THE IMPACT OF SYRIAC TRADITION ON EARLY JUDAEO-ARABIC BIBLE EXEGESIS

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Although medieval Jewish theology in Arabic is usually depicted as having developed under the overwhelming influence of Muslim Kalam, there are strong indications that Syriac Christianity also played a major role in the formative period of Jewish medieval thought (9th-10th century C.E.). And yet, in the theological writings themselves it is difficult to pinpoint such Christian influence. In the following pages I intend to show that through the examination of exegetical texts it is possible to detect this Christian influence with more certainty than by examining theological works. The paper will include a brief presentation of the methodology, and three examples of its application. The first traces back themes of Judaean-Arabic exegesis on one specific verse (Gen. 1:1) to their Christian origin; the second is an attempt to detect the traces of those early contacts in the writings of later generations up to Maimonides; the third presents exegetical material that helps elucidate the nature of the continuous contacts between Jews and Christians.

I. CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM INFLUENCES: A METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

The earliest Jewish theological texts known to us appear in the ninth century, when Muslim Kalam is already well developed.¹ By that time, both Muslim and Christian theology bear the marks of more than two hundred years of interaction and mutual influence. Consequently, theological texts in Arabic from the ninth/third and tenth/fourth centuries share a characteristic language, many basic components of which are common to Christian, Muslim and Jewish texts. To illustrate this point, let us examine the case of Dawūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammis, a Jew from Raqqqa, who lived in the first half of the ninth century. In his youth, al-Muqammis converted to Christianity and he then studied for many years in Nisibis with a Christian

¹9th/3rd cent. kalam texts are considered early mostly because of the scarcity of earlier texts. It is nevertheless obvious that even these early texts are too elaborate to represent the very first stages of Kalamic discussions. Muslim tradition usually places the beginning of Kalam in the first half of the 8th/2nd cent. (Stroumsa, S., "The Beginnings of the Mu'tazila Reconsidered", JSAI, 13 (1990), 265-293).
philosopher named Nānā (identified by Georges Vajda as Nonnus of Nisibis). Subsequently, al-Muqamī’s reverted to Judaism, and wrote the *Iṣḥāq Maqāla*, the first Jewish *summa theologica* known to us. These biographical data allow us to conclude that, generally speaking, the prevalent influence on al-Muqamī was that of Syriac Christianity.

Nevertheless, when we come to analyse the *Iṣḥāq Maqāla*, we find it quite difficult to evaluate more precisely the scope of this Christian influence and to identify its exact expressions. In some cases, especially when al-Muqamī discusses Christian theology, we can detect Christian terminology, imagery and argumentations. But the work as a whole, the *topoi* discussed in it, the order of those *topoi* and the formulas used in the discussion are those characteristic of Islamic theology. One may then legitimately ask about the ultimate origin of these elements: on the one hand, the Christian environment in which al-Muqamī was schooled was also part of a world dominated by Islam and influenced by it; what al-Muqamī received from his Christian mentor may, therefore, have been borrowed from Muslim Kalam. On the other hand, we must take into account the probability of some influence of Christian theology on nascent Islamic Kalam; so, Kalamic elements in the theology of al-Muqamī and Christian teachers may have been originally Christian.

How difficult it is conclusively to prove the Christian origin of al-Muqamī’s theology can be illustrated by his discussion of the divine attributes. Al-Muqamī’s argumentation in this discussion, and in particular his polemics against the Christians in this context, makes use of specifically Christian imagery. This, together with what we know of al-Muqamī’s life-history, made it seem obvious to me that al-Muqamī’s *immediate* sources for the discussion of divine attributes were the Christians with whom he studied in Nisibis. This conclusion, however, has been questioned by Daniel Gimmert. As this leading scholar of Kalam pointed out, the formulas al-Muqamī chooses to uphold in this discussion (*Allāh ḥalā’i bi-dhātī, ḥalā’i bi-nafṣī and even ḥalā’i bi-lā ḥalātī*) were also used by the Mu’aẓzama. Since Islam was the dominant religion of the period, Gimmert presents the very legitimate question of a possible Muslim influence on al-

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The search for such Biblical material may be approached in one of two ways: (a) we may look for themes that are altogether outside the Muslim tradition, or (b) we may concentrate on exegetical material that relates to the specific wording of the Hebrew Bible. This may allow us to identify Christian material even when dealing with subjects that in themselves do interest Muslim authors. In what follows, I shall take the second approach, and examine the first verse of the Bible, and then three verses of Psalms.

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8Anwr, 44, “*Ha-āmidh naqala min kādir al-nasārā wa-tafṣīl thum al-fāṣīr Bereshiti wa-ṣamāhu (11) KIdāh al-khilā’ wa-taṣīr Qohelet*”, Hirschfeld, 40; Vajda, 222-231, and see esp. 224.
heavily on al-Muqammi's. Al-Muqammi's exegetical writings are mostly lost, and al-Qirqisânî is our main source for reconstructing these writings. Recently, however, a fragment of al-Muqammi's exegetical work has been identified among the Geniza documents preserved in Cambridge.

TS Ar. 52.184, one page written in two long columns, contains the end of the fifth chapter and the beginning of the sixth chapter from a Kitâb al-Khalîqa. The name Kitâb al-khalîqa (and tafsîr kitâb al-khalîqa) appear in the preserved text, and on this basis Haggai Ben-Shammâl identified it as al-Muqammi's commentary on Genesis.10 There are, indeed, many indications that point in the same direction. All quotations from the Hebrew Bible in the fragment are given in Arabic; this was not a common practice in Judaeo-Arabic texts, but it was indeed al-Muqammi's usage in the Ishrîn Maqâla. The designation of chapters by the word maqâla (rather than bab or fasîh) is also reminiscent of the Ishrîn Maqâla. But above all, it is the contents and wording of the fragment which point to al-Muqammi as its author.

A characteristic feature of al-Muqammi's writing is his combination of Kalamic and Aristotelian elements. Thus the Ishrîn Maqâla, which is built like any other Kalam work, also presents a repetitive structure of the four Aristotelian noetic questions.11 Similarly, the Geniza fragment is on the whole very "kalamic". But it is also presented as "our opinion concerning the wherefore of [the fact that] the world was created containing diversity"; this seems to indicate that the fragment deals with the last of the four noetic questions.12

The fragment deals with the existence of diversity in the world, which the author sees as evidence of God's wisdom. In order to make his point, the author discusses the differences between three types of agents: those whose behaviour is determined by nature, those who act by virtue of innate instincts, and the true agents, who act by choice. Fire and snow have only one natural effect, which they cannot choose to alter. Certain living creatures, such as the spider, the bee and the silkworm, may perform sophisticated acts, but these cannot be called "wise" acts (hâkûm) for their "agents" (if agents they are) have not deliberately chosen to do them.

fact that God's creation contains such opposites as fire and snow, heat and cold, shows God's ability to choose. According to the author of the fragment, God's purpose in creating the world with this diversity was to indicate to us His wisdom and omnipotence.13

The discussion of the deliberate versus the instinctive act cited here provides us with the conclusive proof of the author's identity. A similar discussion is part of the twelfth chapter of al-Muqammi's Sunna, and the similarity of structure and of the wording leave no doubt that both discussions were written by the same person.14

If we turn now to examine the Syriac exegetical tradition, we find confirmation of al-Qirqisânî's claim that al-Muqammi translated his commentary from Syriac.

(1) Theodore bar Khoni (8th cent.), who offers a synthesis of the earlier Syriac exegetical tradition, can help our comparison: In Mîrâj 1, 96H, he deals with the first verses of Genesis and with the question of how God gave the power of will to His creatures. He begins by pointing out the difficulty of answering this question, since God's acts are multiple and varied. He then discusses the various gifts that were accorded to us by God: we share with other creatures sense-perception, which the four basic elements lack. But rationality and intellectual capacity were accorded to humans alone. Bar Khoni then says: "With the knowledge and discernment which He gave us, God gave us likewise the power of liberty and free will". God could have made us innately good, but He decreed in His wisdom that we should have the choice between good and evil. As examples of beings whose actions are based on instinct, Bar Khoni too mentions the bee, the ant, the spider and the silkworm.

The discussion of the free versus the instinctive act is a staple component in Kalam texts, and the examples of the bee, the spider and the silkworm (drawn ultimately from Aristotle) are also commonplace. It is therefore impossible, when this theme appears in a theological text like the Ishrîn Maqâla, to make any claims concerning its origin. We can only point out parallels between Jewish, Christian and Muslim texts.15

But the appearance of this theme in Syriac exegetical texts enables us to be more

12 Qawwâla fi tamiyyat khâliq al-khâliq mukhtâlaflan.

13 See IM, 243-245. An example of al-Muqammi's distinctive vocabulary is the word qawwâla (silkworm), which appears in this fragment and in IM, 243-245, and see also 129, n.10.
14 See IM, 30-31, 243-245, and notes there.
specific. Al-Muqammiṣ and Bar Khoni adduce the theme in the context of the same biblical verse; they both connect it with another common theme (the existence of plurality in this world) and they both draw from it the same conclusion: God’s omnipotence and benevolence. Bar Khoni’s main point, which is human freedom of action, is included in al-Muqammiṣ’s fragment, and it is also the main point in the parallel discussion in the 'Iṣhrān Maqāla. Clearly, al-Muqammiṣ and Bar Khoni draw from the same exegetical tradition.

(2) So far we have seen nothing that is inherently Christian in the interpretation of the first verse of the Bible: the same interpretation of the word "God" is used by the Jewish and the Christian commentators, but this interpretation could be adopted - or indeed invented - by a Muslim. The claim that the combination of opposites in this world proves God’s omnipotence also appears in Muslim Kalam texts. Only the fact that we find this interpretation linked to the same verse of the Bible ties the Judaico-Arabic exegesis to the Christian rather than to the Muslim tradition.

But the fragment of al-Muqammiṣ also contains an element of a distinctly Christian character. When al-Muqammiṣ argues that "the diversity of the creation indicates (God’s) ability and immense power" he mentions Ps. 33:6: "By the word of the Lord were the Heavens made; and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth". The connection of this verse to the issue of diversity in the world is not self-evident; in fact, the integration of this verse into al-Muqammiṣ’s text is rather awkward. When we examine the works of Christian exegesis, we find that they, too, connect this verse of Psalms with the first verse (or verses) of Genesis, but in the Christian writings the reason for the association of the Word of God (the Logos, identified with the Son) with the creation is very clear, and its Christological implications are made explicit.

It should be noted that in Rabbinic sources this verse of Psalms was already sometimes connected to the first verse of Genesis. But it was not associated with either God’s wisdom or with the diversity of His creation.

Now in al-Muqammiṣ’s work the three components of the discussion (i.e. the verse of Genesis, the verse of Psalms and the theological argument concerning versatility) appear in one cluster, just as they do in the works of Bar-Khoni or of Iṣḥāḍ of Merv. This, I believe, proves beyond doubt that al-Muqammiṣ’s immediate source for the whole cluster was one and the same, and that it was a Christian Syriac rather than a Jewish source.

(3) Also significant is the translation of "the word of God" in Ps. 33:6 by the Arabic word kalima - the common Arabic equivalent of the Logos. This is not a self-evident Arabic translation of the Hebrew davar kalaim for example, would suggest itself more readily. Al-Muqammiṣ apparently used an Arabic translation of this Psalm which reflects the Christian interpretation, and he stuck to the word - c’est le cas de le dire - of his source. Despite his known polemical anti-Christian campaign, Al-Muqammiṣ seems to have followed the Christian tradition with little reserve.

III. TRACES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN LATER LITERATURE

The case of al-Muqammiṣ seems thus quite clear: the overwhelming dependence of his exegesis on the Syriac-Christian tradition is, I believe, established beyond reasonable doubt. It is also certain that al-Muqammiṣ’s commentaries, charged as they were with Christian traditions, played a role in the development of later Judaico-Arabic exegeses. The question is, how large a role? How much of the early Christian influence survived in later generations of Jewish exegetical writings in Arabic?

Any attempt to answer this question requires a survey of the literature on a scale which obviously lies beyond the scope of the present study. But I believe that if we are attentive to the possibility of a Christian impact, we are apt to find much more of it than has been admitted until now. To illustrate this point we can examine the way that the Bible verses we have seen in the fragment of the kitāb al-khaliqa are treated by three major commentators.

(a) Al-Qiraṣānī:

As mentioned above, al-Qiraṣānī’s Commentary on Genesis relied on al-Muqammiṣ’s Kitāb al-Khaliqa. The importance of Qiraṣānī’s writings as a source for identifying Christian influence was noted by Bruno Chiesa, who has studied the exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis, and, in particular, 

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16On the name "God" (Godh), see IM, 39 and notes 97-99; Gimaret, D., Les Noms divins en Islam-Exégèse lexique et théologique, (Paris, 1988).


18PS Ar 52.184 l: "wa-qulē aydan wa-huwa yuridh an yuʾsbahra amma ikhlāṣr al-khaliq dail al-quditaw wa-l-qurra al-zahma qaṭa bi-khalimat Allāh khaliqat al-samāʾ birāt fīhi kuli (janāh) huwa".

19See, for instance, Iṣḥāḍ, 14.

20BT Rosh Ha-Shana 32a, Megilla 21b. I am indebted to Yehuda Liebes for this reference.

21For another example of al-Muqammiṣ’s close dependence on Christian exegesis, see Stroumsa, S., "What is Man?" Psalm 8:4-5 in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Exegesis in Arabic", in Rehen, 1993, fasc. 3 (to appear).

22See IM, 34-35.
the Commentary of Qirqisānī. Chiesa shows that Qirqisānī’s interpretation points in various places to Christian exegesis as its ultimate source.23 The new fragment from al-Muqammī’s commentary enables us to follow the transmission of Christian exegesis from al-Muqammī to al-Qirqisānī. For in his commentary on Gen. 1:1 al-Qirqisānī uses the same Christian argument used by al-Muqammī; the word “God” indicates His wisdom and His absolute freedom. And al-Qirqisānī too associates the interpretation of this word with the variety that exists in this world, which proves that, unlike natural phenomena, such as heat and cold, God’s are the acts of a free, wise agent.24

(b) Saʿādiya:

The tenth-century Rabbanite Saʿādiya Gaon cites Ps. 33:6 in his Kitāb al-amandāt wa-l-tiqādāt. In the context of his polemics against Christian trinitarian exegesis of the Bible, Saʿādiya says: ”Likewise, I have found that some of them (i.e., the Christians) attempt to bring as evidence [for their dogmas] what the Scriptures say, that the Spirit (rūḥ) of the Lord creates... and that His Word (kalima) creates”.25 Saʿādiya associates rūḥ and kalima with Christianity. This is probably the reason for the fact that in his own translation of the same verse, Saʿādiya seeks to avoid this Christian translation of the verse and proposes a very different rendering: bi-amrhi ʿan-lt-amandāt wa-biqawilni jamāl juyūsikā.26

(c) Maimonides:

1) The possibility of Christian influence on Maimonides has already been suggested by Shlomo Pines. Pines has shown the similarity between Maimonides’ explanation of the Biblical commandment of sacrifices and certain Christian theological texts, some in Arabic (Abū Rā‘īla) and others, which are pre-Islamic, in Greek texts. There is also a resemblance to the view of al-Qirqisānī.27 These similarities led Pines to the conclusion that:

23 Chiesa, 61-65, 95-97, 198-199. Of the two methods suggested above, Chiesa’s initial method is the second: the examination of Jewish and Christian exegesis of particular verses. But in a way Chiesa combines with it also the first method (that is, isolating particular themes). For, of course, the Fall of Man, although treated by the Qur’an and by Muslim tradition, can be regarded as a Christian theme, in the sense that it preoccupies Christian authors much more than their Muslim (and Jewish) counterparts.
26 Saʿādiya, Psalms, 105.

There seems thus to be some reason for thinking that, as regards the point we are discussing, Maimonides was influenced by Christian theological writings either directly or through the intermediary of Jewish sources. An explanation of Biblical commandments concerning sacrificial acts would have hardly interested a Moslem author.

Since, however, Maimonides’ discussion of sacrifices was an isolated case, Pines was very careful, even hesitant, in his assessment of its implication. According to him,

A direct impact of Christian doctrines could also no doubt be found in other Jewish philosophical or theological texts written in Arabic. However, during the period with which we are concerned - the one ranging from the eighth or ninth till the twelfth century - this impact, in so far as it bypasses the intermediary of Islamic writers, was only a subsidiary (though by no means negligible) factor in the constitution and development of Jewish thought within the boundaries of dār al-islām.

To my mind, the fact that al-Qirqisānī’s explanation of sacrifices is similar to Maimonides’ suggests a more precise chain of transmission than is admitted by Pines. As we have seen, al-Qirqisānī says that he made very liberal use of al-Muqammī’s exegetical work, including the latter’s Christian heritage. It is likely that Qirqisānī’s (and Maimonides’) explanation of sacrifices in their historical context, which Pines has shown to derive ultimately from Christian sources, found its way to the Jewish texts via al-Muqammī.

2) When Maimonides discusses the question of the creation of the world, he dwells on the meaning of the word bereshith (“at the beginning”). He says that it must not be understood as meaning fī-l-ʿawwal, since this implies temporal order. It means rather fī-l mabda’; this implies that God brought about the creation of the world, but not necessarily that there was some particular point in time at which the world was created.28 For Maimonides, this distinction is the key to the correct understanding of Gen. 1:1:

The word that implies the sense of al-mabda’ is reshit. For it derives from [the word] rōṣh [head] [and the head], given its location [on the body] is the mabda’ of animals. Now the world
was not created at a temporal *mabda*... The correct translation of this verse is: In the *bad'a*... This is the translation that fits in with creation in time.29

A similar analysis of this verse and of this word is offered by the ninth century Nestorian Isho’dad of Merv, who relies on the commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia. According to Isho’dad, the first verse of Genesis indicates, "firstly, the beginning of creation and its temporal and finite character; and secondly, the creative activity of God, His eternity and infinity."30

(Moses) said "at the beginning" and not "at first", because the word "beginning" signifies anteriority more than the word "first". For "first" is said in relation to that which follows, whereas "beginning", although it is the beginning of something, may nevertheless be said disregarding that which follows, according to the Interpreter.31

And like Maimonides, Isho’dad (following the Greek) connects this interpretation with the etymology of the first word of the Bible:

The Greek says: 32 "In the head God has made the heavens and the earth"; meaning [by "in the head"] "before everything", as the head is the first part of the body.33

The exegesis of Isho’dad and that of Maimonides have several points in common: they relate the first word of the Bible to the word "head"; they juxtapose *reshit* "commencement" with *tehilla* "the first of something"; (and they connect the wording with the question of temporal creation (although Maimonides' philosophical position is different from that of Isho’dad, in fact quite opposite to it). Now the etymology *reshit-rosh*, which is used by both Isho’dad and by Maimonides, could be either Syriac/Aramaic or Hebrew,35 and therefore its ultimate source may have been a Jewish text; but the explicit connection of this etymology with the philosophical discussion could not have come from a midrashic source. Maimonides’ discussion of the philosophical question of creation *ex nihilo* versus temporal creation is cast in the language common to the Arabic philosophical texts. Yet, obviously, its connection with the first word of the Bible could not have come from a Muslim source. It is therefore possible that, in this case too, Maimonides’ ultimate source was some Christian tradition, which put together the midrash on *bereshit* with the theological discussion of the creation of the world.

In order to draw the picture in all its complexity we must note that what is extant of Qirqisâni’s Commentary on Genesis does not include this etymology of *bereshit*, and that the translation that Qirqisâni chooses for this word is exactly the one Maimonides rejects: "fi-l-awwal". Yet Qirqisâni, too, links the word *bereshit* to the issue of creation *ex nihilo*.36 It seems therefore that in this case Maimonides did not derive his "Christian" interpretation through the chain al-Muqaddamis-Qirqisani. At the present stage of our knowledge, it is impossible to say whether Maimonides received this interpretation via a Jewish source, or whether he had direct access to Christian exegesis, either through books or through personal encounters.

IV. LATER CONTACTS BETWEEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

The existence of intellectual contact between Jews and Christians under Islamic rule throughout the 10th and 11th centuries is an attested fact.37 The question is again one of quantity: how much contact, and with how much influence?

A rather famous case may offer us some clues towards an answer. It is described by Joseph ben Yehudah Ibn 'Aqin (d. 1220) in his Commentary on the Song of Songs. Ibn 'Aqin derives it from Shemu’el ben Hofni (d. 1013), who relates the following story about his son-in-law, Hai Gaon (d. 1038):

One day, during the study session, it happened that someone

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29Dalldla II/30 (compare Guide, 349). The obvious contradiction between Maimonides’ starting point and his conclusion at the end of this passage illustrates the difficulty in determining Maimonides’ real opinion concerning the creation or eternity of the world, see Klein-Braslavy, S., *Persia ha-Rambam le-sipur beris ha-kulam* (= Maimonides’ Interpretation of the Story of Creation), (Jerusalem, 1987), 114-123.

30Isho’dad, 13.

31Isho’dad, 13 (text, 12-5, 8).

32On the Greek text used by Isho’dad, see Van den Eynde’s Introduction, XXIII.

33Bereish, a common translation of the Greek: *en arukhein*. (My translation, like the French one, attempts to preserve the etymology, despite its awkwardness in English; see Isho’dad, 14. The excessive literalness of the translation is noted by Van den Eynde, 14, note 1.)

34Isho’dad, 13 (text, 12-5, 8).

35Isho’dad alludes to the Hebrew word *reshit* a few lines before, in a different context (13-14).

36Ben Shammay, Vol. II, p 19, Appendix 1, fragment 1; *fa-qasabta fi l-awwal ya’ni ana al-insalika awwal l-a l-awwal nafishu ghary al-khalil wa-annahu ibada atu wa-thalathahu au tu al-salama la min shay’ wa-l-d fi zamun*.

mentioned the verse shemen rosh al yani roshi. The people present disagreed concerning its interpretation. So Hai Gaon directed Rav Mazliah to approach the Christian Katholikes and ask him what tradition he possessed concerning the interpretation of this verse. Rav Mazliah resented this request, and Rav Hai saw that it [i.e. the request] was very difficult for him. So the Gaon rebuked him, saying, "Our holy ancestors and forefathers used to search among the various peoples for variant readings and for interpretations. As it is well known and told, they used to ask even shepherds and cow-herds!" Thereafter he [i.e., Rav Mazliah] approached him [i.e., the Katholikes] and asked him, and he [i.e., the Katholikes] told him that the reading they have in their Syriac language is: mashha daresh’al ta ‘ad reshey.

A close examination of this oft-cited story sheds light on several aspects of Jewish-Christian contacts in the eleventh century.

1. It reflects deeply ambivalent feelings towards consulting Christians: apparently, the more prominent Jews were more open in this matter, while others were more reluctant. It took the authority of Hai Gaon to bring about this consultation.

2. The Syriac reading (like that of the Septuagint) reflects an original (rasha) which differs from the Masoretic text (roshi). The Gaon seems to be aware that different understandings of the verse result from different readings. He explicitly says that one of the reasons for turning to the gentiles is the search for variant readings (uthid).

3. Apart from the uthid, one is authorized to turn to non-Jews for the interpretations (shurud). But as the story clearly shows, this was not an everyday practice at the time of Hai Gaon. I believe that it was not even the regular practice when a particularly difficult text presented itself, and that Christians were consulted only when there was a specific reason to suspect that they had something to contribute to the discussion.

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I would like to conclude by suggesting one area that was probably considered to be so to speak, a Christian speciality, namely, Christology and anything related to the Messiah. The verse discussed in Hai Gaon's majfils alludes to anointing oil, and this may be the reason why the Gaon thought the Katholikes might possess some helpful tradition.

In the case of Ps. 141, the Christological connotations are rather vague, but the phenomenon of consulting the Christian exegetes for verses related to the Messiah is attested in a still unpublished Judeo-Arabic Commentary on Psalms. Commenting on Ps. 80:16-18, the anonymous exegete says:

As to his words: "and the son thou madest strong for thyself", in the Syriac tradition it is said that this is Christ, for whom the author of this Psalm prays, by virtue of prophetic inspiration. The Hebrews say that it is rather the awaited king...and he is also the Messiah, but the difference between "was" and "will be" is well known.

As this commentary clearly shows, Jews were aware that Christians had a store of traditions concerning Christology, and considered it worthwhile to check these traditions, even though they did not necessarily accept them.

CONCLUSION

The Muslim impact on Judeo-Arabic thought is uncontested; it was constant and it affected all levels of the Jewish literary activity in Muslim countries. By contrast, the Christian influence appears to have been uneven, and to have worked in more subtle ways than the Muslim influence. After a short period of apparently extensive Christian influence in the ninth and early tenth centuries, Jewish acquaintance with the Syriac Christian tradition was preserved through the writings of earlier Jewish authors or

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44J. Van der Esch, See also P. 13.

45On the Muslim influence on exegetical literature in Judeo-Arabic, see, for instance, Moshe Zucker’s introduction to his edition and translation of Sa’adya’s Commentary on Genesis, (New York, 1984), 35-69; see also Drori, R., The Emergence of Jewish-Arabic Literary Contacts at the Beginning of the Tenth Century, (Tel-Aviv, 1988), (in Hebrew).
ABREVIATIONS OF FREQUENTLY QUOTED WORKS

APPENDIX

IMPACT OF EARLY SYRIAC TRADITION