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Islamic Reformism and Christinaity. A Critical Reading of the Works of Muhammad Rashid Rida and his Associates (1898-1935)

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Chapter One

Riḍā's Sources of Knowledge of the West, With Special Reference to Christianity

Before dealing with Riḍā's sources of knowledge, it is significant to note that various researchers have already agreed that Western writings of the higher Biblical criticism which emerged in European universities in the 19th century had a great deal of influence on the Muslim apologetic literature on Christianity. All the critical questions regarding the biblical miracles and the historical events were rapidly transferred to the Muslim lands, especially after the famous debate between the German missionary Karl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-1865) and the above-mentioned Indian polemicist al-Qairanāwī. Al-Qairanāwī used different works of famous European theologians, such as Thomas Hartwell Horne (1780-1862) and David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), who were influenced by the historical criticism of European theology. The Pfander-Qairanāwī public debate represents a crucial point in Christian-Muslim controversy in the modern time.¹ The arguments used by al-Qairanāwī affected most of the subsequent Muslim writings, including those of Riḍā, who often praised him.

Albert Hourani described Riḍā as a Muslim scholar, who 'belonged to the last generation of those who could be fully educated and yet alive in a self-sufficient Islamic world of thought'.² Riḍā, moreover, believed that if it were not for the Church, for politicians, and for the inner decay of the Islamic tenets of faith, Europe might well become Muslim.³ Unlike his mentor 'Abduh (who had close personal relations with a number of Europeans, traveled more than once in Europe, and was able to read French),⁴ Riḍā could not read in any foreign language, except very little Turkish. But he managed to draw his vast

¹ Christine Schirmacher, 'The Influence of Higher Bible Criticism on Muslim Apologetics in the Nineteenth Century', in Jacques Waardenburg (ed.), *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 274. Christian W. Troll, 'New Light on the Christian-Muslim Controversy of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 34 (1994), pp. 85-88; C. Schirmacher, 'Muslim apologetics and the Agra debates of 1854: a Nineteenth Century Turning Point', *Bulletin of the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies*, vol. 13/1 (1994), pp. 74-84. Al-Qairanāwī's book *Izhār al-Haqq* became the most popular and widely read book in the Ottoman Empire, see Ignaz Goldziher, 'Über Muhammedanische Polemik gegen ahl al-kitāb', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, XXXII (1878), pp. 343-344 (Quoted below, 'Polemik'). Al-Qairanāwī used such works as, T.H. Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scripture*, London, 1818; and D.F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (The Life of Jesus), Bonn, 1835.

² Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 83.

³ Ibid., p. 236.

⁴ 'Abduh was a friend of the English writer Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. See Blunt's diaries, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events*, two parts, London: Martin Secker, 1918. See also the account of his visit accompanied by Blunt to the English philosopher Herbert Spencer in his house in Brighton (August 1903), part II, pp. 69-70.

knowledge of the Western world from various sources. On more than one occasion, he stated that he acquired his primary experience about the modern progress of the West, when he was in Lebanon through his discussions and personal contact with those whom he labelled as 'liberal Christian intellectuals' and with American missionaries. As a studious visitor of American missionary bookshops and Christian liberal societies, he started to read their books and journals, such famous Arabic journals as *al-Muqāṭaṭaf* and *al-Ṭabīb*.⁵ In addition, the Arab world witnessed at this time a rapid increase in the number of translated books in various fields. Publishing ventures (mostly dominated by Syrian Christians) brought their readers news and popular treatment of Western thought and institutions from many perspectives. This provided Riḍā with another opportunity to compensate his inability to read in Western languages with the help of translated books.⁶

The present chapter is devoted to study Riḍā's attempts to find his sources of knowledge on the West. Although *al-Manār* gives a good picture of Riḍā's line of thought in this regard, his remaining papers in the family archive could add to our knowledge more about other dynamic factors, which obviously contributed to *al-Manār*'s conceptualisation of the West in general, and of Christianity in particular. A detailed analysis of Riḍā's sources would go beyond the scope of this study. I also admit that it will be unattainable to systematically trace all the sources exploited by Riḍā throughout his journal's thirty-seven years of publication. Selecting a representative sample of these sources, however, would be sufficient to adequately evaluate the kind of approach he was using both in his criticism of other religions and his own justification for defending Islam.

1.1. Western Ideas in Arabic Print

In his pioneering study of Riḍā's views on the West, Shahin notes that the introduction of many European writings on sociology, jurisprudence and politics into the modern Arabic literary movement played an important role in moulding the political and social awareness of Muslim thinkers. In 1876, for instance, a disciple of al-Afghānī translated *Histoire de la Civilization en Europe* by the French historian F. Guizot. 'Abduh also admired the book and read it to his Azharī students in his house.⁷

Riḍā also was keenly aware of the significance of making use of such works in his journal. Shahin has traced a few of the Western works, which Riḍā read and fully admired. Among the names which his journal introduced and reviewed were Dumas, Tolstoy, Hugo and Homer, Gustave Le Bon, E. Desmoulins, Shaw, and others. The authors of a particularly profound impact

⁵ See, Riḍā, *Azhar*, p. 193.

⁶ Robert M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society: An interpretation*, Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 88-89; Emad Eldin Shahin, 'Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's Perspectives on the West as Reflected in *al-Manār*', *The Muslim World*, vol. LXXIX (1989), pp. 113-114.

⁷ Shahin, *Eyes*, p. 25.

on his thought, and whose writings were frequently quoted in *al-Manār*, were Le Bon's *Les Lois Psychologiques de l'évolution des Peuples*, Desmoulin's *Quoi Tient la Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?*, and Spencer's *Education* and *The Principles of Sociology*.⁸ One of his most important objectives of analysing them was, besides, to sustain his arguments against Western missionary assaults on Islam. He and his group of apologists often quoted these studies in order to justify Islam as a way of life that is in harmony with the 20th ethics and beliefs.⁹

In its early years, *al-Manār* enthusiastically reviewed works translated by the Egyptian jurist Aḥmad Fathī Zaghlūl (1863-1914),¹⁰ such as his translation of *L'Islam: impressions et études* by Henry de Castries (1850-1927).¹¹ Riḍā's citation of Zaghlūl's translation was said to largely contribute to the fame of his journal among the Egyptian audiences. As a result of their reading of Zaghlūl's translation in *al-Manār*, a group of notable jurists and lawyers became subscribers to the journal.¹² In the period October 1899-September 1906, *al-Manār* published a translation series of the educational work, *L'Émile du dix-neuvième siècle*, by the French writer Alphonse Esquiros (d. 1876).¹³ The translation was prepared for *al-Manār* by the Egyptian jurist 'Abd al-'Azīz Effendi Muḥammad, the attorney general at the Zaqāzīq Court in the Nile Delta, who was motivated by 'Abduh to translate the book.¹⁴

Riḍā believed that most of these European philosophers and writers had not entirely relinquished religion, but rejected the traditions of the Church and perceived its hierarchy as responsible for their backwardness.¹⁵ As compared to missionaries and Western medieval writers, he admitted the moderateness of some modern Western scholars who fairly studied Islam and had no purpose of blindly attacking its scriptures and history.¹⁶ He moreover criticised Muslim scholars for not taking any initiative to learn foreign languages or at least to know what is written in foreign languages on Islam. Admiring the ideas contained in such works, he constantly urged his Muslim fellow scholars to read

⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

⁹ Eban, *op. cit.*, p. 172-171.

¹⁰ Ibid., Zaghlūl was the brother of the well-known political leader Sa'ad Zaghlūl, who was known for his translations of works by people such as Jeremy Bentham on the principles of Legislation, and the French works of Descartes, Desmoulin and Le Bon, see, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid, *Egypt and Cromer, A Study in Anglo-Egyptian Relations*, London: John Murray, 1968, p. 152.

¹¹ Paris: Colin, 1896. The book was also quoted by subsequent Muslim scholars, such as Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, see, *al-Ta'aṣṣub wā al-Tasāmuḥ bayna al-Masīhiyya wā al-'Islām*, Cairo, 1965, pp. 149-196.

¹² *Tārīkh*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1006-1007.

¹³ *L'Émile du dix-neuvième siècle*, Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1869.

¹⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 2/31 (Jumādā al-'Ākhira 1317- October 1899), p. 489. *Al-Manār* later published the articles in one volume under the title, *Emīl al-Qarn al-Tāsi' 'Ashar aw al-Tārbiyyah al-Istiqlālīyah*, 1331 (1913).

¹⁵ Shahin, *Eyes*, p. 68.

¹⁶ See, Riḍā's appraisal of the works of the Italian Leone Caetani (1869-1935), *al-Manār*, vol. 11/1 (Muḥarram 1326/March 1908), pp. 9-31.

them as a good instrument in ‘convincing Europe that Islam is a religion of knowledge and cultivation.’¹⁷

In a similar way, Arabic journals extensively published many of the views of Western writers and politicians on Islam and Muslims, which Riḍā also eagerly followed and used in his refutation of any attack on Islam. An important example was his regular citation from the London-based monthly review *The Nineteenth Century and After*, which was a widely known periodical in Arab journals. He selected some of its articles containing views of Western scholars on Eastern and Islamic issues.¹⁸ He also knew the name of the Scottish diplomat and writer David Urquhart (1805-1877), and some of his writings on the ‘spirit of the East’.¹⁹ In February 1914, he quoted and gave a detailed comment on a lecture delivered in the same year by the Dutch orientalist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) at Columbia University on the religious state of Muslims and the relationship between Islam and Christianity in the Dutch East Indies, which was earlier translated by the Syrian Arabic journal *al-Hudā*.²⁰

Riḍā’s illustration of these views sometimes carried a double message to those whom he considered ‘atheists among Muslims.’²¹ For instance, he quoted the New York-based tri-weekly Arabic newspaper *al-Bayān*²² on the renunciation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to the Lausanne Treaty between the U.S. and Turkey. The background of that event dates back to 1923, when the Presbyterian missionary groups denounced this treaty. Later in 1926, Bishop William T. Manning of the Episcopal Church induced 110 bishops to sign a memorial in which they condemned it, as they believed that it negatively affected their missionary work by enforcing laws that would prohibit the teaching of religion.²³ But Senator William Edgar Borah (1865-1940), the Chairman of the Senate’s Foreign Affairs Committee and the Administration, backed the treaty by rejecting their appeal because of his country’s international

¹⁷ ‘Kitāb al-Islām’, *al-Manār*, vol. 1/11 (Muharram 1316/June 1898), p. 184.

¹⁸ See, for instance, *al-Manār*, vol. 15/3 (Rabi‘ al-ʿAwwal 1330/March 1912), pp. 201-209; vol. 15/4 (Rabi‘ al-ʿĀkhar 1330/April 1912), pp. 299-305; vol. 15/8 (Sha‘bān 1330/August 1912), pp. 627-636; vol. 18/2 (Rabi‘ al-ʿĀkhar 1333/March 1915), pp. 141-153.

¹⁹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 5/3 (Ṣafar 1320/May 1902), pp. 101-104. Cf. D. Urquhart, *The Spirit of the East, Illustrated in a Journal of Travels through Roumeli during an eventful period*, 2 vols., London: Henry Colbourn, 1838; G. H. Bolsover, ‘David Urquhart and the Eastern Question, 1833-37: A Study in Publicity and Diplomacy’, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 8/4 (December, 1936), pp. 444-467.

²⁰ Snouck Hurgronje, ‘Al-ʿIslām Yuqāwim al-Naṣrāniyya’, *al-Manār*, vol. 17/3 (Rabi‘ al-ʿAwwāl 1332/February 1914), pp. 210-217; see, Riḍā’s reply, vol. 17/4 (Rabi‘ al-ʿĀkhar 1332/March 1914), pp. 268-272.

²¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 27/2 (Shawwāl 1344/May 1926), p. 157.

²² *Al-Bayān* was founded by the Syrian journalist Sulaymān Baddūr (d. 1941) in 1911. It played a major role in her support of the Great Syrian Revolution against the French (1925-1926). See, *Zirikli*, vol. 3, p. 122. The newspaper maintained a consistently high literary and journalistic reputation. See, B. T. Mehdi, *The Arabs in America 1492-1977*, New York, 1978, p. 12.

²³ Robert L. Daniel, ‘The Armenian Question and American-Turkish Relations, 1914-1927’, *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 46/2 (Sep., 1959), p. 272.

commercial and political relations.²⁴ Riḍā drew the attention of whom he named as ‘geographical’ Muslims to the renunciation by those bishops of the treaty as a sign of their strong religious sentiments and solidarity. Those Muslims should learn a lesson from that, and should not be ‘tempted’ by any slogans which would indicate that Europe was completely on the secularization path. Religion, in Riḍā’s evaluation, was still playing an important role in Western politics.²⁵

At another level, *al-Manār* polemicized against Christianity by using the well-known controversy around the views of the former dean of Saint Paul’s Cathedral in London W.R. Inge (1860-1954) on Christianity. Inge was known in his time as the ‘outspoken Dean’ or sometimes ‘Mr. Valiant-for-Truth’.²⁶ In his career, he extensively contributed to different magazines and papers. In April 1927, Riḍā eagerly cited a report made by *The Daily Express* on some of Inge’s conclusions on the relationship between the natural sciences and religious knowledge, which he spelled out in a book under the title *Science, Religion and Reality*.²⁷ The book had ‘a practical object, that of indicating possible terms of peace [...] between religion and science.’²⁸ Riḍā quoted *The Daily Express* which described the controversy as a ‘bombshell with heavy clatters’ in the body of Christian churches.²⁹ As a modernist (although he himself disliked the term), Inge accepted the ‘unfettered’ criticism of the Bible in general, but he felt very much the tension it created for orthodoxy. He rejected the miracles as props or proofs for the Christian creed, and made a clear distinction between natural and supernatural sciences.³⁰ Riḍā’s idealism led him wonder: ‘Had Inge read his writings [in *al-Manār*] on the miraculous nature of [the Qur’ān], he would have become one of its preachers.’³¹ He even added that ‘Inge, and people like him, searching for [the truth] had no other resort but the religion of the Qur’ān, which combines ‘reason’ with ‘heart’, and is supported by logic and science’.³²

²⁴ More about Borah’s life, see, Robert James Maddox, *William E. Borah and American foreign policy*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970.

²⁵ *Al-Manār*, vol. 27/2, p. 157.

²⁶ W. R. Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, first and second series, 2 vols., London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1924-1926. More about his life, see, Adam Fox, *Dean Inge*, London: John Murray, 1960, p. 142.

²⁷ Joseph Needham (ed.), *Science, Religion and Reality*, foreword by Arther James Balfour, London: Sheldon Press, 1925. See also, W. R. Inge, *Science and Ultimate Truth*, Fison Memorial Lecture, 1926, Longmans, 1926. Cf. G. Valente, ‘A Finite Universe?’ Riemannian Geometry and the Modernist Theology of Ernest William Barnes’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 38 (June 2005), p. 2.

²⁸ L. P. Chambers, ‘Book Review: *Science, Religion and Reality*, by Joseph Needham’, *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 37/1 (Jan., 1928), p. 78.

²⁹ ‘Taḥawwl al-Kanīsa al-Injīlīyyah ‘An al-Taḳālid al-Naṣrāniyya (The Church of England recants its Christian traditions)’, *al-Manār*, vol. 28/2 (Ramaḍān 1346/April 1927), pp. 144-149.

³⁰ Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175.

³¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 28/2, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

³² *Ibid.*

Al-Manār was always in search for Western views which might support the Islamic views concerning the negation of the divinity of Jesus. For example, Riḍā quoted an article from the Swiss daily *Journal de Genève* (27 January 1928) dealing with a controversial lecture given in Geneva on the early Christian history.³³ Riḍā had received the Arabic text of the article from one of his readers who had a good command of French. It referred to a lecture delivered by the Swiss theologian Auguste Lemaître (1887-1970) at the Society of Protestant Friends in Geneva in which he raised critical questions on various subjects, including the divinity of Jesus. The *Journal* commented that the problem of the nature of Jesus is as old as Christianity. All Churches, Protestant or Catholic, still believe in his divinity, and make this article of faith a basis of their theology. The faith in the divinity of Jesus requires a new rational theory regarding the relation between the Father and the Son.³⁴ As a liberal theologian, Lemaître was against 'rigidity' and 'returning back to old formulas'. 'Investigating the essence of God and the approach of understanding of the real meaning of Christ in history changes through ages. It is possible that the relationship between Christ and God is neither decided at the moment, nor in any historical period. It is rather better to amend the constitutions of faith according to the age while completely keeping up the traditions; but one should seek the real links between this tradition and the modern age.'³⁵ Riḍā was convinced that such Christian forums in the West would be enough verification that the Qur'ān had brought forward clear-cut evidences as regard to the Christian belief many centuries ago. In this vein, he continued, the Church resisted such voices, since it was worried that Christians would one day become free-thinking and researchers among them would in droves convert to Islam.³⁶

Religious developments in Germany, especially Adolf Hitler's pressure on the churches, were also widely discussed in Egyptian journals. In 1934, for instance, Riḍā published two articles on what he titled: 'The Nazi Irreligious Movement and the Bravery and Frankness of the Vatican', and 'Religious Conflicts among German Protestant Sects'.³⁷ The historical background of these two articles was the opposition of a group of young pastors to Hitler and the policy of 'Nazification' of the German Protestant Churches, when he nominated the fervent pro-Nazi bishop Ludwig Müller (1883-1945) as the country's Reichsbishop and 'Delegate and plenipotentiary for all questions

³³ 'Tatawwur al-I'tiqād bi Ulūhiyyat al-Masīḥ (Development of the belief in the divinity of Jesus)', *al-Manār*, vol. 29/9 (Sha'bān 1349/February 1928), p. 693-695.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 693

³⁵ As quoted in *al-Manār*, ibid., p. 693. Lemaître followed what he himself called 'une démarche de désespoir'. It is 'Une théologie qui commence par nier toute trace de la réalité divine dans la conscience ne peut connaître Dieu en Christ que par une démarche purement arbitraire'. See, Bernard Reymond, 'La théologie libérale dans le protestantisme de Suisse romande', *Évangile et liberté: périodique du protestantisme libéral français*, October 1999. E-copy is available at: <http://www.eglise-reformee-mulhouse.org/el/el2.htm>, accessed on 25 May 2007.

³⁶ *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/9, p. 695.

³⁷ *Al-Manār*, vol. 34/1 (Muḥarram 1355/May 1934), pp. 73-78. *Al-Manār* cited here the Egyptian dailies, *al-Muqaṭṭam* (7 March, 1934) and *Kawkab al-Sharq* (12 April 1934).

concerning the Evangelical churches'. The resistance movement, known as the so-called *Bekennende Kirche* (or Confessing Church), was primarily led by Martin Niemöller (1892-1984), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) and Heinrich Gruber (1891-1975).³⁸ The Pope was alarmed by the whole series of events, especially by the conflict with the Evangelical church. The Vatican expressed its serious anxiety about the Church and Germany, and that it might be a rehearsal for a similar treatment of the Catholics.³⁹ *Al-Manār* also referred to the rejection by the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946) of the fundamental tenets of the Christian doctrine, and his desire to build up what Riḍā called 'a new racist religion'.⁴⁰ Riḍā did not give any analysis of the situation, except his short comment that 'Germany and its people – the most civilized in the world – [...] were trying to get rid of such a 'falsified' religion [Christianity], which is contradictory to scientific facts and rational self-evident truths; [...] including] its strict rules, church system, big wealth, fanaticism of its bishops and priests, and their spiritual authority on the people'.⁴¹

Within the above-mentioned context, archaeological discoveries on Biblical themes on the one hand and Western contemporary discussions on Biblical figures and their relation to Islam on the other attracted *al-Manār*'s attention. We turn now to compare Riḍā's early polemical treatment of the discovery of the Code of Hammurabi and the famous *Babel-und-Bibel-Streit* with his later harsh response to the release of the Arabic translation of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and the ideas of A.J. Wensinck, mentioned above.

1.1.1. Hammurabi and the Babel-und-Bibel-Streit (1903)

Riḍā considered such discoveries as 'great news', 'a step from within Europe [to] jump to Islam', 'a new line of thought in Christianity', and 'the appearance of a new Qur'ānic sign'.⁴² *Al-Manār* must have depended on various Arabic papers and journals, which followed these discussions. In his journal, Farah Anṭūn (see, chapter 2), for instance, published lengthy quotations from

³⁸ S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-1945*, Regent College Publishing, 2001, p. 35. Cf. John S. Conway, 'The Historiography of the German Church Struggle', *Journal of Bible and Religion*, vol. 32/3 (July 1964), pp. 221-230.

³⁹ Conway, *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴⁰ 'Al-Nizā' al-Dīnī fī Almāniya: Ba'd Rijāl al-Kanīṣah yataḥadawna al-Nāzī (Religious conflict in Germany: Some Clergymen challenge Nazism)', *al-Manār*, vol. 33/9 (Dhū al-Qi'dah 1352/February 1934), pp. 692-696. *Al-Manār* quoted here another article published in *Kawkab al-Sharq* (22 January 1934). Rosenberg pleaded for a new 'religion of the blood', based on defending the Arian soul and its noble character. More about Rosenberg's ideas on Christianity, see, for example, Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 92-121.

⁴¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 34/1, p. 78.

⁴² 'Al-Naba' al-'Azīm (Great News)', *al-Manār*, vol. 6/3 (Ṣafar 1321/May 1903), pp. 87-109.

Western and Arabic periodicals on this subject as front-page in his famous paper *al-Jāmiʿa*.⁴³

Friedrich Delitzsch was the major figure behind the *Streit*. In his lectures, delivered at the *Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft* before an audience including the emperor of Germany Wilhelm II (1859-1941), Delitzsch found a certain relationship between the Old Testament and Assyrian creation myths. He not only pointed to the presence of Babylonian ideas in biblical texts, but ultimately opposed the Church's concept of divine Revelation as well. His ideas on the subject triggered vehement controversies and many articles appeared contradicting him.⁴⁴

Riḍā referred to the historical arguments that the Mosaic laws were similar to the Code of Hammurabi, whose black diorite block (2.25 metre) had been discovered in 1901 under the ruins of Susa, the ancient capital of Babylon.⁴⁵ Riḍā maintained that German scholars identified King Hammurabi with the Biblical figure Amraphel (Genesis 14: 18-20).⁴⁶ He argued that Amraphel was the Biblical figure Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham according to the story of the Old Testament, and was also mentioned in the New Testament as in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews (7:1-3). But he reconfirmed that Hammurabi, unlike Moses, was an idolater and his scriptures were of a pagan nature.⁴⁷

Riḍā criticised Muslim scholars, such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and others, for their conclusion that the Torah was transmitted by uninterrupted chains of transmission (*tawātur*), and that its distortion (*tahrīf*) according to the Qur'ānic verses was not related to the text. According to this Islamic view, scripture that has been passed down by means of this successive transmission was not prone to textual corruption. God would not allow His word to be distorted so that it was no longer truthful.⁴⁸ Riḍā maintained that such views gave missionaries the chance in their attempt to convince common people that Muslim scholars admitted the invulnerability of the Torah against textual corruption. Later

⁴³ 'Mashāhīr al-Sharq: Hammūrābī', *al-Jāmiʿa*, vol. 4/2 (March 1903), pp. 67-78; he has quoted among others the American Protestant magazine *al-Nashrah al-'Usbū'iyya* (founded 1871, Beirut).

⁴⁴ Friedrich Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel. Ein Vortrag. (gehalten am 13. Januar 1902)*, Leipzig, Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung 1902; id., *Zweiter Vortrag über Babel und Bibel*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1903; id., *Babel und Bibel: Ein Rückblick und Ausblick*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1904; Idem., *Babel und Bibel: Dritter (Schluss-) Vortrag*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1905. See also, Reinhard G. Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel-Streit*, Freiburg/Schweiz: Univ.-Verl.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1994; Emil G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1955, pp. 147-163. Klaus Johanning, *Der Bibel-Babel-Streit: Eine forschungs-geschichtliche Studie*, Frankfurt, 1988.

⁴⁵ F. Delitzsch, *Zweiter vortrag*, p. 22. Cf. Stanley A. Cook, *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi*, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903; F. M. Th. Böhl, 'King Hammurabi of Babylon in the setting of his time (About 1700 B.C.)', in *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen*, 9 (1946) pp. 341-368.

⁴⁶ *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/3, p. 89.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 94.

⁴⁸ See, Chawkat Moucarry, *The Prophet & The Messiah: An Arab Christian's Perspective on Islam & Christianity*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001, *passim*, pp. 47-72

Muslims attempted to study the Scriptures carefully, and reached other conclusions. The Qur'ānic affirmation of the corruption of the scriptures in their present form, he went on, became much clearer after Western scholars had historically criticised them.⁴⁹ Riḍā challenged Christian missionaries to refute these archaeological discoveries. He saw a positive aspect of Christian missionary attacks on Islam that they should stimulate Muslims to study and translate such Western books on the Bible, and to make known for everybody that 'the Bible contains information fully contradictory to science'.⁵⁰

Riḍā labelled the discovery of the Code of Hammurabi as a 'quake' in Europe with regard to the history of the Bible. *Al-Manār* dealt in some detail with the repercussions of the Bible and Babel controversy, and its impact on the belief in the divine nature of the Bible in Europe. In the wake of Delitzsch's first lecture in 1902, public opinion forced Kaiser Wilhelm II to distance himself from Delitzsch's proposal that the Old Testament was nothing but transcribed Assyrian wisdom.⁵¹ The Kaiser met Delitzsch in the presence of his wife Auguste Viktoria and the *Oberhofprediger* Ernest Dryander (1843-1922). *Al-Manār*, probably following *al-Jāmi'a* of Faraḥ Anṭūn, quoted the Arabic translation of the German text of the Kaiser's letter to Admiral Friedrich von Hollmann (1842-1913) in which he tells the story of his meeting with Delitzsch.⁵²

Riḍā was not surprised by the interest of Wilhelm II in the issue. He was persuaded that the Kaiser interfered in the affair only to use religious sentiments as instrument for achieving his political success by demonstrating that politics is no enemy of science, but its strongest tool.⁵³ Riḍā described the Kaiser's letter to Hollmann as 'illusive' and 'contradictory', but also showed his 'impulsiveness, deep understanding and experience'.⁵⁴

Depending on the Kaiser's own words, Riḍā made an Arabic analysis of the arguments. The Kaiser divided the revelation into two kinds: the first historical and ongoing, while the second is purely religious.⁵⁵ As for the first kind, the Kaiser said: 'It [the revelation] sometimes appears in the shape of a great man, a priest, or a king, either amongst the heathens, the Jews or the Christians. Hammurabi was one of these; Moses, Abraham, Homer, Charles the Great, Luther, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kant, and the Emperor Wilhelm the Great as well. God chose them and saw them qualified to achieve great and everlasting deeds and be in service of their people according to His will, both in

⁴⁹ *Al-Manār*, vol 6/3, pp. 87-88.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵¹ By 1905, the controversy had resulted in the publication of 1,650 articles and 28 pamphlets, see, Suzanne Marchand, 'German Orientalism and the Decline of the West', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 145/4 (December, 2001), pp. 468-469.

⁵² About the letter, see, Lehnmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-230.

⁵³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/3, p. 96

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 96; See chapter 7: 'Der Babel-Bibel-Streit als Politikum Kaiser Wilhelm II', in Lehnmann, *op. cit.*, p. 211-230.

⁵⁵ 'Eine fortlaufende, gewissermaßen historische [Offenbarung]' and 'eine rein religiöse auf die spätere Erscheinung des Messias vorbereitende Offenbarung'. As quoted in, *ibid.*, p. 224.

spiritual or mundane acts.⁵⁶ The second kind of revelation had started with Abraham and was ended by the coming of Jesus.

Riḍā was, however, extremely astonished that the Kaiser did not include Islam as a religious community beside the heathens, Jews and Christians, and Muḥammad as a prophet beside other prophets. Wilhelm II, according to him, was either 'ignorant' or 'fanatic'.⁵⁷ It was the German Emperor, who as part of his *Weltpolitik* visited Constantinople and Damascus (autumn 1898) and in a flirting spectacular speech declared himself as a friend of Islam and the protector of the sultan and the Muslim World.⁵⁸ Riḍā ironically indicated that the Kaiser mentioned his grandfather among great historical figures as if he intended to portray him as 'a tool' in the hands of God, which was entitled to preserve the German glory and establish the German Empire. But this alleged divine message was, in Riḍā's view, baseless, as his grandfather was none but an 'instrument' in the hands of his Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck (1862-1890).⁵⁹ Riḍā contended that the prophet of Islam has proved to be greater than Bismarck, and there would never come any new discovery to discredit the Divine origin of his mission.⁶⁰

Riḍā's conclusions from Hollmann's letter mainly depended on his acceptance of the aspects that were in agreement with Islam. In the letter, he accepted the existence of God as the only creator of the world, and that people were in dire need of revelation in their search for knowledge about God. But he primarily rejected the Kaiser's division, and found it absurd and impossible that the Divine entity would be 'split into parts'. Human beings, according to him, are tiny creatures as compared to the ultimate and countless beings in the universe. It was also arrogant to confine the Divine to some individuals on the earth, which is a tiny planet in the universe. God, Riḍā continued, diffuses a spiritual world in the cosmic system with all astonishing secrets and comprehensiveness. In their pagan phase, human minds recognised that world, and called it 'the world of deities', and believed that every part of the universe was organised by its own god. But prophets receiving their missions through revelation named it 'the world of angels', which illustrates that the prophet's spirit is highly connected with these spirits in the acquisition of the Divine knowledge.⁶¹ Riḍā differentiated between the knowledge of prophets and that of poets and kings. The former is not acquisitionable (*muktasab*), but revealed to them through the Spirit with its main subject of faith and the preservation of a specific connection between God and people. The latter is acquisitionable

⁵⁶ In German: 'Offenbart er sich bald in diesem oder jenem großen Weisen, oder Priester oder König, sei es bei den Heiden, Juden oder Christen. Hammurabi war einer, Moses, Abraham, Homer, Karl der Grosse, Luther, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kant, Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse. Die hat er ausgesucht und Seiner Gnade gewürdigt, für ihre Völker auf dem geistigen wie physischen Gebiet nach seinem Willen Herrliches Unvergängliches zu leisten.' Ibid, p. 224

⁵⁷ *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/3, p. 98

⁵⁸ Holger Weiss, 'German Images of Islam in West Africa', *Sudanic Africa*, vol. 11 (2000), p. 53.

⁵⁹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/3, p. 101

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 101

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 102-103.

with no specified subject, but including imaginations, fantasies, stories and policies.⁶²

Riḍā concluded that the Kaiser was mistaken in many of his remarks. He firstly argued that monotheism was known among nations before Abraham. Although there was no historical sign of its existence, there were prophets before him who had also propagated it. Secondly, God's manifestation in Christ was less than His manifestation in Moses, since Jesus only follows the Law of Moses with little reforms: 'I came not to change the law'. His manifestation in Muḥammad, Riḍā went on, was more than that in Abraham, Moses and Jesus, as he was the only figure to whom Jesus' prophecy (John, 16: 12-14) was applicable.⁶³

1.1.2. Arabic Translation of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1933)

Thirty years later the afore-mentioned Dutch orientalist A.J. Wensinck summarized the thesis of his teacher Snouck Hurgronje on the position of the prophet 'Ibrāhīm' in a lemma in the *EI*.⁶⁴ Snouck never attempted to translate his dissertation, but his ideas became widely known through Wensinck's article in the *EI*. The sensitivity of the historical analysis of the figure of Ibrāhīm dates back to the well-known case of the Egyptian liberal intellectual Tahā Ḥusayn, almost seven years before the publicity of the ideas of the *EI*.⁶⁵

In his article, Wensinck argued that major attention was paid to Abraham in the Qur'ān only after Muḥammad migrated to Medina, and not before the outbreak of the dispute between himself and the local Jewish community. In this manner Abraham was presented as the forerunner of Muḥammad, precursor of Islam, preacher of pure monotheism, and founder of the Ka'ba with his son Ismā'īl inviting all mankind to perform Hajj. This would have allowed Muḥammad to claim priority for Islam over Judaism and Christianity. The reason behind the acceptance of the Abraham concept was primarily designed to provide the Prophet with a new means to demonstrate the independence of the Islamic faith vis-à-vis Judaism and to present Islam from that time on as the originally revealed religion.⁶⁶

The present writer has elsewhere analyzed the Wensinck affair in the context of the question of academic freedom and Western scholarship on Islam

⁶² Ibid., p. 103.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Snouck Hurgronje, *Het Mekkaansche Feest*, Leiden, 1880. Cf. A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammads*, Berlin, 1869.; A. J. Wensinck, 'Ibrahim' in *EI*, II, 432a. See the critical views, Y. Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran*, Paris 1958; Rudi Paret, 'Ibrahim', in *EI*, III, 980a.

⁶⁵ About Husayn's indebtedness to Western scholarship, see Mohamed Al-Nowaihi, 'Towards the Reappraisal of Classical Arabic Literature and History: Some Aspects of Taha Husayn's Use of Modern Western Criteria', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 11/2 (Apr., 1980), pp. 189-207; Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'Towards a Structural Analysis of Pre-Islamic Poetry', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 6/2 (Apr., 1975), pp. 148-184.

⁶⁶ Khalil Athamina, 'Abraham in Islamic Perspective: Reflections on the Development of Monotheism in Pre-Islamic Arabia', *Der Islam*, vol. 81 (2004), p. 185.

with an example from Egypt in the early 1930s.⁶⁷ It has been shown that as soon as the Egyptian royal decree of nominating five orientalist members in the Academy became known in the press, the Egyptian physician and health inspector Ḥusayn al-Harrāwī launched a most virulent attack against orientalist circles, especially against Wensinck. His first article appeared as a front-page in the famous Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* as, ‘Orientalists and Islam: Arabic Language Academy member Wensinck ridicules Islam’. He severely attacked the *EI*, and accused the Dutch scholar of ‘assuming a premise and then searching the Qur’ān for those verses that support this premise, discarding anything that would contradict it so as to produce a conclusion that plants the seeds of doubt in the mind of the reader. This is the method that orientalists used in their studies on Islam, on the life of the Prophet or on any matter to which they wished to bring the Qur’ān to bear as evidence. It was an old ruse, the purpose of which was to arm evangelists and colonialists with pseudo-logical arguments to shake the beliefs of the Muslim people and cause them to abandon their religion.’⁶⁸

What concerns us here is Riḍā’s reaction to the publication of the Arabic edition of the *EI* as part of his evaluation of Western scholarship on Islam. These scholars of Islam were trained in theology and Semitic languages, and tried to apply similar historical methods as used by their colleagues on the same Biblical stories and their counterparts in the Qur’ān, such as the story of Abraham in the case under discussion.

Before treating Riḍā’s partaking in the controversy, we should say something about Riḍā’s relationship with Wensinck. It should be first of all stressed that Wensinck’s reputation among Muslim scholars in Egypt had been much connected to his most famous work, *A Handbook of Muḥammadan Traditions* (1927), more than his contributions to the *EI*. The prominent Muslim jurist Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (1892-1958), one of Riḍā’s students,⁶⁹ was perhaps the first Muslim scholar to pay attention to Wensinck’s work. In October 1928 he received the *Handbook*, which he considered as a treasure that should be known to Arab and Muslim readers. Two years later Shākir met Wensinck for the first time in the Salafiyya Library in Cairo, and requested his

⁶⁷ Umar Ryad, ‘The Dismissal of A.J. Wensinck from the Royal Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo’, a paper presented at: ‘Conference Academic Freedom and Religious Freedom’, University of Leiden, 27-28 February 2007; published in Willem B. Drees & Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld (eds.), *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe: Academic and Religious Freedom in the 21st Century*, Leiden University Press, 2008, pp. 91-134. See also, Rached Hamzaoui, *L’Académie de langue arabe du Caire: histoire et œuvre*, Tunis: Université de Tunis, 1975, p. 69ff; Sj. van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de islam*, Leiden: Documentatiebureau Islam-Christendom, Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, 1988, p. 18-23; Usep Abdul Matin, ‘The *Fatwā* of Aḥmad al-Syrabāsī on encouraging Muslims to use Wensinck’s *Concordance* and *Handbook*’, an unpublished paper, Seminar Problems and Methods of Islamic Studies: Islam and the West: Their mutual relations as reflected in *Fatwā*-Literature, MA programme, Leiden University, 1999.

⁶⁸ Yunan Labib Rizk, ‘Chronicles’, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, no. 647, July 2003.

⁶⁹ Ron Shaham, ‘Egyptian Judge in a Period of Change: Qadi Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, 1892-1958’, *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 119 (1999), pp. 440-455

permission to embark upon translating the work into Arabic. In the same year, Shākir's enthusiasm about the work stimulated Riḍā to personally direct the same request at Wensinck, who replied in the affirmative: 'Yes, I wish that the book would be of much use, especially among the people of Egypt and Ḥijāz whom I respect and love much.'⁷⁰

It is also worthy to note that Wensinck probably saw Riḍā for the first time when the latter was giving a lecture on February 9, 1930 at Jam'īyyat al-Rābitah al-Sharqiyya (mentioned above) in Cairo. In his travel diary, Wensinck gives a caricatural description of Riḍā: 'The Sayyid [Riḍā] is a corpulent small man without legs,⁷¹ big turban, a fat nose, and a full beard, superb when he speaks. The subject was 'old and new'. The majority of the audience was enthusiastic. Before he started a young man showing great approval had stood up and said: 'Yahyā [long live] al-Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā'. This lecture [went on] with some interruptions, and sometimes the Sayyid would interrupt himself.'⁷²

Although *al-Manār* was not directly involved in the controversy, and did not utter any explicit view on his dismissal, Riḍā's general attitude towards Wensinck and his *Handbook* was ambivalent. In the very beginning he had highly praised the author's meticulous efforts in compiling the ḥadīth. Wensinck's great critic, al-Harrāwī, belonged to Riḍā's circle, but he did not contribute to *al-Manār* journal with any anti-orientalist polemics during Riḍā's life. His work was, however, later published as a series of articles in Riḍā's journal and later in one volume by Dār al-Manār, a few months after the latter's death in 1936.

In August 1934 (seven months after Wensinck's dismissal), Riḍā wrote the preface of the *Handbook* in which he positively praised the work. He maintained that due to many commitments he was not able to fully participate in the editing of the work. He stressed the usefulness of the *Handbook* for Muslim scholars in tracing all kinds of traditions; and this work would have spared him 'three quarter' of his preceding work and effort in the study of ḥadīth.⁷³ As an orientalist, Riḍā went on, Wensinck had finished his work for the purpose of serving his career and for the sake of other orientalists; but Muslims rather needed it for the sake of knowledge about the sayings and

⁷⁰ Letter, Wensinck to Riḍā, 1st September 1930, Leiden; the letter is found among Riḍā's personal papers in his archive. As Shākir could not finish the whole task of translation, Riḍā recommended Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī (1882-1968) to continue carrying out the translation work. The controversy around Wensinck's writings on Islam did not influence the continuation of the translation work. Shākir invited readers from all over the Muslim world to use the work. 'Abd al-Baqī has been able to publish the Arabic edition of the *Handbook* under the title *Miftāḥ Kunūz al-Sunnā* (or Key to the Treasures of Sunna), Cairo: Maṭba'at Miṣr, 1934. The work was published a few months after Wensinck's dismissal from the Academy. In his introduction (written 23 July, 1934), Shākir still appreciated the work, and did not refer to the stormy debate around the man.

⁷¹ In Dutch: 'zonder beenen'. Wensinck probably means that due to his thick body and the religious dress it was difficult to see his legs.

⁷² See, Wensinck's travel diary in Egypt, Jeddah, Syria and Jerusalem (end 1929-early 1930), Leiden University Library, p. 38. UB Bijzondere Collecties (KL) - Or. 25.686.

⁷³ *Miftāḥ*, op. cit., p. 3.

traditions of their Prophet. He cited the one ḥadīth that ‘Verily, God will support Islam through men who do not belong to its adherents’.⁷⁴

One year later, Riḍā, in the introduction to his last work *al-Waḥy*, all of a sudden renounced his appreciation for Wensinck’s efforts. According to him, most orientalist did not belong to the independent and fair-minded European scholars, since they did not study Arabic or the books of Islam in order to know the truth about it. They were only seeking out its weak points by describing Muslims in a disfigured way so that their people would be driven away from Islam. Riḍā had a similar attitude towards the *EI*. The *EI* and Wensinck’s *Handbook*, which were two key examples that had already disappointed his high expectation of their orientalist scholarship. Riḍā recanted his earlier lofty impression and rendered it as a futile piece of work. He believed that the translation of *al-Waḥy* would have the effect of influencing fair-minded Europeans and convert them to Islam. Riḍā was, however, surprised that when he sent copies of *al-Waḥy* to all orientalists, it sufficed Wensinck to thank him without giving any review of the book.⁷⁵

As soon as the Arabic translation of the *EI* appeared, he rushed to admit that Western scholars did Muslims a great favor. However, he pointed out that Muslims also had a record of early achievements in organizing such encyclopaedias, but had become stagnant in preserving their own heritage. He recommended Muslim readers everywhere to purchase the Arabic translation, as reading the *EI* in Arabic, the ‘public language of Islam’, would be more useful than the English, French or German editions. He summed up some reasons: 1) Man’s prime need is to know oneself, it is very useful that Muslims better know themselves through the eyes of the fair-minded, biased or opponents among the orientalists. 2) The materials on which the authors depend are abundant in Europe, and orientalists follow scholarly lines of investigation. European public opinion depended on their analyses by which they make judgments on the Orientals. 3) The translation should be supplemented with corrections and analysis made by Muslim scholars in order to guarantee the ‘adequacy’ of given data according to the mainstream of Islamic thought.⁷⁶

Riḍā’s main concern was that Western historical and literary critical views on Islam should be evaluated in the light of the criticisms of Muslim scholars, who should also take part in the project. A few years earlier (1926) he welcomed an invitation provided by *Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Islamkunde*, presided by Georg Kampffmeyer (1864-1936), inviting him and other Muslim scholars to cooperate with its editorial members. He had great expectations that their invitation to work together with Muslim scholars would result in great success.⁷⁷ Riḍā’s suspicion of the *EI* concentrated only on two of his

⁷⁴ ‘Muqaddimat Miftāḥ Kunūz al-Sunna’, *al-Manār*, vol. 34/4 (Rabī‘ al-ʾĀkhar 1353/August 1934), pp. 296-297.

⁷⁵ *Al-Manār*, vol. 35/1 (Rabī‘ al-ʾAwwal 1354/July 1935), pp. 36-37.

⁷⁶ *Al-Manār*, vol. 33/6 (Rajab 1352/October 1933), p. 477.

⁷⁷ See, *al-Manār*, vol. 26/8 (Rajab 1344/February 1926), p. 638.

opponents, whom its editorial committee had chosen in the advisory board: namely the anti-Salafī Azharī scholar Sheikh Yūsuf al-Dijwī (1870-1946)⁷⁸ (see, chapter 3) and the fervent Muslim propagandist and Egyptian nationalist Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī (circa 1878-1954).⁷⁹ Dijwī's views as a traditionalist scholar were, according to Riḍā, not to satisfy the minds of 'educated' Muslims, let alone orientalists. As for Wajdī's views, they did not directly 'refute the allegations'. Riḍā requested that the committee should appoint other scholars of higher scholarly position, such as Sheikh Al-Azhar Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (1881-1945) and the Mufti of Egypt Abd al-Majīd Salīm (1882-1954).⁸⁰ Riḍā, however, did not further develop any scholarly historical response to Wensinck's article on Abraham, nor did he critically study the views of Dijwī and Wajdī.⁸¹

Riḍā showed a completely different attitude by publishing a more severe article in which he talked about the 'corruption' of the *EI*. 'A deceiving name', he wrote, '[...] for an encyclopedia pieced together by a group of Western scholars for the sake of serving their religion and colonial states in the Muslim world. [It was intended] to destroy Islam and its forts, after all the failure of missionary attempts to attack the Qur'ān and its prophet or spread false translations of the Qur'ān.'⁸² He harshly attacked the contributors of the *EI* of intentionally presenting Islam and its men and history in a 'twisted' way. In general he believed that 'Westerners are highly qualified in science, arts and industry, but their qualifications in fabricating things are more effective.'⁸³ Riḍā plainly revoked his earlier recommendation of the Arabic version, as the translators did not comply with his former advice of supplementing the criticisms of Muslim scholars to what he saw as 'distorting' information on Islam. He therefore believed that their 'useful' work had now changed to become 'harmful'. He requested the *EI* subscribers to appeal to the editorial committee that the translators should add 'corrections' in the margins, otherwise they should end their subscription, by which they would be financially supporting those who attack Islam. For him, the publication of the Arabic version of the *EI* was even more dangerous than missionary books and journals. Missionary writings would hardly betray any Muslim, but the danger of *EI* could not be avoided, especially among the educated class.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ About their conflict, see, Riḍā, *Azhar*, p. 15f. Yūsuf al-Dijwī, 'Sāhib al-Manār,' *Majallat Nūr al-Islām*, vol. 3/5 (Jumāda al-ʿUlā 1351/1932), p. 337 (Quoted below, 'Sāhib'); Daniel Neil Crecelius, 'The Ulama and the State in Modern Egypt', unpublished PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1967, pp. 314-315.

⁷⁹ About his life and works, see, Muḥammad Ṭāha al-Ḥājirī. *Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī: Ḥayātuh wā ʾAthārūh*. Cairo: The Arab League, 1970.

⁸⁰ *Al-Manār*, vol. 33/6, p. 478.

⁸¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 33/8 (Ramaḍān 1352/December 1933), p. 630.

⁸² 'Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmiyya wā mā fihā min Mafāsīd', *al-Manār*, vol. 34/5 (Jumāda al-ʾĀkhira 1353/October 1934), pp. 386-387.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

1.2. *Al-Manār* Literary Figures

Riḍā was the major writer in his journal, but he regularly made use of the writings of other publicists and scholars since its early appearance. In his *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, Charles Adams (having written his book during Riḍā's lifetime) branded those who gathered around Riḍā's journal and had sympathy for Abduh's ideas as the *al-Manār* party'.⁸⁵ He spoke of different types of people who associated themselves with the literary, political or reformist concepts laid down by 'Abduh. In collecting his information, Adams mainly depended on references in *al-Manār* itself or the biography of 'Abduh. The study of Riḍā's archive adds many more figures to the list of Adams. Mahmoud Haddad, however, has correctly remarked that not everyone who wrote in *al-Manār* can be considered a Manārist.⁸⁶ The Mararists were not a homogenous group, nor even a group, and even when taken as individuals they are not devoid of contradictions and inconsistencies in their various expositions.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, in order to put Riḍā's works to be dealt with in the ensuing chapters into their particular historical context at the time of their production, one has to pay attention to the social and religious setting of some of the writers of *al-Manār* by giving brief accounts of the lives and places in Riḍā's circle, and most importantly the sources they brought forward to his journal. This group of writers on whose writings Riḍā depended in his knowledge of Western sources can be divided into two categories: those who were living in Egypt or elsewhere in the Muslim world, and his associates of network among Muslim activists and writers living in the West.

1.2.1 Muslims Living in the West

Riḍā was in contact with many Muslims living in Europe and the United States. *Al-Manār* had, for example, its own correspondent in Cambridge, U.K.. In 1922, its anonymous correspondent wrote a report on the Girton conference held in the city (1921) on the general theme of 'Christ and the Creeds'.⁸⁸ The report tells us that two of the key speakers were Hastings Rashdall (1858-1924), the Dean of Carlisle, and H.D.A. Major (1871-1961), principal of Ripon Hall in Oxford. Both theologians were connected to the Modern Churchmen's Union, which developed a movement of opposition to the doctrine and practices of the Anglo-Catholic party. The Union achieved its highest public notice with its Cambridge conference. Major was accused of heresy because of his denial of

⁸⁵ Adams, *Modernism*, pp. 205-247.

⁸⁶ Mahmoud Haddad, 'The Manarist and Modernism: An attempt to fuse society and religion', in Stéphane A. Dudoignon (et al), *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, transformation, communication*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 55.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 56

⁸⁸ 'Al-'Islām wā al-Naṣrāniyya', *al-Manār*, vol. 23/4 (Sha'bān 1340/April 1922), p. 267-272. For more details on the issue, see, C. W. Emmet, 'The Modernist Movement in the Church of England', *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 2/6 (Nov., 1922), pp. 561-576.

the physical resurrection of the body.⁸⁹ Rashdall's paper 'Christ as the Logos and Son of God' aroused sharp controversy with such statements as: 'It is impossible to maintain that God is fully incarnate in Christ, and not incarnate at all in anyone else.'⁹⁰

The Druze prince Shakīb Arslān (1869-1946) was one of the foremost sources that provided *al-Manār* with information about Western religious, social and political ideas. Much has been written about his political cooperation with Riḍā in integrating Arab nationalist movements with the idea of pan-Islamism.⁹¹ It suffices here to analyse a few of Arslān's relevant contributions to *al-Manār*. This serves our aim not only of understanding Riḍā's various sources, but also to show Arslān's use of these Western discussions on Christianity as consolidation of his arguments how important Islam was in his anti-imperialist struggle.

From Europe, Arslān was able to make his Geneva exile residence 'the umbilical cord of the Islamic world'.⁹² His effectiveness as an exiled agitator rested with his ability to attract attention to his activities, to publish frequently in the Arabic press, and to maintain contact with influential groups within Arab [and Muslim] states.⁹³ For example, he extended his 'transnational network'⁹⁴ to include the nationalist *Salafiyya* movement in North Africa, and there he became 'a mentor of a generation'.⁹⁵

Arslān repeatedly argued that pan-Islamism should be the ideal accredited remedy for the decline of Muslims and their lagging behind the Christian West. For him, Europe did not entirely succeed in separating religion from politics. It was inevitable that many politicians still interfered in matters of religion. He used the controversy around the Anglican Prayer Book, which erupted in England in July 1927, to prove his point.⁹⁶ Arslān intended to send an indirect message to the growing Westernising movement in the East. Those who were propagating the strict separation between religion and state should not to be 'deluded' by the conviction that Europe's progress had only been scored due to

⁸⁹ Emmet, *ibid.*, p. 566.

⁹⁰ 'Modernism [Christian and Islamic],' *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan), vol.10, pp.7-17.

Available at:

http://www.sjsu.edu/upload/course/course_1507/195_Christian_and_Islamic_Modernism.pdf; accessed on 18 April 2007.

⁹¹ See, for example, Arslān's magazine, *La Nation Arabe*, Geneva, 4 vols., 1934-1938; W. L. Cleveland, *Islam against the West: Shakīb Arslān and the campaign for Islamic nationalism in the West*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985; J. Bessis, 'Chekib Arslan et les mouvements nationalistes au Maghreb', *Revue Historique*, no. 526 (1978), pp. 467-489.

⁹² As quoted in Cleveland, *ibid.*, p. 67.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

⁹⁴ Raja Adal, 'Constructing Transnational Islam: The East-West Network of Shakib Arslan', in Stéphane A. Dudoignon (et al), *op. cit.*, pp. 176-210.

⁹⁵ Cleveland, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-114.

⁹⁶ More about the affair, see, Robert Currie, 'Power and Principle: The Anglican Prayer Book Controversy, 1927-1930', *Church History*, vol. 33/2 (June, 1964), pp. 192-205; link on the website of the Church of England, <http://cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/1928/>, accessed on 4 April 2007.

its total separation of religion from politics.⁹⁷ Arslān attempted to deduce from this postulate that religion and politics were still enmeshed in Europe, and not completely detached. He cynically compared the English parliament's interference in the case to be like 'a religious synod' giving much of their attention to the Book of Prayer, while ignoring all urgent political issues.⁹⁸ 'The English nation as the most civilized', he went on, 'cannot pray but under the official approval of the parliament and after the royal order. Such purely confessional issues and discussions had taken place in irreligious and political councils'.⁹⁹

Arslān read various Western works and introduced their ideas to the Arab readers. A significant example was his comments and additions to the Arabic translation of Lothrop Stoddard's *The New World of Islam* by the Palestinian translator Ajjāj Nuwayhid.¹⁰⁰ In *al-Manār* he praised some orientalis, while blaming and sometimes attacking others. He was impressed by the French translation of the Qur'ān made by the Swiss orientalist Edouard Montet (d. 1934).¹⁰¹ *Al-Manār* cited his preface to the translation in which he described the origin of the Qur'an as: 'The Qur'ānic doctrine has a strong relation with Jewish and Christian doctrines. Jewish historical reports related to Prophets and Fathers, and also the Christian ones related to Christ represent the subject of various pages of the Qur'ān.'¹⁰² In his criticism, Arslān gave a systematic analysis of Montet's concept of revelation and the early history of Islam. Riḍā nevertheless did not go further than giving an emphatically traditional response that 'all Muslims disagree with the translator in his view, and they believe that all that is mentioned in the Qur'ān on the beliefs of Christians and Jews, their conditions and histories is a revelation from God'.¹⁰³

Under the title 'what is being said about Islam in Europe', Arslān translated and gave his critical views on what the French military interpreter Jules Sicard wrote on 'Abduh's movement of Islamic reform'.¹⁰⁴ Aḥmad Balafriḡ (b. 1908),¹⁰⁵ Arslān's Moroccan secretary and right hand and the later founder

⁹⁷ Shakīb Arslān, 'Azmat Kitāb al-Ṣalāh (The Crisis of the Book of Prayers)', *al-Manār*, vol. 29/3 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1346/June 1928), pp. 201-214.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 214.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921; Ajjāj Nuwayhid, *Ḥāqir al-ʿĀlam al-ʿIslāmī*, 4 vols., Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Salafiyyah, 1352/circa 1932-33.

¹⁰¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/5 (Jumādā al-ʿUlā 1348/November 1929), pp. 377-380; vol. 30/7 (Shaʿbān 1348/January 1929), pp. 524-534.

¹⁰² *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/5, p. 378. Compare the French text: 'Cela est si vrai que, dans les éléments communs au Christianisme et au Judaïsme, dont nous constatons la présence dans le Coran, le texte arabe du Prophète est pénétré de l'inspiration juive plutôt que de l'inspiration chrétienne: c'est la forme juive qui l'emporte.' Edouard Montet, *Mahomet: Le Coran*, Paris: Payot, 1929, p. 29.

¹⁰³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/5, p. 387.

¹⁰⁴ Jules Sicard, *Le monde musulman dans les possessions françaises: Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc, Afrique Occidentale Française*, Paris: Larose, 1928. *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/1 (Muḥarram 1348/June 1929), pp. 33-46.

¹⁰⁵ *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/3 (Rabīʿ al-ʿAwwal 1348/August 1929), pp. 211-224.

of the Istiqlal party, translated another part of the same work, which is relevant to our discussion. Balafrij was the founder of the Association des Etudiants Nord-Africains (1927) during his study at the Sorbonne. Between 1926-1932, he regularly visited Arslān in Geneva.¹⁰⁶ Balafrij was described by a later analyst as follows: 'he knows the works of French writers better than most French people, and on many an occasion when I called on him a year earlier I would find him engrossed in some new book by a French philosopher or historian.'¹⁰⁷

Again Arslan and Balafrij vouched their sharp critique against the West. It was not only Western clergymen who tried to prove the superiority of Christianity upon Islam, but also people in functions among colonial policy-makers and officers (such as Sicard).¹⁰⁸ Sicard discussed the Muslim contact with Christianity in five different points: 1) is the conversion of Muslims to Christianity possible or desirable?; 2) his own attitudes towards the political-religious terrain of Islam; 3) the dogma of the trinity; 4) the harmony [between Christianity and Islam] on matters of doctrine; and 5) moral consequences.¹⁰⁹ Sicard bluntly assumed that 'in the hearts of Muslims there is irreducible hostility towards the dogma of the Trinity. This is serious and worth being noted as it has important results in separating us [Christians] from them [Muslims]. [...] They [Muslims] do not understand, or at least their majority, that Christianity does not use the words 'father' and 'son' in the mortal sense, but strictly spiritual; we should therefore limit ourselves to this simple declaration, when discussing this subject.'¹¹⁰

In his general comment on Sicard's work, Riḍā also scornfully added that the author, as a French military officer, tried by his writings to agitate the spirit of hostility between his French homeland and Islam in order to justify its colonial presence, and to guarantee his position in the French army.¹¹¹ Riḍā vigorously reacted that it were the Christians who adamantly adhered to their hostility against the concept of 'pure' monotheism in Islam by their attachment to some 'ancient pagan doctrines'.¹¹² 'It is stupid of the writer', he continued, 'to think that he would deceive Muslims by using such puzzling and decorated words in his attempt of harmonizing the concept of trinity [for Muslims]'.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ About their relation, see, for instance, Cleveland, *op. cit.*, p. 94-102; John P. Halstead, 'The Changing Character of Moroccan Reformism, 1921-1934', *The Journal of African History*, vol. 5/3 (1964), especially pp. 443-444.

¹⁰⁷ Rom Landau, *Moroccan Journal*, London: Rebert Hale Limited, 1952, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/1, p. 223.

¹⁰⁹ Sicard, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-97

¹¹⁰ *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/1, p. 218. Compare: 'le dogme de la Trinité se heurte à une hostilité irréductible. Il s'agit là d'un point de doctrine très important et dont la portée a des conséquences très sérieuses, du point du vue qui nous sépare des sectateurs de l'islam [...] Ils ne se rendent pas compte, du moins en grande majorité, que les mots : Père, Fils, le Christianisme ne les entendent pas d'une manière charnelle, mais strictement spirituelle; la discussion sur le terrain doit se borner à cette simple déclaration.' Ibid., pp. 91-92.

¹¹¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/1, p. 223.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 223-224.

¹¹³ Ibid.

As early as 1930, Muḥammad Basyūnī b. Muḥammad ‘Imrān (1885-1953), one of the followers of *al-Manār* in Indonesia (Sambas, West Borneo), sent Riḍā a query requesting him to refer it to Arslān. The query focused on the causes of Muslim decline as compared to the progress of the Western world. Arslān promptly answered the question in the form of a well-known treatise tackling the reasons why Muslim nations stagnated while the others experienced rapid progress. The treatise has become one of the significant contributions by Arslān to *al-Manār*.¹¹⁴ ‘Imrān brought forward his appeal to Arslān to write on the subject as a continuation of what ‘Abduh and Riḍā had already written in their defense of Islam in order to renew the effect in the spirit of Muslims. Although it addressed Muslims, the treatise was primarily an indirect response to the Western incursion in the Muslim world. As Riḍā put it in his foreword to the treatise, Arslān was spurred to respond to the questions: ‘after his return from his trip to Spain and Morocco (summer 1930), and after he was aroused by the scenes of the remnants of Islamic civilization in Andalusia, and witnessed the French attempts to christianize the Berbers in Morocco as a beginning to christianize all the Arabs in North Africa, just as Spain had christianized their ancestors in Andalusia in the past.’¹¹⁵ Arslān elucidated that he agreed with the Protestant view that the cause of decadence in Medieval Europe was not Christianity as such, but the Catholic Church under the Pope. Christianity, however, should be given the credit for saving Europe from paganism.¹¹⁶ Arslān also briefly alluded to the above-mentioned Sicard in order to disprove the contention of certain European writers that Christianity was a bar to the progress of civilization and had been the cause of the decline and downfall of the Greeks and the Romans. According to him, Sicard, as a French agent in the Department of Religious Affairs in Rabat, was ‘a very conceited person [...] who played a key role in the process of Christianizing the Berbers.’¹¹⁷

In the wake of Wensinck’s affair, Arslān acknowledged orientalist works to be one of the major sources of information on Islam and Muslims for Europe. The orientalist, according to Arslān, is the *tarjumān* (translator), whose honesty or dishonesty would affect the public opinion. In the case of dishonesty, his works could agitate European hatred against Islam. Arslān divided orientalists into three categories: 1) Those who only searched for and enlarged the fallings

¹¹⁴ Shakib Arslān, *Li-mādhā Ta’akhkhara al-Muslīmūn wā li-mādhā Taqaddama Ghayruhum*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1349/1930-1. See the parts in *al-Manār*, vol. 31/5 (Rajab 1349/December 1930), pp. 353-370; vol. 31/7 (Ramaḍān 1349/February 1931), pp. 529-553. It has been firstly translated in English by M. A. Shakoor as: *Our decline and its causes*, firstly published 1944, Lahore: Sh. Muḥammad Ashraf. The Islamic Book Trust in Kuala Lumpur published its revised edition in 2004. My thanks are due to Dr. Nico Kaptein for lending me his copy of the translation. About Imrān’s life, him, see, Martin van Bruinessen, ‘Basyuni Imran’, in *Dictionnaire biographique des savants et grandes figures du monde musulman périphérique, du XIXe siècle à nos jours*, Fasc. no 1. Paris: CNRS-EHESS, 1992, p. 26. G.F. Pijper, *Studiën over de geschiedenis van de Islam in Indonesia, 1900-1950*, Leiden: Brill, 1977, pp. 134-141.

¹¹⁵ Arslān, *Our decline*, p. xxi

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 88-89

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 92-93. The translator wrongly read him as Saicar.

and weaknesses of Muslims in the eyes of Europeans. Their main intention was to serve Christianity by ‘defaming’ Islam and representing it as evil. Examples of this category were H. Lammens (1862-1937), Martin Hartmann (1851-1918), D. S. Margoliouth (1858-1940) and Wensinck. 2) The second, whom he called ‘sensible enemies’, were those whose main concern was to serve European civilization and Christian culture and to spread those among Muslims, but with no ‘deception’. Although they followed specific scientific methods, they did not always refrain from writing ‘allegations’ and ‘poison’ against Islam whenever needed. People under this category were Louis Massignon and Snouck Hurgronje. 3) A rare third class consisted of serious and objective scholars, who had no prejudice against Islam and whose critical approaches were produced after deep investigation. He counted among these Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), G. Kampffmeyer, Max Mayerhoff (1874-1945), and others. This group, according to him, knew perfectly well that they were raised with negative attitudes widespread in the West against Islam. They tried, however, to contribute in a positive way to lessening the remaining medieval perceptions and bad image of Islam in Europe.¹¹⁸

Arslān never read Wensinck’s work, and he included his name under his first category on the basis of Harrāwī’s articles. Presumably Arslān’s views in this regard had an impact on Riḍā’s above-mentioned hesitation. He had nothing to say on the dismissal of Wensinck from the Academy, but considered the case an internal question associated with Egyptian politics. As he was no Egyptian, he preferred to remain silent on that point.¹¹⁹ Arslān must have known Wensinck personally as he attended and presented a paper on Arabic philology at the International Congress of Orientalists in Leiden, presided by Snouck Hurgronje in 1931.¹²⁰ During this event he had a short discussion with Snouck, and concluded that his views on Islam in Java proved that he was ‘a wise person’, ‘one of the less fanatic scholars’, and ‘a great orientalist.’¹²¹

Arslān, on the other hand, deemed the Arabic translation of the *EI* as a useful and necessary project for young generations, despite its many ‘biased attitudes’, ‘mistakes’ and ‘grave scientific errors’ on Islam. He assigned these errors to the first category of orientalists. Arslān made it clear to the translation committee that they should not underestimate the diversity of contributors to the *EI*, which would make their task more difficult. The advice of historians, chemists, geographers, jurists, philosophers, astronomers, and theologians should be taken into consideration in order to be able to create a rather faultless translation, and to avoid the ‘deluding’ of young generations.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Shakīb Arslān, ‘al-Mustashriqūn wā Māwqifuhum al-Khaṭīr min al-’Islām (Orientalists and their dangerous stance towards Islam’, *al-Manār* (quoted from *al-Jihād*), vol. 33/6, pp. 435-440.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 436.

¹²⁰ Snouck Hurgronje (ed.), *Actes du XVIIIe Congrès International des Orientalistes, Leiden, 7-12 septembre 1931*, Leiden : Brill, 1932.

¹²¹ See, his article in *Ḥaḍīr al-’Alam al-’Islāmī*, vol. 3, pp. 372-374.

¹²² Arslān, ‘al-Mustashriqūn’, p. 439.

Elsewhere I have studied the life and works of the Syro-Turkish officer in Berlin Zeki Kirām, who was one of Riḍā's informants in Europe, and also belonged to the circle of Arslān.¹²³ Kirām kept Riḍā up to date with the developments of German orientalism and briefed him on the situation of Muslim institutions in Berlin and other significant news items in the German press (see, appendix I).

Kirām met Riḍā for the first time on October 13, 1921, during the latter's only visit to Europe. In his diary, Riḍā writes: '[Then] we visited [probably with Arslān] Zaki effendi Kirām al-Dimashqī in his bookstore. He is an active young man whose leg was injured during the last war, and he was treated in Germany. Then he married his nurse, and they opened a bookstore together where he sells books with her. He is now studying medicine'.¹²⁴

In February 1926, Riḍā wrote to Arslān to send him Kirām's address.¹²⁵ Since that time, their relation grew. In Kirām's eyes, Riḍā was his 'guide', 'teacher', 'lighthouse', 'elder brother', and 'father'. For Riḍā, Kirām was a 'good and sincere friend'. Kirām had also some business with Dār al-Manār in Cairo where he had labels printed for medicines made in his private laboratory in Berlin.¹²⁶ Kirām also asked Riḍā to send him information or Islamic books, which he sometimes needed when writing German articles or giving lectures to German audiences on Islam.¹²⁷

Kirām translated one of the works of the German orientalist Max Horten on the Islamic *Geisteskultur*. He sent a summary of his translation to Riḍā to publish in his *Manār*. His Arabic style was not perfect, and his writings in Arabic also contained occasional grammatical mistakes. Riḍā revised the Arabic translation and sent it back to Kirām for correction. Kirām suggested that he would send the revised version including with the original German terms to Horten to compare them to the Arabic sources he used.¹²⁸ A summary of his translation of some of Horten's ideas was later published in *al-Manār* under the title: 'Testimonies of Fair-minded Western scholars about Islam, the Prophet and the Muslims' (1929).¹²⁹ In another article in *al-Manār*, he discussed some of the Western medical discoveries on the 'bad effects' of pork and wine on the human body. Kirām argued that pork was prohibited by the divine revelation only because there were no microscopes with which one could have discovered its harms for the human body. For Riḍā, the divine revelation must be

¹²³ More about his life, see, Umar Ryad, 'From an Officer in the Ottoman Army to a Muslim Publicist and Armament Agent in Berlin', *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 63/3-4 (May-August 2006), pp. 235-268 (Quoted below, 'Kirām'). It is interesting to note that I have been able to trace the family of Kirām in Germany by checking the telephone directory of Germany on the Internet.

¹²⁴ Riḍā's diary, October 13, 1921.

¹²⁵ Shakīb Arslān, *al-Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā 'aw Ikhā' Arba'īn Sanah*, Damascus: Ibn Zaydūn Press, 1937, p. 441 (Quoted below, *Ikhā'*).

¹²⁶ Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 19 Muḥarram 1350/5 June 1931.

¹²⁷ Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 11 Rabī' al-ʿAwwal/15 July 1932.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Zekī Kirām, 'Shahadāt 'Ulamā' al-Gharb al-Munṣifīn lī al-ʿIslām wā al-Nabī wā al-Muslimīn', *al-Manār*, vol. 30/2 (Ṣafar 1348/8 July 1929), pp. 140-141. See another article by Kirām in the same volume, p. 140.

applicable to all people in all ages, and not restricted to such arguments. God, and not Muḥammad or Moses, was the one Who prohibited eating pork in the Torah and the Qur'ān.¹³⁰

He also sometimes translated German orientalist works at Riḍā's request. Riḍā urgently requested him to study the work *Mohammed, sein Leben und sein Glaube*¹³¹ by Tor Andrae (1885-1947), on the life of the Prophet Muḥammad and his faith, and to provide him with a summary of the book. Kirām wrote Riḍā back that he did not know the author, but promised him to translate the book into Arabic.¹³²

The purpose of briefing *al-Manār*'s founder about the German press was that he, as an influential Muslim scholar, would get acquainted with the opinions of policymakers in Europe; and that he would also 'convey the current events [to his readers] as soon as possible in order to confront the Zionists and other enemies, who spend millions for disseminating news to the press in order to mislead the public opinion.'¹³³ The ill propaganda of some 'intruders trading in the name of Islam' also caused Islam gross damage and the propagation of 'false beliefs' under the name of Islam, such as those of Bābiyya, Bahā'iyya or Aḥmadiyya, were, in Kirām's view, the reason behind the decline of the spread of Islam in Europe.¹³⁴ He repeatedly complained to Riḍā about the degeneration of Muslim institutions in Berlin and their feeble role in serving Islam. He was convinced that Muslims in Berlin suffered from ill-information and a lack of understanding of the European mentality and did not have any capability of presenting Islam to the Western public in a proper way. In one letter, he directed his severe attack against the Aḥmadiyya *Islamische Gemeinde zu Berlin*.¹³⁵ He had serious doubts about their way of serving Islam. In his view, their work would, on the contrary, defame the image of Islam in the West. He moreover labeled the five board members of the *Gemeinde*, without giving any names, as 'charlatans', 'five fanatic communists', and 'opportunists who knocked at all doors to get financial benefits for their own interests'.¹³⁶

Kirām bemoaned the state of Muslims who, like him, had nothing to defend their oppressed rights, but the 'Islamic feeling' and the 'Oriental Arab heart'.¹³⁷ He also tried to convince Riḍā that, 'due to his own vast readings and solid belief based on knowledge [...], he was able to launch a strong movement

¹³⁰ Id., 'Qawā'id al-Siḥḥa fī al-'Islāmundhu 1348 Sanah wā Qawā'id al-Siḥḥa fī Urūbā Ba'da 1348 Sanah', *al-Manār*, vol. 30/5, pp. 381-384.

¹³¹ Tor Andrae, *Mohammed, sein Leben und sein Glaube*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1932.

¹³² Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 8 Muḥarram 1352/May 1933.

¹³³ Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 9 October (no year).

¹³⁴ Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 3 Dhu al-Hijja 1351/March 1932.

¹³⁵ Arabic: *al-Jam'iyya al-Islāmiyya fī Berlin*, founded by Maulana Sadr-ud-Din of Lahore in Berlin Charlottenburg 1922.

¹³⁶ More about this, see, Ryad, 'Kirām', pp. 245-249. See, letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin 3 June 1926.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

for the cause of Islam and Arab Islamic peoples.¹³⁸ He considered himself as ‘one of the pivots of *’imān* (faith), and a missionary of Islam’.¹³⁹ The only way to destroy ‘the allegations of Zionism, Christianity, Jesuitism and Freemasonry’, in Kirām’s mind, was to use weapons of their own and select some of their controversial books for translation. Kirām maintained that his financial situation and lack of time did not help him enough to exert more efforts in ‘defending Muslim rights’,¹⁴⁰ and ‘devoting all his time to missionary work’.¹⁴¹

In *al-Manār*, Riḍā praised Kirām’s efforts of ‘reproaching Christian missionaries, and Muslims who give them support’. In addition, he described those Muslims as ‘atheists, slaves of colonizers and enemies of their umma’.¹⁴² Among Riḍā’s papers in Cairo, I have found two Arabic manuscripts which contain the Arabic translation of a polemical text on the history of the Jesuits, which seemed to be a polemical treatise against the order. In my view, Kirām sent this translation to Riḍā, as they bear Kirām’s handwriting. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the manuscripts, which leads directly to the original work and its author(s).

On preparing his German lectures ‘Der Prophet Mohammed und die Frau’, Kirām was advised by Arslān to consult Riḍā’s then recently published work on the rights of women in Islam, *Nidā’ ’ilā al-Jins al-Latīf*. At his request, Kirām received the treatise with a word of dedication.¹⁴³ He delivered those two lectures on the rights of women in Islam in one of the principal Berlin hotels. The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* reviewed the lectures.¹⁴⁴ The London-based *Daily Telegraph* also commented on them.¹⁴⁵ Arabic journals, such as the Egyptian Wafdist journal *al-Jihād* and the Palestinian *al-Jāmi’a al-Islāmiyya* (Pan-Islamism), quoted the lecture at length.¹⁴⁶

As an Arab activist in Berlin, Kirām was preoccupied with the developments of the Zionist question in Germany. He kept Riḍā updated with

¹³⁸ Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 14 November 1929.

¹³⁹ Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 8 Muḥarram 1352/May 1933.

¹⁴⁰ Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 14 November 1929.

¹⁴¹ Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 8 Muḥarram 1352/May 1933.

¹⁴² See Riḍā’s comments on the margin of Kirām’s translation of Horten’s ideas. *Al-Manār*, vol. 30/2, p. 140.

¹⁴³ Letter from Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 3 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1351/March 1932; Rashīd Riḍā, *Nidā’ ’ilā al-Jins al-Latīf: Huqūq al-Mar’ah fī al-Islam*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1932. The treatise was found among Kirām’s collection of books with Riḍā’s signature on the front page. Cf. W. J. A. Kernkamp, *De Islām en de vrouw: Bijdrage tot de kennis van het Reformisme naar aanleiding van M.R. Riḍā’s Nidā’ lil-Djins al-Latīf*, published PhD dissertation (University of Utrecht), Amsterdam, 1935.

¹⁴⁴ E. F., ‘Der Prophet Mohammed und die Frau’, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Berlin, Nr. 414 (22 September 1933).

¹⁴⁵ ‘Nazi Plans for Women’, *The Daily Telegraph*, London, Nr. 24, 444 (Saturday, 23 September 1933). It is probable that it was Kirām himself who provided the *Daily Telegraph*, and German and Arab newspapers with information about his activities in Berlin, or even wrote the articles himself.

¹⁴⁶ See, ‘Al-Jarā’id al-Almāniyya tatkalām ‘an al-Maqām al-Ijtīmā’ī li al-Mar’ah al-Muslimah’, *al-Jihād*, Cairo 26 September 1933; ‘Al-Dūktūr Zekī Kirām yuḥāḍir fī al-Mar’ah’, *al-Jāmi’a al-Islāmiyya*, Yafa (Palestine), 5 Rajab 1352/24 September 1933.

the news of the petitions and protests of German Jews against the Zionist movement.¹⁴⁷ In order to substantiate the Arab cause, he believed that the Jewish statements would be of great benefit in fighting the enemy with his own 'weapon'. He was in contact with some anti-Zionist liberal Jewish organizations in Europe. In 1930, he sent *al-Manār* a translation of an article on the history of the Jewish migration to Palestine written by the Jewish German scholar H. Löwe in the *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin*. Kirām's intention was to give the readers of *al-Manār* insight into 'the persecution of the Jews by non-Muslims and the welfare they enjoyed under the banner of Islam.'¹⁴⁸ The reason why the article never appeared in *al-Manār* is not known.

Following the steps of the above-mentioned Fathī Zaghlūl, another Palestinian student in Paris, 'Ādel Zu'ayter (1895-1957), known as 'the Sheikh of Arab translators', translated many Western works on history, philosophy, sociology and Arabic heritage into Arabic.¹⁴⁹ Zu'ayter's career as a translator started when he traveled to Paris to read law at the Sorbonne (1921). His favourite writer was Gustave Le Bon. He not only translated his works on the civilization of Arabs, but also on the world of Indian civilization, the psychology of socialism, the psychology of revolution and political psychology, etc.¹⁵⁰ Thanks to Zu'ayter's translation, Le Bon's works became widely known in the Arab world. They also received, and still receiving, much attention from the side of many Muslim writers.¹⁵¹

Zu'ayter was in contact with Riḍā, and tried to publish some of his works through *al-Manār* (see appendix II). From Paris he was a subscriber to *al-Manār*, and kept sending Riḍā his primitive draft translations in order to be edited and corrected.¹⁵² Riḍā praised Zu'ayter's efforts in serving the Arab culture by introducing his translated works, but did not forget to remind Arab readers not to adopt what he called 'anti-religious theories' in Le Bon's works.¹⁵³

1.2.2. Writers in the Muslim World

The name of Muḥammad Tawfiq Ṣidqī has been frequently mentioned in the introduction. He was known to the readers of *al-Manār* as one of the most productive contributors who vigorously attempted to apply his medical and scientific knowledge to Islamic subjects. As he also heavily criticised

¹⁴⁷ Letter, Kirām to Riḍā, Berlin, 14 November 1929.

¹⁴⁸ Letter, Kirām, Shawwāl 1348 (1930).

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/history/1422/07/article18.SHTML>; accessed, 30 April 2007

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ See, for instance, Ana Belen Soage, 'The Muslim Reaction to Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg Address', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, vol. 8/1 (March 2007), pp. 137-143.

¹⁵² Letter, Adel Zu'ayter to Riḍā, Boulevard Brune, Paris, 14 October 1922.

¹⁵³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 29/4 (Muḥarram 1347 – July 1928), p. 317.

Christianity and its history, he played a most significant part in giving Riḍā new insights in the Western contemporary sources on Biblical studies.

Belonging to a middle-class Egyptian family, Ṣidqī was born in September 1881, and died in Cairo end of April 1920. In his early age, Ṣidqī memorized the Qur'an. He finished his primary schooling in 1896, his secondary education in 1900, and finished his medical studies in 1904. The Egyptian Ministry of Education honoured him for his success. He was later appointed as a physician in al-Qaṣr al-ʿAynī Hospital in Cairo, where he worked for one year. In 1905 he moved to the Prison Hospital of Turah. In 1914 he moved to the Prison Hospital for Juveniles in Cairo.¹⁵⁴

Ṣidqī was known not only to the readers of *al-Manār*, but also to those of other Egyptian periodicals such as *al-Muʾayyad*, *al-Liwāʾ*, and *al-ʿIlm*. He started reading *al-Manār* when he was a student at the Khedīwiyya secondary school in Cairo. His interest in *al-Manār* grew and he eagerly followed its Riḍā's public lectures in the city. Later he became Riḍā's family doctor and one of his close friends. When they were students, Ṣidqī had religious disputes with his Coptic friend ʿAbduh effendi ʾIbrāhīm (1883-1920), who later converted to Islam.¹⁵⁵ Both of them came in touch with Riḍā after having attended many of his public lectures. They used to visit him in his *al-Manār* office to discuss their religious doubts on specific Christian and Islamic doctrines regarding concepts such as *ʾUlūhiyya* (divinity), *Rūḥ* (soul), and *Baʿth* (resurrection).¹⁵⁶

Unlike Ṣidqī, ʿAbduh ʾIbrāhīm did not author any work, nor did he make any attempt to publish in *al-Manār*. Ṣidqī started to publish his first series of articles in Riḍā's journal in the summer of 1905 under the title: 'Religion in Perspective of Sound Reason'.¹⁵⁷ His very impetus to write on such issues was,

¹⁵⁴ Biographical information is taken from *al-Manār*. It is an article published in *al-Majallah al-Tibbiyya al-Miṣriyyā* (Egyptian Medical Magazine) after Ṣidqī's death (May 1920). *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9 (Dhū al-Hijjah 1338/September 1921), pp. 483-495. It is also interesting to know that I managed to trace one of Ṣidqī's grandsons in Cairo through the telephone directory on the Internet, but unfortunately they do not preserve any archival materials for his grandfather.

¹⁵⁵ ʿAbduh ʾIbrāhīm also studied medicine, and like Ṣidqī became a physician in the Prison Department in Cairo. When he converted to Islam, his family invited him for a debate with Coptic clergymen at their house in order to convince him to return back to his former Coptic belief. Riḍā provided him with needed literature (such as al-Qairanāwī's work) for that debate. In his biography of Ṣidqī, Riḍā made no mention to these debates. After his conversion to Islam, ʿAbduh later married a Muslim woman. His eldest son (ʾIsā, died 1980) became one of the prominent Muslim economists, who (together with Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī) was a pioneer in establishing Islamic Banks in the Gulf. The story of ʿAbduh's conversion to Islam is mentioned in ʾIsā ʿAbduh and Aḥmad Ismāʿīl Yaḥyā, *Limādhā Aslamū?* (Why did they convert?), Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1992, pp. 70-135. The story of conversion has been given as a model in a lecture by the Egyptian *Salafī* preacher and psychologist Muḥammad Ismāʿīl al-Muqaddam (b. 1952).

Audio version is to be found at:

http://www.islamway.com/?iw_s=Lesson&iw_a=view&clession_id=6752, checked, 24 November 2006.

My thanks are due to Mr. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʾIbrāhīm, ʿAbduh's grandson, for sending me a copy of the book.

¹⁵⁶ *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9, pp. 486-487.

¹⁵⁷ 'Al-Dīn fī Naẓar al-ʿAql al-Ṣaḥīḥ', five articles, *al-Manār*, vol. 8/9, 11, 13, 19, 20, (July-December 1905).

according to Riḍā, to find answers to many questions and doubts which occurred to his mind with regard to his religion. Riḍā related Ṣidqī's doubts to his modern education and his personal debates with missionaries during his school time.¹⁵⁸

In his comment on Ṣidqī's articles, Riḍā showed that he was impressed by Ṣidqī and his classmate 'Abduh 'Ibrāhīm and their way of deduction, especially their analysis and acquisition in matters of *'aḳīda* (doctrine). He also provided them with religious sources. Riḍā maintained that their studious discussions had helped Ṣidqī to remove his religious doubts, and had lead 'Abduh to be convinced by the truth of Islam.¹⁵⁹ In his reply to missionary writings on Islam, Ṣidqī read Western works on Biblical criticism, and introduced them to the readers of *al-Manār*; such Western writers as the Englishmen Walter Richard Cassels (1826-1907), John Mackinnon Robertson (1856-1933),¹⁶⁰ Christian Heinrich Arthur Drews (1865-1935),¹⁶¹ and William Harry Turton.¹⁶² Like Riḍā, his motive was to defend Islam against these writings by using the works of fair-minded and atheist Western writers. However, Riḍā maintained that Ṣidqī's writings in this regard were to be complemented by other Muslim works, such as the above-mentioned *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*.¹⁶³

Ṣidqī's articles in *al-Manār* aroused intense controversies in Egypt, and many religious scholars heavily reacted to them. Following the ideas of Muḥammad 'Abduh, Ṣidqī, for instance, discussed the Qur'ānic narrative of Adam's creation, and tried to reconcile it with the Darwinian evolutionist views. Sometimes Riḍā's readers blamed *al-Manār* for opening its pages for such discussions which seemed to contradict with the Qur'ān. Riḍā defended his friend's arguments explaining that he discussed Darwin's ideas as a scientific theory, and that his analysis was based on his own *ijtihād* (reasoning). His articles would only express his own views, for *al-Manār* was not responsible for pieces written by others.¹⁶⁴

The most controversial debate was Ṣidqī's criticism of the *Sunna* in his article *al-'Islām huwa al-Qur'ān waḥdahu* (Islam is the Qur'ān Only). In his view, Muslims should rely upon the Qur'ān, as the features of the Prophet's behaviour were only meant for the first generation of Muslims, and not to be imitated in every particular case. Ṣidqī's article in this regard came as a result of his deliberation (together with 'Abduh 'Ibrāhīm) with Riḍā on his conviction that Muslims were in no need for the *sunna*, as it was a temporary source for Islamic law during the time of revelation only. Riḍā suggested that it would

¹⁵⁸ *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9, p. 487.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

¹⁶⁰ For example, J. M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*, London, 1900.

¹⁶¹ C. H. A. Drews, *Die Christusmythe: Die Zeugnisse für die geschichtlichkeit Jesu*, 2 vols., Jena : Diederichs 1910-1911; translated by C. Delisle Burns, *The Christ Myth*, Amherst, N.Y., [etc.]: Prometheus Books, 1998.

¹⁶² William Harry Turton, *The truth of Christianity: being an examination of the more important arguments for and against believing in that religion*, London: Jarrold & Sons, 1902.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9, p. 490.

probably be more fruitful if Ṣidqī formulated his arguments to be published in *al-Manār*, and put them forward for discussion among scholars of Al-Azhar and others.¹⁶⁵ As we shall see, his polemical writings on Christianity even created a political controversy around *al-Manār*, especially after the interference of Lord Kitchener, the British Commissioner in Egypt (see, Chapter 3).

In 1922 Ṣidqī and his friend ‘Abduḥ ‘Ibrāhīm died of typhus. A few days before his death, Ṣidqī wrote one of his last contributions to Riḍā’s journal on the *‘aqīda*, and asked his family to send it to *al-Manār* even after his death. The news of his death reached Riḍā, when he was in his birthplace preparing for the Syrian Congress. In an article entitled: ‘A Big Islamic Disaster’, Riḍā paid his tribute to Ṣidqī and his friend ‘Abduḥ as two ‘spiritual brothers’. He praised the former’s contributions to his journal, describing him as one of the ‘most God-fearing’ Muslims.¹⁶⁶ Riḍā showed his high esteem of Ṣidqī by representing him as one of the ‘pillars’ of knowledge and reform in Egypt. He concluded: ‘we have never found any other highly valuable friend or a highly esteemed student, who served *al-Manār* the way Ṣidqī did. He was benevolent and grateful to the favours given to him by the founder of *al-Manār*. However, we should admit that his favours to us were greater. Besides his sincerity in our friendship, he was above all our private physician, who also did my children great favours.’¹⁶⁷

Another significant polemicist was the Syrian Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Tannīr (d. 1933), who also introduced Western critical studies on the Bible throughout his book entitled: *al-‘Aqā’id al-Wathaniyya fī al-Diyānah al-Naṣrāniyya* (Pagan Doctrines in the Christian Religion).¹⁶⁸ Tannīr’s *Aqā’id* was one of Riḍā’s favorite books, which he regularly quoted in his discussions, *fatwās*, and *Tafsīr*. The book enjoyed wide popularity in Muslim circles in Egypt and elsewhere.

The author’s full name is Muḥammad Ṭāhir b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. Salīm al-Tannīr, who studied at the American University in Beirut. He was living at ‘Ayn ‘Annūb, a village near Beirut. In Beirut he published his own magazine *al-Muṣawwar*. After World War I, Tannīr moved to Egypt. Later he returned to Syria, and was buried in Dummar, on the outskirts of Damascus. Muḥammad Ṭāhir co-published a piece of work on astronomy with his father.¹⁶⁹ According to the Australian missionary scholar Arthur Jeffery (d. 1959), ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad’s father, specialized in exploiting the ultra critical Western theories on the Scriptures with a view to show that what was preached by missionaries

¹⁶⁵ Muḥammad Tawfiq Ṣidqī, ‘al-‘Islām huwa al-Qur’ān waḥdah’, *al-Manār*, vol. 9/7 (Rajab 1324-August 1906), pp. 515-524. The issue is discussed in G. H. A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, pp. 23-30; see also, Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 67-68.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Raz’ ‘Islāmī ‘Azīm: Wafāt al-Duktūr Ṣidqī’, *al-Manār*, vol. 21/8 (Dhū al-Qi‘dah 1338/August 1920), pp. 447-448.

¹⁶⁷ *Al-Manār*, vol. 21/9, p. 495.

¹⁶⁸ Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Tannīr, *al-‘Aqā’id al-Wathaniyya fī al-Diyānah al-Naṣrāniyya*, n. d., n. p. (circa 1912, Beirut).

¹⁶⁹ Ziriklī, *op. cit.*, vol. 6, p. 173.

in the East was not believed by the intellectuals in the West. The father's works also caused many repercussions in Egypt shortly after the First World War.¹⁷⁰

Following his father's steps, Tannīr brought forth his *'Aqā'id* as a reply to some of the contemporary Christian apologetic and polemic literature on Islam.¹⁷¹ As we read in the beginning of the book, the author sarcastically dedicated his work 'to the Crusaders of the Twentieth Century, the Missionaries'.¹⁷² The treatise continued to be one of the significant Muslim polemical works in the present time. It was reprinted in Tehran in 1391 (circa 1972). Muḥammad 'Abdullāh al-Sharqāwī, a professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Dār al-'Ulūm in Cairo, published a revised edition of Tannīr's work in 1988.¹⁷³

Tannīr brought forward the theory of 'Pagan Christs', and quoted from several Western sources in an attempt to prove the 'absurdity' of the Christian faith. Tannīr's work caused reactions in Christian circles. Some of the sources maintained that due to its harsh attacks Tannīr's work was banned in Beirut (see chapter 2).¹⁷⁴ In the preface, Tannīr stated that the motive behind writing the book was not 'hostility' or 'fanaticism' against people who confess other religions. First of all, he composed this small book to answer the objections, or to raise counter objections, to those found in some missionary books, some of which were in Arabic and others in English. These books, according to Tannīr, were full of 'slander and attacks against Islam and Muslims'. The second reason was to call the Christians back to the truth of Islam.¹⁷⁵

Tannīr emphasized that there were similarities between the story of Jesus and the stories of other ancient religions. These similarities allegedly prove that the Biblical story of Jesus was nothing more than a composite or rehash of ancient myths. His attention focused on seeking nearly identical parallels between the story of Jesus and other mythical figures, such as the Krishna story as told in the Hindu Vedas, dated to at least as far back as 1400 B.C., and the Horus myth, which was also said to be identical to the Biblical tale about Jesus.

¹⁷⁰ A. Jeffery, 'New Trends in Moslem Apologetics', in John R. Mott (ed.), *The Moslem World of Today*, Hodder and Stoughton Limited: London, 1925, p. 310 (Quoted below, 'Trends'); id., 'A Collection of Anti-Christian Books and Pamphlets Found in Actual Use among the Mohammedans of Cairo', *The Moslem World*, vol. XV (1925), p. 29. According to Jeffery's list of Muslim literature (no. 11), Abd al-Wahhāb Salīm Al-Tannīr, for example, translated a book attributed to Charles Watt, which he titled in Arabic: *Iḍrāru Ta'lim al-Tawrāh wā al-'Injīl*, Cairo, 1901.

¹⁷¹ At the top of his list of missionary publications was *The Moslem World*, which he described as 'a magazine full of slander and broadsides against Islam'. Among the Arabic books are: *al-Hidāyah* (The Guidance), 4 vols., Cairo: The American Mission, *al-Bākūra al-Shahīyya* (Sweet First-Fruits), Cairo, The Nile Mission Press, n.d.; and for example the works of St. Clair Tisdall, M. A. Rice, Samuel Zwemer.

¹⁷² Tannīr, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹⁷³ Id., *al-'Aqā'id al-Wathaniyyā fī al-Diyānā al-Naṣrāniyyā*, edited by 'Abdullāh al-Sharqāwī, Cairo: Dār al-Saḥwā, 1988. This edition is to be found at: <http://www.da3wah-4-islam.com/vb/showthread.php?t=279>. Accessed on 22 October 2007. Many Muslim websites cite the treatise at length.

¹⁷⁴ *Al-Machreq*, vol. 15 (1912), p. 298.

¹⁷⁵ Tannīr, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-8.

He developed these ideas from a long list of historical and biblical Western studies from which he cited a large number of passages in arranging his argument, such as Huxley's *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*,¹⁷⁶ Jameson's *The History of Our Lord*,¹⁷⁷ Bunsen's *The Angel Messiah*,¹⁷⁸ Fiske's *Myth and Myth Makers*,¹⁷⁹ and Ferguson's *Tree and Serpent Worship*.¹⁸⁰

The method of drawing an analogy between Jesus and pagan deities or heroes of Antiquity was first introduced by Western authors in the nineteenth century. The American atheist Kersey Graves (1813-1883), for instance, found that stories of a crucified savior had circulated in the first civilizations. The story was very old and had been accepted in all of these cultures throughout the Far East, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean countries.¹⁸¹ Gerald Massey (b. May, 1828), the English Egyptologist, also found over 100 similarities between Jesus and Krishna.¹⁸² Robertson followed the same method of comparing Jesus to Krishna.¹⁸³

From beginning to end, Tannir followed the comparative method of drawing an analogy between the Christian doctrines and elements and traces in other different ancient beliefs. The main object of the book was to argue that there was wholesale influence of the pagan mysteries and other foreign doctrines and practices on Christianity. The doctrine of Trinity, for example, which was taught by Christians, was borrowed from heathenism.¹⁸⁴ He attempted to find parallels of such doctrines in other ancient religions in Egypt, India and elsewhere. The same held true for the cross, the incarnation, the virgin birth of Jesus, the appearance of the star in the East, and other events in the life of Jesus.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Henry Huxley, *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*, London: Williams and Norgate 1863; published also in New York, 1880.

¹⁷⁷ Jameson, *The History of our Lord: as exemplified in Works of Arts, with that of these Types; St. John the Baptist, and other Persons of the Old and New Testament*, Compiled by Lady Eastlake, London, 1892.

¹⁷⁸ Ernest De Bunsen, *The Angel-messiah of Buddhists, Essenes and Christians*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892.

¹⁷⁹ John Fiske, *Myth and Myth Makers: Old Tales and Superstitions interpreted by Comparative Mythology*, London, 1873.

¹⁸⁰ James Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, London: India Museum, 1873.

¹⁸¹ Kersey Graves, *The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors*, New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1875. According to Graves, the sixteen saviors are: Thulis of Egypt (1700 B.C.), Khrisna of India (1200 B.C.), Crite of Chaldea (1200 B.C.), Attis of Phrygia (1170 B.C.), Thammuz of Syria (1160 B.C.), Hesus of the Celtic Druids (834 B.C.), Bali of Orissa (725 B.C.), Indra of Tibet (725 B.C.), Iao of Nepal (622 B.C.), Sakia, a Hindu god, (600 B.C.), Alcestis of Euripedes (600 B.C.), Mithra of Persia (600 B.C.), Quexalcoatei of Mexico (587 B.C.), Aeschylus (Prometheus) (547 B.C.), Wittoba of the Telingonese (552 B.C.), Quirinus of Rome (506 B.C.), and according to the author, Jesus Christ allegedly about the year A.D. 28 or A.D. 32.

A soft copy of the book can be also found at:

http://www.acwitness.org/essays/bkup/16_crucified_saviors/index.html; accessed on 11 July 2006

¹⁸² Gerald Massey, *The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ*, London, 1886.

¹⁸³ See: John Mackinnon Robertson, *Christ and Krishna*, London 1889.

¹⁸⁴ Tannir, *op. cit.*, p. 17-39.

Christianity, according to him, largely borrowed from the records of older nations. He insisted that the idea of a suffering God atoning through his death the sins of men, descending into the abodes of darkness and rising again to bring life and immortality to light, was found in the oldest records of the beliefs of the human race, such as those concerning Buddha and Krishna.¹⁸⁵ The question of the virgin birth was of special interest in the treatise. Tannīr sought an analogy between the myths of the birth of Krishna and how the divine Vishnu himself descended into the womb of Devaki and was born as her son Krishna. In this, the deity was not only the effective agent in the conception, but also the offspring.¹⁸⁶ He also placed special emphasis on the relation which the idea of the virgin birth in the Gospels supposedly had with ancient Egyptian religious conceptions. However, he found that the Egyptian story of the virgin birth was much more complex and cruder than the Biblical one. In the story of the birth of Horus and in the idea of the divinity of the pharaohs a great resemblance was thought to be found.¹⁸⁷ The concluding section of al-Tannīr's treatise was again devoted to analogies; first between Krishna and Christ, and then between Buddha and Christ, stating in parallel columns the coincidences as related in pagan books and in the Gospels.¹⁸⁸

Another interesting associate of *al-Manār* was the Moroccan *Salafī* scholar Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī (d. 1987), who travelled to Egypt for the first time in 1921 (see, appendix III). He soon contacted Riḍā and became a close friend and disciple of *al-Manār*. As a big sympathizer with the Saudi Royal family, Riḍā recommended Hilālī to Ibn Saud for the position of religious teacher at *al-Haram al-Nabawī* in Medina.¹⁸⁹ Besides Saudi Arabia, Hilālī made many trips during his life to India (he taught Arabic at the *Dār al-ʿUlūm* of *Nadwat al-ʿUlāmā* in Lucknow), Afghānistan, and Iraq. In the 1940s, he travelled to Germany through his connection with Shakīb Arslān, where he studied for his PhD at the University of Bonn,¹⁹⁰ and became a Muslim activist and an active member of Radio Berlin in Arabic during the Second World War.

Hilālī's correspondence with Riḍā contains important information about the relation between both men, and that they shared the same political ideology of Pan-Islamism. In *al-Manār*, we can read Hilālī's name appearing on the list of a manifesto against the Italian aggression on Libya in 1931, which was signed by Riḍā and other well-known names.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 55-58.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 59ff. Cf. F.F. Bruce, 'The Person of Christ: Incarnation and Virgin Birth,' in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, Carl F. H. Henry (ed.), Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975, p. 128. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 73-74.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 149-184.

¹⁸⁹ Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Hijaz, 15 Dhū al-Hijja 1345/16 June 1927. Another letter, Medina, 16 Jumāda al-ʿAwwal 1346/11 November 1927.

¹⁹⁰ T. al-Hilālī, *Die Einleitung zu Al-Birūnī's Steinbuch*, Gräfenhainichen: Druck von C. Schulze, 1941.

¹⁹¹ See the manifesto, *al-Manār*, vol. 31/9 (Muḥarram 1350/June 1931), pp. 714-717.

During his various journeys, Hilālī attempted to disseminate *al-Manār*'s views in these countries.¹⁹² A relevant example for our study was his defence of Riḍā's acceptance of the possibility of a natural death of Jesus (see, chapters 6 and 7), when a certain 'Abdullah b. Ḥassan, a Najdī scholar, openly criticised *al-Manār*.¹⁹³

In addition to his contributions to Riḍā's journal, Hilālī wrote to Riḍā about his experience with Muslim organizations as a Muslim preacher. In Lucknow, he became a senior teacher of Arabic (summer 1928).¹⁹⁴ During his stay in India, he learnt English, and later co-published a printed English translation of the Qur'ān with the Indian physician Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān.¹⁹⁵

It is interesting to know that Hilālī learnt English from an American missionary in Lucknow. He believed that it was significant to have a good command of any Western language in order to promote his work of *da'wa*. Besides their three-times-a-week lesson, this American missionary requested Hilālī to attend his religious sermons in his missionary basis in order to improve his language. Like Riḍā, Hilālī praised the enthusiasm of Christians in disseminating their religion, while Muslims lacked zealotry in propagating Islam.¹⁹⁶

On the eve of the Christmas of 1930, Hilālī met with a certain young American missionary under the name of William Smith (?) about whom we do not have any information. When they started their debate on the nature of the Bible and the Qur'ān, Hilālī made it clear that he never read the Gospel, and was now learning English to read it in its English version. Smith immediately ordered for him a copy from London, which he sent to Hilālī with a brief note: 'Asking God to bestow on you many blessings through this book.'¹⁹⁷ Hilālī instantly embarked upon drafting his polemical commentaries on this version, and gave Riḍā a summary of his findings. In one of his letters, for example, he informed Riḍā that he wrote these Arabic notes on the margins of the Gospel according to Matthew on the copy sent to him by Smith. Riḍā was much interested in reading Hilālī's comments. Arslān showed a similar interest in reading the comments. After having finished the translation, a proposal was made by Riḍā to let the treatise be published by the well-known Saudi businessman Muḥammad Naṣīf of Jeddah.¹⁹⁸

Hilālī explained his primary motive of translating by writing to Riḍā: 'I hope that some Muslim organization would shoulder the task of translating the Gospels into eloquent and correct Arabic with annotations in order to expose

¹⁹² Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Medina, 23 Jumāda al-ʾĀkhira 1346/December 1927.

¹⁹³ Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Mecca, 10 Rabīʿ al-ʾAwwal, 1346/September 1927.

¹⁹⁴ Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 27 Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1347/13 October 1928.

¹⁹⁵ Al-Hilālī and Khān, *Interpretation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an*, Saudi Arabia: Maktabat Dār al-Salam, 1996.

¹⁹⁶ Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, 'Al-Barāhīn al-ʾInjīliyya ʿalā ʾanna ʿIsā dakhal fī al-ʿUbūdiyyā wā lā Ḥazza lahu fī al-ʾUlūhiyya', unpublished typescript, Morocco, n. d.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁹⁸ Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 28 Jumāda al-Thāniya 1352/18 October 1933.

the confusion of the Christians, just as what they did with our Book [the Qur'ān]. But we should only illustrate the facts, without imitating the Christians in their wrong-doing [with our Book].'¹⁹⁹ His prime aim of producing an excellent translation with footnotes was also to convert Arab Christians to Islam and diminish the possibility that Muslims would be seduced by missionary attempts.²⁰⁰ But the 'real enemy', in Hilālī's view, 'remains Western Christians, not the Eastern ones'.²⁰¹ Hilālī unfortunately lost his copy of the Gospel with its notes, but later published his comments in the magazine of *al-Shubbān al-Muslimūn* (established by the Iraqi writer and lawyer Tāhā al-Fayyād (1899-1964) in Basra) under the title: *Ḥawāshī Shattā 'alā 'Injīl Mattā* (Various Footnotes on the Gospel according to Matthew).²⁰²

As a fervent advocate of disseminating the Arabic language among all Muslims, Hilālī established the Arabic Lucknow-based magazine *al-Diyā'*, in cooperation with the Indian scholar 'Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī (d. 1999).²⁰³ Its main purpose was to promote the knowledge of Arabic among Indian Muslims. *Al-Manār* blessed his project by publishing the introductory statement of al-Nadwī in the magazine.²⁰⁴ Besides his writings in Riḍā's journal,²⁰⁵ Hilālī also tried to introduce *al-Manār* to many Indian scholars. He believed that the only way to propagate *al-Manār*'s reform mission was to encourage learning the Arabic language, and to combat the 'rigid' scholars who argue that translated works were enough for learning Islam.²⁰⁶

A certain Badr al-Dīn al-Ṣinī, a Chinese Muslim, was in the same period on the Indian stage with Hilālī. Little is known about this person. However, he took a good part in Riḍā's religious circle. Al-Ṣinī was actually known to the readers of Arab Muslim magazines in Egypt and elsewhere. In one of his letters, Riḍā asked Hilālī to take care of him by reading many Islamic sources

¹⁹⁹ Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, 24 Jumāda al-Ulā 1352/14 September 1933.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Letter, al-Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 14 Jumāda al-Ulā 1351/4 September 1933.

²⁰² Ibid. Hilālī reworked his *Ḥawāshī* in his later work *al-Barāhīn al-Injīliyya*, which he especially composed at the request of a certain Mundhir al-Darūbī, a Moroccan engineering student in the United States in the 1970s in order to use it in his polemical debates with Christians there. Ibn Bāz later ordered the publication of Hilālī's *Barāhīn* in twenty thousand copies in Saudi Arabia. See, Hilālī's article in *Majallat al-Buhūth al-Islāmiyya*, softcopy, available at: <http://www.alifta.com/Fatawa/fatawaDetails.aspx?BookID=2&View=Page&PageNo=1&PageID=1658>; accessed on 20 April 2007.

²⁰³ See, Jan-Peter Hartung, *Viele Wege und ein Ziel: Leben und Wirken von Sayyid Abu l-Hasan 'Ali al-Hasani Nadwi (1914-1999)*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2004.

²⁰⁴ 'Naḥḍah Jadidah li 'Iḥya' Lughat al-'Islām al-'Arabīyya fī al-Bilād al-Hindiyya (New Renaissance for revitalizing the Arabic Language of Islam in the Indian Lands)', *al-Manār*, vol. 32/5 (Muḥarram 1351/May 1932), pp. 345-351.

²⁰⁵ See, for example, his famous debate with the Shī'ī scholar Sayyid Mahdī al-Kāzīmī al-Qazwīnī (d. 1940) on the issue of visiting shrines and tombs in Islam, *al-Manār*, 7 articles, vol. 28/5-10, vol. 29/1 (June 1927- January 1929). See also, his response to a certain Graham Lewis(?), the editor of the Oriental section in the *Illustrated Weekly of India Bombay* (27 August 1933). T. al-Hilālī, 'Ma'sāt Amīrah Sharqiyya (The tragedy of an Oriental Princess)', *al-Manār*, two articles, vol. 34/7 (Ramaḍān 1353/January 1935), pp. 535-543, vol. 35/1, pp. 82-86.

²⁰⁶ Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 8 Rabī' al-Thānī 1352/31 July 1933

with him.²⁰⁷ Riḍā also committed him with translating his works into Chinese. Through Hilālī, al-Ṣinī made a proposal to Riḍā for translating his book *al-Waḥy* into Chinese. Hilālī described al-Ṣinī as ‘an energetic self-made Muslim’.²⁰⁸ Although he admitted the benefit of the Chinese translation, Hilālī believed that an English translation would be more effective. Among the names he suggested to make the translation was a certain Mirza Muḥammad Khān Bahādir, an Iraqi of Persian origin living in Basra.²⁰⁹

1.3. Conclusion

Studying *al-Manār* in the light of the archive of its founder, we have found two focal categories of sources used by Riḍā in his efforts to collect relevant materials, and which helped him to compensate his lack of knowledge of Western languages (and subsequently influenced the development of his views on Christianity): 1) the critical Western works in Arabic print offered him a wide range of precedents related to the West, and 2) the contributions of various individuals in his circle of associates who had a good command of Western languages (especially English, French and German), and possessed a certain degree of religious involvement in the subject.

These contributions included such subjects as the rise of new Christian movements in the West and historical and archaeological discoveries related to the Bible (such as the afore-mentioned German scholar Delitzsch). *Al-Manār*’s treatment of these subjects was to advocate the authenticity of Islam vis-à-vis Christian missionary claims of the superiority of their religion. It is apparent from Riḍā’s archive that he came into personal contact with various people, and they marked the pattern of his journal and broadened his scope as a journalist immensely. The objective of their contributions seems to have been first to describe certain European ideas that would fit well in the *al-Manār*’s programme. The effect of their interaction was also determined by the kinds of topics of discussions, which Riḍā finally selected for print.

²⁰⁷ Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, 24 May 1935, n. p.

²⁰⁸ Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, Lucknow, 8 Rabi‘ al-Thāni 1352/31 July 1933. See, *al-Manār*, vol. 33/10 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1352/April 1934), pp. 756.

²⁰⁹ Letter, Hilālī to Riḍā, al-Zubayr, Iraq, 28 al-Muḥarram 1353/13 May 1934