The religious polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia
Colominas Aparicio, M.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Chapter Six: Mudejar Polemics with the Christians

Introduction

After having examined Mudejar polemics with the Jews, I would like to turn our attention to its logical corollary, Mudejar polemics with the Christians. To do so, I shall focus on the Kitāb al-Mujādala, a treatise in which the Christians are the most important target. In the preceding chapters, I have already dealt with the composition and circulation of this work and I have discussed some of its sources. It has emerged that, even though the Kitāb al-Mujādala is bound together with an Arabic copy of the Ta'īd in MS AF 58, and both treatises were copied by the hand of al-Raqīlī, they are probably not autographs and have different authors. I have situated the composition of the Kitāb al-Mujādala in the close environment of the Mudejar Sharafī family, some of whose members had contacts with the Christian elite of their time. I have argued on the grounds of the many quotations of Christian arguments in the Kitāb al-Mujādala and its exposition of the views of some Christian intellectual leaders such as Aghushtīn, its references to the activities of the Christian mendicant orders and the Christian claims to the control of the territories of the Iberian Peninsula all strongly suggest that its author was well acquainted with Christians and Christianity. Despite the presence of such topics, the evidence found has not allowed me to determine if the Kitāb al-Mujādala was specifically composed to provide an answer to a particular treatise of Christian polemics against Islam.

As has been noted, human reason seems to occupy a prominent place in the polemical agenda of the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala. The sources of the Kitāb al-Mujādala are quite clear and are enumerated by al-Raqīlī as the Torah, the Gospels and the treatises (maqālāt) of the qāḍī Abū-l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Lakhmī ash-Sharafī. In these works he claims that one can find the same truth as in the revealed books and the books of philosophy and logic. The analysis below will reveal that the defence of philosophy and logic as rightful and authoritative sources of religious authority and of knowledge by the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala is unique in the rest of the corpus of Mudejar and Morisco
literature in which, as Harvey notes, there is a “total absence of philosophy”.\(^1\) Closer analysis will also reveal that, if Christianity is the most important element in the discourse of the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala, he also sets his critical sights on some members of the Muslim religious elites, the ‘ulamā’. Although the term ‘ulamā’ is a plural form referring to Muslim scholars learned in Islamic sciences, in the Kitāb al-Mujādala, the term ‘ulamā’ seems to be specifically, and derogatorily, reserved for the theologians, most probably the Mālikī scholars who rejected the use of philosophy and its related disciplines of logic and the natural sciences in the inquiry into religious subjects and in polemics with the unbelievers. Despite the fact the ‘ulamā’ are not mentioned explicitly in the title of the Kitāb al-Mujādala and the introduction tells us nothing about the author’s purpose in including them in one way or another in his polemics,\(^2\) in the Kitāb al-Mujādala they are often indubitably addressed in a polemical way.

It is my contention that author’s preference for rationalist knowledge (‘aqliyya) – the knowledge acquired through the teaching of proofs – to traditional knowledge (samīyya)\(^3\) is key to understanding the attack on the ‘ulamā’ in this polemic. The author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala quotes a saying by Muhammad as a source of authority for his defence of the use of rationalist sciences in Islam. It reads: “The prophet upon him the peace, [and he was] one of the most learned, [said]: ‘It is as when [there are] most distinguished prophets, [in such a case, MCA] the learned should choose the prophet [among them] by using his independent judgement [faḍala-l-ʿālim an-nabi bi-jīthādīhi] and his teachings on science [wa-dirāsatihi fī-l-ʿilm]”\(^4\). No doubt the author was counting himself among those who use independent judgement and are learned in sciences, the philosophers, or ‘ulamā’ al-falsafa. Their views stand in stark contrast with those of the traditional ‘ulamā’, whom the author places on one level with the “ignorant people”. The following claim to the authority of Ibn Rushd is illustrative of this. Ibn Rushd states that present-day people should not attempt

to understand and know how things occur [...] because people are not rationalist. The rationalist ‘ulamā’ are those among the people who are able to reach an individual judgement and who are able to examine language without confirming it until they know how things occur. [...] The more difficult the understanding of what happens is, the

---

\(^1\) Harvey, 1958, 199 and in 200: “[T]he whole literature of speculation and philosophy is omitted altogether”. Here, Harvey is referring in particular to literature in Arabic, but the same can be said about the literature in Aljamiado.

\(^2\) They are also not mentioned in any of the chapters. See Chapter Three for the chapter overview and the contents of this treatise.

\(^3\) MS AF 58, f. 45v.

\(^4\) MS AF 58, f. 44v.
more their belief in Allāh [namely: of the rationalist ‘ulamā’, MCA] increases.* “[Yet]” – the argument continues – “there are other ignorant people who keep following the tradition with respect to the commands of the Sacred Law (sharī‘a), and underestimate rationalist thinking in dealing with language which has a doubtful meaning, and do not accept it because they do not understand it, nor they want to understand it.3

It will be shown in more detail below that the most important reason the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala desires to use logic and philosophy is that these sciences are a necessary prerequisite to reaching a proper understanding of Revelation and to defending Islam in religious polemics. The ‘ulamā’ are to blame for the fact that, because of their traditional approaches, they give ground to some of the misconceptions about Muslims and Islam among Christians and Jews. He affirms with contempt that in the books of logic and philosophy (namely: of the Christians and the Jews), one can read that Muslims do not dispute about the Qur’ān.4 In the assertion, he seems to be referring to the widespread idea among Medieval and Early Modern Christians and Jews that disputation about the Qur’ān was prohibited in Islam. Such fifteenth-century thinkers as Pius II, Nicholas of Cusa and Marsilio Ficino agree in saying that, “the theological disagreement between Christians and Muslims centred on three widely exploited points: the refusal to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity: the prohibition to question the teachings of the Koran; and the corporeal quality of those teachings”.5 In the eyes of the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala, the ‘ulamā’ have had a great share in ceding ground to such views. To support this, the author quotes Ibn Rushd, who argues “in the Logic, that the ignorant among the Muslim ‘ulamā’ do not know, the explanation of the words in the text of the book of Allāh, the Almighty (the Qur’ān, MCA), and this is because they do not acknowledge the books of logic as part of the essence of Allāh (ka-nafs Allāh).”6 The fear of the ‘ulamā’ that they will not be able to defend the divine text against the attacks of their adversaries underpins their prohibition on interreligious disputation on the Qur’ān, something about which the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala is openly critical.

---

3 This is in line with the well-known rejection of “popularization” of learning by Ibn Rushd. Elī, s.v. “Ibn Rushd” (Arnaldez). MS AF 58, f. 53r.

4 MS AF 58, f. 53r. “Ibn al-Walīd has stated that the ignorant among the Muslim ulamā’ have a great share in the ground given to such views, which is because they do not acknowledge the books of logic as part of the essence of Allāh (ka-nafs Allāh).”

5 Moudarres, 2012, 301.

6 Moudarres, 2012, 301.
What has been said suggests that the Kitāb al-Mujādala might reflect dissensions within the Mudejar communities similar to those illustrated in earlier Arabic works such as the Kitāb Taʾwil Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth ['Book on the Interpretation of the Differences in the Ḥadīth'] by Ibn Qutayba (828-884 CE). In it, Ibn Qutayba defends the science of ḥadīth from all those he considered heretics, among whom the philosophers.\(^9\) We shall see that the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala not only attacks Christian theology, or kalām which, as noted above, is represented by Aghushtīn or the Tathlīth al-Wahdāniyya, but also disassociates himself from the practitioners of kalām among the Muslims. The possibility to attain positive knowledge through human reason, I shall argue, is the axis of his polemics with the 'ulamāʾ, and it is also the hinge between the author’s intra-religious polemics and his polemics with the Christians.

The polemical targets in the Kitāb al-Mujādala raise a number of questions. One of these is that any mention of the internal division within a religious community gives the opponent space to attack, as has been illustrated above in the discussion of such authors as Ibn Ḥazm who, in his attack on the disparities between the four Gospels, remarks that the Christians number seventy-two sects, or al-Qaysī. As examples, he refers to the Melkites, the Nestorians and Jacobites.\(^10\) In this context, dissent is understood as an evidence of the falsehood of a religion. Why lay disagreements among Muslims bare to the Jews and the Christians, which is what the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala does? On the other hand, even though it is true that in most cases the learned Mudejar judges assume the leadership of the religious lives of the members of the aljamas, it is also a fact that their brethren in Muslim lands challenge their legitimacy. Why therefore is it that the sole Muslim source mentioned in the introduction to this polemic is the treatises of a judge who was in all probability a Mudejar? Furthermore, does not a claim to ignorance of philosophy which, as will be argued, lumps the 'ulamāʾ and the Christians together, fall outside what can be considered orthodox Islam?

In this Chapter, I do not attempt to provide a definitive answer to these questions. Instead, I argue that what is at stake in all of them is notions of authority attached to individuals and to sources, and that these notions inform a discourse which is particularly useful to the Mudejars as minorities. I shall sustain the argument that philosophy is the guiding principle behind the author’s understanding of Islam and it certainly does provide fertile ground for his interreligious polemics and also for his intra-religious polemics with those Muslims who do not espouse his views, the ‘ignorant’. As will be revealed, the

---

\(^9\) A copy of this work is found in the miscellaneous manuscript from Almonacid J10, which contains in ff. 60 and 98 the date of 846 H (=1443CE). Ribera Tarragó and Asín Palacios, 1912, 53-56. Harvey, 1958, 149. Goldziher, 1971, 130-131.

The author’s overall line of thought is that interreligious polemics should not be avoided, but instead Muslims should be able to defend Islam vigorously against the proselytizing campaigns of the Christians and the slanders of the Jews. Man should use his intellect to acquire knowledge of God, to understand Sacred Law, or *shariʿa*, and to polemicize with the Christians and the Jews. The secrets of the rationalist sciences do not have to pose any problem to the Arabs (read Muslims, MCA), as in the author’s view, they, especially the Banū Tamim, the Banū Ṣayy and the Banū Quraysh, are those who understand best the rules (Sp. regla) of the sayings which are difficult to comprehend. Moreover, among the Muslims, philosophers take the leading role.

This is an apt point to begin a discussion of the grounds which underpin the unconditional defence of philosophy of the author of the *Kitāb al-Mujādala* and of the way he adduces an authoritative discourse before the Christians and before his Muslim co-religionists. I have divided my inquiry into three sections. In the first, I shall deal with the claims made by the Christians against Muslims and Islam and with the refutation of these claims by the author (6.1). Then, I shall address the authority of philosophy and the misconceptions of the ʿulamāʾ about God and God’s creation because they have rejected philosophy (6.2). The last section will shed light on the rebuttal by this author of the Christian claim that political superiority entails religious superiority (6.3). My overall argument is that the *Kitāb al-Mujādala* provides tools for legitimizing the residence of the Mudejars in the Christian lands and, concomitantly, for living as Muslim in these territories.

The author takes an approach to Islam in which human reason is at the service of man’s natural disposition towards the good, towards acting ethically. In this two concepts seem occupy centre stage: the comprehensive understanding of Revelation (or *shariʿa*) which accepts the Scriptures of the Christians and the Jews as true, and the notion that Islam is the religion which best fits the nature of man (which in Arabic is known by the term *fitra*). This notion is not unique to this author but would also be espoused by some Moriscos. We shall see that it is precisely because it is connected to nature that philosophy guides man towards Islam and helps him to remain faithful. Seen as a fundamentally ethical experience, the Mudejars’ beliefs and practices can be easily presented as authoritative and, hence, legitimate.

---

*MS AF 58, f. 48v. Here the text (with various words in Aljamiado) is very difficult to read, so it is only possible to grasp the general meaning of his point. Elz s.v. “Tamim b. Murr” (Lecker). Elz s.v. “Ṭayyiʾ or Ṣayy” (Shahīd). Elz s.v. “Ḳuraysh” (Montgomery Watt).*

*An example is that of Diego el Niño, who was prosecuted and eventually absolved by the Inquisition in 1573 CE “for having said that the law of Muhammad was founded on natural reason”. Dadson, 2012, 51-74 and 60-61.*
Chapter Six

6.1. The Kitāb al-Mujādala

In this section, I shall briefly expound on the main points of contention raised by the Christians according to the Kitāb al-Mujādala, and the refutation to these claims provided by its author. It should be noted that the claims made by the Christians probably reflect the author’s own interpretation of the sayings of flesh and blood Christians about Muslims and Islam. However, I think that these arguments provide a sense of what might have been the most significant challenges posed upon the Mudejars by the majority Christian society.

6.1.1. The Claims Made by the Christians against Muslims and Islam

I have been able to identify about fifty-five Christian claims, a sum which also includes minor arguments and a number of repetitions. Here I present a selection of the claims which seem to have been of particular importance, either because they are often repeated in the Kitāb al-Mujādala or because the author deals with them at length. Despite their diverse nature, it is possible to distinguish three groups:

a) Attacks on Islam and on the prophetic office of Muḥammad: the Christians oppose Islamic tenets and say that it is better to drink wine, to remain a virgin and, once married, not to divorce. They also claim that Islam promises earthly pleasures in Heaven, that Muslims have no sharī’a and that they will be punished with Hell, a fate they will share with the Jews. These claims are aptly illustrated by some of the questions the Christians pose to Muslims towards the end of this polemic. For instance, how can they provide evidence that Muḥammad lived and was named Muḥammad ibn Ṭālib, and how they can show that he was a prophet.

b) Insults and verbal attacks on Muslims: the Christians claim that they are the only ones who adore God, and God alone; that the Muslims are ‘dogs’ and that the land of Spain belongs to the Christians. Below I shall return to the Mudejars’ rebuttal of this last claim.

c) The bulk of the Christians’ arguments are about Christian dogma. The Christians explain and defend the Trinity and the divine nature of Jesus, two well-known subjects of polemics between Christians and Muslims found in other treatises such as the fourteenth-century polemic of the Kitāb Miṭṭah ad-Dīn or the mas’ala (Answer) from the collection of

---

9 MS AF 58, f. 60r and 51r.
Almonacid and described by Asín Palacios. The Christian discourses in the Kitāb al-Mujādala seem to attach great importance to the role of Jesus as the Saviour of mankind. They claim that Jesus is king on the throne of his father, David, and will reign in the Hereafter. With respect to such verses as those referring to the Paraclete, they argue the Paraclete is not a person but a Spirit (rūḥ) and, in saying so, they probably have in mind the Qur‘ānic interpretations of Jesus as the Spirit of God.

Besides what has been said, the Kitāb al-Mujādala deals at length with a subject which concerns other Muslim polemicists to a lesser extent: the Christian doctrine of sin. Redemption attracts a large proportion of the Christians’ attention in the Kitāb al-Mujādala and Christians are constantly quoted as saying that Jesus died for man’s sins. In the beginning, Adam and Eve died because they ate from the fruit of the tree of Paradise. Thereafter, the devils put all the human generations between Adam and Jesus in Hell. In the Christians’ view, claims the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala, the sufferings to which God condemned Adam and his wife Eve are not meant to take place in this world but in the Hereafter. It is not clear whether Christians consider that all these generations until Jesus (including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), are in Hell, dead or alive, since contradictory statements on this matter are made (as for example in MS AF 58, f. 34r and in f. 39r). Christian views on absolution are contradictory, to say nothing of being quite astounding. So we read that the popes can absolve the sins committed by Christians because Peter has entrusted this power to them. It follows that a murderer does not need to be punished with the death penalty to attain redemption. What is surprising is the assertion by the Christians that baptism protects man from future sins, namely: from sins which have not yet been committed. Even more remarkable is that the Christians plead guilty to having killed Jesus and claim that they have been forgiven for this sin (MS AF 58, f. 36r); later, they again plead guilty to having killed Jesus but this time they claim that they have not been forgiven for this sin (MS AF 58, f. 36v). Also relevant in this polemic is that, according to the Christians, Paul and Peter established the Christian sharī'a, which is the ‘fe’ (Sp.; Eng. faith), and the ‘fe’ should not be disputed but accepted as it is. They allege that they follow the commands of

---

14 This mas’ala was transcribed and translated by Asín Palacios but its original is lost today. Asín Palacios, 1939b; Van Koningsveld and Wiegers provide some notes on the whereabouts of this manuscript. Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, 1994, 185 n. 80. See also Chapter Three.

15 The same use has been noted in Morisco polemics by Cardaillac. Cardaillac, 1977, 236, 381, Third Part, Chapter One and Conclusions, respectively. The Kitāb al-Mujādala also refers to the Muslim views of Jesus as the rūḥ of God; precisely because Jesus is God’s Spirit, argues the Mudejar author, He could have not been His Son. MS AF 58, f. 31r. The Paraclete is also discussed in the Tā‘yūd. Kassin, 1969, I, 173 and in the Kitāb Miftāḥ ad-Dīn, MS BN Alg. 1557, f. 63.

16 For a Muslim explanation of the creation of Adam and Eve and what happened when they ate from the fruit of the tree in Paradise told on the authority of Muḥammad’s companion, Ibn ‘Abbās, see MS BNE 5397, ff. 19r-22v.
Peter and Paul because the reward is greater to he who accepts tradition than to he who seeks proofs. In the Kitāb Miṣṭāḥ ad-Dīn, al-Qaysī also argues that Christians “upheld their own doctrine by way of conjecture (Ar. zann; translated in the Aljamiado versions as ‘fē’). The doctrine of Islam is based on verification (Ar. ṭabqīq), instead.”

6.1.2. The Claims of the Author against the Christians

If we now turn our attention to the refutation of these claims by the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala, we see that he is greatly concerned with explaining to the Christians that they misinterpret God’s Revelation. He pays less attention to that well-known subject of Muslim polemics against Christianity and Judaism, the falsification of the Scriptures, or taḥrif. We have seen that the author of the Taʿīd also argues that, if the Jews were to understand God’s Revelation, they would find that Judaism does not contradict Islam but affirms it. In previous chapters, I have shown that a similar approach is found among some Oriental Muslim authors of religious polemics. It is interesting to note that philosophy was sometimes used in polemical literature to explain why Christians arrive at a wrong interpretation of their Scriptures. An example of this is the ar-Radd al-Jamil li-Ilāhīyyat ʿĪsā ʿala Sarīḥ al-Injīl [‘The Excellent Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus according to the Gospel’], attributed to al-Ghazālī. The ar-Radd states that it is precisely because the Christians use philosophy to address theological questions that they have a too literal, and hence inappropriate, understanding of their Scriptures. Nevertheless, the evaluation of the use of philosophy by the Christians in the ar-Radd is different to that of the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala. The Mudejar author claims that the Christians’ failure to understand God’s Revelation is attributable instead to their lack of philosophical, scientific and rationalist knowledge. It might sound odd that a Mudejar, who was acquainted with Christianity and was perhaps even in contact with the Christian elite, should make such a claim, certainly when the growing interest in philosophy among Christians in the Later Middle Ages is taken into account. On the other hand, Szpiech has convincingly argued that the use of philosophy led to a crisis of auctoritas among Christians from the twelfth century. Philosophy stands out as a sensitive subject which poses a threat to the cohesion of the Christian communities and exposes their internal dissensions. In this last regard, the attacks of the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala on (lack of) the use of philosophy by Christians are transformed into a powerful argument in his polemics with this group. The importance placed on philosophy in the Kitāb al-Mujādala could also be related to the

\[\text{17} \text{Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, 1994, 172.} \]

\[\text{18} \text{The same holds true, in al-Ghazālī’s view, for the divine message in the Torah. EI2 s.v. “al-Ghazālī” (Montgomery Watt). See also, Beaumont, 2031.} \]
claims made by the Christians and their objections to Islam found in some contemporary Christian treatises. For example, in the fifteenth-century *Contra principales errores perfidi Machometi* by the Dominican preacher Juan de Torquemada (1388-1488 CE), we read that: “The Law contained in the Koran is not divine, because it does not fulfil the following conditions: 1. It is not rational [...] 4. It must be confirmed by natural law. It is not even confirmed by miracles, but imposed by the sword.” Perhaps even more enlightening is the description which Torquemada provides of Muḥammad’s deeds: “He persecuted Christians with careful schemes, such as forbidding his disciples to dispute their law and to study philosophy.”

What matters to this author is to demonstrate that philosophy is not opposed to Islam but first and foremost his to demonstrate that Christians are totally ignorant. And ignorance is the source of error in their understanding of God and God’s creation, as the author makes clear throughout his treatise. An example of the inaptitude of Christians is their poor understanding of the movement of the celestial bodies during a solar and a lunar eclipse. The author of the *Kitāb al-Mujâdala* explains that a solar eclipse occurs when it gathers/meets with the moon, and only then. When the moon is in front of the sun, people see that the moon covers one-third, the half or two-thirds of the sun. The same occurs during a lunar eclipse; the Earth stops in front of the moon and people see that it covers one-third, the half or two-thirds of the moon. He scoffs at the Christians who are ignorant of this scientific phenomenon and claim that the solar eclipses are produced because of the death of sultan Awshab (Eusebius)! The author retorts, saying in this, they show that they do not understand anything of this (lā yaʾfhamūna fihi shay’). The reference to Awshab is interesting for, with this name, the Christians are most likely referring to Eusebius of Caesarea (263-339 CE), a Roman bishop of Greek origin, a historian and polemicist. In his Chronicle, he presents Jesus in an apologetic manner and argues that different prophecies predicted Jesus’ death, one of them being a total solar eclipse. This polemicist seems to be well aware of who Eusebius was and of the influence of Eusebius’ polemical views in the Christian communities, and this gives him a weapon to downgrade the Christians, who, like Aristotle’s sturgeons “think that the day is the darkness because they do not see the daylight and they judge it to be darkness.”

---

21 MS AF 58, f. 44r.
23 We have seen that the use of the Torah in the polemic against the Jews in the *Taʾyiḍ* comes close to the techniques used by Oriental authors like al-Ṭūfī, and likewise the possibility exists that the author of the *Kitāb al-Mujâdala* was drawing partly from Christian Arabic sources. Particularly revealing in this respect is the
The ignorance of the Christians is also apparent in their understanding of philosophy, as is illustrated by the following scenario provided by Aristotle in which, in the same blessed hour, a son is born to the sultan and to the baker. The author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala addresses the reader, and claims:

They [the Christians] think that the son of the baker will enjoy the same happiness, dignity and power [over the state] as the son of the sultan will enjoy merely by the fact that they were born at the same time. They do not understand that the meaning of this is only that the son of the baker will obtain happiness according to his nature, [that is], in the use of the oven and in his capacity to beget his own offspring.

Because Christians do not comprehend the words of Aristotle, they fail to grasp the differences between the nature of the sultan and that of the ordinary people. As they cannot understand the world created by God, they cannot, in the author’s view, grasp the true meaning of His Revelation to mankind. The principal claim against Christians and Christianity made in the Kitāb al-Mujādala is that the ‘true’ religion does not lead to ignorance but to knowledge; it is not opposed to rationalist thinking and the natural laws, but confirmed by them. Without question, Islam and not Christianity meets these conditions.

The arguments of the Christians and their refutation by the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala need to be read against the background of the Christian proselytism of the Mudejars. There are several reasons which show that this is so. It has been noted above that Mudejars and Jews were sometimes forced to listen to the sermons of the Christians and had to endure the teachings of the Christian preachers. The presence of a large number of arguments of Christian doctrine in the Kitāb al-Mujādala provides evidence of the importance attached to these issues by the Mudejars and their interest in impeding conversion to Christianity. More will be said about this below, but the claims of the Christians that the land of Spain belongs to them and that Christianity should not be discussed but accepted ‘as it is’ reveal that Christians were not just interested in teaching

---

Van Koningsveld, unpublished edition of al-Ṭūfī's the al-Intisārat, in which it says that

“The state of our intelligences when looking at the first principles is like that of a bat when looking at the sun. I mean that the appearance of the sun in itself is maximal, but for the bat it remains hidden because of its weak sight.”


24 MS AF 58, f. 45v.

قال ظنوا في المواضيع ان الدوام للمكتوب على سعة السعادة والكرامة والدولة كما نزل ولد النسيب بسبب اهمهما ولذا في سعادة واحدة ولا يفهم المعنى لذلك. حان إلى اين الفراتي نزل سعادة على

قد طبعته في الشروط أو عن قدر نسخه.
their religion but also in imposing it on the Mudejars. The philosophical discourse of the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala attempts to counterbalance Christian coercion and mass conversion by providing frameworks which rest on individual reasoning based on proofs. He offers his co-religionists tools to refute Christian discourses which emphasize the blind acceptance of religion, but at the same time he distances himself from the traditional ‘ulamā’ who reject the use of rationalist sources alone in interreligious polemics. We shall see that the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala thinks that, although tradition might suffice for the proselyte, it does not help to defeat the religious opponent or to strengthen the faith of those Muslims in whom doubts had arisen as a consequence of the Christian campaigns. Islam must be defended with energy and believers must make the effort to produce independent thinking. In his view, the latter is key to remaining faithful to Islam in the sort of situation in which the Mudejars find themselves, under circumstances in which ‘tradition’, as it is understood by the Mālikīs, is difficult to uphold.

6.2. Religious Authority in the Kitāb al-Mujādala

The primary line of argument of the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala is that philosophy and rational sciences are sources of religious authority, and knowledge of them discloses the proper meaning of God’s Revelation to mankind. Therefore they constitute important tools to affirm Islam and to polemicize with the unbelievers. Conversely, the inability to understand the rationalist sciences leads to a defective understanding of Revelation and of the world, which is God’s creation, and consequently to defeat in religious polemics.

In the following sub-sections, I shall discuss the defence of philosophy by the author (6.2.1.) and his most important objections to the ‘ulamā’ (6.2.2.). I shall also provide an example of the use of philosophy in the Kitāb al-Mujādala (6.2.3.).

6.2.1. The Author’s Defence of Philosophy

The defence of philosophy by the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala has a place in the intra-religious debates on this issue referred to above. Muslims were confronted with the issue of whether or not philosophy was suitable to an inquiry into religious subjects as soon as the Greek body of thought, in particular the works by Aristotle, began to be translated into Arabic during the first centuries of Islam. The claims against philosophy rested partly on the sense that the term ‘philosophy’ had been substituted by ‘religion’ more than once throughout history. On the one hand, the well-known first-century historian Flavius
Josephus had already talked about Judaism and its sects in terms of ‘philosophy’. On the other hand, philosophy could also be denoted as ‘religion’. In the Jewish polemic the Keshet, discussed in the previous chapter, Duran claims that Ibn Sinā and Ibn Rushd belonged to the same ‘religion’ as Hippocrates and Aristotle, and uses the Hebrew term ‘dat’ which means ‘law’ or ‘custom’. Moreover, philosophical thinking was eventually also linked to the origin of some Islamic tenets. One example is again found in the Jewish polemic the Keshet, in which Duran addresses the belief in Islam’s unity (a central concept in the profession of faith, or shahāda) and argues:

Muḥammad also believed that Jesus of Nazareth brought a divine law, but he supported our side and not that of the Christians, because he realized that the rational evidence supported our religion given that, in his time, the wisdom of Aristotle had already been disclosed; and Aristotle, in his wisdom, claimed the unity of God after affirming His existence. So (Muḥammad) established that Muslims should pray: “There is no God but Allāh.”

It is no wonder that such remarkable claims (which stand in stark contrast to those of Christians quoted above) met with the opposition of the non-philosophers, in the case of the Kitāb al-Mujādala, the ‘ulamā’. They averred that a line of separation must exist between religion and philosophy, and by and large pure philosophers were accused of heresy. Whatever the grounds for being considered a heretic, the consequences of such a charge could be harsh for the accused. An example is the exemplary punishment of the ninth-century mystic al-Ḥallāj who was decapitated, dismembered and burned in public.

Consequently, having good arguments to defend philosophy was a matter of the utmost importance. This is the case of Ibn Rushd, who was accused of being a heretic and throughout his life faced the opposition of the religious scholars who were at the service of the Almohad Caliphs and followed the Almohad doctrines (the so-called ṭalaba). The following fragment from the Kitāb al-Mujādala narrates the appearance of Ibn Rushd

---

25 Van der Horst, 2011, 316.
26 Frau Cortès, 2012, 286 [§6]: מאמון היה יום אברメール, ומסרים בהיותו, והאמת ספרינו מכם, ו殿下 שרי מרכן חכמי מימים וכתו ידחי: וди ביניו...
27 My translation of Frau Cortès, 2012, 312[§7]: “Muhammā també creia que Jesús de Nazaret (read Natzaret) havia dut una llei divina, però es va posar del nostre costat i no del dels cristians perquè s’adonà que l'evidència racional recolzava la nostra religió, atès que en la seva època ja s’havia divulgot la saviesa aristotèlica; i Aristòtil, en la seva saviesa, afirmà la unitat de Déu després d’afirmar-ne l’existència. Per això va establir que els musulmans preguessin: no hi ha més Déu que Al-lāh.”
28 EI2 s.v. “al-Ḥallāj” (Massignon and Gardet).
before the Caliph to defend himself against the charge of heresy and his success in convincing the Caliph of the rightness of philosophy. It reads:

Abū al-Walid Ibn Rushd said: The Muslim jurists [fuqahā’] complained to the amīr al-mu’minin and wrote in their treatises that Ibn Rushd read books of philosophy and logic and, therefore, that he was a heretic [Romance “herej”; Aljamiado, ‘areje’]. When these treatises reached the ears of the amīr, he ordered Ibn Rushd to appear before him to account for their truth. And this was in the time when Ibn Rushd was judge [qādī] in Córdoba. And they brought him bound before the amīr al-mu’minin and placed him before him. Ibn Rushd says in his treatise: ‘If the art of philosophy and logic would lead people to evil because this art [in itself, MCA] begets evil, then I would say that it is so. But this is not the case and the aim of the art of philosophy and logic is to teach people what is close and what is far away and to distinguish between what is correct and what is false. If it is an art, it leads people to goodness. The art of the fuqahā’ is the fiqh, and in it there are many virtues. However, we observe that the most ignorant, the foolish and the vilest among people are the fuqahā’. This is because good and evil are generated in the nature of people and not in the art which they practice. If his nature is good, the person will lean towards the good and if his nature is bad, the person will be inclined towards evil and moral depravity.’ After this, the king [malik] rewarded Ibn Rushd with generous gifts.39

As far as I know, these events are not cited by al-Marrakūshī or by other sources on Ibn Rushd. Moreover, although Ibn Rushd eventually succeeded in convincing his audience of the virtues of philosophy, the gratitude of the Caliph was short-lived: the oeuvre of Ibn Rushd was imprisoned and he was exiled to Lucena.39 It is my understanding that this narration makes sense not as historical evidence but also because it fills the need of the author of the Kītāb al-Mujādala to defend his own use of philosophy in the light of its rejection by the Mālikī scholars, which has been referred to above.

---

39 The accusations of heresy against Ibn Rushd were well known not only among Muslims and, again in the Kesheṭ, we find the following claim by Duran: “Del propi Ibn Rush, diuen els savis d’auvi que, en la seva opinio, era un herete” [About Ibn Rushd himself, the learned of these days say that, in their opinion, he was an heretic]. Frau Cortés, 2012, 296.
39 MS AF 58, f. 43v. قال أبو الوليد بن رشد شنك الفقهاء من ابن رشاد ابن امرأة محمدين وقالوا في مقالاتهم أن ابن رشاد أنه يقرأ كتب الفلسفة والمجالس ولهذا السبب كان ابن رشاد أراها كما سمع أمير المنامين مقالاتهم أمر أنه يحضر ماما [إيوب] أبو الوليد بن رشيد ويقول عن نفسه وكان أبو الوليد بن رشيد في ذات الزمان فلقب فرطته قمعوا مليدا إلى أمير المنامين ووقف ماما قال أبو الوليد بن رشيد في مقالاته أن كان مذهب العلم الفلسفة والمجالس يجعل إلى الإسلام إلى السوء بسبب أنها ي يؤدي السوء، ولكن كلاك والصلاة العلم الفلسفة والمجالس لا يكون كذلك بل يكون ما يفهم كلاك أنما يرى أكثر الأجل والعاس والعيش في الناس هم الفقهاء لأن القرب والшир يولد في الإسلام في طبيعة لا يصنعه إن كانت الطبيعة جيدة يكاد هن الامام إلى الخير وإن كانت الطبيعة الأنسية، يقعد هي الامام إلى السوء والمقدسة وعند ذلك أمر الملك لأبي رشيد بعليها الوفاة
39 Noteworthy is that Lucena was known at the time as ‘Lucena of the Jews’, as Ibn Rushd was “accused of being of Jewish origin”, Fierro, 2004, 475.
To the author of the *Kitāb al-Mujādala* there is no need to choose between religion and philosophy: the two are part of the same all-embracing worldview. The triumph of Ibn Rushd before the Caliph is no doubt the triumph that the author of the *Kitāb al-Mujādala* claims for his own philosophical approach, and Ibn Rushd’s criticism of the ‘ulamā’ (a group to which the *fuqahā’* belong) corresponds with the author’s criticism of some of his co-religionists. I argue, and we shall see this in more detail in the next section of the present chapter, that Ibn Rushd’s arguments form the basis of a worldview which turns philosophy into a key element in the justification for living under non-Muslim rule. One of these arguments is the very definition of philosophy and logic given by Ibn Rushd. The Arabic term of *ṣina’a* connotes ‘production resulting from the action of man’ and comes close to the understandings of ‘art’ of the Greeks, who applied the term “to every craft created by man (as opposed to nature) so long as it was productive (and not cognitive), relied on skill (rather than inspiration), and was consciously guided by general rules (and not just routine).” 32 Aristotle (to whose views Ibn Rushd adhered closely), incorporated the connotation of science into that of art, and understood it “as an ability and as knowledge”. 33 Being ‘art’, philosophy and logic are the result of man’s craft but do not account for man’s behaviour; the latter two are independent things. In the same way, no one would doubt the goodness of jurisprudence, or *fiqh*; the good or bad natural inclinations of the *fuqahā’* are decisive in explaining the bad practices in the application of the *sharī’a*, to which Ibn Rushd seems to be implicitly referring. From this it follows that, in the same way that the natural dispositions of man determine whether someone is a ‘good’ or an ‘evil’ philosopher, they determine whether he is a ‘good’ or an ‘evil’ Muslim, too. ‘Arts’ by themselves, play no role in it.

One main reason philosophy is a guide to ‘good’ is because rational sciences, as Ibn Rushd claims before the Caliph, “teach people what is close and what is far away and to distinguish between what is correct and what is false”, 34 knowledge which is of the utmost importance because, as the author of the *Kitāb al-Mujādala* claims, when people are born they do not know what is hidden (*al-bāṭin*), only what is perceptible (*az-zāhir*). 35 Knowledge of the perceptible, natural world is therefore not an innate given, but nevertheless it is crucial to human beings. According to the author, this is seen in the fact that a deaf person cannot speak because he cannot hear, and a blind person cannot see because he cannot distinguish the various colours of things. 36 Yet, knowledge of the

---

33 Tatarkiewicz, 1970, 141.
34 MS AF 58, f. 45v.
35 MS AF 58, f. 43v.
36 MS AF 58, f. 43v.
perceptible world should not be acquired through the senses but mainly through the intellect. The next fragment from a longer argumentation of Aristotle illustrates this. He says:

'It is like the learned and the ignorant, like the one who makes the image of a person on a wall and this image resembles an ignorant man and the only distance existing between this image on the wall and the ignorant man are the senses and speech. If in the image of a man there is no understanding and intellect, it [that is, this man] resembles the image on the wall.' Aristotle said: ‘People are ignorant about four things and that is because they do not read books on philosophy and logic and that is why they do not understand collective names and metaphorical names.’

This exemplum strongly reminiscent of Plato’s Allegory of the Cave. There, Socrates explains why men who rely on their senses are acquainted only with shadows on the cave’s wall and have no grasp of how things really are; they are ignorant of the permanent Forms or Ideas. Education based on the use of reason enables man to avoid being misled by the senses and therefore it is the path by which to attain real knowledge of the world. The Philosopher is the model here. Very much like Plato, the passage just quoted from the Kitāb al-Mujādala states that a man can only be considered as such if he has understanding and intellect, not when he is just a ‘shadow’ and resembles an ignorant man of flesh and blood who does not use the senses and speech. It is therefore a lack of proper knowledge of what is perceptible which leaves people in the darkness of blindness according to Aristotle, who says in the Kitāb al-Mujādala:

The weak of mind believe they have understood those learned in the natural sciences, while they do not know them, and they do not understand that this is absurd. Similar is the example of the sturgeon or the nocturnal birds which think that the day is the darkness because they do not see the daylight and they judge it to be darkness.

In sum, in the Kitāb al-Mujādala Islam is the path towards light, towards which man is naturally inclined (consistent with the notion of fiṭra); also the rationalist thinking of the righteous man confirms this.

The purpose of many of the polemics with the ‘ulamā’ is to demonstrate the usefulness of the rational sciences to interreligious polemics and to the proper

37 MS AF 58, f. 46r.


39 MS AF 58, f. 43v.
understanding of Islam. Before moving to the main objections made by the author against the ‘ulamā’, a short note is in place here. In most cases, authority in the Kitāb al-Mujādala is indicated by the use of the names of Aristotle and his commentator, Ibn Rushd (Averroes). However, Russell Friedman notes that attributions of textual authority (auctoritas) to individuals in the Middle Ages do not lend authority to individual persons but to their views, in such a way that more than one – and at times, contradictory – authoritative text could be attributed to the same person. This is in keeping with the fact that, in the Kitāb al-Mujādala, Aristotle is occasionally referred to as simply ‘the Philosopher’: the authority of philosophical views is not related to a proper name. Above all, the author seems to be aiming at increasing the authoritativeness of a set of ideas and not of a given person.

Dealing with sets of ideas and not with specific individuals facilitates the ‘Islamization’ of the authority of philosophical sources by the author as, for example, those attributed to Aristotle. In his defence of the authority of philosophy, physics and logical sciences, the most important non-Muslim Philosopher, Aristotle, is presented as if he was a believing proto-Muslim. The author argues: “Aristotle, the Philosopher, claimed that Allāh created three things in men: the soul, the body and the accidents, [and these could be, MCA] good and bad.” A few folia later, almost the same arguments are attributed to Aristotle, who is quoted exclaiming even more emphatically: “Allāh, Almighty, has created these three things!” This is even clearer when the author puts into the mouth of the Philosopher the words: “Allāh created the heavenly things (as-samāwiyya). These are the first elements and do not need to keep their species; [contrary to] the animal beings, which need to keep their species.” Aristotle’s ‘adhesion to Islam’ is necessary to counter the claims of those who say that the philosophers did not believe in God. They can also be easily explained if we assume that the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala is using the commentaries on Aristotle by Ibn Rushd, or those composed by another Muslim author.

---

40 Friedman, 2013, 342. This seems to contrast with the practice in the medieval Christian universities as described by Russell Friedman, when an author quoted an auctoritas not because he agreed with the views in it but to refute these views. “[A] medieval scholar can describe as an auctoritas a passage endorsing a view that he eventually will reject”. Friedman, 2013, 342 and 342–343.

41 We consequently meet the categories of the “philosopher”, the “alchemist”, the “geometrician”, the “astrologer” and the “logician” that who oppose the figure of the “ulamā”, MS AF 58, f. 34r, f. 50r, f. 56v.

42 The argument is followed by a longer disquisition on the various possible combinations of these elements in men depending on whether they are good or bad. MS AF 58, f. 50v.

43 MS AF 58, f. 51v.

44 MS AF 58, ff. 45r–v.

It should be noted that in other parts of this polemic, the author eventually uses the Romance to render God, and writes ‘Diosh’.

45 MS AF 58, f. 51v.

46 MS AF 58, ff. 45r–v.
such as Ibn Sinā.\textsuperscript{45} The latter again shows that the author is not concerned with a particular individual but with the usefulness of his views to his own arguments. In his eyes, an authority needs to be sound (and, in this, a proper name plays a major role) and, almost as importantly, the author needs to show that it agrees with Islam.

6.2.2. The Objections of the Author on the 'Ulamā'

After having addressed the defence of philosophy of the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala, I would like to provide some examples of his attack on some of the Muslim religious scholars, the 'ulamā'. In his view, the 'ulamā' a) do not understand science and b) do not understand philosophy. Consequently, they do not understand Islam and, moreover, they are unable to defeat the Christians and the Jews in religious polemics.

a) Science and Qur’ānic Interpretation

In several places, the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala engages in the interpretation of Qur’ānic verses. He claims, for example, that rabb al-mashriqī wa rabb al-maghrībi (Q. 26:28, 73:9, MCA) refers to the whole of the winter and the summer (al-ʿumūma fi-ṣ-ṣayf wa-sh-shīta) and that, in turn, rabb al-mashriqayn wa rabb al-maghribayn (Q. 55:17, MCA) refers to the fact that the winter is bright as is the summer, (aṣ-ṣayf mashriqan wa-sh-shīta mashriqan). A third verse, rabb al-mashāriqi wa-rabb al-magharibī (Q. 70:40, MCA), refers to the fact that every day the sun rises on time and sets on time (yaṭlaʿa fi kurra wa-yaghrubu fi kurra).\textsuperscript{46} I do not want to delve into the details of the author’s analysis of these verses. What concerns me is his claim that the 'ulamā' do not succeed in disclosing the meaning of Qur’ānic passages such as these and, hence, of God’s true message, because they are ignorant of science. For example, he states vehemently that, “the Earth in the sky is like the yolk of the egg in the egg white”,\textsuperscript{47} which is one of the various astronomical insights which in his view are indispensable to understanding God’s Revelation to Muḥammad. The latter, he claims, is beyond the understanding of the 'ulamā'.

\textsuperscript{45} In Chapter Three the possibility been argued that this author is not quoting directly from Aristotle’s works but from Muslim sources, instead. With regard to Ibn Rushd, he recognizes him as the ‘comentador’ [that is, the commentator of Aristotle] \textit{par excellence} among the Christians.

\textsuperscript{46} MS AF 58, f. 44r.

\textsuperscript{47} MS AF 58, f. 44r.
b) Philosophy and Logic

The ‘ulamā’ do not understand God’s revelation because they do not read books of logic and philosophy, and this prevents them from giving adequate answers to Christian arguments. The biblical verse “He created man in His own image” (Gen 1:26, MCA) is illustrative of the shortcomings of their views. This verse was a subject of Muslim polemics with the Christians because, as we shall see below, it could be interpreted as a reference to the divine nature of Jesus. Moreover, it was an issue of special concern to the members of the Mudejar communities themselves. The author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala quotes a saying of Muḥammad to explain this verse, and claims that the ‘ulamā’ do not understand the meaning of this saying because they overlook that it is a metonymy (hadhā al-hā’ hā’ al-kināya; ‘this hā’ is the hā’ of the metonymy’, MCA). Moreover, if they were acquainted with philosophy and logic, they would see that God’s creation of men could easily be explained by means of philosophy. They would understand, for example, why, according to the ‘ulamā’ al-falāṣifa’, Adam needs to have a father and also why his father is the four humours. Philosophy would teach them that the four humours have no beginning and no end, and in this way, they resemble ‘time’, which has no beginning and no end either.

6.2.3. The Use of Philosophy in the Kitāb al-Mujādala: An Example

I would like to end this section by giving the reader an example of the use of rationalist sciences in the Kitāb al-Mujādala. My purpose is to attempt to illustrate the claim by its author that these sciences should be incorporated into the study of Islam not only because they help to interpret the Qur’ān but, above all, because they are a powerful tool in refuting the arguments of the Mudejars’ religious opponents. More particularly, I shall show how he substantiates their use in the reading of the Torah and the Gospels, which were often used to attack the Muslims. The ‘Chapter concerning Wine’ is a good example. As in many other

---

48 MS AF 58, ff. 33v-34r. MS AF 58, f. 34r.

49 This topic appears in the fatwās to the Mudejars in MS BNE 4950 (Madrid). MS BNE 4950 contains the answer of al-Halfār to the Mudejars of Aragon which gives evidence of the relations which they had with each other (Miller, 2008, 269-273). The explanation of this verse by the muftī upholds the unity of God. On f. 233v of MS BNE 4950, the muftī explains the verse ‘He created Adam to his image’ with the saying of Muḥammad when he saw a man who was hitting his slave. Muḥammad ordered the man to be treated in the same way and argued that the slave had been created according to the image of Adam (and Adam, in turn, was created according to God’s image). It is also dealt with by al-Ṭūfī, who argues that this verse from Genesis is in accordance with the Sunna. Demirί, 2003, 48 and ff.

50 The author alternates between the terms falsafa and falāṣifa in this work.

51 As in many other
parts in this polemic, in this Chapter the author accommodates his philosophical-rationalist worldview to the scrutiny of theological issues by recourse to inference, a characteristic move in this polemic which suggests that he is targeting audiences who were acquainted with his arguments. On account of its brevity, I quote the Chapter in full:

The Christians claim and represent it in the form of *mujāda* [perhaps *mujādala*, controversy]. They say: ‘God Almighty considers the person who does drink wine better than the one who does not drink it, and drinks water.’ Say to them: ‘In each argument which takes place between two [parties], a judge is necessary. And we test you with your Gospels, when the angel announced to Ghishabīl [that is, Elisabeth]: ‘The Holy Ghost has come in you and you are pregnant with a boy whose name will be Yahyā [that is, John the Baptist], who [Rom. “*euxai*”] is hot and [it is because of this that he, MCA] will become drunk from wine and cider [*sidr*] and from everything that comes out of it [viz. wine].’ And it is also said in the Torah that the Lord said to Mūṣā [Moses]: ‘Do not come close to wine, do not drink of it and do not eat anything which comes out of it.’ And Aristotle said in the Physics: ‘The physical bodies [*lahāmiyya*] need cold, humid, dry-*agrīyya* [read ‘dry-sour’] and hot. And the cold and the humid are water, and the hot and the dry are wine. But wine, although [Rom. “*maghāra*”] it is hot and dry, it is not sour [*agrīyya*], which means [Rom. *provinda*, *(porvenir*)].’ The man who eats another *agrīyya* [read ‘sour’] thing can live without it [that is, the wine, MCA].’

The Christian and Graeco-Roman traditions are not merely juxtaposed in the preceding arguments but, instead intermingle with each other and prove to be mutually reinforcing. John the Baptist has a hot nature and is prone to get drunk, and therefore should not drink. However, John’s predisposition is omitted in the annunciation of Gabriel to Elisabeth recorded in the Gospel of Luke, which reads: “He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth” (Luke 1, 15). It is possible that the author of the *Kitāb al-Mujādala* misread *yaskuru* (‘to fill’) and vocalized *yaskaru* (‘to become drunk’) instead, resulting in: “He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will become drunk with (it)” But even if he meant filled because the text talks about wine and cider, it will lead in any case to intoxication.

---

54 The word is difficult to read.

55 MS AF 58, f. 38r.

زعموا التصارع و يجعلوه في المجادلة و قالوا: أحسن الرجل الذي يشرب الخمر من الذي لا يشربه و يشرب الدماء عند الله تعالى فلهم كثر خصام جرا بين اثنين يحتج فيه حاكم و يتجرؤ كدجاج ك حين نشر الملك لعشيئين روح قدن يدخل بك و تكون عنصرا من صبي اسمه يحيا الدول صهو من خمر و سديره و من كل شي يسكر و قال أيضا في النزية أن آرب فارس لا تقرب الخمر ولا تشرب منه ولا تأكل شيء يخرف منه و قال استوا في فلسفة الطبيعة الحمادية يجي电阻 أربع أشياء يارد ورطب و آسرية بابس و حرف فليس هي العربية يعنى بربندة دونه يعنى الإنسان يأكل من العربية الأخرى.

56 Another possibility is that, at the time the *Kitāb al-Mujādala* was composed, different readings of this passage were in circulation. This would explain the difference with the canonical text.
In the same way, the quotation from the Torah is not a faithful rendering of the book of Numbers 6:3-4. Nonetheless, it strongly resembles the prescriptions which God gives in it to Moses for the Nazirites, a group consecrated to God whose members had taken vows of abstention. Hence this passage relates to the previous one about John, who is never qualified in the Gospels as a Nazirite, but who is known for his severely ascetic way of life. It is very likely that this is an implicit reference to the Nazirites. The author claims elsewhere that Peter and Paul refashioned the original message of Christianity in such a way that the Christian communities could no longer be recognized as such, an argument which, as we have seen, is also found in the polemic by al-Qaysi. He claims that they are not even worthy to be called Nazirites, or an-Naṣārā. They do not act as Jesus who, as a true Nazirite (Nāṣirī), celebrated the Jewish feasts, the Sabbath, the sacrifices and circumcision and did not eat blood or carrion and performed the ablutions.55

Furthermore, according to the theory of the Greek physician Hippocrates (460-370 BC), a person is healthy when the four temperaments – which correspond to the four elements – are in balance. From other passages in the Kitāb al-Mujādala, we know that its author was certainly acquainted with this theory widely used by the Greek philosophers, and therefore also by Aristotle. Aristotle claims that a body needs humid, cold, dry-sour and hot to stay alive. Whereas water is wet and cold, wine is only dry and hot, but not sour. The dual quality of dry (that is, sour) brings Aristotle to the conclusion that a man can live without drinking wine as long as he eats other sour things. The very hot nature of John prescribes that if he is to keep his fluids in balance and not to get drunk he should not drink alcohol. So, the adjective ḥarrun (hot) is in my view an addition by the author himself to explain John's propensity to get drunk on the basis of the theory of the four elements. Taken as a whole, the analysis of the various arguments in the 'Chapter concerning Wine' reveals the author's attempt to reconcile a rationalist approach to the world with scriptural exegesis and it shows the internal connections established between the various sources used. However, what really matters is that such an approach serves to defend Islam effectively before the Christians in an interreligious society tinted with polyphonic claims of authority in areas that, as we shall see below, did not stop with exegesis.

55 MS AF 58, f. 50v

Christians refute this by arguing that they are called al-Naṣārā after Jesus, the Nazarene (al-Nāṣirīyyu), because he was born in Nazareth (al-Nāṣira). The author's rebuttal of the Christians' claim that geographical provenance entails religious affiliation will be discussed in the next chapter.
6.3. An Ethical-Centred Model for Islam in the Kitāb al-Mujādala

In this section, I shall argue that the approach to philosophy in the Kitāb al-Mujādala provides an alternative model to tradition alone for the believer in his search for God. This model not only serves as a guide to polemicize with the unbelievers but shows how to live as a pious Muslim in the Christian territories. The idea that a righteous man will reach the true religion by nature if he uses his reasoning and knowledge is well known in the literature of the Iberian Peninsula. We find one of its greatest exponents in Ibn Ṭufayl's twelfth-century celebrated work the Ḥayy ibn Yaẓān (also known as Philosophus Autodidactus). The main character, Ḥayy, comes to know the divine solely through the use of philosophy and rational inquiry. Rationalist thinking was also common in polemical writings. In the fifteenth-century Book of Aḥṭub and Šalmon, the queen of an isolated island, who governs her subjects in a just way by applying reason and knowledge but without having any religion, converts to Judaism after she has listened to the arguments of a Christian, a Muslim and a Jew. As Szpiech argues, the just Queen “is evocative of Lady Wisdom, Sophia, or philosophy, who guides and judges the actions of men with wisdom.”

It is along these lines of thought we should read the claims by Ibn Rushd above that philosophy and logic “lead people to goodness.” Sophia is personified as a fair queen, who guides her subjects towards good works, yet she is an unsatisfied queen, who is in need of a religion. The author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala cannot but agree that philosophy does not suffice to make sense of one's life as a Muslim. Philosophy and logic help the righteous man to distinguish between true and false, but at the end, God's Sacred Law (or sharʿa) is what gives him the details of proper conduct. The author claims that the violation of the sharʿa, even of just one of its rules, leads men to sin; if the sharʿa is disregarded, it is like the many commands which God sent to people were sent to stones, instead! Such an understanding might explain why the Jews are the ones who receive one of the few expletives in the Kitāb al-Mujādala (“God damn the Jews) as an answer to their claim that Muslims have no sharʿ (Sacred Law).

---

56 Ela s.v. “Ḥayy b. Yaẓān” (Goichon).
57 Szpiech, 2011, 210. As he notes in the same spot, the Queen in this polemic mainly directed against Christianity also “plays the role of a virtuous, anti-Mary”.
58 Few lines below, he stresses this view again by quoting Q. 16:33 “Allah wronged them not, but they did wrong themselves”.
59 Ibid. and MS AF 58, f. 41v. ولذلك إذا جاور الإنسان أفراد الشرعة أو واحدة منها ولا كان هذا كذلك أكثر ارسل الله تلك الشريعة إلى الناس مثله كما أرسلها إلى الحجارة
60 MS AF 58, f. 51r, see the full Arabic quotation above.
Having no revealed law is, indeed, one of the worst things that can happen to believing men.

The underlying notion is that the sharī'a is a guide for the Muslim community and the measure by which to punish those who violate God's commands. This comes from the understanding that man is responsible for his actions, albeit as we shall see, not for all of them. In this respect, the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala seems to follow the widespread doctrine of kasb of al-Ash'arī: God sends His decrees (qāḍā'ya) and His destiny (qadarhu) to mankind through the acquisition of their acts (or iktisāb). How acquisition works is clearly explained by Ibn Rushd on f. 51v. He claims:

Everything mankind does, good or bad, is his fate in force; a fate which the Lord aims to accomplish. If it is said that everything is in the faculty of men, this is innovation [bid'ā] and unbelief [kufr]; and the same occurs if [it is said that, MCA] everything comes from God. More frequently God sent prophets and revealed books of commands and prohibitions. In these two ways things which come to men are constrained [majbūra]. And things come to men by their acquisitions [iktsibḥim].

Man, in the author's view, has no control over the actions imposed by God (majhūra). In the same way, if "the ruler (or judge) orders a thief to kill someone, he can thereafter crucify the thief for theft, but not for having committed a murder." As we shall see below, the same is true when the sulṭān is involved or when the orders come from a superior in rank. This notwithstanding, man has a certain degree of free will in his actions.

How free will and acquisition (iktisāb) relate to each other in the Kitāb al-Mujādala is illustrated in the discussion of three cases of the application of sharī'a rules – including one hadd penalty. We would not be erring greatly if we consider these examples prototypical and not as attempts to deal with real cases brought before a qāḍī. They come very close to the intention to copy an abbreviated list of hudūd penalties by a fifteenth-century faqīh from the Ebro Valley mentioned by Kathryn Miller. Much like the examples in the Kitāb al-Mujādala, the list of the Aragonese faqīh evokes a situation of majority in

61 MS AF 58, f. 52v.
62 MS AF 58, f. 51v.
63 MS AF 58, f. 52v.
64 MS AF 58, f. 48v-49r.

I could not find the form qaḍā'ya under the roots qāḍ y.

مثال ذلك إذا أمر الحاكم لسارق أن يذبح رجل ثم أمر الحاكم أن يصبه السارق بسب سرقته لا يذكر الذي ذبح.
Muslim lands; however, Miller notes that, since the hudūd penalties might have clashed with the Christians’ law, their application could have turned into an internal affair without leaving behind much written evidence.\(^{65}\)

All the cases are quoted from the so-called Kitāb as-Sunna ['Book of Sunna']. The first case is about a fool who wants to divorce his wife or kill someone as a result of his illness. Here, the sharī‘a would not validate his divorce and he would not be sentenced to the death penalty for his crime. The reason for this is that, because he suffers from the condition of being a congenital fool, his acts are compelled. At the other extreme, the second case is an example of when acts result from man’s free will (Sp. ‘albedrío’): these are, for example, the things which happen to someone through the acquisition (iktisāb) of his acts – when he drinks wine and then divorces his wife or kills someone. Under these circumstances, his divorce would be effective and he would be sentenced to the death penalty because he has freely chosen to drink wine. A third, intermediate case, is when a man commands another man to commit a murder. In such circumstances, the sharī‘a commands only the killer be punished and not the one who gave the command, because the first had the possibility to do or not to do the deed. Most important to the argument which I would like to make next is that, in all cases, the sharī‘a is addressed as a practice closely related to ethics, and places men’s responsibility in the foreground.

According to the author, the sharī‘a is definitely the best way to guide man’s natural inclination to act rightly, to act ethically way because it is the way which suits human nature best. Such claims rest on the idea of Islam as the ad-dīn al-fītra, or the ‘natural religion’ par excellence. Let me show this with an example about what, in the author’s views, shows the confusion of the Christians with regard to the true meaning of God’s commands: the prescriptions regarding marriage, and its legal dissolution, or divorce. The author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala claims in this respect that the Christians disapprove of the Muslims divorcing their wives and they assert that Christian Sacred Law (sharī‘a) prohibits this practice. Muslims should answer to this:

\[\text{In our Sacred Law (fi sharī‘inā) there are two things. The first one is that when a man marries his woman and she proves to be good, he should keep her during his whole life and, in this way, he observes your law. The second is that if the man marries his woman and she proves to be bad then it is better that he divorce her than that he keep her. If he keeps her by force, she will cheat on him and he will kill her. She will be murdered}\]

\[^{65}\text{Miller, 2018, 81 and 84. See for the application of Muslim law (sunna) in fourteenth-century Aragon, Boswell, 1977, Chapter Three, particularly 133ff. See notwithstanding my remarks above about the death penalty, whose application, as noted, was often impeded by the Christians. With regard to the issuing of fatwās, Miller claims that none “can be definitively attributed to a Mudejar, either in Aragon or Valencia or in other regions of Christian Spain.” Op. cit., 124.}\]
because she [has left] the house of his husband with one of the people. And this occurs many times more among you [that is, the Christians, MCA] than among us.62

These arguments serve the same goals as those in the Ta'īd quoted above: to demonstrate that “the nation of Muhammad [...]” unlike the Jews and the Christians, “continues [...] to uphold its [...] Sacred Law (shari‘a), to this day of ours; they have neither altered nor changed one item thereof.”63 They also support the author’s claim that God has sent His commands because man has been endowed with the capacity to act rightly or wrongly, but He expects that they will act rightfully.64

The prominent place occupied by ethics in the Kitâb al-Mujâdala is clearly underlined in the following two passages. One refers to Seneca (Shânîka). The author explains that Seneca “was a learned person, who lived before the advent of Christianity and Judaism (sic!),”65 who said “I shall not abstain from doing evil out of fear that the sultan will inflict harm on me, only out of fear of being weakened by the slander of the evil person.”66 Hence, an individual can choose good or evil without taking into consideration either the authority of the ruler or the consequences of violating it; there are other aspects which are equally important. In the case of Seneca, it is the fear of slander which leads him to abstain from doing evil, a fear in which is based on the multiple political conspiracies in which Seneca was involved during his lifetime and ultimately forced him to commit suicide.67 It is my understanding that, when the author of the Kitâb al-Mujâdala claims that Seneca was

62 Reading insecure.
63 MS AF 58, f. 55v.
64 recalculating the number of books of the Old Testament, newly published in the nineteenth century, is clearly
65 Seneca was a contemporary of Jesus. Coincidentally, his birthplace was Córdoba, Spain, where Ibn Rushd was also born. Among other works, he wrote the Epistulae morales to which this passage seems to refer. Calboli et al. “Seneca”. In Epistle CXIV, Seneca claims: “The soul is our king. [...] The king, in that he respects things honourable, watches over the welfare of the body which is entrusted to his charge, and gives that body no base, no ignoble commands.” Seneca. Epistles 99-124. Trans. by Richard M. Gummere, 23-24.
66 MS AF 58, f. 55v.
67 Reading insecure.

I could not find the same sentence in Seneca’s works. It should be noted that the popularity of aphorisms attributed to Seneca is well illustrated in Fernando de Rojas fifteenth-century work La Celestina. Fothergill-Payne, 1988. Moreover, not only did Alfonso de Cartagena translate some verses attributed to Seneca, Michelle Hamilton has also found a great part of it transcribed into Hebrew characters in a fifteenth-century work. Hamilton, 2014, 166-167.
neither a Christian nor a Jew, he is indirectly emphasizing the importance of the ‘natural inclination towards ethics’ in man. Such an ethical consciousness is illustrated in Islam by the figure of Ibrāhīm, who is considered to have been a Muslim avant la lettre because he was the first monotheist (or ḥanīf); it is an ethical consciousness which is prior to any religious belief and entails a code of conduct. When misused, as in the case of slander, this consciousness can provoke greater damage than the anger of the sūltān. Note that the term sūltān is also used anachronistically. The closeness between the central views in this passage and Ibn Ṭufayl’s work mentioned above is also very interesting.

The following quotation from Aristotle’s Politics refers to the same natural inclination towards ethics, and reads: “Aristotle said: ‘Philosophy is divided into two: natural and civil. In the Politics (al-Madaniyya’), he said: ‘The man who waits is better than the one who attacks’” (Rom. ‘escomete’; from the Cast. acometer, Cat. escometre). Aristotle’s statement not only refers to various ways a person can behave, it also implies a distinction between questions on ‘natural philosophy’ and questions which deal with the government of the city or ‘polis’. It underlines the primacy which rational thought has in the author’s worldview as opposed to the imposition of will by force. This is directly related to his dispute with the Christians above, in which he says: “The true faith must not be demonstrated by the sword. The Muslims must each time [in a disputation, MCA] defeat the Christians and the true faith will become clear by the evident truth.” Indubitably, for this author, the truth of Islam is the most evident.

To recapitulate, according to the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala, non-revealed sources explain God’s creation, the world and its natural laws, so there can be only harmony between philosophy and rationalist sciences on the one side and Revelation on the other. He goes as far as to quote Aristotle, who compares God and Nature and reaches the conclusion that both “create nothing that does not fulfil a purpose”. Certainly, the insights elicited by philosophy and rationalist sciences are useful in understanding both difficult Qur’ānic passages and passages from the Christian and the Jewish Scriptures, and likewise in understanding the world. Therefore they can be used in interreligious polemic and likewise to disclose the meaning of Islam and to buttress religious authority within the Mudejar aljamas. More importantly, these insights are powerful tools to indicate which ways are more suited to nature and, in particular, to human nature. Islam is tantamount to ‘the’ human nature (fīṭra), a nature in conformity with ethics, which accordingly takes a

---

53 Ela s.v. “Hanīf” (Montgomery Watt).
54 MS AF 58, f. 46r.
55 See the Introduction for the full quote.
central place in the life of a Muslim believer. An additional reason that ethics should be a cornerstone in the approaches to Islam in this polemic is that, by placing men's responsibility in the foreground, their adherence to Islamic ethics sanctions the Mudejars' living outside the Muslim territories and deflects attention from the political domination of the Christians, as we shall see next, when dealing with the political domination of the Christians.

6.4. Political Philosophy in the Kitāb al-Mujādala

The author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala is well aware that the political domination of the Christians was the major challenge faced by Muslim believers in the Christian territories. This is illustrated in the following passage which reads:

The Christians claim that the land which belongs to Spain [Ashbaniyya] is their land. Say to them that the whole land belongs to God, praised be He, and claim that its possession is of God, be He exalted. Like His word: 'The earth is Allāh's. He gives it as an inheritance to whom He will' [Q. 7: 128], and like this/ in this way, the Muslims claim that it is theirs.  

Here the Christians overtly stress their political superiority in the territory, a statement qualified by the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala. By claiming that 'the earth is Allāh's', the Mudejar author is claiming that 'the whole land belongs to God' and, in doing so he distinguishes between authority and leadership in temporal matters and authority in religious matters. This distinction accounts for the claim that being under non-Muslim rule does not impede being a devout Muslim, an assertion which agrees with the views of some Muslim jurists, for instance, al-Māzarī who has been mentioned above. More importantly, it provides an answer to the most important provocation to the Muslim believers in the Christian territories, namely: the Christians' assertion that political dominance entails religious excellence.

77 MS AF f. 54v.

78 See Chapter One. This Mālikī jurist showed great enthusiasm for the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, which, as Gutas rightly notes, is an exceptional attitude in a school of law which was among the most reluctant to accept the points of view and the methods of philosophy. Al-Māzarī claims: 'He (that is, Ibn Sīnā), proceeded in his efforts with great skill until he achieved what nobody had ever achieved'. Gutas, 2014, 367. We do not know if his affinity with philosophy, which is also found in the Kitāb al-Mujādala, played any role in his legal decisions about the Sicilian Mudejar qāḍī discussed above.
We have seen that the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala challenged the political domination of the Christians by showing the inconsistencies in the arguments they use in their polemics and by building on a discourse based on philosophy and ethics; a discourse which claimed to be more appropriate to understanding Islam than the discourse of the traditional, Malikī, ‘ulama’. In this section, I hope to present a succinct discussion of the political philosophy behind such views and its use to counter the authority claims of the Christians. The theoretical tools by which the author separates politics from religion are the same as those which sustain his polemical discourse throughout the Kitāb al-Mujādala; I would like to suggest, moreover, the possibility that they had been inspired by the political philosophy of al-Fārābī. We have noted above that the Kitāb al-Mujādala quotes from “al-Falsafa-l-Madaniyya” (literally, “civil philosophy”) and that these passages can hardly be attributable to Aristotle, as the author claims, since Aristotle’s Politics was not translated into Arabic. It is most likely that they belong to the works of the influential tenth-century Muslim thinker.

Galston notes that the relationship between religion and philosophy is central to the political thought of al-Fārābī. However, there is no scholarly consensus on whether or not the author believed that religion was an imitation of philosophy. Nevertheless, it is beyond the scope of the present study to address such questions; my interest is in the figure of the philosopher-king-prophet who should rule al-Fārābī’s state. My starting point is the various references to the sultan in the passages from “al-Falsafa-l-Madaniyya” quoted in the Kitāb al-Mujādala. In al-Fārābī’s eyes, the ideal ruler of the virtuous city (al-Madina-l-Fādila) must be endowed with a number of skills, among them a sound understanding, a good diction and enunciation, a disdain of the worldly goods and a love of justice. Alfred Ivry sums up his functions very aptly, and claims: “In the best or ideal state, the philosopher is king, legislating practices as well as beliefs.” In a moment we shall see that some of these notions are found in the Kitāb al-Mujādala, in which, much as in al-Fārābī, the references to the sultan do not seem to be addressed to a particular individual. Whereas the sultan primarily fulfilled a governmental function in majority Muslim lands, in this

79 Galston, 1990, 7-8 for a short overview of the various scholarly positions. As Deborah L. Black puts it, religion was seen by him as “the popular expression of philosophy communicated to the non-philosophical masses”, accordingly “it is the function of a virtuous religion to ensure this practical realization of philosophical truths, and thus al-Farabi maintains that the ideal philosopher is also a prophet and a political leader.” Black, 2003, 111.

80 Ivry, 1999, 385.

81 See the Introduction to this chapter. The author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala refers to Maghrebi and Andalusī Muslim rulers, either separately or in tales about the Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. See Chapter Two for the names of these rulers. In some stories (ḥikāya), he also refers to the military campaigns of al-Manṣūr in Asturias and to the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (648-705 CE). MS AF 58, ff. 61r-62r.
treatise the term sultan points instead to abstract notions of power embodied by the rulers of a community. It is used in this polemic to address religious and ethical issues.82

a) The Powers and Duties of the Sultan

The following passage attributed to Aristotle summarizes the powers of the sultan in the Kitâb al-Mujâdala:

Aristotle said in "al-Falsafa-l-Madaniyya" that the sultan does not have two powers, absolute power and the power of justice; indeed, absolute means [here, MCA] shul(u)to.83 He also said that the sultan has three powers over his subjects and that each of these powers does not behave his subjects but only him. The first [of his powers, MCA] is that his subjects follow him and support him in war; the second is that nobody beside himself will mint coins under his rule; and the third is that he is accepted in all places of his dominion and that only he can quash legal decisions.84

In this passage the sultan is undoubtedly depicted as a temporal ruler but his functions do not end with leading his subjects to war or with minting coins: he also acts as an ethical model for his subjects. Leaning again on the authority of Aristotle, the author of the Kitâb al-Mujâdala claims that "[t]he sultan must educate the people to do good deeds and they must be warned by him, and people [would] be warned by him about the good deeds. And people also will imitate the bad deeds like [those] of the sultan (yaqtadūna [...] ash-shirr ka-as-sultan)."85 Moreover, he claims that the authority (hukm) is not complete without three conditions: a sultan who is just (sultan āḍīl), a just law (sharî āḍila) and people who love the just (an-nās yubhibūna al-ʿāḍila).86 In a nutshell, the behaviour of the ruler must be flawless: he is the head of the community, the highest authority and his subjects

82 Sometimes, the author uses another word which denotes power and governance, king (malik). This is, for example, the case when he refers to the Kings of Israel Rehoboam and Jeroboam (MS AF 58, f. 41r), or, as we will see below, to Jesus.
83 Rom. 'suelto' or 'absoluto?'; Eng. free, absolute.
84 MS AF 58, f. 59v.
85 MS AF 58, f. 57r.
86 MS AF 58, f. 57v.
will imitate him. The sultān is, according to this author, the head of the community in a metaphorical sense:

\[ \text{It is the same as the head in the body: if the head complains, the rest of the body does not work. [This is] because in the head are all the senses: the eyes, the mouth, the ears and the mind. If human thought is [focused on what happens, MCA] in his mind, the whole body imitates it [the head] in what is good and in what is evil. In the same way, people will imitate the sultān.} \]

The author's comparison with the bodily senses is congruent with his worldview in which philosophy, logic and the natural sciences are necessary to an understanding of the world and of God, and in which, as we have seen above, sensorial experience is central to the acquisition of proper knowledge. In this particular case, the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala explains to his Mudejar co-religionist the 'civil' – here, 'ethical' – functions of the sultān by recourse to 'biology'. The comparison between the health of a state and the health of the body had been well known since ancient times and also appears in Fārābī. In this case it might also have had a broader religious significance to the Mudejars by echoing the Qur'ānic sayings and the traditions about the proximity and imitation of the Christian and the Jewish mores such as “and if any amongst you takes them [Jews and Christians] as friends, then surely, he is one of them” (Q. 5:51).

b) The Limits of the Authority of the Sultān and of the Church

The author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala stresses the fact that the sultān is the highest office-holder in the judiciary and has the privilege to overturn legal verdicts. In his view, the sultān can be compared to God in the sense that both are equally able to govern and to enforce their absolute will on their subjects, so men can be punished for their acts only to some extent. This does not mean, of course, that the sultān is on an equal footing with God. In the eyes of the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala, the duties and powers of the sultān

---

87 The preceding claims are from Aristotle but here it is not clear whether the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala himself has provided the comparison.

88 MS Af 58, f. 57v.

89 Such an understanding of sin is at odds with the claims of the Jews and the Christians in this work who, according to the author, argue that all the tribulations of the world are caused by the faults of their ancestors (ff. 43r-v). For a detailed discussion of predestination and sin in the Kitāb al-Mujādala, see Colomina Aparicio, “Predestination and Free Will in Mudejar Polemics. Kitāb al-Mujādala ma’a al-Yahūd wa-n-Nāṣārā [The Book called Disputation with the Jews and the Christians] and its Historical and Intellectual Background.” (forthcoming 2016).
are great, but also limited. The following is an example of how the author employs the conceptual framework outlined to dispute with the Christians about leadership, more particularly, that of Jesus. The passage follows two previous claims made by the Christians. The first is that Jesus will be king (malik) ‘in the saddle’ of his father David and that his kingdom will not end. The second is that Jesus will not reign in this world but in the Hereafter. The first claim can be related either to the biblical prophecies in Isaiah (9:6-7) which announce the coming of a child who will reign over David’s kingdom and will be called ‘mighty God’, or to the announcement of Jesus’ impending birth to Maria in Luke 1: 32-33. The second is similar to the words of Jesus before Pilate, where he says (I quote): "My kingdom is not of this world." John 8:36. After having refuted these arguments, the author claims:

The Christians say that ‘Īsā bn. Maryam [here, the author uses the Islamic name for Jesus] is the king of the world [malik ad-dunyā]. Tell them [namely: the Christians, MCA]: “I shall test you with your Gospel when the Jews took him [namely: Jesus, MCA] and threw him into the hands of Pilate. Pilate said to him: ‘Are you the one who claims that he is the sultan of Israel?’ And Jesus answered to Pilate: ‘If I were the sultan of Israel, they would not have thrown me into your hands?”

In the scene of Jesus before Pilate in the canonical Gospels, Jesus is not referred to as a sultan, but as a king. There, Pilate asks whether he is the king of the Jews and Jesus answers, “You have said so”, or “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” These differences suggest that the author might have been using a variant version of the Bible. It is unclear whether by using malik, ‘king’, the Christians have in mind an individual who, besides political authority has religious authority, and whether the argument that Jesus is the ‘king of the world’ refers indirectly to the Christians’ view of Jesus as the Son of God. In any event, on the grounds that Jesus, Himself, argues that He is not the sultan of Israel, and that His own people, the Jews, have betrayed him and delivered him to Pilate, it is safe to argue that, in this passage, the author is denying the alleged Christian claim that Jesus had temporal authority. Hence, the Christians themselves cannot claim this authority for Jesus.

The author also calls upon the sultan to counter the claims of the Christians that: ‘God was human and we test this with the Torah, in which it says: ‘We made man into our
Mudejar Polemics with the Christians

image.93 “Naṣna’u [that is to say, we have made, MCA]”, claims the author, “is like the Trinity”.92 The argument brought forward by the Christians is that in the Scriptures God uses the plural form ‘we’ because He consists of three hypostases: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, retorts the Muslim author, this interpretation can be refuted on two grounds. First, the Christians “do not understand that God created man only as an act of dignity, as when the sultan with dignity says ‘me, we made it’. The sultan who says this word is just a single man! And if they [that is, the Christians, MCA] say: ‘We understand here more than one’, they can understand five, or ten, or whatever number they want because in this word they can understand one, or many.”93 In the same way as the sultan uses the pluralis majestatis, God uses the plural ‘We made’ (naṣna’u) but they are both a single individual. The use of this form is meant only to express ‘majesty, dignity and authority’ and it is therefore not a proof of the Trinity.94

In the same way as the author sets limits to the authority of the sultan and of Jesus, he also sets boundaries on the Christian Church. In his view, the Christian leaders have interfered too much with God’s commands. In this polemic, the Christians themselves acknowledge that they have taken their sharia—which is the ‘fe’ (Sp.; Eng. faith)—from Paul and other holy men. As a result of the decisions taken by these leaders, Christian baptism has altered from the one prescribed by Moses and Aaron. Christians make use of a cross, oil and the chrism, elements which are not commanded in the Gospels.95 When Jesus died, the Apostles fled to Rome to avoid being killed by the Jews. There, Peter and Paul invented a religion (iftar dinan).96 In Rome (fi ard ar-ruma), they allowed the Romans (ar-rumanin) to celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday. They could not abolish such a deep-rooted celebration but replaced the offerings by the Host which was lifted by the priests and also the ritual slaughter. Driven by their egos, Peter and Paul made lawful the consumption of carrion and blood and everything prohibited by God in the Torah and by Jesus in the Gospel. In Rome, too, Paul abolished circumcision, and it was not replaced, as

93 Here the author is quoting Gen 1: 26, which, as already noted, figures prominently in the controversy between the two communities.
94 MS AF 58, f. 33r-

Faqawwun al-nasirin nam bawakan allah jal wal-a’lam batin az al-dini al-mulukhi bihi filah filsafatan al-an Nasa’i al-jathib il Baylor also bihi fihiya al-manjib il Pakistani

95 MS AF 58, ff. 33r-v.

Qal lemon al jauabin al aam lisi yakeen Tahallak ba’ara al a al wa’ada al karimah ma’dal al sultan al karimah ila fihuma ilaman al sultanun al di’al Qal lemon al jauabin al aam lisi yakeen Tahallak ba’ara al a al wa’ada al karimah ma’dal al sultanun al di’al Qal lemon al jauabin al aam lisi yakeen Tahallak ba’ara al a al wa’ada al karimah ma’dal al sultanun al di’al

96 I do not discuss the author’s views about the second part of the verse, ‘to Our likeness’ because they are not relevant to my present argument.
97 MS AF 58, f. 34r. He quotes Mc 1: 9–11; Mt. 3: 13–17 and Lc 3: 21–22.
98 MS AF 58, f. 35v.
both Abraham and Noah received God's blessing before they were circumcised. 97
Nevertheless, Peter and Paul could not enforce all the changes they wanted to make. In the
case of the Sabbath, for instance, they had to reach a compromise: they kept the celebration
but changed the day.

Indeed, according to the Acts of the Apostles, after the death of Jesus a conference
took place in Jerusalem at which the Apostles discussed which practices non-Jews who
would convert to Christianity should follow. During this conference, circumcision was
abrogated, but the consumption of blood remained disallowed (Acts 15). The author of the
Kitāb al-Mujādala asks what kind of faith is taking into account that, according to the
Gospel narrative, Jesus reproved the Apostles, and said: 'I've been so long with you, and you
do not even know me?'98 In the author's view, these words underline that the Apostles did
not know the faith of Jesus. As a result, the Christians' profession of faith (rendered in this
passage as "shahada dhe-fe", 'shahada of faith') is the outcome of their misunderstanding of
Jesus' message. We have seen in Chapter Five that, in the eyes of the Mudejars, the same
re crimination applies to the Jews, who also do not follow God's commands.

The alleged innovations introduced by Peter and Paul can also be understood on
the basis of the relation between discursive and social changes or, in other words, by the
notion that discursive and social changes are dialectically interrelated. 99 In the preceding
paragraphs, the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala emphasizes the fact that, to some extent at
least, these innovations can be explained by the change of residence of Peter and Paul.
Peter and Paul 'invented a religion' after they had settled in Rome, in a context different to
that in which Christianity had emerged. A new environment and the demise of their
religious leader, Jesus, provided fertile ground for Peter and Paul to change the discourse
and practice of Christianity radically. By introducing changes into the Christian practices,
they behaved differently from Jesus Who, according to the author, had not come to change
the law of the prophets, but to fulfil what was commanded.99 However, Peter and Paul
could not enforce all the changes they wanted to make. In the case of the Sabbath, for
instance, they had to reach a compromise: they kept the celebration but changed the day.
The author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala notes that, whereas the spread of Christianity in Rome
partly contributed to the changes in the Christian discourses, in their turn these
innovations produced a social change among Christians. Peter and Paul refashioned the

97 The idea that Jesus did not come to change the Jewish law and that Paul was the responsible for that are both
recurrent arguments among 'Muslim authors who follow pre-Islamic, Jewish-Christian arguments'. Lazarus-
Yafeh, 1996, 71. The same views are found in the polemic of al-Qaysī. Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, 1994, passim.
98 This is a slight adaptation of the words of Jesus to Philip in John. 14:9.
100 The author quotes Matt. 5:17 on f. 41v to reinforce his views.
original message of Christianity in such a way the Christian communities can no longer be recognized as such. As has been noted above, the author considers that contemporary Christians are not even worthy to be called an-Naṣārā. They follow the commands of their leaders who have changed God’s laws, but God’s laws, he claims, can only be abrogated by God Himself. The principal argument is that the political and religious powers must be understood separately; despite the great power which the sultan (as holder of power) or the Christian church might hold, neither of them is above the power of God and cannot impose their religion on the Mudejars.

Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the polemics with the Christians exemplified by the Kitāb al-Mujādala and on the defence of philosophy and rationalist sciences as sources of religious authority in Islam made by the author. The analysis has revealed the author’s overall purpose is to reconcile philosophical knowledge with tradition-based knowledge. In his view, not only do philosophy, logic and rationalist sciences not contradict Islam, they are in fact the tools best suited to disclose its meaning both externally in religious polemics with the Christians and the Jews, and internally within the Mudejar aljamas.

I have argued that the Kitāb al-Mujādala quotes a large number of Christian arguments against Muslims and Islam, most of which emphasize Christian doctrine, and that these arguments should be read against the intense campaigns launched by Christian to proselytize among Muslims and Jews. In composing the Kitāb al-Mujādala, the author could have attempted to counter the efforts of these missionaries to convert the Mudejars with such claims as the Christian religion should be accepted ‘as it is’, because the ‘religious law’ which issues from Christianity rests on tradition. This Mudejar author of polemics claims that tradition is not enough to produce evidence in religion and he supports his views on the authority of Muḥammad, according to whom the individual must choose a prophet on the basis of his independent judgement and his teaching of science. The author denounces the ignorance of the Christians in all these things: they do not understand science; they do not understand philosophy; and, hence, they cannot practise exegesis properly and are wrong in their beliefs and practices. Consequently, Christians have no grasp of Jesus’ true message and are unable to see that the Christian Scriptures foretell and confirm Islam. Furthermore, the use of philosophy by the author of this polemic can be understood as an tool to be wielded against such Christian missionaries as Juan de...
Torquemada, who castigated Islam as a religion doomed to fatalism and Muslims as irrational.

On the basis of the present analysis, it can be argued that the audiences addressed in the Kitāb al-Mujādala are not confined to the Christians and the Jews, as is stated in the title of this treatise, but its message is also intended for the members of the Muslim community. In this respect, I have shown that the author draws intra-community lines which are based on knowledge. The distinction between Muslim ‘ulamā’ and those Muslims learned in philosophy and logic, the ‘ulamā’ al-falsafa wa-l-mantiq, and his unequivocal inclination towards the last group, is derived from the author’s particular understanding of textual authority. Consequently, he sets the supporters of the use of ratio apart on the one hand and on the other distinguishes between those Muslims who are able to understand properly and use rationalist inquiry to address religious questions and those who are not. The two groups are addressed differently: the first is looked upon with contempt and is attacked vehemently. A knowledge of philosophy, logic and the natural sciences are the pillars of his polemical discourse towards other Muslims because, in his eyes, this learning is a prerequisite for a proper understanding the world and, above all, of God and His divine Revelation. I have shown that the author is openly critical of the irrational and ignorant Muslim religious scholars (‘ulamā’), most probably the Mālikis, who all either overlook or disapprove of the knowledge of philosophy and its use in polemics with the unbelievers. The ignorant ‘ulamā’ base their views on tradition and this leads them misinterpret the Qur’ān. An intelligent man should not be satisfied with the acceptance of Islam by tradition and should take pains to sustain his religion by rational methods.

These boundaries suggest that an understanding of the authority of textual sources is a key element in determining whether individuals belong to the in- or out-group of Muslims. Very much as Szpiech has noted for conversion narratives, the polemics of the Mudejars are also aimed at constructing “an image of textuality, a shared corpus of auctoritates (trusted proof texts) that are, by definition, both authoritative and authentic.” Muslim polemical authors set up such an authoritative corpus by engaging in a dialectical relationship with their audiences: although their selection of Qur’ānic verses, traditions (Sunna), sayings of the Prophet (ḥadīth) and early Islamic narratives was the fruit of the polemists’ individual agency, they were endorsed by the group. In this sense textual authority is community-based; it is directed at and originates from the Muslim audiences. The upshot is that the internal cohesion of the community of believers can be disrupted by opposing views on which texts should be trusted, or, in other words, which authorities serve to underpin Islam and which not. These processes take place without taking religious

affiliation into account. Nevertheless, social status does seem to matter and, as is made obvious by the training needed to understand philosophy, the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala is most probably addressing members of the elite. In this, he is following in the footsteps of Ibn Rushd, who claims that the rationalist sciences are not intended for the common people but for the learned. This is consistent with the leading position which he could have enjoyed within his community and with the close connections which the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala seems to have had with the Christian elite. These considerations raise the question of the role of the connections of this author with the Jewish elites, such as the Waqqār family in Toledo, but the internal evidence in the Kitāb al-Mujādala does not allow us to shed any light on this point.

The analysis in this chapter has also revealed that the views of the author about man's responsibility for his acts are closely related to God's revelation as it unfolds in His sharīʿa. I have argued that the dispositions quoted by the author from the Kitāb as-Sunna ['Book of Sunna'] most probably do not refer to real cases but acquire their meaning within the much broader discussion of God's decree and determination (al-qadāʾ wa-l-qadar) in which the author seems to adhere to the well-known kastb-doctrine propounded by al-Ashʿarī. Most important is the author's claim that man has a predisposition to act ethically and that Islam, as the religion which best fits the nature of man (or fiṭra), is also the one which will ensure the best possible ethical behaviour. These arguments seem to have been helpful efforts to polemicize with the Christians on such issues as divorce among Muslims, but also to counter the Christian ethical model of sin which downplays responsibility because of Jesus' redemption through baptism. By emphasizing the importance of individual ethics in Islam and, hence, for salvation, the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala provides a framework suitable to an environment in which orthopraxis was becoming increasingly difficult for the Mudejars.

The final aspect I have dealt with is the most important question of how the author counterbalances the Christians' political superiority in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula by attempting to show that a political hierarchy does not presuppose a religious hierarchy. He underpins his claims by a political philosophy which suits the Mudejars' particular circumstances. Central to this philosophy is the figure of the sultān who, as argued, represents the holder of power in a rather abstract way, and does not refer to a specific person. It has been suggested that the polemicist might be following the philosophy of al-Fārābī (upon which he seems to confer his own interpretation), an assertion which is congruent with our findings in the previous chapters. He limits the powers of the sultān to temporal matters and argues that individuals, even those who hold the highest ranks in society like the sultān, are subordinate to God's will. The sum of the
arguments of the author – that political power is not the equivalent of religious excellence and that each individual must take responsibility for his own actions – corresponds to his attempt to expound a discourse on authority which would also be authoritative, that is to say, which would authorize the possibility to be a good Muslim in the Christian lands. The findings in this chapter add to the evidence already accumulated that the Kitāb al-Mugādala might have circulated in the immediate environment of the Sharafi family and that the interest in “al-Falsafa-l-Madaniyya” could have been the fruit of the contemporary translations of Aristotle’s Politics.