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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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Introduction

The history of Christian missions has been written predominantly from a Christian, missionary perspective.¹ Missions have scarcely been studied from the perspective of the people among whom missionaries worked, in the case of the present research: the Muslims in the Middle East in the early 20th century. The available studies on the history of missions among Muslims are, in fact, incomplete, for they do not give detailed accounts of the reactions and interpretations of the people to whom the missionaries had been sent. Moreover, they do not tell us whether the missionaries themselves were aware of the Muslim reactive positions and writings, and the influence of their work on mutual Muslim-Christian perceptions and misperceptions. Main problems that still need to be examined are: How did Muslims, in various regions and under various circumstances, perceive the missionaries and their work? What ideas did Muslims develop about Christianity as they saw it enter Muslim societies? How did the direct encounter between Islam and Western Christianity through the emergence of missionaries in the Muslim world influence the Muslim polemics against Christianity?

The present work is a *critical study of the dynamics of Muslim understanding of Christianity during the late 19th and the early 20th century in the light of the polemical writings of the well-known Syro-Egyptian Muslim reformist Sheikh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935) and his associates*. It is observable that neither Muslim nor Western scholars paid due attention to his views on Christianity. No full-scale study of his perspectives on that subject has been undertaken so far. Although there are scattered and brief remarks in some individual studies on some of his works on Christianity, investigation is still needed by focusing on his polemics and answers to the social, political and theological aspects of missionary movements among Muslims of his age.

The base of our analysis in the present study encompasses Riḍā's voluminous publications embodied in his *magnum opus*, the journal *al-Manār* (The Lighthouse). The core of these writings on the Christian beliefs and scriptures consisted of polemic and apologetic issues, which had already existed in the pre-modern Islamic classification of Christianity. However, *al-Manār* polemicists have added to their investigations many modern aspects largely influenced by Western critical studies of the Bible. There is no documented

¹ For such studies, see for example, Erich W. Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam: A Study of the Religious Forces of Islam and Christianity in the Near East*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1953; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The Great Century A.D. 1800 A.D.-1914 in Northern Africa and Asia*, vols. 4-6, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1945; Julius Richter, *A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East*, 1st edition, New York: AMS Press, 1970 (reprinted from the edition of 1910); Dennis H. Phillips, 'The American Missionary in Morocco', *The Muslim World*, vol. LXV, no. 1 (January, 1975), pp. 1-20; Lyle L. Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims: The Record*, South Pasadena, CA: the William Carey Library, 1977.

public debate (*munāẓarah*) between Riḍā and his contemporary missionaries. But *al-Manār* developed certain sorts of arguments drawn from critical studies about biblical texts, church history, political confrontations in the period of colonialism, and evidence of what it perceived as the wrong picture portrayed by missionaries (and some Christian Arabs) of Islam.²

A Brief Biographical Sketch

As one of the most significant Muslim religious figures during the first half of the 20th century, the life of Riḍā, his journal and his religious and political thought have been extensively studied (see bibliography). Biographical information on him is mostly taken from his autobiography, which he published more than thirty years after his migration to Egypt.³ His famous biography of his teacher Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), *Tārīkh al-‘Ustādh al-‘Imām*, is also marked as one of the important sources for his life.⁴ By writing this work, Riḍā not only ‘wrote the history of his Sheikh, [but also] what he did [himself] as though he were writing his own history as well.’⁵

Born in al-Qalamūn, a village near Tripoli (Lebanon), in 1865, Riḍā belonged to a religious Sunnī family claiming its kinship to the descendants of the Prophet. In his young years, he was deeply involved into the Naqshabandī Sufī order. In the circle of Sheikh Maḥmūd Nashshābah of Tripoli (1813-1890),⁶ Riḍā read the ḥadīth collection of *al-‘Arba‘īn al-Nawawīyyah*, and obtained his *‘ijāza* (diploma) in the field of prophetic traditions. The well-known Muslim scholar Sheikh Ḥusayn al-Jisr (1845-1909), the founder of the National Islamic School of Tripoli, extended to him another *‘ijāza* certifying him to teach and transmit religious knowledge. In al-Jisr’s school, emphasis was laid upon the combination between religious education and modern sciences, especially mathematics, natural sciences, French, alongside Arabic and Turkish.⁷ In the meantime, Riḍā’s uncle, Muḥammad Kāmil ibn Muḥammad (1843-1939), taught him Arabic, and had an impact on his religious knowledge.⁸

Riḍā’s fascination with the significance of the press for religious reform movement started when he came across some issues of the short-lived *al-*

² Jacques Waardenburg, *Muslims and Others*, Walter de Gruyter, 2003, p. 205. Cf. Mahmoud Ayoub, ‘Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflict’, *The Muslim World*, vol. LXXIX (1989), pp. 25-43; Jane Smith, ‘Christian Missionary Views of Islam in the 19th-20th Centuries’, *Islam and Muslim Christian Relations*, vol. 9 (1998), p. 361; Hugh Goddard, ‘Christianity from the Muslim Perspectives: Varieties and Changes’, in Jacques Waardenburg (ed.), *Islam and Christianity: Mutual Perceptions since the Mid-20th Century*, Leuven, 1998, pp. 213-256.

³ R. Riḍā, *al-Manār wā al-‘Azhar*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1934 (Quoted below, *Azhar*).

⁴ Id., *Tārīkh al-‘Ustādh al-‘Imām*, Cairo: Dār al-Faḍīlah, 2003, 4 vols. (Quoted below, *Tārīkh*).

⁵ Ṭāhir al-Tanāhī, *Mudhakkirāt al-‘Imām Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1961; as quoted in Elizabeth Sirriyeh, ‘Rashīd Riḍā’s Autobiography of the Syrian Years, 1865-1897’, *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 3/2 (1 July 2000), p. 184.

⁶ See, al-Ziriklī, *Al-‘Ālām*, Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2002, vol. 7, pp. 185-86.

⁷ Sirriyeh, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

⁸ ‘Anīs al-‘Abyaḍ, *al-Ḥayāh al-‘Ilmiyya wā Marākiz al-‘Ilm fī Tarābulus Khilāl al-Qarn al-Tāsi‘ ‘Ashar*, Tripoli, 1985, p. 97.

'*Urwah al-Wuthqā* (The Firmest Bond, co-published by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839-1897)⁹ and Muḥammad 'Abduh during their exile in Paris) among his father's papers. In his village Riḍā started his preaching career, and took the central mosque as a place for teaching religious sciences to its people, especially *Tafsīr* lessons.¹⁰ In his autobiography, he also mentioned that he regularly went to cafés to deliver sermons among Muslims, who were not habitual visitors of the mosque. He also gathered women in a room inside his house, where he instructed them about the rules of rituals and worship matters.¹¹

By the end of 1897, Riḍā had left his birthplace searching for more freedom in Egypt. A few months later, he directly embarked upon publishing the first issue of his journal *al-Manār*, the name he later exploited for his private printing house in Cairo. Islamic journalism experienced its earliest zenith in Egypt with the publication of Riḍā's journal, and through which he established himself as the leading Salafī scholar in the Muslim world. From the time of its foundation, *al-Manār* became Riḍā's life work in which he published his reflections on spiritual life, his explanations of Islamic doctrine, endless polemics, his commentary on the Qur'ān, *fatwās*, and his thoughts on world politics.¹²

Through his journal, Riḍā claimed himself to be the organ and disseminator of the reformist ideas of 'Abduh, a man of paramount importance in his life. After 'Abduh's death, Riḍā established himself more as a leading heir to his reformist movement by taking over the commentary of the Qur'ān known as *Tafsīr al-Manār*, which 'Abduh had begun. The impact of 'Abduh on Riḍā's thoughts is noticeable in his writings, especially those authored before 'Abduh's death. In various ways, he imbibed ideas akin to those of his mentor, and was closely involved in his teacher's vigorous defenses against the aspersions cast upon Islam.¹³ In his journal, for instance, Riḍā gave much attention to 'Abduh's debates on the comparison between Islam and

⁹ About Afghānī, see, for example, Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972; id. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983; Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and 'Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, London & New York: Cass, 1966; Albert Qudsi-zadah, *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: An Annotated Bibliography*, Leiden: Brill, 1970; Mazheruddin Siddiqi, *Modern Reformist Thought in the Muslim World*, Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1982; W. Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

¹⁰ Al-Abyad, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

¹¹ Riḍā, *Azhar*, pp. 171-179.

¹² Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1789-1939*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 226-227.

¹³ Assad Nimer Busool, 'Sheikh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's Relations with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh', *The Muslim World*, vol. LXVI (1976), pp. 272-286. There are still, however, other far-fetched theories, which attempt to disassociate Riḍā from 'Abduh, and doubt that he was the real disseminator of his ideas. See the reconsideration of the Tunisian researcher Muḥammad al-Ḥaddād, one of Muḥammad Arkoun's students, *Muḥammad 'Abduh: Qirā'ah Jadīdah fī Khitāb al-'Islāh al-Dīnī*, Beirut, 2003.

Christianity, especially his well-known confrontations with the French historian and ex-minister of foreign affairs M. Gabriel Hanotaux (1853-1944)¹⁴ and with the Christian journalist Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922).¹⁵ In his answers to westerners, ‘Abduh habitually made attempts to explain his arguments with the help of Western works, primarily quoting from authors, such as John William Draper (1811-1882), Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) and Edward Gibbon (1737-1794).¹⁶

Unlike ‘Abduh, it is nowhere mentioned in the available sources that Riḍā was an active member in any inter-religious society of his time. We know that ‘Abduh had founded a political-religious society known as *Jam‘iyyat al-Ta’līf wā al-Taqrīb bayna al-‘Adyān al-Samāwīyya* during his stay in Beirut (circa 1885). Its major aim was to call for harmony and rapprochement among the so-called heavenly revealed religions. The society attracted many Jewish, Christian and Muslim (Shī‘ī and Sunnī) members. One of the major political objectives behind the society was to try to diminish the pressure practised by European colonial authorities in the East (especially among Muslims), and to improve the image of Islam among the people of the West.¹⁷ The most prominent Christian members of the organization were the Canon of York, Reverend Isaac Taylor (1829-1901) (see, chapter 3), and the Orthodox archimandrite Christophoros Gibāra (d. 1901).¹⁸ In his early years in Egypt, Riḍā constantly praised the

¹⁴ The article of Hanotaux appeared in the *Journal de Paris* in French in March and May 1900 under the caption: ‘Face to face with Islam and the Muslim Question’. ‘Abduh’s reply firstly appeared in *al-Mu‘ayyad* and *al-Ahrām* journals, see, Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 382-95. See also, Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, London: Oxford University Press, 1933, pp. 86-89 (quoted below, *Modernism*).

¹⁵ M. ‘Abduh, *al-‘Islām wā al-Naṣrāniyya ma‘a al-‘Ilm wā al-Madaniyya*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1341/1922 (Quoted below *Naṣrāniyya*). For more details, see the annotated German translation, Gunnar Hasselblatt, *Herkunft und Auswirkungen der Apologetik Muhammed ‘Abduh’s (1849-1905), Untersucht an seiner Schrift: Islam und Christentum im Verhältnis zu Wissenschaft und Zivilisation*, PhD dissertation, Göttingen, 1968; Donald M. Reid, *The Odyssey of Farah Anṭūn*, Minneapolis & Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, INC, 1975, especially pp. 80-97 (Quoted below, *Odyssey*); Mishāl Goḥā, ‘Ibn Rushd bayna Farah Anṭūn wā Muḥammad ‘Abduh’, *al-‘Ijtihād*, vol. 8 (1996), pp. 61-87; id, *Farah Anṭūn*, Beirut: Riad el-Rayyes Books, 1998, pp. 57-78.

¹⁶ Hasselblatt, *ibid.*, pp. 184-199.

¹⁷ More about the society, see, Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, pp. 819-820. More about secret societies in Egypt, see, for example, Malak Badrawi, *Political Violence in Egypt 1910-1925: Secret Societies, Plots and Assassinations*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 1st ed., 2000; Eliezer Tauber, ‘Egyptian secret societies, 1911-1925’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 42/4 (2006 July), p. 603-623.

¹⁸ Little is mentioned in the available sources about Gibāra. What I know about him so far is that he – despite having considered himself a Christian, denied the concept of Trinity. In his writings he endeavoured to bring the three religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – together. Georg Graf mentioned him in his work on the history of Christian Arabic literature; see Georg Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, Citta del Vaticano, 1966, p. 165. According to the collection of the titles of Arabic books published in Egypt (1900-1925), Gibāra was the author of *Wifāq al-‘Adyān wā Waḥdat al-‘Imān fī al-Tawrāh wā al-‘Injīl wā al-Qur‘ān*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif, 1901, 64 pp. See, ‘Aydah Ibrāhīm Nuṣayr, *al-Kutub al-‘Arabīyya al-Latī Nushirat fī Miṣr Bayna ‘Amay 1900-1925*, Cairo: American University in Cairo, 1983, p. 129. After Gibāra’s death, neither Christian nor Muslim groups accepted burying his body in their graveyards. In order to solve the problem, an Egyptian Christian witnessed before the Patriarch

members of the organization, but never became a member. His sympathy probably resulted from the fact that ‘Abduh was its president. Despite his belief in the co-existence among religions, Riḍā’s interest in such ideas dwindled after ‘Abduh’s death.

As a ‘print’ scholar and mufti, Riḍā was able to reach readers from all over the world through his community-building works; and to take a highly prominent position in modern Muslim intellectual life in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.¹⁹ Since the early establishment of the journal, he managed to gain subscribers and to extend the influence of his religious ideas in Russia, Tunisia, India, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Bosnia, the Far East, Europe and America.²⁰ Riḍā produced the majority of the articles published in the journal, but was keen on making it a good podium for many contributors among outstanding Arab men of letters concerning a wide range of religious matters, such as theology, law, historiography, and Qur’ānic exegesis.

As evidenced in his unrelenting tide of writings, Riḍā placed a high premium on fighting against the state of stagnancy among Muslims, and defending Islam against its opponents. He endeavoured to achieve reform in the Muslim world while at the same time preserving its identity and culture. As a Muslim reformist, Riḍā not only has historical importance, but also continues to exercise overt influence on modern Muslim thought today. His journal, which started as a private project, signposted the path for many subsequent Muslim thinkers in developing their ideas on many political, social and religious issues. For instance, the religious activism and ideological career of Ḥasan al-Bannā (1904-1949), the founder of the movement of the Muslim Brothers, has its roots in Riḍā’s religious thought. As a young man, al-Bannā frequented his circle and regularly read his journal. He received his early religious training in Islam by his father Aḥmad al-Bannā, who was a close friend of Riḍā and a

that the late Gibāra returned to his belief in the Orthodox Church before his death. Gibāra was then buried according to the Orthodox tradition. See, *al-Manār*, vol 4/12 (16 Jumāda al-’Ūlā 1319/31 August 1901), 478-480. More about Muslim polemics against Gibara and his journal *Shahādat al-Haqq*, see the work of Muḥammad Ḥabīb, a Christian convert to Islam, *al-Suyūf al-Battārah fi Madhhab Khirustuphoros Gibārah* (The Amputating Sword to Christophoros Gibarah’s Doctrine), Cairo: al-‘Āṣimah Press, 1313/circa 1895.

¹⁹ Muḥammad Khalid Masud, et al, (eds.), *Islamic legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 30-31.

²⁰ Riḍā’s list of subscribers in his diary (1903), Riḍā’s private archive, Cairo. See, for example, Mona Abaza, ‘Southeast Asia and the Middle East: *al-Manār* and Islamic Modernity’ in Claude Guillot, Denys Lombard and Roderich Ptak (eds.), *Mediterranean to the Chinese Sea: Miscellaneous Notes*, Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1998, pp. 93-111; Azyumardi Azra, ‘The Transmission of *al-Manār*’s Reformism to the Malay-Indonesian World: the Cases of *al-Imam* and *al-Munir*,’ *Studia Islamika*, 6/3 (1999), pp. 79-111; Jutta E. Bluhm, ‘A Preliminary Statement on the Dialogue Established Between the Reform Magazine *al-Manār* and the Malay-Indonesian World’, *Indonesia Circle*, 32 (1983), pp. 35-42; id., ‘*al-Manār* and Aḥmad Soorkattie: Links in the Chain of Transmission of Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s Ideas to the Malay-Speaking World,’ in Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street, (eds.), *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 295-308.

subscriber to his journal.²¹ Al-Bannā also attempted to continue Riḍā's work by carrying on *al-Manār* after the latter's death in 1935.²²

Riḍā's views on the Christian faith and its scriptures have also left their impress upon later Muslim writers. Riḍā's release of the Arabic edition of the Gospel of Barnabas (see, chapter five), for instance, inspired several translations in several languages, such as Urdu (1916), Persian (1927), and Indonesian (1969).²³ This Gospel, which was translated by the Lebanese Christian Khalīl Sa'ādeh (1857-1934), has made a major impact on a generation of anti-Christian polemical writers, especially in Pakistan. It was found to be a useful weapon in the hands of many Arab and Indian Muslim writers in their resistance to Christian missionary efforts.²⁴ Philip Lewis, the inter-faith advisor to the Anglican Bishop of Bradford, observed that the late 1990s posters advertising a meeting between Muslims and non-Muslims in his city included the words in large bold letters: 'Banned – The Gospel of Barnabas', subtitled 'The True Teaching of the Prophet Jesus'. The speaker, the son of the city's best educated imam, elaborated on the Gospel saying that the Church by rejecting it intended simply to prevent Christians from knowing the truth.²⁵ Besides the impact of this Gospel, Riḍā's ideas were well cited by later Muslim writers on Christianity. In his commentary on the Qur'ān, *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, the Muslim ideologue Sayyid Quṭb, for example, extensively quoted Riḍā's excursus on the Trinity.²⁶

Previous Studies

A few studies have given attention to Riḍā's views on Christianity. As early as 1920, Ignaz Goldziher noted that missionary writings in Arabic on Islam, namely in Egypt, lay the foundation for an 'energetic reaction' from the side of the group of *al-Manār* publicists. The Hungarian orientalist gave short mention

²¹ Letter, Aḥmad al-Bannā to Riḍā, Cairo, 10 August, 1935; Riḍā's private archive, Cairo.

²² See, Brynar Lia, *The Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, London, 1998, p. 56, pp. 220-221, and p. 260.

²³ C. Schirrmacher, *Mit den Waffen des Gegners: Christlich-muslimische Kontroversen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, Schwartz Verlag, 1992, p. 277 (Quoted below, *Waffen*).

²⁴ Oddbjørn Leirvik, 'History as a Literary Weapon: The Gospel of Barnabas in Muslim-Christian Polemics', *Studia Theologica*, vol. 54 (2001), pp. 4-26 (Quoted below, 'Barnabas'); cf. H. Goddard, 'Modern Pakistani and Indian Muslim Perspectives of Christianity', *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations*, vol. 5 (1994), pp. 165-188.

²⁵ Philip Lewis, 'Depictions of Christianity within British Islamic Institutions', in Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001, pp. 209-211.

²⁶ Neal Robinson, 'Sayyid Quṭb's Attitude Towards Christianity: Sūra 9.29-35 in *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān*', in Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, Curzon Press, 2001, p. 167. For more about comparison between *al-Manār* and *al-Zilāl* of Quṭb, see also, Olivier Carré, *Mysticism and Politics: A Critical Reading of Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān by Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966)*, translated by Carol Artigues, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003, especially pp. 24-26, 94-99, 144-150, 222-228 and 244-250.

to the Arabic edition of the *Gospel of Barnabas*, describing it as ‘eine apokryphe Fälschung’.²⁷ In his own words:

Kräftiger ist die gegen die Missionsarbeit in umfangreichen Abhandlungen entfaltete positive Apologetik und Polemik. Zu bemerken ist der stetig wiederkehrende Hinweis auf die unbestrittene Authentie des Korans gegenüber der von christlich theologischer Seite selbst angezweifelte und bestrittenen Authentie ganzer grossen Teile der biblischen Urkunden und ihre Forschung über die Textverderbnis, selbst der als authentisch anerkannten Texte.²⁸

In his *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, Charles Adams hinted that *al-Manār* placed particular emphasis upon the necessity of counteracting Christian missions in the Muslim lands by forming the school of Dār al-Da‘wa wā al-Irshād (he translated it as ‘the Society of Propaganda and Guidance’).²⁹ He made brief mention of the anti-Christian writings of Riḍā and of *al-Manār*’s most prolific polemicist Muḥammad Tawfiq Ṣidqī (1881-1922), which we shall discuss in detail (see, chapter 6).³⁰ In his study of *al-Manār* commentary of the Qur’ān, the Dominican Islamicist Jacques Jomier devoted one chapter to the ideas of the commentary on Christianity and Judaism.³¹ The author noted that ‘le Commentaire du Manār parlera donc beaucoup de la personne de Jésus et de la Trinité’.³² He discussed in some detail Riḍā’s counterattacks against missionary writings on Islam, and his views on the figure of Jesus, his presumed divinity, the Trinity, the authenticity of the Gospels, the crucifixion, the veneration of saints, etc. He maintained that ‘la lutte, on le voit, est serrée et Rachīd Riḍā se lance dans une apologétique infatigable’.³³ At another level, Henri Laoust followed the great stages in the career of Riḍā with special emphasis on his role in the formulation of the modern *da‘wa* (or what he labelled as missionary apologetics), comparing his practices with those current in the Middle Ages. He gave little attention, however, to Riḍā’s works on Christianity and other principal publications, which he used as reading materials for future Muslim missionaries trained in his Dār al-Da‘wa wā al-Irshād.³⁴

²⁷ I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1920, p. 342; see the Arabic translation of the book, Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār (trans.), *Madhāhib al-Tafsīr al-‘Islāmī*, Cairo, 1955, p. 370.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 342-43.

²⁹ Adams, *Modernism*, p. 196.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 241-242.

³¹ J. Jomier, *Le Commentaire Coranique du Manār*, Paris, 1954; especially the chapter, ‘Le Commentaire du Manār, en face du Judaïsme et du Christianisme le devoir de Prosélytisme’, pp. 301-337 (Quoted below, *Commentaire*).

³² Ibid., p. 307.

³³ Ibid., p. 314.

³⁴ For more details, see Henri Laoust, ‘Renouveau de l’apologétique missionnaire traditionnelle au XXe siècle dans l’oeuvre de Rashīd Riḍā’, in *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Age : Islam, Byzance, Occident*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980, pp. 271-279.

As an attempt to understand the concept of 'l'amitié des Musulmans pour les Chrétiens' in the verses of al-Mā'idah (5: 82-83) and their place in the field of Christian-Muslim dialogue, Maurice Borrmans, the editor of the Catholic journal *Islamochristiana*, made an annotated French translation of the *al-Manār* commentary on these passages.³⁵ In the context of Muslim discussions on Christianity, the Lebanese scholar Maḥmūd Ayoub analyzed Riḍā's work *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā wā Hujaj al-'Islām* (Allegations of Christians and Proofs of Islam), a collection of sixteen articles which firstly appeared in *al-Manār* (see, chapter 4). The author discussed a few themes of the book, comparing it with 'Abduh's above-mentioned work on Islam and Christianity, and with two later studies, namely: *Muḥāḍarāt fī al-Naṣrānīyya* by Sheikh Abū Zahrah (Cairo, 1965), and his *Muqāranat al-'Adyān* (Cairo, 1966).³⁶ He concluded that the attitudes of both 'Abduh and Riḍā were not intransigent, but could be regarded as conciliatory. While asserting 'the superiority of Islam as a comprehensive guide for human life and a rational faith, Riḍā wished that the men of faith in both Christian and Muslim communities would live in harmony and amity.'³⁷ In her *Qur'ānic Christians*, Jane D. McAuliffe studied the interpretations of *Tafsīr al-Manār* as part of the long tradition of Islamic exegesis. She mainly dealt with such Christian themes as 'Nazarenes of faith and action' and the 'followers of the Qur'ānic Jesus'.³⁸

Christine Schirrmacher has studied the introductions written by Sa'ādeh and Riḍā to the Gospel of Barnabas. Sa'ādeh depended in his Arabic translation on the English translation made by the Anglican clergyman and scholar, Lonsdale Ragg, and his scholarly collaborator and wife, Laura, from the Italian manuscript (preserved in the Austrian National Library in Vienna).³⁹ Schirrmacher observed that Riḍā held an attitude similar to some Western scholars in the eighteenth century who were convinced the Gospel of Barnabas, because of its ancient pre-Islamic character, was not invented by Muslims.⁴⁰ J. Toland was, however, ironical in his comment on the Gospel: 'Here you have not a new Gospel, but also a true one, if you believe the Mahometans⁴¹ [...] How great (by the way) is the ignorance of those, who make this [Gospel] as an original invention of the Mahometans!'⁴² Although Schirrmacher placed both introductions in the context of prior Western treatment and of the later Muslim apologetic use of the Gospel, she did not critically examine the whole text of

³⁵ Maurice Borrmans, 'Le commentaire du *Manār* à propos du verset coranique sur l'amitié des Musulmans pour les Chrétiens (5,82)', *Islamochristiana*, vol. I (1975), pp. 71-86.

³⁶ M. Ayoub, 'Muslim Views of Christianity: Some Modern Examples', *Islamochristiana*, 10 (1984), pp. 49-70.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

³⁸ Jane D. McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

³⁹ Lonsdale and Laura Ragg (trans. & eds.), *The Gospel of Barnabas. Edited and Translated from the Italian Manuscript in the Imperial Library at Vienna*, Oxford, 1907.

⁴⁰ Schirrmacher, *Waffen*, p. 304.

⁴¹ John Toland, *Nazarenes or Jewish, Gentile and Mahometan Christianity*, London, 1718, p. 15.

⁴² Ibid., p. 17.

the introductions themselves, especially against the background of the whole corpus of *al-Manār*, including Riḍā's perception of this Gospel before and after the appearance of his edition. Sa'ādeh's introduction, in addition, should be studied in relation to the English one of the Raggs, which he sometimes quoted literally.

In his *Muslim Perceptions of Christianity*, Hugh Goddard described Riḍā's views in a similar brief way.⁴³ For him, Riḍā's works on Christianity were influenced by the Indian Muslim polemicist Raḥmatullāh al-Qairanāwī (1834-1891). In his three-page analysis the author maintained that since Riḍā's Arabic edition of the Gospel of Barnabas appeared it has become a standard work in Muslim writings about Christianity. In his *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam*, Oddbjørn Leirvik shortly examined the teachings of Jesus and the concept of the crucifixion and death of Jesus according to the thoughts of both Riḍā and 'Abduh and their general skepticism towards the canonical Gospels.⁴⁴ Olaf Schumann dedicated one chapter of his work, *Jesus the Messiah in Muslim Thought*, to the ideas developed by 'Abduh and the school of *al-Manār* on Jesus. The author studied Riḍā's method of interpreting the relevant Qur'ānic passages on the divinity of Jesus, his miracles, as well as his publication of the Gospel of Barnabas.⁴⁵

In his PhD thesis, Simon Wood made an annotated translation of Riḍā's aforementioned work *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā*.⁴⁶ Riḍā's writings, Wood argued, 'reflect an overwhelming awareness of Muslim weakness relative to non-Muslim strength. The tone of calm confidence one finds in earlier classical Arabic texts is altogether lacking in the works of Riḍā and his contemporaries.'⁴⁷ In Wood's view, following Riḍā's steps, later contemporary influential Muslim thinkers staunchly upheld the 'traditional supersessionist position on pluralism in general and Christianity in particular'.⁴⁸ Wood applied the term of 'supersessionism' in studying Muslim traditions. The same view was held by the controversial polemicist Bat Ye'or, who defined the Muslim 'supersessionist' current as claiming that the whole biblical history of Israel and Christianity was Islamic history, that all the Prophets, Kings of Israel and Judea, and Jesus were

⁴³ Hugh Goddard, *Muslim Perceptions of Christianity*, Gery Seal Book, London, 1996, pp. 55-58.

⁴⁴ Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam*, Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1999, pp. 140-143 (Quoted below, *Images*).

⁴⁵ Olaf Schumann, *Jesus the Messiah in Muslim Thought*, ISPCK/HMI, 2002, pp. 112-144; id., *Der Christus der Muslime: christologische Aspekte in der arabisch-islamischen Literatur*, Cologne/Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1988; id., 'Arabische Schriftsteller begegnen Christus', in *Hinaus aus der Festung: Beiträge zur Begegnung mit Menschen anderen Glaubens und anderer Kultur*, Hamburg: E.B.-Verlag, 1997, pp. 145-174.

⁴⁶ Simon Wood, 'The Criticisms of Christians and the arguments of Islam: An annotated translation of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā wā Hujaj al-Islām*', unpublished PhD thesis, Temple University, May 2004. During the last phase of finishing the present work, the dissertation has been published as, *Christian Criticisms, Islamic Proofs: Rashīd Riḍā's Modernist Defense of Islam*, Oxford: OneWorld, 2008. The quotations below are based on Wood's unpublished thesis.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

Muslims. That the People of the Book should dare to challenge this statement is intolerable arrogance for an Islamic theologian. Jews and Christians were thus deprived of their Holy Scriptures and of their salvific value.⁴⁹

Sources and Organization of the Study

The current study makes use of several sources. First of all, the thesis aims at examining the bulky corpus of *al-Manār*, attempting to trace the development of the thoughts of its author on Christianity and missionary activities of his time, and to determine the circumstances, which affected his discourse.

Besides surveying *al-Manār*, I will make use of Riḍā's private papers remaining in his personal archive in the possession of his family in Cairo.⁵⁰ The archive contains thousands of papers, letters, documents, and published and unpublished manuscripts. The papers were unorganized in carton boxes and plastic bags. I have generally studied and organized the whole collection, which can be divided as follows:

- 1) His diaries, which he used to write since his arrival in Egypt in 1897. I have found about 25 booklets in which he registered his personal memoirs, telling us about his health problems, national and international events, his meetings with various figures, his living costs and the administrative affairs of *al-Manār*, etc.
- 2) Documents of Arab organizations and societies to the foundation to which he contributed, such as *Shams al-'Islām* (The Sun of Islam), *Dār al-Da'wa wal-'Irshād*, and *Jam'iyat al-Rābiṭah al-Sharqiyya* (Association of Oriental League).
- 3) His correspondences with contemporary Muslim and Arab figures.
- 4) Other personal documents and belongings, such as the contract of the establishment of Dār al-Manār, his bank transactions, and the documents of the *waqf* of Al-Qalamūn mosque, established by his family in his village of origin.
- 5) Drafts of published and unpublished memoirs and articles by 'Abduh.

In the course of the preparation of the present study, and as a result of my findings in Riḍā's archive, I managed to discover the family archives of two of Riḍā's associates. The first one contains the archival material of the Syro-Turkish ex-military captain in the Ottoman army Zekī Ḥishmat Kirām (1886-1946), which was preserved by his son in Kornwestheim, near Stuttgart in Germany. Kirām was one of Riḍā's informants and translators, who also kept

⁴⁹ B. Ya'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide*, Cranbury, Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press/Associated University Presses and Lancaster, 2002, p. 370.

⁵⁰ The research took place in July-August 2004. I am very indebted to Riḍā's grandson Mr. Fu'ād Riḍā for giving me access to the papers of his family archive in Cairo. Some of the materials of this collection have been used in two earlier studies. In his biography of Riḍā, Aḥmad al-Sharabāshī made use of many documents of the archive in documenting Riḍā's life and works; A. al-Sharabāshī, *Rashīd Riḍā Ṣāhib al-Manār 'Aṣruhu wā Ḥayātuh wā Maṣādir Thaḳāfatuh*, Cairo, 1970. In his study, Aḥmad Fahd al-Shawābika also employed the archive material in sketching Riḍā's political and intellectual life; A. Fahd al-Shawābika, *Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā wā dawruh fī al-Ḥayāh al-Fikriyya wā al-Siyāsiyya*, 'Amman: Dār 'Ammār, 1989; originally PhD thesis presented to the Department of History at 'Ayn Shams University in Cairo in 1986.

Riḍā up to date about the developments of German orientalism, and briefed him about the situation of Muslim institutions in Berlin and other significant news items in the German press. It largely includes Kīrām's correspondences, diaries and unpublished manuscripts and typescripts and other published works.⁵¹ The second archive contains the papers of Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī (1893-1987), one of the most significant figures of Salafism in Morocco. After having contacted Hilālī's family in Meknès, I managed to get access to his remaining archive.⁵² Although there are no remaining letters of Riḍā in both archives, they are still very significant in shedding more light on the position of both figures in Riḍā's world. Further study of all these documents is also needed in the future.

Polemics are never produced in a vacuum. They should always be seen against the background of their author's political and social context. The first three chapters of this study try to set a close scene for assessing *al-Manār's* views of Christianity. It is also important to underscore the development of *al-Manār's* contributions to the subject by analyzing Riḍā's major polemical works on Christianity in more detail; and to investigate his position, which went through a full circle development in more than three decades.

The *first* chapter investigates the methods that Riḍā, who had no command of Western languages, used in compensating his lack of direct access to primary sources on the West.⁵³ As *al-Manār's* views on Christianity and polemics against Christian missions comprised a part of its whole understanding of the West, I would argue that one should first look at *al-Manār's* sources of knowledge of the West before discussing his polemics on Christianity. The chapter will try to map out a significant part of the literary setting of Riḍā's journal in that regard by dwelling upon two different aspects. *First of all*, we focus on Riḍā's readings of various translated European works, which *al-Manār* republished or quoted from the local and foreign press.⁵⁴ In his

⁵¹ Special gratitude is due to Dr. Harūn Zekī Kīrām (Kornwestheim – Germany), his son, for gifting me the whole archive of his father during my one-week research in Germany in January 2005.

⁵² It took place in January-February 2006. I express my thanks to Dr. Abdel-Ilāh Ijāmi, who introduced me to al-Hilālī's family, Mr. Abdel-Ghanī Bū Zekrī, the grandson of al-Hilālī, and Dr. Mohammad Daraoui of the University of Meknès, one of Hilālī's students, for their generosity and good reception during my stay in Morocco.

⁵³ Emad Eldin Shahin, *Through Muslim Eyes: M. Rashīd Riḍā and the West*, Virginia: IIIT, 1994, p. 91 (Quoted below, *Eyes*). Peter Watson was mistaken when he stated that Riḍā spoke several European languages and studied widely among the sciences. See his 'Islam and the West: why it needn't be war', *The Times* (London), 29 April, 2004.

⁵⁴ About the translation movement in the Arab World, see, for example, A. S. Eban, 'The Modern Literary Movement in Egypt', *International Affairs*, vol. 20/2 (April 1944), pp. 166-178. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 62-65. Cf. Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community: An Analysis of the Intellectual and Political Evolution of Egypt, 1804-1952*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 58-61; H. A. R. Gibb, 'Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, vol. 7/1 (1933), pp. 1-22.

polemics, Riḍā made use of Western discussions on Christianity and discoveries on Biblical themes which were investigated in Arabic journals and newspapers of his time. It has been sometimes very difficult to trace the Western sources used in *al-Manār*, since Riḍā usually cited titles in Arabic translation with names of authors transliterated in Arabic. During my research I have managed to identify most of these cases and their religious background, especially within the history of Christian modern movements and controversies in Europe. Two cases are selected for further special analysis. We firstly examine the controversy known as the *Babel-und-Bibel-Streit* (1903), which had been launched by the German Professor of Assyriology and Semitic languages Friedrich Delitzsch (1850-1922). Riḍā used this case as a tool in order to prove the Qur'ānic insistence on the corruption of the Holy Scriptures. The second one is his reaction to the Arabic translation of the *Encyclopedia of Islam (EI)*, and his harsh response to the analysis developed by the Dutch orientalist A.J. Wensinck (1882-1939) on the figure of 'Ibrāhīm'. This affair led to the dismissal of Wensinck from his post as a member of the Royal Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo in 1933. As his ideas were not agreeable with Islamic traditions on this subject, and were considered disrespectful by many Muslim religious circles, Wensinck's dismissal came after an anti-orientalist press campaign, initiated mostly by religious activists. As the two cases are different both as regard to their contents as well as dates (the first from 1903 and the second from 1933), a comparison between both reflects how Riḍā's treatment of such subjects had changed over the years. In the second place, we shall discuss the question how Riḍā's network in the Muslim world and abroad played a preponderant role in his acquisition of knowledge either on topics pertinent to Christianity or Western scholarly works on Islam. The three hitherto unstudied archives will be of great importance for this part. To establish the precise extent of this network would fall outside the scope of the chapter. But some unpublished documents present an interesting picture about his regular requests to friends with knowledge of Western works to brief him with Arabic translations. We will focus our attention on some of the prominent figures, known as the *Manār* literary group, who contributed to the journal with their reflections on the West and Christianity or directly with polemical reactions to Christian writers. Our point is not to discuss individual interpretations, but rather to make a coherent presentation of those contributors, whose thoughts would imply positions accepted by Riḍā himself.

In the *second* chapter we shall examine the diversity of Riḍā's relations with prominent Arab Christian luminaries by illustrating his cooperation, conflicts, and religious and political confrontations with them. What concern us here are his intellectual (mis)perceptions of this generation of Christians, who made a great contribution to the formation of the modern history of the Arab world. In order to get a good overview, three different aspects are put forward for discussion. Firstly, as a point of departure we briefly sketch Riḍā's political activities with other Syrian Christian nationalists who had similar political ideas. A more focused attempt is made to revisit responses to the writings of Syrian

Christian intellectual émigrés, such as Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922), Jurjī Zaidan (1861-1914), the Syrian doctor Shiblī Shumayyil (1850-1917), Khalīl Saʿādeh, and others. Most of these Christian partners were very critical of their own religion and its clergy. Secondly, it will be important to shift the discussion to investigate some of Riḍā's heavy responses to the mouthpiece of the Syrian Jesuit community, *al-Machreq*, and its criticism of his ideas, especially his last work, *al-Wahy al-Muḥammadī* (mentioned below, *al-Wahy*).⁵⁵ Why was Riḍā more drawn to these secularists (who were of Christian origin, but sharp critics of the clerics and the *ʿUlamā*), while vigorously attacking the Jesuit magazine for its critique of Islam? Thirdly, the chapter moves to speak about Riḍā's attitude towards the question of Egyptian nationalism and the status of the native Egyptian Coptic community. For the sake of comparison, it is appropriate to probe Riḍā's relationship with them over the years. An important historical point was his reaction to the Coptic Congress in 1911 in Asyūt (Southern Egypt). The prime reason behind organizing the Congress was the assassination of the Coptic Prime Minister Buṭrus Ghālī Pasha in 1910 by a member of the National Party, the 25 year-old Ibrahīm Naṣīf al-Wardānī. This period is considered as one of the most critical points in the history of the Muslim-Coptic relations in Egypt. The Copts had seen his assassination as the culmination of the anti-Christian propaganda by Muslims. The Congress resulted in a petition briefing Coptic demands, which was presented to the Khedive and the British.⁵⁶ As a Muslim thinker, Riḍā immediately embarked on responding to the Coptic demands in a series of articles, which he later collected in his work: *Muslims and Copts or the Egyptian Congress*.⁵⁷

The *third* chapter is devoted to a general overview of *al-Manār*'s response to missionary work by analyzing the reflections of Riḍā and his associates on the theological and social effects of missions in the Muslim world in the late 19th and early 20th century. We shall see that even Riḍā's separate works on Christianity came as reaction to missionary attacks against Islam and its doctrines. As Christian missionary groups in Western colonies used to consider themselves the religious spokesmen of the dominant Western civilization,⁵⁸ Riḍā's understanding of missions should be seen within the background of the history of European colonialism. By investigating Riḍā's views over the years,

⁵⁵ R. Riḍā, *al-Wahy al-Muḥammadī*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1934.

⁵⁶ Kyriakos Mikhail, *Copts and Moslems under British Control*, London, 1911; S. Sheikaly, 'Prime Minister and Assassin: Butros Ghālī and Wardani', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 13/1 (1977), pp. 112-123; Moustafa El-Fikī, *Copts in Egyptian politics (1919-1952)*, General Egyptian Book Organization, 1991, pp.38-45; Muḥammad Ṣālīḥ al-Murrākishī, *Tafkīr Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā min Khilāl Majallat al-Manār (1898-1935)*, Tunisian Press: Tunisia and Algeria, 1985, pp. 181-183; Jacques Tagher, *Christians in Muslim Egypt: An Historical Study of the Relations between Copts and Muslims from 640 to 1922*, Altenberge: Oros Verlag, 1998.

⁵⁷ Rashīd Riḍā, *a-Muslimūn wā al-Qibṭ aw al-Mu'tamar al-Miṣrī*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1st ed., 1329/1911.

⁵⁸ Hermas J. Bergman, 'The Diplomatic Missionary John van Ess in Iraq', *The Muslim World*, vol. LXXII (1982), p. 180; cf. Jacques Waardenburg, 'European Civilization and Islam in History', in Joergen S. Nielsen (ed.), *The Christian-Muslim Frontier: Chaos, Clash or Dialogue*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1998, p. 11.

the chapter paves the way for the last four chapters by specifically highlighting *al-Manār*'s various confrontations with the missionary enterprise in the Muslim world. What was the nature of Riḍā's combat against missions? How did he judge missionary education? We shall also consider Riḍā's deployment of his energetic activity of *da'wa* and his aspiration for the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam, such as the well-known case of Lord Headley in England. He saw the conversion of Europeans to Islam as a sharp indication of the failure of Christian missions to convert highly educated and real Muslims. How did Riḍā understand the significance of propaganda for religions? Did he relate the missionary work to colonialism? How far did he interact with his Muslim readers in their daily encounter with missionary work? How effective were his efforts of enhancing Islamic missionary work in the face of Christian missionary work?

The *fourth* chapter takes up a detailed analysis of Riḍā's afore-mentioned work *Shubuhāt al-Naṣārā*, which has been recently translated in English by Simon Wood. As a collection of articles (later compiled in one volume), this specific work represents *al-Manār*'s formative views, which Riḍā began to write as response to a variety of Christian publications on Islam as early as 1901, two years after his arrival in Egypt. As Riḍā wrote his replies occasionally, his articles came out as incoherent, but full of lively polemics against various contemporary missionary writings on Islam. For the sake of clarity, I shall not follow the chronological order of Riḍā's discussions according to their appearance in *al-Manār*. In order to have a more systematic analysis of his ideas, it is appropriate to set up the structure of the chapter on the basis of the replies Riḍā developed to each of his counterparts separately. The most significant among these Christian writings were: 1) a piece of work by a certain Niqūlā Ya'qūb Ghabriyāl, an Egyptian missionary, which he entitled as *Researches of the Diligent in the dispute between Christians and Muslims*,⁵⁹ 2) the Protestant monthly magazine, *The Glad Tidings of Peace*, which was founded by a certain George Aswan in the town of Bilbīs (al-Sharqiyya province) in 1901,⁶⁰ and 3) the mouthpiece of the Society of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church, *The Standard of Zion*, which was founded

⁵⁹ Niqūlā Ya'qūb Ghabriyāl, *Abḥāth* (sometimes *Mabāḥith*) *al-Mujtahidīn fī al-Khilāf Bayna al-Naṣārā wā al-Muslimīn*. The treatise was published for the first time in Cairo in 1901 by the American Mission in Egypt as a guide to missionary workers among Muslims; and was reprinted in 1913 and 1922. See, *Summer 1914 Edition of the Descriptive Guide to the Nile Mission Press*, Nile Mission Press, 1914, p. 40. It has been recently published by Asmār in Damascus (2006). Many Arab Christian websites make use of digitalized versions of the work in their answers to Islam. See for example, <http://www.the-good-way.com/arab/pdf/abook/rb4905a.pdf>; <http://www.callforall.net/data/literature/lectures/mabaheth/>; and <http://www.alnour.com/response/mabaheth/mabaheth1.htm>. All accessed 7 June 2007.

⁶⁰ Arabic: *Bashā'ir al-Salām*. It is mentioned in the index of Arab journals (no. 490), Abdelghani Ahmed-Bioud Hasan Hanafi and Habib Fiki, *3200 Majalla wā Jarīda Arabiyya 1800-1965: 3200 Revues Journaux Arabes de 1800 à 1965*, Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1969, p. 28 (Quoted below, *Reveues*). It is also mentioned in the index of Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Maḥmūd 'Ismā'īl 'Abd al-'Allāh, *Fahras al-Dawriyyāt al-'Arabiyya al-Latī tamtalikuhā al-Dār*, Cairo: Matba'at Dār al-Kutub, 1961, p. 42 (Quoted below, *Fahras*).

in 1894.⁶¹ Unfortunately I have not been able so far to find the last two works. We depend in our investigation on Riḍā's citations of them.

The *fifth* chapter assesses Riḍā's attempt of searching for a 'true' Gospel by discussing his acceptance of the controversial Gospel of Barnabas. It will be discussed that Riḍā took a previous initiative to find another 'true' Gospel by publishing some fragments from the Gospel according to Tolstoy before his publication of the Arabic edition of Barnabas. I will also show that his introduction to the Gospel was one of his many strenuous efforts to prove the authenticity of the Islamic narrative on Jesus and his disciples, and his prediction of the coming of the prophet Muḥammad. In order to determine Riḍā's motivations of publishing this Gospel, we shall focus on this Arabic edition by studying the two Arabic introductions, one written by Sa'ādeh as its translator and the other by Riḍā as publisher. It should be noted that Riḍā published the Gospel in two different editions: one prefaced by the two introductions, and the second including the text of the translation without any preface, which he probably published as a cheaper and popular edition. Riḍā, however, published his own preface in *al-Manār* simultaneously with the publication of the Gospel. The reason why he did not print that of Sa'ādeh in his journal is not known. Another question that springs to the mind of any researcher of the Arabic edition is: why would Sa'ādeh, as a Christian, embark upon such an initiative, and cooperate with Riḍā, while being aware of the sensitivity of the whole subject? Did Sa'ādeh actually believe in the authenticity of the Gospel of Barnabas? Another significant point is that no previous research, to my best knowledge, has studied Riḍā's publication of this Gospel against the background of the response of indigenous Christians of his age. Also *al-Manār* does not give a clear picture about whether there had been any anti-Barnabas polemics on the part of Christians in the Muslim world. It is significant, therefore, to examine: how did the Christians (especially in Egypt) perceive the Gospel, when they saw it translated into Arabic and published by a Syrian Muslim? What kind of polemical tone did they develop against it and its publisher? In this chapter a hitherto unstudied anti-*Manār* treatise is presented. In the light of Riḍā's relation with the Coptic community, we shall examine the reaction of an Egyptian Muslim convert to Christianity and a follower of the Anglican missionary Temple Gairdner (1873-1928) against the Gospel under the title: *The Helmet of Salvation from the Hunting Trap of the Fra-Marinian Gospel of Barnabas*. The author of the treatise was a certain 'Iskandar Effendi 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Bājūrī, who identified himself as the 'missionary of Giza'.⁶²

⁶¹ Arabic, *Rāyat Sohyūn: Majalla 'Ilmiyya Dīniyya*. No. 1569, see, *Revues*, p. 84 and the *Fahras*, p. 143.

⁶² 'Iskander 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Bājūrī, *Khūdhāt al-Khalās min Sharak 'Injīl Barnābā al-Frā Mārīnī al-Qannās*, Cairo: Matba'at al-Tawfīq, 1908. The *Khūdhāt al-Khalās* (or *helmet of salvation*) is a quotation from Ephesians 6:17. Yūsuf Manqāryūs, the head of the Clerical School in Egypt and founder of the Christian magazine *al-Haqq*, took an important part in the publication of the treatise. Bājūrī later wrote an epilogue for Zwemer's biography of al-Ghazālī, *al-Ghawwāṣ wa al-La'ālī* (Cairo, 1926). See, Jamāl al-Bannā, 'al-Ghazālī fī 'Uyūn Masīhiyya', in *al-Rāya*, Doha, 3 January 2007.

The *sixth* chapter is purported to evaluate the polemical contributions of the above-mentioned prolific polemicist Tawfīq Ṣidqī in Riḍā's journal. It is a follow-up to the first chapter in which we discuss some biographical information about him. In the period 1912-1916, Ṣidqī achieved considerable prominence in *al-Manār* due to his writings on various subjects, especially those related to the reliability of the *sunna*, Christianity, and the application of modern medical and scientific discoveries to Islamic concepts. Most relevant for us in the chapter are his polemical articles, in which he, as a physician, was able to extensively exploit English critical works on Christianity and the life of Jesus. He also attempted to analyse a wide range of Biblical passages in order to prove many 'errors and contradictions', which could not be explained away. Our discussion shall centre on three major works: 1) *The Religion of God in the Books of His Prophets*,⁶³ 2) *The Doctrine of Crucifixion and Salvation*,⁶⁴ and 3) *A View on the Scriptures of the New Testament and Christian Doctrines*.⁶⁵ All three works were first published as articles in *al-Manār*, and later compiled in separate treatises. Riḍā always published Ṣidqī's views alone, except in the case of the *Doctrine*. In corporation with him, Riḍā published the first edition of this treatise in 1331 (circa 1913). *Al-Manār* later published several editions of the treatise. The first part contained Riḍā's commentary on the Qur'ānic verse related to the slaying and crucifixion of Jesus (Surat al-Nisā', 157), earlier published in *Tafsīr al-Manār*. At the request of some of his readers, Riḍā decided to publish his commentary as a supplementary part to Ṣidqī's views. As the chapter is primarily devoted to a systematic and general analysis of Ṣidqī's ideas, I shall elaborate on Riḍā's reflections at the end of our discussion in order to keep the thematic lines of discussion as clear as possible. It is not my intention to rehearse all the christological attitudes expounded by Ṣidqī at length. My purpose is to examine these particular works, and to study their methods and the sources used.

The *seventh* chapter closes the analysis by examining how Riḍā exploited all these views in his *fatwās*. *Fatwās* are very important sources, not only because they enable us to understand the *mufīṭ*'s thoughts but they also reflect the urgent and appealing themes occupying Muslim societies. The chapter aims at serving two purposes. First of all, it sums up some elements which Riḍā already raised in his discussions on Christianity. Since its very beginning, different people in various regions brought their petitions to *al-Manār* inquiring about many subjects, including theological issues related to other religions. Secondly, it examines Riḍā's thinking in a wider perspective by focusing on the

Available at:

http://www.raya.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=211031&version=1&template_id=24&parent_id=23; accessed on 3 August, 2007.

⁶³ Tawfīq Ṣidqī, *Dīn Allah fī Kutub 'Anbyā'ih*, Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1330/1912 (Cited below, *Dīn*). For technical reasons, I shall use the treatises, not the articles, as references below.

⁶⁴ Rashīd Riḍā & Tawfīq Ṣidqī, *Aqīdah al-Ṣalb wā al-Fidā*, Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1331/1913 (Cited below, *Aqīdah*).

⁶⁵ T. Ṣidqī, *Nazrah fī Kutub al-'Ahd al-Jadīd wā 'Aq'aid al-Naṣārā*, first edition, Maṭba'at al-Manār, 1331/1913 (Cited below, *Nazrah*).

reception of his ideas by studying the dynamic contact with his readers. As we shall see, the petitions of most of these *fatwās* came as a result of the encounter of those Muslims with Christians and missionaries. The questions to be answered here are: What were the most urgent topics in the minds of his questioners? What was the influence of missionary activities and polemics against Islam (as circulated among Muslims of that time) on the contents of the questions?

Each chapter ends with a conclusion in which a summary of the headlines of its arguments and general remarks is mentioned. The whole study will be ended with a general conclusion in which its main observations are summarized.

