

Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete: new light on Ibn Ishāq's (d. 130/767) Arabic version of John 15: 23–16: 1¹

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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 Ishāq's *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*. Key to understanding Ibn Ishāq'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 Ishāq'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 Ishāq, 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).

49 *maktūban fī l-tawrāti wa-l-injīl*)” (Q. A‘rāf 7: 157). Elsewhere in the Quran,
50 Jesus proclaims to the Children of Israel:

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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
ba‘dī ismuhu Aḥmad, Q. Ṣaff 61: 6).

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Inasmuch as one interprets “Aḥmad” (most praised one) and “Muḥammad”
(praised one) to be the same person, the Quran thus also asserts that Jesus pro-
claimed Muḥammad’s advent. Yet, despite the explicitness of such proclama-
tions, the Arabic scripture makes no precise claim 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.

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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.

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

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

109 **Ibn Ishāq's reading of John 15: 23–16: 1**

110 The earliest exemplar of Muslim attempts to connect Q. 61: 6 and the Paraclete
 111 is the translation of John 15: 26–16: 1 found in Ibn Ishāq's *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, a
 112 work compiled and taught under 'Abbāsīd patronage during the caliphate Abū
 113 Ja'far al-Manṣūr (r. 754–75).⁷ The historical importance of Ibn Ishāq's rework-
 114 ing of this passage from the Johannine discourse on the Paraclete has been
 115 recognized for over a century, inspiring a substantial corpus of scholarship.⁸
 116 This scholarly corpus has been primarily interested in Ibn Ishāq's excerpt of

119 5 See, e.g., *Cologne Mani Codex* 45–64, in Iain Gardner and Samuel N.C. Lieu,
 120 *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
 121 2004), 54–7.

122 6 See *Kephailia* 14.3–15.24 in Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts*, 73–5. Cf. John C.
 123 Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism* (Oakville, CT:
 124 Equinox, 2011), 80.

125 7 See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām*, 17 vols, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād
 126 Ma'rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 2, 16–7 and Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Irshād
 127 al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb*, 7 vols, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī,
 128 1993), 6, 2419. Cf. Josef Horowitz, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their
 129 Authors*, ed. and tr. L. Conrad (Princeton: Darwin, 2002), 74–90 and Gregor Schoeler,
 130 *The Biography of Muḥammad: Nature and Authenticity*, tr. Uwe Vagelpohl and ed.
 131 James E. Montgomery (London: Routledge, 2011), 26–34.

132 8 Anton Baumstark, "Eine altarabische Evangelienübersetzung aus dem Christlich-
 133 Palastinischen", *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und Verwandte Gebiete* 8, 1932, 201–09;
 134 Alfred Guillaume, "The version of the Gospels used in Medina, c. A.D. 700",
 135 *Al-Andalus* 15, 1950, 289–96; and Sidney H. Griffith, "Arguing from scripture: the
 136 Bible in the Christian/Muslim encounter in the Middle Ages", in Thomas J. Heffernan
 137 and Thomas E. Burman (eds), *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in the
 138 Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2005),
 139 29–58, which revises the earlier findings of a now-classic study in idem, "The Gospel
 140 in Arabic: an inquiry into its appearance in the first Abbasid century", *Oriens
 141 Christianus* 69, 1985, 126–67 (esp. 137 ff.). Two recent contributions are: Claude
 142 Gilliot, "Nochmals: Hieß der Prophet Muḥammad?", in Markus Groß and Karl-Heinz
 143 Ohlig (eds), *Die Entstehung einer Weltreligion, II: Von der koranischen Bewegung
 144 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.

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

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

156 Christian Palestinian Aramaic is a “Western” Aramaic dialect once used by
 157 Christians of Palestine, Roman Arabia and the Sinai. It differs from Syriac –
 158 an “Eastern” Aramaic dialect used predominantly, though not exclusively, by
 159 non-Chalcedonian Christians – in its script, corpus and geographical reach.
 160 Whereas the corpus of Christian Syriac spans chronologically from the second
 161 century CE to the contemporary era and spread geographically from the Near
 162 East to the reaches of China, CPA survives in a far more limited corpus that
 163 flourished in a comparatively circumscribed geographical area. The CPA corpus
 164 consists mostly of inscriptions, short texts (personal letters, prayers, etc.), and
 165 translations of Greek texts (e.g. the Septuagint and New Testament, vitae, hom-
 166 ilies, and liturgies). Scholars divide the corpus into three periods: the early (400–
 167 700 CE), the middle (700–900 CE), and the late period (900–1300 CE).¹⁰ Lastly,
 168 whereas Syriac emerges as the language *par excellence* of non-Chalcedonian,
 169 Miaphysite Christology in Late Antiquity, CPA gradually emerges as a key lan-
 170 guage for the monastic communities of Eastern Palestine and the Transjordan
 171 from the sixth to eighth centuries CE. As a different Aramaic dialect to that of
 172 Syriac, the distinctiveness of CPA and its script provided a viable, and perhaps
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 175 9 Hikmat Kashouh has amassed considerable evidence that the Arabic Christian translations
 176 of the second half of the eighth century CE – once thought to be the first attempts –
 177 probably drew upon “more primitive exemplars”. He concludes, “The second half of
 178 the eighth century is when we should talk of the *history of transmission* of the Arabic
 179 Gospel text and not the beginning of the Arabic translation of the Gospels”
 180 (H. Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels: The Manuscripts and Their*
 181 *Families*, Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2010, 333). I find the basic thesis plausible; however,
 182 Kashouh’s main text for supporting this theory, MS Vat. Ar. 13, provides far less evidence
 183 for a pre-Islamic Arabic translation of the Gospels than he believes. See the critiques of
 184 S.H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the ‘People of the Book’ in the*
 185 *Language of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 51 ff. and Juan Pedro
 186 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.

187 10 Christa Müller-Kessler, “Christian Palestinian Aramaic and its significance to the
 188 Western Aramaic dialect group”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119, 1999,
 189 631. Cf. Sidney H. Griffith, “From Aramaic to Arabic: the languages of the monasteries
 190 of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51,
 191 1997, 11–31 and Robert Hoyland, “Mount Nebo, Jabal Ramm, and the status of
 192 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 Syrian 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 Judaeian 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 Ishāq'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 Ishāq'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 Ishāq's work. This recension is also the most widely preserved: the recension transmitted from Ibn Ishāq's student, Ziyād ibn 'Abdallāh al-Bakkā'ī (d. 799).¹³ Other redactors of Ibn Ishāq 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-Bakkā'ī's recension: Ibn Hishām's (d. c. 830) *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya* and an unedited fragment of Abū Ja'far 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-Bakkā'ī's transmission of Ibn Ishāq's text was one of the most sought after, as Ibn Ishāq purportedly dictated his text to him twice ("amlā 'alayhi imlā'an marratayn"). See Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl*, 35 vols, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1983–92), 9, 489.

14 For a concise overview of the different transmissions of Ibn Ishāq's work, see Miklos Muranyi, "Ibn Ishāq's *Kitāb al-Magāzī* 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 Ishāq's materials he preserves in his *Tārīkh* and the *Jāmi' al-bayān*, his *tafsīr*, from Ibn Ishāq's student Salama ibn al-Faḍl (d. c. 806). The transmission of Yūnus ibn Bukayr (d. 815) preserved by 'Abd al-Jabbār al-'Uṭāridī (794–886) also omits the passage, as does the transmission of Muḥammad b. Salama al-Ḥarrānī (d. 806).

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

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

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246 (15.23) Whosoever despises me, despises the Lord. (24) Had I not per-
247 formed in their presence deeds no other had performed before, then they
248 would have been without sin. But now they have seen¹⁷ and think that
249 they can bring me to disgrace,¹⁸ even the Lord as well. (25) But it is inev-
250 itable that the word of the Law (*al-nāmūs*) will be fulfilled:¹⁹ "They
251 despised me without reason" – that is, "in error".²⁰ (26) If
252 al-Mnḥmnā,²¹ the one whom the Lord will send, had come to you from
253 the Lord – the Spirit of Truth²² who comes forth from the Lord – he
254 would be a witness for me, and you (pl.) as well, because you (pl.)
255 were with me from the beginning (*qadīman*). (16.1) I have spoken of
256 this lest you doubt.

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15 Ms. Zāhiriyya, *Majmū'a* 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 (~~full details~~) and Muṭā' al-Ṭarābīshī, *Ruwāt Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Yasār fī l-maghāzī wa-l-siyar wa-sā'ir al-marwiyyāt* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1994), 37, 492–7.

16 Ibn Hishām, *K. Sīrat Rasūl Allāh: Das Leben Mohammeds nach Mohammed ibn Ishak bearbeitet von Abd el-Malik ibn Hishām*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Dieterische Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1858–60), 1, 149–50; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawīyya*, 2 vols (ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī and 'Abd al-Ḥafīz 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 Ishāq "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 *ظروا*; and this reading is supported by Abū Ja'far 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 *يغزوني* (cf. Lane, 1, 1990a) rather than *يعزوني* 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 *majjān^{an}* as "without reason" derives from the CPA *l-mgn*; hence, Ibn Ishāq glosses *majjān^{an}* as meaning "in error (*bāṭil^{an}*)".

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

22 Reading *روح القسط*, with the CPA *rwh' d-qwšt'* 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 *qīst* in Arabic means "justice" rather than "holiness". I have also translated the text without the *waw* preceding *rūḥ al-qīst*, 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 Ishāq'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" ('by) and "the Father" ('b') in the CPA become merely "the Lord" (*al-rabb*) in the Arabic. Moreover, in Ibn Ishāq'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 Ishāq'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 Ishāq's Arabic translation derives from a CPA Gospel. The first is the rendering of the Paraclete as *al-mnhmnā*, thus transcribing the CPA *mnhmn'* (comforter) rather than the Greek *παράκλητος*. In contrast to CPA, where the lexical root *nḥm* generally means "to comfort",²⁴ neither *nḥm* nor *mnhmn'* 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-qist*, conforming to the CPA *rwh' d-qwšṭ'* rather than the Syriac *rwh' d-šr' r'* (ܪܘܚܐ ܕܫܪܐܝܐ).²⁶

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

Although Ibn Ishāq'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

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.h.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 *rwh' d-qwšṭ'* into *rwh' d-qwdš'* 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 Ishāq's interest *mnhmn'* might be rooted in something other than its literal sense. Muslim scholars cited the Hebrew *m'ōd m'ōd* ("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 Ishāq, 'Alī al-Ṭabarī (d. c. 860) argued that Muḥammad must be the Paraclete because the alphanumeric value of *Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh al-nabī al-hādī* in Arabic equalled the alphanumeric value of *prqlt* (ܩܪܠܬܐ) in Syriac; see *The Book of Religion and Empire*, tr. A. Mignana (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922), 141.

337 that the Johannine Paraclete discourse plays an exceedingly prominent role in
 338 Muslim discussions of the Bible from the eighth century CE onwards. Yet, Ibn
 339 Ishāq's citation of the CPA *mnḥmn'* to demonstrate Muḥammad's identity
 340 with the Paraclete is nearly without parallel – virtually all discussions of
 341 Muḥammad as *mnḥmn'* elsewhere derive from Ibn Hishām's recension of his
 342 text.²⁹ Without the version preserved in Abū Ja'far Ibn Abī Shayba's *Tārīkh*,
 343 one could justifiably doubt whether the passage really went back to Ibn Ishāq
 344 at all.

345 Muslim theological literature is replete with references to Muḥammad as the
 346 Paraclete,³⁰ but such literature, rather than being indebted to Ibn Ishāq or Ibn
 347 Hishām, are most often indebted to Ibn Qutayba's (d. 889) *A'lām al-nubuwwa*
 348 and, to a lesser extent, the works of 'Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. c. 860).³¹
 349 Hence, the singularity of Ibn Ishāq's rendering of the biblical proof-text is not
 350 because Muslim scholars rarely cited this proof-text. The Johannine Paraclete
 351 discourses left a profound mark on nearly all of the earliest 'Abbāsīd-era testi-
 352 monia to Gospel proof-texts for Muḥammad's prophecy.

353 Even non-Muslim sources testify to the currency of the Johannine proof-text
 354 in Muslim scholarly circles. Thus, it appears as an integral theme in the
 355 disputation of the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775–785) with the East Syrian
 356 Patriarch Timothy I (780–823) in 165/781 (or shortly thereafter). The caliph
 357 al-Mahdī at one point challenges the patriarch, “Who then is the Paraclete
 358 (روح في قلبه)?” “The Holy Spirit!” the patriarch answers and courteously
 359 refutes the caliph's misguided attempts to read John's Gospel as predicting
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363 29 E.g. Abū l-Rabī' al-Kalā'ī, *al-Iktifā'*, 4 vols., ed. Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn 'Izz al-Dīn
 364 'Alī (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1997), 1: 199; Taqī l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī, *Imtā' al-asmā'*, 15
 365 vols., ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Namīsī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya,
 366 1999), 3: 361–62; and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-I'lām bi-mā fī dīn*
 367 *al-naṣārā*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1980), 268.
 368 The sole exception to this general rule is a tradition attributed to the early Baṣran tra-
 369 ditionist Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (d. 728) in which he declares Muḥammad's name in Syriac
 370 (*al-siryāniyya*) to be Mushaffāḥ (مصحف=مشفع) and al-Mnḥmnā. The earliest version of
 371 this tradition I've found appears in al-Qāḍī 'Iyād ibn Mūsā (d. 1149), *al-Shifā'*, 2
 372 vols., ed. Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Cairo: 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1977), 1: 322. The earliest
 373 reference to 'Mushaffāḥ' as the Syriac equivalent to Muḥammad, to my knowledge,
 374 appears in 'Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī's (d. c. 860) *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* and Ibn
 375 Qutayba's (d. 889) *A'lām al-nubuwwa*. See 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Religion and Empire*, 130–
 376 31 and S. Schmidtke, “The Muslim reception of biblical materials: Ibn Qutayba and
 377 his *A'lām al-nubuwwa*”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, 2011, 258 (§38).

378 30 For a survey of the citations of the Johannine Paraclete passages in Muslim apologetic
 379 and polemical literature, see Martin Accad, “The Gospels in Muslim discourse of the
 380 ninth to the fourteenth centuries: an exegetical inventorial table (IV)”, *Islam and*
 381 *Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, 2003, 459–79.

382 31 A determination of the ultimate source(s) for the early 'Abbāsīd-era translation of the
 383 Gospels into Arabic used by these authors is still elusive. See Sabine Schmidtke,
 384 “Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and his transmission of Biblical materials from *Kitāb al-dīn*
 385 *wa-al-dawla* by Ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī: the evidence from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's
 386 *Maṣā'ir al-ghayb*”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20, 2009, 105–18; Sabine
 387 Schmidtke, “Biblical predictions of the Prophet Muḥammad among the Zaydīs of
 388 Iran”, *Arabica* 59, 2012, 218–66.

385 the advent of Muḥammad.³² The debate over the identity of the Paraclete also
 386 manifests itself in the famous, although dubious, correspondence between
 387 the Byzantine emperor Leo III (r. 717–741) and the Umayyad caliph ‘Umar II
 388 (r. 717–720).³³

389 Yet another early rendering of John 15: 26 also appears during the caliphate
 390 of Hārūn al-Rashīd in a disputational letter composed by the caliph’s scribe
 391 (*kātib*) Abū l-Rabī’ Muḥammad ibn Layth. Rashīd dispatched the letter in
 392 c. 796 to Constantine VI (r. 790–797). In the letter, Rashīd’s scribe declares
 393 to the Byzantine emperor, “Jesus has testified of [Muḥammad] in your midst
 394 (*‘indakum*) and described him (*bayyanahu*) to you (pl.) in the Gospel”.
 395 Thereafter, the Muslim scholar cites a garbled excerpt of the Johannine
 396 Paraclete discourse mixing elements from John 15: 26 and 16: 7–9, 13. His
 397 quotation of Jesus’ Paraclete discourse reads as follows:
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399 I am going so that the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth (*al-bāraqīṭ rūḥ*
 400 *al-ḥaqq*), will come to you, and he shall not speak on behalf of himself,
 401 but shall only speak as he is spoken to. He shall bear witness to me –
 402 you (pl.) will bear witness to me because you were with me – against
 403 the sins of the world(?);³⁴ and he will tell you of everything God has pre-
 404 pared for you.
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406 Ibn al-Layth then concludes by glossing his text, “the translation (*tarjama*) of
 407 Paraclete is Aḥmad”.³⁵ Even though this is a fascinating specimen of an early
 408 Arabic translation of John’s Gospel, the text notably lacks the distinctiveness
 409 in language that separates Ibn Ishāq’s version from all of its successors. In
 410 other words, Ibn Layth’s versions shows no trace of a CPA *Vorlage*; rather,
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 413 32 Martin Heimgartner (ed.), *Timethoes I, Ostsyrischer Patriarch: Disputation mit dem*
 414 *Kalfen al-Mahdī*, CSCO 631, *scr. syri* 244 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 38–43 (vii.18–52).

415 33 Arthur Jeffery, “Ghevond’s text of the correspondence between ‘Umar II and Leo III”,
 416 *Harvard Theological Review* 37, 1944, 293. *La correspondance d’Omar et de Léon*, tr.
 417 Jean-Pierre Mahé and ed. Alexan Hakobian (Paris: ACHCByz, 2015), 388 (V, 89–91).
 418 Even in the Armenian text the Greek *paráclētos* is merely transliterated as *paraklito*,
 419 with the Armenian equivalent *mxit’arič’* (“comforter”) only being added later as a
 420 gloss. Leo III’s letter survives in an Armenian translation preserved in the
 421 late-ninth-century chronicle of Lewond cited above, a medieval Latin translation (*ibid.*,
 422 439–52), and an Arabic version discovered in the manuscript collections at St
 423 Catherine’s in the Sinai peninsula. That this Arabic version still remains unpublished is
 424 particularly regrettable, inasmuch as recent research suggests that, rather than being ori-
 425 ginally a Greek composition (as recently suggested by Mahé in *ibid.*, 347–8), the letter
 426 may have originally been a Christian Arabic composition. See Cecilia Palombo, “The
 427 ‘correspondence’ of Leo III and ‘Umar II: traces of an early Arabic apologetic work”,
 428 *Millenium* 12, 2015, 23164.

429 34 The text seems corrupt here due either to the stray addition of *bi-l-khaṭī’ a* or a lacuna. In
 430 my translation, I have read *wa’ntum tashhadūn li-annakum ma’ī min qibal al-nās*
 431 *bi-l-khaṭī’ a* in order to make sense of the text; however, in my view, the more plausible
 432 reading would be *min qabla l-nās*, “prior to the people/world”, with *bi-l-khaṭī’ a* stricken
 433 from the text as a copyist’s error.

434 35 *Risālat Abī l-Rabī’ Muḥammad b. al-Layth*, 262 in Aḥmad Zakī Ṣafwat (ed.), *Jamharat*
 435 *rasā’il al-‘arab*, 4 vols (repr. Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awladuh, 1971), 3,
 436 217–74.

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

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

442 A number of considerations make this second thesis highly plausible. First,
443 Ibn Ishāq must have acquired his translation of the Johannine Paraclete discourse
444 prior to seeking out 'Abbāsīd patronage because of the limited geographical cir-
445 cuit of the CPA corpus. Although he hailed from Medina, Ibn Ishāq compiled
446 and transmitted his works, in particular his works on the Prophet's biography,
447 exclusively in Iraq (Hīra, Baghdād), the Jazīra (Ḥarrān), and Rayy, due to, on
448 the one hand, the networks patronage he enjoyed there from the 'Abbāsīds
449 and, on the other, the controversies surrounding him in his native Medina.

450 Ibn Ishāq had sought 'Abbāsīd patronage as a virtual exile from Medina, in
451 part due to the fierce and violent opposition he faced from Mālik b. Anas's fol-
452 lowers.³⁶ He first adopted the 'Abbāsīd governor of Mesopotamia, al-'Abbās b.
453 Muḥammad b. 'Alī, as his patron in Ḥarrān and subsequently the caliph
454 al-Manṣūr in Hīra.³⁷ Prior to his exile, however, Ibn Ishāq was deeply enmeshed
455 in Medinan scholarly circles and their networks in Syria and Egypt.³⁸ CPA cir-
456 culated in these western territories in the Levant; however, CPA was foreign to
457 the eastern territories where Ibn Ishāq found refuge from the tribulations he suf-
458 fered at the hands of the Medinans. Subsequent renderings of the Johannine
459 Paraclete discourse (i.e. from the early 'Abbāsīd period onwards) are not
460 dependent on CPA but, rather, derive from either Greek or Syriac Gospel
461 texts. If CPA texts did not circulate in the cities where Ibn Ishāq taught and
462 transmitted his *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* (i.e. Ḥarrān, Hīra, Rayy and Baghdād) then
463 Ibn Ishāq must have acquired the text prior to his exile from Medina.³⁹

464 Second, Ibn Ishāq possessed no knowledge of CPA as far as we know.
465 Scholars have speculated that Ibn Ishāq's grandfather Yasār was Christian
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36 Mālik b. Anas's hatred of and rivalry with Ibn Ishāq is notorious. Mālik purportedly boasted that he personally had expelled Ibn Ishāq from Medina; see Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *al-Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl*, 4 vols in 9 (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1952), 3-2, 193; and Abū Ja'far al-'Uqaylī, *Kitāb al-Du'afā'*, 4 vols, ed. Ḥamdī b. 'Abd al-Majīd b. Ismā'īl al-Salafī (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumay'ī, 2000), 4, 1196.

37 Yaqūt, *Irshād*, 6, 2419.

38 Ibn Ishāq journeyed to Egypt at least once to study with Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb in 115/737; 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 fāraqlītā*)", demonstrating that he relied on a Syriac *Vorlage* that, unlike Ibn Ishāq's CPA *Vorlage*, merely transcribed the Greek παράκλητος. See *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, 5 vols, ed. 'Abdallāh Maḥmūd Shaḥāta (repr. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī, 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 ‘Ayn Tamr in Iraq.⁴¹ However, even if Ibn Ishāq’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 Ishāq, 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 Ishāq’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 Ishāq’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 Ishāq might have acquired the Johannine text through his teacher, but just as feasibly through his own exertions. Ibn Ishāq was an intrepid scholar who courted controversy by transmitting materials from Jews and Christians – one detractor claimed to have seen Ibn Ishāq copy down written material from one of “the people of the Book”.⁴⁵ Other critics even cited the name of one of Ibn Ishāq’s non-Muslim sources, calling him “Jacob the Jew”.⁴⁶

However, in citing non-Muslims as authorities, Ibn Ishāq 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 ~~who~~ he met during the caliphate of ‘Abd 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 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”

40 Horovitz, *Earliest Biographies*, 76.

41 ‘Ayn al-Tamr is located some 50 km west of Karbalā’. Cf. Abū Ja‘far 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-Ya‘qūbī, *al-Tārīkh*, 2 vols, ed. M.Th. Houtsma (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 2, 150–1.

42 Michael Lecker, “Muḥammad b. Ishāq *ṣāhib 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 ‘Uqaylī, *Ḍu‘afā’*, 4, 1200, “*ra’aytu Ibn Ishāq yaktubu ‘an rajulin min ahl al-kitāb*”.

46 Ibn ‘Adī al-Jurjānī, *al-Kāmil fī ḍu‘afā’ al-rijāl*, 7 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984), 6, 2118.

47 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1, 1565; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, 25 vols, ed. Ḥamdī ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1983), 8, 23–4.

529 used in al-Zuhrī's account, *arīs*, is neither Arabic, Greek, nor Syriac. *Arīs* only
 530 appears as a word for tenant in CPA translations of the Gospels.⁴⁸ If Ibn Ishāq's
 531 translation does not derive from his teacher al-Zuhrī, he certainly acquired his
 532 Arabic rendition of the Johannine Paraclete discourse from the same networks
 533 exploited by al-Zuhrī.

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

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48 Ma'mar 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 'Uqayl tribes at the request of the governor 'Umayr b. Sa'd. 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, "Haddithū 'an banī isrā'īla wa-lā ḥaraja: a study of an early tradition", *Israel Oriental Society* 2, 1972, 215–39.

50 Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, vol. 5, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1996), 431; cf. Kister, "Haddithū", 235–6.

51 Avraham Hakim, "The death of an ideal leader: predictions and premonitions", *JAOS* 126, 2006, 1–4.

52 Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, 11 vols (repr. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), 2, 375; cf. R.G. Khoury, "Quelques réflexions sur les citations 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

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Ibn Ishāq’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 Ishāq. 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 Ishāq’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 Ishāq’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 *prqlyt*’, as do all Syriac versions of the Gospels.⁵⁶ Why this discrepancy?

I would like to suggest that Ibn Ishāq 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 Ishāq’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 Ishāq’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?

54 PSLG, 24.–9, 51.14, 55.4.

55 Ibn Ishāq’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 Ishāq’s rendering of John 15: 24b ما كانت لهم خطيئة (Kiraz, 4, 286) more closely matches the reading of Peshiṭta ܡܢ ܠܗܘܢ ܚܘܬܝܢܐ (Kiraz, 4, 286) than the *skl’ l’ hwt lhwn* of CPA gospel texts (PSLG, 24; CCR, 82, col. b). Ibn Ishāq’s use of “the Law” (*al-nāmūs*) in translating John 15: 15 rather than the more standard “their Law” – thus, the ܠܗܘܢ ܘܢܗܘܢܐ of the Sinaiticus and the ܠܗܘܢ ܘܢܗܘܢܐ of the Peshiṭta and the CPA *b-nmwshwn* – in fact conforms to the ܠܗܘܢ ܘܢܗܘܢܐ of the Harklean text (Kiraz 4: 286.ult and CCPA, 2a: 193b). Lastly, the Arabic rendering of John 15: 27 لآنكم قديما كنتم معي appears slightly closer to the Sinaiticus reading ܠܗܘܢ ܘܢܗܘܢܐ ܘܢܗܘܢܐ, than the CPA *mn ryš’ my’ twn* (PSLG, 24; CCR, 83, col. c; CCPA, 2a: 194a).

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

625 In order for this process to transpire, two key developments were necessary.
 626 The first is the emergence and dominance of the exegetical current that inter-
 627 preted the Paraclete as “comforter” rather than “advocate”. The Greek
 628 *paráklētos* can mean either “comforter” or “advocate”. Indeed, modern Bible
 629 translations tend to prefer the meaning “advocate” as the earlier sense, perhaps
 630 even rooted in Aramaic usage of *paráklētos* as a calque. Grounds for this judge-
 631 ment can be found in the fact that, by the Roman period, the Greek word
 632 *paráklētos* entered Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic as the loanword פִּרְקָלִיטִי, mean-
 633 ing “advocate”, as it was often paired with its antonym קְטִיגוּר, another loanword
 634 from the Greek *katēgōr*, meaning “accuser”.⁵⁷ In patristic exegesis, however, the
 635 Paraclete’s role primarily in the sense of a “comforter” rather than an “advocate”
 636 gradually came to hold sway, thus eclipsing the earliest meaning of the term. We
 637 can see this, for example, in a seminal treatise on the Holy Spirit by Basil of
 638 Caesarea (d. 379), who writes:

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

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 649 Evidence for this shift in the interpretation of *paráklētos* appears in the CPA
 650 translation of the *Catechesis* of Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313–387) as well. This
 651 CPA translation of Cyril’s *Catechesis* – dating perhaps to the sixth or seventh
 652 century CE⁵⁹ – simultaneously renders the Greek *paráklētos* first as *mnḥmn*
 653 (comforter) and then subsequently in transcription as *prqlyt’* in a matter of a
 654 few lines.⁶⁰

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 657 57 Cf. Hartwig Thyen, *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum*, WUNT 214 (Tübingen: Mohr
 658 Siebeck, 2007), 664–5. The Greek *katēgōr* entered CPA as “accuser” as well; see
 659 *CCPA* 2b: 292a.

660 58 David G.K. Taylor (ed. and tr.), *The Syriac Versions of De Spiritu Sancto by Basil of*
 661 *Caesarea*, CSCO 576–7, *scr. syri* 228–9 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 87 f. (Syr.), 74
 662 (Eng.). I have slightly modified Taylor’s translation to make it a more literal rendering
 663 of the Syriac. Similar interpretations of *paráklētos* appear in I.-M. Vosté (ed.),
 664 *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentaries in Evangelium Iahannis Apostoli*, CSCO 115,
 665 *scr. syri* 62 (Leuven: Peeters, 1940), 272.5 and M.D. Gibson (ed. and tr.), *The*
 666 *Commentaries of Isho’dad of Merv, Bishop of Ḥadatha (c. 850 a.d.)*, 3 vols
 667 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 1: 264 (Eng.), 3: 188.5, 9 (Syr.)
 668 where the word *mby’n* renders the idea of the Paraclete as “comforter”. This perhaps
 669 follows the Peshittā’s translation of Lam. 1: 16.

670 59 The CPA translation of the *Catechesis* survives only as a fragmentary undertext of a pal-
 671 impsest known as *Codex Sinaiticus Rescriptus*, overwritten by a Georgian monk in the
 672 tenth century CE. For an extensive description of the manuscript, see
 673 C. Müller-Kessler, “Codex Sinaiticus Rescriptus (CSRG/O/P/S): a collection of
 674 Christian Palestinian Aramaic manuscripts”, *Le Muséon* 127, 2014, 263–309.

675 60 *CCPA*, 5: 193a (citing John 14: 16).

673 Yet, this exegetical shift in reading of the Paraclete as “comforter” does not
 674 merely hold importance for CPA Gospel translations. The impetus behind a shift
 675 in Palestinian–Aramaic Gospel translations away from transcribing παράκλητος
 676 as *prqlyt'* and towards a new trend in favour of translating *paráklētos* into
 677 *mnḥmn'* must also be placed in the broader religious context of Late Antique
 678 Palestine. This leads us to our second key development that gave rise to this
 679 translation shift: the CPA translation of *paráklētos* as *mnḥmn'* emerges simultane-
 680 ously with the rise in messianic expectations among Palestinian Jewry of Late
 681 Antiquity.⁶¹

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

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

694
 695 [The Arab] said to [the Jew], “Son of a Jew . . . harness your ox and har-
 696 ness your plow, for the King Messiah has been born”.
 697 He [the Jew] said to him, “What is his name?”
 698 [The Arab] answered, “**Menaḥem.**”
 699 [The Jew] asked, “What is his Father’s name?”
 700 [The Arab] answered, “Hezekiah.”
 701 [The Jew] asked, “Where is he from?”
 702 [The Arab] answered, “From the royal city, Bethlehem in Judah.”

703
 704 Upon hearing the Arab’s declaration of the Messiah’s birth, the Jew promptly
 705 abandons his life as a farmer to become a peddler of swaddling cloth for chil-
 706 dren. Travelling and selling his wares, he finally come across the Messiah’s
 707 mother, to whom he offers his wares on a loan. When he later returns for his
 708 payment, he asks about her child, but receives a shocking reply: “She answered,
 709
 710

711 61 Wout Jac. Van Bakkum, “Jewish messianic expectations in the age of Heraclius”, in
 712 Reinink and Stolte (eds), *The Reign of Heraclius*, 95–112; Nicholas de Lange,
 713 “Jewish and Christian messianic hopes in pre-Islamic Byzantium”, in Markus
 714 Bockmuehl and James Carleton Paget (eds), *Redemption and Resistance: The*
 715 *Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007),
 274–84.

716 62 Arnold Goldberg, “Die Namen des Messias in der rabbinischen Traditionsliteratur. Ein
 717 Beitrag zur Messianologie des rabbinischen Judentums”, in *Mystik und Theologie des*
 718 *rabbinischen Judentums*, TSAJ 61 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 208–74
 (esp. 230–3).

719 63 Here I cite the translation of Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus* (Princeton: Princeton
 720 University Press, 2012), 215–6.

721 ‘After you saw me, winds and whirlwinds came and snatched him out of my
722 hands’”.⁶⁴

723 R. Aibo’s curious story of the Messiah’s birth has inspired numerous studies
724 of its interpretation,⁶⁵ but our main interest lies in the name Menaḥem it provides
725 for the Messiah. As noted above, Menaḥem simply means “comforter” – a per-
726 fectly apt title for a Messiah. The Babylonian Talmud illuminates the Biblical
727 roots behind calling the messiah Menaḥem/“comforter” (*b.San* 98b):

728

729 His name is Menaḥem because, “For these things I weep; my eyes flow
730 with tears; for a **comforter** (מנחם) is far from me, one to revive my cour-
731 age” (*Lam.* 1: 16).⁶⁶

732

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

739

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

746

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

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64 Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 215–6

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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.

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66 A surviving palimpsest of *Lam.* 1: 16 in CPA translates the Hebrew *menaḥem* with *mnḥmn*; see W. Baars, “A Palestinian Syriac text of the Book of Lamentations”, *Vetus Testamentum* 10, 1960, 225 (col. a, l. 15).

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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.

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68 For a discussion of the *piyyut* 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.

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69 Leon J. Weinberger, *Jewish Hymnography: A Literary History* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998), 38. The date of Shim’on 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.

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

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

785
 786 Then [the angel Michael] said to me, “This is the Messiah of the Lord: [he
 787 has been] hidden in this place until the appointed time [of his advent]. This
 788 is the Messiah of the lineage of David, and his name is **Menaḥem** ben
 789 ‘Amiel.⁷⁴ He was born during the reign of David, king of Israel, and a
 790 wind bore him up and concealed him in this place, waiting for the time
 791 of the end.”

792
 793 This Menaḥem, the angel reveals, will soon defeat the satanic “Armilos”⁷⁵ and
 794 liberate Jerusalem to restore Israel. Reference to the *Sefer Zerubbabel* and
 795

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 799 70 Averil Cameron, “Blaming the Jews: the seventh-century invasions of Palestine in con-
 800 text”, *Travaux et Mémoires* 14, 2002, 57–78. See the collection of accounts gathered in
 801 Geoffrey Greatrex and Samuel N.C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian*
 802 *Wars, II: AD 363–630* (London: Routledge, 2002), 190–3, 235.

803 71 Alexei M. Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge:
 804 Cambridge University Press, 2011).

805 72 John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish*
 806 *Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 40–66.

807 73 Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 55.

808 74 The patronymic “ben ‘Amiel” here replaces the Talmudic “ben Hezekiah”, but elsewhere
 809 in *Sefer Zerubbabel* the Messiah is also referred to as the son of Hezekiah (see Reeves,
 810 *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 53). Himmelfarb (“Mother of the Messiah”,
 811 383–7; cited by Reeves, 53 n. 91) has suggested that “ben ‘Amiel” might be a cipher
 812 for “ben Hezekiah”. On the significance behind calling the Messiah “son of
 813 Hezekiah”, see Schäfer, *Jewish Jesus*, 225–7. Another text to refer to the Messiah by
 814 this name is *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer*; see Goldberg, “Die Namen des Messias”, 232–3;
 815 Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology*, 118.

816 75 Armilos being the anti-Messiah modelled after the Byzantine emperor Heraclius; see
 Lutz Greisiger, *Messias, Endkaiser, Antichrist: Politische Apokalypik unter Juden und*
Christen des Nahen Ostens am Vorabend der arabischen Eroberung (Wiesbaden:
 Harrassowitz, 2014).

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

819

820

And the vision of the Son of Shealtiel⁷⁷ will come,

821

Which God has shown to him.

822

And He will give the staff of Israel's salvation,

823

In the city of Naphtali in Kadesh in Galilee, He gives the staff of God.

824

And Ḥephzibah⁷⁸ will come before God,

825

In order to awaken in her Menaḥem son of 'Amiel,

826

Whom God gave her from of old.

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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 *mnḥmn'*, 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 *mnḥmn'*, 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 Ishāq'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 Ishāq's appropriation of the Johannine Paraclete discourse, therefore, share a messianic subtext with CPA translations of *paráklētos* as *mnḥmn'*?

On the one hand, scholars have long seen in Ibn Ishāq's narrative of Muḥammad's call (*mab'ath*) and his encounter with the angel Gabriel at Mt. Ḥirā' 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

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.

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

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Conclusion: “. . . and his name will be most praised”

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

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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

- 904 81 Ibn Hishām (ed. Wüstenfeld), 151–2 (ed. Saqqā et al., 1236–47); al-‘Uṭaridī (d. 886),
 905 *K. al-Siyar wa-l-maghāzī*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 121; Ṭabarī,
 906 *Tārīkh*, 4, 1149–50.
 907 82 *CCPA*, 1, 142.
 908 83 Bruce Chilton (tr.), *The Isaiah Targum* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1987), 77,
 909 “Prophets, prophesy consolation to my people, says your God . . . A voice of one who
 910 says, ‘Prophesy!’ And he answered and said, ‘What shall I prophesy?’ All the wicked
 911 are as the grass. . .”.
 912 84 Erroneously reading the Prophet’s name as the active participle (*muḥammad*, “giving
 much praise”) rather than the passive (*muḥammad*, “receiving much praise”).
 85 Jeffery, “Correspondence”, 293.

913 The relationship between Q. 61: 6 and John is, therefore, tenuous at best. Most
 914 likely, Q. 61: 6 is not a reference to the Johannine Paraclete at all, and the puta-
 915 tive Biblical subtext Ibn Ishāq posits for Q. 61: 6, is a red-herring. If I am cor-
 916 rect, this realization represents a significant step forward, but it also admittedly
 917 leaves modern scholars with a vexing loose end: the significance of “Aḥmad” in
 918 Q. 61: 6 remains unresolved. Several solutions have appeared over the centuries;
 919 we explore them below.

920 The first is what one might call the “philological” solution – even if the
 921 philology supporting it is rather dubious. This solution aims to maintain the con-
 922 nection between Q. 61: 6 and the Paraclete of John’s Gospel, but it proposes a
 923 rather novel solution to the incommensurability between the Arabic *aḥmad* and
 924 the Greek *paráklētos*. According to this argument, the Greek *παράκλητος*
 925 (“comforter/advocate”) was either misread or misunderstood as *περικλυτός* –
 926 meaning “renowned”, “far-famed”, or even (with a little imagination) “praised
 927 one”. This proposition first appears, to my knowledge, in the *Refutatio*
 928 *Alcorani* of the pioneering Italian professor of Arabic at La Sapienza
 929 University, Ludovico Marracci (d. 1700).⁸⁶ A modified version of Marracci’s
 930 suggestion has gained and maintains a considerable following in popular
 931 Muslim apologetic writings. Drawing upon Quranic claims regarding the corrup-
 932 tion (*tahrīf*) of Jewish and Christian scriptures, such writings argue that
 933 *periklytós* was the original reading of the Greek text John’s Gospel rather
 934 than *paráklētos*. It’s certainly an odd twist of fate that the arguments of such
 935 Muslim apologetic works ultimately derive from a suggestion popularized by
 936 a priest of the Order of the Mother of God and confessor to pope Innocent XI.

937 Marracci’s suggestion is clever, but probably too clever. In order for his propo-
 938 sition to work, one first must assume that Muḥammad (or even, say, a hypo-
 939 thetical redactor of the Quran) knew both Greek and Syriac. Second, one
 940 must assume that Muḥammad, or the Quran’s redactor, lacked access to the ori-
 941 ginal Greek text of the Gospels, and so had to “reverse engineer” a Greek word
 942 from the Semitic consonantal skeleton *p.r.q.l.y.t.s*, which he found in either a
 943 Syriac or CPA Gospel text. Faced with the Greek letters π.ρ.κ.λ.τ.ς, either
 944 Muḥammad or the redactor then reinserted the missing Greek vowels but arrived
 945 at *περικλυτός*, “renowned”, rather than *παράκλητος*, “comforter”. While the
 946 reading butchered the original text of John’s Gospel, it did just so happen to
 947 match, albeit rather approximately, the meaning of “Aḥmad”. The scenario is
 948 so convoluted as to be absurd.⁸⁷

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951 86 *Refutatio Alcorani* (Patavii: Ex Typographia Seminarii, 1698), 26–7, 719; cf. Gilliot,
 952 “Nochmals: Hieß der Prophet Muḥammad?”, 77 f. On Marracci, see Roberto Tottoli,
 953 “New light on the translation of the Qur’ān of Ludovico Marracci from his manuscripts
 954 recently discovered at the Order of the Mother of God in Rome”, in Rippin and Tottoli
 (eds), *Books and Written Culture*, 91–131

955 87 To make matters even worse for the proposition, the word *periklytós*, albeit present in
 956 Classical Greek lexicæ, is virtually unknown to the Greek lexicæ of the New
 957 Testament, early Christian writings, Patristic writings, or even the pseudepigrapha.
 958 The sole example of its use I could locate makes for a rather unflattering parallel to
 959 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*

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

970
 971 I bring you good tidings of a prophet whose community will be the last of
 972 [God’s] communities, by him God will seal the prophets and the messen-
 973 gers (*ubashshirukum bi-nabiyyin ummatuhu ākhiru l-umami yakhtimu*
 974 *Llāhu bihi l-anbiyā’ wa-l-rusul*).

975
 976 Thus did Ubayy’s codex purportedly omit any mention of Jesus’s prophecy of a
 977 prophet named Aḥmad altogether.⁸⁸ While an intriguing possibility, the docu-
 978 mentation for this variant reading attributed to Ubayy is late and exceedingly
 979 sparse. Jeffery uncovered the reading from the margins of an autograph manu-
 980 script titled *Qurrat ‘ayn al-qurrā’*, a work on variant readings (*qirā’āt*) of the
 981 Quran by an otherwise unknown Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Alī
 982 al-Qawāsī al-Marandī (fl. latter half of sixth/thirteenth century).⁸⁹ The work
 983 remains unpublished, but the manuscript remains accessible in the Escorial
 984 Library in Madrid. Jeffery characterizes this source as exceedingly rich with
 985 information on readings from Ubayy’s *muṣḥaf*, and indeed, his *Materials*
 986 drew heavily on the manuscript when documenting the hypothetical text of
 987 Ubayy’s codex.⁹⁰ Yet, outside al-Marandī’s work, the reading offered for
 988 Q. 61: 1 is rarely, if ever, attested in the *qirā’āt* literature or in the earliest extant
 989 manuscripts of the Quran. Any argument in favour of Ubayy’s reading as an
 990 “original” and, therefore, “better” reading of the Quran faces an uphill climb.

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

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 998 5, 7). Cf. Peter Busch, *Das Testament Salomos: Die älteste christliche Dämonologie*
 999 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2006), 118.

1000 88 Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur’ān* (Leiden: Brill, 1937),
 1001 170 (with thanks to David Powers for first pointing me towards this reading).

1002 89 MS Escorial (Madrid) no. 1337, fol. 200b. Brockelmann gives the death date for Marandī
 1003 as 569/1173 (*GAL*, 4, 519), but this date is rather the date of the author’s *ijāza* from one
 1004 of his teachers; the author himself states that he completed the work in 588/1192. I have
 1005 benefitted greatly from the discussion of the Escorial manuscript written by Muḥammad
 1006 al-Shanqīrī at: http://vb.tafsir.net/tafsir7010/#.VQD2t_nF-So (last accessed 11 March
 1007 2015). My thanks to Walid Saleh for directing me to the website.

1008 90 *Materials*, 116; hence, this reading does not appear in Ibn Abī Dāwūd’s *Kitāb*
al-Masāhif, which in any case only attributes a handful of readings to Ubayy b.
 Ka‘b’s codex.

1009 of Muḥammad as the final prophet is categorical and unambiguous. Muḥammad
 1010 “seals [the line of] prophets and messengers”. This is a sentiment paralleled only
 1011 in Q. 33: 40 where Muḥammad is also deemed “Messenger of God and the Seal
 1012 of the Prophets (*rasūl Allāh wa-khātam al-nabiyyīn*)”. Yet, the latter, far better-
 1013 attested verse also suggests that al-Marandī’s alternative rendering of Q. 61: 6 is
 1014 late. The categorical interpretation of Muḥammad as the seal of the prophets is
 1015 not present in Q. 33: 40, which suggests that the categorical tenor of
 1016 al-Marandī’s/Ubayy’s reading of Q. 61: 6 probably reflects a more systematic
 1017 and developed prophetology than one would expect to encounter in the
 1018 Quran. Early Arabic poetry provides more than one compelling example of
 1019 how the root *kh.t.m.* in the early Islamic period does not necessarily denote final-
 1020 ity. Hence, a verse attributed to Umayya b. Abī Ṣalt speaks of Muḥammad as the
 1021 man, “by whom God sealed the prophets who come before him and after him
 1022 (*bihi khatama Allāhu man qablahu/ wa-man ba’dahu min nabiyyin khatam*)”.
 1023 Likewise the *Naqā’id* of the Umayyad-era poets Jarīr and Farazdaq refers to
 1024 Muḥammad as “the best of the seals (*khayr al-khawātim*)”⁹¹ – where the very
 1025 multiplicity of “seals” precludes their finality.

1026 Moreover, the explicit pairing of the plurals “prophets (*anbiyā’*)” and “mes-
 1027 sengers (*rusul*)” in al-Marandī’s alternative reading occurs nowhere else in the
 1028 Quran – and this despite the near ubiquity of these terms throughout the
 1029 Quran. Hence, the pairing seems to be at odds with Quranic diction. Lastly,
 1030 nowhere does the Quran refer to Muḥammad’s community (*umma*) as the last
 1031 (*ākhir al-umam*). While not at odds with Quranic eschatology *per se*, this phrase
 1032 does appear early on in the *ḥadīth* literature where it seems to first proliferate.⁹²
 1033 All of this evidence argues against accepting the reading al-Marandī attributes to
 1034 Ubayy’s codex as either an original, or even a historically preferable, reading of
 1035 Q. 61: 6.

1036 A third option entertained at least as early as the late ninth century – but
 1037 unlikely to find many defenders among modern scholars – is what one might
 1038 call the “sectarian” solution. This solution denies that the “Aḥmad” figure fore-
 1039 told by Jesus in the Quran intends to refer to Muḥammad at all. In his *Kitāb*
 1040 *al-Maqālāt*, the Mu’tazilī scholar Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī (d. c. 915–916) provides
 1041 an early testimony to such a view, writing that Qarāmiṭa rebels of his day jus-
 1042 tified their belief that Muḥammad was not the last prophet by claiming: 1)
 1043 Jesus would return to Earth and thus be a prophet after Muḥammad; and 2)
 1044 that Jesus foretold a prophet named Aḥmad, whose coming they await, and
 1045 not a prophet named Muḥammad.⁹³ Elsewhere, al-Ṭabarī (d. 922) records a let-
 1046 ter purportedly penned by one of these millenarian rebels’ leaders in which he
 1047 claimed to be an agent (*dā’ī*) working on behalf of the Mahdī Aḥmad
 1048

1049 91 Y. Friedman, “Finality of prophethood in Sunnī Islām”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and*
 1050 *Islam* 7, 1986, 184–5.

1051 92 A.J. Wensinck et al., *Concordances et indices de la tradition musulmane*, 7 vols
 1052 (Leiden: Brill, 1933–69), 1, 29a.ult.

1053 93 MS Shahāra (Sanaa), fol. 140b. Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī’s authorship of this text is somewhat
 1054 in doubt; however, a strong case for its attribution to al-Jubbā’ī is made by Hassan
 1055 Ansari, “Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī et son livre *al-Maqālāt*”, in C. Adang, S. Schmidtke and
 1056 D. Sklare (eds), *A Common Rationality: Mu’tazilism in Islam and Judaism*, ITS 12
 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007), 21–37.

b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya, “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 Ishāq’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 superlative. 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 Ishāq’s Arabic rendition of John 15: 23–16: 1 from MS Zāhiriyya, *majmū‘a* 19, fol. 54r

A fragment of a work likely composed by Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Abī Shayba (d. 297/909) survives in a collection (*majmū‘a*) of short *ḥadīth* texts preserved in the Zāhiriyya library in Damascus. The title assigned to the text is *Kitāb fī khalq Adam wa-khaṭī‘atihi 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 Ja‘far Ibn Abī Shayba’s *Tārīkh*, of which no other sections are known to be extant.

The attribution of the text to Abū Ja‘far 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-juz‘ al-thānī min ajzā‘ Ibn al-Ṣawwāf*)”. This sentence seems to suggest the work belongs, rather, to the corpus of the Baghdadī *ḥadīth* scholar Abū ‘Alī Ibn al-Ṣawwāf (d. 359/970).⁹⁷ Yet, Muṭā‘

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

95 See, for example, Abū Ishāq al-Tha‘labī, *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān*, 10 vols, ed. Abū Muḥammad b. ‘Ashūr (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2002), 9: 304; and ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, *al-Taḥf al-basīṭ*, 25 vols, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Siṭām ‘Al Sa‘ūd and Turkī b. Sahw al-‘Utaybī (Riyadh: Jāmi‘at al-Imām Muḥammad b. Sa‘ūd al-Islamiyya, 2010), 21, 435–6. For another modern scholar in favour of this reading, see Tilman Nagel, *Mohammed: Leben und Legende* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008), 181.

96 See, most recently, Yāsīn Muḥammad al-Sawwās, *Fihris majāmi‘ al-Madrasa al-‘Umarīyya fī Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyya* (Kuwait: Ma‘had al-Maḥṭūṭāt al-‘Arabiyya, 1987), 92.

97 Khaṭīb, 2: 115–6.

1105 al-Ṭarābīshī has forcefully argued that Ibn al-Ṣawwāf is the transmitter (*rāwī*) of
 1106 the text rather than its author, marshalling, most convincingly, the evidence of
 1107 Ibn ‘Asākir’s (d. 571/1176) citations of the manuscript in his *Tārīkh madīnat*
 1108 *Dimashq* as Abū Ja‘far Ibn Abī Shayba’s.⁹⁸ The matter merits further investiga-
 1109 tion in light of Abū ‘Alī Ibn al-Ṣawwāf’s other *ḥadīth* works, but his corpus still
 1110 remains mostly unpublished in manuscript.⁹⁹

1111 As noted above, the fragment, probably from Abū Ja‘far Ibn Abī Shayba’s
 1112 *Tārīkh*, is preserved in Ms. Ṣāhiriyya, *majmū‘a* 19, fols. 46–57 and draws
 1113 from Ziyād al-Bakkā’ī’s recension of Ibn Ishāq’s *Maghāzī*, in particular the
 1114 first section known as *al-Mubtadā’* (“Genesis”), which contains the early
 1115 Arabic version of John 15: 23–16: 1. Ibn Abī Shayba provides a consistent
 1116 *isnād* for the material he transmits from Ibn Ishāq, citing the authority of the
 1117 Kūfan traditionist Minjāb b. al-Ḥārith (d. 231/845–6), who cites in turn the
 1118 authority of another Kūfan, Ziyād al-Bakkā’ī’s student Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf
 1119 al-Sayrafī (d. 249/863–4). This citation is, therefore, an important (if somewhat
 1120 flawed) testimony to Ibn Ishāq’s Arabic version of John 15: 23–16: 1 outside the
 1121 recension of the ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, and it for this reason that I include
 1122 my edited version thereof in this appendix.

1123 حَدَّثَنَا مَنْجَابُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ يَوْسُفَ قَالَ ثَنَا زِيَادُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ إِسْحَاقَ قَالَ:
 1124 وَقَدْ كَانَ فِيمَا بَلَّغَنِي عَنْهُمَا¹⁰⁰ كَانَ وَضَعَ عِيسَى بْنُ مَرْيَمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِيمَا جَاءَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمِنَ الْإِنْجِيلِ مِنْ
 1125 صِفَةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِمَّا¹⁰¹ أَثْبَتَهُ يَحْنَسُ الْخَوَارِجِيُّ لَهُمْ حِينَ نَسَخَ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِي عَهْدِ عِيسَى
 1126 بْنِ مَرْيَمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ:
 1127 اللَّهُمَّ مِنْ أَبْغَضَنِي فَقَدْ أَبْغَضَ الرَّبَّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَلَوْلَا أَنِّي صَنَعْتُ بِحَضْرَتِهِمْ صِنَاعَ¹⁰² لَمْ يَصْنَعُوا أَحَدًا
 1128 قَبْلِي مَا كَانَتْ لَهُمْ خَطِيئَةٌ وَلَكِنْ مِنَ الْآنَ نَظَرُوا¹⁰³ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ سَيَنْصُرُونَ عَلَيْهِ¹⁰⁴[؟] الرَّبَّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
 1129 وَلَكِنْ لَا بَدَّ مِنْ أَنْ تَتَمَّ الْمَمْلَكَةُ فِي النَّاسِ¹⁰⁵ أَنَّهُمْ أَبْغَضُونِي مَجَانًا أَيَّ بَاطِلًا فَلَوْ قَدْ جَاءَ مَنْحَمَنَا¹⁰⁶
 1130 هَذَا الَّذِي مِنْ عِنْدِ الرَّبِّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ رُوحَ الْقُدُسِ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ الرَّبِّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَهُوَ يَشْهَدُ عَلَيَّ وَأَنْتُمْ
 1131 أَيْضًا لِأَنْتُمْ قَدِيمًا كُنْتُمْ مَعِيَ هَذَا قُلْتُ لَكُمْ لَكَيْمًا لَا تَشْكُوا.
 1132 فَالْمَنْحَمَنَا¹⁰⁷ بِالسَّرْيَانِيَّةِ مُحَمَّدٌ وَهُوَ بِالرُّومِيَّةِ الْبِرْقَلِيطُسِ.¹⁰⁸

1136 98 Ṭarābīshī, *Ruwāt Muḥammad ibn Ishāq*, 495–6; e.g. see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat*
 1137 *Dimashq*, 80 vols, ed. ‘Umar ibn Gharāma al-‘Amrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995–
 1138 2000), 3: 170, 200–1, 393, 416, 426, 453, 456.

1139 99 Although manuscripts of Ibn al-Ṣawwāf’s works remain unpublished, fragments have
 1140 been transcribed, albeit imperfectly, and posted online for *al-Maktaba al-Shāmīla* (see
 1141 <http://shamela.ws>) and can be accessed via their database. Included in this database as
 1142 well as is a transcription of Ms. Ṣāhiriyya, *majmū‘a* 19, fols. 46–57, which Ṭarābīshī
 1143 identifies with the *Tārīkh* of Abū Ja‘far Ibn Abī Shayba; however, the database attributes
 1144 the work to Ibn al-Ṣawwāf and titles it *al-Thānī min ajzā’ Ibn al-Ṣawwāf*. I owe this
 1145 observation and information to Mahmoud Khalifa (Cairo University), who directed me
 1146 to the online transcription of the text.

1145 100 بالأصل: عن ما

1146 101 بالأصل: من

1147 102 كذا كتب يد آخر بعد الناسخ تصحيحًا ولعلّ القراءة الأصلية: صنيغًا

1148 103 بالأصل: نظروا

1149 104 بالأصل: عايه

1150 105 كذا، وكتب يد آخر تصحيحًا: الناموس

1151 106 بالأصل: منحيمنًا

1152 107 بالأصل: فلمنحيمنًا

108 بالأصل: البرقفلنطس