

Ali B. Rabban at-Tabarī's Kitābu'd-Dîn ve'd-Devle And His Place In The Tradition Of İsbatu Nubuwh

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Summary

Many verses within the Qur'ān exemplify Muhammad's prophethood (pbuh). *İsbātu nubuwwah literature results from the embodiment of Muhammad's prophethood within the verses.* An increase in this literature's circulation, resulting from the increasing amount of Christians and Jews converting to Islam, is increasing the amount of material written discussing the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh). However, despite numerous references supporting the multitude of material that ensued, only Ali b. Rabban at-Tabarī's work remains. Tabarī provides a comprehensive answer to opposing views suggesting that Muhammad (pbuh) is not a prophet.

Key Words

Prophethood, signs of prophethood, Muslim-Christian relations, miracle, conversion, Kindī, Rāzī, Tabarī

Strongly perpetuating the Islamic refutation tradition (*raddiya*), prophecies and signs indicative of the prophethood of Muhammad (*pbup*) are established within the holy scriptures of Judaism and Christianity; unmistakably, evidence representative of the prophethood of Muhammad within Semitic tradition. These "Prophecies", based on the words of the Qur'ān and Muhammad (pbuh), became lively debated subjects, especially among Christians, as Muslims became rulers of places heavily resided by Jews and Christians. Later, becoming one of the essential subjects for the Islamic refutation literature.

The relevant texts committed to paper by Muslims were of inadequate Bible knowledge. However, they became more powerful and influential through the contributions provided by an experienced Bible knowledge of converted Christian and Jewish writers. Ali b. Rabban at-Tabarī is an example of one of the people who provided such a contribution. Tabarī who grew up in a Christian family connected to the Nestorian sect in Marw, born approximately around 778-779 (161-162, became Muslim in 849/850. He converted with the encouragement of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil², a rare man-of-science in Islamic cultural history, whose reputation does not reflect his achievements. Very little of Ali b. Rabban at-Tabarī's works remains today even though there are examples of fifteen mentioned in various sources, most of which were about medicine. Only three of which survived, they are: *Firdawsu'l-Hikma*³, which is about medicine; *ar-Rad ala'n-Nasārā*, which aims to defend his conversion against his former coreligionists after he became Muslim; and *Kitābu'd-dīn wa'd-dawla*⁴, which he committed on paper to answer criticism of the believers of the other two big Semitic religions, especially of Christians, on the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh). The following study will be concerning the latter; its authenticity was long discussed in the West, and has not been subjected to any study in Turkey, with the exception of an article in *Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi' (DİA)* titled "*ed-Dîn ve'd-devlet*"⁴, and a master's thesis titled *Ali b. Rabban at-Tabarī'nin Nübüvveti İspat Metod'u*⁵. *Kitābu'd-dīn wa'd-dawla*, which could

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² Concerning life and works of Ali b. Rabban at-Tabarī, see Fuat Aydın, *Ali b. Rabban et-Tabarī ve er-Red ale'n-nasārā Adlu Eseri*, (Unpublished master's thesis) Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Istanbul 1994; Necip Taylan, "Ali Rabban et-Tabarī", *DİA*, II, 434-436.

³ Ebul-Hasen Ali b. Sehl b. Rabban at-Tabarī, *Firdaws al-hikma* (pub. M. Zubeyr Siddikî) Matbâi Afitâb, Berlin 1928.

⁴ Ar-radd 'Ala-n-nasārâ de 'Ali at-tabarī, (Edite par) I. A. Khalife, st. W. Kutsch. St., *Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph*, Beirut (Lebanon) 1959, Toma. XXXVI, Fas. 5, 115-148. The work in question will be referred as *ed-Dîn* in the following parts of the study.

⁵ Faruk Sancar, *Ali b. Rabban at-Tabarī'nin Nübüvveti İsbât Metotları*, Black Sea Technical University, Institute of Social Sciences, master's thesis, Trabzon 2002

be subjected to a study in its many aspects, will be discussed in this paper concerning only one of its many aspects, *isbāt'un- nubuwwah*.

A. Emergence of the Book

The book in question, full title, *Kitābu'd-dīn wa'd-dawla fī isbāti nubuwati'n-Nabī Muhammad (pbuh)*, isn't mentioned in sources much like his work *ar-Rad ala'n-nasārā*. The existence of the work in question was realized by re-discovery made by A. Mingana, in the Oriental M.S.S. of the John Royland Library catalogue, and announced to the scholarly world with an article on it published in 1920 in the *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS)*⁶. Mingana, continuing his work on the book, translated it to English and published it along with a short introduction⁷. The following year, the work was also published in Arabic in Egypt, also with the introduction by Mingana⁸. Ali b. Rabben's book is of complementary nature to *ed-Rad*, which he wrote after his conversion to Islam in order to prove that the Christian faith principles are contrary to The Gospels and that Jesus Christ is human, and it aims to prove the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) by taking the Bible sources as a starting point, and also which is committed to paper with encouragement of al-Mutawakkil, in conformity with the political cycle, as it will be revealed below⁹.

B. The content of *ad-Dīn*

The book consists of an introduction, ten sections and a conclusion. The author states in the introduction that he will reveal the hidden signs concerning the name and characteristics of Muhammad (pbuh), which are denied by Arabian polytheists and present in the sacred works of the believers of the other two big Semitic religions¹⁰.

He says that of the ones writing books on the subject before him, some omitted certain subjects by keeping their works short making the evidences incomprehensible by mixing up the evidences. In addition, some of them attempted to produce evidence with things they wouldn't find in the books of the believers of the other two big Semitic religions, and with poetry. Thus, he mentions the characteristics' an effective rejection has to carry¹¹.

After explaining the conditions in order for *khabar* and *icma* to become evidence and the binding-ness of *khabar* fulfilling these conditions, he reveals the invalidity of the words of Christians that say no prophet would arrive after Jesus Christ, using the history of prophets as a starting point.

In section one, he explains the foundation of Islam, like all divine religions, being "affirming the unity of God"¹². In section two, he shows the superiority of Islam sharia law, and its orders. He supports these with verses of Qur'an and hadiths¹³. In sections three and four, he mentions the miracles performed by Muhammad (pbuh), especially the ones promised in Qur'an by Allah to the prophet and the events realized afterwards¹⁴. As for section five, he explains the miracles coming true after the decease of Muhammad (pbuh)¹⁵.

In section six, he states Muhammad, being an illiterate person, could not create a work as eloquent as the Qur'an, and this may only be expressed as a miracle, and makes comparisons between Qur'an and other divine books also in terms of content. He shows that the Qur'an lacks the weaknesses of other books, which are subject to criticism¹⁶.

⁶ A. Mingana, "A semi-Official Defence of Islam", *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS)*, 1920, s. 481-488

⁷ At-Tabarī, *Book of Religion and Empire* (trs. A. Mingana) John Roylands Library, Manchester 1922.

⁸ Ali b. Rabben at-Tabarī, *Kitābu'd-dīn wa'd-dawla fī isbāti nubuwati'n-nebiy Muhammad (sav)*, A. Mingana, Matbaatu'l-muktatef, Egypt 1923.

⁹ Fuat Sezgin., *GAS*, E.J.Brill, Leiden 1970, III, 240.; Philip Hitti, *İslâm Tarihi*, trns.Salih Tuğ, Boğaziçi Yayinevi, Istanbul, 1989 *ibid*, I, 543; M. Kürd Ali, *Kumūzu'l-adād, Maqallatul-macmati'l-ilmīyyi'l-arabī*, Dimeşk, 1947, XXII, 80; Anawati, Georges C., *Polemique Apologie et Dialogue Islamo- Chrétiens*, p. 303. The book inspired great interest in the Christian world, since it has much precedence in the history of the polemic, and as specified above, it was written by someone who knows the Bible and its main language. The anachronism between the date given by Tabarī as 867 (s. 138) for the work, and he wishes a long life to al-Mutawwakkil, known as died in the year 861, is explained by Mingana, the translator and first revealer of the book, with the calendar used by majority of ancient epoch Syrian authors used to express the life of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰ Tabarī, *ad-Dīn*, p. 35.

¹¹ Kaya, same article, IX, 349.

¹² Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 45

¹³ Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 57

¹⁴ Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 65

¹⁵ Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 80

¹⁶ Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 98

In section seven, he reveals the rightfulness of the relevant thoughts of the ones using Islam's spread in a short period of time, as an indicator of its superiority, and the difference of the spread in question from other fast spreads in history¹⁷.

In section eight, as proof of the superiority of Muhammad (pbuh), he manifests the evidences indicating his piety and piousness coming from those who knew and talked with him, starting from the most serene ones down to the ones with lesser degree, are more numerous when compared with¹⁸ the evidences coming from those who knew and talked with Jesus Christ and Moses.¹⁸

In section nine, manifesting that the prophet whose future arrival was told and whose characteristics were stated by Abraham and Hagar came true with Muhammad (pbuh), and states: "If the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) hadn't come true, the prophethood of all prophets would have been invalid"¹⁹.

Section ten, the last and the longest section, reveals the prophecies of prophets, concerning the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh), taking Bible as the starting point. In this section, it can be seen the *khaber* of Isaiah, David, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Jesus Christ on the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh). He answers the criticism concerning the conversion to Islam of many of those who saw and believed Muhammad (pbuh) without witnessing a miracle, and disapprobation made to Islam using points such as Sunnah, sacrifice, pledge to Allah, and jihad²⁰.

As for the conclusion section, he provides with brief information concerning atheist, Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian dogmas in it. He expresses that the Indian and Chinese, who desire nothing but searching, learning, and finding and accepting the truth has nothing to do but to embrace Islam; after acquiring knowledge on other religions and Islam²¹. He ends his book with a prayer to caliph al-Mutawakkil, who had contributed to his gracing with Islam²².

C. The problem of *ad-Dīn's* belonging to Ali b. Rabban at-Tabarī

After it was first translated to English, and afterwards published in Arabic by A. Mingana, while it is no more necessary for the present day, a serious authenticity discussion was experienced between the orientalist, concerning the belonging of the book to Ali Rabban at-Tabarī.

Jesuit Father Paul Peeter was the first one arguing that the book was unauthentic. In his introduction article in *Analecta* he mentions the following among the things leading to his doubt concerning the book, and alleges there is a literary forgery: Lack of any reference to the book from post-Tabarī authors, while the author of the existing print is copied from manuscript, the original in question having the characteristics of a rough draft, and the text lacking any characteristic of being presented to the caliph. Peeter, who wasn't strict concerning the non-authenticity issue, manifests his doubt as a temporary opinion to be accepted until the authenticity is proven²³.

As for the most serious rejection, which targets a certain person, it is alleged by Maurice Bouyges. According to Bouyges, the text in question is a product of forgery and belongs to a false-20th century Tabarī. As for the indicator of this argument, it is the modern style seen in the book, its vocabulary, the modern partition of the Bible, and the ignorance of the author concerning the religious and political events of the al-Mutawakkil era. As for what Bouyges means with the words false 20th century non-Muslim Tabarī, it is Mingana who discovered the text and introduced it to the scholarship world. He further clarified his approach with two open letters he wrote to Mingana. Bouyges maintained his opinion that the book belonged to a false non-Muslim modern author until the year 1949, and alleged in an article he published on the latter date that he found new evidences²⁴ in *ar-Rad* concerning this characteristic of the book²⁴.

¹⁷ Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 108

¹⁸ Tabarī, *ibid*, p.114

¹⁹ Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 130.

²⁰ Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 130.

²¹ Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 207.

²² Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 210.

²³ David Thomas, "Notes and News: Tabarī's Book of Religion and Empire", *Bulletin of John Royland Literature (BJRL)*, number 69, p. 1.

²⁴ Camilla Adang, Muslim Writers on Judaism and Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabben to Ibn Hazm, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1996, s. 28.

In spite of the mentioned two persons defending the non-authenticity of the boob above, there are many accepting that the text in question belongs to Ali b. Rabban. Opinions argued by Bouyges in his open letter, were rejected right away by the discoverer, publisher and English translator of the book, Mingana²⁵, and the then-John Royland Library officer Guppy, with them expressing the book was definitely belonging to Ali Rabban, and while it was having some difficulties, like any book, these aren't of the type leading to doubt concerning the belonging issue.

Macdonald, Firtsch and Margoliouth also took sides with Mingana in the authenticity discussion. This group was later joined by Graf, Nöldeke and Meyerhof. Mingana's opinion that the book had a semi-official status since its commitment to paper was ordered by the Caliph, a view seen as a little exaggeration by Camilla Adang, is seen as an indicator of the book being an authentic text by Meyerhof²⁶. Perlmann, too, takes sides with the ones defending the authenticity of the book, by answering the allegations that the work in question of Tabarī wasn't referenced by later authors, through showing a Bible text (Habakkuk 3/1-3) concerning the arrival of Muhammad (pbu) included in the interpretation of Fakhreddīn Rāzī, which Rāzī attributed to Tabarī (*nuqila min ibn Razīn at-Tabarī*).²⁷

As for David Thomas, who committed to paper one of the latest articles on the subject, looked the issue from a different standpoint and states that Bouyges' attacks in the authenticity-unauthenticity discussion not only prevented the book from being respected as it deserves, but also led to later scientists, for example *er-Red's* publishers Father Khalife and Kutsch²⁸ doubting from the book²⁹. Thomas upon implying the ineptitude of this doubt due to the evidences revealed by Mingana, answers to the objection that this work of Tabarī wasn't known by later authors, through indicating that the texts transmitted concerning the heralding of Muhammad (pbu) in Āmirī's (d. 311/923) work *Kitābu'l-I'lām bi manāqibi'l-Islām* are taken from Tabarī's book, by comparing the Bible texts included in both books, as an addition to the abovementioned support of Perlmann³⁰.

After observing the historical course of the discussion on the authenticity of the book, and that a general consensus is reached concerning the belonging of the book to Ali b. Rabban, we now may look the writing reason of the abovementioned book in a more detailed manner.

D. Why *ad-Dīn* was committed to Paper and its Target Audience

The reason why Tabarī wrote the book in question is different from the reason why he committed *ar-Rad*, mentioned at the beginning of the article and was in one sense oriented towards defending his conversion to Islam against his previous coreligionists, to paper.

An important change was experienced in the politics of the state with al-Mutawakkil, who came to power after an era dominated by Mu'tazili thought, and in the religious field, Mu'tazili was gradually replaced by Sunni, and particularly hadith ulama. With this approach, the attitude towards non-Muslims, who were being previously appointed to important positions, also began to change. One of the most important factors leading to the attitude in question to change was the fact that non-Muslims appointed to high positions having used their status and the material and spiritual power they obtained as a consequence of their status, against the Muslims, and in order to belittle the Muslims³¹. As for another point connected to this, was the discomfort felt from non-Muslim criticisms on Muslims' faiths being expressed easily due to the cultural environment emerged in consequence of the translation activities³². Not only did the law on non-Muslim subjects start to be implemented in a strict manner because of the change in

²⁵ Mingana produces the evidences supporting himself on the subject in his various articles. Mingana, "Remarks of Tabar's Semi-official Defence of Islam", *BJRL*, No 9, s. 236-40.

²⁶ The information provided above concerning the discussion on the authenticity of the book was extracted from Adang, *ibid* p. 28-30.

²⁷ Moshe Perlmann, "Note on the authenticity of 'Ali Tabarī's Book of Religion and Empire", *BJRL*, 26(1941-42), 246. For the Tabarī reference in Rāzī's interpretation see Rāzī, *at-Tafsīru'l-kabīr*, Dāru ihyā'it-turāsi'l-'arabī, Beirut no date., III, 37.

²⁸ It may be told that the doubts of the scientists in question on *ed-Dīn* led to them not attaching the necessary importance to *ar-Rad ala'n-nasārā* whose publication they made. The most important indicators of this lack-of importance attachment may be seen in errors arising due to the lack of seriousness they displayed in reading the text, and for example, the failure to determine the places of Qur'an verses included in the text For these, see Aydn, *ibid.*, p. 36

²⁹ Thomas, *mentioned text*, p. 3.

³⁰ Thomas, *mentioned text*, p. 3-7.

³¹ The mentioned work of Cahız didn't reach our day completely, but in the form of selections, under the name of *al-Mukhīār f'r-radd ala'n-nasārā*. For the publication and Turkish Translation of this book see the abovementioned footnote: 31.

³² Concerning political and religious implementations in the al-Mutawakkil era see Aydn, *ibid.*, p. 38-41.

government and approach, but also it was tried to support the practice in question culturally, and authors were encouraged to write rejections dealing with non-Muslim faith. As a consequence of this encouragement, famous Mu'tazili scholar Cāhız, teacher of the caliph's children, wrote his work titled *ar-Rad al'an-nasārā*³³, and Tabarī, the palace physician, wrote the present work, and titled *ad-Din*. These and other facts concerning the commitment of paper of the work may also be read from the text itself.

Tabarī, expressing that the believers of the other two big Semitic religions hid the qualities of Muhammad (pbuh) in their books and deleted these from their books, states that his purpose in writing the book is to reveal that his name and qualities also exist in their books. He states that he is not the first person making research on the subject, but the works before his were either too long/too short or hardly comprehensible, and failed in quoting relevant passages from Jewish and Christian sacred texts; however, he has the capacity to fill their relevant gaps³⁴.

Although this attempt oriented toward filling the gaps of the previous works, it doesn't emerge from a theoretical concern, but possibly from the allegations put forward on the subject, by the believers of the other two big Semitic religions: "I didn't leave any evidence, any difficult problem or any disputed point, which may be used by the non-Muslim believers" It is also possible to see that the realization of this target also doesn't arise from a theoretical concern, but is also a demand of the caliph:

"Al-Mutawakkil is serious and willing for the popularization and perpetuation of these types of books in order to strengthen the motives of the faith's reliability, to render its evidences victorious, and persuade the ones who are ignorant on the faith and who doesn't accept how Allah choose Islam and its contemporary followers and how He renewed His blessings for them. Allah made Him feel by them, by multiplying and increasing their numbers and honoring them"³⁵.

Concerning the commitment to paper of such a book, rendered mandatory by the cycle, Tabarī was also specially encouraged by the caliph: "(...) I first thank Allah since he put me on the right way, and then, I give my thanks to His servant and caliph, the Emir of the True Believers (may Allah give him a long life) al-Mutawakkil 'Ala Allah Ja'far, who invited me and drew me, among others from the ranks of the non-Muslim believers to himself, by encouraging me and making me refrain, with his love and respect to all humans"³⁶.

Although the purpose of writing the book is to reveal the names and qualities of Muhammad (pbuh) in the books of the believers of the other two big Semitic religions, it is also performed in order to gain the consent of the caliph, even if just a tad:

"Accept by advise which I strained for you and know that, with what I wrote, I wanted no invane self-praise or promotion, instead, I wanted the thing found before Allah, from which he who wants it will not be disappointed, and the thing, which is the consent of Allah's caliph and servant (may Allah render him strong) al-Mutawakkil 'Ala Allah Ja'far Ibn al Mu'tasim"³⁷. Caliph al-Mutawakkil didn't only encourage the enlightened persons in order to support the Muslim faith and make it victorious at the intellectual level, but also contributed to the emergence of these texts in one sense: "(...) I first mentioned these disputed points and then, I rejected and solved them, by courtesy of the divine gift of Emir of Allah and true believers – may Allah give him a long life - al-Mutawakkil 'Ala Allah Ja'far Ibn al Mu'tasim, the words from whom I had heard I used, and by courtesy of whom I found the right path"³⁸.

Taking what are expressed until now concerning the commitment to paper reason of the book, it is possible to express that the text is a "Semi-Official Defense of Islam", as Mingana has named³⁹. However, it must be told that the fact that the commitment to paper reason is a defense of Islam does by no means prejudice its importance of the field, as we will see below.

³³ The mentioned work of Cahız didn't reach our day completely, but in the form of selections, under the name of *al-Mukhtār fi'r-radd ala'n-nasārā*. For the publication and Turkish Translation of this book see the abovementioned footnote: 31.

³⁴ Tabarī, *ibid.*, 35-36.

³⁵ Tabarī, *ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁶ Tabarī, *ibid.*, p. 210.

³⁷ Tabarī, *ibid.*, p. 209.

³⁸ Tabarī, *ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁹ Mingana, *Religion and Empire*, p. 5, "Remarks on Tabari's Semi-Official Defence of Islam", *BJRL*, Issue 9, p. 236-240

The target audience of Tabarī's book is believers of the other two big Semitic religions in general and Christians in particular. The fact that the general target audience is believers of the other two big Semitic religions, in other words Jews and Christians, may also be supported through the expression that they hid the passages concerning the name and qualities of Muhammad (pbuh) existing in their books, and the expression that his aim is to reveal these passages; and the fact that it is particularly oriented towards Christians⁴⁰ may be supported through the criticisms concerning the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) come from this group of believers, and the sources he mainly is acquainted with are Christians'. Due to this reason, in his book, as we will see below, he doesn't deal with the problem of absolute rejection of nubuwwa, a subject discussed between the Muslim intellectuals of the period in a widespread manner, he only deals with the evidences of the nubuwwa of Muhammad (pbuh) and tried to reach these evidences from the sacred Jewish and Christian texts.

However, while its main target audience is the believers of the other two big Semitic religions, it doesn't mean that he wasn't interested a bit in other religions of his time. As an indicator of this interest, Tabarī, in his work, makes references to Zoroastrians, Atheists, Manichaeists and Buddhists and provides information to their faith principles in order to reveal the superiority of Islam and asserts that the thoughts of these groups in question are wrong.

E. The Historical Context in which the Subject of *ad-Dīn* Exists, or its place in *Isbāt'un- Nubuwwah* Discussions

In the Islamic world, discussions concerning nubuwwa may be dealt under two main categories. The first one is the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh), as for the second one, it is the prophethood (nubuwwa) concept in its absolute sense.

It may be stated that the objections to the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) were started by the first addresses, Arabic polytheists, upon the first revelations which would constitute Qur'ān were received by Muhammad (pbuh). It may be seen particularly in their expressions arguing that Muhammad (pbuh) was eating and drinking, walking in streets like humans, but prophets should be heavenly creatures⁴¹. Discussions concerning the nubuwwa of Muhammad (pbuh) changed (from the reason that prophet must be a heavenly creature, however Muhammad (pbuh) was an ordinary human, to the reason that he should carry the characteristics carried by the Bible prophets in order for him to be a prophet), but continued increasingly after the new religion was encountered by Jews and Christians, previous representatives of the prophetic tradition. One of the main subjects of discussions between the Muslims acting through taking information concerning Muhammad (pbuh) was heralded in previous sacred texts as a starting point, and particularly the Christians⁴² was certainly the subject whether Muhammad (pbuh) was mentioned in these texts in questions, and therefore, whether he was a prophet.

It is possible to see this in the discussion of Caliph Al-Mahdī and Patriarch Timothy,⁴³ in the letter written by Ibn al-Lay to Constantine VI, on behalf of Harun al-Rashid⁴⁴ in the counter-reply sent by Omar Ibn Abd al-Azīz to Leo III⁴⁵, in al-Kindi's expressions in the correspondence between al-Kindi and al-Hashimi⁴⁶; in Ammar al-Basri's⁴⁷, Theodore

⁴⁰ Adang, *ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴¹ "They say: "What sort of a Messenger is he that he eats food and moves about in the streets? Why has not an angel been sent down to accompany him and threaten the (disbelievers)? Or why has not at least a treasure been sent down for him or a garden given to him for (easy) sustenance?" al-Furqān 25/7-8.

⁴² There are virtually no records of discussions made between Muslims and Jews on the subject of religion, after the Muhammad (pbu) period.

⁴³ *al-Muādalati' d-Dīniyya allatī carat bayna'l-khalīfati'l-Abbāsī al-mahdī ve imtāus al-āsilik al-masīhī an-nastūrī, Islamochristiana*, 3/1977, p. 125-152; For English translation see. "The Dialogue of Patriarch Timothy I with Caliph Mahdi", the Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue, A Collection of Documents from the First -Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.) Translations with Commentary, ed. N. A. Newman, Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, Pennsylvania 1993, p. 193-194.

⁴⁴ Ahmed Ferid Rifāī, *Asru'l-Ma'mūn*, Matbaati dāri'l-kutubi'l-Misriyya, Cairo 1928/1346, II, 227-229.

⁴⁵ "Leo III's Reply to 'Umar II", *the Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue, A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries* (632-900 A.D.) Translations with Commentary, ed. N. A. Newman, Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, Pennsylvania 1993, s. 66.

⁴⁶ For al-Kindi, see sources mentioned below. Ammar el-Basri, *Kitābu'l-burhān, neşr ve thk.* Michel Hayek, Dāru'l-meşrik, Beirut 1986, 131-132.

⁴⁷ Ammar el-Basri, *Kitābu'l-burhān, neşr ve thk.* Michel Hayek, Dāru'l-meşrik, Beirut 1986, 131-132. For Theodore Abu-Qurrah, see Sidney Griffith, "The Prophet Muhammad, His Scripture and His Message According to The Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac From The First Abbasid Century", *La Vie Du Prophete Mahomet, Colloque de Strasbourg (October 1980)*, Press Universitaires de France, Paris 1983, p. 143.

Abu-Qurrah⁴⁸ and Hunayn ibn Ishaq's⁴⁹ and others' texts, and also in the discussions committed to paper afterwards, whether real or imaginary.⁵⁰⁵¹

The first written record of criticisms coming from Christians arguing Muhammad (pbuh) not being a real prophethood may be considered to emerge with John of Damascus⁵².

Criticisms⁵³ constituting an integral part of correspondences, mutual conversations and rejections containing these types of subjects may be classified under these categories⁵⁴:

a. The word "prophet", means "a prophesying person", in other words, a person telling us things no other may tell us, or things about no one knows which occurred before or will eventually occur. A person carrying out these, earn our trust concerning the truthfulness of his expressions, through the signs confirming his words and witnessing their wisdom⁵⁵. These things, which are the conditions which a genuine prophet must fulfill, and also evidences of a genuine prophet, doesn't exist in the person accepted by Muslims as prophet⁵⁶; in other words, he didn't teach us anything about neither the past nor the future⁵⁷. Muhammad (pbuh) didn't give information concerning past and future events during lifetime, and the *khabar* he gave during his lifetime didn't realize after his decease. In fact, he never claimed he had such a characteristic⁵⁸.

b. Unlike the previous prophets gaining their victories by courtesy of the favor of the divine hand, his victories weren't gained through divine help. Therefore, the victories in question may not be proof to his prophethood.

The fact he won victories with a few number of supporters, doesn't arise from him being a prophet, but from the nations he beat being sinners⁵⁹.

c. Despite Jesus Christ healing the detached ear of the soldier whose ear was detached by his apostle,⁶⁰ Muhammad (pbuh) couldn't perform a miracle to heal the detached fingers of seriously injured Talhah Ibn Ubaydallah, who was injured when trying to protect Muhammad (pbuh)⁶¹.

⁴⁸ For Theodore Abu-Qurrah, see Sidney Griffith, "The Prophet Muhammad, His Scripture and His Message According to The Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac From The First Abbasid Century", *La Vie Du Prophete Mahomet, Colloque de Strasbourg (October 1980)*, Press Universitaires de France, Paris 1983, p. 143. The epistle of Hunayn ibn Ishaq titled "Kayfiyyatu idrāqi haqiqati'd-diyāna" is a text dealing with the characteristics which a genuine religion should carry, as it may be understood from its name. Since Hunayn Ibn Ishaq embraces Christianity as the genuine religion, it lists the characteristics of Christianity and states that the ones not carrying these characteristics aren't genuine religions. Among these characteristics he lists the announcer of the religion having to perform miracles, the religion not being spread through the use of power and force, etc; since generally it is considered by the Christians that Islam was spread through force, and Muhammad (pbuh) lacks miracles, these are criticisms oriented towards Islam and Muhammad (pbu). For the epistle, see Halil Samir al-Yesūi, "Makālatu Huneyn b. Ishaq fī "Kayfiyyatu idrāqi haqiqati'd-diyāna", *al-Maṣriq*, July 1999, volume 2, p. 245-363.

⁴⁹ The epistle of Hunayn ibn Ishaq titled "Kayfiyyatu idrāqi haqiqati'd-diyāna" is a text dealing with the characteristics which a genuine religion should carry, as it may be understood from its name. Since Hunayn Ibn Ishaq embraces Christianity as the genuine religion, it lists the characteristics of Christianity and states that the ones not carrying these characteristics aren't genuine religions. Among these characteristics he lists the announcer of the religion having to perform miracles, the religion not being spread through the use of power and force, etc; since generally it is considered by the Christians that Islam was spread through force, and Muhammad (pbuh) lacks miracles, these are criticisms oriented towards Islam and Muhammad (pbu). For the epistle, see Halil Samir al-Yesūi, "Makālatu Huneyn b. Ishaq fī "Kayfiyyatu idrāqi haqiqati'd-diyāna", *al-Maṣriq*, July 1999, volume 2, p. 245-363.

⁵⁰ For a similar type of epistle of John of Damascus, see "The Discussion of a Christian and A Saracen, By John of Damascus", *Muslim World*, XXV/1935, s. 266-272.

⁵¹ For approaches of Abbasid period Christians to Muhammad (pbuh) see Griffith, the mentioned text p. 131-142.

⁵² "The Chapter of 100/101 of the *Haeresibus*", Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, Brill, Leiden 1972, p. 135.

⁵³ Other subjects of criticism concerning Muslim's perceptions of heaven and the reason of the Islam converts' preference of Islam as the religion, also are mentioned in rejection texts and al-Kindi's texts. However since these aren't directly related to the subject we deal, these aren't provided here under a separate title.

⁵⁴ Since the criticism subjects of Christians concerning Muhammad (pbu) exists in al-Kindi's *Risāla* in a compact manner, the subjects to be mentioned here were taken from the work in question. Concerning the *Risāla*, see Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Abdülmesih b. İshak al-Kindi", *DIA*, XXVI, p. 38-39; *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 AD), *Translations with Commentary*, ed. N. A. Newman, Hatfield Pennsylvania 1993, p. 355-360. Thomas. E. Burman, "The Influence of The *Apology of Al-KINDI* and *Contrarieties Affolica on Ramon Lull's Late Religious Polemics*, 1305-1313", *Medieval Studies* 53 (1991), p. 197-228; Muhammed Hamdi el-Bekri, "Risālatu'l-Hāşimī ila'l-Kindī wa Raddu'l-Kindī Alayhā", *Mağallatu Kulliyati'l-Adab Cāmiātu'l-Kāhira*, volume IX/I, no. 9, 1947.

⁵⁵ *al-Kindī, Risālatu'l-Hāşimī ila'l-Kindī wa'r-raddu'l-Kindī alayhā, The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue, A Collection of Documents from the First Islamic Centuries (632-900 AD)*, Translations with Commentary, ed. N. A. Newman, Haffield Pennsylvania 1993, p. 435. Al-Kindi gives examples that these characteristic exist in Jewish and Christian prophets mentioned text. p. 435-38.

⁵⁶ Al-Kindi gives examples that these characteristic exist in Jewish and Christian prophets mentioned text., p. 435-38.

⁵⁷ Al-Kindi, mentioned text., p. 435-39.

⁵⁸ Al-Kindi, i mentioned text, p. 435, 440.

⁵⁹ Al-Kindi, mentioned text, p. 428, 440

d. His nature is one of a philanderer. It may be seen from the Zaynab event and his marriage to Aisha whom he married when she was of a very young age⁶². Expressions stated in Qur'ān about the permission to marry up to four women and being with unlimited number of bondmaid were also made up by him in order to legitimize the Zaynab event⁶³.

e. One of the proofs of a person's prophethood is his arrival being heralded by persons who are known as previous prophets. Despite there are so many prophecies concerning Jesus Christ in the Jewish sacred text, which were even confirmed by Qur'ān, there aren't any prophecies concerning the future arrival of Muhammad (pbuh) in neither Jewish nor Christian sacred texts⁶⁴.

f. As for another issue insisted by the Christians is, that, miraculous signs displayed by prophets in the name of God or on behalf of themselves, as it was in the case of Jesus Christ, being a sufficient and reasonable guarantee for any sacred text, any divine inspiration or any religious doctrine to be accepted⁶⁵. As for the main reason of their insistence on the subject, it is the existence of verses such as al-An'am 6/109⁶⁶ and al-Isrā 17/59⁶⁷ in Qur'ān, which reject the miracle performance demands⁶⁸. Al-Kindī, who cites the second one of these verses, states that although later Muslims attribute some miracles witnessing the genuineness of his prophetic role, contrary to the wish of Muhammad (pbuh)⁶⁹, he didn't make such a claim⁷⁰.

g. Against the general acceptance among the Muslims that, Qur'ān, inspired to Muhammad (pbuh) just like inspirations toward Moses and Jesus Christ, despite Muhammad (pbuh) being illiterate,⁷¹ is a literary miracle, therefore inimitable⁷², Christians, since they don't accept the said inspiration, alleged Qur'ān not only lack such a characteristics, but it was actually dictated by Muhammad (pbuh). They told it was Bahira from whom he learned the stories included in the Bible, the source in his commitment to paper of Qur'ān⁷³.

h. al-Kindī divides the laws into three categories. The first one is the supramundane Divine law, which is higher than the reason; the second one is the natural law based on reason, felt in the impulses of the fallen men. As for the third one, it is the law which is the rule of devil, violence and error, naiveté and simplicity. Christianity brought the first law, Judaism the second, as for the Islam, the third. Therefore, the law of Islam is a devilish one⁷⁴.

Up to this point, we saw the expressions of Christian defenders and rejecters concerning what are the necessary conditions for a person to be a prophet; and criteria asserting that these conditions were fulfilled by Jesus Christ, but not by Muhammad (pbuh); therefore the latter wasn't a genuine prophet, but a false prophet. We had said that the target audience of at-Tabarī was the believers of the other two Semitic religions in general, and Christians in

⁶⁰ Matthew 16/51-54; Luke 12/50-51; John 18/10-11.

⁶¹ Al-Kindī, *mentioned text*, p. 432.

⁶² Al-Kindī, *i mentioned text*, p. 434.

⁶³ John Damascus, "The Chapter of 100/101 of *The Haeresibus*", Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, Brill, Leiden 1972, s. 135., s. 139.

⁶⁴ Al-Kindī, *ibid.*, s. 496-499, 509. The first form of this assertion exists in section 100-101 of the work titled *Haeresibus* committed to paper by John of Damascus and which is the first written record oriented towards Islam. For this, see, *ibid.*, p. 135. Also, for the Turkish translation of the text in question, see İsmail Taşpınar, "Doğru'nun Son Kilise Babası Yuhanna ed-Dimeşki (649-749)", *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, İstanbul 2005, issue 21, 2001/2, 51-52.

⁶⁵ Christian rejecters mostly use this argument in the context of asserting that Christianity was mostly spread through miracle, or in other words via divine support, but Islam was spread through sword and mundane interest. For this, see al-Kindī, *mentioned text*, 465-466, and 513-514. Concerning the reasons ensuring the spreading of Islam and allegations that Muhammad (pbu) didn't perform any miracles, see Ammar el-Basrī, *ibid.*, p. 31-32.

⁶⁶ And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths that if a sign came to them, they would surely believe it. Say, "The signs are only with Allah".

⁶⁶ "And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths that if a sign came to them, they would surely believe it. Say, "The signs are only with Allah".

⁶⁷ "And nothing has prevented us from sending signs except that the former peoples denied them..."

⁶⁸ Al-An'am 6/ 37, 65; al-'Anbiya' 21/5-6; ash-Shu'āra' 26/2-3; al-Qasas 28/48-49; al-'Ankabut 29/48, 50-51; al-Isrā 17/90-93.

⁶⁹ Al-Kindī, *mentioned text*, p. 442-443.

⁷⁰ Al-Kindī, *mentioned text*, p. 443. Concerning Proofs of those denying the sensational miracles of Muhammad (pbu), and evaluation of these proofs see. Erdiç Ahatlı, *Peygamberlik ve Hz. Muhammed'in Peygamberliği*, Ankara 2007, p. 208-238.

⁷¹ al-Baqarah 2/23; al-Isrā 17/88; al-Hashr 59/21

⁷² Griffith tells that, despite the roots of this approach being in Qur'ān (al-An'am 6/149), it emerged during the beginnings of the Abbasid period, and afterwards, as a response to the attacks of the Christian defenders. Griffith, *mentioned text*, p. 143.

⁷³ Al-Kindī, *mentioned text.*, p. 452-464. Al-Kindī also deals with the compilation of Qur'ān and its textualization, and answers the challenge that a book similar to Qur'ān may not emerge anymore. Besides, for approaches of other Christian defenders on Qur'ān, see, *mentioned text.*, p. 145-146.

⁷⁴ Al-Kindī, *mentioned text.*, p. 450-452.

particular. In order for the table argued by the believers of the other two Semitic religions concerning the conditions for a person to be a prophet, to be complete, one should also observe whether the Jews also have certain criteria on the subject of prophethood.

It is impossible to see the open objections and criticism made by the Christians to the prophethood and person of Muhammad (pbuh), among Jewish people. They didn't commit to paper works in order to directly reveal that the prophet of Muslim isn't a genuine prophet, they did it in a more indirect manner. As the target audience, they determined the Christians, who claim that the person promised in the Bible was Jesus Christ, and tried to show that criteria fulfilled by Moses, required for a prophet to fulfill, wasn't fulfilled by Jesus Christ. However, while they didn't tell it expressly due to the political cycle⁷⁵, it is possible to deduce that they also implied that Muhammad (pbuh) didn't fulfill these criteria too, while they were telling Jesus Christ didn't fulfill the criteria of prophethood as well.

Characteristics a person shall have in order for the prophethood argument of a person can be accepted by the Jews, while also dealt by authors such as Maimonides, Saadia Gaon and Qirqisani, the characteristics in question are properly summarized in chapter fourteen of the work *Ishrūn Makāla* committed to paper by al-Muqammi. However, it is hard to tell that the criteria explained by al-Muqammi are purely Jewish criteria. Al-Muqammi was converted to Christianity, but after a short time converted back to Judaism⁷⁶ therefore it would be more reasonable to accept that these criteria mentioned by him is a synthesis/mix of Christian and Jewish criteria.

According to al-Muqammi, the characteristics a person must have in order to be a prophet can be followed:

- a. A genuine prophet must spread and announce 'tawhid' belief.
- b. The content of its duty must be reasonably acceptable and in conformity with our sense experience.
- c. He must defend the good practices and ban the bad ones.
- d. Communication on him must come from many centers, many nations, and must be transmitted in different languages, since this multiplicity reduces the possibility of a sham.
- e. The miracles supporting the genuineness of prophethood must be witnessed by a large audiences invited to believe him, a whole nation, instead of a limited number of people; these miracles must be accepted unanimously by the nation, both by the educated and the ignorant, young and old, men and women. These miracles must have a nature persisting for a few days, weeks, months and even years, since it helps confirming whether the communicated event really occurred.
- f. The necessary supramundane events must be a miraculous punishment for the enemies of the prophet.
- g. His first rulership must not come through sword or war, but such victory may only be a happy consequence of events.
- ğ. Lastly, the supramundane events must be recorded in sacred texts of the prophet; since the respect towards a written record, whose accuracy isn't discussed by people, renders collecting evidence parts from different individuals unnecessary^{77,78}.

As for the second problem discussed concerns nubuwwa, which is nubuwwa in the absolute sense, in other words, the problem of whether nubuwwa is necessary-unnecessary or helpful-harmful for people. In Islamic literature, particularly one group and two figures stand out concerning this subject⁷⁹.

One of these, a group, is known as Brahmanists, while they became a symbol of the opinions and thoughts rejecting nubuwwa in the Islam heresiography tradition, it isn't yet clear what exactly this group was, and who were referred under this name, taking the Muslim sources as a starting point⁸⁰.

⁷⁵ A similar evaluation may be also be told for *Emunoth ve-Deoth (Kitāb al-Amanāt wal-Itikādāt)*, a work of Saadia Gaon, generally oriented towards Christianity. It seems reasonable that the criticisms and answers put forward by Saadia, were also valid for the dominant religion, Islam, while the latter not being the target. Particularly, for the place where Muslims' claims on the Law/publication of the Old Testament, and that Mecca is Paran, of the Sinai, Seir and Pharan trinity, see Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trs. from the Arabic and the Hebrew by Samuel Robanblatt, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1976, p. 163-167; Mark . R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the middle Ages/ Haç ve Hilal Altında Ortaçağda Yahudiler*, Turkish translation by: Ahmet Fethi, Sarmal Yayınevi, İstanbul 1997, p. 210-211.

⁷⁶ Adang, *mentioned text*, s. 63.

⁷⁷ This expression appears in al-Kindi, and may be a reference to hadith collectors who are trying to collect Muhammad's (pbu) hadiths in this context.

⁷⁸ Adang, *mentioned text*, p. 163-164.

⁷⁹ Erdiñç Ahaflı, *Peygamberlik ve Hz. Muhammed'in Peygamberliği*, Değişim Yayınları, İstanbul 2002, p. 27.

⁸⁰ İlhan Kutuer, *Akıl ve İtikat, kelâm-felsefe ilişkileri üzerine tartışmalar*, İz Yayıncılık, İstanbul 1996, p. 69.

As per the persons known as their rejection of nubuwwa, these are Ibn al-Rawandī (301/913) and Abū Bakr Zakariya Rāzī (313/925). The opinions put forward on the subject, of the ones rejecting nubuwwa in its absolute sense, may be seen in the work titled *az-Zumurrud*, attributed to Ibn al-Rawandi, which is included to Mu'ayyad fi'd-Din al-Shirazi's *el-Maālu'l-muayyadiyye*, and in words transmitted by the person called "godless" in the book *Alāmu'n-nubuwwe* of Abu Hatim al-Rāzī⁸¹, however told by the later authors to be Abu Bakr Zakariya Razi. For these persons, the reasons to reject the nubuwwa are dealt under the following titles:

a. "Allah is the sovereign; to determine a prophet within a tribe, and to want this tribe to dominate the others, would be to destroy the equality between humans, and does not befit His wisdom. It is not the only issue contrary to the principle of divine wisdom. Prophets caused wars among religions, and made people kill each other by sowing hostility among people. One certifying a religion denies the other and people draw the sword to each other in the fight for political superiority. Why, Allah, who got the wisdom, would cause these?"⁸².

b. "However people are equal, the mind is their minimum, even maximum common point. The one who develops his knowledge by working and exerting himself, and who trains his mind, may compensate the degree differences between him and others. What is important is to understand that mind is the principle of the nature unity and equality principle among humans, and to develop one's own mind, without imitating others'...."⁸³

c. "Think about the situation a person who believes the (far from it, superstitions) called as religious law, brought by the prophets, and selects the way of imitation, and therefore eternal ignorance, instead of the investigative nature of philosophy. Those believing in religious law are the ones believing in imitation. Religious faith isn't based on investigation, consideration and discussion, in other words on research. Besides, religious people also tend to ban research violently.

They don't allow one to think about religion. They destroy the ones who insist. So, the imitation becomes stable. Imitation leads to fanaticism and fanaticism leads to violence."⁸⁴

d. "Religious laws brought by the prophets negate each other. What they tell about God, religion, prophet and universe contradict with each other. Jesus Christ denied Moses and Muhammad (pbuh) denied Jesus Christ. As for Mani, he is opposed to all. Also there are contradictions in sacred books themselves. Therefore, nubuwwa knowledge is not the expression of the truth"⁸⁵.

e. "Persons who don't claim to be prophets, such as magicians, oracles, etc. are also able to perform the things, attributed to prophets as miracles. Besides, rumors transmitted as miracles of Muhammad (pbuh), are transmitted by one, two, or a maximum of three persons. These rumors may very well be pre-arranged"⁸⁶.

f. The claim that Qur'ān is unique is unfounded. It is possible to bring a thousand, let alone a single Qur'ān. There are poems which surpass (far from it) Qur'ān, at the very top in the arts of rhetoric, fluency and selection. The text called Qur'ān not only lacks any scientific contribution, but also is full of sentences failing to constitute proof to anything, mythological tales of the past; it would not even mean anything if we bring a similar book"⁸⁷.

g. "When there is such a contrariety between what is nubuwwa and what is philosophical, why would one aiming to reach the knowledge and truth would choose the hardest road, which is full of labyrinths and doubts, and whose end may be bad? Or why wouldn't he choose the easy road for Allah, and inspire the wrong and the right to all His servants who demand it? Sovereign Allah's inspiration of the good-bad helpful-harmful knowledge to anyone would provide a more general benefit, and it is what befits His wisdom. Why wouldn't Allah, who even gave the animals the instinct to invite the helpful and to get rid of the harmful, even to the animals, grace the nature of human with such a skill? Is not the latter road more helpful, shorter and more comprehensive than appointing prophets for the human?"⁸⁸.

⁸¹ Ebū Hātim er-Rāzī, *Alāmu'n-nubuwwa*, Salāhussāvi-Gulām Rīza Avānī, Tahrān 1977, p. 3.

⁸² İlhan Kutluer, s. 78; for places in the original text, see al-Rāzī, *mentioned text.*, p. 3-4, 182-183.

⁸³ Kutluer, *mentioned text.*, p. 79; al-Rāzī, *mentioned text.*, 11-13.

⁸⁴ Kutluer, *mentioned text.*, p. 79; al-Rāzī, *a.g.e.*, 22-23.

⁸⁵ Kutluer, *mentioned text.*, p. 79; al-Rāzī, *mentioned text.*, 69-71.

⁸⁶ Kutluer, *mentioned text.* p. 80; al-Rāzī, *mentioned text.*, p. 191-192.

⁸⁷ Kutluer, *mentioned text.*, p. 80; al-Rāzī, *mentioned text.*, p. 227-228

⁸⁸ Kutluer, *mentioned text.*, p. 80; al-Rāzī, *mentioned text.* 181-183.

h."Finally, mathematics, astronomy, logic and medicine books are the works of the orientation of the abovementioned skill to knowledge and if a proof is sought, it would not be found in the sacred texts, but in (Euclid's) *Usūlu'l-handasa*, (Ptolemaios') *al-Macastī*. The ones who wrote these works never needed prophets. As for the claim that the principles of these sciences were produced by prophets, it is unfounded. The relevant knowledge arises from the experience and observations of the expert, and develops collectively⁸⁹".

After presenting the content of discussions continuing in two channels concerning prophethood, a brief comparison concerning which of the subjects of these discussions are corresponded to the subjects included in at-Tabarī's work, it will ensure us to see more clearly the channel against which Tabarī's book was committed to paper.

Among these, the part concerning the *khāber* included in the introduction part of at-Tabarī's work, corresponds to the "miracles being transmitted by one or two persons" issue dealt in the discussions on nubuwwah in its absolute sense (e) and criticisms asserted by Jews that "*khāber* shall be transmitted by many centers and persons" (d); "Muhammad (pbuh) inviting to a Single Allah and being in conformity with other prophets concerning this subject", corresponds to the criticism asserted by Jews that "the genuine prophet must spread the oneness of God" (a); the second section in which it is revealed that Muhammad (pbuh) is genuine and his laws are praiseworthy, corresponds to the thesis asserted by Christians that "the law brought by Muhammad (pbuh) is the law of the devil" (h). As for the third section where it is revealed that Muhammad (pbuh) performed miracles, and that it is specified in Qur'ān, it corresponds to the criticism of Christians that "he didn't perform any miracles and it is confirmed by Qur'ān, therefore no such signs exist in him" (f; ġ for Jews); the fourth section in which he reveals that Muhammad (pbuh) foretold some events, some of which occurred during his life and some after his death, corresponds to the criticism of Christians that "Muhammad (pbuh) hasn't performed such a miracle" (a). The sixth section where it is revealed that Qur'ān is a sign and proof of his prophethood, corresponds to the criticism asserted by Christians and Brahman that Qur'ān is not an inimitable the seventh section in which it is tried to show that victories gained by Muhammad (pbuh) in a short period of time is a proof of his prophethood corresponds to the criticisms of Christians and Jews to the contrary, or their criticisms that "it should be like this if he were a genuine prophet" (b; f, g), the eighth section where it is revealed that the one who embraces him are the most benevolent in the world constitutes an answer to the criticism of Christians that those embraced Islam embraced it due to the facilities it provides on the subject of mundane benefit and sexuality (d). as for the ninth and tenth section in which it is specified that the prophethood, name, or even the place where he would emerge as a prophet and things he would do, were announced/heralded by previous prophets, it may be said that it corresponds to the criticisms to the contrary, asserting Jesus Christ being heralded but Muhammad (pbuh) wasn't (a), and to the criticism of the Jews directly addressed towards Jesus Christ and indirectly addressed towards Muhammad (pbuh that, prophets weren't heralded through such prophecies.

This comparison renders the thought "at-Tabarī's work is not about discussions of nubuwwa in its absolute sense, and its target audience is believers of the other two big Semitic religions in general, and Christians in particular"⁹⁰ which was previously expressed in the beginning, even more clear. Also, with this comparison, taking the own expression of at-Tabarī as a starting point, our approach, which is the text being not at a theoretical level, but being against a definite target since being a product of the political cycle, is confirmed since the text, as we revealed taking the texts as our starting point, is a complete answer to virtually all points of criticism, which had become systematic in the works of the authors of the era's (while rooted to the further past, set and continue up to our day without change, since no additions were made⁹¹) authors that were believers of the other two big Semitic religions (both of the Jews and Christians; and while not being directly aimed, one point in the nubuwwa discussions), addressed to Muhammad (pbuh).

⁸⁹ Kutluer, *mentioned text*, p. 80; al-Rāzī, *mentioned text.*, p. 273-274.

⁹⁰ It is very clear from his own expressions that the target of at-Tabarī are particularly Christians: If we would ask why they reject our prophet (pbu), particularly to Christians, they indicate three points: The first one, we never could find, see that a prophet announced/heralded him before his arrival. The second one, we couldn't find any verse/miracle in the Qur'ān about the person who brought it, and no prophecy about him. The third one, Messiah announced no prophet will arrive after him. *ed-Dīn*, p. 48-49.

⁹¹ Concerning the criticism to Islam in general and prophethood of Muhammad (pbu) in the west being still the same in the Western World see. Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters, Perception and Misperception/Müslüman-Hıristiyan Diyalogu*, translated by Fuat Aydın, Birey Yayınları, İstanbul 2000, 121-123.

Regarding what were utilized by at-Tabarī while determining these criticism subjects, it is possible to have happened in two manners. The first one is the possibility he may have obtained these subjects verbally while living among the Christian community in which he spent a long period of his life and to which he was a distinguished member. As for the second one, he may have obtained knowledge on criticisms by consulting the texts committed to paper on the subject, or may have made additions to the ones he previously knew. Because, most of the Christian-origin rejections containing these subjects were committed to paper by figures such as Theodore Abū-Qurrah (d. 820 or 838), Ammar al-Basrī (d. app. 850); Ya'qūb Ibn Ishaq al-Kindī (d. app. 820); Abu-Rāita (d. app 820) etc., who lived during the Abbasid period, in the 9th century when at-Tabari was alive⁹².

One of the clearest indications that at-Tabarī saw and read at least one the works pertaining to the abovementioned writer or writes, is observed in his attempt, at the end of *ad-Dīn*, to reveal the superiority of Islam against other religions by comparison method. The style of at-Tabarī is exactly similar to the comparison made by Theodore Abu Qurrah in order to assert the superiority of Christianity.

Abū Qurrah, probably to give the impression that it is made objectively, has the comparison made to an imaginary person living in Arcadia, away from civilizations. The individual in question, in order to understand which of the religions he encountered when he visited the city (Baghdad) during the Abbasid period in order to fulfill his needs is the truest and most embraceable, meets one by one to the believers of these religions and try to understand what these religions (Sabians, Mazdakis, Samaritans, Jews, Christians, Manichaeists, Marcionists, Bardaisanites and Muslims)⁹³

At-Tabarī, too, at the end of his work, by asking a question, "What do you say about a person arriving from India or China to this country, wanting to find the true path, asking here the religions of the people, and wanting to obtain information concerning the traditions of the people of this country?", a question he thought was more persuasive, gives information on the faiths of the believers of Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Atheism during his era, one by one, and he tells that eventually, an Indian or Chinese with a healthy and open-minded nature, would not believe anything but Islam, if he is looking for the truth⁹⁴.

It is also possible for at-Tabarī to have reached the information concerning the conditions a person has to fulfill in order to be a prophet according to Jews; with the methods he reached Christian criticisms. In other words, he may have learned these criticisms of the Jews during his pre-Muslim life in which these criticisms were commonly known, or he may have seen this work committed to paper in Arabic, after her converted to Islam⁹⁵.

F. *ad-Dīn's* place in the Isbātu Nubuwwah Tradition

We have already told that the texts concerning the subjects, whose certain shortages were listed by at-Tabarī without giving names, were committed to papers before him. The sources also mention texts relevant to the subject. None of these pre-at-Tabari works, which we saw from their titles that some were concerning nubuwwah in its absolute sense and some addressed towards proving the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh), reached our day⁹⁶. Due to this reason, it is impossible to definitely tell where these works stand when compared to at-Tabarī's work, and where at-Tabarī's work stands when compared to these works, since we don't know the contents of these works. However, it is also impossible to tell that we are fully hopeless concerning the subject. While they don't directly tackle the subject, we have some invitation letters and mutual discussion texts.

In order to see the place of at-Tabarī and his work in the tradition of Isbātu nubuwwa, it will be sufficient to see the process of the use of prophecies on Muhammad (pbuh) in previous sacred texts as a sign of his prophethood before at-Tabarī.

In the first centuries of Islam's emergence and first spread, the presence of words in Qur'ān that Muhammad (pbuh) was heralded in the previous books, was sufficient for the the acceptance that he was a prophet whose arrival was

⁹² For other authors, see Griffith, mentioned text.; Samir Khalil Samir&Jorgen S. Nielsen (ed.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1994.

⁹³ For this, Sidney Griffith, "Faith and Reason in Christian Kelām: Theodore Abū Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion", Samir&Nielsen, *ibid.* p. 13-15.

⁹⁴ At-Tabarī, *ibid.*, p. 207-209.

⁹⁵ Adang, *ibid.*, p. 165. Footnote no. 108.

⁹⁶ Concerning these texts, see Ahatli, *ibid.*, p. 31-32.

announced by previous prophets⁹⁷. The earliest example that Muslims were contented with the words of Qur'ān, on the subject, is the verse 'And [recall, O People of the Scripture], when Allah took the covenant of the prophets, [saying], "Whatever I give you of the Scripture and wisdom and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, you [must] believe in him and support him." [Allah] said, "Have you acknowledged and taken upon that My commitment?" They said, "We have acknowledged it." He said, "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses.'^{98 99}. Muslims, based on the mentioned verse, while believing the presence of the prophecy concerning the arrival of Muhammad (pbuh) in the Jewish and Christian sacred texts, didn't seek the evidences of this presence¹⁰⁰. It is possible to see that they were contented with words specified in Qur'ān and weren't seeking the signs mentioned there in the Holy bible, from a discussion made between Amr Al-As and Patriarch John I of Jacobites on May 9 639/18.

As examining the principles of the Christian belief, don't even bring the subject forward¹⁰¹.

It seems that these Qur'ān centered claims of Muslims have not much validity for the believers of the other two big Semitic religions, due to two reasons. The first one was Qur'ā's not being an authority for them; and as for the second one, words, which would support the claims in question, not being present in the texts of the Holy Bible in the first place. Furthermore, information of Muslims accepting the words of Qur'ān as criteria didn't have information to indicate the presence of the promises in question in the Holy Bible, in order to render these objections of the believers of the other two big Semitic religions invalid. It may be deduced from the words of John of Damascus, in the part of his *De Haeresibus* devoted to Muslims, that when asked what the previous prophets told about the arrival of Muhammad (pbuh), the Muslims would be confused, and therefore lose the argument¹⁰².

However, the situation started to change in time particularly through the conversion of Jews and Christians. With the help of knowledge of new converts on Holy Bible, materials on the subject start to emerge in discussions and this type of texts starting from the first half of the eight century (second century hegira). In the letter sent by Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz to emperor Leo III, to invite him to Islam, he asks him how they still don't accept the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) despite the words "When he sees chariots with teams of horses, riders on donkeys or riders on camels, let him be alert, fully alert." contained in Isaiah 21:7, clearly ment as Jesus Christ as donkey rider and Muhammad (pbuh) as the camel rider¹⁰³. Furthermore, from Leo's letter, it is also seen that Paraklate in John 14:16, 26; 15:26 and 16/7 is used by Umar as a sign to Muhammad (pbuh)¹⁰⁴.

A serious increase is observed in the citations made from the sacred texts of the Bible, concerning Muhammad (pbuh) being heralded, in the letter sent by Ibn al-Layth, on behalf of Harun al-Rashid, to Constantine VI.

The citations made for these prophecies from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Hymns and the New Testament¹⁰⁵, are fairly accurate in terms of meaning¹⁰⁶. While a numerical increase is seen in the texts of Bible used in order to prove

⁹⁷ Those to whom we gave the Scripture know him as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know [it]"; "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them." "And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, "O children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of Allah to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad."" (al-Baqarah 2/146; al-A'raf 7/157; as-Saf 61/6)

⁹⁸ Ali 'Imran 3/81

⁹⁹ For the discussion of Najran committee with Muhammad (pbu), see Mustafa Fayda, "Hz. Muham-med'in Necrânî Hıristiyanlarla Görüşmesi ve Mübâhele (Meeting of Muhammad (pbu) with Christians from Najran, and Mubahalâh", *İslami İlimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Ankara 1975, II, 151-174.

¹⁰⁰ A similar thing can also be seen relevant to the following part of the verse al-Baqarah 2/146 ⁹⁹Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know [it]"; Umar asked about Muhammad (pbu) to Abdullah Ibn Salam due to the abovementioned verse, and he told he has no doubts concerning the prophethood of Muhammad (pbu). However, Umar didn't feel the need to ask Abdullah Ibn Salam due to which texts in the Old Testament he reached his opinion. For this verse and the *haber* in question, see al-Râzi, *Tefsîr-i Kebîr*, (Turkish translation), Akçağ yayınları, Ankara 1989, IV, 41

¹⁰¹ See. "The Dialogue of the Patriarch John I with 'Amr Al-As", Newman, *ibid.*, s. 24-28.

¹⁰² John of Damascus, mentioned text, p. 134-135.

¹⁰³ Adang, *ibid.*, p. 143. In Leo's answer it is told that Hymns are also used by Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz as texts containing the prophecy on the arrival of Muhammad (pbu), while it isn't mentioned which sentence was used, "Leo III's Reply to 'Umar II", Newman, *ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁴ Newman, mentioned text, p. 71. Casım Avcı, *İslâm-Bizans İlişkileri*, Klasik, İstanbul 2003, p.114-126.

¹⁰⁵ Those from the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 18/13, 33/12; Hymns 9/21, 44 in some texts 45/3-8, 139/1-9; Isaiah 21/9, 42/1-10; Habakkuk 3/15. As for the citations made from the New Testament, these are as follows: Matthew 6/9, John 14/26, 15/26, 16/3. For these, see. Rifâi, *mentioned text.*, II, 227-229

¹⁰⁶ Adang, *mentioned text*, p. 143-144; Also, for the letter of Ibn al-Layth, see Rifâi, *mentioned text*, II, 188-236; 134-138.

that the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) was heralded by the previous prophets, when compared to the first and second centuries, the biggest shortage of the ones committing such texts to papers was their lack of knowledge of the Bible's sacred texts, and their inability to include many of the relevant sacred book texts in their books, as was expressed by at-Tabarī¹⁰⁷.

Adang tells that the numerical increase in the sacred texts used by Ibn al-Layth was caused by the converts who were previously members of the other two big Semitic religions, and particularly converts from Christianity. Since they were too, using references towards the person expected to emerge in the future, which were included in the Old Testament, in order to prove the prophethood of Jesus Christ to Jews who were claiming no prophet would arrive after Moses. Christians had committed epistles in which such texts were compiled, to paper. Hence, Adang explains the abovementioned increase observed in Ibn al-Lay as possessing an Arabic translation of a list consisting of texts used by Christians on the subject.

During these pre-at-Tabarī works, which reached our day, some Bible texts concerning the heralding of Muhammad (pbuh) was included as mentioned above. However, the only text we have, which put together the texts relevant to the subject in an orderly manner, and which made so many additions to these that it is incomparable to compare it with previous efforts¹⁰⁸, is at-Tabarī's *ad-Dīn*. When it is looked from this point of view, it can easily be told that At-Tabarī not only used the prophecies used for Jesus Christ in the Christian tradition as texts heralding Muhammad (pbuh) instead, but also used texts unknown to Christians and hadn't been used for this purpose, for the same intent¹⁰⁹; and therefore revealed an enormous sacred text corpus on the subject. Books written after him, which were dealing with the texts mentioning the subject of prophecy, could merely be additions to the main body constructed by at-Tabarī.

It may clearly be seen in Ömer Faruk Harman's work titled *Eski ve Yeni Ahit'te Hz. Muhammed'le Alâkalı Müjdeler*¹¹⁰. In the works examined by Harman¹¹¹, the total number of Bible texts mentioned as a proof of the heralding of Muhammad (pbuh) is 117. 72 of those were taken from the Old Testament and 45 from the New Testament. Among the texts in questions, 56 of the Old Testament sources and 6 of the New Testament sources are texts used in at-Tabarī's work¹¹². The majority of the ones mentioned as heralding texts relevant to New Testament consists of texts about "melekûtü's-semavât", and these are additions of Sakkâ'. Thus, when we leave aside these additions of Sakkâ' it is clearly seen that the decisive point in texts, whose sources are both Old Testament and New Testament, is still the ones being used by at-Tabarī¹¹³.

G. Influence on Forthcoming Generations

The most appropriate way to reveal whether subsequent generations are influenced from a text or an author, is to see subsequent generation mentioning the name of both the book and the author, only mentioning the name of the book or of the author, or without mentioning neither the name of the book nor the author, but citing relevant previous subjects. However, it is very hard to find examples for each of these, in the case of at-Tabarī. As mentioned above where we briefly talked about his life, while there are mentions in biographical sources on his medicine-related books, there isn't a single reference to *ad-Dīn*, which constitutes of our subject.

¹⁰⁷ At-Tabarī, *mentioned text*, p. 35. This word of at-Tabarī may be supported with the fact that the full translation of Bible to Arabic was only made in the ninth century

¹⁰⁸ Adang, *mentioned text.*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁹ For example, at-Tabarī, not only used the ones included to the letter of Umar Ibn Abd-al Aziz to Leo III, and all the ones excluding Hymns 9/21 and Matthew 6/9, used by Ibn al-Layth mentioned above, he also used other texts not used by them, for the same purpose.

¹¹⁰ Ömer Faruk Harman, *Eski ve Yeni Ahit'te Hz. Muhammed'le Alâkalı Müjdeler*, (unprinted work) İstanbul.

¹¹¹ The work is an examination on at-Tabarī's *ad-Dīn wa'd-davla*; Qarāfī's *al-Acvibatu'l-fāhira ani'l-asilati'l-fācira*; Abdullah at-Tarumân's *Tuhfatu'l-arib fi raddi alā ahl-i salib*; Rahmetullah el-Hindī's *Izhāru'l-Haq*; Nebhānī's *Hüccetullah ale'l-ālamīn*, Samuel b. Yahya b. Abbās al-Mağribī's *Bazlu'l-Mehūd fi ifhāmi'l-yahūd* ve Ahmed Hicāzi es-Sakkā's Ph. D thesis, *al-Biṣāratu bi-nabīyyi'l-islām fi't-tevrāh*.

¹¹² at-Tabarī tells he used a total of 130 evidences from the Old and New Testament, more than sixty of which were expressions heralding Muhammad (pbuh). Tabarī, *ibid*, p. 45.

¹¹³ For these, see Harman, *ibid*, p. 10-22. For a similar comparison, the majority of which was consisting from post-at-Tabarī writings, see Adang, "Appendix Two" *ibid* p. 263-265.

However, while there are very few authors expressing their usage of at-Tabarī's texts, it does not mean there are none. At-Tabarī is mentioned by name by only two. The first one of these, is the abovementioned Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī. al-Rāzī, in his interpretation, tells a text of Bible (Habakkuk 3/1-3) concerning the arrival of Muhammad (pbuh) is transmitted from at-Tabarī (*nukile min Ibn Razīn at-Tabarī*)¹¹⁴. As for the second one, he is Takiyuddin al-Jafarī¹¹⁵. Other than these two, among the persons told as being somehow influenced by al-Tabarī even they don't mention his name, are: Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889)¹¹⁶ Hasan b. Ayyub (d. app. 377/987-8), al-Āmirī (d. 381/991-2)¹¹⁷, al-Mawardī (d. 450/1058), Ibn Zafer (d. 566/1170-1), Qarafī (ö. 684/1285-6)¹¹⁸, Nisāburī¹¹⁹, Senhācī (d. app..684) and Ibn Qayyim (d.. 751). Mingana, states that the Bible citations existing in the texts of the last two authors are definitely¹²⁰ the Syriac translation of Bible *Peshitta* and none of these authors, neither Senhaci nor Ibn Qayyim, or any other, knew Syriac. Hence, the Bible citations they include are taken from the text of Ali b. Rabban at-Tabarī¹²¹.

As a final word, the following question may be asked: why the work of at-Tabarī, which has a singular place concerning the heralding of Muhammad (pbuh) in terms of the relevant literature, didn't receive the praise it deserves, despite being used as a source in texts, some of which later became widely used (like *Dalā'il'u'n-nubuwa* of Ibn Qutayba)?

In order to give a satisfying answer to this question, one has to have a deep knowledge on era's intellectual life, communication ways between scholars, the subjects discussed by and attracting interest among the ulama of the period, and things, which are needed by a Muslim society. Since it isn't possible to do these in an article, answers on the subject may only be fictionalized. Two reasons may be produced for the situation. The first one of these reasons, which seems more important, is that at-Tabarī having written the work in question in such a manner that it is directly addressed to the members of the believers of the other two big Semitic religions, and the second one, which is less significant/but maybe more important, is that the text was committed to paper through the use of a very academic language that it may have prevented the popularization of the text.

¹¹⁴ al-Rāzī., *at-Taḥṣīn al-kabīr*, III, 37.

¹¹⁵ Adang, *ibid.*, p. 148, footnote no. 46

¹¹⁶ Concerning Ibn Qutayba being influenced by at-Tabarī see Adang, *ibid.*, p. 149-150; for parts of Ibn Qutayba's book, which didn't reach our day in a complete manner, see Ibnu'l-Gavzī, *al-Vaḥī bi-ahvālī'l-Mustafā*, Dāru'l-ma'rīfe li't-tibāati wa'n-naṣr, Beirut 1966, I, 60-83.

¹¹⁷ For the work showing Amirī being influenced by at-Tabarī see Thomas, mentioned text.

¹¹⁸ For works revealing that the abovementioned persons were influenced by at-Tabarī see Adang, *ibid.*, p. 148, sources in the footnote no. 46; Kaya, mentioned text, *DĪA*, IX, 351.

¹¹⁹ Mingana, "Remarks on Tabarī's Semi-Official Defence of Islam", *BJRL*, 1925/1, p.239. Mingana tells here that the text Creation 16/8-13 Nisaburī cited in his *Garību'l-Kur'an*, in relation with al-Baqarah 2/38, is the shortened version of the text used by at-Tabarī (Cairo 1923, p. 67). For a comparison of these citations with at-Tabarī's text, see Mingana, "Remarks on Tabarī...", p. 238-239.

¹²⁰ For a comparison of these citations with at-Tabarī's text, see Mingana, "Remarks on Tabarī...", p. 238-239.

¹²¹ Mingana, "Remarks on Tabarī's..." p. 237.

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