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## CORRESPONDING ACROSS RELIGIOUS BORDERS THE *LETTER OF AL-QURĠ*

**SUMMARY:** This article provides an introduction to the *Letter of al-QurĠ*, a short anti-Islamic polemic in Arabic purportedly written by an unknown priest active in Toledo in the mid-1140s, as well as the complete English translation of the *Letter* together with an emended edition of the Arabic text first published by Abdelmajid Charfi in 1975.

The *Letter of al-QurĠ* or *Letter of the Goth*, is the rather prosaic name given by scholars to a short anti-Islamic polemic in Arabic purportedly written by an unknown priest active in Toledo in the mid-1140s<sup>1</sup>. As we shall see later, however, the ascription of this work to a Christian ecclesiastic is not without problems and therefore a later reworking of the text by a Muslim writer cannot be excluded. The *Letter of al-QurĠ* has

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<sup>1</sup> It has been generally assumed that the *Letter of al-QurĠ* was originally composed in Arabic. This is plausible if the work originates from mid-twelfth century Toledo, a period when Mozarabs thrived in the ancient Visigothic capital. According to Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, however, while the letter reflects Mozarabic views about Islam current in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it was originally written in Latin. See J.P. Monferrer Sala, *Al-QurĠ* in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 3 (1050-1200), ed. D. Thomas, Brill, Leiden 2011, 524-525. See also C.L. Tieszen in *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain*, Brill, Leiden 2013, 147-168; R. Hitchcock, *Mozarabs in Medieval and Early Modern Spain: Identities and Influences*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2008, 75-97; J.-P. Molénat, *Al-QurĠ* à Tolède, du XII<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle in *Al-QurĠ* 15 (1994) 473-496; Idem, *Identité mozarabe dans l'Espagne reconquise, spécialement à Tolède* in *Mutations, identités en Méditerranée: Moyen Âge et époque contemporaine*, ed. H. Bresc and Ch. Veauvy, Bouchène, Saint-Denis 2000, 123-140; Idem, *La fin des chrétiens arabisés d'Al-Andalus. Mozarabes de Tolède et du Gharb au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle* in *¿Existe una identidad mozárabe? Historia, lengua y cultura de los cristianos de al-Andalus (siglos IX-XII)*, ed. C. Aillet, M. Penelas and Ph. Roisse, Casa de Velázquez, Madrid 2008, 287-297; and Cyrille Aillet, *Les mozarabes. Christianisme, islamisation et arabisation en péninsule ibérique (IXe-XIIe siècle)*, Casa de Velázquez, Madrid 2010, 167-171.

survived only in the refutation it occasioned, entitled *Maqānī al-ḥib* (Hammers for Crosses), by the Andalusī Muslim scholar Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAḥmad al-ʿAzraʿī (d. 582/1187). I shall first recall the figure of al-ʿAzraʿī and the circumstances of the composition of his refutation, before focusing on an analysis of the *Letter of al-Q* and offering a complete English translation together with an emended edition of the Arabic text<sup>2</sup>.

Born in Cordoba in 519/1125-26, Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAḥmad b. Abū ʿAbd al-Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAqq al-Anṣarī al-ʿAzraʿī al-Sīdī is the author of several works in various Islamic disciplines<sup>3</sup>. He lived for a while in Granada and Béjaïa (Bougie), eventually settling in Fez where he taught *ḥadīth* at the reputed Qarawīyīn madrasa, dying there on 29 ḥiṣṣa 582/12 March 1187<sup>4</sup>. We learn from his earliest biographer, Ibn al-Abbā (d. 658/1260), that al-ʿAzraʿī studied under the renowned *ḥadīth* expert Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148), among other learned scholars of his day<sup>5</sup>. According to another of his early biographers, Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrūḡī (d. 703/1303-4), al-ʿAzraʿī was already known in his youth for his intelligence and noble character, information which the biographer might have drawn from the *Letter of al-Q* as will be seen below<sup>6</sup>. Al-Marrūḡī also mentions that al-ʿAzraʿī was taken prisoner in the year 540 (between 24 June 1145 and 12 June 1146) and brought to Toledo, where he remained in captivity for about two years<sup>7</sup>. Most probably, al-ʿAzraʿī's capture took place following King Alfonso VII of León-Castile's intervention in Cordoba in the spring of 1146. In January

<sup>2</sup> I wish to thank Pierre Masri, Hanan Ablahad and Fadi Kmeid for their invaluable help in sifting through the variants and establishing the Arabic text. I also thank Andrew Lane, Dennis Halft, Haggai Mazuz, Jason Welle and Mònica Colominas Aparicio for their helpful comments on previous versions of this text.

<sup>3</sup> To my knowledge, in addition to *Maqānī al-ḥib*, the only other work of al-ʿAzraʿī that has survived is his *Nafas al-ʿab* / *al-Qurʾān wa-nṣiḥi wa-mansūh*, which has been edited by Muḥammad ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Miṣṣī al-Idrīsī, *Wizāʾat al-Awqāʾ wa-l-ḥiṣṣa al-Islāmiyya*, [al-Ribāʿī 1994, and, more recently, by Aḥmad Farīd al-Maḥḥūdī al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya, Bayrūt 2008.

<sup>4</sup> On this author, see F. de la Granja Santamaría, *Milagros españoles en una obra polémica musulmana* (El *Kitāb Maqānī al-ḥib* del Jazray), *Al-Andalus* 33 (1968) 311-331; P.S. van Koningsveld, *Muslim Slaves and Captives in Western Europe during the Late Middle Ages*, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 6 (1995) 12-13; T.E. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050-1200*, Brill, Leiden 1994, 80-84; A. Ljamaï, *Ibn ʿAzm et la polémique islamochrétienne dans l'histoire de l'Islam*, Brill, Leiden 2003, 145-152; J.P. Monferrer Sala, *ʿAlī-Khazrajī in Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 3, 526-528; and D. Potthast, *Christen und Muslime im Andalus. Andalusische Christen und ihre Literatur nach religionspolemischen Texten des zehnten bis zwölften Jahrhunderts*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2013, 237-241.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn al-Abbā, *al-Quṭub al-Takmila li-Kitāb al-ʿAla*, ed. Baḥrī ʿAwwāl Maḥḥūdī, 4 vols., Dār al-ʿArab al-Islāmiyya 2011, vol. 1, 176-177 [no. 223].

<sup>6</sup> Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrūḡī, *al-Qayl wa-l-takmila li-Kitāb al-Mawḥi wa-l-Sila*, ed. ʿIzz al-ʿAbbā, Muḥammad Ben ʿArḥā and Baḥrī ʿAwwāl Maḥḥūdī, 6 vols., Dār al-ʿArab al-Islāmiyya 2012, vol. 1, 420-421 [no. 308], here 420.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 421.

1145, led by the *q*Abd al-*ar* b. *amd*, the inhabitants of the city had revolted against the waning Almoravid dynasty. A year later, however, the Almoravid governor Ya<sup>q</sup>ub. *al*. Y<sup>u</sup>f, best known as Ibn *hiya*, regained control of Cordoba, which led the exiled Ibn *amd* to appeal to the Christian king for assistance. In May 1146, Alfonso marched into the city and occupied the suburbs of Cordoba, while Ibn *hiya* held out in the citadel<sup>8</sup>. As Maribel Fierro remarks, however, there is some contradictory data in the sources concerning the exact circumstances of al-*Qazra*'s stay in Toledo, and it is not completely clear whether he was a captive or a refugee after the collapse of Almoravid power in Cordoba<sup>9</sup>. In any event, it was during his sojourn in Toledo that al-*Qazra*, then in his early twenties, wrote his book of anti-Christian polemic in response to the attacks on Islam by a priest of Gothic descent (*qass nasabuhu min al-q*)<sup>10</sup>.

According to the prologue, which is written in the third person and appears to be the work of a disciple, the priest was in the habit of confronting unsophisticated Muslims living in the city with objections to their religion. The Muslims in question brought these objections to al-*Qazra* and returned to the priest equipped with answers. When the priest finally learned about al-*Qazra*, he wrote a letter to him and asked the messengers to bring back his reply. Al-*Qazra* scolded them and refrained from replying, fearing the consequences because of his precarious situation. On the insistence of his fellow Muslims, al-*Qazra* finally agreed to write a response known as *Maq<sup>al</sup> al-*ilb** which he left with them on his departure from Toledo<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> On these events, see, among others, E. Díaz and P. Molina, *Las Campañas de Alfonso VII en Andalucía: un precedente de la conquista de Córdoba* in *Andalucía entre Oriente y Occidente (1236-1492): Actas del V Coloquio Internacional de Historia Medieval de Andalucía*, ed. E. Cabrera, Diputación Provincial de Córdoba, Córdoba 1988, 63-70, and R. El Hour, *Córdoba frente a los Almorávides: familias de cadíes y poder local en al-Andalus* *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos en Madrid* 29 (1997) 181-210. See also, A.S. Baad<sup>al</sup>, *Saladin, the Almohads and the Ban<sup>al</sup> Gh<sup>hiya</sup>: The Contest for North Africa (12th and 13th centuries)*, Brill, Leiden 2015, 48-85.

<sup>9</sup> M. Fierro, *Christian Success and Muslim Fear in Andalus* *Writings during the Almoravid and Almohad Periods* in *Dhimmi and Others: Jews and Christians and the World of Classical Islam*, ed. U. Rubin and D.J. Wasserstein, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, IN 1997, 169. See also Potthast, *Christen und Muslime im Andalus*, 239.

<sup>10</sup> On the preservation of a Hispano-Gothic identity in the Iberian Peninsula after the Islamic invasion of 711, see L.A. García Moreno, *Spanish Gothic Consciousness among the Mozarabs in Al-Andalus (VIII-Xth Centuries)* in *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society*, ed. A. Ferreiro, Brill, Leiden 1999, 303-323. On the evolution of the Mozarabic community in light of Islam, see Burman, *Religious Polemic*, chapter 1: The Mozarabic Community in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, 13-31. According to P.S. van Koningsveld, it is more plausible to think that al-*Qazra* wrote his refutation only after his return to Cordoba, perhaps with the help of a Christian slave. See P.S. van Koningsveld, *Islamitische slaven en Gevangenen in West-Europa tijdens de late Middeleeuwen* [Inaugural address University of Leiden. 4 February 1994], Rijks Universiteit Leiden, Leiden 1994, 18-19, note 40. I owe this reference to Mònica Colominas Aparico.

<sup>11</sup> The *Maq<sup>al</sup>* was first edited by *Abd al-Ma<sup>al</sup> al-*hrf** [Abdelmajid Charfi], Markaz al-Dir<sup>al</sup> wa-l-Bu<sup>al</sup> al-Iqti<sup>liyya</sup> wa-l-*im*iyya, T<sup>his</sup> 1975 (coll. al-Dir<sup>al</sup> al-Isl<sup>hiyya</sup>, 1), on which see the

As mentioned above, the letter which occasioned al-ʿAzraʿī's response has survived only in the refutation it occasioned. We know next to nothing regarding the identity of its author. We can presume that he was a priest active in Toledo in the mid-1140s. A polemical interest in Islam on the part of a Toledo churchman fits the historical context well. It suffices to recall that Peter the Venerable (d. 1156), the ninth abbot of Cluny, visited the Iberian Peninsula in 1142, where he commissioned the first full translation of the Qurʾān into Latin, along with translations of several other works documenting the heresy of the Saracens—the so-called *Collectio Toletana* or, perhaps more appropriately, *Corpus Islamolatinum*<sup>12</sup>. However, certain anomalies in the text preserved in al-ʿAzraʿī's refutation have raised suspicions about its authenticity, at least in its current form<sup>13</sup>. The allegedly Christian letter includes, among other irregularities, a contradictory description of the Trinity as consisting of three hypostases in one hypostasis (ʾal-ḥaqīqah fī ḥuḍūrah wāḥid) instead of the expected three hypostases in one substance (ʾal-ḥaqīqah fī ḥuḍūrah wāḥid) and two problematic quotations from the Torah<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, it has been remarked

extensive review of Kh. Samir, *Maqni al-ḥaqīqah li-ʿAbd al-ʿAzraʿī* 519/1125-582/1186), éd. critique par ʿAbd al-Maʿūd ash-Sharīf, Tunis, 1975; *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980) 242-254, and the remarks of al-Munīr al-Kaṣībī, *Maqni al-ḥaqīqah li-ʿAbd al-ʿAzraʿī* al-radd ʿalā al-ḥaqīqah al-Andalusī *Al-ʿAḥad* 5, nos. 29-30 (1976) 107-126. The *Maqni* has also been edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzraʿī under the title of *Bayna l-Islām wa-l-Masīḥiyyah: Kitāb al-ḥaqīqah li-ʿAbd al-ʿAzraʿī*, Maktabat Wahba, al-Qhira 1979. See also the following studies: ʿAbd al-ʿAzraʿī al-Suyūṭī, *al-ʿAdal al-ḥaqīqah bayna l-Muslimīn wa-Ahl al-Kitāb bi-l-Andalus: Ibn ʿAẓm - al-ʿAzraʿī*, Dār Qibḍ al-Qhira 2001, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAbī, *Abū ʿAbd al-ʿAzraʿī wa-ḥuḍūrah al-ḥaqīqah al-Naḥḥīyah bi-l-Andalus min al-ḥaqīqah li-ʿAbd al-ʿAzraʿī: dirʿa waḥīdah taḥṭ al-ḥaqīqah al-ʿAzraʿīyah*, Dār al-ʿIkma, al-Qhira 2014.

<sup>12</sup> J. Martínez Gázquez, «Islamolatina». La percepción del islam en la Europa cristiana. Traducciones latinas del Corán. Literatura latina de controversia, *Medievalia* 15 (2012), 39-42; Ó. de la Cruz Palma, «Los textos de la llamada *Collectio Toletana*, fuente de información sobre el Islam», *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 17 (2007) 413-434; J. Martínez Gázquez and Ó. de la Cruz Palma, «Las traducciones árabe-latinas impulsadas por Pedro el Venerable en *Las órdenes militares: realidad e imaginario*, ed. M.D. Burdeus, E. Real and J. Verdegel, Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I, Castellón de la Plana 2000, 285-296; A. Fidora Reina, «La Escuela de Traductores», in *La Catedral Primada de Toledo: dieciocho siglos de historia*, ed. R. González Ruiz, Promecal, Burgos 2010, 480-491. See also P.S. van Koningsveld, «La Apología de al-Kindī en la España del siglo XII. Huellas toledanas de un animal disputax», in *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la Reconquista de Toledo: Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes (Toledo, 20-26 mayo 1985)*, Instituto de Estudios Visigótico-Mozárabes de San Eugenio, Toledo 1988, vol. 3, 107-129, espec. 109-110.

<sup>13</sup> The Arabic text of the *Letter of al-ʿAzraʿī* found in *Maqni* ed. al-ḥaqīqah 29-39. For an analysis of its contents and the question of its authenticity, see Samir, *Maqni al-ḥaqīqah* 242-248; Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 65-70; Potthast, *Christen und Muslime im Andalus*, 243-246; and Tieszen, *Christian Identity*, 212-220.

<sup>14</sup> *Maqni* ed. al-ḥaqīqah 31.

<sup>15</sup> Samir, *Maqni al-ḥaqīqah* 253. Still, in my view, the argument against the authenticity of the *Letter of al-ʿAzraʿī* on the basis of the presence of misquotations of biblical passages and of spurious biblical passages in it has been overstated. Not all biblical references in the work are meant as direct quotations from the scriptures.

that the text contains an Arabic calque from Latin (*iltrauma*), which was not common in Christian Arab writings originating in the East, which suggests the local origin of this material<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, it is better to provisionally propose two possible explanations for the current state of the text to which al-Qaṣṣa replies: either it consists of a Muslim writer reworking (or translation and reworking) of an existing Christian text and that Muslim writer may have been al-Qaṣṣa himself; or it is an entirely new composition by a Muslim author who was nevertheless familiar with the topics of Muslim-Christian polemics and with Christian apologetic arguments current in the Iberian Peninsula<sup>17</sup>.

After recalling the role of Jesus Christ in the divine economy of creation and redemption, the *Letter of al-Qaṣṣa* begins by inviting its Muslim addressee to confess the Triune God if he wishes to receive God's mercy and attain Paradise. The letter then proceeds to claim qur'ānic support for the Christian confession of Christ as the Son of God. Not only did He restore the dead to life, as mentioned in the Qur'ān, but He also gave the power to His apostles to do the same and sent them out to all the nations. The next paragraphs focus on the Incarnation, God's personal and decisive intervention in history that brings to completion His mercy toward humankind. Here the letter reflects a medieval view of the atonement, portraying Christ as having made satisfaction on the cross to an offended God for the sins of humankind. It would have been unbecoming of God's infinite sublimity to take revenge on His disobedient servant, Adam. Instead, the letter explains, God chose to take His revenge on the human being who is a God like Himself<sup>18</sup>. Thus the God-man placed Himself in the hands of the Jews, who crucified Him. To deny the crucifixion is an act of unbelief by which Muslims jeopardize their own salvation. Nevertheless, they exalt Christ and there is much good

<sup>16</sup> As noted by Burman (*Religious Polemic*, 160-162), the use of the verb *iltrauma* (with its corresponding verbal noun *iltrauma*) to refer to the Incarnation appears to have been quite common among Arabised Christians in the Iberian Peninsula. See also the comment of Aillet in *Les mozarabes*, 191. For the use of *iltrauma* in relation to the Incarnation in a fourteenth-century Eastern work of Muslim anti-Christian polemics, see D. Schlosser, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Attitude Toward Christianity in *Hidāyat al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya al-yahūd wal-naṣāra* in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, ed. B. Krawietz and G. Tamer, De Gruyter, Berlin 2013, 445. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) might have derived this term from the *Kitāb al-Fiṭṭān al-milal wa-l-ahwā-l-niṭāl* of the Andalus scholar Ibn Qāzīm (d. 456/1064), which was a source for his polemical treatise. See Ibn Qāzīm, *Kitāb al-Fiṭṭān al-milal wa-l-ahwā-l-niṭāl*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mayra, 2nd ed., 5 vols., Dar al-ḥadīth, Bayrūt 1996, vol. 1, 119.

<sup>17</sup> According to Tieszen (*Christian Identity*, 214), the *Letter of al-Qaṣṣa* may only be farce insofar as it may not have existed as an authentic Christian text in and of itself as we have it today. Instead, it may simply be an accurate summary of the Mozarab priest's line of argumentation that falters in some of its recollection and use of Christian Scripture and doctrine. Likewise, Potthast (*Christen und Muslime im Andalus*, 240) writes: Al-Qaṣṣa's Gesprächspartner wird daher eine umfangreiche theologische Bildung besessen haben, die nur in den *Maqāmāt* aufgrund muslimischer Unwissenheit nicht adäquat abgebildet werden konnte.

<sup>18</sup> *Maqāmāt* ed. al-Ḥarf 33.

in their religion. Thus there is a chance that they may come to the full truth, to which attest the scriptures that Muslims acknowledge.

From this point onwards, the letter presents a series of arguments for the superiority of the Christian religion as well as examples of the perceived deficiencies of Islam: The Our Father is *the best prayer one can pray*<sup>19</sup>. Christians are blessed with the annual descent of the *Holy Fire* in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. God has granted the bishops the power to forgive sins. The Islamic law falls short of the perfection required by the Gospel: *Whoever strikes you on your right cheek, offer him your left one*<sup>20</sup>. The qur<sup>anic</sup> injunctions regulating polygamy, repudiation and remarriage prove that Muslims do not follow the truth. The letter takes particular issue with Q 9:111, in which the promise of Paradise to those who kill or are killed in the way of God is said to be found *in the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Qur<sup>an</sup>* *Yet* the letter retorts, *the Torah and the Gospel state just the opposite!*<sup>21</sup>, a contradiction which Muslims cannot explain away by adducing the abrogation of the previously revealed legislation, as in the case of polygamy, repudiation and remarriage. Furthermore, the Qur<sup>an</sup> is simply wrong about Mary, the mother of Christ: *The name of her father was Joachim, and you have taken her to be the daughter of *Imr<sup>an</sup>*, who was the sister of Moses and Aaron* explains the letter<sup>22</sup>. The Qur<sup>an</sup> is also said to contradict the biblical story of the fall of Ibl<sup>is</sup>, another difficulty Muslims cannot escape by citing the theory of abrogation, since it is not a matter of legislation<sup>23</sup>. Nonetheless, some Muslims explain such discrepancies by adducing the textual corruption of the Jewish and Christian scriptures<sup>24</sup>. The letter adamantly rebuffs this accusation as being *Just words that you have made up yourselves* and as being part and parcel of the unbelief of Muslims<sup>25</sup>. The letter goes on to affirm the divine favour that Christians enjoy as shown by the continuous presence of signs and miracles among them. Next,

<sup>19</sup> *Maq<sup>alat</sup> al-*Chr<sup>ist</sup>** 34.

<sup>20</sup> *Maq<sup>alat</sup> al-*Chr<sup>ist</sup>** 35.

<sup>21</sup> *Maq<sup>alat</sup> al-*Chr<sup>ist</sup>** 36.

<sup>22</sup> *Maq<sup>alat</sup> al-*Chr<sup>ist</sup>** 36.

<sup>23</sup> Unlike other arguments of the *Letter of al-*Q<sup>ur<sup>an</sup></sup>** the question about the conflicting accounts of the fall of Ibl<sup>is</sup> is not taken up by al-*Qazra* in his refutation. This absence seems to exclude the possibility that al-*Qazra* himself could have entirely composed the alleged Christian letter as an excuse to deploy his attack on Christianity. For earlier examples of negative Christian reactions to the qur<sup>anic</sup> story of the fall of Ibl<sup>is</sup> (Q 2:34; 7:11-18; 15:26-43; 17:61-65; 18:50-51; 20:116; and 38:71-85), see S. Minov, *Satan's Refusal to Worship Adam: A Jewish Motif and Its Reception in Syriac Christian Tradition* in *Tradition, Transmission, and Transformation from Second Temple Literature through Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*, ed. M. Kister et al., Brill, Leiden 2015, 258-267; see, for instance, the writings of the Chalcedonian monk Anastasios of Sinai (d. ca. 700), who dismisses the idea that *Satan* fell away because of his not paying homage to Adam *as silly myths [that] belong to the Pagans and Arabs* J.A. Munitiz (trans.), *Anastasios of Sinai: Questions and Answers*, Brepols, Turnhout 2011, 195 (cited by Minov, 258).

<sup>24</sup> The literature on the topic is abundant. A good entry point is A. Saeed, *The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures* *Muslim World* 92 (2002) 419-436.

<sup>25</sup> *Maq<sup>alat</sup> al-*Chr<sup>ist</sup>** 37.

it denounces the qurʾānic view of heaven as a place of eating and drinking and copulation. Christians do believe in the resurrection of the body, but we shall not eat nor drink.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the letter draws a severe contrast between the spread of the religion of the cross without the sword and without coercion and Islam's triumph on earth by the sword and coercion. This contrast only reflects the behaviour of their respective founders: whereas Muḥammad fought all the nations and subdued them by his sword, Christ came only as a servant and in weakness, and He did not fight anyone.<sup>27</sup> The letter concludes by inviting its addressee to consider the advice offered, hoping that God will make it a light to guide him.

In what follows, I offer an emendation to ʿAbd al-Maʿūd al-Ḥarfī's edition of the preface of *Maqāni al-Qalb*, which includes the *Letter of al-Qurṭubī*. Changes have been made on the basis of the variants within the manuscript tradition as listed in the critical apparatus of the two published editions of the *Maqāni* to which I refer the interested reader<sup>28</sup>. I have also considered the remarks of Samir Khalil in this review of al-Ḥarfī's edition, as well as the passages of the *Letter of al-Qurṭubī* quoted by al-Ḥazraʿī's fellow Cordovan, Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī (d. 656/1258), in his work of anti-Christian polemic entitled *Ḥadīth bi-maʿy al-Naṣṣāmin al-faṣḥ wa-l-awḥān*<sup>29</sup>. The translation of the *Letter of al-Qurṭubī* largely follows and completes that

<sup>26</sup> *Maqāni* ed. al-Ḥarfī 38. The carnality of the qurʾānic description of heaven is a classical topos of anti-Muslim polemics. A panoramic view of the development of this polemical motif in Christian-Muslim controversy is furnished in B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Barṣa: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam*, Brill, Leiden 2009, 121-128.

<sup>27</sup> *Maqāni* ed. al-Ḥarfī 38.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Ḥarfī's edition of the *Maqāni al-Qalb* is based on the following nine manuscripts (see Introduction, 18-25): MS Istanbul, Aya Sofiya 2367 (19th century); MS Istanbul, Aḥmet III 1863 (19th century); MS Tunis, Al-Maktaba al-Waṣṣaniyya 14472 (16th century) [previously MS Tunis, Al-Maktaba al-Aḥmadiyya 2063 (16th century)]; MS Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayı R 506/3 (possibly 18th century); MS Istanbul, Maktabat Asʿad Effendi 6/4 (18th century); MS Tunis, Al-Maktaba al-Waṣṣaniyya 18545 (19th century); MS Tunis, Al-Maktaba al-Waṣṣaniyya 13659 (19th century); MS Tunis, private copy belonging to Muḥammad al-Ḥilālī al-Nayfar (19th century); and MS Tunis, Al-Maktaba al-Waṣṣaniyya 8983 (19th century). As for ʿAbd al-Ḥarfī's edition, it is based on two manuscripts (see Introduction, 40-46): MS Istanbul, Aḥmet III 1863 (19th century) and MS Tunis, Al-Maktaba al-Aḥmadiyya 2063 (16th century) [= MS Tunis, Al-Maktaba al-Waṣṣaniyya 14472 (16th century)]. ʿAbd al-Ḥarfī also used a work published in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century by Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Malḥūm under the title *al-Faṣḥ bayna l-Ḥaqq wa-l-Baṭal* (al-Qḥira 1898). This work was in reality the *Maqāni al-Qalb*. Al-Malḥūm however, created a fictitious historical setting: an encounter between an Egyptian Christian named ʿAnnā Maḥmūd al-Ḥawṣ and a Muslim visitor called ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muḥammad who was the alleged author of al-Ḥazraʿī's text.

<sup>29</sup> See Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī *al-Ḥadīth bi-maʿy al-Naṣṣāmin al-faṣḥ wa-l-awḥān wa-l-ḥadīth maʿīn al-Islām wa-l-ḥadīth nubuwwat nabiyyin* Muḥammad, ed. Aḥmad ʿIzz al-Saqqā Dī al-Turḥān al-ʿArabī al-Qḥira 1980, 250-251, 410 and 448. Born in Cordoba in 578/1182-83, al-Qurṭubī's biographers mention that he left his native city in his early twenties in search of knowledge, spending some years in Tlemcen, Fez and Ceuta, in North Africa, before returning to Cordoba. We also hear of a sojourn in Granada some years later. When he was about forty years old, al-Qurṭubī went on pilgrimage to Mecca, visiting Tunis and Alexandria on the way. Apparently, he never returned to al-Andalus, but settled in Alexandria where he became a respected teacher and scholar, eventually dying there on 4 Ḥi-l-Qaḍā

of Thomas Burman, but modified to reflect my own reading of the Arabic text<sup>30</sup>. Words between square brackets, including paragraph titles, have been added to facilitate the understanding of the text.

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[MAQAM AL-ULBON Preface]

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. May God bless our lord Muḥammad and his family and grant them abundant peace.

When the decree of God the Most High concerning the destruction of the sovereignty of Cordoba and the dispersion of its inhabitants took effect, with the subsequent hardships following upon it, a young man from Cordoba, of the house of ʿAbd al-ʿaqq al-ʿazraʿ, renowned for his intelligence, made his way to Toledo. In Toledo, there was a priest of Gothic descent who was constantly raising religious objections to a group of Muslims who frequented him. They began to bring their questions to the young man [from Cordoba], who would answer them, and they would then take back the answers to the priest. The priest refused to accept their rejoinder because he knew that they were not intelligent persons. He questioned them one day and they told him about the young man. The Goth wrote a personal letter and asked them to take it to him and bring back his response.

This is the text of his letter:

[Letter of al-Qurṭubī]

From So-and-so to So-and-so. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one God. Peace be upon you, and the mercy of God and His blessings, O young Ishmaelite, Muslim, Muḥammadan.

[Believe in the Trinity and you will gain Paradise]

After the praise of God Who guided us to His religion and strengthened us with His right hand and set us apart through His beloved Son, and bestowed upon us mercy through the cross of Jesus (Yasūʿ), the Messiah, our God, Who created {the heavens

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656/2 November 1258. On this scholar and his anti-Christian polemical work, see Potthast, *Christen und Muslime im Andalus*, 316-421, and D.R. Sarrió Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarṭubī* (d. 684/1285), Brill, Leiden 2014, 82-90. On al-Qurṭubī's references to the *Letter of al-Qurṭubī* see Aillet, *Les mozarabes*, 221-222. In Aillet's view, the *Letter of al-Qurṭubī* clearly is *l'œuvre de la supercherie littéraire*. In other words, the letter would be a forgery, written most probably by al-ʿazraʿ himself, as a pretext to refute Christianity and assert the truth of Islam.

<sup>30</sup> T.E. Burman (trans.), *Mozarabic Refutation of Islam* (ca. 1140) in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, ed. O.R. Constable, 2nd ed., University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2012, 190-194. A complete German translation of the *Letter of al-Qurṭubī* is provided in Potthast, *Christen und Muslime im Andalus*, 533-537.



and the earth and all that is in them} (Q 5:120) and Who redeemed us by His holy blood, and lifted from our necks the sin which was on the necks of the sons of Adam because of his having eaten from the tree that was forbidden to him for the Messiah saved us by His blood and redeemed us and protected us from the suffering of Gehenna; He shed His blood to make satisfaction for all the offspring of Adam since the sin remained on the necks of all of them; all were saved from it except whoever disbelieved in Him and doubted Him if you desire that God would cover you with His mercy and that you would gain His Paradise, then believe in God and confess that the Messiah is the Son of God Who is God, and the Holy Spirit: three hypostases in one substance<sup>31</sup>, and then you will prosper and be rightly guided<sup>32</sup>.

[The divinity of Christ]

Have you not heard what is in the Book your lawgiver brought, that [the Messiah] is the Spirit of God and His Word<sup>33</sup> and that He was {eminent in this world and the next and one of those brought near [to God]} (Q 3:45)? And who is more eminent in this world and the next than the Messiah, the Son of God? And in the Book your lawgiver brought [it is written] that He restored the dead to life and this suffices as evidence that He is God<sup>34</sup>.

[The sending of the Apostles]

Then He strengthened some of His apostles (aw-iyy) with the power to restore the dead to life and they restored the dead to life just as the Messiah had done<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Literally, three hypostases (aq) in one hypostasis (qun) which makes no sense. The Greek term *hypostasis*, used in Christian theology to refer to the threeness of the Trinity, was translated into Syriac as *qnom* which was then transliterated into Arabic as *uqn* / *aqn* / *qun* (pl. *aqn*). See S.P. Brock, 'The Christology of the Church of the East' in *Traditions and Heritage of the Christian East*, ed. A. Muraviev and D. Afinogenov, Izdatelstvo 'Drik' Moscow 1996, 159-179, reprinted in S.P. Brock, *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2006, III. See also Bo Holmberg, 'Person in the Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Arabic Apologetics and Its Background in the Syriac Church Fathers' in *Studia Patristica* 25, ed. E.A. Livingstone, Peeters, Leuven 1993, 300-307.

<sup>32</sup> Compare with Potthast's interpretation:

Wenn du willst, dass Gott dich mit seiner Gnade einhüllt und dass du seinen Garten erringst, so glaube an Gott und sag: *Der Messias, der Sohn Gottes, ist Gott. Durch den Heiligen Geist sind drei Hypostasen (uqn) eine einzige Hypostase*. Du wirst Erfolg haben und rechtgeleitet sein (p. 533).

<sup>33</sup> Reference to Q 4:171, a qur'anic passage to which Christian apologists have turned again and again as a proof-text in defense of the veracity of the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Incarnation. Perhaps the earliest case of Christian awareness of this passage is found in a letter of the Syrian Orthodox bishop, Jacob of Edessa (d. 708). See S.H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 2008, 31-32.

<sup>34</sup> See Q 3:49.

<sup>35</sup> The qur'anic word aw-iyy (sing. aw) is an Ethiopic loan word meaning 'apostles'. The Qur'an employs it four times to refer to the close disciples of Jesus (see Q 3:52, 5:11-12, 61:14).

<sup>36</sup> See Matt 10:8.

And, after giving His laws to them, the Messiah sent them out to all the nations, enjoining them to spread His authority<sup>37</sup>. The people saw Him with their own eyes as He humbled himself before them. Thus it was their duty to do just as they saw their Creator do<sup>38</sup>.

[*The reason for the Incarnation*]

For truly, when He (to Whom belong Might and Majesty!) addressed the world through the mouths<sup>39</sup> of His prophets, He made them His messengers and mediators to His creatures, to teach them to acknowledge His lordship. [The prophets] decreed that they abandon their idols and images whose perverseness was spread over all the earth. Then He (praise be upon Him!) descended from heaven to address humankind personally so that they might have no cause against Him, for their cause is cut short by the very fact of His having spoken to them Himself, directly, and not through a mediator. For from one who had broken his compact with God, all excuses faded once God Himself had intervened in order to bring to completion His mercy toward humankind.

[*The fact of the Incarnation*]

Thus, He personally descended from heaven and was made flesh (*ilṭaḥama*) in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Maiden, Mother of the Light. He took on a veil (ḥiṭḥ) from her just as He had anticipated in His eternal wisdom, because ḥiṭḥ in the beginning was the Word and the Word was God (John 1:1)<sup>40</sup>. He is creature with respect to the body (ḥism) and Creator with respect to the spirit (*nafs*), He created His body and He created His mother. His mother existed before Him in His humanity and He existed before her in His divinity. He is completely God and completely human being.

<sup>37</sup> See Matt 28:19-20.

<sup>38</sup> See Phil 2:1-11.

<sup>39</sup> Literally, ḥuṭuṭ.

<sup>40</sup> On the diffusion in al-Andalus of the theological understanding of Jesus Christ as ḥiṭḥ the human veil (al-ḥiṭḥ al-insānī) through which God could address humankind, see Potthast, *Christen und Muslime im Andalus*, 424-458, and Aillet, *Les mozarabes*, 231-234. Although the *Letter of al-Qurṭūbī* does not make any explicit connection in this regard, the reference to a ḥiṭḥ recalls Q 42:51: ḥiṭḥ belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him, except by revelation, or from behind a veil (ḥiṭḥ), or that He should send a messenger and he reveal whatsoever He will, by His leave. Indeed, a number of Arab Christian apologists evoked this qurṭūbī passage, suggesting that ḥiṭḥ the veil the Qurṭūbī mentions is none other than the human nature of the Messiah, from behind which the Son of God, God the Word, addressed mankind (Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow*, 169). See also S.Kh. Samir, ḥiṭḥ The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity (c. 750) in *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, ed. S.Kh. Samir and J.S. Nielsen, Brill, Leiden 1994, 96-97:

ḥiṭḥ Mankind was not able to look towards God and live. For that reason God veiled Himself through a Man (ḥiṭḥ al-ḥiṭḥ al-insānī) without sin. So He showed us mercy in Christ, and brought us near to Him.

On the ḥiṭḥ theme in relation to the Incarnation, see also J.C. Block, *The Qurṭūbī in Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Historical and Modern Interpretations*, Routledge, London 2014, 93, 98, 101-102, 112, 167-168.

[*God took revenge for the sin of Adam with the crucifixion of Jesus*]

It is part of His total mercy toward humankind that He consented to shed His blood for its members on the wood of the cross. Thus, He placed himself in the hands of the Jews, His enemies, to execute His wrath upon them. They took Him and crucified Him. His blood sank into His finger, because if some of it had fallen on the earth, the earth would have dried up □ only a small bit fell on the wood of the cross, and flowers sprang there<sup>41</sup>. It is impossible in God's eternal wisdom that He should take revenge on His disobedient servant Adam, who had wronged Him and shown insufficient respect for Him. God did not want to take revenge on him because of the contrast between His elevated rank as Master and the lowness of that of His servant. [God] chose to take His revenge on the human being who is a God like Himself, and so He took revenge for the sin of Adam with the crucifixion of Jesus (ﷺ<sup>2</sup>), the Messiah, Who is God [and thus] equal to Him<sup>43</sup>.

[*Muslim denial of the crucifixion*]

And so the Son of God (to Whom belong Might and Majesty!), He who is God, was crucified on Friday at the ninth hour<sup>44</sup>. The accursed Jews crucified Him. And the Jews acknowledge that they crucified Him, whereas you [Muslims] deny this, an act

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<sup>41</sup> The Arabic text is a bit confusing here and we should exclude a corruption in the transmission. The background of the passage is the medieval Legend of the Cross, a complex narrative construction which developed around the material instrument of Christ's passion between the early fifth and the fourteenth century. According to some versions of the legend, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil furnished the wood for the cross on which Jesus died. It is said that flowers sprang from the wood of the cross when the blood of Christ fell on it. See, among others, B. Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, Brill, Leiden 2004. Compare with Aillet's translation of the same paragraph quoted in al-Qurṭūbī *al-Ḥaṣṣ*, 250:

□ls [les juifs] s'comparèrent de lui et le crucifièrent, et son sang sécha sur ses doigts, car si des gouttes en étaient tombées sur le sol, elles auraient desséché tout ce qu'elles auraient atteint, comme les flammes asséchant tout ce qu'elles touchent (Aillet, *Les mozarabes*, 222).

Aillet's misunderstanding of the text (he translates the Arabic *nuww* as flames instead of flowers) reinforces his belief that the *Letter of al-Qurṭūbī* is a forgery. He comments: □ obsession du pseudo-prêtre à l'égard de la valeur miraculeuse du sang christique est par contre beaucoup plus insolite, car les Évangiles n'identifient nullement le sang répandu à cette image du feu, symbole de la colère et de la toute-puissance de Dieu. Visiblement, il s'agit ici de préparer une diatribe contre la superstition des chrétiens, adonnés au culte des miracles (ibid.).

<sup>42</sup> Qurṭūbī's name for Jesus.

<sup>43</sup> Compare with Aillet's translation of the same paragraph quoted in al-Qurṭūbī *al-Ḥaṣṣ*, 251:

□ n'est pas possible, dans toute sa Sagesse éternelle, que Dieu se venge de son serviteur désobéissant, Adam, celui qui a commis la faute et qui a négligé sa puissance. Dieu n'a pas voulu se venger de lui. Pour élever la dignité du Seigneur et faire descendre celle du Serviteur, il a voulu se faire honorer par l'homme qui est divin comme lui. Il a obtenu justice pour le péché d'Adam par la mise en croix de Jésus le Messie qui est Dieu, et il a effacé le péché avec lui (Aillet, *Les mozarabes*, 222).

<sup>44</sup> See Mark 15:33-34; Matt 27:45-46.

of unbelief on your part because for us the denial of the crucifixion<sup>45</sup> is unbelief, so that everyone who denies it is an unbeliever.

[*Believe that Christ is God and your belief will be complete*]

Nevertheless you [Muslims] exalt the Messiah and because of this I hope that God will guide you to the truth. All your doctrines are good and there was among you much justice and general goodness at the origin of your religion. So if you were to believe in the Messiah and affirm that He is God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, your belief would be complete<sup>46</sup>. There is no doubt that you<sup>47</sup> read the Torah, the Psalms and the Books of the Prophets; take heed [of them], for in these are found attestations of all of this.

[*The superiority of Christian prayer*]

Our prayer is the best prayer one can pray. It is as follows: **Our Father** Who are in heaven. Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us the bread that is convenient<sup>48</sup> for us. And forgive us our sins

<sup>45</sup> The manuscript tradition hesitates concerning the word here translated as **crucifixion** **Al-ḥarf** opts for **ḥiyya**. I prefer **ḥiyya**, which is another of the textual variants listed and which Samir (Maqṣūd al-ḥiyya 253) thinks could be another Arabic calque from the Latin *crucifixio*. The word **ḥiyya** does not appear in Georg Graf's lexicon of Christian Arabic terminology but does appear in the *Kitāb nuzhat al-muḥarrir* al-ḥiyya, the famous work of descriptive geography written by Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (d. 560/1165). Among the sites in Jerusalem, he mentions the Gate of the Crucifixion (**ḥiyya**) as well as the place of the crucifixion (**makān al-ḥiyya**). See G. Graf, *Verzeichnis arabischer kirchlicher Termini*, L. Durbecq, Louvain 1954; al-Idrīsī *Opus Geographicum, sive Liber ad eorum dilectionem qui terras peragrarare student* fasc. IV, ed. A. Bombaci et al., Instituto Universitario Orientale, Naples *Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente*, Rome 1974, 359. See French translation by P.A. Jaubert, *Géographie d'Édrisi traduite de l'arabe en français d'après deux manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi et accompagnée de notes*, Paris 1836, vol. 1, 342.

<sup>46</sup> Urvoy's argument against the authenticity of the *Letter of al-Qaṣṣ* on the grounds that this positive view of Islam as lacking only the confession of Christ's divinity in order to be perfect is not attested among Christians before the end of the thirteenth century is not compelling on its own. In my view, these positive remarks are more an exercise of *captatio benevolentiae* than they are a theological assessment of Islam. The rest of the letter makes it clear that Islam is perceived as being deficient in several areas, and not just with regards to Christology. See D. Urvoy, *Pensiers d'al-Andalus: La vie intellectuelle à Cordoue et Séville au temps des empires Berbères (fin XI<sup>e</sup> siècle-début XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Presses Universitaires du Mirail, Toulouse 1990, 166.

<sup>47</sup> **ḥiyya** singular, i.e., the Muslim young man from Cordoba.

<sup>48</sup> **mulḥim**: attested in the Arabic version reproduced in Sinai Arabic Codex 69 (1065). See J.P. Monferrer Sala, *Ḥiyya-l-ḥiyya-samḥa... Notas sobre antiguas versiones árabes del Padre Nuestro* *Al-Qanṣara* 21 (2000) 277-305, here 289. The surviving manuscripts of al-Qaṣra's work give us different possibilities. One of them is **muyḥim**, a word not attested in Arabic, but which could be a copyist's mistake, the original word being **muyḥim**, daily, which is used in several occidental Arabic versions of the Our Father. See Monferrer Sala, 294-296.

as we forgive those who sin against us. Do not cause us to perish in the test<sup>49</sup> and protect us from the Evil one. This is our prayer.

[God's approval of Christianity]

Every year, in Jerusalem, God makes the light descent upon us from heaven<sup>50</sup>.

Through the hands of our bishops, God has done what He has not done through the hands of anyone else, and this because whatever [the bishops] do on earth, God will do in heaven<sup>51</sup>. Therefore, when we sin, they are the ones who accept our acts of penance and forgive our sins, and in their hands is the salvation (salvation) of the living and the dead.

[The superiority of Christian law]

Many of our bishops have written books discrediting your religion. [The bishops] mention your lawgiver and they describe things in such a way that we see that you [Muslims] do not follow the truth; the truth is rather with us. And there is no benefit in [following] your religious law (law) because we find that there are two kinds of religious injunctions. The first is from the Torah: 'Whoever strikes you, strike him'. The second is from the Gospel: 'Whoever strikes you on your right cheek, offer him your left one'. You see that the second is superior to the first, and you will not find any other third injunction that is not already included in these two<sup>52</sup>.

And what evidence is more convincing of the fact that you [Muslims] do not follow the truth than what is written in your Book: {Marry such women as seem good to you, two, three, four} (Q 4:3). And yet God said in the Gospel that a man should not marry more than one woman, just as was [the case] with Adam and his wife<sup>54</sup>. And it

<sup>49</sup> *al-biqn al-mi'a*: expression used in several oriental and occidental Arabic versions of the Our Father. See Monferrer Sala, *al-biqn al-mi'a* - sam....

<sup>50</sup> Reference to the annual descent of the Holy Fire in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. During this miracle, which supposedly takes place on the eve of Easter Sunday, fire descends from the dome of the Church and lights the lamps hanging above the site believed to be Christ's tomb. Several medieval Christian and Muslim accounts of the miracle can be found in M. Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634-1099*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992, 466-469.

<sup>51</sup> See Matt 16:19.

<sup>52</sup> See Matt 5:38-39.

<sup>53</sup> Compare with Aillet's translation of the same paragraph quoted in al-Qurṭubī *al-faḥḥ*, 448:

«Votre loi ne présente aucun avantage alors que la nôtre possède deux prescriptions. La première nous vient de la Torah, et dit «Celui qui te gifle, gifle-le !». Le seconde nous vient de l'Évangile et affirme : «Celui qui te frappe sur la joue droite, tends-lui la joue gauche» (Aillet, *Les mozarabes*, 221).

Once again, Aillet's misunderstanding of the argument reinforces his conviction that the alleged Christian letter cannot be authentic. He comments: «La tentative de concilier l'inconciliable, c'est-à-dire la loi du Talion avec la célèbre parole évangélique, dénonce la fonction de faire-valoir de ce pastiche entièrement forgé pour recevoir la réponse d'un interlocuteur musulman mieux armé intellectuellement» (*ibid.*).

<sup>54</sup> Not a direct quote. It seems to be referring to Jesus' teaching in Mark 10:1-12 and Matt 19:4-6.

is written in your Book that when a man divorces his wife a third time, {it is not permitted to him to marry her after that, until she marries another husband} (Q 2:230). Yet God said in the Torah, **Whoever** divorces his wife and then wants to return to her again, she is permitted to him as long as no other man has touched her<sup>55</sup>.

And it is written in your Book: {God has bought from the believers their persons and their possessions against the gift of Paradise; they fight in the way of God; they kill, and are killed; that is a promise binding upon God in the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Qurʾān} (Q 9:111). Yet God said in the Torah that there should be no fighting, for the killer and the slain will both end up in Hell<sup>56</sup>. There is nothing surprising in this because you<sup>57</sup> can defend the injunctions I have mentioned from your Book by adducing the abrogation [of the previously revealed legislation], which is one of the preliminary principles at the basis of your religious law. The surprising thing lies only in the words of your Book which state that it is {a promise binding upon God in the Torah and the Gospel} (Q 9:111). Yet the Torah and the Gospel state just the opposite!

#### [Errors in the Qurʾān]

There is also cause for surprise in what [your Book] says about Mary, the mother of the Messiah: {And Mary, daughter of **Imrān**, who guarded her private part} (Q 66:12). And in another passage it says about her: {Sister of Aaron! Your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother a prostitute} (Q 19:28). But the mother of the Messiah was neither the sister of Aaron nor the daughter of **Imrān**. The name of her father was Joachim, and you [Muslims] have taken her to be the daughter of **Imrān**, who was the sister of Moses and Aaron<sup>58</sup>.

And about **Iblīs**, [your lawgiver] has also said in your Book that God cast him to earth when he refused to worship Adam<sup>59</sup>. Yet God had said in the Torah that He cast **Iblīs** from heaven before He created Adam because he wanted to make himself the

<sup>55</sup> **Who** her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled (Deut 24:4 NRSV).

<sup>56</sup> Rather than a reference to a particular biblical passage, this seems to be a simplification **for** the sake of polemics **of** the Mosaic legislation on killing. Strangely enough, the Arabic sentence here translated as **for** the killer and the slain both will end up in Hell (*fa-l-qā'il wa-l-maqūl fī al-nār*) appears literally in a well-attested **hadīth** in which Muḥammad predicts the same fate for two Muslims who confront each other with swords with the intention of killing each other. See, for instance, Muslim b. al-Ḥaḍḍaḍ, **Ṣaḥīḥ** Muḥammad Fuṣṣal, **Abd al-Baqī** 5 vols., Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, **Ḥaḍḍaḍ** al-Baḥā al-Ḥalab al-Qadīra 1955, 2213-2214 (*Kiṭāb al-fitan wa-dawā' al-salāḥ, bāb fī dawā' al-muslim bi-bi-sayfayhim*) nos. 14 and 15).

<sup>57</sup> **You** singular, i.e., the Muslim young man from Cordoba.

<sup>58</sup> See Num 26:59; 1 Chr 6:3.

<sup>59</sup> According to the qurʾānic account, when God orders the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam, **Iblīs** proudly refuses, saying: **I** am better than him: You made me from fire, and him from clay (Q 7:12; 38:76). In this respect, the Qurʾān is closely connected with the Adam tradition of the *Cave of Treasures*, a Christian Syriac writing probably written in the sixth century. See G.S. Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, Routledge, London 2010, 49-51.

equal of God<sup>60</sup>. He prided himself above the angels and told them: □ am made of fire and have no Creator. Make me, therefore, a throne upon which I will be like the Most High □ But he had not finished speaking when God cast him from heaven into the disgrace of the here-below, him and all his companions who had entertained the vile notion [of setting up the throne]<sup>61</sup>.

[*The integrity of Christian Scriptures*]

You [Muslims] say that in the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms and the Prophetic Books there is abundant corruption<sup>62</sup>, and that we have added to them and subtracted from them. But this is part and parcel of your unbelief. You have no evidence of this,

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<sup>60</sup> As Tommaso Tesei remarks in a recent study (□The Fall of Ibl□ and Its Enochic Background□ in *Religious Stories in Transformation: Conflict, Revision and Reception*, ed. A. Houtman et al., Brill, Leiden 2016, 66-81), the qur□anic account of the fall of Ibl□ belongs to that branch of the wider stream of extrabiblical traditions where the rebellion and the fall of Satan take place after the creation of the first man. This version of the story was apparently favoured in the Syriac Christian tradition (see Minov, □Satan□ Refusal to Worship Adam□. Instead, following Augustine, Western Christianity preferred the version of the story where Satan□ primordial transgression takes place before the creation of Adam, which is precisely al-Q□ point here. See in this regard G.A. Anderson, □The Fall of Satan in the Thought of St. Ephrem and John Milton□ *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 3, no. 1 (2000), 9. See also J.-M. Vercruysse, □Les Pères de l□glise et Lucifer (Lucifer d□après Is 14 et Ez 28)□ *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 75, no. 2 (2001) 147-174.

<sup>61</sup> The *Letter of al-Q* seems to reflect here a tradition preserved in 2 *Enoch*, a Jewish pseudepigraphon generally dated to the first century. 2 *Enoch* 29:4-5 describes Satan□ primordial transgression as an attempt to exalt himself above his own rank in the angelic hierarchy established by God. According to this early apocalyptic work, one of the archangels (identified as □Satanail□ in 2 *Enoch* 31:4) conceived an □impossible idea□ namely □that he might place his throne higher than the clouds which are above the earth, and that he might become equal to [God□] power□. It is for this reason that God hurled him out from the height, together with the angels under his authority. This happens on the second day of creation, before the creation of Adam on the sixth day:

<sup>3</sup>And from the rock I cut off a great fire, and from the fire I created the ranks of the bodiless armies □the myriad angels □and their weapons are fiery and their clothes are burning flames. And I gave orders that each one should stand in his own rank. <sup>4</sup>But one from the order of the archangels deviated, together with the division that was under his authority. He thought up the impossible idea, that he might place his throne higher than the clouds which are above the earth, and that he might become equal to my power. <sup>5</sup>And I hurled him out from the height, together with his angels. And he was flying around in the air, ceaselessly, above the Bottomless (2 *Enoch* 29, 3-5).

Trans. F.I. Andersen, □ (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch□ in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. I: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth, Doubleday, New York 1983, 148.

<sup>62</sup> By □corruption□(*fas*), Muslim polemicists who accused Jews and Christians of textual alteration of their scriptures usually meant the presence of what they perceived as theological aberrations, such as anthropomorphic descriptions of God or the attribution of undignified behavior to the prophets that contradicts the Islamic dogma of prophetic impeccability. See, for instance, T. Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn □azm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, GA 1998.

nor is it written in the Book your lawgiver brought. They are just words you have made up yourselves.

*[Miracles confirm the truth of Christianity]*

If you<sup>63</sup> would peruse all of our books, and [perceive] the excellent qualities we had and continue to have to this day □for among us are righteous persons who perform signs and miracles<sup>64</sup>, though they do not make a display of them unless there is need of doing so; and if you could witness the descent of the light which comes to us every year on the night of our Great Feast [of Easter]<sup>65</sup> □you would see something amazing and unique!

*[Muslim teaching about Paradise]*

You [Muslims] say that in Paradise there is eating and drinking and copulation, and that all these things are mentioned in the Book your lawgiver brought. All of this, which we consider to be absolutely impossible, we deny. [We believe,] however, that on the day of resurrection, we shall all be gathered together, each with his body and soul, but we shall not eat nor drink.

*[Islam□triumph by the sword]*

The religion of the cross has spread throughout the earth without the sword and without coercion. Your religion triumphed on the earth by the sword and coercion, and your lawgiver fought the nations and subdued them. He is to blame for the change in our situation and for our being accused of unbelief. In his Book [it is written]: {They are unbelievers who say, □God is the Messiah, Mary□ son□ (Q 5:72). The Arabs entered our towns, uprooted our homes and exposed us to dishonour<sup>66</sup>. When [your lawgiver] believed in God and called people to God, God supported him. Then he fought all the nations and subdued them by his sword. But the Messiah, Mary□ Son, came only as a servant and in weakness, and He did not fight anyone. He was crucified to make satisfaction for us. He is our God, our Creator, our Provider, the One Who gives us life and takes it away. He (to Whom belong Might and Majesty!) forgives our sins by His grace and covers us with His mercy.

*[Conclusion]*

Because of what I have come to know of your noble character, I willingly offer you<sup>67</sup> the advice contained in this letter. Consider it and reflect on it, and God will make it a light to guide you. Amen.

<sup>63</sup> □You□singular, i.e., the Muslim young man from Cordoba.

<sup>64</sup> Literally, □proofs□(bar□□).

<sup>65</sup> A second reference to the annual descent of the □Holy Fire□in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. See note 50 above.

<sup>66</sup> Literally, □ent open our veils or coverings□

<sup>67</sup> □You□singular, i.e., the Muslim young man from Cordoba.



Upon receiving this letter, the young man rebuked those who had brought it to him. He refrained from answering the priest because, being then a mudejar<sup>68</sup> in their midst and under the protection of their religion, he feared him. They<sup>69</sup> persevered in pressing him for a reply [to the priest]. Meanwhile, the time came for the young man to take his leave of them. [But before doing so], he wrote this answer, entitled *Kitāb maqāni al-ḥarb al-ḥalbi wa-rawḥ al-ḥalbi*<sup>70</sup>, which he left with them and went on his way.

## كتاب مقامع الصليبان لأحمد بن عبد الصمد الخزرجي

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وسلم تسليماً.

لما نفذ القضاء من الله تعالى على قرطبة باندثار ملكها وتفرق أهلها لتتابع ضنكها، ألحق منهم بطليطلة صبي من آل عبد الحق الخزرجي يوصف بالذكاء. وكان بها قسّ نسبه من القوط يُكثر من الاعتراض في الدين على نفر كانوا يألّفون له من المسلمين، فجعلوا يرفعون سؤالاتهم إلى الصبي فيجاوبهم الصبي عليها. فيرجعون بذلك إلى القسّ فينكر جوابهم لعلمه أنّهم ليسوا من

<sup>68</sup> *mudaḥḥan*, literally 'one who remains behind' a Muslim who, after the conquest of a territory by a Christian ruler, remained there without changing religion and entered into a relationship of vassalage. The literature on the subject is vast. See, among others, J.-P. Molénat, 'Tolède fin XI<sup>e</sup>-début XII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le problème de la permanence ou de l'émigration des musulmans' in *De Toledo a Huesca. Sociedades medievales en transición a finales del siglo XI (1080-1100)*, ed. C. Laliena Corbera and J.F. Utrilla Utrilla, Institución Fernando el Católico (Zaragoza 1998), 101-111, and Idem, 'Mudéjars et mozarabes à Tolède du XII<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècles' *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 63-64 (1992) 143-153. On the Mudejar literature of religious polemics with the Christians and the Jews, see the forthcoming study of M. Colominas Aparicio, *The Religious Polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia Identity and Religious Authority in Mudejar Islam*, Leiden, Brill 2018.

<sup>69</sup> That is, the group of Muslims who frequented the Toledo priest.

<sup>70</sup> The extant manuscripts and the Arabic bibliographical tradition refer to al-Qasbi's work under different titles. See a list in al-Qasbi's Introduction to *Maqāni al-ḥarb al-ḥalbi*, 11-13. See also De la Granja Santamaría, 'Milagros españoles en una obra polémica musulmana' 324-325.

أهل الذكاء. واستفهمهم مرّة فأعلموه بالصبيّ. فكتب القوطي عن نفسه كتاباً  
وسألهم أن يوصلوه إليه، ويأتوا منه بجواب.  
وهذا نصّ كتابه:

من فلان إلى فلان: باسم الآب والابن والروح القدس إله واحد.  
سلام عليك أيها الفتى الإسماعيليّ المسلم المحمّديّ ورحمة الله وبركاته.

أمّا بعد حمد الله الذي هدانا لدينه وأيدنا بيمينه، وخصّنا بابنه ومحبوبه  
ومنّ علينا رحمة بصليبه، يسوع المسيح إلهنا، الذي خلق السماوات  
والأرض وما فيهنّ، والذي فدانا بدمه المقدّس، ورفع عن أعناقنا الخطيئة  
التي كانت في أعناق بني آدم بسبب أكله من الشجرة التي نهى عنها،  
فخلصنا المسيح بدمه وفدانا، ومن عذاب جهنّم وقانا. هرق دمه في مرضاة  
جميع ولد آدم إذ كان الذنب باقياً في أعناق جميعهم، فكلّهم تخلص منه إلّا من  
كفر به وشكّ فيه. فإذا أردت أن يتغمّدك الله برحمته وتفوز بجنته فأمن  
بالله، وقل المسيح ابن الله الذي هو إله، وروح القدس، ثلاثة أقانيم في  
أقنوم واحد، فستنجد وتُرشد.

ألم تسمع ما في الكتاب الذي جاء به صاحب شريعتك أنّه روح الله  
وكلمته وأنّه كان ﴿وجيئاً في الدنيا والآخرة ومن المقربين﴾؟ وأين أوجه في  
الدنيا والآخرة من المسيح ابن الله؟ وفي الكتاب الذي جاء به صاحب  
شريعتك أنّه أحيى الموتى. وكفى بذلك دليلاً على أنّه هو الله.

ثمّ إنّّه أيّد بإحياء الموتى بعض الحواريين فأحيوا الموتى كمثل ما فعل  
المسيح. وأرسلهم المسيح إلى جميع الأجناس، وأمرهم بإفشاء أمره بعد أن

كان هو بذل لهم شرائعه بنفسه، ورآه الناس بأعينهم وهو يتواضع فوجب عليهم أن يفعلوا كما رأوا خالقهم يفعل.

لأنه عز وجل لما كلم العالم على السنة أنبيائه الذين جعلهم رسله ووسائطه إلى خلقه، ليعلموهم الإقرار بربوبيته، وشرعوا لهم ترك أوثانهم وأصنامهم الفاشية ضلالتها في جميع الأرض. فنزل هو سبحانه من بعد ذلك من السماء ليكلّم الناس بذاته، لئلا تكون لهم حجة عليه، فتقطع حجّتهم من أجل أن كلمهم بذاته لا بواسطة بينهم وبينه. فارتفعت المعاذير عن ضييع عهده بعدما كلمهم بذاته إتماماً لرحمته على الناس.

فهبط بذاته من السماء والتحم في بطن مريم العذراء البتول أمّ النور، فأخذ منها حجاباً كما سبق في حكمته الأزليّة، لأنه "في البدء كانت الكلمة والكلمة هو الله". وهو مخلوق من طريق الجسم وخالق من طريق النفس. وهو خلق جسمه وهو خلق أمّه، أمّه كانت من قبله بالناسوت وهو كان من قبلها باللاهوت، وهو الإلاه التام، وهو الإنسان التام.

ومن تمام رحمته على الناس أنّه رضي بهرق دمه عنهم في خشبة الصليب. فمكّن اليهود أعداءه من نفسه ليتّم سخطه عليهم، فأخذوه وصلبوه، وغار دمه في إصبعة لأنه لو وقع منه شيء في الأرض لبيست، إلّا شيء يسير وقع فيها فنبت في موضعه التّوّار. لأنه لا يمكن في الحكمة الأزليّة أن ينتقم الله من عبده العاصي آدم الذي ظلمه واستهان بقدره، فلم يرد الله الانتقام منه لاعتلاء منزلة السيّد وسقوط منزلة العبد. أراد أن ينتصف من الإنسان الذي هو إلاه مثله، فانتصف من خطيئة آدم بصلب عيسى المسيح الذي هو إلاه متساوٍ معه.

فُصِّلَ ابن الله عزَّ وجلَّ، الذي هو الله، في الساعة التاسعة من يوم الجمعة، صلبته اليهود الملاعين. واليهود تقرُّ أنَّها صلبته، وأنتم تنكرون ذلك كفرًا منكم لأنَّ إنكار الصلوبيَّة عندنا كفر، فكلَّ من ينكرها فهو كافر.

ولكنكم تعظّمون المسيح، فمن أجل ذلك أرتجي لكم أن يهديكم الله إلى الحق. وما عقائدكم كلّها إلَّا حسنة، وكان عندكم عدل كثير في أصل دينكم، وخير شامل، فلو آمنتم بالمسيح وقلتم إنَّه هو الله خالق السماوات والأرض لكمل إيمانكم. ولا شكَّ أنَّك تقرُّ التوراة والزبور والنبؤات، فاعتبر ففيها شواهد على ذلك كلّ.

وصلاتنا أحسن صلاة تقرُّ، وهي هذه : أبانا الذي أنت في السماء، تقدّس اسمك، وليأت ملكك، ولتكن إرادتك في السماء مثلها في الأرض. أعطنا خبزنا الملائم، واغفر لنا ذنوبنا كما تغفر نحن لمن أذنب إلينا، ولا توبقنا في المحنة وسلّمنا من الشرّير. فهذه صلاتنا.

وينزل الله علينا من السماء النور في كلّ سنة في بيت المقدس.

وقد جعل الله في أيدي المطارين ما لم يجعله في يد أحد، وذلك لأنَّ جميع ما يفعلونه في الأرض يفعله الله في السماء، فإذا أذنبنا فهم الذين يقبلون التوبات، ويعفون عن السيئات، وبأيديهم صلاح الأحياء والأموات.

وأما دينكم فقد ألّف كثير من أساقفتنا كتبًا في الطعن عليه، وذكروا صاحب شريعتكم، ووصفوا أشياء. فرأينا أنكم لستم على الحق، وإنّا الحق معنا، ولا فائدة في شريعتكم لأننا نجد الأحكام الشرعيّة حكمين: الأول التوراتي الذي هو "من لطمك فالطمه"، والآخر الإنجيلي الذي هو "من

لطم خدّك الأيمن فانصب له الأيسر". وأنت ترى فضل هذا على الأوّل، ثمّ لا تجد لهذين الحكّمين ثالثًا إلّا كان داخلًا فيهما.

وأنيّ دليل يُطلّب على أنكم لستم على الحقّ أكبر من أن يكون مكتوبًا في كتابكم: ﴿انكحوا ما طاب لكم من النساء مثنى وثلاث ورباع﴾، والله قد قال في الإنجيل: "لا يتزوَّج الرجل إلّا امرأة واحدة كما كان آدم وزوجته". وكُتِبَ في كتابكم أنّ الرجل إذا طلق امرأته ثلاثًا ﴿لا تحلّ له .. حتى تنكح زوجًا غيره﴾ والله قد قال في التوراة: "من طلق امرأته ثمّ أحبّ مراجعتها فهي تحلّ له ما لم يمسه رجل آخر".

وكُتِبَ في كتابكم: ﴿إنّ الله اشترى من المؤمنين أنفسهم وأموالهم بأنّ لهم الجنة يقاتلون في سبيل الله فيقتلون ويقتلون وعدًا عليه حقًّا في التوراة والإنجيل والقرآن﴾، وقد قال الله في التوراة أن لا يكون قتال بين بني آدم فالقاتل والمقتول في النار. وليس العجب من هذا فإنّ الذي ذكرت لك عن كتابك من الأحكام يمكنك أن تحتجّ فيه بالنسخ الذي هو مقدّمة من مقدّمات أصل شريعتك. وإنّما العجب من قوله مخبرًا ﴿وعدًا عليه حقًّا في التوراة والإنجيل﴾، وما في التوراة والإنجيل إلّا ضدّ ذلك!

والعجب أيضًا من قوله عن مريم أمّ المسيح: ﴿ومريم ابنت عمران التي أحصنت فرجها﴾. وقال عنها في موضع آخر: ﴿يا أخت هارون ما كان أبوك امرأ سوء وما كانت أمك بغيا﴾. وليست أمّ المسيح بأخت هارون ولا بابنة عمران، وإنّما اسم أيها يُوَقِّم، فتوهّمتم أنها ابنة عمران التي كانت أخت موسى وهارون.

وقال أيضًا في كتابكم عن إبليس إنّ الله أسقطه إلى الأرض لما أبى أن يسجد لآدم. وقد قال في التوراة إنّه أسقط إبليس من السماء قبل أن يخلق آدم لأنه أراد أن يجعل نفسه ندًّا لله واعتزّ على الملائكة وقال لهم: أنا من نار ولا خالق لي، فاجعلوا لي كرسيًّا أكون عليه شبه العليّ. فلم يتمّ قوله حتّى أسقطه الله من السماء إلى خزي دار الدنيا، هو وجميع أصحابه الذين داخلتهم الفكرة الدنيّة.

وأتمّ تقولون إنّ في التوراة والإنجيل والزبور والنبوّات فسادًا كثيرًا، وإنّا قد زدنا فيها ونقّصنا، وهذا من كفركم. وليس عندكم على ذلك دليل، ولا هو أيضًا مكتوب في الكتاب الذي جاء به صاحب شريعتكم، وإنّا كلام قلتموه أتمّ.

فلو أنّك تطالع جميع كتبنا، وما كان لنا من الفضائل، وحتّى إلى الآن، فإنّ منّا أقوامًا صالحين يعملون الآيات والبراهين ولكنّهم لا يظهرونها إلّا في وقت الحاجة إليها. ولو شاهدت نزول النور الذي يأتينا في كلّ سنة ليلة عيدنا الكبير، لرأيت أمرًا عجيبًا وشيئًا غريبًا.

وأتمّ تقولون إنّ في الجنّة أكلًا وشربًا ونكاحًا، وجميع ذلك مذكور في الكتاب الذي جاء به صاحب شريعتكم. ونحن ننكر جميع ذلك، ولا يمكن بوجه من الوجوه عندنا ذلك. إلّا أنّنا إذا حُشرنا يوم القيامة حُشرنا بأجسادنا ونفوسنا، ولكن لا نأكل ولا نشرب.

ودين الصليب فشا في الأرض دون سيف ولا قهر، ودينكم ظهر بالسيف والقهر في الأرض، وقاتل صاحب شريعتكم الأمم وغلِبهم، وكان سببًا

في تغيير أمرنا وتكفيرنا. وفي كتابه: ﴿لقد كفر الذين قالوا إنّ الله هو المسيح ابن مريم﴾ ودخلت العرب بلادنا، واستأصلت ديارنا، وهتكت أستارنا. لكنّه لما آمن بالله ودعا إلى الله، أعانه الله، فقاتل جميع الأمم فغلبهم بسيفه. وإنّا جاء المسيح ابن مريم مهينًا ضعيفًا، ولم يقاتل أحدًا، وُصِّلَ في مرضاتنا، وهو إلهنا وخالقنا ورازقنا وميتنا ومحيينا، وهو عزّ وجلّ بفضله يغفر ذنوبنا ويتغمّدنا برحمته.

وأنا قد بذلت لك النصيحة في هذه الرسالة، لما ظهر لي من نبلك، فاعتبرها وتدبرها، والله يجعلها نورك وسبب هداك آمين.

فلما وقف الصبيّ على هذه الرسالة زجر موصليها وامتنع من مراجعة القسّ تخوّفًا منه، لكونه يومئذ مُدَجَّنًا بين ظهرائهم وفي كف ديارتهم. فألحوا عليه في الجواب، وفي خلال ذلك حان سفره عنهم، وكتب هذا الجواب المسّمي بمقامع هامات الصلبان وروائع روضات الإيمان، وغادره عندهم ومضى.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Le présent article est une introduction à la *Lettre d'al-Q* brève polémique anti-islamique en arabe prétendument écrite par un prêtre anonyme à Tolède au 12<sup>ème</sup> siècle dans les années 40 ; il fournit aussi la traduction intégrale de la *Lettre* en anglais avec une édition amendée du texte arabe, publié pour la première fois par Abdelmajid Charfi en 1975.

