17 Appendix:
The Influence of European Higher Criticism on Muslim Apologetics in the Nineteenth Century

The aim of this paper is to trace the development of a new Muslim view of Christianity in the nineteenth century, which still has an enormous impact on today’s Muslim apologetic works. The composition of anti-Christian books has changed in character because of the achievement of a different view of Christian dogmas and Christianity itself in the nineteenth century.

The development of Muslim-Christian polemics dates back to an event in the middle of the nineteenth century. On the April 10 and 11 in 1854, we find ourselves in the schoolroom of the British missionary agency Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Agra, India, among several hundred Muslims and Europeans, mostly Christian missionaries but also a few government officials of the British colonial power. They had all gathered in order to listen to a public debate initiated by the Muslim community of Agra. The

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debate was carried out between the German missionary Karl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-1865), coming out of the pietistic movement in Württemberg, Swabia, and an Indian Muslim Šiʿî theologian, Rahmatullâh Ibn Halîl al-ʿUtmânî al-Kairânawî (1818-1891). Despite the fact that this debate took place nearly 150 years ago, both of the opponents are still well remembered in the Muslim world today pertaining to matters of dialogue. The subject of discussion at this public debate, which lasted for two days, was mainly tahrîf (deviation of the Christian Scriptures).

The challenger of the debate in 1854 was the Muslim theologian al-Kairânawî, who intended to publicly demonstrate the inferiority of Christianity and make it clear once and for all that Muslims should not be shaken in their faith because of the proclamation of the Christian creed by Protestant missionaries in India in the past decades.

India had been opened to Protestant Christian missionary activities by a decree of the British Parliament in 1813, and the first Anglican Bishop was secretly consecrated on May 8, 1814, in Lambeth Palace, Calcutta. In 1832/1833 non-British missionary agencies were allowed to follow and began to establish their net of Christian mission all over India, more or less officially supported by the British. It is interesting enough that the Šiʿî al-Kairânawî represented himself in 1854 as the defender of the Muslim religion and obviously was accepted as such by the whole Muslim community.

Although it was planned to extend the discussion to subjects of tatlît (Trinity), the Qurʾân being the Word of God, and the sending of the prophet Muhammad, the debate did not proceed further than the deviation of the Christian Scriptures. The discussion centered on this point of controversy: al-Kairânawî insisted that the Christian Scriptures had been abrogated and tried to prove this with examples taken out of the Bible itself, while the Christian missionaries persistently affirmed the integrity of the Old and New Testaments. After two days, the opponents separated and "both sides claimed the victory." Also, a few conversions to Christianity.

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took place following the debate. Besides the well-known Safdar ʿAli, who was baptized in 1864, perhaps the most famous Muslim convert to Christianity in India had been ʿImâd ud-Dîn (ca. 1830-1900), who was baptized in 1866 and ordained as an Anglican priest in 1872. He had been involved in mosque preaching against Christian missionary work before, and afterward he wrote several apologetic works against Islam such as the famous book *hidâyat al-muslimîn* or *tahqîq al-imân*.

But why is this 1854 debate of such significance? Have there not been many more debates before and up to the present which have concentrated again and again on the main points of encounter between Islam and Christianity such as *tahrîf*?

The 1854 Agra debate is a historical milestone. Experts of the religious situation of India in the nineteenth century have asserted: “… there was in these days no debate on the scale of the high drama of the Rahmatullâh-Pfander debates of the 1850s.” I will attempt to analyze the significance of this Muslim-Christian debate in India and its effects on future Muslim apologetic works.

**Significance of Place and Time**

Concerning the nineteenth century onward, Jacques Waardenburg has written:

“We see another period of confrontation, now mostly political, between Muslim states and the expanding West, heir to Christian tradition. In this time


\[106\] The German magazine of the Basle Mission Society EMM (Evangelisches Missions-Magazin) published the story of his conversion under the title “A Mohammedan Brought to Christ, Being the Autobiography of a Native Clergyman in India” (No. 14 (1871), pp. 397-412), being probably a summary of his own tract dealing with his conversion in Urdu, which was republished in 1957 in Lahore and in 1978 in Vanyambadi.

we witness a growing polemic of Islam, at first linked with the national movements, against religions like Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism …

This is perfectly true for India. In the nineteenth century Agra, the former symbol of the Mughal power, developed into one of the centers of Muslim learning and culture in India. The British government transformed it into its administration center of the North-West-Provinces. In addition, the British government allowed foreign mission agencies to enter the country. Especially in Agra, most missionaries were British, and they opened a huge orphanage after a disastrous famine in 1837. Several children were baptized as Christians, so that the growing influence of the Christian mission was universally recognized. In Agra itself several polemical Christian books against the Muslim creed had been published. All of these facts made the Muslim population extremely aware of the presence of Westerners and missionaries as an instrument of British colonialism.

So we find ourselves in the heat of Christian-Muslim tensions in Agra in the middle of the nineteenth century: the Muslim ulamâ’ felt threatened by the presence of European Christian missionaries and during the 1840s and 1850s underwent a severe crisis because of the decline of values of their own religion and culture. Different parties gathered in the middle of the nineteenth century in Agra, and various lines intersected at this historical turning point: 1) the representatives of India’s colonial power, being Great Britain, the protector of the European missionaries; 2) the German pietist and Protestant missionary Pfander himself, his co-workers, and perhaps a few of his converts; and 3) representatives of the Anglican church, who were neither against the debate nor wholeheartedly supported it. Thomas Valpy French (1825-1891) should be named; he later became the first Anglican bishop of Lahore. He himself was not overly convinced of the benefit or the necessity of open encounter and proselytizing, but having been challenged by the Muslim theologians, he was determined to defend the integrity of the Bible; 4) Catholic missionaries, who obviously disliked the work of their Protestant colleagues and materially supported Muslims,

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who helped them refute the Protestant missionaries; and 5) the Muslim audience, including Šîîs and Sunnis, while the Šîî theologian al-Kairânawî prepared himself to defend the Muslim creed against Christian mission with the help of Dr. Muhammad Wazîr Khân, who had worked since 1851 in a British medical hospital. He had received parts of his medical training in Great Britain, where he collected material in order to prove Christianity to be false.

### Significance of Individuals Involved

**Karl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-1865)**

The German missionary Karl Gottlieb Pfander, who was involved in the controversy, was, even a few decades after his death, still considered as “the greatest of all missionaries to Mohammedans”\(^{111}\) or “one of the most interesting figures among the Missionaries to Muhammedans of the 19th century.”\(^{112}\)

In the West, Pfander remained, nevertheless, quite unknown until the very present, but especially his controversial book *mîzân al-haqq* is still a current topic of debate in the Muslim world today. This apologetic work, written in 1829, originally in German\(^{113}\) in refutation of Islam, intends to convince its readers of the supreme values of Christianity, mostly by defending the integrity of the Old and New Testaments and refuting the Muslim charge of *tahrîf*. After its first publication in 1831 in Armenian, it was quickly translated into at least half a dozen Muslim languages, including, e.g., Urdu (1840), Persian (1835), Turkish (1862), and Arabic (1865)\(^{114}\) and has had an enormous influence. This book *mîzân al-haqq* still

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\(^{113}\) The original handwritten text is still to be found in the archives of the Basle Mission Society headquarter (Basler Mission), Switzerland.

\(^{114}\) In Turkey, where Pfander was missionary from 1858-1865, “the circulation of the Mizân seems to have brought matters to a crisis…” (Pfander’s letter of 16th Sept 1862 to the CMS, Doc. No. 63a; archives of Heslop Room/University of Birmingham). The Ottoman government resolved to expel all missionary agencies in consequence of the baptism of several converts to Christianity by Pfänder and his co-workers in the year 1864.
is both quoted by and refuted by Muslim apologists today. It has remained a subject of controversy in the Muslim world. Twelve years after Pfander’s death, a participant of the Agra-debate of 1854 wrote:

“He has passed away, but the stir and movement he excited has not passed ...”

*mîzân al-haqq*, the “standard work of encounter between Christianity and Islam,” was used by generations of Christian missionaries as an apologetic tool to refute Islam, and for this reason it was reprinted many times up until the present. Despite the fact that we also hear severe critiques concerning the work, especially in the twentieth century, we can date the last Arabic and English reprints back to the year 1986, and these reprints are still used today for missionary activities among Muslims.

The author of the book, Karl Gottlieb Pfander, having being stationed as missionary of the British mission agency CMS in India from 1837 to 1857, was requested on April 10, 1854, by Muslim theologians of Agra to publicly defend the Christian dogma of the integrity of the Bible. In fact, it was he himself who had opened the discussion by public preaching on the bazars (market places), by writing and distributing books for several years. It should also be noted that Pfander tried to prove the high value which the Qur’ān attributes to the Bible with the help of Qur’ānic statements. He also quoted Muslim commentators in order to hint at the difference of their judgment about Christianity:

“... the Christians were trying to show that in the Qur’ān itself Muhammad shows respect for Christianity and veneration for its beliefs and teachings.”

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Rahmatullâh Ibn Halîl al-’Uṯmânî al-Kairânawî (1818-1891)

Nevertheless, Pfander’s opponent is much more interesting regarding the theme of Muslim-Christian historical encounter.

The Šīʿī theologian Rahmatullâh Ibn Halîl al-’Uṯmânî was engaged in the battle against the presence of Christian missionaries in India from the beginning of the 1850s, and in 1855, he had already written three polemical works against Christianity in order to defend Islam, probably with the help of the Bengali physician Muhammad Wazîr Khân. al-Kairânawî and Wazîr Khân belong to the most outstanding figures of Indian Muslim defense against Christian mission in the nineteenth century. They came into contact at the beginning of the 1850s in connection with their apologetic work. In 1854 both of them took part in the public Agra debate, al-Kairânawî being the challenger and the leader of the discussion, Muhammad Wazîr Khân acting as interpreter between the Urdu and English-speaking participants.

The Influence of al-Kairânawî on Nineteenth-Century Muslim Views of Christianity

al-Kairânawî’s influence is not restricted to this single event in Agra. This was only a prelude to his future impact, which is due to his written works. When it comes to Muslim apologetics, al-Kairânawî certainly comes to mind. The reason for this is his famous book izhâr al-haqq, which he wrote as a response to Pfander’s mîzân al-haqq. Written in Arabic in 1867 by request of the Ottoman sultan Abdülaziz I (1861-1876), the book has seen several translations into Turkish (1876/1877), French (1880), English (ca. 1900), and Urdu (1968), i.e., it has been translated into almost the same languages as has Pfander’s mîzân al-haqq. Like mîzân al-haqq, izhâr al-haqq has been reprinted up until the present. In 1964 a new edition came out, supervised by the Department for Islamic Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco, and a foreword was added by the adab-professor ʿUmar ad-Dasûqî. The last Arabic editions date from the year 1978; one of the two was authorized by the late šâih ʿAbd al-Halîm Mahmûd of al-

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120 Ahmad Hijâzî as-Saqqâ (ed.). Rahmat Allâh al-Hindî, izhâr al-haqq. al-Qâhira 1978, p. 29-30. al-Kairânawî had to go into exile because the British government suspected him of participating in the anti-British revolt of 1857. al-Kairânawî fled to Mecca, and when the Ottoman sultan made his hajj to Mecca at the beginning of the 1860s, he was informed about the events in India of 1854. al-Kairânawî had to stay in Mecca until his death in 1891.

Only a few polemical Muslim works have become as famous as al-Kairânawîs izhâr al-haqq. It has been stated:

“The first great classic of modern Muslim polemic has never been superseded”\textsuperscript{121}.

Ignaz Goldziher reported that during his visit in 1877 to Damascus, everybody was talking of izhâr al-haqq.\textsuperscript{122} Undoubtedly, the book played a key role for Muslim polemics in the past, but it is still currently on the ‘top ten’ of Muslim apologetic works. Concerning the significance of izhâr al-haqq, Georges C. Anawati wrote in 1969:

“C’est le grand ouvrage de base qui a servi et continue à servir d’arsenal pour les apologistes musulmans de la fin du 19e siècle jusqu’à nos jours.”\textsuperscript{123}

and again in 1981:

“… et aujourd’hui encore, il reste le livre par excellence où les musulmans traditionalistes et peu ouverts au christianisme, puisent leurs arguments.”\textsuperscript{124}

Concerning izhâr al-haqq it was stated in 1968:

“The editor of the Urdu version has expressed the strong opinion that nothing written in the intervening hundred years on the theme of Islam and Christianity has replaced the books which were generated in the mind of Maulânà

\textsuperscript{121} Dorman. Islam. p. 44.


Rahmat Allâh Kairânawî by the situation of extreme tension which faced the ā’lamā’ of northern India in the first half of the 19th century.¹²⁵

The popularity of *izhâr al-haqq* is also because only a very cautious Šî‘î coloring can be found in the book. As far as it can be seen in the different editions from 1867 onward, the reason for this is not any revision but is rather the original tone of al-Kairânawî himself, who only once hinted at his own Šî‘î background when dealing with hadît. Therefore, it could become the standard work of Muslim apologetics, as well as in ‘orthodox’ circles such as al-Azhar.

In order to realize the influence of *izhâr al-haqq*, it can be noted that the Sunni nineteenth-century ‘reform-wing’ theologian Rašîd Ridâ made extensive use of al-Kairânawî’s *izhâr al-haqq* when dealing with Christianity. Coming to the question of Muhammad’s mission, he quoted the famous Abduh/Ridâ Qur’ân commentary *tafsîr al-qur’ân al-hakîm*, about 60 pages from *izhâr al-haqq*.¹²⁶ Another Muslim polemicist who made use of *izhâr al-haqq* should be mentioned, Muhammad Muhammad Abû Zahra.¹²⁷ In his ‘lectures on Christianity’ (*muhâdarât fî n-nasrânîya*), he made use of al-Kairânawî’s commentaries on the Christian creed.¹²⁸

### Reasons for the Influence of *izhâr al-haqq*

The very reason for the immense influence of al-Kairânawî’s *izhâr al-haqq* can be found in his developing a new method to prove Islam to be the only true religion: it is quite obvious that al-Kairânawî does not restrict the defense of Islam to a mere devaluation of the Christian creed or to praise of Islam. al-Kairânawî took advantage of the new orientation of European theology which had taken place especially during the nineteenth century. From a formerly conservative standpoint in regard to the integrity of the Christian Scriptures, European theology had undergone a rapid change to a more and more critical standpoint regarding the reliability of historical and

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¹²⁵ Powell. «Maulânâ Rahmat Allâh Kairânawî.» p. 63.
¹²⁷ This is mentioned by the editor of one of the newest editions of *izhâr al-haqq*: Ahmad Hijâzî as-Saqqâ (ed.). *Rahmat Allâh al-Hindi. izhâr al-haqq*. al-Qâhira 1978, p. 33.
textual questions, especially since the nineteenth century. Critical and liberal standpoints found their way into universities and churches. In this evolution, Germany was the forerunner for the whole Christian Occident. Numerous theological liberal works appeared and found their way into the Muslim world rather quickly.

al-Kairânawî was – ostensibly – the very first apologist in the Muslim world who referred to these books and Bible commentaries in order to fight Christianity with its own weapons. For the first time, he used different works of famous European theologians who were influenced by liberalism and historical criticism of European theology of the nineteenth century. During the Agra debate, al-Kairânawî quoted these representatives of liberalism in order to show the conservative missionaries that Christian theology had already produced evidence that the Bible is unreliable.

**European Theology and Philosophy**

**Influence Muslim Apologetics**

This is not the only example where the Muslim world borrowed fruits of European theology or philosophy which affirmed Islam. Before the nineteenth century, there had been a movement in European theology called rationalism. Representatives of German rationalism, e.g., Karl Friedrich Bahrdt (1741-1792) or the famous Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761-1851), maintained that Jesus Christ had been crucified, but they neglected that he had really died on the cross, a standpoint which is again an ‘outside’ position today. Bahrdt wrote at the end of the nineteenth century:

“This is my opinion on this last part of the history of Jesus. Jesus has been put to death: he underwent all the sufferings of an evil-doer, he endured the suffering of death, but he overcame death – he came from death to life – he came out of the mausoleum … on the third day after having been put to death … and he has shown himself to his disciples as somebody being revived from the dead”\(^\text{129}\).

It is possible, even if not probable, that the Ahmadiya-standpoint of Jesus having died a natural death in India after he survived his crucifixion did not originate in Islam itself but was fostered by developments in Europe.

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such as rationalism. Muslim apologists claimed: “European theologians and scientists have proven that Jesus Christ survived the crucifixion.”

Some Christian university theologians even went so far as the climax of theological liberalism, which is, historically speaking, connected with enlightenment, that they neglected Jesus as a historical figure or at least his deity or his being part of the Trinity. Muslim apologists have used these theories as proofs for their old affirmation that according to surah 4:157-158, Jesus never died on the cross, even if he was perhaps crucified, which is doubtful.

The Gospel of Barnabas Confirms Muslim Apologists

Doubts of European theologians and philosophers concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ or concerning the reliability of the four canonical Gospels also played a key role when the Gospel of Barnabas was defended in numerous books and pamphlets by Muslim apologists as the only true Gospel of Jesus Christ, mostly in the twentieth century. Muslims had mostly taken over positive statements about the value of the Gospel of Barnabas by European critics of conservative theology of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while at the same time Christian missionaries tried to prove that it is impossible to date this Gospel back to the first centuries A.D. The Gospel of Barnabas proves that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross; Judas was transformed into the likeness of Jesus and was crucified, while everybody thought he was Jesus himself; so the Qur’an is again affirmed in its refutation of the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Qur’an is confirmed by ‘objective,’ ‘scientific’ results: Muslim apologists name European theologians or philosophers, such as the well-known English deist John Toland (1670-1722), who positively mentioned the announcement of Muhammad in the Gospel of Barnabas. Muslim apologists concentrate on European authors who, on the one hand, trace the Gospel of Barnabas back to the first centuries and herewith accept its value and who, at the same time, doubt and critique the integrity of the Bible and the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ E.g., John Toland. Christianity Not Mysterious. London 1696 had a rationalistic understanding of the wonders narrated in the Bible. In his work Nazarenus he attributes at the same time a great probability to the Gospel of Barnabas going back to the very first centuries A.D.: John Toland. Nazarenus or Jewish, Gentile and Mahometan Christianity. London 1718. He defended the Gospel of Barnabas
It is possible that al-Kairânawî himself ‘brought’ the Gospel of Barnabas to the Muslim world by mentioning it for the first time in 1854 in his Urdu work ījāz-i ʿĪsāwî\textsuperscript{131} and afterward in izhâr al-haqq, from 1867 onward, as an old Christian Gospel which foretells the coming of the prophet Muḥammad. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Gospel of Barnabas had not even been published as a whole. Only a few fragments were known to the Western world when al-Kairânawî used it as a weapon against the Christian rejection of Muḥammad, who had been foretold from the beginning of revelation. It is quite probable that Muḥammad Raṣīd Ridâ, who defended the Gospel as the only surviving reliable Gospel from the time of Jesus and who published the first Arabic edition of the Gospel of Barnabas in 1908 under the title al-injîl as-sahîh, was led to this Gospel through the work of al-Kairânawî. Several translations have appeared since 1908 to promote this ‘only true Gospel of Jesus Christ’ (Urdu 1916; English 1916; Persian 1927; Indonesian 1969; Dutch 1990).

**Changes of Muslim Apologetics are because of Developments in European Theology**

In the nineteenth century, a new wave of criticism emerged in Europe and quickly found its way into the Muslim world. In European universities, all miracles reported in the Old and New Testaments were called into question; historical events were doubted; the formulation of Christology, the Trinity, and the deity of Jesus Christ, His crucifixion and resurrection were discussed from their very foundation. All these doubts and critical remarks of European theology found their way into the Muslim world and were enthusiastically taken as proofs of the traditional Muslim view of a corrupted Christian Bible. This way of arguing against the reliability of the Old and New Testaments has marked the form of controversy, especially since al-Kairânawî.

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\textsuperscript{131} Rahmatullâh Ibn Ḥalîl al-ʿUṭmânî al-Kairânawî, ījāz-i ʿĪsāwî. Agra 1853/Delhi 1876.
During the Agra debate, this method of controversy was used for the first time. al-Kairânawî confronted the theologically conservative missionary Pfander and his friends in 1854 with the newest results of European critical research. Pfander, who had already left Europe in 1825 as a missionary, had not witnessed the important developments which had taken place in European theology in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the pupils of the conservative Basel Mission Society (Basler Missionsgesellschaft), where Pfander was educated from 1821 to 1825, had allowed their pupils to visit the theological seminary at Basel but had restricted its influence on the candidates.\textsuperscript{132} David Friedrich Strauss’ world-famous book \textit{Das Leben Jesu} (\textit{The Life of Jesus}) was not published until 1835, when Pfander had already been ten years abroad. As the Agra debate took place in 1854, Pfander had already suspected that his Muslim opponents were busily studying European theological works, but he either underestimated the far-reaching effects of these studies or he did not have enough knowledge himself of these new developments. Pfander wrote concerning his Muslim opponents:

“... several of their friends in Delhi have been for the last two or three years hard at work in studying the Bible, reading the controversial books we have published, and searching out our commentaries and critical writers ..., only to obtain material for refuting it.\textsuperscript{133}"

During the Agra debate, al-Kairânawî and Muhammad Wazîr Khân presented the newest critical remarks on textual variations and on contradictions between different biblical texts of the latest theories in Europe. al-Kairânawî seemingly inherited most of his material from Muhammad Wazîr Khân, who received part of his medical training in Great Britain, where he came into contact with European theologically critical works. In addition, al-Kairânawî received the latest European works from Catholic


\textsuperscript{133} Undated letter, perhaps to Thomas Valpy French, participant of the Agra debate 1854: Birks, \textit{Life}, vol. 1, p. 71.
missionaries in India, who strongly disliked the work of their Protestant colleagues.\textsuperscript{134}

In several polemical works against Christianity in Agra and later on, for the first time Muslim theologist al-Kairânawî presented the latest scientific research from Europe. Pfander was helpless against this new sort of attack, since his books responded to the traditional Muslim charges against Christianity and not to the European results of higher or lower criticism presented from the Muslim side.

Europe did not have the slightest idea about the effects of its theological evolution on the Near East. Protestant missions were comparatively new to Muslim countries, dating only from the nineteenth century;\textsuperscript{135} in which a new branch of Christian mission had been extended to Muslim countries apart from single attempts in former centuries as, for example, undertaken by Henry Martyn or Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg. It can be added here that after the debate, Pfander sought European authors in Basel who were refuting these theories but only in order to demonstrate to the Muslim polemicists that the standpoint of these theologians was only one part of the prism of European theology.\textsuperscript{136}

Apart from the Agra debate, we are able to witness that al-Kairânawî developed this method of proving the corruption of the Bible with European voices. In \textit{izhâr al-haqq}, al-Kairânawî draws all the evidence he can procure from European sources: he quotes Luther’s critical attitude concerning the Pope and King Henry VIII of England and European critical remarks on the apostle Paul’s devastating influence on early Christianity; he refers to doubts among theologians as to whether the epistles of Jacob or Judas belong to the original biblical canon; he criticizes the forming of dogmas at the first Christian councils such as Nicea about 300 years after the death of


\textsuperscript{135} The nineteenth century is called the ‘Missionsjahrhundert’ (century of mission) in Europe because of the founding of numerous Protestant missionary agencies and seminaries for the education and sending of missionaries to foreign countries.

\textsuperscript{136} He asked for the books in a letter to his former school in Basel “… um den Mohammedanern, die sich mit denselben gar sehr brüsten, zu zeigen, daß diese Neologen und Pantheisten weit über den Koran hinausgehen und also gefährliche und schlechte Hilfsgenossen seien, teils um nachzuweisen, daß Strauß und Konsorten längst ihre Widerlegung gefunden haben…” Christoph Friedrich Eppler. \textit{D. Karl Gottlieb Pfander, Ein Zeuge der Wahrheit unter den Bekennern des Islam.} Basel 1888, p. 152.
17 Appendix: The Influence of European Higher Criticism …

Jesus Christ. Furthermore, he refers to doubts about the authorship of the books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, etc. When he comes to the genealogies of Christ, he detects ‘errors and contradictions;’ ‘absurdities’ in the narrative of Elijah being fed by ravens; and he quotes commentaries on the Bible from Eichhorn, Horne, and Henry and Scott. I could continue with hundreds of contradictions al-Kairânawî ‘detects’ between single biblical texts. In six thick volumes, *izhâr al-haqq* served as a summary of all possible charges against Christianity and was therefore used after al-Kairânawî’s death as a sort of encyclopaedia, since al-Kairânawî extended the material of former polemicists such as ‘Ali Tabarî, Ibn Hazm and Ibn Taymiyya to a great extent.

**European Theology Changes Muslim Views of Christianity**

Here it is obvious that al-Kairânawî has changed the former Muslim view of *tahrîf* and the Muslim view of Christianity as a whole: *tahrîf* should, according to al-Kairânawî, no longer be understood as mere single alterations in the texts of the Old and New Testaments which had crept into the texts during the process of copying them throughout the centuries. Apologists in former times only criticized certain biblical dogmas such as the Trinity or the deity of Jesus Christ, as the Qur’ân itself does. al-Kairânawî expanded the Qur’ânic criticism of the corruption of the Bible to a much larger extent. Leading Muslim apologists now follow the example of *izhâr al-haqq* and take over the ‘results’ of the textual studies of European theologians. al-Kairânawî came to the conclusion that the biblical texts are totally distorted, corrupted, and unreliable in all their historical, dogmatic, and narrative passages. For al-Kairânawî this is no matter of dispute, since the Christian ‘ulamâ’ of Europe themselves admit the complete distortion of all biblical texts. So al-Kairânawî and his followers feel confirmed in the traditional Muslim view that the Bible is corrupted just as the Qur’ân states. Muslim apologists have known this for centuries already, but now European theologians have confirmed it themselves through scientific studies in history, geology, and archaeology.

137 It is true what H. G. Dorman states for the real apologetic literature until the present time: “Through most of this material there moves a strain of suspicion and resentment. In only a few of the books is there an open friendliness in the approach. For the most part the polemists are fighting hard to win a declared battle and to overthrow the enemy. There is surprisingly little difference from the classical polemical methods of the earlier centuries.” Dorman. *Islam.* p. 113.
The effect of this use of European theology can be summarized: in today’s Muslim apologetic works against Christianity, we find numerous results of the severe studies in textual exegesis and different sciences undertaken in the West. With this transformation of the dogma of *tahrīf* in Christianity and the acknowledgment of European theology serving as a proof for the Muslim statements, the whole Muslim view of Christianity has changed. In former times, only certain dogmas of Christianity had to be refuted, but Christianity as a whole contained the same message as Islam. Now Christianity seems to have been proven to be corrupted as a whole: if Christian scientists and theologians in the West determine that it is untenable to believe in this collection of fanciful stories and legends originating in heathenism or Greek Platonic philosophy, it is no longer tenable to praise this revelation. Muslim apologists only take seriously what the religious authorities of Christianity have discovered about their own creed. In contrast to this great error, Islam is the religion of understanding and intelligence. The Islamic dogmas are clear, understandable, and reasonable.

Furthermore, we witness that Muslim polemical works following the al-Kairānawī-Pfander battle always pursue this fundamental attitude: Christian theologians themselves admit that the Old and New Testaments are not inspired by God as we have them today, but both parts of the Bible are full of errors, misconceptions, contradictions, and absurdities, if not willful distortions. Thus Muslim theologians are confirmed in their interpretation of the Christian Scriptures.

We can witness this form of controversy today when it comes to Muslim apologetic works: Muhammad Raṣīd Ridâ used the results of European theological studies in his *tafsīr*. For him the apostle Paul is especially guilty for having introduced heathenism into Christianity. It was not until the Council of Nicea in the year 325 A.D. that the dogmas of the Trinity and redemption through the crucifixion of Jesus were established. With this development, *tauhīd* was replaced by *širk*.138 We witness the same tendency in Abû Zahra’s *muhādarât fi-n-nasrânîya*: Jesus Christ himself preached monotheism, but this dogma was distorted by the influence of syncretism, new Platonic and Greek philosophy, and Roman heathenism.139 Ahmad Shalaby considers Christianity a mixture of heathenism and the

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139 Muhammad Muhammad Abû Zahra. *muhādarât*. p.11.
convictions of the apostle Paul, and Jesus’ miracles narrated in the four Gospels as unreliable.

Elwood M. Wherry remarks, according to his personal view, of course, concerning the beginning of the twentieth century:

“The Muslims were obliged to abandon their own works and endeavour to save the day by a counter assault, in which they scrupled not to use the stock arguments of European infidelity in their effort to overthrow the authority of the Christian Scriptures. This characteristic has marked the Muslim method of controversy ever since.”

Summary

1. In the nineteenth century a Muslim-Christian debate took place far away from the traditional centers of Muslim learning. In Agra in 1854, probably for the first time, Muslim theologians used European critical works as proofs against Christian missionaries.

2. The nineteenth century marks a turning point when it comes to Muslim apologetics: the Muslims developed a completely new method to prove Christianity to be the ‘false religion’ with the help of European sources being mainly Christian theological works (e.g., Bible commentaries).

3. After the publication of izhâr al-haqq, this method of controversy became common among Muslim apologists such as Muhammad Rašîd Ridâ and Muhammad Muhammad Abû Zahra to prove the traditional charge of tahrîf.

4. tahrîf is the center of Christian-Muslim apologetics of the nineteenth century (Christology or redemption is the center of apologetics in the twentieth century).

5. This leads to a new Muslim view of Christianity during the nineteenth century. The dogmas of Christianity are no longer distorted in fragments but rather as a whole.

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141 ibid. p. 62.
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About the Author

Biography

Christine Schirrmacher, born in 1962 (MA in Islamic Studies, 1988; PhD in Islamic Studies, 1991, University of Bonn, with a thesis dealing with the Muslim-Christian controversy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) has studied Arabic, Persian, and Turkish and is presently Professor of Islamic Studies at the Department Religious Studies and Missiology of the Evangelisch-Theologische Faculteit (Protestant University) in Leuven/Belgium and lecturer of Islam at Freie Theologische Akademie (Free Theological Academy) in Giessen. She is director of the Institut für Islamfragen (Institute of Islamic Studies) of the German Evangelical Alliance, as well as an official speaker and advisor on Islam for the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). She lectures on Islam and security issues, serves in continuing education programs related to politics, and is a consultant to different advisory bodies of the German government.

Dr. Schirrmacher is a member of the Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte (International Society for Human Rights) (IGFM/ISHR), Frankfurt; a member of the Deutsch-Jordanische Gesellschaft (German-Jordanian Society), Berlin; and a curatorium member of the Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen (Protestant Center for World View Questions), an academic documentation and advisory center of the Protestant Church of Germany (Berlin). She is engaged in current dialogue initiatives, formulating papers responding to the letter of the “138 Muslim theologians” to Christian leaders in October 2007, and will partake in the coming conference “Loving God and Neighbor in Word and Deed: Implications for Muslims and Christians” of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, in July 2008.

Dr. Schirrmacher has visited many countries of the Muslim world of the Near and Middle East, has been the speaker at national as well as international conferences dealing with Islam, and is the author of numerous arti-

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