

## THE PRE-EXISTENT ANGEL OF THE MAGHARIANS AND AL-NAHĀWANDĪ

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THE VIEW that the world was created by a pre-existent created angel is reported in several sources in the name of a Jewish sect and in the name of the Karaite Benjamin al-Nahāwandī.

The earliest source is the work *Kitāb al-Anwār w'al-Marāḳib* by the Karaite Ẹirḳisānī. He describes a Jewish sect, which, according to him, appeared at the time the Sadducees flourished and before the rise of Christianity. He calls that sect Magharians (*al-maghāriyyah*), "cave-dwellers", explaining that they are called "cave-dwellers" because their books were found in a cave, from which it may be inferred that, according to him, that was not the original name of the sect. He mentions an author of that sect, whom he describes as "the Alexandrian", saying of him: "His book is *mashhūr ma'rūf*, and it is the most important of the books of the Magharians, and after it there is a small booklet entitled *Sefer Yaddu'a* or *Yadu'a* (ספר ידוע), and this is also a fine book."<sup>1</sup> I have left the two Arabic words, *mashhūr ma'rūf*, untranslated. Literally, *mashhūr* means "well-known" and *ma'rūf* means "known." Inasmuch as the Hebrew title of the "small booklet", if read *Yadu'a*, means also "known,"<sup>2</sup> we have reason to believe that the Arabic term

<sup>1</sup> *Anwār* I, 2, 8, p. 12, 11. 1-3; I, 18, 2, p. 59, 1. 8 (ed. Leon Nemoy). Cf. A. A. Harkavy, *Le-Ḳorot ha-Kittot be-Yisra'el* in S. P. Rabbinowitz' Hebrew translation of Graetz, *Geschichte*, III, p. 496-498; S. Poznanski, "Philon dans l'ancienne littérature judéo-arabe," *REJ*, 50 (1905), 10-31; D. Neumark, *Geschichte*, Erster Band, I, p. 132, n. 2; *Toledot*, I, p. 121, n.; Leon Nemoy, "Al-Qirḳisānī's Account of the Jewish Sects," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 7 (1930), 326-327; S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, V, 1957, pp. 379-80, n. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Harkavy (*op. cit.*, p. 496) and Poznanski (*op. cit.*, p. 14, n. 1) take the Hebrew to read *Sefer Yaddu'a*, "The Book of [a man called]

*ma'rūf* here refers to the title of the Arabic work, so that in the opening statement of Ẓirḳisānī the word *ma'rūf* is to be emended to read *bi'l-ma'rūf* and the statement is to be translated as follows: "His book is commonly known by the title of *Ma'rūf*." We may thus assume that the small Hebrew *Sefer Ya'dua* was a sort of abridgment of a larger Arabic work. What the title of the book meant will be discussed later.

The views of this sect is described by Ẓirḳisānī as follows: "Da'ud ibn Merwān [al-Muḳammaṣ] in one of his books reports concerning the Sadducees that they anthropomorphized the Creator and took the terms implying anthropomorphism, by which Scripture describes the Creator, in their literal sense. But of the Magharians the opposite of this is reported [by him], viz., that, while they do not speak of God in anthropomorphic terms, yet they do not strip such anthropomorphic descriptions of God [in Scripture] of their literal sense, but they rather think that these descriptions apply to one of the angels (*li-ba'di al-malā'ikati*), namely, the angel who created the world."<sup>3</sup> By this he means to say that they solve the problem of the anthropomorphic expressions not by explaining them allegorically but by ascribing them to an angel whom God created before the creation of the world and who created the world. It will be noticed that, while Ẓirḳisānī does not explicitly say that it is Muḳammaṣ who reports concerning the Magharians being opposed to the Sadducees in their interpretation of scriptural anthropomorphism, it may be assumed that the report is taken from the same work of Muḳammaṣ from which Ẓirḳisānī has taken his report on the Sadducees and hence that they are represented by Muḳammaṣ as having already existed, probably under some other name, at the time of the Sadducees.

A view similar to that reported by him of the Magharians is

Yaddu'a" (cf. Neh. 10: 22; 12: 11, 22). Nemoy (*op. cit.*, p. 327, n. 26) suggests the reading *Sefer Yaddu'a*, which he translates "The Book of the Known" used in the sense of "The Book of the Unknown."

<sup>3</sup> *Anwār*, I, 7, p. 42, ll. 3-8.

said by Ẓirḳisānī to be that which he will later report of Benjamin al-Nahāwandī.<sup>4</sup> As reported by him later, al-Nahāwandī believed that “the Creator created only a single angel, and it is this angel who created the whole world, and it is he who sent forth the prophets and dispatched the apostles and performed the miracles and ordained the laws and prohibitions, and it is he who, independently of the First Creator, brings about whatsoever happens in the world.”<sup>5</sup> In this report of the teaching of Nahāwandī there is the additional element that it is that pre-existent created angel through whom the Law was revealed. There is no mention of it in his account of the Magharians. Conversely, no mention is made here by Ẓirḳisānī of the Magharians’ explanation of the anthropomorphic expressions in Scripture as referring to that angel. The description here of God as “the First Creator” would indicate that, when Ẓirḳisānī reports in the name of Nahāwandī that “the Creator created only a single angel, and it is this angel who created the whole world”, he only means that directly God created only a single angel but that the whole world was created by Him indirectly through that angel.<sup>6</sup>

Parallel to these reports about a Jewish sect and Nahāwandī as believing in a pre-existent angel who created the world are reports in Shahrastānī.<sup>7</sup>

In Shahrastānī, the term Magharians (*al-maghāriyyah*) was corrupted into Maḳaribans (*al-maḳāribah*),<sup>8</sup> and he uses this term, erroneously, to include also a Persian Jewish sect of the seventh century known as the Yudghanites (*al-yudghāniyyah*) but which he calls Yud’anites (*al-yud’āniyyah*). The Magha-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 14, 1, p. 55, ll. 3-5. Cf. III, 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. below at nn. 30, 43, 44, 45.

<sup>7</sup> *Kitāb al-Milal wa’al-Nihāl* (ed. Cureton), p. 168, I, 19. The report in Biruni’s *Kitāb al-Āthār al-Bāḳiyyah*, p. 284, II, 6-11 (ed. Sachau), in which, as in that of Shahrastānī, *al-maghāriyyah* was corrupted into *al-maghāribah* or *al-maḳāribah*, does not contain their teaching about the pre-existent angel.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169, l. 20.

rians proper are described by him as follows: "One part of the Maḡaribans believe that God spoke to the prophets through an angel, whom He had chosen and placed above all creatures and whom He had appointed as His proxy over them"<sup>9</sup> and that "he who addressed Moses with spoken words is that angel,"<sup>10</sup> and that it is this angel who is spoken of as God in the anthropomorphical narratives of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>11</sup> He then continues: "They say that it is ordinarily possible that God sent a certain angel from all those who attend upon Him, to confer upon him His name, and to proclaim: This is My apostle and his place among you is My place and his word and command among you is My word and command and his appearance among you is My appearance. This was the case of that angel. It is said that Arius, who states concerning the Messiah that He is God in the sense that He is the elect one of the world, has taken his views from them, who had preceded him by four hundred years."<sup>12</sup>

In this report of Shahrastānī, the created angel, like that of Ḳirḳisānī's Magharians, is used as an explanation of anthropomorphism and, like that of Ḳirḳisānī's Nahāwandī, is described as he through whom the Law was revealed. No mention is made in it of his being the creator of the world. It contains, however, three additional elements: (1) that the angel, through whom the Law was revealed and to whom all the anthropomorphical narratives of the Hebrew Bible refer, could be sent down by God among men to act as His representative; (2) that that angel was actually sent down by God to act as His representative among men; (3) that it is this belief of theirs that was later followed by Arius. This would seem to change the Magharians from a Jewish sect into an early Christian sect with an Ebionitic Christology, like that later adopted in Arius.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169, ll. 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 11-16.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 16-20.

If we are right in assuming that the brief report on the Magharians in *Ḳirḳisānī* is taken from the same work of Muḳammaṣ, from which he has taken his report on the Sadducees, we may also assume that the first part of Shahrastānī's report, that part which on the whole corresponds to the report by *Ḳirḳisānī*, but which contains details not found in *Ḳirḳisānī*, was also taken from Muḳammaṣ. And, if we are right in assuming that the first part of Shahrastānī's report was taken from Muḳammaṣ, we may also assume that the second part, that which would seem to make of the Magharians a Christian sect and forerunners of Arius, was also taken from Muḳammaṣ. This is not an unlikely assumption, for Muḳammaṣ, who was born a Jew, was for a number of years a convert to Christianity, during which time he is said to have studied under a Christian philosopher by the name of Nana. His interest in Christianity is attested by the fact that he wrote commentaries on Genesis and Ecclesiastes, which are based on Christian works, and also that, after his reversion of Judaism, he wrote two books against Christianity.<sup>13</sup> However, *Ḳirḳisānī*'s report, as well as the corresponding statement in the first part of Shahrastānī's report, definitely describes the so-called Magharians as a Jewish sect. We may, therefore, assume that in the original work of Muḳammaṣ the statement corresponding to the second part of Shahrastānī's report was not a continuation of his description of a Jewish sect in his statement corresponding to the first part in Shahrastānī's report; it was rather a description of a Christian sect which arose out of that Jewish sect. This will explain why this part was omitted by *Ḳirḳisānī*, whose statement dealt only with Jewish sects.

Shahrastānī then goes on to report: "And it is also said that a follower of this view is Benjamin al-Nahāwandī, who explained to them [i.e., his followers] this belief and taught them that the verses in the Torah which imply a likeness between God and creatures are all subject to interpretation and

<sup>13</sup> *Anwār*, I, 8, 5.

that God is not to be described by any description used of men, that He cannot be likened to any created thing nor can any created thing be likened to Him, and that what is meant by all those expressions which occur in the Torah is that aforementioned angel."<sup>14</sup>

In this report on Nahāwandī, it will be noticed, there is an explicit mention only of that single fact which is not mentioned by Ẓirḳisānī, namely, that the created angel it is who is the subject of the anthropomorphical expressions in Scripture. No mention is made of the two facts which are explicitly mentioned by Ẓirḳisānī, namely, that the created angel it is who created the world and through whom the Law was revealed.

From a comparison of Ẓirḳisānī and Shahrastānī we may judge that underlying both of them was the work of Muḳammas, in which two sects were described, an earlier Jewish one and a later Christian one and that out to that work Ẓirḳisānī and Shahrastānī selected what they each happened to be interested in. The story of these sects may therefore be summarized as follows:

At about the time the Sadducees were still flourishing, there was somewhere a sect which held the following beliefs: (1) That an angel created by God before the creation of the world created the world. (2) That through that angel the Law was revealed. (3) That that angel is the subject of all the anthropomorphic expressions used in Scripture about God. (4) That an angel may be sent down in the form of man to represent God. (5) That subsequently the sect or some part of it came to believe that the pre-existent angel, who created the world, was actually sent down in the form of man to represent God and that Arius, about 400 years later, based his christology upon that view.

We further gather that that sect, which contemporaneous with the Sadducees existed somewhere, was later to be bound in Egypt, where it flourished for some time and then dis-

<sup>14</sup> *Milal*, p. 169, l. 20 - p. 170, l. 4.

appeared, so that by the time of Ẹirḳisānī, or perhaps even by the time of al-Muḳammaṣ, it no longer existed.<sup>15</sup> Their books, however, had been left by them in a cave, where they were afterwards discovered. One of these books, ascribed to an author called "the Alexandrian," was known either to Ẹirḳisānī or to Muḳammaṣ. It existed in two versions, the original longer version written in Arabic and an abridgment of it written in Hebrew. The respective Arabic and Hebrew titles of these two versions of the book meant the same thing, "known." It is ultimately from these two versions of the book that was derived the knowledge of their belief as it has come down to us through the reports of Ẹirḳisānī and Shahrastānī.

The question naturally arises, where did the conception of such an angel come from? When that question was first raised, the answer given was that it was the Logos of Philo.<sup>16</sup>

But since, according to all accounts, the so-called Magharians existed as a Jewish sect prior to the rise of Christianity, a Philonic origin of the view of that sect is to be excluded on chronological grounds.

Besides, the assumption of a Philonic source would not explain the view of the pre-existent angel as taught either by the Magharians or by Nahāwandī.

To begin with, the pre-existent angel of both the Magharians and Nahāwandī is not only the creator of the world but he is also the God of the Old Testament who is described anthro-

<sup>15</sup> *Anwār* I, 18, 2, p. 59, l. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Harkavy, *loc. cit.*; S. Poznanski, *loc. cit.*; Neumark, *loc. cit.* See Baron's critical remarks on this view (*op. cit.*, p. 380) and his following statement: "Neither does the mere fact that the Magharians believed in an intermediary angel who created the world necessarily link them directly with the Philonic *logos*. The doctrine of a *demiurge* had been much alive in Christian, as well as in Jewish, gnosis long before it was turned into a vehicle of anti-Jewish propaganda by Marcion and Pontus." Recent attempts to identify the Magharians with the Ẹumran sectarians were surveyed by Dr. N. Golb in a paper read at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society, March 29, 1960, in which he suggested that the Hebrew **יָדוּעַ** should be read *yado'a* and translated "gnosis."

pomorphically. Now Philo does not identify the Logos with the God of the Old Testament, nor does he use it as an explanation for its anthropomorphic description of God, though he occasionally ascribes to the Logos certain actions which in the Old Testament are ascribed to God.<sup>17</sup> Second, Philo never made the Logos the intermediary of the revelation of everything in the Law. According to him, all revelations to Moses were either (1) directly by the Divine Voice or (2) indirectly (a) through the Divine Spirit or (b) through angels.<sup>18</sup> Third, Philo never called the Logos an angel, though he occasionally interprets the term angels in Scripture as Logoi.<sup>19</sup> This, however, should not be considered a serious objection, for the term "angel" came to be used in the literature of the time as a general description for any supramundane being. The term "the Alexandrian" by which the author of the book is described is not sufficient to identify him with Philo. Philo is not referred to in antiquity as "the Alexandrian" nor even as "Philo the Alexandrian." He is simply referred to as Philo,<sup>20</sup> though Clement of Alexandria refers to him once as "the Pythagorean Philo"<sup>21</sup> and Jerome refers to him as "Philo Judaeus, a native of Alexandria".<sup>22</sup>

Nor, for the same chronological reason, can the New Testament be taken as the source of the view attributed to this sect. Besides—though, as we have said, this is not a serious objection—while in the New Testament the Pauline Wisdom and the Johannine Logos are each, as the pre-existent Christ, said to be He through whom all things were created (Col. 1: 16; 1 Cor. 8: 16; Heb. 1: 2; John 1: 3) and

<sup>17</sup> Cf., for instance, in his comment on the term "God" in Gen. 9: 6 (*Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesis* II, 62) and on the term "God" in Gen. 31: 13 (*De Somniis* I, 31, 227-230). Cf. Drummond, *Philo Judaeus*, II, 196-197.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. my *Philo*, II, pp. 22-45.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Drummond, *op. cit.*, II, p. 240.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. references to Philo in Josephus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, and Suidas.

<sup>21</sup> *Stromata* II, 19<sup>100.3</sup> (PG 8, 1043 B).

<sup>22</sup> *De Viris Illustribus* XI (PL 23, 625 B).

the Law is said to have been ordained by angels (Gal. 3: 19; Acts 7: 53; Heb. 2: 2), neither Wisdom nor the Logos, through Whom all things were created, is ever identified with the angels, through whom the Law was ordained. It is only some Church Fathers who, following Philo, tried to show that the term angel in the Old Testament occasionally refers to the Logos, that is, to the Logos of the New Testament. Thus the "angel of the Lord" who appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exod. 3: 2) is said by Justin Martyr to be the Logos<sup>23</sup> and Clement of Alexandria says that in the Old Testament "the Logos was an angel",<sup>24</sup> that is to say, in the Old Testament the term angel sometimes refers to the Logos.

What is needed here is a view according to which whenever God is spoken of in Scripture, whether as Creator of the world or as a revealer of the Law or as the subject of all kinds of anthropomorphic descriptives, it is not God Himself but an angel who was created by God before the creation of the world and, furthermore that that angel was ultimately sent down by God in the form of man.

Such a view is to be found among the earliest of the Christian Gnostics which appeared before the end of the first century. The belief that the world was created not by God himself but by an angel is common to all the Gnostic systems. Similarly common to all of them is the belief that the Law was revealed by an angel. That all anthropomorphisms in Scripture refer to that angel, and not to God, though not stated by them in so many words, is implied in their common view that the God of the Old Testament is not the God the Father of the New Testament, but the angel who created the world and revealed the Law. Similarly some Gnostic sects, though not all of them, followed Paul and John in identifying the Creator of the world with the pre-existent Christ who was sent down among men<sup>25</sup> and one sect of Gnostics, the Barbelo-Gnostics, described one

<sup>23</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 60.

<sup>24</sup> *Pedagogus* I, 7<sup>59</sup> (PG 8, 321 A).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. my *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, I, pp. 508-9, 515-16, and

of their many pre-existent Christs as "the first angel".<sup>26</sup> In fact, the description of the pre-existent Christ as an angel is the chief characteristic of one of the earliest Christian heresies, reported in the New Testament, the so-called Colossian heresy, which may be regarded as one of the earliest forms of Gnosticism. "These Colossian heretics," as I have said of them elsewhere, "seem to have been converts to Christianity from some form of Judaized pagan syncretism, in which the original lower pagan deities were reduced to the status of Jewish angels. Their conversion to Christianity must have taken place under the influence of Paul, from whom they had adopted the belief of a pre-existent Christ. But instead of following the teaching of Paul in its original form, they mounted it upon their own Judaized syncretism. The pre-existent Christ thus became to them only one of those many angels whom they had worshiped before they became Christians and whom they continued to worship even after they became Christians."<sup>27</sup> From the fact that Paul, in his exhortation to them, said: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Col. 2: 16), it may be inferred that these heretics continued also to practise the Jewish religious laws.

We may, therefore, assume that the so-called Magharian sect, like the so-called Colossian heresy, started as a Judaized syncretism, and later became Christianized. While yet a Judaized syncretism, these Magharians raised one of the many deities with which it had started to the position of one uncreated God and reduced all the other deities to the position of created angels. Following their inherited pagan view that it was not the highest God, but one of the subordinate deities that created the world, they identified the God, who in

sections on "God", pp. 520 ff., "Pre-existent Christ: Logos and Holy Spirit", pp. 531 ff., and "Creator", pp. 538 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I, 29, 4, and my comment on it *op. cit.*, p. 539, n. 49.

<sup>27</sup> *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, I, p. 511.

Genesis is said to have created the world, with one of the created angels. And since in Scripture it is the God who created the world that is also said to have revealed the Law and that is also constantly described by anthropomorphic terms, they identified the God spoken of throughout Scripture with that angelic creator of the world. With the rise of Christianity that Judaized form of syncretism added to its system the belief in Ebionitic type of Christology, which in its vocabulary took the form of a statement that the pre-existent angel, who created the world, was sent down in the form of man to represent God.

The Magharians thus started as a Judaized pagan syncretism and ended up as a certain form of Gnosticism, with an Ebionitic Christology and probably also with an Ebionitic attitude toward the Law. With the rest of Christian Gnosticism it soon found its home in Alexandria, where, we imagine, it flourished for some time under the name of Gnostics on the outskirts of Christianity. With the elimination of Gnosticism from Christianity, the sect drifted back to Judaism, and flourished, still under the name of Gnostics, on the outskirts of that religion, so that by the time Egypt came under Muslim rule and was Arabicized the sect came to be regarded as a Jewish sect. It is during that period of the sect under Muslim rule that there appeared the books referred to by *Ḳirḳisānī*, one in Arabic, written by "the Alexandrian", and the other in Hebrew, which was only an abridgment of the former. Both these books bore the same title, which contained the words *ma'rūf* and *yadu'a* respectively, literally meaning "known". Since the views of the sect, as we have seen, correspond to the views of the Gnostics, the title of the book would seem to be somehow connected with some form of a term suggesting Gnosticism. Now in Arabic the term *ma'rifah* is technically used in the sense of mystic knowledge of God, that is, "gnosis", and the term *'arif* is technically used in the sense of one possessing such mystic knowledge of God, that is,

“gnostic”.<sup>28</sup> Similarly the term *ma‘rūf*, literally “known”, is technically used in the sense of the God of the ‘*arīf*,<sup>29</sup> that is, the God of the gnostic. Accordingly, by retaining in the text of *Ḳirḳisānī* the reading *ma‘rūf* and only slightly emending the words *mashhūr ma‘rūf* to read *mashhūr bi’l-ma‘rūf*, we may infer that the book was entitled *Kitāb al-Ma‘rūf*, of which the Hebrew *Sefer Yadu‘a*, slightly emended to read *Sefer ha-Yadu‘a*, is an exact translation.

The origin of the Magharians is thus plausibly explained. That the Karaite Nahāwandī should have accepted their views is to be explained by the influence of the Muslim environment in which Karaism arose and by which it was influenced in many other ways.

As for Nahāwandī’s belief that the world was created through an intermediary whom he calls angel, there is Aḥmad ibn Ḥā’it, of whom it is reported that he believed that “the world has two lords and two creators, of whom one is eternal, and He is God, and the other is created.”<sup>30</sup> The name of the second and created creator is given by him directly as being “Jesus the son of Mary,”<sup>31</sup> and is said to be referred to as “image” in “the tradition which has come down that God created Adam in His image (*ṣurah*).”<sup>32</sup> All this reflects Paul’s statements about the pre-existent Christ, to whom he refers as “our Lord Jesus Christ” (Col. 1: 3), that He is “the image (εἰκὼν) of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” and that “by Him were all things created” (Col. 1: 15, 16) and

<sup>28</sup> Massignon, *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn* (1913), pp. 7, 156, 183, 194; *La Passion d’Al Hallāj* (1914-21), p. 688; Gardet et Anawati, *Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane* (1948), pp. 89, 209, n. 1; 230 n. 2; Goichon, *Ibn Sīnā: Livre des Directives et Remarques* (1951), p. 35. Cf. Saadia’s Arabic translation of Num. 24: 16.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Al-Maḳḳarī, *Analectes* (1855-60), p. 589, 1. 4, quoted in Dozy, *Supplément*, s.v. ‘*rf*, p. 118, col. 2; Goichon, *op. cit.*, p. 498, n.

<sup>30</sup> *Kitāb al-Farḳ bayn al-Firaḳ* (Cairo, 1328), p. 260, ll. 8-9. Cf. I. Friedlaender, “Jewish-Arabic Studies”, *JQR*, N.S., 3 (1912/13), p. 255.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 13-14.

also the Patristic interpretation of the term "image" in the verse "Let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1: 26) as referring to the pre-existent Christ,<sup>33</sup> which must have come down to Muslims as an oral tradition. But with this Christian origin of an intermediary creator of the world there must have been joined also a Neoplatonic source, for Ibn Ḥā'it̄ is also reported to have said that the first created thing was "the first intellect" (*al-'aql al-awwal*) or "the Active Intellect" (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*), from which emanate the forms upon the other existing things."<sup>34</sup>

As for Nahāwandī's belief that the Law was revealed by an angel, there is, besides a few stray rabbinic statements about the presence of angels at the revelation of the Law on Mount Sinai,<sup>35</sup> the Muslim belief that the Koran was received by Muhammad through an angel.<sup>36</sup>

As for Nahāwandī's explanation of scriptural anthropomorphisms as referring to that created angel, there is an explanation in Shahrastānī, who, after reporting on the teaching of Nahāwandī, says that his view with regard to the scriptural anthropomorphism is the same "as when in the Koran going and coming is taken to refer to the coming of an angel."<sup>37</sup> Evidently in Islam there was already the attempt to explain anthropomorphisms by attributing them to an angel.

Repudiation of the conception of a pre-existent angel as the creator of the world, aimed directly at Nahāwandī, is to be found in the works of both Rabbanites and Karaites.

Among the Rabbanites, Saadia, in a chapter devoted to the rejection of erroneous views, refers to those who interpret

<sup>33</sup> Cf., for instance, Clement of Alexandria, *Cohortatio ad Gentes* 10<sup>98.4</sup> (PG 8, 212 C ff.). Cf. also Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 62.

<sup>34</sup> *Milal*, p. 44, II. 4-5. On the still earlier influence of this view on Islam, see I. Goldziher, "Neuplatonische und gnostische Elemente im Hadīṭ," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 22 (1908/9), pp. 317-344.

<sup>35</sup> *Pesikta Rabbati* 21, p. 102b (ed. Friedmann); *Tanḥuma*, *Yitro* 14 (ed. Buber); *Midrash Tehillim* 68, 10 (ed. Buber).

<sup>36</sup> Surah 2: 91; 53: 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Milal*, p. 170, II. 4-5.

the verse, 'Let us make man in our image' (Gen. 1: 26), as implying that some angel had created Adam and the world."<sup>38</sup> The reference is quite evidently to the view of Nahāwandī.<sup>39</sup> In refutation, Saadia applies to exponents of this view verse 20 in Psalm 139, which in the Authorized Version reads: "For they speak against Thee wickedly, and Thine enemies take Thy name in vain," but which Saadia quotes in Hebrew and evidently means it to be translated as follows: "Who exalt Thee with wicked thought; Thine enemies elevated [Thee] with falsehood,"<sup>40</sup> that is to say, they introduced an angel as the creator of the world because of their wicked conception of God as a being who is so transcendent as to be too far above the act of creating a material world.<sup>41</sup>

Among the Karaites, there is first Kīrkīsānī, who has a long refutation of Nahāwandī.<sup>42</sup> Then there is Joseph al-Baṣīr, who has several refutations of Nahāwandī. In one place, after stating that God "creates all things by Himself, without any intermediary", he declares his "denial of all intermediaries . . . and of the view of Benjamin ha-Nahāwandī, who said that God created an angel and through the angel He created the world, that is to say, the heaven, the earth, mankind, and everything else."<sup>43</sup> In another place, he says: "If we imagine that God bestowed power upon one of the angels, enabling him to create His world, as has been asserted by Benjamin ha-Nahāwandī and his like, then inevitably we

<sup>38</sup> *Emunot ve-De'ot* V, 8, p. 186, II. 9-10.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Schreiner, *Studien über Jeschu'a ben Jehuda*, p. 41, n. 2; Guttman, *Religionsphilosophie des Saadia*, p. 191; Ventura, *La Philosophie de Saadia Gaon*, p. 225.

<sup>40</sup> *Emunot ve-De'ot* V, 8, p. 188, II. 10-11.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Shebil Emunah* on *Emunot ve-De'ot*, *ad loc.*, referring to 'Ikkarim III, 18.

<sup>42</sup> *Anwār* III, 20.

<sup>43</sup> *Maḥkimat Peti* 14, p. 111b (MS. Leiden, Warn. 41.3):

מחדש הוא הבורא לנפשים בנפשו. יע' [= יעני] הוא בעצמו בלא תיכוני או על ידי בינוני. ונבאר אחר כן הכחדת כלל הבינוניים . . . ודברי בניימין הנאונדי אשר יאמר כי יי' ית' שמו ברא מלאך והמלאך ברא את העולם ועל ידו יע' השמים והארץ ולבני אדם.

thereby confirm the existence of an eternal Creator, that is to say, the existence of an incorporeal eternal being who is the bestower of power upon that angel. Moreover, after we have shown by proof that [a body], on account of its being powerful only in virtue of power [granted to it by God], could not create bodies, it is evident that between the Creator [who is incorporeal] and ourselves there is no intermediary but that He Himself is the creator of our bodies and our life."<sup>44</sup> Third, there is Jeshua ben Judah, who makes a hypothetical questioner pose to him the following question: "Do you maintain that it is God Himself who created the world without any intermediary or do you consider it possible that God created an angel (*hav*) and that angel created the world?" In answer to this he says: "Even if we had decided that we have no proof for the view that God created the world without any intermediary, the view of him who says that the creator of the world is an angel (*mal'ak*) would be untenable. . . We maintain, however, that we have a way of establishing that God is the creator of the world without any intermediary,"<sup>45</sup> and thereupon he proceeds with his arguments. But, while he denies the pre-existence of an angel as the creator of the world,

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114a:

ולו השערנו כי יי' ית' שמו נתן כח למקצת המלאכים לבריאת עולמו, כאשר אמרו מקצת אנשים כמו בנימין הנאונדי ודומה לו, לא יעבור מלקיים בורא קדמון. יע' אפרדיאבטון איני [= ἀπαρδιαβατόν εἶναι] מלהיות קדמון אינו בגוף הוא הגותן כח לזה המלאך. אבל אשר הביאנו בו ראיה על כי היכול ביכולת לא יתכן שיעשה הגוף יראה וה כי אין בינינו ובינו ית' שמו בינוני אבל הוא הבורא לגופינו וחיינו.

It may be remarked that the term ἀπαρδιαβατόν does not occur in any Greek lexicon, nor does the other possible retransliteration ὑπερδιαβατόν.

<sup>45</sup> Jeshuah be Judah, *Bereshit Rabbah*, p. 72a (MS. Leiden, Warn. 41.2), quoted in part by Schreiner, *op. cit.*, p. 41, n. 5:

שאלה. אם אמ', התאמרו כי הקב"ה הוא העושה העולם בלא בינוני אם תעבירו כי הוא ית' ש' ברא חי והחי ההוא ברא העולם?  
נ"ל קצבנו כי אין ראיה על זה, היה זה הדבר מושחת אשר יאמ' כי בורא העולם הוא מלאך. . . ואולם נאמ' כי יש לנו דרך לכרות מי הקב"ה הוא בורא העולם בלא בינוני.

he does not deny the possibility of the pre-existence of an angel who is not assumed to be the creator of the world. This may be gathered from his comment on the meaning of the term *be-reshit* in the opening verse of the Book of Genesis. Usually this term is translated "In the beginning", but he takes it to mean "with the first", that is to say, with the angel who was the first created being, and the verse is interpreted by him to mean either that simultaneously with the creation of the angel, or immediately after the creation of the angel, God created the heaven and the earth. Both these interpretations are characterized by him as "plausible".<sup>46</sup> The background of these two alternative interpretations is the discussion in Christianity whether angels were created prior to the creation of the world or whether they were created on the first day of creation<sup>47</sup> and especially some such statement as that of Theodoret of Cyrrihus that the question "whether angels exist before (προῦπαρχουσι) heaven and earth or whether they were created with (σὺν) them" is a useless question.<sup>48</sup>

The passage about the Sadducees and the Magharians and Nahāwandī quoted in the name of Muḳammaṣ by Kırkısāni is also quoted in the name of Muḳammaṣ by Judah Hadassi. It reads as follows: "David ben Merwān al-Muḳammaṣ in one of his books reports concerning the Sadducees that they attribute to God every human likeness by which He is described in Scripture. And He also reports concerning the Magharians as being of an opposite view with regard to God, maintaining that they do not apply to God any human likeness but that, while they take any term predicated of God in Scripture in its literal sense, they explain and interpret it as applying to a wonderful being from on high, [namely, an angel]. Besides, they say that the scriptural predicates of God apply to some

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79b-80a:

ונאמ' עם ראשית ברואו, ירמוז בו אל, החי, והוא קרוב. ונאמר אחר הברוא הראשון, ואע"ג כי בריאת המלאך נתקדם לבריאת העולם בעת א'. וזה קרוב.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. my *Philo*, I, pp. 418-19.

<sup>48</sup> *Quaestiones in Genesis* I, 3 (PG 80, 80 C).

angels (*le-miḳṣat ha-mal'akim*), and among them the angel who created the world, as has been said by Benjamin al-Nahāwandī.<sup>49</sup>

This statement of Hadassi is assumed to be based in its entirety upon *Ḳirḳisānī*<sup>50</sup> and accordingly the difference between the phrase "to some angels" (*le-miḳṣat ha-mal'akim*) used here by Hadassi and the phrase "to one of the angels" (*li-ba'di al-malā'kati*) used by *Ḳirḳisānī*<sup>51</sup> has been explained as being due to Nahāwandī's misunderstanding of the meaning of the Arabic phrase used by *Ḳirḳisānī*.<sup>52</sup> This, I think, is not necessarily so. While it is to be admitted that the first part of Hadassi's statement is based upon *Ḳirḳisānī*, and therefore I translated it in correspondence to *Ḳirḳisānī*, it is possible that the second part, that beginning with "Besides, they say" and concluding with "as has been said by Benjamin al-Nahāwandī" is based upon another source. The existence of such another source is indicated by Hadassi's statement elsewhere that Nahāwandī, in agreement with certain Christian theologians, held that on the first day of creation, when the "uppermost heaven" was created and "before the creation of anything else", God created "the totality of glories and angels in His world".<sup>53</sup> Undoubtedly among this "totality of glories

<sup>49</sup> *Eshkol ha-Kofer* 98, p. 41d:

הניד דוד בן מרואן אל מקמץ במקצת ספר[ו]ו בעד צדוק' כי הם יתנו דמות לבורא במה שספר הכתוב עליו: וספר גם בעד אל' מנאריה בחלוף זה לאלהיך: קשורם כי לא הם מוסיפי' בדמיון: כי אם בספור התורה אשר ספרה כפשומו מפרשי' ומבררי' בנורא ועליון: ועוד אומרי' כי הם ספורי' למקצת המלאכי' ומהם הוא המלאך אשר ברא את העול' כמאמר בנימן אל' ה[נ]אונדי .

<sup>50</sup> *Anwār*, VII, p. 42, ll. 3-8; cf. above at nn. 3, 4, 5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 14, 1, p. 55, l. 3; cf. above at n. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Poznanski, *op. cit.*, p. 15, n. 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Eshkol ha-Kofer* 47, p. 25c:

ובנימן ה[נ]אונדי משכילי נ'ע אמר כי קוד' כל בריה ברא אלהים הכבוד וכסאו. וכלל הכבוד והמלאכי' בעולמ'. וכן חכמי הדעת וחכמי היוג' במלכותנו אומרי' כי באמור בראשית ברא אלהי' את השמי' ואת הארץ. באורו את כבודו וכתותיו עם השמי' העליוני': ואחר כן ואת הארץ וכתותיה כל יצורינו כשבאר בתורתו כל אחד ואחד ביומו בששת ימי בראשית: ודעתי נוטה אל דברי משכילי נ'ע בנימן בזה שאמר שהמלאכי' נבראו עם השמי' העליוני' ביום ראשון ככתו' בראשית ברא אלהי' את השמי'.

and angels" created on the first day before any other creation was also the angel who created the world, and perhaps the same source contained also a statement to the effect that, according to both Nahāwandī and the Magharians, it is to these angels, among them the angel who created the world, that the scriptural anthropomorphisms are to be taken to apply.