The fourth and by far the longest of these texts comes from Abū al-Hasan 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Ḥamad al-Hamadhānī al-Asadābādī, the leading Mu'tazili scholar of his day and the first whose works are extensively known in their original form. Like al-Bāqillānī, he was a qādī as well as a theologian, though his career was by no means smooth. He died out of favour in 415/1025.¹

As his name indicates, 'Abd al-Jabbār was born in Asadābād near Hamadhān in Iran. Since he is said to have lived into his nineties, he was probably born sometime in the 320/930s, about the same time as al-Bāqillānī and during the latter years of al-Māturīdī. He studied law under scholars in many towns in the Iranian region, and then in 346/958 he went to Baṣra, where he studied Mu'tazili kalām under Ibrāhīm al-'Ayyāsh, a student of Abū Ḥāshim al-Jubbaṭī, before moving to Baghdad to study with another of this master's students, Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī, to whom he remained devoted until the latter's death in 369/980.

It was through Abū 'Abdallāh that 'Abd al-Jabbār entered public life, when Abū 'Abdallāh secured for him a post under al-'Ṣāhib Ibn 'Abbād, the vizier of the Būyid ruler Mu'ayyid al-Dawla. Ibn 'Abbād made him chief qādī of Rayy, and the two appear to have cooperated in harmony there for some years, during which 'Abd al-Jabbār enjoyed celebrity status which culminated in his being recognised as the leading Mu'tazili theologian of his time.

This came to an end in 385/995 when Ibn 'Abbād died and the Būyid ruler Fakhr al-Dawla dismissed 'Abd al-Jabbār from his position. The circumstances of this dismissal are not entirely clear, though there is some suspicion among his early biographers that the qādī had come

to enjoy his status so much that he no longer acknowledged his benefactor. When Ibn ‘Abbād died, he refused to credit his piety with the expected pronouncement of blessing, and the ruler then used this as an excuse to get rid of a man who essentially had allowed success to go to his head.

For the remainder of his life ‘Abd al-Jabbār lived in private. He continued to teach and write, but he no longer profited from the heady success of his most vigorous years.

The titles of nearly seventy works by ‘Abd al-Jabbār are known, and his biographer Abū al-Sa‘d al-Jishumī reports that he wrote an enormous 400,000 pages in all. These included commentaries on earlier theological works, particularly those of the masters Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbārī and his son Abū Hāshim, legal works, answers to questions sent from parts of the Islamic empire, critiques of works by Muslim opponents of the Mu‘tazila, including Naqd al-Luma‘ (Criticism of ‘The Flashes’), Abū al-Hasan al-Ash’arī’s fundamental theological work, and also a few works specifically against non-Muslim groups, among which his Sharḥ al-Ārā‘ (Commentary on ‘The Opinions’), Abū Mu‘ammad al-Hasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī’s unfinished expose of a number of religions entitled K. al-ārā‘ wa-al-diyānāt (Opinions and Religions), was particularly remembered. This work was evidently in the maqālāt tradition of descriptive compendia that is known from such third/ninth century authors as Abū al-‘Abbās al-Īrānshahrī and Abū Īsā al-Warrāq. Among its accounts of Indian religions, Greek philosophical systems and dualist sects, it also portrayed Christian beliefs in a way that clearly impressed ‘Abd al-Jabbār.4

But both al-Nawbakhtī’s original and ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s commentary are lost. Of all the works he wrote, fourteen by G.S. Reynolds’ estimation are now accessible either in their original form or as part of other compositions. Of these, two have extensive discussions on Christianity and reveal something of their author’s attitude, the Mughnī fi alwāb al-tawḥīd wa-al-‘adl (The Summa on divine Oneness and Justice), the systematic theology that is discussed in detail below, and the Tathbūt dalā’il al-nubuwwa (The Confirmation of the Proofs of Prophethood), a rather differ-

---

3 Reynolds, Muslim Theologian, p. 58.
5 Reynolds, Muslim Theologian, pp. 61–62, n. 213.