

8. Saudi Arabia (1968-1974): Once Again Against Christian Theology

8.1. The Hijab Revisited

The year 1968 marks the starting point of a new period in Al-Hilālī's life, as it witnessed his move to Saudi Arabia to take up the invitation from Ibn Bāz (d.1999), the incumbent Grand *Mufti* of Saudi Arabia. From 1968 to 1974, Al-Hilālī served as professor of the Islamic Faith at the Faculty of *Da'wa* and Theology of the Islamic University in Medina.¹

As mentioned in Chapter 3, as early as the year 1933, Al-Hilālī had written a booklet in which he expressed his legal opinion on the issue of the veil. In this booklet, *Al-Isfār 'an al-ḥaqq fī mas'alat al-Sufūr wa-l-ḥijāb* (Uncovering the Truth about the Issue of the Uncovering and Covering the Hands and the Face), he had provided no fewer than twenty-three arguments from the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* and the opinions of the four Sunni schools to substantiate the view which says that a Muslim woman can disclose her hands and her face. The booklet was severely criticized by Ṣafīyy al-Rāḥmān al-Mubarfūrī in his book *'Ibrāz al-Ḥaqq wa al-Ṣawāb fī mas'alat al-sufūr wa-l-ḥijāb'* (The Truth Revealed about the Issue of the Uncovering and Covering the Hands and the Face), published in Riyadh in 1991, in which he criticized Al-Hilālī's views on the veil, especially objecting to his claim that the Quranic verse about the *niqāb* [33:53] applied only to the wives of the Prophet.² Al-Mubarfūrī was sure that wearing the *niqāb* was a religious prescription and women should cover everything that they are forbidden to expose, especially their face as it presents a source of temptation and desire.³

Al-Hilālī had repeated his view on the veil in an article entitled *Ta'līm al-Banāt wa Tarbiyatuhunna* (The Teaching of Girls and Their Education) published for the first time, Al-Hilālī says, in *Majallat al-Tamaddun al-Islāmī* in Syria in 1953.⁴ He republished this article in the Islamic University Journal in Medina.⁵ The article aroused the anger of Muḥammad Abū Al-Faṭḥ al-Bayānūnī [1940-], lecturer of the Islamic Faith at the Faculty of *Sharia* in Riyadh. In a counter-article, entitled *Hal al-tamassuk bi-al-ḥijāb ghuluw wa-inḥirāf* (Is the Veil a Sign of Extremism?), the latter, among other criticisms, accuses Al-Hilālī of encouraging the

¹ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 269.

² Al-Mubarfūrī (1991), 11.

³ Al-Mubarfūrī (1991), 15-16.

⁴ Al-Hilālī, "Radd 'alā maqāl al-Tamassuk bi al-Ḥijāb Ghuluw wa-Inḥirāf," n.d., approximately 1972, 24.

⁵ Al-Hilālī, (jun 1970): "Ta'līm al-Banāt wa Tarbiyatuhunnā", the *Islamic University Journal*, 4,2: 17-30.

Westernization of Islam, a very serious accusation in the context of the Islamic University of Medina.⁶

Al-Hilālī wrote a rebuttal to the article of Abû al-Faṭḥ, of which the author of the present study found as a manuscript among his papers in the family archive in Morocco. I shall return to the question of whether this article has been published or has remained unpublished below. In it, he, made, among other pronouncements, the following statements:

In fact, all the arguments I used to show that Muslim women are allowed to disclose their faces in the presence of people whom they might marry, provided that the former are neither alone nor in a suspicious situation with the latter, concern those countries in which the Islamic Law is not applied, and where nudity has become an undisguised social phenomenon. So, if women abandon complete nakedness and comply with the principles of the Islamic Law by covering all their body except their hands and faces, this would be a return to the Truth. However, I have no intention of making things easier in this pleasant country (Saudi Arabia) which has been blessed by a Caliph and a Guardian of the *Sharia*, who has appointed great scholars to issue *fatwas*, who consider the opinion which states that the whole body must be covered preferable. There are in fact two reasons for which I do not want to disagree with this opinion. Firstly, the ruling of the Caliph ends the divergence of opinions within Islamic jurisprudence. Secondly, I think that this opinion is true and good.⁷ Indeed, I have asked my family to behave in accordance with this opinion, both inside and outside this blessed kingdom.⁸

Al-Hilālī regretted that he had not been circumspect enough when he had published his article in Saudi Arabia.

⁶ Al-Bayānūnī, Abū Al-Faṭḥ(1971): “*Hal al-tamassuk bi-al-ḥijāb ghuluw wa-inḥirāf*”, *The Islamic University Journal*, 13, 5: 231-239. See Also <http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-4473#page-2227>, accessed 09-11-2014.

⁷ Al-Hilālī, *Radd ‘alā maqāl al-Tamassuk bi al-Ḥijāb Ghuluw wa-Inḥirāf*, unpublished, n.d., approximately 1972, 30.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

I had to change some phrases and expressions when I decided to publish that article in the Islamic University Journal, because it is the context which defines the nature of discourse which one has to make.

Apparently, he claims, religious rules in Saudi Arabia could differ from those applying in a country in which the courtesies of Islam were not respected. All the arguments he had previously used in his *fatwa* on the veil had to be limited to women living in countries which do not abide by the Islamic Law.⁹

Al-Bayānūnī pointed out that , in his article Al-Hilālī was condemning the *niqāb* by claiming that wearing it is a custom which has nothing to do with the Islamic faith.¹⁰ To refute the allegation levelled against him, Al-Hilālī wrote:

‘... Praise and thanks be to Allāh, I recommend (the members of my family) to cover their faces even in countries in which women uncover their bodies. In recent years, I have usually asked my wives and daughters to drop a veil over their faces, not only during the *haj* but generally speaking, even though I do feel guilty about this....’¹¹

This feeling of guilt can be explained on the one hand by Al-Hilālī’s order to his family to wear the *niqāb* (integral veil) both inside and outside Saudi Arabia, and on the other hand, his point of view, which had remained unchanged, namely: that wearing the *niqāb* was left to the free choice of Muslim women themselves and that there was no shame in exposing their faces.¹² Muslim women would not, Al-Hilālī believed, violate Islamic Law if they were to wear the headscarf provided they did not expose their ‘charms’ (*al-zīna*).¹³ To support his point of view, in his rebuttal entitled *Radd ‘alā maqāl Hal al-Tamassuk bi al-Ḥijāb Ġuluw wa ‘inḥirāf?* (Refutation of the Article :*Is the Veil a Sign of Extremism?*), he adduces twenty-two arguments from the Qur’ān and the *hadith* and the sayings of the four *madhhabs* on the ruling

⁹ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰ Al-Bayānūnī , Abū Al-Faḥ(1971): “*Hal al-tamassuk bi-al-Ḥijāb ghuluw wa-inḥirāf?*”, *the Islamic University Journal*, 13, 5: p.233. See also Al-Hilālī, *Radd ‘alā maqāl al-Tamassuk bi al-Ḥijāb ghuluw wa-Inḥirāf*, unpublished, n.d., approximately 1972, 24.

¹¹ Ibid., 32.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 29.

of the veil in which he maintains that the complete body of a woman, with the exception of her face and hands are 'awra,¹⁴ implying that the duty of a woman was to wear a veil and not a *niqāb*.¹⁵

‘Ali Ibn Aḥmad Al-Raysūnī (b.1943), one of Al-Hilālī’s students, confirmed in a personal interview¹⁶ that Al-Hilālī did not change his point of view about the *niqāb* and that he never agreed with the covering women's faces when he was a professor in Saudi Arabia. Al-Raysūnī said that the article written by Al-Hilālī was torn out, meaning that the pages about the veil were cut out of the edition of the journal which was printed in Medina. Al-Raysūnī states unequivocally that Ibn Bāz, the leading religious scholar of Saudi Arabia at the time, who believed that wearing the *niqāb* was compulsory, had ordered all the pages of the article to be excised with scissors when he found out that Al-Hilālī had written that covering the woman’s face was not compulsory. Thereupon, Al-Hilālī went to the Chancellor, ‘Abd al-Azīz Ibn Bāz, asking him about what had happened as the article had been removed from that international Islamic University magazine from Al-Medina (*Majallat al-Jāmi‘a al-Islāmiyya*).¹⁷ Most likely, the article to which Al-Raysūnī is referring is the above-mentioned article, *Radd ‘alā maqāl: Hal al-Tamassuk bi al-Ḥijāb Ġuluw wa Inḥirāf?*, although this is not mentioned in the online database of *the Islamic University Journal*, which contains all the articles published from its foundation up to now, including several other articles published by Al-Hilālī at that time. As said earlier, I only traced it as a manuscript in the family archive in Morocco.

Al-Hilālī’s Wahhābī colleagues recognized his particular expertise in the field of linguistics, especially his knowledge of English. The Saudi authorities were attempting to propagate their religious doctrines and reach Muslim communities in the West whose members certainly had only a shaky grasp of the Arabic language. Therefore, during his term of office at the Islamic University in Medina, Al-Hilālī was assigned the task of translating the Qur’ān into English,¹⁸ in collaboration with Muḥsin Khān (1927 -), the Pakistani director of the University hospital.¹⁹ When he accepted this challenge, Al-Hilālī generated one of the

¹⁴Ibid.,1-32. See also Al-Hilālī (2006b),10-12.

¹⁵ Ibid., 31.

¹⁶ Personal conversation with Mr ‘Alī al-Rayṣūnī , in his house in the city of Chefchaouen, on 9 August 2011.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Lauzière (2008), 356.

¹⁹ Al-Hilālī and Khān (1997), 2-3.

most important tools for the Saudi-sponsored *da'wa* across both geo-political and linguistic boundaries. The *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an* was so widely distributed over the years that Al-Hilālī achieved fame in the West, especially in America and Britain.²⁰

The *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Quran* was first published in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1974 and later in Ryad²¹. It has been criticized for being a 'Wahhabi translation of the Qur'an'. Khālid Abū El Fadl criticizes, for instance, the way in which Al-Hilālī and Khān emphasize the obligation for Muslim women to cover their entire face, save the eyes, on the basis of their translation of (Qur'an24:31) and (Qur'an 33:59).²² This inconsistency seems to reveal that apparently Al-Hilālī was not able and did not insist on giving his own view on this matter, as he was living in Saudi Arabia and his translation was prepared under the sponsorship of the Saudi authorities. Moreover, it was in support of a broader campaign of Saudi proselytism.²³ Printed copies included a certificate of authentication signed by 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Bāz, confirming that Al-Hilālī and Khān had worked together on the project while they were employed at the Islamic University in Medina.²⁴

In 1974 Al-Hilālī decided to return to Morocco where he was to spend the last thirteen years of his life. Al-Hilālī's grandson, 'Abd al-Ghanī Būzakrī, says that Al-Hilālī became completely blind in 1975, and therefore was in need of clerks and scholars to help him write his essays and other publications.²⁵ Some students from India were also charged with this task of writing.²⁶ In this period Al-Hilālī wrote *Al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya* (The Evangelical Proofs

²⁰ Lauzière (2008), 356.

²¹ Al-Hilālī, T. and Khan, M. 1994. *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language: A Summarized Version of At-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi and Ibn Katheer with Comments from Sahih Al-Bukhari Summarized in One Volume*, 4th edition, Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam.

²² Lauzière (2008), 356; Abū Al-Fadl (2006), 194.

²³ Lauzière (2008), 356.

²⁴ Al-Hilālī and Khān (1974), 3.

²⁵ Based on Personal conversation with Al-Hilālī's grandson 'Abd al-Ghanī Muḥammad Būzakrī, in the city of Meknes, 11 August 2010.

²⁶ According to Al-Hilālī's grandson, 'Abd al-Ghanī Būzakrī, among the scribes were a certain Ran al-Wāsi Allah 'Abbās, a lecturer at the University of Umm al-Qura at that time; Dr 'Abd al-Qadūs, an employee at the Ministry of Justice in Riyadh; a Moroccan scribe to write down his articles and the publications, Dr 'Abd al-'Alim Al Būṣṭawī; and Dr Muḥammad Al- Māni' who used to teach at the Islamic University and who supervised the writing of the two first volumes of *Sabīl al- Rashād* and the last part of its third volume. He likewise supervised

that Jesus is a Human Being and Has No Share in Divinity). This polemical piece will be discussed in more detail below.

the writing of both *Al Hadiya al Hādiya ilā al- Ṭā'ifa Al-Tijāniyya* (The Guiding Gift for the Tijani Sect) and *Al Da'wah ilā Allah fī Bilād Mukhtalifa* (The Call to Allah in Different Countries).

8.2. An Anti-Christian Pamphlet: ‘The Evangelical Proofs that Jesus is a Human Being and Has no Share in the Divinity’²⁷

Al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya represents one of the Al-Hilālī’s most successful *fatwas*,²⁸ as in its formulation, he again put his wit and his knowledge of Western languages, especially English, at the service of the Salafī-Wahhābī *Da’wa*. The full name of the original petitioner was Ismā‘īl Mundhir al-Drūbī al-Baghdādī, a gentleman who had resided in America and after his return to Iraq had worked at Baghdād University, where he was head of the Engineering Department. He passed away in 2007.²⁹

The *fatwa* is not dated, but in all probability Ismā‘īl Mundhir al-Drūbī al-Baghdādī contacted Al-Hilālī in 1969. Al-Hilālī wrote a letter³⁰ to a Shaykh Zuhair al-Shāwush (1925-2013) dated 28-3-1391/24-05-1971 in which he says that the Saudi Shaykh Ibn Bāz (d.1999) had read his *Al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya* and had praised it. He had placed an immediate order for 150 stencilled copies. So it seems that the *fatwa* was first issued approximately at the end of the 1960s.³¹ (There is another question addressed to Al-Hilālī by the same Ismā‘īl Mundhir al-Drūbī al-Baghdādī, which is dated 15 January 1964).³²

Ibn Bāz later ordered the publication of 20,000 copies of Al-Hilālī’s *Al-Barāhīn* in Saudi Arabia.³³ They were published in Mecca in 1973 by *Dār al-Thaqāfa*. *Al-Barāhīn al-*

²⁷ During my research into this *fatwa* and after I had finished translating it, I discovered that Al-Hilālī’s had had part of this *fatwa* translated into English and published, under a new title namely *Jesus and Muhammad in: the Bible and the Qur’ān, Biblical Evidence of Jesus Being a Servant of God and Having No Share in Divinity*, in: Appendix 2, in: Al-Hilālī and Khān (1974), 950.

²⁸ Al-Hilālī (2010a).

²⁹ I received this information via email from the College of Engineering [bceic@yahoo.com], Baghdad University date 06-02-2011.

³⁰ Al-Hilālī (2006), Vol.1, 101.

³¹ Al-Hilālī stated in his introduction to the *fatwa*, ‘My student, Mr Ismā‘īl Mundhir al-D.rūbī al-Baghdādī, who had been studying architecture in one of the American universities for approximately four years, has sent me a letter’. See Al-Hilālī (2010a), 14.

³² Al-Hilālī, ‘Al-Fatāwā al-Hilāliyya’, 1976, Vol.1, 26.

³³ Al-Hilālī (Dhū al-Qi’dah, 1404/ July 1984), Manqba li al-Malik Fayṣal Qaddasa Allah Rūḥahu” in: Majallat al-Buḥūt al- Islāmiyya, Vol.11. Casablanca, 313. softcopy, available at

<http://www.alifta.com/Search/ResultDetails.aspx?lang=ar&view=result&fatwaNum=&FatwaNumID=&ID=1650&searchScope=2&SearchScopeLevels1=&SearchScopeLevels2=&highLight=1&SearchType=exact&SearchMoesar=false&bookID=&LeftVal=0&RightVal=0&simple=&SearchCriteria=allwor>

Injīliyya was also published in the Moroccan magazine *Al-Ihyā' al-maghribiyya*, in 1981.³⁴ And again in *Majallat al-Jāmi'a al-Salafiyya al-Hindiyya* (Salafi University Journal) in India, in 1985.³⁵ A more recent edition of *Al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya* was published in Cairo in 2010³⁶ by Muḥamad Jamīl Hamāmī, a member of the Islamic Supreme Council in Al-Quds, Palestine, and a soft copy was published on his website.³⁷ In his introduction, Muḥammad Jamīl Hammāmī says:

I copied *Al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya* with the help of a dear brother from a copy printed in Mecca in 1393 [AH], after it had almost been forgotten'.

Al-Hilālī included an English translation of the *Barāhīn* at the end of his translation of the Qur'ān, the first edition of which appeared in 1974.

Al-Hilālī's idea of adducing proof against Christianity, using the Christian scriptures to support a proper Islamic perception, goes back as far as the year 1930. In his *Al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya*, he mentions some events which happened during his time in India in the period 1930-1933, when he was a teacher at the *Dār al-'Ulūm of Nadwat-al 'Ulamā* in Lucknow.³⁸ Al-Hilālī asserts that this event showed the arbitrariness of the Christians, their abusiveness and the skewed vision they have of Islam. Al-Hilālī goes on to say what is amazing about the Christians when they look into the *Qur'ān* is the fact that they never do so in order to seek the truth. Instead they read it to search for what they see as errors.³⁹

Al-Hilālī grew conscious of the fact he had to learn a foreign language because, he admits, complete knowledge would remain, out of the question without mastering a foreign language. He set out to learn English words by heart from vocabulary books. Within two years, he was able to translate whole articles, but could not yet speak the language. He

[ds&PagePath=&siteSection=1&searchkeyword=216167217132217135217132216167217132217138#firstKeywordFound](http://www.hmmami.com/2011/01/06/23-2/), accessed 15- july-2011

³⁴ Published in Journal *Ihyā' al-Maghribiyya* in Morocco, Volume 2, Part 1 in Rajab 1401 ,pp.9-25.

³⁵ Vol 17. number 2,3, Luknow India, 1985.

³⁶ Al-Hilālī (2010a).

³⁷ <http://hmmami.wordpress.com/2011/01/06/23-2/> edited 10-02-2011.

³⁸ Al-Hilālī (2010a),24-30.

³⁹ Al-Hilālī (2010a), 11.

developed his oral skill later, when he travelled to Europe.⁴⁰ Interestingly, he went to an American pastor and asked him for some English lessons for a fee. The middle-aged pastor would not accept financial compensation, but agreed to give three free lessons a week if, in exchange, Al-Hilālī agreed to attend Christian sermons delivered in English. At Christmas 1930, Al-Hilālī engaged in a debate with a young American missionary whose name was Fred William Smith,⁴¹ about whom we have no further information, except that he happened to have some knowledge of the *Qur'ān* and strongly criticized it from a biblical perspective. When they began their debate on the nature of the Bible and the *Qurān*, Al-Hilālī made it clear that he had never read the Gospels, and was now learning English so as to read it in its English version. Smith ordered an English copy of the Bible from London, which he sent to Al-Hilālī with a brief note: ‘Asking God to bestow on you many blessings through this book.’

A month later, Al-Hilālī noted the places which appeared to him to provide evidence which favoured the Muslim point of view against the Christians, writing down polemical commentaries to equip himself to respond to Smith and like-minded Christians.⁴² In one of his letters, Al-Hilālī informs Riḍā that he had written Arabic notes in the margins of the Gospel of Matthew in the copy sent to him by Smith. Both Riḍā and Prince Shakīb Arsalān (1869–1946) were interested in reading Al-Hilālī’s comments.⁴³ Al-Hilālī had entitled his notes, which were apparently published in a booklet, *Ḥawāshī Shattā ‘alā Injīl Mattā* (Various Notes on the Gospel of Matthew).⁴⁴ Later, they were (apparently: re-)published in Basra in *Majallat al-Shubbān al-Muslimīn*⁴⁵ (*Young Muslims’ Magazine*), by Hajj Ṭāhā Al-Fayyād (1899-1967).

⁴⁰ Al-Hilālī, “Al-Jawab ‘an muqtaraḥ wa su’āl faḍilat Abi al-Samḥ”, *Lisān al-Dīn*, 1-6, (December 1946):29-32.

⁴¹ I found the full name: Fred William Smith in a letter from Al-Hilālī addressed to Riḍā dated 24/05/1352 circa 1934. See Ryad (2008), 270.

⁴² Al-Hilālī (2010a), 27.

⁴³ Letter, Al-Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 28 Jumāda al-Thāniya 1352/ 18 October 1933, See Ryad (2008), 270.

These notes apparently had been published as a booklet, but in spite of a long enquiry, the present author has not been able to lay hands on a copy of this booklet, nor has he found any information about the year of its publication.

⁴⁴ Al-Hilālī (2006b), 311.

⁴⁵ The magazine *Al-Shubbān al-Muslimūn* was established by the Iraqi writer and lawyer Haj Ṭaha Al-Fayyād [1899-1967] and founded in 1928, Haj Ṭaha Al-Fayyād was also the owner of the *Sahīfat Al-Sijil* which was a newspaper with Islamic views and religious tendencies. It was founded in 1937.

46. <http://www.basratuna.net/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=11967> edited 10-02-2011

Forty years later, Al-Hilālī probably reworked his *Hawāshī* in his work *Al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya*.⁴⁶ After assiduously studying the pamphlet, the petitioner (whom we have referred to before) invited some Christians to have a debate.⁴⁷ During the disputation, he later told Al-Hilālī, his opponents were utterly defeated. Al-Hilālī argued that a Muslim does not need arguments which testify to the truthfulness of his faith, and to the falsehood of his enemies' religions; what he does lack are true and faithful brothers who support the victory of Allāh and His Prophet.⁴⁸

In his pamphlet, Al-Hilālī does not cite any specific sources apart from the Bible, nor does he mention whether he used an existing Arabic translation of the Bible. However, evidently when he was preparing his *Al-Barāhīn*, Al-Hilālī was aware of the famous polemical work *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*⁴⁹ (The Truth Revealed) by Raḥmatullāh Ibn Khalīl al-Raḥmān Al-Kīrānwī (1818-1891), which he had written at the request of the Ottoman Sultan ‘Abdulaziz I (1861-1876). As will become clear, this work served to him both as a model and a source of inspiration. Both *Izhār al-Ḥaqq* and *Al-Barāhīn* are based on a face-to-face debate⁵⁰ between a Muslim theologian and a Christian missionary. As had *Al-Barāhīn*, *Izhār al-Ḥaqq* also demonstrates a broader and a deeper use of Christian scripture to support its anti-Christian polemic. As does *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*, in his *Al-Barāhīn*, Al-Hilālī discusses the subjects of Revelation, alterations to the biblical text, the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity and the mission of Muḥammad in more detail. *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*, which represents one of the most authoritative studies of the Bible among Muslims, was written by the distinguished nineteenth-century Indian scholar, Raḥmat Allāh Al-Kīrānwī and appeared in 1864. Obviously, Al-Hilālī availed himself of a copy, when he first entered into debates with Christians during his time in India, even before writing the *Hawāshī shattā*.⁵¹ The primary purpose of *Al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya* was to serve as a repository of ‘irrefutable’ arguments to be

⁴⁶ Ryad (2008), 51.

⁴⁷ Al-Hilālī (2010a), 10.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Al-Kīrānwī (1989). The first edition was published in [Constantinople] Istanbul in 1280/1867.

⁵⁰ *Izhār al-Ḥaqq* represents a response to the Christian offensive against Islam during the British rule in India, specifically to a book in Urdu entitled *Mīzān al-Ḥaqq* attributed to a certain C. C. P. Fonder. Shaykh See first paragraph next page] Raḥmatu Allah asserted that he would convert to Christianity if he failed to answer the questions of the missionary who had made the commitment to accept Islam if he was defeated, see Al-Kīrānwī (1989), 17.

⁵¹ Al-Kīrānwī (1989), Vol.1, 17.

used when debating with Christians.⁵² It examines many passages from the Gospels - especially the Gospel of Matthew. At this juncture, it would be useful to point out a few striking parallels between *Al-Barāhīn* and *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*.

Jesus was a human being. Al-Hilālī made clear in his very first point that the Gospel states that Jesus is the servant of God,⁵³ whereas God is the Master and Lord, according to Matthew 4:7: ‘It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.’⁵⁴ Al-Hilālī asserts that Jesus never called himself Son of God but used to call himself the Son of Man.⁵⁵ In his book *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*, Shaykh Raḥmatu Allāh Al-Kīrānwī mentioned that Christ usually referred to himself with the words ‘the Son of Man’, to which the Gospel of Matthew. Bears witness⁵⁶ He says that there are many similar places to be found in other books. In total there were sixty verses in the Gospels in which Christ is referred to as the Son of Man.⁵⁷ Al-Hilālī argued that Jesus was just *a worshiper*. To support his argument, Al-Hilālī asked rhetorically if it were true that Jesus was God or a part of God. If so, how should he pray?⁵⁸ Actually, the prayer he gave his disciples, the Lord’s Prayer, is only performed by a poor servant who is in need of the mercy of God. In *Izhār al-Ḥaqq* the author gives twelve different arguments to prove that Jesus was just a worshiper.⁵⁹

Jesus was a prophet of God. Al-Hilālī confirms that Jesus was a prophet of God. He states that Matthew 21:46 is the strongest evidence against those who believe in the divinity

⁵² Al-Hilālī, (Dhū al-Qi’dah, 1404/ July 1984) Manqaba li al-Malik Fayṣal Qaddasa Allah Rūḥahu, in: *Majallat al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyya*, Vol 11, 317. Casablanca, Morocco. Soft copy, available at <http://www.alifta.com/Search/ResultDetails.aspx?lang=ar&view=result&fatwaNum=&FatwaNumID=&ID=1650&searchScope=2&SearchScopeLevels1=&SearchScopeLevels2=&highLight=1&SearchType=exact&SearchMoesar=false&bookID=&LeftVal=0&RightVal=0&simple=&SearchCriteria=allwords&PagePath=&siteSection=1&searchkeyword=216167217132217135217132216167217132217138#firstKeywordFound>, accessed on 15-July-2011.

⁵³ Al-Hilālī (2010a), 11.

⁵⁴ Al-Hilālī also referred to the story of Jesus and the Devil in the Bible, see [Matthew 4:10], ’] ‘Thou shalt serve the Lord , thy God; And Him only shalt thou serve.’

⁵⁵ Matthew [5:45], Al-Hilālī (2010a), 11.

⁵⁶ Matthew [8:20, 9:6, 6:13, 27, 17:9, 12, 22, 18:11, 19:28,20:18, 28, 24:27, 26:24, 45, 64]., see Al-Kīrānwī (1989), 686.

⁵⁷ Al-Kīrānwī (1989), 736.

⁵⁸ Matthew [14:23]; Al-Hilālī (2010a), 14.

⁵⁹ Al-Kīrānwī (1989), 736-750.

of Jesus (or the incarnation of God). It proves that all those who believed in Jesus during his lifetime did not believe in him being God or the Son of God or one part of the Trinity. His contemporaries believed in him as a prophet only.⁶⁰ Shaykh Al-Kīrānwī used the same verse to support the above statement. In *Izhār al-Haqq* he declares that this verse is evidence of a refutation of the Trinity. Jesus did not even like being called ‘good’, let alone being called God. This statement would be meaningless if Jesus had been God Incarnate.⁶¹

Jesus preached monotheism. To prove that Jesus preached monotheism (*tawhīd*), Al-Hilālī used Mark: 12:28-34, John: 17:30 and John: 20:16, thereby supporting his argument that Jesus had actually testified that Allāh is one, that there is no God save Him and that anyone who asserts his belief in His Unity is indeed close to the Kingdom of Allāh. Therefore, he who ascribes partners to him or makes him One of Three is removed from the Kingdom of Allāh, and is indeed the enemy of Allāh.⁶² Al-Hilālī confirmed that Jesus truly witnessed that Allāh was his God and the God of the other prophets and that there was no difference between him and them as far as their human nature was concerned. Therefore, anyone who pretends that Jesus is a God denies Jesus and denies all the messengers and the prophets of Allāh.⁶³ Besides these same verses, *Izhar al-Haqq* uses other verses to produce twelve statements made by Christ which implicitly or explicitly refute the doctrine of Trinity.⁶⁴

Al-Hilālī claimed that in Matthew: 7:21,⁶⁵ the word ‘LORD’ had been incorrectly translated into Arabic with the word *God*, leading people to believe that Jesus was God. If one looked carefully at the rest of the verse, one would find that it testifies instead to the fact that Christ is indeed a servant of God. The correct translation of the verse referred to, according to Al-Hilālī, should be as follows: ‘*Not everyone who addresses me as “Sir” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who complies with the will of my Father who is in Heaven.*’ Also, the term ‘father’ is used to denote ‘God’ in different places in the Bible,⁶⁶ and it is not specific

⁶⁰ Al-Hilālī (2010a), 12.

⁶¹ Al-Kīrānwī (1989), 741.

⁶² Al-Hilālī (2010a), 19.

⁶³ Al-Hilālī (2010a), 20.

⁶⁴ Al-Kīrānwī (1989), 736-750.

⁶⁵ In the King James’ Version, Cambridge Edition, we read : “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”

⁶⁶ Matthew [5:45], Matthew [5:48], Matthew [6: 1], Matthew [11:25]

to Christ. In his *Izhār al-Haqq*, Al-Kīrānwī argues that some words, like father, have been omitted from the Arabic translation of the Gospel (Mark 13:32): ‘*But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone*’. He adds that this verse also refutes the doctrine of the Trinity.⁶⁷

When dealing with *Distortion and Abrogation in the Bible*, in his *Izhār al-Haqq* Al-Kīrānwī mentions that the translator of the Arabic version of the Bible printed in 1811 had distorted Christ’s statement by changing the first person into the second person. Christ’s statement was ‘The Lord our God is one Lord’, this had been changed into ‘The Lord thy God is one Lord’. This seemed to have been a deliberate change as the first person used in the first instance refutes any possibility of godhood for Jesus whereas the use of the second person does not necessarily refute it (Mark 12:29).⁶⁸

After an investigation and comparison of different Bible translations, it seems that Al-Hilālī used the "King James’ Version" in his translations of the Bible verses. Al-Hilālī does not say which Arabic version of the Bible he used. In his opinion, the Arabic version of the Gospel he used was very poor and barely comprehensible. In a letter to Ridā, Al-Hilālī states that he wrote notes in Arabic on the Gospel of Matthew. When reading the English version afterwards, he discovered an Arabic version mistranslated from English. Commenting on this he says: ‘I hope to translate the Bible into good Arabic’.⁶⁹ In another letter to Ridā, he says: ‘I hope that some Muslim organization will translate the Gospels into correct Arabic with annotations to expose the confusion of the Christians, just as they have done with our Book.’⁷⁰

The author of *Izhār al-Haqq* claims that the biblical books teem with errors and that a large number of clear contradictions are to be found in them. He categorically states that it was self-evident that a revealed text must be free of errors and contradictions. *Shaykh* Al-Kīrānwī claimed he had been able to discover 119 contradictions and 110 errors.⁷¹ Al-Hilālī shared this view, as he also mistrusted the reliability of the Gospels as a revealed text (*tahrīf*)

⁶⁷ Al-Kīrānwī (1989), 740.

⁶⁸ Al-Kīrānwī (1989), 739.

⁶⁹ Letter from Al- Hilālī to Ridā, Lucknow, 28 Jumāda al-Thāniya 1352/ 18 October 1933, See Ryad (2008), 270.

⁷⁰ Ibid, Letter, Al-Hilālī to Ridā, Lucknow, 24 Jumāda al-Ulā 1352/ 14 September 1933, See Ryad (2008), 270.

⁷¹ Al-Kīrānwī (1989), 257-350.

in either the Arabic or the English version. He pointed out that there were many cases of distortion and human manipulation in the texts of these books.⁷²

Crucifixion. Al-Hilālī provided the petitioner with several pieces of evidence that the story of the crucifixion was a forgery. The strongest evidence was, he said, when the Jews arrested Jesus and took him before Pilate, who condemned him and then handed him over to the Jews to be crucified, Jesus refused to speak or to utter even a single word.⁷³ Al-Hilālī commented that the Christians would interpret this as his desire to be crucified in exchange of the redemption of mankind and the forgiveness of their sins. Al-Hilālī wondered, if this were true, why did he ask God to turn death away from him? Why did he shout as he was on the cross ‘*Eli, Eli, lāmā sabachthani?*’ (My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?, Matthew 27:46). He adds, how could Jesus have refrained from revealing the truth, especially as he was reported to have been an eloquent orator who used to deliver long speeches in which he fluently rebuked and criticized the Jewish scholars.⁷⁴ Al-Hilālī thought no reasonable person would believe this. But, if both the crucifixion and the redemption were to prove to be forgeries, all the cornerstones on which the Christian belief is grounded would definitely collapse.⁷⁵ Describing the event of the crucifixion of Jesus, Rahmatullāh Al-Kīrānwī mentions that if Christ had been God, he would not have cried and said, ‘My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?’⁷⁶ or ‘Father into your hands I commend my spirit’⁷⁷ and so forth because death cannot overcome God.

These paragraphs reveal that it is crystal-clear that Al-Hilālī knew of Al-Kīrānwī and his work. He replicated many of his arguments without citing the source. Both Al-Hilālī and the Indian Muslim polemicist Rahmatullāh Al-Kīrānwī used the same verses from the same Gospels to support their argument on the doctrine of Trinity, stating that Jesus was a human being and a prophet of God. It was Al-Hilālī and Al-Kīrānwī’s view that it is a common practice of Christian scholars to change the texts of their Holy Scriptures they thought this would be expedient. As did Al-Kīrānwī, Al-Hilālī argued that the story of the crucifixion was

⁷² Lauzière (2008), 367.

⁷³ Matthew [27:11], Matthew [27:13-14]. Al-Hilālī (2010a), 9.

⁷⁴ Al-Hilālī (2010a), 22.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Matthew [27:46].

⁷⁷ Luke [23:46].

a forgery. The new aspect of Al-Hilālī's work was perhaps that he had been able to 'verify' the Arabic quotations from the Bible in the English King James' Version.

It was typical of Al-Hilālī, that he tried to substantiate the Islamic points of view on the basis of passages from the Gospel of Mathews which were merely concerned with matters of the Creed.⁷⁸ Al-Hilāl asserted that Christians are wrong and must be recognized as infidels because they attribute a divine status to a prophet.⁷⁹ It was characteristic of the quality of Al-Hilālī's work that his moderate knowledge of English did not hinder him from proving the weakness of Christianity by quoting passages from the Gospel of Matthew.

Al-Hilālī's work attracted wide attention after its publication in 1973. As we mentioned earlier, Ibn Bāz later ordered the publication of 20,000 copies of Al-Hilālī's *Al-Barāhīn* in Saudi Arabia.⁸⁰ As said, they were published in Mecca in 1973 by *Dār al-Thaqāfa*. In an article in 1984, Al-Hilālī mentioned that people from Jordan had asked his permission to republish his *fatwa* because they said contained strong arguments against the Christians, without which it would not be possible to defeat them.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Al-Hilālī (2010a), 10.

⁷⁹ Al-Hilālī (2006), Vol.3, 310; Al-Hilālī and Khān (1997), 878.

⁸⁰ Al-Hilālī (Dhū al-Qi'dah, 1404/ July 1984), "Manqba li al-Malik Fayṣal Qaddasa Allah Rūḥahu" in: Majallat al-Buḥūt al- Islāmiyya, Vol.11. Casablanca, 313. softcopy, available at <http://www.aliifta.com/Search/ResultDetails.aspx?lang=ar&view=result&fatwaNum=&FatwaNumID=&ID=1650&searchScope=2&SearchScopeLevels1=&SearchScopeLevels2=&highLight=1&SearchType=exact&SearchMoesar=false&bookID=&LeftVal=0&RightVal=0&simple=&SearchCriteria=allwords&PagePath=&siteSection=1&searchkeyword=216167217132217135217132216167217132217138#firstKeywordFound>, accessed 15- july-2011.

⁸¹ Ibid.