

Muslim regard for Christians and Christianity, 900-1200

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Muslim attitudes towards Christians who lived within the increasingly fragmented Islamic world remained governed by the so-called Pact of 'Umar, though it is unclear how far its stipulations were applied beyond the exaction of the *jizya*.¹

The evidence of such texts as the 11th-century *Khabar al-Yahūd wa-l-Naṣārā* (q.v.), in which the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim retires from his meeting with the heads of the main client faiths to consult the sources about the treatment of *dhimmīs*, and of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kātib's *Al-durr al-thamīn* (q.v.) from the later 12th century, which tells how the Ayyūbid Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn renewed the *dhimmī* regulations, indicates that they were not regularly enforced or even well-known, at least in Egypt. The fact that the Caliph al-Qādir (r. 991-1031) is specifically recorded as re-introducing them in Baghdad, and al-Ḥākim (r. 996-1021) eccentrically and cruelly in Cairo, suggests that while the regulations were always present in potential they were not systematically invoked.

It might well be that the majority of Christians living under Islamic rule were generally tolerated, if not welcomed as full participants in society. Certainly, Christian professionals who had something to offer, such as medical or linguistic skills, do not appear to feel any undue opprobrium: the leading 10th-century scholar Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (q.v.) moved within Baghdad intellectual circles as an equal to any Muslim he knew, and among elite intellectuals exchanges about philosophical or medical matters were not impeded by religious barriers. But Christians always risked being dismissed from their jobs if they advanced too far. And the steady flow of converts who have left renunciations of their Christian beliefs – al-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb (q.v.) and Naṣr ibn Yaḥyā (q.v.) are two of the most vocal – is a strong indication that the incentives to accept Islam, or disincentives to resist it, were never

¹ The standard work remains A. Fattal, *Le statut legal des non-Musulmans en pays d'Islam*, Beirut, 1958. See also C. Hillenbrand, *The crusades, Islamic perspectives*, Edinburgh, 1999, particularly ch. 5.

completely absent from social and professional relations. Even Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī was pressurized to define and defend the intellectual probity of the doctrines he upheld.

While the evidence for widespread conversions to Islam remains inconclusive, the absence of extensive references in many Muslim works of history and geography in this period is at least consistent with the reality of a faith community that was in decline, lacking in momentum and increasingly marginalized in society. This period is marked by the first historical works written by Muslim authors that survive in more than fragmentary form. As might be expected, they contain mentions of Christians in accounts of day to day living within the Islamic world as well as of battles against the Byzantines and later the crusaders. But since many of these are only incidental and show little explicit awareness of Christians' religious status, they suggest that to their authors Christian communities were evidently not important or powerful religious or social elements.

Historians who do not appear to give special attention to Christians or Christianity are listed below, while notable exceptions are treated in separate entries in what follows. However, a word of caution should be added. It is possible that in some histories at least, Christians are singled out as alien and hostile by sophisticated structural elements and indirect portrayals such as actions rather than descriptions, as well as repetitive designations such as 'associator' or 'polytheist'. Fuller analysis of these histories, as well as similar apparently unyielding works, may show more widespread attitudes towards Christians than is immediately apparent.

The historians Abu l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 905 or after), Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), Abū Naṣr al-Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāḥir (or al-Muṭahhar) al-Maḥdī (d. after 966) and Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Azraq al-Fāriqī (d. 1176-77) give enough valuable information about Christianity or indications of their attitude towards it to merit entries in what follows. The attitudes of others are less clear, and the details they give about Christians are generally scanty.²

² The list given by C. Hillenbrand, 'Sources in Arabic', in M. Whitby (ed.), *Byzantines and crusaders in non-Greek sources 1025-1204*, Oxford, 2007, 283-340, pp. 310-13, 322-23 (including authors who did not only write about the Byzantines and crusaders) has been taken as the basis for what follows. It provides full listings of editions and studies of these works.

Among them, the Egyptian ‘Izz al-Mulk al-Musabbihī (d. 1030), of whose vast *Akhbār Miṣr* (‘Accounts of Egypt’), supposedly 40 volumes in its original form, only one chapter covering the years 1023-25 survives, makes only passing references to the Christian community in Cairo, without introducing or describing them, except to say that it was their custom to celebrate their festival of *Yawm al-qallīla* together with Muslims in the city.³

Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Miskawayh (d. 1030), who was secretary to a succession of Būyid viziers, and is known as a philosopher as well as historian, makes a number of indicative though brief mentions of Christians in his *Tajārib al-umam* (‘Experiences of the nations’), stating in passing that the vizier of the Caliph al-Muṭī‘ extorted money from both *dhimmīs* and Muslims to pay the troops in 971-71,⁴ that the Būyid amīr ‘Aḍud al-Dawla (d. 983) entrusted his Christian general Abū l-‘Alā ‘Ubaydallāh with the tasks of leading two attacks against renegades,⁵ and gave his Christian vizier Naṣr ibn Hārūn permission to build churches and monasteries and distribute money to poor Christians,⁶ that in 1002 rioters in Baghdad attacked Christians and set fire to a church, which fell on some Muslims, ‘a terrible affair’,⁷ and that in 1002 the patriarch of Baghdad was arrested and humiliated.⁸

These details show that some Christians were able to rise to high positions in the state at this time, but also that the Christian community was without influence in society and a potential target in times of unrest. Ḥamdān ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm (d. 1159) may well have made some telling comments about Christians and their ways, but his work has completely disappeared and almost nothing is known about it.⁹

³ A.F. Sayyid and T. Bianquis (eds), *Tome quarantième de la Chronique d’Égypte de Musabbihī (le prince al-Muhkhtār ‘Izz al-Mulk Muḥammad ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Aḥmad)*, 366-420/977-1029, 2 vols, Cairo, 1978, i, pp. 19-20. See below the entry on al-Musabbihī’s lost *Kitāb darak al-bughyā*.

⁴ *The eclipse of the ‘Abbasid caliphate. Original chronicles of the fourth Islamic century*, ed. and trans. H.F. Amedroz and D.S. Margoliouth, 6 vols (i-iii text and iv-vi trans.), Oxford, 1920-21, ii p. 308/v p. 331.

⁵ *The eclipse of the ‘Abbasid caliphate*, ii p. 392/v pp. 431-32, and ii p. 398/v p. 437.

⁶ *The eclipse of the ‘Abbasid caliphate*, ii p. 408/v p. 447.

⁷ *The eclipse of the ‘Abbasid caliphate*, iii p. 418/vi pp. 443-44.

⁸ *The eclipse of the ‘Abbasid caliphate*, iii p. 456/vi p. 485.

⁹ See Hillenbrand, *The crusades. Islamic perspectives*, p. 258.

He himself lived within crusader territory on an estate that had been granted by Alan, lord of Athārib, and he administered the town of Ma'arat al-Nu'mān on behalf of the Franks. So his *Sīrat al-Afranj al-khārijīn ilā bilād al-Shām fi hādhihi sini* ('The way of the Franks who went out to Syria in those years') was evidently written on the basis of intimate knowledge of the Crusaders, making its loss unfortunate. The historians Abū Ya'lā Hamza ibn Asad ibn al-Qalānīsī (d. 1160) (*Dhayl ta'rīkh Dimashq*, 'Continuation of the history of Damascus'), Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-'Azīmī (d. after 1161) (*Ta'rīkh*, 'History') and Zāhīr al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī (d. c. 1186-87) (*Saljūqnāma*, 'The book of the Saljuqs') say nothing significant about Christians.¹⁰

The same applies by and large to Arab geographers writing in this period; they tend not to remark on the Christian world in any detail, and have little to say about Christians living within the Islamic world, suggesting that these communities were insignificant parts of the social framework and merited no particular attention. This can be illustrated from the references found in the following authors. Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī (c. 946-c. 1000), in his *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fi ma'rīfat al-aqālīm* ('The best divisions for knowledge of the regions'), briefly remarks that there are many objectionable Christians in Jerusalem,¹¹ that in Syria and Egypt there are many Christian officials because their linguistic ability is respected by Muslims, that most medical doctors are Christians,¹² and that most Egyptian Christians are Copts.¹³

He also habitually refers to the Byzantine emperor as a 'dog'. His contemporary Abū l-Qāsim 'Alī ibn Ḥawqal (d. after 988), in his *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik*, better known as *Kitāb šūrat al-arḍ* ('The form of the earth'), gives an account of Constantinople and its empire as well as the towns of southern Italy,¹⁴ and describes Muslim Sicily at some length. But apart from a reference to a church in Palermo that had been converted into a mosque,¹⁵ he says very little about Chris-

¹⁰ Al-'Azīmī includes a brief paragraph on Jesus as a precursor of Muḥammad, *Ta'rīkh Ḥalab*, ed. I. Zar'ur, Damascus, 1984, pp. 65-66.

¹¹ Ed. M. de Goeje, Leiden, 1906, p. 167; trans. B.A. Collins, *The best divisions for knowledge of the regions*, Reading, 1994, p. 152.

¹² Ed. de Goeje, p. 183; trans. Collins, p. 166.

¹³ Ed. de Goeje, p. 202; trans. Collins, p. 186.

¹⁴ J.H. Kramers and G. Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, Paris, 1964, pp. 190-95.

¹⁵ Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration*, p. 117. He says that Christians believed that a tomb in this church was that of Aristotle. A. Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily. Arabic speakers and the end of Islam*, London, 2003, pp. 16-17, suggests that his reference to intermarriage practices between 'bastardised Muslims' and Christians

tians as people of religion. It is possible that his lost work about Sicily contained more. Earlier in the 10th century, the little-known Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān wrote a detailed account of an embassy sent in the 920s by the Caliph al-Muqtadir along the Volga to the capital of the Bulgars. He remarks that among the Khazars Christians, like followers of other faiths, have the right to appeal to a judge of their own faith.¹⁶

The great 12th-century geographer Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (1100-1165/66) is no exception to the general rule of disregarding Christians as religious people or spiritual and doctrinal competitors. In his *Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-afāq* (‘Diversion for the desirous of ranging the regions’), generally known as the *Kitāb Rujār*, after the Norman King Roger II of Sicily for whom he wrote it in 1154, he describes how the inhabitants of the island of Socotra off southern Arabia became Christians, says that the nomads of northern Nubia and of the island of Quṭruba near Baḥrayn are Christian, and lists the vizirs of the king of Sarandīb (Sri Lanka) as four of the native people, four Muslims, four Christians, and four Jews, but without further comment.¹⁷

He also describes with evident interest and awe some of the larger churches he has seen, but makes no comment about the faith that is expressed in them.¹⁸

An exception to the general disregard for Christians and Christian lands was Constantinople, which appears to have held a particular fascination for many historians and geographers, ‘a space fluctuating between the real and the imaginary’.¹⁹

Al-Ya‘qūbī (q.v.) in the late 9th century is just one among many historians who give dynastic lists of Constantine and his successors, while Ibn Khurrādādhbih (d. 911) in his *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* (‘Routes and realms’; a source used by many later geographers) is

in remoter parts of the island may indicate the persistence of old customs between new converts to Islam and their former co-religionists (repeated in A. Metcalfe, *The Muslims of medieval Italy*, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 60).

¹⁶ R. Frye, *Ibn Fadlan’s journey to Russia. A tenth-century traveler from Baghdad to the Volga River*, Princeton NJ, 2005, pp. 73-74.

¹⁷ P. A. Joubert (trans.), *La géographie d’Édrisi*, 2 vols, Paris, 1836-40 (repr. Amsterdam, 1975), i, pp. 47-48, 35, 62, 72.

¹⁸ Joubert, *La géographie d’Édrisi*, ii, pp. 22, 229, 250-51.

¹⁹ N. El Cheikh, *Byzantium viewed by the Arabs*, Cambridge MA, 2004, p. 140. For further references to Muslim authors on Byzantium, see the bibliography listed in the book. See also M. Vaiou, *Diplomacy in the early Islamic world. A tenth century treatise on Arab-Byzantine relations: Ibn al-Farrā’s Kitāb rusul al-mulūk*, London, 2009.

intrigued enough by court life there to mention such details as the red buskins that only the emperor could wear.²⁰

Ibn Zuhri (12th century) calls it one of the most beautiful cities of the world,²¹ while for his part al-Mas'udi (q.v.) is clearly so enthralled that he refers to aspects of the life of the city, its major landmarks, rulers, ecclesiastical hierarchy and forms of worship in each of a long succession of works, and al-Muqaddasi, brief as he is, mentions the house near the hippodrome in which aristocratic Muslim prisoners were held, and gives a somewhat garbled account of the factional passions that were stirred up during chariot races.²²

The most detailed account of the city known among Muslims in this period was that preserved by Abū 'Alī Aḥmad ibn Rusta in his early 10th century *Kitāb al-a'lāq al-nafīsa* ('Precious valuables')²³ from Hārūn ibn Yaḥyā, a prisoner (possibly a Christian) who was held there sometime just before or after the year 900. The latter describes many of the city's main buildings with a sense of wonder that makes it a treasure house of architectural and monumental gems, his wide-eyed appreciation providing a staple source for later Muslim authors.²⁴

All this was despite the fact that the Byzantines were the among the main external enemies of the Islamic empire in this period, conducting periodic attacks on coastal and inland regions, at times forcing Muslims onto the defensive, and constantly reminding them of the enmity between them through the formal letters that were acknowledged elements in relations between emperors and caliphs. This is underlined by Sharaf al-Zamān Ṭāhir al-Marwazī (d. after 1120), physician to the Seljuk ruler Malik Shāh, who registers the ingrained hostility and fear of the city's inhabitants towards Islam in his comment about the chariot races, where 'if the king's team wins this is cause for joy and is a good omen, and it is said, "The victory over the Muslims is

²⁰ Ed. M. Makhzūm, Beirut, 1988, p. 97.

²¹ D. Bramon, *El mundo en el siglo XII. Estudio de la versión castellana y del 'original' árabe de una geografía universal: 'El tratado de al-Zuhri'*, Barcelona, 1991, p. 128.

²² Ed. de Goeje, pp. 147-48; trans. Collins, pp. 134-35.

²³ Ed. M. De Goeje, Leiden, 1892; trans. G. Wiet, *Les atours précieux*, Cairo, 1955; summarized by El Cheikh, *Byzantium viewed by the Arabs*, pp. 143-49.

²⁴ See also M. Canard, 'Les aventures d'un prisonnier arabe et d'un patrice byzantine à l'époque des guerres bulgarobyzantines', *DOP* 9 (1956) 49-72. Canard argues that the story of a Muslim prisoner in the Byzantine empire, as reported by the 10th century historian Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī, has more the flavor of a tale of adventure against an exotic background than of an historical account.

ours". But if the Emperor's team wins they take this as a bad omen and say, "The Muslims will defeat us".²⁵

A number of historians of universal histories in this period include accounts of Jesus and his family among the events that anticipated the coming of Islam. A few, such as al-Ya'qūbī (q.v.) and al-Maḡdisī (q.v.), clearly referred to Christian sources for details about Jesus, though others appear to have restricted themselves to mainly to Muslim sources, including what are probably popular traditions. This also appears to be the case with authors of works in the related *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* ('tales of the prophets') genre, suggesting they felt little pressure to reconcile Muslim and Christian versions or justify the Muslim as the more truthful. The most substantial example is the 'Arā'is al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā' of Abū Ishāq Aḥmad al-Tha'labī (d. 1036).²⁶

In this the story of Jesus is based upon the Qur'anic model with narrative and dramatic additions from a wide variety of sources (pp. 638-80). These include the Gospels (indirectly), though only where they do not conflict with the Muslim version. Thus, for example, the account of Jesus' last supper with his disciples is given in detail, and Jesus' actions of washing his disciples' feet and his final words to them are related at length. But when it comes to the arrest a disciple leads the Jews to Judas, and he is crucified in Jesus' stead (pp. 670-71). Nothing is said about a competing account, and no suggestion is made that there is disagreement between Muslims and Christians over this.²⁷

The same is true of al-Khaṭīb al-Baḡhdādī's *Tārīkh al-anbiyā'*;²⁸ there is little to indicate any sense of tension between Muslim and Christian versions or that the Muslim version needs to be defended or its accuracy upheld.

By the beginning of this period, Muslim theologians had fashioned arguments that to their own satisfaction easily exposed the

²⁵ Al-Marwazi, *Ṭabā'ī' al-ḥayawān*, trans. V. Minorsky, 'Marwazi on the Byzantines', *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves (Mélanges H. Grégoire 2)* 10 (1950) 457-69, p. 462 (repr. in V. Minorsky, *Medieval Iran and its neighbours*, London, 1982, no. VIII).

²⁶ Trans. W.M. Brinner, 'Arā'is al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā', or 'Lives of the prophets', Leiden, 2002.

²⁷ See B.M. Hauglid, *Al-Tha'labī's Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'. Analysis of the text, Jewish and Christian elements, islamization, and prefiguration of the prophethood of Muḥammad*, Ann Arbor MI, 1998 (Diss. University of Utah).

²⁸ Ed. A. al-Bāriḥ, Beirut, 2004, pp. 317-34.

shortcomings of Christian doctrines, and they had answers to the main questions that were typically posed by Christians. The dextrous conciseness with which figures such as ‘Abd al-Jabbār (q.v.), al-Juwaynī (q.v.) and al-Ghazālī (q.v.), or the author – maybe a convert – of the refutation attributed to him, dismiss Christian teachings and defenses speaks eloquently of confidence about the rational soundness of Islam and the incoherence of rival faith traditions. And the frequency of works in defense of Muḥammad suggests that, while Muslims continued to think it necessary to deal with criticisms from Christians and others, they were not bereft of decisive arguments.

One of the major topics of Muslim apologetic works in this period was this theme of *dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, ‘proofs of prophethood’. It was already known in the 8th century, and is represented by a few surviving and many more lost works from the 9th century. The surviving examples show that among the arguments in many of these early works there were likely to have been proof texts taken from the Old and New Testaments that showed Muḥammad was foretold by earlier prophets and also that he was attested by miracles, both responses to Christian accusations. These elements continue through the period 900-1200, though since some of the surviving works in the genre from this time do not include them (often restricting their proofs mainly to Hadiths) and others make comparatively little of them, it cannot be assumed they were major elements in the evidence that was assembled by Muslim apologists, or that they featured consistently.²⁹

This suggests that the criticisms made by Christians were no longer regarded as acute, and could be answered by reference to familiar sets of proof-texts and tried arguments. In consequence, unless a work is known to have centered on such arguments from Christians, it has not been included in a separate entry in what follows, but is listed here.

Authors who wrote surviving works in the genre that do not refer explicitly to Christian criticisms, though often give lists of verses from biblical books that predict the coming of Muḥammad and Islam, include: the traditionist Abū Bakr Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad al-Firyābī al-Saghīr (d. 913), (*Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*);³⁰ the major Shī‘ī theologian

²⁹ But see the comments of al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq in the entry later in this volume to the effect that only People of the Book would challenge Muslims about proofs of Muḥammad’s prophethood.

³⁰ Ed. Umm ‘Abdallāh ibn Maḥrūs, Beirut, 1980; see G.S. Reynolds, *A Muslim theologian in the sectarian milieu, ‘Abd al-Jabbār and the critique of Christian origins*, Leiden, 2004, p. 181.

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī (d. 991) (q.v.), (*Kitāb al-nubuwwa*);³¹ the preacher and ascetic Abū Sa'd (or Sa'īd) 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad al-Khargūshī (d. 1016), (*Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā*);³² the expert on Sufism and Shāfi'i legal scholar Abū Nu'aym Aḥmad ibn 'Abdallāh al-Iṣfahānī (948-1038), (*Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*);³³ the legal scholar and political theorist Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Māwardī (974-1058) (q.v.), (*A'lām al-nubuwwa*);³⁴ and the traditionist and Shāfi'i legal scholar Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (994-1066), (*Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*).³⁵

To these may be added Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 971) (q.v.), whose *Kitāb ithbāt al-nubuwwa*,³⁶ in its surviving parts a general defense of prophethood, lacks the last part on the prophethood of Muḥammad where any biblical quotations or references to Christianity may have occurred; and Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153) (q.v.), who in his *Nihāyat al-aqdām fī 'ilm al-kalām*³⁷ defends prophethood in principle (ch. 19) and the prophethood of Muḥammad (ch. 20) without mentioning anything to do with Christianity at all. Ibn Sīnā's (d. 1137) *Fī ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*, which is on the status of the prophet as recipient of transcendent knowledge, is likewise unrelated to these defences of the specific prophetic status of Muḥammad.

Authors of lost works of this kind, about which there is no clear information concerning references to Christian criticisms of the Prophet or allusions to biblical predictions of his coming, include the following: the traditionist Abū Bakr ibn Abī 'Aṣim al-Nabīl al-Ḍaḥḥāk

³¹ Tehran, 2002.

³² See *Manāḥil al-shifā wa-manāhil al-ṣafā bi-taḥqīq Kitāb Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā, riwāyat Abī l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Qushayrī*, ed. Abū 'Aṣim Nabīl ibn Hāshim al-Ghamrī Āl Bā'ulwī, 6 vols, Mecca, 2003. The work is also known as *Sharaf al-Nabī*, *Sharaf al-nubuwwa* and *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*.

³³ Ed. M.R. Qal'ahjī and 'A. 'Abbās, Beirut, 1986 (on pp. 587-625 there is a series of comparisons between the excellent qualities and miracles of Muḥammad and other prophets).

³⁴ Ed. M. Baghdādī, Beirut, 1987 (on pp. 36-38 there is a brief section on the three main Christian sects known in the Islamic world, and on pp. 197-216 a section on biblical prophecies about Muḥammad, which are derived from 'Alī al-Ṭabari; see F. Taeschner, 'Die alttestamentlichen Bibelzitate, vor allem aus dem Pentateuch, in al-Ṭabari's Kitāb ad-Dīn wad-Daula und ihre Bedeutung für die Frage nach der Echtheit dieser Schrift', *Oriens Christianus* Series 3, 9 (1934) 23-38).

³⁵ *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa wa-ma'rifaṭ aḥwāl ṣāhib al-sharī'a*, ed. 'A.-M. Qal'ajī, 7 vols, Beirut, 1985.

³⁶ Ed. 'A. Tāmir, Beirut, 1966.

³⁷ Ed. A. Guillaume, *The Summa philosophiae of al-Shahrastānī*, London, 1930-34.

ibn Makhlad al-Shaybānī (d. 900), untitled *dalā'il* work;³⁸ the Shī'ī Abū l-'Abbās 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥimyarī (fl. 910), *Kitāb al-dalā'il*;³⁹ the Shī'ī Abū Sahl Ismā'il ibn 'Alī l-Nawbakhtī (d. 924), *Kitāb tathbīt al-risāla*;⁴⁰ the Mālikī jurist Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥammād ibn Ishāq (d. 935), *Kitāb dalā'il al-nubuwwa*;⁴¹ the Qur'an reader Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Naqqāsh al-Mawṣilī (880-962), *Kitāb dalā'il al-nubuwwa*;⁴² the traditionist Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥibbān al-Tamīmī l-Bustī l-Shāfi'ī (d. 965), untitled *dalā'il* work;⁴³ the student of the Shī'ī traditionist al-Kulaynī, Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ja'far al-Nu'mānī (d. 956 or 971), *Kitāb al-dalā'il*;⁴⁴ the Shāfi'ī legal expert Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Ismā'il al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (904-76) (q.v.), untitled *dalā'il* work;⁴⁵ the traditionist Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ja'far ibn Ḥayyān al-Bustī l-Ṣfahānī, known as Abū l-Shaykh (887-979), untitled *dalā'il* work;⁴⁶ the traditionist Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Shāhīn (909-96), untitled *dalā'il* work;⁴⁷ the otherwise unknown Abū l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Sakūnī (10th century), *K. dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, which he transmitted from an earlier author named al-Sharīf Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān;⁴⁸ the traditionist Abū l-'Abbās Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Mustaghfirī al-Nasafī l-Ḥanafī (d. 1040), unnamed *dalā'il* work;⁴⁹

³⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Ṣārim al-maslūl 'alā shātīm al-rasūl*, ed. M.'A. al-Ḥalwānī et al., 3 vols, Beirut, 1997, ii, pp. 432, 434.

³⁹ Ibn Ṭāwūs in E. Kohlberg, *A medieval Muslim scholar at work. Ibn Ṭāwūs & his library*, Leiden, 1992, p. 139.

⁴⁰ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 225; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Najāshī, *Kitāb al-rijāl*, ed. M. Jawād al-Nā'inī, 2 vols, Beirut, 1988, i, p. 122, gives it as *Kitāb al-iḥtijāj li-nubuwwat al-Nabī*.

⁴¹ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 252.

⁴² Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 36; Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn 'an asāmi l-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. G. Flügél, 7 vols, London, 1842, iii, p. 237.

⁴³ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Ṣārim al-maslūl*, ii, p. 434.

⁴⁴ Ibn Ṭāwūs in Kohlberg, *A medieval Muslim scholar at work*, pp. 139-40; Kohlberg speculates that the first chapter of this work may have been about the proofs of Muḥammad's prophethood.

⁴⁵ This is mentioned without further reference by M. Kister, 'The *Sīrah* literature', in A.F.L. Beeston et al. (eds), *Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period*, Cambridge, 1983, 352-67, p. 355.

⁴⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Ṣārim al-maslūl*, ii, p. 432. It is mentioned without further reference by Kister, 'Sīrah literature', p. 355.

⁴⁷ Mentioned without further reference by Kister, 'Sīrah literature', p. 355.

⁴⁸ Ibn Ṭāwūs in Kohlberg, *A medieval Muslim scholar at work*, pp. 141-42.

⁴⁹ Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn* iii, p. 237.

Abū Dharr al-Ḥarawī (1043), unnamed *dalā'il* work;⁵⁰ Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī (fl. before c. 1050), *Kitāb dalā'il al-imāma* (or *al-a'imma*);⁵¹ and Abū l-Qāsim Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad al-Iṣbahānī (1140), *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*.⁵²

An intriguing feature of several works by authors with Fatimid and Ismā'īlī connections runs counter to dominant attitudes towards Christian beliefs in Jesus in this period. A number of them portray him in a manner that is more closely related to Christian than mainstream Islamic traditions. Abū Ḥāṭim al-Rāzī (d. 934) (q.v.), Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 971) (q.v.) and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (q.v.) (writing in the mid 10th century) all refer to him being crucified and dying, while a text that survives in fragmentary form from before 920 refers to him as a 'man who was united [with the Holy Spirit], was one from One, descended from heaven and ascended there, and was Lord of the worlds'.⁵³

This brief reference at the end of an argument about the forms in which God manifests himself on earth suggests that the author of this work, like others from this particular tradition, did not share the strictures on portrayals of Jesus that were observed by other Muslims.

The Fatimids themselves were no different from other ruling houses in their attitudes towards Christians, though with the exception of the Caliph al-Ḥākim they appear to have been pragmatic in using their subjects' talents to their best advantage.⁵⁴

One important aspect of this, the prominence of Armenians in Egyptian public life in the last century of the Fatimid caliphate (1074-71), marks one of the most significant phases of Christian-Muslim relations in this period.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Mentioned without further reference by Kister, 'Sirah literature', p. 356.

⁵¹ Ibn Ṭawūs in Kohlberg, *A medieval Muslim scholar at work*, pp. 140-41; Kohlberg points out that the published parts of this work (Najaf, 1949) lack the lost first sections, which included miracles of Muḥammad.

⁵² Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn* iii, p. 237.

⁵³ L. Massignon, *Recueil de textes inédits concernant l'histoire de la mystique en pays d'Islam*, Paris, 1929, pp. 215-17. Massignon published this fragment, which comes from a treatise named *Al-maqāla l-Masīhiyya*, as the composition of the fourth Fatimid caliph, al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh (931-75). But details in the MS itself indicate that it was a copy derived from a copy made in 920, near to the start of the Fatimid movement; see 'Bibliographie', *Islamochristiana* 3 (1977) p. 256, correcting the reference in *Islamochristiana* 2 (1976) p. 193. See the entry in *Al-maqāla l-Masīhiyya* in this volume.

⁵⁴ See S.K. Samir, 'The role of Christians in the Fāṭimid government services of Egypt to the reign of al-Ḥāfiz', *Medieval Encounters* 2 (1996) 177-92.

⁵⁵ The standard work on the Fatimid Armenians is S.B. Dadoyan, *The Fāṭimid Armenians. Cultural and political interaction in the Near East*, Leiden, 1997, which

It was the culmination of radical changes in the politics of the eastern Mediterranean, and its study links otherwise seemingly unconnected phenomena. During the 10th century, Byzantine re-insurgence, the fall of the Armenian kingdoms, and the Seljuk advance drove the majority of the Armenian people to the south and west of their historic homeland and into the Islamic empire. Armenian political-military energy broke down into unheralded new patterns, and interactions generated semi-autonomous principalities and powers in Cappadocia, Upper Mesopotamia, Cilicia, the Euphrates, al-Shām, and Fatimid Egypt.

Summoned to Cairo at the end of 1073 by the beleaguered Caliph al-Mustaṣṣir (1036-94), the Armenian Badr al-Jamālī, who was already the governor of al-Shām, not only saved the caliph with his mostly Muslim Armenian troops but also brought a predominantly heterodox Armenian element (initially T'ondrakian sympathizers of Islam) into the army and administration. In the course of the next century seven Armenian viziers, all except one of them Muslims, ruled for a combined total of 60 years: the Shī'ī Badr al-Jamālī was vizier of al-Mustaṣṣir from 1074 to 1094; his son, the Sunnī sympathizer al-Afḍal Shāhanshāh (1094-1121), was vizier successively of al-Mustaṣṣir (very briefly), al-Musta'li (1094-1101) who was his nephew, and al-Āmir (1101-30) who was his great nephew; Abū 'Alī Aḥmad Kutayfāt (1131), a Twelver Shī'ī, was vizier of al-Āmir; and Yānis (1132), *mamlūk* of al-Afḍal, was vizier of al-Ḥāfiẓ (1130-49).

Armenian involvement in Fatimid Egypt developed along an 'orthodox' path as well. In 1075 the visit of the Catholicos Grigor II Martyrophil (1065-1105) provided a means of introducing the pro-Byzantine church and nobility. Two of Grigor's grandsons became particularly prominent: Bahrām or Vahram (1135-37), vizier of al-Ḥāfiẓ, and Grigoris, who became Catholicos of the Egyptian Armenian community. Bahrām came from al-Shām with a personal army of 20,000 men with a mission to 'conquer'. His anti-Muslim measures and their

provides a full bibliography on particular events and individuals. See also her 'The Armenian Intermezzo in *Bilād al-Shām*: 10th to 12th centuries', in D. Thomas (ed.), *Syrian Christians under Islam. The first thousand years*, Leiden, 2001, 159-183; *The Armenians and Islam. Paradigms of interactions – Prolegomenon to the history of the Armenians in the Near East, fourth-fourteenth centuries*, Leiden, forthcoming. Professor Dadoyan has kindly supplied the details in the following paragraphs about Armenians in Egypt.

bloody aftermath provoked the first and only anti-Armenian spasm in Fatimid Egypt. But the lingering reputation left by his predecessors was not dimmed by his excesses, because after less than two decades another Armenian, the Nuṣayrī Ṭalā'ī ibn Ruzzīk, was appointed to bring order after the assassination of the Caliph al-Zāfir (1149-54). He was vizier from 1154 to 1161 and was briefly succeeded by his son Ruzzīk (1161-62), though if everything had gone to plan the son of his daughter, who was married to the last Fatimid caliph al-Ādid, would have attained the caliphate.

After the rise of Badr al-Jamālī the Armenian community in Egypt flourished, and in the general atmosphere of tolerance towards Christians it reached a hundred thousand in number. It is generally accepted that the Armenian involvement in government prolonged the caliphate for a century, restored some of its glory and prosperity, and kept the Seljuks and crusaders out of Egypt. In consequence of these achievements Christian Armenians in Egypt enjoyed freedom of faith, and Muslim Armenians had no difficulty in assimilating both cultural and political Islam – al-Afḍal and Ṭalā'ī wrote poetry in Arabic. With the exception of minor incidents, and also occasional criticisms about the Armenian-Christian origins of the ruling Armenian clans and individuals, no incidents were recorded. Strangely, they were always identified as *Armanīs*, even though there is no indication that they preserved their language, faith or folklore.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Armenian period in Egypt is the manner in which Jamālī, Ruzzīk and their respective descendants manipulated Islam to achieve absolute power for themselves. But this went without challenge, because as long as the state apparatus ran properly and the people and country were secure and prosperous, the primarily Muslim Sunnī and Christian Coptic population had no complaints. The true nature of their faith is a matter of debate. They seem to have reconciled their ethnic background with a spirituality that was zeal beyond dogma and a ruthless yet fair sense of justice. In addition to their religious tolerance this spirituality granted them legitimacy and popularity in Muslim society.