culture.⁴⁰

With respect to dialogue with other religious traditions, one must recognise the fact of different interpretations of the scriptures, and hence the different denominations and sects of the major religious traditions. Ibn Hazm studies not only the mainstream orthodox positions of major religious traditions, but also their histories in terms of sects and main differences in beliefs and creeds. He consulted those parts of the scriptures that provided the ground for differing interpretations and the basis for differing beliefs.

In his study of other religious traditions, Ibn Hazm did not approach them in terms of chronological sequence or in consideration of their geographical location. Rather, he took religious ideas, and then discussed their relation to or deviation from his view of the truth and reality. Thus, his study of the religious history of mankind is not marred by racial or cultural prejudices, or by evolutionary or progressive assumptions, seems to be the case with a large number of modern Western scholars. His study is humane, intellectual, and universal, in both its nature and scope.

Ibn Hazm divides all of mankind's conceptions of reality and truth into six broad categories using division, definition, and analysis, and using reason and sense perception as his basis. He arranges these

³⁹See the section titled "The Jews and the Theory of **Abrogation**" in chap. six

⁴⁰Ibn Hazm, *al-Radd 'ala Ibn al-Naghrih al-Yahudi*, p. 114. See also *al-Taqrih*, p. 166 and *al-Ihkim*, pt. 1, p. 21.

six categories according to the degree of their distance and deviation from reason and sense perception principles, and hence their differences and divergences from Islam.

For Ibn Hazm, Islam is the religion of truth. Its truth-claim is based on reason and sense perception; In his typology of religious traditions, Ibn Hazm starts from general errors in philosophies and ideologies and moves to the particular errors of major religious traditions.

C. Six-fold Typology of World Religious Traditions

Ibn Hazm classified all religious traditions and ideologies of mankind known to him into six types:

1. Those who deny the existence of any facts, realities, or truths. Mutakallimiin called them by the name of Sophists.
2. Those who acknowledge realities but maintain that the world is eternal. It has neither any Creator nor any Providence. Broadly speaking, this group might represent the Naturists, or Materialists, or Atheists.
3. Those who believe in the existence of realities and the world to be eternal. They also believe in its eternal Providence as well.
4. Those who believe in the existence of realities but differ in their concepts of the eternity of the world. Some believe that the world is eternal and others reject this notion. Again, they agree that there is more than one Creator and Providence of the world, but differ in regard to their number.
5. Those who believe in the existence of realities, hold that the world is created and has a Unique and Eternal Creator, but deny the existence of any prophets and reject prophecy.
6. Those who believe in the existence of realities, in the createdness of the world, and in One, Unique, Eternal Creator, who affirm prophecy, but differ as to who are to be accepted as prophets, and who are to be rejected.⁴¹

Ibn Hazm takes into account the claims and arguments of all these religious-philosophical worldviews, and identifies the irrational and

⁴¹ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa~l*. pt. 1, p. 13.

illogical aspects of their ideas and beliefs. He deals with them on the basis of reason and sense perception, or on the basis of those principles that are commonly acceptable to their adherents. First, he refutes the skeptical and nihilistic doctrines of the Sophists. Next, he argues against the eternity of the world, and then argues for the existence of only One, Unique, Eternal Creator. Then, he argues for the necessity of prophecy and the reality of the prophets. Although his treatment of these philosophical and religious ideologies is systematic and logical, he does not deal with any major religious tradition consistently at one place. He discusses the doctrines and beliefs of these religious traditions under six categories. For example, all philosophies and religious systems that do not accept the phenomenon of prophecy are dis—ed together. Since Christianity and Judaism are closer to Islam than other religions, and share with Islam belief in God, in prophecy, and in the revealed books, they are dealt with in more than one place and more comprehensively than other religious traditions and philosophical ideologies.⁴²

Ibn Hazm's approach in the study of other religions is characterized by a very combative and disputatious spirit, but is systematic and logical. First, he sets forth the position of his opponents as accurately as he understands it, and records their arguments, both religious and philosophical. To quote Israel Fried-Laender: "... the characteristic which constitutes the real greatness of Ibn Hazm and is of paramount importance for the subject dealt with in this treatise is his truthfulness".⁴³

Ibn Hazm himself claims that he would not use against his adversary any quotation from their traditions which is not clear in meaning so that the opponent may not react by saying that God meant by it what He willed.⁴⁴ In terms of presentation, he directly proceeds to the main points, recording the arguments of the opponents, and then refutes them one by one, marshalling proofs based on logic and religious texts. His critiqueness rests on the premise that a scripture, which is revealed by God, cannot be inconsistent and contradictory in content.⁴⁵

⁴²Ibid. pt. 1, pp. 8ff.

⁴³Israel Friedlaender, *The Heterodoxies of the Shi'ites, According to Ibn J.azm* (New Haven, Connecticut: 1901), p. 14.

⁴⁴Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 117, 165.

⁴⁵Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 116ff. See also: *al-Ilküm*, pt. 1, p. 19.

SIX

Judaism

In his typology of religio-philosophical worldviews Ibn Hazm puts the religious tradition of the Jews in the sixth category. This category represents the people who believe in the Oneness of the Eternal Creator, in the createdness of the world, in prophecy and in revealed books, but who accept some prophets while rejecting others. Ibn Hazm calls the Jews by the Qur'anic term *Ahlu Hüdhihi al-Millah* (the people of this religious community), He also includes in this category Sabians and Magians who reject the Christian notion of the Trinity and who, like Jews, also accept some prophets and reject others.¹

A. Description of Sects and Schisms in Judaism

Ibn Hazm divided the Jews into five sects.

1. Al-Samiriyyah (the Samaritans). They differ with the majority of Jews in not accepting Jerusalem as the holy city. Second, their Torah is different from that of the rest of the Jews. Third, they do not accept any other prophets after Moses and Joshua. Hence, they reject the prophecy of Simon, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Elisha, Elias, Amos, Habakkuk, Zachariah, and Jeremiah. Fourth, they do not believe in Resurrection. They live in Syria and consider it illegitimate to move **away** from there.

¹ Ibn Hazm, *Kiiib al-Fasl*, pt. 1, p. 98.

2. Al-Sadiiqiyyh {Sadducees or Zadokites). This sect associates itself with a person called Sadiiq (Zadok). Differing with all other Jews, they regard 'Uzayr (Ezra) as the son of God. They live in Yemen.
3. Al-'Ananiyyah {Ananites or Qaraites or Karaites). They are followers of 'Anan al-Dawiidi al-Yahiidl (Anan Ben David). They claim that they do not transgress the laws and commandments of Torah and what is enjoined on them in the Books of the Prophets. They do not accept the interpretations of the rabbis, or the codes and laws made by them. They are found in Iraq, Egypt, and Syria. In al-Andalus, they live in the areas of Tulaytalah, and Tulaybarah.
4. Al-Rabbaniiyyah {Rabbanites). They are al-Ash'aniyyah. They follow the rabbis and their interpretations. This group represents most Jews and constitutes their majority.
5. Al-'Isawiyyah (!suites). They are the followers of Abu 'Isa al-Isfahani, also referred to as Muhammad ibn 'Isa, a Jew belonging to the city of Isfahan. They believe in the prophethood of 'Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary) and of Muhammad; that 'Isa ibn Maryam was sent to Banu Isra'Il {the Children of Israel) as a prophet as attested to by Injil; that Jesus is also one of the Israelite prophets; that Muhammad is a prophet sent with the revelation of the Qur'an and its *Sharü'i'* to Banu Isma'Il {the Children of Ishmael) and to the rest of the Arabs, even as Ayyiib {Job) was sent as prophet to Banu 'Ays and Bal'am to Banii Muwab, according to the belief of all other Jews. A good many of the elite Jews with whom Ibn Hazm came into contact belonged to this school of thought.²

B. The Jews and the Theory of Abrogation

The main difference between Islam and Judaism is that while Muslims accept Muhammad as the last prophet of God, who was sent to

²Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 98-99. Ibn Hazm's description of *al-'isawiyyah* is also corroborated by Jacob B. Agus, "Some of the Qaraites, at least, acknowledged explicitly the relative truth of the Mohammedan and Christian faith, believing that both Jesus and Mohammed were true prophets who brought authentic messages of redemption to millions of pagan peoples". Jacob B. Agus, *The Evolution of Jewish Thought* (London: Abdelard Schuman, 1959), p. 151.

all mankind and who received the Qur'an as the Word of God and as an embodiment of the Shari'oh; the Jews do not. This Muslim belief primarily depends upon the idea that a succession of messengers was sent with a series of revelations from God. This in turn implies the notion of *naskh* (abrogation)—that is, if Muhammad is a true prophet and that the Qur'an is the true revelation from God, then all previous revelations are thereby abrogated.

In response the Jews transferred this issue to the realm of Philosophy, interestingly though, they also became divided on the issue of abrogation. While some reject this theory in principle and deny abrogation altogether, others accept it in principle, but deny that it ever occurred.³ The former contend that it implies a change of mind on the part of God. If He prescribes something at one time and abrogates it later on for the succeeding generations, it means that God is devoid of foreknowledge and lacks prescience. In contrast, the latter argue that although it is possible in principle it never occurred; nor is there any historical evidence of its occurrence.⁴

Ibn Hazm refutes both these views on both philosophical and scriptural grounds. First, he provides instances from the Jewish Torah to show that abrogation did occur and that it was accepted by the Jews themselves. For instance, the Torah records that Jacob simultaneously married Leah and Rachael, the daughters of Laban, but later this marriage to two sisters at the same time was prohibited and made illegal in Mosaic Law (Lev. 18:18). Likewise, Moses' father, Amram, had married his aunt Jochebed, the daughter of his grandfather, Levi, but marriage to one's aunt was later prohibited and forbidden in Mosaic Law.

The contrast between Dt. 20:15-18 and Jos. 9:3-27 provides another instance. Moses was commanded to destroy all the cities and living beings of Jordan and Palestine, but when one of those peoples (who were called 'Abadiin or Gibeonites) tricked them into believing that they had come to make peace with the Israelites from a far off land, they accepted their plea. Lateran, learning the truth, Joshua and their congregation decided not to implement the law and not to kill them, "but Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord..." (Jos.

³Ibn Hazm, *Kitiib al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, p. 100.

⁴Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 100-102.

9:27). For Ibn Hazm this change of law cannot be justified except in terms of abrogation.⁵

Ibn Hazm maintains that Torah not only provides such instances of abrogation being practised, but also shows them as committing *al-badii'* (change of mind due to external circumstances) on the part of God. Any change in God's decision and determination implies a change of mind, either because of the uncertainty of the future or due to lack of determining and controlling power. A decision or determination first made and announced and then later withdrawn can be a creature's characteristic. But to attribute such a thing to God is the worst caprice and *al-badii'*, asserts Ibn Hazm." He substantiates his claim for this Jewish conception of God by reference to the story in Ex. 32:9-14. In Moses' absence, the Israelites took a molten calf as their god and worshipped it. The Lord told Moses not to interfere, because His wrath against them burned hot and He would consume them because they were a stiff-necked and rebellious people who had committed such a heinous crime. Moses earnestly entreated and persistently beseeched the Lord to change His decision, and the Lord did so. Ibn Hazm argues that this is an obvious case of *al-badii'* and may be attributed to the creatures but not to the Creator.⁷ According to Ibn Hazm:

Al-badii' is that when one does or orders a thing to happen but does not know its ensuing results or future conditions, its forms or aspects, nor has he any determining power over it. On the contrary, abrogation is that when one does or orders a thing to be done and is fully aware of and determines and controls all its proceeding results and future aspects.⁸

Hence *al-bada'* cannot be an attribute of God because... when we speak of *al-bada'*, we do not mean just the letters '*Ba*, '*Dal*,' and '*Ali*,' but we mean what they stand for. Whatever term one may employ for this meaning, *al-bada'* or *al-naskh*, or any other term that means that a doer or commander of a thing to take place is unaware of its future aspects and does not determine

⁵Ibid., pt. 1, p. 101.

⁶Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 101-102.

⁷Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 101; and 163-164.

⁸Ibn Hazm, *Al-Ihkiim*, pt. 1, p. 446.

its conditions and results, then this is al-bada' and it is inconceivable about God. Any description of God that includes this conception and attributes to Him such a thing is nothing less than gross anthropomorphism. God the Creator is free from all such limitations.⁹

Ibn Hazm maintains that the abrogation (*naskh*) of any divine command or abrogation of its relevance for a certain period of time or place or people does not negate God's Omniscience and Omnipotence, but denotes both the creatures' limitedness and dependency and God's Eternal Wisdom and Gracious Providence because of which God prescribes certain laws and rituals to cater to certain human conditions. Once those conditions change, other laws and rituals replace them. Thus the difference in the Law is not only wise, rational, and logical, but also practical and providential.¹⁰

Second, *naskh* is confined to Shari'i' only—i.e., those divine laws, rituals, and forms of worship that are not determined and discerned by human reason and intellect. It does not apply to the basic principles of religious belief which are universal and unchangeable and which could be known through common sense perception, reason, and intuition. Nor does it apply to such basic beliefs as the Unicity, Uniqueness, and Transcendence of God.¹¹ There is no *naskh* in matters which constitute the immutable principles of the cognition of Reality, are known through sense perception, reason, and intuition. This means that *naskh* takes place in the practical aspects of religion rather than in its conceptual and theoretical aspects and all such abrogations are brought about through a prophet who brings a new *Shari'ah* and revelation.

As regards the phenomenon of prophecy, there is no difference between Muslims, Jews and Christians, claims Ibn Hazm. A prophet is distinguished by the fact that he works miracles with the permission and aid of God. These miracles are signs of God that stand as conclusive proof of his prophethood.¹² Ibn Hazm probably assumes that the Islamic concepts of prophecy, revelation, and miracles are also accepted by the Jews and Christians. Both Jesus and Muhammad worked miracles which were witnessed and reported by a large number of people; hence their prophethood is undeniable. Their

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibn Hazm, *al-Taqrīb*, pp. 158-159 and *Al-Ihkīm*, pt. 1, p. 59.

¹²Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp. 102-103 and *passim*.

prophethood empowers them to teach a new *Sharfah* and abrogate the preceding *Sharii'i*, Hence the Jews' rejection of the prophethood, first, of Jesus and, then, of Muhammad, is based neither on rational nor on scriptural grounds; it is rather based on self-contradiction, arrogance, and a blind following of the ancestral tradition.¹³

In the case of 'Isawiyah-v-those who accept the prophethood of both Jesus and Muhammad, but deny that their teachings and *Sharii'i* are binding upon them—their contradiction and irrationality are self-evident.¹⁴

C. Historical Textual Criticism of Hebrew Scriptures

It is generally claimed that the higher criticism of the Bible did not start until after the Renaissance and the Reformation. Although both Jewish and Christian scholars of the Bible were aware of many internal inconsistencies, contradictions, discrepancies, and conflicting statements long before individual critics started pointing out the non-Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and its composite nature, the traditional scholars had never questioned the divine origin of the Bible, nor had they conceived it as having been composed through the ages by humans. It is significant, though, that Baruch Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), considered the first critical review of Hebrew scriptures, had called them a national and literary product rather than the literally inspired word of God.

Among the many factors contributing to the emergence of Biblical criticism, the most compelling reason was the concerted attempt to explain away the apparent variations and contradictions in the narratives as well as in the laws. The critical studies on the Bible suggested a change in the traditional views of the revelation of scriptures. Henceforth Biblical scholarship was divided into a modernist position and an orthodox-traditional position, arguing respectively for the human or divine origin of the scriptures and sacred texts.

The founders of the historical-literary method started analyzing the Biblical text critically on its literary and historical sources, Ibn Hazm's analysis and critique of the Hebrew scriptures, especially of the Pentateuch, resembles this method. Although his focus on the problematic passages corresponds with the early Biblical critics, his assumptions and objectives of studying them are polemical.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

Historical criticism generally represents "a method for: (a) collecting all possible witnesses to an era or event, (b) evaluating what they say, (c) relating the findings to one another in a coherent structure, and (d) presenting the conclusions with the evidence". Ibn Hazm's study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament seems to fairly follow these procedures; his study in fact represents the first, albeit rudimentary, systematic historical criticism of the Bible.¹⁵ He went through the scriptures with care and diligence, and examined their integrity and credibility in terms of their content, context, chronology, geography, history of transmission and validity of claims, in accordance with the rules of internal consistency from within the tradition as well as their consistency with the universal human religious experience and common sense perception and reason. Clearly his whole endeavour was meant to discern the truth from falsehood and to proclaim it without reservation as he saw it.¹⁶

Ibn Hazm studied the Hebrew scriptures in their Arabic versions. It is not known whether he knew Hebrew, Greek or Latin, but most probably he did not know Hebrew, as he fails to point out the varying uses of the terms of Yahweh and Elohim in the Pentateuch. He does raise, however, the question on the use of al-Kirubim (the Cherubim) in Gen. 3:24 in one manuscript and Israfil in another. There is no question that he did consult different Arabic versions of the Hebrew Scriptures, but which ones, and by whom, it is now impossible to know. It is also difficult to determine which and whose Arabic translations he used.¹⁷

Ibn Hazm's textual criticism on the etymology, terminology, style, and use of words, as one would expect, in view of his presumable lack of the knowledge of Hebrew, is based on the Arabic translations of the Jewish religious texts with which he was familiar. But in order to clarify complex and controversial terms, Ibn Hazm, in addition to consulting the original sources and materials available to him, discussed and debated the issues in question with renowned and leading

¹⁵Edgar Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 41.

¹⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb al-Faṣl*, pt. 5, pp. 118, 135, and *al-Taqrö*, p. 174.

¹⁷Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 51-52, 121, 142. See also J. Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945-1965), pt II, vol. 1, p. 179. (Part I, two vols., Part II, 2 vols.)

Jewish and Christian scholars of his time with whom he was in close touch.¹⁸

It was generally believed in his time that the Pentateuch was written and transmitted as dictated by God to Moses; i.e., it is a verbatim revelation from God. Even though the Quran has charged *Ahl al-Kitāb* with committing *ta-rīf*, *tabdil* and *talbis*, both the Jews and the Christians have continuously denied these Qur'anic charges. Except for those Biblical verses that prophesy the coming of Muhammad (peace be on him), Muslim scholars did not generally feel the need to substantiate the Qur'anic critique with a systematic Biblical criticism. On the other hand, both the Jews and the Christians took these Qur'anic charges as mere polemics and vague allegations. Although theological and scriptural debates and discussions and claims and counter-claims had started between Jews, Christians, and Muslims soon after the Muslim conquest of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, there is no evidence of any Muslim study of Torah and the Gospels that employs a systematic critical method to scrutinize and analyze the scriptures in the manner undertaken by Ibn Hazm. Some Orientalists maintain that these early Muslim polemics against Jews and Christians drew mainly upon the sources and arguments of the Jews against the Christians and of the early Christians against the Jews. In early apologetical and theological treatises, however, direct references to and quotations from Biblical sources are few and far between and are confined only to basic differences of doctrines. Nor do Muslim bibliographical and biographical references mention, prior to Ibn Hazm, any significant, in-depth work on Biblical criticism and the history of religions.¹⁹

Some of the basic principles of Ibn Hazm's critique of the Scriptures are as follows: first, any scripture or *Shari'ah*, *Shari'ah* that is confined to its believers and is kept secret from others, is hardly immune to alteration and corruption. This rule relates to the principle of verification of the processes and history of transmission of religious scriptures and traditions.²⁰ Second, every *khbar* (news, tradition, historical report, truth-claim) can either be true or false, or

¹⁸Ibn Haam, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 1, pp. 152, 213 and *passim*.

¹⁹Shlomo Pines, "The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source", in *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* (Jerusalem, 1968), vol. 2, no. 13, pp. 237-310. See also S.M. Stern, "Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in 'Abd al-Jabbar", in *Journal of Theological Studies*, New ser., vol. 18, no. 1 (1968), pp. 24-57.

²⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 1, p. 113.

a mixture of both. However, it is logically impossible and irrational from the point of common sense that an event or news may be at the same time true and false, or true for some and false for others.²¹ Third, one of the basic *Kalüm* principles is that if anything belonging to the category of the impossible is claimed as possible or *vice-versa*, then such a claim becomes an evident proof of its own falsity as well as of the falsity of the report, and its reporter is exposed to the charge of lying. The categories of possible and impossible are known to the common sense perception, observation, and to the immediate intuition of the intellect—the oft-repeated and basic Hazmian triad of principles for the discernment of truth from falsehood. Fourth, the criticism and objections of Ibn Hazm which consist of his contention that certain religions had deviated from the truth relate only to those passages and narratives of their scriptures that are clear and unambiguous in their meaning, purport, and implication.²²

Ibn Hazm studies Biblical texts in the sections comprising pages 116 to 224 of the first part, and pages 1 to 86 of the second part of his *The first section deals with Pentateuch and other Hebrew scriptures. He entitles this section "Fasl fī Munūqa-ūt ?ühirah wa Taküdhfb Wü~*ah fī ol-Kitiib alladhf iusammih al-Yahiid al-Tawrüh wa fī Sü'ir Kuiubihim wa fī al-Anüjfl al-Arab'ah yatabayyan bi dhülik Ta~rifuhum wa Tabdiluhum wa annahü Ghayr alladhf Anzala Allah 'Azza wa Jalla"* (section concerning manifest contradictions and obvious lies in the Book named by the Jews as Torah and in the rest of their Books and in the four Gospels wherefrom their corruption and alteration is manifest, and that they are what Allah, the Exalted and the Sublime, revealed).

Ibn Hazm's critique of Hebrew scriptures is neither topical nor a verse by verse commentary. Rather, it is a sort of running commentary on and critique of those passages and narratives of the Hebrew scriptures that provide or demonstrate obvious proofs for internal textual contradictions, false claims in factual matters, geographical and historical inaccuracies, chronological errors, obvious arithmetical and computational mistakes, predictions and prophecies that were later belied by history, statements of anthropomorphism, and immoral conduct ascribed to prophets and angels. Ibn Hazm points out numerous inconsistencies, discrepancies, contradictions, and conflicting statements; hence he contends that Torah (Pentateuch) can

²¹Ibid., pt. 1, p. 103; Ibn Hazm, *al-Taqrü*, p. 182 and *al-Radd 'ala Ibn al-Naghrih al-Yahudi*, p. 114.

²²Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 120, 117.

neither be the work of Moses nor a verbatim revelation from God. Ibn Hazm also claims to have found passages that are morally questionable, as also those that are at discordance with common sense understanding and historical facts. Such texts, argues Ibn Hazm, cannot be the work of any sensible person, let alone of a prophet. Nor, by the same token, can the works containing them be revealed scriptures.

Interestingly enough Ibn Hazm had many of these problematic and complex narratives to which the so-called founders of Biblical criticism referred long after him. Thus his critique foreshadows several aspects of earliest studies of Western Biblical criticism. Indeed, the wide convergence between them in the selection of the problematic passages indicates that the Western Biblical critics of the later Middle Ages and of the early modern period might well have drawn upon Ibn Hazm. Some Jewish scholars do acknowledge that Ibn Hazm's objections had forced Maimonides and his predecessors to defend the Torah and its integrity. Some studies also exist on the influence of Muslim sciences on modern Europe through Sicily and Spain in general. There remains, however, the need to trace the influence of individual scholars in different branches of learning on significant European intellectual developments. Some Sephardic Jewish and Christian historians of religion and Biblical criticism came soon after Ibn Hazm's study, but how and to what extent they were influenced by his *Kitāb al-Faṣl* awaits a definitive study. There is also the need for a proper editing, documentation, and English translation of *Kitāb al-Faṣl*; that, in itself, would be no mean a contribution to the history of religions and Biblical criticism.²³

²³Hastwig Hirschfeld, "Mohamedan Criticism of the Bible" in *JQR* (January 1901), pp. 224-240. Hirschfeld argues that Articles VIII and IX of the thirteen Articles of the Creed were written with the express purpose of refuting Ibn Hazm's critique on the Torah. Abraham ibn Da'ud's *al-'Aqidah al-Rafi'ah* and Sefir ha *Qabbalah* may be considered in the same category. See also the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, art "Ibn Daud". We invite the attention of scholars to Ibn Hazm's impact on Western thought. It should be emphasized that the impact of Ibn Hazm's ideas on his fellow Muslims are only suggestive, awaiting more detailed and careful research of each case in which such an impact is apparent. In such an undertaking, difficulties are apt to be encountered, and many a question may remain unresolved. If such be the case within a cultural tradition, the difficulty is compounded when one attempts to determine the impact of a particular cultural tradition upon another when little documentation is available. Thus, any attempt to determine the impact of Ibn Hazm's ideas on Western thought will at best remain suggestive and provisional. As far as can be ascertained, none of Ibn Hazm's many works is known to have been translated into Latin or other European languages during

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In order to highlight the principles and methodology employed by Ibn Hazm, it would be appropriate to systematically arrange his criticism of the scriptures. Grouping his objections under certain specific categories will help avoid unnecessary repetition of the Biblical passages. Although his critique represents a rational, logical, historical, textual, as well as socio-scientific analysis of the Biblical texts, his objectives, assumptions, and postulates are couched in terms of his own religious outlook. Moreover, his language in all his disputations, whether against Muslims or non-Muslims, is pejorative to the extent of the proverbial saying which gained currency: "The sword of al-Hajjaj and the tongue of Ibn Hazm are twin sisters". Ibn Haem's effensive style and name-calling might well have prevented his works from having a wider impact.

the medieval times, when numerous Arabic works by eastern and western Muslim authors were translated, particularly into Latin. Nevertheless, the possibility of a relationship between Ibn Hazm's ideas and those of Western thinkers should not be ruled out altogether. There are several, perhaps persuasive, reasons to justify the possibility of such a relationship. There are many areas in which striking similarities between Ibn Hazm's ideas and those of later European writers exist. First Ibn Hazm was one of Islam's greatest polemicists, who used the scholastic method with great skill and precision. His advocacy of the validity of the intellect for establishing proofs and getting at the truth, his espousal of the harmony of philosophy and faith, his recommendation of a truly liberal arts education, and his insistence on interdependence and harmony of the religious and secular sciences are significant contributions that cannot be overlooked. Moreover, his *Tasūq al-Ifāmah* on love and lovers contains all the ingredients of courtly love which are echoed in Andreas Cappelanus' "Art of Courtly Love in the Book of Good Love" by the Archpriest of Hita. Significantly, some of his arguments against Christianity and Judaism appear in the work of Fray Anselmo Turmjeda (fifteenth century) and in some fifteenth and sixteenth century Aljamiado texts.

Ibn Hazm's ideas could have provoked controversies with Christians and Jews, these could also have occurred indirectly through the works of his co-religionists whose works were translated into Latin. Research in this area could yield interesting results. Meantime, an affinity of the views of Ibn Ifazm vis-a-vis their Western counterparts should not be surprising given the fact that Ibn Hazm was, after all, living in Muslim Spain in which continuous interaction between Muslims and Christians at all levels had been established for centuries. Anwar G. Chejne, *Ibn Hazm: His View of Sciences* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1982), p. 19. J. Stomp, "An Early Medieval Dialogue with Islam written by Anselm of Canterbury") says, "In a way he (Ibn Hazm) really practiced 'higher criticism' long before the concept was introduced in Biblical studies", *The Bulletin of Christian Institute of Islamic Studies*, vol. 5, nos. 1-2 (1971), pp. 23-34, p. 28.

1. Ibn Hazm's Critique of Pentateuch

Ibn Haem's critique of Pentateuch contains several passages which embody several points that the European fathers of Biblical criticism later took as the basis for their source documentary theory and for the rejection of the traditional view of its Mosaic Authorship.

Although Ibn Hazm missed the Yahweh and Elohim variants, he points out the Israel and Jacob variants in the Joseph story. In Gen. 32:28, God informs Jacob: "Your name shall no more be called Jacob but Israel." Later, in the Second Book of Moses, however, God tells Moses: "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the people of Israel" (Ex. 19:3). Ibn Hazm sees this as a contradiction that God should refer to his earlier name Jacob after He had commanded that it should be Israel. (Gen. 35:10, 20, and 21 illustrate this apparent contradiction all the more vividly). Ibn Hazm also refers to several other passages, including Dt. 33:4-5, and 33:2, the latter having long been contended by Muslim theologians and polemicists as an incontrovertible proof of the advent of the Prophet Muhammad.

Ibn Hazm contends that the verbal contradiction indicates multiple authorship of the Torah, demonstrates its tampered condition, and even ascribes a lie and self-contradiction to God.²⁴

Gen. 35:6-26 represents another example of internal contradiction. Gen. 35:23-26 narrates that twelve sons of Jacob identified by their names were born to Jacob in Paddan-Aram, but verses 16-19 state that Benjamin was born to him by Rachel after he had journeyed from Paddan-Aram and was some distance away from Epharath (Bethlehem).

Interestingly enough, modern Biblical scholars present Gen. 35:16-29 to demonstrate how different strands and traditions of 'E' 'J' and 'P' have have been combined together without losing their diversity and differences.²⁵

Likewise, Ex. 16:13 contradicts Num. 11:4-9. The former describes manna as white with the taste of honey wafer, while the latter as yellow with the taste of oil-baked cake. To Ibn Hazm, this is a contradiction in terms of nature, colour, and taste.²⁶

²⁴Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fihrist*, pt. 1, p. 143. See also *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, ed. E.A. Speiser (New York: Garden City, Doubleday and Co., 1964), p. 273. (hereafter referred to as *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*).

²⁵*The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, pp. 273ff. See also *The Interpreter's Bible*, eds., George Arthur Buttrick et. al., 12 vols. (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952-), pt. 1, p. 742 (hereafter referred to as *The Interpreter's Bible*)

²⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fihrist*, pt. 1, p. 160.

This problematic case which had long kept Rabbinic Midrashim puzzled, could only be resolved through a theological interpretation of manna: it was defined as having the property of being able to change at will and suit everyone's taste of delicacy. Modern Biblical scholars take recourse to literary critical grounds to explain this discrepancy. The two narratives, they contend, point to the fact of belonging to different traditions of 'P' and 'J' respectively and provide another proof for the credibility of the source documentary theory.²⁷

Ibn Hazm also finds Dt. 34:6-12, which both narrates the death of Moses and claims him to be the author of Pentateuch, problematic. He questions the Mosaic authorship of the Torah, asserting that this section provides a conclusive proof of the extent to which Torah had been tampered with and altered. Clearly, this section, which tells of Moses' death, burial, and post-mortem conditions could not have been revealed to him in his lifetime. Second, the statement "but no man knows the place of his burial to this day," further supports the contention that the Pentateuch is a history compiled long after Moses had died.²⁸

This section of the Pentateuch provides modern Biblical critics one of the basic passages for challenging the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and the traditional view of Torah's uniformity, unity and homogeneity, and for arguing its composite nature.

²⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Bzodus: A Critical Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 291. See also Martin North, *Bzodus: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library Series (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 131. Interestingly, whereas almost all the modern Biblical scholars accept this discrepancy as a fact and ascribe it to the different strands of tradition, Sweetman ignores the contradiction between Ex. 16:31 and Num. 11:8, and, instead charges Ibn Hazm of being misled by his translation. J.W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*, (pt. I, vol. 1 {1945}, vol. 2 {1947}; pt. II, vol. 1 {1955}, vol. 2 {1967}), Lutterworth Library Volumes 19, 20, 22 and 45 (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945-1967), pt. II, vol. 1, p. 178.

²⁸ Ibn Hazm does not record the phrase of Dt. 34: 6a, "and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Bethpe" or point out that it runs counter to Dt. 34:6b, "but no man knows the place of his burial to this day". So he does not raise the point of internal textual contradiction here. But then, Dt. 34:6-12 was the last section of the Torah under his study and consultation. The Torah he used had 100 pages, each page comprising 23 lines and each line 13-19 *{bi'll'ah 'ashar}* words approximately, and according to him, this Torah was unanimously accepted by all the Jews (Rabbanites, Sadducees, Zadokites, Ananites and Isawites), and even by the Christians as the revelation from God. See Ibn Hazm *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp. 185-187. See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 197-199.

Finally, mention may be made of Ibn Hazm's raising critical questions about Gen. 3:24. Although this verse is not pointed out by him for any contradiction or discrepancy in the text, his comments and remarks on its varying Arabic translations demonstrate some features of his critique: his diligent and comprehensive study of the scriptures, his meticulous study of each and every word used in it, his awareness of the different variations and alterations of terms, his consultation of different Arabic versions, and his honest presentation of all that he had consulted and studied. According to him, one version in Arabic reads: "And in the east of the garden of Eden, He placed al-Kirubirn (Cherubim) and a blazing sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life," while, another mentions the word Israfil (Seraphim) in place of al-Kirubim. And if this variation is riot the mistake of a translator,²⁹ what else is it, wonders Ibn Hazm.

2. Empirical Objections: Socio-Scientific Criticism

This cluster of objections represents examples from the Hebrew Scriptures, mostly from the Pentateuch, which indicate apparent contradictions in events, places, and dates. Ibn Hazm finds them unacceptable to common sense understanding, and as a social reality, controverting geographical accuracy, or mathematical validity. This cluster may be divided into three categories: socio-historical falsity of the events, their geographical inaccuracies, and the chronological errors.

a. Socio-Historical Falsity of the Events

In this category, Ibn Hazm mentions the Pentateuchal account of the number of Israelites who went out of Egypt and entered the Holy Land. Its version of the number, population, growth, and settlement of the Israelites is not only 'absurd and inane', but also 'extremely grotesque and preposterous'. The number of the people of Israel who came out of Egypt, excluding the Levites, the old, women, and children who were unable to participate in the war, were 603,550, (Num 1:45-47; 2:32-33), but while entering the Holy Land, their number was 601,730 (Num. 26:51). And when David counted Israelites in his days, their number was 800,000 and of the children of Judah alone

¹⁹Ibn Hazm, *Kitiib al-J:a-l*, pt., 1, p. 121. Sweetman remarks that the difference of *al-Kirubim* and *Isrūfil* noticed and objected to by Ibn Hazm seems to be due to the identification of Cherubim with Seraphim and the latter translated in Arabic as *Isrūfil*. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1 p. 185.

counted 500,000 males (2 Sam. 24:9). In his war against Jerobo'am of Israel Abi' Jah, son of Rehobo'am, puts the number of people put to the sword at 500,000 (2 Chron. 13:17). To Ibn Hazm, this count of Israelites at the time of Exodus not only contradicts Num. 11:21 and Ex. 12:37 which put it at '600,000 men on foot beside women and Children', but also raises questions of historical reality as detailed below:

First, the land occupied by the Israelis was rather limited: Tyre, Sidon, and Damascus, on its north, Moab, 'Ammon and Edom on the east, which remained continuously at war with them. Thus, this small territory of Palestine, Jordan and Ghor could by no means accommodate this great mass of people. Second, the claim concerning the cities belonging to different tribes does not seem credible. On the basis of the scriptures, Ibn Hazm lists them, and they number about 400. Ibn Hazm argues that to claim that this limited territory contained so many and that sixty cities belonging to half of the Tribe of Manaseeh were located in the east of Jordan (Jos. 13:29-31, Jos. 17: 18) goes against geo-historical reality. Third, the claim in respect of population growth: to believe that fifty-one offsprings of the twelve patriarchs procreated a population of more than 2,000,000 souls within a period of 217 years is simply preposterous. Such a claim, to say the least, is controverted by, the empirical factors of human life and socio-economic experience. Besides the problems concerning child-bearing and rearing, and the factors of climate, economy, epidemics and health in terms of procreation and the multiplication of children, one cannot possibly ignore the incidence of barrenness and miscarriage, and the interval between one conception and another, and infant mortality. Among the children girls are also included. The claim to such a high rate of population growth would make sense only if everyone bore more than twenty children, and such a growth rate is rather impossible even in economically prosperous and hygienically civilized communities. Ibn Hazm finds that among the Muslim and non-Muslim peoples only fourteen persons who gave birth to twenty or more children. Hence the extent of population growth that is claimed goes against socio-historical reality.

Ibn Hazm also points out instances of growth rate claimed in Num. 3:2-4 and Josh. 21:4— e.g., Aaron's children inhabiting thirteen cities within eighteen months after his death. He also considers that the existence of 600,000 male brickmakers is inconceivable, even the whole land of Egypt, let alone the small area of Goshen. The same applies

to the inordinately large numbers mentioned in connection with the persecution and exodus of the Israelites.

Ibn Hazm also rejects the conjecture that Joseph might have had more than two sons or Jacob more than twelve sons since the Torah fails to support such a conjecture. Ibn Hazm's queries regarding them also failed to elicit any response from the Jewish scholars of his time.³⁰

Modern Biblical commentators and critics suggest that the Hebrew word which is translated as 'thousand' in fact stands for a subsection of the tribe and was employed according to the ancient military numbering procedures. Thus, in these cases, the original number follows 'thousand' in each case. The number yet remaining high, they suggest that the priestly tradition read back the figures of monarchy in its belief of God's promise to Abraham to increase his descendants and to support them. Whatever the justification for resolving such difficulties of figures and numbers, the fact remains that modern Biblical scholars have reached the same conclusion that Ibn Hazm had already proffered: "Six hundred thousand men on foot in addition to women and children is an exaggeration, for neither the land of Goshen nor the southern Palestinian wilderness could have supported so large a population [at least 2,500,000]"³¹

b. Geographical Inaccuracies

To substantiate his contention that there were geographical errors in the Bible Ibn Hazm refers to the description of Eden and the rivers flowing from it (Gen. 2:10-15). He calls "gross materialism" the description and location of Paradise on earth and ridicules his knowledge of geography, since "the source of these four rivers is not the same". The Nile (The Revised Standard Version has Pishon Ibn Hazm was using the version that had the Nile in place of Pishon, perhaps Sa'adia Gaon's translation) has its source in the south of Egypt, while the sources of the rest of the three rivers, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, are in the north. Second, the statement that Gihon encompasses the whole of Ethiopia is erroneous since the Nile alone flows in all the three countries ~ Egypt, Sudan, and

³⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 165-180.

³¹John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd edn. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981), p. 134. See also *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, expanded ed., *Revised Standard Version*, Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York: OUP, 1977) (hereafter referred to as *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*).

Ethiopia. Third, the statement that the land of Havilah (Ibn Hasm's "Zavilah", perhaps a copyist's mistake) contained fine gold, bdellium and onyx stones is also erroneous because these are found in the Persian Sea and the Arabian Sea.³²

This Eden interlude has also caught the attention of the modern Biblical critics and scholars, resulting in the production of an enormous literature but little in terms of restoring the controversy and the confusion. Several Biblical scholars ascribe this ambiguity in respect of the physical description of Eden and the rivers to the author's "vague geographical ideas colored by Mesopotamian mythology"³³ while Speiser claims that "recent data on the subject demonstrates that the physical background of the tale is authentic". According to Speiser, the literature of this locality describe it as the blessed land, and these four streams might have once converged near the head of the Persian Gulf, to make it a rich garden land. The two main factors responsible for many Biblical scholars' rejection of this geography are: (i) misidentification of Cush with Ethiopia rather than its identification with the land of the Kassites; and (ii) misreading the Hebrew term *ro'sii* ('heads') in the sense of separating these four streams rather than taking it in the sense of 'ends' to mean merging of these streams within Eden.³⁴ Thus, it will be seen that both Ibn Hazm and Biblical scholars address the same problems but reach different conclusions, if only because of the divergence in their objectives.

c. Errors in Chronology, Ages, and Mathematical Computations

Ibn Hazm's first objection in respect of apparent errors made in simple mathematical computation in relation to the ages of Biblical characters relates to the nature and number of Jacob's descendants who came from Egypt with him. According to the Torah, Joseph was seventeen when he went along with his brothers for shepherding and they sold him out (Gen. 37:2). He was thirty when he entered the service of Pharaoh (Gen. 41:46); and when Jacob came to Egypt with all his descendants, it was the second year of the famine and Joseph was then thirty nine (Gen. 45:6). Among Jacob's descendants, numbered and described here, there were Judah's great-grandchildren, the two sons of Perez— Hezron, and Hamul (Gen. 46:12). Ibn Hazm

³²Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 118-120.

³³*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, p. 495.

³⁴*The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, pp. 14-21.

wonders how Jacob's grandchild, son of Judah, Perez, could be old enough to have sired two sons within a period of twenty-two years. Ibn Hazm contends that Perez could not have been more than eight or even seven years old at the time of Jacob's migration to Egypt. According to the Torah, Perez was Judah's youngest son, born to him from his daughter-in-law, Tamar. She was the widow of his two older sons who had denied her to be the mother of their children, and as a result had died. Later on, the same Tamar deceived Judah, her father-in-law, into having illicit relations with her, bearing him his youngest son, Perez. It is also worth noting that Judah was not married until after Joseph was taken to Egypt.³⁵

Ibn Haam also refers to Gen. 46:8-27: "All the persons of the house of Jacob that came into Egypt were seventy". This includes the two sons of Joseph that were born to him in Egypt (Gen. 46:27). This number contradicts not only the number of 66 given in Gen. 46:26, but also the total number of names of Jacob's descendants given in Gen. 46. According to Ibn Hazm, this number comes out to be 69 rather than 70. Excluding Joseph's two sons born in Egypt who were already there, the number is reduced to 67 and not to 66 as narrated in Gen. 46:26. However, while referring to Driver's commentary on Genesis, Speiser notes:

The figure sixty-six would seem to be a late correction by someone who deducted from the 'total number of seventy the two sons of Judah (Er and Onan) who died in Canaan, and Joseph and his two sons who were already in Egypt, but counted Dina.³⁶

In the same chapter, (Gen. 46), Ibn Hazm sees a contradiction in the numbering of the sons of Benjamin. Gen. 46:21 gives the names of ten sons of Benjamin, while Num 26:38-40 mentions only five by their names as family heads. Also, to Ibn Hazm, Ard and Na'aman, sons of Bela (Num. 26:40) must be different from Ard and Na'aman, sons of Benjamin, as narrated in Gen. 46:21. "In the light of such contradictions, discrepancies, and obvious confusion," asserts Ibn Hazm, "there can hardly be any justification to claim this Torah as the revealed book of God or a revelation sent to Moses. It is not even worthy of its attribution to a learned person, let alone to be a revealed book".³⁷

³⁵Ibn Hazm, *Kittib al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 148-150.

³⁸ *The Anchor Bible*: Genesis, p. 345.

³⁷Ibn Hazm, *Kittib al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, p. 151.

Interestingly though, Speiser also feels that "the list of Benjamin's sons has been badly mangled in the present version". He further points out that this obvious discrepancy is in addition to mechanical textual corruptions and contradictions in terms of their names as described in Gen. 46:21, Num. 26:38-40, and 1 Chr. 8:4 ff.³⁸

Ibn Hazm also points to the contradiction between Ex. 12:40-41 and Ex. 6:18-20 and 7:7. The period of the Israelites' stay in Egypt is said to be 430 years. The Torah says that the descendants accompanying Jacob to Egypt included Korath, who was born a little earlier. Korath lived for 133 years and his son, Amram, the father of Moses, lived for 137 years (Ex. 6:8-20). The Torah also says that Moses was eighty when he asked the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of Egypt and that both Amram and Moses were born after the death of their respective fathers. Thus the period between Jacob's entry into Egypt and Israelites' exit from it comes to 350 years. Even if we were to add Joseph's twenty-two years' stay in Egypt prior to the arrival of his father, the total period comes to 372, rather than 430 years, as narrated in Ex. 12:40-41.³⁹ Although Ibn Hazm fails to mention here the contradiction of the above passage with Gen. 15:13, the latter passage, however, did not go unnoticed. He contrasts this passage with Gen. 15:10 in the light of Ex. 1:6-11, and presents it as a case of internal textual contradiction.^t

Ibn Hazm does not seem to be aware of the additional phrase in the LXX, reading "and in Canaan," inserted after Ex. 12:40-41, probably to harmonize Gen. 15:13 with Ex. 12:40-41. He is aware, however, of some Biblical commentators' opinion that the period of 400 years should be counted from the time when God made the promise to Abraham that his descendants would be sojourners in a foreign land where they would be slaves and oppressed for 400 years (Gen. 15:13), and that they would come back in the fourth generation (Gen. 15:16). But he considers this interpretation unworthy of acceptance in the light of the related passages (see Gen. 15:13-16, Ex. 1:6-11, and Ex. 12:40-41), asserting that it represents a sort of *ta'wfl* that not only suppresses the texts, but also falls short of any proper resolution. The promise "itself bristles with an internal contradiction, besides contraverting the statement about the period of Israel's stay in Egypt being four hundred and thirty years" (Ex. 12:40). Nor do statements

³⁸ *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, p. 345.

³⁹ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 158-159.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

related in the Torah correspond to the facts of history.⁴¹ Furthermore, even if the period is counted from the time of God's 'promise' to Abraham, it comes to only 421 years — i.e. 204 years from the year of the 'promise' to Jacob's migration to Egypt and 217 years from Jacob's entrance in Egypt to the Exodus. This number of years corresponds with neither the 400 years of the 'promise' narrative, nor with its clause of a four-generation period (Gen. 15:16), nor does it reconcile with the period of the stay of the Israelites in Egypt as stated in Ex. 12:40-41.

Ibn Hazm states that the fact is that this period of the Israelites' stay in Egypt does not exceed 372 years in any case. The time period from Jacob's migration to Egypt to Moses' taking the Israelites out of Egypt is 217 years rather than 430 years as claimed. This figure is borne out by proper computing of the ages of the patriarchs and by a proper following of the chronology as given in the Torah. These simple mathematical and computational mistakes are by no means small errors in terms of preserving the revealed texts, but they provide ample evidence of the text having been badly mangled and tampered with.⁴²

Ibn Hazm also refers to Num. 3:32, 28, 34, and 39 as a case of internal textual contradiction. According to Num. 3:39: "All who were numbered of the Levites...all the males from a month old and upward, were 22,000." This number differs from those given in Num. 3:22, 28, and 34 and these latter are 6,500, 8,600, and 6,200 respectively.⁴³

Ibn Hazm also points out the inaccuracy about Moses' age. According to Num. 12-14, and Ex. 7:7, Dt. 2:7, 31:3, and 34:7, Moses was eighty at the time of Exodus, and there must have been at least a duration of a month to a year before the Israelites were punished by being caused to wander in the desert for forty years. Thus, Moses could not have been 120 years old at the time of his death, but at least a year or two more than 120, (or else ?) the period of the Israelites' wandering must be less than forty years. In either case, in the number of the years as well as the chronology of that period, there is an obvious contradictions described in the Torah.⁴⁴

⁴¹Ibid. See also *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, p. 113; *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1:926.

⁴²Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 124-128, 158-159.

⁴³Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 178-179.

⁴⁴Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 178-179. Ibn Hazm gives the number of Geershonite families as 65,000 whereas the R.S.V. records them as 7,500.

Modern Biblical scholars suggest that the Israelite tradition had seemingly assumed the round figure of forty years for a generation in its rough computation. They caution, however, that this does not necessarily solve the problems of chronology mathematical computations, and contradictions of ages and numbers given in the Hebrew scriptures, most of which Ibn Hazm had taken notice of.⁴⁵

3. Historical Inaccuracies

In respect of the Hebrew scriptures' claims of blessings to be bestowed on the Israelites, Ibn Hazm records an extensive list of the promises of God in addition to the blessings that were promised to them and these were never fulfilled. These would be presented under the section dealing with theological and ethical objections since Ibn Hazm characterizes them as lies and false promises attributed to God and His prophets. (see pp. 92 below). Hence only those passages which are considered problematic in terms of the falsification of historical facts are being dealt with here.

Ibn Hazm objects to the historical narrative in Gen. 15:18-21₁ which claims that the land under Israelites' domination stretched from the Nile to the Euphrates. The land in question is in distance closer than ten days' journey from the Nile to Jerusalem, and the point closest to the Euphrates were also more than ten days' journey, while the cities closest to the Euphrates were about ninety parasangs (i.e. between 270 and 360 miles) distant. Ibn Hazm expressed the view that this covenant which was attributed to God and His prophet was later belied by the actual course of history. In no sense could it have been a part of any revealed book.⁴⁶

Ibn Hazm sees little justification for interpreting the term 'descendants', used in Gen. 15:18: "To your descendants I give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" to include the Children of Isma'il (Ishmael) as well. He found such an interpretation invalid on two counts. First, the Children of Isma'il (here Ibn Hazm refers to the *Pax-Islamica* of his times) have dominion over a much more vast area than this 'promise'—from Spain to India, and from the Sudan to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Second, the claim that Abraham was also informed that his descendants, for whom this 'promise' was made, "will be sojourners in a land that is

⁴⁵Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 183-184; John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), pp. 124-128.

⁴⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 1, pp. 128-129.

not theirs, and will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years" (Gen. 15:13), is not borne out by history. On the contrary, asserts Ibn Hazm, God had spared the Children of Isma'il from the sort of humiliation to which the Israelites were subjected in history. Instead, God had granted them a vast dominion and much honour.⁴⁷

Ibn Hazm strongly contends that history also belies the claims, promises, and predictions embodied in other passages of the Torah. For instance, history belies Jacob's blessings of pre-eminence to Ephraim over Manasseh according to their own description of the history as it later unfolded (Gen. 48:14-20). Likewise, in the Book of Joshua, the families of Manasseh, at the time when al-Sham (Syria), after its conquest, was allocated to them, numbered 52,700, and the families of Ephraim were 32,500.⁴⁸ (Num 1:33-35). Ibn Hazm rejects as proof of Jacob's blessing coming true on the ground that this blessing was meant neither for a short period pertaining to the early period of their history, but was meant for all times to come, and that later history had proved that this prediction, which was wrongly attributed to Jacob, was false.⁴⁹

Likewise Jacob's 'prophesies' in respect of his sons— Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah—(see Gen. 49:1-12), have been disproved. For one thing, Reuben's tribe never achieved pre-eminence in power. The 'prophecy' that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to where it belongs" (Gen. 49:10), also stands disproved since the scepter had long departed from Judah, with none of his descendants having been the king since Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple, except for the brief sign of Zerubabel, son of Salathiel. Ibn Hazm discussed this passage with one of the most learned and greatest Jewish scholars and polemicists of his time—the famous Samuel Ben Joseph, known as Ibn al-Naghrihah. But Ibn Hazm rejects his interpretation that there had been princes from the line of Judah in exile (Exilarchs), arguing that they were only nominal rulers, devoid of the authority of kings

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 150-151.

⁴⁹Ibid. pt. 1, p. 151. Ibn Hazm refers to *Mu--af Yusha'* (The Book of Joshua) for these numbers. But in Joshua chapters 16-17, where the details of the territories assigned to different tribes are given, there is no mention of the numbers of the families of Manasseh and Ephraim. J.W. Sweetman's reference to Num. 26:54, 37 is in order. See Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, p. 191.

or the claim of exercising their power directly or independently.⁵⁰ Ibn Hazm also refutes that King Herod and his sons were from the line of Judah on the ground that well-informed historians record them as Romans.⁵¹

Likewise, Ibn Hazm considers the statement about Levi and Simeon in Gen. 49:7: "I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel" true only in the case of Levi, since the Simeonites were never scattered, but they lived together in a city assigned to them like other tribes.⁵²

The problematic case of Gen. 49, on which Ibn Hazm focuses, has long been the subject of discussion among modern Biblical scholars and critics and continues to be problematic even in the light of the source documentary theory. Hence, contends Speiser: "It is indeed doubtful whether one of the problems here encountered can ever be resolved with any degree of confidence".⁵³

4. Textual Problems: Internal Textual Contradictions

Most of the passages selected by Ibn Hazm under this head indicate contradictions in respect of information, meaning, law, and prediction, thus justifying the charge of interpolation, alteration, and emendation. A case in point is the contradiction between Gen. 4:2 and Gen 4:20. Gen. 4:2 says that "Abel son of Adam was the keeper of sheep", while according to Gen. 4:19-20: "Lamech took two wives... Adah and... Zillah. Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwelt in tents and have cattle". In "These... two narratives... one belies the other and there is no way out", argues Ibn Hazm.⁵⁴

Modern Biblical scholars see or explain such inconsistencies in Gen 4 thus: (i) a later redactor, called 'Rp', had tried to unify the two independent traditions of 'J' and 'P', but had failed to harmonize them; and juxtaposed them through effecting some changes in sequence; and (ii) a long and complex process of transmission had resulted in this sort of seeming inconsistency and contradiction.⁵⁵

⁵⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp. 151-153. On Ibn Naghrilah, see Ibn Hazm, *Al-Radd 'ala Ibn al-Naghrilah al-Yahudi*, pp. 7-18. See also R. Dozy, *A History of Moslem Spain*, pp. 651-655. See also Emilio Garcia Gomez, "Polemica entre Ibn Hazm ed. Ibn al-Naghrilah", in *Al-Andalus* 4 (1938-1939), pp. 1-28.

⁵¹Ibn d Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 152-153.

⁵²Ibid., pt. 1, p. 153.

⁵³The *Anchor Bible: Genesis*, p. 371.

⁵⁴*Kitab al-Fasl* records Yahal for "Jabal." See pt. 1, p. 12L.

⁵⁵ *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, pp. 515ff.

Likewise, Ibn Hazm finds Gen. 6:3, contradicting several other passages that report the ages of the patriarchs. Gen. 6:3 states: "My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years"; then the ages of the patriarchs and many other personae of the scriptures would not have been recorded as more than 120 years. To Ibn Hazm, this passage not only contradicts many other narratives, but also raises doubts about the decision, will, and power of Almighty God. It also demonstrates the author to be bereft of a sound memory and integrity.⁵⁶

Ibn Hazm also criticized Gen. 6:1-4 for its gross anthropomorphic, immoral, and obvious contradictory nature. Even modern Biblical scholars who ascribe it to 'J' are unable to suggest any proper solution to the problems involved in it. The influence and the borrowings from ancient Near Eastern myths have been frankly admitted, but to quote Speiser, "there have been innumerable conflicting opinions with few if any concrete gains".⁵⁷

Ibn Hazm presents Noah's curse directed against his son, Ham, as another instance of internal textual and historical contradictions. Barely six lines after this statement of Noah's curse, the Torah maintains that the families of Canaanites became kings over their cousins. Clearly, this not only gives the lie to Noah's curse and prediction (and hence makes the prophet Noah a liar), but also contains many internal textual contradictions with statements in the same and the following chapters. For instance, Gen. 10:18-12 presents Nimrod, grandson of Ham, as the first mighty man on earth, building the kingdoms of Babel and Nineveh, while (Gen. 10:19-20) says that the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar, as far as Gaza...as far as Lasha". How could Nimrod build a kingdom and rule over the land at a time when even Noah and his son, Shem, were both still alive asks Ibn Hazm?⁵⁸ Hence these contradictory statements can, by no means, be part of a revealed scripture.

⁵⁶ Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp. 121-122.

⁵⁷ *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, p. 45.

⁵⁸ Ibn Hasn, *Kitāb al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp. 123-124. Ibn Hazm mention Abii **Kan'in** instead of Canaah in Gen. 9:25-27 where Noah's curse is spelled against his son. Thus the seeming contradiction between Gen. 9:22 and Gen 9:25-27 and between Gen. 9:18 and Gen. 9:24 maintained in the prevalent Bible versions and in R.S.V. does not call for Ibn Haem's criticism. Which version and translation did Ibn Hazm use is not certain. However, as Ibn Hazm quotes biblical verses word for word and in summary extensively, it would be a great contribution in itself to collect all these quotes, and bring them to the attention of biblical scholars who are engaged in reconstructing the original version of the Bible by resource to form

It would be interesting to mention what Speiser has to say about this: "The passage thus supplies more questions than answers".⁵⁹

In Ibn Hazm's opinion, one of the best examples of interpolation and emendation is the abruptly inserted passage about Keturah and her children from Abraham in Gen. 25:1-2 and Gen. 25:5-6. Only two wives of Abraham (Sarah and Hagar) are mentioned first; we are not informed of any bondswoman as wife except Hagar; but then comes this abrupt insertion about Keturah and her children of Abraham. Keturah is stated to be the daughter of the King of al-Rabadh, (a place situated nearer al-Balqa' in Jordan), and a bondswoman. Modern Biblical scholars have also found the passage, especially in respect of the chronological sequence and interpolation of some new data, such as Keturah and her children, quite problematic.^P Thus, Speiser admits: "Nevertheless, in summary notices of this sort, the documentary analysis is more uncertain than elsewhere, and must be so labelled in the present instance".⁶¹

Again, the narrative of Num. 12:1-2 contradicts Ex. 2:21-22, the former speaks of Miriam's and Aaron's turning and speaking against Moses for his having married an Abyssinian while Ex. 2:21-22 says Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian, and hence, a descendant of Midian, the son of Abraham. "Each of these two statements belies the other",⁶² contends Ibn Hazm.

and literary criticism and by comparing different translations. In this regard, Ibn Hazm's quotations would be no less rewarding.

⁵⁹ *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, p. 62.

⁶⁰ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Faṣl*, pt. 1, pp. 135-136.

⁶¹ *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, pp. 188-189. See also *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, p. 661.

⁶² Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Faṣl*, pt. 1, p. 183. Ibn Hazm's *Kitab al-Faṣl* records Habashiyyah and Abyssinian instead of "Cushite" as given in R.S.V. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* notes on Num. 12:1 that the term "Cushite" apparently includes Midianites and other Arabic peoples. Cf. Hab. 3:7. But Martin North considers it to be a complex passage, combining two different strands, and, hence difficult to be disentangled from a literary point of view. However, the term "Cushite," he suggests, should not be taken as Negress as Luther took it, since it relates to Cushan as mentioned in Hab. 3:7. But it still does not include Midian in it; hence this "Cushite", is different from Zipporah the Midianite of Ex. 2:21. Martin North, *Numbers: A Commentary*, (London: S.C. M. Press, 1968), pp. 91-97. Interestingly, Ibn Hazm does not catch the variation of Moses' (father-in-law's name, called Reul in Ex. 2:18, Jethro in Ex., 3:1, and Hobab in Num. 10:29. He also does not record the variation in the name of the mountain where Moses received his call: named Horeb in Ex. 3:1, 17:6, 33:6, and named Sinai in Dt. 1:2, 6:19, 5:2, 9:8, 18:16 and 29:1.

Ibn Hazm's criticism on those other than the five books of Moses is less severe, and more selective, with fewer examples, and this is presumably for the following reasons. First, except for these five books, others are not claimed to be revelation to Moses. That is why he refers to these five books as Torah, but not to the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Second, these books are called the books of prophets and scribes, i.e., Nive'im and Ketubim hence Ibn Hazm calls them books of history. Third, once the unity and authenticity of the Pentateuch and the traditional claim for its Mosaic authorship are proved to be false, and once alteration, corruption, interpolation, emendation, and tampering in respect of them are established, then the rest could not possibly claim a different fate. Therefore, it is only to further strengthen his critique of and objections to the Pentateuch that he cites some examples of contradiction and interpolation in the books of the prophets and the writings.⁶³

In terms of internal textual contradiction, Ibn Hazm cites the following problematic passage from the Book of Joshua. Jos. 7, narrates the story of Achan son of Charmi. He steals from the booty. This results in the defeat of the Israelites by Ai; and Joshua inflicts a severe punishment on Achan, destroying his family, children, belongings, and possessions. Ibn Hazm points out that this severe punishment - stoning all of his family, children, and burning his belongings - is not only abhorrent to any sense of human justice and equity, but also contradicts Dt. 24:16 which says that: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers, every man shall be put to death for his own sin". He further asserts that there is no way to resolve this contradiction except either by way of admitting abrogation in the Law of Moses as practiced by Joshua or by denouncing him as an unjust tyrant who had committed a change in the law of God, and is, therefore, disobedient to Him. However, both of these positions are impossible to maintain.⁶⁴

The Biblical scholars of the historical and critical era also took note of this apparent contradiction of individual guilt and punishment maintained in Dt. 24:16, Jer. 31:29, and Ezek. 18 with the corporate guilt and punishment stated in Num. 16:31, Jos. 7:24-26, and 2 Sam. 21:1-9. A general solution is seen in the gradual development and

⁶³Ibn Hazm, *XUS» al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, p. 179, 186ff., 204 and *passim*.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pt. 1, pp. 204-205

the dialectics of both the traditions referring to different periods and situations emphasizing corporate and individual responsibility.⁶⁵

The Book of Joshua narrates how Joshua got all his men circumcised at Gilgal before they entered the Holy Land and fought wars against their enemies. However, Moses did not circumcise those who were born on their way from Egypt to the Holy Land (Jos. 5:2-7). Thus, Moses allegedly broke the covenant. According to Gen. 17:7-14, circumcision was to be performed on the eighth day after the birth of all descendants and generations of Abraham with whom this covenant was made; it was both a sign and an act of everlasting covenant, retaining membership in the community as well as a guarantee for respite of life. "How could Moses", asks Ibn Hazm, "have neglected and violated this law that later Joshua realized and carried out?"⁶⁶

One of the Jewish scholars with whom Ibn Hazm discussed this problem offered the following explanation: the circumcision was delayed because the people were in the wilderness and always on the move; thus circumstances precluded the carrying out of this commandment. Ibn Hazm rules out this interpretation; arguing that if it was a mere matter of adverse circumstances, it was still much less troublesome for the males to be circumcised when they were children and being taken care of by their mothers than waiting until they were grown up and soon had to engage in war. "This argument", writes Ibn Hazm, "made him dumb-founded".⁶⁷

5. Theological Objections

Ibn Hazm also finds numerous passages and narratives that imply theomorphism, anthropomorphism, and obvious polytheism. The first page of the Torah presents the first instance in this regard wherein it is said: "Then God said, 'I will make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Gen. 1:26). If it would have been *ka -uratina* (in our image), argues Ibn Hazm, there would have been nothing wrong, since the term *-urah* ('image') connotes a sense of possession and creation in its idiomatic expression, but to use the phrase *ka shibhina* ('in our likeness') implies that the form of the creature is similar to the form of the Creator. The use of the terms *shibh* or *mithl* of God because each connotes likeness of kind and substance. Hence, the

⁶⁵ *The Interpreter's Bible*.

⁶⁶ Ibn Haem, *Kitüb al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 204-205.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

'likeness of God' appears gross theomorphism to Ibn Hazm, entailing plurality of God. Moreover, to conceive 'likeness' in the Creator and the creature is not even perceptible to the immediate sense-perception, for God is beyond any 'likeness' and the attribution of any *shibh* or *mithl* is *būtil* (improper and inconceivable) in respect of God.⁶⁸

Attributing to God a statement such as "Behold, man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:22-23a), according to Ibn Hazm, is one of the greatest follies on the earth since it implies more than one Deity. He remarks that it is such statements that were responsible for the Jewish elite's view that the being who created Adam was first created by God; that this being ate from the tree of knowledge and knew good and evil; that subsequently it ate from the tree of life, thus becoming a demigod; and that it is this being who created Adam.⁶⁹

For modern Biblical scholars, however, Gen. 3:22 is a gloss and a later insertion as seen in the light of the source documentary theory. From a theological viewpoint, the above-mentioned verse and Gen. 1:26 and Gen 2:5 (which also mention likeness to God or gods) gave rise to questions that have remained unresolved. Although it is generally understood that phrases such as 'like God's or 'one of us' used in the Bible refer to the heavenly company and celestial beings, the proper and clear meaning remains obscure. It is perhaps the ambiguous nature and implications of the above verses that might have lent support to the 'logos theory' to which Ibn Hazm alludes as belief in different creators and which was prevalent in the Jewish elitist circles at his time.⁷⁰

To Ibn Hazm, anthropomorphism is also implied in Gen. 6:1-4. Ascribing any familial relations to God is not only a great folly but also a great lie against God. Ibn Hazm is aware of its figurative interpretation by the Biblical scholars of his time, but he argues that to interpret 'sons of God' or 'gods' as angels and celestial beings does not solve the problem. Likewise, intermarriages with the angels is as inconceivable as to think of familial relations with God, though not

⁶⁸Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 117-118.

⁶⁹Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 120-121. This doctrine is attributed to Magharians. See Harry A. Wolfson, "The Pre-Existent Angel of the Magharians and al-Nahawandi" in *JQR*, vol. 51 (1960-61), pp. 89-106.

⁷⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp. 120-121. See also *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, i., p. 23 and *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, p. 514.

as abhorrent.⁷¹ On the other hand, modern Bible interpreters who explain it in its figurative sense, put it down as a borrowing from the ancient myths, but cast in the form of a moral indictment to prepare a logical ground for the Great Flood. Even to them, however, the passage is "puzzling and controversial in the extreme", and "its problems are legion".⁷²

Ibn Hazm also takes note of the episode of mysterious visitors to Abraham (Gen. 18:1-8), contending that the passage implies both anthropomorphism and trinitarianism and that it has too many problems to be rectified by any attempt at its interpretation. He also contends that any interpretation of these three visitors as angels or men directly contradicts Gen. 18:1: "And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day". To address three as one Lord and then ascribe it three individuations (*tashkhiṣ*) is a kind of Trinity that is even grosser than the Christian Trinity. And if they were angels, then Abraham's prostration before them and his obeisance and address of worship to them is tantamount to Abraham committing polytheism. Similarly, any interpretation of these visitors in terms of humans amounts to accusing Abraham of polytheism and results in a clear textual contradiction. Additionally, it entails contravention of the Torah. Abraham served meat, milk, and butter on the same table, a practice that the rabbis of Ibn Hazm's time saw as illegitimate. Some books of the Christians have cited this passage as a sanction for their doctrine of Trinity. Ibn Hazm also notes several other passages that lend support to the Christian doctrines of Trinity and Jesus' sonship of God, as later enunciated in the New Testament.⁷³

In Ex. 4:22-23, God commands Moses to tell Pharaoh that Israel is God's first born that he must spare them and must let them serve their God. Ibn Hazm feels shocked at the expression: "Israel is my first born son". He wonders on what grounds could the Jews denounce the Christian notion of the Trinity. Instead, such claims and passages had provided precedents and had prepared the way to the doctrine of the Trinity. Between the Jewish claims of all Israelites being the sons of God and the Christian notion of the Trinity, the latter are far less anthropomorphic and polytheistic since the Christians ascribe

⁷¹Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 1, pp. 120-121.

⁷²*The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, pp. 44-48.

⁷³Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 1, pp. 130-131.

the soughship of God to one only, viz., Jesus, who worked miracles and lived a righteous life.⁷⁴

Ibn Hazm also questions many passages from the Psalms—for instance, Ps. 2:7; 78:65, 82:6, 87:5-6, and 110:1 for their implication of crude anthropomorphism and ascription of familial relations to God, which include, besides a son, other familial relations such as a wife, father-in-law, etc.⁷⁵

Ibn Hazm rejects the passages that liken God with creatures and other finite things as being part of any revealed book. The narratives that describe God like a warrior (Ex. 15:13), and like a devouring and consuming fire (Dt. 4:24) are too anthropomorphic to be interpreted in any other sense.⁷⁶

Ibn Haam's objection to Gen. 32:23-33, besides its implication of anthropomorphism, is illuminating for his use of textual and logical principles in his critique. He had discussed the issues presented in it with several Jewish scholars. He, however, rules out the interpretation of the term *Iltihim* (*Elohim*) as an angel because neither the context nor the text supports this meaning. He contends that *Ihiihim* refers to a being who blessed Jacob and changed his name from Jacob to Israel presence the place was named *Fini'Il* (*Peniel*), and of his touching the sinew of the hip that made it illegitimate to be eaten. Thus, both the context and the logical understanding of the text do not lend themselves to any interpretation except that the term signifies *nod*. On the basis of his discussion with the Hebrew scholars Ibn Hazm confirms that the term "*Il*" means "God" in Hebrew. He refers to Gen. 32:30: ("For I have seen God face-to-face, and yet my life is preserved") to establish beyond doubt that *fluhim* could not mean anything but God.

Although Ibn Hazm brought under investigation other narratives of the Pentateuch that deal with prophetic visions of God and prophets' religious experiences (e.g. Ex. 20:22-23, 24:9-17, 33:7-2, Dt. 4:12-15, and 34:10-12), Jacob's vision of God as described in ~x. 2:23-33 demonstrates for him the crudest form of anthropomorphism. To him, it is a great lie against Jacob. It represents a lowly conception of God; and it tantamounts to deriding the religious experiences.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 153-154.

⁷⁵Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 204-206.

⁷¹¹Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 160-161.

⁷⁷U, id., pt. 1, pp. 141-142.

6. Ethical and Moral Questions

Ibn Hazm also objects to those narratives that characterize God, His angels, and His prophets in immoral and unethical terms. He presents a long list of episodes in which they tell lies, break promises, cheat, deceive, repent, change their minds and/or engage in otherwise immoral conduct. For Ibn Hazm, these passages are derogatory to them, and abhorrent in terms of human ethics. We shall refer below only those passages that stand as the very clear illustrations of his textual critique.

In Gen. 4:15-24, God has promised to keep Cain immune from any vengeance or killing for seven generations. Yet, according to the Torah itself, Lamech killed Cain, from whom Lamech is the fifth generation. Besides there being an internal contradiction in the text, this passage represents an implied accusation against God of either telling a lie or breaking His promise.

Similarly, the statement in Gen. 6:3, where God declared that His spirit shall not dwell in man forever and man's days shall be a hundred and twenty years, represent a patent lie against God, since many of the patriarchs, according to the Torah, lived more than 120 years. Furthermore, the ages of some of the patriarchs from Shem to Aaron given in the Torah, negate and contradict the Gen. 6:3 statement.⁷⁸ Modern Biblical scholars also consider these passage to be problematic.⁷⁹

Ex. 32:10-14 and 33:3-14. ascribe *al-badi'* (changing of mind) to God. The internal contradictions between especially Ex. 32:10, 32:14, and 33:2-3 on the one hand and Ex. 33:14, on the other, raise many problems of theological and moral concern. In this case, in spite of God's determination to punish the Israelites for their idolatrous conduct, He did not execute punishment due to the intercession of Moses who, by reminding God of His promise made with Abraham and the patriarchs for their descendants, had impliedly made Him realize His "wrong" decision and repenting for it. To Ibn Hazm, such deeds are hardly befitting any person of integrity, let alone God, the Almighty. Similarly, Ex. 33:2-14, accuses God of breaking His promise, of changing His decision and mind, of violating the principles of justice, and of telling lies.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 120-121.

⁷⁹Cf. "Its problems are a legion." *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, p. 45.

⁸⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*; pt. 1, pp. 163-164.

In regard to the stories of Sarah's seizure by Pharaoh and Abime'elech, as narrated in Gen. 12:10-18 and Gen. 20, Gen. 17:17, and Gen. 20:1-18, and Gen. 21:15, Ibn Hazm raises the following objections: (a) it is inconceivable that a woman of more than 90 years was fair and attractive enough to allure Abime'elech; (b) they told a lie to both the kings, i.e., that Sarah was Abraham's sister; (c) if Sarah was Abraham's sister, then either Abraham violated the Mosaic Law, or the Torah abrogated Abraham's *Shari'ah*, implying abrogation which the Jews deny.⁸¹

Ibn Hazm discussed with Ibn al-Naghrilah, the question in respect of the sister/wife motif that still remains a puzzling and disturbing question to the modern Biblical scholars, who consider it to be a strong different strands of traditions were woven together in confusion. Ibn al-Naghrilah told Ibn Hazm that the word *ukh*: (sister) here meant just a relative, and not necessarily a sister as understood by him. In response to that Ibn Hazm called Ibn al-Naghrilah's attention to Gen. 20:12, which reads: "Besides she is indeed my [Abraham's] sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife". This left Ibn al-Naghrilah confused and silent.⁸² Besides the passages mention Abraham and Sarah as liars and deceivers. For instance, Gen. 18:9-16a, besides representing gross anthropomorphism, characterizes Sarah as a shameless liar and portrays her argumentation with God as bickering between two equals.⁸³

Similarly, in Gen. 19, Ibn Hazm finds many derogatory and disparaging statements about Lot, his daughters, angels, and even God. Angels are portrayed as eating food and as even prepared to excuse Lot's relatives from the general punishment at the expense of their duty and commands of God. Lot is shown as worshipping angels, prostrating himself before them, getting drunk, and committing adultery with his daughters. Lot's daughters are portrayed as lustful, incestuous women. Even Abraham is shown to be a cold-blooded person who does not come to the help of his nephew, Lot, despite the fact that he lived not very far from him and was wealthy. According to Ibn Hazm, in addition to moral questions, these narratives demonstrate the internal contradictions with other passages of the same text. Thus, while specifically dealing with theological and moral

⁸¹Ibid., pt. 1, p. 135.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 131-133.

questions, he also highlights both internal contradictions of the passages in question as well as their incongruity with historical facts. For instance, while discussing Gen. 19, he asks how the statement of Lot's daughter: "There is not a man on earth to come into us after the manner of all the earth" (Gen. 19:31) can be credible while Abraham and his people lived not farther than three miles from there.⁸⁴

Similarly, Ibn Hazm considers the adulterous actions ascribed to Reuben—defiling the wife of his father—and Judah having sexual relations with his daughter-in-law, Tamar (Gen. 35 and 38), as extremely repugnant, and hence, a concoction of someone intent on making these Hebrew scriptures a laughing-stock.⁸⁵

In Gen. 27, Ibn Hazm finds a combination of theological, moral, textual, and historical problems. To Ibn Hazm, the parts played by Jacob, Isaac, and Rebekah, and the blessings approved of by God in this story, do not befit any sensible person, let alone the prophets. According to these narratives, Jacob deceived his father, Isaac, and told lies, and cheated his brother, Esau. Isaac had intended his blessings for Esau, but these went to Jacob. And God let his bounties go to Jacob and could not divert them due to Jacob's cunning and deceitful planning. Everyone in this story served as pieces in a chess game played by Jacob. Strangely enough, historical reality disproves the proceeds of Isaac's blessings for Jacob, and God happens to be a powerless being incapable of keeping his promise, as the historical forces later unfolded.

Ibn Hazm points out a parallel case, repeating the same paradigm in the religious history of Islam. The Jacob story resembles, in its fabrication, the hopes and wishes of the Rafidah Shi'ites. Just as the narrative in Gen.27 would have us believe that Isaac gave and intended his blessings for Esau, but instead they went to Jacob, so [so some of]the Shi'ites believe that God had sent the Qur'an to 'Alī, but Jibra'īl (Gabriel) mistakenly delivered it to Muḥammad.⁸⁶

In his concluding passages Ibn Hazm makes his critique on Dt. 13:1-3, 18:20-22, and 34:6-12, the last one being termed as the most obvious, substantial, and telling proof for his claim of the extant Torah being neither the Word of God nor the work of Moses, but, a fabricated history instead which was compiled later. In addition to the fact that Dt. 13:1-5 is contradicted by Dt. 18:20-22, the passages raise the question of ambiguity and confusion between the true

⁸⁴Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 132-134.

⁸⁵Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 143-148.

⁸⁶Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 137-140.

prophet and the false prophet, and tend to denigrate the phenomenon of prophecy as a religious category, reducing it to the level of magic and trickery.

To Ibn Hazm, the basic characteristic of prophecy is that the prophet works miracles, and the miracle is an action that brings a change in the nature of the thing or is something that cannot conceivably be done by any human power or skill. A miracle is an undeniable sign and an inimitable work that occurs only through God's intervention, His will, and His command, and it is only prophets upon whom this grace is bestowed. On the other hand, a work of magic is an illusion, a deceptive trick on the perception and vision of the spectators without any true change having taken place. Thus, to equate a magician with a prophet not only implies a rejection of a clear criterion of prophecy, but also negates it as a unique religious occurrence. For, **with what** criterion of prophecy is human common sense left, if both the true prophet and the false one work miracles and speak in the name of God. To Ibn Hazm, it was such a warped conception of prophecy that had led the Jews to attribute to Moses and Aaron in the Exodus the sort of actions that are mentioned in it, such as the magicians competing with Moses in working miracles, and Aaron **making a** molten calf, thus prompting the Israelites to idolatry and rebellion against God.

Finally, Ibn Hazm briefly lists the immoral actions attributed to the Hebrew prophets: Aaron with immorality and idolatry (Ex. 32:1-6, 19, 21-25); Solomon with offering sacrifices to the idols and killing of Joab; Saul with receiving a revelation to kill the people with cruelty (I Sam. 15:1 ff.), and treat Balaam, as an idolater (Num. 22:34); Manasseh with being a killer of prophets and an idol-worshipper (2 Chron. 33); and Samson with similar acts of unbelief (Jud. 14-16).⁸⁷

All these objectionable passages, contends Ibn Hazm, testify to the fact that the Hebrew scriptures had been badly tampered with, altered, corrupted, interpolated and emended; and, hence, they were not worthy of the claim of being revealed scriptures.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 154-164 and pp. 184-185.

⁸⁸Ibid., pt. 1, p. 186.

SEVEN

Christianity

A. Christianity: Its History and Main Divisions

1. The Treatment of Christianity in *Kitüb al-Fa-l*

We have noted earlier that Ibn Hazm deals with the various aspects of the religious tradition of the Christians in some detail in his *Kitüb al-Fasl* in the context of his typology of world-views and philosophies of mankind. Except for his sporadic references in terms of comparison and similarities of ideas, beliefs, rituals, and customs, he primarily deals with Christianity at two places.

One of these is Part One of *Kitüb al-Fa-l*¹ where Ibn Hazm deals with the Christian concepts of God, the Trinity, and Christology, and with the early Christian sects and schisms and the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan creed. Here he places Christianity in the fourth category of his religious world-views and philosophies—that is, as those who believe in the reality, the creation of the universe and the world, but hold, at the same time, that the Creator and the Providence to be more than one. Despite the Christians' claims of believing in the oneness of God, in the Israel's prophets, in the revealed books (such as the Torah and the Psalms), and in the religion of Abraham, Ibn Hazm justifies his classification on the basis of the Christian belief in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Although the Christians are *Ahl al-Kiiib aad* believe in the prophecy of some prophets, yet their masses and their main sects do

¹Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, p. 35, pt. 1, p. 48.

not believe in the absolute unity of God *{bi al-taw-īd mujarradan}*. Rather, they believe in the Trinity (*Bal yaqūluna bi al-taihlith*), and hence it is appropriate to deal with their doctrines here in the fourth category because they believe in three Eternal Beings (*Fa al-Nasiirii a-aqqu bi al-idkhūl tiihunii li-annahum yaqūluna bi-Thalūthatin lam yazaiu* ✓

Similarly, Ibn Hazm includes in this category other religious communities such as the Magians (al-Majils) and the Manichaeans, who are also designated as *Ahl al-Kiīib*. He justifies their inclusion on account of their belief in two eternal beings *{li-qawlihim bifū'ilayn lam yazūlū}*.³

The second place where Ibn Hazm deals in detail with Christianity is the Part Two of *Kitiib al-Fa-l'*⁴ where he discusses the Christian scriptures. Here he places Christianity in the sixth category, which represents those who believe in the reality, the creation, and the origination of the universe, and in one Creator and Providence Who sent His prophets to mankind with His guidance; but who, at the same time, accept some prophets and deny others. This group basically embraces all those religious traditions which fall within the Qur'anic category of *Ahl al-Kitūb*.⁵

2. History of Christianity

Ibn Hazm does not seem much interested in sketching the history of Christianity. His discussion of early Christian sects and schisms, his critique of the doctrines of the Trinity and Christology, and his analytical study of the New Testament, however, do indicate his knowledge of the primary sources, both canonical and apocryphal. Ibn Hazm's critique and analysis of the history of the transmission

²Ibid., pt. 1, p. 48

³Ibid., pt. 1, p. 48. For the term "al-Kiīib" see note 5 below.

⁴Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fesl*, 1st ed.,

~he term "*Ahl al-Kitiib*" is generally translated in English as "the people of the Book". This rendering, though literal, is rather ambiguous. Whenever referred to in the Qur'an for the revelation sent down from God, the term means the "Holy Writ", and not just "the Book" in its common sense usage. The "*Ahl-al-Kitab*" or "*Kitab*" in the Qur'an applies to the revealed message, guidance and the commands of God sent down to people through the agency of messengers. Hence it applies to a single *ayah*, a *siirah*; a part of the Qur'an, or for the whole Qur'an. It equally applies to revelation sent to Moses, Jesus, Abraham and other prophets. It also applies to the basic source of all these revelations called "*al-Kiīib*" with God or known as "*Umm al-Kitiib*", For more details see chapter 1 titled "The Qur'an and Other Religions".

of the Christian scriptures also contain some brief statements about the history of Christianity. To him, the Christian case for preserving the scriptures and the subsequent tradition, in terms of its continuous and valid chain of transmission, is much weaker than even that of the Jews. For one thing, Jesus' 120 followers at the time of his ascension remained in hiding for over three centuries, unable to preach their religion openly and in public. Not only were they socially outcast and legally a *religio illicita*; they were also "an uncivilized cult", in mortal fear for their lives. Second, the whole Christian scriptural radiation goes back to three persons: Paul, Mark, and Luke, who in turn report from Peter, Matthew, John, James, and Jude. According to Matthew, the Gospel (*Injil Matti*) was also translated or copied (*nuqila*) by John. Of course, the epistles of Paul go back to Paul. The original Gosepl of Jesus (*Injilu 'Īsā*) was itself taken up by God. In conditions of extreme persecution, no one dared to preach in public, and those that came into "the open", were caught and executed. Thus, James and Stephen were stoned to death; Peter, Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Paul were crucified; James, Thomas, Bartholomew, Judas, and Matthew were put to the sword; and John was poisoned. Moreover, because of the social, political, and religious environment till the conversion of Constantine, neither could the scriptures be preserved nor the traditions followed with uninterrupted continuity nor in its pristinely pure form. Thus, the Christian claim for the authenticity and validity of their scriptures and traditions as having emanated from Jesus' words, sayings, and actions cannot meet the criteria of '*naql kuwaf*' and '*naql matawatir*' (valid chain of continuous transmission and by historically-known and reliable transmitters).⁶

Ibn Hazm is fully aware that the Christians do not claim that the books of the New Testament, and especially the Four Gospels, are the words of Jesus. They rather consider them to be four histories written by four different persons at different times. They, however, claim them to be eyewitness reports of the Apostles of Jesus and the

⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 1-5 and passim. "*Naql Kuuiii*" or "*naql mutawūtir*" are the terms used in the science of *Ḥadīth-criticism*. They stand as the criteria for the authenticity of the traditions in terms of their exact text and perfect transmission from the recipients of the revelation to its canonization. It is made certain that the text and its narrators in its process of transmission reach back to the original source without any loss of a word or doubt or break on the part of its narrators. And the transmitters make a plural chain of narrators in every period of time and stand beyond any blemish of disintegrity. Hence their concurrence on a lie becomes inconceivable and impossible.

inspired Word of God to their authors. Ibn Hazm, however, contends that because of their mutual inconsistencies and internal contradictions, these books cannot be considered the inspired Word of God, nor eyewitness reports. Rather, they are a mixture of truth and falsehood and a wilful distortion of the facts of history.

Constantine had accepted Christianity because his mother, Helen, herself a Christian, had brought him up as a Christian. But, contends Ibn Hazm, neither Constantine, nor his son, Constantius, were true trinitarian Christians, as both were followers of Arius who did not believe in the divinity of Jesus. "They both held that Christ was a created servant, a prophet of God (*yaqūluūna anna al-Masfī 'abdun makhlūqun nabī Allah Ta'ūlū*)." Interestingly enough, Constantine did not declare himself to be a Christian until after his father's death and after he had moved his capital from Rome to Constantinople.⁷

As for Ibn Hazm's knowledge of the Church of the Circumcision, or the so-called Judea-Christianity of modern ascription, he does allude to its observance of the Sabbath and to Jewish feasts and fasts, the observance of the Torah Law and the performing of circumcision. To him, the instituting of Sunday services, waiving the obligation of circumcision for the gentiles, abandoning Jewish dietary laws and other customs are innovations of Peter and Paul. He accuses the apostles or the New Testament disciples of having corrupted the true message, teachings, and normative practices of Jesus and his early followers, of having abrogated the Law, and of instituting a new Law which ran counter to Jesus' will and teachings. But he also mentions that the true followers of Jesus, who are called in the Qur'an al-Hawariyyiin, believed in Jesus as the Prophet of God, and in Injil as a revealed book, that they helped Jesus during his lifetime to deliver the message and faithfully followed his teachings and practices after him. Ibn Hazm, however, does not speculate on their identity because the Qur'an does not identify them by their names.⁸

To Ibn Hazm, the New Testament apostles were not even true believers in Jesus, let alone his esteemed companions. He insists that soon after the ascension of Jesus to the heaven, the true followers of Jesus were pushed aside owing to socio-political and religious pressures and the Jewish establishment schemed against them and

⁷Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 1-7. The quote is on p. 5.

⁸The Qur'an is explicit on the humanity and prophethood of Jesus, on his receiving revelation from Allah, "Al-Injil", his conveying the message of Allah, living and acting upon it and on his having true followers and helpers known in the Qur'an as "al-Hawanyyun".

managed to ensure that Hellenistic and Gnostic ideas and beliefs make inroads among the Jews. Moreover, like many Jewish and Muslim historians, Ibn Hazm sees Paul as the originator of trinitarian Christianity.⁹

He also mentions the impact of the Hellenistic, Gnostic, and Manichaean influences on the early Christian Church and its assimilation and adaptation of external beliefs and rituals, but does not dilate on the details of this process of assimilation and acculturation. He also gives brief descriptions of various Christian sects and schisms, but confines himself only to one thing—the understanding of the person of Christ.¹⁰

3. Christian Sects and Schisms

In treating this subject Ibn Hazm does not give the details or highlight the background of the emergence of different Christian sects, nor does he attempt a thorough exposition of their doctrinal disagreements and controversies, nor does he provide us with the history of ecumenical councils and the causes of the emerging heresies. About the so-called heresies, he writes:

And the Christians, they are of many sects. Among them are the following:

1. Arians (A-ḥiāb Arius): They are followers of Arius who was a priest (*qiss*), in Alexandria. He believed in the absolute unity of God (*al-taw-ḥīd al-mujarrad*). He held that 'Isa was a human servant and creature and Word of God through whom God created the heavens and the earth. Arius was a contemporary of Constantine, the founder of Constantinople, the first Roman emperor who accepted Christianity. And Constantine was a follower of Arius.
2. Paulinists (A-ḥiāb Bawlis al-Shamsatr), the followers of Paul of Samosata. They are the followers of Paul of Samosata who was a bishop of the Metropolitan of Antioch before the emergence

⁹Ibid., pt. 2, p. 1-7, 38-39, 70-76 and passim. See also S.M. Stern, "Abd al-Jabbar's Account of How Christ's Religion Was Falsified by the Adoption of Roman Customs" in *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, 19 (1968), pp. 28-86; Leon Nemoy, "The Attitude of Early Karaites toward Christianity" in *Solo W. Baron Jubilee Volume*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1974), pp. 697-715; Muhammad ibn al-Tayyib al-Baqillanī, *Kitab al-Tamhid* (Beirut: Librarie Orientale, 1957).

¹⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp 48ff.

of [trinitarian] Christianity (*qabl ?tlhür al-Na\$rüniyah*). He believed in the pure unity of God, in pure and exact monotheism (*wa kiitu: qauluhu al-taw!fd al-mujarrad al-\$ali!f!*). He held that 'Isa was a human servant of God and His messenger, one like His other messengers. God created him from the womb of his mother Mary without the participation of any male, and he was human and there was no divinity in him (*wa annahu insiiti la ilahiyyata fih*). He said that he did not comprehend the meaning of *al-kalimah* (the Word) and *Rüli al-Qudus* (the Holy Spirit).

3. Macedonians or Pneumatomachians. They are the followers of Macedonius (A~liab Maq dunlyus) who was a bishop of Constantinople after the emergence of [trinitarian] Christianity (*ba 'da zuhiir al-Na\$rüniyah*) during the period of Constantius, son of Constantine, the founder of Constantinople. This Constantius was a strong follower of Arius. Macedonius believed in the absolute unity of God. He held that Jesus was a human being, a created servant, a prophet-messenger of God like the rest of God's messengers (*wa anna 'Isü" 'abd makhliiq ins'an nabi rasül Allah*). He also held that Jesus was also *Ru! al-Qudus*, the Holy Spirit, and *Kalimat Allah*, Word of God, and that the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are both created. God created all that.
4. Al-Barbaraniyyah or Collyridians. They believe that both Jesus and his mother are deities other than God (*ilahan min dun Allah*). This group has died out by now.¹¹

In his introduction to the Christian sects and orthodoxies of his time,

¹¹Ibid. Ibn Hazm's statement that Paul of Samosata (d. after 372 C.E.) was before the emergence of Trinitarian Christianity (*qabla ?Uhiir al-Na-raniyyah*) and that Macedonius (d. after 360) was after *?Uhur al-Na-raniyyah* seems to be his allusion to the Council of Nicaea that is considered to be the first systematic step toward the canonization of the Christian Trinity. Although Paul of Samosata is now considered to be the precursor of Arianism and then of Nestorianism, I have not been able to find any evidence that he professed silence or ignorance on *al-Kalimah—the Word* and *Ru~ al-Qudus—the Holy Spirit*, as Ibn Hazm tells us. As for the sect of "al-Barbaraniyyah" who believed in Jesus and his mother, Mary, as the other two persons of the Trinity, the historians of early Christianity now refer to Epuiphanius' description of such a cult of Mary known as Collyridians who worshipped Mary. See J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 498.

Ibn Hazm lists the following main sects.

1. Al-Malkaniyah, the Melchites or Melkites. This is the religious rite of all Christian kings and their peoples of all Christendom except those of Ethiopia and Nubia. All Christians of Africa, Sicily, al-Andalus and the people of Syria belong to this group. Their belief is that God means three things to them: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. All of them are eternal (*kulluhü lam tazal*). That Jesus is truly God and truly man. One is not different from the other. It was the human in him who was crucified and killed, and nothing happened to the divine in him. That Mary gave birth to both the divine and the human. That both are one and the same thing, the Son of God. (May Allah be exalted from their blasphemy!).
2. Al-Nastiiriyyah, the Nestorians. They also hold exactly the same views, but they insist that Mary did not give birth to the divine or deity. Rather she bore only the man. God begot the deity but He did not beget the man. This group is mostly found in Musil, Iraq, Fars, and Khurasan (i.e., in Syria, Iraq, and Iran of today). They are called after the name of Nastiir (Nestorius), the bishop of Constantinople.
3. Al-Ya'qibiyyah, or the Jacobites. The Jacobites maintain that Jesus himself is God. According to their belief, God himself died, was crucified and killed and the whole universe remained without its Provider and Maintainer (*Mudabbir*) for three days. Then God rose up and returned to his place. Thus God became originated and the originated became eternal. It was God who was conceived and carried in Mary's womb. They [the Jacobites] live in parts of Misr (Egypt). And all the Christians of al-Habashah and al-Nubah, including the kings of these two nations, belong to this group. These Jacobites are called after the name of Ya'qib al-Bardha'ani, Jacob Baradaeus or Baradei.¹²

After having identified these sects, Ibn Hazm discusses the doctrine of the Trinity as understood by these Christian sects, arguing against them both on scriptural and rational grounds.

¹²Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 48-49.

B. Christian Doctrines and Their Analysis

1. The Trinity

As Ibn Hazm's portrayal of various Christian sects indicates that he had some knowledge of the history of the development of Christian creeds, of the Christian councils, of the controversies in which these sects engaged and of their philosophical and theological differences regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. He believed that despite the differences among these different sects, there was general agreement among them as to the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, which are the essence of Christianity. Ibn Hazm addresses himself to the basic Christian doctrines and tries to show that the scriptures of the Christians lack consistency and coherence in respect of these doctrines and fail to provide any dependable philosophical or rational ground for Christianity. His discussion may be mentioned under two categories: scriptural arguments and rational arguments.

a. Arguments from the Scriptures

The followers of all the three monotheistic religious traditions viz. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, share some common rational and religious principles. They all believe in the absolute and simple unity of God, and in His incorporeality and immutability. They also believe that their respective Scriptures were revelations from God were transmitted through the prophets who had received them either verbatim or by some form of inspiration, and that their Scriptures were the Word of God in the literal sense of the phrase.¹³ On these commonly-held scriptural and philosophical principles, Ibn Hazm bases his critique and refutation of the Christian doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation. In his own words: "They (Christians) bold.that by God they mean three things; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three are one and the same thing and each of them is equally the other".¹⁴

¹³The well-known dictum in this regard has been "Sacra Scriptura est verbum", (Sacred Scripture is the Word-of God). Burtchaell notes that "Charles Billuart's brief on its behalf is not untypical". See James Trunstead Butchaell, *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration since 1910: A Review and Critique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 121; "The attribution of the written Torah to Moses is affirmed by a tannaitic source (quoted in B.B. 146 and Tj, Sot. 5-6-end) which relates that the Torah is literally inspired and is the revealed Word of God to Moses:" *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. s.v. "Revelation".

¹⁴Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, p. 50.

0 To Ibn Hazm this sort of thinking is sheer folly and confusion since if the three are one and the same, then what sense is there in calling as 'Father,' the second as 'Son,' and the third as 'Holy Spirit'. Even the New Testament contradicts this understanding since it reports Jesus as saying: "I will be seated on the right hand of my father" (Mt. 24:36) on one occasion, and on another he said: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the 'Son,' but the 'Father' only", (Hab. 1:13). Thus in these texts the 'Son' is not the same as the 'Father'. And, as is evident from these texts, the 'Son' is less than the 'Father' in knowledge and in rank. This deficiency and lack of knowledge characterizes the 'Son' as originated, and an originated being cannot be the eternal being.¹⁵ Additionally, there are other texts as well such as Jn. 3:35 and Jn. 14:28 that corroborate the fact that the 'Son' is other than the 'Father'. Once it is proved that the 'Son' is different from the 'Father', it then follows that both cannot be God the Eternal Being. He concludes that neither Jesus nor the Son can be God, and that God cannot be triune.¹⁶

Ibn Hazm does not find any direct or clear statement in the Christian scriptures that might support the doctrine of the Trinity. He refutes the tradition referring to the Psalms or Isaiah from which the divinity of Jesus is often deduced.. saying that these do not speak of Jesus at all. In contrast, several passages in the New Testament attest to Jesus being "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people", and "a servant of God."¹⁷ Nor does Jesus claim himself to be the 'Son of God'. Rather, he calls himself 'Man' or the 'Son of Man'.¹⁸ Ibn Hazm also confutes deriving the divinity of Jesus from those verses of the New Testament in which Jesus addresses God as 'My Father', citing several other passages in which God is addressed as the 'Father' of Jesus' disciples. How does Jesus'

¹⁶Ibid., pt. 1, p. 50. Generally Ibn Hazm's quotations and citations from the Gospels are either in verbatim in Arabic or very close and literal translations. However, in the case of this verse, his rendering seems to be a free translation. His words are: "sa uq'adu 'an yamini abi" – "I will be seated on the right hand of my father". No verse that describes the exaltation of Jesus is found with the same words. Cf. Mt. 26:64; Mk. 14:62; 16-19; Lk. 22-69; 20:42-44; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 10, 12; 8:1; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 3:21.

¹⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 50, 55.

¹⁷Ibid., pt. 1, p. 56. Here Ibn Hazm cites only Lk. 24:19 to assert that Jesus was a human prophet of God. But in his critique he hardly lets any passage go unnoticed that somehow alludes to it that Jesus was a created servant and a human prophet sent by God.

¹⁸Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, p. 24.

referring to God 'My Father' qualify him as divine, while the same usage for others does not make them divine.¹⁹

Ibn Hazm contests the claim that Jesus' working of miracles is an evidence of his divinity, saying that according to the Judeo-Christian scriptures, other prophets (e.g., Moses, Elijah) were also endowed with miracles and yet they were not considered divine. In Ibn Hazm's view, the divinity of Jesus and the doctrine of the Trinity have been contrived by the elders of the Church without any scriptural basis, and others followed them blindly and uncritically.²⁰

b. Rational Arguments on the Trinity

It is rather well known that the early Church had to go through a long and complex process for the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. In some sense, it became a criterion of orthodoxy after the Council of Chalcedon, in 451 C.E. but its uniform explanation and exposition remained far from a reality. According to the Church Fathers, the doctrine remained a mystery even to the best minds. They had to find some examples and analogies from nature to make some sense of this complex concept, which later became the subject of philosophical discussion on the Trinity.²¹ To Ibn Hazm, these analogies and images are illogical and shallow..

Some say that we know by necessity that the Creator and the Originator must be Living and Knowing. Then it follows from this that God has Life and Knowledge. God's Life is called the 'Holy Spirit' and His Knowledge is known as the 'Son.'²²

Ibn Hazm argues that God cannot be described by means of rational deduction or induction; rather, He describes Himself in the revelations that mankind received from Him. Neither in the New Testament nor in any other scriptures is there a statement describing 'the-Son' as the 'Knowledge' of God. Some Christian scholars claim that in Latin the 'knowledge' of the knower is also called his 'son'. That, however, is not sustainable because the New Testament was

¹⁹Ibid., pt. 1, p. 56. Here Ibn Hazm refers only to Mt. 6:9 and Jn. 20:17 to argue that Jesus' calling God "my father" is a metaphorical use of the word "father", and does not necessarily imply the divinity of Jesus. But in his critique his citations and references on the subject are extensive. See the section on "Theological Objections".

²⁰Ibid., pt. 1, p. 56.

²¹Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 315-363, p. 348.

²²Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp. 300.

not originally written in Latin. The original languages of the Old and New Testaments were Hebrew and Aramaic, and there is nothing in the Hebrew language implying that the 'Knowledge' of the knower is called his 'son'. Additionally, such a claim and understanding contradict Paul's words characterising Christ as the power of God and the wisdom of God. Furthermore, if one derives the names of God from His attributes and actions, then He also has the attributes of power, hearing, seeing, speech, intellect, wisdom, generosity, etc. **Why**, then, asks Ibn Hazm, should God's names be derived just from His attributes of 'life' and 'knowledge' and not from His other attributes and actions? If one holds that the 'power' of God is the same as His 'life', then His 'Knowledge' is the same as His 'life'. If it is claimed that one may have life without having knowledge (e.g., as in the case of an insane person), one might similarly have life argues Ibn Hazm, without having power such as the one who has fainted. Finally, if the 'Son' is the 'Knowledge' and the 'Spirit' is the 'life,' how can this be reconciled with the claim that Jesus is both the 'Son' and the 'Spirit'? And if Christ is both the 'Knowledge' of God and the 'life' of God, how about the belief that Mary gave birth to the 'Son' of God? Does this mean, then, that Mary gave birth to the 'Knowledge' of God? To Ibn Hazm, therefore, all this is sheer nonsense, and results in confusion. Jesus, he asserts, was endowed with life and knowledge like all the other prophets of God and there is nothing in him to suggest divinity.²³

Ibn Hazm also resorts to another speculative argument which is the following:

Some say that we find all things in two kinds, animate and inanimate. The animate things are again of two kinds, '*natiq*' or rational and irrational. This implies that God is 'Living' and 'Rational' or *ḥayy*' and '*Nūtiq*'²⁴

In response to that Ibn Hazm says:

First, this categorization applies only to nature and the things that pertain to it. If we see God in the category of animate things, then He belongs to the genus of animate beings, and, hence; would be characterized by the limits and characteristics of animate beings. It will imply

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., pt. 1, p. 151.

that God is composed of genus and differentia. Now, every thing composed is limited and every limited thing is originated.

Second, this categorization or division in itself is false and refutable. If they have to properly make this division, then they should start with the declaration that all things are either '*jawhar*' (substance) or '*lii jawhar*' (not substance). After this they may categorize God in any of these two kinds. In each case they would commit the folly of describing God as originated and limited. God be exalted that He is described as the creature and originated!²⁵

Ibn Hazm also mentions another argument:

Some maintain that we know by necessity that God is the Perfect. The number three is the most perfect number as it includes in it both odd and even. Hence God is three and should be called as three rather than one.²⁶

To that Ibn Hazm responds thus:

First, God the Exalted and the Creator is not described with the qualities of completion, perfection, wholeness, etc. These qualities are relative, and occur in terms of comparison and contrast. They apply to a thing as compared to its kind and species. There is no completion or perfection without its opposite, lack of completion or imperfection. But to think of God or describe Him in terms of opposites is inconceivable.

Second, this argument implies that every number greater than three is more perfect than three. If the number three is perfect because it includes both odd and even, then every greater number than three becomes more perfect than three because the latter includes odds and evens, evens and odd, or odds and evens. This entails that God then should be of infinite number which belongs to the category of the impossible.

¹⁵Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 51-52.

²⁶Ibid., pt. 1, p. 52.

Third, this argument also contradicts their own belief that God as Trinity is not a Triune God. Rather He is both One and Three at the same time. If they call God as three in terms of the number three that includes one in it as an odd and a part, then one as a part of the three cannot be the same as three, because a part of the whole cannot be the same whole. To consider of a part of the whole the same as the whole belongs again to the category of the impossible.

Fourth, in relation to the concept of perfection in terms of a number, it can be argued that number two is more perfect than three because it includes odd in addition to its being even.

Finally, to describe God in a number also implies that God belongs to the category of things numbered because there is no number without things numbered. The number is always a relative category. If God is one or three as a number then this entails that He is also limited and originated as everything numbered is limited and originated. This sort of argument makes God originated and hence composed.²⁷

Ibn Hazm further asserts that God is not called one in the sense of the number one. The term *al-Wa-id* used for God does not mean the number one; rather it means a unique and self-subsistent Reality.²⁸

2. The Doctrine of the Incarnation

In regard to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, Ibn Hazm says:

They maintain that the Divine is united with the human in such a way that the two became one thing. The Jacobites employ the analogy of water mixed with wine. They hold that this unity of the Divine and the human is like mixing wine with water and becoming one thing. Nestorians see this unity like the unity of oil and water each maintaining its own nature. Melchites use the analogy of fire and a fiery iron bar.²⁹

²⁷Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 52-53.

²⁸Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 53, 64-65.

²⁹Ibid., pt. 1, p. 53.

TQ Ibn Hazm, however, the Judea-Christian scriptures fail to provide any textual proof for these doctrines, or any evidence to support these analogies. His comments are extremely interesting:

In their analogy the Melchites commit the mistake of putting accident in substance. According to their analogy, the Divine becomes an accident and the human its substance. This is a sheer corruption of the concept of God and man. The Jacobites' view is even more shallow. One may ask then: if the divine became man then Christ becomes human because the divine and man when mixed together became one thing, that is Christ and human. In such case, then, there does not remain any divinity in Christ. Similarly, if both divine and man united became divine then there is no humanity in the Christ. But if none of the two changes to the other then this is the view of Nestorians and not theirs [the Orthodox]. As for the Nestorians, their view in fact boils down to the proposition that in Jesus man remained man and the divine remained divine. If this is the case, then in one sense every human being remains in himself divine and human. So there does not arise any distinction between Jesus and other human beings.³⁰

About this doctrine Ibn Hazm also argues that:

... Verily what they believe belongs to the category of the impossible because the Eternal does not change into the nature of the human, the originated, nor can the originated change into the deity, which is the Eternal. This is impossible in itself. ... Similarly, the human and the originated cannot be in the same place with the Eternal One.³¹

3. The Theory of Logos Incarnation

About the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan theory of Logos Incarnation, which, in addition to 'Father,' 'Son,' and the 'Holy Spirit', also refers to a fourth entity, 'the Word' (*al-Kalimah*), and which posits that the

³⁰Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 51-54.

³¹Ibid., pt. 1, p. 54.

'Word' was united with the human body, conceived in the womb of Mary and was born to her. Ibn Hazm contrasts the texts of this creed with Jn. 1:14, 3:35, 14:28, and Heb. 1:3₁ and asks:

Is this 'Word', 'Father,' or 'Son,' or 'Holy Spirit', or something else and a fourth one? If their response is that this 'Word' is a fourth thing, then they believe in al-Tarbi' (Quaternity) rather than in *al-Tathlith* (Trinity). But if they hold that this 'Word' is one of the three, then they should come up with evidence for that. Further, one may ask them: Is this 'Word' 'Father' or 'Son'? Or is it something else? And with this one may also ask them: who was conceived in the womb of Mary? In case they hold that this 'Word' is 'Son' who was also conceived in the womb of Mary, then they deny in 1:14 where ('Word') is described as 'God'. But, if they hold that this 'Word' is 'Father' who was also conceived in the womb of Mary, then they deny the formula of their creed where it is clearly admitted that it was 'Son' who was conceived in the womb of Mary. If they maintain that 'the Word' is both 'Father' and 'Son', then they deny Mt. 24:36, Jn. 3:35, 14:28, and Heb. 1:3 which maintain that 'Father' and 'Son' are two different things. In addition to all these questions there is another problem: what do they mean by *'iltal)ama'* (became flesh)? If it is meant that 'the Word' became a human then this goes against the belief of the Nestorians and the Melchites.³²

Ibn Hazm drives the argument to what he considers its logical conclusion: "If they hold that it is neither He nor other than He, then they have gone mad".³³ He adds:

According to your creed, it is 'Son' who descended from the heaven and took upon himself the human body with the 'Holy Spirit' and became human and was killed and crucified. Was the 'Son' before his descending from the

³²Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 54-55. Ibn Hazm's version of the Christian Rule of Faith or Creed is almost the same that Henry Bettenson documents, known as Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed or the Creed of Jerusalem, describe. See Henry Bettenson, Documents *of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 36-37 and compare it with *Kitāb al-Fasl*, pt. 1, p. 54:55.

³³Ibid., pt. 1, p. 55.

heaven an originated creature or an eternal being? Now if their response to this is that the 'Son', before his descending from heaven was a creature, then it implies that 'Father' and 'Holy Spirit' are also creatures because they claim that 'Son' is the same as 'Father' and, 'Holy Spirit.' But if their answer is that the 'Son' before his descent was eternal and after his descent became human, this belief then belongs to the category of the impossible—that the eternal being changed into a human and a creature.³⁴

Concluding, Ibn Hazm raises the following questions:

This incarnate one whom you view as 'Son' and in your concept of Trinity, you see this 'Son' as 'Knowledge' of 'Father', the question arises whether this 'Son' has knowledge and power, or not? If they respond to this question in the negative, then their belief in Trinity would become **false** because the 'Son' with knowledge and power cannot be the same 'Father' who has knowledge and power. Hence this 'Son' is different from 'Father' and Trinity is denied. But if their response to the above question is in the positive, then again God does not remain Trine, rather He becomes Five eternal beings, i.e., 'Father', His 'Life', His 'Knowledge', that is, 'Son', and added to these are the 'Knowledge of the Son' and 'the Power of the Son' too. The same question should likewise be posed in relation to 'Holy Spirit' as the Life of the 'Father'.³⁵

In sum, to Ibn Hazm the Christian scripture does not provide a coherent, uniform, and solid basis for the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation, nor can those doctrines be sustained on the basis of philosophical reasoning. Thus, he contends, the Christian religious tradition, as well as the Christian creed, are the result of a blind following of the Church Fathers.³⁶

C. Biblical Criticism: New Testament

Ibn Haem's study of the New Testament follows his critique of the Hebrew Scriptures. He is well aware of the fact that the Torah is,

³⁴Ibid., pt. 1, p. 56.

³⁵Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 56-57.

³⁶Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 57ff.

in some sense, on a different level from the rest of the books of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament in terms of their being the Word of God. As against other Jewish and Christian scriptures, the Torah was not only claimed to be an integral unit in terms of its text, content, and theology, but was also believed in Ibn Hazm's time to be the work of one author, both as its recipient and transmitter.

In Ibn Hazm's time, there seems to have been a vague understanding of two levels of scriptures as being the Word of God. At one level, the scriptures were seen as revelation from God in the sense of being literally the Word of God—that is, God spoke and Moses wrote. At the second level, revelation was considered to have been received by the prophets and apostles, who then wrote down the revelation in their own words. This inspired 'Word of God', which later took the form of scriptures, was also considered the Word of God. Though authorship of these scriptures was not attributed to a single person, the source for them was claimed to be God. Furthermore, they were claimed to be integral in terms of text, content, history and theology. In other words, they were claimed not as verbatim revelation, but as the Word of God in so far as they were inspired. Hence, Ibn Hazm remarks that he was relieved from not having to prove the New Testament having been sent down by God, as he was required to do in the case of the Hebrew scriptures which the Jews claimed to have been sent down by God. Unlike the Jews' claim for their scriptures, the Christians, regardless of their sectarian and schismatic differences, consider the Gospels as four books of history that were written by four different men at different periods of time.³⁷

Like his critique of the Hebrew scriptures, Ibn Haem's critique of the New Testament is a running commentary on selected problematic passages and narratives in the four Gospels. However, he does not limit himself to the narrative of one Gospel at a time. His is an original attempt by a Muslim scholar to deal with the synoptic problem in such a manner as to preclude all further attempts at the harmonization of their mutual and internal inconsistencies and contradictions. Ibn Hazm arranges and compiles all the narratives which

³⁷Ibid., pt. 2, p. 2. Ibn Hazm seems to be fully aware of the fact that the Christians see Jesus as the revelation of God, or that God revealed himself in the form of Jesus. Rather, the discussion here is on the revelation from God in terms of his message, commandments, guidance and the *Shari'ah* sent to mankind through the agency of human prophets. And this revelation to different prophets later took the form of scriptures for the people of those prophets. Each religious tradition takes these scriptures as their sacred books and believes in them as the "Word of God"

appear to be dissimilar, and later compares and contrasts them, highlighting those inconsistencies and contradictions which, to him, defy harmonization.³⁸

Ibn Hazm sees obvious divergences between the so-called synoptics and the Gospel according to John. He thinks that there is no unity, coherence, congruity, consistency, or logical compatibility in the New Testament, whether in terms of the authors' reports of historical events or in their understanding of Jesus and his teachings. Not only the synoptic gospels but all the books of the New Testament display contradictions, both within themselves and among themselves.³⁹

In his critique Ibn Hazm was centuries ahead of his time. The problems that he identifies had to wait until the time of Reimarus whereafter they began to be perceived by Western Biblical scholars as problems of inner contradiction.

In his critique Ibn Hazm addresses himself to the question and the problem of the transmission of al-Injil. Interestingly enough, he does not question the sources, authorship, gradual development and reduction of the gospels, to refute their identification with what the Qur'an terms as *al-Infil*. His main concern appears to be to prove that neither the four gospels nor the other books of the New Testament are worthy of even being called authentic books of history due to their internal and mutual inconsistencies and contradictions, let alone that they be claimed as scriptures and the inspired Word of God. To him, the authors of the gospels were neither the true apostles of Jesus, nor preservers of his original teachings and message. Instead; they had tampered with the true teachings of Jesus and forged the

³⁸In a sense, Ibn Hazm's study of the New Testament may be seen as the first critical-historical study to raise the Synoptic problem. William R. Farmer states that Johann Jakob Griesbach's publication of Synopsis originated the history of the Synoptic problem that continues through its scientific investigations up until now. He writes, "Griesbach's harmony, if a harmony at all, was a harmony to end harmonization". William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical analysis*, (London and New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), pp. 5a8. See also John Charlot, *New Testament Disunity: Its Significance for Christianity Today* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc. 1970), p. 41.

³¹¹Charlot sketches the history of New Testament criticism briefly but cogently, to show how the historical criticism after the Reformation had challenged and even demolished the Christian belief in the theory of the unity of the New Testament as an inspired Word of God. The New Testament scholars were gradually forced to admit first the textual disunity of the New Testament and then its historical and theological disunity. Of course, Charlot is not aware of Ibn Hazm's critique of the New Testament which had attempted to demolish its unity and integrity centuries before the historical-critical methods became prevalent in the West.

Gospels, mixing truth with falsehood. While accepting, for the sake of argument, these authors as apostles, eye-witnesses, and inspired reporters, he shows them to be liars against Jesus and God.

1. Introduction to the New Testament

About the Gospels, Ibn Hazm writes:

The first among them is the book of history or a historical report which was written by Matthew, the Levite, a disciple of Christ. He

wrote it nine years after the ascension of Jesus {*raf' al-Masih*}. He wrote it in Hebrew in the city of Judea in Syria. It makes about twenty-eight leaves written in medium point {*bi khattin mutauassitin*}. The second is Mark the Aaronite's book of history. He was a disciple of Simon, the Cephas, son of Thomas known as Peter. He wrote it in Greek in the city of Antioch in Syria twenty-two years after the ascension of Jesus. It is also reported that Simon himself wrote it and then erased his name from its beginning and attributed it to his disciple, Mark. It takes up twenty-four leaves written in the medium point. Simon Peter is a disciple of Christ. The author of the third book is Luke, the physician of Antioch, who was also the disciple of Simon Peter. He wrote his book in Greek in Achaia [sic.] after Mark had written his Gospel. It is about the length of Matthew's Gospel. The fourth Gospel was written by John son of Zebedee, the disciple of Christ. He wrote it in Greek about sixty-nine years after the ascension of Christ, in the city of Ephesus (*Ashfniyyah*). It is about twenty-four leaves written in the medium point. This John himself translated his companion Matthew's Gospel from Hebrew to Greek.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*; pt. 2, pp. 2-7. It must also be noted that until Ibn Hazm's time the Christians believed in the theory of independent origin of the gospels — that is, they were apostles' eye witness reports and inspired Word of God. The problem of likenesses and differences, similarities and contradictions was tackled dogmatically through interpretation, the Gospels' order was taken on the authority of St. Augustine that Matthew was the oldest one and Mark and Luke depended on it. See Robert C. Briggs, *Interpreting the New Testament Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977), pp. 6f. As for the authors of the gospels, their places and dates of writing, Ibn Hazm must have taken his information from

In addition to these four Gospels the other sacred books of the Christians include: Acts, which was written by Luke and deals with the activities and histories of the disciples of Paul the Benjaminite. It makes about fifty leaves written in closed congested point—the Book of Revelation and Proclamation, besides seven canonical epistles, three written by John, son of Zebedee; two by Simon Peter, and one each by James, son of Joseph the carpenter, and by his brother Jude (each epistle takes about a leaf or two); fifteen epistles by Paul, the disciple of Simon Peter, all of them comprising about forty leaves.⁴¹

Other than these books there were works of their late patriarchs or of the Church fathers, such as the collection of six councils of their bishops and priests and of later councils. They derive their religious laws from ecclesiastical commands such as the legal code of King Recared by which all the Christians of al-Andalus regulate their lives. Similarly, the Christians of other countries follow the rules of their respective Church leaders. They also have records and histories of their martyrs.⁴²

2. History of the Transmission of the Christian Scriptures

Ibn Hazm's remarks about the canonicity, sources, and the process of transmission are as follows:

The four gospels and the other books noted above, i.e., the New Testament, are the basic source of their religion. All Christians, regardless of their sectarian differences, whether belonging to the East or to the West, take these books as one Vortex and of the same significance. It is not possible for anyone to add or drop a single word from this codex but at the cost of all Christians' condemnation and rejection of such a person.

The Christian scriptures go back for their source to Mark, Luke and John. As for Matthew's gospel, it was also

some Christian sources now not known to us. Modern New Testament scholars now almost discard most of the traditional reports on them. The New Testament now is not seen as the work of four authors. For detail see Werner Georg Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 17th rev. ed., trans. by Howard C. Kee (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975).

⁴¹ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 2-7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pt. 2, pp. 2-7.

translated by John, and the epistles of Paul go back to Paul. Similarly, the entire Christian tradition goes back to three persons, namely, Paul, Mark, and Luke. These three in turn draw upon and transmit from five, namely, Peter, Matthew, John, James and Jude.... Paul tells us in the Acts that he met Peter for the first time and remained with him for fifteen days. When he met Peter for the second time, he remained with him for a very short period of time. The third time he saw him they were both seized and executed.

It must be known to all that the Christian case in terms of proper preservation and authentic transmission of their scriptures is much weaker than that of the Jews. In the latter case, there were a good number of people who followed Moses. After him they had their rulers and kingdoms and several prophets such as Joshua, Samuel, David and Solomon, who followed the Mosaic tradition and commanded with it. After the fall of Solomon, however, unbelief and faithlessness crept in and the Jews started worshipping idols and killing their prophets. Their temple was destroyed repeatedly and the Torah burned, and they finally lost their kingdom. It was then that the Torah came to be corrupted and altered. As regards early Christians, they were not more than 120 men after the ascension of Jesus and with them were some women who supported them through their wealth. During his [Jesus'] time and after him, they were frightened and lived in hiding. Nor did they preach in public since whoever appeared on the scene was executed, such as James {son of Joseph the carpenter) and Stephen (known as the first martyr). The latter was stoned; Peter and his brother, Andrew, Simon the brother of Joseph the carpenter, Philip and Paul were crucified; James, the brother of John, Thomas Bartholomew, Jude, son' of Joseph the carpenter, and Matthew were killed by the sword, and John was poisoned. For some three centuries they remained under persecution and, as indicated earlier, it was only after Constantine's conversion that they gathered together and started preaching in public. During the period of persecution God withdrew his *al-~~in~~fl* except for leaving some

verses extant which were to be an evidence against their fabrication.⁴³

However, Ibn Hazm is rather equivocal as to whether the extant New Testament books are truly the words of their authors, or have also suffered corruption and alteration in their text and transmission during the period of general persecution. Even so, our analysis of his critique indicates that he does not regard the New Testament books representing the true history, teachings, and original message of Jesus. Rather, they represent exercises in distortion and alteration. Either their authors had intentionally confused the truth with falsehood or had fallen a prey to Jewish schemes. Commenting on Mk. 16:15, Ibn Hazm argues that Jesus gave them one Gospel and not four gospels.⁴⁴

3. Contradictions between Mosoretic Text and Septuagint

To Ibn Hazm, both the Jews and Christians received some of the same books as their scriptures. Despite the fact that the Mosoretic and Septuagint versions are mutually contradictory, the Christians

⁴³Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 2-7.

⁴⁴Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 2-7, 55-56. Ibn Hazm renders Mk. 16-15 (R.S.V.: "Go unto all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation)" as "*Idhhabu ilü jami' al-dunyü wa-bashshiru jami' ol-Khalii'iq bi al-Injil*" and then derives from it that the "*Injil*" that Jesus gave them to preach was one Gospel and not the Four Gospels that the Christians now regard as their scripture. He also asserts that the Four Gospels are four books of history compiled by four different authors at different periods of time and cites for it Lk. 1:1-4 as a proof from their text. Although he employs the term "*Arba'ah Tawünl:h*" for the four gospels yet he also uses "Anajil" for the gospels and Injil for the New Testament as well. In accordance with the Muslim tradition he is not ambiguous on the use of the term "Injil" , and regard it as different from the extant New Testament Books, as it was withdrawn by God when there occurred alterations and corruptions in it.

The ambiguity in the use of the term Evangelion or Gospel as singular continued since Synoptists' different use of it than Mark and continues to persist. "This ambiguity in usage (of the word Gospel), says Briggs, "has persisted to the present time. At times "Gospel" refers to the books that give information about the life of Jesus, in other instances it refers to the total Christian message that is centered in Jesus Christ; and in some cases it refers to the Word of God which comes to expression in the act of proclamation". Robert C. Briggs, *Interpreting the Gospels: An Introduction to Methods and Issues in the Study of the Synoptic Gospels* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 50. On how and when the term "Evangelion" as plural came into use, see Werner Georg Kummel, pp. 36ff.

accept the Hebrew Bible as their scripture. Ibn Hazm lists some contradictions in the chronologies and ages of the Patriarchs—Gen. 5:3, 6, 7, 12, 15 11:12-15, 18, 20, 22-23, 24-25, and 32 from both versions. He asserts that the versions differ from each other at nineteen places. He also claims that the two versions report a difference of about 1350 years in counting the age of the world.⁴⁵

Ibn Hazm questions the integrity of both versions, and argues:

If the Masoretic text does not stand for the Tawrat of Musa and other books of the prophets which the Christians embrace as scriptures, then the Christians must acknowledge that Ezra and the Jews have committed corruption and alteration. Accepting that there were seventy translators of the Septuagint employed by Ptolemy who made changes in the text and content implies that the Christians follow the corrupted scripture. If both the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint are right and true, as the Christians believe, then they follow two contradictory scriptures as true. The fact is, however, the such books cannot be the Scriptures or the basis for a (true) religious tradition.⁴⁶

Moreover the Christians refer to some verses from the Pentateuch, Psalms, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah that stand for them as evidence and prophesy of Jesus' being the Messiah and 'Son of God.' The Jews understand these verses differently, rejecting vehemently the Christian interpretation. To Ibn Hazm, this is further evidence that the books which are interpreted in two opposite ways can never be scriptures, nor even the work of a sensible person, let alone the Word of God.⁴⁷

4. Biblical Criticism: Historical-Critical Study of the New Testament in the West

The French priest, Richard Simon (1638-1712), is generally acknowledged as the first Christian scholar to study the text of the Bible critically and scientifically. He wrote a series of treatises known as *A Critical History of the Old Testament* (1678), *A Critical History of the Text of the New Testament* (1689), *A Critical History of the*

⁴⁵Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 7-10.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

Translations of the New Testament (1690), and *A Critical History of the Chief Interpretations of the New Testament* (1693). In his Biblical studies, he applied the historical-critical method and "became the direct founder of the historical study of the Bible", "the founder of the science of New Testament introduction", and "offered the first great challenge to both Protestant and Catholic theories of unity" of the Bible.⁴⁸

Simon's approach was, however, primarily apologetic. He wanted to prove the Protestant doctrine that the scripture was the sole source of true doctrine was misleading because no proper and true understanding of the Bible was possible without the help and guidance of the extra-Biblical Christian tradition. However, using his empirical-critical method, he demonstrated that there was no uniformity in the text of the New Testament. Comparing and contrasting the different available manuscripts, translations, and versions of the New Testament, he brought both the Protestants and the Catholics to task. He maintained that the text of the New Testament was neither absolute nor unchanged, let alone divinely inspired, and that textually it had suffered irretrievable alterations through its long process of transmission and translation.

Simon was forced to burn many of his writings under the pressure of the Church and its dogmatic leaders, both Protestant and Catholic. His writings, however, had effectively challenged the basis for belief in the theory of textual unity and literal-verbal inspiration of the New Testament. The new humanistic spirit of his age of Reformation had also helped to make the ancient texts available. With the emergence of the New Testament editions with critical apparatus, starting with the work of John S. Mill (1645-1707) and the Greek New Testament (1734) and leading to the Synopsis (published 1777) of Johann Jacob Griesbach (1745-1812), the "disunity" of the text of the New Testament has become an unavoidable question. Comparison and analysis of the variant readings of the text also prompted literary and source-criticism in the wake of textual criticism, although this was to come much later. The authority of the Textus Receptus (1633) and the Bible as the inspired Word of God were called into question especially by deist thinkers. New Testament scholars had moved forward to search the sources while dogmatic scholars made

⁴⁸See n. 49, below, for details.

a shift from their theory of the unity of the New Testament text to a theory of the work's historical unity.⁴⁹

I The Bible was still regarded as consistent in its content and historical reportage, and considered the inspired Word of God to contain reports of God's actions in history. These historic events were accepted as having been recorded by the apostles and the disciples of Jesus who were their eyewitnesses and who transmitted the events diligently with the help of the Holy Spirit. Still, several contradictions found in the reports of historical events were either explained away as peripheral, or by the Augustinian principle of harmony, as belonging to different but similar episodes.⁵⁰

English deists argued for the role of reason to test and interpret the contents of the New Testament on the basis of their principles

⁴⁹This section is a brief summary from the following works: Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 15ff.; Werner Georg Kummel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*, trans. S. Mclean Gilmour and Howard Clark Kee, originally published in German in 1970 (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 41ff.; John Charlot, op.cit. 17ff. The other works consulted for this section also include: G.E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1967); I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977).

⁵⁰J.J. Griesbach originated the so-called Synoptic problem in 1883 by questioning the traditional views of the relationship of the gospels and the Augustinian hypothesis that Matthew was written first and Mark used it and then both were used by Luke. Greisbach proposed his hypothesis that Matthew was written first. Then Luke, depending on Matthew, wrote. And it was Mark who wrote last by using both Matthew and Luke. Greisbach's hypothesis in turn was questioned and Heinrich Julius Holtzman (1832-1910) formally proposed "The Two Source Hypothesis or the Two Document Hypothesis" in 1863 and argued that Mark was the first that came into writing. Using another source, now non-extant and known by the name of Q. Burnett H. Streeter (1847-1937), proposed another hypothesis in 1924 in his *The Four Gospels* called "The Four Source Hypothesis or The Four Document Hypothesis". Subsequently various modifications of the "Two Document Hypothesis" have been proposed. Although "The Two Document Hypothesis" still provides a strong foundation for the modern Gospel criticism yet it has been continuously challenged since the second half of this century. Bishop B.C. Butler's *The Originality of St. Matthew* (1951) attacked the "Two Document Hypothesis" and argued again for the Augustinian Hypothesis. Farmer strongly argued again for Greisbach's Hypothesis in his *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical History* (1964). This is again challenged by C.M. Tuckett, *The Revival of Greisbach Hypothesis: An Analysis and Appraisal* (Cambridge: University Press 1983). For discussion on the Synoptic Problem see also G.M. Styler, "The Priority of Mark" in C.F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament*, 3rd revised ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1981), pp. 285-316.

of Natural Religion. They pointed out internal contradictions in the content and the reports of historical events in the New Testament, "but the historical disunity of the New Testament did not become an acute problem for theology as a whole until the publication in 1777 of the *Fragments* from Wolfenbuttel, edited by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing".⁵¹ Attributed initially to an unknown author, it was declared to be the work of Hermann Samuel-Reimarus (1694-1768) by his son in 1813. Reimarus' penetrating analysis demonstrated irreconcilable internal and mutual contradictions of the gospels in their reports of historical events. He demonstrated how the evangelists had failed in their reportage of Jesus' resurrection, ascension and exaltation, how they were deluded into believing in an imminent "Parousia" and later disappointed at its unending delay, and how they had distorted the message and teachings of Jesus to overcome this disappointment. All of this resulted in their making unsuccessful and contradictory reports, and goading them to alter, corrupt, and emend the Hebrew texts to prove that Jesus was the expected Jewish Messiah.⁵²

To Reimarus, Jesus was a political revolutionary and a deluded eschatological visionary. Reimarus prompted the New Testament scholars' "Quest for the Historical Jesus" over the next two centuries and set the stage for the demonstration of the historical disunity of the New Testament. "Reimarus raised the problems", writes Edgar Krentz, "that occupy New Testament scholarship to the present: Jesus as eschatological preacher, the messianic secret, the passion prediction and the surprise of the disciples at the resurrection, miracles, creative additions, the differences between John and the Synoptics, etc."⁵³

The contribution of Reimarus' *Fragments* to the initiation of the school known as the "Quest for the Historical Jesus" is beyond question. New Testament scholars such as Werner Georg Kummel cannot help but acknowledge that:

The importance of the publication of the *Fragments* lies rather in the fact that for a large circle the historical task of distinguishing between the proclamation of the historical Jesus and the preaching of the early Church

⁵¹ John Charlot, *New Testament Disunity*, p. 28.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Herman Samuel Reimarus' *The Intention of Jesus and His Teaching*, is now available in English: *Reimarus: Fragments*, trans. Charles H. Talbert and Ralph S. Fraser, Lives of Jesus Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970). (Hereafter referred to as Reimarus, *Fragments*.)

was made imperative, while at the same time a problem was raised that demanded attention: namely, what role in the emancipation of Christianity from Judaism is to be attributed to Jesus.⁵⁴

Thus, Reimarus' rational and historical demonstration of the gospels' irreconcilable contradictions in their reports of essential and historical events, on the one hand, forced the defenders of orthodoxy to give up their belief in the historical unity of the Bible and make another shift—to that of clinging to and defending the theological unity of the Bible by inventing the principle of separation between faith and history. On the other hand, Reimarus' critique on the New Testament opened a Pandora's box of Biblical criticism.

The Church had been conscious of theological differences among the New Testament books even before the books attained their canonicity. The two main ancient schools of divergent approaches to the scripture not only had given rise to recurrent heresies but also had brought about a schism in the church. The Antiochene school continuously emphasized a literal understanding of the scripture while the Alexandrian school, with its allegorical, symbolical, and mystical interpretation established its orthodoxy. The two never could or did converge.

The Reformation brought these attitudes toward the scriptures into focus again. Luther viewed them as the sole source and final authority, and raised again the question of the canonicity of Hebrews, James, Jude, and the Apocalypse, to avoid obvious theological contradictions. However, the problem of divergent theological streams in the New Testament was not taken seriously until the deists started pointing out ideational differences in addition to literary, textual, and historical contradictions. By their rational and scientific treatment of the New Testament, they discovered variant streams of Christianity pitted against one another: Jewish Christians versus Gentile Christians, Petrine and Jamesian Christianity against Pauline Christianity.⁵⁵

In the early nineteenth century, Georg Lorenz Bauer (1755-1806) "published the first survey of New Testament theology" and categorized it in different theologies under separate sections, "but the theological disunity of the New Testament became an inescapable

⁵⁴Edger Krentz, *it The Historical Critical Methods*, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁵Werner Georg Kummel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*, p. 90.

problem through the work of the German theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur"⁵⁶ (1792-1860). Ferdinand Baur tried to explain the historical differences and inconsistencies of the New Testament writers in terms of their theological interpretations. He argued that the evangelists remodelled and shaped the tradition to express their understanding of the gospel and to preach their theological visions and views. For Baur, the books of the New Testament as a canon still contained a unified Christian theology that should be seen in Hegelian terms as thesis (Judeo-Christianity- James, Peter and Matthew), antithesis (Pauline Christianity), and synthesis (Early Catholicism).

Baur's division of the New Testament theologies into three Hegelian categories was soon rejected, but his principle of "tendency criticism" (*tendenzkritik*) and his commitment to source criticism were generally accepted. It was seen as being extremely helpful in explaining historical differences in the New Testament in the light of the theological interpretations of its writers and the Christian communities or churches for whom they wrote. In the wake of this "consistently historical approach to the New Testament", the emergence of the "Tubingen school", "historical theology", and the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (history of religions school) was accomplished by the coming into focus of the relation of history with faith.⁵⁷

Today, although the radical criticism of the New Testament denies any historical reality of Jesus and his ministry is rejected, critical scholars have come to recognize its theological diversity. For many present-day scholars, the Bible is no more seen as the Word of God in terms of "verbal inspiration or literal inspiration" (i.e., the dictation theory of inspiration, or mechanical inspiration), or in the traditional sense of the term, which was generally believed until the end of the nineteenth century and is still believed by the Christian fundamentalists. However, it is still believed that the New Testament is uniform in its presentation of the gospel, notwithstanding its textual, historical, and theological diversity.⁵⁸

In short, the historical criticism of the Bible is still widely believed to have started about the middle of the fifteenth century, i.e., 1453 C.E. Its "first rustles" started with the Renaissance. The Reformation added to it the "first rules of criticism", the rules of

⁵⁶John Charlot, *New Testament Disunity*, p. 4 and 40ff.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 41.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 2; Krentz, *The Historical Critical Methods* 14ff; Werner George Kummel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*, pp. 39ff.

methodological doubt, the application of scientific empirical observation, historical knowledge regarding the Biblical claims, and the conformity of revelation and reason. The scholars of the Enlightenment set the stage "for the flowering of true historical interest and methods".⁵⁹ Thus, Biblical criticism has now developed into a field of discipline, with each sub-discipline having its own enormous store of literature, complex terminologies and methods. All this has made the publication and the use of "handbooks of Biblical criticism" imperative.⁶⁰

D. Ibn Hazm's Critique of the New Testament

Ibn Hazm's critique of the gospels is entitled "*Dhikr Munüaqaĵüt al-Anüjil al-Arba'ah wa al-Kadhib al-Şühir al-Mawĵu' Fihü*" ("The Story of the Contradictions of the Four Gospels and the Obvious Forged Lie in It").⁶¹

Ibn Hazm follows the traditional order of the gospels, taking Matthew as the first and the most authentic, and later going to Mark and Luke and ending with John. When comparing and contrasting the passages that relate the same events, he uses the same order: Matthew first, followed by Mark and Luke and then John. Although he does not present these passages in parallel columns, like a Western synopsis or a book of gospel parallels, his treatment of the four gospels resembles a reflective synopsis, more properly called, a '*disposis*'. He does not refer to similar passages merely by mentioning their verse numbers and the name of the gospel (as do traditional harmonies prepared for supportive proofs and harmonising interpretations). Rather, he quotes the passages virtually in full, and always emphasizes the contradictions, divergences, and variations in the text, content, context, ideas, and purpose of the message.

As already indicated, Ibn Hazm's criteria for scriptural critique are common sense understanding, reason, internal and mutual consistency and coherence, historical validity, and conformity with the universal experience of revelation. His premises are not those of an agnostic skeptic nor of an historicist, nor even of an anti-religious, absolute rationalist. His principal rules of-analysis and critique of

⁵⁹Ibid., especially 120ff., 403, and Edger Krentz, *The Historical Critical Methods*, 6ff., 22.

⁶⁰See Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, new expanded 2nd edn. (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1981).

⁶¹Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb al.Fa\$!*, pt. 2, 1ff.

the scriptures are the same for all religious traditions which accept revelation as their basis. As already noted, again, Ibn Hazm accepts that the four gospels are a running commentary which is not arranged under any topical or historical-chronological categories, but that they are books of history dealing with the historical Jesus, his life, message, and ministry as compiled by the founders of the Christian tradition. His purpose, however, is to prove that these gospels, as extant, and as believed to be scriptures by the Christians, are not true and coherent reports on and about Jesus, nor revelation or scripture from God. He accepts the Christian belief in the New Testament as the Word of God only as a point of discussion, and then, on historical, critical, and scientific-rational grounds, proceeds to disprove their claim.

In our analysis, Ibn Hazm's expostulation is categorized into five main sections: empirical, historical, textual, theological, and common sense-ethical objections. This division is, of course, our innovation and is bound to have a subjective element, but it is likely to facilitate our understanding of Ibn Hazm's approach to the gospels. It will also help focus attention on the fact that while the Western scholars later came to gradually discern the textual, historical, and theological discrepancies over a period of time, Ibn Hazm's incisive analysis of the gospels' text laid bare these contradictions at an earlier time in history.

1. Empirical Criticism

Under this category are presented Ibn Hazm's objections to those passages of the gospels which, in his view, are opposed to physical facts and contradict the empirical knowledge and observation of the facts of nature and human experience. These passages are such that, according to Ibn Hazm, they cannot be easily accepted as true on grounds of their inconsistency with simple, common-sense understanding and observation.

The first case in this category is Ibn Hazm's review of Mt. 4:12-22, the verses that narrate Jesus' meeting with the first disciples, and juxtaposes them with Mk. 1:14-20, Lk. 5:1-11; and Jn. 1:35-42 to pinpoint four divergencies and contradictions. The first discrepancy he notes is, the time of Jesus meeting with them. The second is the place; the third is the manner and precedence; and the fourth is the condition and circumstance of Jesus' meeting with them.

Ibn Hazm highlights these contradictions as follows: Matthew and Mark agree on the report that Jesus first met Simon Peter and his

brother, Andrew, "after John the Baptist was arrested" "by the sea of Galilee" when they were "casting their nets into the sea" for fishing. Luke tells us that Jesus saw them when they were "washing their nets... after they had toiled all night and took nothing". John narrates that Jesus saw Andrew standing with John the Baptist and that the latter, seeing Jesus, told the people, "Behold the Lamb of God". Upon hearing this, Andrew, a disciple of John, followed the new prophet and became his disciple. After spending the night with Jesus, Andrew brought his brother, Simon, to Jesus as well.

It is of course impossible that the source of such contradictions would be the word of God, or a Prophet, or even a Truthful person. Rather, a report so full of contradictions can only be from an unscrupulous forger who does not care about the veracity of his report.

Ibn Hazm counts "four lies" (*arba' kadhibūt*) in this event. Each one of these four contradictions is without doubt a lie, he contends, since it is impossible for them to be the Word of God, nor even the handiwork of a truthful person. Rather, a report so full of contradictions can only be from an unscrupulous forger who does not care about the veracity of his reports. To him, the most grotesque thing about this is that the Christians of his time also believed that it was John who translated the Gospel of Matthew from Hebrew into Greek. John kept the differences without either himself or Matthew correcting them. Rather, he insisted on these contradictions. What trust remains, then, in the reports of such books, he asks?⁶²

Differences in John's account of the call of the first disciples with the synoptic account have been admitted by Biblical critics of the past, and various attempts at their harmonization have been made. "The standard harmonization", writes Raymond E. Brown, "is that Jesus first called the disciples as John narrates, but they subsequently returned to their normal life in Galilee until Jesus came there to recall them to serve, as the synoptics narrate".⁶³

The contradictions are not only between John and the synoptics, but also in the reports of the synoptics themselves, notes Ibn Hazm. The texts of the gospels, when compared, hardly suggest any solution. Aware of this difficulty, the modern New Testament scholars still see their reconstruction of past ages as forced. "There may be some basic truth in this reconstruction", writes Brown, "but it goes

⁶²Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 18-21.

⁶³*The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John i:iii*, p. 77.

considerably beyond the evidence of the gospels themselves".⁶⁴ However, within the last century the project has been abandoned once it began to be seen that each evangelist had his own theological project and none was interested in the harmonization of details.

Ibn Hazm also objects to the parable of the mustard seed. Subjecting Mt. 13:31-32 to criticism, and quoting the parable in full and without citing its parallels, (as they do not contradict it), he questions its factualness. He argues that human experience all over the world is witness to the fact that the mustard seed plant never grows big enough to have its branches where the birds of the air can make nests. Continuing his argument Ibn Hazm states:

This is our own observation of the mustard seed plant, and the observation of those who have seen it in other parts of the world. Such ignorance of a fact of nature is not to be expected from a prophet, let alone from God. Rather, anyone who used this parable is ignorant and had little experience with crops and agriculture {kiina qalil al-basiiral: *bi ol-jolihol*}. Far be it from Christ to give such a parable!⁶⁵

This parable is taken to be a promise and reassurance of abounding hope, but the Biblical interpreters are very well aware of the problem of its literal meaning. They frankly admit that "literal interpretation is not acceptable".⁶⁶ Further, this is one of the verses which provides grounds for the "two source theory of the synoptic gospels".⁶⁷

The third example in Ibn Hazm's review relates to Jesus' entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Quoting Mt. 21:1-7 and contrasting it with Mk 11:1-7, he states: "These two narratives contradict each other. Matthew informs us that Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a she-ass [birniiral], while Mark that he came into Jerusalem riding on a colt (*fi/w*)". While Ibn Hazm's diligent study and his care for the text led him to question the contradiction about the animal, he does not point out what Biblical critics see as Matthew's ignorance of the literary and poetic Hebrew form employed here, leading him to ask his readers to picture Jesus riding on two animals into Jerusalem.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 77.

⁶⁵Ibn Hazm, *Kitiib al-Fasl*, pt. 2, p. 34. See also James Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, vol. 2, p. 255.

⁶⁶*The Interpreter's Bible: Mt. 13:31-32* in vol. 7.

⁶⁷*The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, ed. William Foxwell Albright.

It is obvious that Ibn Hazm missed this "ignorance of Matthew" because of an Arabic translation where it appears that this sentence was corrected, because Ibn Hazm, quoting Mt 21:1-7, especially v. 7, cites "*wa aqbala bi ol-himiirali wa filwiha... wa ajlasühu min fawqihü*" ("they brought him a she-ass with its colt... and made him sit on her"). If this contradiction of Jesus' riding on one animal, a colt, according to Mark, and riding on two animals, a she-ass and a colt, according to Matthew, had been found in the Arabic version that Ibn Hazm was using, he would have surely remonstrated against this verse as well.

Commenting on these cases Ibn Hazm also informs us of the Muslim-Christian dialogue prevalent in al-Andalus at his time. He tells us that one of his friends, al-Husayn ibn Baqi, had already discussed this narrative and its contradiction with one of the Christian New Testament scholars, who explained to him the allegorical use of the word *līmūrah* in reference to the Torah. Al-Husayn jestingly added that the '*filw*', colt, would then mean "the New Testament".

Ibn Hazm also questions the use of this event as a testimony to the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophesy that the king of the Jews or Jerusalem would enter Jerusalem riding an ass. Besides the fact that Jesus was not the king of the Jews or of Jerusalem, remarks Ibn Hazm, it is also inconceivable that no one before Jesus had entered Jerusalem riding on an ass.⁶⁸

Modern Biblical scholars almost unanimously express the opinion that the reference to two animals in Matthew is due to his quotation from Zech. 9:9, where the Hebrew poetic parallelism, "on a donkey, {and} on a colt, a donkey's foal", is used. The translator's inconscience with this Hebrew poetic and literary expression led him to assume that there were two animals involved. Mark and Luke know of only one animal, as does John.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, p. 44; Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt.2, vol. 1, pp. 255-256. Ibn Hazm is perhaps unaware of the fact that Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-254C.E.) had explained this contradiction in exactly the same terms: that by the parent animal it was meant Torah and the colt stood for the New Testament. See F.F. Bruce, "The History of the New Testament Study" in I. Howard Marshall *The New Testament Interpretation* pp. 21-59, 25.

⁶⁹*The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, pp. 250-252. See also E.C. Colwell, *The Study of the Bible* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950) p. 127.

2. Historical Criticism

This section may be divided into three parts: (a) passages which, according to Ibn Hazri's investigation, contain contradictions, inconsistencies, divergences, and discrepancies in reporting the essential historical events; (b) passages describing the historical relationship of Jesus and the early Church with Judaism and the Christian attitude toward the Torah, the Jews, and to Mosaic Law and its practice; and (c) passages containing prophecies attributed to Jesus which, according to Ibn Hazm's claim, were never realized.

a. Contradictions in Reports of Historical Events

The first example in this category consists of Ibn Hazm's comments on the passages dealing with Jesus' genealogy. Ibn Hazm first quotes Mt. 1:1-17, word for word, and raises points of internal discrepancy and of contradictions with the Hebrew Bible in terms of names, number of fathers, and attribution of Jesus' lineage to Joseph. He treats these contradictions with attention to minute details, even to the extent of noting differences in spelling and vocalization of names for which Hebrew or Greek differences of vocalization and translation (and also the Arabic translation and transliteration) might be responsible.

Ibn Hazm's main points demonstrating the contradictions found in Mt. 1:1-17 are as follows: (1) Matthew's list of Jesus' genealogy differs from the record of genealogies as reported in the Hebrew Bible in terms of names. There is also an omission of three names in Mt. 1:9 and 11. (2) Matthew does not reject the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus, yet he cites the genealogy of Joseph, which implies that Jesus was Joseph's son from the line of David. (3) Mt. 1:17 records that the total number of generations from Abraham to Jesus was forty-two, but his record of names of ancestors cited falls short of this number, contradicting this count.

Ibn Hazm also compares and contrasts Matthew's genealogy of Jesus with Luke's. He quotes Lk. 3:23-38 and raises the following objections: (1) Matthew reports that Joseph's father was Jacob, while Luke reports his name as Heli. (2) In Matthew's list of genealogy, Joseph's lineage is derived from David's son, Solomon, while in Luke from Nathan. (3) Both evangelists report Joseph's genealogy and then imply it as being Jesus' genealogy, while insisting that Jesus was born to a virgin Mary. (4) In respect of Lk. 1:5-40, Ibn Hazm also raises the question that if Elizabeth is the kinswoman of Mary, then Mary should be Aaronite as the former is (cf. Lk. 1:36 and 5).

How can this statement be reconciled with the Christian beliefs and claims that Jesus was from the Davidic line and came to fulfil the Jewish expectations of a Messiah? It also contradicts both Luke's and Matthew's assumptions, employed in their lists of genealogy, that Jesus belonged to the Davidic line.

Ibn Hazm is also aware of the traditional attempts at the harmonization of these discrepancies, both within each gospel and between the gospels. He contends that the Christian interpretation of these discrepancies—that one list represents Jesus' physical genealogy while the other reports his legal genealogy—does not resolve the conflict.

Granted that Matthew wants to report the legal genealogy and Luke's concern is to report the physical genealogy, both lists recording the ancestors ascending from David to Abraham on to Adam would also be considered either as belonging to the one or the other. It would be a gross misinterpretation to relate one part of the genealogy to the physical and the other to the legal in one and the same list.

Similarly, an attempt at their harmonization which takes one as symbolizing the royal messiah and the other as the priestly messiah does not resolve the formal contradiction on which Ibn Hazm insists.⁷⁰

These contradictions have prompted modern New Testament scholars to find their resolution by recourse to speculation about various sources, church communities and their traditions, and different theological views and apologetic christologies used by the redactors of the gospels. The points of contradiction raised by Ibn Hazm remain, nevertheless, problematic. Commenting on Mt. 1:1-17, William Foxwell Albright, despite his belief in the honesty and integrity of the gospels, cannot help admitting the existence of persistent contradictions. He writes:

That there is formal inconsistency here is not to be doubted: both evangelists claiming Davidic descent through Joseph, while at the same time giving us a tradition of virginal conception and birth. To make charges of dishonesty or to impugn the motives of the writers is—at this

⁷⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 10-15, 56-57. See *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, pp. 1, 234-236.

remove of time—perilous. Allowing for the very tenacious traditions with respect to ancestry among Jews at the time of Jesus, we are certainly entitled to say that both evangelists were faithfully recording the traditions which they had received, whatever the inconsistencies.⁷¹

It is commonly admitted now by the New Testament scholars that these lists of genealogies were later formulated by the Church to argue that Jesus was the Davidic messiah of the popular Jewish hope. "Both Luke's genealogy and Matthew's", says Gilmour, "date from a time when it was important for the Church to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah of Jewish expectations by proving that he was descended from David".⁷²

Another example of internal and mutual contradictions in the gospels while reporting the historical events that deal with Jesus consists of the statement that Jarius' daughter was raised from the dead. Contrasting Mt. 9:19-20, 23-25, Mk 5:22-24, 35-43, Lk. 8:41-42 and 49-56, Ibn Hazm raises several objections.

(1) Matthew's report attributes a lie to Jesus. If the statement that Jesus told the people to "Depart, for the girl is not dead but sleeping" (Mt. 9:24) is true, then Jesus did not perform any miracle. On the other hand, if Jesus made the girl alive after she was dead, then Matthew puts these words into the mouth of Jesus attributing a lie to him. Second, there is an internal contradiction in the statement attributed to Jesus. Jesus tells Jarius: "Do not fear, only believe and she shall be well" (Lk. 8:50), but to the bewailing crowd he says: "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping" (Lk. 8:52 cf. Mk. 5:36 against Mk. 5:39). Now, either Jarius' daughter was dead, or she was sleeping. Attribution of both these conflicting statements to Jesus charges him to be a liar or a deceiver. Hence, one of these statements is a lie against Jesus forged by the evangelists. (2) Matthew informs us that when Jarius came to Jesus to request him to raise his daughter, she was already dead. On the contrary, Luke reports that, when Jarius came to Jesus, she "was dying". It was later

⁷¹ *The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, p. 6.

⁷² *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, pp. 250-253 and vol. 8, pp. 81ff For the quote see vol. 8, p. 82.

that her father was informed by a messenger that his daughter was dead by then and there was no need to trouble the master, i.e., Jesus, any more. It is obvious from these contradictory reports of the same event that one of the narrators is in error. (3) These narratives also demonstrate that Jesus performed miracles, hiding them from the public, while the basic purpose of working miracles is to show the power and signs of God and to awaken belief in God among people. (4) Mt. 12:38-39, 16:1-4, Mk. 8:11-13, and Lk. 11:29 and 12:54-56, tell us that Jesus was unable to work miracles; at other times they report his refusing to work miracles for the unbelievers, and, at still other times, they depict him working one miracle after another.⁷³

Modern New Testament scholars are conscious of these discrepancies and look to different sources and literary forms prevalent in those days to solve them. Passages where Mark and Luke agree against Matthew had led them to source criticism.⁷⁴ As for the contradiction in the story of Jarius' daughter, it is maintained that the proper message is not yet clear. To quote Albright:

We are in no position to determine whether Jesus was saying of the girl that she was dead, and that it was his mission to proclaim that death no longer was to have the tenor of finality, or whether he was asserting that the girl was not dead but in a coma.⁷⁵

Another case of conflicting reports is that of Peter's denials as foretold and their realization at the Passion. Comparing and contrasting Mt. 26:34-35, Mk. 14:30-31, Lk. 22:34, and Jn. 13:38 with Mt. 26:69-75, Mk. 14:66-72, Lk. 22:55-62, and Jn. 18:17, 25-27, Ibn Hazm raises the following points:

(1) If Mark is right in stating that the cock crowed twice after Peter's third denial, then Matthew, Luke, and John are wrong who agree on the report that the cock crowed for the first time after Peter had denied Jesus three times. If they are right in their reports about the denials of Peter, then Mark is wrong and lies against Jesus. (2)

⁷³Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 25-26. See also Sweetman *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 239-241.

⁷⁴*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9, pp. 18-25.

⁷⁵*The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, p. 112.

If both the contradictory reports are somehow true, then Jesus was wrong in his prophecies and foretold two contradictory things that can never materialize, and, hence, had falsified one. (3) The character of Peter portrayed in these reports makes him neither worthy of being a true disciple nor a trustworthy transmitter of a religious tradition.⁷⁶

Modern New Testament scholars find this to be problematic, but, in their opinion, it is not indispensable to the Passion narratives. It rather evinces later theological reflections on it.⁷⁷

Subjecting the Passion narratives to his criticism, Ibn Hazm finds a contradiction in the reports as to who carried Jesus' cross on the way to Golgotha. Comparing Mt. 27:32, Mk. 15:21, Lk. 23:26, and contrasting them with Jn. 19:17, he makes the following remarks: Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree that it was Simon the Cyrenian who was forced to carry Jesus's cross. John reports that "he went out, bearing his own cross". Ibn Hazm discussed this contradiction with some Christian scholars of his time who said that the cross being too long to be carried by one person, was carried by both Jesus and Simon. To Ibn Hazm, this interpretation fits neither with the text nor the context. Ibn Hazm retorts that it might be that both of them had carried the cross, each one for some distance.⁷⁸

For modern New Testament scholars, the traditional ways of harmonization are much too simplistic to explain away such an obvious contradiction. They explain the differences in terms of the theological views of the synoptics which differed from the church that made up the tradition for John's gospel. According to Wilbert Howard:

John is silent about Simon of Cyrene, who was requisitioned to carry the load that was too heavy for Jesus (Mk. 15:21), perhaps because the incident was unimportant to him, possibly because Gnostic heretics were already suggesting, as Basilides did a generation later, that Simon and Jesus changed places, so that Jesus did not actually suffer death.⁷⁹

As regards the contradiction in the attitudes toward Jesus of the two robbers who were crucified with him, Ibn Hazm compares Mt. 27:38-44, Mk. 15:27-32, and Lk. 23:32-43, and says that one of the

⁷⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 2, pp. 48-49. See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology* pt. 2, pp. 1, 258.

⁷⁷*The Interpreter's Bible*, see Mt. 26:34ff.

⁷⁸Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 2, pp. 49-50.

⁷⁹*The Interpreter's Bible*, 8:778.

reports must be false. Matthew and Mark agree that both the robbers reviled Jesus. On the other hand, Luke informs that one of the robbers derided Jesus while the other rebuked his fellow robber and that he requested Jesus to remember him in his kingly power and, in turn, received the good news of Paradise.

Ibn Hazm also rules out any attempt at interpretation that both robbers first reviled Jesus, with one of them later believing in him, asserting that neither text nor context in Luke allow for such an interpretation. Hence, Ibn Hazm concludes that either Luke or the person who told him of the incident had lied; by the same token, if Luke's report is correct, then Matthew and Mark had lied.⁸⁰

Ibn Hazm's objections to the Resurrection and Appearance are similar to those made by Hermann Samuel Reimarus some seven centuries later. Comparing and contrasting Mt. 27:57-28:17, Mk. 15:42-16:14, Lk. 23:50-24:51, and Jn. 19:38-23, Ibn Hazm points out the following contradictions: (1) Matthew records that both Mary Magdalene and another Mary came to the grave on late Saturday night, before dawn on Sunday after the Sabbath, and they both found that he had already risen. (2) Mark reports that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, mother of James and Salome, went to the grave on Sunday when the sun had risen. (3) There is a contradiction as regards their arrival at the grave. Who arrived or went there? Whether Mary Magdalene went alone, or Mary and the other Mary went, or both of the Marys, with some other woman? (4) Matthew says that both Mary Magdalene and the other Mary saw that an angel descended from the heaven and rolled the stones away, that there was an earthquake, that the guard fainted, and that the angel told the women that Jesus had already risen. On the contrary, Luke tells us that the women found that the stones had already rolled away and that the two men in white clothes standing there told them that Jesus had already risen. John reports that Mary Magdalene alone came to the tomb, found that the stone had already rolled away, did not see anyone there, returned frightened and informed Simon and John (the narrator of the story) about it. They both rushed to the grave and, finding no one there, returned. There, Mary Magdalene found Jesus standing before her. He greeted her, and told her about his resurrection. (5) Matthew reports that both the Marys came to the

⁸⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, p. 50. Sweetman still argues for the justification of the traditional interpretation, in spite of the obvious contradiction noted by Ibn Hazm. See Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt.2, vol. 1, p. 252.

disciples and told them what Jesus had instructed (i.e., their meeting him in Galilee) and, that taking her to be truthful, they went to Galilee where they gathered together with him. Mark says that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, and she informed the disciples who did not believe her. Then he appeared to the two, and they informed the disciples but they did not believe in the woman's report and Peter himself went to the grave and found no one there. He [Jesus] came down to them in Jerusalem. They all saw him then, and he ate broiled fish with them. John says that he appeared to the ten first, excluding Thomas, and later appeared to them all, including Thomas.

Such great divergencies in reporting one historical event, remarks Ibn Hazm, demonstrates without doubt that its reporters were without any integrity. Rather, they were liars who had no concern for keeping the truth, whether in their oral report or in their written reports (*la yatal,arrawna al-sidqa fima lladdathü bihi wa mi kaiabihu*).

Citing Mark (16:14) that Jesus, after his death, "upbraided them in their unbelief and hardness of heart" and corrected their belief, Ibn Hazm asks: "How then is it sensible to accept any religious tradition from such characters or how can it be legitimate to believe that "the Lord gives them the keys of heaven and the authority of binding and loosing?" (Mt. 18:18 and parallels).

Ibn Hazm mentions the story of Mary and the disciples of Jesus observing the Sabbath and abstaining from work on that day, waiting to embalm the dead body, for which purpose Mary Magdalene was the first to go out. He asserts that the writers of the gospels and their followers, Christians, do not adhere to the religion of Jesus nor of his true followers; they rather follow another religion.⁸¹

In his criticism of the Resurrection and Appearance narratives, Ibn Hazm raised certain points which later led Reimarus, in his historical critical study of the gospels, to conclude that the Christian belief in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus was nothing less than a betrayal by 'pious fraud'. Significantly enough, one finds in the *Fragments* of Reimarus all objections and contradiction raised by Ibn Hazm in the gospels' ambivalence toward and..to some extent, the rejection of, the Mosaic Law; the falsity of Parousia and the subsequent changes due to its unending delay; the making up of the predictions of the Passion, Resurrection, and Exaltation; the innovation of the Christian cult and rituals, etc.

⁸¹ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 50-54; Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 252-253.

Interestingly, the manner and the tenor of Reimarus' criticisms on the Resurrection narratives are the same as of Ibn Hazm, The difference between them, however; is that while Ibn Hazm does not speculate and conjecture, Reimarus does speculate and conjecture about the role of Jesus and his true religion. Moreover, Ibn Hazm does not sound like Reimarus in calling upon the conscientious, **thinking** and objective readers to note the multifarious contradictions. Reimarus asks:

Reader, you who are conscientious and honest: tell me before God, could you accept as unanimous and sincere this testimony concerning such an important matter that contradicts itself so often and so obviously in respect to persons, time, place, manner, intent, word, story?⁸²

Before putting his argument in a summary form and counting the main contradictions as ten, Reimarus' remarks are virtually the same as those of Ibn Hazm, the former almost repeating him verbatim:

Witnesses who differ so greatly in the most important points of their testimony would not be recognized in any secular court as valid and legal (even if it were a matter of a little money belonging to someone) to the extent that the judge could rely upon their story and base his decision on it. How then can anyone want the whole world and all mankind to base their religion, faith, and hope of salvation at all times and in all places upon the testimony of four such varying witnesses? But even with the differences between their stories it does not stop. They unquestionably contradict one another in many passages and make many a futile martyr of good commentators who attempt to make this tetrachordon emit a more harmonious sound.⁸³

It is important to note that Ibn Hazm applies at least the same, if not more rigorous, criteria in his historical-critical approach to the gospels as those followed and developed by the founders of Biblical criticism and New Testament criticism. He insists, like Reimarus, on the principles of consistency, internal coherence, conformity of reason and revelation, and the judgment of reason and common sense in

⁸² *Reimarus Fragments*, p. 197.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

regard to the content of revelation that deals with historical events (better known to Reimarus as the "doctrine controlled by the history"). However, Ibn Hazm does not conjecture or speculate, like Reimarus, nor is he so skeptical, naturalistic, or historicist to rule out the reality of miracles. He is in agreement with Reimarus' later contention that the evangelists' reports on the resurrection of Jesus and his subsequent appearances, as found in the extant gospels, are neither true nor of the character of eyewitness reports in the view of their multiple and evident contradictions. He implies that the writers of the gospels were either liars, forgers of the stories, careless story tellers having no qualms about compromising truth and integrity, or persons naive enough to suffer a deception that blinded even their common sense.

Ibn Hazm does not accuse the disciples of the scheme to steal the body of Jesus and then make up stories to spread a new cult. To him, such hypothetical claim would neither be proved by the data available for the historical events, nor supported by the later revelation, i.e., the Qur'an, by the dictates of which Ibn Hazm feels himself bound. Further, it is unlikely that Ibn Hazm would have granted the evangelists, whom he considered simplistic, the credit for conceiving, let alone implementing the highly intelligent ruse suggested by Reimarus.

Awareness of these evident contradictions in such an historical and essentially religious event led many a modern Christian theologian to reverse the traditional doctrine that "Christianity depends entirely upon the truth of the story of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead". "Now many will readily acknowledge", notes Charles Talbert, "that Christianity does not depend upon the historical truth of the story of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead".⁸⁴

Those who did not go along with the radical criticism of the New Testament to make the choice between the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith" introduced a new theory, that the "historical Jesus" and the "historic Jesus" are intricately and irretrievably interwoven in the gospels. The central problem of the relation of faith to the historical-critical approach to the gospels persistently stands in the face of New Testament fundamentalist scholars who still wish to argue for the integrity and authenticity of the evangelists who return to some point of unity in the witnesses, no matter how fragile that might be. Thus, in his comments on Mt. 28:1-15, Albright concludes:

¹⁴Ibid., p. 152.

"For all the confusing chronology, for the manifest variation in tradition, the one thing upon which all four evangelists are agreed is that the tomb of Jesus was empty".⁸⁵

b. Historical Relationship of Jesus **with** Early Catholicism or Western Christianity and Judaism

It is almost inconceivable that a diligent and keen critic such as Ibn Hazm could have missed the now well-known "Jesus-Paul problem," or "Law and Grace" dialectic in the gospels. Comparing and contrasting Mt. 5:17-19, 24:35, with Mt. 5:31-32, 38-39, and referring to Mk. 13:31, Lk. 16-17, and Ex. 21:24-25, Lev. 24:20, and Dt. 19:21, Ibn Hazm raises the following points: (1) In these texts we first learn that Jesus did not come "to abolish the Law and the Prophets" and he categorically denies any possibility of abrogation (Mt. 5:17-18). We are also informed that Jesus proclaimed: "Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away". Ibn Hazm notes that Matthew writes in the same chapter: "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce'. But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the grounds of unchastity, makes her an adulteress and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Mt. 5:31-32). To Ibn Hazm, this is tantamount to rejecting the Mosaic Law. Similarly, Mt. 5:38-39 attributes Jesus' abrogation of the *lex talionis* of Ex. 21:24-25, Lev. 24:20, and Dt. 19-21. (2) The gospels also inform us that Jesus and his early disciples observed the Jewish feasts and festivals, observed the Sabbath and followed all the Mosaic Law. They also witness that Jesus and his followers were celebrating the Passover feast on the night of his capture. If these contradictions are maintained, asserts Ibn Hazm, they demonstrate Jesus to be mad and a liar, or the writers of these stories to be forgers of confusion. (3) We learn that it was Paul who revoked the law of circumcision and thus repealed the Mosaic Law further, and that it was Peter who legitimized the eating of pork and other animals and the food that the Torah had prohibited.

To Ibn Hazm, all this indicates that the Christian disciples of Jesus and their followers had reversed the teachings and actions of Jesus and had also attributed lies to him, disobeyed God and Jesus, and that they would therefore be the least trustworthy in the Kingdom of God, according to Jesus (Mt. 5:19).⁸⁶ It is significant that Reimarus

⁸⁵ *The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, p. 36.

⁸⁶ Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt.2, pp. 21-24.

raised similar objections against the evangelists some seven centuries after Ibn Hazm: " In a word, the apostles strayed completely from their master in their teachings and in their lives, abandoning his religion and his intention and introducing a completely new system".⁸⁷

Reimarus' criticism drew the attention of many New Testament scholars towards the cleavage found in the gospels between Jesus' teachings as transmitted by his "disciples" and the Torah Law, prompting the "Quest for the Historical Jesus" and leading German theologians to perceive Christianity as a creative innovation of the disciples after the resurrection. This tendency, in return, prompted modern New Testament scholars to the "New Quest for the Historical Jesus" to maintain the balance between history and mythology found in the gospels. For, according to Reimarus:

Jesus considered Moses' Law in every respect, and down to the most minute details, eternal and immutable as long as the earth should last, just as other Jews did, and he reckoned not only that the Law would not be abolished and come to an end, but that it would be especially valid and strictly observed in this Kingdom of heaven that was imminent, the Kingdom of God under the Messiah.⁸⁸

Ibn Hazm further quotes Mt. 24:20: ("Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath") to buttress the contention that Jesus had never intended to relax the Torah Law, let alone abolish it, either for himself or for his followers, till the end of the world. "This is an evident statement", says Ibn Hazm, "that observing the Sabbath was binding upon them till the end of their affairs, but they [i.e. the Christians] do not observe the Sabbath and thus go against the commands of Jesus".⁸⁹

Ibn Hazm further claims that the claims of the Christians that they belong to Jesus and follow his religion are mere empty words, that their religious system in fact deviates starkly from Jesus' life and teaching, and that they neither follow in his footsteps nor carry out his commands. He refers to Mt. 5:22 and 29-30 and argues that they (to wit, the Christians) take the above as commands of Jesus, yet they never abide by them. Rather, in practice they oppose Jesus: they do not take circumcision to be obligatory although Jesus

⁸⁷ Reimarus *fragment*, p. 102.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

⁸⁹ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-F* pt. 2, pp. 46-47.

practiced and instituted it. Also, whereas Jesus and his true followers observed the fasts of Torah and celebrated Jewish feasts and observed the Sabbath throughout his life, they altered all these. Instead, they instituted Sunday services and instituted them in place of Sabbath, Lent in place of Jewish fasts and Easter in place of Jewish feasts. All these were instituted a hundred years after the ascension of Jesus.

To the Christian claim that in their religious observances, rituals, and feasts they follow the elders (the disciples) whom Jesus had commanded, Ibn Hazm argues that such an excuse even turns against them. Were their bishops to abrogate what the disciples innovated a century after Jesus' ascension and reinstitute the observance of Sabbath and Jewish fasts and the celebration of Jewish feasts which Jesus himself practiced, would they then follow their bishops or not? Should the response be in the negative, that they are afraid of judgment upon them for such completely forbidden alteration, Ibn Hazm might counter by asking: which judgment is greater than Jesus' curse upon those who alter and repeal the Law of Moses? However, if their response is in the affirmative, it again proves that they do not have a revealed and valid religion; rather they follow what their elders (that is, church leaders) enact for them. Thus, no matter which religious reports the Christians may accept from Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, or Paul, all will lead to misguidance and take them far away from Jesus' own teachings.⁹⁰

Commenting upon Lk. 23:34 and considering the humanity of Jesus, Ibn Hazm again charges the Christians, in reference to their mistreatment, allegation, and persecution of the Jews for their responsibility in the crucifixion of Jesus, with acting in stark contravention of Jesus' teachings and example throughout history. Jesus prayed to God for the Jews' forgiveness. Christians, he contends, should either admit that Jesus' prayer in this respect was not accepted and hence their mistreatment of the Jews remains valid, or that their practice of persecuting the Jews throughout history has been in violation of Jesus' teachings.⁹¹

Mk. 10:25 provides Ibn Hazm with yet another ground to admonish the Church hierarchy. For the above statement testifies to their greed, their lust for money, and their craving to hoard wealth. "According to this statement of their Lord, says Ibn Hazm. They will never enter the Kingdom of God till the camel goes through the eye of the needle.

⁹⁰Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 21-24. See Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, i:1, vol. 1, pp. 237-238.

⁹¹Ibn Hazm, *Kiuiib al-F~l*, pt. 2, p. 60.

This, by Allah, is true, and for this I am among the witnesses against them".⁹²

For Ibn Hazm, the above passages are telling scriptural proofs that demonstrate the great cleavage between Jesus' attitude to the Torah Law and the Jews. Western Christianity's attitude them. For Ibn Hazm, these historically established contradictions between the teachings to Jesus and the attitude of Catholic Christianity are evidence of the alteration and corruption of his message.

Although some of the above passages might not support the conclusions arrived at by Ibn Hazm, modern New Testament scholars hardly disagree with Ibn Hazm's main conclusions viz. that the abrogation of Torah Law and the institution of several rituals and laws were later innovations of the Christians. Commenting upon Mt. 5:17-20, Albright notes regarding v. 17:

This statement by Jesus seems clear enough, but combined with the following verses [that Ibn Hazm also emphasizes] it might be taken as meaning that the Law is binding on the followers of Jesus to the end of time.... There is no shred of evidence that Jesus at any point repudiated his obligation to the Law to which both his birth and his circumcision committed him.

Likewise, he says: "The two attitudes to the Law found in the gospels, came into sharp contrast with the spread of the gospel to the Gentile world".⁹³

Similarly, Mt. 24:20 is now seen as an illustration of the fact that "the Church for which Matthew writes still keeps the Jewish Sabbath".⁹⁴

Western scholars who are conscious of this unbridgeable cleavage between Jesus and the Western or Catholic Christianity usually allege Paul to be the initiator of the abrogation of the Torah Law which is enshrined the Jesus-Paul problem in German theology. To Ibn Hazm, however, all the disciples as well as the evangelists were equally responsible for the alteration that completely reversed the true religion of Jesus, Jesus' "original, purely theocentric teachings" and his "God-centred preaching".⁹⁵

⁹²Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 54, 74. See Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, v. 1, pp. 254-255.

⁹³*The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, pp. 57-58.

⁹⁴*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, p. 547.

⁹⁵The quotes are from Charlot, *New Testament Disunity*, pp. 44ff. See Ibn Hazm Kiiib al-Fasl, pt. 2, pp. 21-24; see also Frances E. Peters, *Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 82.

c. Historical Criticism: History and the Gospels' Prophecies and Promises

To Ibn Hazm, the prophecies and promises contained in the New Testament turned out to be false, hence their ascription to Jesus by the gospels creates unresolved problems. Had these promises and prophecies been either from Jesus or revelation from God, he contends, history would not have contradicted and belied them: «History cannot obstruct or vitiate either the Plan of God or His Will. A true prophet's prophecies or promises cannot be falsified by the later unfolding of history. This must especially be true of Jesus, who for Christians is the 'Son of God' or God Himself».

Ibn Hazm points out that Parousia's claims attributed to Jesus about the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God and the second coming of Jesus within the lifetime of the disciples, before they had "gone through all the towns of Israel", did not materialize even after a long time. He quotes Mt. 10:23, Mk. 9:1 and Lk. 9:27, and points out that the promise of Jesus' return with glory did not materialize even after the disciples had all died, and even until this day, they continue to argue that Ibn Hazm writes:

Far be it from a prophet, let alone deity, to tell such a lie! In this single passage there is sufficient proof for an intelligent student of these gospels that those who wrote them were unscrupulous liars.⁹⁶

Ibn Hazm lays down the criterion for distinguishing the truth of religious literature from false reports:

We definitely refute and reject the Jews' and the Christians' ascription of lies to God and their claims that such falsities are from God. And we reject Christians' way of taking liars as infallible narrators and basing their religious tradition upon reports even after it had been proved that their reports are both self-contradictory and mutually contradictory.⁹⁷

If these passages genuinely represent the message of Jesus in his own words then we must conclude that Jesus

⁹⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitiib al-Faʿl*, pt. 2, p. 27.

⁹⁷Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 27-28; Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 242-243.

simply happens to be in error in his vision about the coming of the Kingdom of God. History has given the lie to his prediction, otherwise those are fabricated reports and empty wishes.⁹⁸

The problem of the Parousis has been no less bewildering for the modern New Testament scholars than for the early Christians. "That Jesus expected an imminent end of the age", notes Charles Talber, "is very widely accepted today. There are some, however, who believe that such sayings are due to the innovation of the Church".⁹⁹

The historical contradiction of the imminence of the Parousia, jeering as it does in the very face of the disciples, as Reimarus argues, made a figure as great as Paul contradict himself time and again by changing sides. Peter, though "a better hand at it", fared hardly better. Though Peter altered the exact meaning substantially, his solution too provided "little satisfaction to sensible honest men and even less to the scoffers".¹⁰⁰ The Church fathers still continued to hope for the fulfilment of the Parousia. Classical Christianity and then the Medieval Church were intelligent enough to push this problem to the back burner so as to let it become forgotten. But historical criticism once again brought it to the fore, since "Matthew Tindale argued first in 1730 that, if the apostles had made such an erroneous mistake on this point, they could obviously make mistakes on other points too". The problem is no less thorny and no less important for Christian thinkers today. "Yet", as Charlot remarks, "dogmatic theologians are being slow to turn their attention to it".¹⁰¹ Reimarus' historical criticism of the problem of Parousia led him to conclude that its unfulfilment and perpetual delay not only proves the historical contradiction in the gospels' reports and the self-deceiving forgery of the disciples, but also demolishes one of the three essential pillars of the Christian faith, namely, the prophesy of the "return of Christ to reward and to punish".¹⁰²

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Reimarus, *Fragments*, p. 218, n. 89, Cf. Eta Linneman, *Jesus of the Parables*, trans. J. Sturdy (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

¹⁰⁰Reimarus, *Reimarus: Fragments*, pp. 225-226.

¹⁰¹Charlot, *New Testament Dimnity*, p. 53.

¹⁰²Reimarus, *Fragments*, pp. 215-230, p. 229. Reimarus' criticism also prompted New Testament scholars to come up with a new defensive for their theory of "Salvation in History." See Oscar Cullman, *Salvation in History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

Arguing for the points of theological disunity of the New Testament, Charlot provides us with an illuminating example of the riddle of Parousia and its delay, and of how the consequent problems and solutions have preoccupied Christian theologians throughout history, causing them to enunciate ever-changing christologies, eschatologies, and theologies:

Thus the new situation created by the delay of the Parousia contradicted the old hopes and views that had been based on the expectation of its imminent coming. The whole of Christian thought had to be restructured and solutions found to many new problems that arose. These new views and solutions (again) contradicted those that had been accepted before the delay of the Parousia became acute. They also contradicted each other. ...¹⁰³

Another false prophesy ascribed to Jesus which Ibn Hazm points out is about the resurrection. Quoting Mt. 12:38-40, he first criticizes the evangelists' attributing of lies to Jesus—that is, Jesus refusing to give any signs to the Scribes and the Pharisees, and to work miracles in public. (The contradictions in the accounts of Jesus working miracles are discussed in the section entitled, "Theological Criticism" below). According to Mt. 12:40, Jesus foretold that he would remain "in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights" like the prophet Jonah. In their reports of the resurrection of Jesus, all the gospels agree that Jesus was buried on Friday evening and rose before Sunday morning, having been in the grave for a little more than two nights and a day. For Ibn Hazm, this contradiction evidently demonstrates either that Jesus' prediction turned out to be false or that the evangelists attributed false prophecies to Jesus. To Ibn Hazm the latter is surely the case.¹⁰⁴

While both Reimarus and Ibn Hazm believe that the evangelists forged these prophecies later, the former primarily emphasizes logical and contextual contradictions, for instance that between the resurrection prediction narratives and the resurrection narratives themselves. He probably assumes, though incautiously, that the prediction was fulfilled, as he speculates that such predictions were forged later after the disappointment of the disciples over the non-fulfilment of the resurrection itself, and in order to make an attractive story of Jesus, presenting him as the suffering spiritual saviour. To quote Reimarus:

¹⁰³Charlot, pp. 63 and 52-94.

¹⁰⁴Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, p. 33.

It is especially difficult to grasp why, if Jesus had spoken so clearly of his death and resurrection in three days, such a vivid promise would not have been remembered by a single disciple, apostle, evangelist, or woman when he really did die and was buried. Here all of them speak and act as if they had never heard of such a thing in their whole lives: they wrap the corpse in a shroud, try to preserve it from decay and putrefaction by using many spices, indeed, they seek to do so even on the third day after his death, even as the promised time of his resurrection was approaching. Consequently, they know nothing of such a promise; they are thinking only that Jesus is dead and will stay dead and that he will decay and stink like anyone else.¹⁰⁵

Modern New Testament scholars agree with the validity of Reimarus' criticisms. The passion and resurrection predictions were, they argue, the innovations of the early Church rather than the sayings of Jesus himself. "Reimarus' judgement against the historicity of the passion predictions has been largely upheld by modern research", notes Talbert. "Even if (some type of) prediction of the suffering by Jesus seems authentic, the present prophecies of resurrection on the third day or after three days are clearly reflection of the early Christian kerygma (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-5)".¹⁰⁶ Similarly, the passage (Mt. 12:38-40) that Ibn Hazm contrasts with the gospels' narratives on the resurrection itself is seen by modern commentators as a later editorial insertion.¹⁰⁷

The narratives that contain the so-called second prediction of the passion are subjected to the same criticism by Ibn Hazm. Comparing and contrasting Mt. 16:21-23, 17:21-23, Mk. 9:30-32, and Lk. 18:31-34, he states that there are three problems in these passages. First, all of the gospels are unanimous in reporting that Jesus forewarned the disciples that he or the Son of Man "will be killed (*an yuqtala*)". On the other hand, they also agree in reporting that "Jesus was crucified and died on the cross". This contradiction ('will be killed', 'died on the cross') clearly shows to Ibn Hazm that the prediction was false. Ibn Hazm capitalizes on the textual contradiction in using the two divergent words: "will be killed (*an yuqtala*)" and "was crucified and

¹⁰⁵ *Reimarus Fragments*, p. 131.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 132, n. 41

¹⁰⁷ *The Anchor Bible: Matthew*.

died on the cross *{li salbihi... miia 'ala al-khashabah}*." Second, the disciples are again agreed in reporting the prediction of resurrection; they all also agree that he rose on the Sunday morning—the second night since he was buried Friday afternoon before the night of the Sabbath, and rose on Saturday night before Sunday. Third, according to Matthew, when Jesus foretold his suffering and execution, the disciples understood him—"and they were greatly distressed". Even Peter rebuked Jesus for such a prediction and wished it would never happen (Mt. 17:22-23, 16:21-23). On the contrary, Mark and Luke report that the disciples "did not understand the saying" (Mk. 9:30-32, Lk. 18:31-34). Ibn Hazm emphasizes that these self-evident contradictions demonstrate that such reports cannot come from truthful men, let alone from infallible ones. For Ibn Hazm it becomes clear that the writers of the gospels were unscrupulous.¹⁰⁸

Modern New Testament scholars are now convinced of these divergences and explain these passion and resurrection predictions as reworkings and editorial additions rather than as original components of the gospel tradition. It is only thus that they can reconcile the tradition of the disciples with Jesus' teachings on the passion, especially with reference to Mark and Luke.¹⁰⁹

Ibn Hazm criticizes the claim made in Mt. 18:19-20 as another example of false promises and predictions attributed to Jesus. To him, such a claim is downright comical. Were it the case that everything they asked from God would be accepted by God, then all the people they preached to in the name of their religion would have been converted to it, for they must have prayed to God for their guidance beforehand. If they were, however, to argue that they did not ask from God the conversion of all people beforehand, then it is evident that they must have been unsure of their cause, and insincere to the people to whom they preached. They must have been then only pretending to call the people towards their salvation. They could have been neither sure of its truth, nor sincere to the people. The fact, however, is that God does not bind Himself to such unliteral promises (of such a categorical nature)—promises that place in doubt His Absolute Authority and Justice. Even the Prophet Muhammad was denied when he prayed to God for the forgiveness of polytheists.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 2, pp. 39-40; Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 251-252.

¹⁰⁹*The Anchor Bible: Matthew*.

¹¹⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 2, pp. 42-43. See Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, p. 242.

Interestingly, William Foxwell Albright also considers Mt. 18:19 out of place and a later editorial insertion.^U

Similarly, regarding Mk. 10:29-30 Ibn Hazm contends that the rewards promised therein were never granted to the disciples and that history has given the lie to such promises. He also draws attention to the logical contradiction of the promise: If all these bounties were accorded in this world to begin with, then why had they to part with them afterward, asks Ibn Hazm.¹¹²

3. Textual Criticism

The first case that Ibn Hazm deals under this category relates to "conferring the authority of binding and loosing on the disciples". He raises the following questions: (1) According to Mt. 16:19, the "authority of binding and loosing" is conferred on Peter alone. In Mt. 18:18 and Mt. 10:1-16, this privilege is granted to all the disciples (cf. Jn. 20:21-23). (2) The notion of "conferring authority of binding and loosing" (which, for Ibn Hazm, implies the institution of a new Shari'oli), hardly squares with Mt. 5:17-19, 24:35, Mk. 13:31, Lk. 16-17, which allow no place for any new Shari'oli or abrogation of the older one. (3) This conferring of the authority of binding and loosing to the disciples and its exercise by them also implies that either they have received the revelation from God, or else could legislate and make laws on their own without being in need of any revelation from God. The first alternative is denied by Mt. 11:13, Lk. 16:16, which maintains that "the Law and the prophets were until John", while the second one implies the abdication of God and makes the disciples independent of God, as if they are in no need of instruction or revelation from God. (4) In these contradictory passages there is also a common sense problem of moral integrity. Mt. 16:19 confers on Peter the honour of binding and loosing while Mt. 16:23 reports Jesus rebuking him for his evil thoughts and infirmity of will, saying "that he is not on the side of God". (5) Similarly, there is the problem of Judas Iscariot's conduct and of the nature of his discipleship. Ibn Hazm asks whether Jesus knew of Judas Iscariot's treachery, unfaithfulness, and later betrayal of Jesus, or not. Now, if

¹¹¹ *The Anchor Bible: Matthew.*

¹¹² Ibn Hazm, *Kitiib al-Fasl*, pt. 2, p. 55. Ibn Hazm's version differs from the Revised Standard Version. He also does not mention its parallels Mt. 19:29 and Lk. 18:29-30.

Jesus knew all about his character and unfaithfulness and still bestowed on him such a great honour, then Jesus' justness and love for righteousness come into question. On the other hand, if Jesus did not know of Judas Iscariot's intentions and character, then how can Christians conceive of Jesus as a deity?

Ibn Hazm warns Muslims not to identify the Quranic *Ifawariyyīn* with the gospels' disciples or apostles, such as Peter, Matthew, John, James, and Judas, who were not possessed of the characteristics of believers in Jesus, let alone of his companions or *Hawariyyīn*.¹¹³

Recent commentators on the New Testament recognize these contradictions, but consider them being reductional. For instance, they see both Mt. 16:19 and 18:18 out of their place. As for the authority of the disciples, and consequently of the Church, it is explained that Jesus' redemptive nature brought this about together with the Kingdom of God. The gospels' ambivalence in characterizing apostles is explained in terms of paradox. Commenting on Mt. 16:18, Albright remarks: "The interest in Peter's failures and vacillation does not detract from his pre-eminence, rather it emphasizes it".¹¹⁴

Ibn Hazm finds many contradictions in those narratives of the gospels that deal with the purpose and status of John the Baptist, especially his role in prophesying the advent of Jesus. Contrasting these divergent verses one after the other, he reduces them to absurdity. He sees, for instance, two problems in Mt. 11:9-10. First, the phrase "more than a prophet" belongs to the category of the impossible. Any human being, in this case John the Baptist, either receives revelation from God, or does not. If he does, then he was a prophet; and if not, then he was just a common person: either a believer in God or a disbeliever. Second, the verse "Behold, I send my messenger [Ibn Hazm reads it 'my angel-malak'] before thy face" and claims that John was an angel while in fact he was human, born of a man and a woman, who lived and died. These are not the characteristics of angels. The humanity of John is also acknowledged in Mt. 11:11. Hence, argues Ibn Hazm: "Its first part affirms that John was the greatest of all men" but its second part declares that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he (John)". "This necessitates that every human believer is higher than John and he is the lowest of all believers".

¹¹³Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 22-23, 36-39. See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 238-241.

¹¹⁴*The Anchor Bible: Matthew*.

Ibn Hazm refers to Mt. 11:13, Mt. 11:9-11, Mt. 23:34, Jn. 2:21, and Acts 21:10, to point out that sometimes John is greater (RSV has 'more') than a prophet (Mt. 11:9), that at another place John denies being a prophet, and that it is still maintained that all prophethood ended with John (Mt. 11:13). Also, Jesus told his disciples that he will send prophets among them and that they should acknowledge the appearance of such a prophet (Acts 21:10) despite their claim that "all prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Mt. 11:13). Ibn Hazm also contrasts Mt. 11:18-20 with Mk. 1:6 and points out how "the contents of the above texts make an obvious contradiction" Hence, for him, one of the reports is certainly false.

Ibn Hazm also argues that Mt. 11:18-20 degrades Jesus as compared with John, because the former is in need of food and drink **while** John had no need for physical and bodily necessities. And if Jesus, in his own words, admits that he eats and drinks and is a human being, then he cannot be claimed to be a deity. Ibn Hazm rules out the interpretation that here Jesus was only referring to his humanity, because neither the text nor context allows for such an arbitrary interpretation.¹¹⁵ He also compares Jn. 1:19-23 with Mt. 11:7-15, M.k. 11:30-32 (cf. Lk. 7:26-28) to show how one of these statements should necessarily be false. And since Jesus and John the Baptist cannot be liars, it is evident that the reporters of these statements should have fabricated lies.¹¹⁶

Modern New Testament scholars are aware of these discrepancies. To some, however, "the chief difficulty is to determine what was understood by the prophet", while others see John's denial as a disclaimer to the three eschatological roles of a Messiah of Jewish expectations—a prophet like Moses, a royal Messiah, or a priestly Messiah.¹¹⁷

John Charlot, however, attributes the divergence between the Synoptists and John towards John the Baptist to the conflict between the followers of John the Baptist and the early Christians arising from a dispute about the superiority of Jesus to John. Early Christian communities, he argues, lived almost in isolation and evolved their doctrines, practices, and theologies in response to different challenges and to meet diverse needs and situations. Hence:

¹¹⁵Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, pp. 30-32; *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 243-244.

¹¹⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 63-64.

¹¹⁷*The Anchor Bible: Gospel According to John* I-xii.

Unity, as most idealize it, did not exist in the early Church.... The Johannists had an important argument against the Christians' claim that Jesus was more important than John. Did not the fact that Jesus had allowed himself to be baptized by John show that he had accepted to be his superior? The various remodellings of the account of Jesus' baptism were designed to answer this objection. Another method of subordinating John to Jesus was by placing him to a lower position in a scheme of redemptive history.¹¹⁸

Ibn Hazm's critique is based on the dialectical characterization of the disciples. Ibn Hazm demonstrates that these reports stand contained in the gospels' reports, not only against the authenticity and historicity of the New Testament, but also against the integrity and veracity of the disciples themselves. Contrasting Mt. 17:16-21 with Mt. 2:19-22 and Jn. 14-12, he argues that their faithlessness is proved and attested by their own statements. He points out: (1) In the light of Jn. 14:12, if the disciples and the Christians believe in Jesus then they must be able to perform works as Jesus did—i.e., work miracles. Otherwise Jesus' sayings would be proved false. (2) According to Mt. 17:16 and 17:20, the disciples could not cast out demons in the life time of Jesus himself because of their 'little faith'. However, according to Mt 17:21 (cf. Jn 14:12), had they the faith as much as a grain of mustard seed, nothing would have been impossible for them. All this proves one of three possibilities: that they did not have faith; that Jesus' words were false, or that these sayings were falsely attributed to Jesus.

When Ibn Hazm broached this problem with a Christian scholar, he explained that the text means: "If you have faith as a tree of mustard seed rather than as a grain of mustard seed and this tree is higher than all and where birds make their nests in its branches (perhaps confusing it with Mt. 13:31-33 and parallels)". Ibn Hazm rebutted him with the statement that the gospels do not use *shajarat khardal*, tree of mustard seed, and that they use *habbat khardal*, a grain of mustard seed, which is described by Jesus himself as the smallest of all seeds.¹¹⁹

Jesus' teachings on forgiveness also present a case of contradiction in text and content. Mt. 18:15-17 contradicts Mt. 18:22, and there is

¹¹⁸Charlot, pp. 63-64.

¹¹⁹Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, pp. 41-42.

no way to reunite or reconcile them, contends Ibn Hazm.¹²⁰ The contradiction between these two teachings has been noted by the New Testament scholars. Charlot presents it as an important example to prove his case of "successive contradictions" in the New Testament. He points out how soon and drastically were the original teachings of Jesus, his sayings and parables, not only forgotten, suppressed and reinterpreted, but also completely and negatively changed. He considers Mt. 18:22 "a genuine saying of Jesus" and Mt. 18:15-17 as "the words that were put into the mouth of Jesus" later by the early Church, resulting in a "direct contradiction of the spirit and even the letter of Jesus' teaching".¹²¹ The tradition-history critics also acknowledge Mt. 18:17 as unauthentic. To quote David Catchpole: "So it appears to be unlikely, that Matthew 18:17 is authentic; indeed, it seems to represent a later acceptance of attitudes which Jesus himself had resisted".¹²²

Ibn Hazm finds the gospels' narratives mutually contradictory even regarding Jesus' mission. Contrasting Mt. 10:34-36, Lk. 12:49-53 with Lk. 9:55-56 and Jn. 12:47, he remarks that these two groups of texts contradict each other the contents and import of. He rules out any attempt at harmonization by interpreting that Jesus came to save the believers in him and to destroy the disbelievers, arguing that Lk. 9:52-56 stands clearly in the way of any such interpretation. Furthermore, referring to Jn. 12:44-47 he emphasizes the phrase: "He who believes in me, believes not in me but in Him who sent me". The notion of sending (*ba'thah*) in this text plainly shows, states Ibn Hazm, that Jesus was a prophet who was sent from God (cf. Mt. 10:40-41).¹²³ He returns to this contradiction when he comments on Jn. 5:15-25. and Jn. 3:35. He objects to the notion of God that these passages purport, remarking that herein God is likened to a human father or king who in his old age hands over authority and judgment to his son, and that God stands no more as authority and judge. This is a sort of abdication, asserts Ibn Hazm.¹²⁴

¹²⁰Ibid., pt. 2, p. 43.

¹²¹ Charlot, pp. 44ff., 49-51.

¹²² David R. Catchpole, "Tradition History" in I. Howard Marshall, *The New Testament Interpretation*, p. 180.

¹²³Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 28-29. Ibn Hazm's version here again differs from that of R.S.V. It corresponds with K.J.V. especially in Lk. 9:52-56 and also with the version of the ancient authorities as referred to in the R.S.V. See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, p. 243.

¹²⁴Ibn Hazm *Kitaab al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, pp. 64-65.

3 The contradictions found in the above-mentioned passages of the New Testament—whether Jesus came to judge or to save, to bring peace or destruction—are also seen as problematic by the modern New Testament commentators. Raymond Brown explains that the apparent contradiction found between group one (Jn. 3:17, 12:47) that emphasize that Jesus did not come to judge, and group two (Jn. 5:22, 9:39) that contends that Jesus came to judge, can be reconciled by interpreting the statements to mean the following: Jesus himself did not come to judge or condemn; He rather came to save. But his presence itself implies judgment of those who do not believe in him. "The idea in John, then, seems to be that during his ministry Jesus is no apocalyptic judge like the one expected at the end of time yet his presence does cause men to judge themselves".¹²⁵

Another textual contradiction that Ibn Hazm notes is between the conception of Jesus as the good Lord, and as something else. Jesus denies for himself the adjective 'the good' {"*al-ḥayy*"}) in Mk. 10:17-18, but claims it for himself in Jn. 10:11 and 14.¹²⁶

Mk. 10:18 has also been a problem for the Christian theologians since the classical times. Matthew perhaps tried to solve it by changing it to read: "Why do you ask me about what is good?" to avoid the suggestion that Jesus is not as good as God. The later theologians even implied the meaning: "If you call me good, you imply that I am God," which seems "wholly impossible both in the original setting and for Mark".¹²⁷

Commenting on the notion of Jesus as his own witness, employed in the gospel according to John, Ibn Hazm finds another contradiction in the texts. Contrasting Jn. 5:31 and Jn. 8:14, he remarks that such mutually contradictory statements—"my testimony is true" and "my testimony is not true"—are nothing less than an amazing confusion.¹²⁸ Modern commentators on the New Testament also acknowledge this problem. Commenting upon Jn. 5:31, Raymond Brown states 8:14, but still, to him, it does not make a real contradiction in terms of import. However, he suggests that "one may doubt if the same editor wrote both lines".¹²⁹ (pp. 327-328).

¹²⁵ *The Anchor Bible: Gospel According to John I-xii.*

¹²⁶ Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 2, p. 55. See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, pp. 1, 246.

¹²⁷ *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, pp. 484, 801.

¹²⁸ Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, pt. 2, p. 55. See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, pp. 1, 246.

¹²⁹ *The Anchor Bible: Gospel According to John I-xii.*

4. Theological Criticism

Under this section we shall take note of those passages which, according to Ibn Hazm, deny the Christian doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. To him the gospel statements concerning these doctrines are hardly unambiguous and consistent. He selects passages that demonstrate and speak of the humanity of Jesus and describe him as a prophet sent by God who delivered His message and was dependent on Him just like other prophets. As Ibn Hazm's references on the subject of Jesus as a human prophet are numerous, we have confined our analysis only to those passages that he cites exclusively relating to this subject.

This present section is divided into two parts: Part (a) deals with those narratives of the gospels that stand for Ibn Hazm a clear proof that Jesus was a human being, a prophet servant of God and there was no divinity in him. Part (b) concentrates on those narratives that, in his view, deny Christological titles to Jesus in the sense of an incarnate deity or an apocalyptic Messiah. Rather, they describe Jesus unambiguously as a human prophet.

a. The Gospels and the Humanity of Jesus

Ibn Hazm's first example relates to Jesus' visit to his home country. Contrasting Mt. 13:53-58, Mk. 6:1-6 with Lk. 4:16-30, and referring to Lk. 2:33, 48, 8:19-21, Jn. 2:12, 7:5, Ibn Hazm notes three problems. First, these texts state that Jesus had human relatives such as Joseph the carpenter, who was his father, Mary his mother, four brothers known by their names, sisters, etc. They declare Joseph to be Jesus' father, citing the testimony of his mother. As for Jesus' mother, Mary, the Muslims, Jews, and Christians in general agree that Mary conceived Jesus and gave birth to him in the manner of other women. However, there is a small group of Christians who believe that Jesus entered into Mary through her ears and came out of her vagina. If so, how could Mary declare Joseph to be the father of Jesus (Lk. 2:48) if Jesus was born to her when she was a virgin? In Hebrew, it is true, a husband of one's mother, a foster father, is also called a father, but the children of a stepfather are not called brothers and sisters in Hebrew. And the gospels call Joseph's children "Jesus" brothers and sisters". Again, if these children were from both Mary and Joseph, through their marriage after the birth of Jesus, as the Metropolitan of Toledo Elipandus argues, the question of attributing human relatives to their deity still remains unanswered. If the word 'brothers' here

means 'believers in him' then this attempt at solution is thwarted by Jn. 2:12, where Jesus' disciples make a separate group from his relatives. Jn. 7:5 creates yet another problem by stating that Jesus' brothers were disbelievers in him, asserts Ibn Hazm.

The second problem is raised by statements such as: "And he could do no mighty works there" (Mk. 6:5a, cf. Mt. 13:58). Such a description cannot suit a deity. Rather, this description fits a creature and a human prophet who does not have any control over God's Will. In the case of the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an (29:50) directs him: "Say, the signs [i.e. miracles] are in the power of God alone; I am but a plain warner".

The third problem is raised when it is admitted that Jesus had heard people calling him the 'son of Joseph' (Lk. 4:22) and the 'son of the carpenter' (Mt. 13:55), thus ascribing a human father to him, but he did not refute them. Either Jesus took this attribution to be true and hence did not refute or deny it, which goes against the Christian belief; or else Jesus did not refute it, though it was a lie. This latter implies that he concurred with a lie, which in turn implies an evil on his part. In short, all this is tantamount to confusion and ambiguity in religion (talbis *fi* al-din.),¹³⁰ asserts Ibn Hazm.

Ibn Hazm almost repeats the same objections when he comments on Lk. 2:41-52 and 4:22-24. Comparing them with Mt. 13:53-58 and Mk. 6:1-6, he remarks that these texts ascribe a human father and relatives to Jesus. To think of Mary living with Joseph for more than thirteen years in the same house without having any marital relations raises another problem. Citing the Qur'anic version (19:17-31) of Jesus' birth from the virgin Mary, he concludes that human relatives are ascribed to Jesus, a husband to Mary, etc., because the Christians have been deceived in their religion by the Jews.¹³¹

The New Testament scholars are aware of the problem of Jesus' relatives, especially the brothers of Jesus. Not only the Protestants and the Catholics but also the New Testament scholars are not certain about their exact relationship. To quote William Albright:

We know nothing of the brothers of Jesus. How old the tradition is we do not know, but it has been commonly held in both eastern and western Christendom, that the brothers here referred to were either cousins, or children of Joseph by an earlier marriage. Mt. 1:25

¹³⁰ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 34-36,59; Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, pp. 1, 249-250.

¹³¹ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 57-59.

can be taken to mean that children were born to Mary and Joseph subsequent to the birth of Jesus.¹³²

Similarly, the contrast in Mt. 13:58 and Mk. 6:5, which was noted by Ibn Hazm, has also led modern New Testament scholars to theories of diverse sources and 'source criticism'.¹³³

Quoting Mt. 20:20-23, Ibn Hazm argues that there is evidence that Jesus does not have control over all things. It is not in his power to make the sons of Zebedee sit at his right and left. Rather, Jesus admits that it belongs to the Father alone to decide. This makes it evident, claims Ibn Hazm, that Jesus is different from and other than God, the Father. If both are still to be taken to be deities, it means that they are two different deities: one is stronger and the other is weaker; one has the power to make the sons of Zebedee sit at Jesus' right and left and the other has no power to do that. Ibn Hazm points out the divergence in passages such as Mt. 11:27, 16:19, Jn. 3:35, and 13:3, and remarks that one cannot understand why Jesus is unable to grant the sons of Zebedee this honour while it is still claimed that God has handed all authority over to Jesus, and when even Peter has been given the power to bind and loose at his will. Thus, to him, Mt. 20:20-23 clearly indicates that Jesus is different from the Father and hence is a human and not a deity.¹³⁴ Similarly, quoting Mt. 24:36 and Mk. 13:31-32, Ibn Hazm argues that these texts imply that Christ was other than God:

We are informed in these texts that 'the Father' knows something of which 'the Son' has no knowledge. The text of the gospels clearly states that even 'the Son' does not know 'that day and the hour of the end of time'. Only 'the Father' knows it. By this we know by necessity that 'the Son' is other than 'the Father' (*fā bi al-Iarurah al-qati'ah na'lamu anna al-ibn ghayr al-ab*). If one knows something of which the other has no knowledge, then it follows from it that the two are different from each other. Still taking both of them as deities results in association of others with God (*shirk*). Reason negates there being two deities, one less than the other. Thus it becomes necessarily clear

¹³² *The Anchor Bible: Matthew*.

¹³³ *The Interpreter's Bible*.

¹³⁴ Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faḥḥ*, pt. 2, p. 43. See also Sweetman, *Mam and Chruṭian Thṭalogy*, pt. 2, vol. 1, p. 246.

that the one that is deficient in knowledge is a creature and is dependent on God.¹³⁵

Ibn Hazm also argues that Jesus is other than God and is different from 'the Father' as stated in Mk. 16:19.

This is sheer foolish association of others with God {*shirk ahmaq*}, A Lord being taken up by another Lord, and being seated at his right hand! These are two Lords and two deities one who bestows the honour of seating at his right hand is more sublime than the other who is granted the honour of sitting at the right hand.¹³⁶

Discussing the tensions, contradictions, and unresolved questions found in the New Testament christologies, Charlot reaches the same conclusion—Le. the subordination of God and the otherness of Jesus from God. He is of the view that even the scheme of exaltation of Jesus intended to adapt him to the role of God in the redemptive history devised by the early Church could not do away with the pre-Johannine tradition that emphasizes the subordination of Jesus to God: "God is here clearly distinct from Jesus. Jesus is not God. In the order of all things, Jesus is at the head. But just as the order is subordinate to God, so is Jesus. Jesus is clearly subordinate to God",¹³⁷

The narratives that relate Jesus' prayer to God at Gethsemane, and his request to God to remove the cup (death) from him if that conforms to the Will of God, provide Ibn Hazm with another proof that Jesus was human and other than God. Quoting Mt. 26:39, Lk. 22:41-45, Mk. 14:35-36, Mt. 27:46, Mk. 15:34, he jests and asks: "Are these the characteristics of a deity? Does a deity need the consolation of an angel? A deity prays to another deity to remove from him the cup of death, a deity sweating when he sees his death near and certain, and a deity surrendering himself to another deity?"

He rules out the interpretation that such references are to the human nature of Jesus, insisting that the text clearly states: "The Christ did such and such, the Christ said", etc., and "the Christ is taken for both natures, divine and human natures together".¹³⁸

Ibn Hazm also finds proof for the humanity of Jesus in Jesus' prayer to God to forgive his crucifiers "for they know not what they do".

¹³⁵Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, p. 48. See Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, p. 246.

¹³⁶Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, p. 56. See Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, p. 246.

¹³⁷Charlot, *New Testament Disunity*, p. 86.

¹³⁸Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, p. 61.

Quoting Lk. 23:34 verbatim, Ibn Hazm argues that there are two problems. First, whether Jesus is a deity or not. Second, why does a deity make a request to another deity to forgive his executioners? This is otherness and differentiation between the deities, and the Christians do not believe in such a thing. If Jesus requested their forgiveness from himself, this is folly (*hawas*). Moreover, and despite all this, avers Ibn Hazm, the gospels also claim that God had handed over all authority to Jesus (Mt. 11:27a, Jn 3:35, 13:3).¹³⁹

Whereas the phenomenon of prayer at Gethsemane and the cry of the dereliction have "given rise to no end of theological speculation" and mysticism and poetry. Jesus' prayer for his crucifiers is now also considered a later, scribal addition. Lk. 23:34 is omitted in Codex Vaticanus, Codex Bezae, and other important ancient manuscripts. Modern New Testament scholars do not regard it as a part of the original gospel of Luke.¹⁴⁰

Ibn Hazm argues that the text of the New Testament itself provides evidence that Jesus' addressing God as "my father" does not imply his 'sonship of God', nor his divinity as such. Rather, his addressing God as "my father" is a metaphorical usage prevalent at his time. It was also used in the case of Jews, and even in respect to Jesus' own disciples. Ibn Hazm further argues: Jesus himself asserts that by the use of the term 'Father' he means nothing more than what its metaphorical sense implies. He clearly negates any sense of divinity and blasphemy to be inferred from it. Quoting Jn. 10:33-39, with its reference to Ps. 82:6, and comparing it with Jn. 14:8-10, 20, Ibn Hazm says that all these texts show that Jesus' calling God "my father" is metaphorical. Jesus also calls God his disciples' father. He even teaches them to address God in the prayer as "our father who is in heaven". Similarly, quoting phrases from the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:9, 32, and Jn. 20:17), Ibn Hazm questions what makes Jesus' calling God "my father" imply his sonship? "If this use in the case of Jesus implies sonship, then why should it not be taken in the same sense in the case of the disciples and even in the case of all Jews, who do not believe in Jesus?" And if the Christians still accept and infer this meaning only in the case of Jesus, and not for others, then it means that they accept Jesus' teaching in part, and deny him otherwise. The fact is that God is neither the father of Jesus nor of anyone else. God is the only Deity, the Deity of the Christ, and other than Christ,

¹³⁹Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 59-61, 60.

¹⁴⁰*The Interpreter's Bible*, see Lk. 23-34. See also Mt. 11:27 in vols. 7 and 8.

(*ilūh al-Masih wa ilūh kulli man huwa ghayr al-Mosih*], asserts Ibn Hazm.¹⁴¹

In many other places in the gospels, continues Ibn Hazm, Jesus also calls himself the 'son of man'. It is impossible and a great folly that God should be the son of man, or be both—the son of man and the son of God—or that a man begets God. This is the height of foolishness, impossibility, and disbelief.¹⁴²

Citing almost the same passages from the gospels (e.g., Mt. 6:9, Jn. 14:28, etc.), Reimarus makes the same point centuries later. Like Ibn Hazm, he emphasizes that Jesus' calling God his father did not imply Jesus' divinity. Rather, to address God as father was a common Hebrew expression at Jesus' time, used to show one's reverence, humility, and utter dependence on the belovedness of God. Explaining the proper meaning of the terms, 'son of God', 'son of man', 'God as father', etc., as these were employed in the Hebrew Bible and understood by the Jews and Jesus at his time, Reimarus' remarks are similar to Ibn Hazm's:

And we find that Jesus most frequently and preferably calls himself the 'Son of Man' because this appellation demonstrates humility and a disdain of the self, and because Isaiah describes God's beloved, in whom God has pleasure, by the trait of humility. He frequently calls God his father, but this too was a term customarily used of God at that time by everybody to demonstrate their reverence and veneration. He makes no secret of confessing that "the father is greater than I" (John 14:28). Thus he teaches the disciples to pray only: "Our Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9), but not "Our Father and Son of God".¹⁴³

Although the modern New Testament scholars do not generally agree with Reimarus' conclusions—that the New Testament, read critically, does not propound the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption—the difference that he demonstrated between the Old Testament and the Hebrew understanding of 'Son of God', and the Greek-influenced Christian understanding of it, is no longer debatable.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 24-25, 46, 60-64; See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 238-239.

¹⁴²Ibid

¹⁴³*Reimarus Fragments*, p. 87.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., note 14 on p. 76 with its reference to Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribners, 1965) and Oscar

b; The Gospels and the Christological Titles

To Ibn Hazm, the so-called Christological titles in the New Testament do not necessarily imply the doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. Rather, these terms, properly understood, stand for the humanity and prophethood of Jesus.

In this category Ibn Hazm refers to the passages that describe Jesus as full of 'holy spirit'. Comparing Lk. 4:1 with Lk. 1:15, 41, he asks that if John the Baptist and his mother were also filled with the holy spirit, just like Jesus, then what preference does Jesus have over them? What Ibn Hazm implies here is that if, in Lk. 4:1, Jesus' becoming full of the holy spirit after his baptism in the river Jordan means that God became incarnate in Jesus, then why should not the same characteristics of John and his mother—Le., "being full of the holy spirit"—be understood in the same sense? Hence, concludes Ibn Hazm, the term 'holy spirit' employed for Jesus here neither means the third person of the Trinity nor that God became incarnate in Jesus.¹⁴⁵ He also cites Lk. 12:10 reported to be the saying of Jesus, which clearly demonstrates that the 'son of man' is different from and other than the 'holy spirit'. Since speaking against one is forgiven, while speaking against the other is not, it becomes evident that the one is different from the other. Now, if Jesus is the 'son of man', then he is not the 'holy spirit', and vice versa. Pursuing his argument still further, he states that if Jesus still is taken to be both the 'son of man' and the 'holy spirit', then it implies that Jesus lied when he made this statement.¹⁴⁶

Reimarus also argues that wherever the term 'holy spirit' is employed in the New Testament it commonly means 'spiritual gifts' or 'hot stirrings and drives' to praise God. Referring to Lk 1:41, 67, 12:10, etc., he also concludes that "there is no concept of special person of God hidden in them (i.e., John the Baptist, his mother and his father, etc.)".¹⁴⁷

Questioning the concept of Jesus as a Davidic Messiah, (Mt 22:41-46), Ibn Hazm says:

Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. S.C. Guthrie and C.A.M. Hall (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), chapter 10.

¹⁴⁵Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, p. 18.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pt. 2, p. 59. See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, p. 246.

¹⁴¹ Reimanu *Fragment.*, pp. 76-98 and 91.

The Christ is certainly true in his statement and he categorically denies that he is David's son but the strange thing is that the Christians, who claim themselves to be followers of Jesus, neither deny Jesus' denial to be the son of David nor refrain from attributing to him descent from David as maintained in all the gospels.¹⁴⁸

What Ibn Hazm understands of this passage is that Jesus denied for himself to be taken as David's son and the Davidic Messiah of the Jewish expectations, a Christological title later invested in the term 'son of David' and applied to Jesus. However, until Ibn Hazm's time, either this passage was not understood as a proof of Jesus' Davidic descent, or Ibn Hazm, at least, does not seem to be aware of this. Thus he takes this passage in its obvious and literal sense, and alleges that the Christians are going against this teaching of Jesus and still calling him David's son.

Modern New Testament scholars are divided in their understanding of the above passage. Bultmann, among others, for instance, believes that the early Church, not Jesus himself, has made the identification of Jesus and the 'Son of David'. Similarly, Klausner, like Ibn Hazm, argues that Jesus' argumentation implies that he is calling into question the Davidic origin of the Messiah.¹⁴⁹

As regards the term 'son of man', used by Jesus for himself as employed in the gospels, Ibn Hazm cites many such passages from the gospel according to John, and argues that many passages stand as proof that he was a human prophet sent by God to do His Will. Ibn Hazm wonders at the confusion and absurdity found in Jn. 5:26-27. To him, it is evident that Jesus sees himself as human albeit bestowed with authority from God, and thus is other than God. Quoting Jn. 6:38-40, 7:16, and emphasizing Jn. 14:28, Ibn Hazm asks what can be a clearer expression of Jesus' servitude and creatureliness than the import of these verses? Citing Jn. 3:35, 5:15-25, 31, and emphasizing Jn. 6:14, he remarks that though there is no less confusion and contradiction in these passages, it is clear that people at Jesus' time knew and acknowledged him as a prophet.^P Arguing again from Jn. 8:40, and supporting it with Mt. 12:18 with its reference to Is.

¹⁴⁸Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, p. 46.

¹⁴⁹Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Son of David Tradition and Matthew 22:41-46", in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), pp. 113-126. See also *The Anchor Bible: Matthew*.

¹⁵⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 64-66. See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 244-248.

42:1-4, Ibn Hazm asserts that it is a fact that Jesus was a prophet and a servant of God.¹⁵¹

Modern New Testament scholars are now conscious of the complexities of the term 'son of man' as it is employed in the gospels, and of its having different import and meanings. Brown notes that there are three groups of 'son of man' sayings in the Synoptics—referring to (i) the earthly activity of the 'son of man', (ii) his suffering, and (iii) his future glory, Parousia, and the authority of Judgment. According to John, there are twelve 'son of man' sayings, but none refers to the group one of the Synoptics.

Ibn Hazm makes full use of Jn. 8:40 where the term 'man' is employed to prove Jesus to be a mere human being. Brown notes:

This unqualified use of anthropos for Jesus without any implication of a uniqueness is not encountered elsewhere in the New Testament. Some theologians have been disturbed by its implications, perhaps because of Crypto-monophysitic strains in their thought.¹⁵²

Ibn Hazm discards many Johannian passages that deal with the notion of the mystical union of disciples with Christ, and their dwelling in Christ, and considers these as sheer confusion and delusion. He considers Jn. 6:53-71 to be composed of lies attributed to Jesus, and of sayings that make no sense. Similarly, Jn. 1: 28,34, and 36 wherein John the Baptist is reported as having recognized and called Jesus as the 'Lamb of God' and 'Son of God', fall in the same category.¹⁵³

Likewise, Reimarus rejects the derivation of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption from such Johannine mystical verses, but, unlike Ibn Hazm, he does not consider them to be nonsensical. Reimarus explains them as emphasizing the unity of will and love.¹⁵⁴

Modern New Testament scholars differ in the proper reading of the term, 'Son of God', in Jn. 1:34, of its two variants—"This is the Son of God" and "This is God's chosen one". Bratton considers the latter as original, and suggests that scribal change can be imagined from the latter to the former, rather than in the opposite direction.¹⁵⁵

On the humanity and prophethood of Jesus, Ibn Hazm comments on Lk. 24:13-26 and quotes v. 19, emphasizing that the disciples themselves knew Jesus as a prophet: "Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in that this statement of the two disciples on

¹⁵¹ Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb al-Faṣl*, pt. 2, p. 67.

¹⁵² *The Anchor Bible: Gospel According to John I-xii*.

¹⁵³ Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb al-Faṣl*, pt. 2, pp. 64-66.

¹⁵⁴ *Reimarus Fragments*, p. 98.

¹⁵⁵ *The Anchor Bible: Gospel According to John I-xii*.

their way to Emmaus was not refuted by Jesus.' Similarly Ibn Hazm stresses Mt. 13:57, Mk. 6:4, Lk. 4:24, Lk. 4:24 to argue that Jesus claimed for himself that he was a prophet sent to his people.

He claims that Lk. 24:19 belongs to the true teachings of Jesus and to the true Injil mentioned in the Qur'an which Allah has preserved from the hands of Christian corruption and alteration.

Ibn Hazm also addresses the problem in Christian theology known to modern New Testament scholars and researchers as the 'Messianic secret'. To him the sayings that bear the 'secrecy motif' and portray Jesus' unwillingness to work miracles in public, to reveal his identity, or to show signs except to his believers, not only rob Jesus of his proper function and purpose of prophethood, but also subvert and alter the true notion of prophethood and deprive it of its empirical and rational criterion. Mt. 24:24 and Mk. 13:22 like Dt. 13:1-3, he asserts, open the door to the denial of the prophethood of Moses and Jesus. If the false prophets and anti-Christ, and likewise the magicians, can work the same miracles and show similar signs and wonders, then there is no criterion left for humankind to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Ibn Hazm claims:

To see false prophets and magicians working the same miracles as those performed by the true prophets results in confusion of the truth with falsehood, and there remains no way to distinguish the true from the false. This is corruption and falsification of reality, a denial of necessary truth, and a rejection of the senses.¹⁵⁶ These are not the teachings of Jesus or Moses. Rather, these are the words of someone who is a Hindu {*Barahmi*} or a Manichaeon or someone who neither believes in the prophethood of Moses and Jesus nor subscribes to the true criterion of prophecy.¹⁵⁷

Ibn Hazm raises the same issues in his objections to Mt. 12:38-40, Lk. 4:22-24 and parallels, and Jn. 7:3-5, which imply that Jesus used to hide and refuse to perform his miracles in public. In Jn. 7:3-4 he finds allusion to the fact that people at Jesus' time recognized true prophets because they performed extraordinary wonders in public.¹⁵⁸

Ibn Hazm's main purpose in finding and demonstrating all these contradictions, tensions, and confusions in the Christological titles

¹⁵⁶Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 47-98.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 33, 59, 66.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., and passim.

and in the mission and status of Jesus, as preferred by the gospels, is to prove that Jesus neither claimed himself to be the Messiah of Jewish expectations nor a redeemer of Christian belief. For him it is a fact that Jesus lived, acted, and preached God's message as a human prophet, one among many, though endowed with a revealed book and a new *Shari'ah*. He claims that all the sayings that portray Jesus otherwise are lies and fabrications against him and his true religion.¹⁵⁹

Interestingly, Reimarus reaches much the same conclusion as Ibn Hazm, viz., that Jesus had never taught the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption or even remotely hinted at the current Christological terms or titles with which the Evangelists and Western Christianity had later invested them. However, Reimarus' view of the 'Messianic secret motif' is totally opposed to that of Ibn Hazm. Reimarus attributes the motif to the historical Jesus who, in his opinion, wanted to make the people "more eager to spread the news" by such a scheme. Explaining Jesus' scheme of the secrecy motif, Reimarus writes: "The more he forbade them, so much the more they proclaimed it".¹⁶⁰

Both Ibn Hazm and Reimarus base their critiques on the principles of consistency and coherence in the contents of the revealed Scripture, but due to their different concepts of prophecy they reach different conclusions. Modern New Testament scholars, however, discard Reimarus' observations on the "messianic secret motif". In his classic study, Wilhelm Wrede showed in 1901 that the secrecy motif employed in Mark, and to a lesser extent also continued by other Synoptists, does not give a factual report of Jesus' intentions. He suggests that it was the author of the gospel according to **Mark** who invented this device and applied it to the original material to teach his Christology and theology, which stands in striking contrast with the teachings of the gospel according to John. The author of the Fourth Gospel interpreted Jesus as a vicarious Messiah who was known from the very beginning of his ministry, whereas according to the Synoptists, and especially to Mark (9:9), Jesus concealed his identity as the Christian Messiah until after his resurrection.

Charlot maintains that soon after Jesus his parables were misused. They were altered, wrongly interpreted, and even defamed to meet

¹⁵⁹ *Reimarus Fragments*, p. 144.

¹⁶⁰ Charlot, *New Testament Disunity*, p. 49.

the new situations and new needs of diverse Christian communities. The Greek converts applied their allegorical interpretations to them. This had not only deformed them, but had also often altered their meaning and message. Due to this process of reinterpretation, alteration, and deformation, they became incomprehensible to the Christians. Hence Mark's remark that "the parables were riddles". They were not meant "to reveal but to conceal the true message of Jesus from the crowds". In the words of John Charlot:

A more complete reversal of the function of parables could not even be imagined. One of Jesus' most effective means of communication had been transformed into a block to understanding. This entailed also a very distinct theology of Jesus' mission he had been sent, not to proclaim and communicate his message, but to hide it. This was, of course, very different from Jesus' own view.¹⁶¹

Some modern New Testament scholars also seem to be in agreement with Ibn Hazm in regard to the latter's contention that Jesus did not employ any of the Christological titles for himself, and, for sure, Jesus did not do so in the sense in which Western Christianity for centuries has understood them and based its doctrines upon them. According to Charlot:

The original teaching of Jesus was purely theocentric. But quite naturally, the place of Jesus himself was one of the greatest preoccupations of later Christian theology, and various attempts were made to define it. One of the methods of this later theology was to put words into the mouth of Jesus himself and he himself was made to speak about himself, to speculate on his place in redemptive history. No one of the passages in which Jesus is supposed to discuss his theological status—be it that of Messiah, Son of Man, or whatever—can be convincingly shown to be, in fact, from Jesus himself. On the contrary, most modern scholars accept that these passages have been constructed by the later communities as a form of their own theologizing. They speculated by creating stories of his speculations. Jesus himself, as far as

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 45.

the evidence goes, never departed from his purely God-centred preaching.¹⁶²

5. Criticism on Moral and Common Sense Grounds

This section deals with those passages that, to Ibn Hazm, defy morality in the sense in which it is commonly understood. The first case is that of Jesus' temptation narratives. Quoting Mt. 4:1-11 and Lk. 4:1-13 almost verbatim, Ibn Hazm raises the following points: (1) Both gospels agree that the Devil led Jesus once to a very high mountain, and then to the Holy city to set him on the pinnacle of the Temple. Either Jesus followed the Devil willingly or did it unwillingly. If he followed him willingly, that makes Jesus a wicked and wretched person; and if he did that unwillingly, that makes him someone possessed by evil spirits. Both descriptions are, however, unbecoming of a prophet, let alone for one who is assumed to be a deity or son of God. (2) How can the Devil tempt his Lord and Creator, the Creator of the universe and its Lord, merely for the kingdom of the world and its glories? (3) How can the Devil expect his own Lord and Deity to bow down before him and worship him? On the Christian understanding of the temptation narratives, Ibn Hazm argues that if it is granted that the Devil tempted the humanity of Jesus or Christ, then Matthew and Luke are liars because the words, 'Jesus' and 'Christ' are not used for the humanity of Jesus alone. For this interpretation to be entertained they should have reported 'half-Jesus' and 'half-Christ.' Moreover, the text itself provides evidence against this interpretation since it records that the Devil addressed Jesus, saying: 'If you are the Son of God' do such and such a thing.¹⁶³ Modern New Testament scholarship, however, sees the temptation narratives as a case of Christian midrash, developed on the pattern of Deut. chaps. 6-8.¹⁶⁴

Turning to the narratives of the claim that a disciple's reward is equal to the prophet whom he receives, Ibn Hazm quotes Mt. 10:41 verbatim and remarks that it is a lie and an impossibility. He states:

No people will be shown any preference nor will they be considered to be possessed of any inherent excellence.

¹⁶²Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, pp. 16-17.

¹⁶³Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 2, pp. 29-30. See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, p. 243

¹⁶⁴*The Anchor Bible: Matthew*.

Any rewards they receive on the Day of judgement will be in consideration of their good deeds. Whoever will receive greater rewards will become greater than those whose rewards are less; those whose rewards are equal **will** become equal. Now, it follows by necessity that one who follows a prophet cannot reap rewards equal to those of the prophet whom he follows. If a disciple is rewarded equally with the prophet whom he follows, then it entails that all believers on that Day will be rewarded equally. This is impossible by necessity. Such an understanding also implies that all Christians will be equally rewarded on the Day of Judgment and all Christians would be equal to Peter and other disciples of Jesus such as Paul, Luke, etc., and this is something that the Christians deny. The only other alternative is that their Lord told a lie. Far be it from a prophet to do so; or a righteous believer to fabricate a lie.¹⁶⁵

Albright notes that the above verse has suffered a change of sense "once the Gospel had passed from the Jewish to the Greek milieu". In the light of new materials and manuscripts discovered, he translates Mt. 10:41 as: "Whoever receives the Prophet because he is the Prophet will be rewarded by the Prophet and so he who receives the Righteous one because he is a Righteous one will be rewarded by the Righteous one." "Thus translated", he suggests, "the verse implies that Jesus recognizes two attitudes of the people towards himself: those who saw him as the Prophet—the Herald of the Messianic Age—and those who saw him as both the Herald and Messianic Righteous one".¹⁶⁶

Another passage that appears to Ibn Hazm to be against common sense, morality and human religious experience is Mt. 11:27. He considers the statement: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son" to be queer. All the Christians believe in the Christ as the Son of God, and they take God as Christ's father. This is also what Peter in his Epistles, and Matthew, maintain. Hence the above statement of the Christ necessitates that the disciples of Jesus, as well as all the Christians, neither know Jesus nor have knowledge of God. And anyone who is ignorant of God is a disbeliever and a pagan. Thus, it implies that either Jesus told a lie,

¹⁶⁵ Ibn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Fa-l*, pt. 2, pp. 26-27, 36-38.

¹⁶⁶ *The Anchor Bible: Matthew*.

or else Matthew fabricated a lie against Jesus, or all the Christians in the present and past are ignorant of God. Says Ibn Hazm:

Far be it from a servant and prophet of God like Jesus to state such a thing! The other two alternatives might be true. Such a statement further implies that all the previous prophets of God, and also His angels, do not have knowledge of God.¹⁶⁷

Mt. 11:27 has also been noted by modern commentators. Having no parallel in other gospels, it raises a great difficulty in respect of the unique relationship of 'Father' and 'Son' implied herein and found in Matthew. Bultmann is of the opinion that it is a later editorial addition and has its origin in Gnostic terminology.¹⁶⁸

Ibn Hazm also finds a great question of common sense morality involved in Jesus giving to the twelve disciples authority to cast out unclean spirits and to heal every disease and infirmity. Referring to Mt. 10:1-6 and then comparing it with Jn. 12:4-6, he says:

There are only two ways to resolve this contradiction. Either Jesus knew that Judas Iscariot was a thief and of wicked intentions, and, despite his knowledge of Judas' conduct, Jesus gave him this honour, or Jesus was not aware of Judas' disbelief and deceptive conduct and so gave him this authority alongwith others. In the first case, Jesus' care for truth and righteousness becomes questionable. The second alternative raises the question of his divinity. How can a deity be ignorant of his creature's nature?¹⁶⁹

A similar objection is raised in respect of Lk. 22:28-30, where Jesus is reported as bequeathing the Kingdom of Judgment to the twelve, Judas Iscariot included, over the twelve tribes of Israel. To Ibn Hazm, such a promise made by Jesus, especially to someone like Judas Iscariot, is repugnant to all common sense morality. Moreover, claims Ibn Hazm, such a promise hardly squares with Mt. 26:24 and its parallels, which point out the wretched destiny of Judas. Ibn Hazm also raises the same sort of questions about the conduct of Peter and his pre-eminence as maintained in the gospels.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb al-Faṣl*, pt. 2, pp. 32-33.

¹⁶⁸*The Anchor Bible: Mathew.*

¹⁶⁹Ibn Hazm, *Kitüb al-Faṣl* pt. 2, pp. 26-27, 36-38.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., pt.2: 36-38, 45-46.

4 Ibn Hazm also points out the contradictions and problems of common sense morality involved in the gospels' descriptions of Paradise. He illustrates the contradictions found between Mt. 22:30, Mk. 12:25, and Mt. 26:29, Mk. 14:25, and Lk. 22:28-30. He asserts that sometimes their scriptures report the angels of God eating with Abraham and Lot, that other times their deity, after the resurrection, is shown eating broiled fish, while the people in Paradise are reported to be deprived of the blessings of God.¹⁷¹

To recapitulate, it is evident that the relentless vigour of Ibn Hazm's critique of Christianity was matched only by his extensive and profound knowledge of the basic Christian texts. Apart from being severe, this critique was both pervasive and brilliant and brought into serious question the very foundations of Christianity. It is significant that the critique of Christianity for over seven centuries after Ibn Hazm remained confined mainly to the same points that had been raised probably for the first time by him.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pt. 2, pp. 45-46; See also Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, pt. 2, vol. 1, pp. 259ff.

EIGHT

The Asian Religions

A. Religious Traditions of Mesopotamia and Persia: al-Sabi'in and al-Majus

1. Al-*Sabi'un* (Sabaeans, Sabians, Mandaeans, Harranians, al-Kasaites)

The word *Sabi'un* occurs three times in the Qur'an and that along with the Jews and the Christians pointing out that they belong to the *Ahl al-Kiib* category.¹ Ibn Hazm, of course, is very well aware of

¹The Qur'an, 2:62; 5:69; 22:17. Almost all the classical commentators on the Qur'an, including the earliest ones such as al-Fabari have left the identification of al-Sabi'un vague. Al-Tabari, noting the differing opinions of the Companions of the Prophet, and of the Successors, identifies al-Sabi'in with the people who do not adhere to any traditional religion, but are monotheist and claim to be the possessors of revelation from God. The suggestions given for the definition of al-Sabi'un are as follows:

- (1) a group of people belonging to the category of "Ahl al-Kitab" (the people of the Divine Writ).
- (2) a group of people known as the followers of Noah;
- (3) a group of people falling in between the Jews and the Christians;
- (4) a group of people falling in between the Christians and the Majiis;
- (5) a group of people falling in between the Jews and the Majiis;
- (6) a group of people who neither belong to the Jewish faith, nor to the Christian, nor to the Majiis, but believe in Tawḥīd (Monotheism) and do not have any revealed book or a specific religious law (*Shari'ah*);
- (7) a group of people who are monotheist and hold al-Zabiir (Psalms of David) as their Scripture;

it. In his typology, Ibn Hazm discusses Sabi'un in the fourth category, along with Majiis. As noted earlier, he also includes Christians in it due to their Trinitarian belief.

This fourth category comprises those who believe that the Creator is more than One. Describing the Sabaeans further, Ibn Hazm says:

Among those who believe in more than One Sustainer of the universe are the Sabaeans. They believe in the eternity of the two elements or principles as we have mentioned about Majiis. However, Sabaeans revere the Seven Stars or Planets and the twelve Signs of the Zodiac. They put their pictorial representation, pictures, or images in their temples. They offer animal sacrifices and incense offerings. They observe five worship-prayers very close to the Muslims' prayers. In their worship-prayers they face towards Ka'bah, and revere both Makkah and Ka'bah. They observe the fasting of Ramadan. They regard the meat of the dead animal and of swine and the blood as prohibited. They also do not marry close relatives, just like the Muslims.... And the religion to which these Sabi'tin hold was the oldest religion in the world and dominant throughout the whole world. With the passage of time there occurred changes in it. They altered their religious laws and code of life. Then Allah sent Ibrahim to them with the religion of Islam, the same to which we hold, and that is identified with the religion of, Muhammad, sometimes known as *al-anfiyyah al-sam-iih*, the one that corrects what the Sabaeans had invented in terms of their reverence and worship of the stars and the idols. These people were known by the name of Hunafa' at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an and thereafter. The remnants of this group live in Harran and are nowadays extremely small in number These al-Sabi'un consider themselves to be the followers of the religious laws that were brought by Hermes who is identified by some with Idris. Some attribute

- (8) a group of people who are montheist and worship angels;
- (9) a group of people who are monotheist and worship stars; and
- (10) a group of people who are dualists but do not have any Scripture.

All these various definitions notwithstanding, the Islamic tradition remained consistent and constant al-Sabi'un as belonging to the category of *Ahl al-Kitab*.

themselves to Ka'ilun who is identified with Niih (Noah), to Asqalani'lis, the owner of the Temple, to 'Adhimun (Agathodemon) and to Budasif (Vistasp, the Persian King converted by Zoroaster), etc.²

2. Al-Majiis (Zoroastrians and Manichaeans)

The people who believe that the Creator of the universe is more than One are divided into different small sects, but are mainly represented by two main groups. The first one holds that the Sustainers or Rulers of the universe are other than the universe itself. Rather, it is sustained and maintained by the Seven Stars or Seven Planets which are eternal, called the Majus.³ According to Ibn Hazm, the *Mutakallimūn* report that:

These people [al-Majus] believe that when God's loneliness or loneliness was prolonged, He felt melancholic. He reflected upon this condition and conceived an evil idea (*Jakkara fikrata sil'*). This idea took an embodiment or adopted a form and turned into a darkness [zulmah]. Thus there emerged or was created from it Ahriman which is Iblis (Devil). Then God wished and desired to put this away from Himself, but He could not do so. Then God fortified and protected Himself from it by creating the good whereas this Ahriman began to create the evil. Such as this, there is still more confusion in what they [al-Majus] claim.⁴

Ibn Hazm contends that the *Mutakallimūn* should have mentioned the following to be the beliefs of the Majus:

...that there is the Creator known by the name Uwrman (Ormuzd). There is a Devil called Ahriman. There are *Kam* (time), *Jam* (Space and Sphere), and Niim (Substance, Matter, Nature, and Self-developing Nuclei). All these five are eternal beings. The Ahriman is the creator of evils, Uwrman (Ormuzd) is the creator of good things and Niim is the one in which everything is created....

²Ibn al-Hazm, *Kitab al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 34-36, 113-116.

³Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 38-48.

⁴Ibid.

These Majiis revere lights, fires and waters. However, they believe in Zaradusht (Zoroaster, Zarathustra) as their prophet and attribute all their religious laws to him.⁵

a. Al-Mazdaqiyah and Al-Khurramiyah

Among the different sects of the Majiis, are the al-Mazdaqiyah, the followers of Mazdaq al-Mawbadh (Mazdak), who believe in equality of earnings, economic equality, and in the equality of women, i.e., equality of sexes.⁶

Al-Khurramiyah are those who follow Babak. They are a sect of al-Mazdaqiyah, and it had inspired the Muslim sects known as al-Isma'iliyah, al-Qaramitah, and Banii 'Ubayd.⁷

b. Al-Manawiyah (Manichaeans)

The second main group under the fourth category is represented by those who believe that the universe is managed by its own essential elements, and these include al-Daysaniyah, al-Mazqiiniyah and Al-Manawiyah. This group believes that the creation of the universe is the ultimate result of the mingling and comingling of four eternal elements.

In contrast, says Ibn Hazm, the Manichaeans (al-Manawiyah), believe that there are two eternal elements, Light and Darkness;— and that they are living entities and infinite in all dimensions except when they mix with each other. They have woven a good many myths {*khurüfüt*}.

Ibn Hazm contests the Muiakallimiin's version that al-Daysan was a student and disciple of since, according to him, Mani himself has referred to al-Daysan in his books and has refuted the latter's views. Both, however, agree on almost everything except that Mani invests Darkness with life (*layüh*), while al-Daysan does not. On Mani, Ibn azm writes:

Man! was a monk in Harran. He invented his religion. The King, Bahram ibn Bahram, had him executed after Man! had a debate and disputation with Adharbadh ibn Marks-fand, the Mawbadh. Their disputation was on the subject

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

of stopping procreation and liberation from this world. Adharbadh argues against Mani by saying that Mani believes in the prohibition of marriages, so as to end with the new generations and to stop any more births, thus helping Light to get rid of Darkness and liberating souls caged in bodies. In the light of this belief, emphasized Adharbadh, it seems appropriate that first Mani should be killed so that he might further the cause of liberation from Darkness by his own example. On this argument, Mani became dumb-founded, so Bahram had Mani and his followers killed.⁸

Ibn Hazm reports that the Manichaeans do not slaughter or eat animals, nor recognize the Hebrew prophets except Jesus, and that they believe in Zaradusht and Mani as their prophets. The Marcionites held views similar to the Manichaeans except that they believed that besides the two eternal elements they (i.e., Light and Darkness), there is a third element, the one that mixes them together.⁹ To Ibn Hazm, whatever the differences among those sects in terms of the number and character of the Creator, the conditions of creation of those Creators, and the religious laws, they all are one in believing that the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe is more than One.¹⁰

c. The Scriptures of the Majfis

Ibn Hazm asserts that the fate of the sacred books of Majis had been worse than those of the Jews' and the Christians' scriptures.

The sacred book of the Majus and their law "(ere kept with their Mawbadh and with their twenty-three Harbadh. Each Harbadh had a separate scroll of different content from the others. This book was not open to the public. At the time of Alexander's invasion of Persia and his killing of Dara ibn Dara, Alexander entered their sacred sanctuary and burnt it. Thus their scripture was burned and one-third of it was lost forever. This is an historical fact which they

⁸Ibid. Ibn al-Nadim does not mention about this disputation. See *al-Fihrist* chapter 9. However, al-Ya'qubi also notes that Mani died in prison during the reign of Bahram ibn Hurmuz, the father of Bahram ibn Baram. See Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub al-Ya'qubi, *Ta'rikh al-Ya'qubi*(Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1960), pp. 159-161.

⁹Ibn Hazm, *Kitib al-Fasl*, pt. 1, p. 36. Ibn al-Nadim calls this group "Al-Marqiyiyyah". Bayard Dodge translates and identifies it with the Marcionites. See Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn al-Nadim, *The Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadim*, ed. and trans., Bayard Doge. (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1970), vol. 2., p. 806, 915.

¹⁰Ibn Hazm, *Kitib al-Fa-l*, pt. 1, pp. 34-36.

themselves accept. Their scholars, such as Bashir al-Nasik, admit of the above-mentioned fact.¹¹

A modern Zoroastrian scholar, Manneckji Dhalla says:

Alexander crushed the Iranian armies at Arbela, and wrested the sceptre from the hands of Darius III in 300 BC and the structure of the Iranian empire was shattered to pieces. Great as the national catastrophe was, still greater was the spiritual loss involved in the destruction of the holy Scriptures of Zoroastrianism, which perished in the conflagration of Persepolis, when the great conqueror, in a fit of drunkenness, delivered the palaces of the Achaemenians to the flames. Fire, the most sacred emblem of Iran, was wantonly utilized in consuming the Word of Ormazd. The ill-fated Darius who had ordered the two archetype copies to be preserved in the Dizh-i Nipisht and Ganj-i Persepolis, perished in the conflagration. The second copy of the sacred writings, in the Ganj-i Shapigan, we are informed, was done into Greek fire.... Iran once more recovered her political autonomy, but she never regained in their pristine fullness the holy works of her great prophet.¹²

Ibn Hazm considers the Sabi'un and Majiis as *Ahl al-Kiub*. Among the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and their Successors who reported the Majiis as belonging to the category of *Ahl al-Kitab* are 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Hudhayfah, Sa'Id ibn al-Musayyab, Qatadah, Abu Thawr and some scholars belonging to the *ahir* school of Islamic Law.¹³ Surprisingly however, Ibn Hazm fails to mention 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf, an eminent Companion of the Prophet, who is considered to be the most effective spokesman for the legitimacy of accepting *jizyah* from the Majiis and the Iranians during 'Umar's caliphate.¹⁴ Despite considering the Sabi'un and Majiis as *Ahl al-Kitab*, Ibn Hazm maintains that their religion was no longer valid since their scriptures had suffered much worse corruption and alteration than those of the Jews and the Christians".¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid., pt. 1, p. 113.

¹² Manneckji N. Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology* (New York: AMS Press, reprint 1972), p. 184.

¹³ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp. 113-116.

¹⁴ Cf. *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*. s.v. "Majiis.

¹⁵ Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl*, pt. 1, pp. 113-116.

B. Religious Traditions of India and the Far East

Ibn Hazm's knowledge of the religious traditions of India and the Far East is extremely limited. Whatever he reports is merely based on the information he had gathered from sporadic references to them in the works of the mutokallimiin.

In the eleventh century when Ibn Hasm was engaged in his study, the Muslims had not yet come into close contact with the peoples of India and the Far East, nor had they any profound interaction and encounter with their religious traditions. This was especially true of the Muslims of North Africa and al-Andalus. Interestingly though, Ibn Hazm considers the Brahmans as deists and regards the religious traditions of India and the Far East in general as a corrupted form of the religion of Sabaeans.¹⁶

1. Al-Barahimah (Brahmans)

In his typology of world-views, religions, sects, and philosophies of the world, Ibn Hazm places the Barahimah (Brahmans) in the fifth category. This embraces those who believe in the existence of realities, the world having been created by the One Unique and Eternal Creator, but who deny prophecy. Ibn Hazm writes about them as follows:

The Barahimah believe in the Unicity of God just as we do. But they deny the phenomenon of prophecy. They are a tribe in India comprising the nobles and high-breds of the Indians. They say that they are the children of one of the ancient kings of India known by the name of Barahmi. They distinguish themselves from the rest of the Indians by wearing red and yellow threads from which they hang their swords.¹⁷

According to Ibn Hazm, in their denial of prophecy the Barahimah have recourse to two main arguments. First, as God is Wise and Omniscient, He knows that the people to whom He sends His messengers would still not believe in God and His messengers. Hence the sending of the messengers turns out to be an exercise in futility, and God, the Exalted One, does not indulge in such exercises. Second, if

¹⁶Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 34-48, 69-78, 113-116.

¹⁷Ibid., pt. 1, p. 69.

God's purpose in sending His messengers to people is to direct them to belief in God, then it seems more reasonable for God to bestow on mankind an intellectual and rational faculty that would compel them to have belief in God. So, on this ground too, prophecy remains superfluous.¹⁸

Ibn Hazm's refutation of these arguments is as follows: Before the advent of the prophets, God's sending or not sending the prophets belongs to the category of the possible. Once the prophets have come, it becomes obligatory to accept the reality of the phenomenon of prophecy. But again, now that the last and final prophet had declared the end of the phenomenon of prophecy, it becomes imperative to accept that no prophet will appear in the future. Ibn Hazm gives three main arguments. First, God's sending the prophets does not necessarily imply that He has a reason or a purpose behind it since His actions transcend [human] reason and He does what He pleases. Second, all the knowledge, crafts, and techniques, in short, the progress of human culture and civilization, did not come from nowhere. Were it based just on human search and experience, it would have taken millions of years to reach this point. Hence it is through God's messengers that mankind was taught how to use and exploit nature for their prosperity and progress, leading to the birth and flourishing of human civilization. And finally, the advent of the messengers is a known historical fact. Large groups of people did accept and follow them. These messengers-prophets worked miracles that provided an empirical proof in support of their claims of prophecy. These miracles proved conclusively that they were agents of God who were sent to guide people, since miracles are not something that can be worked by [ordinary] human beings. These miracles are distinct from the tricks or deceptive feats of magicians or tricksters. To Ibn Hazm, miracles demonstrate a change in the order of nature or a transmutation of an essence, whereas in the magical feats the performer exploits the laws of cause and effect or deceives the common sense observation or the psyche of the spectator for a short period of time. Hence the Barahimahs' denial of prophecy is neither based on reason nor on any historical fact.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 69-78.

¹⁹Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 69-78.

2. Hindus and Buddhists

Ibn Hazm mentions the people of India in general only once, and that too in passing. Ibn Hazm considers the religion of Sabi'un to be the oldest one. They were the first to introduce the veneration and worship of the Seven Stars and the Zodiac, and then placed their pictorial representation and images in their temples. Indians followed them, made pictorial representation and statues of the stars, and started worshipping them. Later on, this practice spread to Arabia and to the Sudan, thus introducing idolatry in these lands.²⁰ Ibn Hazm classifies the Indian people in his fourth category—Le., those who believe in more than One Creator of the world.²¹

As for Buddhism and other religious traditions of the Far East (e.g., China and Japan), Ibn Hazm seems to have no knowledge of them.

3. *Al-Tünūsukh* (The Transmigration of Souls)

Surprisingly in his discussion on the issue of transmigration of souls, Ibn Hazm does not directly attribute this idea to the Brahimah or the Hindus. Of the two groups of people who believed in the transmigration of souls, he says, one of them claims to be Muslims, while the other group comprises the Naturists (al-Dahriyyah). Both, however, claim that the transmigration of souls takes place in consequence of good or bad deeds that people do in their life-time. After death their souls reappear in the form of other living beings as reward and punishment. Ibn Hazm refutes their arguments in the same vein as he had already done with respect to the view of materialist philosophers.²²

All said and done, Ibn Hazm's knowledge of the religious traditions of India and the Far East is rather sketchy, and he fails to provide any clues to his sources except that he refers to some of the works of the Mutokalimmiu». Some of the extant work on Muslim theology and Muslim sects make similar statements about the Barahimah, For instance, al-Baghdadi (d. 1037/429 A.H.), writes:

The Mu'tazilah and Barahimah claim that intellect is a sufficient means to determine what is necessarily beneficial and what is necessarily harmful. Most of them believe what is ugly to the intellect and harmful and there is no

²⁰Ibid., pt. 1, p. 35.

²¹Ibid., pt. 1, 34ff.

²²Ibid., pt. 1, 90ff.

benefit in it. As for the Barahimah, they accept the unic-
ity of the Fashioner or Maker and deny the prophets.²³

Such a view of the Barahimah seemed to be prevalent at Ibn Hazm's time not only among the Muslim *Mutakallimūn* but also among the Jewish and Christian philosophical theologians. Saadia Gaon (d. 942 C.E.), says: "There are men who say there is no need of prophets and apostles and that our minds themselves can guide us to a knowledge of right and wrong".²⁴ According to Effros, [i.e., Saadia], does not specify here who these men are, but elsewhere he refers to the Brahmans as maintaining that view.²⁵

To conclude, then, Ibn Hazm is not alone, nor the first, in attributing to the Brahmans disbelief in prophecy. He merely followed the prevalent notion about the Brahmans during the Middle Ages without properly investigating it.

²³ Abd al-Qahir ibn Tahir al-Baghdadr, *Kitab U-ul al-Din* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthanna, n.d.), p. 26.

²⁴ Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Belief and Opinions*, trans., Samuel Rosenblatt, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 145.

²⁵ Israel Isaac Efros, *Studies in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 27.

NINE

Conclusion

It becomes clear from the foregoing study of Ibn Hazm's study of world religious traditions, that Muslim historians of religions seriously addressed themselves to the issues of religious diversity, both intellectually and religiously. Although they were convinced of the unity of truth and of the unity of knowledge, they did not brush aside the fact that there existed a variety of religions and world-views. Rather, they took the diversity of religious views as a problem of objective truth and knowledge. They analyzed religious diversity and sought to identify its causes in man rather than in God who was presumed to be the source of its origin.

Human passion and ulterior motives, human forgetfulness and misunderstanding, unscrupulousness in expression and description, carelessness in judging about the veracity of reports, changes of versions and socio-economic adversities, among others, were the causes of the alteration of revealed texts despite the fact of their common origin. Differences of religions, asserted the Muslim historians of religion, were either due to varying reports of the same phenomenon by the people who witnessed it, or to inadequate descriptions, or erroneous expressions of the phenomenon.

Like many other Muslim scholars preceding him, Ibn Hazm believes in the unity of truth, unity of knowledge, and unity of humanity. He is convinced that the methodology of any branch of knowledge must be one and the same, regardless of the subject matter. The principles of observation, commonsense perception, reason and intuition, critical examination and reasonableness must all be basic to any pursuit of knowledge.

Ibn Hazm's understanding of true knowledge of things is to understand them as they are in terms of their objective, observable

reality. Such a knowledge alone, he believes, constitutes wisdom and measures up to the requisites of genuine faith (conviction).

Religions and world-views, beliefs and opinions, he asserts, should proceed from the actual phenomena from the things as they are in the real world, and not *vice-versa*. The observer who takes reality as he would like it to be rather than as it is removes himself from reality. Additionally, it must be borne in mind that the objective knowledge of reality involves not only sound scientific methodology, but also the will to abide by and acknowledge what the application of such methodology produces by way of new facts and evidence. Hence, the objective of knowing the truth and stating it as one finds it is equally a demand of morality and integrity, justice and truthfulness. Errors in observation and understanding and in description or reportage are certainly possible. But they must be critically examined and honestly dismissed when the evidence against them is adequate.

Being convinced that the truth was one and so was true religion, Ibn Hazm was determined to see that unity is established as the ultimate criterion of religious diversity. So, with his usual logical vigour, he first sought to demonstrate the Existence, Oneness, and Transcendence of God on the basis of reason, common sense perception, and intuition with a view to establish this fact as the first principle of all religions. Ibn Hazm sees no incompatibility between reason and revelation, between philosophy and religion. In this respect, in a way he was the precursor of Ibn Rushd. Purely on rational and logical grounds he disproves the claims of the Sophists which involve the denial of all reality. He also refutes the claims of the atheists and materialists which entail denial of God and His Providence as he does the dualists' denial of Transcendence, Unity, Uniqueness, and Otherness of God. Thereafter Ibn Hazm argues for the reality and necessity of revelation, the ability of the prophets to provide mankind with true knowledge, guidance, and principles of religio-moral laws in order that it might achieve felicity in this world and in the Hereafter. Ibn Hazm argues against the denial by deists and theistic-rationalist philosophers of the necessity and reality of revelation sent from on high through the agency of the prophets. After establishing the reality of God, Revelation, and Prophecy as the basic principles of the monotheistic religious traditions, he sets out to examine the obvious claims laid down by them in their respective scriptures.

In his examination of the claims of various religions, Ibn Hazm relied heavily on their scriptures and sacred writings because he regarded them as the ultimate authority for the different positions

taken by those religions. His critical attitude and determination to seek and demonstrate the truth of the religious traditions led him to new avenues of historical, textual, theological, and moral criticism and subject all the religious texts extant in his time to the ruthless tests of consistency, coherence, historical integrity, and correspondence with reality. If most of the religions of the world failed his rigorous tests, he nonetheless believed firmly in the possibility of true religious knowledge.

Having unswerving belief and strong conviction in compatibility between reason and revelation, he was convinced that through dialogue and informed discussion between persons of different religious traditions who are imbued with genuine religious convictions, the truth can be arrived at, provided the participants in this exercise are fully equipped with the reliable data of their religious traditions.

In this respect, Ibn Hazm closely followed the directives of the Qur'an as to how to approach other religions. His involvement in active dialogues with the Jews and the Christians, with the philosophers and the Sufis, and with scholars of different juridico-theological schools in Islam is in consonance with the Qur'anic injunction to seek knowledge and truth through reason, reflection, and meaningful discussion. Similarly, he follows the Qur'anic directive to argue with persons who believe in earlier revelation in the most kindly manner (16:135).

However, so far as the second part of the Qur'anic directive — to argue with men of other convictions in a kindly manner — is concerned, Ibn Hazm fails to live up to it. The tenor of his discourse is, to say the least, that of an intemperate person. Throughout our analysis of his arguments and critiques of the Judea-Christian scriptures, we have ignored and omitted a number of his harsh remarks because they do not add anything to the force of his arguments nor are they in keeping with the tradition of serious academic discourse. Apart from this lapse, Ibn Hazm represents the mainstream Muslim thought on the history of religions and stands as the founder of Biblical criticism and comparative study of religions.

Ibn Hazm is the first Muslim scholar who takes the Qur'anic charge of *ta~rif* (distortion) against the followers of earlier revealed scriptures, especially the Bible (both Hebrew and Christian), in its most extreme and literal sense. Using the four religious categories of the universality of revelation, the revealed scriptures, the agency of the human prophethood, and the historically attested unbroken line of transmission of the traditions, he makes a thorough critique of their religious scriptures. His critique of the Bible is based on the principles

of consistency and coherence, compatibility between the narratives of the text and historical facts, and the generally accepted norms of conscience and human morality. The extant Bible, he concludes, cannot be the Word of God in the literal sense of the term. He makes a penetrating study of the Arabic version of the Bible, which alone was available to him, and points out almost all the problematic passages and draws attention to the contradictions and inconsistencies found in them, significantly, it is these very contradictions and inconsistencies which later caught the attention of the Western Biblical critics. Most of the time Ibn Hazm is consistent in his contention that a wilful distortion had taken place in the revealed text of the Bible, and hence no proofs can be derived from it. At times, however, he seems to be carried away by his zeal to prove his point to an extent where he accepts Biblical passages and proffers his own interpretations of them. In this way, he appears to return to the second view of *ta~rif* in order to prove that the revealed text has been corrupted, not only in its form but also in its meanings and applications.

For Ibn Hazm the knowledge of comparative religion possesses a salvific value for humanity. To say the least, such knowledge acts upon its pursuants as a refining and, indeed, a humanizing influence.

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