Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete: new light on Ibn Isḥāq's (d. 150/767) Arabic version of John 15: 23–16: 1[1]

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Abstract

Biblical proof-texts for the prophethood of Muḥammad play a prominent role in early Muslim interest in the Bible. This study re-examines the earliest known attempt by Muslims to find such a biblical proof-text in the New Testament – the Arabic version of Jesus's sermon on the "advocate/comforter" (Gk. *paráklētos*) in John 15: 23–16 found in Ibn Isḥāq's *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*. Key to understanding Ibn Isḥāq's adaptation of the Johannine text, this study argues, is the Christian Palestinian Aramaic Gospel behind it as well as the climate of Late Antique apocalypticism and messianism out of which Ibn Isḥāq's distinctively Islamic version emerged. This study concludes with an interpretation of Quran 61: 6, which appears to claim that Jesus prophesied a future prophet named Aḥmad.
Keywords: Ibn Isḥāq, Aḥmad, Muḥammad, Quran, Menaḥem, Paraclete, Late Antiquity, Apocalypticism, Messianism, Gospel of John, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Translation

The belief that Jewish and Christian scriptures prophesied Muḥammad's prophetic mission has inspired Muslim interest in the Bible since the earliest days of Islam. This belief was integral to the first efforts Muslim scholars undertook to articulate Islam's relationship to the scriptural legacy of its monotheistic forbears. The Quran even describes the early community of Believers as those who follow "the Messenger, the gentile prophet whom they find inscribed in the Torah and the Gospel (*al-rasūl al-nabī al-ummī alladhī yajidūnahu*

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[1] Abbreviations used: *CCPA* = Christa Müller-Kessler and Michael Sokoloff (eds), *Corpus of Christian Palestinian Aramaic*, 5 vols (Groningen: STYX, 1997–99); *CCR* = Agnes Smith Lewis (ed.), *Codex Climaci Rescriptus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909); *GdQ* = Theodor Nöldeke, Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergsträßer and Otto Pretzl, *Geschichte des Qorans*, 3 vols (repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1961); *PSLG* = Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson (eds), *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1899).

maktūban fī l-tawrāti wa-l-injīl)" (Q. Aʿrāf 7: 157). Elsewhere in the Quran, Jesus proclaims to the Children of Israel:

> I am God's Messenger to you, sent to confirm the teachings of the Torah before me and to announce good tidings of a messenger who shall come after me; his name is Aḥmad (*innī rasūl Allāh ilaykum muṣaddiqan li-mā bayna yadayya min al-tawrāti wa-mubashshiran bi-rasūlin min baʿdī ismuhu Aḥmad*, Q. Ṣaff 61: 6).

Inasmuch as one interprets "Aḥmad" (most praised one) and "Muḥammad" (praised one) to be the same person, the Quran thus also asserts that Jesus proclaimed Muḥammad's advent. Yet, despite the explicitness of such proclamations, the Arabic scripture makes no precise claim concerning where in the Torah or Gospels such prophesies appear. The task of combing through the Jewish and Christian scriptures for these portents fell to its community, which assiduously pursued signs of such portents in the Bible.

Yet how early did this search begin? Our best evidence suggests that from at least the mid-eighth century CE, if not earlier, Muslim readers of the New Testament singled out Jesus's discourse on the Paraclete in the Gospel of John as the very annunciation of Muḥammad's prophetic destiny that Jesus proclaims to the Israelites in Q. 61: 6. For many early Muslims, Muḥammad was indeed this Paraclete prophesied by Jesus. Muslims were not the first to claim that Jesus's sermon on the Paraclete was in fact a fatidic pronouncement about the founder of their religious movement. The New Testament Johannine literature, in fact, recognizes two "Paracletes": the exalted Christ who intercedes with God on the believers' behalf (1 John 2: 1) and "the other Paraclete", the Spirit of Truth, whom Jesus promises will ever remain with his followers after Jesus departs from the world (John 14: 16–9).[2] Although this "other Paraclete" has been traditionally identified with the Holy Spirit (John 14: 26), the history of Biblical interpretation has seen no lack of attempts to envisage this second Paraclete as an actual successor to Christ embodied by, or even incarnated in, a historical person. As early as the late second century CE the Montanists saw in the founder of their prophetic movement, Montanus of Phyrgia, a manifestation of Jesus's promise of the Paraclete,[3] even if it is uncertain if Montanus himself claimed to be the Paraclete.[4] Manichaeans, too, regarded the rapture of Mani and his union with his Sýzygos (his celestial pair-comrade and alter ego) in the third century CE as the moment in which he united

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2   Raymond E. Brown, "The Paraclete in the fourth gospel", *New Testament Studies* 13, 1967, 113–32; George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

3   Antti Marjanen, "Egalitarian ecstatic 'new prophecy'", in A. Marjanen and Petri Loumanen (eds), *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics"* (Brill: Leiden, 2005), 196–9.

4   Cf. the competing views of Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79 ff. and William Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), 32–3.

with the Paraclete predicted by the Johannine Christ.[5] Modern historians are more certain that the Mani himself, and not just his acolytes, claimed that he embodied the Paraclete.[6]

This study investigates the earliest known attestations for Muslim attempts to uncover the textual counterpart in the Gospels of the Quranic Jesus's prophecy of a future prophet named Aḥmad. In particular, this study takes a fresh look at our earliest extant Arabic translation of a Gospel passage: the translation of Jesus' prophecy of be coming the Paraclete (Gr. *paráklētos*), a comforter/advocate, in John 15: 23–16: 1 as preserved in Muḥammad b. Isḥāq's (d. *c*. 767) seminal biography of Muḥammad.

Ibn Isḥāq's reading of John 15: 23–16: 1

The earliest exemplar of Muslim attempts to connect Q. 61: 6 and the Paraclete is the translation of John 15: 26–16: 1 found in Ibn Isḥāq's *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, a work compiled and taught under ʿAbbāsid patronage during the caliphate of Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr (r. 754–75).[7] The historical importance of Ibn Isḥāq's reworking of this passage from the Johannine discourse on the Paraclete has been recognized for over a century, inspiring a substantial corpus of scholarship.[8] This scholarly corpus has been primarily interested in Ibn Isḥāq's excerpt of

5 See, e.g., *Cologne Mani Codex* 45–64, in Iain Gardner and Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 54–7.

6 See *Kephailia* 14.3–15.24 in Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts*, 73–5. Cf. John C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism* (Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2011), 80.

7 See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām*, 17 vols, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 2, 16–7 and Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Irshād al-arīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb*, 7 vols, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1993), 6, 2419. Cf. Josef Horovitz, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors*, ed. and tr. L. Conrad (Princeton: Darwin, 2002), 74–90 and Gregor Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad: Nature and Authenticity*, tr. Uwe Vagelpohl and ed. James E. Montgomery (London: Routledge, 2011), 26–34.

8 Anton Baumstark, "Eine altarabische Evangelienübersetzung aus dem Christlich-Palästinensischen", *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und Verwandte Gebiete* 8, 1932, 201–09; Alfred Guillaume, "The version of the Gospels used in Medina, *c*. A.D. 700", *Al-Andalus* 15, 1950, 289–96; and Sidney H. Griffith, "Arguing from scripture: the Bible in the Christian/Muslim encounter in the Middle Ages", in Thomas J. Heffernan and Thomas E. Burman (eds), *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in the Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 29–58, which revises the earlier findings of a now-classic study in idem, "The Gospel in Arabic: an inquiry into its appearance in the first Abbasid century", *Oriens Christianus* 69, 1985, 126–67 (esp. 137 ff.). Two recent contributions are: Claude Gilliot, "Nochmals: Hieß der Prophet Muḥammad?", in Markus Groß and Karl-Heinz Ohlig (eds), *Die Entstehung einer Weltreligion, II: Von der koranischen Bewegung zum Frühislam* (Tübingen: Hans Schiler, 2011), 53–95 (esp. 77–81); and Jan M.F. van Reeth, "Who is the 'Other' Paraclete?", in Carlos A. Segovia and Basil Lourié (eds), *The Coming of the Comforter: When, Where and to Whom? Studies on the Rise of Islam and Various Other Topics in Memory of John Wansbrough* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012), 423–52. My interpretation departs considerably from those offered by Gilliot and, especially, van Reeth.

the Gospel of John because it predates all other *extant* translations of the Gospels into Arabic – even translations by Arabic-speaking Christians.[9] Yet, there remains one key aspect of Ibn Isḥāq's excerpt from the Gospel of John – an aspect that, in my view, has been underappreciated.

What makes Ibn Isḥāq's translation exceptional, even among its successors, is that his version draws on neither a Greek nor a Syriac version of the Gospel text. Unlike subsequent Arabic translations of the Bible, behind Ibn Isḥāq's translation lay a Christian Palestinian Aramaic (hereafter CPA) version of the Gospel of John. The significance of this fact deserves further emphasis, because the language of the template for Ibn Isḥāq's translation sheds considerable light on its provenance, both in terms of geography and chronology.

Christian Palestinian Aramaic is a "Western" Aramaic dialect once used by Christians of Palestine, Roman Arabia and the Sinai. It differs from Syriac – an "Eastern" Aramaic dialect used predominantly, though not exclusively, by non-Chalcedonian Christians – in its script, corpus and geographical reach. Whereas the corpus of Christian Syriac spans chronologically from the second century CE to the contemporary era and spread geographically from the Near East to the reaches of China, CPA survives in a far more limited corpus that flourished in a comparatively circumscribed geographical area. The CPA corpus consists mostly of inscriptions, short texts (personal letters, prayers, etc.), and translations of Greek texts (e.g. the Septuagint and New Testament, vitae, homilies, and liturgies). Scholars divide the corpus into three periods: the early (400–700 CE), the middle (700–900 CE), and the late period (900–1300 CE).[10] Lastly, whereas Syriac emerges as the language *par excellence* of non-Chalcedonian, Miaphysite Christology in Late Antiquity, CPA gradually emerges as a key language for the monastic communities of Eastern Palestine and the Transjordan from the sixth to eighth centuries CE. As a different Aramaic dialect to that of Syriac, the distinctiveness of CPA and its script provided a viable, and perhaps

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9   Hikmat Kashouh has amassed considerable evidence that the Arabic Christian translations of the second half of the eighth century CE – once thought to be the first attempts – probably drew upon "more primitive exemplars". He concludes, "The second half of the eighth century is when we should talk of the *history of transmission* of the Arabic Gospel text and not the beginning of the Arabic translation of the Gospels" (H. Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels: The Manuscripts and Their Families*, Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2010, 333). I find the basic thesis plausible; however, Kashouh's main text for supporting this theory, MS Vat. Ar. 13, provides far less evidence for a pre-Islamic Arabic translation of the Gospels than he believes. See the critiques of S.H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the 'People of the Book' in the Language of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 51 ff. and Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, "An early fragmentary Christian Palestinian rendition of the Gospels into Arabic from Mār Sābā (MS Vat. Ar. 13, 9th c.)", *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 1, 2013, 69–113.
10 Christa Müller-Kessler, "Christian Palestinian Aramaic and its significance to the Western Aramaic dialect group", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119, 1999, 631. Cf. Sidney H. Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic: the languages of the monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51, 1997, 11–31 and Robert Hoyland, "Mount Nebo, Jabal Ramm, and the status of Christian Palestinian Aramaic and Old Arabic in Late Roman Palestine and Arabia", in M.C.A. MacDonald (ed.), *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 29–46.

purposefully elevated, diophysite alternative to the increasingly dominant Syriac lexicon of miaphysite theology by the time of the Islamic conquests. Hence, CPA found favour in particular alongside Levantine Greek with the diophysite monastics that dominated the Jerusalem Patriarchate and powerful Sabaite monasteries of the Judaean desert,[11] a favour it enjoyed at least until the mid-ninth century CE when Arabic began to eclipse CPA among Melkite Christians.[12]

Ibn Isḥāq's reliance on a CPA version of John is, therefore, not merely a philological curiosity. His reliance on a CPA *Vorlage* means that historians can trace his source text to a particular geography within the early Islamic polity and a specific Christian community. To my knowledge, no other Arabic translations of biblical texts, fragmentary or otherwise, draw upon a CPA *Vorlage* – although one may reasonably expect future research to bring more to light.

The transmission history of Ibn Isḥāq's biography of Muḥammad is notoriously complex: the text survives in at least four discrete recensions, most of which are fragmentary. Yet the Arabic Gospel text only appears in one recension of Ibn Isḥāq's work. This recension is also the most widely preserved: the recension transmitted from Ibn Isḥāq's student, Ziyād ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Bakkāʾī (d. 799).[13] Other redactors of Ibn Isḥāq either omitted the text, or else their version thereof does not survive, given the fragmentary state of their preservation.[14] For this reason, the passage appears independently attested in only two works, each drawing from Ziyād al-Bakkāʾī's recension: Ibn Hishām's (d. *c.* 830) *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya* and an unedited fragment of Abū Jaʿfar Ibn Abī

11 Philip Wood, "*We Have No King But Christ*": *Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquests (c. 400–585)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 208; cf. Alain Desreumaux, "La naissance d'une nouvelle écriture araméenne à l'époque byzantine", *Semitica* 37, 1987, 95–107.

12 Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic", 24 ff. Although the ninth century marks the definitive period of the rise of Arabic among Melkite Christians of Palestine, Arabic appears as an important medium for Christian worship at least as early as the late eighth century. The survey of the Jerusalem church commissioned by Charlemagne and preserved in the Basel Roll, recorded upon the survey's return to Europe in 808, testifies already to the use of "the Saracen tongue" in litanies. See Michael McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land: Wealth, Personnel, and Buildings of a Mediterranean Church between Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2011), 138–43, 206–7.

13 Ziyād al-Bakkāʾī's transmission of Ibn Isḥāq's text was one of the most sought after, as Ibn Isḥāq purportedly dictated his text to him twice ("*amlā ʿalayhi imlāʾ an marratayn*"). See Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, 35 vols, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1983–92), 9, 489.

14 For a concise overview of the different transmissions of Ibn Isḥāq's work, see Miklos Muranyi, "Ibn Isḥāq's *Kitāb al-Maġāzī* in der *Riwāya* von Yūnus b. Bukair: Bemerkungen zur frühen Überlieferungsgeschichte", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14, 1991, 214–75. Thus, al-Ṭabarī (d. 922) does not include an excerpt of the translation in the corpus of Ibn Isḥāq's materials he preserves in his *Tārīkh* and the *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, his *tafsīr*, from Ibn Isḥāq's student Salama ibn al-Faḍl (d. *c.* 806). The transmission of Yūnus ibn Bukayr (d. 815) preserved by ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-ʿUṭāridī (794–886) also omits the passage, as does the transmission of Muḥammad b. Salama al-Ḥarrānī (d. 806).

Shayba's (d. 909) *Tārīkh*.[15] Insofar as the latter source is accessible only in manuscript, I reproduce the Arabic text in an appendix.

Other key aspects of Ibn Isḥāq's version the Johannine Paraclete discourse become clearer with reading; its text runs as follows:[16]

> (15.23) Whosoever despises me, despises the Lord. (24) Had I not performed in their presence deeds no other had performed before, then they would have been without sin. But now they have seen[17] and think that they can bring me to disgrace,[18] even the Lord as well. (25) But it is inevitable that the word of the Law (*al-nāmūs*) will be fulfilled:[19] "They despised me without reason" – that is, "in error".[20] (26) If al-Mnḥmnā,[21] the one whom the Lord will send, had come to you from the Lord – the Spirit of Truth[22] who comes forth from the Lord – he would be a witness for me, and you (pl.) as well, because you (pl.) were with me from the beginning (*qadīman*). (16.1) I have spoken of this lest you doubt.

15 Ms. Zāhiriyya, *Majmūʿa* 19, fol. 54r (with thanks to Saud Al Sarhan for help locating the manuscript). Ibn Abī Shayba's *isnād* for the report suggests a transmission independent of Ibn Hishām's redaction (see Appendix). Unfortunately, Ibn Abī Shayba's version is also truncated and garbled in several places. On the identification of this fragment with Ibn Abī Shayba's *Tārīkh*, see Sezgin, *GAS*, 1: 164 and Muṭāʿ al-Ṭarābīshī, *Ruwāt Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Yasār fī l-maghāzī wa-l-siyar wa-sāʾir al-marwiyyāt* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir, 1994), 37, 492–7.

16 Ibn Hishām, *K. Sīrat Rasūl Allāh: Das Leben Mohammeds nach Mohammed ibn Ishak bearbeitet von Abd el-Malik ibn Hischâm*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Dieterische Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1858–60), 1, 149–50; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, 2 vols (ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī and ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ al-Shalabī) (Cairo: al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 1, 232–3.

17 In the text: بطروا; thus, Griffith translates the text as "they have become proud", plausibly suggesting that Ibn Isḥāq "Islamicized" the passage and rendered his reading to align closely with the Quran ("Arguing from scripture", 39–40; cf. Q. Anfāl 8: 47 and Qaṣaṣ 28: 58). Baumstark ("Eine altarabische Evangelienübersetzung", 205) and Guillaume ("Version of the Gospels", 293) suggested, instead, reading نظروا; and this reading is supported by Abū Jaʿfar Ibn Abī Shayba's recension. Van Reeth's suggestion to read بصروا is also plausible ("Comforter", 438), but lacks the support of the manuscripts available to me. However, I reject van Reeth's subsequent, and in my view unjustifiably speculative, reconstruction of the text.

18 Reading يَغُرُّونني (cf. Lane, 1, 1990a) rather than يعزونني as in Ibn Hishām, ed. Wüstenfeld, 1, 150.1 (=ed. Saqqā et al., 1, 233.3).

19 In Ibn Abī Shayba's recension: ". . . that the Kingdom will be fulfilled among the people (*an tatimma l-mamlakatu fī l-nās*)"; see the appendix.

20 Cf. Ps. 35: 19, 69: 4. The sense of *majjānan* as "without reason" derives from the CPA *l-mgn*; hence, Ibn Isḥāq glosses *majjānan* as meaning "in error (*bāṭilan*)".

21 Ibn Abī Shayba's version reads منحيمنا rather than المنحمنا, garbling the letters somewhat and dropping the *alif-lām*. See the appendix.

22 Reading روح القسط, with the CPA *rwḥ d-qwšṭ* and Ibn Hishām (ed. Wüstenfeld), 1, 150.3. Even though the majority of the Arabic MSS have روح القدس (Ibn Hishām, ed. Saqqā et al., 1, 233.5 and n. 3 thereto), this is most likely a result of hyper-correction since *qisṭ* in Arabic means "justice" rather than "holiness". I have also translated the text without the *waw* preceding *rūḥ al-qisṭ*, since some of the Arabic MSS omit it and this reading conforms more closely to the CPA lectionary.

As amply documented by Griffith,[23] Ibn Isḥāq's translation is not merely a literal, word-for-word Arabic rendering. He also offers a quasi-Islamicized version of the passage. Hence, "my Father" (*ʾby*) and "the Father" (*ʾbʾ*) in the CPA become merely "the Lord" (*al-rabb*) in the Arabic. Moreover, in Ibn Isḥāq's rendering of John 15: 26, God rather than Jesus sends the Paraclete. All of these modifications accommodate touchstone tenets of Islamic Christology. However, Ibn Isḥāq's rendering of the passage still preserves sufficient vestiges of the original to determine with relative certainty its source.

Two features reveal to us that Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic translation derives from a CPA Gospel. The first is the rendering of the Paraclete as *al-mnḥmnā*, thus transcribing the CPA *mnḥmnʾ* (comforter) rather than the Greek παράκλμτος. In contrast to CPA, where the lexical root *nḥm* generally means "to comfort",[24] neither *nḥm* nor *mnḥmnʾ* mean "comforter" in Syriac,[25] nor is the Syriac root used to translate the Greek *paráklētos* in Syriac versions of John's Gospel (see below). The second is the rendering of the Johannine "Spirit of Truth" in Arabic as *rūḥ al-qisṭ*, conforming to the CPA *rwḥʾ d-qwšṭʾ* rather than the Syriac *rwḥ d-šrʾrʾ* (ܪܘܚܐ ܕܫܪܪܐ).[26]

The first feature is especially striking. Immediately after his quotation from the Gospel of John, Ibn Isḥāq explains to his readers that al-Mnḥmnā in "Aramaic" (*al-siryāniyya*)[27] and means "Muḥammad". He also notes that in Greek (*al-rūmiyya*) the word is al-Baraqlīṭus (البرقليطس = παράκλητος). While the equivalence of *mnḥmnʾ* and *paráklētos* is relatively straightforward, the identification of these words with Muḥammad is certainly less so. Unlike *mnḥmnʾ* in Aramaic and *paráklētos* in Greek, "Muḥammad" does not mean "comforter" in Arabic, but rather "praised one".[28]

Although Ibn Isḥāq's version of this excerpt from the Gospel of John is early, it is also scarcely cited outside Ibn Hishām's recension. This is puzzling given

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23 "Arguing from scripture", 36–45.

24 M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Christian Palestinian Aramaic* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 260b–261a.

25 In Syriac, the root *n.ḥ.m* is, rather, usually associated with raising the dead back to life; see, e.g., Robert Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 2 vols (London: Clarendon, 1879–1901), 2, 2337. On the translation of παράκλητος as "comforter" in Syriac, see n. 58 below.

26 *PSLG*, 24; cf. Kiraz, 4: 287 (see n. 22 above). The corruption of *rwḥʾ d-qwšṭʾ* into *rwḥ d-qwdšʾ* also occurs in CPA; see, for example, *CCPA*, 2(a), 193b (John 15: 26).

27 "Christian Palestinian Aramaic" is a modern designation, and Arabic-speaking writers referred to Aramaic generally as *al-siryāniyya* without distinguishing between Aramaic dialects such as CPA and Syriac properly so-called. Cf. Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic", 17.

28 Ibn Isḥāq's interest *mnḥmnʾ* might be rooted in something other than its literal sense. Muslim scholars cited the Hebrew *mᵉʿōḏ mᵉʿōḏ* ("exceedingly") in Gen. 17: 20, for instance, because the numerical value of the Hebrew letters matched the numerical value of Arabic letters for Muḥammad. See Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton: Darwin, 1995), 24. Albeit writing a century later than Ibn Isḥāq, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī (d. *c.* 860) argued that Muḥammad must be the Paraclete because the alphanumeric value of *Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh al-nabī al-hādī* in Arabic equalled the alphanumeric value of *prqlyṭ* (ܦܪܩܠܝܛ) in Syriac; see *The Book of Religion and Empire*, tr. A. Mignana (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922), 141.

that the Johannine Paraclete discourse plays an exceedingly prominent role in Muslim discussions of the Bible from the eighth century CE onwards. Yet, Ibn Isḥāq's citation of the CPA *mnḥmnʾ* to demonstrate Muḥammad's identity with the Paraclete is nearly without parallel – virtually all discussions of Muḥammad as *mnḥmnʾ* elsewhere derive from Ibn Hishām's recension of his text.[29] Without the version preserved in Abū Jaʿfar Ibn Abī Shayba's *Tārīkh*, one could justifiably doubt whether the passage really went back to Ibn Isḥāq at all.

Muslim theological literature is replete with references to Muḥammad as the Paraclete,[30] but such literature, rather than being indebted to Ibn Isḥāq or Ibn Hishām, are most often indebted to Ibn Qutayba's (d. 889) *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa* and, to a lesser extent, the works of ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. *c.* 860).[31] Hence, the singularity of Ibn Isḥāq's rendering of the biblical proof-text is not because Muslim scholars rarely cited this proof-text. The Johannine Paraclete discourses left a profound mark on nearly all of the earliest ʿAbbāsid-era testimonia to Gospel proof-texts for Muḥammad's prophecy.

Even non-Muslim sources testify to the currency of the Johannine proof-text in Muslim scholarly circles. Thus, it appears as an integral theme in the disputation of the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775–785) with the East Syrian Patriarch Timothy I (780–823) in 165/781 (or shortly thereafter). The caliph al-Mahdī at one point challenges the patriarch, "Who then is the Paraclete (ܡܚܕܐ ܦܐܖܩܠܝܛܐ)?" "The Holy Spirit!" the patriarch answers and courteously refutes the caliph's attempts to read John's Gospel as predicting the advent of

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29 E.g. Abū l-Rabīʿ al-Kalāʿī, *al-Iktifāʾ*, 4 vols, ed. Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAlī (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1997), 1: 199; Taqī l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī, *Imtāʿ al-asmāʿ*, 15 vols, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Namīsī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1999), 3: 361–2; and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Iʿlām bi-mā fī dīn al-naṣārā*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1980), 268. The sole exception to this general rule is a tradition attributed to the early Baṣran traditionist Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (d. 728) in which he declares Muḥammad's name in Syriac (*al-siryāniyya*) to be Mushaffaḥ (ܡܚܕܐ=مشفح) and al-Mnḥmnā. The earliest version of this tradition I've found appears in al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ ibn Mūsā (d. 1149), *al-Shifāʾ*, 2 vols, ed. Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1977), 1: 322. The earliest reference to "Mushaffaḥ" as the Syriac equivalent to Muḥammad, to my knowledge, appears in ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī's (d. *c.* 860) *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* and Ibn Qutayba's (d. 889) *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa.* See ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī, *Religion and Empire*, 130–31 and S. Schmidtke, "The Muslim reception of biblical materials: Ibn Qutayba and his *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa*", *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 22, 2011, 258 (§38).

30 For a survey of the citations of the Johannine Paraclete passages in Muslim apologetic and polemical literature, see Martin Accad, "The Gospels in Muslim discourse of the ninth to the fourteenth centuries: an exegetical inventorial table (IV)", *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 14, 2003, 459–79.

31 A determination of the ultimate source(s) for the early ʿAbbāsid-era translation of the Gospels into Arabic used by these authors is still elusive. See Sabine Schmidtke, "Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and his transmission of Biblical materials from *Kitāb al-dīn wa-al-dawla* by Ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī: the evidence from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*", *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 20, 2009, 105–18; Sabine Schmidtke, "Biblical predictions of the Prophet Muḥammad among the Zaydīs of Iran", *Arabica* 59, 2012, 218–66.

Muḥammad.[32] The debate over the identity of the Paraclete also manifests itself in the famous, although dubious, correspondence between the Byzantine emperor Leo III (r. 717–741) and the Umayyad caliph ʿUmar II (r. 717–720).[33]

Yet another early rendering of John 15: 26 also appears during the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd in a disputational letter composed by the caliph's scribe (*kātib*) Abū l-Rabīʿ Muḥammad ibn Layth. Rashīd dispatched the letter in *c.* 796 to Constantine VI (r. 790–797). In the letter, Rashīd's scribe declares to the Byzantine emperor, "Jesus has testified of [Muḥammad] in your midst (ʿ*indakum*) and described him (*bayyanahu*) to you (pl.) in the Gospel". Thereafter, the Muslim scholar cites a garbled excerpt of the Johannine Paraclete discourse mixing elements from John 15: 26 and 16: 7–9, 13. His quotation of Jesus' Paraclete discourse reads as follows:

> I am going so that the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth (*al-bāraqlīṭ rūḥ al-ḥaqq*), will come to you, and he shall not speak on behalf of himself, but shall only speak as he is spoken to. He shall bear witness to me – you (pl.) will bear witness to me because you were with me – against the sins of the world(?);[34] and he will tell you of everything God has prepared for you.

Ibn al-Layth then concludes by glossing his text, "the translation (*tarjama*) of Paraclete is Aḥmad".[35] Even though this is a fascinating specimen of an early Arabic translation of John's Gospel, the text notably lacks the distinctiveness in language that separates Ibn Isḥāq's version from all of its successors. In other words, Ibn Layth's version shows no trace of a CPA *Vorlage*; rather,

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32 Martin Heimgartner (ed.), *Timethoes I, Ostsyrischer Patriarch: Disputation mit dem Kalifen al-Mahdī*, CSCO 631, *scr. syri* 244 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 38–43 (vii.18–52).

33 Arthur Jeffery, "Ghevond's text of the correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III", *Harvard Theological Review* 37, 1944, 293. *La correspondence d'Omar et de Léon*, tr. Jean-Pierre Mahé and ed. Alexan Hakobian (Paris: ACHCByz, 2015), 388 (V, 89–91). Even in the Armenian text the Greek *paráclētos* is merely transliterated as *paṙaklito*, with the Armenian equivalent *mxitʿarič* ("comforter") only being added later as a gloss. Leo III's letter survives in an Armenian translation preserved in the late-ninth-century chronicle of Łewond cited above, a medieval Latin translation (ibid., 439–52), and an Arabic version discovered in the manuscript collections at St Catherine's in the Sinai peninsula. That this Arabic version still remains unpublished is particularly regrettable, inasmuch as most recent research suggests that, rather than being originally a Greek composition (as recently suggested by Mahé in ibid., 347–8), the letter may have originally been a Christian Arabic composition. See Cecilia Palombo, "The 'correspondence' of Leo III and ʿUmar II: traces of an early Arabic apologetic work", *Millennium* 12, 2015, 231–64.

34 The text seems corrupt here due either to the stray addition of *bi-l-khaṭīʾa* or a lacuna. In my translation, I have read *waʾntum tashhadūn li-annakum maʿī min qibal al-nās bi-l-khaṭīʾa* in order to make sense of the text; however, in my view, the more plausible reading would be *min qabla l-nās*, "prior to the people/world", with *bi-l-khaṭīʾa* stricken from the text as a copyist's error.

35 *Risālat Abī l-Rabīʿ Muḥammad b. al-Layth*, 262 in Aḥmad Zakī Ṣafwat (ed.), *Jamharat rasāʾil al-ʿarab*, 4 vols (repr. Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlāduh, 1971), 3, 217–74.

this later text appears to have been translated from either Greek, Syriac, or a combination of the two.

Why was Ibn Isḥāq's translation so singular and neglected? Part of the answer must be that later, ʿAbbāsid-era, translations of the Gospels into Arabic from Greek and Syriac swiftly eclipsed the *ad hoc* translation Ibn Isḥāq transmitted. A second possibility merits consideration, too: Ibn Isḥāq's translation probably derived from a Syrian, Umayyad-era tradition of *ad hoc* translations of the Bible into Arabic that did not otherwise survive the vicissitudes of the ʿAbbāsid transformation of the early Islamic polity.

A number of considerations make this second thesis highly plausible. First, Ibn Isḥāq must have acquired his translation of the Johannine Paraclete discourse prior to seeking out ʿAbbāsid patronage because of the limited geographical circuit of the CPA corpus. Although he hailed from Medina, Ibn Isḥāq compiled and transmitted his works, in particular his works on the Prophet's biography, exclusively in Iraq (Ḥīra, Baghdād), the Jazīra (Ḥarrān), and Rayy, due to, on the one hand, the networks of patronage he enjoyed there from the ʿAbbāsids and, on the other, the controversies surrounding him in his native Medina.

Ibn Isḥāq had sought ʿAbbāsid patronage as a virtual exile from Medina, in part due to the fierce and violent opposition he faced from Mālik b. Anas's followers.[36] He first adopted the ʿAbbāsid governor of Mesopotamia, al-ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, as his patron in Ḥarrān and subsequently the caliph al-Manṣūr in Ḥīra.[37] Prior to his exile, however, Ibn Isḥāq was deeply enmeshed in Medinan scholarly circles and their networks in Syria and Egypt.[38] CPA circulated in these western territories in the Levant; however, CPA was foreign to the eastern territories where Ibn Isḥāq found refuge from the tribulations he suffered at the hands of the Medinans. Subsequent renderings of the Johannine Paraclete discourse (i.e. from the early ʿAbbāsid period onwards) are not dependent on CPA but, rather, derive from either Greek or Syriac Gospel texts. If CPA texts did not circulate in the cities where Ibn Isḥāq taught and transmitted his *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* (i.e. Ḥarrān, Ḥīra, Rayy and Baghdād) then Ibn Isḥāq must have acquired the text prior to his exile from Medina.[39]

Second, Ibn Isḥāq possessed no knowledge of CPA as far as we know. Scholars have speculated that Ibn Isḥāq's grandfather Yasār was Christian

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36   Mālik b. Anas's hatred of and rivalry with Ibn Isḥāq is notorious. Mālik purportedly boasted that he personally had expelled Ibn Isḥāq from Medina; see Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl*, 4 vols in 9 (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1952), 3: 2, 193; and Abū Jaʿfar al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ*, 4 vols, ed. Ḥamdī b. ʿAbd al-Majīd b. Ismāʿīl al-Salafī (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 2000), 4: 1196.

37   Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 6: 2419.

38   Ibn Isḥāq journeyed to Egypt at least once to study with Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb in 115/733; however, after his stay in Egypt he returned directly to Medina. No evidence indicates that he travelled to Syria or that he, like al-Zuhrī, ever enjoyed the favour of Umayyad court. See Horovitz, *Earliest Biographies*, 77, 79.

39   The early Quran-exegete of Transoxiana, Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 767), claims that Aḥmad simply "means Paraclete in Syriac (*bi-l-siryāniyya fāraqlīṭā*)", demonstrating that he relied on a Syriac *Vorlage* that, unlike Ibn Isḥāq's CPA *Vorlage*, merely transcribed the Greek παράκλητος. See *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, 5 vols, ed. ʿAbdallāh Maḥmūd Shaḥāta (repr. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 2002), 4: 316.

and, therefore, knew Syriac,[40] since he was taken captive from a sanctuary of worship, sometimes called a synagogue and on other occasions a church, in 12/633 at ʿAyn Tamr in Iraq.[41] However, even if Ibn Isḥāq's ancestry were Christian, this ancestry would most likely be rooted in the East Syrian (so-called "Nestorian") Christianity that predominated in this region of the former Sasanid Empire – i.e. of Syriac- or Aramaic-speaking heritage but not a speaker of CPA. Furthermore, speculation regarding the putative Christian heritage of Ibn Isḥāq, as recently argued by Michael Lecker, is tendentious – he is just as likely to have been of Jewish heritage.[42]

Lastly, the Syrian, late Umayyad provenance of Ibn Isḥāq's Gospel text is made all the more plausible by the fact that the only other Muslim upon whom the influence of the CPA versions of the Gospel has been directly documented is Ibn Isḥāq's teacher Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 742). An eminent scholar of Qurashī descent with intimate ties to the Umayyad court, al-Zuhrī's connections with the Umayyads earned him fame and controversy. His seminal influence on early Muslim scholarship, however, is beyond dispute.[43] A star student of al-Zuhrī,[44] Ibn Isḥāq might have acquired the Johannine text through his teacher, but just as feasibly through his own exertions. Ibn Isḥāq was an intrepid scholar who courted controversy by transmitting materials from Jews and Christians – one detractor claimed to have seen Ibn Isḥāq copy down written material from one of "the people of the Book".[45] Other critics even cited the name of one of Ibn Isḥāq's non-Muslim sources, calling him "Jacob the Jew".[46]

However, in citing non-Muslims as authorities, Ibn Isḥāq also emulated his teacher al-Zuhrī. In his narrative of Muḥammad's letter to the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, al-Zuhrī cites the authority of a Christian cleric from Jerusalem whom he met during the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705) to vouch for its authenticity.[47] The language of the letter bears out al-Zuhrī's claim (in part at least) to have drawn from a Christian Palestinian source. Muḥammad's letter threatens that Heraclius and the Byzantines will suffer "the sin of the tenants (ithm al-arīsīn)" – a clear reference to the gospel parable

40 Horovitz, *Earliest Biographies*, 76.
41 ʿAyn al-Tamr is located some 50 km west of Karbalāʾ. Cf. Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 3 ser., ed. M.J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901), 1: 2064 and Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī, *al-Tārīkh*, 2 vols, ed. M.Th. Houtsma (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 2: 150–1.
42 Michael Lecker, "Muḥammad b. Isḥāq ṣāḥib al-maghāzī: was his grandfather Jewish?", in Andrew Rippen and Roberto Tottoli (eds), *Books and Written Culture of the Islamic World: Studies Presented to Claude Gilliot on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 26–38.
43 M. Lecker, "Biographical notes on Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 41, 1996, 21–63.
44 Khaṭīb, 2: 14.
45 ʿUqaylī, *Ḍuʿafāʾ*, 4, 1200, "raʾaytu Ibn Isḥāq yaktubu ʿan rajulin min ahl al-kitāb".
46 Ibn ʿAdī al-Jurjānī, *al-Kāmil fī ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl*, 7 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984), 6: 2118. Indeed, Ibn Isḥāq did not derive his Biblical material from a single source: his citations of the Pentateuch relied on the Syriac *Peshiṭtā*. See Joseph Witzum, "Ibn Isḥāq and the Pentateuch in Arabic", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 40, 2013, 1–71.
47 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1, 1565; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 25 vols, ed. Ḥamdī ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1983), 8, 23–4.

of the "wicked tenants" dispossessed of their land due to their evil deeds (cf. Mark 12: 1–12; Matt. 21: 33–46; Luke 20: 9–20). Yet, the word for "tenant" used in al-Zuhrī's account, *arīs,* is neither Arabic, Greek, nor Syriac. *Arīs* only appears as a word for tenant in CPA translations of the Gospels.[48] If Ibn Isḥāq's translation does not derive from his teacher al-Zuhrī, he certainly acquired his Arabic rendition of the Johannine Paraclete discourse from the same networks exploited by al-Zuhrī.

Arabic sources are rich with anecdotes of Muslims acquiring, requesting and stumbling upon the sacred writings of Jews and Christians. Some accounts appear contradictory and offer conflicting data. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and his daughter Ḥafṣa allegedly aroused the Prophet's ire by over-indulging in their enthusiasm for reading stories from Jewish scripture,[49] and in other accounts, ʿUmar as caliph berates a man so severely for reading the prophecies of Daniel that he erases the book.[50] Yet other accounts portray ʿUmar as constantly wooed by Kaʿb al-Aḥbār's ability to decipher the caliph's fortune from the Hebrew scriptures.[51] Equally curious stories circulate about personalities of later generations, too, such as the intrepid bibliophile Mālik b. Dīnār (d. 748), who would eagerly pilfer the libraries of Iraq's monasteries for learnèd tomes,[52] and Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. *c.* 732) about whom stories abound of the prodigious erudition he acquired by studying with non-Muslim scholars.[53] Yet, as fascinating as these anecdotes are, they are scarcely verifiable. In the case of Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic rendition of the Johannine Paraclete discourse, however, the philological data present us with a verifiable and accessible case of historical transmission.

48   Maʿmar ibn Rāshid, *The Expeditions (Kitāb al-Maghāzī)*, ed. and tr. S.W. Anthony (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 48–9 (2.7.3) and 292, n. 76. The first scholar to discover the CPA behind this reference to *ithm al-arīsīn* was Lawrence Conrad, "Heraclius in early Islamic Kerygma", in G.J. Reinink and B. Stolte (eds), *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 115–6. Such citations raise the spectre of Umayyad translations of the Gospels into Arabic and the role of CPA therein. Christian sources recount a story about John III, Patriarch of Antioch, rendering the Gospels into Arabic in 643 alongside well-versed scholars from the Ṭayy, Tanūkh and ʿUqayl tribes at the request of the governor ʿUmayr b. Saʿd. See Michael Penn, "*John and the Emir*: A new introduction, edition, and translation", *Le Muséon* 121, 2008, 77–80. Presently, however, the evidence only permits us to suggest the possibility, and our hypothesis works just as well if one assumes the translations from CPA were *ad hoc* rather than systematic.
49   M.J. Kister, "*Ḥaddithū ʿan banī isrāʾīla wa-lā ḥaraja*: a study of an early tradition", *Israel Oriental Society* 2, 1972, 215–39.
50   Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf,* vol. 5, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1996), 431; cf. Kister, "*Ḥaddithū*", 235–6.
51   Avraham Hakim, "The death of an ideal leader: predictions and premonitions", *JAOS* 126, 2006, 1–4.
52   Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, 11 vols (repr. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), 2, 375; cf. R.G. Khoury, "Quelques réflexions sur les citation de la Bible dans les premières générations islamiques du premier et du deuxième siècles de l'hégire", *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 29, 1977, 275–6; and Alfred-Louis de Prémare, *Les fondations de l'Islam: Entre écriture et histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 333–5.
53   A.-L. de Prémare, "'*Comme il est écrit*': l'histoire d'un texte", *Studia Islamica* 70, 1989, 50–1; cf. Jean-Louis Déclais, "L'Évangile selon Wahb ibn Munabbih et sa famille", *MIDEO (Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire)* 28, 2010, 127–203.

Menaḥem and the Paraclete

Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic rendition of John 15: 23–16: 1 sheds light not merely on Muslim interest in the Bible – his Arabic rendition also sheds light on a key facet of the translation of the Gospels into CPA in the context of transformations of Late Antiquity and early Islam. The rendering of the Greek *paráklētos* into CPA as *mnḥmn'* – an Aramaic word meaning "comforter" – was not an artificial concoction of Ibn Isḥāq. Rather, he bears witness to an authentic and autochthonous shift in Christian translation of the Gospel of John into CPA. Two textual corpora confirm this: 1) palimpsests of a CPA lectionary edited by A.S. Lewis and M.D. Gibson from two twelfth-century Sinai codices discovered at St. Catherine's Monastery; and 2) the *Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum* dating to 1029 CE.[54] All of these twelfth-century CPA versions of the Gospel of John, like Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic version, translate the Greek *paráklētos* with the CPA *mnḥmn'*. Yet, these two texts are also late – they belong to the so-called late period (*c.* 900–1300 CE) of the CPA corpus. Hence, a considerable chronological gap separates these twelfth-century witnesses and our earliest, surviving exemplar of the Gospels in CPA on the one hand and, on the other, Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic version of Johannine Paraclete discourse.[55] What makes matters more curious is that the earliest testimonia to the Gospels in CPA, in particular the *Codex Climaci Rescriptus* (*CCR*) (*c.* sixth century CE), lack any attempt to provide a vernacular translation of the Greek *paráklētos* and, instead, merely transcribe the Greek original as *prqlyṭ'*, as do all Syriac versions of the Gospels.[56] Why this discrepancy?

I would like to suggest that Ibn Isḥāq offers us a key testimony to a sea change in CPA translations of John's Gospel, wherein Christians translating John's Gospel into CPA began rendering Paraclete as *mnḥmn'*, probably from the seventh century onwards. In other words, Ibn Isḥāq's text, although a Muslim text preserved for Muslim theological purposes, provides us with an important *terminus ante quem* for a key change in the translation practices of CPA. Sometime before Ibn Isḥāq's composition of his biography of Muḥammad in the mid-eighth century CE but after the sixth-century *Codex Climaci Rescriptus*, CPA translators began rendering *paráklētos* as *mnḥmn'*. Yet, why did this sea-change in CPA translations of *paráklētos* transpire in the first place?

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54 *PSLG*, 24.–9, 51.14, 55.4.

55 Ibn Isḥāq's text may or may not draw from a direct ancestor of the *Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum* or the Sinai codices. There are some interesting departures from the extant CPA versions of John 15 that make such a position difficult to uphold without reservation. Ibn Isḥāq's rendering of John 15: 24b ما كانت لهم خطيئة more closely matches the reading of Peshiṭta ܠܝܬ ܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܚܛܝܬܐ (Kiraz, 4, 286) than the *skl' l' hwt lhwn* of CPA gospel texts (*PSLG*, 24; *CCR*, 82, col. b). Ibn Isḥāq's use of "the Law" (*al-nāmūs*) in translating John 15: 15 rather than the more standard "their Law" – thus, the ܒܢܡܘܣܟܘܢ of the Sinaiticus and the ܕܢܡܘܣܗܘܢ of the Peshiṭta and the CPA *b-nmwshwn* – in fact conforms to the ܕܢܡܘܣܐ of the Harklean text (Kiraz 4: 286.ult and *CCPA*, 2a: 193b). Lastly, the Arabic rendering of John 15: 27 لأَنَّكم قديمًا كنتم معي appears slightly closer to the Sinaiticus reading ܡܢ ܪܝܫ ܥܡܝ ܐܢܬܘܢ, than the CPA *mn ryš ʿmy 'twn* (*PSLG*, 24; *CCR*, 83, col. c; *CCPA*, 2a: 194a).

56 Kiraz, 4: 287; *CCR*, 82; *CCPA*, 2(a): 139b.

In order for this process to transpire, two key developments were necessary. The first is the emergence and dominance of the exegetical current that interpreted the Paraclete as "comforter" rather than "advocate". The Greek *paráklētos* can mean either "comforter" or "advocate". Indeed, modern Bible translations tend to prefer the meaning "advocate" as the earlier sense, perhaps even rooted in Aramaic usage of *paráklētos* as a calque. Grounds for this judgement can be found in the fact that, by the Roman period, the Greek word *paráklētos* entered Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic as the loanword פרקליט, meaning "advocate", as it was often paired with its antonym קטיגוד, another loanword from the Greek *katḗgōr*, meaning "accuser".[57] In patristic exegesis, however, the Paraclete's role primarily in the sense of a "comforter" rather than an "advocate" gradually came to hold sway, thus eclipsing the earliest meaning of the term. We can see this, for example, in a seminal treatise on the Holy Spirit by Basil of Caesarea (d. 379), who writes:

> As our Lord said concerning Her [viz., the Holy Spirit], "She will glorify me" (John 16: 14). She does not give glory . . . as a creature to the creator, but as the Spirit of Truth (*rwḥ' d-šr'r'*) who plainly manifests true testimonies concerning Him through the indication of the Godhead's glory; . . . and, again, as the Spirit-Paraclete (*rwḥ' prqlyṭ'*), which She was called, for this name she has taken upon herself the likeness of the Son, that through her benefactions she might comfort (*tby' hw't*) the hearts of those to whom She should come . . .[58]

Evidence for this shift in the interpretation of *paráklētos* appears in the CPA translation of the *Catechesis* of Cyril of Jerusalem (*c.* 313–387) as well. This CPA translation of Cyril's *Catechesis* – dating perhaps to the sixth or seventh century CE[59] – simultaneously renders the Greek *paráklētos* first as *mnḥmn* (comforter) and then subsequently in transcription as *prqlyṭ'* in a matter of a few lines.[60]

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57 Cf. Hartwig Thyen, *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum*, WUNT 214 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 664–5. The Greek *katḗgōr* entered CPA as "accuser" as well; see *CCPA* 2b: 292a.

58 David G.K. Taylor (ed. and tr.), *The Syriac Versions of De Spiritu Sancto by Basil of Caesarea*, CSCO 576–7, *scr. syri* 228–9 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 87 f. (Syr.), 74 (Eng.). I have slightly modified Taylor's translation to make it a more literal rendering of the Syriac. Similar interpretations of *paráklētos* appear in I.-M. Vosté (ed.), *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentaries in Evangelium Iahannis Apostoli*, CSCO 115, *scr. syri* 62 (Leuven: Peeters, 1940), 272.5 and M.D. Gibson (ed. and tr.), *The Commentaries of Ishoʿdad of Merv, Bishop of Ḥadatha (c. 850 A.D.)*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 1: 264 (Eng.), 3: 188.5, 9 (Syr.) where the word *mby'n'* renders the idea of the Paraclete as "comforter". This perhaps follows the Peshiṭtā's translation of Lam. 1: 16.

59 The CPA translation of the *Catechesis* survives only as a fragmentary undertext of a palimpsest known as *Codex Sinaiticus Rescriptus*, overwritten by a Georgian monk in the tenth century CE. For an extensive description of the manuscript, see C. Müller-Kessler, "Codex Sinaiticus Rescriptus (CSRG/O/P/S): a collection of Christian Palestinian Aramaic manuscripts", *Le Muséon* 127, 2014, 263–309.

60 *CCPA*, 5: 193a (citing John 14: 16).

Yet, this exegetical shift in reading of the Paraclete as "comforter" does not merely hold importance for CPA Gospel translations. The impetus behind a shift in Palestinian–Aramaic Gospel translations away from transcribing παράκλητος as *prqlyṭ'* and towards a new trend in favour of translating *paráklētos* into *mnḥmn'* must also be placed in the broader religious context of Late Antique Palestine. This leads us to our second key development that gave rise to this translation shift: the CPA translation of *paráklētos* as *mnḥmn'* emerges simultaneously with the rise in messianic expectations among Palestinian Jewry of Late Antiquity.[61]

A central theme to the Jewish messianism of Palestine in Late Antiquity is the expectation of the advent of a Messiah named Menaḥem. The name is highly significant. Menaḥem means "comforter". The name is thus roughly the Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic equivalent of *paráklētos* and *mnḥmn'* of the Paraclete discourse. The name Menaḥem is also widely attested in Late Antique Jewish texts, appearing in the seminal Talmudic discussions of the Messiah's names as well as Jewish apocalypses and Palestinian *piyyuṭim*.[62]

The Jerusalem Talmud provides one of the earliest attestations to the Messiah named Menaḥem in a story attributed to Rabbi Aibo. In R. Aibo's tale, an Arab delivers shocking news to a Jew ploughing his fields. First, the Arab announces the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, but then he relates what is seemingly more hopeful news (y.*Ber* 2.4.25b):[63]

> [The Arab] said to [the Jew], "Son of a Jew ... harness your ox and harness your plow, for the King Messiah has been born".
> He [the Jew] said to him, "What is his name?"
> [The Arab] answered, "**Menaḥem**."
> [The Jew] asked, "What is his Father's name?"
> [The Arab] answered, "Hezekiah."
> [The Jew] asked, "Where is he from?"
> [The Arab] answered, "From the royal city, Bethlehem in Judah."

Upon hearing the Arab's declaration of the Messiah's birth, the Jew promptly abandons his life as a farmer to become a peddler of swaddling cloth for children. Travelling and selling his wares, he finally come across the Messiah's mother, to whom he offers his wares on a loan. When he later returns for his payment, he asks about her child, but receives a shocking reply: "She answered,

61 Wout Jac. Van Bekkum, "Jewish messianic expectations in the age of Heraclius", in Reinink and Stolte (eds), *The Reign of Heraclius*, 95–112; Nicholas de Lange, "Jewish and Christian messianic hopes in pre-Islamic Byzantium", in Markus Bockmuehl and James Carleton Paget (eds), *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 274–84.

62 Arnold Goldberg, "Die Namen des Messias in der rabbinischen Traditionsliteratur. Ein Beitrag zur Messianologie des rabbinischen Judentums", in *Mystik und Theologie des rabbinischen Judentums*, TSAJ 61 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 208–74 (esp. 230–3).

63 Here I cite the translation of Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 215–6.

'After you saw me, winds and whirlwinds came and snatched him out of my hands'".[64]

R. Aibo's curious story of the Messiah's birth has inspired numerous studies of its interpretation,[65] but our main interest lies in the name Menaḥem it provides for the Messiah. As noted above, Menaḥem simply means "comforter" – a perfectly apt title for a Messiah. The Babylonian Talmud illuminates the Biblical roots behind calling the messiah Menaḥem/"comforter" *(b.*San 98b):

> His name is Menaḥem because, "For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for **a comforter** (מנחם) is far from me, one to revive my courage" (Lam. 1: 16).[66]

Regardless of the original intent of R. Aibo's story, its reverberations – especially the idea that Israel's messiah had already been born and awaits the time of his advent – can be found in an array of sources. A popular messianic motif, for example, places the Messiah at the gates of Rome where he suffers in solidarity with Israel as a leper indistinguishable from the throngs of lepers around him until the time of his re-appearance draws nigh.[67]

Leading up to the seventh century, the urgency of messianic fervour among the Jews of Palestine becomes particularly acute in the liturgy (*amida*) and hymns (*piyyutim*) of the synagogue as well as in apocalyptic literature.[68] The expectation of a Messiah called Menaḥem is a common motif throughout the compositions of this period. The words of the *payytan* Shimʿon bar Megus offer a vivid example of such messianic urgency:[69]

> Send us the man called Menaḥem!
> Vengeance will sprout from him.
> Let him come in our day,
> And may authority rest on his shoulders (Is. 9: 5).

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64 Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 215–6
65 Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 214–35 and Martha Himmelfarb, "The mother of the Messiah in the Talmud Yerushalmi and Sefer Zerubbabel", in Peter Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture III*, TSAJ 93 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 369–90.
66 A surviving palimpsest of Lam. 1: 16 in CPA translates the Hebrew *menaḥem* with *mnḥmnʾ*; see W. Baars, "A Palestinian Syriac text of the Book of Lamentations", *Vetus Testamentum* 10, 1960, 225 (col. a, l. 15).
67 Abraham Berger, "Captive at the Gate of Rome: the story of a messianic motif", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 44, 1997, 1–17.
68 For a discussion of the *piyyuṭ* in the liturgy of Palestinian Jewish synagogues of Late Antiquity, see Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 583–8. On the challenges of dating the *piyyutim*, see Eyal Ben-Eliyahu, Yehuda Cohn and Fergus Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity, 135–700 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 129–37.
69 Leon J. Weinberger, *Jewish Hymnography: A Literary History* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998), 38. The date of Shimʿon bar Megas's *piyyutim* are uncertain, but the virulent diatribes against Christian authorities and the absence of any mention of Arab or Muslim authorities suggest that he flourished in Palestine prior to the Islamic conquests. See Ben Eliyahu et al., *Handbook,* 137.

An important catalyst for the spread and codification of these ideas, particularly in Jewish apocalyptic literature, comes first in the form of the Perso-Byzantine War (602–628) and in the form of the Arab conquest of Jerusalem (637), leading to yet another expulsion of Byzantines from Syria. The Sasanid conquest of Jerusalem in 614 even briefly placed Palestinian Jews in control of the city until 617 and saw in particular the outbreak of spectacular violence and upheaval that struck many as apocalyptic in significance, if not in scale.[70] However short-lived this restoration of Jerusalem to the Jews was, Byzantium's humiliation stoked eschatological dreams of Israel as Rome's messianic and imperial heir and of the Messiah Menaḥem's imminent advent.[71]

No Jewish apocalyptic work embodies these expectations more vividly than the early seventh-century apocalypse *Sefer Zerubbabel,* itself likely written in response to the tumultuous events in Palestine and Syria during the Perso-Byzantine War (601–628).[72] The apocalypse recounts the vision of the Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel of Biblical fame, whom the archangel Michael carries away to the gates of Rome to meet the Messiah-in-waiting:[73]

> Then [the angel Michael] said to me, "This is the Messiah of the Lord: [he has been] hidden in this place until the appointed time [of his advent]. This is the Messiah of the lineage of David, and his name is **Menaḥem** ben ʿAmiel.[74] He was born during the reign of David, king of Israel, and a wind bore him up and concealed him in this place, waiting for the time of the end."

This Menaḥem, the angel reveals, will soon defeat the satanic "Armilos"[75] and liberate Jerusalem to restore Israel. Reference to the *Sefer Zerubbabel* and

70 Averil Cameron, "Blaming the Jews: the seventh-century invasions of Palestine in context", *Travaux et Mémoires* 14, 2002, 57–78. See the collection of accounts gathered in Geoffrey Greatrex and Samuel N.C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, II: AD 363–630* (London: Routledge, 2002), 190–3, 235.
71 Alexei M. Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
72 John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 40–66.
73 Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 55.
74 The patronymic "ben ʿAmiel" here replaces the Talmudic "ben Hezekiah", but elsewhere in *Sefer Zerubbabel* the Messiah is also referred to as the son of Hezekiah (see Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 53). Himmelfarb ("Mother of the Messiah", 383–7; cited by Reeves, 53 n. 91) has suggested that "ben ʿAmiel" might be a cipher for "ben Hezekiah". On the significance behind calling the Messiah "son of Hezekiah", see Schäfer, *Jewish Jesus*, 225–7. Another text to refer to the Messiah by this name is *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer*; see Goldberg, "Die Namen des Messias", 232–3; Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology*, 118.
75 Armilos being the anti-Messiah modelled after the Byzantine emperor Heraclius; see Lutz Greisiger, *Messias, Endkaiser, Antichrist: Politische Apokalyptik unter Juden und Christen des Nahen Ostens am Vorabend der arabischen Eroberung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014).

Menaḥem's role therein appears also in Jewish hymnography, as one can see the *piyyut* known as *ʾOto ha-Yom*:[76]

> And the vision of the Son of Shealtiel[77] will come,
> Which God has shown to him.
> And He will give the staff of Israel's salvation,
> In the city of Naphtali in Kadesh in Galilee, He gives the staff of God.
> And Ḥephzibah[78] will come before God,
> In order to awaken in her Menaḥem son of ʿAmiel,
> Whom God gave her from of old.

Read in light of these currents of Jewish Messianism in Palestine, the tiny shift in the translation of the Gospel of John into CPA in which "Paraclete" becomes *mnḥmnʾ*, in my view, creates a profound statement. This subtle shift marks the emergence of a discretely Christian counter-discourse against Jewish expectations of their own messiah-comforter whom they call "Menaḥem". By calling the Paraclete *mnḥmnʾ*, the Christians using CPA signalled that their Comforter – their Menaḥem – had already come. He was at once the Christ Jesus of Nazareth and the "other Comforter" (John 14: 16), the Spirit of Truth who comforts Christ's followers in his absence. What makes the story of this subtle shift in CPA translation practice in response to Late Antique Jewish messianism all the more extraordinary is that, wittingly or unwittingly, Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic rendition of John 15: 23–16: 1 offers us our best evidence that this shift transpired simultaneously with the rising tides of Jewish messianism at its epicentre in Palestine.

The broad currents of Late Antique apocalypticism did not disappear with the rise of Islam. Indeed, the Islamic conquest harnessed and reinvigorated these currents in unanticipated ways, as apocalypticism and its attendant literature continued to flourish well into the second century of the Islamic conquests.[79] Does Ibn Isḥāq's appropriation of the Johannine Paraclete discourse, therefore, share a messianic subtext with CPA translations of *paráklētos* as *mnḥmnʾ*?

On the one hand, scholars have long seen in Ibn Isḥāq's narrative of Muḥammad's call (*mabʿath*) and his encounter with the angel Gabriel at Mt. Ḥirāʾ references to passages from the Biblical book of Isaiah in the textual underlayer of the narrative – in particular Is. 29: 12 and 40: 6.[80] The latter

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76   Cited in Sivertsev, 117. For a cautious assessment of the date of this *piyyut*, see Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin, 1997), 319–20.

77   I.e. Zerubbabel.

78   Menaḥem's mother, responsible for the opening salvo of the eschatological showdown with the anti-Messiah; see Himmelfarb, "Mother of the Messiah".

79   See Stephen J. Shoemaker, "'The Reign of God Has Come': eschatology and empire in Late Antiquity and early Islam", *Arabica* 61, 2014, 514–58. More specifically on the Jewish case in the early Islamic period, see S.W. Anthony, "Who was the Shepherd of Damascus? The enigma of Jewish and messianist responses to the Islamic conquests in Marwānid Syria and Mesopotamia", in Paul Cobb (ed.), *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 21–60.

80   Andreas Görke, Harald Motzki and Gregor Schoeler, "First century sources for the life of Muḥammad? A debate", *Der Islam* 89, 2012, 31–2.

passage serves as quite a striking example. When in Ibn Isḥāq's narrative Gabriel appears to Muḥammad in his sleep and, holding a silk scroll, commands, "Read (*iqra'*)!", the Prophet famously replies, "I cannot read (*mā aqra'*)!"[81] Isaiah 40: 6 shares a similar structure and wording with the passage, even in the Hebrew: "A voice says, 'Proclaim/Read (*qĕrā*)!' And I said, 'What shall I cry out (*māh 'eqrā*)?'" What makes this correspondence significant for our concerns is that Isaiah 40 actually begins with divine admonition to "comfort" God's people, "Comfort, comfort my people (*naḥămū naḥămū 'ammî*), says your God...". The CPA version of Isaiah 40: 1 matches the Hebrew very closely, reading: *nḥmw nḥmw qhly 'mr 'lh'*.[82] Targumic readings of Isaiah 40, in fact, connect the command to "comfort" explicitly with the act of prophecy.[83] Is this the messianic subtext to Ibn Isḥāq's narrative of Muḥammad's call to prophecy? Put another way: is Muḥammad a/the "comforter" – in the mould of Menaḥem and the Paraclete/*mnḥmn'* – by virtue of his prophetic mission? The evidence for affirming that Ibn Isḥāq's text does put forward such a view is not definitive, but it is suggestive.

Conclusion: "... and his name will be most praised"

The preceding analysis leaves us with a curious result. Even though the tools of historical philology illuminate considerably not just the provenance of Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic translation of the Johannine Paralcete discourse but also important features of his source-text, we have learned little about the Quranic text that ostensibly inspired this early Arabic translation. Part of the issue is that the connection between the Gospel of John's Paraclete and Q. 61: 6 is tendentious. "Aḥmad" and "Muḥammad" on the one hand and *paráklētos/mnḥmn'*/ Menaḥem on the other do not carry even approximately similar meanings. The words are simply incommensurate. Polemicists note the fact that the Johannine proof-text fails to work the way early Muslim apologists would like virtually from the outset. Ps.-Leo III thus writes to the Umayyad caliph 'Umar II:

> Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Paraclete since he sought to console his disciples for his departure ... Paraclete thus signifies "comforter", while Muḥammad means "to give thanks", or "to render grace",[84] a meaning which has no connection whatsoever with the word Paraclete.[85]

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81   Ibn Hishām (ed. Wüstenfeld), 151–2 (ed. Saqqā et al., 1236–47); al-'Uṭāridī (d. 886), *K. al-Siyar wa-l-maghāzī,* ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 121; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1: 1149–50.
82   *CCPA*, 1: 142.
83   Bruce Chilton (tr.), *The Isaiah Targum* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1987), 77, "Prophets, prophesy consolation to my people, says your God ... A voice of one who says, 'Prophesy!' And he answered and said, 'What shall I prophesy?' All the wicked are as the grass...".
84   Erroneously reading the Prophet's name as the active participle (*muhammid*, "giving much praise") rather than the passive (*muḥammad*, "receiving much praise").
85   Jeffery, "Correspondence", 293.

The relationship between Q. 61: 6 and John is, therefore, tenuous at best. Most likely, Q. 61: 6 is not a reference to the Johannine Paraclete at all, and the putative Biblical subtext Ibn Isḥāq posits for Q. 61: 6, is a red-herring. If I am correct, this realization represents a significant step forward, but it also admittedly leaves modern scholars with a vexing loose end: the significance of "Aḥmad" in Q. 61: 6 remains unresolved. Several solutions have appeared over the centuries; we explore them below.

The first is what one might called the "philological" solution – even if the philology supporting it is rather dubious. This solution aims to maintain the connection between Q. 61: 6 and the Paraclete of John's Gospel, but it proposes a rather novel solution to the incommensurability between the Arabic *aḥmad* and the Greek *paráklētos*. According to this argument, the Greek παράκλητος ("comforter/advocate") was either misread or misunderstood as περικλυτός – meaning "renowned", "far-famed", or even (with a little imagination) "praised one". This proposition first appears, to my knowledge, in the *Refutatio Alcorani* of the pioneering Italian professor of Arabic at La Sapienza University, Ludovicco Marracci (d. 1700).[86] A modified version of Marracci's suggestion has gained and maintains a considerable following in popular Muslim apologetic writings. Drawing upon Quranic claims regarding the corruption (*taḥrīf*) of Jewish and Christian scriptures, such writings argue that *periklytós* was the original reading of the Greek text John's Gospel rather than *paráklētos*. It's certainly an odd twist of fate that the arguments of such Muslim apologetic works ultimately derive from a suggestion popularized by a priest of the Order of the Mother of God and confessor to pope Innocent XI.

Marracci's suggestion is clever, but probably too clever. In order for his proposition to work, one first must assume that Muḥammad (or even, say, a hypothetical redactor of the Quran) knew both Greek and Syriac. Second, one must assume that Muḥammad, or the Quran's redactor, lacked access to the original Greek text of the Gospels, and so had to "reverse engineer" a Greek word from the Semitic consonantal skeleton *p.r.q.l.y.ṭ.s*, which he found in either a Syriac or CPA Gospel text. Faced with the Greek letters π.ρ.κ.λ.τ.ς, either Muḥammad or the redactor then reinserted the missing Greek vowels but arrived at περικλυτός, "renowned", rather than παράκλητος, "comforter". While the reading butchered the original text of John's Gospel, it did just so happen to match, albeit rather approximately, the meaning of "Aḥmad". The scenario is so convoluted as to be absurd.[87]

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86   *Refutatio Alcorani* (Patavii: Ex Typographia Seminarii, 1698), 26–7, 719; cf. Gilliot, "Nochmals: Hieß der Prophet Muḥammad?", 77 f. On Marracci, see Roberto Tottoli, "New light on the translation of the Qurʾān of Ludovico Marracci from his manuscripts recently discovered at the Order of the Mother of God in Rome", in Rippin and Tottoli (eds), *Books and Written Culture*, 91–131

87   To make matters even worse for the proposition, the word *periklytós*, albeit present in Classical Greek lexica, is virtually unknown to the Greek lexica of the New Testament, early Christian writings, Patristic writings, or even the pseudepigrapha. The sole example of its use I could locate makes for a rather unflattering parallel to Muḥammad. In the *Testament of Solomon*, the Israelites' king Solomon exorcises a series of bound demons by interrogating them. When he asks one gnarly demon his name, the demon replies, "Among mortals I am called Asmodeus the renowned (*periklytós*)" (*TSol*

Another radical solution tweaks not the text of the New Testament but rather the text of the Quran. This second, "codicological", solution jettisons the *aya* in which Jesus prophesies a future Messenger (*rasūl*) altogether, in favour of an alternative, albeit far less historically attested, reading. Nearly a century ago, Arthur Jeffery unearthed a reading of Q. 61: 6 ostensibly deriving from the Companion Quran codex (*muṣḥaf*) of Ubayy b. Kaʿb (d. *c*. 640–656) that provided an entirely different rendering of Jesus's prophecy of a future messenger (*rasūl*) named Aḥmad. In the reading attributed to Ubayy's codex, Jesus's prophecy in Q. 61: 6 rather ran as follows:

> I bring you good tidings of a prophet whose community will be the last of [God's] communities, by him God will seal the prophets and the messengers (*ubashshirukum bi-nabiyyin ummatuhu ākhiru l-umami yakhtimu Llāhu bihi l-anbiyāʾ wa-l-rusul*).

Thus did Ubayy's codex purportedly omit any mention of Jesus's prophecy of a prophet named Aḥmad altogether.[88] While an intriguing possibility, the documentation for this variant reading attributed to Ubayy is late and exceedingly sparse. Jeffery uncovered the reading from the margins of an autograph manuscript titled *Qurrat ʿayn al-qurrāʾ*, a work on variant readings (*qirāʾāt*) of the Quran by an otherwise unknown Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muhammad ibn ʿAlī al-Qawāsī al-Marandī (fl. latter half of sixth/thirteenth century).[89] The work remains unpublished, but the manuscript remains accessible in the Escorial Library in Madrid. Jeffery characterizes this source as exceedingly rich with information on readings from Ubayy's *muṣḥaf*, and indeed, his *Materials* drew heavily on the manuscript when documenting the hypothetical text of Ubayy's codex.[90] Yet, outside al-Marandī's work, the reading offered for Q. 61: 1 is rarely, if ever, attested in the *qirāʾāt* literature or in the earliest extant manuscripts of the Quran. Any argument in favour of Ubayy's reading as an "original" and, therefore, "better" reading of the Quran faces an uphill climb.

The reading attributed by al-Marandī to Ubayy, however, deserves careful consideration. Aspects of the reading suggest an early, perhaps even a seventh-century, dating. Its tone is, for one, eschatological. On the other hand, other aspects of the reading suggest that it post-dates the seventh century. Its depiction

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5, 7). Cf. Peter Busch, *Das Testament Salomos: Die älteste christliche Dämonologie* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2006), 118.

88 Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān* (Leiden: Brill, 1937), 170 (with thanks to David Powers for first pointing me towards this reading).

89 MS Escorial (Madrid) no. 1337, fol. 200b. Brockelmann gives the death date for Marandī as 569/1173 (*GAL*, 1: 519), but this date is rather the date of the author's *ijāza* from one of his teachers; the author himself states that he completed the work in 588/1192. I have benefitted greatly from the discussion of the Escorial manuscript written by Muḥammad al-Shanqīṭī at: http://vb.tafsir.net/tafsir7010/#.VQD2t_nF-So (last accessed 11 March 2015). My thanks to Walid Saleh for directing me to the website.

90 *Materials*, 116; hence, this reading does not appear in Ibn Abī Dāwūd's *Kitāb al-Masāḥif*, which in any case only attributes a handful of readings to Ubayy b. Kaʿb's codex.

of Muḥammad as the final prophet is categorical and unambiguous. Muḥammad "seals [the line of] prophets and messengers". This is a sentiment paralleled only in Q. 33: 40 where Muḥammad is also deemed "Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets (*rasūl Allāh wa-khātam al-nabiyyīn*)". Yet, the latter, far better-attested verse also suggests that al-Marandī's alternative rendering of Q. 61: 6 is late. The categorical interpretation of Muḥammad as the seal of the prophets is not present in Q. 33: 40, which suggests that the categorical tenor of al-Marandī's/Ubayy's reading of Q. 61: 6 probably reflects a more systematic and developed prophetology than one would expect to encounter in the Quran. Early Arabic poetry provides more than one compelling example of how the root *kh.t.m.* in the early Islamic period does not necessarily denote finality. Hence, a verse attributed to Umayya b. Abī Ṣalt speaks of Muḥammad as the man, "by whom God sealed the prophets who come before him and after him (*bihi khatama Allāhu man qablahu/wa-man baʿdahu min nabiyyin khatam*)". Likewise the *Naqāʾiḍ* of the Umayyad-era poets Jarīr and Farazdaq refers to Muḥammad as "the best of the seals (*khayr al-khawātim*)"[91] – where the very multiplicity of "seals" precludes their finality.

Moreover, the explicit pairing of the plurals "prophets (*anbiyāʾ*)" and "messengers (*rusul*)" in al-Marandī's alternative reading occurs nowhere else in the Quran – and this despite the near ubiquity of these terms throughout the Quran. Hence, the pairing seems to be at odds with Quranic diction. Lastly, nowhere does the Quran refer to Muḥammad's community (*umma*) as the last (*ākhir al-umam*). While not at odds with Quranic eschatology *per se*, this phrase does appear early on in the *ḥadīth* literature where it seems to first proliferate.[92] All of this evidence argues against accepting the reading al-Marandī attributes to Ubayy's codex as either an original, or even a historically preferable, reading of Q. 61: 6.

A third option entertained at least as early as the late ninth century – but unlikely to find many defenders among modern scholars – is what one might call the "sectarian" solution. This solution denies that the "Aḥmad" figure foretold by Jesus in the Quran intends to refer to Muḥammad at all. In his *Kitāb al-Maqālāt*, the Muʿtazilī scholar Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. *c.* 915–916) provides an early testimony to such a view, writing that Qarāmiṭa rebels of his day justified their belief that Muḥammad was not the last prophet by claiming: 1) Jesus would return to Earth and thus be a prophet after Muḥammad; and 2) that Jesus foretold a prophet named Aḥmad, whose coming they await, and not a prophet named Muḥammad.[93] Elsewhere, al-Ṭabarī (d. 922) records a letter purportedly penned by one of these millenarian rebels' leaders in which he claimed to be an agent (*dāʿī*) working on behalf of the Mahdī Aḥmad

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91   Y. Friedman, "Finality of prophethood in Sunnī Islām", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7, 1986, 184–5.

92   A.J. Wensinck et al., *Concordances et indices de la tradition musulmane*, 7 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1933–69), 1, 29a.ult.

93   MS Shahāra (Sanaa), fol. 140b. Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī's authorship of this text is somewhat in doubt; however, a strong case for its attribution to al-Jubbāʾī is made by Hassan Ansari, "Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī et son livre *al-Maqālāt*", in C. Adang, S. Schmidtke and D. Sklare (eds), *A Common Rationality: Muʿtazilism in Islam and Judaism*, ITS 12 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007), 21–37.

b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, "the Messiah who Jesus, who is the Word, . . . who is Gabriel".[94] While certainly an extreme example, the Qarmaṭīs at least demonstrate that not all Muslims identified the Quranic Aḥmad with Muḥammad.

There remains only one other solution, and to my mind it is also the most credible. This is what I would like to call the "minimalist" solution. The minimalist solution essentially rejects the very premise of Ibn Isḥāq's early quest for a Gospel proof-text; it is also a solution favoured by major exegetes of the classical tradition.[95] In this reading, "Aḥmad" is not a proper name at all, but rather an adjective: the Arabic phrase *ismuhu aḥmad* should not be read as "his name is Aḥmad" but rather "his name is most praised" – reading *aḥmad* as a straightforward elative. In other words, this reading severs the putative connection between Jesus's Quranic proclamation from the Paraclete discourse of the Gospel of John. While decoupling these two texts may defy the unrelenting impulse to embed every verse of the Quran in a biblical subtext, intertext, or source text, such a decisive decoupling of the Q. 61: 6 from the textual cobwebs of biblical proof-texts, in this one instance at least, provides the most convincing reading.

Appendix: Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic rendition of John 15: 23–16: 1 from MS Ẓāhiriyya, *majmūʿa* 19, fol. 54r

A fragment of a work likely composed by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān ibn Abī Shayba (d. 297/909) survives in a collection (*majmūʿa*) of short *ḥadīth* texts preserved in the Ẓāhiriyya library in Damascus. The title assigned to the text is *Kitāb fī khalq Ādam wa-khaṭīʾatihi wa-tawbatih . . .*, but this is merely an *ad hoc* title assigned by the cataloguers and derives from the contents of the initial portions of the text.[96] The fragment likely derives from Abū Jaʿfar Ibn Abī Shayba's *Tārīkh*, of which no other sections are known to be extant.

The attribution of the text to Abū Jaʿfar Ibn Abī Shayba is, however, by no means an absolute certainty: the first folios of the manuscript are missing and the final folio (57r, line 13) ends stating, "the end of the second quire/section of the quires of Ibn al-Ṣawwāf (*ākhir al-juzʾ al-thānī min ajzāʾ Ibn al-Ṣawwāf*)". This sentence seems to suggest the work belongs, rather, to the corpus of the Baghdādī *ḥadīth* scholar Abū ʿAlī Ibn al-Ṣawwāf (d. 359/970).[97] Yet, Muṭaʿ

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94 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 3: 2128–9; cf. Wilferd Madelung, "The Fatimids and the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrayn", in Farhad Daftary (ed.), *Medieval Ismaʿili History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25–8.

95 See, for example, Abū Isḥāq al-Thaʿlabī, *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān*, 10 vols, ed. Abū Muḥammad b. ʿĀshūr (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2002), 9: 304; and ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, *al-Tafsīr al-basīṭ*, 25 vols, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Siṭām Āl Saʿūd and Turkī b. Sahw al-ʿUtaybī (Riyadh: Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad b. Saʿūd al-Islamiyya, 2010), 21: 435–6. For another modern scholar in favoor of this reading, see Tilman Nagel, *Mohammed: Leben und Legende* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008), 181.

96 See, most recently, Yāsīn Muḥammad al-Sawwās, *Fihris majāmiʿ al-Madrasa al-ʿUmariyya fī Dār al-Kutub al-Ẓāhiriyya* (Kuwait: Maʿhad al-Maḫṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, 1987), 92.

97 Khaṭīb, 2: 115–6.

al-Ṭarābīshī has forcefully argued that Ibn al-Ṣawwāf is the transmitter (*rāwī*) of the text rather than its author, marshalling, most convincingly, the evidence of Ibn ʿAsākir's (d. 571/1176) citations of the manuscript in his *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq* as Abū Jaʿfar Ibn Abī Shayba's.[98] The matter merits further investigation in light of Abū ʿAlī Ibn al-Ṣawwāf's other *ḥadīth* works, but his corpus still remains mostly unpublished in manuscript.[99]

As noted above, the fragment, probably from Abū Jaʿfar Ibn Abī Shayba's *Tārīkh*, is preserved in Ms. Ẓāhiriyya, *majmūʿa* 19, fols 46–57 and draws from Ziyād al-Bakkāʾī's recension of Ibn Isḥāq's *Maghāzī*, in particular the first section known as *al-Mubtadāʾ* ("Genesis"), which contains the early Arabic version of John 15: 23–16: 1. Ibn Abī Shayba provides a consistent *isnād* for the material he transmits from Ibn Isḥāq, citing the authority of the Kūfan traditionist Minjāb b. al-Ḥārith (d. 231/845–6), who cites in turn the authority of another Kūfan, Ziyād al-Bakkāʾī's student Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf al-Sayrafī (d. 249/863–4). This citation is, therefore, an important (if somewhat flawed) testimony to Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic version of John 15: 23–16: 1 outside the recension of the ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Hishām, and it for this reason that I include my edited version thereof in this appendix.

حدّثنا منجاب أخبرنا إبراهيم بن يوسف قال ثنا زياد بن عبد الله عن محمّد بن إسحاق قال:

وقد كان فيما بلغني عمّا[100] كان وضع عيسى بن مريم عليه السلام فيما جاءه من الله ومن الإنجيل من صفة رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وسلم ممّا[101] أثبته يحنس الحواريّ لهم حين حين نسخ الإنجيل في عهد عيسى بن مريم عليه السلام في رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وسلّم:

اللّهمّ من أبغضني فقد أبغض الربّ عزّ وجلّ ولولا أنّي صنعتُ بحضرتهم صنائع[102] لم يصنعها أحدٌ قبلي ما كانت لهم خطيئةٌ ولكن من الآن نظروا[103] فظنّوا أنّهم سينصرون عليه[؟][104] الربّ عزّ وجلّ ولكن لا بدّ من أن تتمّ المملكة في الناس[105] أنّهم أبغضوني مجّانًا أي باطلًا فلو قد جاء منحمنا[106] هذا الذي من عند الربّ عزّ وجلّ روح القدس هذا من عند الربّ عزّ وجلّ وهو يشهد عليّ وأنتم أيضًا لأنّكم قديمًا كنتم معي هذا قلت لكم لكيما لا تشكوا.

فالمنحمنا[107] بالسريانيّة محمّد وهو بالروميّة البرقليطس.[108]

98 Ṭarābīshī, *Ruwāt Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq*, 495–6; e.g. see Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq,* 80 vols, ed. ʿUmar ibn Gharāma al-ʿAmrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995–2000), 3: 170, 200–1, 393, 416, 426, 453, 456.

99 Although manuscripts of Ibn al-Ṣawwāf's works remain unpublished, fragments have been transcribed, albeit imperfectly, and posted online for *al-Maktaba al-Shāmila* (see http://shamela.ws) and can be accessed via their database. Included in this database as well as is a transcription of Ms. Ẓāhiriyya, *majmūʿa* 19, fols 46–57, which Ṭarābīshī identifies with the *Tārīkh* of Abū Jaʿfar Ibn Abī Shayba; however, the database attributes the work to Ibn al-Ṣawwāf and titles it *al-Thānī min ajzāʾ Ibn al-Ṣawwāf*. I owe this observation and information to Mahmoud Khalifa (Cairo University), who directed me to the online transcription of the text.

100 بالأصل: عن ما

101 بالأصل: من

102 كذا كتب يد اخر بعد الناسخ تصحيحًا ولعلّ القراءة الأصيلة: صنيعًا

103 بالأصل: نظروا

104 بالأصل: عايه

105 كذا، وكتب يد اخر تصحيحًا: الناموس

106 بالأصل: منحيمنا

107 بالأصل: فلمنحيمنا

108 الأصل: البرنفلنطس