CHAPTER 2

Outline of *al-Radd al-jamīl*—A Fitting Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus from the Evidence of the gospel

The manuscript is said to be written by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, who promises at the outset to critique the Christian doctrine of the union of the divine and human in Jesus Christ, particularly to refute those who depend on philosophy to apply the analogy of the union of the soul and the body to the union of the divine and human in Christ.

The opening section has three arguments

There is a false use of analogical reasoning to connect divinity and humanity in Jesus. No connection can be made between God and the essence of any human being, in a similar way to the connection between a soul and a body. Even if it is proven that there is a connection between the soul and the body, Christians can make no use of it to establish the divinity of Jesus, because God has a directive relationship with each creature and not just with one particular one such as Jesus Christ.

Christian attempts to prove Jesus’ divinity from his performance of miracles are futile. Moses performed similar miracles, but Christians do not argue that he is divine. Elijah and Elisha raised the dead but Christians do not believe that makes them divine.

Christians are misled in their reliance on philosophy. Depending on philosophy for the union of the divine and human in Christ surely means that Christians must accept other beliefs of the philosophers, such as the eternity of the world and the limitations imposed on a creator of that world.

The author concludes by introducing his study of the teaching of Jesus in the gospels which will demonstrate to Christians that need to understand the metaphorical meaning of those passages that they have interpreted literally.

The second section of the work is an interpretation of Jesus’ teaching from John’s gospel
The author precedes this investigation by announcing his interpretive method. Reason should be the principle guide to understanding meaning. What Jesus says should be understood either literally or metaphorically by applying reason to the interpretation. Seemingly contradictory passages should be reconciled by the use of reason.

**Jesus claims to be one with his Father**

John 10:30–36 is quoted. Jesus says ‘I and the Father are one’, but the Jews picked up stones to throw at him, because they accused him of blasphemy, claiming to be God.

The author argues that the Jews understood Jesus to be making a literal claim to union with God, but that Jesus himself did not. He was merely suggesting that the word he shared with God was being declared to them. This is like the saying of the Prophet,

> Whoever wants to come close to me will come closest by performing what I have prescribed for him. Then the worshipping servant will continue to come close to me by performing more than I have prescribed, and so I will love him. When I love him I will be the ear with which he hears, the eye with which he sees, the tongue with which he speaks, and the hand with which he strikes.

God is not present in any of these members of the body, so the saying is metaphorical in meaning rather than literal. God enables the believer to speak with the tongue and strike with the hand. Jesus intended such a meaning by offering help to others to come close to God.

**Jesus prays that his followers will be one as he is one with his Father**

The second saying of Jesus is from John 17:11, where he prays for his disciples that they be one as he and his Father are one.

The author argues that if Jesus saw his unity with God to be unique to him then how could he ask for the same unity to be granted to the disciples? Thus Christians are simply wrong to claim that the unity of Jesus with his Father makes Jesus divine. He is talking of friends being one.