

Defending the "People of Truth" in the Early Islamic Period

*The Christian Apologies
of Abū Rā'īṭah*

Sandra Toenies Keating



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The History of Christian-Muslim Relations

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by

Sandra Toenies Keating



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Photo front cover: Vase, Jar, Iraq, Abbasid dynasty, 10th century, Earthenware painted over glaze with luster H. 28.2 x Diam. 23.2 cm (11 1/8 x 9 1/8 in.) Origin: Iraq
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INTRODUCTION

A NINTH-CENTURY DEFENSE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE: *ABŪ RĀ'ĪṬAH AL-TAKRĪTĪS* RESPONSE TO HIS MUSLIM CRITICS

Christians and the Rise of Islam

It is likely that Christians and Jews living in Mesopotamia at the beginning of the seventh century could not have imagined the magnitude of the change that was about to descend upon their world. Life was continuing much as it had for centuries, albeit under the exhausting burden of the warring Byzantine and Persian empires. Yet, from an obscure place in Arabia, a military and religious leader stepped on to the stage of history, bringing a religion that would change the face of the world in less than two hundred years. The man who came to be known as the Prophet Muḥammad was believed by his followers to have received revelations from God for twenty-two years until his death in 632 A.D. In the last decade of his life he gathered around himself a small community and set in motion one of the most breath-taking conquests in history.

Initially the Arab conquerors essentially left the existing bureaucratic and legal structures they encountered in place, insisting only that their subjects pay taxes and refrain from slandering Muḥammad or their religion. However, by the middle of the eighth century the Muslim community had developed a self-confidence that manifested itself in the desire to transform society according to the demands of the *Qur'ān*. The result was the appearance of a new dynasty, the 'Abbāsids, and a new capital, Baghdad, founded near the ancient Christian city of Takrīt. Under these new rulers, Arab-Islamic civilization flourished and for five centuries relative peace and prosperity prevailed throughout the lands they dominated. Although the 'Abbāsids never had direct authority over the entire territory controlled by Muslim rulers, their presence and influence was widely felt in every aspect of life. Through their leadership, Islamic civilization entered its Golden Age and was able to attain exceptional achievements in science, medicine, law, astronomy, poetry, literature and art. While the 'Abbāsids remained in power in Baghdad,

Muslim society flourished until the Mongol invasions in 656/1258.¹

As the Islamic empire grew in power and stability, the Christians living within its confines were confronted with dramatic changes in their daily lives. Those living in North Africa and east of Byzantium who had been divided by their acceptance or rejection of various ecumenical church councils were now united under an alien rule that was having increasing influence over every area of their existence. Many of those who had supported Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople (428-431), as well as the champions of Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria (412-444) who subsequently rejected Chalcedon, had formed communities in the East. Before the rise of Islam, they had generally been able to maintain a degree of autonomy through political and territorial separation. Now, all Christians, Nestorians, Jacobites (Cyrillian Monophysites), Melkite Chalcedonians, Maronites and others, were faced with the challenges brought by Islam.

The turn of the ninth century saw a rapid cultural transformation that deeply touched both the Christian and Islamic communities. The first 'Abbāsid century was a formative period for all aspects of Islamic thought, as well as a time during which relations between Muslims and Christians were solidified into patterns that were to last for a millennium. The stabilization of the Islamic community had established a more regulated and uniform society, creating the conditions for an intellectual and cultural flowering. For Christians and Jews, increased religious and social restrictions were accompanied by unique opportunities to participate in the nascent stages of what would become an explosion of scholarly activity. And so it was that the commencement of the 'Abbāsid reign found the Syrian Jacobite community of Iraq in transition: as a new civilization grew out of the meeting of cultural streams from Persia, Byzantium, Arabia and Mesopotamia, a new language and legal system prevailed, and many were choosing to convert to the young religion of Islam. At this time, theological exchange between Muslims and Christians emerged in a form which had not occurred earlier and was to become rare in the following centuries. It was in this unique milieu that the Jacobite Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah made his contribution as a Christian apologist.

¹ M.A. Shaban, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Christian Apologetic under Islamic Rule

It has been common in the West to regard the period of Christian intellectual history following John of Damascus in the seventh century as one of decline, during which little other than commentary and copying of previous writers occurred. Yet, for those living in the Islamic context, the nature of discourse had changed, and Christian theologians were forced to come up with creative ways by which to express and explain their faith. While Christians and Jews remained the majority until well into the tenth century, the steady rise to power of Muslim Arabs after the death of Muḥammad pressed them to address challenges being made to their religions. During this time, the theological and philosophical agenda began to be set by Muslims who challenged Christians to defend the consistency and even intelligibility of their faith.² The initial appearance of the apologetical literature that resulted can be found in Syriac-speaking circles, but during the first ‘Abbāsīd century, Christian intellectuals begin to feel compelled to write their defences in Arabic.

The theological debate between Muslims and Christians had already commenced during the lifetime of Muḥammad, and by the beginning of the ninth century polemical writings similar to those of Abū Rā’īṭah authored by adherents of both religious communities were becoming common.³ Although the origins and actual content of the earliest discussions remain obscure, it appears that a number of areas of conflict arose very soon after Muḥammad’s initial revelatory experiences. Among these were whether Muḥammad’s own position *vis-à-vis* Israel’s prophets could be recognized by Christians

² Sidney H. Griffith, “Habib ibn Hidmah Abū Rā’īṭah, a Christian *mutakallim* of the First Abbasid Century,” *Oriens Christianus* 64 (1980): 161.

³ Among the most complete general overviews of Muslim-Christian polemical writings are Adel-Théodore Khoury, “Apologétique byzantine contre l’Islam (VIII^e-XII^e siècle),” *Proche Orient Chrétien* 29 (1979): 242-300, Paul Khoury, *Matériaux pour servir à l’étude de la controverse théologique islamo-chrétienne de langue arabe du viii^e au xiii^e siècle*, 3 vols. (Würzburg: Echter Verlag / Altenberge: Telos-Verlag, 1989, 1991, 1997), and David Thomas, ed. and trans., *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq’s “Against the Trinity”* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). For Christian writings defending the Trinity, see Rachid Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes 750-1050*, Coll. *Beauchesne Religions* 15 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), 25-83.

and Jews, the authenticity and authority of his religious experiences, and in particular, his call to absolute monotheism.⁴

For the multitude of Christians living increasingly under Islamic rule, this last point became the primary source of friction in their relations with the Islamic community, because it precluded the two fundamental Christian beliefs: the Trinity and the Incarnation. Even when they could not agree on the exact expression and implications of these two doctrines, nearly all Christians had historically held that both were critical to authentic faith in Jesus Christ. Defining the meaning of the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, however, had not been an easy task, and continued to be a bone of contention among various Christian groups for centuries after the first ecumenical councils.

The problem had arisen from the fact that, while Christians believed that both doctrines were clearly implied in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures (first as foretold in prophecy and later fulfilled in actual events), the inner character of neither the Incarnation nor the Trinity was explicitly stated in an unambiguous formula. The introduction of Hellenistic thought, primarily in the form of neo-Platonic, Stoic and Aristotelian philosophy, had subsequently raised questions that the scriptures did not seem prepared to answer. For several centuries following the birth of Christianity, Christians had been engaged in a heated debate trying to work out an accurate and clear expression of the nature of the Incarnation and the Trinity, often resulting in some less than edifying incidents. The conflict had culminated in the Council of Chalcedon which, far from resolving the issue, precipitated several splits in the Christian community that eventually became irreparable. It was into the aftermath of Chalcedon that Islam was born, with its own unequivocal condemnation of even the possibility of an incarnation or trinity in God.⁵

⁴ The *Qur'ān* makes numerous references to such discussions between Muḥammad and Christians and Jews. Of particular interest here are the verses which defend the revelations to Muḥammad that contradict Christian teaching, especially those concerning his role as a prophet in a line of prophets (*Sura* 33:40; 5:19; 6:84-90; 23:23-52), the Trinity (*Sura* 4:171), and the status of Jesus and Mary (*Sura* 4:172; 5:17, 110).

⁵ It might be suggested that confusion and frustration with the christological controversies following the Council of Chalcedon played no small role in the relatively rapid conversion of the population to Islam with its simple message of one God. In response to this view, however, it is important to note that the majority of early

The revelation to Muḥammad was at its heart the message of absolute monotheism. This seemed to put it immediately at odds with the Christian teachings of the Incarnation and Trinity. The *Qurʾān* clearly and unambiguously rejects any notion that Jesus was more than a prophet (*Sura* 4:171; 5:75; 43:59, 63-64), and its cosmology expressly prohibits the possibility of God's becoming incarnate by a refusal to admit a similarity between God and creation (*Sura* 6:100; 112:1-4) or of God having a son (*Sura* 2:116; 6:101; 10:68; 19:35; 23:91; 37:149-153). Further, in the struggle against the polytheism of the nomadic Arab tribes, the *Qurʾānic* insistence on absolute monotheism made Christian Trinitarian doctrine suspect (*Sura* 4:171; 5:73; 6:22-23, 136-137, 163; 16:18). As a consequence, these topics became the central focus of debate between Muslims and Christians in the following centuries.

By the end of the eighth century, Christians, too, were becoming more aware of their Muslim rulers and beginning to recognize that Islam was not just "the heresy of the Ishmaelites", identified by John of Damascus and many Greek writers after him.⁶ This increased awareness was probably the result of a combination of a growth in the number of converts to Islam, as well as the flowering of intellectual communities during the relative peace that decended

converts were from polytheism in Arabia and later from Mazdaism in Persia who did not receive *ḍimmī* status (Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), I/194, 200-206 and Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment. The Gunning Lectures, Edinburgh University, 1925* [London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1926], esp. 190-191). Only in the following centuries did large numbers of Christians and Jews become Muslim, and many arguably under economic and social duress. Nonetheless, the poor witness of Christians in their relations with each other (as *Sura* 43:65 attests) and contacts with members of other religions (*Sura* 2:113), as well as a lack of interest on the part of the Eastern churches in evangelizing indigenous groups should not be underestimated factors in conversion to Islam. One can cite as evidence the apparent absence of an Arabic translation of the Bible before the first 'Abbāsīd century to be used for evangelization of nomadic tribes (Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century," *Oriens Christianus* 69 (1985): 126-167). Muḥammad's initial conviction that he was receiving the message of the Gospels and Torah in Arabic to be used in converting these tribes to monotheism also supports this idea. Only gradually did Muslims become aware of the extent of the discrepancies between the scriptures, indicating that they had a fairly limited knowledge of Christianity.

⁶ Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites"* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).

on the Mediterranean world after the ‘Abbāsīd rise to power. More interchange between Muslims, Christians and Jews resulted in an increased awareness of the views of each other and the necessity to respond to their questions.

The first written Christian accounts addressing such issues appear around the turn of the eighth century in Syriac.⁷ These initial responses generally followed one of two avenues. Either they saw the advent of the Arabs with their new religion in apocalyptic terms as fulfilling a prophesied eschatological stage,⁸ or they tried to treat the new theological challenges in a systematic way. Although Syriac writers did not take up the genre of apologetical debate with Muslims with as much enthusiasm as later Arabophone Christians, one finds in the early extant texts Christian replies to the topics which would later become standard for Muslim and Christian apologetics: the legitimacy of Muḥammad’s prophethood and the revelation of the *Qur’ān*, the status and authenticity of the Gospel, the Trinity and Incarnation, laws and practices governing Christian life (veneration of images, fasting, sacraments, etc.).⁹ All of these are subjects which Abū Rā’īṭah and his contemporaries deal with extensively in Arabic in their various writings in response to Islam.¹⁰

In many ways, the central challenges of Islam were not new to the Christian community, and learned Christians were quick to acknowledge this fact. From the very beginning, Christians had been faced with the Jewish rejection of their claim that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and that he in fact was God incarnated. They had also already confronted the absolute monotheism of Judaism, which, like that of Islam, denied the possibility of a multiplicity within the being of God. These two tenets

⁷ Gerritt J. Reinink, “The Beginnings of Syriac Apologetic Literature in Response to Islam,” *Oriens Christianus* 77 (1993): esp. 186-187.

⁸ Sidney H. Griffith, “Muslims and Church Councils: the Apology of Theodore Abū Qurrah,” *Studia Patristica* 25 (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1993), 272.

⁹ Sidney H. Griffith, “The Prophet Muhammad: His Scripture and His Message according to the Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac from the First Abbasid Century,” in *La Vie du Prophète Mahomet*, Bibliothèque des Centres d’Études Supérieures Spécialisés, ed. Colloque de Strasbourg (octobre 1980) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 99-100 and “Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: from Patriarch John III (d. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286),” *Wolfenbütteler Symposium*, “Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter” (11-15 June, 1989), 253-257.

¹⁰ In keeping with his silence on specific aspects of Islam, Abū Rā’īṭah does not explicitly mention Muḥammad or the *Qur’ān* in his own works.

of Christian faith conflicted so deeply with the Jewish concepts of God that Christians were forced to demonstrate the very continuity between their beliefs and those of the Hebrew scriptures.¹¹

This difficulty was compounded by the fact that the nascent Christian community existed within a predominantly polytheistic context where the possibility of beings who were the result of the intercourse between humans and divinities was widely accepted. Pagans were not disturbed by the impression that Christians worshipped three gods (even if they were sceptical of the limitation to so few) and believed in the existence of a person half divine, half human, born of a god and a woman. Christians consequently were obliged within this milieu to clarify carefully what they meant by “trinity” and “incarnation” in a way that avoided tritheistic and polytheistic implications. Finally, the early encounter with Hellenistic philosophy added a tangle of questions, concepts and vocabulary foreign to Jewish and Christian scriptures which had to be sorted through.¹² As a result, early Christian theologians had occupied themselves with explaining the doctrines of Incarnation and the Trinity both to the members of their own communities as well as to their opponents in such a way as to preserve monotheistic belief while still maintaining what was divinely revealed. All of these ancient factors presented themselves again in different ways in the new encounter with Islam, and the multitude of texts preserved from this early period provided a blueprint for later Christian writers.

Islam, too, arose out of a polytheistic nomadic society in which Judaism and Christianity had exercised some limited influence, especially among the sedentary population.¹³ The fight against *širk* (idolatry usually associated with polytheism) is one of the most common themes found in the *Qurʾān*, where it is contrasted with *ihlās* (fidelity

¹¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 12-27.

¹² See Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, trans. Edmund J. Fortman, *Studies in Historical Theology* 1 (Still River, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), 126-138; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

¹³ See for example, J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (London & New York: Longman; Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1979), esp. pp. 243-286.

to God alone) and *tawhīd* (monotheism). Although *širk* as such is generally tied to blatant worship of multiple gods, the *Qurʾān* identifies Christians, and even Jews, as *mušrikūn* (those who practice *širk*) because they in some way compromise the unity of God.¹⁴ Similar to earlier Jewish critique, much of its criticism of Christianity is directed particularly at the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity which seem to lead to polytheism. This made it possible for Christian apologists confronted with Islam to draw on the arguments made by their predecessors against the charges of polytheism and tritheism by Jews.

As a consequence, scholars of Abū Rāʾīṭah's day were faced with the task of explaining complex questions about the exact character of the unity of God, its relationship to the three *hypostaseis*, and their relationships to each other and to creation. The struggles of the early church in answering the challenges are well known and need not be enumerated here.¹⁵ However, it should not be assumed that Abū Rāʾīṭah and his contemporaries simply repeated what they had received through the theological tradition. They were eminently aware of the differences between their situation and that of the Cappadocian fathers, on whom they relied for a great deal of inspiration.

A significant reason why a defense of Christian doctrine could not be taken over wholesale from earlier apologists such as Justin Martyr, Origen, Cyprian and Irenaeus, was that the *Qurʾān* had added another problem to the mix: it claimed that scripture passages which supported such teachings had been falsified by the Jews and followers of Jesus.¹⁶ Many of the arguments about historical events (such as the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus' prediction of the coming of Muḥammad, and the role of Jesus' disciples) had resulted in a stale-

¹⁴ Gerald Hawting, "Širk and 'Idolatry' in Monotheist Polemic," in: *Dhimmi and Others: Jews and Christians and the World of Classical Islam, Israel Oriental Studies* 17, ed. Uri Rubin and David J. Wasserstein (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, Inc., 1997), 107-126.

¹⁵ Detailed discussions of the relevant topics can be found in Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 1/311-325 and Bertrand Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, trans. Edmund J. Fortman, *Studies in Historical Theology*, vol. 1 (Still River, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), 57-138.

¹⁶ The Jews are accused directly of tampering with the scriptures in the *Qurʾān* in several passages, including *Sura* 2:63-64, 77-79. Evidence in favor of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the lack of any reference in the Gospels to the coming of Muḥammad was attributed by later Muslim scholars to the treachery of Jesus' followers. This problem of *tahrīf* will be examined in detail below.

mate between the two communities, since both sides appealed to their own scriptures as revelations from God for their primary evidence. Whereas Christians did not recognize Muḥammad's prophethood and the validity of the *Qur'ān*, Muslims asserted that the Jews and Christians had tampered with their own scriptures. Consequently, Christians responding to this claim were obliged to limit themselves to scriptural texts that were not the object of great dispute. Abū Rā'īṭah, for example, employs numerous scriptural references to prophets and persons who were recognized by the Islamic community in his replies to Muslims, including quotations from Jesus not connected to his death or resurrection.

The effect of this limitation for writers such as Abū Rā'īṭah was to force them to appeal to reason and logical deduction (just as those who engaged pagan philosophers had done), supplemented with acceptable scriptural evidence. The rising interest in Greek philosophy by Muslim *mutakallimūn* during the 'Abbāsīd period, in part prompted by the desire of the caliphs to create a new social, intellectual, and political ideology encompassing all peoples in the empire,¹⁷ provided a common basis from which to work, and allowed Christian scholars to actively participate, even if in a restricted and circumspect manner, in one of the most significant periods of Islamic thought.¹⁸

Exactly during the decades around the turn of the ninth century in which Abū Rā'īṭah's letters were composed, intellectual enterprises sprang up throughout the young empire. Scholarly centers were founded that aimed at collecting and publishing *ḥadīṭ*, and establishing Islamic legal schools. Simultaneously, Muslims began massive translation projects of ancient Greek texts on philosophy, rhetoric, medicine, astrology, and the natural sciences. Soon, extensive efforts were under way to collect, translate and harmonize all of the known works of Aristotle, Plato, Galen, Hypocrates, Ptolemy, and a host of others. Unlike earlier Syriac translations that had been made in nearly every major Hellenized Syro-Christian city, the Arabic translation

¹⁷ See the conclusions of Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsīd Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998).

¹⁸ Gerhard Klinge, "Die Beduetung der syrischen Theologen als Vermittler der griechischen Philosophie an den Islam," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 58 (1939): 346-386.

movement was initially found exclusively in Baghdad, only a short distance from Abū Rā'īṭah's Jacobite community.¹⁹

The greater part of direct Christian participation in the effort can be traced to the Nestorian community because of its generally better relationship with Muslim authorities, but the effects were felt throughout the wider Christian church. As more texts became available in Arabic, Muslim intellectuals entered into an age-old debate and brought with them new questions and new perspectives. Because they were often drawn into discussions on religion, Abū Rā'īṭah and his Christian contemporaries became relatively knowledgeable of the issues currently being argued in Islamic scholarly circles. Often, they were able to use the questions to their advantage, drawing subtle connections from controversies about the eternity of the *Qur'ān* as the Word of God and its relationship to the Divine Being, divine attributes, human knowledge of God, interpretation of the revealed text, and how one can determine the authenticity and status of oral tradition, to the christological and trinitarian topics on their own agendas.²⁰ For example, although Abū Rā'īṭah never directly mentions Muslim discussions on the terms "being", "knowledge" and "life", he certainly assumes that his opponents accept the necessity of these eternal divine attributes. In fact, a clear parallel can be identified between these attributes and those of being, speech and will, which were the subject of extensive debates surrounding the createdness of the *Qur'ān*.²¹ As a result of this intellectual context, although Abū Rā'īṭah does devote some of his attention to traditional topics and evidence for them (especially in *Proof*), his primary

¹⁹ Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 121-141; F.E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs: The Aristotelian Tradition in Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 57-67.

²⁰ The theological issues current in Islamic circles in the eighth and ninth centuries are discussed extensively in W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998), Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 1983), Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1976) and Morris S. Seale, *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers* (London: Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1964). The development of criteria for interpretation and collection of *ahādīṭ* can be found in Watt and Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, rep. 1986). The books of Wolfson and Seale should be used with care, however. In my opinion, both authors impute far too much Christian influence in development of Islamic theology than is warranted by the evidence.

²¹ Wolfson, *Kalam*, 112-132, 235-278.

argument is a philosophical one concentrated on the triune nature of God.²²

It is here that a notable aspect of Abū Rā'īṭah's method should be mentioned. In order to establish the soundness, indeed even the existence, of Christian monotheistic belief, he and his contemporaries depart from the Cappadocian emphasis on the triune economy in the one God²³ and begin instead with the divine unity. In fact, Abū Rā'īṭah always develops his argumentation from the basis of God's absolute oneness, to threeness, to incarnation. This does not mean that he overlooks the revelation of the Trinity in history, but rather shows how the One God is ultimately revealed through the Incarnation to be three. This, too, is necessitated by the assumptions of his Muslim audience. For them, the real questions are why and how God became human, while still maintaining continuity with previous (monotheistic) revelations and without introducing plurality into the divine being. It is for this reason that although Abū Rā'īṭah mentions the Holy Spirit in connection to God's threeness, he never elaborates on the third Person to the same extent as the other two. This move from *de deo uno* to *de deo trino* is a conscious and practical one. Without first firmly grounding Christian teaching in the one God, any further assertions put forth in response to Islamic critique will be useless.²⁴

²² For the background to this contribution, see Harald Suermann, "Der Begriff *Ṣifāh* bei Abū Rā'īṭah," in: *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir and Jorgen S. Nielsen, *Studies in the History of Religions (Numen Bookseries)*, vol. LXIII (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994), 157-171.

²³ Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 122-138.

²⁴ It seems this apologetical aspect of the theological shift away from the trinitarian economy after the Cappadocians is a significant one that has been overlooked by critics of medieval theologians such as Catherine Mowry LaCugna. In her book, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), LaCugna argues that with Augustine the relations between the divine persons and the economy of redemption were minimized, resulting in an emphasis on God as an impersonal divine source. This, she maintains, was extensively developed by Thomas Aquinas and had far-reaching consequences for all aspects of theological thought. While there may be truth to her argument for the Western church, it does not take into consideration the apologetical difficulties facing those who were forced to defend their trinitarian monotheism, and even of their influence on Aquinas, who was aware of Jewish and Islamic criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity. This is a topic which warrants further examination.

Islamization and Conversion from Christianity

A second, and perhaps more significant difference between early Christian apologists and those of the 'Abbāsid period was the context of an escalating number of Christians converting to Islam. Whereas most of the Church Fathers whose writings were available to Abū Rā'īṭah and other theologians of his time lived as minorities among pagans who were slowly turning to Christianity, the 'Abbāsid age saw an unprecedented numbers of Christians accepting the new religion. Now the concern was not only to justify Christian beliefs which seemed absurd to non-Christians (previously a pagan majority and now the growing Islamic minority),²⁵ but to stem the tide of conversions away from the well-established and ancient Christian church. Clergy and scholars were prompted to make their case in favor of Christianity in such a way as to defend its intelligibility and legitimacy in the face of Islamic criticism, as well as to calm fears and encourage confidence within the Christian population.

Although it is extremely difficult to gain an accurate picture of the trend of conversion to Islam during the 'Abbāsid period, some general calculations have been made by modern scholars. Based on the estimate of the Umayyad governor, 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād, around the year 64/675, only about three percent of the population in Iraq had converted to Islam.²⁶ Many of those who converted early on were women who married Muslim men, a practice explicitly condoned in the *Qur'ān*. However, beginning with the reign of the caliph Harūn ar-Rašīd (170-193/786-809), the rate of conversions increased dramatically. By the mid-ninth century, the Muslim population of Iraq is thought to have reached nearly forty percent.²⁷ This was surely a cause for alarm among Christians who had themselves been the majority for several centuries previous.

The reason for this rapid increase in conversion to Islam can be found in the coincidence of the missionary zeal of individual Muslims and the more organized efforts to "Arabize" society under the recently formed 'Abbāsid regime. The initial contact between

²⁵ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), I/27-41.

²⁶ Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), 81.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

Muslims and Christians had been for the most part characterized by tolerance so long as the conquered peoples paid the *ḡizyah*, a type of poll tax, and submitted to their Arab rulers.²⁸ This was in keeping with the explicit prohibition of forced conversion to Islam found in the *Qurʾān*: “Let there be no compulsion in religion” (*Sura* 2:256). Instead, non-Muslims were given the option of paying the *ḡizyah*, which was also justified by the *Qurʾān*: “Fight those who do not believe in God or the Last Day . . . nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth from among the People of the Book until they pay the *ḡizyah* willingly and are subdued” (*Sura* 9:29). In return for payment of the tax, specific groups of non-Muslims identified as “People of the Book”, the *ahl al-kitāb*, were granted protection, or *ḍimmah*, and religious toleration by the state.²⁹

In spite of the *Qurʾānic* affirmation of Christianity and Judaism as legitimate religions, the underlying assumption that the truth of the revelation to Muḥammad would be apparent to all, and therefore that Islam would be embraced by everyone, does not lie far below the surface of the prevailing vision among Muslims, an expectation that was frustrated time and again. Disappointment that the revelations were not immediately recognized and confirmed by the Jews and Christians of Makka probably played a major role in Muḥammad’s move in 622 to the predominantly pagan city of Yaṭrib, later known as *Madīnat an-Nabī* (“the City of the Prophet”). Yet, adherents of the new religion for the most part seem to have respected the command that there be “no compulsion in religion,” and widespread attempts at spreading Islam were not undertaken until decades after Muḥammad’s death. Some have even speculated that conversion in the early Islamic world was discouraged because the *ḡizyah* was an important source of income for the nascent government.

²⁸ Wadi Z. Haddad, “Continuity and Change in Religious Adherence: Ninth-Century Baghdad,” in: *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, M. Gervers & R.J. Bikhazi, eds., Coll. *Papers in Mediaeval Studies* 9 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 34. However, those who refused to pay the *ḡizyah* or to convert risked death or enslavement if they did not prevail against the Muslim armies. See André Ferré, “Chrétiens de Syrie et de Mésopotamie au début de l’Islam” *Islamochristiana* 14 (1988): 77-79.

²⁹ Those considered to be included in the *ahl al-kitāb* are Christians, Jews, the *Ṣābiʿa* (a sect not positively identified) and, by some authorities, the Zoroastrians. Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 33-36.

Initially, the payment of the *ǧīzyah* had seemed advantageous to non-Muslims. Consequently, as the Arab conquerers swept across the Mediterranean world, hundreds of Christian and Jewish cities and villages faced with the choice of conversion to Islam or payment of the tax accepted the latter and fell into Arab hands without a struggle. Many probably hoped that this would bring an end to the exhausting and burdensome wars between the Sāsānian and Byzantine empires that had been raging on and off for centuries. Others, particularly the Jewish communities, may have thought that the *ǧīzyah* would buy them religious freedom and ease the yoke of foreign rule.³⁰ However, the apocalyptic literature of the period reveals the fears of those who saw another side of the current rulers. Many recognized in the new religion a serious threat to the Christian community, and correctly predicted it as the beginning of the end of Christian control of the eastern Mediterranean. This, they believed, could be nothing other than punishment from God, and the *ǧīzyah* was to become symbolic of this divine chastisement.³¹

The enforcement of the *ǧīzyah* varied with time and place depending on the convictions of the local rulers,³² but some general observations may be made. As the Arab armies rapidly moved beyond the Arabian peninsula in the second half of the seventh century, they were able to take large areas of land with little force. Although many cities surrendered peacefully through treaty, usually involving some lump payment in return for remaining unscathed, those that did not submit were besieged and the inhabitants killed off until the city officials surrendered. Both groups, however, were subject to the choice of paying the *ǧīzyah* and *karāǧ* (land tax) and accepting the status of *ḍimmī*, or conversion to Islam and exemption from all tax.³³

³⁰ Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, I/200-203; Armand Abel, "La Djizya: Tribut ou Rançon?" *Studia Islamica* 32 (1970): 5-19.

³¹ See, for example, Armand Abel, "L'apocalypse de Baḥīra et la notion islamique de Mahdī," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales* 3 (1935): 1-12; F.J. Martinez, "The Apocalyptic Genre in Syriac: The World of Pseudo-Methodius", in: H.J.W. Drijvers et al. (eds.) IV Symposium Syriacum 1984, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 229 (1987): 337-352; Harald Suermann, *Die geschichts-theologische Reaktion auf die einfallenden Muslime in der edessischen Apokalyptic des 7. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: P. Lang, 1985).

³² Daniel C. Dennett has made compelling arguments to this effect in his study *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950). All previous analyses should be understood in light of his conclusions.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3-13.

In Mesopotamia, the villages and country peoples yielded with little resistance, but the capital city of Edessa was subjected to a long, unrelenting siege, after which it finally surrendered and paid a fixed tribute. Those in the countryside were charged with providing provisions for the army, but no monetary payment was required of them. Both taxes were extremely moderate compared to other areas of the empire, such as Egypt, and apparently no *karāğ* was leveled in hard currency. However, the situation changed under the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (65-86/685-705).³⁴ Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē records that in 691/2 ‘Abd al-Malik took a census and began to impose a four dinar tax on all adult non-Muslims to replace the previous one dinar tax. In his *Chronicle*, Dionysius points to this incident as the beginning of the Arab oppression of Christians and the evils that followed.³⁵ A similar account is given by Michael the Syrian, who dates the census six years later.³⁶ Indeed, the reformed *ğizyah* represented a four hundred percent increase on city dwellers and a shift from a tax in produce to money for those in the countryside. Further, now the land itself, and not produce, was taxed based on its distance from city markets.³⁷

For non-Muslims the tax burden forced one of three choices. A landowner could continue to pay the *ğizyah* and the *karāğ* to the best of his ability. He could also choose to abandon his land and emigrate to a city, thus becoming free of the *karāğ* but still subject to the *ğizyah*. Initially, it appears that most Christians chose the latter option. Both of these entailed accepting *ḍimmī* status as “protected” citizens of the empire. However, as time went on and increasing social, political and religious restrictions were added to the tax burden, the third option became more and more attractive: conversion to Islam. Through conversion a person was automatically exempted from both the *ğizyah* and the *karāğ*, and thus could continue to pos-

³⁴ Ibid., 45.

³⁵ Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē, *Chronicon = Incerti auctoris chronicon anonymum pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Chabot, CSCO (Parisiis: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1927), 104/154, 507/116.

³⁶ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, Jean-Baptiste Chabot, ed. and trans. T. I-III, French trans., T. IV, Syriac text (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899-1910), II/473, IV/447.

³⁷ Dennett, *Conversion*, 45-48.

sess property while being required to pay only the moderate *zakāt* (alms tax) imposed by the *Šarī‘ah*.³⁸

The expansion and defining of particular restrictions on the *ḍimmī* apart from those connected to the *ġīzyah* and the *karāġ* had already begun with the sporadic institution of policies and practices encouraging the Islamization and Arabization of areas under Arab control by caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty (41/661-132/750). Along with the tax reform, ‘Abd al-Malik initiated efforts to limit the public display of Christian and Jewish images and to replace them with Arabic inscriptions. This was particularly apparent in the monetary reforms whereby new coinage was issued eliminating notations and symbols other than Arabic, carrying instead *Qur’ānic* inscriptions and references to the caliphate.³⁹ Road signs, too, begin to bear the *šahāda*, the Islamic profession of faith.⁴⁰

The most significant of all was the erection of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem with its *Qur’ānic* inscriptions directed explicitly against Christianity. As a public edifice, it was a symbol affirming the superiority and finality of Islam in the ancient holy city of Jerusalem.⁴¹ However, apart from isolated incidents, Christians and Jews continued to function within the new social structure relatively unhindered in their cultural and religious practices. The rarity of reports of harassment for religious reasons can be taken to indicate that pressure experienced by the *ḍimmī* in the Umayyad period was primarily economic and political.⁴²

With the accession of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty to the caliphate in 750,

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-13; Ferré, “Chrétien,” 79-84.

³⁹ J.C. Miles, “The Iconography of Umayyad Coinage” *Ars orientalis* 3 (1959): 207-213; André Grabar, *L’iconoclasme byzantin: Dossier archéologique* (Paris: Collège de France, 1957), 67-74.

⁴⁰ Moshe Sharon, “An Arabic Inscription from the Time of the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 29 (1966): 367-372.

⁴¹ The inscriptions found on the Dome of the Rock are the oldest known written texts of the *Qur’ān*. The citations chosen emphasize the essential beliefs of Islam such as the unity and oneness of God (*Sura* 112) and the belief that Muḥammad is the prophet of God (*Sura* 33:54). However, a disproportionate space is given to verses which reject Christian beliefs (*Sura* 4:169-171; 19:34-37). Oleg Grabar, “The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem,” *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 33-62, repr. in *Studies in Medieval Islamic Art* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976), 52-62; Sidney H. Griffith, “Theodore Abū Qurrah’s Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105 (1985): 62-65.

⁴² Ferré, “Chrétien,” 104.

the situation changed. Now, along with the stabilization of Islamic society and religion after a century of expansion and internal turmoil, specific policies encouraging the use of Arabic and privileges granted to Muslims were put into place. An important contributor to the success of the 'Abbāsīd rise to power was the promise of the new regime to assimilate all of the populations under the control of the Islamic caliph into full participation in political and religious life.⁴³ In contrast to the previous practice of reserving high positions only for those who could trace their lineage back to the earliest Arab followers of Muḥammad, the 'Abbāsīd caliphs began to open society to Arabs and non-Arabs alike, extending the benefits to adherents of Judaism, Christianity, and Persian religions who converted to Islam.⁴⁴ This stepped up an effort to encourage conversion already begun by the Umayyad caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (99-101/717-720) a few decades earlier.⁴⁵ The consequence of his program was a slow but steady rise in the numbers of those turning to the new religion. Under the new 'Abbāsīd regime the tide swelled as more and more indigenous peoples began to be drawn to the advantages of conversion through the convincing arguments put forth by Muslim theologians in favor of Islam.⁴⁶

Simultaneously, *ḍimmī* status became less and less tolerable as limitations increased. In return for paying the *ḡiḏyah*, non-Muslims were accorded freedom to maintain their own religious beliefs, exemption from military service and from the *zakāt*, as well as the right to be judged according to their own religious law.⁴⁷ By the middle of the eighth century, however, these benefits were being diminished progressively by restrictions on public displays of religion, limitations on property ownership, and the requirement of distinctive signs and dress for all non-Muslims.⁴⁸ This situation continued throughout the

⁴³ Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, I/280-284, 303-305.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I/247-254, 274-276; Arthur Stanley Tritton, *The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of 'Umar*. (London, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1930), 18-23.

⁴⁵ See Shaban, *Abbasid Revolution*, 168 and H.A.R. Gibb, "The Fiscal Rescript of 'Umar II," *Arabica* 2 (1955): 2-3.

⁴⁶ Shaban, *Abbasid Revolution*.

⁴⁷ Showkat Hussain, "Status of Non-Muslims in Islamic State," *Hamdard Islamicus* 16 (1993): 67-70.

⁴⁸ For Christians this included prohibitions against ringing church bells, wearing or displaying crosses, public processions, repairing or building new churches, etc. Ferré, "Chrétien," 98-103.

first decades of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate until Harūn ar-Rašīd (170-193/786-809). At this point, evidence in Islamic historical records shows that the increasing strictures placed upon the *ḍimmī* were justified with an appeal to earlier practices, which were then further defined and expanded.

The pretext for curtailing the rights of the *ḍimmī* was the so-called “Covenant of ‘Umar”.⁴⁹ This text, which exists in several forms, presents itself as a contract between the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb (13-23/634-644) and Christians in conquered cities. Essentially it is a rather long and explicit list of regulations covering a host of public and private actions, as well as guidelines governing relations to Muslims to be followed by the *ḍimmī* in return for their protected status. Oddly enough, the Covenant is written in the first person plural by Christians in some copies, and by Muslims in others. It would be strange, however, if Christians had imposed the multitude of restrictions contained in the Covenant on themselves. Further, there are no known treaties made with conquered cities that bear any resemblance to the Covenant.

Instead, it is likely that the Covenant of ‘Umar first made its appearance in its present forms as much as a century later. Tritton suggests that it was developed by the emerging legal schools as a format for treaties. This can be seen in the extensive example of the Covenant found in the *Kitāb al-Umm* written by the jurist aš-Šāfi‘ī at the beginning of the ninth century.⁵⁰ The stimulus to spell out the implications of the *Qur’ānic* verses related to the *ḍimmī* probably came during the reign of the second ‘Umar, who was more interested than his predecessors in the creation of an Islamic state. Because it was obvious to the writers of the Covenant that these restrictions were implicit in the *Qur’ānic* prescriptions, they believed that the attribution of the initial formulation to ‘Umar I was logical. Nonetheless, subsequent application of the regulations of the Covenant was irregular and appears to have been entirely dependent on the sensibilities of the local authority. In some places Muslims complained of the influence and wealth of the *ḍimmī*, while in others genuine persecution of them occurred.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The most extensive study of the Covenant of ‘Umar available remains that of Tritton, *Caliphs*, especially pp. 5-17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-16.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 229-233.

In the period between Harūn ar-Rašīd and al-Mutawakkil (232-247/847-861), exactly the time during which Abū Rā'īṭah is writing, relations between Muslims and Christians had become decidedly strained, and Christian chroniclers such as Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē began to identify their situation as one of religious persecution.⁵² Now the policy of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs to promote conversion to Islam through the promise of full participation in political and cultural life, coupled with the added incentive of relief from the *ḡīzyah*, and religious and social restrictions, made it increasingly attractive for non-Muslims to abandon their ancestral religions. It is within this context that sophisticated Christian apologetics directed against Islam develops.

Arabic: The New Lingua Franca

Along with strategies of taxation and limitations imposed on non-Muslims, the 'Abbāsīds adopted the Arabic language for official government transactions and everyday speech. Previously, conquered peoples had continued to conduct business in Greek, Persian and Syriac, and local languages and dialects remained in use. In fact, numerous government officials had remained in their posts after having been defeated by Arab armies precisely because they could negotiate the language. Often an Arab governor or administrator who was not literate in any official language of commerce was appointed to oversee the affairs of an area that had surrendered, leaving him simply to rely on the infrastructure already present. Evidence of the resulting bilingual commercial and social transactions is ubiquitous throughout the seventh and eight centuries.⁵³ Only with the caliph al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik (86-96/705-715) did all official records begin to be kept in Arabic.⁵⁴ This now made bureaucratic positions available to those who did not speak the local language, including former soldiers and their family members. The trend was intensified

⁵² Ferré, "Chrétien," 104-105.

⁵³ Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, I/206-207; Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 23-24.

⁵⁴ *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, Jean-Baptiste Chabot, ed. and trans. Syriac text and Latin trans. CSCO, A. Abouna, French trans., (T. 15, series tertia) (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1916-1920, 1937; Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1974), 81/298-299, 109/232-233.

by the 'Abbāsīd intention to unify the empire into a single homogeneous community which necessitated a common language. Just as converts to Islam began to be rewarded with official positions, Arabic gained a privileged place and soon replaced all other languages for bureaucratic, as well as everyday matters.⁵⁵

After the 'Abbāsīd dynasty took up the reins of power and subsequently moved the capital of the Islamic empire from Damascus to the newly founded city of Baghdad in 762, the Arabic language began to take hold as the *lingua franca* of predominantly Syriac-speaking peoples. The Arabic that became the official language of the Islamic empire was, of course, that based on the *Qur'ān*. Muslims believed that the language in which the holy book had been revealed, the *quraiṣī* dialect spoken by Muḥammad, was sacred. This made it the object of serious study for theologians even before it became a developed literary language.⁵⁶ Among the other scholarly disciplines which gained importance under the 'Abbāsīd caliphs was the intensive effort to classify the vocabulary and grammar of Arabic, providing the basis from which it grew to rival Greek, Latin, Syriac and Persian in the Mediterranean world.⁵⁷ Yet, although Arabic developed dramatically as a language of literature and commerce, it retained its character as a sacred language heavily laden with *Qur'ānic* presuppositions and definitions.

This state of affairs is reflected in the growth of Christian Arabic literature in the first 'Abbāsīd century. Initially, Christian writers had responded to the challenge of Islamic missionizing attempts on their community with treatises primarily in the scholarly languages of Greek and Syriac. As Arabic became more widespread and these languages began to be accessible only to a few of the learned, Christian apologists were obliged to turn to composition in the new language in addition to traditional ones. Consequently, between 750 and 850, along with the Bible, many Christian classics and liturgical texts were translated into Arabic.⁵⁸ A second change can be detected

⁵⁵ Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, I/235-236, 449.

⁵⁶ Scattered inscriptions and poetry passed on orally constitute the limited pre-*Qur'ānic* literary body of Arabic. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, I/151-153.

⁵⁷ The initial lexicographers and grammarians were non-Arabs who had learned Arabic and were interested in understanding it better. Sibawayh of Baṣra (d. 177/793) was the first of these and is credited with producing the standard book of grammar used by later generations. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, I/296-297.

⁵⁸ Griffith, "Abū Rā'itah," 162.

in the intended audience of the texts. Previous to the middle of the eighth century, Christian polemic against Islam was generally directed inwardly in an attempt to ward off conversions.⁵⁹ Such treatises could be written in languages understood only by Christians.⁶⁰ The first centuries of the 'Abbāsid period, however, witnessed a shift to Arabic as Christian writers were obliged to change their focus from internal defenses of the faith against Islam to more direct external apologetics defending their beliefs from Muslim criticism.

The Christian community was at this time apparently without an "official" translation of the scriptures in Arabic. To date, all evidence points to the first appearance of efforts to translate more than scattered passages sometime in the beginning of the ninth century.⁶¹ Abū

⁵⁹ The end of the seventh century also saw an increase in Syriac apocalypses. These were apparently intended to promote the idea of a future unified Christian empire brought into being after a final holy war in which armies led by the Byzantine emperor would vanquish the Arabs. Since the monophysite churches were especially suspicious that Byzantine efforts were designed to bring them into the Chalcedonian fold, the emperor was portrayed as a figure similar to Constantine and Jovian who would liberate Christians from pagan rule and restore the Christian kingdom in the hopes of preventing conversions to Islam (Reinink, "Syriac Apologetic Literature," 183-184).

⁶⁰ This is the case with nearly all Syriac apologetic literature of this period. An important example for our purposes here is letter recording a discussion between the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch Yoḥannan Sedrā (631-648) and a Muslim official named 'Amr, probably 'Umayr ibn Sa'd al-Anṣarī, that took place in 639. Although there is some dispute about the historical authenticity of the occasion, the intention of the author is clearly to establish Islam as a recent manifestation of Old Testament religion and Mosaic law which does not supersede Christianity. Written in Syriac, it displays an awareness of Islamic claims to be a new religion and shows special concern for the opportunity that the weakness of divisions among Christians provide in the face of Muslim proselytism. Based on this overall theme, the text in its current form can be dated around the beginning of the eighth century. (Reinink, "Syriac Apologetic Literature," 176-182; Griffith, "The Prophet Muhammad," 99-100 and "Disputes," 253-257. A French translation of the text can be found in François Nau, "Un colloque du patriarche Jean avec l'émir des Agaréens et faits divers des années 712 à 715 d'après le ms. du British Museum *Add.* 17193. Avec un appendice sur le patriarche Jean I^{er} sur un colloque d'un patriarche avec le chef des mages et sur un diplôme qui aurait été donné par Omar à l'évêque du Tour 'Abdin," *Journal Asiatique* 11/5 (1915): 225-279. A German translation has been prepared by Harald Suermann in "Orientalische Christen und der Islam. Christliche Texte aus der Zeit von 632-750," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 67 (1983): 122-128).

⁶¹ Some scholars have suggestion that translations were made much earlier; however, no concrete evidence to support this has come to light. Griffith, "Gospel," 128; Arthur Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament: Manuscript Studies*, Papers

Rā'īṭah's own Jacobite community does not seem to have possessed liturgical or scriptural texts in Arabic, and the presence of citations in his writings appears to be based on his own translation.⁶² The *Qur'ān* itself suggests it was the lack of initiative on the part of Christians to make the Gospel accessible to Arabic-speakers that was a factor in God's initiation of revelations to Muḥammad. Numerous passages assert that Christians and Jews were concealing all that was present in the scriptures through various means of deception (*Sura* 2:42, 140, 146, 159, 174; 3:71, 187). This is accompanied with an emphasis on the *Qur'ān* as an Arabic revelation (*Sura* 12:2; 12:37; 41:44; 42:7) which could be understood by everyone. The implication seems to be that the scriptures were in a language that was not accessible to the arabophone community, and that there was little interest on the part of Christians to make them available for purposes of evangelization. Now, two centuries later, the tables had been turned and Christians were the object of missionary efforts on the part of Muslims. Regulations laid down by the Islamic rulers forbade Christian evangelization and laws based in the *Qur'ān* made conversion away from Islam apostasy punishable by death. At the same time, Arabic spread as the *lingua franca* of the empire.

The transition from Syriac to Arabic is evident already within fifty years of the 'Abbāsīd rise to power. One of the most important Syriac apologies for Christianity that appeared roughly contemporary with Abū Rā'īṭah's Arabic treatises is that of the Nestorian Catholicos Timothy I (727-823). In this letter, Timothy recounts his responses to the Caliph al-Mahdī (158-169/775-785) who had asked him about the teachings of Christianity.⁶³ Although it was originally composed in Syriac, the letter is more widely known in its Arabic version,⁶⁴

of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile 6 (Stockholm: [Estonian Theological Society in Exile], 1954), 271-277.

⁶² See the arguments made below in *Witnesses*.

⁶³ Thomas Richard Hurst, "The Syriac Letters of Timothy I (727-823): A Study in Christian-Muslim Controversy," unpublished Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1985.

⁶⁴ This letter is extant in both a longer and a shorter account. The longer Syriac version is available in A. Mingana, "Timothy's Apology for Christianity," vol. 2, in *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic, and Garshūni*, ed. and trans. (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Limited, 1928), 1-162, the shorter version is found in A. Van Roey, "Une apologie syriaque attribuée à Élie de Nisibe," *Le Muséon* 59 (1946): 381-397. For Arabic versions see Hans Putman, *L'église et l'islam sous*

suggesting that an Arabic recension was more accessible and hence more useful. There is no evidence that Abū Rā'īṭah himself wrote in anything other than Arabic, even though it is likely that the generation preceding him was Syriac-speaking, and it is clear that he assumed Arabic was the language best understood by his Christian readers.

While the Syriac apologetic tradition did not die out completely, as is evidenced by the later Syriac treatises authored by, among others, Abū Rā'īṭah's younger colleague, Nonnus of Nisibis,⁶⁵ Arabic was to become the primary vehicle for the defense of Christianity in the Muslim-dominated lands of the east. By the beginning of the ninth century, each of the three major Christian denominations which found itself existing in Arab-dominated lands had produced an important apologist in Arabic: the Nestorian 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (c. 800-850), the Melkite Bishop of Ḥarrān, Theodore Abū Qurrah (fl. 785-829), and the Jacobite Abū Rā'īṭah.⁶⁶ After these three, Christian Arabic apologetic soon eclipsed the number of similar treatises appearing in Syriac.

The shift to Arabic forced Christian apologists to contend with the difficulties it presented as a language. Whereas John of Damascus had composed his summary of Christian doctrine and the "heresy" of Islam in the first half of the eighth century in Greek, a language which had been fully mastered by the Christian community,⁶⁷ later writers were confronted with the problem of translating complex ideas and doctrines into an idiom that explicitly precluded their basic premises, and in the beginning, had not yet acquired the vocabulary necessary for such an enterprise. The problem was thrown into

Timothée I (Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq, 1975); Robert Caspar, "Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le Catholicos Timothée I et le Calife al-Mahdi (II^e/VIII^e siècle), 'Mohammed a suivi la voie des prophètes'," *Islamochristiana* 3 (1977): 107-175.

⁶⁵ This text has been edited and translated in Van Roey, *Nonnus*.

⁶⁶ For a brief survey of each of these authors and published editions of their writings, see Griffith, "The Prophet Muhammad," 101-104.

⁶⁷ The same can be said of Syriac, Aramaic, Coptic, Armenian, and Georgian, all of which were used by Christians to formulate anti-Islamic polemic directed at their specific communities. See, for example, Reinink, "Syriac Apologetic Literature"; Griffith, "Disputes," "From Aramaic to Arabic: The Languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997): 11-31, "Greek into Arabic: Life and Letters in the Monasteries of Palestine in the Ninth Century; the Example of the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*," *Byzantion* 56 (1986): 117-138.

relief when Christians tried to articulate ideas in terminology already dominated by *Qur'ānic* images.⁶⁸ For example, the notion of *tawḥīd* (monotheistic belief) had essentially been defined by the *Qur'ān* to exclude multiplicity in God, as contrasted to *ṣirk* (associating others with God). This made it difficult for Christians to explain and defend the doctrine of the Trinity in Arabic as consistent with monotheism without being accused of polytheism, and consequently idolatry.⁶⁹ As a result, Christian apologists of the first 'Abbāsīd century were required to use imagination and skill in presenting traditional Christian teaching as consistent and credible.

Arabic Christian Apology and Theological Debate

The Arabic apologetical treatise has its roots in the well-developed Syriac apologetical tradition. Most of the subjects that emerged later in Arabic polemic are found defined already in Syriac literature.⁷⁰ Eventually, a standard repertoire of topics and arguments was developed which appears in the works of numerous known and anonymous writers taking up the pen in defense of their own faith. The issues were generally formulated and organized in a treatise by the apologist to serve two objectives. First, it was intended to provide Christians with a sort of handbook of ready responses to be given to the questions posed by Muslims about their religion. A second and equally important aim was to encourage wavering Christians and sustain their faith in the face of Muslim missionary efforts. Often the authors were compelled to emphasize and defend the credibility of Christian claims concerning the Trinity, Incarnation, and certain practices for Christians themselves, since the Muslim argument that they were absurd and contradictory was beginning to sow doubt within the Christian community.⁷¹

Georg Graf has identified two levels of debate behind these apolo-

⁶⁸ Griffith, "Muslims and Church Councils," 272-273.

⁶⁹ Hawting, "*Ṣirk*," 120-123.

⁷⁰ These include the above-mentioned Trinity, Incarnation, integrity of the Christian scriptures, free-will, sacraments, and numerous Christian practices, such as veneration of the cross, marriage customs, etc. Griffith, "Disputes," 254-255.

⁷¹ Sidney H. Griffith, "Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians," *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 4 (1979): 63-64. Abū Rā'īṭah, whose letters are addressed almost exclusively to Christians asking advice on how to answer these criticisms, takes great pains to demonstrate the consistency of the Christian faith.

getical writings: first, scholarly polemic that took place between the intellectuals of the Muslim and Christian communities intent on laying out the issues in complex theological and philosophical categories, and second, popular polemic that extended to a wider range of participants, and was aimed at expressing teachings in a more simplistic form.⁷² These two types of polemic are indicative of the extent to which discussion on religion had spread; not just scholars but also common folk were pressed into defending their beliefs and urged to consider conversion to Islam. Such engagement is encouraged by the *Qurʾān* within the limits of fairness: “Do not dispute with the People of the Book except in a courteous manner, unless it is with those who do evil. Say: ‘We believe in [the revelation] which has been sent down to us and sent down to you; Our God and your God is One, and we submit to Him’” (*Sura* 29:46).

Scholarly polemical debate between Christians and Muslims appears to have evolved into a somewhat fixed form parallel to *munāzara* found in theology in Islamic intellectual circles. The origin of the *munāzara*, or disputation, is connected to the development of *ʿilm al-kalām*, the “science of speech”. The latter is closely related to the form of διάλεξις / διαλέγεσθαι employed by some church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, and, while it is not simply a transference of the Greek or Christian form of debate into Islamic circles, the *munāzara* seems to have drawn its inspiration from it.⁷³ These rhetorical tools continued to be used by Christians well into the Islamic period to lay out their positions and were probably known by Muslim scholars and adapted for their own use.⁷⁴

Although general parallels can be found between the rules of debate laid out in certain known Aristotelian texts, such as the *Sophistikoi Elenchoi* and *Topics* VIII, and Islamic *munāzarāt*, important differences

⁷² Georg Graf, “Christliche Polemik gegen den Islam.” *Gelbe Hefte* 2 (1926): 827.

⁷³ Josef Van Ess, “Disputationspraxis in der islamischen Theologie. Eine vorläufige Skizze,” *Revue des Études Islamiques* 44 (1976): 24. See also, Josef Van Ess, *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie: Zwei antiqadāritische Traktate aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Hīgra*, Beirut Texts u. Studien, Bd. 4 (Beirut: Orient-Institut; Wiesbaden: In Kommission bei F. Steiner, 1977).

⁷⁴ There are numerous examples of this, including John of Damascus, the *Didascalia* of James, Hieronymous of Jerusalem, etc. See Bernd Reiner Voss, *Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literatur*, *Studia et Testimonia Antiqua* IX (München: W. Fink, 1970).

exist between them. In the late antique period, rhetoric was highly valued as a constitutive part of a good education and disputation was considered to be a necessary exercise. However, for Islamic theology, the *munāzara* was seen as a means to arrive at the truth and not just a rhetorical exercise.⁷⁵ In debates between Muslims and Christians, the goal becomes the ability of one side to convince the opponent of the truth of his religion. The presumption is that when one enters into the debate, one is already in possession of the truth. Exploration and study of a particular question was expected to take place among like-minded scholars, apart from the constraints of a *munāzara*.⁷⁶

According to several historical accounts, it was understood that one was free to refuse to participate in a staged *munāzara*, especially if he was convinced that the opponent was someone who did not understand the topic to be debated.⁷⁷ For the one who lost the debate, there was a penalty. Although there are reports that losers were executed, there is little evidence that this actually occurred. Instead, the one who was judged to have been defeated was often fined, and failure to pay the fine could result in imprisonment. For non-Muslims who lost the debate, the expectation was conversion to Islam, but few seem to have done so. A number of *munāzarāt* were staged by Muslim officials, such as those at the court of the Caliph Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān (41-60/661-680), who brought together Christians and Jews more for the sake of information or the fine to be paid than for purposes of conversion.⁷⁸

This, however, seems to have changed by the ninth century as the drive to draw all people into the Islamic *umma* increased. Consequently, more Christians were being invited into conversations in which they were asked to defend their beliefs and encouraged to convert to Islam. This is suggested by the comments Abū Rā'īṭah makes to those confronted with the risks of participating in such

⁷⁵ Van Ess, "Disputationspraxis," 52-53, 55. Nonetheless, as a consequence of scepticism about the possibility of finding religious truth (*takāfu' al-adilla*) it remained for some a form of entertainment and an opportunity to show one's skill at rhetoric (Josef Van Ess, "Scepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," *Al-Abḥāt* 21 (1968): 1-18).

⁷⁶ Van Ess, "Disputationspraxis," 44.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 34. This was certainly the case among Muslim scholars, and Abū Rā'īṭah implies in *On the Trinity* 2, 5 that this was also the case for Christians.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

exchanges (*On the Trinity* 2). Christians appear to have been constantly aware of their precarious situation in entering into *munāẓarāt* and did not push the limits of the debate in defense of their faith. On the contrary, although difficult questions were asked, the discussion was kept cordial. For example, the conversation between the Nestorian Timothy I and the Caliph al-Mahdī does not end with the Catholicos “winning”, even though the account of it is written from the Christian point of view in Syriac. Few Muslims would have had access to this text, but apparently the Nestorians were unwilling to take the chance!⁷⁹

In most cases, the actual *munāẓarāt* are difficult to reconstruct because of the nature of the historical records. Certainly, it can be argued that debates actually took place among various Muslim intellectuals, as well as between Muslims and Christians and/or Jews. In any case, there is enough evidence to put their existence beyond doubt.⁸⁰ Some Muslim officials in particular, such as the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, are known to have been very interested in religious questions and staged debates for entertainment and their own edification.⁸¹ However, most accounts of *munāẓarāt* have obviously been redacted and the arguments softened by later editors. Sometimes people and places are not named clearly, making it difficult to determine to what extent or whether the events described actually occurred. Many accounts exist in several recensions in which different participants “win” the debate. Conclusions in which a person is able to triumph with a single well-phrased question or answer also raise the suspicion that the ideal is presented rather than the reality. These texts betray the desire of the author to record the event not exactly as it transpired, but as it should have occurred in his eyes, perhaps after

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁸⁰ It has been argued that existent texts claiming to be eyewitness accounts of debates were written much later as theological exercises and were simply effective literary forms for presenting apologetical arguments. However, the sheer number of Syriac and Arabic apologetical texts in this form which exist, as well as numerous outside references to such debates make it highly unlikely that they did not actually occur. In fact, their effectiveness as literary tools to some extent depends upon their plausibility (Sidney H. Griffith, “Reflections on the Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah,” *Parole de l'Orient* 18 (1993): 156-157).

⁸¹ Sidney H. Griffith, “Theodore Abū Qurrah, the Intellectual Profile of an Arab Christian Writer of the First Abbasid Century,” *The Dr. Irene Halmos Chair of Arabic Literature Annual Lecture* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1992), 24-25.

some thought and research. The goal of these texts is to set before the reader ready-made, succinct statements that offer the strongest position possible for use in future debates.⁸²

In many cases, the evidence that exists for a *munāzara* is not written in the form of a transcript, but instead as a theological tract that includes the objections and even explanations of the opponent(s).⁸³ While these tracts (often designated as a *risālah* or a *radd*) do not claim to reproduce *munāzarāt*, one detects behind them the underlying experience of actual participation by the authors in debate and their desire to formulate in a coherent form a sort of “handbook” for others who might also be engaged such activities.⁸⁴ These are the type of texts that one finds among the writings of Theodore Abū Qurrah and Abū Rā’iṭah.

Since one can identify numerous hints of Abū Rā’iṭah’s own participation in *munāzarāt* in his writings, especially in *Proof of the Christian Religion, On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation*, a brief sketch of the formal requirements for debate here is helpful for understanding the structure of the texts. The procedures for *munāzarāt* in Islamic thought can be traced back as early as the *mu’tazilī* Ḍirār ibn ‘Amr (c. 112-c. 184/ c. 730-c. 800) and were fully developed by the tenth century.⁸⁵ The basic ground rules included the prohibition of generally obnoxious behavior, such as shouting, interrupting the opponent, or trying to enlist the support of other listeners, although one was allowed to point out repetitions or errors on the part of the adversary for the benefit of onlookers. At the conclusion, the person who had invited the participants, usually a caliph or vizier, would decide who had “won” the debate and the competitors were obligated to accept his decision graciously.⁸⁶

Before the *munāzara* commenced, each person was to choose

⁸² Van Ess, “Disputationspraxis,” 27, 39.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 26, 29-30.

⁸⁴ One finds evidence of this in a multitude of writings by both Muslims, such as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (163-240/780-855), and Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq, and Christians, including Abū Qurrah, Timothy I, and of course, Abū Rā’iṭah.

⁸⁵ Ḍirār addressed this topic in a book called the *Kitāb Ādāb al-mutakallimūn* (“Methods of the Theologians”), written at the beginning of the ninth century. The later book of Ibn al-Rāwandī, *Kitāb Ādāb al-ḡadal* (“The Method of Discussion”) had a tremendous influence on later theologians, who passed it down and corrected it. Van Ess, “Disputationspraxis,” 30-34.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

whether he wished to be the questioner (السائل) or the respondent (المعلّل). The former was considered to be the position of advantage, and usually the weaker party was allowed to begin. The interrogator was not allowed to give an answer or explanation, only to pose the questions, and thus lead the debate in a direction favorable to his own position. The respondent was permitted to answer the questions either with an agreement that substantiated the claim or with a refutation; however, he was required to give a reply even if he believed the question was pointless. If the questioner was defeated by the answer of the respondent, he was not allowed to begin again, but forced into the position of answering the questions of the opponent until he could regain control of the debate.⁸⁷

In view of these rules, the best strategy for the questioner was to force the opponent into precision and dominate the direction of the debate so that certain answers were given. The questioner could then show that all of the possibilities had not been considered by his opponent. Nonetheless, it was very important that it did not appear that he was stalling for time. By contrast, the respondent had to be careful that he had fully understood the question and weighed all of the possibilities before giving his answer so as to lead the debate in his own direction by anticipating the ensuing questions. A successful respondent was one who could quickly move into the dominant position by skillfully gaining control.⁸⁸

Formal *munāzarāt* was often structured according to the requirements for a proof (برهان). First the questioner asked for a description of the proof. This necessitated the respondent to lay out the evidence or cause (علّة) for the proof, and then general validity of it (طرد العلة). It is in the third step that the respondent put forth his most important arguments. In many cases one or more analogies were used to show the general validity of the proof offered.⁸⁹ At this stage the respondent had to be aware of the types of arguments his questioner and listeners would accept. There were many among the Muslim theologians and jurists who did not accept analogy (قياس)

⁸⁷ Ibid., 36-38. At *munāzarāt* between Muslims and non-Muslims the role of questioner was rarely given to the latter. While maintaining the required level of courtesy, usually the Muslim took the role of “missionary”, often enquiring at the outset why the opponent remained a Christian or a Jew.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 42.

or consensus (اجماع) as legitimate evidence, and between Muslims and Christians the problem of *tahrīf* (falsification of the scriptures) inhibited the use of scriptural proof-texts, *ahādīth*, or any ecclesial documents. The respondent was consequently required to find a common foundation or principle on which to base his argument that would be acceptable to his opponent. Many, most notably the *Mu'tazilah*, found a solution in rationalism. Christians were quick to pick up this approach and respondents such as Abū Rā'īṭah used a combination of reason and commonly accepted scriptural arguments to make their point.⁹⁰

According to Muslim logicians, there were two types of questions which a questioner could pose: the *mas'alah tafwīḍ* (مسألة تفويض) and the *mas'alah ḥaḡr* (مسألة حصر). The first of these is a question open to the respondent and allows all possibilities, e.g., "what is a human being?" The second, which was used extensively by theologians, provided the options and the respondent was forced to choose one, e.g., "is A considered to be X or Y?" This latter form of questioning can be traced to Aristotle's *Topics* VIII.2. It was customary to begin a *munāzara* with a *mas'alah ḥaḡr* because it quickly exposed the opponent and revealed the extent of his knowledge. His success in the debate depended upon whether he recognized the full implications of the choices he had been given and how he chose to handle them.⁹¹

Within either of these two lines of investigation the questioner typically proceeded by compelling his respondent to ever more precise distinctions. For example, if the respondent chose an undesirable option when presented with a *mas'alah ḥaḡr*, the questioner could proceed by saying, "if you say X, then there are only two possibilities, A and B. A leads to C, B leads to D, and both are unacceptable. Thus, Y is the only solution." Two kinds of distinctions were recognized in debate, *taqsīm* (تقسيم), those differentiations made in the subject at hand and *tafīrīq* (تفريق), differentiations made between the meanings of a single word.⁹² *Taqsīm* allowed the questioner to pursue distinctions within a single topic, such as those between different grammatical

⁹⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁹¹ Ibid., 40-41. Van Ess maintains that theologians did not recognize the two categories of questions until later, although one finds both types in the writings of Abū Rā'īṭah.

⁹² Ibid., 27; 40, n.8.

categories, e.g., is a term being used as an adjective or as a noun? *Tafīrīq*, on the other hand, emphasized the different meaning of a single term, e.g., in what way is the opponent using the word “one”? Both of these types of distinctions can be identified in Abū Rā’īṭah’s writings, but are especially clear in *On the Trinity*. Using *taqsīm*, he asks his opponent whether the divine attributes are “single, absolute names” or “predicative names”, followed by an explanation and the implications of each (§11). The foundation of his apology, however, is based on *tafīrīq*, forcing a definition of the meaning of the term “one” according to Greek philosophical categories (§§8-10).

In nearly all of his extant letters, Abū Rā’īṭah follows the standard pattern of question and answer common in the writings of his contemporaries. He begins each topic with the statement or question of the opponent, either in the singular or plural: “now, if they say, . . . then it should be said” (فان قالوا . . . يقال لهم ان). A similar style is found frequently in the Fathers and is probably the model for later Christian writers: εἰ δέ φάτε . . . φάμεν ὅτι / ἔάν ἔρηται . . . ἀποκρινόμεθα. This form is not a direct dialog following a pattern of A–B–A–B, but rather a series of hypothetical questions or objections and responses.⁹³

In his own treatises, Abū Rā’īṭah lays out the series of questions in such a way as to pursue as many of the possible objections of the questioner as possible. In nearly every case, he assumes that his Christian reader will participate in the position of the respondent, and almost never the questioner.⁹⁴ This, of course, gives his Christian reader the tools necessary to try and gain control over the potential debate and show the validity of the Jacobite view. As a form of apologetic primarily intended to instruct other Christians, it leads the reader to see the strength of Christian teaching in the face of difficult and convincing questions, and to assist Christian intellectuals in adopting the developing *munāzara* structure and using it to their own advantage when they were called upon to defend their faith.

⁹³ Ibid., 25.

⁹⁴ In *On the Trinity*, for example, Abū Rā’īṭah begins with the challenge posed by Muslims for Christians to defend their faith. He gives them the option to choose their position in the debate, but then proceeds to raise questions that they are to answer (§7). However, in the remainder of the text he provides the questions that a Muslim questioner would ask, and the most effective answers and objections to them.

In summary, it is clear the Christian community at the turn of the ninth century living under Islamic rule was confronted with a new situation that necessitated a creative response. Faced with the rising number of Christian converts to Islam as a consequence of Islamization in conjunction with an increase in the *ḡizyah* and restrictions on the *ḍimmī*, Christian theologians sought to ameliorate the circumstances through writings designed to give answers to common theological questions posed by Muslims that at the same time encouraged Christians in their faith. Because this occurred during the rapid supplanting of local languages by Arabic, those addressing the situation were obliged to formulate their thoughts and responses in a new medium initially not well-suited to accommodate Christian ideas. Further, with the Islamic rejection of Christian scripture as a starting point, writers such as Abū Rāʾīṭah and Theodore Abū Qurrah began to produce treatises designed to aid Christians in scholarly as well as everyday debate with Muslims using reason as a common basis for argumentation. Consequently, in this period doctrinal apologetic between Muslims and Christians begins to flower, revealing a keen interest on behalf of the writers in each community in the beliefs of his opponent and the desire to articulate his own faith in a new milieu.

Abū Rāʾīṭah al-Takrīṭī, the Jacobite (c. 775-c. 835)

It is within this rapidly changing environment that Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rāʾīṭah al-Takrīṭī makes his appearance. Although he is among the first Christians to write in Arabic whose name is known, very little can be said to date about his person. Traditionally, Abū Rāʾīṭah has been recognized as a bishop of the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox church, and his writings are preserved in collections of the Monophysite community, particularly those of the Coptic church. However, it is unlikely that he was a bishop, and the references to him as a member of the hierarchy of the Syrian Orthodox church in Nisibis are certainly incorrect. Nonetheless, the information that is currently available about Abū Rāʾīṭah allows a certain degree of confidence in establishing the parameters of his life and its context.

Name

The primary source for information about Abū Rā'īṭah is his name, which is found in some form in nearly all of the headings given to his works in the various extant manuscripts.⁹⁵ The most complete version of his name is found in the manuscripts of *On the Trinity*, *Threefold Praise (II)*, and *Refutation*.⁹⁶ In these three, his title is given as “Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah, known as Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrītī the Jacobite” (حبيب بن خدمة المعروف بابي رائطة التكريتي اليعقوبي). The *kunya* (surname), Abū Rā'īṭah, is a relatively rare name. “Rā'īṭah” is known exclusively as a feminine name, and would not have been given as an honorific title. The most likely explanation is that Abū Rā'īṭah was a father of at least one daughter, but had no surviving sons. His *ism* (personal name) Ḥabīb is, of course, a common name among both Christians and Muslims, but the *nasab* (kinship name) ibn Ḥidmah is more problematic. The various manuscripts in which Abū Rā'īṭah's writings are found and references to him in outside sources give the voweled text as Ḥadīṭah, Ḥudayṭah or Ḥudaybah. This complication arises from the fact that in the early period the text was not pointed, leaving later scribes to add points as they understood it. Without the points, the name can appear as either حدمه or حدمه.⁹⁷ However, most modern scholars have followed the Coptic tradition and accepted Ḥidmah as the correct reading. A difficulty remains with this reading in that it means “service”, an unlikely name in any interpretation. To date, one can simply observe that it is an Arabic term, which would indicate his connection to an Arabic-speaking community; however, its unusual meaning casts doubt on its usefulness for determining his family origin.

Finally, the *nisbah* (place of origin) “al-Takrītī” is commonly given

⁹⁵ The exceptions are the manuscripts containing *Witnesses and Demonstration*.

⁹⁶ The texts of *Trinity* and *Threefold Praise II* are contained together in manuscript Par. ar. 169; all three are found in Bibl. P. Sbath 1001 and 1041.

⁹⁷ See the comments of Khalil Samir in “Création et incarnation chez Abū Rā'īṭah. Étude de vocabulaire,” in *Mélanges en hommage au professeur et au penseur libanais Farid Jabre*, Publications de l'Université Libanaise, Section des Études Philosophiques et Sociales, 20 (Beirut: Département des Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1989), 190, and “Liberté religieuse et propagation de la foi chez les théologiens arabes chrétiens du ix^e siècle et en Islam,” in *Witness of Faith in Life and Worship*, Tantur Yearbook, 1980-1981 (Tantur/Jerusalem: Ecumenical Institute for Theological Research, 1981), 99, n. 12. Samir has devoted some effort to solving this problem and has promised a full explanation of his findings in a future publication.

to Abū Rā'īṭah. The city of Takrīt, situated just a short distance outside of Baghdad, was an intellectual center of the Western Syriac community which reached its apex with Anthony the Rhetor (d. 845) and the Patriarch Cyriacus (793-817) during the period in which Abū Rā'īṭah was active.⁹⁸ At this time, Syriac was rapidly being replaced by Arabic as the *lingua franca* of the area. This was especially true of a city like Takrīt because of its close proximity to Baghdad. It is clear from his writings that Abū Rā'īṭah was fluent in what is now known as Middle Arabic,⁹⁹ but it is highly likely that he was born of Syriac-speaking parents and belongs to the transitional generation of those who were fluent in both Syriac and Arabic.¹⁰⁰ One notices certain tell-tale aspects of his writing such as his use of ʃ to signal an object, which is forbidden in Arabic, but required in Syriac. He also commonly employs ʔ as a translation for the Syriac *gheir*, itself being a rendering of the Greek γαρ.¹⁰¹ Both of these are indicative of Arabic-speakers living in the Syriac milieu.

⁹⁸ Samir, "Création," 189-190.

⁹⁹ The transition to Middle Arabic through Ancient Southern Palestinian (often called Christian Arabic) for Syriac- and other Aramaic-speakers resulted in a form of the language which reveals some noticeable deviations from Classical Arabic. Abū Rā'īṭah's writings exhibit a number of the characteristics associated with the adoption of Arabic by Christians, including the frequent use of ʃ as a negation, the predominance of subject-verb-object word order (more prevalent in Aramaic) instead of the usual verb-subject order found in Classical Arabic, and a haphazard use of ʔ and ʃ. These variations from Classical Arabic, among others, often give the reader of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings the impression of a carelessness and sometimes incomprehensibility not infrequently found among early Christian Arabic writers. For a full study of this transitional period see Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic I-III: Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millennium*, CSCO 267, 276, 279/subs. 27-29 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1966-1967): esp. 267, subs. 27/42-58.

¹⁰⁰ It is no accident that Abū Rā'īṭah chooses to write in Arabic and not in his native Syriac just at the turn of the ninth century. By this period, the 'Abbāsīd Arabization policy was well under way. Among the many aspects and effects of this strategy was the 'Abbāsīd caliphs' hope of unifying the various cultures under their control and providing a common medium for social participation and intellectual exchange. For a well-argued study on the transition to Arabic under the 'Abbāsīd's, see Gutas, *Greek Thought*, esp. his conclusions, 187-192.

¹⁰¹ See Salim Daccache, "Polémique, logique et élaboration théologique chez Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrītī," *Annales de Philosophie* 6 (1985): 38.

Date

Only two datable events are connected with Abū Rā'īṭah which allow any possibility of narrowing the outside dates of his life. The first is the occasion of his sending the Archdeacon Nonnus of Nisibis (c. 790-c. 870)¹⁰² to Armenia to represent him in a debate with Theodore Abū Qurrah. The request was made by the court of the Bagratid Armenian prince, the *iṣṣan* Abū 'l'Abbās Ašot ibn Simbāt (d. 826), nicknamed Msaker, “the meat-eater”, who ruled between 804 and 826.¹⁰³ Abū Qurrah had arrived in Armenia during his missionary journey throughout the Mediterranean in an effort to gain converts from among Monophysite Christians to the Diophysite teachings of Maximus the Confessor (d. 662).¹⁰⁴ At first he was successful and convinced the prince to adopt the faith as it had been expressed by the Council of Chalcedon (451). However, with the arrival of Nonnus, Ašot Msaker was persuaded to accept the Jacobite objections to Chalcedon and turned away from the Melkite teachings.

Two of Abū Rā'īṭah's extant writings, *On the Union* and *Threefold Praise (I)*, are explicitly addressed to the *iṣṣan* arguing against the position presented by Abū Qurrah. The first of these was meant to be a letter of introduction for Nonnus and a brief outline of the Jacobite doctrine. The second, which is much longer, is apparently a follow-up letter written to answer further objections which arose in the debate between Abū Qurrah and Nonnus.

In *On the Union*, Abū Rā'īṭah apologizes for having been unable to respond to the request of the prince, asking that Nonnus, whom he has instructed, be accepted as a replacement. He writes:

Your letter, O Excellency, finds me shackled, detained, and prevented from hastening to your command and coming to you. Without a doubt this hindrance upon me is from God—villainy all around restricts me, and I complain to God of my misfortune. Although I burn for release, I have found no one to aid me, so I have decided to send . . . the Deacon Ilyān [Nonnus], a relative of mine, to you. (*On the Union* 2)

¹⁰² For complete biographical information on Nonnus of Nisibis, see A. Van Roey, *Nonnus de Nisibe, Traité Apologétique, étude, texte et traduction*, Bibliothèque du Muséon, vol. 21 (Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon, 1948), esp. 3-60.

¹⁰³ *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Habīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rā'īṭah*, trans. Georg Graf, CSCO 130 (Arabic text) and 131 (German translation), *Scriptores Arabici* 14-15 (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1951), 131/ii. Graf gives the date of 824 for the end of Ašot's rule; however, there is no evidence that he did not reign until his death in 826.

¹⁰⁴ Griffith, “Reflections,” 146.

Some have suggested that Abū Rā'īṭah's excuse need not be taken literally, that he was simply otherwise occupied and did not wish to travel to Armenia.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, in the absence of corroborating evidence, caution should discourage one from taking this statement at face value. However, the extent of his complaint and comment that he has not been able to find anyone to assist him in his troubles do support a more literal reading. The nature of his predicament remains unclear though, and could be anything from a chronic illness to physical detainment, yet it should be noted that imprisonment is not an impossibility. Nonnus himself was later imprisoned along with the entire household of the Armenian royal family, and Abū Rā'īṭah alludes to this danger in two of his other letters.¹⁰⁶

Throughout his writings, Abū Rā'īṭah is careful never to make explicit references to either the current Muslim authorities or the consequences of their rule or to Islam. Therefore, if he had been confined, it is improbable that he would jeopardize an apparently already difficult position by mentioning those who have imprisoned him and the reasons why in this letter if it were connected to his activities as a Christian apologist. On the other hand, if his reference is to a metaphorical imprisonment, he may simply mean the state of Christians living under Arab domination, although it is difficult to see how this would inhibit him more than Nonnus or the *iṣṣan* himself. In any case, at this point one cannot place too much weight on these brief remarks concerning his decision not to travel to Armenia.

In contrast, the meeting between Nonnus of Nisibis and Abū Qurrah in Armenia is substantiated by several outside accounts. The Armenian chronicler Vardan (1198-1271) writes:

In those days a bishop, Epikuṛa by name, came to Ašot and tried to convert him [to the theology] of Chalcedon. When Buret, a certain *vardapet* in Mesopotamia, heard of this, he dispatched the deacon Nana, who came and disputed with Apikuṛa, defeating him by the power of the Holy Spirit. So the *iṣṣan* expelled him and was confirmed even more in the faith of Saint Gregory.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ See for example, Graf, 131/82, n. 3 and Van Roey, 19, n. 51.

¹⁰⁶ In *Proof* 2, 5 and the *Demonstration*, Abū Rā'īṭah argues that fear of the sword provides no proof for the truth of a religion, nor is it an acceptable reason to change one's beliefs. In both instances he uses the peacefulness of Christianity as evidence for its truth, and with the implication that his readers are aware of other religions, namely Islam, that do not fit this criterion.

¹⁰⁷ Robert W. Thompson, *The Historical Compilation of Vardan Arevel'ci*, Dumbarton

The references to “Buret” (Բուրետ) and “Epikoūra/Apikoūra” (Եպիկուրայ) are certainly corruptions of the Arabic names Abū Rā’īṭah and Abū Qurrah respectively. Louis Mariès has made the argument that the use of the genitive in the transliteration of Abū Qurrah indicates that Vardan employed an Arabic source for his chronicle here, plausibly an account of the discussion between Nonnus and Abū Qurrah itself.¹⁰⁸

Vardan places this event as having occurred “in those days” between two known dates, that of the death of the Emperor Leo V in 820, and the death of the *išxan* Ašot Msaker in 826. However, his placement of the account does not necessarily indicate an historical sequence of events. Vardan often uses such structures as literary devices in his chronicle, rather than as indicators of chronology.¹⁰⁹ Another chronicler, Mxithar of Ayrivankh (fl. 13th c.), puts the encounter between 801 and 821.¹¹⁰ It is, nevertheless, possible that he has used Vardan as a source, repeating what he had before him with a different emphasis on the course of events.¹¹¹ A Georgian

Oaks Papers 43 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1989), 183. For the Armenian text, see J. Muyltermans, *La domination arabe en Arménie. Extrait de l’Histoire Universelle de Vardan* (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner; Louvain: Imprimerie J.B. Ista, 1927), 60/9-14, Fr. trans. 115. Յաւուրսն յայնոսիկ զայր Եպիկուրայ մի Եպիկուրայ անուն առ Աշոտ , և ջամայր դարձուցանել զնա . . . Քաղկեդոնի . զոր լուեալ Բուրետ ոմն վարդապետ ի Միջագետս , առաքել զասրկաւագին Նաննա , որոյ կէեալ մարտնչի ընդ Ապիկուրայ , և յարթէ նմա զօրութեամբ . . . և հպածէ զնա իշխանն , և հաստատի եւ առաւել ի հաւատս սրբոյն Գրիգորի : The Vardapet Vardan’s *Historical Compilation* is a history of Armenia from creation to the year 1267.

¹⁰⁸ Louis Mariès; “Epikoūra = Aboukara,” *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 1 (1920-1921): 439-441. Thomson has noted that Vardan’s primary source for the ninth century was the history of Armenia by John Catholicos (r. 897-925). John identifies his own source for details concerning the origin of the Bagratid kings and events that are not found elsewhere as the writings of Šapuh Bagratuni (d. after 899). Šapuh’s works are now lost, but from the coincidence of their lives, it is not improbable that John knew him personally. See Robert W. Thomson, “Vardan’s *Historical Compilation* and Its Sources”, *Le Muséon* 100 (1987): 350. Nonnus was imprisoned with the royal family when Šapuh was a young man, and it is probable that they were acquainted, making Nonnus the ultimate source for the Arabic.

¹⁰⁹ Van Roey, *Nonnus*, 10-11.

¹¹⁰ Marie-Félicité Brosset, *Histoire chronologique par Mkhithar d’Ayrivank*, Mémoires de l’Académie impériale des sciences de St. Petersburg, 7^e série, t. 13, fasc. 5 (St.-Petersburg: Acad. Imp., 1869), 83. The relevant passage is: “Epicoūra (Եպիկուրայ) s’efforce d’amener Achot (Աշոտ) à la foi de Chalcedoine, mais le vartabeid Bouret (Բուրետ) envoie son diacre Nana (Նաննա), qui triomphe d’Epicoūra et explique l’Évangile de S. Jean.” As quoted in Van Roey, *Nonnus*, 11.

¹¹¹ N. Akinian, *Theodor Abu-Qara and Nana (Nonnos) der Syrer in Armenien und die*

chronicle paints a different picture of the meeting between Abū Qurrah and an unnamed “Armenian” who is doubtless Nonnus of Nisibis. Written from the Chalcedonian point of view, Abū Qurrah is portrayed as the victor in the debate.¹¹² Nonetheless, although the details of these accounts vary, all three substantiate the event itself. Further, the inclusion in the Armenian accounts of a reference to Abū Rā’iṭah provide an added witness to his own part in the encounter between Nonnus and Abū Qurrah.

The *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian, Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch (1166-1199), reports that in 1125 (813/814), Abū Qurrah had traveled to Alexandria and Armenia on a missionary journey to spread the teachings of Maximus the Confessor. In response to this threat, Nonnus was sent to Armenia during the reign of Patriarch Cyriacus (793-817) to engage in debate with him.¹¹³ If this is true, then Nonnus probably arrived there sometime between 815 and 817, somewhat earlier than Vardan’s account suggests. Van Roey argues that the earlier date is most likely correct, since the source of Michael’s *Chronicle* here is the history of the Patriarch Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē (r. 818-845),¹¹⁴ who would have been unlikely to attribute such an initiative to his predecessor had it not been true. Instead, the date of 813/814 given by Michael probably reflects the date that Abū Qurrah began his missionary journey.¹¹⁵ In any case, the incident itself has not been contested, and is supported by numerous other sources (including Abū Rā’iṭah’s own writings), making it fairly certain that the appearance of Nonnus in Armenia, at the suggestion of Abū Rā’iṭah, can be dated sometime between 815 and 820.

The second incident, which can be dated precisely, is Abū Rā’iṭah’s

armenische Uebersetzung des Kommentars zum Johannes-Evangelium von Nana, in: *Handes Amsorya* 36 (1922): col. 199

¹¹² See N. Marr. Арк’авнь, монгольское назваіе крїстіань, въ связи съ вопросомъ объ армянахъ—“Ark’aun, The Mongol Domination of the Christians and the Question of the Chalcedonian Armenians,” (Russian) *Bizantiskii Vremennik*, t. 12 (1905): 1-68. As cited by Van Roey, *Nonnus*, 16.

¹¹³ *Chronique*, III/32-34, IV/496.

¹¹⁴ Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē, Patriarch of Antioch, is most well-known for his chronicle, which is now lost. It was an important source for the chronicles of both Michael the Syrian and Gregory Abū ’l-Farağ (Bar Hebraeus). Sidney H. Griffith, “Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē”, *ODB*: 1/628-629.

¹¹⁵ Van Roey, 14-15. Van Roey is suspicious of the report, however, since he believes that it was not Patriarch Cyriacus, but the “Bishop” Abū Rā’iṭah who sent Nonnus.

involvement in the deposition of a bishop of Nisibis. In the earliest direct reference to Abū Rāʾīṭah known to date, Michael the Syrian writes in his *Chronicle* that Philoxenus of Nisibis was removed from his see in 827/828 on the basis of accusations made by Abū Rāʾīṭah and Nonnus of Nisibis. The passage states that:

In that year, a synod of forty bishops convened to meet with the Patriarch [of Antioch] Mār Dionysius [of Tell Maḥrē at the monastery] of Asphoulos, near Reṣʿayna, on account of Philoxenus of Nisibis, whom he had removed from his episcopal see. The ones who brought the accusations against him were his Archdeacon Nonnus of Nisibis and Abū Rāʾīṭah of Tagrīt, [both] scholars and philosophers. When [Philoxenus] was summoned [before] the synod, he did not come, and without giving leave he returned to Nisibis. At that time the synod declared Abiram and Philoxenus anathema, and the two of them became associates.¹¹⁶

Based on Michael's record of the event, it can be assumed that Abū Rāʾīṭah and Nonnus were at this time in close contact, and that Nonnus had returned from Armenia. Michael includes a letter written by Mār Dionysius which notes that the bishops had delayed making a decision for six years,¹¹⁷ bringing the accusations back as early as

¹¹⁶ *Chronique*, III/50, IV/507.

¹¹⁷ It seems that Abiram was wearing the pallium and laying claim to the patriarchal seat. Apparently he had also accused several bishops of heresy and even denounced Cyriacus. He and his brother, Simeon, and a third excommunicated monk (probably Philoxenus) appealed to the Muslim governor, ʿAbdullah b. Tāhīr, for a commission and to be given authority. As evidence for his legitimacy, he produced a commission from ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib which had been given under the authority of al-Maʾmūn. After at least two audiences with the governor, Dionysius was recognized as the legitimate patriarch of Antioch (*Chronicon*, 82/264-265, 354/198-199). While the bishops had the right of electing their own heads, the final approval remained with the government. Without a commission from the Muslim authorities, a church leader and his followers would have been considered heretics and not received *ḍimmī* status (Tritton, *Caliphs*, 80-84). The letter written by Mār Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē, which does not mention Abū Rāʾīṭah, explains the consequences of the situation for the church more clearly. Dionysius includes the following in his report: "Because of the terrible accusations against him which were presented to us by the Archdeacon Nonnus, a virtuous and estimable man, we had forbidden Philoxenus of Nisibis from returning to Nisibis before having been judged. We delayed his examination for six years, in the hope that God would provide the solution and an outcome which pleased him, so that by this examination the Holy Church could avoid becoming the object of derision because of him. [But] as he did not cease to stir up trouble and cast division into the village, we convened forty bishops at Raš ʿAyna and pronounced his deposition." (*Chronique*, III/65, IV/517). This letter is also reproduced in the anonymous *Chronicon 1234*, where it is clearly stated that Nonnus was the archdeacon of Philoxenus (*Chronicon 1234*, *ibid.*).

822, during which time Nonnus must have been residing in Nisibis, or at least fully aware of the situation there. In any case, he appears to have left Armenia by the death of Ašot Msaker in 826.

Since the synod at Raš 'Ayna can be dated between 827 and 828, and no other evidence of Abū Rā'īṭah's later activity is available, it can be taken as the *terminus post quem* of his death. Assuming that he was not exceedingly old at the time of the synod, and allowing that he was older than his nephew Nonnus (c.790-c.870), it is not a stretch to place his dates between 770 and 835. This time period in fact encompasses that of his known contemporary, Theodore Abū Qurrah, who probably lived between 785 and 829.¹¹⁸

One might add here that these dates also increase the possibility that Abū Rā'īṭah was in personal contact with a known *Mu'tazilī*, Abū Ma'an Tūmāmah ibn al-Ašras an-Numaryī al-Bašrī, who died around 213/828. Samir has pointed out that the name "Tūmāmah" appears in the superscription of Sbath manuscript 1017 (15th century Egyptian) as the addressee of Abū Rā'īṭah's short defense of Christianity through the use of reason (*Demonstration*). As Samir correctly observes, although this is the sole manuscript in which the name is given,¹¹⁹ it is doubtful that a later Christian scribe would have added the name of an earlier (relatively obscure) Muslim scholar with such precision, since Tūmāmah ibn al-Ašras would have been known only to specialists. Further, the name is unusual, reducing the chance that it was added merely to give the text an addressee.¹²⁰ The fact that Abū Rā'īṭah was nearly an exact contemporary to Tūmāmah ibn al-Ašras adds weight to the veracity of the claim.

Ecclesiastical Status

The date range of 770-835 situates Abū Rā'īṭah's period of activity during the Patriarchs of Antioch Cyriacus (793-817) and Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē (818-845) and the Jacobite Maphriens Šarbil (793-798), Šam'un I (798-805), Šam'un II (805-815), Basilius of Balad I

¹¹⁸ See Griffith, "Theodore Abū Qurrah."

¹¹⁹ The text of Abū l-Barakāt ibn Kabar Šams ar-Riy'āsah (d. 1324) simply notes that Abū Rā'īṭah is responding to a *Mu'tazilī*. See the first chapter of his *مصباح الظلمة في إيضاح الخدمة* translated in *Livre de la Lampe des Ténèbres de l'exposition lumineuse du Service (de l'Église)* (Louis Villecourt, Eugène Tisserant, Gaston Weit, ed. and trans., *Patrologia Orientalis*, 20/4, no. 99 [Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1928], 654).

¹²⁰ Samir, "Liberté," 98-100.

(818-829) and Daniel (829-834).¹²¹ This was a period of ecclesiastical turmoil for the Jacobite church in Takrīt with infighting and mutual excommunication among several bishops, the Maphriens and Patriarch Cyriacus. In part, the issue stemmed from the greed of Basilius and his attempt to collect a tax from the Muslims in Takrīt. The consequence of this ill-conceived idea was the destruction of several churches and execution by the Muslim authorities of at least one of Basilius' accomplices on the grounds of "insult to the Prophet".¹²² No doubt this affair raised the tension level between Muslims and Christians in the city. In addition, unrest following the death of the Caliph al-Amīn (193-198/809-813) brought uncertainty to Christians throughout the empire until al-Ma'mūn (198-218/813-833) gained control of Baghdad in August of 819.¹²³

It has been noted that tradition has perpetuated the view that Abū Rā'īṭah was a bishop during this period, usually of the city of Takrīt.¹²⁴ Essentially the arguments have been tied to the *nisbah* "al-Takrītī" given to him in numerous manuscripts and other sources. Generally, a *nisbah* indicates a place of origin; however, in the case of a cleric, it can also mean that one is bishop of that see. Georg Graf, following Coptic writers of the 11th to the 14th centuries, takes his *nisbah* to mean that Abū Rā'īṭah was the Jacobite bishop of the influential Syriac-speaking city of Takrīt in the diocese of Sarūḡ.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Jean-Maurice Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus: Répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Beirut: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 1993), 28-29; Giorgio Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, series episcoporum ecclesiarum christianarum orientalium, 2 vols. [Padova: Edizioni messagero, 1988], II/80.1.17.

¹²² Jean-Maurice Fiey, "Tagrit, esquisse d'histoire chrétienne," *L'Orient Syrien* 8 (1963): 313-314, (reprinted in *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Irak des origines à 1552*, no. X, [London: Variorum Reprints, 1979]).

¹²³ Jean-Maurice Fiey, *Chrétiens syriaques sous les Abbassides, surtout à Bagdad (749-1258)*, CSCO 420, subsidia tomus 59 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1980), 41-75, esp. 63-65.

¹²⁴ One line of tradition does associate him with Nisibis, based on the heading found in the Vat. ar. 103 and Sbath 1017 manuscripts of *Demonstration*, but this is probably a confusion due to his relationship with Nonnus of Nisibis.

¹²⁵ Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 131/i-ii. Graf states that Michael the Syrian has included Abū Rā'īṭah among the Jacobite bishops (ibid., i). However, this is not the case. One should point out though that Joseph S. Assemani's *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana* mentions "Abibum Episcopum Tagritensem" in his summary of the contents of the *Kūṭāb I'tirāf al-Ābā'* (t. 2: *De scriptoribus Syro Monophysites*, 154), but not in the list of the prelates of the city of Takrīt (t. 2, 437) (Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1721).

Abū Ishāq al-Mu'taman ibn al-ʿAssāl includes him in his list of Syrian authors (before 1260) as “Ḥabīb ibn Ḥudaiṭa al-Takrītī, Bishop of the City of Takrīt of the Diocese of Sarūḡ, known as Abū Rāʾiṭah.”¹²⁶ Somewhat later, the encyclopaedist Abū l-Barakāt Ibn Kabar Šams ar-Riyāsah identifies him as “Ḥabīb, known as Abū Rāʾiṭah, the Bishop of Takrīt.”¹²⁷ Subsequent writers have relied on these sources and included Abū Rāʾiṭah in bishop lists for Takrīt.

In the twentieth century the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ignātiyūs Afrām al-Awwal Baršawm, Patriarch of Antioch (1887-1954) put forward the suggestion that Ibn al-ʿAssāl and Abū l-Barakāt were mistaken in believing that Abū Rāʾiṭah was a bishop.¹²⁸ His brief arguments have been summarized and expanded by Fiey in a short article published in 1986.¹²⁹ However, because one still finds references to Abū Rāʾiṭah as bishop, it is helpful to give a summary of Fiey’s position, here, along with some further observations.

The strongest evidence in favor of the tradition that Abū Rāʾiṭah was a bishop are two of the sources mentioned above: Michael the Syrian’s report of his involvement in the deposition of another bishop at the Synod of Rešʿayna in 827/8, and Abū Rāʾiṭah’s delegation of the Archdeacon Nonnus of Nisibis to represent him in a debate with Theodore Abū Qurrah, Bishop of Ḥarrān, before the Armenian *iṣṣan* Ašot Smbāt Msaker. Some scholars have argued that Abū Rāʾiṭah appears to have had an authoritative capacity in both instances, particularly in the second in which he was apparently invited as an official representative of the Jacobite community. Further, it is

¹²⁶ “الاب حبيب بن حديثة التكريتي اسقف مدينة تكريت من كرسى سروج المعروف بابي رايطة،” Georg Graf, “Das Schriftstellerverzeichnis des Abū Ishāq ibn al-ʿAssāl,” *Oriens christianus*, Neue Serie 2 (1912): 212-213.

¹²⁷ See Wilhelm Riedel, *Abu 'l-Barakat Ibn-Kabar: Der Katalog der Christlichen Schriften in arabischer Sprache von Abu 'l-Barakat*, Nachrichten der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse, Heft V (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1902): 666, 703.

¹²⁸ Ignātiyūs Afrām al-Awwal Baršawm, *كتاب اللؤلؤ المنشور في تاريخ العلوم والآداب* (Hims: Académie Irakienne, 1943, 1956, 1976; rep. Holland: Bar Hebraeus Verlag, 1987), 332.

¹²⁹ Jean-Maurice Fiey, “Ḥabīb Abū Rāʾiṭah n’était pas évêque de Takrīt,” pp. 211-214, *Actes du deuxième congrès international d’études arabes chrétiennes (Oosterhesselen, septembre 1984)*, ed. Khalil Samir, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 226 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1986).

claimed that Abū Rā'īṭah could only have sent Nonnus if he had held a higher rank in the church.¹³⁰

In response one must first point out that neither Abū Rā'īṭah himself nor any of his colleagues make mention of his being a bishop,¹³¹ nor is he named in any of the contemporary lists of bishops of Takrīt, which to date are fairly complete.¹³² This certainly undermines the traditional view in light of the fact that two of the most well-known Christians engaged in debate with Muslims, the Nestorian Catholicos Timothy I and the Melkite Bishop of Ḥarrān, Theodore Abū Qurrah, as well as the Archdeacon Nonnus of Nisibis, are always clearly named as ordained leaders in contemporary sources.

One can add to this the evidence of the Armenian chroniclers who call Abū Rā'īṭah a teacher or *vardapet* (վարդապետ).¹³³ Surely his status as bishop would have been recorded here, had it been known, since it would have given greater authority to Nonnus as a participant in the debate and his eventual capacity as adviser to Aṣot Msaker. Michael the Syrian's account also adds an interesting detail to Nonnus' arrival at the court. It seems that Aṣot did not immediately receive him as Abū Rā'īṭah's representative since Nonnus was a "young man", and Abū Qurrah refused to meet with him because it was not dignified for a bishop to debate with someone so young.¹³⁴ While Michael may have added some of this story for effect, Abū Rā'īṭah himself seems concerned that Nonnus may not be accepted as a suitable replacement (*On the Union* 1). If Abū Rā'īṭah had in fact been a bishop, it is odd that no mention is made of the disrespect that such a refusal to receive his envoy would have meant. Instead, the account focusses solely on the success of Nonnus.

¹³⁰ See for example Haddad, *Trinité*, n. 215.

¹³¹ Fiey, "Abū Rā'īṭah," 212.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 214.

¹³³ "When Buret (Բուրետ), a certain *vardapet* (վարդապետ) in Mesopotamia, heard of this, he dispatched the deacon Nana (Նանանի), who came and disputed with Apiku'a (Ապիկուոայ)," Thomson, *Historical Compilation*, 183; Muyldermans, *Domination*, 60 (Armenian text); and Brosset, *Mkhithar d'Airivank*, 83.

¹³⁴ "When Nonnus arrived, he saw that Aṣot was inclined toward the heresy of Pygla [Abū Qurrah]. Aṣot thought that Nonnus, a young man, could not debate at the same level in his presence, on account of the renown of that man. And when Nonnus demanded a discussion, Pygla refused, under the pretext that it was not dignified for a bishop to debate with young man (because he believed he would be unmasked). However, he was obliged to do so by Aṣot." (*Chronique*, III/33, IV/496).

Neither does Michael's chronicle state explicitly that Abū Rā'īṭah was *present* at the synod of Raš 'Ayna in the capacity of bishop or otherwise, only that he "brought the accusations" against Philoxenus. Furthermore, it names Nonnus of Nisibis with his title before Abū Rā'īṭah. This is important for several reasons. First, the title "Mār" is not given to Abū Rā'īṭah as it would have had he been a bishop. Second, the rank of each individual, very important in ecclesiastical circles, would have been indicated in the order that each is named. Michael would have known this, and been careful to use the proper titles and order. Third, it is striking that Gregory Abū 'l-Farağ, known as Bar Hebraeus (Ibn al-'Ibrī, 1225-1286), in his *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* mentions only Nonnus in connection with the incident at Raš 'Ayna,¹³⁵ substantiating the letter of Mār Dionysius which Michael includes. If Abū Rā'īṭah had been a bishop, his accusation against Philoxenus would have been sufficient on its own, without the assistance of Nonnus, especially if he had held the right to participate in the synod.¹³⁶

The second argument that Abū Rā'īṭah could only have sent Nonnus in his place to the court of the Armenian *išxan* if he had held a higher position has been countered by the suggestion that Nonnus only accepted the request as a favor to his friend or relative.¹³⁷ Even more compelling, however, is the further evidence found in Michael's *Chronicle* that it was not Abū Rā'īṭah, but the Patriarch Cyriacus, who sent Nonnus to confront Abū Qurrah. Concerning Nonnus' visit to Armenia, Michael writes: "The Patriarch Cyriacus then sent the Archdeacon of Nisibis to unmask [Theodore Abū Qurrah's] heretical views, so that he did not deceive the Armenians. When Nonnus arrived, he saw that Ašot was inclined toward the heresy of Pygla [i.e., Abū Qurrah]. . . ."¹³⁸ Previous scholars have assumed that the substitution of Cyriacus for Abū Rā'īṭah reflects an error on the part of the chronicler. However, it seems at least

¹³⁵ Gregorii Barhebraei, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, Tomus I, ed. Johannes Baptista Abbeloos et Thomas Josephus Lamy (Lovanii: Excudebat car. Peeters, 1872), col. 363: "On account of the terrible accusations brought against him by his archdeacon Nonnus, a virtuous and estimable man, Philoxenus of Nisibis was deposed by forty bishops gathered at the synod in Raš 'Ayna."

¹³⁶ Fiey, "Abū Rā'īṭah," 213.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Chronique*, III/33, IV/496.

plausible, if not more likely, that Abū Rāʾiṭah, unable to travel to Armenia himself, sent the prince's request to the patriarch along with the suggestion to delegate Nonnus, whom he would instruct on how to proceed in debate with Abū Qurrah. At a minimum, it is another strike against the view that Abū Rāʾiṭah was a bishop—his involvement is not even mentioned in Michael's report of Nonnus' visit to Armenia.

A few other counter-arguments have been added to the mounting evidence against the traditional view of Abū Rāʾiṭah as bishop. Fiey notes that Abū Rāʾiṭah's letter to Armenia (*On the Union* 1) mentions that it was carried by his relative, a deacon named Eliās (Arabic الـليان),¹³⁹ and this could indicate that Nonnus was not the only one he delegated.¹⁴⁰ Contrary to Fiey, however, one must point out that all of the known sources that give an account of the meeting between Theodore Abū Qurrah and a Syrian Jacobite opponent before the *iṣṣan* Aṣot Msaker name only Nonnus of Nisibis. The error can be reasonably attributed to a copyist of Abū Rāʾiṭah's writings (in transcribing الـليان for ننان) and does not necessitate the involvement of a second deacon.¹⁴¹ Finally, Samir argues that his name makes it fairly certain that Abū Rāʾiṭah was married and had a daughter. While not precluding the possibility that he was a bishop, this adds more weight against it.¹⁴²

In view of the above evidence, the fact that Abū Rāʾiṭah and his contemporaries make no mention of his status as a bishop of the Syrian Orthodox church forces one to conclude that this tradition is in fact an error. It is more probable that it was later copyists who, recognizing the high regard he received in the Monophysite community, took his *nisbah* "al-Takrīti" to mean that he was a bishop of that important city.¹⁴³ That being the case, the notable absence of a title associated with Abū Rāʾiṭah in the earliest references to him must necessarily raise the question of his true position in the Jacobite church. It is obvious both from his own writings and the later traditions surrounding him that he was a well-respected person who had the confidence of his own clergy and whose fame had spread.

¹³⁹ Graf, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, 131/91; 130/73.

¹⁴⁰ Fiey, "Abū Rāʾiṭah," 213.

¹⁴¹ Van Roey, *Nonnus*, 5.

¹⁴² Samir, "Création," 191.

¹⁴³ Fiey, "Abū Rāʾiṭah," 214.

A clue to Abū Rā'īṭah's status may lie in the reference to him in the Armenian records that he was a "*vardapet* in Mesopotamia" (վարդապետ ի Միջագետքում). In the period in which Abū Rā'īṭah lived, the ecclesiastical office of *vardapet* was in the process of becoming a more formalized position in the Armenian church. The origin of the Iranian term is uncertain, but its earliest ecclesiastical usage in Armenia is as a translation for the biblical word διδάσκαλος, and sometimes for ραββί. Although by the fifth century *vardapets* appear to have been ordained, they are not mentioned as a separate class of clergy, did not have a liturgical role, nor are they included in the nine grades of the hierarchy of the medieval Armenian church. In the century preceding Abū Rā'īṭah, *vardapets* have status as theologians, and the term is often used to refer to the orthodox teachings of the Church Fathers.¹⁴⁴

At this time, the primary function of a *vardapet* was to pass on and interpret church teachings. For this, an extensive knowledge of the Bible and scriptural exegesis was essential. As a teacher and exegete, a *vardapet* generally had disciples, and often took on the role of a missionary to gain converts to Christianity. This was especially important in times of anti-Christian pressure. The term apparently came into widespread use during the rule of the Sassanians over Armenia in the seventh century with their effort to assimilate Christians into Zoroastrianism. The majority of the Christian clergy were fairly uneducated, relying on *vardapets* to provide the teachers and scholarly effort needed for resistance. In the ninth and tenth centuries, the office of *vardapet* became clearly defined, and a distinguished *vardapet* was often regarded as an equal to the bishop. There are even records of *vardapets* participating in synods independently of their bishops.¹⁴⁵

In his own writings, Abū Rā'īṭah reveals himself to fit the description of *vardapet* exactly—he is a teacher, intellectual authority, and “missionary”, yet appears to act relatively independently within his church, making no mention even of his own patriarch. His various letters and treatises are concerned with explaining and defending difficult teachings (in several instances, apparently to clergy in nearby communities), instructing his readers on how to proceed in debate

¹⁴⁴ Robert W. Thomson, “*Vardapet* in the Early Armenian Church,” *Le Muséon* 75 (1962): 367-382.

¹⁴⁵ Thomson, “*Vardapet*”, 383.

with opponents of the Jacobite church, and providing examples from Scripture and the Fathers to support his claims. In his writings addressing Islam, he seeks to convince both Muslims and wavering Christians of the viability of Christian doctrine in the face of doubt and incentives for conversion to the new religion. In this manner Abū Rā'īṭah seeks to repel Islamization efforts just as the Armenians had resisted Zoroastrianism. It is little wonder that the Armenians identified him as fulfilling the role of *vardapet* in their own church.

In fact, one finds in the Syrian Orthodox church a position similar to the Armenian *vardapet* in the *malpōnō*. This Syriac term, also used to translate the Biblical διδάσκαλος, refers to the less developed position of one authorized to teach church doctrine. Like a *vardapet*, a *malpōnō* was responsible for teaching the faith to converts and children, even though this may not have been his primary occupation. Several saints and theologians are given the title (such as Ephraem the Syrian and Jacob of Saruḡ), denoting their status as recognized teachers of the faith.¹⁴⁶ Abū Rā'īṭah himself gives Ephraem the title الملقان in Arabic (*Threefold Praise (I)* 13), a simple transliteration of the Syriac, rather than translation, suggesting that he understood it to be a particular title.

Although the position of *malpōnō* was not clearly defined until later, by the beginning of the sixth century the term appears as a title given to teachers at the Nestorian School of Nisibis.¹⁴⁷ The School was a continuation of the one which had been suppressed in Edessa in 489, and it carried on the work of educating the Nestorian clergy and intellectuals. For over a century it was a center of Syrian Christian learning until the rise of Islam. It was followed by the creation of a further academy in Seluecia-Ctesiphon in the sixth century, and eventually a new school in the capital of the empire at Baghdad under the Catholicos Sabrīšō' (r. 830's). In each of these institutions the title of *malpōnō* was given to the learned teachers who taught

¹⁴⁶ R. Payne Smith, ed. et al., *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Tomus I (Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1879; repr. Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1981), 214.

¹⁴⁷ The *Canons of Henānā* use the term for those teachers who are of high rank in the School of Nisibis. In some manuscripts it designates those of the highest rank, while in others it is applied to teachers in general. See Arthur Vööbus, *The Statutes of the School of Nisibis* (Stockholm: Etse, 1962), esp. 93, n. 15.

Scripture and doctrine as well as relevant philosophical texts.¹⁴⁸

Abū Rā'īṭah himself is nowhere given the Syriac title of *malpōnō*, nor is he known to have been associated with a particular insitution, but his erudition and apparent authority as a theologian is consistent with what is known of the Nestorian *malpōnō*. Its similarity to the Armenian position further makes it very probable that it lies behind his designation as a *vardapet*. If this is the case, then his ecclesiastical status is greatly clarified.

As a *malpōnō* Abū Rā'īṭah would have been well-versed in biblical exegesis and church doctrine, and would have been involved in teaching at some level. He probably was not ordained, nor did he serve in any official capacity in his church, accounting for the silence about his position in the Jacobite church in Syriac chronicles. In fact, there is no obvious reason to believe that Ašot Msaker contacted him directly as a member of the hierarchy. It is more likely that the communication came through another, perhaps the Patriarch Cyriacus himself, who contacted Abū Rā'īṭah because of his reputation as a scholar, or perhaps because of his fluency in Arabic, the language of Abū Qurrah. The position of *malpōnō* also explains his role as a consultant but not participant in the synod of Raš 'Ayna. There his rank as a theologian would have added weight to the accusations against Philoxenus, but in the Jacobite church he would not have taken part in the synod directly.

A final observation regarding the Armenian epithet should be made here. It is clear from a careful examination of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings that he saw himself as a defender of the true faith and a missionary of sorts in the face of both the efforts of Abū Qurrah to spread Melkite teachings and the challenge of Islam. It is not surprising then that the Armenian church should recognize him with the honorable title of *vardapet* in a time when the church was beginning to feel the pressure to abandon its traditional teachings. Thus, Vardan's designation of Abū Rā'īṭah as a "*vardapet* in Mesopotamia" implies more than a simple attempt to translate the Syriac term *malpōnō* into another language. It is a recognition of his important task as teacher and missionary in the changing times in which he lived.

¹⁴⁸ Arthur Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*, CSCO 266, Subsidia 26 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1965), esp. 325.

A Christian Mutakallim

Although neither external references to Abū Rā'īṭah nor his own writings give direct information about his position in the wider intellectual community of his day, it is important to make some initial observations before turning to his works. If the dates projected for his life are correct, Abū Rā'īṭah came of age during the formative stages of the two Islamic *maḍahib al-kalām* in Baṣra and Baghdad towards the end of the eighth century under the guidance of Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā (d. 131/749) and 'Amr b. 'Ubayd (c. 49-c. 144/c. 669-c. 761), and Ḍirār b. 'Amr (fl. 168-194/785-810), respectively. These two groups are traditionally recognized as the “forerunners” of the *Mu'tazilah*, who gained particular prominence under the reign of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn (198-218/813-833) with the attempt to make their doctrines the standard for Islamic orthodoxy. The stabilization of the political and cultural realm under the 'Abbāsīd caliphs with its attendant interest in Greek civilization created an environment in which theological and philosophical questions could be pondered and studied. This intellectual ferment at the turn of the ninth century resulted in the development of *kalām* as a science.

Wensinck has noted that the term *kalām* means “speech”, with the related meanings of “discussion” and “disputation”. Those who were engaged in the early debates of such topics as free will and the createdness of the *Qur'ān* were called *mutakallimūn*, “those who discussed”.¹⁴⁹ Initially, the term seems to have referred to those who used discursive arguments to make their case. Fairly early on, however, the science of *kalām* (*ilm al-kalām*) came to mean especially theology, or the religious sciences, and the use of rational arguments to explain the faith and defend it against doubters. The role of *kalām* as an apologetical tool was particularly important in the early centuries of Islam, and it has maintained this character throughout its history. Although modern scholars (and past critics) have tended to emphasize the importance of Hellenistic philosophy for the *mutakallimūn*, it is crucial not to overlook the primary place which apologetic had for them, and the use of reason (*'aql*) in its service. Initially, the *mutakallimūn* were chiefly concerned with defending their faith against the *zanādiqa*—the “unbelievers” who were influenced especially by

¹⁴⁹ A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (Cambridge: University Press, 1932; rep. New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979), 79.

Mazdaism, Manicheism, and later Greek rationalism. They wanted to protect Islam from those who would introduce “multiplicity” and anthropomorphism into God, innovations which were explicitly rejected by the *Qurʾān*.¹⁵⁰ Later Christianity, with its doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, became a significant target and partner in the debate on the nature of God.¹⁵¹

Those Christians who engaged these Muslim *mutakallimūn* sought to use the same rational arguments to make their case for the Christian faith. Yet, the difficulty of finding common ground on which to meet the opponent was a formidable task. Without recourse to a common scriptural base or mutually acceptable authorities such as the Fathers, they were forced to construct their arguments on principles that could be embraced by those who rejected Christian doctrine. Certainly Christians had faced this challenge before with the spread of Christianity throughout the Greco-Roman world and beyond in the confrontation with numerous other religious systems, and many recognized that the earlier apologetical heritage could serve those now living under Islamic rule. Similar to earlier apologists such as Justin and Origen, Christians identified the fortuitous budding interest in the Islamic scholarly community in Greek philosophy towards the end of the eighth century as just such an opening through which to enter into debate and defend their faith. By appealing to logically constructed arguments about the being of God and His relationship to creation, as well as reasoned proofs refuting charges of deception and duplicity made against Christians, they aimed to show that Christian teachings were not irrational, but rather eminently complex and subtle.

Although other Christian apologists are known to have engaged Muslims on key doctrinal issues before the beginning of the ninth

¹⁵⁰ Louis Gardet, “ILM AL-KALĀM,” *EF*², vol. 3: 1141-1143.

¹⁵¹ Although the writings of a few anti-Christian polemicists have been published, including Abū ʿUṣmān al-Gāhiz (158-254/775-868), Abū ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī Sahl Rabbān at-Ṭabari (c. 192-c. 250/c. 808-c. 864), and Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq (d. 247/861), the general unavailability of these works has obscured their importance for the history of Muslims and Christian thought. A significant contribution has been made by David Thomas, with his translation and commentary in *Anti-Christian Polemic* (see especially 31-50 for summaries of important early Islamic refutations of Christianity). The series to which this volume belongs promises to make more of these relevant texts available (*The History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, ed. D. Thomas, T. Khalidi, G.J. Reinink, M. Swanson [Leiden: Brill]).

century, Abū Rāʾiṭah is one of first whose name is known to have done so in the language of Arabic. As a Christian *mutakallim* and one engaged in theological debate with Muslims, Abū Rāʾiṭah recognized the parallels between the exigencies of his own time and those of the past and used the experience of his predecessors as a spring-board for his own response to the crisis. But two important differences separate him from earlier apologists which demanded his own insight and innovation. First, the new language of intellectual discourse was Arabic, which was not easily malleable for expressing traditional Christian doctrine, and required the development of a vocabulary out of terms already heavily influenced by the *Qurʾān* world-view. Second, the new religion challenging Christianity was one of absolute monotheism, which shared neither a common scriptural nor cultural heritage, and rejected the very possibility of a Trinity or Incarnation.¹⁵² Christian *mutakallimūn* accepted these challenges and began the process of explaining and translating their faith in the new milieu to make it coherent and rational for those to whom it appeared to be neither. In his writings, Abū Rāʾiṭah reveals himself to be a full participant in this important period of intellectual history, and as one of the three most significant Arab Christian apologists of his day along with the Nestorian ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī and Theodore Abū Qurrah. These three notable Christian *mutakallimūn* were among the very first to set down the basic points of controversy and outline responses to them which would form the foundations for Arab Christian thought in the centuries to come.

On the one hand, the earliest Christian *mutakallimūn* were at a distinct disadvantage. As first generation Arabic speakers, they often did not have an educated grasp of the language, which was in the process

¹⁵² Although a common theme in early Christian apologetic was the refutation of Judaism, the debate generally centered around the interpretation of the Old Testament and showing that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The *Qurʾān*, on the other hand, while acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, explicitly rejects the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and Trinity, and presents itself as *the* revelation which supersedes all previous revelation. Thus, although Christians and Muslims share certain themes and figures (such as Creation and the Last Judgement, Abraham, Moses, Mary and Jesus), Muslims refuse evidence contrary to the *Qurʾān*, leaving Christians without recourse to traditional scripture-based arguments. See Sandra Toenies Keating, “Refuting the Charge of Tahrīf: Abū Rāʾiṭah (d. ca. 835) and His ‘First *Risāla* on the Holy Trinity’,” pp. 35-50, in: *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. Sebastian Guenther (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

of developing a technical philosophical vocabulary. This increased the risk of misunderstanding or disagreement with those in political power, sometimes with dire consequences. On the other hand, they had the benefit of a long tradition of engagement with those who disagreed with Christianity, as well as access to Greek logic, often in the original language or through good translations. In this way, they were able to take advantage of the growing interest of Islamic scholars in Hellenistic thought and occasionally to influence debates in Islam at a critical point in its theological development.¹⁵³

The goal of these Christian scholars was twofold—to counter the arguments put forward by Muslims concerning Christian Scriptures and central doctrines, and to commend Christianity as the true religion both to their fellow Christians and to Muslim partners in debate.¹⁵⁴ To do this, Abū Rāʾīṭah uses every tool at his disposal: traditional arguments from the Fathers (especially the Cyrillian tradition and the Cappadocians), Greek logic, an extensive knowledge of the Christian Scriptures, and an accurate grasp of Islam and its theological implications. Although he rarely cites the writing of any particular author directly when he is addressing Muslims, careful examination of his arguments exposes him as well-educated in the Syriac intellectual tradition, with an added awareness of Islam and a good knowledge of Arabic. Through controversialists such as Abū Rāʾīṭah, the Syriac theological heritage formed the basis for

¹⁵³ One must be cautious here of attributing too much direct influence in the debate to Christian involvement. Although it is undeniable that important controversies among early Islamic thinkers (such as those over free will, the createdness of the *Qurʾān*, and the attributes of God) bear significant resemblances to similar theological issues in Christianity, some modern scholars have seen these as merely a redux of Christian thought. Others have argued that the Islamic contribution is unique and even that it arose independently from Christian thought. However, the complex interplay between the two religions cannot be reduced to a one-way influence, often making it difficult to correctly identify the origin of a particular question or stream of thought. With this in mind, the following studies are still master works on the subject: Henry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), Seale, *Muslim Theology*, Richard M. Frank, “The Divine Attributes According to the Teaching of Abu al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllaf” *Le Muséon* 82 (1969): 451-506 and “Remarks on the Early Development of the Kalam,” pp. 315-329, in *Atti del terzo congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici. Ravello, 1966* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1967), and Watt, *Formative Period*. Dimitri Gutas, in *Greek Thought*, adds an important perspective on the intellectual environment of the early ʿAbbāsīd period.

¹⁵⁴ Griffith, “Abū Rāʾīṭah,” 162-164.

Christian thought in Arabic and the elaboration of new models in its confrontation with Islam.¹⁵⁵

It should be emphasized here that Abū Rā'īṭah's knowledge of Islam appears to have grown out of direct engagement with Muslims. Several of his writings, especially the *rasā'il* *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation*, exhibit the signs of having been drawn from actual conversations and debates in which he had taken part. His accuracy in recounting the objections and argumentation of Muslims of his day suggests that he was probably a participant in the staged debates between scholars of various religions (Muslim, Jew, and the Christian denominations) which are known to have taken place in Baghdad.¹⁵⁶ This would account for the context of several of his letters, as well as the extent and precision of his knowledge. By all accounts, he was considered by his fellow Christians to be an expert and successful at responding to interreligious theological issues.

All of the conditions and constraints characteristic of the Christian community in the early ninth century are particularly apparent in Abū Rā'īṭah's *rasā'il* and treatises written in defense of Christianity in light of the challenge of Islam. Abū Rā'īṭah does not launch an open attack against Islam itself, but rather constructs a complex web of questions and answers designed to lead his reader to the conclusion that trinitarian language provides the only appropriate predication of God, and consequently that Christianity is the true religion. He does this in a manner that follows the general pattern found in the apologies for Christianity of his contemporaries, 'Ammār al-Baṣrī and Abū Qurrah. Making use of the ancient Christian apologetical approach, they first emphasize the importance of miracles and prophecies, supported by a comparison of Christian teachings, Scriptures, and prophets with those of other religions. These are measured according to various criteria; for example, Abū Rā'īṭah insists it is critical that these indicators be accessible to all people. Finally, by means of a set of negative criteria, all religions except Christianity are eliminated as being the true "religion of God".¹⁵⁷ As evidence

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 165.

¹⁵⁶ The earliest Syriac texts mentioning these debates record the interrogation of the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, John III (d. 648) by Muslims in 644. He was questioned concerning the authenticity of the Christian Scriptures, along with a Jew, who was asked to show that the Torah had not been distorted. Griffith, "Disputes," 257-258.

in support of his thesis, he lays out common themes concerning the doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation, and supplies explanations of various rituals and customs in a manner that he believes will be convincing to those of his own community who are confused or inclined to embrace Islam, as well as to those Muslims who are engaged in polemics directed at exposing what they believe are inconsistencies and errors in Christian faith and practice. As note above, he does this as one of the very first to adopt Arabic as his medium, drawing on his knowledge both of the Christian apologetical tradition and of Islam.

At its core, Abū Rā'īṭah's apologetical approach assumes what has been recognized by modern scholars as characteristically Neoplatonic, with its philosophical premise that human beings can discover the existence of God through reason. Created humanity must in some manner reflect the God who created it, and human perfections point to those qualities in the Creator. Consequently, one must use reason to evaluate religious doctrines in light of what can be known by the human mind. Further, the veracity of any religion can only be established when it can be shown that the sole motivation for a person to adhere to that faith is divine proof.¹⁵⁷ That Christianity is the only religion which fulfills these criteria is the conclusion Abū Rā'īṭah and his fellow apologetists set out to demonstrate.

Abū Rā'īṭah was a *mutakallim* in his own right, the Christian counterpart to those Islamic scholars at the turn of the ninth century who sought to defend their faith through rational arguments. He is one of the first, whose name is known, to defend Christian faith against those who, like Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq (d. 861), dismissed it as inconsistent and contradictory, making no sense in Arabic.¹⁵⁸ In an effort to argue the legitimacy of Christianity, Abū Rā'īṭah broke new ground by helping to create a common language and influence the meanings of terminology and concepts in a period of intellectual development which would set the stage for centuries to come. This is certainly his greatest contribution.

¹⁵⁷ Griffith, "Comparative Religion," 65.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 66-67; Klinge, "Bedeutung," 375-383.

¹⁵⁹ See Thomas, "Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq," esp. 3-8.

Conclusion

In spite of the limited historical references to him, it seems possible to narrow Abū Rā'īṭah's period of activity as a teacher, participant in public debate, and writer to between 810 and 830. One can be almost certain that he had died before 840. This places him near Baghdad during the greatest period of intellectual ferment in the course of Islamic history, and makes him a contemporary of some of the most important Christian thinkers in the ninth century Mediterranean world:¹⁶⁰ the Nestorians 'Ammār al-Baṣṭī and Catholicos Timothy I, the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurrah, and 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī (fl. 820-825). He was also alive during the intellectual careers of the eminent *Mu'tazilah* of Baṣra, Abū l-Huḍayl al-'Allaf (135/752-226/840)¹⁶¹ and his student, Ibrāhīm ibn Sayyār an-Naẓẓam (d.c. 225/840),¹⁶² and of Baghdad, Bišr b. al-Mu'tamir al-Hilālī (d. 210/825),¹⁶³ and his student, Ṭumāmah ibn al-Ašras. It is further reasonable to assume that Abū Rā'īṭah lived under the rule of the 'Abbāsid caliphs Harūn ar-Rašīd (169-193/786-809), al-Amīn (193-197/809-813), al-Ma'mūn (197-218/813-833) and possibly al-Mu'tasim (218-227/833-842), who represent an important period in the Muslim engagement with the Greek philosophical tradition, one in which Abū Rā'īṭah and his contemporary Christian and Jewish thinkers actively participated.

Abū Rā'īṭah was involved in the life of the Syrian Jacobite church as a theologian and teacher, probably in the capacity of *malpōnō*. Although nothing is known about his education, it is evident from his writings that he had studied the Scriptures and the Fathers and was fairly knowledgeable regarding Greek philosophy, especially that of Aristotle. He was also likely a native Syriac-speaker who had learned Arabic well enough to participate in debate with Muslim scholars. Consequently, Abū Rā'īṭah was able to draw on his own first-hand experience of Islam through debate, and to gain more than a cursory knowledge of the *Qur'ān*. His use of all of these resources reflects his own social context and the Syriac intellectual tradition, which he then employs to respond both to the missionary activity of

¹⁶⁰ Samir, "Création," 192.

¹⁶¹ *GAL*, S. 1, 338.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 338-339.

the Melkite church and the challenge of Islam in order to convince both Muslims and Christians of the validity of Christian beliefs, making his works unique in this genre.

Writings

Abū Rā'īṭah's writings can be divided into two general groups: refutations of the theological positions of other Christians, namely the Melkites (Chalcedonians) and Nestorians, and responses to questions and accusations about Christianity on the part of Muslims. The first group reveals the continuing bitter struggle among the various Christian churches that grew out of the clashes over the ecumenical councils. As the churches in the East were slowly being cut off from those in the West, the Jacobites, Melkites and Nestorians continued their polemics against one another as they had for centuries. Abū Rā'īṭah and many of his co-religionists were beginning to become aware, however, of the tremendous challenge that Islam presented, as well as the degree to which the inter-confessional squabbles put Christians at a disadvantage in dealing with the difficulties arising out of their new situation. Abū Rā'īṭah's contribution to this apologetical literature provides a rare view of the issues at the heart of this conflict, particularly between the Jacobite and Melkite churches, while at the same time offering an insight into the effect that these historical controversies had on Christians living in the midst of the Islamization of society.¹⁶⁴

Abū Rā'īṭah's writings in response to Islam, which are contained in this volume of translations, are for the most part composed as letters to members of the Jacobite community (most likely clergy), advising them on how to construct an effective reply to the concerns of their Muslim neighbors about Christian doctrines. The ostensible purpose of these texts is to decrease the numbers of Christian converts to Islam by giving coherent answers to the questions of both Muslims and Christians. Using a dialectical method, Abū Rā'īṭah builds his case by finding points of agreement with his Muslim opponents and drawing out their logical conclusions in support of Christian teaching. Because of Muslim suspicions about the integrity of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, he finds his primary resources in philosophical

¹⁶⁴ An edition of these texts with an English translation is forthcoming in a separate volume.

principles that are just becoming known in Islamic scholarly circles through the translation of Greek texts. Abū Rāʾīṭah's arguments are clearly designed to allay the fears and doubts of Christians being called upon to defend the coherence of their faith against Muslim criticisms. But the fact that he wrote in Arabic (unlike his predecessors who primarily employed Syriac) and used sources available to Muslim intellectuals of the period suggests a second purpose—his desire to participate in the intellectual life of the emerging Islamic culture and gain a foothold for Christian thought within it.

At the present time, Abū Rāʾīṭah can be credited with ten and possibly eleven writings, although only nine are known to be extant. Two additional texts, preserved in Coptic manuscripts, contain excerpts taken from other writings and an account of Abū Rāʾīṭah's participation in a debate with representatives of the three dominant Christian confessions. The eleven surviving texts have been edited and translated into German by Georg Graf using available manuscripts.¹⁶⁵ Of the texts that can be attributed to Abū Rāʾīṭah directly, just eight appear to exist today in complete copies; a ninth shows signs of having lost pages.¹⁶⁶ To date this is all that can be identified as belonging to Abū Rāʾīṭah's *corpus*.

The writings included in this volume belong to what remains of Abū Rāʾīṭah's defense of Christianity against Islam. Although only one of these texts (*Demonstration*) can be identified as having been written as a direct response to a Muslim in answer to questions raised about Christianity, all of these writings have such questions as their subject. This group also includes four major works: *The First Risālah on the Holy Trinity*, *The Second Risālah on the Incarnation*, *Witnesses from the Words of the Torah, the Prophets and the Saints*, and *A Risālah on the Proof of the Christian Religion and the Proof of the Holy Trinity*, as well as the very brief text *On the Demonstration of the Credibility of Christianity*. Included here is also an untitled account written by another author of a debate in which Abū Rāʾīṭah supposedly took part designated *Christological Discussion*.

¹⁶⁵ Graf, *Abū Rāʾīṭah*, 130 and 131. See below for a complete list of manuscripts.

¹⁶⁶ The *Proof of the Christian Religion* breaks off in the middle of the argument at the bottom of the page. The final word of the manuscript indicates the original presence of another page.

At least one and perhaps two writings can be presumed lost. The source for this conjecture is a text entitled *From 'The Book of the Confession of the Fathers'*,¹⁶⁷ which contains a brief summary of a few short excerpts from either two or three writings by Abū Rā'īṭah. What is noteworthy is that it mentions works that are not known to be extant. The editor states that the first citation is taken from a *risālah* written to the “Christians of the West”, that is, the Jacobite community¹⁶⁸ living in Baḥrīn,¹⁶⁹ a city located in the district of Ṭīrhān near Mossūl.¹⁷⁰ From the passages reproduced in *Confession*, as well as Abū Rā'īṭah's own reference to it in the *On the Incarnation* (§85), it can be deduced that this *risālah* probably contained an explanation of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation and perhaps the Trinity, including biblical citations as evidence for both. The references to this text indicate that the arguments made in it were primarily concerned with the true nature of Christ's body and the Incarnation in general.

The compiler of the text in *Confession* also gives a short excerpt from what he says is “the second *risālah* of the three *rasā'il*, in which [Abū Rā'īṭah] speaks of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation” (§3). The citation can be identified as having been taken from the *On the Incarnation*, which belongs together with the *On the Trinity*. Both of these *rasā'il* are lengthy treatises addressed to Jacobite Christians living in close proximity with Muslims. Neither of the two *rasā'il* makes reference to a third, and the statement in *Confession* could be interpreted to mean the previously mentioned *risālah* to the Chris-

¹⁶⁷ The dogmatic *florilegium* كتاب اعتراف الابهاء appeared in the year 1078. It is a compilation of short summaries and citations drawn from theologians recognized by the Coptic church. Georg Graf, “Zwei dogmatische Florilegien der Kopten,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 3 (1937): 345-402.

¹⁶⁸ This is the Jacobite designation for themselves, as opposed to “Christians of the East”, that is, the Nestorians. See Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 131/195, n. 2.

¹⁶⁹ In a private communication, Khalil Samir noted that this letter was addressed to those in Baḥrīn, and not Baḥrayn, as Graf has assumed (Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 131/xxv). He is almost certainly correct, and the evidence that Baḥrīn is known to have been a Jacobite community not far from where Abū Rā'īṭah lived adds to the probability that they were the recipients of the letter. More will be said about this below.

¹⁷⁰ The city of Baḥrīn was probably originally in the Nestorian diocese of Barḥīs, which became Monophysite after 605. It was located in the district called Ṭīrhān, which was a dependent of Mossūl and whose capital was Takrīt, Abū Rā'īṭah's home. Jean-Maurice Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne: Bêt Garmaiā, Bêt Aramāyé et Maišān Nestoriens*, vol. 2 (Beyrouth: Dar El-Machreq Editeurs, 1968), 138-139.

tians in Baḥrīn. If this is the case, then the subject of that *risālah* would have been a defense of Christianity intended for Muslims, not Melkites or Nestorians. It was not unusual for the three topics of Trinity, Incarnation, and Christian practices to be covered together in the apologetical works of writers in this period.¹⁷¹ Abū Rā'īṭah in fact does address all of these subjects together in his *Proof of the Christian Religion*. Therefore, it is not implausible that a third *risālah* belonging with *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation*, perhaps discussing Christian practices, did exist, but has been lost.

Genres

Among Abū Rā'īṭah's nine generally complete writings, some recognizable genres emerge, two of which are common in Christian-Arabic apologetic literature.¹⁷² The first is a general apology for the Christian religion, usually including an explanation of the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, and certain Christian practices, as well as criteria for recognizing the true religion. This genre is particularly well-represented by Abū Rā'īṭah's *Proof*. His contemporaries, Abū Qurrah and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī,¹⁷³ both wrote such apologies, which appear to have been widely circulated. These general apologies are a sort of *vademecum* intended to provide their reader with short, clear answers to questions and objections raised about Christianity.¹⁷⁴ They usually do not go beyond the basic outline of an answer sanctioned by the Christian community they represent. Abū Rā'īṭah himself often suggests a further line of questioning that can be pursued to encourage the questioner to see the logic of the argument. The apology format is also found in Abū Rā'īṭah's treatises defending Jacobite practices against the charges made by Melkites in the *Threefold Praise (II)* and the *Refutation*.

The second type of Christian Arabic apologetical literature represented in Abū Rā'īṭah's writings is the *risālah* (رسالة), which is a sort of epistle-treatise format. A similar genre of epistle-treatise is found

¹⁷¹ Griffith, "Disputes," 254-255.

¹⁷² Graf, "Christliche Polemik," 827.

¹⁷³ Louis Cheikho, ed., "Mīmar li Taurus Abī Qurrah fī Wuḡūd al-Ḥāliq wa d-Dīn al-Qawīm," *Al-Machriq* 15 (1912): 757-774, and Michel Hayek, ed., 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, *Apologie et Controverses*, Orient Chrétien 5 (Beyrouth, Liban: Dar El-Machreq Editeurs, 1977).

¹⁷⁴ Griffith, "Abū Rā'īṭah," 167.

in Syriac literature, and can probably be traced back to the Greek *erotapokriseis* apologetical style.¹⁷⁵ Abū Rāʾīṭah's twin *rasāʾil* *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation* are typical examples of this type, although aspects of it appear in nearly all of his writings. The Arabic *risālah* is generally distinguished by statements from the author professing it to be a response to a request, followed by a letter whose contents are presented in a dialectical treatise form. The writing is characteristically addressed to a person or community who has ostensibly consulted the author on particular doctrinal issues. As in the case of Abū Rāʾīṭah's writings, the persons are often only vaguely identified, if at all. In reality, the address to a particular recipient is only a thinly-veiled medium to convey the material contained in the text. Abū Rāʾīṭah uses the *risālah* format to communicate information obviously intended for a much wider audience. This is not to assume that the occasion for the *risālah* has been entirely fabricated, but rather that the author takes the opportunity to construct arguments that are of interest beyond the immediate circumstances in which he is writing. This intention is made particularly clear in Abū Rāʾīṭah's decision to write in Arabic, which made his texts available to those outside of the Syrian Jacobite community.

In all of his *rasāʾil*,¹⁷⁶ Abū Rāʾīṭah first gives a brief account of the occasion of the missive and then quickly turns to develop a treatise designed to address religious controversies of the time. The format of the treatise is dialectical, in which possible questions are posed, followed by an appropriate answer, and in many cases a counter question with several potential answers and their implications. As will be discussed in detail below, the more formal question and answer format adapted into a narrative style is reflective of that employed in the debates being staged in Islamic scholarly circles. It is also probable that this dialectical form lies behind the development of *ʿilm al-kalām*, or dialectical theology, in Islam.¹⁷⁷ By the turn of the ninth century

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Heinrich Dörries, "Erotapokriseis," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 1966): VI/342-370.

¹⁷⁶ The term *risālah* (pl. *rasāʾil*) will be used exclusively to refer to texts falling into the genre described here. These include *On the Trinity*, *On the Incarnation*, and *Proof*. The latter is an extended apology for Christianity in the form of a *risālah*. The letters to Aṣot Msaker, (*On the Union* and *Threefold Praise (I)*), have been designated as *rasāʾil* in several manuscripts and by Graf; they are, however, written to a specific person for a particular purpose, and can be identified more properly as epistles.

¹⁷⁷ Griffith, "Abū Rāʾīṭah," 167-168.

when Abū Rā'īṭah is writing, one finds the essential characteristics of the dialectical format in Islamic theological texts.¹⁷⁸ It is reasonable to suggest that Abū Rā'īṭah chose the *rasā'il* format to convey his ideas both because of his familiarity with it in Syriac literature and because it was recognizable to his Muslim opponents.

In addition to the more common apology and *risālah*, Abū Rā'īṭah makes use of other literary forms to construct his arguments in defense of Christianity. The most important of these is the list of biblical and patristic citations in support of a particular doctrine. An example of this type is the extensive compilation found in *Witnesses*. Such lists are also contained in the body of some of his other works, for example the *Proof, On the Union*, and *Threefold Praise (I)*. Although they are generally presented with little introduction, these collections of “proof texts” provide important information for understanding Abū Rā'īṭah’s apologetical method and his knowledge of his opponents.

Topics

In spite of the variety of genres and purposes found in his writings, some recurrent themes can be identified throughout Abū Rā'īṭah’s extant *corpus*. In keeping with the standard topics found in Muslim-Christian controversial literature, those texts concerned with a defense of Christianity include the usual explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity and its relationship to monotheism, as well as an exposition and defense of the teaching on the Incarnation. This is, of course, in answer to the explicit rejection of these beliefs in the *Qur'ān*. Abū Rā'īṭah’s own treatment of the charges made against Christians about their doctrines reveals his clear insights into the problem, and much of his writing on the subject is taken up with clarifying the disagreement about the nature of monotheism and its implications for appropriate speech about God.

In his general apology for Christianity (*Proof*) he also deals with common questions about a multitude of Christian practices, such as veneration of the Cross, prayer facing East, the Eucharistic celebration, and the forty-day fast, as well as concerns about the Christian abandonment of certain Jewish practices, including animal sacrifice, circumcision, and the Law of the Covenant. The apology treats a further issue of particular concern in his day, ways to recognize the

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Van Ess, “Disputationspraxis,” 23-60.

true religion. In addition to the standard topics (Trinity, Incarnation, Christian practices, and the signs of the true religion) customary in the writings of Arab Christian controversialists of the early ninth century,¹⁷⁹ Abū Rā'īṭah covers several specific issues, including valid reasons for conversion, parameters for discussing religious doctrines, proper use of analogy, and the problem of *tahrīf*. Each of these plays a key role in the development of his argument and is of special interest for understanding his response to Islam. Taken as a whole, Abū Rā'īṭah's writings touch on nearly every topic that can be identified as a point of theological contention between Muslims and Christians of his day.

Addressees and Opponents

In general, the immediate addressees of all of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings can be identified as members of his own Syrian Orthodox community, whom he generally refers to as the "People of Truth" (اهل الحق). The exceptions to this are texts explicitly addressed to the Armenian *iṣḫan* Ašot Msaker¹⁸⁰ (*On the Union and Threefold Praise (I)*), and *Demonstration*, which has evidence of being addressed to the *Mu'tazilī* Tumāmah ibn al-Ašras. None of the remaining works is directed to a specific person, although in most of them Abū Rā'īṭah claims to have composed the document in order to provide information requested by an unnamed Christian individual either in defense of Christianity in general or of Monophysite teachings in particular, including *On the Trinity*, *On the Incarnation*, *Refutation* and *Proof*. Texts *Threefold Praise (II)* and *Witnesses*, which do not have clear introductions, probably also fall into this category. At the same time, it seems apparent that Abū Rā'īṭah intended all of these writings for a wider audience. This is the case both with regard to those texts taking up questions raised by Muslims and by non-Monophysites.

In a quick survey of Abū Rā'īṭah's known works, it is easy to recognize his primary adversaries as Muslims and Melkite Christians, with some references to the Nestorians. Throughout his writings against other Christians, Abū Rā'īṭah argues for the superiority of the position held by the Jacobites (اليعقبيون). This is the name he seems

¹⁷⁹ Griffith, "Abū Rā'īṭah," 169-170.

¹⁸⁰ The Armenian church subscribed to monophysite doctrines, but was estranged from the Syrian Jacobite church on account of certain liturgical practices.

to accept for the Monophysite community, even when he refers to it as the “so-called Jacobites” (المسميين اليعقوبية) (*Threefold Praise (I)* 7, 8). Generally, he contrasts the faith of his own church with that of the Nestorians and Melkites (الملكيون والنسكوريون), the two other major groups of Christians living in the Mediterranean world at the time. These three, Nestorians, Jacobites, and Melkites, are often found together in the apologetical literature of the period, as well as in debates defending Christianity. The untitled text (*Discussion*) mentioning Abū Rāʾīṭah’s participation in a debate before a Muslim official reports that a representative from each denomination was asked to present the teachings of his own church, without attacking the other two. This combination of spokesmen for the three confessions, (sometimes also including a Jew) appears regularly in accounts of staged debates. But, in spite of his disapproval of the teachings of his fellow Christians, he does not mention sectarian conflicts in any of his writings directed towards the questions of Muslims. He shares this habit with other Christian apologists at the turn of the ninth century who were aware that confessional disagreements were a topic in the *Qurʾān* and considered by Muslims to be proof that Christians had strayed from the original perfect revelation.¹⁸¹

The second group of adversaries who are the object of Abū Rāʾīṭah’s rebuttals are the Muslims. Although they are never mentioned by name, the texts concerning objections raised by Muslims against Christianity are so unambiguous there can be no doubt they are the subject. Instead, he identifies the Muslims as “those who differ from us” or “our opponents” (مخالفونا). Speaking to his Jacobite reader, Abū Rāʾīṭah refers to the partner in debate in *On the Trinity* 7 as “the one who is your opponent in religion . . . (مخالفكم في الملة).”¹⁸² In other places, he speaks of “the People of the South” (اهل التيمن), who are clearly Muslims. The identity of the “opponents” is also confirmed by the citations Abū Rāʾīṭah produces from the *Qurʾān* in order to illustrate his arguments in defense of Christian teachings. These are accompanied by comparisons with Muslim practices and explicit engagement with questions about God that were being asked by the Muslim community in his time. Abū Rāʾīṭah’s skilled

¹⁸¹ Griffith, “Comparative Religion,” 65.

¹⁸² Griffith, “Abū Rāʾīṭah,” 168.

use of this material reveals an exceptional knowledge of theological discourse occurring among Muslim scholars.

One can deduce from his care not to mention his opponents by name that Abū Rā'īṭah was particularly cognizant of the danger writing on this subject poses to himself and his Christian readers. The reason why he does not wish to be too obvious by naming his adversaries can be surmised from his context and hints in his writings. As he points out in the opening paragraphs of *On the Trinity*, public opposition to Islam could be risky, but was sometimes unavoidable. The lack of explicit reference to Islam or Muslims in any of the texts, even though the “opponents” can be no one else, may have been an attempt at protection from over-zealous government and religious officials. In the event that some difficulty did arise about the content of his writings and he was called on to explain himself to the Muslim authorities, he could argue that it was not the offended party who was meant, but rather some other less orthodox group. Another possibility is that he intended to claim he was directing his critique against another monotheistic religion such as Judaism. This, however, draws one’s attention to a second observation.

By writing his texts in Arabic, Abū Rā'īṭah made them accessible to Muslims as well as Christians. In fact, his style of writing sometimes presumes a great deal of knowledge about Islam on the part of the reader. Unlike many other writers on the subject, Abū Rā'īṭah in no way distorts the teachings of Islam, but rather expresses them clearly, using terms and concepts so heavily Islamic as to suggest they are drawn from actual conversations with Muslims he has collected over his career. In addition, the care that Abū Rā'īṭah has given to avoid any mention of Islam while he continuously addresses his other enemies by name is evidence that he not only expected his writings to be read by Muslims, but probably even intended it. In making use of Arabic, Abū Rā'īṭah made certain that his serious engagement with Islam and the challenges it posed to Christian faith could be read by and perhaps be convincing to his opponents. In doing so, however, he placed himself and fellow Christians at some risk, and sought to protect them with a degree of anonymity. Whether this was effective or not cannot be determined from the texts themselves.

As an apologist for the intelligibility and veracity of Christianity, Abū Rā'īṭah was a full participant in the intellectual milieu of his

day, a Christian *mutakallim*. Unlike many of his predecessors, he did not simply translate the Syriac tradition into the new language of Arabic. Rather, he began the attempt to communicate Christian faith clearly and coherently in a new idiom already heavily influenced by a religion hostile to it. In this way, he helped set the stage for future debates and determine the theological language which would be used in them. Abū Rāʾīṭah's influence on Arab Christian theology has long been recognized by the Coptic and Syrian Orthodox churches. His insight and response to current questions provide an important window into the Christian engagement with the Islamic environment in a critical period of the intellectual development of both. Abū Rāʾīṭah saw himself following in the footsteps of those apologists who had gone before him both as an evangelist and as a defender of the faith. Thus, he took up the pen in order to give his fellow Christians tools they needed to face a new challenge and to remain the "People of Truth".

Translation Method

It is hoped through this translation to make Abū Rāʾīṭah's contribution to apologetical discourse with Muslims at the turn of the ninth century better known and appreciated. Each of the texts is preceded by a brief introduction, situating it within its context with what can be ascertained from the text itself and other historical materials. As with any translation, the primary difficulty is to communicate to the reader in clear language the subtleties and complexities of the argument of the author. This translation, too, finds itself subject to all of the pitfalls and limitations inherent in any endeavor to mediate between two very different languages. The problems here are further exacerbated by significant cultural differences and the passage of more than a millennium. An attempt to provide a faithful rendering of the original Arabic by following general sentence structures, rigid vocabulary choices and the complex development of the argument can allow the reader to gain a better appreciation of the rhetorical strategies of Abū Rāʾīṭah and his opponents, as well as the intellectual and political milieu in which they lived. However, the result can also be decidedly inharmonious and even misleading when implications and idiomatic phrases are not translated into modern-day language. Thus, it is imperative for any translation of these texts to maintain

a balance between faithfulness to the original Arabic text and interpretation of the intention of the author.¹⁸³

In the instance of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings, the intention of the author is of paramount importance. The primary purpose throughout his writings is to convince his listeners, both Muslim and Christian, of the truth of Jacobite Christianity. Thus, he consciously chooses terminology and expressions from his own milieu which would appeal to his intended audience and draw them to his own position. Unfortunately for the English-speaker, the "bridge" that Abū Rā'īṭah carefully builds between his own faith and that of his opponent does not always reveal itself with as much subtlety in translation as one finds in the Arabic. This is especially true in the case of common vocabulary which had taken on new connotations as they were claimed by Islam. A particular example here is the word *ḡahada* and all of its derivatives (*ḡihād*, *iḡtihād*, etc.). Originally, the term means simply "to endeavor, to strive", however, by Abū Rā'īṭah's day its *Qur'ānic* and Islamic legal meanings were widely known. He takes advantage of this and uses it frequently with its original meaning, while contrasting the Islamic *ḡahada* with that of the Christian.

It must therefore be constantly borne in mind that Abū Rā'īṭah himself was a translator, attempting to communicate to Muslim challengers his own Syriac Christianity, which was heavily informed by Greek thought and by the conclusions to theological controversies arrived at several centuries earlier. Abū Rā'īṭah was well aware that he needed to provide more than proof-texts from biblical, patristic or philosophical sources to convince his opponents. It was instead the meaning and implication of the Christian message that was important, and consequently he takes great pains to develop his arguments in terms that will strike the appropriate chord with "those who differ".

While some of his Muslim listeners were acquainted with Greek philosophy and even Christianity (themselves being among the recently converted), many were sceptical of the validity of non-Muslim authorities. Moreover, these would have been untutored in the standard philosophical and patristic texts to which Abū Rā'īṭah could have appealed among Christians. To contribute to the difficulty, Abū Rā'īṭah was a linguistic pioneer. One finds throughout his letters

¹⁸³ The particular difficulties for translating Arabic texts from this period have been outlined in Richard M. Frank, "Hearing and Saying What Was Said," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116 (1996): 611-618.

terms for which he could not find an acceptable Arabic word and relied on a transliteration (الهيلي—*Ûλη*) or Arabization of a word with which he was familiar (اقانيم, for *uqnūm*, the Syriac translation of ὑπόστασις) to convey his ideas. Finally, Abū Rā'īṭah does not appear to have had an Arabic translation of the Bible available to him, and was forced to render the necessary passages himself, which he sometimes does rather freely. As a result, his own writings are disjointed in places, occasionally ambiguous and even impenetrable. All of this adds to the challenges facing the modern day translator.

These considerations have informed the decisions made in an attempt to produce an accurate and understandable translation. The approach chosen here is to adhere as closely as possible to the Arabic text, but to give priority to the meaning of the passage where a literal translation may obscure the sense. This can sometimes result in an awkwardness in the English text. However, it is hoped that by preserving a degree of the “otherness” of the text, the reader is encouraged to enter more fully into the feel of the Arabic. This can also aid in reducing the potential for reading modern sensibilities into an early medieval writing. In light of this, no attempt has been made to “update” Abū Rā'īṭah’s language. For example, in several of his writings, he refers to his own Christian community as “the Jacobites”, the name by which they were known throughout the Mediterranean world, but are correctly referred to as the Syrian Orthodox community. Neither has his use of the masculine pronoun for God been altered, a practice that was universally unquestioned until recently, and which has less serious implications in a bi-gendered language.

In general, a one-to-one correspondence between English and Arabic words has been maintained, except in instances of homonyms where an alternative word better conveys the Arabic meaning. A particular difficulty with the Arabic text is the habit of the Arabic-speaker to multiply synonyms (usually adjectives) to communicate intensity, which becomes repetitive and unwieldy in English. In these instances unnecessary repetitions have sometimes been dropped in favor of a superlative or other appropriate choice. In the service of clarity, repeated pronouns have also been eliminated, and usually replaced with the nouns to which they refer. These are contained in brackets, as are all additions to the text which are my own. In order to reduce the confusion that can arise from the wordplays that Abū Rā'īṭah sometimes employs, this translation capitalizes

words referring to God (He, One, Who). Often these are clarified in Arabic through the use of a pronoun that is usually lost in an English rendering. Finally, the sentence and paragraph divisions made by Graf have generally been followed. He has identified the most appropriate sentence segments, as well as paragraph groupings in most cases, even if they are sometimes arbitrary in the original text. However, new section numbers have been assigned in order to create shorter, more convenient passages.

Abū Rā'īṭah's letters offer an important insight into a critical period in the relations between Muslims and Christians, as well as in the development of Islamic theology, and warrant closer attention by modern-day scholars than they have previously received. It is hoped that the following translations will provide the non-Arabic speaker with a clear example of Abū Rā'īṭah's thought and method of engagement with his adversaries and provide the possibility for further study.

Manuscripts

To date eleven relevant manuscripts containing texts associated with Abū Rā'īṭah have been identified. Georg Graf's text from 1951, which made use of eight of these,¹⁸⁴ provides a careful edition that has served as the basis for the present rendering.¹⁸⁵ In preparing his own edition of Abū Rā'īṭah's extant works, Graf relied primarily on Par. ar. 169 and Bibl. Sbath 1001, basing his transcription and German translation on the Paris manuscript and noting deviations from Sbath 1001, with additions from other manuscripts where they were clearer or more complete. Graf was also aware of the existence of Bibl. Sbath 1041, 1042 and 1017, as well as another unnamed manuscript, but they apparently were not available to him, since they were held privately.¹⁸⁶ Further, he notes that while he was able to consult Bibl. Sbath 1001 during his own research in 1932, he was

¹⁸⁴ For a full listing of manuscripts containing Abū Rā'īṭah's works, used by Graf, see, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 130/ii-iv and 131/iii-iv.

¹⁸⁵ Some other translations and editions of Abū Rā'īṭah's individual writings have appeared, most notably that of *On the Incarnation* by Khalil Samir in "Création". These have not been incorporated into the present edition, since they do not offer significant changes to Graf's work.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Sbath, *Al-Fihris: Catalogue de Manuscrits Arabes*, Première Partie (Cairo: Impr. al-Chark, 1938), 22, nos. 132-138.

unable to locate it again after Paul Sbath's death in 1945.¹⁸⁷ However, Fr. Samir Khalil has discovered that the manuscript collection of Paul Sbath is now held by the Georg et Matild Salem Foundation in Aleppo, Syria. Consequently, I have been able to consult copies of these manuscripts and have included variations in the footnotes of the Arabic text.

Based on the textual integrity of the Sbath manuscript (S) where it is more complete than the Paris manuscript (P), and on the improvements made in (P), Graf concludes that neither is a copy of the other, but rather both are made from an earlier copy. This earlier recension, he suggests, was probably a Coptic edition made in Egypt, where (S) was found. Graf's argument in favor of this is that Abū Rā'īṭah's two writings defending the addition to the Trishagion against the Melkites (*Threefold Praise (I)* and *(II)*) include the Trishagion and Ὁ Μοῦνογενής texts in Coptic, which Abū Rā'īṭah, a Syriac speaker, would not have added.¹⁸⁸ This in fact appears to be correct, since Abū Rā'īṭah himself refers to the Greek version of the Trishagion throughout these two writings. Further, the letters are intended for readers who would be Arabic speakers, perhaps understanding Syriac or Greek. But apart from these two passages, the Coptic community finds no reference in any of his extant writings. Graf also notes that the other later manuscripts, none of which were used for his edition, are all clearly of Coptic origin, supporting the theory of an original Coptic recension.¹⁸⁹

In general, the notes offered by Graf have been reproduced in English here (including his suggested readings of variant forms), along with notes of errors in the Graf text. This edition, however, has not used the manuscripts of *On the Trinity* found in the writing of al-Kindī, since it is certain that the latter is drawing from Abū Rā'īṭah and the author has made numerous alterations and additions for his own purposes. These manuscripts have also been identified as much younger than those containing the works of Abū Rā'īṭah.

The following translation has assigned abbreviated titles to each of Abū Rā'īṭah's texts to make them easier to identify. Further, more extensive paragraph numbering has been added to allow more precise

¹⁸⁷ Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 130/ii, n.2.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 130/v-vi.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 130/vi.

scholarly reference. Some attempt has been made to organize the text into topics, although since this does not exist in the original, no artificial divisions have been introduced. It is hoped that these additions have resulted in a text and translation that is useful both for those who are familiar with Arabic and those who are not, in order to make Abū Rāʾiṭah's works better appreciated by modern scholars.

Extant Manuscripts

- S Bibl. Sbath 1001 (16-17th c.;¹⁹⁰ 63r-157v)¹⁹¹ Includes *Trinity, Incarnation, Union, Threefold Praise (I), Refutation, Witnesses, Threefold Praise (II), Proof*
- S2 Bibl. Sbath 1041 (18th c.)¹⁹² Includes *Trinity, Incarnation, Union, Threefold Praise (I), Refutation, Witnesses, Threefold Praise (II), Proof*
- S3 Bibl. Sbath 1042 (14th c.)¹⁹³ Includes *Threefold Praise (II), Trinity*
- S4 Bibl. Sbath 1017¹⁹⁴ Includes *Demonstration*
- P Par. ar. 169 (1064 AH / 1654 AD; 51 v—98 r)¹⁹⁵ Includes *Trinity, Incarnation, Union, Threefold Praise (I)*
- T Ms. 320 (Theol. 177; 81 r—210 v)¹⁹⁶ Includes *Trinity, Incarnation, Union, Threefold Praise (I), Refutation, Witnesses, Threefold Praise (II), Proof*
- V1 Vat. ar. 101 (1405 AH / 1688 AD; 374 v—375 r) Includes *Confession*¹⁹⁷
- V2 Vat. ar. 103 (13th c.; 144 r)¹⁹⁸ Includes *Demonstration*

¹⁹⁰ This is Graf's dating, although he does not give reasons for his conclusion. The Sbath catalog assigns it to the 11th c. (Sbath, *Manuscripts*, 118)

¹⁹¹ Paul Sbath, *Bibliothèque de Manuscrits Paul Sbath. Catalogue*; Tome I-II. Cairo: H. Friedrich et Co., 1928-. The page numbers given in Graf are incorrect. The manuscript itself assigns a single number for both the *verso* and *recto* of each of the 186 sheets, whereas Sbath numbered each page, arriving at a total of 371 pages.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁹⁵ William MacGuckin Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Impr. national, 1883-1895), 41ff.

¹⁹⁶ Graf, *Abū Rāʾiṭah*, 131/11. Georg Graf, *Catalogue de manuscrits arabes chrétiens conservés au Caire, Studi e Testi* 63 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1934), 201, n. 534, and Marcus Simaika Pasha, *Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, the Patriarchate, . . .*, vol. 2, fasc. 1 (Cairo: Government Press, 1939, 1942), 134. There appears to be an error in the order that Graf gives for Sbath 1001, but I was not able to consult the *Catalogue of the Coptic Museum* myself to confirm whether the order of these manuscripts coincides with it.

¹⁹⁷ Described in A. Mai, *Scriptorum veteram nova collectio*, tom. IV (Romae, 1831). This manuscript could not be found in the Vatican collection in 2001.

- V3 Vat. ar. 1492 (13th—14th c.; 30 r—31 r)¹⁹⁹ Includes *Discussion*
 O Hunt. 240 (Bodl. ar. christ. Uri 38; 1266 AH / 1549/50 AD; 118 r—119 r)²⁰⁰ Includes *Discussion*
 Q Par. ar. 183 (13th c.; 369 r—370 r)²⁰¹ Includes *Confession*
 R Par. ar. 82 (14th c.; 95 r—97 v)²⁰² Includes *Discussion*

*List of Known Writings*²⁰³

Writings in Defense of Christianity

I. “A *Risālah* of Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī on the Proof of the Christian Religion and the Proof of the Holy Trinity” (رسالة لابي رائية التكريتي في اثبات دين النصرانية واثبات الثالوث المقدس)²⁰⁴ (*Proof*) (VIII)

II. “The First *Risālah* on the Holy Trinity” (الرسالة الاولى في الثالوث) (المقدس) (*On the Trinity*) (I)

III. “The Second *Risālah* on the Incarnation” (الرسالة الثانية لابي رائية) (التكريتي في التجسد) (*On the Incarnation*) (II)

* A third *Risālah* belonging with I and II now lost (الرسالة الثانية من الثلث) (رسائل التي قالها في الثالوث المقدسة والتجسد)

IV. “Witnesses from the Words of the Torah, the Prophets and Saints” (شهادات من قول التوراة والانبياء والقديسين) (*Witnesses*) (VI)

V. “From the Teaching of Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī, the Syrian, Bishop of Nisibis: On the Demonstration of the Credibility of Christianity Which was Received from the Preaching of the Evangelists in the Holy Scriptures” (من قول ابي رائية التكريتي السرياني اسقف نصيبين مستدلاً به على صحة النصرانية) (المقبولة من الداعين المبشرين بها بالانجيل المقدس) (*Demonstration*) (X)

¹⁹⁸ Also edited and translated in: Louis Cheikho, “Un traité inédit de Honein,” pp. 283-291, in *Orientalische Studien. Theodor Nöldeke zum siebzigsten Geburtstag* (2. März 1906), Erster Band, hrsg. Carl Bezold (Gieszen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1906).

¹⁹⁹ This manuscript is very corrupt and missing the beginning of the text.

²⁰⁰ Johannes Uri, *Bibliothecae Bodleianae codicum mss. orientaliū . . . catalogus*. Pars prima (Oxonii, 1787), 34.

²⁰¹ Slane, *Catalogue*, 46.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁰³ Each text title is followed by the abbreviated form used in this edition, and the Roman numeral assigned in Graf's edition.

²⁰⁴ The second half of this is now lost.

VI. Christological Discussion (قيل ان عبد ايشوع المطران النسطوري وابو قرة الاسقف الملكى وابو رائطة اليعقوبى اجتمعوا عند احد الوزراء. فطلب منهم ان يصف كل واحد منهم اعتقاده بقول موجز ولا يعترض احد منه على صاحبه) (Discussion) (XI)

*. “A *Risālah* to the Christians of the West in Baḥrīn”, now lost (رسالة له الى من بالبحرين من نصارى المغرب)

Writings in Defense of the Jacobite (Syrian Orthodox) Church

VII. “From the Third (Second)²⁰⁵ *Risālah* of Abū Rā’iṭah al-Takrītī on ‘The Refutation of the Melkites on the Union [of the Divinity and Humanity in Christ]’” (من الرسالة الثالثة (الثانية) لابي رائطة التكريتي في الرد على) (On the Union) (III)

VIII. “The Third *Risālah* of Abū Rā’iṭah al-Takrītī: ‘Evidence for the Threefold Praise of the One Who was Crucified for Us to Abū-l-‘Abbās al-Baṭriq Ašūṭ ibn Sinbāṭ from the Servant of God, Jesus the Messiah, Ḥabīb ibn Hidmah’” (الرسالة الثالثة لابي رائطة التكريتي: احتجاج عن الثلاثة تقديسات للذى صلب عنا لابي العباس البطريق اشوط بن سنباط من عبد الله يسوع المسيح حبيب بن خدمة) (*Threefold Praise (I)*) (IV)

XI. “A Treatise of Ḥabīb ibn Hidmah, Known as Abū Rā’iṭah al-Takrītī the Jacobite on ‘Evidence for the Threefold Praise for the One Crucified for Us’” (مقالة لحبيب بن خدمة المعروف بابي رائطة التكريتي اليعقوبى فى) (*Threefold Praise (II)*) (V)

X. “The Fourth *Risālah* of Ḥabīb ibn Hidmah, Known as Abū Rā’iṭah al-Takrītī the Jacobite, ‘Refutation of the Melkites’” (الرسالة الرابعة لحبيب) (بن خدمة المعروف بابي رائطة التكريتي اليعقوبى رد على الملكية) (*Refutation*) (VII)

XI. “From the ‘Book of the Confession of the Fathers’” (من كتاب اعتراف) (Confession) (IX)

²⁰⁵ Ms. Bibl. Sbath 1001 labels this the “second” *risālah*.

A RISĀLAH OF ABŪ RĀ'ĪṬAH AL-TAKRĪTĪ
ON THE PROOF OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
AND THE PROOF OF THE HOLY TRINITY

Introduction

Content and Context

Abū Rā'īṭah's *Proof of the Christian Religion and Proof of the Holy Trinity* is the most comprehensive and the longest of his writings in defense of Christianity against Muslim criticism. Although he covers many of the topics found in it more extensively in *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation*, it is his most thorough attempt to give a general overview of many of difficult questions posed by Muslims. In it, he treats six main topics: legitimate and illegitimate reasons to convert to a religion (§§2-14), the use of analogy as an aid to understanding the Trinity (§§15-25), biblical witnesses in support of the doctrine of the Trinity (§§26-28), questions about the Incarnation (§§29-34), biblical witnesses in support of the doctrine of the Incarnation (§§35-37), and Christian practices (§§38-46). Here, without a conclusion, the text breaks off, although the Sbath manuscript clearly indicates that at least one page is missing. Unfortunately, without the final pages of the text, it is impossible to determine the full extent of the treatise. It is notable that the copiest has given the title *Proof of the Christian Religion and Proof of the Holy Trinity* to the manuscript, implying that he had before him a text in two parts. It is therefore possible that the original text also included a more detailed treatise on the Trinity than is found in the first part of the existing manuscript.

The text presents itself as a kind of handbook filled with responses for someone confronted with one of the most serious difficulties facing the Christian clergy in the early ninth century: how to stem the rising tide of conversions to Islam that were occurring for a multitude of reasons, but first and foremost as a result of social pressure. The *Proof* first addresses the issue of conversion, and then moves through the three major topics at issue between Muslims and Christians, the Trinity, the Incarnation, and particular Christian practices. For each of these, Abū Rā'īṭah offers three types of evidence—analogy, scriptural passages, and parallels found in the *Qur'ān* or Islamic practice—in order to show the validity, and even superiority, of

Christianity. Several of the issues he touches on in the *Proof* do not appear in any of his other writings, particularly those of Christian practices, such as prayer facing the east, veneration of the Cross, celebration of the Eucharist, and abandonment of the Jewish custom of circumcision, making this text valuable for establishing the wider context within which he is writing.

Abū Rāʾīṭah opens his apology for Christianity by examining the motivations for a person to convert to another religion. To substantiate his argument, he provides a list supported by biblical citations¹ of what he considers to be common reasons why people belong to a particular religion and categorizes them according to whether or not they are legitimate. From his ensuing defense of Christianity, it appears that Abū Rāʾīṭah did not believe that the majority of Christians who became Muslims had done so as a result of an honest search for the truth, nor that the Muslim community had gained many of its new members fairly. Instead, he implies that Islam had used two unacceptable means to coerce Christians into conversion, worldly temptations and fear. This is an underlying theme in all of his extant writings addressing Islam, which are plainly intended to provide the basis for theological discussions with Muslim contemporaries in an attempt to “level the playing field.” Abū Rāʾīṭah does this while simultaneously setting out convincing proofs for Christians who were confused or intimidated by the arguments of Muslims in the hope of persuading them that their worldly desires were inappropriate reasons to abandon their faith.

In spite of this obvious purpose, nowhere in his explanation is an example given which indicates that he is speaking of those who would convert to a particular religion. In fact, all of these reasons could be motivations to convert to a distorted version of Christianity. Yet, it is striking that the six negative reasons given by Abū Rāʾīṭah conform perfectly to common accusations made against persons who were becoming Muslim in the eighth and ninth centuries: that conversions resulted from a desire for a better position in society (either to gain status or to ease the burden of restrictions and taxation on non-Muslims) or because of the incentives offered by the religion itself (polygamy and concubines, ease of divorce, and

¹ The biblical references are mostly found in Matthew, interspersed with citations from Luke and I Corinthians. See notes in Graf, *Abū Rāʾīṭah*, 131/161-163.

explicit descriptions of rewards and punishments in the Hereafter).² Along with “fear of the sword,” as he puts it in *Demonstration*, he argues that these reasons are not fitting motivations for conversion to any religion. His conclusion is that the only legitimate reason for conversion to another religion is that one is convinced that it is true, and the only way one can be certain of its truth is that it has been confirmed by miracles and signs from God. Although not explicitly stated, his central argument here is that, while Christianity has been verified by the miracles of Jesus and his Apostles and disciples, the religion of Muḥammad has no such evidence. Therefore, adherents to Islam cannot be sure that their religion is the true one.³

Without mentioning the problem explicitly, throughout his writings Abū Rā’īṭah hints at the primary crisis of the church in his day: the beginning of mass conversion from Christianity to Islam. During Abū Rā’īṭah’s lifetime, the Muslim population in Iraq appears to have increased from approximately ten percent to nearly forty percent. Further, since new converts tended to move to the larger cities, and the capital city of Baghdad was home to a large number of Muslim government personnel,⁴ Abū Rā’īṭah would have been a first-hand witness to the rapid changes that were occurring. Among the converts were Christians and Jews who made the Islamic profession of faith for different reasons, some more and less authentic in the eyes of their neighbors. Several writers of the period, including Abū Rā’īṭah, comment on this issue and respond in an effort to slow the rising tide of conversions.

Unlike previous generations of Christians living under Islamic rule, those of Abū Rā’īṭah’s day experienced changes in policies under the new ‘Abbāsīd regime which strongly encouraged conversion and the Arabization of culture throughout the empire. The parameters of these policies were dictated by the rights and obligations granted to Christians by the *Qur’ān* itself, which contains several verses relating to the relationship between Muslims and members of other religions, and Islamic law, based on the *sunna* of the Prophet. Essentially, the teaching of the *Qur’ān* is one of toleration and respect for the so-called *ahl al-kitāb*, literally “People of the Book,”⁵ that is, the Jews, Christians,

² Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, I/301-308.

³ This is the main underlying theme in the proof found in *Demonstration*.

⁴ Bulliet, 82-83.

⁵ The *ahl al-kitāb* are mentioned numerous times in the *Qur’ān*, but are defined

Magians (Zoroastrians) and *Ṣābi'a* who have received a recognized scripture from God through a prophet.⁶ Forced conversion of these monotheists was expressly forbidden in the *Qur'ān*: “Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the right path is clearly distinguished from error.”⁷ Those to whom God had sent a messenger and a scripture where thus understood to have access to “the right path”. However, tension had grown between the followers of Muḥammad and the *ahl al-kitāb* on account of the latter's refusal to accept the legitimacy of the final revelation of the *Qur'ān*.

The *Qur'ān* portrays Muḥammad as the “Seal of the Prophets” (ختم النبيين), the last in the line of prophets for each of the monotheistic religions. Accordingly, the prophets of the *ahl al-kitāb* are honored figures as precursors to Islam who were sent by God with a message. The *Qur'ān* insists that this message is the same for all peoples, and that the discrepancies that exist between it and the scriptures of the other religions is simply the result of envy and deception on the part of the followers of the earlier prophets (*Sura* 42:13-14). The message given through Muḥammad in the *Qur'ān* is thus a corrective to all previous scriptures, and their truth can be known in comparison to it (*Sura* 41:43-45). To the extent that the *ahl al-kitāb* adhere to basic tenets of Islam (i.e., profess monotheism, revere Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, observe a divine law, give alms to the poor, etc.) they are recognized as legitimate religions instituted by the one God.

The vast majority of the *ahl al-kitāb*, however, did not accept the legitimacy of Muḥammad or the *Qur'ān* and were consequently not granted equality with Muslims. With the spread of Arab political control beginning already during the lifetime of Muḥammad, Christians and Jews were forced to accept the secondary status of *ḍimmah* (“protection”) in society and to pay the *ḡizya*. Initially this did not

specifically in 2:62, 5:69, and 22:17. Verses 10:47 and 40:78 explain that to every people a messenger was sent with the revelation of God. These are the prophets of the *ahl al-kitāb*.

⁶ The *Ṣābi'a* are referred to in 2:62 and 22:17 among those having a revealed religion. Their identity is disputed, and many groups have claimed to be connected to them. However, the references imply that they were a monotheistic, baptizing community, suggesting they be identified with the Mandaeans or Elchasaites. Some Muslim scholars have argued that it is intended as a category for any religion deemed to be an authentic form of worshipping God. T. Fahd, “ṢĀBI'A,” *EF*², vol. 7: 675-678.

⁷ *Sura* 2:256: لا اكره في الدين قد تبين الرشده من الغي

pose a serious problem for non-Muslims living in Arab-controlled territories. However, as the government began to stabilize, a more explicit program to establish the superiority of Islam and Muslim Arabs in society was put into action. By the beginning of the eighth century, under some of the last Umayyad caliphs, new policies favoring Islam began to have a significant impact on non-Muslims.

Although Christians and Jews remained in high stations of government and society, their freedom was becoming increasingly limited. With the rise of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty to power, non-Arab Muslims were raised to a status equal to Arab Muslims, Arabic was made the official language of government, and the gap between Muslims and *ḍimmī* was widened. This meant that the opportunities once enjoyed by Christians and Jews as government officials, court scholars, doctors, etc. were severely reduced. Non-Muslims who had occupied local government positions and continued to conduct bureaucratic activities in local languages came under pressure to make way for Muslims and Arabic. The justification for this shift was the argument that Muslims should not be subject to the authority of a non-Muslim. The Umayyad caliph 'Umar II had first declared that no Muslim should be in this position and commanded his governors to begin removing non-Muslims from higher government offices. However, this was not strictly enforced, and many Christians and Jews continued to retain their positions. Under 'Abbāsīd rule, policies favoring Arabic and Muslim workers were implemented more frequently so that by the reign of al-Mutawakkil in the middle of the ninth century the law prohibiting non-Muslims from government service was widely enforced.⁸ No doubt many of Abū Rā'īṭah's Christian readers were beginning to feel threatened by this development and contemplate conversion to Islam to safeguard their positions. But, Abū Rā'īṭah insists, this is not a sufficient reason for conversion.

Simultaneously, added restrictions on religious displays (crosses, processions, ringing of church bells, building of churches and synagogues, etc.) increased the burdens of daily life for non-Muslims. Many scholars believe that it is this period that the so-called "Covenant of 'Umar" reached its present form. The conclusion was that opportunities for full participation in society became limited only to

⁸ Tritton, *Caliphs*, 21-23.

Muslims.⁹ One can well imagine, as Abū Rā'īṭah hints in the *Proof of the Christian Religion*, that those who desired relief from the *ḡizya* or to have a better or more secure position in society (§2) would be strongly tempted to convert to Islam.

This situation was in some way exacerbated by a growing Muslim scholarly community and the establishment of Islamic centers for study. The early 'Abbāsīd period saw the collection and publication of the *aḥādīṭ*, the foundation of several Islamic legal schools, massive translation projects of ancient Greek texts on philosophy, rhetoric, medicine, astrology, and the natural sciences, and a distinctive architectural style. Now Islam had become an comprehensive way of life that could rival the local cultures with which it came into contact. Intellectual arguments, as well as exegetical and legal methods, developed in light of Greek philosophy strengthened the claims of Muslim theologians.¹⁰ This in turn made Islam more attractive to those Christians who were wavering and who saw the advantages conversion brought. The simultaneous experience of the difficulties of being a non-Muslim and the growth of a vibrant Islamic community tempted many to abandon their Christian faith.

Seen in this light, Abū Rā'īṭah's *Proof* is a complete summary of Christian faith designed to respond to the charges leveled at Christians by Muslims, as well as to provide convincing arguments for Christians themselves. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the opening paragraphs where he lays out justifications for conversion. His six unacceptable reasons contrasted with the single legitimate motivation are directed both at Muslims, whom he believes are gaining converts through unfair means, and Christians, who are not examining the causes for their acceptance of a new religion carefully enough.

Thus, in his *risālah* aimed at proving the truth of the Christian religion, Abū Rā'īṭah provides his reader not only with answers to common questions posed by Muslims, but with a method to be applied in any situation. He begins each of his arguments by identifying the central issue in the question, and systematically lays out responses designed to address his listener's concerns. In general, he opens with a logical argument, eliminating absurdities and contradictions,

⁹ Tritton, *Caliphs*, esp. 5-36, 127-154.

¹⁰ Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 28-104.

substantiated with analogies found either in nature or in Scripture. To these he adds scriptural passages as proof texts to support his position. In all of his arguments Abū Rā'īṭah takes care to provide examples and evidence that could be acceptable to both a Christian and a Muslim reader. He cleverly includes prophets and figures recognized in the *Qur'ān* in nearly all of his biblical citations, and only rarely chooses ideas blatantly rejected by the Islamic revelation. In this way, he provides his Christian brother the basis for a line of defense that might ultimately be convincing to all of his listeners.

Addressee and Date

In the opening greeting Abū Rā'īṭah gives no indication to whom his *risālah* is addressed, but instead simply acknowledges his reader in (§2) as “my brother”. One can deduce from the contents of the *risālah* that this person is himself a Jacobite and quite possibly a member of the hierarchy or a teacher like Abū Rā'īṭah—the arguments given are complex and assume a fairly deep knowledge of both Christian doctrine and Islamic thought. Although the *Proof* appears to be primarily intended as a handbook of answers to the most common questions asked by Muslims, it is also clearly aimed at convincing Christians to remain steadfast in their faith. In (§13), he advises the recipient of the treatise to adjust the arguments to his own situation using his own good judgement. Therefore, one might suggest that the addressee is some member of the clergy, perhaps a bishop, who is confronted with the problem of members of his flock slowly converting to Islam. It is also likely that Abū Rā'īṭah assumed that his *risālah* would be read by those who had already left Christianity for Islam, as well as Muslims involved in missionary efforts directed at Christians.

Because of the lack of internal evidence, it is impossible to date the *Proof* precisely. The circumstances at which it hint—an increase in conversions from Christianity to Islam and in staged debates between Muslims and Christians may indicate that it was prompted by the activities of the court of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn. This would put its appearance sometime between 813 and 833. Assuming that the necessity for such a work did not arise immediately, and that Abū Rā'īṭah responded relatively quickly, the date for the earliest appearance of the text can be narrowed to approximately 815.

It is also notable that Abū Rā'īṭah does not give any hints of the turmoil that was taking place in the Muslim community near

the end of al-Ma'mūn's rule. As the *Mu'tazilah* gained more and more influence in the court, their doctrines became the standard by which orthodoxy was gauged. Already in 827 some scholars were being questioned about their views on the createdness of the *Qur'ān*, and in 833 a full-fledged interrogation was begun.¹¹ The *Mihna*, or "inquisition", lasted until the reign of al-Mutawakkil (232-247/847-861), who ended it in 849. During this time many officials, scholars, and prominent people were questioned. Most capitulated, but a few were tortured and imprisoned, and several later died as a result of the harsh treatment.¹² This affair was of considerable concern in theological circles, and many of the issues Abū Rā'īṭah touches on in his writings, including the unity of God and the eternity of the divine attributes, were at the center of the debate.¹³ If he had been aware of these events taking place at the court, it is difficult to

¹¹ The litmus test for orthodoxy became the question of whether or not the *Qur'ān* was created. In defense of the absolute unity of God, the *Mu'tazilah* argued that the *Qur'ān* was created, since there could not be two eternal things (God and His Word) without introducing plurality into the divine being. Traditionalists, including Ahmad ibn Hanbal, continued to maintain that it was uncreated. This latter view seems to have arisen out of the concern to defend God's complete omnipotence by insisting that the events recorded in the *Qur'ān* were eternally known, and thus preordained by God. Only in this way, the traditionalists argued, could God's being be eternally unchangeable and unchallenged by His creatures. If one accepted that God's Word was created, then God could have created it otherwise, allowing a degree of fluidity and uncertainty in the created universe. There were important political implications to this question. As the eternal, uncreated Word of God, the *Qur'ān* could be used as the basis for the empire, which put its interpreters, the *'ulamā'*, in a powerful position of authority. Consequently, it was in the interest of the caliph and his supporters to defend its createdness. Watt, *Formative Period*, 178-179.

¹² *Ibid.*, 178. An account of the trial of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who was widely recognized as a hero of the Traditionalists, and of the theological issues involved, has been published and translated by Walter M. Patton, in *Ahmed Ibn Hanbal and the Mihna: A Biography of the Imam including an Account of the Mohammedan Inquisition called the Mihna, 218-234 A.H.* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1897).

¹³ There is evidence in the writings of some Muslim traditionalists that concern over the influence of Christian ideas in some circles was a partial cause for the friction between the *Mu'tazilah* and other Islamic scholars. See of the conclusions of Sandra Toenies Keating, "The Issue of the Createdness of the *Qur'ān* from the 'Refutation of the *Ġahmites*' by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal," Licentiate thesis, Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica, 1995. Cf. "Watt, *Formative Period*, 242-246; Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran", in: *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985); originally printed in *Orientalia Hispanica sive studia F.M. Pareja octogenario dicta*, ed. J.M. Barral, vol. I/1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 515, 518-520.

explain the apparent absence of any hint of the views of either the *Mu'tazilah* or their opponents, or any attempt to distance himself from the conflicts. This suggests that the *Proof* was written before the controversy had become intense sometime around 825.

When compared to Abū Rā'īṭah's two other longer extant works, *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation*, one notices immediately that the latter present arguments that are significantly more developed and complex. The questions posed by the interlocutors are elaborate and Abū Rā'īṭah's responses follow the logical implications of the various possibilities to a greater extent. One also has the impression that the *Proof* has been written more with Christian readers in mind than the other two *rasā'il*. These considerations lead one to suspect that Abū Rā'īṭah wrote the *Proof* first, and later, after having had more experience as a controversialist and in confronting the issues presented by Islam, composed a longer trio of letters based on issues similar to the contents of the *Proof*.

With these clues in mind, it is possible to propose a general date for the composition of the *Proof* at sometime between 815 and 825, followed by the trio of *rasā'il* including *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation*. Although a somewhat earlier or later date is plausible, this suggestion cannot be too far from correct.

رسالة لابي رائطة التكريتي في اثبات دين النصرانية واثبات الثالث المقدس

1 وفقك الله وايانا لدرك الحق والهمك الوقوف على الصواب وأوصلك الى تناول الحسنى وممكنك من الغبطة والزافى . سألت الحقك الله بالفائدة ان اشرح لك الحالة التى دعت العاقل والجاهل الى قبول دين النصرانية بدياً¹ وامتناعهم اخيراً . وقد اعتمدت² فى جوابك على معرفة فاطر الدعوة ومظهر النحلة رب السموات والارض له الحمد دائماً ابداً . فنقول فى ذلك بحسب اعتقادنا من قول السلف الافاضل من الائمة المنتخبين ودعائم الايمان والدين بركات الله عليهم صلواتهم تحفظنا وتوفقنا امين .

2 اعم يا اخى ان كل مذهب تفرع فى الدنيا وكل دين ظهر فى العالم لا يخلوا³ اعتقاد فاعله من احد سبعة اقسام اضطراراً . احدها اما رغبة فى عاجل ظهر نفعه وغيره . والثانى طمع فى اجل يرجوا⁴ دركه . والثالث رهبة قاهرة يضطر الى قبوله . والرابع رخصة فى كل مطلوب من المحظورات تسببه . والخامس استحساناً لتنميته وزخرفته . والسادس تواطؤ⁵ وعصبية من رهط محتال على رهط والوصول الى العز والمظافرة على القدرة وادراك الثروة والايثار بنصرة .

¹ Graf: read بدءاً ² اعتمده S ³ Graf: read يخلو ⁴ Graf: read يرجو ⁵ Graf: read تواطؤ

A *Risālah* of Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrītī
On the Proof of the Christian Religion
and the Proof of the Holy Trinity

1 May God give you and us success in arriving at the truth! And may He inspire you in the pursuit of what is correct, lead you to grasp perfection, and give you happiness and honor!

You have asked, may God give you the benefit! that I explain to you the circumstances in the beginning in which both knowledgeable and ignorant [people] were called to accept the Christian religion, and their eventual denial [of it]. In the reply to you, I am relying on the knowledge of One Who brought forth the proclamation and Who manifests grace, the Lord of the heavens and the earth, glory be to Him forever and always! We are speaking in this [book] in accordance with our beliefs and [drawing] from the teaching of the best [of our] chosen leaders and pillars of faith and religion, may the blessings of God be upon them, [and may] their prayers protect us and give us success. Amen.

2 Know, my brother, that in every ideology¹ that has spread throughout the earth, and every religion which has appeared in the world, it does not fail that the conviction [of those who believe in the religion] necessarily has its source in one of seven types [of reasons]. One of these is the desire to gain advantage and other [benefits] in this world. The second is the desire for the Hereafter, and the hope of its attainment.² The third [reason] is over-powering fear compelling one to accept [the religion]. The fourth [reason] which motivates [someone] is the allowance of everything desired that is forbidden. And the fifth is to be highly regarded, so that one is glorified and decorated. The sixth is collusion and tribal solidarity with a tribe to deceitfully [over-power another] tribe, and the attainment of influence and seizing of power, the realization of wealth, and the facilitation of success.

¹ I.e., belief or school of thought.

² Abū Rā'īṭah implies here and elsewhere that one must follow the laws of God (obedience, humility, chastity, charity) to receive the reward of heaven, and that this reward is something unimaginable. Simply being a member of a religion is not enough, nor should one expect a reward similar to earthly rewards.

وهذه الستة الاقسام حائلة عن دين الله وخارجة عن طاعته ومفارقة دينه لما يعترىها من الفساد ويلتحق عليها من التناقض . فاما القسم السابع الذى به يقوم البرهان وعليه معتمد الايمان من تأييد رب العزة بما يعجز العقل عن تحصيله ويمتنع الخلق عن فعله الا لاهل الحق المرشدين .

3 ووجدنا معتقدى دين النصرانية منا بدين الاقسام الستة الخارجة عن ارادة⁶ الله جل ذكره المضادة لدين الحق . فاولها الرغبة العاجلة الملتزمة من اهل الدنيا التى تشره الانفس الى قبولها فانها مناصبة لانجيل الله وعهد ميثاقه الذى به وله واليه انقادت⁷ الامم الى الدعوة المسيحية لان المعول عليه من الرغبة الوصول الى راحة الدنيا ومتابعة العز والعظمة واتنعم والاستظهار بالفوائد وبذل المال . ووجدنا اهل دين النصرانية قد الزموا من فرائض الانجيل ترك ادراك الرغبة العاجلة وازالتها ما الزمهم من التواضع والذلة والخمول والقلّة ويكلفهم الصبر والقنوع وان يتأسوا بطير السماء فى ترك الذخار وبذل الاجتهاد فى التعب والاقتصار على قوت يوم بيوم والاستدراج فى ضيق المسالك ومنعهم التبيّح فى الراحة والخفض . مما اكد عندهم انهم اذا فعلوا افعال الخير والبر كلها التى افرضهم عليهم من قبول التعب والنصب فى طاعة الله ومرضاته مدة حياتهم ان يعدوا⁸ ذلك كله عند انفسهم فيقولوا انهم عبيد بطالون فعلوا ما امروا به مما يلزمهم من خدمة سيدهم بغير

يعدو S⁸ (?) انفاضة; انقادة S⁷ ارادت S⁶

[But] these six types [of reasons] diverge from the religion of God, and lie outside of obedience to Him, and so are separated from His religion because of the depravity which possesses them, and the contradictions inherent in them. [However,] the seventh type is one for which there is proof, and upon it faith is sanctioned by the support of the Lord of Majesty. For understanding is too weak to grasp it, and creation is prevented from effecting [this true religion], apart from the rightly-guided³ People of Truth.

3 We find that the believers of the Christian religion reject the six types [of reasons to convert to another religion] foreign to the will of God, His remembrance is exalted! [and] contrary to the religion of truth. The first is the longing of this world, the desire of worldly people which [their] souls greedily accept, that is set up against the Gospel of God and promise of His Covenant by which, for which and to which the peoples were guided to the proclamation of the Messiah. Because that on which avarice is dependent is the attainment of worldly ease, pursuing might and power and luxury, and gaining profit and spending money. We find that the people of the Christian religion are obligated by the divine precepts of the Gospel to renounce the attainment of the longing[s] of this world and to do away with them.

What obligates [these people] is humility, submissiveness, obscurity and poverty, and they are charged with patience and modesty. And they should be like the birds of the heavens in refraining from gathering up treasures⁴ and not expending great efforts in toil and being contented with [enough] food day to day,⁵ and proceeding step by step along the narrow paths.⁶ They should not boast [of living] in ease and comfort. That which they are assured of is that when, during their lives, they do acts of goodness and righteousness [and] all of what is enjoined upon them, [such as] the acceptance of hardship and exertion in obedience to God and for His pleasure, and if they count all of this to themselves, they say that they are useless servants, doing what they were commanded by Him [that] service [for] their Master made incumbent upon them, without [the

³ Note the similarity of الخلفاء الراشدون (“the Rightly-Guided Caliphs”) with اهل الحق المرشدون.

⁴ Cf. Mt 6:19, 26

⁵ Cf. Mt 6:11

⁶ Cf. Mt 7:14

حمد ولا شكر . فآية⁹ رغبة قادت من كانت حاله هذه الى قبول دين فرائضه هكذا .

4 والقسم الثانى هو طمع الآجل المرآو ادراكه بالامل . فان ذلك ايضاً مفارق لشريعة المسيح . وذلك ان الرجاء منه حصل لاهل الطاعة الملتزمين من شرائعه المجاهدين لشهوات انفسهم القامعين لاجسادهم بالغفلة المتوصلين باعمال البر الى سيرة الملائكة الروحانيين . انهم يخلصون بعد نشورهم من القبور وبعثهم من التراب من الاجداث ووصولهم الى ملكوت¹⁰ السماء ان يكونوا فيها مثل الملائكة بغير طعام ولا شراب ولا لباس ولا تزويج ولا فنية ولا فائدة معروفة مما تسكن اليه الانفس وترجوه المطامع من المتعارف من اللذات¹¹ والنعيم والعز والافتخار . بل حصلوا من ذلك كله على امر مجهول لا يعرف ولا يوقف عليه قبلوه وهو ان يوصلهم بعد اماتهم¹² انفسهم من كلما فى حياة الدنيا دركه الى ما لا تراه عين ولا تسمع به اذن ولم يخطر على قلب بشر . فآى طمع ينسب الى ما يرجو دركه ولا يعرف نفعه ممن هذه حاله .

5 واما القسم الثالث الذى هو الرغبة القاهرة التى تضطر الى قبول دين النصرانية فذلك ممتنع خارج عن دين النصرانية . ان¹³ الداعين¹⁴ اليها حاملون ضعفاء مساكين فقراء متواضعون مبددون صيادون . افترقوا فى جميع الدنيا اباديد قليلة العدد ذليلة حقيرة النسب ضعيفة مهينة فى البدن عاجزة

الداعيين S¹⁴ الى S¹³ اماتهم S¹² اللذات S¹¹ ملكوة S¹⁰ فآيت S⁹ passim

expectation of] praise or thanks.⁷ What [worldly] longing could lead someone in this position to accept a religion whose commandments are like these?

4 The second kind [of motivation] is to desire the Hereafter, [and] the hopeful expectation of its attainment. This, too, deviates from the law of the Messiah, for this hope [only] comes to obedient people, who put themselves under the obligation of His law, who struggle against the appetites of their souls [through] the restraint of their bodies by indifference and by continuous works of piety, [leading them] to act as the spiritual angels. They will be saved after their resurrection from the graves, and their awakening from the dust of the tombs, and their arrival in the Kingdom of Heaven, where they will be like the angels, without food or drink, clothing or marriage,⁸ property or [other] well-known benefits that souls rely on and hope for [in this life], the usual things coveted, like sensual delights, comfort, power and glory.⁹ Rather, instead of all of this, they attain something unknown, receiving [something] not perceived and not understood [in this world], that is, after they have made themselves dead to everything in the life of this world, they attain what no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and no human heart has imagined.¹⁰ What [earthly] desire of someone in this position could be linked to what he hopes to attain, [since] its usefulness is unknown?¹¹

5 As for the third kind [of reason to convert], the over-powering fear that compels [one] to accept the Christian religion, this is forbidden and foreign to the Christian religion. Its missionaries were obscure, weak, poor, needy, humble, scattered, fisherman. They dispersed themselves throughout the whole world, [were] scattered in small numbers, despised, of base lineage, weak, contemptible in body, powerless. Childlike in understanding, perfect¹² was their speech, one was their garment, unshod were their feet.¹³ The earth

⁷ Cf. Lk 17:10

⁸ Cf. Mt 22:30; Lk 20:35

⁹ Cf. *Qur'an* 37:41-49; 38:49-52; 52:17-24; etc.

¹⁰ Cf. 1 Cor 2:9; Is 64:4

¹¹ E.g., a reward in the next life that is unimaginable cannot fulfill any earthly desire.

¹² Text is unclear.

¹³ Cf. Mt 10:10

طفلة فى العقل [...]؟¹⁵ منطقها واحد سربالها حافية اقدمها الارض مركبها الغربية مأواها الرجاء داعيها السلام كلامها الصلاة نعيمها الصنف جزاؤها الجهل شراءها . يعلمون بين الامم ان المرسل لهم نهاهم وحرم عليهم حمل السيف وحصر على قابلى دعوتهم المكافحة والمناضلة وافترض عليهم الصنف عن الاعداء والاحسان الى من أساء . فايه رهبة او يأس يتخوف من هذه حاله ان ينتسب اليها .

6 واما القسم الرابع اعنى الرخصة فى كل مطلوب من امحظورات فذلك مفارق للدعوة المسيحية اذ هى تقول من نظر الى امرأة بعين شهوة فقد زنى بها فى قلبه ومن طلق امرأته بغير سبب يجور فقد انتج لها الزناء ومن تزوج مطلقة فقد زنى . فهذا فى باب الشهوة اللازمة دافع للرخصة . فاما فى القنية والاذخار فانها تقول انه كما لا يمكن الجمل يدخل فى سم¹⁶ ابرة الخيوط كذلك لا يستطيع الغنى ان يدخل الى ملكوت الله . وان من لم ينكر نفسه ويجحدها بل ويهلكها ثم يحمل صليبه ويتبع الله مفارقاً لجميع ما فى الدنيا من اللذات كلها والشهوات ويستحق نفسه عامداً من اجله فليس لله باهل ان يكون تلميذاً ولا يصل الى السلامة من جهنم . بل من قال لاخيه المؤمن احمق يريد نقصه وخزيه فقد استوجب جهنم . فايه¹⁷ رخصة شملت من هذا اعتقاده وبهذا يدين .

7 واما القسم الخامس الذى هو الاستحسان لتنميته وزخرفته فذلك ايضاً غير جائز فى شريعة الانجيل . لان المقصود بالعبادة المطلوب بالديانة المدخر للعاقبة المرجو المكافأة المعتمد عليه فى الدنيا والاخرة رجل

فايت S¹⁷ يتم S¹⁶ كامله S¹⁵

was their vessel, exile their dwelling, hope their cause, peace their teaching, prayer their comfort, forgiveness their recompense, folly¹⁴ their purchase.

They taught among the peoples to whom they were sent, prohibiting and forbidding them to carry the sword,¹⁵ and the one who accepts their proclamation is restricted from battle and fighting, and the forgiveness of enemies and charity to the one in distress is incumbent upon them.¹⁶ What fear or hopelessness could frighten someone who is in this position into being associated with [this message]?

6 The fourth kind [of reason], namely, the allowance of everything desired that is forbidden, this deviates from the Christian proclamation, for it says “the one who looks on a woman with lustful eyes, has committed adultery with her in his heart”¹⁷ and “the one who divorces his wife without cause does wrong, and brings on her adultery. And the one who marries a divorced woman commits adultery”¹⁸ This contradicts [any] permission for license in the face of desire.¹⁹ As for the acquisition and accumulation [of worldly things], they have said “Just as it is impossible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, so is the rich man incapable of passing into the Kingdom of God.”²⁰ And the one who does not deny and renounce himself, even die to himself, then carry his cross and follow God, separating himself from all worldly pleasures and desires, and make himself humble for His sake, he does not deserve to be a disciple for God, and he will not receive security against hell. Rather, the one who says to his brother, the believer, “The fool!”, desiring his downfall and his disgrace, he has earned hell.²¹ What license is implied in this belief and this religion?

7 As for the fifth type [of reason for acceptance of a religion], which is the approval to adorn and ornament oneself with finery, this is also not permitted in the law of the Gospel. Because the aim of worship, what is wanted in religion, is the storing up of treasure

¹⁴ Cf. I Cor 1:18-24

¹⁵ Cf. Mt 26:52

¹⁶ Cf. Mt 5:44

¹⁷ Mt 5:28.

¹⁸ Mt 5:32.

¹⁹ Literally, “at the gate of desire”.

²⁰ Mt 19:24.

²¹ Mt 5:22.

مصلوب ضعيف الظاهر مهين المنظر بين صالبه¹⁸ وتلقيهم اياه بكل نكال اوجب موته ودفنه . فآية¹⁹ حالة استحسان لزم من هذا قبوله واى زخرف او تنميق يلتحق بمن هذا يقينه .

8 واما القسم السادس الذى هو التواطى²⁰ والعصبية على اعمال الحيلة والمظافرة بالنصرة لبلوغ العز وادراك الثروة فانا قد وجدنا المشتهرين ببشرى هذه الدعوة فيه مهانة وعصابة ذليلة شعارهم التواضع وثارهم الخمول ببندوا فى الارض متفرقين فى حوالى البلدان الشاسعة . وهم يزعمون ان المرسل لهم الى دعوة الامم امرهم ان لا يقتنوا ذهباً ولا فضة ولا نحاساً . ومن لطم خده اذار للاطمه الاخر . ومن سخره ميلاً فليمش معه ميلين . ومن طلب اخذ الثوب فلا يمنعه ان ياخذ مع الثوب الرداء . وحظر عليهم قنية ثوبين او حمل زاد . وان يشهروا انفسهم انه ارسلهم كمثل الخراف بين الذئاب . وان كلمن قبلهم²¹ يظن انه قرب لله قرباناً . فى تزايد او تواطى²² او اعمال حيلة فى الوصول الى عزّ او ادراك ايسار او ظهور جه ممن هذه حاله من الاقلال والرعب والفرع والتعب والفقير سوء الحال .

9 ولما تبين ان الشريعة المسيحية مفارقة الاقسام الستة فقد بقى ان يكون الخاص بها اللازم لها انها ظهرت واستظهرت على جميع الاديان بتأييد رب

¹⁸ Graf: read صالبيه ¹⁹ فاي ت S ²⁰ Graf: read تواطؤ ²¹ Graf: قتلهم ²² Graf: read تواطؤ

for the end [of time], the reward hoped for, that on which [one] relies in this world and the next, is a Man crucified, weak in outward appearance, seen as contemptible by those who crucified Him. They imposed on Him every punishment, resulting in His death and burial. What kind of approval could one cling to [by] accepting this [religion] and what ornaments and adornments are taken up by the one who has this as his conviction?

8 As for the sixth kind [of reason], which is collusion and tribal solidarity in acts of deception and an aid in the successful attainment of power and the realization of wealth, we find that for those who become known through the good news of this proclamation there is humiliation in it. [They wore] a lowly headcloth, their underdress was humility and their overdress was obscurity. They were scattered over the earth, separated from each other in the remotest countries. And they claimed that the one who had sent them to summon the peoples had commanded them: “Do not possess gold nor silver nor copper,”²² and “the one who is struck on his cheek, should turn the other [cheek] toward the one who struck him. And when he is pressed [by someone into going] a mile, he should go two miles with him. And if someone tries to take [his] garment, he should not refrain from giving the garment along with [his] cloak.”²³ It is forbidden to them to possess two garments, or to carry provisions.²⁴ And so they should make themselves well-known [far and wide], for He had sent them like lambs among the wolves.²⁵ And any one who received²⁶ them would think that he had offered a sacrifice to God.²⁷ What is the increase or [advantage of] collusion or means to an end for the achievement of power and realization of affluence, or appearance [and] high rank for the whose condition is this, neediness, fear, hardship, poverty, and an unfortunate situation?

9 Since it has been shown that the Christian law differs from [these] six kinds [of false reasons to belong to a religion], it remains that the characteristic of it, the inherent property belonging to it, is that it is evident and demonstrated to be above every religion by the

²² Mt 10:9

²³ Mt 5:39-41

²⁴ Mt 10:10; Lk 10:4

²⁵ Lk 10:3

²⁶ Arabic reads “killed”.

²⁷ Cf. Mt 10:40; Heb 13:16

العالمين الذى ايد به الداعين اليها من الايات المعجزات والبراهين
الوضحات التى قادت جميع الامم الى قبولها طوعاً . فاذا قد وضح وبان قبول
الامم دين النصرانية على تشتيت اهوائها وانقطاع نسبها واختلاف اخلاقها
وتنائى بلدانها وتباعد هممها فضلاً عن سنتها والفاظها بلا رغبة دنيوية ولا
رهبة ولا طمع فى أجل معروف ولا استحسان وتنميق ولا رخصة واباحة ولا
تواطى²³ على اقامة علم بعز لبلوغ المأمول .

10 فلا بد من السابغ الذى دلت العقول وتحيرت²⁴ الذهون وتاهت
الوفود²⁵ وبطل القياس واكذب الاراء وامات البدع واحيا المجهول واعي
الحيل وفات الفكر ادراكه وذلك بتأييد المسيح الله سبحانه الذى ايد به
رسله وتوح²⁶ به وفوده وقوى به اصفياه واكرم به محبيه²⁷ وامنح به احبائه
وزين به ووفوده²⁸ من احيائهم اموتى باسمه وفتحهم الاكمه باذنه وابرائهم
البرص بحوله وغير ذلك من الجرائح بقوته والاعجاب المبصرات
الظاهرات²⁹ التى لم بقدر على دفعها احد ملك كان او مملوكاً شريفاً او
وضيعاً حكيماً او جاهلاً حكيماً ان سفيهاً . فحققوا دعوتهم الصحيحة بهذه
الايات الصادقة واستغنوا بذلك عن تحقيقها بزخرف الكلام وتمويهه
واحكام نسقه واقامة محاله وعقد مجهوله وايضاح مشكله لان الكلام كافة

²³ Graf: read تواطؤ ²⁴ S وتحيرة ²⁵ S الوقول ²⁶ Graf: وتوح ²⁷ Unclear.
S نحبيه ²⁸ Unclear. S وروده ²⁹ Graf: الظاهرات

confirmation of the Lord of the Worlds, Who confirmed with it those who proclaimed [the Christian law] through signs and miracles and clear proofs²⁸ which led all of the peoples to accept it willingly.

So [motivation for] the peoples' acceptance of the Christian religion is clear, in spite of the diversity of their inclinations and the break from their origins [such an acceptance necessitated], [in spite of] differences in their values, great distance between their lands, the divergence of their intentions, not to speak of their [diverse] practices and word usages, [they accepted it] without [prompting by] worldly desires or fear, without aspiring to a known afterlife,²⁹ without approval and embellishment, without licentiousness or permissiveness, without collusion to revive the prestige of [one's heritage] in order to attain what is hoped for.

10 Thus, the seventh [reason for adhering to a religion] is necessary, which understanding is [too] weak [to grasp] and the intellect is at a loss [to understand], crowds [of seekers] go astray [in search of it], analogy is in vain. And it exposes the opinions [of it] as false, kills heresies, gives life to the unknown, incapacitates subterfuge, contemplation fails [to reach] an understanding of it. And this is done with the confirmation of the Messiah, God, may He be praised! Who by it confirms His Apostles, and by it He has destined³⁰ His company [of Apostles], by it He has given power to His dear friends, by it He has bestowed honor upon those who love Him,³¹ by it He has granted favors to His beloved, and by it He has adorned [them]—His company [of Apostles], namely, gave life to the dead in His name, they opened [the eyes] of the blind by His permission and healed the lepers by His strength, and [performed] other wonders by His power, and visible and perceptible marvels that no one is able to reject, be he king or servant, high-born or low-born, educated or ignorant, wise or foolish. They proved the authenticity of their proclamation by these true signs, and were able, because of these, to dispense with its authentication through embellished and affected speech, practiced style, with setting aright what is absurd, joining together what is unknown, and explicating what is obscure, because

²⁸ Cf. *Sura* 2:213; 2:253; 57:25; 61:6, etc.

²⁹ I.e., in contrast to the explicit promises of the *Qur'ān*.

³⁰ Graf: crowned; for توج, not توح

³¹ Text is unclear here.

يسير دفعه غير عسير رده وان كان هو الغاية فى الصحة والبيان . واما الايات والجرائح فلا سبيل الى جحودها وانكارها فى القلب وان جحدها اللسان بحسد او بغضة سبقت .

11 وان قال قائل وما بأس ان يكون الله حقق دينه بالمرغوب فى امور الدنيا والمرهوب جميعاً او ابحدتها خاصة . وقد ترون موسى ابن عمران وغيره من الانبياء المقبولة منكم قد دعوا الى دين واظهروه واثبتوه . بالرغبة والرهبه جميعاً . اما الرغبة فكقول موسى ان الله مورثكم ارض كنعان وبساتين ارض يجرى منها اللبن والعسل لكم فيها رمان³⁰ وليمون وغير ذلك مما تشتتبه الانفس وتلذذ الاعين . واما الرهبه فكقوله ايضاً لبنى اسرائيل وتقدمه اليهم ان الله مورثكم ارض الامم يقيناً فتقتلونهم حيث لا تبقون منهم احداً لكيلا يضلوكم ويميلوكم الى اهوائهم فى عبادة اوثانهم وسوا³¹ اعمالهم واستاصلوهم من بين ظهوركم ولا ترحموهم ولا تعاهدوهم عهداً ولا عقداً ولا تقبلول منهم فدية . فإى وعيد ارغب من هذا واية رهبه ارهب مما وصفت.

فنقول ان ترغيب موسى لبنى اسرائيل ايها الحكيم وتفضيله الارض المقدسة عندهم على ارض مصر وغيرها من الارضين³² وامرهم بقتل سكانها وسفك دماء جابرتها بحق وليس ذلك منه ترغيباً وترهيباً فى اثبات

³⁰ S زمان ³¹ Graf: read وسوء ³² S الارضيين

the word is able to be rejected without difficulty and refuted, even when it [has reached] the greatest [level of] credibility and clarity. But it is not possible to deny and reject the signs and wonders in [one's] heart, even if the tongue denies them because of prior envy or hatred.

11 Someone may say: “What is the harm if God shows His religion to be true through things of the world that are desired and feared, [either all] in general or one of them in particular? You see that Moses, son of ‘Imrān³² and the other prophets accepted by you, proclaimed a religion and they revealed it and confirmed it with desire and fear together. As for the desire, it is just as the statement of Moses that “God made you heirs to the land of Canaan and the gardens of a land from which flow milk and honey,³³ and in them are pomegranates and lemons for you, and other things that souls long for and please the eyes.” As for the fear, it is also just as his statement to the Sons of Israel, offering to them that “Surely God has made you heirs of the land of the peoples, so you shall kill them until not one of them remains, in order that they not lead you astray nor incline you to their heretical ways in service of their idols and their evil works. Root them out from your midst and do not show mercy to them. And do not contract a treaty or pact with them, and do not accept ransom from them.”³⁴ Which of these promises is more desirable than this, and which fear is more terrible than what I have described?”

We say that if Moses awakened the desire of the Sons of Israel, o Wise One, to have a preference for the Holy Land over the land of Egypt or any other lands, and commanded them to kill its inhabitants and to shed the blood of its tyrants, [this was] correct. This was not in order to affirm the religion and prove it true through desire and fear. Rather, [through this] he brought about the protection

³² It is notable that Abū Rā'īṭah uses the *Qur'ānic* name for ‘Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron according to Ex 6:20. The *Qur'ānic* account of the birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus found in *Sura* 3 (*Āl ‘Imrān*), as well as 66:12, identifies her father as ‘*Imrān*. However, the father of Moses and Aaron is also called ‘*Imrān*, probably the result of confusion between Mary (Maryam) and Miriam. To avoid attributing error to the *Qur'ān*, later exegetes explained this difficulty by claiming that the text means two different men named ‘*Imrān*. Abū Rā'īṭah's use of the Arabic epithet suggests that he was aware of these references in the *Qur'ān*.

³³ Cf. Ex 3:8, 17; Lev 20:24; etc.

³⁴ Cf. *Sura* 7:133-141; 43:48-56

الدين وتحقيقه . بل جعل عصمته الدين وقبوله بالايات والجرائح التي اظهرها واجراها الله على يديه بارض مصر كمثل اتيانه بالجراد والقمل والبرد واستحالة نيلها الى الدم وظهور الموت فى ابيكارهم واغراقه فرعون وجنوده وانفتاح البحر لعبور الشعب وتحليته الماء المر لبنى اسرائيل اطعامه المن والسلوى وانحباس وجرى الماء من الحجر وتظليلهم بالغيمام نهاراً واشراقه عمود من نور ليلاً . فهذه الايات اثبت دين الله على يدى موسى من العجائب المذاعة فى الامم كافة .

12 ولما كان قد اصطفى شعباً مارداً وحزباً حديثاً لا يطيعه لعجز رأيه وغلظ فهمه بل يطيع شهوة المهلك له لغفلته وقسوة قلبه واماته فكره عن ذكر الله له الحمد والتمسك بدينه وقبول عهده بطغيان اهل مصر واعتقاده وحده اصنامها وذلتها لعبادتها ورغبته فى غذائها وجهله بالارض المقدسة المدعوا³³ اليها وغذائها ورغبته لمن³⁴ كان للدين منكراً مكذباً بعد تحقيقه لديهم بانواع من الايات واصناف من العجائب الذائعة فى الامم امر بقتل تلك الامم المعاندة لدين الله وعرفهم فضل الارض المقدسة على ما كانوا يعتقدونه ويحنون اليه من ارض مصر وغذائها .

والبرهان على ذلك قول الله سبحانه لنجيه موسى عند التماسه خلاص بنى اسرائيل من يد فرعون وضلالة قومه واستعباده اياهم وسوقهم بكل عذاب

³³ Graf: read المدعر ³⁴ فمن S

of the religion, and its acceptance through signs and wonders that God revealed and caused through the hand of [Moses] in the land of Egypt, as the example of His sending the locusts and lice and hail, and transformation of the Nile in the land into blood, and [causing] the appearance of the death of their first-born, and His drowning of Pharaoh and his armies, and the sea opened for the passage of the tribe. And He made the bitter water sweet for the Sons of Israel, and gave [them] manna and quail to eat. The water, which had been held back, flowed from the rock. He shaded them with clouds by day, and made a pillar of fire shine by night. Now, these signs proved the religion of God by the hand of Moses [and] are among the wonders widely-known by the all of the peoples.³⁵

12 Since He had chosen a rebellious people and a young³⁶ tribe, who did not obey Him on account of their³⁷ weak judgement and crude understanding, and instead obeyed their [own] yearning for destruction because of their foolishness and hardness of their hearts; [they had] destroyed³⁸ their idea³⁹ of the remembrance of God, glory be to Him! and [their] adherence to His religion and acceptance of His Covenant because of the oppression⁴⁰ of the Egyptians and their own belief in the [Egyptian] idols, their depravity in worshipping them, their desire for [Egyptian] food and their [own] ignorance about the Holy Land to which they were called and its food, and its desirableness for them, [a tribe]who denied and rejected the religion [of the Egyptians] after it was shown in their presence to be true with various signs and diverse wonders, [because of this] He commanded the killing of those peoples who resisted the religion of God and He announced to [the Israelites His bestowal of] the favor of the Holy Land, in spite of their [previous] beliefs and their yearning for the Land of Egypt and its food.

The proof of this is the statement of God, may He be praised! to His intimate friend, Moses, when he begged Him to save the Sons of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh and from the error of his

³⁵ This account bears a strong resemblance to the story of Moses found in *Sura* 20:9-36, and especially verses 17-20.

³⁶ In comparison to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, etc.

³⁷ Arabic pronoun is singular, referring to 'tribe'.

³⁸ Literally, "killed".

³⁹ Or, contemplation.

⁴⁰ Graf: godlessness.

اليوم واظهاره لهم دينه وانزال كتابه عليهم بسننه وشرائعه على يده راحماً لهم هناك اذ يقول الرحيم لعبده موسى نظراً نظرت الى ذلة شعبي الساكن بارض مصر وسمعت ضجيجهم ونزلت بخلاصهم . فتعال ارسلك لذلك . فابتدى³⁵ موسى قائلاً من انا فى القدر لاعز فرعون وجنوده لخلاص بنى اسرائيل ولست بمستنبط القول لاتي امرء نزر كلامى ولسانى الثغ . فحمل ذلك من اردت تحميله .

13 قال الله لموسى يا موسى من خلق الفم واللسان او من اقام بصيرة الاعمى وجعل ناطقاً وخارساً . اليس بقدرتى . فانا معك وملهمك ومؤيدك . وقال له وما تلك بيمينك يا موسى وقال له عصاى . فقال له القها . فالقها فاذا هى حية ثعبان يسعى . فهال ذلك موسى فقال الله له اشد يدك به . ففعل ذلك موسى فصارت بيده عصا . ثم امره ان يستر يده بسرباله فسترها واظهرها وهى فى البياض كالثلج . وامره ان يسترها ثانية فاخرجها عائدة كجسده . فقوى موسى فى نفسه . وهنالك امره الله بجهاد فرعون الغاشم وجنوده وضربه اياهم بهذه العصا الحقيرة بانواع من الايات واصناف من الجرائح حجة قائمة بالغة فى العالم باسره لكى يتذكر او يخشى . فغرق بها فرعون وجنوده بعد قسوته وامتناعه من الاتباع بما نزل بهم من النقم . فاثبت بالايات دينه والاقرار به والمعرفة بآياته فى صدور بنى اسرائيل وابطل جميع

³⁵ Graf: read فابتدى

people, from his enslavement and oppression of them with every painful torment, and to reveal to them His religion and send down to them His book with His practices and His law⁴¹ by His [own] hand in mercy to them here [on this earth],⁴² when the Merciful One said to His servant Moses: “I have seen the humiliation of my people dwelling in the Land of Egypt, and I have heard their cries, and I have descended to save them. And so, I send you for this.” So Moses began speaking: “Who am I to be able to do something against the mightier Pharaoh and his armies for the salvation of the Sons of Israel?⁴³ I cannot devise [convincing] speech, for I am an insignificant man. My words and my tongue are defective. Give this task to someone whom You wish to burden with it.”

13 God said to Moses: “O Moses! Who created the mouth and tongue? Or Who gives sight to the blind and makes eloquent and dumb? Is it not in My power? I am with you and inspire you and stand by you.”⁴⁴ And He said to him: “What is this in your right hand, O Moses?” and he answered Him: “My staff.” Then He said to him: “Throw it [down]!” So he threw it down, and suddenly it became a snake, a moving serpent.⁴⁵ This terrified Moses, but God said to him: “Grasp it with your hand!”. So Moses did this, and it became a staff in his hand. Then He commanded him to hide his hand in his garment, and he hid it in it, and [then] showed it again, and it was white as snow. And He commanded him to hide it a second [time], then he drew it out [and] it had returned to being like his [own] flesh. So Moses was strengthened in himself.⁴⁶

Then God commanded him to fight against the Pharaoh and his armies, and to strike him and them with this paltry staff with various signs and [every] sort of wonders, as unshakable, far-reaching evidence for the whole world, so that they would remember [God] or fear [Him]. So with [the staff] He drowned Pharaoh and his army, as the punishment He sent down upon them, after [Pharaoh] hardened his [heart] and he had been prohibited from pursuing [the Israelites]. Through signs, [God] affirmed His religion and confession of it and

⁴¹ Arabic: *sunan* and *ṣarāʿi*

⁴² Cf. *Sura* 6:154

⁴³ Ex 3:7, 8, 10, 11

⁴⁴ Ex 4:10-12

⁴⁵ Cf. *Sura* 7:117

⁴⁶ Ex 4:2-4, 6-7; cf. *Sura* 20:18-21

شبهات وضلالات ما اتى به سحرة فرعون مكايده منه لموسى ولدعوته .
14 وذلك لاحتمال العصا السر الاعظم من العصا الاتية بالصليب المنقذ
 به اهل العالم . فهذه سنة الله جارئة فى الاولين والاخرين من اقامة دينه
 ونصب علمه وثبات حججه على خلقه تصحيح من الايات ويين من
 المعجزات التى لا يحيط بها عقل مخلوق ولا يقوم بذكرها قلب مبرى³⁶ لا
 بكثير الرأى وبلغ الكلام ولا بأس ونجدة كما وصفت .
 فاذا صار ذلك لم يحتاج³⁷ النصرانية الى المناضلة عليها واثباتها باصيل الرأى
 وبلغ المنطق لتقصيرها عن ادراك كنه حقها وبلوغ غاية صدقها بما وصفت
 قبل هذا الموضوع من ايضاح بلوغ غاية صدقها بالايات والعجائب التى اذلت
 صعاب الرقاب وذلت قاسية القلوب او لبس الادراك والوقوع على ذات
 الموصوف بعينه . فهل يسلم الرأى اعنى والقول جميعاً من الدرك . فعجز
 قولنا اذن وصف رأينا عن درك صفة ما لا درك لصفته والوقوع عليها بكنهها
 والمعرفة بذلك والاقرار به . دليل واضح وبرهان بين على دليل قولنا
 وصواب منطقنا الذى قلناه عن ائمة النصرانية واحتملناه من كتب الله
 القديمة والحديثة المحققة دعوتها بما وصفنا من الايات والعجائب من غير
 رأى ولا قياس .
15 واذا سئلنا عن بعض قولنا فى الله سبحانه من امر التثليث والتوحيد

³⁶ Graf: read مبروء ³⁷ Graf: read يحتج

the knowledge of His signs in the hearts of the Sons of Israel, and He thwarted all of the doubts and errors which sorcerers of Pharaoh gave to them, turning them against Moses and his proclamation.

14 And this [occurred] because the staff [of Moses] bore the greatest *mysterion* of the staff which was to come in the Cross, through which the people of the world would be delivered. For this is the customary practice⁴⁷ of God, from the first to the last [peoples], in the establishment of His religion and erecting His banner and affirming His proof for His creation: correction through signs and clarification through miracles, which are not comprehended by creaturely understanding and are not located in the memory of a created heart,⁴⁸ [it is] not in the many opinions, nor eloquent speech, nor the strength and courage [of human beings], as I have described.

Since this has happened, it is not justified to battle⁴⁹ Christianity and to remain firm [against it] with unswerving opinions and eloquent speech, because they are incapable of attaining the essence of its truth and reaching the utmost limit of its veracity, as I have [already] described before this. [In fact,] the place [where] the elucidation [necessary] to reach the utmost limit of its veracity [is found] is in the signs and wonders which humble obstinate difficulties [in the search for the truth] and overcome hardness of heart or uncertain comprehension and perception of a being which is being described in itself. Can an opinion, that is, [any] statement, be certain [and] complete in comprehension? Our statement (that is, a description of our opinion), is incapable of attaining a description of something whose description cannot be attained, nor the perception of it in its essence or the knowledge of this or the confession of it.

A clear indication and an evident proof confirming our teaching and the correctness of what we say is what we have said about the leaders of Christianity and what we have taken from the Old and New Books of God, which confirms the truth of their proclamation by what we have described of the signs and wonders, without [resorting to] opinion or analogy.

15 If someone asks us about [any] part of our teaching about God, may He be praised! concerning the Trinity and the Unity, and

⁴⁷ Arabic: *sunna*.

⁴⁸ The heart as the location of the mind.

⁴⁹ Here meant in the figurative, not military, sense.

وامر التجسد والتأنس وغير ذلك من صفاته فاجنبنا³⁸ برأى او قياس او حجة من كتاب فوقع قريباً من البغية واقنع السائل فى جوابه شكرنا الله على ذلك وان الفى بعيداً منها غير ملائم لها فى جميع انحائه او جلها فذلك جميل هو على صدق صفته فى قوله ان تصفىنى الواصفون فلا ينال العقول .

نعنى فى ذلك قد سهل علينا جوابك وجواب غيرك . فان وقع ما عسى ان نجيبك به موافقاً شانياً فذلك من الله له الحمد وحده . وان قصرنا عن رجائك وخالفنا ظنك فيما طمعت فيه منا والتمسته لدينا فجدير انت ان ترم ذلك بعقلك وتتغمضه بشرفك وتركن فيه الى حسن الظن بمودتك .

فالمذموم لعمرى من بخل بما عنده وان قل والعجز عند بذل الكلام . وهذا حين صرت الى جوابك ومرادك ان شاء الله تعالى .

16 قال مخالفونا يا معشر النصارى وصفتم الله الهة ثلاثة لاثباتكم ايه اقانيم ثلاثة وواحداً فرداً فى العدد . ووصفنا اياها بما هو ملائم لها فى جميع انحاء جوهرها وماهيتها . فاعلم يا اخى انهم على احدى منزلتين لا محالة . اما قوم لم يعرف مذهب قولنا وغرض نحلتنا . فيعذروا فى وصفهم ايانا بغير ما نحن عليه لجهلهم به وان حاز ان يعذر³⁹ احد على الجهل . واما قوم اوضحوا بالفرق بعلم ومعرفة من غير اكرثا ولا حرج . فيلزمهم من العيب والشنعة ما لا يحتاج الى جوابهم اذ كان يلزمهم فى اعتقادهم واحداً فرداً

يعذرا S³⁹ نالجينا S³⁸

the matter of the Incarnation and becoming human, and anything else about His attributes, and we answer with a deductive proof or an analogy or evidence from a book, and if [the answer] happens to approach the goal and the questioner is happy with the answer [given to] him, then we thank God for this! If it is found, [however], to be far from [the goal], not appropriate for [the question] in all or most respects, this is [still] good and holds true for His predication, for according to His statement: “The understanding of the one who describes Me with descriptions is not capable of succeeding.”⁵⁰

We mean by this that it is easy to give you and others an answer. For if it happens that what we might answer you is appropriate and suitable,⁵¹ then this is from God alone, may He be praised! And if we are short of your expectation and we fail in your opinion in what you had hoped for and requested from us, then it behooves you to rectify this with your [own] understanding, to ignore [the shortcomings of the answer] out of your honor, and to trust in the good will [of the one answering] out of your amicability.

It is reprehensible, by my life! for one to be stingy with what he has and even worse is the one who is incapable of spending words. So, these [conditions are what] I will insist upon for your answers and your desires, if God wills!

16 Our opponents say: “O Christian people! You describe God as three gods,⁵² in that you affirm [God is] three *hypostaseis* and a single one in number.” [But in reality] we describe [the *hypostaseis*] by what is appropriate to them in all of the relations of their *ousia* and their quiddity. Know, O my brothers, it is inevitable that [these people who oppose us] fall into one of two categories. Either [they are] people who do not know the content of our doctrine and the purpose of our faith ([and then] they can be forgiven in their ascription to us of something other than what [we hold], because they are ignorant of it, for it is permitted to forgive someone for ignorance), or they are people who, in [their] difference [with us] exhibit knowledge and learning without careful attention or constraint, and they are necessarily at fault and disgraceful, so one does not need to give them an answer, as [for example] when they require it [in

⁵⁰ Cf., *Sura* 21:22; 23:93, etc.

⁵¹ Text unclear.

⁵² Cf., *Sura* 4:171; 5:73

بقولهم ذلك من غير فحص ولا تفتيش . ولو تبيّنوا ذلك لما نطقوا بشيء من هذا وقد يجدوا⁴⁰ فى القياس اذا هم الطفوا النظر وناصحوا بالشفقة انفسهم سبباً لما وصفنا فى بعض وجوهه لا فى كلها .

17 فحد القياس المستعمل من ذوى المعرفة فضلاً عن صفة الله له الحمد المعتلية عن كل صفة موصوفة الارواح والاجسام جميعاً . واذ غرضنا ذكر القياس وعظمت حاجتنا الى استعماله فى ايضاح قولنا لمن التمس ذلك منا وجب علينا الاجتهاد والمبالغة فى تصحيحه من امكن الاشياء واقربها مأخذ⁴¹ وان بعد ذلك واستصعب لبعده من الاشياء المقيس فيه فى كل انحائه .

فقد ينبغى لمن تقلد ذلك ان يشتقّ قياساً بجمعه من اشياء شتى تقنع السائل فى ملائمته للمتخذ له قياساً للعجز الواحد منها عن بلوغ صفة الملتمس له قياساً وللوسائل ان يقبله اشد القبول وان لم يجد ذلك فى اصول الاشياء . ان الملتمس له قياساً يعلوا⁴² على كل قياس موجود من المعقول والمحسوس كما وصفنا .

18 فما قولكم فى مصابيح ثلاثة يوقد ضوءها اعنى لا ذات المصابيح اعينها . او احد هو خاصة او ثلاثة فقط او واحد وثلاثة جميعاً معاً . فان قالوا هو واحد خاصة اى معدود واحد لا ثلاثة فى الضوء قلنا لم نعد الضوء كله لبعض المصابيح الذى لا يجاوز فى اخراج ضوءه خاصة غيره من المصابيح فلسنا نراه يغادر ضوءه شيئاً ولا يسلب غيره من المصابيح خروجه والخارج ايضاً ضوء كامل فى الذات لا بعض الضوء .

⁴⁰ Graf: read يجدون ⁴¹ Graf: read مأخذاً ⁴² Graf: read يعلو

response to] their confession of the One alone, with neither [their own] examination nor investigation into their teaching on this. If they wish to clarify this [teaching], why do they articulate it in this [manner]? If they made a careful investigation and were sincerely concerned for themselves,⁵³ they would find in the analogy [we offer] a basis for what we have described in some of its aspects, [if] not in all of them.

17 The term ‘analogy’ is used by those having knowledge besides for the exalted predication of God, glory be to Him! for every attribute predicated of spirits and corporeal beings in general. And if our goal is to present the analogy, and our need for its use increases in an explanation of our teaching to the one requests this from us, then effort and intense [care] in its correct [application] are necessary for us [in order to find] the best possible things [to use for the analogy] and the simplest approach, even if this is far removed and is considered to be difficult, on account of its distance from the things that are compared to it in all of its relations.

Now, the one who seeks to take this on must derive an analogy by gathering it together from various different things [so that] it satisfies the questioner in its appropriateness for that which an analogy is used, because one [thing] is incapable of attaining a [complete] description of that for which the analogy is sought, and [so] the questioner must accept it wholeheartedly, even if he does not find this [completeness] in the elements of the things [compared]. For that for which the analogy is sought is above every analogy found among what is intelligible and perceptible, as we have [already] described.

18 What do you say about three lamps whose light has been ignited (I do not mean the being of the lamps themselves): is it one particular [light] or only three [lights] or one and three together? If they say: “It is one particular, that is, counted as one, not three, in light”, we say: We do not count the light of all of them to [a single] one of the lamps which, in emitting its light, does not have [anything] particular apart from the [other] lamps. Nor do we see that its light takes something away, or deprives the other lamps of their [own] emission [of light]. And the emitting of light is also perfect in being, not [just] a part of the light.

⁵³ I.e., for the correctness of their own search for truth.

فان قالوا ثلثة قلنا فكيف ذلك وليس بينهم اختلاف فى الضوء والانارة ولا تباين فى المكان . بل هى ملائمة فى جميع حالاتها المستوجبة بها الضوء ليعلموا ان الضوء الموصوف واحد وهو ثلثة جميعاً معاً . اما واحد ففى ماهية الضوء وجوهه واما ثلثة ففى العدد الواقع على ذات المصايح الخاص اللازم لكل واحد منها .

19 كذلك القول فى الله سبحانه وله الحمد . بل افضل من ذلك بان لاشبه ولا مقدار واحد فى الجوهر والازلية والعلم والقوة والمجد والعظمة وغير ذلك من الصفات الجوهريات وثلثة فى الاقانيم جميعاً معاً هو بعينه لقوام ذاته خاصة لكل واحد منها . وثبوت خاصته مع توحيده والثامة بغيره من الاقانيم وانفراده بها واستدلال الواقع بها عليه دون غيره من الاقانيم المتحد بها سوى ذلك من انحاء الصفات الدالّة على جوهره ما لا سبيل ان يوجد فى غيره مثله البتة كما وصفنا .

20 فان قالوا ان الضوء الذى وصفتم هو وصف اكثر وتوحيد جميعاً من قول عام فيه من انه ضوء واضواء وكل واحد منها قائم بعينه غير مضاف اليه غيره او يضاف بعضها الى بعض . فما الحائل بينكم وان⁴³ تصفوا هذه الاقانيم التى ذكرتم الالهة وان كان كل واحد منها علة نفسه قائم من غير ان يضاف الى غيره من الاقانيم وهذا خلاف قولكم بعينه اباً وابناً وروح قدس⁴⁴ . فهل بعض هذه الضواء تضاف الى غيرها من الضوء كاصافتكم بعض هذه الاقانيم الى بعض وتسميتكم اياها اباً وابناً وروح قدس⁴⁵ .

روحاً قدساً⁴⁵ Graf: read قدساً⁴⁴ . روحاً قدساً⁴⁴ Graf: read قدساً⁴³ S ان

Now if they say: “[It is] three [lights]”, we say: Why is this? There is no difference among them in the light and the illumination, and no separation in the place [of the light]. Rather, what is necessary for light is proper [to them] in all of their states. So they should know that the light described is one and three together [simultaneously]: one with regard to the quiddity of the light and its *ousia*, and three with regard to the number applicable to the being of the particular lamps necessary for each one of [the lights].⁵⁴

19 This is like the teaching about God, may He be praised and glory be to Him! but more excellent than this, because [for Him] there is no likeness nor measure: [God is] one in *ousia*, eternity,⁵⁵ knowledge, power, honor, majesty, and substantial attributes other than these, and [God is] simultaneously three in *hypostaseis* in Himself because of the mode of being proper to each one of them. What is proper [to each *hypostasis*] is constant in its union and harmony with the other *hypostaseis*, as well as in its uniqueness and its individuality apart from them. And the demonstration [that this is correct is that] the application [of the individual property] to [one of the *hypostaseis*] to the exclusion of the [other] united *hypostaseis* is the same as this in the relations of the indicative attributes to its *ousia*, although it is absolutely not possible that one find in anything else His likeness, as we have described.⁵⁶

20 They may say: “The light which you describe, is it a plurality and a unity together, [so that] one speaks of it generally as ‘light’ and ‘lights’? [Either] each one of them stands alone without a relationship to another, or they are related, one to the others. What prevents you from describing these *hypostaseis* which you have presented as ‘God’ and ‘gods’? If each one of them is a cause in itself and stands [alone], without being related to the other *hypostaseis*, then this contradicts your statement itself [that they are] Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Is one of these lights related to the other as you have related one of the *hypostaseis* to the other, and which you have named Father, Son and Holy Spirit?”

⁵⁴ I.e., ‘one’ refers to the light itself, and ‘three’ refers to the particular number of the sources of light necessary to produce the light.

⁵⁵ Eternal being.

⁵⁶ There is a great deal of similarity between Abū Rā’īṭah’s explanation of the relationship between the *ousia* and the *hypostaseis* and that found in Basil’s *Ep.* 236.6 (*PG* 32, col. 884).

قلنا ترانا انتفعنا فى تقديم تلخيصنا وشرحنا نعت القياس لكم كثير بشىء⁴⁶ اذ صرتم تلتمسون قياساً للسماء وارتفاعها وطولها على ما هو دونها بمنزلة السقف او الخباء فنسئل عن الفلك الدائر والنجوم هل نجده فى السقف والخباء المضروبين له قياساً ايها الحكيم . كان سوى سوى⁴⁷ فى جميع الحال المقيس به ولم يخالفه . فاذا كان اذ هو الشىء بعينه لا قياس له . فانما اتخذنا الضوء قياساً مقنعاً فى بعض انحائه فى توحيدِه وتثليثه جميعاً معاً كما وصفنا من الله سبحانه عندنا جوهرأ واحداً اقانيم ثلاثة جميعاً معاً لا فى اضافة بعضها الى بعض وتسميتها باكثر وتوحيد جميعاً الضوء اعنى والاضواء . لا يلزمنا فى هذا القول الهة والاه وارباب ورب كما ظننتم .

21 فاذ وجدنا فى اصول الاشياء المعقولة المفهومة شيئاً واحداً يحتمل كلا الصفتيم . وذلك فى بعض انحائه واحداً اعنى وثلاثة جميعاً من غير ان يستحيل القول فيه . وجب علينا فى سائر الانحاء الموجودة فيه المخالفة لغيره ما شرح سبب ذلك وعلمه الى حقه وصدقه .

واعلم يا اخى ان من الاشياء الواقعة على الاشياء ما يقال على قسمين احدها واقع على جوهر الشىء وماهيته المشترك فيه الجميع المتجزأ⁴⁸ منه بلا زيادة ولا نقصان على قدره وتقطيعه . المباين به نظراءه فى الجوهر الموصوف به⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Graf: شىء . ⁴⁷ Graf: read سواءً سواءً . ⁴⁸ Graf: read المتجزئ . ⁴⁹ Error in Graf: تفضيعه .

We say: Have we [not] shown and been successful in the summary and explanation of the terms of the analogy we offered to you? [There are] many things for which you might persist in requesting an analogy—[for example], heaven and its heights and its size—from what is beneath them in rank—a roof or a tent. So we ask you about the rotating heavenly bodies and the stars: do we find in a roof or [even] in a large tent an analogy for them, o Wise One? In the general case of what is used as an analogy, a likeness is equal to it and is not different from it; when, however, it [concerns] the thing in itself, there is no analogy for it.⁵⁷

We have only taken the light as a sufficient analogy in the partial similarity of its unity and its threeness simultaneously, as we have described concerning God, may He be praised! according to [our teaching] as one *ousia* and three *hypostaseis* simultaneously, not [as an analogy] in the relationship of some of them to the other or in the naming of the plurality and unity of [them] together (that is, the light and the lights). It is not necessary for us in this teaching [to speak of] gods and God, or lords and Lord, as you think.

21 When we have found something among the elements of the things that can be known and understood that can carry at least two attributes, and this is in part similar to it, that is one and three simultaneously, without it being an absurd statement, it is necessary for us [to provide] for the remaining aspects present in [the thing], which are different from that other [thing to which it is being compared] that has been presented, a reason for [the difference] and to instruct [the listener] on its truth and its correctness.

Know, o my brother, that one can make two sorts of statements about things that are applied to [other] things.⁵⁸ The first [of these] is applied to the *ousia* of the thing and its quiddity: everything that is a component of [the thing] participates in it, without increase or decrease in its measure or its members. What are distinguished in this [category are other things that] correspond to [the thing described]

⁵⁷ Here Abū Rāʾīṭah is reiterating a point he makes elsewhere (*On the Trinity* 19) that an analogy is only useful from the perspective of the general point it is trying to illustrate, and cannot be taken to be identical in its particulars, as, for example, the analogy of the heavens as a tent does not account for the movement of the celestial bodies.

⁵⁸ I.e., names or designations given to existent things.

علينا كقول القائل حى وانسان .

والاخر على تقطيعه وامتيازه بعينه غير مشارك له فى الجوهر ويوصف به
بخاصة كقول القائل سعد وخالد بالخاص منها منسوب باسم العام لمشاركته
فى الواقع عليه بكماله من غير نقصان . قاما العام بان ينسب باسم الخاص
لانه بحالة القول فيه لا . بل قد يوصف سعد وخالد حياً وانساناً وذلك كذاك
ولا يوصف الحى والانسان بارسال سعداً وخالداً لما فيه من الشنعة
والكذب .

22 فاذا قد بيننا اسم العام والخاص جميعاً فلننظر فى كل معنى كل واحد
منهما فى وقوعه على الشىء المقول عليه . هل يجوز استعمال العام منها
باكثر او توحيد على الانفراد او جميعاً كما وصفوا ام لا . فانسان اسم واقع
على جوهر وانسان وحده بلا زيادة ولا نقصان . فاذا صار الناس كلها اعنى
الاشخاص جوهرأً واحداً اسمه الانسان لم يصح تسميتهم باكثر ايضاً اى
الناس والا صار معنى ذلك جوهرأً واستحال الكلام وصار الموصوف كذباً .
كذلك الضوء الموصوف منا قياساً هو اسم جوهر الضوء . فان يصح⁵⁰ ان
يوصف ضوءاً واضواء فانما صار يعنى ذلك جوهر وهذا المحال بعينه ان
يكون جوهرأً واحداً⁵¹ جواهر شتى كما وصفنا .

واحداً⁵¹ Graf: read واحد⁵⁰ S انصح

in *ousia* (which we have [already] described), as when one says “living” and “human being”.

The other [kind of statement describes each individual] member and its differentiation in itself, not what is has in common [with other things] in the *ousia*. [The thing] is described by a [specific] property, as when one says “Sa’d” and “Hālīd”. What is peculiar about [the thing] is related to the name of the general [category], because of its real participation in [the general category] entirely, without decrease [to itself].⁵⁹ [However,] substituting [the name of] the general [category] with the name of the specific [property], so that it’s position is changed in the statement, no, [that is not possible]. Rather, “Sa’d” and “Hālīd” are described as “living” and “human being”, and this is so, but “the living” and “the human being” are not described conversely as “Sa’d” and “Hālīd”, because there would be ugliness and falsehood in [this].

22 Now, when we have clarified the name of the general and of the specific completely, let us examine the meaning of each of them in its application to the thing of which it is said. Is it permissible to employ the general [category] with a plurality [of things] or a single [thing], with the individual or a group, as we have described, or not? For “human being” is a name applied to the *ousia* [of a human being], as well as to one [individual] human being, without increase or decrease. Now, although all human beings, that is, the individuals, are one *ousia* whose name is “human being”, it is not correct to name [the individual] also as a plurality, that is, as “human beings”, otherwise the meaning of [the name of the individual] would be “*ousia*”, and the word would be changed and what is described would become a falsehood.⁶⁰ This is the same with our description of the light as an analogy: [our analogy refers to] the name of the *ousia* of the light. If it were permissible to describe “light” and “lightnesses”, this would, on the contrary, mean the *ousia*, and this is impossible in itself, that one *ousia* be various different *ousiae*, as we have described.⁶¹

⁵⁹ I.e., the specific property (tall, female) is related to the general category (human being) because to be tall or female does not make one less human.

⁶⁰ The *ousia* is not a plurality, only specific individuals can be many. See Aristotle, *Categories* 5, esp. 3b34-4b19.

⁶¹ Abū Rā’īṭah means here that in the analogy “light” refers to the *ousia*, which is only one, not to the individual sources of the light, which are three. Therefore, it is incorrect to argue the individuals are “gods”, since the divine *ousia* is one.

23 هذا فى الخلق الذى الخطاء فيه يسير رده خفيف . فاما ان يخطر ذلك فى الله جل وعز الذى غير الخطاء فى صفته زيادة كانت ام نقصاناً يفضى عن النعيم ويقرب الى العذاب . فاسم الله له الحمد اسم جوهر بذوات⁵² القانيم الثلاثة بلا زيادة ولا نقصان . وهذه الاقانيم جوهر واحد لا جواهر . فلن يجوز وصفنا باكثر اى الهة بل واحداً كقولنا فى الشمس انها ذات ثلاثة اشخاص ذاتية وصفات جوهرية بغير تباين ولا افتراق من جوهرها الواحد المقول على صحة وجودها وانفرادها بوحدانيتها شمساً واحدة ذات جوهر واحد مدروكة ثلاثة خواص معروفة اعنى القرص الذى هو الموصوف بالصفتين⁵³ الجوهريتين⁵⁴ التى هما النور والحرارة منذ لم تزل بهما موصوفاً انه لم يزل والد النور مولداً متساوياً بوجود القرص قديماً بقدمه بلا زمان سابق لوجود احدهما قبل غيره .

كذلك والحرارة منبثقة منه فى النور المولود منه ازلها بازلته قديماً بقدمه . ليس القرص النور ولا النور الحرارة بامتياز الوجود الخاص لكل واحد من القرص والنور والحرارة بل جوهر واحد وطبع واحد وقدرة واحدة ثلاثة خواص مدروكة شمساً واحدة معروفة .

24 فاذا كان ذلك ممكناً⁵⁵ من المخلوقات المصنوعات فهل ينكر ذلك فى الخالق الصانع جل ذكره كما وصف ذاته بوجوده حياً ناطقاً بحياة ازلية ونطق جوهرى . نطقه مولود منه ازل من لم يزل وحياته منبثقة منه بلا زمان ثلاثة خواص ذاتية اى اقانيم جوهرية اباً والداً لكلمته منذ لم يزل وابناً مولوداً بلا

52 S بذواة 53 S بصفته 54 Graf: read اللتان 55 S مملكتاً

23 This is the case with creatures, in which the error in [the argument] can be easily refuted. However, applying this to God, exalted and powerful, Who is without error in His description, be it an increase or a decrease, leads [one] away from blessing and towards chastisement. For the name of God, glory be to Him! is the name of the *ousia* with the beings of three *hypostaseis*, without increase or decrease. These *hypostaseis* are one *ousia*, not *ousiae*.

It is not permissible for us to describe [the *ousia*] as a plurality, that is as “gods”, but rather [only] as one, as we say about the sun, for it is a being of three existent individuals and [three] substantial attributes, without difference or separation from their one *ousia*. [It is] that which is called “one sun” because of its genuine existence and uniqueness in its singularity, a being, one *ousia*, comprehending three known properties, that is, the sun disc which is described with two substantial attributes, which are the light and the heat, since [the sun] does not cease to be described with the two [attributes], in that it does not cease to generate the light, [which is] generated simultaneously with the existence of the sun disc from before time, without one of [the attributes] having existed prior to the other two.

This is the same with the heat: it proceeds from [the sun disc] in the light generated from it eternally and before time. The sun disc is not the light and the light is not the heat, on account of the differentiation of the specific existence belonging to each one (the sun disc, the light and the heat). Rather, [it is] one *ousia*, one nature, one power and three properties, comprehended and known as one sun.

24 Now if this is possible of things created and made, should this be denied of the Creator and Maker, Whose remembrance is exalted? In this way, His being is described by His existence as living and speaking, with life eternal and a substantial word.⁶² His word is begotten from Himself from eternity without ceasing, and His life proceeds from Him without time: three existent properties (that is, three substantial *hypostaseis*), a Father, Who begets His Word cease-

⁶² It is unusual for Abū Rā’īṭah to use the Arabic *نطق* instead of *كلام* for “word” or “speech”. His choice may be meant to imply the philosophical connotations of *نطق* and its connection to the rational principle of the *logos*, rather than the *Qur’ānic* Word of God.

زمان وروحاً منبثقاً منه بغير درك الالهة واحداً ورباً واحداً وجوهراً واحداً .
 فاما اضافة الابن والروح الى الاب فاضافة جوهرية لم تنزل لان الاب علة ازلية
 للابن والروح . لانهما منه على اختلاف خواصهما لا هو منهما من غير
 تقديم ولا تاخير كاملين من كامل ازليين من ازلى لاتفاق كل واحد منهم مع
 الاخر فى كل انحاء جوهرها وماهيتها كاضافة هابيل وحوى الى ادم الذين⁵⁶
 هما منه كاملن من كامل جوهر واحد ثلثة اقانيم مفردة كل واحد منهم
 بخاصيته اللازمة له منسوب بها اعنى الابوة والبنوة والانبثاق مع التثامها
 وتوحيدها جميعاً فى الجوهر . وكما ان ادم وحوى وهابيل كل واحد منهم اذا
 توهل بخصيصة ذاتية الانسان فهو انسان كامل حقاً له حدّ الانسان بكماله
 وهو حقاً حياً ناطقاً مائتاً وثلاثتها انسان واحد ايضاً اي جوهر واحد .

25 كذلك القول فى الله سبحانه كل واحد من الاقانيم الثلاثة اذ هو توهل
 بخصيصة ذاته الهه كامل لا بعض ولا جزو⁵⁷ وثلثتها ايضاً الهه واحد اي جوهر
 واحد من غير ان يلحقها تباين فى المكان لعموم ذاتها ولامتزاج جوهرها
 ولاختلاط طبعها . ليست كالاكسام ولا الاجساد المتباينة المتفرقة اذ هي
 ليست بجسد ولا جسم .

وهذا بعض تحقيق قولنا فى توحيد الله له الحمد وتثليثه بقدر ما يمكن من
 القياس المخلوق المبصر المحدود اعنى الضوء وادم وهابيل وحوى

⁵⁶ Graf: read اللذان ⁵⁷ Graf: read جزء

lessly, and a Son, Who is begotten without time, and a Spirit, Who proceeds from Him, without interruption, One God, one Lord, one *ousia*.

As for the relationship of the Son and the Spirit to the Father, it is a substantial, unceasing relationship, because the Father is the eternal cause of the Son and the Spirit, for they are from Him (in spite of the difference of their properties), He is not from them, without being earlier or later [in time], two perfects from a perfect, two eternal from an eternal, because of the identity of each one of them with the others in every way with their *ousia* and their quiddity. [This is] like the relationship of Abel and Eve to Adam,⁶³ who were from him: two perfects from a perfect, one *ousia*, three *hypostaseis*, each one of them differentiated by its particular inherent properties and related through them, that is, fatherhood, sonship and proceeding, completely together in their harmony and their unity in the *ousia*. And just as it is the case that Adam and Even and Abel, when each one of them is regarded [from the perspective] of the existent characteristic of “human being”, [each] is in truth a perfect human being, [fulfilling] the definition of “human being” completely. [Each] is truly living, speaking, mortal, and the three of them are also [only] one human being, that is one *ousia*.

25 This is the same as the teaching about God, may He be praised!: each one of the three *hypostaseis*, when it is regarded [from the perspective] of the characteristic of His being is perfectly God, not a part or a component [of God], and the three of them are also one God, that is, one *ousia* (without their being affected with separation in place⁶⁴), because of [the] generality of their being, the mixing of their *ousia*, and [the] commonality of their nature. [However,] they are not like corporeal things nor like bodies, which are separated and divided, since they do not have a body or flesh.

This is part of the substantiation of our teaching about the unity and trinity of God, glory be to Him! in as much as an analogy is possible from what is created, visible, and limited, that is, [an analogy

⁶³ Abū Rāʿīṭah is the only Arab Christian writer from this period known to cite this analogy, which is found frequently in the Fathers, especially, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus. Haddad, *Trinité*, 122-123.

⁶⁴ To be an individual is to occupy a specific place, which Abū Rāʿīṭah emphasizes here is not a characteristic of God.

والشمس لمن يكوّن قياساً وعلى قدر احتمال العقل المخلوق العاجز عن الوقوع على صفة خاصته فضلاً عن بعده من الوقوع على بعض صفات الله له الحمد .

26 وقد يجب علينا ان نتبع القول في القياس في توحيد الله سبحانه له الحمد وتثليثه بنبوات وشهادات وايات من كتب الله المنزلة القديمة والحديثة تصديقاً لقولنا وتعريفاً لمن يخالفنا معشر النصارى . انا لم نبدع ولم نلفظ بما لم ينزل به كتاب وحملته الانبياء والابرار القديمة والرسل المبشرون بالحديث حكاية منهم عن الله الذى اوحى اليهم اسراره وحملهم باذنه ذلك وشرحه كل واحد منهم لاهل عصره⁵⁸ وزمانه على قدر احتمالهم قبول الاسرار .

27 قال نجى الله في كتابه التورية ان الله له الحمد قال عند خلقه لادم لنخلق انساناً كصورتنا وشبهنا . فبلى⁵⁹ بالتوحيد اذ وصف بان الله قل وختم بالتثليث بقوله كصورتنا مثالنا . ومن قوله ان ادم قد صار كاحدنا شبيهاً بالقول الاول على تثليثه وتوحيده . وقوله ايضاً ان الله قال عند اجتماع الناس كلهم فى بابل والتماسهم بناء الصرح لتضايق الارض عليهم تعالوا ننزل

⁵⁸ Written above دهره ⁵⁹ Graf: read بدأ

with] light, and Adam, Abel and Eve, and the sun, for One Who brings analogy into being, and in proportion to what the created and weak [human] intellect can bear in order to arrive at a proper attribute [of God], aside from the fact that [the intellect] is far from reaching [even] a part of God's attributes, glory be to Him!

26 Now it is necessary for us to pursue the teaching of the analogy for the unity of God, may He be praised! glory be to Him! and His trinity in the prophecies and witnesses and signs of the old and new Books of God that have been sent down, as a verification of our teaching and instruction for the one who disputes us, the Christian community. Truly, we do not innovate,⁶⁵ nor express anything which was not sent down in a Book and which the prophets and the ancient pious ones and the Apostles, the messengers of the new [Covenant] passed on themselves concerning God, Who revealed to them His mysteries and charged them with [passing them on], by His permission,⁶⁶ and each one of them explained⁶⁷ [the teaching] to the people of his age and time, in as much as they were able to accept the mysteries.

27 The intimate friend⁶⁸ of God said in his book, the Torah, that God, glory be to Him! said at the creation of Adam: "Let Us create a human being in Our image and Our likeness."⁶⁹ [Moses] began with the unity, when he explained that "God said", and concluded with the trinity in his statement: "in Our image and Our likeness." And [in another place] is his statement that: "Adam has become like one of Us",⁷⁰ similar to the first statement concerning [God's] trinity and His unity. Also, [in the Torah] is his statement that God said when all of the people had gathered in Babel and sought to build the tower, because the land was [too] restrictive for them, "Truly,

⁶⁵ Probably in response to the charge in *Sura* 57:25-27 that Christians have innovated in their religion.

⁶⁶ Revelation, miracles, punishment, victory and death all occur, according to the *Qur'an*, by God's permission (cf. 2:97; 3:49; 2:102, 249, 251; 3:145, 166; 4:64; etc.).

⁶⁷ Interpretation of scripture is a legitimate exercise, when God opens the hearts of the prophets and messengers to its true meaning (cf. a similar idea in *Sura* 16:106; 29:22; 94:1; 6:125; 20:25).

⁶⁸ Moses

⁶⁹ Gen 1:26; that Adam is only a creature, cf. *Sura* 20:116-123

⁷⁰ Gen 3:22; cf. *Sura* 2:30-39; 7:19-25

ونفرق هناك الالسن . دل بذلك على كلتي صفتيه تثليثه وتوحيده .
ومن قوله ايضاً عندما ترايا⁶⁰ الله لعبده ابراهيم عند باب خيمته ترايا⁶¹ الله
له ممثلاً رجلاً ثلاثة فبادر ابراهيم نحوهم وخرّ ساجداً لهم قائلاً يا رب ان⁶²
كنت لديك مرحوماً فلا تعدل عن النزول بعبدك لآت⁶³ بقليل من الماء
واغسل ارجلكم . المخبر منه لابراهيم بانه حقاً واحد وثلاثة . وغير ذلك من
قول موسى ما لو تكلفنا كتابته لخرج بنا اتساع الكلام وكثرته عن الجواب .
28 ثم ان داوود النبي حقق قوله بان الكلمة ذات قائمة الاله حق من الاله حق
لا كلام منتقض اذ يقول في قوله لربه بانك ربنا ابداً قائمة كلمتك موجودة في
السماء . وقوله ايضاً لكلمة الله اسبح . فالكلمة اذاً الاله حق مستوجب
التسبيح من داوود وغيره من الخلائق .
فضلاً عن قول المسيح سبحانه لتلاميذته ورسله عند ارساله اياهم لدعوة
الحق المبطله ذكر الالهة الكثيرة وعبادتها مبشرين داعين الى الله الواحد اذ
يقول لهم الحميد اذهبوا وبشروا الناس كافة وطهروهم باسم الاب والابن
والروح القدس وانا معكم الى انصرام الدنيا .
فذلك صفة لم تزل ولا تزال كتمت عن الاولين لعجزهم عن الوقوع على

60 Graf: read تراءى 61 Graf: read تراءى 62 انت S 63 Graf: read لآتى

let Us descend and divide the languages there.”⁷¹ With this He indicated both of His attributes, His trinity and His unity.

Also is [Moses’] statement: When God appeared to His servant Abraham at the door of his tent, God appeared to him in the form of three men,⁷² and Abraham hastened toward them and prostrated himself, before them, saying: “O Lord, if I have [found] mercy before you, do not turn from staying [a while] with your servant. I shall bring a little water, and I shall wash your feet.”⁷³ From [this] it was made known to Abraham that He is truly one and three. And there are statements of Moses other than these, but if we were to take up [the task of] writing them down, the extent of the sayings and their great [number] would draw us away from the answer [we wish to give].

28 Then, David, the Prophet, verified [Moses’] statement, that the Word [of God] is a [self-]existent being, true God from true God, not an inconsistent⁷⁴ Word, when he said in speaking to his Lord: “You are our eternal Lord, Your existent Word is present in heaven.”⁷⁵ And also his statement: “To the Word of God I give praise.”⁷⁶ The Word is, then, true God, deserving the praise of David and other creatures.

In addition is what the Messiah, may He be praised! said to His disciples and His Apostles when He sent them to proclaim the truth, [and] abolish the invocation of many gods and worship of them, to announce and proclaim the One God, when He, the Praiseworthy, said to them: “Go and announce [the Good News] to all people, and purify⁷⁷ them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and I am with you until the end of the world.”⁷⁸

This description [of God as three and one], (as well as other things which God, glory be to Him! made known), which has never ceased and does not cease [to be true], was hidden from the fore-

⁷¹ Gen 11:7

⁷² Cf. *Sura* 11:69-73; 15:51-56; 51:24-30

⁷³ Gen 18:1-3

⁷⁴ Abū Rā’īṭah probably intends a double meaning here, both the inconsistency of human speech, and the Islamic idea that plurality is inconsistent with a definition of ‘God’.

⁷⁵ Ps 119:89

⁷⁶ Ps 56:10

⁷⁷ I.e., baptize.

⁷⁸ Mt 28:19

معناها وغير ذلك مما الله له الحمد اعلم به وظهرت للاخرين ليكملهم فى العلم والمعرفة ولما لطف وذق فى المعنى الموجود فيهم من القول والايمان به واليها دعوا التلاميذ تفریقاً منهم من تابعهم⁶⁴ وبين غيرهم ممن وصف الله لعزیز صفته وبها حققوا دعوتهم الصحيحة اقتداراً منهم على الايات الغير محصى عددها والجرائح كلهم كما وصفنا .

فهذا فى اول مسائلهم كاف لكيلا يطول القول فيه فيمل لكثرتة .

29 فاما قولهم ما الذى دعا الله سبحانه الى التجسد والتانس افما كان يمكنه خلاص البشر من غير ذلك .

فاعلم يا اخى ان الذى دعا الله تبارك اسمه الى التجسد والتانس بقدر ما يختص عقلها الضعيف والذى قلناه عن كتب الله وحملتها بصلاحه وجوده وتفضله على خلقه وامتنانه عليهم بحسب⁶⁵ حاجتهم الى ذلك منه وعظيم رحمته لهم لارتطامهم كانوا فى الهلكة والميتة ونشره لهم وتجديده خلقهم المتملك عليهم كل البلاء لاشتمال انواع الحظية عليهم عامة .

فاحق من تولى تجديدهم اولاً واخيراً الذى خلقهم بدياً⁶⁶ . فان يكن تطاطيه⁶⁷ اليهم لخالصهم وانقاذهم اخيراً عبثاً لم يكن الذى دعاه الى خلقهم بدياً مدحاً . بل هو ممدوح جل ثناؤه بدياً ووسطاً واخيراً . عقل ذلك من عقل وجهل من جهل .

⁶⁴ S بايعهم ⁶⁵ S لحسم ⁶⁶ Graf: read بدءاً passim ⁶⁷ Graf: read تطاطؤه

fathers because they were incapable of perceiving its meaning, was revealed to later [people] so that they would be more perfect in knowledge and understanding, and because the meaning available to them concerning the teaching and faith in [God] became [more] subtle and refined. The disciples preached [this description of God] in their dispersion [over the earth] to the ones who followed them and among others who described God with His honorable description, and by it proved [the disciples'] proclamation to be the true one, having [also] the power [to perform] countless other signs and every wonder, as we have described.

Now this may be enough for the first of their questions, so that remarks do not become too drawn out and become boring because of its extent.

29 As for their statement: “What was it that caused God, may He be praised! to become incarnate and become human?⁷⁹ Was the salvation of humankind not possible for Him in [a way] other than this?”

Know, o my brother, that that which caused God, blessed is His name! to become incarnate and become human (as much as our weak understanding is capable [of grasping] and [based on] what we are able to draw from the Books of God and what they pass on [to us]), is [found] in His righteousness, His goodness, and His grace and favor [He shows] to His creation in accordance with its need of these from Him, and His great mercy on them, because they had fallen into destruction and death, and [He wanted to] resurrect them and create them anew, for every affliction had mastery over them, and every kind of sin had overcome them.

The most suitable [one] who could undertake their renewal was alone the One who had created them in the beginning. If His inclination towards them for their salvation and their deliverance was finally in vain, then that which caused Him to create them in the beginning would not be a glorification [for Him]. But He is glorified and exalted, He is extolled in the beginning and the middle and the end. [And thus His victory is apparent.] The one who understands this is wise, and he does not know [it] who is ignorant.

30 As for their statement “Was the salvation of humankind not

⁷⁹ Literally, “what was it that prompted God . . . to the Incarnation and the becoming human.”

وسوء فهمه وانكاره فعل الله سبحانه صغيراً وكبيراً وقدرته عليه وارادته لسابق علمه فى تقدير الامور وتكوينها . لم يمكنه خلافه بعينه وانما يفعل له الحمد ما يعلم انه ينتفع الخلق به من الجهة التى يمكن البشر قبولها . لان كل ما اراده كان عليه قادراً لانه لا يستصعب عليه امر يريده ولا يمنع ان يكون شىء يقويه .

فما عسى ان يجيبوا لو سألهم سائل عن سياسة الله له الحمد للبشر وارساله اليهم رسله افعل ذلك لانه كان يمكنه عند ارسالهم اليهم غير ذلك فلم يفعل ذلك الرحيم ليكونوا حجة بالغة عليهم كافة وليأمرهم بما احب واراده ويحذرهم ما بغض وكره ليجيبوا طائعين غير مكرهين فيستوجبوا حسن ثوابه على ايثارهم طاعته على اهوائهم وتقريبهم منه بحسن نية الى كريم ثوابه وابعادهم منه الى شديد عقابه لاتباعهم شهواتهم واختيارهم عاجل لذاتهم على اجل نعيمهم من غير فهم منهم .

31 فان قالوا لا يساوى ارسال الرسل منه ومباشرته التى وصفتكم من تجسده وتأنسه قلنا اجل اذاً هو يساوى فى الجوهر والقوة فلا⁶⁸ امترى⁶⁹ ان ارساله قوماً فى حاجته ايسر عليه فعلاً من ان يروم ذلك ويباشره . فان⁷⁰ خالفنا له الحمد فى الجوهر والقوة وغير ذلك من صفاته لم يكن اذنه وامره وارساله

⁶⁸ Text unclear. S بلا. No dot under ب ⁶⁹ Graf: read امتراء ⁷⁰ فان اذا S

possible for Him in [a way] other than this?”, the questioner is astonishing, [that] his comprehension is [so] disgraceful and that he would deny that God, may He be praised! does [things] small and great, and [deny] His power over them, and His comprehension [of all things] because of His foreknowledge in ordaining things and bringing them into being. It is not possible for Him to contradict Himself and He, glory be to Him! only does what He knows is useful to creation in the manner which it is possible for humankind to accept. For everything that He wills, He has the power [to do],⁸⁰ for nothing He wills is difficult for Him, and nothing hinders Him from being able to do something.

Would it not be necessary if someone asked⁸¹ about God’s governance [over human beings], glory be to Him! and His sending of messengers to them: “Did He [really] do this, because it was possible when He sent [the messengers] to them [to do] something else? Why did the Merciful One do this?”, [to answer him]: So that [the messengers] would be profound evidence for all [human beings] and so that He could instruct them in what He loves and wills, and warn them against what He hates and abhors. And [also] because it is necessary that they obey [Him] without compulsion, becoming worthy of His good reward for their preference of obedience to Him against their [own] desires and with good intentions drawing near to Him [to receive] His generous reward, and so keep themselves distant from His severe punishment for pursuing their [own] cravings and preferring them for themselves in this world over their happiness in the next, which cannot be grasped.

31 Now if they say: “His sending out of the messengers and effecting His becoming flesh and becoming human, which you have described, are not the same,” we say: Certainly, if He were the same in *ousiā* and in power, then without doubt His sending people out according to His desire would be easier for Him to do than to wish for [the Incarnation] and effect it. If, [however,] He, glory be to Him! is different from us in *ousiā* and power and His other attributes, then His permitting⁸² and His commanding and His sending of out of the

⁸⁰ This idea is found throughout the *Qur’ān*, as in *Sura* 24:45: “God creates what He wills, for God has power over all things”.

⁸¹ Literally: “if they asked them . . .”

⁸² I.e., God permits signs and wonders to occur.

الرسول بايسر فعلاً عليه من تجسده وتأنسه ومباشرته نفسه لخلاص عباده من ضلالة⁷¹ الغاشم الشيطان اعنى الخطيئة المستولية كانت عليهم لتلافهم واستهزائهم اياها .

وما الذى كان يدعوه جل ثناؤه ترك⁷² ذلك الا ان يكون لهم رحيماً او حذر على نفسه تغييراً او تبديلاً او هزماً من الالام والاوجاع . بل ذلك منتها الجود والرحمة وغاية الصلاح والموافقة والقدرة والقوة .

32 فان قالوا قد اقرتم بانه لا متغير ولا مبتدل . فهل من سبيل الى ان يصير احد على حالة غير حالة الاولى بلا تبديل ولا تغيير وغير ذلك مما ذكرتم اذا كان القابل مركباً فيه قبول التغيير والتبديل على ما احاط به عجز عقلنا . ولسنا ايضاً نعقل فاعلاً خالقاً بالاذن والقول من غير الة واداة وكلمة واحتراز بالجهد عن الخطاء والغلط . فما قولكم اكدلك بخلق الله وما تروا⁷³ . انجحد خلقه بعجز عقلنا عن الاحاطة بما وصفنا او نقبله اشد القبول اذ كان ذلك منسوباً الى الله له الحمد فنقبل القول فى تجسده وتأنسه من غير تغيير ولا تبديل وان فات العقل ادراكه .

33 واما بعد فيجب علينا ايضاح قولنا فى تجسده وتأنسه من غير تغيير ولا تبديل وقبوله الالام والموت وهو حى لا بموت ولا يألم كما يظن بنا انا وصفنا قولاً مناقضاً بعضه بعضاً من قولنا التجسد والتأنس من غير تغيير ولا

⁷¹ S ضلالت ⁷² Text is corrupt. Graf suggests this to replace الى تكميل ⁷³ Graf: ترون read

messengers is not easier for Him to do than His becoming flesh and becoming human, and His effecting it Himself for the salvation of His servants from the error of the oppressor, Satan, that is, [from] sin, which was master over them, because they were ruined [by it] and they scoffed at it.

What would cause Him, exalted be His praise! to neglect this? Is He not⁸³ merciful towards them, or is He wary of changing or altering Himself or being overcome by suffering and pain? Rather, this is the gift of goodness and mercy, and the greatest righteousness and reconciliation, might and power.

32 Now, if they say: “Do you confess that He is unchangeable and unalterable? How is it possible that something arrive at a state [different] from [its] first state, without alteration or change or anything else that you have mentioned, to accept change and alteration, unless it is a composite,⁸⁴ according to what our weak minds can understand?”, [we say]: we, too, do not understand [God’s] making and creating by permission and speech without a tool or implement or talking, or taking great care against mistakes and error.⁸⁵ What do you say? Is it like this with God’s creation, and what do you think?⁸⁶ Should we deny His creation because of the incapacity of our understanding to grasp it, as we have described, or should we accept it eagerly in [our] hearts since it belongs to God, glory be to Him? For we accept the teaching about His Incarnation and becoming human without change or alteration, even though [our] understanding fails to comprehend it.

33 Now then, it is necessary for us to explain our teaching about His Incarnation and becoming human without change or alteration, and His acceptance of suffering and death, [although] He is living, does not die, and does not suffer pain. It is thought that we describe a doctrine that is inconsistent with itself, since we teach the incarna-

⁸³ Arabic manuscript is corrupt here.

⁸⁴ Literally “it has received composition into itself”.

⁸⁵ Abū Rā’īṭah is making a distinction here between the use of words (كلمة) and God’s creative speech (قول). The former is a tool which can be used to construct an argument or express thoughts and ideas; the latter is truly creative, and results in the instantaneous manifestation of God’s will without any intervening time, activity or agent.

⁸⁶ According to the *Qur’ān*, when God determines something, He only has to say “Be!” and it is (*Sura* 2:117; 16:40; 36:82; 40:68; cf. also 54:49-50).

تبديل مائت ألم لا يموت ولا يألم .

فنقول ان المسيح سبحانه كلمة الله لم تزل ثابتة ولا تزال تجسد جسداً ذا نفس منطيقية مبتدعاً مخلوقاً مائتاً ألماً من الطاهرة مريم البتول واتحد به اتحاداً قنوماً طبيعياً جوهرياً كاتحاد النفس الروحانية بجسم الانسان المركب من المزاجات الاربعة من غير تغيير لاحد هذين المتحدين الكلمة اعنى والجسد . وسقطت لذلك اعداد الجوهريين الى تحصيل وجود جوهر اوحده فيه لالتئامه واتحاده من شيئين مختلفين الكلمة اقول والجسد ذو النفس المنطيقية المخالفة صفة الكلمة فى الواحد المتوحد منها صفة الجسد الذى يجسد من سربال الاجساد الادمية المركبة .

فهو الاله حق وانسان حق . هو بعينه لا اثنين ويحتمل الصفتين من انه حتى لا يموت ولا يألم ولا يبصر ولا يحس بلاهوته وهو ايضاً بعينه مائت الم محسوس محدود بتجسده وتأنسه واحد من اثنين لا اثنين كما وصفنا . ولو ان وصفنا اياه حياً وميتاً وألم⁷⁴ وغير الم ومبصر⁷⁵ وغير مبصر من جهة واحدة لاستحال القول وتناقض نقضاً بيئاً . واما اذ وصفنا ذلك انه صائر فى حل وحال وجهة وجهة ولم يستحيل ولم يتناقض من غير ان يكون الموصوف بالحالين والجهتين معاً جميعاً اثنين البتة .

34 فان جاز ان يضرب قياس فى بعض الانحاء لما لا قياس له ولا مثل قلت ذلك . ان ذلك كالانسان المركب من جوهريين اثنين من النفس الحية

⁷⁴ Graf: read ألماً ⁷⁵ Graf: read مبصراً

tion and becoming human without change or alteration of one who dies and suffers, [but] who does not die nor suffer.

We teach that the Messiah, may He be praised! is the Word of God, which has not ceased to endure, and will never cease, incarnated in a body possessing a rational soul, newly fashioned, created, mortal, and able to experience suffering, from the pure virgin Mary. He is united with [the body] in a natural and substantial⁸⁷ union, just as the spiritual soul is united with the human body (which is constructed from the four temperaments), without change to either of the two that are united, that is the Word and the body. And because of this, the numbering of the two *ousiae* comes to result in one existent *ousia* in Him, on account of His combining and uniting two different things, namely the Word and the body possessing a rational soul. The description of the isolated Word alone is different from the description of the body which is incarnated in a garment of the [kind of] bodies that are human⁸⁸ and composite.

He is true God and true human. He is Himself alone, not two, and sustains both [types of] predicates, that is, living, not dying, and not suffering, invisible, not perceptible [by the senses] in His divinity, and He is also Himself dying, suffering, perceptible [by the senses], limited in His Incarnation and His becoming human, one from two, not two, as we have described. If we would describe Him as living and dying, suffering and not suffering, visible and not visible from a single aspect, this would be an absurd teaching and obviously inconsistent. However, since we describe this [by saying] that He is at the same time in [one] state and in [another] state, from [one] aspect and from [another] aspect, it is not absurd and inconsistent, without what is described by the two states and two aspects⁸⁹ both together being two [separate things] absolutely.⁹⁰

34 Now, in as much as it is permissible to offer an analogy for what has no analogy and no likeness, let me say this. This [teaching describes what] is like the human being composed of two *ousiae*: from

⁸⁷ Later hand in the manuscript adds “*hypostasis*”.

⁸⁸ Arabic also: like Adam

⁸⁹ Abū Rā’īṭah employs the two terms “states” and “aspects” to avoid implying that the divinity and humanity exist as “natures”, as the Melkites maintain.

⁹⁰ That is, since the opposing predicates are attributed to two different *aspects* and *states* of the same Messiah simultaneously, it is not necessary to say that there are two different Messiahs.

المنطقية الروحانية المحفوظة بالبقاء والجسد الحاسى المبصر المتألم
المائة واحد لا اثنين بلا تبديل للنفس عن حالها ولا الجسد عن حاله
محتملاً لكلتى الصفتين بعينه من انه مرى⁷⁶ وغير مبصر وحى ومائت
محسوس معقول وغير محسوس ولا معقول الم وغير الم الجسد اعنى
والنفس الروحانية المتحددة به لا حتماله جهتين لاجهة واحدة كما وصفنا .

35 وقد يجب علينا اثبات ما ادعينا من التجسد والتأنس وظهور الله بذلك
مناجياً للبشر لخلاصهم وانقاذهم من الضلالة من كتب الله وحملتها كما
كان تصديق الانبياء ودفعا ذلك اليهم قبل هذا الموضوع .

قال نبي الله داوود فى كتابه المسمى المزامير تضرعاً منه الى الله سبحانه
واستعانة واخباراً عما يكون قبل كونه كحد النبوة الصادقة . ربنا طأطئ
السموات وانزل وازجر الجبال كاللدخان .

ومن قوله ان الله يأتى جهاراً ولا يسكت . ومن قوله ويرى الاله الالهة فى
صهيون .

ومن قوله ارسل كلمته فابراًهم وخلصهم من الفساد .

36 ثم ان ميخا النبي افتتح كتابه بان قال اسمعى ايتها السموات وانصتوا
اهل الارض وليكن الرب عليكن شهيداً ان الله خارج من موضعه نازل
والطئ على يقيناً .

⁷⁶ مرثى Graf: read

the living, rational, spiritual soul preserved [for eternity] through immortality, and from the sensible, visible body that suffers and dies. [The human being] is one, not two, without the soul altering its state or the body its state, and carrying himself both descriptions, in that he is visible and not visible, living and dying, perceptible and sensible, and not perceptible and not sensible, suffering and not suffering. That means that the body and the spiritual soul united with it permit two [opposing] aspects [to be attributed to it], not [just] a single aspect, as we have described.

35 Now it is necessary for us to explain what we have preached concerning the Incarnation and becoming human, and the revelation of God in this as the intimate friend of humans for their salvation and deliverance from error [found] in the Books of God and what they passed on, just as the prophets have attested. We have presented this to [our opponents] previous to this point.

The Prophet of God, David, said in his book called “the Psalms”, imploring God, may He be praised! and asking for help, reported what happened before [his very eyes] in accordance with [other] authentic prophets: “Our Lord inclined the heavens and descended and drove back the mountains, like smoke.”⁹¹

And from [David’s] sayings: “God comes openly and is not silent.”⁹²

And from his sayings: “The God of the gods is seen in Zion.”⁹³

And from his sayings: “He sent His Word, and exonerated them and saved them from corruption.”⁹⁴

36 Then, the Prophet Micah began his book, saying: “Hear, o heavens, and hearken, people of the earth, for the Lord will be a witness against you. Surely, God goes out from His place, descends and treads upon me.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ Ps 144:5

⁹² Ps 50:3

⁹³ Ps 84:7

⁹⁴ Ps 107:20

⁹⁵ Mic 1:2,3

ثم ان ارميا النبي قال فى بعض رسائل باروخ كالمشير الى ربه بان هذا الاهنا لا يشترك معه اخر الذى احتوى على العالم كله وكل سبل السلام خص به عبده يعقوب وحببيه اسرائيل بدياً . ثم اظهر بعد ذلك على الارض ماشياً ومع الناس مصطحباً ومناجياً . وهذا من اجل خطية يعقوب ومن اجل ذنوب اسرائيل .

واشعيا المحمود بنبوته لا يجاز قوله وافصح كلامه قال ان العذرى ستحبلى وتلد ابناً ويدعى اسمه عمانوئيل تفسيره الاهنا معنا .

ومن قوله وُلد وُلد لنا وابن اعطيناه الذى رئاسته على عاتقه الله جبار العالمين سلطان السلام ويدعى ملك المشورة العظمى اب الدهور الاتية .

37 وموسى نجى الله قال حكاية عن يعقوب اسرائيل عند وصيته اولاده وانبائه اياهم عن الامور الاتية بلا محالة عند اقتراب الساعة لصدق النبوة عليها لا يزول الملك من يهودا ولا رئيس من فخذته حتى ياتى الذى له الملك وياه تترجأ⁷⁷ المم وتنظر . فمن له الملك غير الله له الحمد .

وغير ذلك من قول عامة الانبياء التى لو تتبعنا ذكرها لطالت⁷⁸ الصحف وكثرت⁷⁹ ليعلموا اننا قلنا ذلك عن كتب الله المنزلة او حملتها وليس ذلك منا تحرصاً ولا بدعة .

38 واما قولهم فى تعظيمهم⁸⁰ الصليب وقد نهينا عن عبادة الاوثان

⁷⁷ Graf: read تترجى ⁷⁸ S ذكر لما طالت ⁷⁹ Text is corrupt here. ⁸⁰ Correct تعظيمنا to.

Then, the Prophet Jeremiah said in a part of a letter to Baruch, as an indication of his Lord, that: “This is our God, [Who] has no other partner beside Him, Who holds the whole world, and all the ways of peace. He bestows it upon His servant Jacob, and His beloved Israel from the beginning. Then He appeared after this walking upon the earth and was a companion and friend of human beings.”⁹⁶ And this was because of the sin of Jacob and because of the offenses of Israel.

And the Prophet Isaiah, who is praised because of his prophecy, [for] his word and eloquent speech cannot be surpassed, said: “The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be proclaimed ‘Immānuel’⁹⁷ (the explanation of it is ‘our God is with us’).”

And [another] of his sayings is: “A child is born to us, and a son is given to us, whose leadership is upon his shoulder, God the Almighty of the worlds, the Ruler of peace, and he shall be proclaimed King of the great council, Father of the ages to come.”⁹⁸

37 Moses, the intimate friend of God, told this story about Jacob Israel, when he instructed his sons and established the things certain to come with the approaching hour [of his death] in order to verify the prophecy concerning them: “The king will not withdraw from Judah, nor the chief from his tribe until the One to whom the kingship belongs comes and for whom the peoples hope and expect.”⁹⁹ To whom does the kingship belong, other than God, glory be to Him?

There are other statements besides these in all of the prophets which, if we were to give a citation of them, would make the pages longer and many. [Our opponents] should know that our teaching of [the Incarnation] is from the Books sent down by God or those who transmitted them, and this is not a fabrication by us or an innovation.

38 As for their statement concerning our exaltation of the Cross, while we forbid the worship of idols, our exaltation of it, o my

⁹⁶ Bar 3:35-37

⁹⁷ Is 7:14

⁹⁸ Is 9:6

⁹⁹ Gen 49:10

فتعظيمنا اياه يا اخر خاصة على خساسته دليل واضح لقدفنا عبادة الاوثان
 وجحدنا سجدة الاصنام . لانا لو قبلنا عبادتها لما عدلنا عن اكرمها صورة
 وارفعها جوهرأ ولما حدنا عن المصنوعة بالذهب والفضة والزمرد والياقوت
 . فاما اذ لم يصمد غير هذا الشكل الحقيقير . فلو كنا اتخذناه من ارفع الاشياء
 ولحسنها لم يظن بنا احد له عقل بانا التمسنا عبادة الاصنام فى وجه من
 الوجوه بل صمدنا صمد الشكل بعينه كما وصفت فصار لنا قبلة وما هو
 خاصة دون الاشياء كلها .

فظهر الله له الحمد بتجسده عليه سبحانه وانقاذه ايانا من عبادة غير الله فهو
 علمه الوكيد فى الارض الذى اياه يؤمن القاصد لعباده بظاهر به ويرجوا⁸¹
 عودته الى الارض اخيراً بالمجد والكرامة كوعده الحقيق اذ يقول فى بشرائه
 ان هنالك يعاينون علمى المتقدم امامى عند عودتى اخيراً مع اجنادى
 وملائكتى . يا لهذا الرعب الموجل للعدو المبين واجناده المردة لانكشافهم
 وانهمامهم ولا يزال وجنوده حذراً فرقا⁸² . . . مكايده به وعزه وشدة باسه فهو
 . . . المتولية وجوهنا منظره لعبادة الله الظاهرة . . . من عبادة الشيطان
 وضلالة اوثانه .

فهل يمكن المتولى وجهه لعبادة ربه المتوجه الى قبلة غير قبلته . فالصليب

⁸¹ Graf: read يرحو [sic]. ⁸² The following text is corrupt.

brother, [even though] it is especially contemptible, is a clear indication of our rejection of the worship of idols, and our repudiation of the veneration of graven images [of them].¹⁰⁰ Because if we were to accept worship of [idols], we would not refrain from the image most precious and of the finest material,¹⁰¹ nor limit ourselves from what is crafted from gold and silver, emerald and sapphire. But when [we] do not turn to anything other than this despised form, [it must be asked]: if we were to make it from the finest and most beautiful things, would not someone who is intelligent think of us that we are seeking to worship graven images in some way or other? Rather, we turn ourselves to this form itself, just as I have said, it has become for us a *qiblah*,¹⁰² and something particular apart from all other things.

God, glory be to Him! has been revealed in His Incarnation, praise be upon Him! and has delivered us from worship of [everything that is] other than God, [the Cross] is His sure sign upon the earth, which one who intends to worship Him manifestly¹⁰³ believes in, and hopes for His return to the earth in the end [times] with honor and esteem, as He truly promised when He said through His evangelists that: “There they shall see My sign preceding before Me when I return in the end [times] together with My armies and My angels.”¹⁰⁴ O what a terrifying fear this is for the clear enemy¹⁰⁵ and his rebellious soldiers because it exposes them and puts them into flight! And he and his soldiers will never cease to beware and be fearful.¹⁰⁶

. . . For how is it possible that the one who turns his face toward worship of his Lord be oriented to a *qiblah* other than His *qiblah*? Now the cross is for us a *qiblah* and a glorious [thing], deserving of

¹⁰⁰ The issue of the veneration of holy objects, particularly icons and the Cross, has been taken up by several contemporaries of Abū Rāʾīṭah, most notably Theodore Abū Qurrah, see for example, Griffith, *Holy Icons*.

¹⁰¹ Here Abū Rāʾīṭah uses the term *جوهر* as a common term to mean the substance or material from which something is made, rather than in its philosophical sense of *ousia*.

¹⁰² The direction of prayer; for Muslims this is the direction of Makka.

¹⁰³ That is, one who intends to be an open worshipper of Christ, God incarnate.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Matt 24:30.

¹⁰⁵ This is a *Qurʾānic* expression (*Sura* 2:168, 208; 6:143, etc.).

¹⁰⁶ Beginning here the manuscript is corrupted.

لدينا قبلة ومجد مستحق التعظيم والاكرام والاخلاص الذى اتخذه قبلة
خلص دون غيره من الاشياء . فنحن معشر النصارى عابدون ربنا والاهنا لا
عابدون الالهة الاخر من المخلوقين .

39 فاما استقبالنا المشرق فى اوقات صلواتنا دون غير من الجهات الثلاث
فلامرين . اما الواحد فان البلدة المسكونة بدياً من ابينا ادم قبل وقعته فيما
يوجد من الابهاء كالمتمفق عليها كانت المشرق والبلدة المهبوط اليها بعد
السقطه والصرعة بالمعصية فبلدة غربة وجلاء ودار ضائعة وحبس . فالقلب
يحن الى الوطن الاول ملتتمسا العودة اليه ملتتهفاً اليه اسفاً ناصباً خياله ممثلاً
فى قلبه شاخصاً بفكره اليه راجياً منالاً لزيارته .

فان ربنا المسيح سبحانه تقدم الى رسله وتلاميذه⁸³ عن صمدهم المسئلة
عن وقت عودته اخيراً فقال لهم ينادى لا يداخلكم فى ذلك شك . فلن ينل
علم ذلك بتوقع اقول لكم كما ان البرق يبرق فى المشرق ويرى فى المغرب
كذلك ظهورى عند اقتراب الساعة . فنحن معشر النصارى متوقعون مجيئه
من المشرق كوعده الحقيق متولين وجوهنا فى اوقات صلواتنا نحوه .

40 فاما قولهم ان جميع الانبياء وجميع الابهاء السالفة لم يتخذوا المشرق
قبلة فاعلم يا اخى ان الله له الحمد اتخذ بيت المقدس قبلة خاصة دون
الارض لكها امرهم ان يتولوا وجوههم اليها انما كانوا نحوه وذلك لظهور
الله له الحمد بتجسده وتأنسه فيها واحتماله الصلب المنقذ بتأنسه من

⁸³ تلاميذهم S

exaltation and honor and devotion, and who takes up [this] *qiblah*, apart from [all] other things, is saved. We, the Christian community, worship our Lord and our God, and do not worship another god from among creatures.¹⁰⁷

39 When we turn to the east at the times of our prayers, and not toward any of the other three directions, it is because of two [reasons]. The first is that the land where our father Adam dwelt before his Fall, according to the agreement of what is found in the Fathers, was the east, and the land of the Fall to which [he went] after [his] downfall and ruin through disobedience was a land of exile and [a land] of banishment, a wretched house and a prison. The heart yearns for the first home, longing for the return to it, lamenting for it in sadness. In his heart, [one] raises up his ideal vision, fixes on it with his mind, hoping for the success of his journey.

[The second is] that our Lord the Messiah, may He be praised! granted His apostles and disciples when they asked the question concerning the time of His return at the end [times], saying to them and proclaiming: “Do not let doubt overcome you in this. But no knowledge of this with [explicit] expectations [will be given to you]. I say to you, just as the lightning flashes in the east and is seen in the west, like this will be My appearance when the hour draws near.”¹⁰⁸ So we, the Christian community, expect His coming from the east, as He truly promised, and we turn our faces at the times of our prayers toward it.

40 As for their statement that: “All of the prophets and all of the forefathers did not take the east as the *qiblah*,” know, o my brother, that God, glory be to Him, took Jerusalem as a particular *qiblah* from [all of the places of] the whole world. He commanded them to turn their faces toward it wherever [they are], and this is because God, glory be to Him, appeared in His Incarnation and becoming human in it, and He bore the cross of salvation in His humanity

¹⁰⁷ Abū Rā’īṭah is drawing the connection between Muslim worship in the direction of the *Ka’bah*, which is symbolic of the Divine Presence radiating out throughout the earth, and the Christian veneration of the Cross. In both cases, it is not the object itself—the Black Stone or the Cross—that is worshiped, but rather the God Who is brought to the mind of the worshipper. As such, the *qiblah* deserves honor and devotion because it is a sign of God’s presence and care for the world, not because the object itself carries any intrinsic value.

¹⁰⁸ Mt 24:27

اهلها واثباته بصديق القيامة الاتية لا محالة لما اقام جسده الطاهر بعد وقوعه وقبوله الموت قيام الابد بها . فهذا سر استقبال الانبياء وسائر الاشراف بيت المقدس بدياً واستقبالنا المشرق اخيراً .

41 واما اتخاذنا القربان سنة جارية ووصفنا اياه جسد المسيح ودمه فذلك كذلك لقول ربنا الالهنا له المجد المسيح جل ذكره فى كتابه الانجيل لتلاميذه المصدقين به يقول لهم اذ ناولهم خبزاً فقال كلوا فهو جسدى المبذول دون العامة ودونكم لغفران الخطايا . ثم ناولهم الكأس فقل اشربوا كلكم جميعاً فهو دمي المبذول المهراق دون العامة ودونكم يسفك . كذلك فافعلوا ميثاقاً منى جديداً عليكم وعهداً حديثاً الى عودتى . فنحن معشر النصرارى فاعلون ذلك لامره ايانا لتحيص ذنوبنا وتجديد ذكر موته دوننا وذكر القيامة الى عودته .

42 فاما قولهم باننا تركنا الختانة والذبائح وقد لزمها المسيح المعبود وجميع الانبياء والابرار المتقدمة فاعلم يا اخى ان الله له الحمد لا يأمر عباده بأمر الا لعلّة وسبب معروفاً كان ذلك عند عامتهم ام مجهولاً وهو الكامل الغنى بذاته الذى لا تناله لذة شىء مما اهل به او قرب به اليه ولا يأسف على ما فاته منها . والبرهان فى ذلك قوله له الحمد على لسان نبيه داوود فصلاً عن غيره من الانبياء لست اكل لحم الثيران ولا اشرب دم التيوس لان لى الارض بكمالها .

بل امر بنحرها الرحيم لما ورد بنو اسرائيل ارض مصر وطل بهم المكث

before its people and He affirmed faith in the certainty of the future resurrection when He resurrected His holy body, after it had fallen and had accepted death, forever. This is the *mysterion* for why the prophets and all of the honorable [fathers] turned towards Jerusalem from the beginning, and [the reason] we finally turn towards the east [in prayer].

41 As for our receiving the Eucharist as a customary practice and [why] we describe it as the body of the Messiah and His blood, this because our Lord and our God, glory be to Him! the Messiah, whose remembrance is exalted! said in His book, the Gospel, to His disciples who believed in Him, speaking when He gave bread to them and saying: “‘Eat, for it is My body freely given for all and for you for the forgiveness of sins.’ Then He gave them the cup, saying: ‘Drink, all of you, for it is My blood freely poured out and shed for all and for you. Do it like this as a new Covenant from me with you and a new pledge, until My return.’”¹⁰⁹ Now we, the Christian community, do this because He commanded us for the purification of our sins, and a renewal of the remembrance of His death for us and the remembrance of the Resurrection until His return.

42 As for their statement that we have renounced circumcision and sacrifices, although the Messiah, Who is worshipped and all of the prophets and righteous people of old adhered to them, know, o my brother, that God, glory be to Him! charged His servants with a command only for a [particular] reason, and the cause of this may be known to all of them or unknown. And He is the Perfect [One], sufficient in Himself, Who does not have a desire of something but that it comes to Him, or He causes it draw near to Himself, and He does not regret what slips away from Him. The proof of this is His statement, glory be to Him! through the mouth of His prophet David (not to speak of the other prophets): “I do not eat the flesh of bulls nor drink the blood of goats, because the whole earth is Mine.”¹¹⁰

Rather, the Merciful One commanded that they be slaughtered when the Israelites came to the land of Egypt,¹¹¹ and their stay there

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Mt 14:19; 15:36; 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:17-19; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:23-26. This is not literally taken from any of the biblical texts, nor is it found in any of the Syriac anaphoras known to date. (Graf, *Abū Rāʾīyah*, 131/189, n. 1)

¹¹⁰ Ps 50:13.

¹¹¹ Cf. *Sura* 2:67. This section has numerous parallels in the *Qurʾān*.

هنالك والفوا سنن اهل مصر وشرائهم فى العبادۃ المأكل ولزموا ذبائحهم حتى صار ذلك فيهم سنة جارية كسائر اهل مصر . وكان الخنزير طعاماً لهم والثور والشاة معبوداً منهم فاعتادوا ذلك وضروا عليه ورسخت محبته فى قلوبهم حتى لم يؤثروا معه غيره من العبادۃ والغذاء لطول المدة فيهم وعظم ما استولى فيهم من الجهل الى ان ارسل الله فيهم موسى نبياً ومخلصاً من عبادة غير الله واخرجه اياهم من ارض مصر وازاحه اهوائهم من اهوى⁸⁴ اهلها . فانزل عليهم كتاباً من لدن الله ربه اعنى التوريه وامر بخلاف ما كانوا عليه من العبادۃ والغذاء واستعظماً منه اياها . وفحسبهم بذلك من عبادة غيره . وامر بنحر المعبود كان منهم له وابعاح لهم فى اكل لحومها . وحرّم عليهم الخنزير بعد ان كانوا يغتذون به خاصة دون اللحوم .

43 وتحقيق ذلك عدلهم موسى من بعد اخراجه اياهم وبقرهم وغنمهم فصلاً عن الذهب والفضة اذ تاسفوا وتندموا على ما فاتهم من اكل اللحوم بمصر لقولهم لو بقينا بمصر اكلنا⁸⁵ وشبعنا من اللحم فاذا هم يتذكرون ويتلهفون على شبع اللحم لتعلم يا اخى ان اللحم المتلهف عليه منهم لحم الخنزير يقيناً لا غيره من اللحم الموجود معهم .

فعلة تطبيق ربنا سبحانه لبنى اسرائيل الذبائح وان كان الى قبولها منهم حيناً مرموزاً التماس تثبيتهم وردهم بالعبادة اليه وابطال محبة غيره من قلوبهم واشغال صدورهم باثبات المحبة والمودة له والرغبة اليه وثبات معرفته فى

⁸⁴ Graf: read اهواء ⁸⁵ S لنا

became longer, and they became accustomed to the practices of the people of Egypt and their laws in worship and to the food. And they practiced animal sacrifices until it became for them a customary practice, as [it was for] the rest of the people of Egypt. Swine [flesh] was food for them and the bull and the sheep were something to be worshipped by them. So they became accustomed to this and were in thrall to it, and love of it was deeply rooted in their hearts, until they did not prefer anything except [the form of] worship and food [of the Egyptians] because the time had grown so long [that they had accepted] them and the ignorance that overpowered them had become great, until God sent Moses to them as a prophet and one to save them from worship of what is not God. And he led them out of the land of Egypt, driving out their longings for the pleasures of its people. He brought down to them [from Sinai] a Book from God, his Lord, that is, the Torah, and commanded what was different from the worship and food [of Egypt] and what was superior to them. So with this He cut them off from worship of [anything] other than Himself, and He commanded the slaughter of what they had [previously] worshiped, and permitted them to eat its flesh. And swine [flesh] was forbidden them after they had eaten it to the exclusion of other flesh.

43 The verification of this is their reproach of Moses after he had taken them and their cattle and their sheep, not to mention the gold and silver, out [of Egypt]. When they were regretful and had remorse over the food and meats they had left behind in Egypt, they said “If we had stayed in Egypt, we would have eaten and had our fill of meat.”¹¹² Now when they thought about being satisfied with meat and lamented [it], you must know, o my brother, that the meat that they lamented [not having] was the meat of swine, for surely there was no other kind of meat that was not with them.

The act of our Lord, may He be praised, permitting the Sons of Israel animal sacrifices, even though they accepted them at a designated time,¹¹³ was [out of] the desire to strengthen them and return them to worship of Him, destroying the love of anything other than Him in their hearts, strengthening their inner devotion with firm love and friendship to Him and [establishing] their longing for

¹¹² Ex 16:3

¹¹³ E.g., after a period of time that had a purpose in God’s plan.

الناس كافة والاقرار به وان كان يرسخ ذلك فى قلوبهم .
 وفى احتمال الذبائح ايضاً سر اخر وهو السر الممثل للذبيحة التى عن
 البشر عامة اعنى المسيح ربنا والاهنا سبحانه وذلك بتجسده له الحمد
 الممكن قبول ذلك لا بلاهوته المتعالية عن الموت والذثر . لانه ان كان
 بذبيحة تلك البهائم تغفر الخطايا فكم بالحرى يكون الغفران بدم سيدنا
 والاهنا المسيح سبحانه .

44 كذلك القول فى جميع الشرائع الجسمانيات فانها سمة ورسم حزب
 الله بها بدياً ليعرفون⁸⁶ بها خلصة دون غيرهم من الامم . وذلك فى زمان
 محدود لا واجب فعلها فى كل حين كما امر الله ابراهم بذلك بعد ان مضى
 من عمره تسعون سنة اذ لم يكن فى زمانه من يعرف الله ولا يأمن⁸⁷ بالله⁸⁸
 غيره . فوسمهم بالختان ليعرفوا انهم شعب الله العارفون بربوبيته دون سائر
 الامم .

والشاهد على ذلك قول الله له الحمد على لسان نبيه ارميا اذ يقول حكاية
 منه عن ربه . قد يأتى عليكم ايام التى بها اعهد الى بنى يهودا عهداً جديداً
 ليس كالعهد الاول الذى عهدته الى ابائهم حين اخرجتهم من ارض مصر .
 لانهم عصوا عهدى فزهدت⁸⁹ فيهم . وكقوله ايضاً على لسان حزقيال النبى اذ
 يقول لجماعة بنى اسرائيل انى اذكر لك عهدى اياك واقيم لك عهداً جديداً .
 والعهد الاول الذى عهد به الى ابائهم بدياً هى التوراة بلا شك المنزلة فيها
 والاقرار بالتوحيد لله جملة بلا تفسير والختانة وحفظ السبت والذبائح وغير

فزهدة S⁸⁹ بالله S⁸⁸ يؤمن Graf: read⁸⁷ ليعرفوا Graf: read⁸⁶

Him and persistence in knowing Him in every human being, and the confession [of faith] in Him, even as these were [becoming] deeply rooted in their hearts.

And in His permitting animal sacrifices there was another *mysterion*—the *mysterion* of the likeness of the sacrifice which was for all of humanity, that is, the Messiah, our Lord and our God, may He be praised! and this [brought] the possibility by His Incarnation, glory be to Him! to accept [the sacrifice on our behalf] not in His divinity, which is exalted over death and extinction, [but rather in His humanity]. For if by the sacrifice of these beasts sins were forgiven, how much more is the forgiveness through the blood of our Lord and Our God, the Messiah, may He be praised!

44 It is like this with the teaching on all of the laws concerning the body, for they are a sign and a mark of the adherents of God¹¹⁴ from the beginning, so they would be known particularly by [the law] apart from the other peoples. And this was for a fixed time and it is not necessary to follow them for all time. As God commanded Abraham with this after he had passed ninety years of his life, when no one in his time knew God and believed in God except him, so He marked [Abraham and his descendents] with the circumcision, so that they would know that they were the tribe of God, who acknowledged His divinity, apart from the rest of the peoples.

The witness for this is the statement of God, praise be to Him, through the tongue of His prophet, Jeremiah, when he gave [this] account according to his Lord: “The days are coming upon you when I will make a New Covenant with the Sons of Judah, not like the first Covenant which I made with their fathers at the time I led them out of the Land of Egypt. Because they disobeyed My Covenant, so I have abandoned them.”¹¹⁵ And like His statement also through the tongue of Ezekiel the prophet, when he said to all of the Sons of Israel: “I remind you of My Covenant with you, and I will raise up a New Covenant with you.”¹¹⁶

The first Covenant that [God] made with their fathers in the beginning was without doubt the Torah, in which [the revelation of] the general confession of the oneness of God has been sent down,

¹¹⁴ Or: the party of God.

¹¹⁵ Jer 31:31-33. Note addition of the final phrase to the received text.

¹¹⁶ Ez 16:60

ذلك من الشرائع الظاهرة كما وصفنا .

45 والعهد الجديد الذى لا يشبه العهد الاول هو الانجيل الطاهرالناسخ بشرائعه شرائع التورية وحدودها الملائم الموافق لها فى الايمان بالله بحق توحيد . فاذاً قد نسخت شرائع التورية بشرائع الانجيل ويحقق به توحيدها املح⁹⁰ بتاويله وايضاحه وتسميته اباً وابناً وروحاً قدساً .

اما التورية⁹¹ لم يجب علينا الاخذ بها ولا العمل بسننها ولا بفرائضها بعد ان صحت معرفتنا بتوحيد جوهره ووصفنا اياه بحق صفاته واذ حققها المسيح سبحانه عند تأنسه وتجسده واثبتها لانه هو المفترض لها بدياً اذ لم يبطل شيئاً منها ونسخها افضل منها اخيراً .

فستان ما بين فرائض الانجيل فى الفضل وبين فرائض التورية كستان بين الجور فى التفضيل وبين العدل . فهذا سبب ترك فرائض التورية لا من تكذيب شىء منها ولا تبطيل .

46 فاما علة صيامنا اربعين يوماً فذلك واجب على الناس كافة لخصال شتى . اولها صيام موسى وغيره من الانبياء هذه العلة بلا زيادة ولا نقصان التى الستوجبوا بها مناجاة الله له الحمد وتكليمه وتحلية وجوههم بحلية النور واشراقه . فاهلوا ان يقتلنى بهم ويحتلنى حذوهم بالصيام اللازم للاولين والآخرين كعظيم منفعتة وكثرة معونته فى اكتساب الفضل والاعتصام به فى القرب الى الله سبحانه .

واما الثانية فقبولنا من المسيح سبحانه عند مشاركته ايانا بتجسده وتأناسه لنا

90 Unclear. S Graf: كمل ؟ 91 Added in a later hand. اما التورية

without an explication, [the command of] circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath, animal sacrifices, and other revealed laws, as we have described.

45 The New Covenant, which is not similar to the first Covenant, is the pure Gospel, abrogating¹¹⁷ the laws of the Torah and its limits with its [own] laws, [yet giving] proper sanction to [the Torah] in the belief in God and in the truth of His oneness. Therefore, the laws of the Torah are abrogated by the laws of the Gospel, and [the confession] of [God's] oneness is established in it, and its explanation is given and clarified, and [God] is named Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

As for the Torah, it is not necessary for us to accept it nor to take up its practices nor its duties, after our knowledge of the oneness of His *ousia* is correct. And we describe His attributes in truth, since the Messiah, may He be praised! established them and affirmed them in His becoming human and His Incarnation. Because He had assumed them from the beginning, without abolishing anything of them or abrogating them with something better.

What a difference in worth there is between the duties of the Gospel and the duties of the Torah, like the difference in preference between injustice and justice! This is the reason the duties of the Torah were left behind, not because of a denial of something of them or invalidity.

46 As for the cause of our forty-day fast, this is necessary for all human beings for various reasons. The first is the fast of Moses, and others of the prophets, for by this number [of days], without increase or decrease, they were made worthy of refuge in God, praise be to Him! and of speaking with Him and of their faces being adorned by Him with the ornaments of fire and His radiance. It is fitting that they be emulated and their example of the obligatory fast be followed, from the first to the last [human being], for its great benefit and many helps in gaining grace and the protection in it [while] drawing closer to God, may He be praised!

As for the second [reason], we have received [the obligation of

¹¹⁷ The term "abrogation" (ناسخ) would call to mind the Islamic exegetical principle, based in the *Qur'an* (2:106, 22:52, 17:86, 13:39, 57:6-7, 16:101), by which certain verses given to Muḥammad are "modified" or revoked (منسوخ) by others, often through the later revelation of a more specific directive.

صار لنا قائداً مبارزاً بجهاده وكده ومنازلاً⁹² ذنوبنا نافعاً عنا ابليس الدنس وجنوده المستولية كانت علينا لارتكابنا اهوائهم فى شهوات اجسادنا ولذات⁹³ ابداننا المضطرم الشاعلة لاسترخائنا وانقيادنا اليها باستهواننا لها . فمثل لنا الجسد قتاله ومجاهدته ونصب امامنا كيده بما ماكره سبحانه بجسده فى صيامه اربعين يوماً بلياليها لقدرته على ذلك له الحمد . فهزمه وهده وكسر قوته ونسخ صورته من روعه وحذره مناصبة البشر كافة لما اذاقه من الالم الاول وشديد النكاية بجسده الشبيه باجسادنا .

وقد نجد فى الكتاب المنزل فضلاً عما وصفنا من تقبيل هذه العلة فى تمحيص الذنوب وتطهيرها بان الله له الحمد لما اباد الناس فى دهر نوح الطاهر حين انزل بها عذاب الطوفان اربعين يوماً ولياليها وصير العقوبة المحدودة فى التورية لمن اذنب من بنى اسرائيل اربعين جلثة . وانهم مكثوا سائحين فى البرية اربعين عاماً اذياً منه الرحيم لهم على ما فرط من سوء اعمالهم . فهذه علة اقتصارنا فى صيامنا⁹⁴ . . .

⁹² S ومبايداً ⁹³ S ولذاة ⁹⁴ Here the text ends with a custos, indicating the continuation on the next page, which is blank in the extant manuscript.

the fast] from the Messiah, may He be praised! upon His participation with us in His Incarnation and His becoming human for us, He became for us a leader and fighter in His struggle and His labor, and cast off our offenses and drove from us the stain of Iblīs, and his armies who had been master over us. Because we had pursued their inclinations for the desires of our flesh and the burning and flaming delights of our bodies, we had become slack and had been led to them by our neglect. [The Messiah] gave to us an example for the flesh [in] His fight and His struggle and set up before us His strategy by which He, may He be praised! deceived [Iblīs] in His flesh during His fast for forty days and nights, because of His capability [of doing this], glory be to Him! So He put [Iblīs] to flight and crushed him and shattered his power, and erased his image from His mind and He warned him against fighting all human beings. For [this was accomplished] from the first pain He tasted, and the great outrage [done to] His body which is like our bodies.

We find in the Book¹¹⁸ sent down [by God], besides what we have described about accepting this number [of forty days], concerning the purification and cleansing of sins, that God, glory be to Him! after He had destroyed humanity in the age of Noah, the righteous, at that time sending down on them the punishment of the flood for forty days and nights, the punishment of forty lashes for the one of the Sons of Israel who had sinned was fixed in the Torah. And they remained wandering in the desert for forty years as a punishment from Him, the Merciful, because of the excess of their evil deeds. Now this is the reason we limit our fast

¹¹⁸ The Torah.

THE FIRST *RISĀLAH* ON THE HOLY TRINITY

Introduction

Background and Contents

Arguably the most important of all of Abū Rā'īṭah's treatises is *The First Risālah on the Holy Trinity*, which, along with *The Risālah on the Incarnation*, is written in the form of a letter answering the request of an unnamed member of another Jacobite community. Together, these two *rasā'il* provide his most complete treatment of Muslim objections to central Christian doctrines. Evidence also suggests that a third *risālah* related to them has been lost. The short compilation found in the *Confession of the Fathers* of excerpts from several of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings refers to *The Risālah on the Incarnation* as being "the second *risālah* of the three *rasā'il* in which he speaks of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation".¹ The reference is somewhat ambiguous, and the third *risālah* may be the one written to the Christians of Baḥrīn, which Abū Rā'īṭah himself refers his readers to at the end of *On the Incarnation* 85 as containing more information on a similar topic.²

However, the possible existence of third letter in connection with *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation* is not unlikely. The note in *Confession* 3 implies that its subject was the Trinity and Incarnation, although this is not certain. One might also speculate that the topic of the missing *risālah* was an exposition of religious practices questioned by Muslims, perhaps with an emphasis on eucharistic celebrations, and other liturgical customs connected to the Incarnation. It was not unusual for the three subjects of Trinity, Incarnation, and Christian

¹ (*Confession* §3): الرسالة الثانية من الثلث رسائل التي قالها في الثالث المقدسة والتجسد . . .

² There are several reasons to assume these are two different letters. The compiler of the excerpts in the *Confessions* refers to the *risālah* to the Christians in Baḥrīn as a separate letter, unlike his mention of *On the Incarnation*. Also, both *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation* have been given the titles of "first" and "second" *risālah* followed by their topics. It is doubtful that the *risālah* to those in Baḥrīn would have been designated as the "third". Not only was it obviously written before the other two, it can probably be safely assumed that the style was conspicuously different, since it was composed on a separate occasion for a particular purpose.

practices to be treated together in Syriac literature, as Abū Rā'īṭah did in Arabic in his own *Proof of the Christian Religion*.³

The significance of the extant texts *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation* lies in the purpose for which they have been written. Abū Rā'īṭah presents his reasons for composing the *rasā'il* in the opening sections of the *On the Trinity*: he has been asked by an unnamed person to “write a book explaining what is obscure to you concerning the teachings of the peoples and their claim that what they hold is correct” (§2). In fact, nowhere does he speak directly of “the teachings of the peoples”, that is, the Muslims. Rather, the central intention of these texts can be identified in his statement at the beginning of *On the Trinity* that it is a clarification of the teachings of “the People of the South”, and that he will provide for his reader the “confession” of “the People of the Truth”, that is, the Jacobite community, and the proof for it (§2). The “proof” or *burhān* is certainly a reference to the *Qur'ānic* testimony that Christians will be called upon to produce their proof for the truth of their religion on the Day of Judgement (*Sura* 2:111, 28:75). In particular, they will be compelled to give a justification for their belief in the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. The two *rasā'il* Abū Rā'īṭah offers to the Christian (and Muslim) reader are a sort of compendium of ready responses to possible questions and objections that could be leveled against Christians, a kind of *kitāb al-burhān*, to exactly these issues raised by Muslims about Christian beliefs.

Like the *Proof of the Christian Religion*, these treatises were written within a context of rising external pressure on Christians to convert to Islam, as well as increasing doubts within the Christian community itself. In *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation*, Abū Rā'īṭah takes up nearly all of the same questions concerning these topics found elsewhere in his writings. Many of the issues addressed in the *Proof* appear in a more fully developed treatment using additional philosophical and scriptural evidence. Nonetheless there is a noticeable shift in the tone between the *Proof* and the two *rasā'il*. Whereas the former is intended as an overall apology for Christianity, usually providing explanations and replies that might be accessible to any

³ Griffith, “Disputes,” 254-255. Among the numerous examples of this in Syriac is the apologetical text authored by Abū Rā'īṭah's protegé, Nonnus of Nisibis (Van Roey, *Nonnus*).

educated Christian, the *rasā'il* on the Trinity and Incarnation are intended to rebut charges made by Muslim *mutakallimūn*. The form of the *Proof* is often discursive, giving detailed explanations of teachings designed to convince and bolster the faith of the believer, and is written primarily with other Christians in mind.

The *rasā'il* *On the Trinity and On the Incarnation*, on the other hand, are dialectical and follow the rules of debate more closely. In both of these treatises, Abū Rā'īṭah provides his reader with clearly formulated questions intended to identify the source of the conflict, followed by an arsenal of responses drawing on a variety of sources. Often he assumes a great deal of knowledge on the part of his reader, sketching only the barest outlines of his arguments, and giving brief references to significant theological and philosophical concepts. These are scholarly treatises, not general apologies.

It is in this structure that another important aspect of the texts can be identified. At this critical moment in the development of Islamic theology, Abū Rā'īṭah offers an insight into the mutual knowledge that Muslims and Christians had of one another, and what topics were of concern to them. With the transition to Arabic and the formulation of Islamic doctrines in light of newly-translated Greek texts, terminology and categories were being defined and solidified, often in ways that excluded Christian understandings of them. The long history of conflict among the churches over the same issues of precise definitions is evidence that Christians did not consider this to be an academic exercise. Now, it appeared that Christianity was being overcome by an alternative religion on the grounds that it was itself inconsistent with reason and what could be known about God. These *rasā'il* reflect the attempt of a significant figure in the Jacobite church to regain control over those categories and provide a "proof" that the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation are neither contradictory nor nonsensical. In fact, Abū Rā'īṭah argues, an openness to the evidence necessarily leads one to the conclusion that the Christian understanding of divine attributes and the relationship between Creator and creation can be the only appropriate way to speak about God.

The approach Abū Rā'īṭah takes to counter the challenges his community is facing displays his exceptional understanding of the problem. After a brief introduction, he lays out the problems confronting the person who would engage in debate with the opponents, and the pros and cons of entering into such a conversation (§§1-4).

This is followed by what amounts to a creedal statement put into the mouths of the Muslim interlocutors, and Abū Rā'īṭah's request for fairness in the ensuing debate (§4). The next section is an extensive discussion of the definitions of terms and their application to God using logical principles and analogies (§§5-32). The treatise concludes with some examples taken from the "sacred books" demonstrating that it is not inconsistent to say God is a plurality (§§33-38) and some further analogies found in the created world (§§39-45).

Abū Rā'īṭah begins *On the Trinity* with a long invocation asking God's blessings on the addressee of the letter and on Abū Rā'īṭah himself and the unidentified "us". While one finds brief introductions in several of his other letters, (e.g., the opening greeting of *Proof*), the first *risālah* is extensive. In fact, the introduction itself (§§1-3) bears a strong resemblance to the format of the Syriac preface, which was already well-developed by the end of the sixth century. The composition of the Syriac preface has its roots in Greek sources, but came to be a form in its own right under the influence of Neo-Platonic commentators of Alexandria and Christian Syriac writers.⁴

Numerous elements of the traditional Syriac preface can be identified in Abū Rā'īṭah's text, such as an address to a person without an actual greeting, an appeal to God for assistance (§1), a brief explanation of the occasion and purpose of the letter, a declaration of his unworthiness and fear of the task before him, and his feeling of obligation towards the addressee, as well as supporting biblical citations (§2-3).⁵ A typical aspect of the preface found in the *risālah* is the tendency to emphasize that what is being presented is not something new, but rather a simple exposition of what has already been given in the Scriptures and other esteemed authorities, in this case, the ancient philosophers.⁶ Although Abū Rā'īṭah does not say this directly at the outset, his objective is unmistakable—he intends to establish that Christianity is consistent with what has been recognized as the truth throughout the ages and is neither self-contradictory nor an innovation.

The opening of the preface in *On the Trinity* is a series of petitions begging for guidance in the search for the truth and support

⁴ Eva Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, *Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 11 (Uppsala: Uppsala University; Stockholm, Sweden: Distributer Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988), esp. chapters 3 and 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 187-207, 214-218.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 208-211.

for those seeking to live in God's ways (§1). The language is flowery and complex, and no doubt intended to impress the reader. One notices immediately that in his introductory lines Abū Rā'īṭah has chosen terminology that is strongly reminiscent of *Qur'ānic* and Islamic ideas: clinging to God's divine precepts (فرائض) and the obligation of His laws (شرائع), fighting for God's ways (متحربين لسننه), holding fast to God's Word (كلام), rejoicing⁷ in His religion (دين), rejecting the unbeliever (جاحدين الكفر)⁸ and the Deceiver (الطاغوت) (§1).⁹ All of these would be recognized by a Muslim, as well as an Arabic-speaking Christian reader, as identifiable aspects of Islamic faith. Yet Abū Rā'īṭah cleverly turns the phrases slightly to make them Christian. For example, his reference to the fight for God's "ways", or *sunan*, would have been contrasted in the mind of the reader with the *sunna* of the Prophet Muḥammad, the basis for Islamic religious and legal practice. The term *sunna* itself simply means "practice" or "tradition", but within the context of Abū Rā'īṭah's list it carries with it an implied distinction between Islamic and Christian practice.

This brief inventory of appropriate attitudes of the believer sets the tone for the two *rasā'il*. By choosing common vocabulary and concepts, Abū Rā'īṭah lays out Christian teachings in such a way as to show their similarity to Muslim beliefs (and thus demonstrates that they are not incoherent), while at the same time presenting them as superior. Consequently he can respond both to the scepticism of Muslims and the doubts and fears of Christians confronted with Islam.

After his short preface, Abū Rā'īṭah turns to the project at hand. He states that he is writing this letter in response to a request by the addressee to answer a number of questions and objections concerning "the teachings of the peoples" and their claim that their own religion is correct. In particular, he notes, he will explain the religion of "the People of the South" (اهل التيمن), who say that their faith is superior above all other religions (§2). The phrasing of this is interesting, for it implies that Abū Rā'īṭah intends to look first at the "teachings of the peoples", and then more specifically at those

⁷ *Sura* 13:36 speaks of rejoicing on account of the revelation of the "Book" (الكتاب).

⁸ *Sura* 29:47, 49; 31:32; 6:33; etc. state that it is the unbelievers who reject the signs of God.

⁹ *Sura* 2:256-257; 4:51, 60; etc.

of the “People of the South”. The identity of the latter is certainly believers of Islam.

In keeping with his habit of never mentioning anything Islamic by name, Abū Rāʾiṭah uses the unusual phrase “the People of the South” (اهل التيمن) to identify his Muslim opponents. This epithet also appears in a list of religious groups he gives in *Threefold Praise (I)* 5. It has been suggested that the designation of “the People of the South” refers to the direction, or *qiblah*, of the *Kaʿbah* in Makka toward which a Muslim should pray when one is located in Takrīt near Baghdad.¹⁰ This theory has some support in a later Syriac chronicle which distinguishes Muslims as praying while facing the south,¹¹ making it a plausible suggestion. However, it seems just as likely that the designation refers simply to the place of origin of the Muslim conquerors. This would better explain Abū Rāʾiṭah’s otherwise odd statement about “the teachings of the peoples” and further clarification “*especially* the teaching of the People of the South.” Since it is obvious from the text that he only intends to address questions about Islam (hence, the teachings of the Muslims), “peoples” probably refers to Muslims in general, including Arabs, Persians, and other converts.¹² The “People of the South,” then, are likely the Arabs, who saw themselves as bringers of the message of the *Qurʾān* to the Mediterranean world.¹³ An advantage of this explanation is that it accounts for the two parts to Abū Rāʾiṭah’s statement.

Further, while the Arabs could truly be called “southerners,” the designation of “those who pray facing south” would be somewhat arbitrary. Muslims are very careful and precise about the specific direction of the *qiblah*, making it relative to one’s own position. The direction of “south” would be a rather vague description, and not necessarily the same for Abū Rāʾiṭah as for his readers. This theory also presupposes that his non-Muslim readers would be familiar with this Islamic practice, not an improbable assumption, but a consideration nonetheless.

¹⁰ Griffith, “Abū Rāʾiṭah,” 169.

¹¹ *Chronicon 1234*, 81/230, 109/180.

¹² Bo Holmberg argues that this term is also associated with numerous apocalyptic expectations concerning the Muslims. Holmberg, “*Ahl/farīq at-tayman*—ein rätesvolles Epitheton”, *Oriens Christianus* 78 (1994): 83-103.

¹³ This distinction between Arabs and later converts was a common one before the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty, and no doubt still existed in the consciousness of the people, even among non-Muslims.

In any case, in spite of the lack of an explicit identification, there is no doubt that Abū Rā'īṭah is setting out to refute only Islamic doctrines in the following two *rasā'il*. Muslims would have recognized themselves immediately in his lucid summaries of their teachings, as well as the allusions to, and in some cases, near exact citations from the *Qur'ān*. There are at least two possible explanations for this. First, it may be that Abū Rā'īṭah wishes to deflect some emphasis away from his primary intention to refute Islam. This follows his general approach of never mentioning Muḥammad, the *Qur'ān*, or anything Islamic by name. Perhaps he thought to argue that it is not particularly Islam that is the object of his rebuttal in the event he was called to task by the authorities. However, this seems improbable, since no one reading the remainder of the text could confuse or mistake his purpose.

A second possibility is that his contrast between the “peoples” and the “People of the South” points to the actual phenomenon of those accepting Islam. The period in which Abū Rā'īṭah lived saw the conversion of many indigenous peoples to Islam. After the 'Abbāsīd dynasty came into power, the ethnicity of Muslims shifted from predominantly Arab to a majority of non-Arab descent through marriage and conversion.¹⁴ By the time in which Abū Rā'īṭah is writing there were many “peoples” who had accepted Islam, although it was well known that the religion originated with the “People of the South”.

In view of this, one cannot help but notice his choice of the plural *umam* and think of its common usage in Islam in connection with the Muslim community, or *umma*. Abū Rā'īṭah appears to be making a tacit comment on the Islamic claim that all Muslim believers are united into the single *umma*.¹⁵ Contrary to this assertion, he is reminding his reader that the acceptance of Islam by these various “peoples” is a recent occurrence, and not to be thought of as equal to the ancient religions to which they had adhered before. The move of society in the direction of a single religion, culture and language did not erase the fact that converts to Islam were coming from a multitude of peoples.¹⁶

¹⁴ Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam*.

¹⁵ R. Paret, “UMMA,” *EF*, vol. 4: 1015-1016.

¹⁶ Gutas has pointed out that the 'Abbāsīd program to create a common Islamic culture based upon a universal religious and linguistic foundation was particularly

As a prologue to his own explanation and refutation of those who reject the Trinity and Incarnation, Abū Rāʾiṭah commences the body of his treatise with a statement put in the mouths of Muslims about what they believe. Although he does not cite it again throughout his writings, nor does he discuss every aspect of it in his response to the assertion, it provides the backdrop for the ensuing discussion. The essential argument of the “People of the South”, according to Abū Rāʾiṭah, is that Christians and Muslims agree on the basic attributes of God. Therefore, it does not make sense for Christians to reject what they know to be true. As evidence, the opponents put forward a list of all of those attributes which they know are recognized by Christians. However, they add the *caveat* that their refusal to accept the Trinity is justified, because it is incorrect.

This summary, which is a list of commonly held attributes of God, clearly reflects a developed Islamic theology at the turn of the ninth century. One can identify within it attributes found in the *Qurʾān*, as well as in the very long and complex statement of Islamic faith commonly known as the *Fiqh Akbar II* from the end of the ninth century.¹⁷ Although the final form of the *Fiqh Akbar II* appears almost a century after Abū Rāʾiṭah, it contains more terms found in *On the Trinity* than any other known *ʿaqīda*.¹⁸ A number of the terms and phrases which cannot be directly connected to the *Qurʾān* or the *Fiqh Akbar II* can be traced to other sources found in Abū Rāʾiṭah’s milieu. Another *ʿaqīda*, and one of the most comprehensive from the early to the middle of the eighth century, is that of the *Muʿtazilah* reported by

prominent in this period. If this is so, then Abū Rāʾiṭah’s comment may reflect an attempt to counter the endeavor. Gutas, *Greek Thought*.

¹⁷ It is in this period that more formalized creeds reflecting theological and philosophical concerns appear. According to Wensinck, Islamic creedal statements, or *ʿaqāʾida* (singular *ʿaqīda*), previous to the beginnings of the ʿAbbāsīd period tended to be very brief and concise, often reflecting the solidification of certain positions concerning particular practices and beliefs. The earliest of these *ʿaqāʾida* is the *Fiqh Akbar*, attributed to Abū Ḥanīfah (700-767/81-150), which makes no mention of the unity of God or of any of the questions of attributes. The turn of the ninth century saw the development and expansion of the *ʿaqāʾida*. The *Fiqh Akbar II*, which is an extensively developed version of Abū Ḥanīfah’s *Fiqh Akbar*, to the period of Abū-l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ismāʿīl al-Aṣʿarī (260-324/873-935) as an expression of the final rejection of the *Muʿtazilah* movement by the Islamic community. Wensinck, *Creed*, esp. chapters I and II.

¹⁸ To date I have not found other relevant *ʿaqāʾida* apart from those published in Wensinck.

al-Aš'arī, which expresses their teaching about God almost entirely in the characteristic negative language.¹⁹ The 'aqīda of the *Mu'tazilah*, of course, develops these in much greater detail, and the order of the terms is not exact. Nonetheless, one can identify a general form in the summary provided by Abū Rā'īṭah which is similar to the later 'aqīda. It is also notable that the conclusions of both reflect a clear rejection of certain Christian teachings. Abū Rā'īṭah's text ends with the Muslims denying the possibility of a Trinity in God, while the 'aqīda refuses to admit divine incarnation.²⁰

In light of the similarities between the teachings of the *Mu'tazilah* and the statement found in *On the Trinity*, it might be suggested that Abū Rā'īṭah's questioners are adherents of that well-known group.²¹ Baghdad was one of the two important centers of the *Mu'tazilah*, and during the reign of al-Ma'mūn, exactly at the time in which Abū Rā'īṭah is writing, they exerted significant pressure on imperial policy and on the development of theological thought.²² In fact, there is strong evidence that Abū Rā'īṭah's *Demonstration* is written to an eminent *mu'tazilī* who had moved to Baghdad and was very influential there, Abū Ma'an Ṭumāmah ibn al-Ašras an-Numaryī al-Baṣrī. There are some important indications, however, that it was not only the *Mu'tazilah* who were Abū Rā'īṭah's opponents. In particular, he uses analogies throughout his treatises as a significant aspect of his argumentation. However, the *Mu'tazilah* are known to have rejected analogy as valid, along with any other ideas that compared God to creation. Nonetheless, Abū Rā'īṭah may have included analogies simply because he intends to provide his reader with every possible type of argument, in order to reach the widest audience possible.

In fact, however, all of the terms and ideas found in the summary of Muslim faith presented by Abū Rā'īṭah in the *risālah* can be generally accounted for either in the *Qur'ān*, or in other Islamic sources.²³

¹⁹ Ibid., 73-74.

²⁰ Abū-l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl Al-Aš'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt al-islāmīyīn wa ihtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. Helmut Ritter (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH., 1963), 156.

²¹ Daccache argues that the list of attributes given by Abū Rā'īṭah bears enough resemblance to the tenets held by the *Mu'tazilah* that his interlocutors can be identified with them. Daccache, "Abū Rā'īṭa," 43-47.

²² Watt, *Formative Period*, 221, 224-225.

²³ Only three phrases cannot be found directly, but are still known to have

It does not appear that Abū Rā'īṭah has created the summary on his own, but rather reproduced what he has heard directly from Muslims with whom he is in conversation, allowing one to accept it as a reliable description of orthodox Islamic faith as it was expressed in scholarly circles in Baghdad at this time. Although the evidence is too limited to identify it as a sort of *proto-aqīda*, it certainly can be counted as one of the earliest summaries known to date.

Second, and equally important, is the extent to which the *risālah* reveals the knowledge that Abū Rā'īṭah, as a Christian intellectual, had of Islam. Unlike later Christian accounts of the beliefs of Muslims, particularly those coming from Western writers, Abū Rā'īṭah's writings exhibit a profound and accurate understanding of the central issues which separate followers of the two religions. He clearly recognizes his "opponents" as adherents of another faith, not just supporters of a heretical strain of Judaism or Christianity, and proceeds in a suitable manner. The evidence and arguments Abū Rā'īṭah puts forward in defense of Christianity are intended to address the matters that divide it from Islam, and he believes that he will only be successful if he accurately describes Muslim beliefs and takes them up honestly. The summary of faith which he provides lays out the issues up front and leaves nothing to be disputed for its deception or inaccuracy. His conscientious and meticulous approach make his writings all the more valuable for understanding the intellectual atmosphere and level of exchange that occurred between Muslims and Christians in this period.

With the summary of faith of the "People of the South" as the premise, Abū Rā'īṭah has constructed his argument in such a way as to get to the heart of the problem of the nature of God (how does one speak appropriately about divine attributes? and, can God become incarnated?), while avoiding the use of any traditional sources to substantiate his position that might provide a basis for his opponents to dismiss his case out of hand. For this reason he begins his treatises by defining the meaning of "one" and its relationship to other predicates, and then moves in the second part to the possibility and reasons for the Incarnation.

This overall structure of his apology is completely determined

been acceptable to Muslim scholars. See my forthcoming article for an extensive analysis of this passage from Abū Rā'īṭah.

by an issue he only mentions briefly in (§33) and (§39) at the end of *On the Trinity*, *tahrīf*, the claim that Christians and Jews have distorted their scriptures and consequently obscured the truth of God's word. This concern for avoiding rejection by Muslim thinkers on the grounds of *tahrīf* fully informs Abū Rā'īṭah's project of explaining and defending the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. Knowing that much of the traditional evidence employed earlier by Christian apologists against Judaism will be denied because it contradicts the *Qur'ān*, he is one of the first to build his argument using principles of logic and elements drawn from Greek thought.²⁴ Only then does he give further evidence and analogies taken from scriptural examples that he believes will pass the scrutiny of those suspicious of *tahrīf*. It is for this reason he uses passages from the Old Testament almost exclusively, as these can be shown to be acceptable even to "our enemies the Jews" (§39).²⁵

Like the *Proof*, Abū Rā'īṭah's *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation* are written in the dialectical format common among Arab Christian apologists, and show some signs of following the patterns dictated by the formal *munāzarāt* occurring in Islamic circles in this period.²⁶ In general, a *munāzara* was expected to follow a three-part structure: a question (description of a proof), a first response (evidence or causes for the proof) and second response (general validity of the proof, often using analogies).²⁷ The overall outline of the *On the Trinity* follows this approach, beginning first with the Muslim question in the creed-like statement (§34), followed by Abū Rā'īṭah's rebuttals which include a refutation and evidence for the disagreement, and analogies or examples supporting his position.

For the convenience of the reader, Abū Rā'īṭah has used the standard apologetical format and organized the text as a series of questions by his opponents followed by the most appropriate way in which to develop a response. In order to produce a successful counter-argument in a *munāzara*, it was first necessary to know what

²⁴ Harald Suermann argues that Abū Rā'īṭah may be the first Christian to use Aristotle in engaging Muslims on these topics. See "Trinität in der islamisch-christlichen Kontroverse nach Abū Rā'īṭah," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 74 (July 1990), esp. 221-223.

²⁵ Keating, "Tahrīf," 35-50.

²⁶ See the Introduction for a detailed discussion of formal *munāzarāt*.

²⁷ Van Ess, "Disputationspraxis," 39.

types of argument the opponent will accept. For example, certain groups of Muslim theologians in Abū Rā'īṭah's day were unwilling to accept analogy or consensus as legitimate elements of argumentation. Christians had the added difficulty of responding to the accusation of *tahrīf*.

Most importantly, if one was to succeed in the debate, it was critical to find a common starting point. The *Mu'tazilah* used rationalism, and evidence shows that Christians generally adopted this approach. Indeed, Abū Rā'īṭah begins both *On the Trinity* and *Proof* with the issue that is at the root of the disagreement: a clear definition of the meaning of the statement that "God is One" (§7). He then proceeds with a *mas'alah ḥaḡr* (insisting that one of several provided categories be chosen), asking whether God is "one" in genus, species or number. This strategy is recognizable as *tafīrīq*, forcing the opponent to differentiate between multiple meanings of a single word. Abū Rā'īṭah also uses *taqṣīm* throughout *On the Trinity*, *On the Incarnation*, and *Refutation*, in which distinctions within a single topic are made until the opponent is led to the appropriate conclusion.²⁸

Abū Rā'īṭah's skill in using these strategies in making his case support the suggestion that he actually participated in *munāzarāt* with Muslims. The complexity of his arguments and his ability to predict how his adversaries will proceed indicates that the *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation* are closer to edited transcripts of actual debates in which he took part, than to hypothetical exercises designed as teaching tools. While the texts may have been used in academic settings for this very purpose, there can be no doubt that Abū Rā'īṭah's personal experience during which he honed his responses and rhetorical skills lies behind the current form of the text.

Throughout the *risālah* Abū Rā'īṭah forces his questioners to formulated ever-more precise definitions of their terms, and to define attributes more clearly, until they are compelled to admit the truth of Christian doctrine. Although he does not mention any of the "people of wisdom" specifically, one can identify the Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, behind many of the distinctions he makes. He has also drawn on the insights of the Cappadocian fathers here,

²⁸ Ibid., 27; 40, n.8.

whom he mentions explicitly in his writings in defense of Jacobite teachings against the Melkites.

It is only at the conclusion of the text that Abū Rā'īṭah adds some well-known analogies, and even a few biblical citations that he believes will be helpful to illustrate his argument. At this point he concludes, with the intention of picking up the implications of the Holy Trinity in the Incarnation in his second treatise.

Addressees and Date

The structure of *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation* follows the form of the *risālah* noted above, exhibiting the two-fold purpose of being written for an unnamed person or group, while at the same time intended for a much wider readership. The vague reference to an individual at the beginning of the text is someone with whom Abū Rā'īṭah appears to be acquainted. After this opening remark, he does not mention this person again until the very end. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that the text was composed under entirely fabricated circumstances, and something may be deduced about the addressee.²⁹ In the introduction to the first *risālah*, he asks the blessings of God on himself and on an unidentified “us”. The references in the opening paragraphs are to a single masculine person, using the familiar (الـيك) rather than the formal form (الـيكم) of address, which can be understood either as a singular or plural. This suggests that he is writing to an individual whom he knows well and who belongs to the same ecclesial community to which Abū Rā'īṭah belongs.

Given the remark at the end of the *On the Incarnation* (§85) that he has written “to the people of Baḥrīn”, it seems that Abū Rā'īṭah's addressee lives somewhere in the same general vicinity and would be familiar with this Christian community in the district of Ṭirhān near Mossūl. This is in keeping with the general assumption throughout the two *rasā'il* that the addressee is having similar experiences with his Muslim neighbors as Abū Rā'īṭah. It is also clear that, although the bulk of the *risālah* is presented as a question-answer exchange between Muslims and Abū Rā'īṭah, the primary expected readership is his own ecclesial community, whom he calls the “People of Truth” (اهل الحق) (§2). That this is the Syrian Jacobite community

²⁹ Griffith, “Abū Rā'īṭah,” 167.

is readily apparent from the monophysite christological position he puts forth in the *On the Incarnation*.

One can also assume that the unnamed recipient of these two *rasā'il* was an educated lay person like himself, or a cleric with whom he was on friendly terms. The contents of the text assume a great deal of learning, both in the Christian tradition, and of basic concepts and intellectual trends in Islam, and would be useless to someone who could not follow the argument himself. Abū Rā'īṭah has written the *rasā'il* as a guide to those who would be invited to participate in debates with learned Muslims and who would presumably be well-versed in the issues that might arise, but who could benefit from the experience and successes of a renowned debate partner. The addressee might also be a clergyman, priest or bishop, who is concerned that members of his flock are unable to defend themselves when confronted by questions put to them by Muslims during their daily activities.

Without any internal evidence for support, it is difficult to pinpoint a date for the two *rasā'il*, although it is quite probable that they were written together. The smooth transition between the two and the similar degree of care and deliberation in their composition allow the assumption that Abū Rā'īṭah intended them (perhaps along with a third) to be considered as a unit. Other factors suggest that these writings belong to the middle or latter part of Abū Rā'īṭah's career. In particular, many of the arguments found in the *Proof* have been developed more fully and show a degree of polish that is not apparent in his other writings. If the dates of Abū Rā'īṭah's intellectual activity are put between 815 and 828, the two *rasā'il* coincide with the period of theological controversy that was beginning to arise in the Muslim community in Baghdad.

These particular writings reveal a high level of knowledge on Abū Rā'īṭah's part about the positions of his Muslim opponents. In fact, he addresses nearly every topic known to be a point of contention between Muslims and Christians in this period. This knowledge, along with the extent and completeness of his responses and explanations, argues for a good deal of experience on the part of the writer. In addition, Abū Rā'īṭah probably began to be invited to participate in staged *munāzarāt* after he was known as a Christian theologian. The purported occasion of the *rasā'il* is a request on the part of a distant Christian individual for help in responding to questions raised by Muslims, suggesting that his reputation as a controversialist had

spread beyond his home. These factors lead one to the conclusion that the date of composition for both *rasā'il* is not sooner than 820, and more likely to be assigned sometime towards the end of that decade.

A brief word should be said here about the relationship between *On the Trinity* and another text containing excerpts from it identified as an epistolary conversation between the Muslim al-Hašimī and the Christian al-Kindī. This document, whose authors have not been conclusively identified, is an extensive exposition of Muslim beliefs and Christian responses to them, including an invitation by each to convert to the religion of the other. The letters claim to be an exchange written during the reign of the caliph al-Ma'mūn, which has been convincingly corroborated. However, it is unclear of which community the Christian is a member, and even whether the letters reflect an actual conversation between a Muslim and a Christian or are fabrication for an unknown purpose.³⁰

In any case, of special interest is the long excerpt of Abū Ra'ītah's *risālah On the Trinity* found in the letter of al-Kindī.³¹ The passage has not been lifted in its entirety from Abū Ra'ītah, but has instead been edited and abridged to fit the overall argument made by the author of that letter. Some have suggested that internal evidence points to Abū Ra'ītah as the one who has borrowed from the letter in his own writings. However, this forces one to assume that a lesser known person with only one identifiable writing was considered by Abū Ra'ītah to be an authority worthy of plagiarizing. It seems instead that some other interesting possible explanations present themselves. Abū Ra'ītah states that his purpose for composing the *rasā'il* is to answer the request of another person who is in need of information on this topic, presumably to defend himself against various charges being made against Christianity by Muslims. al-Kindī's

³⁰ For a French translation and examination of the questions surrounding the text, see Georges Tartar, *Dialogue Islamo-Chrétien sous le calife al-Ma'mūn (813-834): Les épîtres d'Al-Hashimī et d'Al-Kindī*, Etudes Coraniques (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1985) and «L'authenticité des épîtres d'al-Hāšimī et d'al-Kindī sous le Calife al-Ma'mūn (813-834),» pp. 207-221, in: *Actes du premier congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes*, ed. Khalil Samir (Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1982).

³¹ Graf has reproduced a German translation of the text in al-Kindī and identified the passages drawn from Abū Ra'ītah's *risālah*. Graf, *Abū Rā'ītah*, 131/32-36.

letter is exactly that. One cannot help but speculate that the author of the letter is in some way connected to the request to which Abū Ra'itah is responding. The dating of both Abū Ra'itah's first *risālah* and the letter of al-Kindī to within ten years of each other supports this possibility. That Abū Ra'itah can in fact be identified as the author of the letter is less likely, but nonetheless a suggestion that bears further investigation. At the very least, the dates proposed here for Abū Ra'itah's *rasā'il* seem to be confirmed by what can be substantiated about the letter of al-Kindī.

In summary, Abū Ra'itah offers his two *rasā'il* *On the Trinity* and *On the Incarnation* to fellow Jacobites as compendia of clear responses to inquiries about Christianity by Muslims. It is probable that both were written together sometime later in his career, after he had had considerable experience as a controversialist and had become known beyond his own city of Takrīt. This situates them sometime between 820 and 830. Using all available resources, he sets out to construct a set of arguments in defense of the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation which will be convincing to his readers.

It can be established that following the objectives characteristic of Christian *mutakallimūn* of this period, Abū Ra'itah's goal is three-fold in *On the Trinity*. First, he wishes to appropriate the categories of philosophical thought and especially Greek logic into Arabic as a medium for discourse with members of a new religious tradition determined by its own patterns of expression. Second, in order to find common ground with adversaries who reject much of the traditional scriptural foundation of Christian doctrine, he seeks to move the debate to the level of rational proofs, and consequently pushes his opponent toward the rules governing the art of controversy. Finally, through a dialectical method he forces the discussion to move towards an ever more precise definition of the terms so as to purge it of every ambiguity and come to the logical conclusion that he intends.³² It is only when he believes he has succeeded in these aims that he adds non-controversial scriptural evidence to support his arguments. Through this strategy, Abū Ra'itah seeks to reestablish the credibility of Christian thought by showing that it is not logically

³² Daccache, "Abū Rā'ita," 34.

contradictory, and in fact is authentically based in revealed Scripture. Ultimately, his hope is to introduce Christian definitions into the scholarly debate and give Christians a voice in society where Islam was becoming the dominant world-view.

رسائل حبيب بن خدمة المعروف بابى رائطة التكريتى يعقوبى
الرسالة الاولى¹ فى الثالث المقدس

1 الهمنا الله واياك الصواب وأيدنا بتأييد المعلى² على كل تأييد . وجعلنا
واياك ممن يلتمس حقه ونوره وينقاد بضياء سرجه العلمية ويتبع مصابيح
النيرة المرشدة لمن استنار بها الى ادراك حقائق الامور مواظبين عليها
متمسكين بفرائضه لازمين لشرائعه متحريين لسننه اخذين بكلامه فرحين
بدينه رافضين لمن خالفه مجتنبين لمن اسخطه جاخدين الكفر والطاغوت³
مصدقين بالله⁴ وبما جاء من عنده . فانه ولى كل نعمة ومنتهى كل رغبة .
2 اما بعد فانك سألت ان اكتب اليك كتاباً اوضح لك فيه ما اشكل عليك
من اقويل الامم وادعائهم الصواب لما فى ايديهم ولا سيما قول اهل التيمن
ووصفهم فضل دينهم وشرفه واعلايه⁵ على سائر الاديان وان اشرح لك مع
ذلك لقرار اهل الحق ومحبتهم وما اتوا به من الحكمة والبرهان وانهى
ذلك بهية⁶ المسائل والمجاوبة . فلقد سألت من ذلك امراً فيه بعض العسر
والصعوبة لا يعين عليه الا الله له المجد دائماً . وذلك بخلال انا آت على
ذكرها ان شاء الله .

فاول ذلك ان من كان فى مثل حالى ممن قد غلب عليه الغى⁷ وبروز الكلام
وقلة⁸ الاستمال له والحضور لاهله فلا شى اولى به من الكف⁹ عما لا طاقة
له به ولا نهوض . ثم من قد لحقه من المؤن والكلف فى امر معاشه

1 P الاولة 2 P المعتلى 3 S والطاغوة 4 PS بالله 5 P اعتلائه 6 Graf: read
الكلمة 7 P ابعى 8 S وقلت 9 S الكلف . بهيئة

From the *Rasā'il* of Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidmah,
Known as Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrītī, the Jacobite
The First *Risālah* on the Holy Trinity

1 May God inspire you and us with what is correct, and give us the greatest of all support. May He put both of us among those who seek His truth and His light, who are led by the light of His lamps of knowledge, and those who follow His bright lights, which show the way to those who seek enlightenment by means of them, to a grasp of the true things. They are the ones persisting in [what is true], clinging fast to His precepts, and the obligation of His laws, fighting for His ways, holding fast to His Word, rejoicing in His religion, spurning those who differ from Him, avoiding those who anger Him, rejecting the unbeliever and the Deceiver, giving credence to God and to what comes from Him. He is the Patron of all grace and the End of all desire.

2 Now then. You have asked that I write a book explaining what is obscure to you concerning the teachings of the peoples and their claim that what they hold is correct, and especially the teaching of the People of the South, and their description of the superiority of their own religion, and its excellence and preeminence above the other religions. And so, along with this [clarification], I shall set forth for you the confession of the People of Truth,¹ and what they love and what they offer [in defense] of it by way of wisdom and proof, and I shall communicate this in the form of questions and answers. Now, you have asked something which is among the most difficult [things to do, something] which is allotted to no one except God, may He be praised eternally! This is because of the dilemmas [we face], of which I am [now] going to speak, if God wills!

The first of these [is this]: If one is in a position similar to mine, one of those who are defeated by error and excellence of speech, and has little wealth, and is rarely in the presence of his [own] people, then it is better for him to refrain from what he has neither the aptitude nor the encouragement to do. Further, the one who is weighed down by [the duty to] provide food [for others] and [by] the things

¹ I.e., the Jacobite Christian community.

الدنياي¹⁰ ما لا سبيل معه الى اشخاص رويه¹¹ وارسال اشراط ذهنه فى البغيه ليحتسب بجهده من الخطأ والغلط .

واما الثالثة التى هى¹² تفسخ الشهوة وتردع عن التكلف بشىء من هذه الامور الواضعة الزمام والرباط على شفتى حذارى لسفه سفيهم وشغب اهل الجهل منهم وطولهم وافتحارهم¹³ والعجابهم بما اوتوا من القدرة والسلطان فلا يامن مخالطهم ان يورطوه فيما لا خلاص له منه ولا منجا الا بعون الله وعصمته .

3 فقد التبس على ذهنى وانتشرت اركان حيلى وتُهتُ المذهب وتحيرت وصرت مؤامر نفسى التقدم على ذلك والتخوف مما ذكرت¹⁴ او اهمله . فذلك اشد واعظم لتخوفى ولتهييى مما يلزمنى من العيب والشنعة . ولانى ضعيف وخفت الكلام مخافة على نفسى فى العاجل وكتمت الحق ولم اعلنه بجهدى .

ولزمتنى الحجة فى تصنيفى ذلك وقلت¹⁵ تفقدى لما ذكره سيدنا المسيح جل ثناؤه فى وصيته شيعته فى كتابه وتقويته اياهم حيث فال لا تهابوا ممن كان على قتل الجسد قادراً فانهم لم يقدروا على قتل النفس . بل هابوا واحذروا من كان على ايراط¹⁶ النفس والجسد فى نار جهنم قادراً حيث لا خمود لناها ولا انصرام لعذابها . وقوله فى الانجيل ايضاً من سالك فاعطه والطالب منك لا تمنعه . وهذه واشباهها مما لم اذكر فى هذا الكتاب ولتوكلى والجماعى نفسى الى الذى قال لا تهتموا ما الذى تقولون فقد تعطون عند الحاجة ما اياه تنطقون .

¹⁰ Graf: read الدنياوى ¹¹ Graf: read رأيه ¹² Graf: read التى ¹³ Error in Graf: افتحارهم not افتخارهم ¹⁴ S ذكرة ¹⁵ S وقلة ¹⁶ S انزال

of his worldly livelihood has no possibility to express his opinion or demonstrate signs of his intellect in his unjust [situation]. In his endeavor he should be on guard [to avoid] mistakes and blunders.

The third [dilemma] is that which tears away the passion [to speak] and impedes one from [taking up] this burden, the thing which puts the bridle and reins on my lips: Beware of the stupidity of the fools and the discord sown by ignorant people among them, and their presumption, pride and conceit coming from their power and might. For one is not safe in their company from becoming entangled in that from which there is no deliverance nor release, except by the aid of God and His protection.

3 Consequently, confusion reigns in my mind and the supports strengthening me have collapsed and I have lost the way. I am at my wit's end, babbling, and deliberating with myself about advancing upon this [path], and afraid of what I will mention or omit. But the worst and the most distressing is my fear and my dread of the shame and disgrace which is flung upon me, because I am weak and I am afraid of speaking in haste. And so I hide the truth, and do not make an effort to make it known.

Yet the argument compels me to write this, and my survey is only an insignificant [example] of what our Lord, the Messiah, exalted is His praise! referred to when He instructed His disciples in His book² and encouraged them when He said: "Do not be afraid of the one who has the power to kill the body, but does not have the power to kill the soul. Rather, fear and beware of the one who has the power to hurl the soul and the body into the fire of Hell, which is never extinguished, and has no end to its torment."³ And He also said in the Gospel: "If someone asks of you, then give to him, and if someone seeks something from you, then do not withhold it from him."⁴

With this in mind (and other similar [commands of Jesus] which I have not mentioned in this book), and because you have charged me, I myself take refuge in what He said: "Do not have doubts about what you will say, for you will be given according to the need to articulate it clearly."⁵ And so, I set out on the journey to comply

² I.e., the Gospels.

³ Cf. Lk 12:4-5

⁴ Cf. Mt 5:42

⁵ Cf. Mt 10:19

وطئت نفسى على قضى¹⁷ حاجتك والاجتهاد فى اعلان وايضاح لما ادعى على الفريقين من امر دينهما ليكون ملزماً لكل ذى حق حقه وباطل باطله .

4 واول ذلك من هاهنا . قال اهل التيمن ان الحجة فى ايدينا والبرهان فى قولنا . لانكم وافقتمونا وشهدتم على ما فى ايدينا بانه حق من حيث لم تنكروا علينا وصفنا ان الله واحد لم يزل ولا يزال حتى عالم بصير سميع لا شريك له فى جوهريته ولا فى ملكه . وهو الاول والاخر خالق ما يرى وما لا يرى غنى كامل ذاته لا يصفه الواصفون معتلى عن النقص والعجز غير موصوف بالتبعض ولا بالتجرى مالك قوى فاعل لما يريد لا يرى ولا يحس ولا يدرك ولا يحد وسع كل شىء علماً . فالدليل الواضح ان قولنا هو الحق وديننا هو الصواب ومن اتبع غيره فهو من الخلسرين باقراركم¹⁸ وتصديقكم لقولنا فيما وصفنا الله به من حق صفته¹⁹ . فاما ادعاؤكم²⁰ ووصفكم الله مع توحيده²¹ بالتثليث فليس ذلك مما يلزمنا لانا به جاحدون وله منكرون .

يقال لهم عند ذلك ايها القوم انما دعانا الى محاورتكم . وهىخ ما هىخ فى مناظرتكم فيما بيننا وبينكم . رجاء ان تنصفونا فى الكلام وتفصلونا منه²² مفصلة الاخوة المشتركين فى بضاعة يوارثوها عن ابيهم وكلهم فيها مشتركون ليس لبعضهم فيها شىء دون بعض . فنحن وانتم فى الكلام سوا . فان رأيتم ان لا تسرعوا فى قضاء تلزمونا به حتى تنظروا فيما يرد منا من

¹⁷ Graf: read قضاء ¹⁸ S ما اقراركم ¹⁹ S من الوحانية ²⁰ P ادعاركم ²¹ S
²² The citations found in the manuscripts of 'Abd al-Masīh ibn Ishāq al-Kindī of this text begin here.

with your needs, and to attempt to illustrate and explain the claims of the two parties⁶ concerning the issue of their religion, so that the one who believes the truth is compelled to acknowledge what is true and the liar to admit his deception.

4 The first [issue] is the following. The People of the South say: “The evidence is in our possession and the proof is in our teaching. For you agree with us, and give witness to the truth of what we possess, in as much as you do not deny our description of God as one,⁷ always was and always will be, living, knowing, seeing, hearing, having no partner in His *ousia* or in His dominion. And He is the first and the last, Creator of what is seen and what is unseen, without want, perfect [in] His being, He is not described by those who [wish to] describe Him, [He is] exalted above diminishing and weakness, not described by division, nor by [having] an envoy, Ruler, powerful Doer of what He wishes, not seen, not sensed, not comprehended, not limited, comprehending everything [in His] knowledge. The obvious demonstration that our teaching is the truth and our religion is the correct one (and that the one who follows another [religion] is among those who are lost), is in your confession and your assent to our teaching in which we describe God by His true description. However, if your claim and your description of God is threeness, together with His oneness, then this is not [something] which is incumbent upon us, because we reject it and deny it.”

They should be answered in this way: Oh people! Verily we are called upon to a debate with you. Let us get down to⁸ our dispute about what stands between us. It is hoped that you will treat us justly in the discussion and that you will share with us just as common brothers share in the portion of goods they inherit from their father—all of them have a portion and some of them do not have something apart from the others. Then we and you will be equal in the discussion. If you are of the opinion that you need not hasten to impose a judgement on us until you have examined the answer

⁶ I.e., Christians and Muslims.

⁷ Cf. *Sura* 29:46.

⁸ Ar. هيخ ما هيخ. According to Kazimirski, this is a figure of speech, coming from the command for a camel to kneel down (A. de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, 4 tomes [Caire: Impr. V.R. Egyptienne, A. Boulec, 1875], IV/779). See also Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 130/4, n. 2.

الجواب فيما سألتمونا لكي تكون قضيتكم علينا بعلم ومعرفة فافعلوا .
5 واما ادعاؤكم ان الحجة في ايديكم والصواب والحق في مقالته من حيث شهدنا لكم بان الله واحد مع سائر صفاته فلذلك يجب على اهل الحق الا يردوا صواباً ولا يجحدوه في يد من كان . بل يقبلوه اشد القبول مع جميل الثناء وحسن القول على اهله . فان ذلك مما يزينهم ويشهد لهم بانهم ملتزمون الصواب جهدهم ومتخذون الحق بقدر الطاقة . واما امتعاضكم مما يلزمكم من القول او يقوم ²³ به عليكم الحجة ان الله يوصف مع وحدانية ²⁴ بالتثليث من حيث انكرتم ذلك وحججتموه فاذن الامر يلقي على غير ما وصفتم . لان ليس الذي ليطل حجة قوم امتناع خصمائهم عن قبولها .
6 بل يجب علينا ²⁵ ان نحص عن ذلك فحصاً شافياً براى اصيل لا يميل به هوى عن فضاء السبيل . فان يكن ما ذكرناه من امر التثليث حقاً فليقبل وان الشيء ²⁶ على غير ذلك ووجد باطلاً فالرياح اولى به ولا قسر ²⁷ على احد في قبوله .

مع اننا وان كنا وافقناكم في مقالته ²⁸ بان الله واحد فما ابعد ما بين القولين فيما تظنوا ونصف . والشاهد على ما ذكرت مخالفة صفتهم لوحدانيتها صفتنا اياه . لو قد سألناكم ²⁹ عن ذلك واجبتمونا على كم نحو يوصف الواحد واحداً فاذا انبأتمونا ذلك علمنا انكم صادقون فيما ادعيتم من اننا شهدنا لكم على ما وصفتم . وان الفيتم غير عالمين على كم نحو يوصف الواحد واحد ³⁰ فادعائكم باننا شهدنا لكم ذلك مدحوض .

²³ S تقوم ²⁴ S وحدانيته ²⁵ S لنا ²⁶ PS الغى ²⁷ S omits ²⁸ S واحد ²⁹ S لوحدانية ³⁰ Graf: read واحداً في مقالته omits

we give to what you ask, so that your case against us made with knowledge and information, then do that.

5 As for your claim that the evidence is in your possession and that which is correct and true is in your teaching (in particular, that we also bear witness to you that God is one together with His remaining attributes), it is necessary that the People of Truth⁹ do not refuse what is correct, nor reject it, no matter who may possess it. Rather, they should wholeheartedly accept it with beautiful praise and excellent words for those people [who have it in their possession]. For this is what puts them in a favorable light, and bears witness that they are among those who seek what is correct in their endeavor, and adopt the truth, insofar as possible. And as for your indignation at what is enjoined upon you by [our] teaching or the evidence of it established against you ([namely,] that God is described along with His oneness by threeness), although you deny this and reject it, I think that the issue will be found to be different from what you describe. For the one who simply declares unshakable evidence invalid has not hindered his opponents from accepting it.

6 Rather, it is necessary for us to seek information about [the questions], examining and investigating with genuine regard, and not be prejudiced by an inclination to turn from the open path. If it is the case that what we have said concerning the matter of the Trinity is true, then it should be accepted; and if the thing is otherwise, and found to be false, then the winds are more deserving of it,¹⁰ and it cannot be forced upon anyone in his heart.

Nevertheless, even if we reach an agreement with you on your teaching, that God is one, what a great distance lies between the two statements in what you think and what we describe! And the confirmation of what I say lies in the difference between your¹¹ description of His oneness and our description of it. If we ask you about this, and you answer us according to how many ways “one” can be described as one, when you explain it to us, we shall know that you are confirming what you claim, namely, that we bear witness to you of what you describe. But if you are discovered to be unlearned in how many ways “one” is described as one, then your demand that we bear witness to you in this is unjustified.

⁹ I.e., those who search for the truth.

¹⁰ I.e., this should be thrown to the winds and abandoned.

¹¹ Arabic: their description.

7 فهل تقولون ان الواحد يقال الا على ثلاثة اوجه اما فى الجنس واما فى النوع واما فى العدد . ما اخال بدعته ذو اللب منكم . لانا انما نناجى ذوى العقول والاراء منكم الراسخين فى العلم الداخلين الامور لا المسيحيين الذين اذا وردت عليهم مسلة غامضة بلطف عجزوا عن الاجابة فيها ولم يكن لهم من جواب غير سبحان الله نعم سبحان الله حتى تنضرم³¹ الدنيا وما دامت الاخرة فمن يعجز عن مثل هذا الجواب .

فلنرجع الى ما ذكرنا ما رأيتم . اتجيبون انتم واکون من السامعين او تقلدونى ذلك واحكيه عنكم . فانى مرطد نفسى على الانصاف لما كان من الجواب³² . وان احكى عنكم بصلق ان قلدت ذلك فاختاروا لانفسكم من تروه انه لكم . ولا امترى انكم تأبون تقليدى ذلك لان من كان مخالفاً فى الملة كان كلامه لديكم غير مقبول . فاذا أبيتم ذلك فقد لزمكم الجواب .

8 فعلى اى وجه تصفون ان الله واحد من هذه الوجوه الذى ذكرناها فى موضع ذلك فى الجنس لو³³ فى النوع او فى العدد . فى قلتم فى الجنس فصار واحداً عاماً لانواع شتى مختلفة لا يجوز فى صفة الله . وان قلتم واحداً فى العدد كان ذلك نقضاً لكلامكم ان ليس كمثل شىء . لانى لا اشك ان كل واحد³⁴ منكم لو سئل عن نفسه كم هو لم يقدر ان يقول انه واحد فرد . كيف

واحداً P³⁴ لم Graf: 33 جواب S³² تنظرم S³¹

7 Do you say that “one” may only be spoken of in three ways: either as genus, or as species, or as number?¹² No one among you who is reasonable will regard this as an innovation.¹³ For we only engage those among you who are intelligent and judicious, firmly grounded in knowledge [and interested in] penetrating the issues, not with such Christians who, when faced with the subtlety of a difficult question, are incapable of a response to it, and no answer comes to them other than “God be praised! Yes, God be praised until the world is set on fire and as long as the Hereafter endures!” Rather, [we wish to discuss the issues] with someone who is incapable of an answer like this.

Now we return to your opinion¹⁴ which we mentioned [above]. Do you [wish] to answer yourselves, and that I [sit] among the listeners, or do you wish to force [your opinion] on me, and that I mimic it according to [your desire]? I myself will respond justly to what is to be answered. But if I am only to mimic you, while in truth I am forced into it, then choose for yourselves someone of your own opinion. I do not doubt that you would refuse if I forced this [on you], because the word of someone who is your opponent in religion is unacceptable to you. But if you refuse [to let me speak freely], then it is incumbent upon you to give the answer.

8 [Which] of the ways that we have mentioned in the [above] descriptions (in genus, or in species, or in number) is the way you actually describe God? If you say in genus, then [God] becomes a common one, encompassing various different species;¹⁵ this is not permitted in a description of God. And if you say [God is] one in number, then this is a contradiction of your statement that nothing is like [God].¹⁶ Now, I do not doubt that if each one of you were to ask himself, how many is he, [he] could only say that he is a single

¹² Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.6 [1016b-1017a] (*Metaphysics. Books I-IX*, vol. 17, trans. by Hugh Tredennick, *The Loeb Classical Library* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: St. Edmundsbury Press Ltd., 1933, repr. 1996]). Abū Rāʾiṭah does not include analogy in his list here, probably because it is problematic for many of his Muslim opponents.

¹³ The Trinity and Incarnation are considered in the *Qurʾān* to be innovation and exaggeration. Cf. *Sura* 4:171; 5:72, 77, 46:9, etc.

¹⁴ I.e., that Christians agree with Muslims and therefore should convert to Islam.

¹⁵ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.6 [1016b].

¹⁶ *Sura* 112:4. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.6 [1016b].

يقبل عقولكم هذه الصفة التي لا يفصل الهكم من سائر خلقه .
وكيف زعمتم انه ليس كمثله شيء ولا يصفه الوصفون . وای صفة اعظم
من هذه او تشابهه مع وصفكم اياه بالعدد تصفوه³⁵ بالتبعيض والنقصان . اما
تعلمون³⁶ ان الولحد الفرد في العدد بعض العدد . لان كمال العدد ما عم
جميع انواع العدد فالواحد بعض العدد وهذا نقض الكلام³⁷ انه كامل غير³⁸
متجزىء .

9 فان قلت انه واحد في النوع فالنوع³⁹ ذوات شتى لا واحد فرد وان كان في
الجوهر واحداً . وجب علينا ان نسئلكم هل تخالف صفة الواحد في النوع
عندكم صفة الواحد في العدد وانما⁴⁰ تعنون واحداً في النوع واحد في العدد
 . فان قلت انه قد تخالف هذه⁴¹ تلك قلنا فحد الواحد في النوع عند اهل
الحكمة اسم يعم عدداً شتى وحدّ الواحد في العدد عندهم ما لم يعم غير
نفسه .

افمقرون انتم ان الله واحد في الجوهر يعم⁴² اشخاص شتى ام انما تصفونه
شخصاً واحداً . فان كان معنى قولكم بانه واحد في النوع واحد في العدد ولم
تفرقوا الواحد في النوع ما هو وكيف هو ورجعتم الى كلامكم الاول بانه
واحد في العدد فهذه صفة المخلوقين كما وصفنا في موضع ذلك .

10 فان قلت فهل تقدر ان تصفون الله واحد في العدد بعض وليس
بكامل يقال لكم قد نصفه⁴³ واحد⁴⁴ كاملاً في الجوهر لا في العدد لانه في

³⁵ PS add. ام ³⁶ Graf: تلعون ³⁷ S كلامكم ³⁸ P غير غير ³⁹ S omits
فالنوع ⁴⁰ S ما ⁴¹ P هذا ⁴² Graf's acceptance of the correction in
Kindi's manuscript of يعم for بغير appears to be correct. ⁴³ S يصف ⁴⁴ Graf:
واحد

[individual] one.¹⁷ How can your intellects accept this description which does not distinguish your God from the remainder of His creation?

And how do you assert that nothing is like [God], and that those who [wish to] describe [Him] do not describe Him? Which description is the best of these or is similar to your description? For by number you describe Him with division and imperfections. Do you not know that the [numerical] one is a single [number which is] a part of a number? For the perfection of number is what encompasses all species of number, so “one” is a part of a number, and this contradicts the statement that He is perfect without being divided into parts.

9 Now if you say that He is one in species, “species” is [comprised of] different beings, not one single [being], even if [they] are one in *ousia*.¹⁸ It is necessary for us to ask you: according to you, is the description “one in species” different [from] the description “one in number”? Truly, you mean “one in species” [in the sense of] “one in number”. For if you say that they are different, we shall say: according to the People of Wisdom¹⁹ the term “one in species” is a name encompassing various numbers,²⁰ and the term “one in number” according to them, is what does not encompass [something] other than itself.

Do you confess that God is one in *ousia* encompassing various individuals, or do you only describe one individual? If the meaning of your teaching is that “one in species” is “one in number”, and you do not define what “one in species” is and how it is, then you return to your first statement, that [God] is “one in number”. However, this is a description of creatures, just as we explained it [previously].

10 If you say, “How are you able to describe God as ‘one in number’ neither [as] a part, nor as a perfect [whole]?” It should be said to you: We describe Him as one perfect in *ousia*, not in num-

¹⁷ Cf. the example of the man and the animal in Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.6 [1016b].

¹⁸ The Arabic *واحدًا في الجوهر واحدًا* is the equivalent of *ἰσοουσία* here.

¹⁹ I.e., the philosophers.

²⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Categories* 5 [2a-2b] (*The Categories. On Interpretation. Prior Analytics*, vol. I., trans. and ed. by Harold P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick, *The Loeb Classical Library* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1983]).

العدد اى فى الاقانيم ثلثة . فقد كملت صفته فى الوجهين جميعاً . اما وصفنا اياه واحداً فى الجوهر⁴⁵ فلاعتلائه عن جميع خلقه وبريته محسوسة كانت ام معقولة لم يشبهه شىء ولم يختلط به غيره بسيط غير كثيف روحانى غير جسمانى يات⁴⁶ على كل بقرب جوهره من غير امتزاج ولا لختلاط . وفى العدد فلانه عام لجميع انواع العدد . لان العدد لا يعدوا⁴⁷ ان تكون انواعه نوعين زوجاً وفرداً . فقد دخل هذان النوعان فى هذه الثلثة⁴⁸ اقانيم . فباى انحاء وصفناه لم يعدل بصفته الكمال شيئاً . لتعلموا وصفنا الله واحداً ليس على ما وصفتموه . فهذا فى بدء كلامنا هكذا .

11 واما ما وصفتم من ان الله حىّ عالم سميع بصير وظننتم انا وافقناكم فى ذلك وشهدما لكم بالصدق فلننتظر جميعاً فى هذه الصفات من حىّ وبصير وعالم فى اسماء مفردة مرسله ام اسماء مضافة تدل على اضافة شىء الى شىء . وقد يجب علينا ان ننظر ما الاسماء المضافة وما المرسله المفردة . فالمرسله كقول القائل ارض وسماء ونار وكلما كان مما قيل شبيهاً بما لا يضاف الى غيره . واما الاسماء المضافة المنسوبة الى غيرها فكالعالم

⁴⁵ S omits فى الجوهر ⁴⁶ Graf: read يأتى ⁴⁷ Graf: read يعدوا ⁴⁸ Graf: الثلثة

ber, because He is in number (that is, in *hypostaseis*) three. [This] description of Him is perfect in both ways: When we describe Him as one in *ousia*, then He is exalted above all His creatures, be it His perceptible or His intellectually comprehensible creation—nothing is comparable to Him, nothing is mixed with Him, He is simple, without density, incorporeal, His *ousia* approaches everything closely without blending or mixing.²¹

And [we describe Him] in number because He encompasses all of the species of number. For number can only be counted in two species: even and odd.²² These two types are included in the three *hypostaseis*. In whatever manner we describe Him, nothing is equivalent to His perfect description. So you know: we describe God as one, [but] not as you describe Him. This is the beginning of our statement on this.

11 As for your description of God as living, knowing, hearing, and seeing, and your presumption that we agree with you in this and witness to what is correct [in your view], we wish to examine everything closely concerning these descriptions of living and seeing and knowing. [Are they]²³ single, absolute names, or predicative names,²⁴ indicating the predication of one thing to another thing? It is necessary for us to examine which are the predicative names, and which are the single, absolute [names].

The absolute [names] are those such as when one says “earth”, and “heaven”, and “fire”, and anything similar of which it can be said that is not predicated of another thing.²⁵ As for the predica-

²¹ Abū Rāʾīṭah’s approach here is similar to the Cappadocian arguments, particularly those of Basil. Cf. *Ep.* 8 (*PG* 32, col. 248 [*TCF*, 272]).

²² Such numerical “proofs” are common in patristic texts, although this particular one may be original to Abū Rāʾīṭah. Griffith points out that a more extensive explanation is found in the Syriac apology of Nonnus of Nisibis: “One is an odd number, but two is an even number. While three is even and odd at the same time, one even [digit], and one odd [digit]. Every number above three, either does not preserve this completeness of the species of numbers (e.g., four is two even numbers, and there is no odd number; while five, even though it includes an odd number, also has two even numbers.) or, if they somewhere preserve the appearance [i.e., of the completeness of number], they are doubled, and they proceed to an infinite magnitude without cause.” Van Roey, *Nonnus*, 7-8, as translated by Griffith in “Abū Rāʾīṭah,” 181.

²³ There appears to be a word missing here. Kindī has added اهي.

²⁴ Cf. this distinction in Basil, *Contra Eunomius* (*PG* 29, cols. 497ff.).

²⁵ Cf. Aristotle, *Categories* 1-4.

والعلم والبصير والمبصر والحكيم والحكمة وما اشبه ذلك . فالعالم عالم بعلم والعلم علم عالم . والحكيم حكيم بحكمة والحكمة حكمة حكيم . وهذا القول فيما كان كثير لما وصفنا لكيلا يخرج بنا اتساع الكلام الى الكثرة فيضطر السامعون الى ملله ولستثقاله .

12 فاذا بينا ما الاسماء المفردة وما المضافة المنسوبة الى غيرها وجب ان نسئلكم عن الموصوف بهذه الصفات اللازمة هل هي لجوهره في ازليته ام انما اكتسبها الكتساباً واستوجب الوصف فيها من بعد كما استوجب ان يوصف له خلق وبرية حيث خلق وبرى ⁴⁹ وسائر ما ⁵⁰ لم اذكر من الاسماء سمي بها صفات ووصف وحكى بها لافتعاله لها .

فان قلت فيما وصفتموه به من حى وعالم وحكيم انه انما اشتقت له استقافاً واستوجبها كما استوجب جميع ما سمي به من اكمل فعله لها فاذا قد يوصف انه قد كان ولا خلق له ولا برية حتى اتى على ذلك بالفعل هكذا فليجز اذا ان يقال قد كان الله ولا حياة له ولا علم ولا حكمة حتى صارت الحياة والعلم والحلمة لديه موجودة . وهذا مخالف من الكلام ان يكون الله سبحانه خلواً طرفة عين من حياة وعلم .

13 وان قلت الامر غير ⁵¹ ما ظننتم ووصفتم لنا ما ⁵² لزمكم من الشنعة بانه قد ويصف بان لله خليفة وبرية قبل ان تفارق ⁵³ شيئاً منها بالفعل قلنا انما هما وجهان اما ان يكون الله جل وعلا وحده لم يزل وما سواه محدثاً . واما ان

بل ان يفارق S ⁵³ ما S omits ⁵² على غير S ⁵¹ مما S ⁵⁰ برأ Graf: read ⁴⁹

tive names, [they] are related to something else, just as “knower” and “knowledge” [are related to each other], “seer” and “seeing”, “wise” and “wisdom”, and anything similar to this.²⁶ So the knower is knowing through knowledge, and the knowledge is knowledge of a knower. And the wise person is wise through wisdom, and the wisdom is wisdom of a wise person. This teaching pertains to much of what we have [already] described. We shall leave it [here] so that we do not draw the discussion out too much, and do not compel the listeners to boredom and place a burden on them.

12 When we have clarified what are the single [absolute] names and what are the predicative [names which are] related to something else, it is then necessary that we ask you about what is described by these descriptions of inherent properties: Do they belong to [God’s] *ousia* eternally, or did He acquire them and merit the description only later, just as He merited being described by creation and creatures when He created and brought forth, [as well as] the rest of the names referring to attributes²⁷ which I do not mention [here]? And is He described by and spoken of with them because He causes them?

If you are saying that [those terms] by which you describe Him, [such as] living and knowing and wise, are on the contrary derived from Him, and that He merited them just as He merited everything by which He is named [after] He completed it by His act, as when He is described as having existed and having had no creation and no creatures until He came to this by the act [of creation], it should be allowed as a consequence to say in the same way that God existed and had no life, no knowledge and no wisdom until the attributes of life and knowledge and wisdom began to exist in Him. And it is a contradictory statement [to say] that God, may He be praised! was for [even] a blink of an eye, lacking life and knowledge.

13 And if you say: “The issue is not what you think and what you have described to us, [because what you say] would be ugly, for God would be described as having a creation and creatures before He distinguished any of them by the acts [of creation],” then we say: There are two possibilities: Either God, the Exalted and Most

²⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *Categories* 7 [6a].

²⁷ At this point in the text, the term *صفة* begins to take on the specific philosophical meaning of ‘attribute’, rather than simply ‘description’. The remainder of the translation will employ the term most appropriate to the context.

يزعموا ان البرية ازلية ايضاً غير محدثة فلا نحسبكم الا نقمين⁵⁵ على من وصف الخلق بشيء من ذلك . فاذا لا محالة قد يقال ان الله له الحمد قد كان من قبل ان يكون شيء من الخلائق موجوداً . فكيف جاز ان توصف لله خليفة وبرية ولم يخلق ولم يبرى⁵⁶ بعد حتى اتى الوقت الذى فيه شاء ان يخلق ما خلق .

14 الا ان تقولوا⁵⁷ من اجل انه قادر ان يخلق اذا اراد فقد وجب ان توصف له خليفة قبل ان يخلق . فنقول ان كان من اجل انه قادر على ان يخلق اذا اراد يوصف له خلق لم يزل فليوصف اذا انه لم يزل قد اقام القيامة واحيا الموتى وبعث من فى القبور وقد ادخل الجنة جميع الابرار وخذل جهنم من كان لذلك مستوجباً .

مع انى لا اظن ان لحداً من اهل العقل يقبل هذه الصفة . فان رجعتم الى الحق والصواب وتركتم المرأى⁵⁸ فيما لا تنتفعون به وقلتم ان هاتين الصفتين لمختلفتان صفة طباعية لم يزل موصوفاً بها لازمة به وصفة اكتسبها له اكتساباً وهى صفة فعله رجعنا الى مسألتنا الاولى .

15 نسئلكم اذا رايتم هذه الاسماء التى يسمى بها هل هى دالة على اسماء مفردة . وقد فسرنا الاسماء المفردة فى صدر هذا الكتاب حيث وصفنا ان المفردة هى كقول القائل ارض وسماء او انسان او فرس وما اشبه ذلك . واما المأسورة المنسوبة المضافة الى غيرها كحى وعالم وحكيم . فان كان الله لم يزل حياً عالماً فالحياة والعلم اذا ازلية .

54 S فان المرأى read
55 Graf: read ناقمين
56 Graf: read ببرأ
57 S انا نقول
58 Graf:

High, [Who] alone has never ceased to exist and has no equal, is originated. Or, you²⁸ are asserting that creatures are eternal also, and are not originated. We do not consider you to be among the unfortunate who describe creation by something such as this. If it most certainly can be said that God, may He be praised!, existed before anything created, then how is it possible that creation and creatures be attributed to God, but that He did not create and did not bring forth until after the time came in which He wanted to create what He created?

14 But if you say: “On account of the fact that He possesses the power to create when He wants,²⁹ it is necessary that creation be attributed to Him before He created”, then we say: If therefore, creation is attributed to Him on account of the fact that He possesses the power to create when He wants, then it must [also] be attributed to Him that He has not ceased resurrecting, bringing the dead back to life, and calling [the dead] forth from the tombs, and that He [has not ceased] leading all of the righteous into the Garden, and making Hell eternal for the ones who are deserving. Now, I do not think that anyone of the People of Knowledge accepts this [understanding of] the attribute.

If you return to the truth and that which is correct, relinquishing an argument from which you have nothing to gain, and you say that these two attributes are different (a natural attribute does not cease [to exist] and describes an inherent property in [God], and an acquired attribute, which He has acquired, is an attribute of [God’s] operation), [then] we return to our first question.

15 We ask you: Are you of the opinion that these names by which [God] is named indicate single [absolute] names? We have already explained the single [absolute] names in the first part of this book when we described the single [absolute names] are similar to when a speaker says: “earth” and “heaven”, or “a human being” or “horse” and the like. On the other hand, the construct [names which are] connected and related to something else, are [those] like “living”, and “knowing”, and “wise”. If God has not ceased to be living and knowing, then [His] life and knowledge are eternal.

²⁸ The switch to third person plural (يزعموا) in the Arabic text appears to be a copiest’s error.

²⁹ Cf. *Sura* 36:81-82

وان كان الامر على ما وصفنا فلا محالة⁵⁹ من ان تكون هذه المنسوبة اليه الحية اعنى والعلم اما غيره كما ينسب الشريك الى الشريك واما منه . فمنه ايضاً على وجهين اما فعل فعل منه فقد نفينا عنه هذه الصفة ولزمها من المشنعة ما لزمها فى موضع ذكرها واما ما تكون من جوهره . وان كانت ايضاً من جوهره فذلك على وجهين . اما كاملة من كامل واما ابعاصن من كامل . فاما الابعاض فلا يجوز فى صفة الله لانه معلى عن ذلك . فاذا لا محالة انها كاملة من كامل .

16 فاذا كان هذا هكذا⁶⁰ فلا بد من ان توصف اما مفترقة متباينة لا اتصال لها واما متصلة مأسورة لا تباين لها واما مأسورة مفترقة جميعاً معاً . فان قالوا انها مفترقة غير متصلة فقد وصفوا ان الله محدود لانه لا سبيل ان يكون شىء واحد بعضه مفارق مباين البعض الا وهو خارج من غير جوهره فقد حجز بين بعضه وبين بعضه . وهذا نقض لما وصفوا فى صدر هذا الكتاب ان الله غير محدود ولا⁶¹ مدروك⁶² من الذى يحده .

وان قالوا انها مأسورة متصلة غير متباينة كان هذا القول ايضاً مما يدعوا⁶³ الى نقض قولهم بانها كاملة من كامل . لان هذه صفة ابعاض واجزاء لا صفة كامل . فاذا هدمت هاتان الصفتان اعنى التفريق وحده والاتصال وحده⁶⁴ فلا شل ان الصواب فى الصفة الثالثة بانها⁶⁵ متصلة مفترقة جميعاً معاً .

17 فعند هذا القول يثبون⁶⁶ الى الاخذ علينا بالطريق ويستلونا كيف⁶⁷ يكون⁶⁸ امر واحد متصلاً مفترقاً . اما تعقلون ما تصفون . فنجيبهم عن ذلك

⁵⁹ Here the excerpts found in al-Kindī end. ⁶⁰ S هكذى ⁶¹ P omits ولا ⁶² S
adds مدروك مدروك مدروك ⁶³ Graf: read يدعو ⁶⁴ S وهذه ⁶⁵ S انها ⁶⁶ S
افكون ⁶⁷ S omits. ⁶⁸ S

And if the issue is as we have described, then most certainly these are related to Him, that is, life and knowledge, either as other than Himself, as [one] partner is related to [another] partner,³⁰ or as from Him. “From Him” also has two aspects: either [the attributes are] an act He has done from Himself, but we have refuted this [description of] the attribute, and this is an abominable thing (which was mentioned previously), or they are what is from His *ousia*. And further, if they are from His *ousia*, then this has two aspects. Either [they are] something perfect from something perfect, or [they are] parts from something perfect. However, if [they are] parts, this is not possible in a description of God, because He is above this. So they must certainly be something perfect from something perfect.

16 And if this is the case, then it is necessary that [the attributes of life, knowledge and wisdom] be described either as divided and dissimilar, having no continuity, or as continuous and connected, having no dissimilarity, or as connected and divided simultaneously. If they say that they are divided without being continuous, then they are describing God as limited, because it is not possible that part of a single thing is divided and separated from the other part, unless it is outside of its *ousia*, so that the two parts are isolated from each other. And this is a contradiction of what they have described in the first part of this book, [namely], that God is not limited, and not grasped by the one who [intends to] limit Him.

If they say that [the attributes of life, knowledge and wisdom] are connected and continuous without being dissimilar, this statement also belongs to what they claim contradicts their teaching that [the attributes] are something perfect from something perfect. Because this [would be] a description of parts and divided things, not a description of something perfect. Now, if these two [descriptions of] the attributes, that is “division alone” and “continuity alone”, are invalidated, then there is no doubt that the correct one of the three descriptions [of the attributes] is “continuous and divided simultaneously”.

17 With this statement, they will try to obstruct our way, and ask us: “How can a single thing³¹ be continuous and divided [simultaneously]? Do you not understand what you describe?” Then we must

³⁰ The worship of anything other than the One God is explicitly rejected by the Qur’ān (*Sura* 6:22-23, 163; 17:111, etc.).

³¹ Ar. شيء. Previously, the text uses شيء.

بل انا تعقل ما نصف . فلو كان وصفنا اياه بالاتصال والافتراق جميعاً بها فيها اى فى الوجه الذى نصفه به متصلاً ماسوراً بها ايضاً نصفه مبيناً مفارقاً كان لعمري تلبساً علينا فى عقولنا . فاما اذ وجد الامر بخلاف ما ظننتم والعى على غير ما توهمته قلوبكم فانا نقذف بالقطن ونضرب بالسوط من الصوف المنقوش . فالواصل الينا من الم . ضربتكم مثل الذى يصل من الريح الساكنة الهادى⁶⁹ الى العالى من الصنوبر .

18 لانا انما وصفناه باتصال فى الجوهر وتباين فى الاشخاص اى القانيم . فان انكروا هذه الصفة الشتباها عليهم وقالوا ان هذه الصفة شىء مختلف لان من كان جوهره غير اقانيمه واقانيمه غير جوهره لم يكن فى الصفة ولكن مختلفة غير ملاوم⁷⁰ يقال لهم افهل وصفنا جوهره غير اقانيمه كما وصفتم . فان قالوا بلا⁷¹ قد وصفتم ذلك حيث زعتم ان وجه اتفاقه غير وجه افتراقه ووجه افتراقه غير وجه اتفاقه يقال لهم ان الامر على غير ما تذهبون اليه . انما وصفنا انه متفق⁷² فى الجوهر مفارق فى الاقانيم وجوهره هو اقانيمه واقانيمه هم جوهره بمنزلة اضواء⁷³ ثلاثة فى بيت واحد .

فلا يظن منا احد انا عيننا سرجاً ثلاثة بل عيننا اضواءها فان كان الله تبارك عن كل قياس متعالياً فالاضواء ثلاثة . وواحد هى بعينها اما ثلاثة فلان كل واحد منها قائم بعينه ثابت بذاته وان كان ليس بينه⁷⁴ وبين غيره من الاضواء حاجز فى المكان واما واحد فلاتفاقها جميعاً فى الضوية⁷⁵ . ودليل ذلك انها واحد وثلاثة فان كل واحد منها غير الآخر فى قوام ذاته . لانه⁷⁶ لو اخرج بعض تلك

⁶⁹ Graf: الهداية ⁷⁰ Graf: read ملائمة ⁷¹ Graf: read بلى ⁷² P add. متسق ⁷³ P
اضو ⁷⁴ Graf: بينه ⁷⁵ Graf: read الضواء ⁷⁶ S omits.

answer them against this [accusation]: On the contrary, we have understood what we have described. If our description of [God] as continuous and divided simultaneously, [means] that according to the way by which we have described Him, He is continuous and connected, and we have [at the same time] also described Him as separated and divided, then by my life! there would be confusion in our understanding. However, if it is found that the issue is contrary to what you think, and the error is not what your hearts suspect, then we will throw cotton [around ourselves] and strike with whips of colored wool. For the one who joins us is one who will suffer. I will strike you like the one who takes himself from the calm tranquil breeze to the highest point of the pine tree.

18 For we only describe [God] by continuity in *ousia*, and by dissimilarity in the individuals, that is the *hypostaseis*. If they refuse this description because it is obscure to them, and say that this is contradictory because the one whose *ousia* is other than his *hypostaseis*,³² and whose *hypostaseis* are something other than his *ousia* cannot be described because it is contradictory and not appropriate, it should be said to them: Have we described [God's] *ousia* as other than His *hypostaseis* as you have described?

If they say: “Nonetheless, you meant this when you assert that the manner of [God's] unity is different from the manner of His division, and the manner of His division is different from the manner of His unity”, it should be said to them: The issue is not as you think it is. We only describe [God] as unified in *ousia* and divided in the *hypostaseis*, and [God's] *ousia* is His *hypostaseis*, and His *hypostaseis* are His *ousia*, as with the placement of three lights in one house.

None of us thinks that we mean three lamps, rather, we mean their light, even though God, blessed is He, is above every analogy. For the lights are three and one—they are identical with each other. They are three because each one of them is self-subsistent and enduring in its being, even if there is no obstruction in the space between it and the other lights, and [they are] one, because they are all united in light. And the demonstration of this (that they are one and three [simultaneously]) is that each one of them is not the others in the proper state of its being. Because, were one of these lamps to be

³² Abū Rā'īṭah has repeated this assertion using the plural اقانيم instead of the singular *hypostasis*, as would be expected.

السرّج من البيت خرج صوءه معه ⁷⁷ من غير ان يبقى منه شيء ⁷⁸ .
19 فان قالوا فهل يمكن ان تكون اضواء ثلاثة من غير مصابيح ثلاثة
وهكذى ⁷⁹ تصفون الاقانيم الثلاثة ان لها معدناً كمعدن الاضواء الخارجة من
المصابيح يقال لهم ان حدّ القياس عند اهل الرأى ما شبه فى تعض الوجوه
فكان الغالب عليه الاختلاف . فلو ان القياس اشبه المقاس به فى كل انحائه
ولم يخالفه فى شيء منها كان اذاً هو الامر الملتمس له قياساً قائماً . فانما
يشتق من القياس ما احتيج اليه لا ما استغنى عنه .

فلو ان الله سبحانه اى الاقانيم نوراً وضوء محسوس لكان لعمرى كل واحد
منها محتاجاً الى علته يخرج منها كحاجة الاضواء المحسوسة التى هى
محتاجة الى المعادن . فاما اختصار وصفنا لاضواء معتلية عن الحواس
والعقل جميعاً لم نضطر الى ان نصف لكل واحد ⁸⁰ منها علة بل احدهما
علة الاثنين بلا بدى ⁸¹ ولا زمان . والاثنين مضافان ⁸² الى الواحد اضافة
جوهرية طباعية . وهما كاملان من كامل كحوى وهابيل الذين هما من ادم
كاملان ⁸³ من كامل . وهما مضافان الى ادم اضافة جوهرية وهما فى الانسانية
واحد ثلاثة فى الاقانيم .

20 فجوهر اللاهوت ثلاثة اقانيم ثلاثة اقانيم جوهر ⁸⁴ اللاهوت جوهر . لان
مخالفة الجوهر الاقنوم ⁸⁵ الواحد كمخالفة شيء عام لبعض خواصة . لانه
خالفه بكثرة ضمه لا بالجوهر . فالانسان العام اى الناس لجمعون لم
يخالف ⁸⁶ موسى لهرون ⁸⁷ اى الاشخاص الا بضم الكثرة .

واما فى الجوهر فواحد لان لموسى وحده ولهرون وحده جميع ما للناس
اجمعين غير الضم ⁸⁸ الكثرة . فلو ان من اراد ان يحد الانسان العام ⁸⁹ لحق

⁷⁷ P معه ⁷⁸ S add. او يلحقه من الباقيه شىء ⁷⁹ Graf: read هكذا ⁸⁰ P
واحد ⁸¹ Graf: read ⁸² S يده ⁸³ P كاملين ⁸⁴ S omits جوهر ⁸⁵ Graf:
علم ⁸⁶ Graf: read ⁸⁷ P لم خالف ⁸⁸ Graf: read ⁸⁹ P وحرون

removed from the house, its light would be removed with it, and nothing of it would remain.

19 If they say: “Is it possible that the three lights exist apart from three lamps? In this way, you describe the three *hypostaseis* as having a source, like source of the lights of the lamps previously mentioned,” then it must be said to them: According to the *ahl ar-ra’y*,³³ the analogy is limited to what is similar in one way, for the most part there is difference. If the analogy bears resemblance to what is compared in every manner, and there is no difference in any [part] of it, then there would be a question as to whether it is a sound analogy. Only what is necessary may be derived from the analogy, not what is not needed [to make an argument].

Now, if God, may He be praised! that is, the *hypostaseis*, were a luminous and perceptible light, then, by my life! each one of them would be in need of a cause from which it emerges, just as it is necessary that the perceptible lights have sources. [However,] when we briefly described the lights, which are above all of the senses and all knowledge, we are not compelled to describe each one of them as having a cause. Rather, one of them is the cause of the other two, without beginning and without time. And the two are related to the one in a substantial, natural relation. And both are something perfect from something perfect, just as Eve and Abel, who are from Adam, are something perfect from something perfect. And the two of them are related to Adam by a substantial relation. They are one in humanity, and three in *hypostaseis*.

20 The *ousia* of the Godhead is the three *hypostaseis*, and the three *hypostaseis* of the *ousia* of the Godhead are the *ousia*. For the difference between the *ousia* [and] the single *hypostasis* is like the difference between a whole thing and one of its properties, because its difference lies in the plurality of what it consists of, not in the *ousia*. So the whole of humanity (that is, all humans) is not differentiated, as Moses to Aaron (that is, the individuals), except it consists of a plurality.

As for the *ousia*, they are one, because Moses alone and Aaron alone have everything that human beings have collectively, except that they do not consist of a plurality. Now, if one wants to define

³³ This is probably a general reference to the group of Islamic legal scholars who were known for their extensive use of reason and opinion.

حده لم يعد⁹⁰ ان يحده بانه حى منطبق مائت . ولو اراد ان يحد موسى وهرون وحدهما ايضاً لم يعد ما حد به الانسان العام لانه حى منطبق مائت .

21 وان قالوا فاذ صارت هذه الاقانيم الثلاثة لديكم فى الجوهر فليوصف كل واحد منها بصفة خاصة الاخرى والداً او مولوداً او خارجاً حتى لا يخالف بعضها بعضاً . يقال لهم لعمري لو لم يكن لكل واحد منها قنوم كامل مباين للآخر بخاصية لكان يصير كل واحد منها كما وصفتهم . فاما اذ قد صار كل واحد منها قنوماً كاملاً معتقلاً بخاصيته التى بها يخالف الاخر لم يلزم كل واحد منها بصفة الاخر فى الخاصة بل كل واحد منها يعرف بخاصيته الاب بابويته والابن⁹¹ ببنوته والروح بخروجه من الاب .

وليس اختلاف خواصها بالذى يصير جوهره⁹² مختلفاً كادم وهابيل وحوى الذين هم جوهر واحد لا اختلاف فيه . لان كلا انسان⁹³ . وليس صفة خاصة احدهما صفة خاصة الاخر لان ادم والذ لا ولد وهابيل ولد لا والد وحوى⁹⁴ خارجة من ادم لا والد ولا ولد . لزم كل واحد منهم خاصته⁹⁵ التى بها يخالف للآخر من غير ان يكون الجوهر مختلف⁹⁶ كما ذكرنا . وادم وهابيل وحوى سر الاب والابن وروح القدس بقدر ما يمكن المحسوس المبصر⁹⁷ ان يكون سرّاً لما ليس بمحسوس ولا مبصر .

22 فان قالوا فاذ كانت الاقانيم الثلاثة الموصوفة منكم الالهاً على ما ذكرتم من امر ادم وهابيل وحوى فما الحائل بينكم وبين ان تصفوها الهة ثلثة كما فد يوصف ادم وهابيل وحوى اناساً ثلثة . يقال لهم انه انما جاز ان يوصف ادم وهابيل وحوى اناساً ثلثة لحال⁹⁸ ما يوجد بينهم من الاختلاف ما لا سبيل ان يوجد مثله فى هذه الثلاثة اقانيم البتة .

S⁹⁶ خاصيته S⁹⁵ حوا P⁹⁴ انسان S⁹³ جوهرها S⁹² والابا P⁹¹ يحد P⁹⁰ مختلفاً بحال S⁹⁸ البصر P⁹⁷ مختلفاً

the whole of humanity by its true definition, he would not hesitate to define it as living, having the faculty of speech, and mortal. If he also wishes to define Moses and Aaron individually, he would not hesitate to define each by what he had defined the whole of humanity, because each is [also] living, having the faculty of speech, mortal.

21 If they say: “If these three *hypostaseis*, according to you, occur in the *ousia*, then each one of them is described by a proper attribute of [one of] the others: begetter, or begotten, or processing, so that there is no difference between one and the other,” they should be answered: By my life! If each one of them were not a perfect *hypostasis*, particularized from the others by a property, then each one of them would exist just as you have described. However, when each one of them exists as a perfect *hypostasis*, bound by its property which differentiates it from the others, then none of them are required to take on the attribute of the other as a property. Rather, each one of them is recognized by its own property: the Father by His Fatherhood, and the Son by His Sonship, and the Spirit by His Procession from the Father.

And the difference of their properties is not something which makes its *ousia* different, like Adam and Abel and Eve, whose *ousia* is one with no difference in it, because all of them are human beings. The description of the property of one of them is not the description of the property of the other, because Adam is the begetter and not the begotten, and Abel is the begotten and not the begetter, and Eve is the one who proceeds from Adam, [she is] not the begetter or the begotten. Each one of these is inseparable from that which differentiates it from the other, yet the *ousia* is not different, as we have explained. And Adam and Abel and Eve are a *mysterion* for the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, to the extent that it is possible for what is perceptible and visible to be a *mysterion* for that which is neither perceptible, nor visible.

22 If they say: “If the three *hypostaseis* described by you as divine have the same relationship to each other according to your account as Adam and Abel and Eve, then what obstacle stands between you and describing them as three gods, just as Adam and Abel and Eve are described as three human beings?” , then they should be answered: It is only permitted to describe Adam and Abel and Eve as three human beings on account of the difference which exists between them. It is absolutely not possible that [a difference] like [this] exists in these three [divine] *hypostaseis*.

فان قالوا ما ذلك الاختلاف يفارق ادم وهابيل وحوى بعضهم⁹⁹ بعضاً من غير ان يوجد في هذه الاقانيم الموصوفة منكم الالهاً مثله . بينونا¹⁰⁰ به لنعرفه . يقال لهم انا مبينوكم اذا سالتموننا ذلك . فاول اختلافهم ان منهم اولاً وائخراً . بعضهم¹⁰¹ اقدم من بعض في الكون لانهم مكونون في ازمنة مختلفة واحايين متقدمة ومتاخرة .

ثم انهم يحتاجون الى اماكن متباينة شاملة لزرع اجسادهم وقد يختلفون في القوة والهمة . لانهم ليسوا سوا¹⁰² في القوة والهمة . فقد زادوا في الاختلاف فضلاً على ما ذكرنا مخالفة كل واحد منهم نفسه حتى لا يكاد يوجد طرفة عين ولا لمحة بصر لنفسه مسالماً . فلهذا واشباهه وصف ادم وزوجته وابنه اناساً ثلثة .

23 فاما المتفق في جميع اموره المتسق في جميع حالاته من القبلية والبعدية بل كل اول واحد وقبل وبعد اعلى حاجة المكان لروحانيته ولطف جوهره من لا اختلاف في قوته ولا تشتت¹⁰³ في مشيئته¹⁰⁴ ولا في افعاله جوهر واحد كيف يجوز في الذي حاله هكذا ان يوصف بالاله الثلثة . فلو ان حال ادم وزوجته وابنه كانت متفقة في جميع امورها لم يختلفوا في وجه من الوجوه جاز القول فيهم انهم انسان واحد . لكن علة تسميتهم اناساً ثلثة الذي لحقهم من الاختلاف كما ذكرنا .

24 فان قالو كيف يجوز ان تصفوا الله بهذه اصفة من الاتصال والافتراق جميعاً . فهل يكون الاتصال الا وقد سبقه افتراق او افتراق الا وقد تقدمه اتصال يقال لهم انكم لو لطفتم النظر فيما ورد عليكم من وصفنا الله من اتصال وافتراق جميعاً معاً¹⁰⁵ اعظمكم ذلك وكثر له تعجبكم .

⁹⁹ S لبعضهم ¹⁰⁰ Graf: فابينونا ¹⁰¹ S بعضهم ¹⁰² S اسوا ¹⁰³ S ما ¹⁰⁴ Graf: read مشيئته ¹⁰⁵ S ما يستت

If they say: “What is this difference which separates Adam and Abel and Eve from each other, of which nothing like it exists in these *hypostaseis* you described as divine? Clarify it for us, so that we can know it”, then they should be answered: We shall clarify it for you, since you have asked us this. Their first difference is that they have a beginning and an end. Some of them are older than the others in existence, because they became beings at different times, and lived earlier and later [than the others].

Further, they require completely separate places, so that their bodies can grow. And they are different in power and in ambition, because they are not equal in power and ambition. They are endowed with difference in even more than what we have mentioned: the difference of each one of them within himself, so that there is scarcely blink of an eye, or a moment [when] he is peaceful. For this and similar [reasons], Adam and his wife and his son are described as three human beings.

23 As for the One Who is in agreement³⁴ in all of His affairs, Who is harmonious in all of His states, [both] earlier and later, but utterly first [and] only, before and after, above the need of a place on account of He being spirit and the immateriality of His *ousia*, without difference in His power and without variation in His will, nor in His operations: one *ousia*. How is it possible to describe one whose state is this as three gods? If it were the state of Adam and his wife and his son to be in agreement in all affairs, without difference in a single aspect, [then] it would be necessary to say of them that they are one human being. However, the cause for their being identified as three human beings, which is because of the reality of their difference, is as we have explained.

24 If they say: “How is it possible that you describe God with these attributes of continuity and division simultaneously? Is it not the case that continuity is anticipated by a division, or a division is preceded by continuity?” it must be said to them: If you would be so kind as to examine what is presented to you about how we describe God with continuity and division simultaneously, you would regard this as of great importance, and your astonishment would increase.

³⁴ I.e., never conflicted within oneself.

فانكم قد تجدون في بعض صفات الجسوم وغيرها ان انتم الطفتم النظر وناصحتم انفسكم شبيهاً بما وصفنا الله به وان كان عن القياس الاشبه متعالياً . فالواجب على من كان لنفسه مناصحاً ولها محتاطاً وعليها شفيقاً الا يدفع حقاً ورد عليه لبغضة¹⁰⁶ سبقت الى قلبه من اعداء النعم ولجهله به بل يعمل رؤيته ويجيد فكرته ويجهد نفسه فيما في التماسه وقبوله الاعتصام به .

25 فما¹⁰⁷ عساكم ان تقولوا في النفس والعقل والنطق . أمتصلة هي ام مفترقة ام لها كلا الصفتين اعنى اتصالاً وافتراقاً . فهل كانت النفس قط مباينة للعقل والنطق او بعض هذين لها ثم اتصلت من بعد . او ليس انما اتصالها وتباينها¹⁰⁸ جميعه مع اول انشائها لم يتقدم احدهما الاخر .

فان الشيء¹⁰⁹ على ما وصفنا من امر اتصال النفس بعقلها ونطقها وافتراقها ممن عسى ان يتدبر ذلك غير مقنع له ولا كاف للطفه وجب علينا ان نتبعه بقياس منشرح واضح .

26 اخبرونا عن الشمس وضوءها وحرارتها أمتصلة هي بعضها ببعض لم متباينة غير متصلة . ام لها كلا الصفتين جميعاً اتصالاً اعنى وافتراقاً فهل تقدم اتصالها افتراقها او افتراقها اتصالها . ام لها كلا الحالين جميعاً في اصل تكوينها كما وصفنا . وماذا تقولون في الخمس الحولس الجسدانية أمتصلة هي ماسورة في الجسد بعضها ببعض ام مفترقة متباينة لا أسر لها . ام لها الامران جميعاً فلا ريب في مسألتكم ايانا على ما استنار من بيان حجتنا وضياء برهاننا .

الغى PS 109 وتباينها S 108 فيما S 107 ما S adds 106

Now, if you are so kind as to examine [the issue], and you are honest with yourselves, you will find in some of the attributes of bodies and other things similarities to the way we have described God (even if He is above analogy and similarities). For it is necessary for the one who is honest with himself and is cautious and concerned [to take care], lest he repudiate a truth presented to him because of hatred left in his heart by an enemy of grace, and because he is ignorant of it. Rather, he [must] pursue his examination [of the evidence] and devote his thoughts [to the truth] and apply himself in search [of it], and its acceptance and adherence to it.

25 Now, what do you say about the soul and the intellect and the faculty of speech? Are they continuous or are they divided, or do they have both attributes, I mean continuity and division? Was the soul ever separate from the intellect and the faculty of speech, or one of these two from the others, then joined [together] later? Or is it not the case that their continuity and division [occurred] together from their very beginning, [so that] one of them did not precede the other?

Now, the thing is [in fact] as our description [explains] the continuity of the soul with its intellect and its faculty of speech, and their division. Yet perhaps someone who reflects on this is not convinced by it, and it does not measure up to his [level of] sophistication, [so] it is necessary for us to provide him with an explanatory and obvious analogy.

26 Tell us about the sun and its light and its heat:³⁵ is it continuous, one part with another part, or is it separate and not continuous? Or does it have both attributes together, I mean continuity and division? Now, does its continuity precede its division, or does its division precede its continuity? Or did it have both states together from the beginning at its creation, as we have described? And what do you say about the five bodily senses: Are [they] continuous, one part bound in the body with another part, or are they divided and separated, and [the body is] not bound to them? Or do they have things in common? [There is] nothing suspicious in your question to us about what is illustrated by our clear evidence and lucid proof.

³⁵ Among others, Graf notes this analogy is found in the disputations of the monk Abraham of Tiberias and the Catholicos Timothy I, as well as in the anonymous *Tract on the Trinity* and the writings of Abū Qurrah (*Abū Rāʾīṭah*, 131/19, n.1).

فهل تقدم اتصال الحواس في الجسد افتراق او افتراق سبق اتصال . فاذا كانت النفس والجسد¹¹⁰ والحواس وهى مخلوقة مبرّية متصلة مفارقة جميعاً معاً من غير ان يسبق اتصالها افتراق وافتراقها اتصال فقد ثبت وصفنا بان الله سبحانه اقانيم ثلاثة ماسورة لاتفاق جوهرها ومتباينة لحال قوام ذات كل واحد منها غير¹¹¹ ان يتقدم اتصالها افتراق وافتراقها اتصال .

27 فان قالوا ومن اين يشبه ما قسمتم من امر النفس وعقلها ونطقها والشمس وضوءها وحرارتها والحواس واختلافها صفتكم الاقانيم الثلاثة . انما هى اجزاء وابعاض الذى¹¹² هى له . اهكذا تصفون الالهكم بانه من اجزاء وابعاض غير ملائم بعضها بعض . فهذا اذا واحد مركب من اجزاء مختلفة كاختلاف اجزاء النفس والشمس ولحواس وكل واحد منها مخالف للآخر فى جميع انحاية .

يقال لهم انا لم نضرب لكم مثلاً من الشمس والنفس والحواس قياساً . ونحن نريد نقتاس بتجزئة اجزائها انما اتحدناها قياساً لحال اتصالها وافتراقها جميعاً معاً لم تتقدم احدها الاخر . وقد قلنا فى القياس قبل هذا الموضوع فى هذا الكتاب انه ما اشبه فى بعض وجوهه وكان الاختلاف غالباً عليه .

فاما انهما كاملان من كامل الابن¹¹³ اعنى وروح القدس من الاب فقد ابنينا على تفسير ذلك عند وصفنا ادم وهابيل وحوى¹¹⁴ ووضحنا¹¹⁵ القول فيهم بان حوى وهابيل من ادم كاملان من كامل اقانيم ثلاثة جوهر واحد . لان الله له الحمد خلقه على سر عدد اقانيمه وتوحيد جوهره .

¹¹⁰ S الشمس ¹¹¹ S من غير ¹¹² S للذى ¹¹³ S اولابن ¹¹⁴ S وحوا ¹¹⁵ S ووضحنا

Now, does continuity precede division in the senses of the body, or does division anticipate continuity? For if the soul and the body and the senses are creatures, created things [which are] continuous and divided simultaneously without continuity anticipating division, and division [preceding] continuity, then [this] is established as fact as we have described [it, namely] that God, may He be praised! is three *hypostaseis* bound through the coincidence of their *ousia*, and separated through the state³⁶ of existence of the being of each one of them, without their continuity preceding division and division [preceding] continuity.

27 Now, if they say, “And on what basis are your analogies of the soul and its intellect and its speech, and the sun and its light and its heat, and the senses and their difference comparable to your description of the three *hypostaseis*? Are they are divided things and parts of that to which they belong? Is this the way you describe your God, that He is [a composition] of divided things and parts that do not fit together? Then this [God] would be composed of different divided things, like the differences of divided things [such as] the soul and the sun and the senses. Each one of them is differentiated from the others in every relation.”

It should be said to them: we did not give you the examples of the sun and the soul and the senses [as] a [complete] analogy. We want to compare the division of what is divided in them [to that of the *hypostaseis* and] we only connect them analogously because of the state of their simultaneous continuity and division, [where] one of them does not precede the other. And we have said before this point (above in this book), that an analogy bears resemblance [to what is compared] in some aspect, but the difference is predominant.

Truly, they are two perfect [things] from a perfect [thing], I mean, the Son and Holy Spirit from the Father. Now, we have constructed an interpretation of this according to our description of Adam and Abel and Eve. And we have explained the teaching by them, in that Eve and Abel are from Adam—two perfect things from a perfect

³⁶ Abū Rāʾīṭah employs the Arabic حال (state) here instead of نحو (mode) to express what is meant by τρόπος ὑπαρχεως (mode of existence.) The reasons for his use of it are twofold. First, it communicates more concretely the idea of a property as a state of the divinity. Further, Arabic grammarians defined it as that which is predicated of a subject when it is specified by a particular attribute (Griffith, “Abū Rāʾīṭah”, 185, esp. n. 91).

28 فان قالوا ما الذى دعاكم الى ان تصفون الله سبحانه اقانيم ثلاثة دون عشرة او عشرين او اقل من ذلك او اكثر يقال لهم انا لم تصفه ثلاثة اقانيم دون جوهر واحد . فهذه الثلاثة اقانيم جوهر واحد فى جميع انحائه ما لا سبيل الى ان يوجد لذلك نظير ولا مثل .

فاما قولكم ما الذى دعاكم الى ان تصفوه اقانيم ثلاثة بلا زيادة ولا نقصان فانا مخبروكم ان الذى دعانا الى ان نصفه بهذه الصفة وجود الاقانيم انفسها . لانها لم تزل ثلاثة جوهرًا واحداً كما ذكرنا ان الله ذو علم وروح وعلم الله وروحه دائمان قائمان لم يزلا . لانه لا يجوز فى صفة الله له الحمد ان يكون موصوفاً فى ازليته بلا علم ولا روح .

29 او اليس هذا الكلام محلاً بعينه. ان يسئل عما هو عليه انما يقال لهم لم صار هذا هكذا لما له ابتدى¹¹⁶ او مبتدى¹¹⁷ ليجاب لعله هكذا وكذا . فاما من لا ابتدى¹¹⁸ له ولا صانع فلن يجوز فيه لم صار لانه ازلى لم يزل ولا يزال . وما عساكم ان تجيبوا لو سالكم بعض الجحاد¹¹⁹ عن الواحد الفرد الذى تعبدون لم صار لديكم واحداً فرداً دون اثنين او ثلاثة او اكثر من ذلك وما الذى دعاكم الى ان تصفوه بهذه الصفة . وهل لذلك عندكم علة او سبب . تعرفونا جوابكم اياه فى الواحد الفرد لنحتدى حذوكم فى الجواب فيما سالتمونا عن الثلاثة .

فما اجبتم عن الواحد الفرد فليكن لنا جواباً فى الثلاثة . فما اجبتم¹²⁰ مع انا قد نستدل ان الله جل ثناؤه واحداً وثلاثة فصلاً¹²¹ عما¹²¹ اخبرت به الكتب باتفاق العامة مع اختلاف اديانها على ان الله ليس كمثل شىء . فالواجب على العامة النظر فيما وصف الله به فى كل ملة . فاي ملة وجدت تصف الله

¹¹⁶ Graf: read ابتداء ¹¹⁷ Graf: مبتدى ¹¹⁸ Graf: read ابتداء ¹¹⁹ Graf: عن ما ¹²¹ S omits فما اجبتم ¹²⁰ S omits الجحاد

thing—three *hypostaseis*, one *ousia*, because God, May He be praised! created them according to the *mysterion* of the number of His *hypostaseis*, and the unity of His *ousia*.

28 Now, if they say: “What prompts you to describe God, May He be praised! as three *hypostaseis* rather than ten or twelve, or fewer than this or more?”, it should be said to them: Truly, we do not describe Him as three *hypostaseis* instead of one *ousia*. These three *hypostaseis* are one *ousia* in all aspects. It is not possible to find an equivalent or a likeness for this.

As for when you say: “What prompts you to describe three *hypostaseis* without adding or subtracting?”, we say that that which prompts us to describe [God] by this attribute is the existence of the *hypostaseis* themselves. Because they, without ceasing to be three, are one *ousia*. As we have already explained, God possesses knowledge and spirit, and the knowledge of God and His spirit are permanent and perpetual, not ceasing. For it is not permitted in a description of God, May He be glorified! that He be described in His eternity without knowledge or spirit.

29 Is this statement not absurd in itself? If it is asked, “For what reason [is this the case]?”, it should be said to them: Why did this or that occur? Because it had a beginning or one who caused a beginning. So one answers, “Because its cause is such and such.” As for the One Who does not have a beginning nor a maker, it is not permitted [to ask]: “Why did He occur?”, because He is eternal, never having ceased, and never ceasing.

And what could you possibly answer, if one of those who denies it asks you about the one single [God] Whom you worship: “Why did He occur, according to you, as one single [God], rather than as two or three or more than this? And what [is it] which prompts you to describe Him by this attribute? Do you have a cause or a reason for this?” [It should be said to them:] Let us know your answer about the one single [God], so that we might make take your example in the answer to your question to us about the three. For what you find concerning the one single [God], this is [also] our answer concerning the three.

But you do not answer, whereas we prove that God, May He be exalted! is both one and three, apart from what the [sacred] books report in agreement with all people (in spite of the difference of their religions!) that nothing is like God. All people should see how God is described in every religion. When a religion finds that it describes

بصفة ليس كمثله شيء وهى العابدة له العارفة به وای ملة الفيت تصفه بالتشبيه والتمثيل فهى الضالة عنه الجائلة به . فكل من كان موحداً ما خلا النصرارى لم يعد ان يصفه واحداً فرداً معدوداً .

30 فما قولكم فى انسان واحد وملك واحد . اليس كل واحد منهما فرداً . فای تشبيه اعظم مما وصفتم . فاما النصرارى فنفت عنه كل تشبيه¹²² ومثل لوصفهم اياه اقانيم ثلاثة جوهر واحد . ولو ان جوهر الله سبحانه كان عدداً فرداً كان¹²³ احط جوهر من جوهر الخلق الذى هو من اثنين الهبولى اى¹²⁴ الاله والنوع اى الصورة . ولو انه كان اثنين لكان به شبيه وله نظير . فاذ وجد انه ثلاثة اقانيم جوهر واحد فقد اعتلت صفته عن كل تشبيه ومثل لانه لا سبيل الى ان يوجد فى الخلق جوهر واحد اقانيم ثلاثة هو بعينه فى جميع ذواته .

31 وهذه صفة الله الحقيقة بلا زيادة ولا نقصان فقد كملت صفته فى كل الوجهين . اما فى العدد فلا تفاقها فى كل انحاء موصوفة به ذواتها واما فى الثلاثة فلا نفراد قولم ذات كل واحد منها ولكمال¹²⁵ انواع العدد . لان¹²⁶ انواع العدد نوعان زوجاً واحداً وفرداً واحداً . وهما موجودان فى هذه الثلاثة . فاكثر من الثلاثة تكرار فى العدد واقل منها نقصان منه ما لا يقبله ذو الرأى فى صفة الله .

فان S 126 و S omits 125 اعنى انى S 124 لكان S 123 تشبيه S 122

God by the attribute “nothing is like Him”, then it [truly] worships of Him and knows Him. And if a religion discovers it describes God with anthropomorphism and comparison with creatures, then ignorance of Him is its perpetual goal. Each of those professing the unity of God, with the exception of the Christians, do not hesitate to describe Him as one, single, and numberable.

30 What do you say about one human being, and one king? Is not each one of them a single [individual]? Which comparison is more important than what you describe? As for the Christians, they reject any comparison [of creatures] and likeness with [God] when they describe Him as three *hypostaseis* and one *ousia*. And if the *ousia* of God, May He be praised! were a single number, then it would be a lesser *ousia* than the *ousia* of creatures, which is two [principles]: the matter (that is, the instrument) and the species (that is, the form). And if it were the case that He is two [principles], then He could be compared [to creatures] and there would be something comparable to Him. But when it is found that He is three *hypostaseis* and one *ousia*, then His description is above every comparison and likeness [with creatures], because it is not possible that a single *ousia* [having] three *hypostaseis*, which is identical in all of its essences, exists in creation.

31 This description of God is true, without adding or subtracting, for His description is perfect in two ways. [It is perfect] with regard to the number [one], because [the *hypostaseis*] are identical in every way with what describes their essences, and [they are perfect] with regard to the [number] three, because it isolates the substantial being of each one of them. [This description is also true] because of the perfection of the species of number, for the species of number are two: the even [numbers] are one and the odd [numbers] are one. And the two exist in [the number] three. Now, more than three are a repetition in the number, and fewer than [three] are a decrease in it, and no person having good judgement accepts this in a description of God.³⁷

³⁷ Such arithmological proofs are common in the writings of pagans and Christians alike before the modern period. In general, they can be traced through Neo-Platonism to one or more of the writings of Plato, particularly the *Timaeus*. Although the source of this reference has not been identified, similar arguments are found throughout the *Parmenides* of Plato and in Aristotle's *De Caelo*, 1.1 [268a-268b]. Aristotle attributes the insight that the world and everything in it is determined by the number three to the Pythagoreans. This is because three includes a beginning,

32 وهى متفقة متميزة ومختلفة . اما متفقة ففى ماهيتها ووجودها وتمتيزه لميزة قوام ذات كل واحد منها كما ذكرنا قبل هذا الموضوع ومختلفة لاختلاف خاصة كل واحد منها من غير ان يكون جوهرها مختلفاً لاختلاف خواصها . لان الخواص دالة على صفات اضافة قنوم الى قنوم لا على ذات المضافة كاختلاف خواص ادم وحوى وهابيل من غير ان يكون جوهرها مختلفاً لاختلاف خواصها . فادم والد لا ولد وهابيل ولد لا والد وحوى خلرجة لا والد ولا ولد¹²⁷ خواص مختلفة لاقانيم متميزة جوهر متفق .

33 وقد يجب علينا ان نتبع القول فى القياس بان الله ليس عدد واحد فرد بشهادات من الكتب تيقظاً لمن خالفنا وتشديداً ليقين ممن شايعنا وان كان مخالفونا لها مكذابين بما ادعوا من تحريفنا اياها بالزيادة فيها والنقصان منها .

قال نجى الله موسى عن الله عند خلقه ادم لنصنع انساناً بصورتنا وكشبهنا . ولم يقل اصنع بصورتى وشبهى . وقال فى موضع اخر فى كتابه لا يحمل ان يكون ادم وحده فلنجعل له مثله معيناً له . ولم يقل اجعل . وفى موضع اخر من كتابه قال ان ادم قد¹²⁸ صار كواحد منا تويخاً له بذلك ولم يقل مثلى .

¹²⁷ Graf: ولدت ¹²⁸ S omits قد

32 For they are coincident, distinguished, and different: coincident in their quiddity and their existence, and distinguished because of a distinguishing characteristic of the substantial being of each one of them, just as we have explained before in this passage. And [they are] different because of the difference in property of each one of them, although their *ousia* is not different because of a difference in their properties. Because the properties indicate the attributes of the relation of [one] *hypostasis* to [another] *hypostasis*, not the essences of the [things] related, just as the properties of Adam and Eve and Abel are different, although their *ousia* is not different because of the difference of their properties. For Adam is the begetter and not the begotten, and Abel is begotten and not the begetter, and Eve is the one who proceeds, neither the begetter nor the begotten: [they have] different properties belonging to distinguished *hypostaseis*, [and] coincident *ousia*.

33 Now it is necessary for us to notice in the teaching about analogy that “God” is not counted as a single one, in keeping with the witnesses of the [sacred] books, cautioning the one who differs from us, and strengthening with support the one who follows us, even if the ones who differ from us on it declare it to be false when they claim we have altered [the sacred books] by adding to them and taking away from them.

The intimate friend of God, Moses, said about God that at the creation of Adam, [He said]: “Let Us fashion a human being in Our image and Our likeness.”³⁸ He did not say: “I shall fashion [a human being] in My image and My likeness.” And He³⁹ said in another passage in His book: “It is not a good situation, that Adam is alone, therefore, let Us make a likeness for him as his helper.”⁴⁰ He did not say: “I shall make.” And in another passage of his book, he said: “Adam has become like one of Us,”⁴¹ reproaching him with

middle, and end, and consequently, the gods are worshipped with the triad. Many of these ideas would have been familiar to Abū Rā’īṭah’s readers. Cf. Christopher Butler, *Number Symbolism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), esp. 22-44 and Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence on Thought and Expression* (Morningside Heights, NY: Columbia University Press, 1938), esp. 1-42.

³⁸ Gen 1:26

³⁹ The speaker here is God, not Moses.

⁴⁰ Gen 2:18

⁴¹ Gen 3:22

وفى موضع اخر قال تعالوا ننزل ونفرك الالسن¹²⁹ . ولم يقل انزل . وان
ذانيال النبي اخبرنا بان الله قال لبختنصرلك نقول يابختنصر ولم يقل اقول .
34 وقد ذكرتم ان فى¹³⁰ كتابكم مكتوباً ايضاً شبه ما ذكرنا من قول موسى
وذانيال حكاية عن الله من قلنا¹³¹ وخلقنا وامرنا واوحينا¹³² واهلكنا ودمرنا
مع نظائر لهذه كثيرة . ايشك احد يعقل ان هذا القول قول شتى لا قول واجد
فرد .

وان قالوا ان العرب قد اجازت هذا القول يقال لهم انه لو كانت العرب
وحدها هى التى ابتدعتها لكان لهم فى ذلك تعلق . فاما اذ سبق العرب فى¹³³
هذا القول العبرانيون واليونانيون والسريانيون وغيرهم من الالسن لم يكن
لما وصفوا من اجازة العرب ذلك حجة مع انه ومن اين جازت العرب هذا
القول .

فان قالوا بلى قد اجازته من حيث يقول رجل واحد امرنا وارسلنا وقلنا ولقينا
وما اشبه هذا يقال لهم ان ذلك صحيح جائز فى المؤلف من اشياء مختلفة
والمركب من اعضاء غير متشابهة . لانه واحد كثير¹³⁴ اجزائه . فاول الاجزاء
من الانسان النفس¹³⁵ والجسد . وان الجسد ايضاً مبنى من اركان شتى
واعضاء¹³⁶ كثيرة . فلذلك جاز ان ينطق على ما وصفتم . فاما الواحد البسيط
المتفق فى كل انحاء الذى لا اعضاء¹³⁷ له ولا اجزاء فكيف جاز له ان ينطق
بما وصفتم من قلنا وامرنا واوحينا اذ هو عدد واحد كما زعمتم .

¹²⁹ Graf: فنبليل هنك لسانهم ¹³⁰ P omits فى ¹³¹ PS قولنا which does not appear in the
Qur'an. ¹³² Graf: P always writes with clearly defined dots اوجابنا, which does not
appear in the *Qur'an* as does S in the following citation. This is certainly an error
on the part of the copiest. ¹³³ Graf: قى ¹³⁴ كثيرة S ¹³⁵ Graf: النفس ¹³⁶ P
واعضاء ¹³⁷ P omits, S اعضا

this. He did not say: “like Me.” And in another passage, He said, “Come, let Us descend and divide the languages.”⁴² He did not say: “I shall descend.” And Daniel the Prophet tells us that God said to Buhtanaşar: “We are speaking to you, O Buhtanaşar!”⁴³ He does not say: “I am speaking.”

34 You recall that in your book is [something] similar to what we have referred to from the sayings of Moses and Daniel is written in accounts concerning God: “We said”,⁴⁴ “We created”,⁴⁵ “We commanded”,⁴⁶ “We inspired”,⁴⁷ “We destroyed”⁴⁸ and “We annihilated”,⁴⁹ along with many others comparable to these. Does one who thinks doubt that these words are the speech of several and not the speech of one single [individual]?

If they say: “The Arabs permit this [type] of speech,” it should be said to them: If it were the Arabs alone who had invented it, then they could refer to it [as an argument]. However, since the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Syrians, and other languages anticipate the Arabs in this [type of] speech, what they describe as permitted for the Arabs is not evidence for this. And on what grounds do the Arabs permit this [kind of] speech?

If they say: “Certainly, it is permitted when one man says “We command” and “We have sent” and “We have said” and “We have encountered” and similar things,” it should be said to them: This is correct and permitted in a composite of different things, and a composition of members which are not similar, because it is one [thing with] many parts. The primary parts of the human being are the soul and the body. And the body is also a construction of various basic elements and many members. For this reason it is necessary that what you have described be clearly specified. As for the One, simple [God] Who is in agreement in all manners and does not have members or parts, how is it possible that He be specified clearly in the way you have described (by “We said” and “We commanded”

⁴² Gen 11:7

⁴³ Dan 4:31

⁴⁴ *Sura* 2:34, 35, 37; etc.

⁴⁵ *Sura* 15:26, 85; etc.

⁴⁶ *Sura* 10:24; 11:40; etc.

⁴⁷ *Sura* 4:173; 7:117; etc.

⁴⁸ *Sura* 6:6; 10:13; etc.

⁴⁹ *Sura* 7:137; 26:172; etc.

35 فان قالوا ان ذلك تعظم¹³⁸ لله واجلال له وتفخيم ان يقول ارسلنا وامرنا واوحينا . يقال لهم لعمري ان لو لم يقل ذلك من ليس مستحقاً للتعظيم لجاز قولكم . فاما اذ كان يتنوّه به من كان حقيراً وضيعاً لم يثبت قولكم ان ذلك تعظم¹³⁹ له لتعلموا ان الله واحد ثلاثة¹⁴⁰ من حيث نطق بكلى¹⁴¹ اللفظتين من امرت وامرنا وخلقنا وخلقنا واوحيت واوحينا . فامرنا واوحيت وخلقنا وخلقنا واوحيت وخلقنا واوحيت واوحينا خلقنا دليل على اقانيم ثلاثة .

36 وبيان ذلك من قول موسى النبي انه اخبر في التوراة¹⁴² عن ابراهيم خليل الله قائلاً ان الله تراءيا¹⁴³ لا ابراهيم وهو¹⁴⁴ عند باب خيمته فى موضع كذا وكذا فلما استحر النهار جلس ابراهيم على باب خبائه . فرفع عينيه وابصر رجلاً ثلاثة قياماً فوقه . فقام مستقبلاً لهم وسجد لهم وقال رب ان كنت رامقاً الى بعين الرحمة فلا تجاوزن عبدك .

افلا ترون ان الذى عاين ابراهيم ثلاثة عددها حيث فال رجلاً ثلاثة فسمّاهم رباً واحداً فتضرع اليه وساله ان ينزل عنده . فعدد الثلاثة سرّاً لا قانيم الثلاثة . وتسميته اياهم رباً لا ارباب سر لجوهر واحد . ففى ثلاثة يجوز واحد كما وصفنا . ثم ان موسى اخبر ايضاً وقال اسمع يا اسرائيل الهك¹⁴⁵ رب واحد . معنى ذلك ان الله موصوف بالثلاثة اقانيم هو رب واحد .

37 وان داوود قال فى كتابه بكلمة الله خلقت السموات وبروح فيه كل قواتها . فقد لفصح داوود بالثلاثة اقانيم حيث قال الله وكلمته وروحه . فهل زدنا فى وصفنا على ما وصف داوود . ثم انه وصف فى موضع اخر من كتابه

¹³⁸ S تعظيم¹³⁹ S تعظيم¹⁴⁰ S omits. ¹⁴¹ S بكلتى ¹⁴² P التوبة ¹⁴³ Graf: ¹⁴⁴ وهو ¹⁴⁵ S الالهك تراءى read

and “We revealed”), when He is counted as one, just as you have asserted?

35 If they say: “When [God] says: ‘We sent’ and ‘We commanded’ and ‘We revealed’, this is a reverence to God and to honor Him and show respect,” it should be said to them: By my life! If this were not said of what is not deserving of glorification, then your teaching would be permissible. However, if one who is mean and base is greatly exalted by it, your teaching that this is a glorification for Him is not proven. So you should know that God is one and three when He speaks in both [types] of utterances: “I commanded” and “We commanded” and “I created” and “We created” and “I revealed” and “We revealed”. For “I commanded”, “I revealed” and “I created” indicate that His *ousia* is one, and “We commanded”, “We revealed” and “We created” indicate three *hypostaseis*.

36 The clarification of this is from the teaching of Moses the Prophet. He reports in the Torah concerning Abraham, the Friend of God, saying: “God appeared to Abraham [while] he was before the door of his tent in the place of such and such. As the daylight became hot, Abraham sat before the door of his tent. He lifted his eyes, and beheld three men standing before him. So he stood, facing them, and bowed to them, and said: ‘Lord, if you regard me with merciful eyes, then do not pass by your servant.’”⁵⁰

Do you not see that those who Abraham saw with his own eyes were three in number, because he said “three men”, yet he called them one Lord, humbling himself before Him, and asking Him to stay with him? Now the number three is a *mysterion* for the three *hypostaseis*. And he called them “Lord”, not “Lords”. [This is] a *mysterion* for one *ousia*. So in three can be one, just as we have described. Then Moses also reports: “Hear, O Israel, your God is one Lord.”⁵¹ This means that God, Who is described by three *hypostaseis*, is one Lord.

37 And David said in his book: “By the Word of God the heavens were created, and by the breath in it all of their hosts.”⁵² Now David clearly expresses the three *hypostaseis* when he says God, and His Word, and His Spirit. In our description, are we adding to what

⁵⁰ Gen 18:1-3

⁵¹ Deut 6:4

⁵² Ps 33:6

تحقيقاً بان كلمة الله اله حق حيث قال لكلمة الله اسبح . افكان داوود ممن يسبح لغير الله .

ثم انه قال . قال الرب لربي اجلس عن يميني حتى اضع اعداك تحت موطيء قدميك . يعنى بذلك قول الاب للابن من بعد تجسده . ثم انه قال فى موضع اخر ارسل كلمته فشفاهم وخلصهم من الموت . لتعلموا ان الكلمة المرسله ذات كاملة من ذات كاملة .

38 ثم انه اشعيا المحمود فى الانبياء قال فى نبوته منذ بدأت لم انطق خفية ومنذ كنت فثم انا والان ارسلنى الرب الاله وروحه . فالان الله وكلمته وروحه هو قولنا اب وابن وروح القدس . وكيف كان يجوز ان يرسد الروح اشعيا لو لم يكن الالهاً ذاتاً¹⁴⁶ كاملاً . ثم انه وصف ايضاً ان الله تراياً¹⁴⁷ له والملائكة خافون به مقدسون له قائلون قدوس قدوس قدوس الرب ذو القوة المملوءة السموات والارض من تسايحه . فتقدیس¹⁴⁸ الملائكة مراراً ثلاثة واقتصارهم على ذلك بلا زيادة ولا نقصان سر اتقدیسهم لاقانيم ثلاثة الالهاً واحداً .

فهذا بعض شهادات الانبياء على ان الله واحد ثلاثة وثلاثة واحد واذا قد اقتصرنا على بعض الانبياء لكيلا يكثر الكلام فيمل . ولولا ذلك لاتينا من كل شىء شهادات كثيرة حتى يكثر فيها الاضطراب وتطول الصحف . يعرف ذلك من قرأ كتبهم .

39 فان انكراو هذا القول وحجوده وقالوا ان الانبياء لم تنطق به وانما حرفتم الكلام عن موضعه وتقولتم عليهم الزور والكذب . يقال لهم انه لو

فتقدس S¹⁴⁸ ترأى Graf: read¹⁴⁷ ذاقاً Graf: ذاقاً¹⁴⁶

David describes? Then, in another place in his book he confirmed that the Word of God is true God, when he said: “I give praise to the Word of God.”⁵³ Now, can David be among those who give praise to something other than God?

Then he said: “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies beneath the footstool for your feet.’”⁵⁴ By this he means the speech of the Father to the Son after His Incarnation. Then he says in another place: “He sent his Word, healing them and rescuing them from death,”⁵⁵ so that you might know that the Word which was sent is a perfect being from a perfect being.

38 Then Isaiah, the one who was praised among the prophets, said in his prophecy: “‘Since I have begun, I have not spoken secretly, and since I was, I am there’, and now the Lord, God has sent me, and His Spirit.”⁵⁶ And now God, and His Word and His Spirit are they [of whom] we say: Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit? How [else] is it possible that the Spirit send Isaiah, if it is not God, a perfect being? He also described God appearing to him, and the angels trembling with fear before [God], glorifying Him saying: “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord, to Whom belongs the Power, the Heavens and the Earth are filled with His Praise.”⁵⁷ The angels give praise three times, and their restriction to this, without adding or subtracting, is the *mysterion* for their praise of the three *hypostaseis*, one God.

These are some of the testimonies of the prophets that God is one and three, and three and one. And if we have restricted ourselves [only] to some of the prophets, it is so that the discussion will not become too much and tiresome. If this were not the case, then we would produce many witnesses from everything [in the Scriptures], until the compulsion [to accept the Trinity] increases, and the pages multiply. One can know this by reading the books [of the prophets].

39 Now, if they deny this teaching, and reject it, saying: “The prophets did not say this, rather, you have altered the words from their places,⁵⁸ and you have made [the prophets] say what is false

⁵³ Ps 56:10

⁵⁴ Ps 110:1

⁵⁵ Ps 107:20

⁵⁶ Is 48:16

⁵⁷ Is 6:3

⁵⁸ Cf. *Sura* 4:46; 5:13,41; 2:75

كانت هذه الكتب في ايدينا من غير ان يكون في ايدي اعداءنا اليهود كان لعمرى يقبل قولكم انا غيرنا وبدلنا . فاما اذ صارت الكتب في ايدي اليهود ايضاً لم يقبل قولكم احد الا ان يوجد ما في ايدينا من الكتب مخالفاً لما في ايدي اليهود منها مشاكلاً ملاوماً¹⁴⁹ لما كان لدينا منها .

فان قالوا ان الذين ولّوا تحريفها اليهود التماساً بذلك تضليلكم¹⁵⁰ قلنا لهم لو كان الامر على ما وصفتم لكان ينبغي ان تكون لديهم صحيحة غير متحرفة . لان الذى يلتمس هلاك غير لا يرى هلاك نفسه . فاذا وجدنا ما في ايديهم منها وما في ايدينا واحداً لا اختلاف¹⁵¹ فيه كما ذكرنا لم يقبل منكم ما ذكرتم من تحريفها .

40 فان قالوا انما صار الله لديكم ثلاثة اقانيم كشهادة الكتب لكم لزعمكم . وان كل واحد منها موصوفاً رباً والاهاً فامتعضكم من ان تصفوها ارباباً والهة ثلاثة ما هو . يقال لهم لعمرى لو كانت الكتب مع وصفها كل واحد من الاقانيم رباً والهاً لم تضاف بعض الاقانيم الى بعض واوجبت ان كل واحد منها علة لا معلول لكان ما وصفتم جائزاً مستقيماً . فاما اذ حق ان الابن والروح من الاب لم تصر عللاً كثيرة لم تنسب الهة ثلاثة ولا ارباب .

فان قالوا اوليس البشر كلهم من علة واحدة اى من ادم لا من علل شتى . فقد تصفون اناساً شتى . فليوصف هذه الثلاثة اقانيم الهة ثلاثة كنعو ما قيل فى الناس . يقال لهم فانه وان كانوا يسمون اناساً شتى فانما يعنى بذلك اقانيم

واحداً لاختلاف S¹⁵¹ تضليلكم P¹⁵⁰ ملائماً Graf¹⁴⁹

and a lie,” it should be said to them: If these books were only in our possession, and not [also] in the hands of our enemies the Jews, then, By my life! one could accept your teaching that we have changed [them] and substituted [words for other words]. However, if the books are also in the hands of the Jews, no one can accept your teaching, unless it were found that the books that we possess differ: [but] what is in the hands of the Jews is in harmony with what we possess.⁵⁹

If they say: “Those who are responsible for the alteration [of the books] are the Jews, who are attempting to deceive you with this,”⁶⁰ we should say to them: If the matter were as you have described, then there ought to be in their possession genuine [copies which have] not been altered. Because the one who seeks the destruction of another does not seek his own destruction. Now, we find what they possess and what we possess to be one [and the same], with no difference in it, just as we have pointed out. [Consequently,] no one can accept what you have reported about alteration.

40 Now, if they say: “You assert that God is only three *hypostaseis*, as your books witness. And if each one of them is described as Lord and as God, then why your indignation at describing them as three lords and gods?” it should be said to them: By my life! If it were the case that the books describe each one of the *hypostaseis* as Lord and God, without bringing any of the *hypostaseis* into relation with another, and it were necessary that each one of them is a cause, not caused, then what you have described is permitted and right. However, if it is true that the Son and the Spirit are from the Father, then there are not many causes, [nor are] three gods or lords ascribed [to God].

Now, if they say: “Is not every human being from one cause, that is from Adam, not from multiple causes? However, you describe multiple human beings. So these three *hypostaseis* should be described as three gods, in the same manner as human beings are spoke of,” it should be said to them: Certainly, when one names multiple human

⁵⁹ Abū Rā’īṭah assumes a desire within the Jewish community for fidelity to the original revelation, even if there is an attempt to mislead others. The *Qur’ān*, however, claims that the revelation was distorted almost immediately after its revelation to Moses, and that no authentic copy was preserved (cf. *Sura* 5:13, 41; 2:75-76; 4:46).

⁶⁰ Cf. *Sura* 2:75; 4:46; 5:13,41.

شتى لا جواهر شتى . لان اسم الانسان انما هو اسم الجوهر العام . ولذلك اشترك فى اسمه جميع الاقانيم . فاما اسم القنوم الواحد فكعبد الله وموسى وهرون وغير ذلك من الاسماء المتشابهة بما وصفنا .

41 فان قالوا فاذا صار اسم الله عندكم اسم الجوهر العام . فلا ينبغي لكم ان تصفوا كل واحد منها الاهاً دون ثلاثتها اذ صارت لديكم هى الجوهر . يقال لهم فانه وان كان اسم الله اسم جوهر اى اسم ثلاثتها فقد يستحق كل واحد منها التسمية باسم العام .

لانه ليس بمخالف فى ذاته ذات غيره من الاقانيم التى هى معه جوهر عام كاسم الذهب العام لكل الذهب وبعض الذهب كامل لا بعض الذهبية . فاذا ذكر بعض الاقانيم كان جائزاً ان يوصف الاهاً ورباً وجوهرأً وغير ذلك من اسماء الجوهر ما خلا كثيرة الضم . واذا اضيف الاثنان الى الواحد اى الابن والروح الى الاب وصفت الاهاً واحداً .

42 فان قالوا ان كان الاب علة الابن والروح كما وصفتهم ينبغي ان يكون الاب اقدم ممن هو له علة . فان لم يكن الاب اقدم من الابن والروح واوجبت انها ازلية معاً فليس بعضها اذن بمستحق ان يكون علة لبعض دون بعض . بطل قولكم بان علة الاثنين واحد . يقال لهم لعمري ان بعض العلل على ما وصفتهم من القدمة التى هى لهم علة ولكن ليس كل العلة كما وصفتهم لا محالة . فقد ترون الشمس وهى علة شعاعها وحرارتها . هكنا والنار علة ضوءها وحرارتها ولم تكن قط عادمة لضوءها وحرارتها . هكنا والقول فى الابن والروح هما من الاب ازليان من ازلى بلا سابقة كانت من الاب لهما .

43 فان قالوا هل ¹⁵² يخلوا ¹⁵³ الشىء اذا نسب انه من شىء من ان وكون اما

¹⁵² P omits هل ¹⁵³ Graf: read يخلو

beings, what is meant by this is ‘multiple *hypostaseis*’, not ‘multiple *ousiai*’, because the name ‘human being’ is only a name for the *ousia* in general. And because of this, all of the *hypostaseis* participate in its name. So the name of the single *hypostasis*, such as ‘Abd Allah, and Moses, and Aaron, and other names like this are similar to what we have explained.

41 Now, if they say: “Is the name ‘God’, according to you, the name of the *ousia* [in general]? Then you ought not describe each one of [the *hypostaseis*] as God, instead of all three of them [together as God], since, according to you, they are [collectively] the *ousia*.” It should be said to them: Certainly, if the name ‘God’ is the name of an *ousia*, that is, the name of all three of them, then each one of them is entitled to be called by the name of the whole.

For [none of them] is different in its being from the being of another of the *hypostaseis*, together with which it is the *ousia* in general, just as the name of ‘gold’ in general is for all gold, and for a piece of gold. It is perfect, not [just] a part of what is golden. Now, when one of the *hypostaseis* is mentioned, it is permitted that it be described as ‘God’, and ‘Lord’, and ‘*ousia*’, and other names for the *ousia* like this, but [it is] not [permitted to describe the individual *hypostasis*] by the plurality of the collective. And if two [*hypostaseis*] are brought into relation to the one, that is, the Son and the Spirit to the Father, then they are described as ‘one God’.

42 Now if they say: “If the Father is the cause of the Son and the Spirit, as you have described, then it ought to be the case that the Father [exists] before the one of which He is the cause. And if the Father does not [exist] before the Son and the Spirit, and they exist eternally together, then one of [the *hypostaseis*] is not [more] worthy than the others of being the cause of [the others]. And your teaching that one is the cause of two is false.”

It should be said to them: By my life! Some causes, such as you have described, [exist] before those [things] for which they are the cause. However, this is not as you have described with all causes. You see the sun, and it is the cause of its rays and its heat. In the same way fire is the cause of its light and its heat. And it is never lacking its light and its heat. The teaching about the Son and the Spirit from the Father is the same as this: [they are] two [things which are] eternal from [something] eternal, although the Father does not anticipate them.

43 Now, if they say: “Is it not necessary that when a thing has

بعضه واما فعله . فاحد الامرين اما ان يكون الابن والروح بعض ذات الاب
اذ وصفتموها منه واما فعله . فان قلت انها بعضه لم¹⁵⁴ تستحق البعض
تسمية الكمال اى الاله وان كانا فعله فكذلك ايضاً لم يستحق اسم الاله لانه
اسم الكمال .

يقال لهم لعمرى ان لو كان كلما وصف انه من شىء بعض ذاته او فعله
لكان الامر على ما وصفتم . فاما اذا¹⁵⁵ يوجد شىء من شىء وبعض من بعض
على غير ما وصفتم . فقد وجب عليكم النظر فيما نصف .

44 فالبعض يوصف على وجهين اما تعض العدد وهو كامل بذاته كموسى
وهرون او غيرهما من الارباب¹⁵⁶ التى هى بعض الناس¹⁵⁷ اى بعض عددهم
وكل واحد منهم انسان كامل واما كاليد والرجل اللتين هما ابعض واجزاء
من غير ان يستوجب كل اواحد منها اسم الكمال اى اسم الانسان .

هكذا والشىء من الشىء فقد يقال على وجه الفعل والبعض وكامل من
كامل . فالفعل كالكتابة من كاتب . والبعض كاليد والرجل من البدن واما
الكامل . من الكامل فالولد من الوالد . فقد يقال انه منه ليس فعل ولا بعضه
بل كامل من كامل كما وصفنا وهو مستوجب اسم الذى هو منه اى انسان من
انسان .

45 وقد يقال ان اشياء من شىء على غير احد هذه الثلاثة وجوه كحوى
الموصوفة من ادم . وهى منه لا بعضه ولا فعله ولا ولده كاملة من كامل
انسان من انسان . هكذا القول من الابن والروح من الاب سبحانه . كل

¹⁵⁴ S omits لم ¹⁵⁵ S اذ ¹⁵⁶ Graf: reading unclear. S الرقاب ¹⁵⁷ P repeats
(بعض) العدد وهو كامل بذاته

its origin in [another] thing, it is either its part or its operation? It is one of two things: either the Son and the Spirit are a part of the being of the Father when you describe them as being from Him, or they are His operation. Now, if you say that they are a part of Him, then the part does not deserve the name of the perfect [whole], that is, ‘God’. And likewise, if [they] are His operation, in the same way they are not deserving of the name ‘God’, because it is the name of the perfect [whole].”

It should be said to them: By my life! If everything which is described as being ‘from something’ were a part of [the thing’s] being or its operation, then the matter would be as you have described. However, when it is found that a thing from a thing, and a part from a part is not as you have described, then it is necessary for you to examine what we describe closely.

44 Now, ‘part’ is described in two ways: Either it is a part of a number, and it is perfect in its being, just as Moses and Aaron, or [someone] other than these two patriarchs,⁶¹ who are a part of ‘human beings’, that is, a part of their number. And each one of them is a perfect human being. Or it is like hands and feet, which are parts and pieces, although none of them merits the name of the perfect [whole], that is, the name ‘human being’.

This is also the case with ‘a thing from a thing’. One may say it according to the aspect of an operation, and of a part, and of a perfect [whole] from a perfect [whole]. Now, an operation is like the writing of a writer. And a part is like the hands and feet of body. As for a perfect [whole] from a perfect [whole], it is as the begotten is from the begetter. Now, one says ‘he is from him’, not [as] an operation, and not as a part of him, rather, [as] a perfect [whole] from a perfect [whole], just as we have described. And [the thing] merits the name of that from which it is from, that is, a human being from a human being.

45 And one may say that things are from a thing in another [way] besides these three ways, just as Eve is described as [being] from Adam. She is from him, but not a part of him, and not his operation, and not his child—a perfect [being] from a perfect [being], a human being from a human being. This is the same as the teaching

⁶¹ Text unclear: Sbath gives الرقاب (“persons”); Graf corrects with الرباب.

واحد منهما بعض العدد لابعض ذات الاب بل ذاتان كاملتان من ذات كاملة .
فالابن منه كالولد من الوالد . ولاروح خارج منبثق منه كخروج حوى كما
ذكرنا وان كان الله عن كل صفة متعالياً ولا بحسب القول فى هذا الوجه .

الان قد انتهى منتهى . كمل القول الاول بعون الله سبحانه ولواهب النعم
جزيل الشكر والحمد لله .¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ والحمد دائماً . ونحن بادون بالقول الثانى ان شاء الله تعالى ذكره S

about the Son and the Spirit from the Father, May He be praised! Each one of them is a part of the number, not a part of the being, of the Father. Rather, [they are] two perfect beings from a perfect being. The Son is from Him, just as the begotten is from the begetter. And the Spirit processes and emanates from Him, just as Eve proceeds [from Adam] as we have explained. [Yet,] truly God is above all attributes, and is not commensurate with the teaching in this regard.

Now the conclusion has been reached. The first teaching has been completed with the help of God, May He be praised! and to the Giver of grace, abundant thanks, and glory to God!⁶²

⁶² S: and glory forever! and we shall make plain the second teaching, if God wills, exalted is His remembrance!

THE SECOND *RISĀLAH* OF ABŪ RĀ'ĪṬAH AL-TAKRĪTĪ ON THE INCARNATION

Introduction

As was outlined above, Abū Rā'īṭah's *Second Risālah on the Incarnation* was written in conjunction with the previous *risālah* on the Trinity to an unnamed Jacobite with the purpose of answering questions raised by Muslims about these two Christian doctrines. The style and internal evidence further substantiate the suggestion that it was written later in Abū Rā'īṭah's career after he had had considerable experience as a controversialist and become known beyond his home of Takrīt.

Essentially the aim of this text is the same as that of *On the Trinity*: to establish common ground with the Muslim *mutakallimūn* with whom he was in conversation in order to show first that the Jacobite teaching on the Incarnation is not contradictory, and second, that Christianity is in fact the true religion. In the *risālah* on the Incarnation, the opponents in the debate have challenged Abū Rā'īṭah to explain how God can have become human (تأنس) and incarnated (تجسد) without change or alteration. Muslims point out that Christian teaching on the Incarnation demands that Christians hold opposite statements about God as true: God is mortal and immortal, passible and impassible, eternal and born in time, etc. This, they insist, is impossible and must be rejected. As in the *On the Trinity*, Abū Rā'īṭah proceeds in this *risālah* with a response clarifying the doctrine and providing examples to demonstrate that what appears incompatible with what is known by human beings about God can be demonstrated to be a logical truth.

In the *risālah* on the Incarnation, Abū Rā'īṭah treats some of the most troubling problems for Muslims about Christianity using both those concepts and strategies developed in the previous *risālah* on the Trinity and additional material taken from the Muslim and Christian Scriptures. *On the Incarnation* begins with a short transition from the previous *risālah* (§1) and moves directly into the issues at hand, addressing first the question of the relationship between the three divine *hypostaseis* and the one incarnated in a body (§§2-7), turning

eventually to the difficulty of how God can enter into the limitations of creation (§§8-18). The interlocutors raise the inevitable problem of whether it was necessary for God to bring about salvation through incarnation (§§19-23). The underlying issue is the true nature of Jesus and his mission: is he God incarnated to redeem creation as Christians believe, or is he a Messenger sent to announce God's commands as the *Qur'ān* claims? But at the heart of the conflict lies a question that is ultimately unanswerable by human beings: why did God choose this particular means to reconcile creation to Himself? Abū Rā'īṭah gives his Muslim questioners a standard Christian response, and turns the question to back to them, asking for a justification for their teaching that God sent messengers (§§24-35). The problem returns to the question of God becoming what has the definable properties of a creature (§§36-62) and concludes with an examination of the Messiah's knowledge of the future (§§63-77) and His willing the crucifixion (§§78-85). More details, Abū Rā'īṭah concludes, can be found in his letter written to the Christians of Baḥrīn (§85).

One notices some important differences between the approach found in the previous treatise and this much longer one. First, Abū Rā'īṭah's knowledge of Islam is revealed to a much greater extent in this *risālah* than anywhere else. Not only does he mention Islamic beliefs explicitly, he even offers passages from the *Qur'ān* to make his point. The reason for this candid approach is doubtless to be found in the precise references to Jesus and Christian beliefs about him in the *Qur'ān*. Its unambiguous rejection of the possibility that God generates or is generated (*Sura* 112) and an emphasis on Jesus' humanity (*Sura* 5:75) could not be easily manipulated or reinterpreted so as to admit the Incarnation. In addition, contemporary issues being debated in Muslim scholarly circles did not readily lend themselves to exploitation in support of the Incarnation.¹ Although Abū Rā'īṭah is able to credibly demonstrate the plausibility of three *hypostaseis* in the Divine Being through philosophical principles, it is more difficult to show how and why one of those *hypostaseis* became human. Consequently he must take up the counter-claims to the doctrine of the Incarnation asserted in the *Qur'ān* directly.

This leads to the second difference in this *risālah*: whereas the emphasis in *On the Trinity* is on redefining certain terminology so as to

¹ Griffith, "Abū Rā'īṭah," 191-192.

allow for the conceptual possibility of trinitarian descriptions of God, *On the Incarnation* relies much more on scriptural evidence. Here one finds citations from the Old Testament as well as the New Testament used in support of Christian beliefs. This is especially necessary, since the New Testament witness is considered to be the primary basis for faith in the Incarnation. As a result, the problem of *tahrīf* arises in this context with more serious implications. Abū Rā'īṭah has already laid some of the groundwork for introducing these passages as evidence in the last part of the *On the Trinity* with his defense of the integrity of the Scriptures against the charge that they have been altered,² but in *On the Incarnation*, Abū Rā'īṭah chooses a different means to counter the charge of *tahrīf*. Instead of focussing on a defense of the integrity of the Scriptures, he draws examples from the *Qur'ān* and Muslim beliefs to argue that Christian teaching is not contrary to what can be said about God. Although his primary arguments are made with regard to the Old Testament, his goal is clear: to prove that Christian teaching is reliably based on the Scriptures and that they are an authentic source for knowledge about God. Nonetheless, the most important disagreement, whether the crucifixion and resurrection actually occurred, must remain unresolved. It is with this final problem Abū Rā'īṭah leaves his Christian reader.

It is also notable that Abū Rā'īṭah gives brief, succinct answers to a series of questions, without entering into the long and complex development of an argument found in many of his other writings. In fact, many of the arguments made in this text are simply drawn from *On the Trinity* and applied to the relevant question. This style gives the *risālah* the feel more of a transcript of a conversation than a full-blown treatise, suggesting once again that his personal experience lies behind the present work. The questions put in the mouths of the adversaries seem to reflect actual, and in some cases perhaps even verbatim, reports. It is noteworthy, for example, that exclamations and epitaphs associated with Islam (e.g., “the Messiah, glory be to Him!”) are always included in the Muslim questions. Yet, in spite of the more terse format of the *risālah*, it remains Abū Rā'īṭah's project to provide his reader with the best possible responses, even if given briefly, in order to assure success in the defense of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

² Keating, “Tahrīf.”

One detects a recognition on Abū Rā'īṭah's part that in the end, one cannot convince the Muslim opponents of the truth of the Incarnation, but at best can show that it is not contradictory or absurd. In this sense, the second *risālah* on the Incarnation appears to be more directed at supporting Christians in their faith than that *On the Trinity*. Whereas the first *risālah* contains carefully constructed technical arguments allowing for the possibility of a plurality in the One God, the second *risālah* appeals to the Christian reader by reminding him of God's plan of salvation and the necessity of faith to believe it. For, as stated in the *Proof of the Christian Religion*: "We accept the teaching about His Incarnation and becoming human without change or alteration, even though [our] understanding fails to comprehend it." (*Proof* 32)

الرسالة الثانية لابي رائطة التكريتي في التجسد¹

1 كان القول جرى في صدر هذا الكتاب الى هذا الموضوع في صفة الله له الحمد ونعت توحيده وتثليثه وتفسير الاقانيم واتفاقها وتمييز قوام ذات كل واحد منها واختلاف خواصها وذلك بايضاح وشرح بمقاييس صحيحة صادقة وحجج غزيرة ثابتة وبيانات نيرة مضيئة لمن كان الحق مريداً وايه طالباً .

ولم نذكر من امر تجسد احد الاقانيم وهو الابن كلمة الاب الازلية وصيرورته انساناً بلا تغيير عن حاله او تبدل عن جوهره² وذلك لترك مسايلتكم³ ايانا في هذا الوجه . وقد يجب علينا النظر فيما تسئلون من امر المتجسد والتجسد واجابتكم في ذلك جواباً مرضياً متفقاً لكيلا ياخذ منا في الله لومة لائم موافقاً كان لنا او مخالفاً مسالماً او معانداً .

2 قال مخالفونا اخبرونا عن المتجسد كزعمكم الاله ام انسان . يقال لهم ان المتجسد عندنا الاله متانس . فان قالوا ان كان المتجسد عندكم الالهاً فقد اوجبتم في بدء قو لكم ان الله اقانيم فالمتجسد اذا اقانيم ثلاثة . فكين زعمتم المتجسراحد الاقانيع الثلاثة لالثلاثة . يقال لهم ان اسم الله عندنا عام وخاص فثلاثتها عامة اله وكل واحد ذات الاخر في الماهية كما وصفنا من امر الذهب الموصوف كله ذهباً والقليل منه ذهباً ايضاً . فانما عني

¹ P reverses the heading: في التجسد الرسالة الخ
² S add. لأنها Graf: a half line is left blank. On the margin هكذا وجدت
³ P مسايلتكم

The Second *Risālah* of Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrīṭī on the Incarnation

1 The discussion following from the beginning of this book until this point has been the predication of God, may He be praised! and the characterization of His oneness and His threeness, an explanation of the *hypostaseis*, of their coincidence and the proper mode of being of each one of them, and of the differences of their properties. This was done through clarification and presentation of proper and accurate analogies, abundant and enduring arguments, and clear and illuminating evidence for the one seeking the truth and pursuing it.

We have not mentioned anything about the subject of the Incarnation of one of the *hypostaseis*, that is the Son, the eternal Word of the Father, and His becoming human without change in His state or alteration in His *ousia*. And this is because you have refrained from asking about it up to this point. Now it is necessary for us to examine what you have asked us concerning the subject of the Incarnation and the incarnated One, and give you a satisfactory and suitable answer in this, so that no one may have grounds to reproach us concerning [our teachings about] God, whether he agrees or disagrees with us, is peaceful or obstinate.

2 Our opponents say: “Tell us about the incarnated One, as you claim—[is he] a god or human?” It should be said to them: According to us, the incarnated One is God become human.

If they say: “If according to you the incarnated One is God, and at the beginning of your account [of your teachings] you [argued] it is necessary that God is [several] *hypostaseis*, then the incarnated One is three *hypostaseis*. How do you claim that the incarnated One is one of the three *hypostaseis* and not three [himself]?” it should be said to them: According to us, the name ‘God’ is [both] general and specific.¹ The three are in general divinity and each one of them is the same as the other in quiddity, just as we have described concern-

¹ This distinction is made in Aristotle, *Categories* 5 [2a] with regard to primary and secondary substances.

ان المتجسد الاله اى احد الاقانيم وهو الابن كلمة الله الحية الاله ازلى لا ثلاثة اقانيم .

3 فان قالوا اخبرونا عن تجسد المتجسد افعل هو منه او بعض يقال لهم انكم سألتمونا عن المتجسد . فقد سألتم عن ذات متجسدة مضم فيها الجسد والتجسد . لانه لا سبيل الى ان يوصف متجسد بلا تجسد وجسد . فعلى اى وجه . سألتمونا فعل هو ام بعض . تقولون تجسد المتجسد اى افتعاله للجسد بعض او فعل . فانا نقول ان تجسد المتجسد منه بغير فعل او بعض بل طريق الى الفعل .

فان كان قولكم تجسد تعنون بذلك الجسد بعض المتجسد او فعل احتجنا الى ان نسئلكم ايضاً تقولون ان الجسد بعض الذات المتجسدة او انما تعنون بعض المجتمع المركب من الذات المتجسدة . وان كان قولكم اهو بعض اى بعض الذات الالهية نفينا ان يكون الجسد بعضها . لان الذات الالهية معتلية عن تبعض او تجزى وان قلت اهو بعض المجتمع من ذات الله والجسد اوجبنا لكم انه بعض وفعل .

4 فان قالوا ومن ولى افتعال الجسد الذى وصفتم انه بعض المجتمع يقال لهم ان الذى ولى افتعال كلمة الله المتجسدة به . فان قالوا وانا نجوز لشيء يفتعل بعضه يقال لهم وهل وصفنا ان شيئاً يفتعل بعض ذاته . انما وصفنا ان الكلمة اخذت لها جسداً من غير ان يكون الجسد لها بعضاً . بل هو بعض المجتمع من الكلمة وفيه . فالجسد اذا بعض المجتمع لا بعض الكلمة كما وصفنا .

5 فان قالوا اخبرونا عن تجسد الكلمة بالجسد فعل من هو . يقال لهم اليس قد اخبرناكم قبل هذا الموضوع⁴ . فعلى اى الوجوه تعنون فعل من هو . تقولون الجسد من خلقه فان كان معناكم على ما وصفنا قلنا ان الجسد فعل

⁴ P الوضع

ing gold—all of it may be characterized as gold, even the smallest piece of it is also gold. However, we mean [here] that the incarnated One is divine, that is, one of the *hypostaseis*, and He is the Son, the living Word of God, eternally divine, not three *hypostaseis*.

3 If they say: “Tell us about the incarnation of the incarnated One. Is he an act [of God] or a part [of God]?” it should be said to them: You have asked us about the incarnated One. Now, you are asking about an incarnated being, in which the body and the incarnation are united, because it is not possible to describe [something] incarnated without incarnation and body. But in which manner? You have asked us whether He is an act or a part [of God]. [In asking] is it a part or an act, you are speaking about the body of the incarnated One, that is His ‘becoming a body’. However, we say that the Incarnation of the incarnated One is something other than an act or a part, rather, it is a means to the act.

If when you say “incarnation”, you mean by this the body, [and ask] is it a part of the incarnated One, or an act, we will argue, asking you, too: Do you say that the body is a part of the incarnated being, or do you only mean a part of that from which the incarnated being is composed and constructed? Then, if you say: “Is he a part, that is, a part of the divine Being?” we deny that the body is a part [of the divine Being], because the divine Being is above division or separation. If you say: “Is it a part of the composite of the being of God and the body?” we must [say] to you it is a part and an act.

4 If they say: “Who has the authority [over] the ‘becoming a body’, which you have described as a part of the composite?” it should be said to them: That which has authority [over] His becoming the incarnated Word of God is Himself. Now, if they say: “Are we to allow that something makes itself a part?” it should be said to them: Have we described something as becoming a part [separate] from its own being? We have only said that the Word has taken to itself a body, without the body being a part of [the Word]. Rather, [the body] is a part of the composite of the [incarnated] Word and is in it. The body is a part of the composite, not a part of the Word, as we have [already] described.

5 If they say: “Tell us about the incarnation of the Word in the body, by whom was it done?” it should be said to them: Have we not already told you before this point [in the discussion]? In which manner do you mean “by whom was it done”? Are you saying of the body “who created it?” If this is what you mean concerning what

ثلاثتها وان قلنا احد الثلاثة لا ثلاثة .

فان قالوا فايينونا عن فعل ثلاثتها او احد هو ام كل واحد منها فعل خاص دون الاخر يقال لهم اما فى وجه الخلقة والمشية⁵ فكلما⁶ كان او يكون منهم فواحداً . واما فى الترابى⁷ وظهور كل واحد منها باى فعل شاء حال فخاص ليس بعام وذلك لامتياز قوام ذات كل واحد منها . فلو ان ثلاثتها قنوم واحد لا ثلاثة لكان ظهور شىء منها او ترابى على اى الاحوال كان ظهور وترابى ثلاثتها .

فاما اذ صار كل واحد من الاقانيم مع اتفاق ذاته ذات غيره من الاقانيم قنوماً خاصاً مميزاً عن الاخر فلن يلزمها لا محالة ما شاءت ان يلزم احدها فقط⁹ . فقد شاءت احدها تجسد ذى نفس منطيقية¹⁰ من العاتق الطاهرة مريم . فالظهور بالتجسد لاحدها خاص دون الاثنين . واما¹¹ خلقة الجسد او مشيتهم بتجسد احدها فعام لثلاثتها .

6 والمثل فى ذلك وصفكم الله بانه¹² يعلم ويشاء ويقدر فعلم الله بالاشياء اهو مشيته فيها او قدرته عليها . فان قالوا نعم يقال لهم فكل ما علم الله اذن فقد شاءه وقدر عليه . فاذا علم ان القيامة ستقوم فقد قامت اذ كان علمه لديكم هو مشيته فقد شاء ذلك اذن وقدر عليه . فالى كلام اشنع واشد استحالة من هذا .

وان قالوا ان علمه بالاشياء غير مشيته فيها وقدرته عليها لانه قد يعلم ما لا يشاء كالفواحش ويقدر على ما لا يشاء كادخال الكفار الجنة يقال لهم كما جاز لديكم ان يكون علم¹³ الله بالاشياء غير مشيته فيها وقدرته عليها وكل

⁵ Graf: read المشية passim. ⁶ P بكلما ⁷ Graf: read الترابى ⁸ Graf: read تراءى ⁹ S omits. ¹⁰ Graf: unusual form for منطيق passim. ¹¹ P omits. ¹² P على ¹³ P فانه

we have [just] described, then we say that the body was an act of the three [*hypostaseis*], [at the same time] we say, [an act of] one of the three, not of the three.

If they say: “Clarify for us the act of the three [*hypostaseis*]: is it a proper act of one or of each one of them apart from the others?” it should be said to them: From the perspective of creating and willing, everything that happened or is happening through [the *hypostaseis*] is one. As for manifestation and revelation, each one of [the *hypostaseis*] is in any act or state it wills, and this is specific, not common [to all of them]. This is because a mode of being distinguishes each one of them. If the three of them were one and not three, then the revelation of something from them or a manifestation in any way, would be a revelation and manifestation of the three of them.

However, although each one of the *hypostaseis* is coincident in its being with the being of that which is not itself of the [individual] *hypostasis*, it is [still] a particular *hypostasis* distinct from the others, so there is no doubt that what [an *hypostasis*] wills belongs only to itself. For one of them willed to become incarnated, possessing a rational soul, through the pure Virgin Mary. And the revelation in the Incarnation is a property of one of them exclusive of the other two. As for the creation of the body or their will for one of them to become incarnated, [this] is common to the three of them.²

6 The example of this is your description of God, [when you say] He knows, wills and is powerful. Is God’s knowledge about a thing His willing it and His power over it? If they say: “Yes”, then it should be said to them: Has God already willed and have power over all of what He knows? Then since He knows the Resurrection will occur, it has already happened, because according to you His knowledge is [the same as] His will, and He has already willed it and has power over it. What teaching is a more repugnant and worse absurdity than this?

If they say that [God’s] knowledge of things is something other than His willing it and power over it, because He knows what He does not will, such as vile deeds, and He has power over what He does not will, such as leading the unbelievers into the Garden, it should be said to them: Just as according to you it is permissible

² This argument is directed against any suggestion of modalism.

من الله لا من غيره هكذا والقول في تجسد احد الاقانيم دون الاثنين وان كانت ثلاثتها جوهرأ واحداً .

7 فلا يظن بنا احد انا جهلنا كثرة خلاف ما قسنا به منه ما اشد من قنومه¹⁴ لا¹⁵ كل انحائه . وكنور الشمس المتجسدة بالعين الناظرة وانارتها عام لها بضوءها وحرارتها . لانه من عين الشمس وضوءها وحرارتها [لا] تباين في المكان لاتصالها . والمتجسد بالعين الناظرة منها الضوء وحده دون العين والحرارة من غير ان يصف¹⁶ احد انه رأى العين او الحرارة متجسدة بالعين الناظرة كحال تجسد ضوءها .

8 فان قالوا ان المتجسد انما يتجسد بخروجه عن حاله الاولى بمنزلة الماء الجامد فاضافتكم الجسد الى الكلمة وقد اوجبتم لها التجسد ما هو . يقل لهم قد يجب عليكم ان تطلقوا النظر فيما نرد عليكم من قولنا حتى تعرفوا غايتنا فيه . فان يكن باطلاً كان كلما افصحنا به اشد كسرة علينا من ان تجهلوه .

زعمتم ان اضافتنا الى الله الجسد فضل از وصفناه انه تجسد وذلك كحال تجسم الماء بذاته لا بشيء غيره . فمثلكم في هذا الوجه كمن قضى على الناس كافة بالنهم جيش اذ وجد بعضهم جيشاً . فلو لم يوجد المتجسد على غير ما وصفتم من جمود الماء كان ما وصفتم مشبهاً . فاما¹⁷ يوجد الشيء يتجسد بغيره من الجواهر بلا تغيير عن حاله لم يكن لقولك هذا ثبات .

9 ما تقولون في النار التي من جوهرها لا تبصر ولا تحس ولا تقع تحت شيء من الحواس البتة للطفها دون ان تتجسم ببعض الاجسام اما حطب

¹⁴ قنونه P ¹⁵ Graf: read في instead of لا ¹⁶ S نصف ¹⁷ Graf: add اذ

that God knows things that He does not will and has power over them, and everything comes from God, not something other than Him, just so is it with the teaching of the Incarnation of one of the *hypostaseis*, exclusive of the other two, even though the three are one *ousia*.

7 One should not think that we are ignorant of the great difference of what we compare to [God, the incarnated One] in His *hypostasis*, [and] even more so in³ all of His relations. [Yet, a possible] example are the light and illumination of the sun, incarnated in the seeing eye, to which [also] belong its brightness and heat. [There is no] separation in location between the sun disc and its brightness and heat because of their union. That which is incarnated of [the light, heat, etc.] in the eye is the brightness alone, not the disc and heat. And no one says that he sees the disc and the heat incarnated in the seeing eye in the same way its brightness is incarnated.

8 Now, if they say: “The incarnated One can only become incarnated by emerging from its primary state, in the manner of frozen water. If you bring the body into relationship with the Word [of God], making the incarnation necessary for it, what is it?” it should be said to them: It is necessary for you to pay close attention to what we say to you in reply, so that you will understand our conclusion. If it is false, everything that we have clearly laid out is a great defeat for us, just as if you were ignorant of it.

You claim that our addition of the body to God is an excess,⁴ when we describe Him as incarnated, and this is like the state of [frozen] water, embodied in its own being, not in something else. Your example in this aspect is like someone determining that all people are an army when he finds that some of them are soldiers! Now, if it were found that the incarnated One is not different from what you have said about frozen water, then what you have described would be [an acceptable] likeness. But if it is found that a thing can be incarnated in another *ousia* without change in its state, then [your argument] is not proven by what you say.

9 What do you say about fire, whose *ousia* is absolutely not seen nor felt nor perceived through something of the senses because of its immateriality, except when it is embodied in some bodies, either

³ ὕ is certainly incorrect (Graf, 131, p. 41, fn. 3).

⁴ Cf. *Sura* 4:171; 5:78; 9:30-31; 112:1

واما¹⁸ شمع واما ذهب واما فضة وغير ذلك من الاجسام . افترون النار هي بجسمها¹⁹ ببعض هذه الاجسام الموصوفة متغيرة ام متبدلة عن ناريتها او الاجسام المتجسمة فيها الى غير حالها الاولى . وانما نار نار ابدأ وان تجسمت ببعض الجسوم . والجسم جسم ابدأ وان تجسمته²⁰ النار . وما قولكم في نور الشمس الذي مكث بعد ما خلق ثلثة ايام غير متجسم بالعين . يعرف ذلك من قرأ التورية . فتجسم بالعين من غير تغيير عن جوهره الاول وهو نور من قبل ان يتجسم ومن بعد تجسمه .

10 اوليس²¹ كل نفس كل واحد منا ايضاً متجسدة بالجسد لكمال الانسان . افتخرجوها²² عن روحانيتها ولطفها بتجسدها او بانتقال الجسد عن حاله بدى²³ . فالنفس نفس ابدأ والجسد جسد ابدأ من غير ان يكون المركب من هذين المختلفين اثنين بل واحد بالاتحاد .

فكما ان النار متجسمة ببعض الجسوم والشمس بالعين والنفس بالجسد من غير ان ينتقل كل واحد منها عن جوهره هكذا والقول في الكلمة وفضل من هذا بما لا فسحة له ولا مقدار . تجسدت بجسم ذى نفس منطيقية بتجسد حقيقى دائم لازم بلا تباين من غير تبدل ولا تغيير . هي الكلمة ابدأ والجسد جسد ابدأ من غير ان يكون المجتمع منها اثنين بل اقنوم واحد متجسد الاله حق²⁴ وهو انسان حق²⁵ فهو واحد لا اثنين كما ذكرنا .

¹⁸ P والا ¹⁹ Graf: read بتجسمها ²⁰ S جسمته ²¹ P repeats اوليس ²² PS حقاً ²³ Graf: read بدءاً ²⁴ Graf: read حقاً ²⁵ Graf: read حقاً sic.

wood or candles or gold or silver or some other corporeal bodies [like] this? Are you of the opinion that when fire is embodied in some of these corporeal bodies [just] described, it changes or is altered from its fire-ness or the corporeal bodies in which they are embodied [become something] other than [their] primary state? Fire is always fire, even when it is embodied in some bodies, and the corporeal body is always a corporeal body, even when the fire is embodied in it.

What do you say about the light of the sun, which remained for three days after its creation without being embodied in its disc? This is understood by the one who has read the Torah. [The light] was embodied in the disc without change in its primary *ousia*, and it was light before it was embodied and after its embodiment.

10 Is not every soul of every one of us also incarnated in a corporeal body [to make] a complete human being? Do you separate [the soul] from its spirituality and its immateriality in its embodiment or in the transformation of the body [back] into its first state [of death]? The soul is always a soul and the body is always a body without the composite of these two being two different things; rather it is one in the union [of the two].⁵

Just as the fire is embodied in some corporeal bodies, and the sun in the disc, and the soul in the body, without any of them being transformed from its *ousia* [into something else], just so is the teaching about the Word [of God], and even more so than this, in that He has no space and no measure. [The Word] is incarnated in a corporeal body, possessing a rational soul in a true, eternal, necessary incarnation, without separation, alteration or change. It is the Word [of God] eternally, and the body a body eternally, without that in which they are joined together being two. Rather, the one incarnated *hypostasis* is true God, and He is a true human being; He is one, not two, as we have mentioned.

⁵ These examples are common among Monophysite writers. The comparison with union between the human soul and body is especially favored, and was developed by Severus of Antioch. Griffith, "Abū Rā'itah," 193. Cf. Joseph Lebon, "La christologie du monophysisme syrien," pp. 425-580, in: *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Aloys Grillmeier u. Heinrich Bacht, Band I: *Der Glaube von Chalkedon* (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1951) and *Le monophysisme sévérien: étude historique, littéraire et théologique sur la résistance monophysite au concile de Chalcedoine jusqu'à la constitution de l'église jacobite* (Louvain: Excudebat Josephus van Linthout, 1909).

11 فان قالوا افتزعمون الله تعالى ذكره سكن ذلك الجسد يقال لهم بلى . انا نصف انه سكن الجسد على وجه التجسد به لا سكن مرسل كسكونه فى غيره من البرايا .

فان قالوا فاذ سكن الجسد كما تصفون فقد احاط به الجسد والمحاط به محدود والمحدود مخلوق فالله²⁶ اذن مخلوق كزعمكم يقال لهم انما كان يلزم الله ما وصفتم لا محالة . يقسم كلامكم على الكلمات صادقة حقيقية²⁷ . كمن ادعى ان الانسان جوهر فاستشهد على ذلك فقال ان الانسان حى والحى جوهر ورد الكلام الى اوله فقال الانسان لا محالة جوهر . فصاغ كلامه من كلمات حقيقية صادقة .

فاما من صاغ كلامه من كلمات كاذبة مدفوعة مجحودة فلا سبيل ان يظهر فى الجملة كلام صادق لا محالة . كمن وصف الانسان دائما والدائم [لا]²⁸ الابتداء له فالانسان اذا الاله . صاغ كلامه من كلمات شتى اولهن كاذبة . فلما صار رأس الكلام باطلاً لم يظهر الحق فى الجملة وان كانت الكلمات المقرونة اليها صادقة حقيقية . هكذا وانتم لما اوجبت ان اجسد محيط بالكلمة وبنيتم الكلام على كلمة مدفوعة الحقتم من بعد كلمات صادقة مقبولة . ثم قضيتم فى الجملة بما اردتم غير ان يلزم الجملة ما وصفتم .

12 فان قالوا من اين بينا كلامنا على كلمة مدفوعة كما وصفتم . اليس قد اوجبت ان الكلمة سكنت الجسد . فاحد الامرين اما ان يكون الجسد محيطاً بها آتٍ عليها واما ان تكون الكلمة ماسكته فيكون خلو منها كسائر الاجساد . يقال لهم انا وان اوجبت ان الكلمة سكنت الجسد فقد نفينا ان يكون²⁹ سكنه

²⁶ P فالله ²⁷ حقيقة ²⁸ Missing in Graf ²⁹ S تكون

11 If they say: “Are you claiming that God, His remembrance is exalted! dwells in this body?” it should be said to them: Of course! We describe Him as dwelling in the body in the manner of [His] incarnation in it, not the “dwelling” that is sent out [from God], like His dwelling in creatures other than Himself.⁶

If they say: “If He dwells in the body, as you have described, then the body confines Him, and what is confined is limited, and what is limited is created. Is God therefore a creature, according to your claims?” it should be said to them: Certainly, what you have described must be necessary for God. Your syllogism has accurate and true premises, just as when one maintains that the human being is an *ousia*, and demonstrates this, saying that the human being is living, and what is living is an *ousia*. The syllogism returns to its first part, so he says: “The human being is without a doubt an *ousia*.” The syllogism is formulated from true and accurate premises.

However, if his syllogism is formulated from false premises that should be rejected and denied, certainly it is not possible that the conclusion of the syllogism will be accurate. As when one states: the human being is eternal, eternity has no⁷ beginning, the human being is, therefore, God. His syllogism is formulated from many premises, the first of which is false. For if the beginning of the syllogism is formulated invalidly, then the conclusion will not result in the truth, even if the premises linked to it are accurate and true. This is the same as what you have argued, [when you say] that the body confines the Word, and you build the syllogism on a premise that should be rejected, adding further accurate and acceptable premises. Then you reach the conclusion [you desire] with what you set out, although the conclusion is not necessarily what you have described.

12 If they say: “How are we building our syllogism on a premise that should be rejected, as you have described? Have you not made it necessary that the Word [of God] dwells in the body? Then it must be one of two things: either the body is encompassed by [the Word] which has come into it, or the Word grasps it, then [the body] is devoid of [the Word], just as [all of] the rest of bodies,” it should be said to them: if we have made it necessary that the Word

⁶ That is, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in creatures. If applied to the Incarnation, this would lead to some form of adoptionism.

⁷ √ is missing in Graf.

مثل سكونها سائر الاجساد . وانما وصفنا ان³⁰ سكونها الجسد سكون تجسد به لا كسكون مرسل .

فانما كان ينبغي لكم ان تسئلونا عند اقرارنا بسكون الكلمة الجسد امحيط هو بها ام لا . فان قلنا محيط جاز لكم ان تتبعوا الكلام اين ما صار اليه . وان دفعنا ذلك نظرتم فيما يلزمنا . فالزمونا الى ان نورد عليكم حجة صحيحة غير مدفوعة ولا محجوة .

13 فان قالوا انما يكون الشيء ساكناً في شيء غير ان يحيط³¹ به يقال لهم اما في الجسم فلا سبيل الى ان يسكن بعضها بعض من غير ان يحاط به . فاما الذي ليس بجسم فلا سبيل للجسم ان يحيط به اذا سكنه . بل الجسم محاط منه بمنزلة النور المتجسم بعين الشمس وكالنار المتجسمة بالجمرة وكالنفس المتجسدة بالجسد . فعين الشمس محاط من نورها لا هو منها والجمرة محاطة من النار الشاعلة فيها لا هي من الجمرة . والجسد محاط من النفس لا هي منه .

14 فالشمس ونورها والجمرة ونارها والنفس وجسدها سر لتجسد كلمة الله بالجسد . فكما ان كل واحد من هذا الثلاثة المذكورة متجسم فيما تجسم به بلا تغيير عن حاله ولا تبديل عن جوهره من غير ان يكون مع الشيء الذي تجسم به اثنين بل واحد³² بحق فهكذا والقول في كلمة الله تجسدت³³ جسداً ذا نفس من مريم الطاهرة بلا تغيير من حالها ولا تبدل من جوهرها من غير ان تحد من الجسد بل الجسد المحدود منها . وهي

³⁰ P repeats ان ³¹ PS محيط ³² S better بل كل واحد ³³ S تجسدة , P تجتدب

dwells in the body, we have [also] denied that it dwells in it in a similar [manner] to its dwelling in the rest of bodies. We have only described its dwelling in the body as a dwelling of “incarnation” in it, not like a dwelling [of the Holy Spirit] sent out [by God].

Yet, it is necessary that you ask us: According to your affirmation of the dwelling of the Word in the body, does [the body] encompass it, or not? Now, if we say it encompasses it, you are permitted to pursue the syllogism, [saying]: In what does this result? And if we deny this, you must pay attention to what is necessary for us [to make the argument]. For we are obligated to set out for you sound evidence, that should not be rejected nor denied.

13 If they say: “Verily, can something dwell in something [else] without being encompassed by it?” it should be said to them: Either [it is something] in corporeal things, and then it is not possible that one dwells in another, without being encompassed by it, or [it is something] which does not have a body, and it is not possible for the body to encompass it when it dwells in it. Rather, the body is encompassed by it, as is the case of the light embodied in the disc of the sun, just as fire is embodied in coal and so, [too] the soul is incarnated in the body. For the disc of the sun is encompassed by its light, not [the light by the sun], and the coal is encompassed by the fire burning in it, [the fire] is not [encompassed] by the coal, and the body is encompassed by the soul, not [the soul] by [the body].⁸

14 The sun and its light, and the coal and its fire, and the soul and its body are a *mysterion* for the incarnation of the Word of God in the body. For just as each one of these three things mentioned is embodied in what embodies it, without change in its state or alteration in its *ousia*, and without the thing with which it is embodied being two, but rather that it is in truth one, just so is it in the teaching on the Word of God: [it is an] Incarnation [of the Word in] a body possessing a soul, through Mary, the immaculate, without change in its state nor alteration in its *ousia*, without being limited by the body; rather, the body is limited by [the Word]. And [the Word] and the

⁸ The contrast is being made here between those things that are contained when they are embodied in something else and those things that are not contained when they are embodied. Abū Rā’īṭah is arguing that some things, like fire, can be embodied in something else, like coal, but not limited or contained by it.

والجسد واحد باتحاد حقيقي³⁴ دائم بلا تباين تبايناً يجرى عليه العدد ويدعوا الى اثنين وان كان فرقاً جوهرياً³⁵ لازماً له ثابتاً فيه كثبوت فرقى³⁶ جوهرى الشمس والنار والنفس والذين تجسمت بهم .

15 فان قالوا ماذا انكرتم ان يكون الجسد حاوياً للكلمة محداً لها وقد اوجبتم انها فيه كما هي فى غيره من الاجسام والاجساد . فاحد الامرين اما ان يكون كل الاشياء التى هي فيها لها جسد واما لا يكون ذلك الجسد الذى وصفتم بانها تجسده لها جسداً اذ صارت فيه بلا حد كما انها فى غيره من الاشياء . يقال لهم وكيف ذلك يصير حلولها فى الجسد وحلولها فى سائر الاشياء واحداً وهى متجسدة به وبه متحدة وفى الاشياء بلا تجسد بها ولا اتحاد بها . ولو ان وصفنا اياها فى جسدها لكان لعمري لكم فى ذلك مقال . فاما اذ اختلف وصفنا اياها فى جسدها وفى الاشياء وجب عليكم النظر فيما نصف .

16 فكما ان نور الشمس موصوف بانها³⁷ فى عينه وفى الهواء وفى الارض والبيت وغير ذلك من الاشياء على انحاء مختلفة ووجوه متشعبة لانه فى عينه مركب فيها متجسد بها وفى الهواء شامل له متحد به من غير تركيب ولا اتحاد ثابت وفى الارض والبيت كذلك وكبصر العين الناظرة الى الاشياء فالنظر مشارك العين والاشياء المبصرة منها ولن يستولى مشاركته لانه متجسد متركب بعينه والاشياء فيما بين قريب وبعيد بلا اتحاد بها ولا تركيب وكالعقل³⁸ فى النفس المعتقلة منه وغير ذلك مما لم يوصف اقتصاراً³⁹ على ما سبق متاً فيها .

17 هكذا والقول فى كلمة الله سبحانه فانها⁴⁰ موصوفة فى جسدها وفى الاشياء اما فى جسدها فاتحاد تركيب دائم ابدى وفى الاشياء كمن لا حد له

³⁴ PS وحقيق and passim. ³⁵ فرقنا جوهرنا S; فرقنا جوهرنا P ³⁶ Graf: read بانها S ³⁷ P فانه ³⁸ P ³⁹ P ⁴⁰ P اقتصار

body are one in a real and eternal union, without difference [like that which] occurs in number, and they are not drawn to become two. Yet, a substantial distinction is inherent in [the body] and enduring in it, just like the substantial distinction between the sun and the fire and the soul, and those [things] which are embodied in them.

15 Now if they say: “Why do you deny that the body contains and limits the Word, yet you make it necessary that [the Word] is in it, just as it is in other corporeal things and bodies? It must be one of two things: Either all of the things that it is in have a body, or that body you have described, which [the Word took] to itself to become incarnated in, is not a body, since [the Word] is in [the body] without limit, as it is in other things,” it should be said to them: Why should this descending [of the Word] into the body happen in the same way as its descending into everything else, for it is incarnated in [the body] and is united with it, and is in [other] things without being incarnated in them nor united with them? If we had described [the Word] so in its body, by my life! then you are right. But since our descriptions of [the Word] in its body and in [other] things are different, it is necessary for you to examine what we have described.

16 Similarly, the light of the sun is described in its disc and in the air and on the earth and on a house and other things with different relations and in many ways, because [the light] is bound up in [the sun’s] disc and it is incarnated in it, and the air encloses it, uniting with it, without there being a composite or persisting union, and on the earth and house it is the same. [It is also] like [the relationship of] the sight of the eye of the viewer to the things [it sees]: the seeing is associated with the eye and with the things seen by it, yet [the sight] does not take possession over what it is associated with, because [the sight] is incarnated and bound up with its eye, without being united or a composite with the things, both those near and far. And it is like the intellect in the soul, through which it is rational, and other [things] that do not need to be described [here] in order restrict [ourselves] to what precedes us.⁹

17 It is the same with the teaching about the Word of God, may He be praised! [The Word] is described in its [own] body and in things: in its body as a united composite, lasting and eternal, and

⁹ I.e., the questions that are being asked.

ولانه لا يجوز في صفة
الله سبحانه ان يكون موصوفاً في موضع دون موضع . لانه في كل⁴¹ بلا حد
معتلى عن كل بلا تهاية من غير ان يكون له الحمد بشيء منها متجسماً او
مركباً ما خلا ذلك الجسد الطاهر كما وصفنا .

18 فان قالوا هل بين الجسد الذي تجسده وبين سائر الاجساد اذا وصفتموه
مخلوقاً فصل او فرق يقال لهم اما في وجه الخلقة فلا واما في الاتحاد
والتكريم والتفضيل فكثير⁴² ما بينهم للذي تجسده واتحدته . لانه حلاه بحلاه
وكسائه نوره والبسه رتبته وشمله شعاع ضيائه⁴³ وملاه قدسه حتى صار محيياً
مطهراً مقدساً كالجمرة الموصوفة محرقة منيرة مضيئة وغير ذلك مما توصف
به النار من غير ان تكون الجمرة اثنين بل واحداً من اثنين من نار لطيفة
وجسم حاسى بلا تغيير من نار عن جوهرها ولا الجسم عن طبيعته .

19 فان قالوا وما الذي دعا الله سبحانه الى ان يتجسد ويصير انساناً يقل
لهم ان الذي دعاه سبحانه في البدى⁴⁴ الى ان يخلق ادم وذريته من تراب بعد
ان لم يكن شيئاً ونفخ فيه من روحه ومن ملكه تصريف فعاله وجلب اليه
جميع حالاته وخوله ما في البحر والبر الهواء وامره بمنافعه ونهاه وحذره
مضاره واسكنه جنته واوعده ملكوته هو الذي دعاه الى التجسد والتانس
التماساً بذلك انقاذه وذريته وتخليصهم من ضلالة تسلطت عليهم بتضعفهم

المدء Graf: read⁴⁴ ضاءه Graf: read⁴³ فيكتر S⁴² الكل S⁴¹

in things as one that has no limit and no end, without being bound up with them or embodied in them. Because it is not possible of an attribute of God, may He be praised! that He be described as [being] in one place to the exclusion of another place, since He is in everything, without limit, exalted over everything, without end, there is nothing, praise to Him! in which He is embodied or with which He is a composite, except that pure body [of Christ], as we have described.

18 Now if they say: “Is there a separation or differentiation between the body in which He became incarnated, and the rest of bodies, since you describe it as created?” it should be said to them: From the perspective of the creation, no; [from the perspective] of the union and honor and esteem, there is a great [difference] between them and that [body] in which He became incarnated and with which He united Himself. For He adorned it with His [own] ornamentation, He clothed it with His light and the garment of His rank, enclosing it in the rays of His brightness, and filled it with His holiness, so that it became living, pure and holy, like the coal, described as burning, becomes luminous and light-giving, and anything else with which one describes fire, without the coal being two [different things]. Rather, [the coal] is one from two: from immaterial fire and a perceptible corporeal body, without the fire changing its *ousia*, or the corporeal thing [changing] its nature.

19 Now, if they say: “What is it that caused God, may He be praised! to be incarnated and become human?” it should be said to them: That which caused Him, may He be praised! in the beginning to create Adam and his descendants from dust, after there had been nothing, and breathe into him from His [own] spirit, and from His own authority [allow] him to act freely, and [allow] him to bring about his own condition completely,¹⁰ and bestow on him what is in the sea and the land and the air, and command him with [the use of] its benefits and forbid him and warn him from what will harm him, and give him His Garden as a home and promised him His Kingdom, is that which caused Him to the Incarnation and becoming human. [God] sought by this [Adam’s] deliverance and [that of] his descendants, and their salvation from the error that had mastered

¹⁰ Through God’s authority humanity is endowed with free will and self-determination.

انفسهم بطول الفتهم بها وانهضهم من صرعتهم وردهم الى مرتبتهم الاولى.

فان قالوا وما الذى دعاه الى ان يخلق ادم وذريته يقال لهم الذى دعاه الى ذلك صلاحه وتفضله .

20 فان قالوا اولم يكن صالحاً ذا فضل⁴⁵ حتى خلق يقال لهم اما على شىء مخلوق فلا لانه لم يكن حتى خلقه واطهر عليه منته وصلاحه وان كان سبحانه لم يزل صالحاً بذاته . فالذى دعاه الى ان يتطأطأ الى ما ليس بموجود عبثاً ولا غرضاً فيصيره شيئاً ذا قدر وخطر هو دعاه الى ان يجدد خلقته لما اخلقته الخطية . واعد بريته الى حالها الاولى كسابق علمه له الحمد لم يزل وتخليصه فضل على ما ركب فيه من الاستطاعة . ولذلك⁴⁶ لم يرفض خلقه اذ علم ما هو صائر اليه بارتكابه وتورطه فى الضلالة . لما قد سبق فى علمه جل ثناؤه وسببه من انه منقذه ومخلصه من الضلالة له كما ذكرنا .

21 فان قالوا وما كان يقدر يخلصهم من غير ان يصير انساناً يقال لهم بلى له الحمد هو القادر على ما اراد ولكن لم يرد ان يكون خلاصهم وانقاذهم فعلاً منه وحده دونهم لكيلا يحرمهم الثواب على متابعتهم⁴⁷ اياه . لان الثواب والجزاء على فعل الثواب لا على فعل غيرهم بهم . وما الذى كان يدعوه سبحانه ان لا يصير انساناً لخلاص الذى دعاه صلاحه الى ان يخلقه وفى اى فعليه ترون العيب كان يلزمه عند نفسه ولم يكن يستبين صلاحه افى تركه لا شىء يصير شيئاً موجوداً يجدد خلقه بما فعله من تجسده لخلاصه او

مباعتهم P⁴⁷ وكذلك S⁴⁶ ذى فضلاً S; ذى فضلاً P⁴⁵

them, weakening them through their long inclination toward it, and He aroused them up from their destruction to their original rank.

Now if they say: “What is it that caused Him to create Adam and his descendents?” it should be said to them: That which caused Him to do this was His goodness and His esteem.

20 If they say: “Was He not good and estimable until He created?” it should be said to them: With regard to something created, no, because it did not exist until He created it and revealed His graciousness and His goodness to it, although He, may He be praised! never ceased to be good in His being. [It was] that which caused Him to incline towards what was [previously] not existent, useless and without purpose, making it something possessing value and importance. It caused [God] to restore His creation which sin had made shabby. And so He returned His creation to its original state, as He, may He be praised! had always known [He would do] before. The deliverance of [creation] is more than the ability to assemble it together. Because of this, He did not refrain from creating it, [although He] had the knowledge of what would befall it when it committed sin and became entangled in error, since it was previously in His knowledge, great is His praise! and He caused Himself to be its Deliverer and Savior from error, as we have mentioned.

21 Now, if they say: “Did He not have the power to deliver them without becoming a human being?” it should be said to them: Certainly, may He be praised! He is powerful over what He wills. However, He did not will that their salvation and deliverance would be an act from Him alone without them, in order not to deprive them of the reward from following Him, because the reward and recompense comes to [the ones who do] the work [earning] the reward, not the work of others on their behalf.¹¹ And what would have caused Him, may He be praised! not to become human to save those whom His goodness has caused Him to create? Which of [God’s] acts that are inseparable from Himself do you regard as the disgrace and do not make plain His goodness: His allowing a ‘nothing’ to become an existent thing, and renewing His creation by

¹¹ God could not have justly rewarded human beings for following Him if He had not become incarnated as a human being, since then human beings would not have participated in the plan for their own salvation.

اهماله اياه فى الهلكة بعد ان صيره شيئاً موجوداً . فالذى دعاه الى ان يتجسد ويتانس صلاحه ورحمته كما ذكرنا .

22 فان قالوا وما الخلاص الذى ذكرتم انه خلصكم دون مخالفيكم فقد نرى الموت ظاهراً عليكم كسائر الامم المخالفة لكم . يقال لهم ان الموت موتان احدهما موت بحق والاخر باستعارة من القول بالموت⁴⁸ الحقيقى موت الخطية والضلالة وباستعارة من القول بمفارقة الروح من البدن . فكما ان الجسد ميت بمفارقة النفس اياه هكذا والنفس ميتة بعدمها الايمان . فقد انقذنا وخلصنا من كلا الموتين⁴⁹ .

اما من الحقيقى⁵⁰ فيما ايدنا وعلمنا من الايمان بالله صواباً بحق صفته والقائه عنا السنة المغلظة المضلة لاهلها والعمل بطاعته المخالف لاعمل الامم الداعية الى حب الدنيا والانغماس فيها .

23 واما من المستعار⁵¹ فيما حقق قيامة الاجساد واعادتها بقيامة جسده الى الابد واقامته من اقام من البشر . فليس المتيقن باعادة حياته فان⁵² مات بميت ولا الحى حياً اذا كان بالموت والفناء متيقنا وان كان حياً . فعلة الموت الحقيقى الجهل بالقيامة وعلة الحياة الحقيقية التيقن بها . لان المتيقن بها خائف اوزاره وراج حسناته والشاك فيها زاهد فى الحسنات راكب للخيكيات . فقد خلصنا له الحمد من كلا الموتين كما وصفنا .

24 فان قالوا فليس لو ارسل لخلاص العالم وانقاذهم غير اما من الملائكة واما من الطاهرين من البشر كان افضل من ان يباشر بنفسه يقال لهم كما ان

⁴⁸ S فالموت ⁴⁹ PS الميتين ⁵⁰ Graf: better المستعار ⁵¹ Graf: better واذ ⁵² S المستعار

what He did in His incarnation for its deliverance, or His neglect of it in destruction after He had made it into an existent thing? That which caused Him to become incarnated and become human is His goodness and mercy, as we have mentioned.

22 If they say: “What about the salvation you have mentioned, are you saved, apart from your opponents? We see that death is obviously upon you, just as [it affects] the rest of the peoples who are your opponents?” it should be said to them: Death is of two [kinds]. One of these is true death and the other is metaphor [drawn] from the expression “true death” ([that is,] the death of sin and error), and it is a metaphor for¹² the expression “a separation of the spirit from the body”. Just as the body dies with the separation of the soul from it, so the soul dies separated from faith. [Through the Incarnation,] we are delivered and saved from both [kinds] of death.

[We are saved] from true [death of the soul] by what He confirmed for us and taught us concerning the correct faith in God about His true predication [as one and three]. And He cast off from us the practices that were harsh and misleading for their own people, and [gave us] the work of obedience to Him in contrast to the works of the peoples, which are motivated by love of the world and immersion in it.

23 [We were saved] from the metaphorical [death of the body] when He effected the resurrection of bodies and their restoration forever by the resurrection of His [own] body and His raising up of the people He raised up. The one who is certain of the restoration of his life is not dead with death, and [one who is] alive is not living when [he believes] in death and the extinction [of existence] while he is still alive. For the source of true death is ignorance of the resurrection, and the source of true life is the certainty of it, because the one who is certain of [the resurrection] is afraid of his sins and hopes in his good works, and the one who doubts it refrains from good works, [instead] committing sins. So has He, praise to Him! saved us from the two [kinds of] death, as we have described.

24 If they say: “Would it not have been better, if He had sent someone else, either an angel or someone from among the holy people, for the salvation and deliverance of the world, than to have carried it out Himself?” it should be said to them: It would not have

¹² Error in the manuscripts: من for ل.

خلقه لادم وذريته لو تولاه غيره اما من الملائكة او غيرهم لم يكن بافضل .
لانه كما وجبت عبادته على ادم وذريته لخلقه اياهم لذلك كانت تجب عبادة
الذى يتولى انقاذهم⁵³ وخلصهم عليه . لان انقاذهم تجديد خلقتهم ولا
سبيل ان يجدد خلقتهم غير الذى تولى صنعهم .

مع انه قد ارسل اليهم بعضهم كنوح وابراهيم وموسى وغيرهم من الانبياء
والرسل . فكل واحد منهم فى زمانه لاهله منذر . فلما لم يتبعه كلهم وانما
اتبعه قليل زماناً يسيراً ثم عادوا الى ما كانوا عليه⁵⁴ من قبل وهو الاستحواذ
على الضلالة . فلما⁵⁵ لحق هذه الرسل من الضعف لانهم كانوا مخلوقين
غير خارجين من الصرعة وان كانت لم تستولى عليهم كاستيلائها على
العامة لان احدهم اذا قتل ومات لم يكن به طاقة الى عودة اولى وذلك
يدعوا⁵⁶ قبلهم الى الزهد فيهم والى الاستخفاف بامرهم اذ لم يقدروا على
ان يقيموا انفسهم من بعد موتهم .

25 فلهذه واشباهها مما لم نصف لم يرسل سبحانه غيره لانقاذ العالم
وخلصه ودعته رأفته⁵⁷ ورحمته جل ثناؤه الى ان تجسدت⁵⁸ كلمته الموصوفة
انها المولودة من الاب بلا ابتداء كامل من كامل اله حق من اله حق وعله
وصفه نفسه ابناً باتفاق ذات الذى منه ولد فى جميع انحاء ذاته كاتفاق ذات
كل واحد ذات ابيه من غير ان يلزمه ما يلزم الابناء والاباء المخلوقين .

فصارت⁵⁹ انساناً بلا تغيير من جوهرها فانقذت البشر وخلصتهم من
الضلالة بما دعته اليه من الايمان والعمل . وحققت ذلك لديهم بنهوضها

⁵³ PS افتقادهم ⁵⁴ S omits. ⁵⁵ ولما ⁵⁶ Graf: read يدعو ⁵⁷ S لرافته ⁵⁸ S
بتجسدة ⁵⁹ S فصارة

been better if He had entrusted it to someone other than Himself, either an angel or someone else. For just as it is necessary for Adam and his descendents to worship [God] because He created them, so it would be necessary [for them] to worship the One who had been entrusted with their deliverance and salvation. Because their deliverance is the renewal of their creation, and it is impossible that someone other than the One who was entrusted with producing them renew their creation.

To be sure, He sent [to the people] some, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and other prophets and messengers, but each one of them was a warner to his people in his own time.¹³ But all of [the people] did not follow [the prophet], they only followed him a little for a short time, then they returned to what they were before, being overpowered by error.¹⁴ Also, these messengers were afflicted by weakness [themselves], because they were creatures, not outside of the destruction [of sin], although it was not master over them, as it mastered the [rest] of the people. When one of them was killed or died, he was not worthier [than the others] of the ability to [be resurrected and to] return, and this led their tribe to abandon them and to scorn their commands when they did not have the power to raise themselves up after their deaths.¹⁵

25 Because of this and similar things, which we do not describe [here, God], may He be praised! did not send another to deliver and save the world. His compassion and mercy caused Him, Whose praise is exalted! [to effect] the Incarnation of the Word, which can be described [thus]: it is begotten from the Father without beginning, Perfect from a Perfect, true God from true God. And the reason He describes Himself as “son” is in the identity of His being with the being of the One from Whom He was begotten in all relations of His being, in the same way the being of each one of [the relations] is identical with the being of His Father, although what is necessary for created fathers and sons is not necessary for Him.

[The Word] became a human being without change in its *ousia*, and delivered humanity and saved it from error through the proclamation of faith and [good] works. And this was shown to be true

¹³ Cf. *Sura* 3:33-34; 4:165; 5:19; 6:83-88

¹⁴ Cf. *Sura* 23:23-50; 34:43-45

¹⁵ Cf. *Sura* 14:10-13; 16:43-44; 21:7-9; 25:7-8

بالجسد الى الابد من بعد ما⁶⁰ قتلت بجسدها . ودعاهم ذلك الى الرغبة فيها والتعظيم لسأنها والزموا نفوسهم عبادتها لما رأوا من مخالفة⁶¹ حالها حل جميع المخلوقين .

26 فان قالوا العجب لعقولكم كيف احتملت هذا القول وصدقت بالاہ يموت ويقتل . فاخبروا عن من مات ايجوز ان يكون حياً وعن من ليس بحى ايجوز ان يكون الاهاً مدبراً . فاذا وجبتم انه قد مات فقد بطل واذا بطل فقد بطل التدبير والسياسة . واذا بطلت السياسة فقد بقى العالم بلا مدبر . يقل لهم لو كان وصفنا ان الله مات على ما ظننتم من موت⁶² العباد كان لعمري وهناً فى عقولنا ونقصاً فى ذهننا . فاما اذ صار موته عندنا غير ما عنيتم لم يلزمنا من معناكم عتب . لانا لما عنينا مقتولاً ميتاً بالجسد اى من جهة الجسد لا من جهة لاهوته وان كان اسم الموت واقعاً على التجسد⁶³ بكماله لحال⁶⁴ الاتحاد انما امكن ان تجعل القتل والموت بجسده لا بلاهوته المعتلية عن الموت والحيال كما ذكرنا .

27 فهو حى ميت فى وقت واحد بمنزلة الانسان الموصوف بصيراً واعمى فى وقت واحد فهو بصير⁶⁵ بقلبه معتراً⁶⁶ ببصره⁶⁷ واحد لا اثنين . فالاعتراء واقع على كله بجملة العما⁶⁸ ببعضه من غير ان يصل العما الى غير العين من ابعاضه فالعما موت البصر . لان موت البدن جمود حواسه⁶⁹ والعما جمود البصر . فالانسان اذا ميت ببصره حى بغير ذلك من حواسه وكالمشجوج برأسه هو مشجوج وغير مشجوج مشجوج⁷⁰ برأسه غير مشجوج بيده . لان المحال من الكلام ان يوصف احد مشجوجاً بيده لان ليس بموضع الشج .

⁶⁰ P بعد من مخالفت⁶¹ S موة⁶² S Graf: المتجسد⁶³ P كحال⁶⁴ S Graf: read المعى⁶⁵ P بصره⁶⁶ S Graf: read معترى⁶⁷ S repeats برأسه غير مشجوج بيده . لان⁷⁰ S omits. حواسكم

to [humanity] when [the Word] raised itself with the body into eternity, after its body had been killed. This is the reason why [people] desire [the Word] and make [His] glorification the highest object [of worship] and feel themselves compelled to His service, because they recognize the difference between His state and the state of all other creatures.

26 If they say: “Your understanding is astonishing, how it bears this teaching and believes in a God Who dies and is killed!¹⁶ Tell us about someone who dies: is it possible that he is alive, and about [someone] who is not living: is it possible that he is the God Who rules [all of creation]? When you make it necessary that He died, then He ceased [to exist], and when He ceased [to exist], then the rule and government [of creation] ceased, and when government ceased, then the world remained without a Ruler”, it should be said to them: If we have described God as having died death [like] humanity, as you think, then by my life! our understanding would be feeble and our minds would be deficient! But when His death according to us is something other than what you mean, no censure of what we mean is necessary. Because we only mean killing and death of the body, that is, with regard to the body, not with regard to His divinity, even while the term “death” is applied to the Incarnation in its entirety on account of the union [of humanity and divinity], so it is possible that the killing and death were effected in His body, not in His divinity, which is exalted above death and change, as we have [already] mentioned.

27 He is living and dead at the same time, [like] the status of the person described as seeing and blind at the same time: he is seeing in his heart, [yet] afflicted by his blindness, [he is] one [person] not two. The affliction affects all of [the person] completely, [although] the blindness is only a part of him, without the blindness entering into any part of him other than the eye. Blindness is the death of sight: the death of the body is the rigor of its senses, and blindness is the rigor of sight. For the human being, when he dies in his sight, is living in his other senses. In the same way, the one who is wounded in his head is [both] wounded and not wounded: wounded in his head, but not wounded in his hand. Because it is absurd speech to describe one of his hands as wounded, since it is not the site of the

¹⁶ This is meant sarcastically.

وان كان الانسان المشجوج واحداً . هكذا والقول فى المسيح سبحانه هو مقتول ميت بجسده وحى غير مقتول بلاهوته وهو واحد لا اثنين .

28 فقولنا انه مات بجسده ليس كمن مات فى مدينة او دار او بيت . الذى هو الميت الموضوع لا الموضوع بل هو قتل ومات الرحيم لاجاعنا لانقاذنا وخلصنا بالجسد كالأعمى والمشجوج الذين كل واحد منهما موصوف انه مفعول به ببعضه واسم العما⁷¹ والشج واقع على الانسان بكماله .

29 فان قالوا فاذا اوجبتم عليه القتل والموت فقد فارقت لاهوته جسده وبطل الاتحاد الذى وصفتم انه الى الابد . لان موت⁷² الانسان وانحلاله فراق نفسه جسده ومزايلتها عنه . فى كلام اعظم تقيضة بعض على بعض من هذا . زعمتم ان الله اتحد مع جسده اتحاداً ابدياً لا انحلال⁷³ له ولا افتراق . ثم وصفتم انه قتل ومات . فلحد الامرين اما ان يكون اتحاده اتحاداً دائماً ابدياً فلم يقتل ولم يموت . واما ان يكون اتحاده مع جسده اتحاداً مزايلاً مفارقاً فيلزمه ما يلزم من قتل ومات من فراق لاهوته جسده . فبلى القولين قلتكم كان نقضاً لقولكم .

يقال لهم⁷⁴ انا قد وصفنا فى غير هذا الموضوع من هذا الكتاب ان المسيح له الحمد الاله متأنس وانما قتل⁷⁵ ومات⁷⁶ بجسده لا بلاهوته وموته بجسده فراق⁷⁷ نفسه المخلوقة جسده⁷⁸ المخلوق لا مزايلة لاهوته نفسه وجسده بل اللاهوت متحد بهما اتحاداً دائماً⁷⁹ كما وصفنا . لان موته موت انسى من جهة تأنسه لا الهى من جهة لاهوته . وانما وصفنا اتحاداً دائماً ابدياً اتحاد الكلمة مع البدن والنفس جميعاً لاتحاد النفس مع البدن .

30 فالمنحل اذاً امتياز النفس من البدن لا اتحاد الكلمة معهما كالنمو⁸⁰

⁷¹ P Graf: read العمى ⁷² S موة ⁷³ S نحال ⁷⁴ The following text until وصفنا كما is cited in the florilegium *Confession of the Fathers* (Vat. ar. 101, f. 375r). ⁷⁵ V قيل ⁷⁶ V مات ⁷⁷ V بفراق ⁷⁸ V جسده ⁷⁹ V ابدأ ⁸⁰ S كالنمو

wound! yet the wounded person is one [and the same]. The teaching about the Messiah, may He be praised! is like this: He was killed, died in His body, and is living, not killed in His divinity, and He is one, not two.

28 Now, we say that He died in His body, but this is not like someone who dies in a city, or a house or a home. That which died was the object, not the subject. Further, the Merciful [One] was killed and died for our sufferings and for our deliverance and our salvation, just as the blind and wounded, who both have the attribute that affects him in [one of] his parts, the name “blind” and “wounded” is applied to the person in his entirety.

29 If they say: “Since you make the killing and death necessary for Him, then His divinity was separated from His body, and the union, which you have described as eternal, ceases [to be]. For the death of a human being and His disintegration is the separation of his soul and his body, and [the soul’s] leaving [the body]. What statement is a greater contradiction between two things than this? You claim that God was united with His body in an eternal union, having no disintegration or nor separation, then you describe [Him] as having been killed and died. It must be one of two things: either His union is a lasting and eternal union, then He cannot have been killed nor died, or His union with His body is a transitory, separable union, because it is necessary for Him what is necessary for one who is killed and dies concerning a separation of His body from His divinity. Whichever of these two statements you assert, it will contradict your teaching.”

It should be said to them: We have already described in another place in this book that the Messiah, may He be praised! is God become human, and that He was only killed and died in His body, not in His divinity, and His death in His body was the separation of His created soul from His created body, not the abandoning of His body and His soul by His divinity. Rather, the divinity was united with them in a lasting union, just as we have described. Because His death was a human death with regard to His becoming human, not a divine [death] with regard to His divinity. We only describe the union of the Word with the body and the soul together as a lasting and eternal union, because the soul is united with the body.

30 The ascription, therefore, [pertains to] the separation of the soul from the body, not the union of the Word with both of them,

في شجرة كبيرة⁸¹ باغصانها قطع بعضها فغرس فهو الشجرة ونابتة⁸² فالنمو⁸³ ثابت فيها . واذا صار هذا هكذا فقد حق⁸⁴ القول في قتله وموته بتأنسه وثبت اتحاد لاهوته مع نفسه وجسده اتحاداً دائماً ابدياً من غير ان يلزمنا شيء مما وصفتم .

31 فان قالوا اي الصفتين⁸⁵ كانت اجمل وافضل في الله اذ دعاه صلاحه الى انقاذ عباده وخلصهم كما ذكرتم اذ لم يجز بعثه الملائكة ولا البشر لحال ما وصفتم بان ياذن بخلصهم من غير كلفة ولا نزوح عن موضعه وان يباشر ذلك بنفسه ويتجسد ويناصب ما ناصب من قتل وموت وغير ذلك مما وصفتم يقال لهم ان الفضل والجمال فيما صنع له الحمد لا فيما يصنع وان⁸⁶ لطف ذلك وخفى علمياً⁸⁷ لانا لم نعط علم الغيب كله ولم نحرم بعضه .

فلو ان خلاص العباد وانقاذهم من الضلال كان بالاذن وحده سراً من غير عيان ولم يعاين⁸⁸ المخلص لكان يلزمهم من الالتباس والتخليك والتهور في الهلكة اعظم من ان لو تركوا في صرعتهم الاولى . لان اذن الآذن خفى لطيف ولا سبيل الى الوقوع على الاذن الا بالمخبر المبصر المرى⁸⁹ .

32 فلمن كانوا يشكرون على خلاصهم اذا اشتكل ذلك عليهم . فاحد الامرين اما لا يشكرون لمخلصهم لجهلهم فيكونوا كفرة بالنعمة واما ان يشكروا من لا يعرفوه ولا يحمدهوا على شكرهم . مع انه محال من القول ان لو ياذن بخلصهم سراً . لان خلاصهم وانقاذهم متابعتهم اياه وتسليمهم لما

⁸¹ Graf: كثيرة ⁸² PS وبانيتها ⁸³ S فالنمو ⁸⁴ S حقق ⁸⁵ P الصفتين ⁸⁶ P المرئي ⁸⁷ Graf: read المرئي ⁸⁸ P نعاين ⁸⁹ P عليها ⁸⁷ P فان

like the growth of a large¹⁷ tree with branches: one of [the branches] is cut and planted, and yet growth remains in both the tree and its shoot. If it is so in this [case], then the teaching about His being killed and His death in His humanity are true, and consequently it is established: the union of His divinity with His soul and His body is a lasting, eternal union, without what you say being incumbent upon us.

31 If they say: “Which of the two descriptions of God is more suitable and better (if His goodness caused Him to deliver His servants and save them, as you have described, and it was impossible for Him to send an angel or a human being for the reason you explained): that He permitted their salvation without inconvenience [to Himself] or departure from His place, or that He carried this out Himself, becoming incarnated and suffering what [He] suffered, being killed and death and other things that you have described?” it should be said to them: The better and more suitable is in what He did, may He be praised! not in what He might have done, even if this is subtle and knowledge of it is concealed, because we are not given all of the hidden knowledge, nor do we commit an offense [having] part of it.

Now if the salvation and deliverance of the servants from error was [done] by the permission of [God] alone, secretly, without being manifest or the Saviour being seen, then the muddle, confusion and collapse into destruction would necessarily be greater for them than if they had been left in their original [state of] ruin. Because the permission of the One Who permits is concealed and subtle, and it is impossible that the occurrence [of something done] by [His] permission [is known] except by the One who makes it known, seen and perceived.

32 And whom should [human beings] thank for their salvation if this had been obscure to them? For it is one of two things: either they would not thank their Savior because of their ignorance, then they would be ungrateful for the grace, or they would thank one whom they did not know, and they would not be commended for their thankfulness. Further, it cannot be said: “if only He had permitted their salvation to be secret”, because their salvation and deliverance is in their following Him, and in their surrender to what He has

¹⁷ Sbath ms.

دعاهم له طايعين غير مكرهين من الايمان به والعمل بطاعته من بعد تحقيقه القيامة لديهم⁹⁰ بجسده . فانما خلصهم من الجهة التي كانوا يتمكنون ان يخلصوا بها لا بالاذن وان كان على ذلك قادراً .

33 وما عساهم قائلين لو سألناهم كنعوا ما سألونا⁹¹ اى الصنفين كان افضل واجمل⁹² فى الله سبحانه وله الحمد اراد ان يدعو⁹³ الناس الى عباده وطاعته ان يصيرهم عابدين له طائعين من غير ان يكلف بعثه الرسل والوحى من ان يرسل اليهم رسلاً يدعوهم الى الايمان به والعمل بطاعته فيشتمون ويضربون ويقتلون .

34 ليعلموا ان الله تبارك وتعالى انما يدعو الناس اليه من الجهة التي يعلم انهم يستوجبون باجابتها اياه بها الثوات والجزاء لا من جهة فعله وان كان على ذلك قادراً . وای فعل اتى الله له الحمد صغيراً ام كبيراً ليس بقادر على غيره . فليقال اذا فى كلما⁹⁴ فعل الله الو⁹⁵ فعل غيره كان اجمل وافضل اذ هو على ذلك قادراً .

35 واما ما ذكروا من امر الكلفة والنزوح⁹⁶ من موضعه فانهم سهوا . لو لا ذلك السهو لم ينطقوا بشيء من هذا . انما الكلفة للعاجز الضعف الذى قد يخف عليه بعض الفعال . فاما الله سبحانه فليس اذنه ايسر عليه فعلاً من مباشرته ما باشره بتجسده لانه لايمتنع عليه امر اراده ولا يستصعب عليه هويه . واما النزوح والتنقل فللاجسام المحدودة المحتواة من المكان . واما من لا حد له ولا نهاية ملاء كل شيء وسع كل شيء متعالٍ ظاهر على كل شيء . فكيف يجوز عليه التنقل والنزوح .

36 فان قالوا هل يجوز فى صفة الله ان يحتمل الزيادة فى جوهره يقال لهم

⁹⁰ S omits. ⁹¹ S سالوا ⁹² S افضل وافضل ⁹³ Graf: read يدعو ⁹⁴ S omits. ⁹⁵ S اتو ⁹⁶ P النزوح

called them voluntarily, without being compelled, by belief in Him and [doing good] works in obedience to Him after His accomplishment of the resurrection of His body in their presence. Truly, He saved them in the way which it was possible they could be saved, not [simply] by [His] permission, even though He was powerful [enough to do] this.

33 What would they say, if we asked them in the same manner they question us: Which of the two ways is better and more suitable of God, may He be praised and Glory to Him! [that He] decided to call human beings to serve Him and obey Him, and to make them His obedient servants without commissioning His delegation of messengers and the revelation or that He sent messengers to them, calling them to belief in Him and to works of obedience to Him, so that they would be reviled and beaten and killed?

34 Certainly they should know that God, the Blessed and the Exalted, only calls human beings to Himself in the way in which He knows that they will deserve merit through their response to it, and which has reward and recompense, not in the way in which He [alone] acts, even though He is powerful [enough to do] this. What act, small or great, could God, may He be praised! not have [accomplished] in another way with [His] power? So, does one say about every act of God, “if only He had done something else, it would have been more suitable and better”, even though He is powerful [enough to do] this?

35 As for what they mentioned concerning the issue of the inconvenience [to Himself] and departure from His place, they are neglecting [something]. If there were not this negligence, they would not speak of such a thing. Inconvenience is for the unable and the weak, for whom only some work is easy. But for God, may He be praised! an act He permitted [to be done by another] is not easier for Him than His directly causing what He carried out in His Incarnation, because nothing prevents Him from commanding His will, and there is nothing difficult for Him [in attaining] His desire. Regarding leaving and change of position, this is only for corporeal things that are limited and contained by a place. With regard to what is not limited and does not have an end, [this] fills up everything, comprehends everything and is exalted, mastering over everything. How is leaving and changing position possible for Him?

36 If they say: “Is it possible in a predication of God that an increase be sustained His *ousia*?” it should be said to them that “sus-

ليس احتمال الزيادة من صفة الله . لانه كامل معتلى عن الكمال . وان الزيادة صفة الاجساد⁹⁷ والاجسام .

فان قالوا اوليس الجسد الذى تجسد فيه زيادة يقال لهم ان الزيادة انما تكون فى الجسم كما ذكرنا . ولا تعدوا ان توجد اما⁹⁸ فى الوزن واما فى الذرع واما فى الكيل واما فى العدد . فاخبرونا عما ليس بجسم ولا وزن له ولا ذرع ولا كيل ولا عدد كيف يجوز ان يحتمل الزيادة فى بعض هذه الانحاء . وانما يحتمل الزيادة ان احتمل فى العدد وحده . فلننظر هل له احتمال الزيادة فى العدد . وهو قبل ان يتجسد واحد بسيط روحانى ومن بعد تجسده ايضاً واحد وان تجسد . فلسنا نرى انه احتمل الزيادة فى وجه من الوجوه .

37 فان قالوا وكيف لا يكون الجسد زيادة فيه وقد كان ولا له جسد يقال لهم ليس الجسد فيه زيادة . لانه لا يجوز على الله فيه لانه انما يوصف فى الاجسام والاجساد كما وصفنا . فما قولكم فى الانسان ارايتم جسده زيادة هو فى روجه . ان كان زائداً فهو فيها .

فابينونا على اى الوجوه من هذه الموصوفة هو اما فى الوزن فلسنا نراها زادت لانها لا وزن لها . ولا فى الكيل . لانها ليست بمكالة ولا فى الذرع لان الذرع لا يقع عليها . ولا فى العدد لانها واحد مع جسدها لاتحاده معها من غير ان يكون الجسد فيها زيادة ولا هى فيه . اخبرونا عن جسم اشتعلت فيه النار ازائد هو فى النار لاشتعالها فيه او انما اتحدته من غير ان يكون زائداً فيها ولا هى زائلة فيه .

38 فان قالوا وكيف لا يوصف الجسم المشتعلة فيه النار زائد فيها وقد غيرته عن حاله الاولى لما غلبت عليه حتى لا⁹⁹ يظهر منه شىء لتصييرها ايه نارا يقال لهم انما يعرف الاشياء معرفة صحيحة بحدودها . فابينونا ما حد

لم⁹⁹ S لها⁹⁸ P الاجسام⁹⁷ S repeats

taining an increase” cannot be [predicated] in a description of God, because He is perfect, exalted over perfection. Increase is an attribute of bodies and corporeal things.

If they say: “Is not the body, in which He incarnated Himself, increased?” it should be said to them that the increase is only [found] in corporeal things, as we have mentioned. Do not overlook [the fact] that increase is found either in weight, or in length, or in volume or in number. Tell us about what is without a body and has no weight nor length nor volume nor number: how is it possible that increase is sustained in one of these aspects? Increase is only sustained when one of these increases in number. So let us turn our attention to whether He sustains an increase in number. Now, before He was incarnated, He was one, simple and immaterial. And also after His Incarnation He was one, although incarnated. We do not see that He sustained increase in any way.

37 If they say: “How can it be that the body was not an increase for Him, when He had existed [before] and had no body?” it should be said to them: The body was not an increase in Him, because this is not necessary for God, since [increase] is only predicated of corporeal things and bodies, as we have described. What do you say about the human being: do you see an increase in His body when His spirit is in Him? If there were an increase, then it would be in [the spirit].

Clarify this for us, in which of these ways described is it? It is either in weight, but we see that it does not increase, because [the spirit] has no weight. Nor is it in length, because it does not have length, nor is it in volume, because volume does not occur in it, nor is it in number, because it is one together with its body, since [the body] is united with [the spirit] without the body being an increase in [the spirit], nor is [the spirit an increase] in [the body]. Tell us about a corporeal body in which a fire burns: is it an increase in the fire, because it burns in it, or is it only united with [the body] without being an increase in [the fire] or [the fire] being an increase in [the body]?

38 If they say: “Why should a corporeal body with fire burning in it not be described as increased by [the fire], for [the fire] changes it from its primary state when it overcomes [the body] until nothing of it is visible, because it makes [the body] into fire”, it should be said to them: Things are only known correctly by their definitions.

الجسم لنعلم هل تغير ام لا .
 فحد الجسم عند اهل النظر بالحدود انه جوهر مبصر ذو ثلث جهات
 وذلك¹⁰⁰ الطول والعرض والغلط . فلننظر هل يوجد هذا الحد في الجسم
 المشتعل في النار كجوهـر مبصر ثلثة جهاته وان كانت النار قد كسته نورها
 وحلته بحليتها ليعلموا ان الجسم المشتعل من النار ليس بزائد فيها ولا
 متغيرة عن حالها الاولى . هذا وهى مخلوقة مبرية فكيف اعظمكم ما قيل
 فيما ليس بمخلوق ولا مبرى¹⁰¹ .

39 فان قالوا اخبرونا عن الكلمة امحدودة هى من شىء ام ليس بمحدودة
 يقال لهم ليست بمحدودة بل كل محدود منها . فان قالوا فالكلمة اذاً فى كل
 يقال لهم اجل انها فى كل معتلية على كل . فان قالوا الكلمة بكمالها
 تجسدت ام بعضها يقال لهم انا قد بينا قبل هذا الموضع ان الكلمة لا
 توصف ببعض ولا كمال ولا بالاستعارة من القول . وذلك ان البعض مضاف
 الى الكمال والكمال مضاف الى الابعاض والله معتلى عن كل الصفتين .
 فان كان معنى قولكم الكلمة تجسدت¹⁰² بكمالها اى احيطت من الجسد
 نفينا عنها هذه الصفة .

40 فان قالوا فاذا قررتم ان¹⁰³ الكلمة تجسدت بكمالها والكلمة فى كل
 احد فالجسد اذاً فى كل لكيلا يبقى من الكلمة شىء لم يتجسد يقال لهم
 العجب من رأيكم . كيف ذهب به الذاهب . فلعمري لو كانت الكلمة جثة
 عظيمة ملاء¹⁰⁴ كل شىء وانها تجسدت جسد اخر لكان واجباً ان يكون ذلك
 الجسد الذى تجسدت به¹⁰⁵ على قدرها ليلا¹⁰⁶ يبقى بعضها مجرداً من غير
 تجسد . واما اذ هى لدينا روحانية غير جسمانية معتلية عن الاجزاء والابعاض
 لم نضطر الى ان نصف الجسد فى كل كوصفنا اياها وان تجسدت به فهى

¹⁰⁰ S هو ذلك ¹⁰¹ Graf: read مبروءة ¹⁰² S تجسدة passim. ¹⁰³ S omits
 ان ¹⁰⁴ Graf: read ملاء ¹⁰⁵ S omits. ¹⁰⁶ S لكيلا

Clarify for us what the definition of a corporeal body is, so that we may know whether it changes or not.

The definition of a corporeal body, according to the definitions of people who examine things [carefully] is: a visible *ousia* possessing three aspects, and these are length, breadth and thickness. So let us examine it. Is this definition found in the corporeal body burning in the fire as a visible *ousia*, its [three] aspects persisting even though the fire clothes it with its light and adorns it with its finery? They should know that the corporeal body burning from fire does not increase [the fire] and [the fire] is not changed from its original state. This is so in what is created and made, why do you find what is said about what is not created or made so difficult?

39 Now, if they say: “Tell us about the Word: is it something limited or not limited?” it should be said to them: It is not limited. Rather, everything is limited¹⁸ by it. If they say: “The Word, then, is in everything”, it should be said to them: Indeed! It is in everything and exalted over everything. If they say: “Was the Word incarnated in its entirety or [was] only a part of it [incarnated]?” it should be said to them: We have [already] clarified before this point, that the Word cannot be described as a “part” or a “whole” or [even] by a metaphorical statement. That is to say, the part is related to the whole and the whole is related to the parts, but God is exalted above both predications. If the meaning of your statement “the Word was incarnated in its entirety” is “it is encompassed by the body”, then we deny this description of [the Word].

40 Now, if they say: “If you acknowledge that the Word was incarnated in its entirety, and the Word is in everyone, the body, therefore, is in every[one], so that nothing of the Word remains that is not incarnated,” it should be said to them: Your view is astonishing! How can [anyone] hold [such a] view? By my life! If the Word were a vast body filling everything, and if it had become incarnated in another body, then it would have been necessary that this body in which [the Word] was incarnated be equal [in size] to it, so that no part of it remained free and not incarnated. However, since according to us [the Word] is spiritual, incorporeal, exalted above components and parts, we are not compelled to describe the body as being in everything in the same way we describe [the Word], even

¹⁸ I.e., contained or bounded.

فى كل بلا حد ولا نهاية متجسدة من غير ان يكون الجسد فى كل .
41 اوليس قد تصفون ان¹⁰⁷ الله له الحمد فى السماء وعلى العرش .
 فابينونا بكماله هو فى السماء وعلى العرش ام بعضه فى السماء وعلى
 العرش وبعضه فى غير ذلك . فان قالوا لن¹⁰⁸ نصف¹⁰⁹ الله ببعض حتى يقل
 ان بعضه فى كذا وعلى كذا وبعضه لا يقال لهم فاذا وصفتموه فى السماء
 وعلى العرش فممحوا¹¹⁰ هو منها ام هو فى كل من غير حد . فلا يشك انهم
 يوجبون انه فى السماء وعلى العرش وفى كل . يقال لهم فاذا وصفتموه فى
 السماء وعلى العرش¹¹¹ وجب عليكم ان تصفوا السماء فى كل ايضاً لكيلا
 يبقى منه شىء ليس هو فى السماء وعلى العرش كنحو قولكم فى الكلمة
 وجسدها لتعلموا ان الكلمة وان تجسدت بكمالها فهى فى كل لم نضطر ان
 نصف الجسد فى كل .

42 فان قالوا ان قولنا ان الله فى السماء وعلى العرش انما يعنى انه رب
 السماء ورب العرش ليس بانه فيها كالشىء فى الشىء يقال لهم فهو فيها
 على غير ما يكون الشىء فى الشىء ام لا يوصف فى الاسياء البتة لا كالشىء
 فى الشىء او غير ذلك فانما هى اوجه ثلاثة . اما تصفون الله انه فى السماء
 وعلى العرش من غير ان يحويه شىء منهما لاعتلائه عليها واما ان يكون
 فيهما محوى منهما واما ان يكون ظاهراً عليهما لا فى شىء منهما .
 فان قلت انما فيهما [لا] ظاهر عليهم او ظاهر عليهما لا فيهما كان الله
 سبحانه بهذه الصفة محدوداً من خلقه ما لا يجوز فى صفته . وان قلت انما
 فيهما ظاهر عليهما وصفتم حقاً ودخلتم فيما عبتم الا ان تقولوا غير هذه

¹⁰⁷ S omits. ¹⁰⁸ P ان ¹⁰⁹ P يصف ¹¹⁰ Graf: read فممحوا ¹¹¹ S omits
 وفى كل . يقال لهم فاذا وصفتموه فى السماء وعلى العرش

if it is incarnated in [the body]. For it is in everything without limit and without end, incarnated, without the body being [present] in everything.

41 Do you not describe God, glory be to Him! as being in heaven and on the Throne?¹⁹ Clarify [this] for us: is He in heaven and on the Throne in His entirety or is a part of Him in heaven and on the Throne, and a part of Him in something else? Now if they say: “We do not describe God with a part, so that it must be said that part of Him is in this and in that, and part of Him is not”, it should be said to them: When you describe Him as in heaven and on the Throne, does He vanish from them, or is He in everything without limit? Without a doubt, it is necessary for them that He is in heaven and on the Throne and in everything.

It should be said to them: When you describe Him as being in heaven and on the Throne, it is necessary for you to describe heaven as being in everything, too, so that nothing of Him remains that is not in heaven and on the Throne, following your statement about the Word and its body. So you should know that even if the Word was incarnated in its entirety, it is [still] in everything. Thus, we are not compelled to describe the body as being in everything.

42 If they say: “Our statement that God is in heaven and on the Throne only means that He is Lord of Heaven and Lord of the Throne, not that He is in them, as something is in something else,” it should be said to them: Then He is in them, in a way other than something is in something else, or He is not described as in things at all: not as something is in something else, or in a way other than this. There are only three ways. Either you describe God as in heaven and on the Throne without Him being contained by anything of them, because of His exaltedness over them, or He is in them and encompassed by them, or He is outside of them and not in anything of them.

If you say: “He is in them, [not]²⁰ outside of them” or “He is outside of them, and not in them”, then God, may He be praised! is limited by His creation with this description, which is not possible in a description of [God]. If you say that He is in them and outside of them, you have described [God] correctly, and you have come

¹⁹ *Sura* 2:256

²⁰ Graf correctly adds \forall .

الاجه الثلاثة انه لا يوصف فيهما ولا ظاهراً عليهما .
43 فتلزموه كلتا الصفتين انه فيهما وظاهر عليهما . اما فيهما من حيث انكرتم انه ظاهر عليهما . وظاهر عليهما من حيث حددتم انه [لا] فيهما كمن وصف الشمس لا نيرة ولا مظلمة . فاثبت لها كلتا الصفتين من حيث بقى ذلك عنها اما مظلمة فلوصفه¹¹² اياها غير نيرة ونيرة من حيث وصفها لا مظلمة . لانه يوجد من هذه¹¹³ الصفتين صفة ثالثة ما ليس بنور ولا ظلمة بمنزلة الاحمر الموصوف لا ابيض ولا اسود لثبت له صفة ثالثة اى الحمرة . لتعلموا انه لا اضطرار للشئ المسكون ممن ليس بمحدود ان يكون غير محدود مثله .

44 فان قالوا كيف يجوز في من ليس بجسم ان يولد من امرأة جسمانية وانما يولد من الجسم جسم لتعلموا انه لا سبيل الى ان يولد ما ليس بجسم . يقال لهم انه لو كان وصفنا فى الكلمة ولدت من امرأة جسمانية مجردة من غير جسد لكان لكم فى ذلك مقال فاما اذ صار وصفنا ولود¹¹⁴ الكلمة من امرأة جسمانية ولوداً¹¹⁵ جسمانياً لم يلزمنا فى ذلك عيب . فانما ولد لحال الجسد المأخوذ من الامراة المتحد بها لانها ولدت¹¹⁶ منها روحانية جسداية .

45 اوليس القول فى ولود الادميين من امهاتهم شبيه بها فى بعض انحائه فى ولود الكلمة من مريم . والمولودون من امهاتهم اهم ارواح من غير ابدان ام ارواح متبدنة¹¹⁷ . واذا لم يلدن ارواحاً مجردة تنفى¹¹⁸ عنها ولودها متبدنة¹¹⁹ . فكما ان الارواح لو لم تكن متحلة بالابدان لم يكن بسيل الى ان يولدن من الامهات وقد يولدن منهم لاتحادهن بالابدان مع اول خلقتهن . هكذا القول فى الكلمة المتجسدة ولدت¹²⁰ لحال الجسد الماخوذ من مريم

¹¹⁷ P ولدة S ¹¹⁶ ولودياً P ¹¹⁵ وارد P ¹¹⁴ هتين Graf: read ¹¹³ فلو وصفه P ¹¹² متبدية S ¹²⁰ ولدة S ¹¹⁹ متبدية P ¹¹⁸ ينفى S ¹¹⁶ متبدية

to what you [previously] paid no attention to; nevertheless, you say that it is other than these three ways: He is not described [as being] in them and not outside of them.

43 Yet, it is necessarily both of these descriptions: that He is in them and He is outside of them. [He is] in them insofar as you deny He is outside of them, and He is outside of them insofar as you have established that He is [not]²¹ in them, just as someone describes the sun as [both] not luminous and not dark. He affirms it has both attributes, because these remain [constantly] with it: dark because he describes it as not luminous, and luminous insofar as he describes it as not dark. But a third attribute is found along with these two attributes, which is neither light nor darkness, as with [the color] red, which is described as not white and not black, because it has a third attribute, namely, redness. So you should know that it is not necessary that something inhabited by something else without limits be without limits [itself], like [that which dwells in it].

44 They may say: “How is it possible that one who is without flesh be born of a corporeal woman? Flesh can only be born from flesh. You should know that it is impossible that what is without flesh be born.” It should be said to them: If we had described the Word [of God] as having been born from a corporeal woman free of a body, then you would [be correct] in this statement. However, when our description is: “the birth of the Word from a corporeal woman is a corporeal birth”, there is no fault necessary for us in this. The “being born” only belongs to the state of the body, which is taken from the woman and unified with [the Word], because it is born from her as spiritual and corporeal.

45 Is not something similar in a certain way said about the births of humans from their mothers as the birth of the Word from Mary? Are they born from their mothers as spirits without bodies, or embodied spirits? And since they are not born simply as spirits, can it be denied that they have a bodily birth? Just as it is impossible that spirits be born from mothers if they are not united with bodies, and are born of [mothers] because of their being united with bodies from the beginning of their creation, so is the teaching about the incarnated Word: [the Word] was born into the state of having a

²¹ Graf correctly adds √.

المتجسد بها لا مجردة من الجسد كما ظننتم .

46 فان قالوا فكيف يتجسد ما ليس بجسد فقال لهم اما كيف فنحن مقرون انه لا علم لنا . وليس جهلنا بالكيف بالذي يبطل قولنا فيه . لان الغالت فيما لا يشكول فيه . ونشك ما جهلنا كيفيته . واول ذلك خلق الخلائق وكل مقر بانهن مخلوقات من الله . فاما كيفية خلقتها فلم نرا¹²¹ دعا علم ذلك . وسكون الروح البدن مما لا يمتري فيه احد . فاما كيفية سكونها فمخفى عنا مستتر . وليس ذلك بالذي يمنعنا من ان نقر بخلق الخلائق وسكون الروح البدن . هكذا والقول في اتحاد الكلمة الجسد نحن مصدقون به غير جاحدين له وان لطف ذلك فلم¹²² نعلمه .

47 فان قالوا اخبرونا عن المسيح ابن¹²³ الله تبنا¹²⁴ اى اتخذه من غير ان يكون¹²⁵ ابناً حقاً او ولد ولده من جوهره يقال لهم ان المسيح سبحانه¹²⁶ لدينا ابن الله ولده بلا زمان ولا بدى¹²⁷ لان المتخذ ابناً ليس ابناً حقيقياً وان وصف ابناً .

فان قالوا اوليس¹²⁸ انما ولدته مريم فى زمن¹²⁹ بنى اسرائيل فكيف زعمتم انه لم يتخذ ابناً انه ابن تبناه من غير ان يلد يقال لهم انا لم نصف المسيح سبحانه ابناً لله لحال ما ولد¹³⁰ من مريم متجسداً اخيراً . ولكنه حين ولد من الاب بلا زمان ولا بدى .

48 فان قالوا فالابن كوصفكم ولد مرتين من الاب ومن مريم كما ذكرتم يقال لهم نعم ان الامر كذلك . فان قالوا فالاب اذا ينبغى ان يكون اقدم من وجوده فى¹³¹ الابن يقال لهم لعمرى لو كان للاب بدى بمنزلة الابهاء

ان يكون¹²⁵ P omits تبني¹²⁴ Graf: read بن¹²³ P بن¹²³ P omits. ¹²² P omits. ¹²¹ Graf: read نر¹²¹ ولد¹³⁰ P omits ¹²⁹ زمان S ¹²⁸ أليس S ¹²⁷ Graf: for بدء passim. ¹²⁶ S omits. ¹²⁵ P omits ¹³¹ P من يقال لهم انا . . . لحال ما

body, which was taken from Mary, and incarnated with [the Word], [the Word was] not free from a body, as you think.

46 Now if they say: “How does something without a body become incarnated?” it should be said to them: As for the “how”, we are in agreement that we have no knowledge. But our ignorance of the “how” does not invalidate our teaching concerning it, because what is of greatest [importance] in it is what they do not doubt. And we are [only] uncertain of [what] we are ignorant of, the “how” of it, and this is primarily the creation of creatures, and everyone acknowledges [creatures] are things created by God, but with regard to the “how” of their creation, we do not see the invitation [from God] to know this. And the dwelling of the spirit [in] the body no one disputes, but with regard to the “how” of its dwelling, this is concealed and hidden from us. But this does not hinder us from acknowledging the creation of creatures and the dwelling of the spirit in the body. This is the same with the teaching of the union of the Word and the body: we believe it and do not deny it, even if this is so subtle that we do not understand it.

47 Now, if they say, “Tell us about the Messiah, the Son of God, is He adopted, that is, did He take Him up²² without His being a real son, or did He beget Him from His *ousia*?” it should be said to them: the Messiah, may He be praised! is according to us the Son of God, Whom He begot without time and without beginning, because an adopted son is not a true son, even if he is described as a son.

If they say: “Did not Mary give birth to Him at the time of the Israelites? How do you claim that [the Messiah] did not take up sonship, so that He is a son, whom [God] adopted, without begetting Him?” it should be said to them: We do not describe the Messiah, may He be praised! as a son of God because of what was born of Mary later as incarnated, but because He was begotten from the Father previously without time and without beginning.

48 If they say: “The Son, according to your description, is born two times, from the Father and from Mary, as you have mentioned”, it should be said to them: Yes, it is like this.

If they say: “It should be then, that the Father was in existence before the Son,” it should be said to them: By my life! If the Father had a beginning in the manner of created fathers, then there is no

²² I.e., adopt him.

المخلوقة لكان يكون لا محالة للابن ابتدى¹³². فاما اذ صار الاب اباً بلا بدى
كذا والابن ابن بلا بدى. لانه انما لحق الابناء المخلوقة ابتدى لحال ما
سبق من اباهم من الابتدى.

49 فان عجزوا عن قبول ذلك لنبو فهمهم عنه واصرفوه على ما يعقل من
المخلوقين يقال لهم ان كان من قبل وصفنا الله والداً ومولوداً واباً وابناً
نضطر الى ان نلزمه جميع صفات الوالدين والمولودين فالاباء والابناء
المخلوقة فقد وصفتموه ووصفناه فاعل الاشياء فلنلزمه كل ما لزم من فعل
شيئاً. فهل يعقل فاعل من المخلوقين يفعل شيئاً بلا حركة ولا مكان ولا
زمان او فكرة او آلة او اداة يفعل بها او غير ذلك مما مل نصف. فلنصف
الله له الحمد انه لا يفعل شيئاً دون هذا لحال المضطر اليها العباد عند اوان
فعلهم لشيء.

50 فان قالوا ان الله الحميد ليس بمحتاج الى ما ذكرتم عند اوان فعله لانه
اذا اراد امرأ يقول له كُن فيكون. يقال لهم اوليس¹³³ مفعولاً هذا من افعل
العباد.

فان قالوا ليس افعال الله الاشياء كافعال العابد¹³⁴ لها لانه قوى عليها قادر¹³⁵
على ما اراد يقال لهم هكذا فليجز القول فى ولود الله¹³⁶ وان كان ولود العباد
مخالفاً. فكما ان فعل العباد بحركة وزمان ومكان وعناية وكلفة وحاجة هكذا
وولودهم محتاج الى حركة وزمان وقدمه والد وولده¹³⁷ كما ان الله سبحانه
غنى على عما احتاج العباد عند افتعالهم شيء هكذا وولوده ابدأ دائم متعالى
عن ولود العباد.

¹³² Graf: read ابتداء passim. ¹³³ S الیس ¹³⁴ S كافتعال العباد ¹³⁵ S omits
قادر ¹³⁶ S omits الله . . . ولود الله ¹³⁷ In PS

doubt the Son would have a beginning. But if it happens that the Father is a father without a beginning, in the same way the Son is a son without beginning. Because created sons only have beginnings on account of the beginnings their fathers had before [them].

49 Now if [the opponents] are unable to accept [this] because their understanding conflicts with it and they dismiss it on the basis of what is known about creatures, it should be said to them: If it follows from our description of God as Begetter and Begotten, Father and Son, that we are compelled to make necessary for Him all predications of creaturely begetters and begotten, fathers and sons, then [since] you would describe Him and we would describe Him as a Doer of things, so, [too,] we must make everything necessary for Him that is necessary for someone who does something. But does a doer from among created things know how do something without movement or place or time or thought or a tool or an instrument to make it, or anything else that we have not described? Then we must describe God, may He be praised! as not making [any]thing without these [things], as humanity needs them when it does something.

50 Now, if they say: “God, the Praiseworthy, does not have what you argue [is necessary] when He does something, because when He wills something, He [only] says of it, “Be! and it is”,²³ it should be said to them: does this not happen with the actions of humanity?

If they say: “The actions of God are not things like the actions of [His] servants,²⁴ because He is powerful over them and master over what He wants”, [it should be said to them: In this way, the statement about the birth of God should be allowed,]²⁵ for the birth of the servants is different [from the birth of God]. For, just as the servants act through movement and time and place and with carefulness and costs and requirements, their births also require movement and time and place and the precedence of the progenitor to his offspring. In the same way God, may He be praised! is free from want and exalted above the needs of the servants when they do something, so His birth is eternal, everlasting, and exalted above birth [like] the servants.

²³ Cf. *Sura* 2:111; 3:42, etc.

²⁴ A creature who submits to the Creator.

²⁵ Omitted in *Sbath*.

51 فان قالوا لا سبيل الى ان يلد والد والداً¹³⁸ دون المولد المعقول يقل لهم ولا سبيل اذا ان يفعل شائئاً دون ان يفعل كالمخلوقين الا ان ياتوا بعله اضطرار على ولوده كالحيوان كما ظنوا واختلاف افتعاله افعالهم .

52 فان قالوا فاذا اختلف ولوده وولد المخلوقين لم يستحق ان يسمى اباً وابناً . لان الاب انما يسمى اباً [والابن]¹³⁹ ابناً لتقدمة الاب الابن وكون الابن بعد ابيه يقال لهم ومن اين يصير اسم الاب مما يدل على تقدمه الابن وانما اوجب له اسم الابوة بالابن . فهل يوصف من لا ابن له اباً ومن لا اب له ابناً . فهذه اسماء صفات بعضها الى بعض لا يوجد بعضها بفقدان بعض ويوجد بعضها بوجود بعض . فلاب اذاً والابن معاً سوا لم يتقدم احدهما الاخر ولم يتاخر . هذا وهما مخلوقان فكيف اعظمكم قولنا اذ هو على الله الطف وادق معنى مما هو فى الخلق .

53 واما قولهم اذ خالف ولوده ولود المخلوقين فليس بمستحق ان يسمى اباً فكانهم فى هذا الموضوع لم تلتطفوا¹⁴⁰ النظر . لان الحيوان كافة¹⁴¹ مخالف بعضها فى انحاء ولودها وكل موصوف اباً وابناً لا يمتري فى ذلك ممتري انهما لا يتغيران اوليس¹⁴² انما الاب¹⁴³ حقاً الذى لم يكن ابناً والابن حقاً الذى لم يصير اباً ابداً . لان الابية والابنية خواص والخاصية الحقيقية مما لا¹⁴⁴ تبدل لها ولا تغيير . فاما الذى له احدى الصفتين فهى فه اولى من الاخرى¹⁴⁵ فمن اين يصير اب حقاً او ابن . فكل من سمى اباً او ابناً من المخلوقين فانما سمي ذلك باستعارة من القول منه من الله عليه .

138 P ولد; والد S 139 PS omit. 140 PS يلطفوا 141 S كانه 142 S البس 143 PS
الاخره 145 P لم 144 PS للاب

51 If they say: “It is impossible for a begetter to beget offspring apart from the known [manner] of begetting”, it should be said to them: Then it is impossible that He do anything without doing it like creatures. Nevertheless, [the opponents] will put forward the reason it is necessary that He begets like living things, as they think. But [God’s] actions are different from [creaturely] actions.

52 Now, if they say: “If His begetting is different from the begetting of creatures, it is not correct to name [Him] as “father” and “son”, since the father is only named “father” and [the son]²⁶ “son” because the father precedes the son, and the son is after his father [temporally]”, it should be said to them: Why is it that the name “father” is something that indicates [he] precedes the son, since the name “fatherhood” is only granted with [the existence of] the son? How is one described as father who does not have a son, and one who does not have a father as a son? These names are reciprocal attributes: one part does not exist with the lack of the other part, and one part [only] exists with the existence of the other part. The father, therefore, and the son are together equally, one of them does not precede the other, nor come after [the other]. This is so with created [fathers and sons]. Why do you find our teaching hard when with God it has a more subtle and precise meaning than it has with creation?

53 As for their statement: “If [God’s] begetting is different from the begetting of creatures, then it is not correct that He be named “father”,” they²⁷ are not studying [the issue] carefully in this place. Because all living things are different from each other in the manner of their begetting, and [yet] all are described as “father” and “son”. No one doubts this, [asking] if they are different [from each other], or [asking], is it not that the father is only really one who is not a son, and the son is really one who has never become a father? For fatherhood and sonship are properties and [their] real particularity can be neither exchanged nor altered. As for that which has one of these attributes, [that attribute] is better for it than another. How does one in reality become a father or a son? All of those who are called father and son among creatures are only called this as a metaphor,

²⁶ Missing in the Arabic text.

²⁷ Following Sbath; Graf: you.

54 فان قالوا كيف جاز ان يكون المسح الالهاً ورباً وقد اقر بالعبودية وحققها عليه بتسميته نفسه مع تلاميذه اذ قال اذهب الى ابي وابيكم والاهي والاهكم . وان ابي الذي ارسلني اكبر مني . ونفيه عن نفسه علم الساعة . وقوله للرجلين اذ سلاه الجلوس عن يمينه وعن شماله في ملكوته ان عطاء ذلك ليس لي . واستغاثته من الموت وغير ذلك مما كان نظير لما قيل .

يقال لهم لو كان المسيح سبحانه اذ نطق بما وصفتم من كلام المتواضع اذ تحقق ناسوته لم ينطق برفيع القول الدال على لاهوته وربوبيته لكان لكم في ذلك مقال . فاما اذ نطق بكلا القولين ووصف نفسه بكلتا الصفتين وجب عليكم النظر في اخلاف القولين والصفتين . لان الذي وصفتم انه قل اذهب الى ابي وابيكم والاهي والاهكم عنى بذلك من كلام المتواضع هو الذي قال من رانى فقد رأى ابي . وانا بابى وابى بى . وانا وابى واحد اى جوهر واحد .

ووصف نفسه رب السبت ورب التلاميذ ورب الدنيا وانه لم يزل قبل ان

as the saying about from where [a child] is: he is given to [a father] from God.²⁸

54 If they say: “How is it possible that the Messiah be God and Lord, and consented to be a servant,²⁹ establishing [this] when He so named Himself along with His disciples as He said: “I am going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”,³⁰ and “My Father Who sent me is greater than I”.³¹ And He denied He had knowledge of the Hour [of Judgement],³² and He said to the two men, when they asked Him for the seats on His right and His left in His Kingdom, “this is not mine to give”.³³ And He called for help from death,³⁴ and other things, similar to what has [already] been said”.

It should be said to them: If the Messiah, may He be praised! had spoken [only] the words of a humble [person] when He confirmed His humanity, as you have described, [and] not spoken with sublime speech pointing to His divinity and His lordship, then you would be [correct] in this contention. However, since He spoke with both [types of] statements and described Himself with both predications, it is necessary for you to study the difference between the statements and predications. Because He Whom you describe as saying: “I am going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”, (this reference is from [His] words of humility), is He Who said: “The one who sees me sees my Father”,³⁵ “I am in my Father, and my Father is in me”,³⁶ and “I and my Father are one”,³⁷ that is, one *ousia*.

And He described Himself as “Lord of the Sabbath”,³⁸ and “Lord of the disciples”,³⁹ and “Lord of the World”,⁴⁰ and [said] that He

²⁸ Creaturely fathers and sons are only called so derivatively, since fatherhood and sonship are from God, and according to Christian understanding, reflect the relations of the Trinity in a limited way, not *vice versa*.

²⁹ I.e., human being.

³⁰ Jn 20:17

³¹ Similar to Jn 14:28.

³² Mk 13:32

³³ Mt 20:23

³⁴ Cf. Mt 27:47

³⁵ Jn 14:9

³⁶ Jn 10:38

³⁷ Jn 10:30

³⁸ Mt 12:8

³⁹ Cf. Jn 13:13

⁴⁰ Cf. Mt 28:18

يكون ابراهيم وغير ذلك من القول الرفيع الذى يدل على لاهوته . وحق له ان ينطق بكلا القولين ويصف نفسه بكلتا الصفتين . لانه الاه حق وانسان حق هو . وهو واحد لا اثنين . فما تكلم به من كلام التواضع كان تحقيقاً مبيناً لتناسه¹⁴⁶ وما كان من الرفيع المعتلى فتشبيهاً وتحقيقاً للاهوته .

55 كالذى¹⁴⁷ يلتمس وصف الانسان بحق صفته ولا يكتفى ان يصفه منطقياً حتى يصفه ميتاً . فلو انه وصفه منطقياً دون ميتاً لما ميزه من الملائكة والشياطين وكل منطقي . ولو انه وصفه مائتاً غير منطقي لما ميز بينه وبين سائر الحيوان البكم . فاذا صار¹⁴⁸ القول على ما وصفنا كان جديراً¹⁴⁹ سبحانه الا يدع قولاً مما كان¹⁵⁰ للاهوته وانسانيته مثبتاً محققاً الا قاله واستاصل به الشك من انفس الذين شاءوا ان يكونوا¹⁵¹ تبعاً وتلاميذ¹⁵² والاستراب . فظهرت¹⁵³ بذلك الحجة على من خالفه ممن التمس ان يبدع فى صفته ما لم يصف به نفسه له الحمد . رفع امراً ووضع هذا فى جملة القول على ما وصفنا .

56 فاما قولهم ان المسيح له الحمد قال اذهب الى ابي وابيكم والاهى والاهكم فقد صدقوا . ولكنهم غلطوا¹⁵⁴ اذ ظنوا ان ما¹⁵⁵ اتفق فى الاسماء والصفات اتفق ايضاً فى المعنى . فليس الامر على ما ظنوا من ذلك ان الله له الحمد وصف نفسه حياً سمياً بصيراً عليمياً ووصف الناس كذلك . ولم يمتنع سبحانه من ان يصف نفسه بما وصف به عباده . ولم يرد احد من اهل العقل قال ان الله متفق مشاكل لخليقته لاتفاق اسمائه وصفاته مع اسمائهم وصفاتهم .

146 P لمناسبه 147 S كان 148 P سار 149 S جديداً 150 S كا 151 S adds
انما 155 S عنوا PS 154 فظهرة S 153 تلاميذاً Graf: read 152 له

always was, [even] before Abraham existed,⁴¹ and [made] other sublime statements that point to His divinity. He has a right to say both [types] of statements and describe Himself with both predications, because He is true God and true human being, and He is one, and not two. The words of humility that He uttered are a clear confirmation of His humanity, and [those] sublime, exalted [words] are an affirmation and confirmation of His divinity.

55 This is like someone who wants to describe the human being with his correct attributes, and is not contented to describe him as “capable of speech”, but describes him as “mortal” [as well]. For if he describes [a human being] as “capable of speech”, without “mortal”, what would distinguish [a human being] from the angels and demons and every other [being] capable of speech? And if he describes him as “mortal” without “capable of speech”, what would distinguish between [a human being] and the rest of dumb living things? If the statement is as we describe, it was appropriate, may He be praised! that He omitted [any] statement that confirmed and established His divinity and His humanity, except what He said, and with it He uprooted doubt and uncertainty from the soul of those who wanted to be [His] followers and disciples. With this, the argument against His opponent, the one asking that [something] new be added to His description with which He did not describe Himself, glory be to Him! becomes obvious. He elevated the issue [to a high level] and established this in a complete teaching, as we have described.

56 As for their statement that the Messiah, may He be praised! said, “I am going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”, they are correct. However, they are mistaken when they think that what is identical in names and attributes is also identical in meaning. The issue is not as they think, this being that God, glory be to Him! describes Himself as living, hearing, seeing and knowing, and human beings are [also] described like this. He, may He be praised! did not refrain from describing Himself with [the attributes] with which His servants were described. [Yet] none of the intellectuals would come to say that God is identical to and resembles His creatures because of the identity of His names and attributes with their names and attributes.

57 Just as God is living, hearing, seeing and knowing, and human

⁴¹ Jn 8:58

57 فكما ان الله حى سميع بصير عليم والانسان الموصوف بذلك واتفق فى الاسماء والصفات لامتنانه به على عباده بما اسماهم به من اسمائه ووصفهم بصفاته مختلفان المعنى هكذا والقول فى المسيح سبحانه وتلاميذه قال اذهب الى ابى اوبيكم . فابى حق لانى ولدت منه ¹⁵⁶ . وابوكم لامتنانى عليكم اذ صيرتكم لى اخوة بتانسى تنزيهى ¹⁵⁷ اياكم عن اخوة الحمير والبقر . والهى ¹⁵⁸ والاهكم فبانعامى عليكم اذ صرت معكم متجسداً ومشاركتى اياكم بتانسى وتطاطأت لانقاذكم وخلاصكم .

58 لان المنة فى ان يتواضع الرفيع الى الموضوع ¹⁵⁹ اجسم من ان يرتفع الوضيع الى الرفيع . فله الحمد اهل لما جسم من المنن واعظم من الانعام . والاهكم ¹⁶⁰ حق لانه خالقكم وباريكم وملك عليكم اذ ايدكم ¹⁶¹ بالايمان به وبى وبروح القدس وقربكم من طاعته بما استنتت عليكم من السنن الفاضلة ووظفت عليكم من الوظائف المحمود الرفيعة . لان الاب معتلى ان يكون الاهاً لمن جهل صفته ولم يقر بكلمته وروحه وكان لتجسده منكراً وان كان له الحمد من جهة الخلقه لهم الاهاً وعليهم ¹⁶² ملكاً ورباً . فهذا تلويل قوله ابى وايبكم والاهى والاهكم .

59 فاما ما ذكروا من ان المسيح قال ابى الذى ارسلنى اكبر منى اى اعظم ليعلموا ان الكبر والعظم مما يقال على اوجه مختلفة . لان الشىء قد يقال له عظيم كبير فى الوجه كعظم الملك على الانسان وعظم الانسان على البهائم وفى الجسم كعظم الجبل على التل وفى الحظر كعظم الملك على السوقة .

¹⁵⁶ S وحق منه ولدة ¹⁵⁷ S وتنزهى ¹⁵⁸ S adds هى ¹⁵⁹ S الموضوع ¹⁶⁰ S وعليم ¹⁶¹ S ايدىكم ¹⁶² P

beings are those [beings] described with these, [too], the identity between the names and attributes results from His gracious bestowal [of them] on His servants, so that they are named with His names and described with His attributes, [yet] the two differ in meaning. The statement of the Messiah, may He be praised! to His disciples is like this, when He said: “I am going up to my Father and your Father”, [that is], “my Father” is true because I am begotten from Him, and “your Father” because I have bestowed blessing on you, when I made you brothers through My becoming human and My setting you above the brothers of the donkey and the cow.⁴² “My God and your God” [is true] because of my favor to you when I became incarnated among you and [and because of] My communion with you in My becoming human, and [because] I humbled Myself for your deliverance and your salvation.

58 For a grace in which the lofty humbles itself to the lowly is greater than the lowly raising itself to the lofty. God deserves praise for what is a great grace and marvelous favor. [Saying] “Your God” is correct because He created you and formed you and rules over you, at the same time He strengthens you in the belief in Him and in Me and in the Holy Spirit, and draws you toward His obedience through what is prescribed in the excellent practices⁴³ and praiseworthy, lofty duties placed upon you. For the Father is too exalted to be the God of someone ignorant of His [true] attribute[s], and who does not acknowledge His Word and His Spirit, and to be unknown through His Incarnation, but, glory be to Him! with regard to creation, [He is] their God and ruler and Lord over them.” This is the explanation of His statement: “my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”.

59 As for what they mentioned, namely, that the Messiah said: “My Father Who sent me is greater than I”, that is, superior, they should know that greatness and superiority are spoken of in different ways. For something can be said to have greatness and superiority in a manner like the superiority of the king over people⁴⁴ and the superiority of human beings over the animals, and in a corporeal thing like the superiority of the mountain over the hill, and in [the right

⁴² Human beings are favored by God above animals.

⁴³ *Sunna*.

⁴⁴ I.e., in social class.

ويقال عظيم في العلة كعظم والد على ولده في العلة لان الوالد علة ولده لا الولد علة الوالد .

60 فقول المسيح سبحانه ابي الذي ارسلنى اكبر منى ليس بعظم من جوهره ¹⁶³ لانهما جوهر اوحده كما وصف به نفسه من انه واياه واحد . ولا عظم خطر ¹⁶⁴ ايضا ¹⁶⁵ لانهما واحد في المجد والكرامة ذلك من قوله الحقيق من اكرم الابن فقد اكرم الاب ومن لم يكرم الابن لم يكرم الاب .

61 فاذ نفينا عنه عظم هاتين الصفتين وجب علينا ان نصف الاب اعظم من الابن في العلة لا في الجوهر . لان الابن من الاب كما وصفنا . لا ابن الا من اب . فلو ان الاب كان اعظم من الابن في الجوهر لما جاز للابن ان يقول انا وابى واحد . لان العالى في الجوهر والحطيط ¹⁶⁶ ليس بواحد .

ليعلموا ان تعظيم الابن للاب ليس لانه احط منه جوهرًا لكن ليدل ¹⁶⁷ بذلك السماع ¹⁶⁸ العباد باسم الاب ويلحق قلوبهم بحبه ويدعوهم الى عبادته والايمان به وبروحه . لان غرض تجسده له الحمد شرح صفة الله الحقيقية وايضاح معرفة التصديق به وبابنه وبروحه .

62 لان الاولين كلفوا ان يعبدوا الله جملة بانه واحد من غير ان يفصح ¹⁶⁹ لهم بتفسير كلمته وروحه . وذلك لقرب عهد طغيانهم لالهة كثيرة ليلا يظنوا ان الذى دعوا اليه شبيه لما كانوا فيه من كثرة ¹⁷⁰ الالهة وعباتهم ¹⁷¹ اياها . لانهم ضعفوا عن توحيد الله في جوهره وكلمته وروحه

¹⁶³ S ليدلك ¹⁶⁴ P الخطيط ¹⁶⁵ P انها ¹⁶⁶ S مخطر ¹⁶⁷ S جوهر ¹⁶⁸ P اسماع ¹⁶⁹ S يفصح ¹⁷⁰ Graf: كثرت ¹⁷¹ P وعادتهم

to] prohibition, like the superiority of the king over the subjects.⁴⁵ Superiority is also said [with respect to a] cause, like the superiority of a begetter over his offspring in [its] cause, because the begetter is the cause of his offspring, not the offspring the cause of the begetter.

60 Now, [as for] the statement of the Messiah, may He be praised!: “My Father Who sent me is greater than I”, He is not superior in His *ousia*, because the two of them are one *ousia*, just as He described Himself [saying] that He and [the Father] are one. Nor is He superior in importance, because they are both one in glory and honor. This is [seen] in His true statement: “The one who honors the Son, honors the Father, and the one who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father”.⁴⁶

61 If we deny Him the superiority of the first two descriptions [given], it is necessary for us [only] to describe the Father as superior to the Son in cause, not in *ousia*, because the Son is from the Father, as we have [already] described. A son is only from a father. Now if the Father were superior to the Son in *ousia* [in the Holy Trinity], it would be impossible for the Son to say: “I and my Father are one”, because what is elevated in *ousia*, and what is diminished [in *ousia*] are not one.

They should know that the Son does not [attribute] superiority to the Father because [the Son] is diminished in *ousia* [when compared] to [the Father], but rather by this, to point the hearers, [that is,] the people, to the Name of the Father, and to unite their hearts to His love, and to cause them to serve Him and believe in Him and His Spirit. For the purpose of His Incarnation, glory be to Him! was to make plain the true attribute of God, and the elucidation of knowledge of faith in Him and His Son and His Spirit.

62 For the ancestors were charged with worshipping God in general, in as much as He is one [God], without Him giving them an explicit explanation of His Word and His Spirit. And this is because shortly before, they had been in thrall to many gods, and so they were not to think that to which they were called was similar to the many gods and to worship of them [that they had practiced]. For they were too weak for belief in the unity of God in His *ousia*, and His Word and His Spirit, even if the *mysterion* for the Trinity with

⁴⁵ I.e., in authority.

⁴⁶ Jn 5:23

وان كان سر الثالث بخاصة فيهم منشرح واضح .
فكلفوا ان يعبدوا الله واحداً جملة حتى اذا ما هم اعتلوا فى المعرفة ونبذوا
الالهة الكثيرة خلف ظهورهم واشتدت عرا¹⁷² قلوبهم وعقولهم ليميزوا بين
المختلفين ويؤلفوا المؤلفين اظهر لهم التفسير وشرح لهم صفة الكمال اذ
لا يحاذر عليهم الميل الى عبادة ما ليس بالا اله بالحق .

63 واما ما ذكروا من انتفاء علم المسيح لذكره السجود من علم الساعة
وايجابهم عليه العبودية من حيث جهل ذلك كظنونهم فاسترداع سوء ظنونهم
وردهم الى الصواب غير عسير ان انصفوا . والحمد لله سبحانه ذى الرأفة
والرحمة على عباده لا يحول بينه وبين الاحسان اليهم فى¹⁷³ كل امورهم امر
فعله او قول قاله وان دعا ذلك الى التواضع . لانه ليس بمتاج الى اقتباس
المدح بالقول لغنى ذاته عن المدح .

64 ولا¹⁷⁴ يعدل عنده الرحيم امر من امور العالم عظم ام صغر خلاص
نفس واحدة من عباده وان له سياسة لطيفة مستترة على علم العباد معتلية
مخفية عن فكرهم¹⁷⁵ وان تاقت نفوسهم الى الاحتياط بها والوقوع عليها
وذلك لرحمته لهم ورأفته بهم كما ذكرا . وان من عظم احسانه على عباده
وجسيم امتنانه عليهم اخفاه¹⁷⁶ علم الساعة عنهم لنظره له الحمد لهم وعلمه

¹⁷² Graf: read عرا ¹⁷³ P من ¹⁷⁴ P repeats ولا ¹⁷⁵ P مكرهم ¹⁷⁶ Graf: read اخفاؤه

[its] particularities was discernable and apparent in their midst.

So they were charged with worshipping God as one in general, until [the time] when they had advanced in knowledge, and they had cast off the many gods and their ostentation was left behind. And [when] their hearts and minds had been siezed [by God] and become firm, so that they were able to [intellectually] distinguish between different things and combine things that are connected, [God] revealed to them the explanation and elucidated for them the complete description, since it was not necessary to guard them from the proclivity to worship what is not in truth God.⁴⁷

63 As for what they refer to concerning the Messiah's knowledge, Veneration is for His remembrance!⁴⁸ [saying He] was lacking in knowledge of the Hour [of Judgement], and [consequently] they impose the status of a servant on Him, because, according to their suspicion, He is ignorant of this, their ill suspicion can be deterred and they can be turned back to what is correct, if it is not difficult for them to be fair. Glory be to God, may He be praised! He Who has mercy and compassion for His servants! Nothing intervenes between Him and [His] beneficence for them in all of their affairs, [when] He commands His act or utters His speech, even if this calls for humility, because He does not require a measure of praise with words, because His being is free from want of praise.

64 And, according to Him, the Compassionate, there is nothing of the affairs of the universe, big or small, equal to the salvation of a single soul of His servants, even if His administration [of the universe] is subtle and concealed from the knowledge of the servants, above their thoughts and hidden [from them], though their souls long to comprehend [God's governance] and to grasp it, and this is on account of His compassion for them and His pity on them, as we have [already] mentioned. Out of His great beneficence for His servants and His vast benevolence toward them, He keeps knowledge of the Hour [of Judgement] from them, because He, glory be to Him! takes care of them and He knows of the great importance

⁴⁷ This is a defense of the notion of divine pedagogy and the legitimacy of speculative theology against the Islamic idea that God has sent only one unchanging revelation to all people.

⁴⁸ Christ is remembered in the Christian act of veneration. The exclamation is probably to be understood within the context of the contemporary debate over the veneration of icons. See *Proof* 38-39.

بعظم عظمتهم وشدة نكايته ما يشمل العالم من المضار في اعلان ذلك لنكايته¹⁷⁷ اعلان سائر ما لم يعلن لو اعلن وستر ما كشف لو ستر . لان الله ليس بمظهر امر ولا حاجب من العباد الا لسبب منافعهم وعلّة صلاحهم .

65 فلما ساله التلاميذ عن علم الساعة ليكونوا على الثقة فيها اجنح عن ذلك سبحانه لحال ما وصفنا من رحمته لهم ونظره لهم .

فان قال ليس يعلم وقت ذلك احد¹⁷⁸ من البشر ولا الملائكة ولا الابن دون الاب فرفع علم ذلك واحاله الى الاب لاستتاره دونهم ووضع عنهم مؤونة الالحاح عليه لينبئهم علم ما يعلم ان الجهل به خير لهم من احاطة معرفتهم به . ولم يانف الحكيم ان يضيف الى نفسه الجهل بالساعة اللازم للعباد لامحالة رحمة منه لهم ولم يمتعض من مشاركتهم حالهم في تأنسه وان كان هو الموقت للاوقات وتقلبها استناداً¹⁷⁹ على ما سبق من علمه بها .

66 فان قالوا وكيف يجوز في صفة الله انكار معرفة ما هو فاعله ومصرفه كيف يشاء كما وصفتم من غير ان يلزمه الكذب وهل يخلوا¹⁸⁰ من حجد امراً من ان يكون جاهلاً به او كاذباً فان احد¹⁸¹ الامرين اما ان يكون جاهلاً بالساعة كما وصف فتلزمه العبودية واما ان يكون عالماً بها فيلزمه الكذب في حجود العلم بها . يقال لهم لو كان لعمرى المسيح له الحمد في اخفائه علم

177 S ككناية 178 P احداً 179 PS اناساً 180 Graf: read يخلو 181 S فاحد

of warning them, and the intensity of the harm that pervades the world [resulting from the anticipation] of losses [when] these are announced, on account of the harm of the announcement of all that is not known if it is announced, and of keeping secret what has been disclosed if it is kept secret. Because God does not reveal a matter nor keep it hidden from His servants, except for the purpose of their benefits and the cause of their usefulness.⁴⁹

65 For when the disciples asked Him for knowledge about the Hour [of Judgement] so they could be certain of it, He, may He be praised! declined this, because of what we have described of His compassion for them, and His care for them.

Now, when He said: “No one among human beings or the angels or the [even] the Son knows that Hour, except the Father”,⁵⁰ He offered up the knowledge of this, and handed it over to the Father, so that it was hidden from [His disciples] and prevented them from [putting] troublesome pressure on Him to reveal to them knowledge of what He knew, [since] ignorance of it would be better for them than understanding and their knowledge of it. The Wise One⁵¹ does not disdain to take to Himself [the same] ignorance of the Hour that is necessary for the servants,⁵² certainly it is a mercy from Him on them, and He does not resent sharing their condition in His becoming human, even though He sets the appointed time to the moments, and its assignment is based on what He already knows of it.⁵³

66 If they say: “How is a denial of knowledge of what He will do and [how He] will act as He wills possible in a description of God, as you describe, without deceit being necessary for Him? Is it not the case that one who denies something should [either] be ignorant of it or be a liar? For it must be one of two things: either He was ignorant of the Hour [of Judgement], as He explained, and then servitude⁵⁴ is a necessary [attribute] for [the Messiah], or He knew it, so by denying knowledge of it, deceit is a necessary [attribute] for Him”, it should be said to them: By my life! if the Messiah, glory be

⁴⁹ God knows that if the details of future events are made known, they will cause great suffering for human beings; therefore, He only reveals or keeps hidden those things that are necessary for the benefit of humanity.

⁵⁰ Mk 13:32

⁵¹ I.e., God.

⁵² I.e., human beings.

⁵³ The text is unclear here.

⁵⁴ I.e., He is only a creature.

الساعة عن التلاميذ يلتمس اجترار المنافع¹⁸² او دفع المضار عنه وكان مربوطاً مأموراً لكان يلزمه لا محالة الكذب كما وصفتم اذ انكر علم ما يعلمه .

67 فانما¹⁸³ يلزم الناس الكذب في احد هذين الوجهين من اجترار المنافع اليهم او دفع المضار عنهم . فاما هذا فهو امر ناهى غنى بذاته ينبوع المواهب ووقاء المضار . لم يلزمه الكذب في اخفاء ما رأى ان يخفيه عن العباد لسابق علمه فيما يصل اليهم من الفضل في اخفائه وما ينالهم من المضار في كشفه . ما كان انفاً¹⁸⁴ المسيح علم الساعة عنه لحال ما وصفنا يلزمه ما يلزم العباد عند انكارهم علم ما يعلمون من جهل او كذب .

68 فالزموا الله سبحانه ما لزم العباد من الشك في قولهم لعسى وعسى وما ذلك وانت قلت كذا وكذا وهل انا اقول يقع¹⁸⁵ من العباد وقع الشك . فقد ذكرت ان الله قال في كتابكم فصلاً على ما نجله قاله في التورية لموسى . قل لفرعون قولاً ليناً لعله يتذكر او يخشى . وفي موضع اخر في كتابكم وعسى ربكم يجعل بينكم وبين الذين عاديتهم منهم¹⁸⁶ مودة . انت قلت للناس اتخذوني وامى الاهين من دون الله .

69 وهل انتم¹⁸⁷ غير ذلك مما كان قيل شبيهاً . افترون الله فيما وصفنا شاكاً او مستراً¹⁸⁸ لحال ما يلزم العباد من المرى والاستتار فيما ذكر . فكما ان هذا

¹⁸² S المناني ¹⁸³ S فانما ¹⁸⁴ Graf: read انفى ¹⁸⁵ S هل انا نقول نفع ¹⁸⁶ S ساكيا او مسيراً ¹⁸⁷ Text is corrupted in the manuscript. ¹⁸⁸ P omits.

to Him! had wanted to gain benefits or to repel harm from Himself in His concealing knowledge of the Hour from the disciples, and if He were under [another's] lordship and commanded [by someone else], then certainly deceit would be a necessary [attribute] for Him (as you have described) when He denied He knew what He did know.

67 Deceit is attached to human beings in one of two ways: to gain benefits for themselves or to repel harm from themselves. However, this is something prohibited [for one Who] has no need in His being, from Whom gifts gush forth and protection from harm [comes]. No deceit is attached to Him in concealing what He saw, if He concealed [something] from the servants⁵⁵ because of His antecedent knowledge of what benefit would come to them by His concealing it, and the harm that would come to them by His disclosing it. If the Messiah denied Himself knowledge of the Hour for the reason we have described, then what is necessary for the servants when they deny knowing what they know is not necessary for Him, [that is,] ignorance or lying.

68 Is doubt necessarily [attributed] to God, may He be praised! as it is necessary for servants with their statements “perhaps” and “maybe” and “what is this” and “did you say such and such” and “should I say”? [These statements] indicate doubt [when made] by servants. You must remember that God said to Moses in your Book,⁵⁶ not to mention what we find in the Torah: “Speak to Pharaoh mildly, perhaps he will take warning or fear [God]”.⁵⁷ And in another place in your Book: “Perhaps your Lord will grant friendship between you and your enemies”,⁵⁸ [and] “Did you⁵⁹ say to people, ‘take me and my mother as gods instead of Allah?’”⁶⁰ and “Did you . . . ”⁶¹ and other [statements] like this which have been said.

69 Do you think that God, in what we have described, is doubtful or is hiding [something], since doubt and concealment would necessarily be the case for servants in what has been mentioned? In the

⁵⁵ Human beings. The emphasis in the following lines is on the great difference between creatures and Creator, servants and Master.

⁵⁶ The *Qur'ān*.

⁵⁷ *Sura* 20:44

⁵⁸ *Sura* 60:7

⁵⁹ The question is from God directed to 'Īsā (Jesus), son of Maryam.

⁶⁰ *Sura* 5:116

⁶¹ Manuscript is corrupt here.

القول اذ اما نحن نطقنا به كان منا شكاً واستتاراً فإذا¹⁸⁹ ما نطق الله به كان اما احتجاجاً واما سياسة منه واما وعيداً واما توبيخاً واما استفهاماً هكذا والقول في انتفاء المسيح سبانه عن¹⁹⁰ علم الساعة سياسة وتحذير مجيئه¹⁹¹ ثانية .

لان الساعة انما تكون مجيئه¹⁹² وهو صانعها . وكيف يكون جاهلاً بالساعة من يصف علاماتها ودلائلها بان قال لتلاميذه اذا رأيتم كذا وكذا فقد حضر مجيئي وابتكم الساعة . لتعلموا ان ذلك سياسة منه وتحذير واخفاء لعلم ما يكون من هلاك العالم في اعلانه لهم كما ذكرنا لا لانه جهل علم الساعة كما ظنوا .

70 واما قولهم ان المسيح قال لرجلين من تلاميذه اذ¹⁹³ سالاه الجلوس عن يمينه وعن شماله ان اعطاء ذلك ليس هو لى هو توبيخ وتجهيل منه لهما وادب وتحضيض على الفضل فاما التوبيخ والتجهيل فانهم سالاه ان يوجب لهما ذلك خاصة دون العشرة ما قد اوجبه لعامتهم . حيث سالوه ما الذى يوجب لنا اذا جئت في ملكك وقد رفضنا الدنيا وتبعناك¹⁹⁴ . فقال لهم حقاً اقول لكم اذ رفضتم الدنيا وتبعتموني اذا ظهرت في ملكى تجسسون عن يمينى وعن شمالى على اثنى عشر كرسيّاً وتدينون اثنى عشر سبط اسرائيل . **71** فضل من الاثنتين وجّهل سؤالهم خاصة ما قد اوجبه لهما في العامة . ولذلك¹⁹⁵ قال لهما ليس ذلك الى لانكما لو صدقتما ان ذلك لى لما سالتمانى ما قد اوجبت لكما مع غيركما من التلاميذ . واما ادب لانه مرح من

189 S وإذا 190 S صن 191 P محبه 192 P محبه S ; بمجيه S ; اذا S 193 Error 194 Error
وكذلك S 195 . تبعنك not تبعناك here: probably

same way, this statement, when we utter it, [indicates] doubt and concealment, but when God utters it, either it is an argument⁶² or governance [of creation] by Him, or a threat or reprimand or an explanation. This [is like] the statement of the Messiah, may He be praised! denying knowledge of the Hour [of Judgement]: it is [God's] governance [of creation] and a warning of His second coming.

For the Hour is of His coming alone, and He will set it. How could He be ignorant of the Hour, when He described its signs and indications, in that He said to His disciples, "When you see such and such [a sign], [the time of] my return has arrived, and the Hour has come to you,"⁶³ so that you will know that this is [God's] governance and a warning and something [that has been] concealed, because He knows what would be destroyed in the world if He announced [the Hour] to them, as we have mentioned, not because He lacked the knowledge of the Hour, as [the opponents] think.

70 As for their statement that the Messiah said to the two men of His disciples when they asked Him to be seated at His right and His left, that: "This is not for me [to give]", it is a reproach and [a rebuke for their] ignorance from Him against them, and it chastised [them] and prompted [them] to goodness. [The reason for] the reproach and [the rebuke for their] ignorance was that they asked Him to grant that to them particularly, to the exclusion of the [other] ten, which He would grant to all of them. Since they had asked Him, "What is it that you will grant to us when you come into your Kingdom, for we have abandoned the world and followed you," He said to them: "Truly, I say to you, if you abandon the world and follow me, when I appear in my Kingdom, you will be seated to my right and to my left upon the Twelve Thrones, and you will pass judgment upon the Twelve Tribes of Israel"⁶⁴.

71 He turned away from [the question] of the two and ignored their request [to be granted] in particular what He would grant to all of them. And it was because of this He said to them: "This is not for me [to give]." [He meant:] "If you believed that this was mine [to give], then you would not have asked me for what I have [already] granted to you along with the other disciples." However,

⁶² I.e., proof or demonstration.

⁶³ Similar to Lk 22:31

⁶⁴ Mt 19:27-28

الاثنين ان يسالوا ما هو اعطى للعامه دون العامه .

72 فلو انه الحكيم اجابهما فيما سالاه اوقع بينهما وبين العشرة العداوة والبغضاء . فلما قال لهما ان ذلك ليس اليّ حسم العشرة عن ابداء ما فى صدورهم من الوجد عليهما اذ حرما ما سالاه اعطاه خاصة دونهم . واما تحضيضه اياهما على الفضل فلانه عدل غير مخيف . وان خاصة كل واحد من التلاميذ لديه بقدر اعلاء رتبته فى الفضل على غيره من التلاميذ . لان كل نفس بما كسبت رهينة . ومن كان يرجوا لقاء ربه فلن يلقاه دون ان يعمل عملاً صالحاً .

واذ صار الامر على ما وصفت فليس اعطاء ما سالتمانى اليّ بل اليكما ان تحرصا على السموّ والاعتلاء فى الفضل الذى به يوصل الى ما سالتمانى . واذا فعلتما ذلك نلتما ما سالتمانى اعطاءكم¹⁹⁶ خاصة دون غيركما من التلاميذ باستيجاب واستحقاق .

73 واما قولهم انه استغاث من الموت والتمس النجاة منه فذلك تحقيق لتانسه وقوام لحجته على الشيطان واليهود الذين ولوا صلبه وقتله . فاما التحقيق لتانسه فان للناس جزعاً عند الموت كارهون له . فحقيق ذلك بما يناولهم اذ ابدا¹⁹⁷ من الجزع والهلع عند اوان موته بتانسه ما ابدا¹⁹⁸ . واستدل بذلك ان تجسده تجسد حق مشاكل لاجسادنا الكارهة الموت ورد بذلك على من ادعا¹⁹⁹ ان تجسده من السماء لا من البشر فقد زعم ذلك قوم ممن نسب نفسه الى النصرانية .

196 Graf: read ابدى 197 Graf: read ابدى 198 Graf: read ابدى 199 Graf: read ادعى

He chastised [them], in that He made fun of the two when they asked for what He had [already] bestowed on all [of the disciples] without exception.

72 Now if He, the Wise One, had granted the two of them what was asked of Him, He would have caused hostility and hatred between them and the ten. But because He said to them: “This is not mine [to give]”, He prevented the ten from expressing [the hostility] in their hearts openly against the two when [He] forbade what was asked of Him, [namely] to grant [the request to them] particularly to the exclusion of [the other ten]. Instead, He spurred them on to virtue, because He is just, and does not inspire fear. The particular [virtue] of each one of the disciples before [the Messiah] is measured according to the high degree of virtue of the other disciples, because each soul is responsible for what it earns.⁶⁵ And the one who hopes to find his Lord will not find Him except when he does good deeds.⁶⁶

If this is as I have described, [the Messiah means to say]: “What you [two] have asked of me is not mine to give. Rather, it is for you to strive for greater and higher virtue, through which you will attain what you ask of me. When you do this, you will receive what you ask of me by merit and worthiness, [for then] I shall give to you [two] particularly, apart from the other disciples.”

73 As for their statement that He called for help against death and begged for deliverance from it, this was confirmation of His becoming human, and raising His evidence against Satan and the Jews, who carried out His crucifixion and death. [This] was a confirmation of His becoming human, because human beings are anxious before death, having an aversion to it. He confirmed this with what He presented them when He showed anxiety and fear at the time of His death, [and] with what He showed in His becoming human. Through this, it was shown that His Incarnation was a true incarnation, [in a body] like our [own] bodies, having an aversion to death. And by this He refuted the one who proclaims that His Incarnation is from heaven, not from humankind; [some] people who refer to themselves as Christians allege this.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Sura* 74:38

⁶⁶ Cf. *Sura* 18:110.

⁶⁷ That Christ's body is not a true fleshly body, but only appears to be so. A reference to the Docetists.

74 واما قوام حجته على الشيطان واليهود فثلاً يعذروا انفسهم فيما ارتكبه من الذنب فى قتله وثللاً يقولوا انه لا ذنب لنا فيما صنعنا لانا انما فعلنا ذلك برضا منه . اذ شهدت²⁰⁰ العامة كراهيته لذلك بما استغاث من الموت فلعمرى انه عليهم ساخط ناغم فيما ارتكبه من الذنب وان كان احتمال ذلك منهم له الحمد رضا . لان غرضه فى سياسته واتمامها صلبه وقتله بتجسده الذى به اوجب ان يخلص العالم من الضلالة والموت الحقيقى .

75 والشاهد على ذلك ما ذكرنا من التماسه تحقيق تانسه وحسم الشيطان واليهود عن الحدجج فيما آتوا²⁰¹ بسوء ضميرهم ونقص اهوائهم زجر بعض تلاميذه حيث اخبرهم انى صاعد الى ايروشليم²⁰² وان اليهود تصلبنى وتقتلنى واموت واقبر ثلاثة²⁰³ ايام وثلاثة²⁰⁴ ليل . ثم انهض²⁰⁵ من القرب بمجد وكرامة لاتمام النبوة علىّ انى ساصلب²⁰⁶ متجسداً . واقبل الموت واقوم لاقامة جوهر الناس كافة الذى يسلمط عليه الموت والمحالّ بمعصية ادم لربه وغفلته عن طاعته وذريته من بعده .

76 واذا قال حاشى لك يا رب ان يحل بك هذا قال له المسيح سبحانه خلف²⁰⁷ وراعى ايها الشيطان فانت لى عشرة لان همتك فى ذات الناس ليس فى الله . ثم انه قال لليهود ان القبيلة الشريرة يلتمس اية ولن تعطى²⁰⁸ غير اعجوتة يونس ابن متى بحق اقول لكم كما ان يونس ابن متى لبث فى بطن الحوت ثلاثة ايام وثلاثة ليل كذلك ابن البشر يلبث فى قعر الارض

200 S شهادة 201 P اتو 202 S اورشليم 203 S ثلث 204 S وثلث 205 S
206 S اصلب 207 S تخلف 208 Graf: read تعطى امض

74 As for His raising evidence against Satan and the Jews, [this] is so that they will not excuse themselves from [the crime] they have committed in killing Him, and so that they will not say: “There was no crime for us in what we did, because we only did this with His permission.”⁶⁸ Since all [present] were witnesses to His aversion to this [death], since He called for help against death, by my life! He was angry with them and detested the crime they had committed, even though He permitted His [own] suffering of this at [their hands], glory be to Him! Because His purpose in His submission and its completion, [even] in His Incarnation which He took upon Himself, was His crucifixion and His death, that the world might be saved from error and true death.

75 The witness that this ([that is], what we have mentioned about His beseeching [God]) is a confirmation of His becoming human and cuts off the arguments Satan and the Jews put forward with their evil hearts and their defective inclinations, is [that] He rebuked some of His disciples when He told them: “I will go up to Jerusalem, and the Jews will crucify me and kill me, and I will die, and be buried for three days and three nights. Then I will rise from the grave with glory and honor in order to accomplish the prophecy about me, that I, [while] incarnated, shall be crucified.”⁶⁹ I shall accept death and inaugurate the resurrection of the *ousia* of all of humanity, which death and the Deceiver have ruled over because of the disobedience of Adam towards his Lord and his indifference to obedience [to God] and his throwing aside worship of Him.”

76 When [the disciple] said: “Far be it from You, o Lord, that this come upon You!”, the Messiah, may He be praised! said to him: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling [block] to me, because your concerns are with human beings, not with God.”⁷⁰ Then that He said to the Jews: “The wicked tribe begs for a sign. None will be given other than the miracle of Jonah, son of Amittai.”⁷¹ Truly, I say to you: just as Jonah, son of Amittai, remained in belly of the whale three days and three nights, in the same way the Son of Man will

⁶⁸ Cf. *Sura* 2:87; 4:157.

⁶⁹ Cf. Mt 16:21; Lk 18:31-33.

⁷⁰ Cf. Mt 16:22-23.

⁷¹ Jon 1-2

ثلاثة²⁰⁹ أيام وثلاث²¹⁰ ليال .

وضرب مثلاً وقال الحق اقول لكم ان الحبة ما لم تقع في²¹¹ الارض وتموت²¹² تبقى²¹³ وحدها بلا ثمار فاذا خالطت الارض وماتت فيها نمت وكثر رجاءها . وغير ذلك من الايات التى نطق بها فى كتابه تدل ان احتماله الموت²¹⁴ والصلب بتجسده برضى منه لا مكره²¹⁵ عليه وان كان ناقماً ساخطاً على من ولى ذلك بعدله وقسطه .

77 فان قالوا فقتله وصلبه برضا²¹⁶ منه كان²¹⁷ ام بكره . فان كان برضى منه فلا يُنجاح على الذين ولو اصابه بل مستوجبون الثواب مستحقون الجزيل من الجزاء لاتباعهم رضوانه . وان قتله وصلبه بكره منه فإى الاله يكون مكرهاً . ان هذا القول عظيم . يقال لهم ان القتل والصلب عندنا على وجهين لانه مضاف الى الاثنين الفاعل والمفعول به .

فقد يقال ان قتل فلان كان من فلان فى يوم كذا وكذا وقتل فلان لفلان يوم كذا وكذا . والمضاف الى اليهود من قتل المسيح فعلهم به . والمضاف اليه من قتله انقاده لهم واحتماله لما كان منهم اليه من غير ان يحول بينهم وبين ما ارادوا . والقتل والصلب بعينه ليس بممدوح ولا مذموم لانه انما يذم اذا ما اضيف الى الفاعل والمفعول به .

78 فاذا اتينا على تفسير الوجهين الذين وصفنا من امر القتل والصلب فلننظر فى جواب مسالتكم²¹⁸ ايانا برضى كان صلبه وقتله ام بكره منه . فان

تبقا²¹³ P adds 212 S omits. 211 P omits. وثلاث²¹⁰ S 209 P ثلاث²¹¹ S 214 S الموة²¹⁴ P 215 P مكره²¹⁵ Graf: read برضى²¹⁶ S 217 S omits. 218 S مسلتكم²¹⁸ S

remain in the depths⁷² of the earth three days and three nights.”⁷³

And He gave an example, saying: “Truly, I say to you, if the seed does not fall upon the earth and die, it remains alone, without bearing fruit. But when it mixes with the earth and dies in it, it grows, and the hope [placed in it] increases.”⁷⁴ [There are] other signs than these which He uttered in His Book [of the Gospels] demonstrating that He suffered death and crucifixion in His Incarnation by His own consent. He was not compelled [to accept it], even though, in His justice and His fairness, He detested and was angry with the ones who had carried this out.

77 Now if they say: “His being killed and His crucifixion [either occurred] with His consent or through coercion. Now if it was with His consent, then it cannot be held against those who carried out His crucifixion. Rather, they deserve a reward and are entitled to the most abundant of the portions [of the reward], because they complied with His consenting [to it].”⁷⁵ And if His being killed and His crucifixion were through His coercion, what god can be compelled [to do something]? Now this statement is a terrible thing!” it should be said to them: The killing and the crucifixion, according to us [refer to] two aspects, because they are related to two [separate persons]: the one who does it and the one to whom it is done.⁷⁶

For one says that ‘the killing of so-and-so was by so-and-so on such-and-such a day’ and ‘so-and-so killed so-and-so on such-and-such a day’. That which is related to the Jews in the killing of the Messiah is their act against Him and that which is related to Him in His killing is His deliverance of them, and His suffering what they [committed] against Him, without interfering with what they wanted. The killing and the crucifixion are themselves neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy, because what is blameworthy is only in relation to the one who does it and the one to whom it is done.

78 When we put forward an explanation of the two aspects that we have described concerning the killing and crucifixion, we must examine carefully the answer to your question to us: was His cru-

⁷² Literally, “the pit”.

⁷³ Mt 12:39-40

⁷⁴ Jn 12:24

⁷⁵ That is, they complied and did not try to stop what He had consented to.

⁷⁶ In the following passage, Abū Rā’īṭah is examining the active and passive forms of the verb.

كان معناكم كان الذى كان اى هو راض بما اتى اليه من اليهود لحسدكم وخبث نياتهم قلنا معاذ الله ان يكون لذلك راضياً ولا محباً لانه ليس محباً لشى من المعاصى وذلك معصية .

79 وان كان قولكم راض هو فيما صنعت به اليهود او راض هو بما احتمال منهم غير مكره عليه قلنا بلى قبوله لذلك رضى لانه به خالص العالم وانقذهم من الضلالة التى تسلطت عليهم من غير ان يكون بفعلهم مريداً كما صفنا .

فان قالوا وكيف يكون بما احتمال منهم راضياً غير راض بما افتعلوا فكانما فعلهم لديه غريب²¹⁹ احتمله منهم يقال لهم بلى ان احتماله منهم عندنا غير فعلهم به ولذلك²²⁰ اوجبنا له رضى على احتمال ذلك منهم والنقم منهم²²¹ بفعلهم . لان احتمال من المقتول للقتل غير احتمال المقتول للقاتل²²² والا صار القاتل مقتولاً والمقتول قاتلاً .

80 فان ادعيتم ان فعل اقاتل واحتمال المقتول واحد سالناكم ما قولكم فى من استشهد منكم فعل الكفار به فعله وفعله فعلهم . فان كان الامر واحداً²²³ فالشهيد قاتل والقاتل شهيد وكل مذموم وممدوح القاتل والمقتول مذموم عن القتل وممدوح على الاستشهاد .²²⁴

81 وما عسيتم تقولون لو سالناكم نحو²²⁵ [ما] سالتمونا من امر القتل اراض الله بقتل شهدائه ام كاره . فان قلت راض قلنا فلا جناح على الكفار

²¹⁹ Graf: better غير ما ²²⁰ S وكذلك ²²¹ S لفعلهم ²²² P للقتل ²²³ S نحو²²⁴ Graf: read على, as in the following phrase. ²²⁵ S نحو واحد

cifixion and killing [done] with His consent or through coercion? If your meaning is: that which happened happened; that is, He consented to what the Jews [did] to Him because of their envy and their wicked intention, we say: God forbid that He had consented to this and wants it! Because He does not what anything that is an outrage, and this [which they did] was an outrage.

79 If you say: “He consented to what they did to Him, that is, He consented to what He suffered from them, without being compelled to it,” [then] we say: Yes, indeed! He consented to accept this because through it He saved the world and delivered [human beings] from the error that had overpowered them, without willing their act, as we have described.

Now if they say: “How did He consent to what He suffered at their hands⁷⁷ without consenting to what they did, as if their action before Him⁷⁸ were different from what He suffered at their hands?” it should be said to them: Yes, indeed! His suffering at their hands, according to us, is not their act against Him. In this way, we make His consent necessary for His suffering this [act] at their hands and their punishment [necessary] for their act. The suffering of the one killed because of the [act of] killing is different from the suffering of the killing⁷⁹ caused by the killer,⁸⁰ otherwise the killer would be the one killed, and the one killed would be the killer.

80 Now, if you maintain that the act of the killer and the suffering of the one who is killed are one [and the same], we shall ask you: What do you say of the one among you who is a martyr: is the act of the unbeliever against him his [own] act, and is his act their act? If they are one [and the same] then the martyr is the killer, and the killer is the martyr, and all are blameworthy and praiseworthy, the killer and the one who is killed are blameworthy because of the killing, and praiseworthy because of the martyrdom.

81 What might you say if we asked you, similar to what you asked us about the killing [of the Messiah]: Does God consent to the killing of His martyrs, or does He abhor [it]? If you say: “He consented”, we say: then it is not an outrage for the unbeliever who carried out

⁷⁷ Literally, “from them”.

⁷⁸ In His sight; that is, in His judgement.

⁷⁹ Arabic is “the one killed”.

⁸⁰ That is, the suffering inflicted by a killer is different from the suffering received by the one killed.

الذين ولوا قتل الشهداء والهم ثواب جزيل اذ تبعوا رضوانه فى قتل شهدائه . وان قلتم كاره قلنا ولنا يكون بلاه يكره . وهل الصلب والقتل بالجسد فى النقص الا بمنزلة الشتم والافترى²²⁶ فكل منقصة من الفاعل والمفعول²²⁷ به . فما قولكم على من افترى على الله سبحانه اراض هو بذلك منه ام كاره . فليكن جوابكم ايانا فى هذا جوابا فيما سالتموننا من امر الصلب والقتل .

82 فان قالوا من اين يشبه ما وصفتم من امر الصلب والقتل قولكم فى الفرية على الله . فهل ينال الله من الافترى شىء . فاما انتم فقد الزمتموه القتل والموت . فى كلام اشنع واشد استحالة من هذا . يقال لهم وبماذا عنيتم²²⁸ بقولكم لا ينال الله من الافترى شىء²²⁹ يقولون²³⁰ لا يفترى على الله احد . وكتابكم عليكم شهيد اذ يقول يفترى على الله كذباً .

83 وان كان قولكم لا يناله من الافترى شىء لاعتلى²³¹ جوهره عن احتمال الافتراء . شألناكم فما قولكم عن الذى يفترى على الله اذ لا يناله من ذلك شىء اماخوذ بالفرية على الله ام فريته مهملة²³² . فان قالوا بلى هو ماخوذ بالفرية على الله . يقال لهم وكيف يوخذ بالفرية على الله ولم ينله من ذلك شىء . فان قالوا اضممر²³³ واطهر من فعله وان اعتلى الله له الحمد على الافترى يقال لهم صدقتم هكذا والقول فى المسيح سبحانه اذ هو اله متجسد لم ينله²³⁴ بذاته اللاهوتية من الصلب والموت شىء وان كان هو المصلوب المائت بتجسده كما وصفنا فى موضع ذكر موته من هذا الكتاب .

²²⁶ Graf: read الافتراء and passim. ²²⁷ S وبالمفعول ²²⁸ S اعنيتم ²²⁹ P
²³⁰ S تقولون ²³¹ Graf: read لاعتلاء ; لاعقلى ²³² S منهملة ²³³ P
²³⁴ S يناله omits.

the killing of the martyr, and they would deserve the most abundant reward when, with His consent, they complied in killing His martyrs. And if you say: He abhors [it], we say: Certainly we [also say] He is a God [Who] abhors [it]. Is not the crucifixion and killing of the body of the [same] degree in offense as insult[s] and lie[s] all are a degradation of the one who does it and the one to whom it is done? What do you say about the one who lies about God, may He be praised? Does He consent to this [act] against Himself, or does He abhor [it]? Your answer to us in this is the answer to what you have asked us concerning the crucifixion and killing [of the Messiah].

82 Now if they say: “Why should what you have described concerning the crucifixion and the killing be similar to your statement about a lie about God? Does anything of slander reach God?⁸¹ Yet, you have [even] imposed killing and death on Him! What speech is more abominable and a greater absurdity than this?” it should be said to them: What do you mean by your statement that nothing of slander reaches God? You may say: No one slanders God. But your Book⁸² is a witness against you when it says: ‘They slandered against God, lying’.⁸³

83 If you say that nothing of slander reaches Him because His *ousia* is above suffering slander, then we ask you: what do you say about the one who slanders against God, when nothing of this reaches Him: is he is punishable for the slander against God or is his slander overlooked? If they say: “Indeed, he is punishable for his slander against God”, it should be said to them: Why should he be punished for the slander against God, [even though] nothing of this thing reaches Him? If they say: “It is hidden and it is manifested in His act, even though God, Glory be to Him! is above the slander”, it should be said to them: You are correct. The teaching about the Messiah, may He be praised! is like this. For He is God incarnated, Whose divine being is not reached by anything of the crucifixion and death, even though He is the Crucified and the Mortal in His Incarnation, just as we have described in a [another] place where His death is mentioned in this book.

⁸¹ Can slander affect God?

⁸² The *Qur'ān*.

⁸³ *Sura* 4:50; 5:103; 10:60, 69; 16:116

84 فاليهود ماخوذون بصلبه وقتله لما نوا من ابادته وان جل عن ذلك له الحمد لارتفاع جوهره عن القتل والموت²³⁵ كالمأخوذ بالفرية على الله وان اعتلى الله على ذلك علواً كبيراً²³⁶ كما وصفنا . هكذا والقول في كل ما نطق به المسيح سبحانه او فعل فعله .

85 فما دعا الى التواضع²³⁷ وما نات²³⁸ على تفسيره في هذا الكتاب فانما ذلك بتحقيق وتشبيت لتناسه . فليكن ما فسرنا منه مغنيا عن ما نات²³⁹ على شرحه في هذا الكتاب . وانما اهملنا تاويله حذراً من التطويل والاكثر . فان العسل وان كان طيباً لن يطيب عند الاكثر منه مع انا قد اتينا على تفسير ما نطق به المسيح له الحمد من صفة تواضعه لحال تجسده في كتابه الانجيل كلمة كلمة وفعالاً فعالاً مما كان التواضع داعياً في رسالة كانت منا الى اهل البحرين جواباً عن رسالتهم اضتاء في²⁴⁰ شرح ذلك لهم . احتذنا فيها حذو الانبياء والرسل والاباء في وضعهم اياه من غير بدعة ولا اتباع راى .

86 فان يكن ما كتبنا به اليك في هذا الكتاب مقنعا لك فيما سالت حمدنا الله على اعطائه . وان الغى مخالفا لرجائك غير مقنع فجدير انت ان تعدد من عجز عن بلوغ غاية ما لا غاية له لاعتلائه عن كل عقل ونطق باعلائه بلا نهاية . فليكن ما كتبنا به اليك كالألف والباء عند من التمس الخط . فانها وان كانت الاثنيين بانفراها غير شيء فلا سبيل الى علم الكتابة دونها .

²³⁵ S الموة ²³⁶ PS كثيرا ²³⁷ P المتواضع ²³⁸ Graf: read نأتى ²³⁹ Graf: اتبأنى S ; ابناالى P Unclear. ²⁴⁰ نأتى read

84 The Jews are punishable for His crucifixion and His killing, because they intended His annihilation, even if He is exalted above this, glory be to Him! because His *ousia* rises above killing and death, just as the one who is punishable for slander against God, even though God is sublimely and greatly exalted above this,⁸⁴ as we have described. This is like the teaching about all that is uttered by the Messiah, may He be praised! or [every] act He does.

85 What points to the humiliation and the death [of the Messiah], and what we put forward as its explanation in this book is only a confirmation and an affirmation of His becoming human. Because it would be superfluous to what we have [already] explained for us to put forward its [further] elucidation in this book, we rather omit its interpretation in order to be cautious of prolongation and multiplication [of the arguments]. For honey, even if it is good, is not agreeable when too much of it [is eaten]. We have [already] put forward an explanation of what the Messiah, glory be to Him! said as a description of His humiliation [while] in the state of His Incarnation in His book, the Gospel, word by word, act by act, [and] of the purpose of the humiliation. [It is] in a *risālah* from us to the People of Baḥrīn in answer to their *risālah*, illuminating [it] in constructing⁸⁵ an explanation of this [issue] for them. In it, we have followed the example of the Prophets and the Apostles and the Fathers as they have laid down, without innovation or inventing [something from our own] opinion.

86 If what we have written to you⁸⁶ in this book is a convincing [response] to what you have asked, we give glory to God for His gift. And if it [appears] mistaken, contradictory to your expectation and not convincing, then you deserve to be counted among [those who are] incapable of attaining the extreme limit of what has no limit, because of His exaltedness above every understanding and utterance, for His exaltation is without end. For what we have written in [this book] to you is like the A and B for the one who desires to write, although the two [letters] individually are nothing, it is impossible to learn to write without them.

⁸⁴ *Sura* 2:61; 4:155

⁸⁵ Manuscript is unclear here

⁸⁶ Beginning here, “you” is singular, referring to the “brother” mentioned throughout.

جعلنا الله واياك ممن انفذ ايامه في طلب العلم النافع ونبذ بالتواني
والكسل في اقتباسه خلف ظهره ان شاء الله .
والحمد لله دائماً ابداً²⁴¹ .

²⁴¹ S adds سرمديا امنين

May God put us and you with the one who fulfills his days in the search for useful knowledge and throws slackness and laziness in his commitment to learning behind himself—if God wills!

Glory be to God forever and always!

WITNESSES FROM THE WORDS OF THE TORAH, THE PROPHETS AND THE SAINTS

Introduction

The untitled text designated as “Witnesses from the Words of the Torah and the Prophets and the Saints” in its opening line, is at first glance an unusual document, being simply a list of biblical citations from the Old Testament in no apparent order. Although it is included as the sixth of his eight extant writings in the most complete manuscript collection his works, Bibl. P. Sbath 1001,¹ it contains no specific reference within itself tying it to Abū Rā’īṭah. It is also found in Par. Ar. 169 as the last of six, suggesting that the copyist had received the original manuscripts in a single collection.² In addition, many of the biblical passages found in *Witnesses* are reproduced elsewhere in Abū Rā’īṭah’s writings, especially in *On the Trinity* and *Proof*. As a consequence, there is no obvious reason not to attribute it to Abū Rā’īṭah. In fact, closer examination of the list reveals its likely purpose and a particular motive why Abū Rā’īṭah would have created such a document, increasing the likelihood that it can be counted among his literary output.

The text itself consists of approximately eighty quotations taken exclusively from the Old Testament to be used as proof texts to substantiate the Trinity and Incarnation. All of the passages are brief, none is more than ten verses long according to modern numbering and many are only a few words. The author’s motivation for producing this document is not immediately apparent, since no formal introduction is given. However, the time period in which it was composed and the purpose behind Abū Rā’īṭah’s other writings suggests an interesting possibility. This collection of verses may well represent an initial effort to translate important and useful biblical passages into Arabic and make them accessible to those who needed to avail themselves of apologetical materials. If this is in fact the case,

¹ Sbath, *Bibliothèque*, 116.

² Graf, *Abū Rā’īṭah*, 130/iii, 131/iii.

it may indicate that the Jacobite church did not have at its disposal a complete Arabic translation of the Bible at the beginning of the ninth century.

Some scholars have claimed to have found proof that the biblical texts were translated into Arabic even before the time of Muḥammad. On the face of it, it seems strange that Christian missionaries from Abyssinia, Ethiopia, Yemen, and the Roman empire who penetrated the Arabian peninsula did not attempt to translate the scriptures into the local language. However, in spite of a few scattered pre-Islamic sacred inscriptions in Arabic that can be identified as Christian, to date there is no concrete evidence that significant texts were translated until much later.³

The earliest known Arabic translations of both the Old and New Testament are from the beginning of the ninth century found in manuscripts primarily from St. Catherine's and Mar Sabas monasteries. Studies have also shown that the Gospel first became available to the Melkite church in Palestine in the ninth century, when it began to be used there for liturgical and apologetical purposes.⁴ It is notable that while nearly all of the writings of the New Testament can be accounted for in translation at this time, only isolated portions of the Old Testament, in particular the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach and Psalm 79, appear to have been made.⁵ The lack of a full translation of the Old Testament into Arabic before the ninth century seems to be confirmed by the fact that Muslims did not have access to more than some commonly repeated passages which were often taken completely out of their context. Very often these verses are quoted by Muslims with apparently no knowledge of those immediately preceding or following them.⁶

It has long been recognized that the version of the text which

³ Most of the manuscripts which were thought to have been early translations have now been positively dated much later. Arthur Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament: Manuscript Studies*, Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile 6 (Stockholm: [Estonian Theological Society in Exile], 1954), 271-277.

⁴ Griffith, "Gospel," 128.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 131-134; see also Sidney H. Griffith, "The Monks of Palestine and the Growth of Christian Literature in Arabic," *The Muslim World* 78, no. 1 (January 1988): 1-28.

⁶ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 118.

underlies the earliest available translations of the scriptures into Arabic is the Old Syriac. There are a limited number of extant texts that include biblical citations revealing characteristics which indicate an original Old Syriac source. Some of the first of these were authored by Abū Rā'īṭah's literary adversary, Theodore Abū Qurrah. In fact, Vööbus includes Abū Rā'īṭah's writings among those containing passages which show a definite relationship with the Old Syriac version.⁷ The question remains whether the translations can be attributed to Abū Rā'īṭah himself, or whether he copied them from an existing translation.

The text containing the scriptural evidence from "the Torah, prophets and saints" does not begin with a clear introduction. Although the Sbath manuscript 1001 includes a longer title (probably added by a copiest), it immediately moves into citations from Genesis. The verses do not appear to be set down in any particular order, and those from the same book are not always listed together. It is possible, however, to identify a general outline to the document. The first group of citations (§§1-7) provides excerpts that can be used to show that the Trinity was foreshadowed in the Torah. These are followed by similar proofs for the Incarnation (§§8-25), with an emphasis on the suffering, crucifixion and death of the Messiah.

The first, and most extensive group, are those passages which point to the existence of a plurality in God. Some of these speak of the activity of one or more of the *hypostaseis* of the Trinity, such as the Spirit or the Word, others describe God as speaking with the first person plural, while others portray God revealing Himself to individuals. Many of these are texts which Abū Rā'īṭah uses elsewhere in his other writings. For the sake of clarity, the passages are divided here into the three categories, followed by the other texts of Abū Rā'īṭah in which they appear.

I. *Activity of one or more hypostaseis*

Gen 1:2; 18:1-3 (*Trinity*), 19:10-14; Ex 34:5-6; Ps 33:6 (*Trinity*); 56:10 (*Trinity, Proof*); 74:12; 84:8 (*Proof*); 107:20 (*Trinity, Proof*); 110:1 (*Trinity*); 119:89 (*Proof*), 105; 139:7; 141:10.

⁷ Vööbus, *Early Versions*, 277-280. Vööbus suggests that this is evidence that an "archaic translation" of the Gospels in Arabic was available to those who include passages in their Arabic writings (280).

II. *God's self-reference in the plural*

Gen 1:26 (*Trinity, Refutation, Proof*); 3:22 (*Trinity, Refutation, Proof*); 11:7 (*Trinity, Proof*).

III. *God reveals Himself to human beings*

Gen 18:16, 22-32; Ex 3:1-6.

The second group of verses are those substantiating the Incarnation. Some of the passages could be counted under category (I) above, since they refer to the activity of the Word of God. However, nearly all of them mention the Son or something which Christians later attributed to the second person of the Trinity specifically. This group can also be somewhat organized into four general categories: apocalyptic or future expectation, prophecy of the coming of a Son or Ruler, the suffering, crucifixion and death of the Messiah, the signs, wonders and victory of the Messiah. The number of passages that appear elsewhere in Abū Rā'īṭah's writings is significantly less than those for the Trinity. These have been noted here.

I. *Apocalyptic / Future Expectation*

Prov 30:4; Is 48:16 (*Trinity*); Dan 4:28 (*Trinity*); 7:9-14.

II. *Prophecy of the Coming of a Son / Ruler*

Is 7:14 (*Proof*); 9:6; Jer 23:5-6; Mic 5:1; Bar 3:36-38 (*Proof*); Zech 6:12; 9:9.

III. *Suffering, Crucifixion and Death of the Messiah*

Gen 49:10-11; Is 50:4-8; 53:2-12; Zech 11:12-13; (Mt 28:9-10);⁸ 12:10; 13:1, 7; 14:6-7; Mic 5:1; Amos 8:9; Jer 11:19;⁹ Wis 14:7; Ps 22:17-19; 41:6-8, 10; 69:22; 78:65; 88:5.

IV. *Signs, Wonders and Victory of the Messiah (God)*

Is 35:3-8; 40:22;¹⁰ 49:7-10; 63:1; 65:1-2; Wis 2:12; Ps 8:1-2; 15:3; 24:7-8; 46:6, 9; 56:6; 67:2, 5, 19, 25, 33-34; 106:43; 118:22-23; Zeph 3:8; Dan 9:25-26; Hab 3:4; Mic 1:2-3; Job 19:25.

A single passage cannot be identified with any known writing from the Old Testament: "And Jeremiah the prophet said about the dead: "The dead will live, as the Lord of Lords has said." (§23)

⁸ The verses of Zechariah cited are based on this text of Matthew.

⁹ Graf notes that the text given by Abū Rā'īṭah is not found in Jeremiah; however, this verse is very similar to it (Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 130/124, n. 9).

¹⁰ Graf states that the text, "Truly, certainly, God sits upon the Earth" (حَقًّا يَقِينًا جَلَسَ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ), is not found in Wisdom (Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 131/120, n. 6). However, it is similar to this passage in Isaiah.

In light of this analysis, two points are striking about the contents of *Witnesses*. The first is that the passages themselves and their repetition in Abū Rā'īṭah's other writings make clear the purpose of the document. One notices immediately that the types of verses that have been included have all been used to substantiate Christian teachings challenged by Muslims: the plurality of *hypostaseis* in God and the interaction of these *hypostaseis* with creation, the expectation of the incarnated Son of God, His suffering, crucifixion, death, resurrection and miracles. This evidence thus suggests that the list was compiled primarily for use as an apologetic "source book" of biblical texts to be used in defense of Christian doctrines. That they are all drawn from the Old Testament adds support to this hypothesis.¹¹

As was mentioned above, the problem of *tahwīf* appears to have compelled Abū Rā'īṭah to rely generally on non-biblical arguments to defend Christian beliefs. However, within limited confines he still employed passages from the Old Testament in his apologetical writings. He apparently did this because it was easier to provide convincing evidence for the Old Testament than for the New that it had not been tampered with, since the same texts had also been preserved by the Jews. In view of this issue, the value of this compilation becomes obvious. It seems very likely that Abū Rā'īṭah created the document to provide those who would be engaged in apologetical activities with Muslims with a ready-made list of biblical texts that could be used to substantiate the central Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation that would be acceptable to both Christians and Muslims. This document may have been intended for Abū Rā'īṭah's own students, for those engaged in face-to-face confrontation with Muslims, or for clergy faced with the rising tide of conversions to Islam.

Second, a closer look at the various instances of the verses throughout Abū Rā'īṭah's writings makes it almost impossible to believe that he had a pre-existing Arabic translation of the Scriptures before him. The numerous verses contained in *Witnesses* that appear in several other texts show an extraordinary diversity of renderings. At the

¹¹ Mark Swanson has drawn my attention to the similarity between this text and the so-called '*testimonia*' found in the Church Fathers. Cf. Martin C. Albl, "And Scripture Cannot Be Broken": *The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections*, Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*, v. XCVI (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1999). See my forthcoming article on this topic.

same time, one notes that the basic sentence structure is usually maintained, and important terms repeatedly make their appearance in each of the instances. It is necessary only to give a few examples to illustrate this phenomenon:

Gen 1:26:

- (W):¹² نخلق انساناً كصورتنا ومثالنا.
 (T): لنصنع انساناً بصورتنا وكشبهنا.
 (R): لنصنع انساناً بشبهنا ومثالنا.
 (P): لنخلق انساناً كصورتنا وشبهنا.

Gen 3:22

- (W): ادم قد صار كواحد منا.
 (T): ادم قد صار كواحد منا.
 (R): ادم صار كاحدنا.
 (P): ادم قد صار كاحدنا.

Ps 33:6

- (W): الله خلقت السموات وبروح فيه كل اجناده.
 (T): الله خلقت السموات وبروح فيه كل قواتها.

Ps 107:20

- (W): ارسل كلمته فابراهم وخلصهم من الجبال.
 (T): ارسل كلمته فشفاهم وخلصهم من الموت.
 (P): كلمته فابراهم وخلصهم من الفساد.

The multitude of variations allows some conclusions to be drawn about the relationship between *Witnesses* and the remainder of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings. First, it seems clear that Abū Rā'īṭah is translating from the Old Syriac version as he goes. Consequently, one can conclude that he did not have anything that he considered to be an authoritative translation into Arabic available to him. The inconsistency of his adaptations further implies that he made them sporadically over a space of time, and was only later prompted to set down a more complete and consistent list of useful texts. This suggests two points. Since Abū Rā'īṭah does not appear to have used his own translation to provide any consistency in his writings, he probably compiled the list some time after he had composed most

¹² W=*Witnesses*; T=*Trinity*; R=*Refutation*; P=*Proof*

of his other works, perhaps after having gathered together passages that he knew from experience could be used effectively. Further, this list includes many passages that are not incorporated in his extant writings in places where they would have been useful, particularly for questions concerning the Incarnation.¹³ In light of these considerations, the compilation of the Old Testament texts can probably be dated later in Abū Rā'īṭah's career, sometime before 830 and no earlier than 820.

The impetus for setting down this group of verses in translation may have been the realization that Arabic was beginning to take a firm hold among Jacobite Christians in Iraq and the necessity of translating important texts was increasing. The escalating confrontation with Muslims on questions of religion, clearly evidenced in Abū Rā'īṭah's other writings, is also likely what motivated him to create the collection to make the texts available in the language of the debate. He may even have been prompted by someone who considered him to be an authority on the subject. Such a handbook would have been invaluable to those caught in the fray, explaining why it has been preserved for nearly twelve centuries.

Thus, in spite of a decided lack of explicit internal evidence, it is possible to offer some impressions about this compilation of Old Testament passages included among Abū Rā'īṭah's writings. First, the subjects of the verses collected reveal that the primary motivation behind it was apologetical. Many of the passages are found in Abū Rā'īṭah's writings in defense of the Trinity and the Incarnation, albeit with variations. Within the context and stated intent of his other apologetical texts, the supposition that he created the document at the request of a church official or member of the clergy in defending Christian doctrines against Muslim charges is probably not far from the truth. An alternative possibility is that he made it for his own use as a *malpōnō* to train students in the art of apologetics.

The context and contents of the text also suggest a secondary motivation—an attempt to set down important biblical texts in Arabic at a time when no translation was available to the Jacobite church in Iraq. Given the relationship between this text and the remainder of

¹³ It should be borne in mind that at least one, and perhaps two, of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings on the Incarnation have been lost, increasing the likelihood that he employed some of these passages elsewhere.

his extant documents, it can be plausibly dated sometime between 820 and 830. For this reason the collection may be valuable to biblical scholars seeking to establish the details surrounding the transition from Syriac to Arabic in the church of ninth century Iraq. Finally, the uniqueness of the translations may also be of help in identifying other texts not yet associated with Abū Rā'īṭah, with an eye to discovering those known to be lost.

شهادات من قول التوراة¹ والانبياء والقديسين

1 بسم الله القوى العظيم القدوس شهادات على التلائية من العتيقة .

2 من ذلك من قول موسى قى التوراة حيث يقول² روح الله ترفّ على الماء .

ثم قال كما تقدم ذكره نخلق انساناً كصورنا ومثالنا .

وقال هوذا ادم قد صار كواحد منا .

وقال تعالوا ننزل ونفرق اللسن .

3 وقال وظهر الرب على ابراهيم وهو جالس على باب خيمته وقت استحرار النهار فرفع ابراهيم عينيه ولمح فاذا ثلثة نفر مياماً امامه . فلما ابصرهم سعى اليهم وقال رب ان كنت رامقاً الىّ بعين الرحمة فلا³ تجاوزن عبدك .

4 فاجابوه قائلين هذا القول تعد الضيافة انى عائد اليك للحول فى هذا الحين ولسارة امرأك ابن . وابراهيم وسارة كانا قد كبرا وقد كان⁵ جاز عن سارة طريق الولد . فتبسمت سارة فى نفسها وقالت من بعد البلى تكون شببية وسيدى قد شاخ . فقال الرب لابراهيم لِمَ ضحكت سارة وقالت بحق الد ابناً⁶ انى قد كبرت⁷ . افلعله غالبه الرب .

¹ P omits. ² This line found only in S. ³ P omits. ⁴ S adds تفسير اى على الكبير ⁵ S وكان قد ⁶ S adds الذاتيا ⁷ S in margin

Witnesses from the Words of the Torah,
the Prophets and the Saints

1 In the name of the Powerful, the Mighty, the Holy. Witnesses for the Trinity from the Old [Testament].

2 From this, from the words of Moses in the Torah, when he said: “The Spirit of God hovered over the water.”¹

Then he said, as was earlier mentioned:² “We created human beings in our image and our likeness.”³

And he said: “Look, Adam has become like one of us.”⁴

And he said: “Come, let us go down and divide the languages.”⁵

3 And he said: “The Lord appeared before Abraham, and he was sitting before the door of his tent, at the time of the heat of the day, and Abraham lifted his eyes and suddenly, behold, three persons were standing before him. And when he saw them, he went quickly to them and said: ‘Lord, if you regard me with mercy, do not pass by your servant’.”⁶

“And they answered him, saying this after the meal of hospitality: ‘I will return to you in a year at this time, and Sarah, your wife, will have a son.’ Now Abraham and Sarah were very old and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. And Sarah smiled to herself and said: ‘After becoming old, I should be young? And my husband is [also] elderly.’ But the Lord said to Abraham: ‘Why is Sarah laughing?’ and she said: ‘Shall I really bear a son myself? I am already very

¹ Gen 1:2

² It is not clear to what this refers. It may be that this was an appendix to another document.

³ Gen 1:26

⁴ Gen 3:22

⁵ Gen 11:7

⁶ Gen 18:1-3

4 ونهض القوم من هماك وتوجهوا قبالة سدوم وخرج ابراهيم معهم وشيعهم⁸ وقال الرب لا اخفى عن ابراهيم عبدى ما انا فاعل .

فلما اخبره بحال سدوم وغامورا بعد⁹ ذلك سأل ابراهيم ربه وقال رب ان كان فى القرية او فى المدينة مائة صالح فانت مهلكهم . فقال الرب لابراهيم لا . فقال فان كان فيها خمسون¹⁰ فقال له لا اهلكها . فلم يزل حتى¹¹ الى عشرة .

والرب اهبط على سدوم وغامورا¹² النار والكبريت من السماء من بين¹³ يدى الرب .

5 وقال موسى ايضاً انه اتى جبل حوريب وتراءى له ملك الله فى اجلجة النار من شجرة العُليق . ونظر الى شجرة العليق فيها النار والشجرة غضة لا تحرق . وقال موسى اعدل انظر الى هذا الهول العظيم من اجل ماذا لا تحترق شجرة العليق . فمظر الرب الى موسى انه عدل لينظر فناداه الله من جوف العوسدة لا تدنوا¹⁴ الى هاهنا . اخلع نعليك من قدميك من اجل ان البلدة التى¹⁵ انت قائم عليها مقدسة . وقال الله له ايضاً انا اله ابراهيم اله اسحق اله يعقوب . وغظا موسى وجهه لانه جزع ان ينظر الى الله .

⁸ S يشيعهم ⁹ فعند S ¹⁰ S in margin اول سوال ابراهيم لله قال خمسون ¹¹ S الذى P ¹² نزل adds ¹³ من يدى S ¹⁴ Graf: read تُدن ¹⁵ P

old. Perhaps the Lord can overcome [my old age].”⁷

4 “The people rose from that place and turned in the direction of Sodom. Abraham went with them and bid them farewell. And the Lord said: ‘I do not wish to hide from Abraham my servant what I will do.’”⁸

“So when He had told him about the condition of Sodom and Gamorrah, Abraham then asked his Lord, and said: ‘Lord, if there are in the village or city one hundred just people, will You destroy it?’, and the Lord said to Abraham: ‘No’. So he said: ‘And if there are fifty in it?’⁹ and He said: ‘No, I will not destroy it.’ And he did not stop until [he had reached ten].”¹⁰

“And the Lord caused fire and sulphur to rain down from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah, [this was done] by the hand of the Lord.”¹¹

5 And Moses said, too, that he came to Mount Horeb and an angel appeared to him in a burning fire in a thorn bush. And he saw the fire in the thorn bush, and the bush was lush, but it did not burn. And Moses said: “I will go and see this terrifying and great [wonder] in order [to know] why the thorn bush does not burn.” Then the Lord saw Moses going to look, and God called out to him from inside of the thorns [. . .]: “Do not come near here! Take off your sandals from your feet because the place on which you stand is holy.” And God also said to him [. . .] “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” And Moses covered his face because he was afraid to look upon God.”¹²

⁷ Gen 19:10-14

⁸ Gen 18:16

⁹ Gloss in the margin of Sbath ms.: The first question of Abraham to God, he said fifty.

¹⁰ Gen 18:22-32

¹¹ Gen 19:24

¹² Cf. Ex 3:1-6

وقال موسى ايضاً ونزل الرب فى الغمام وتكلم باسم الرب ¹⁶ .

وقال ايضاً جاز بين يدى الرب .

6 وقال داوود النبى بكلمة الله خلقت السموات وروح فيه كل اجناده .

وقال ايضاً بكلمة الله اسبح .

وقال ايضاً ارسل كلمته فابرأهم وخلصهم من الجبال .

وقال ايضاً الى الابد انت ايها الرب وكلمتك ثابتة فى السماء .

وقال كلمتك سراج ¹⁷ منير لرجلى ونور لسبيلى ¹⁸ .

وقال اين اذهب من روحك واين اختفى منك .

وقال وروحك الطيبة ترشدنى الى طريق الحياة .

وقال ايضاً ¹⁹ قال الرب لربى اجلس عن يمينى ²⁰ .

وقال اله الالهة يرى فى صهيون .

¹⁶ S adds الرب ¹⁷ S omits. ¹⁸ S ونورا لسبلى ¹⁹ S omits. ²⁰ Graf: add.
حتى اضع اعداك تحت قدميك

And Moses also said, “And the Lord descended in the clouds and He spoke the Name of the Lord.”¹³

And he also said: “The Lord passed before [him].”¹⁴

6 And David, the Prophet, said: “By the Word of God the heavens were created, and by the Spirit of His mouth all of His hosts.”¹⁵

And he also said: “The Word of God I will praise.”¹⁶

And he also said: “He sent His Word to heal them and save them from the snares.”¹⁷

And he also said: “For eternity are You, o Lord, and Your word is forever in heaven.”¹⁸

And he said: “Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.”¹⁹

And he said: “Where shall I go away from Your Spirit, and where can I hide from You?”²⁰

And he said: “Your Spirit of goodness shall lead me on the path of life.”²¹

And he said: “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right’.”²²

And he said: “My God is the King who has made salvation in the middle of the earth.”²³

¹³ Ex 34:5

¹⁴ Ex 34:6

¹⁵ Cf. Ps 33:6

¹⁶ Ps 56:10

¹⁷ Ps 107:20

¹⁸ Ps 119:89

¹⁹ Ps 119:105

²⁰ Ps 139:7

²¹ Cf. Ps 143:10

²² Cf. Ps 110:1

²³ Ps 74:12

وقال الهى الملك الذى جعل خلاصاً²¹ فى وسط الارض .

7 وقال سليمان الحكيم من ارتفع الى السماء وهبط ومن قد²² السماء بشبره . ومن كال تراب الارض ومن قبض الرياح بكفه ومن صر الماء فى البرقع . ما اسمه واسم ابنه²³ ان كنت تعلم .

وقال اشعيا النبى الله ارسلنى وروحه لانذركم .

وقال دانيال النبى ان الله لك يقول يا بختنصر ملكك ينزعونه منك .

8 وقال ايضاً دانيال²⁴ رأيت كراسى وضعت وعتيق الايام جالساً لباسه ابيض كالثلج الابيض وشعر رأسه كالصوف النقى كرسيه كجاجة النار وبكراته نار تتقد ونهر نار جارى بين يديه والوف الوف يسعون فى خدمته وعظم الربوات قيام بين يديه . والحاكم جلس والاسفار فتحت .

ورأيت على سحاب السماء كرؤية ابن²⁵ البشر . جاء ووصل حتى دنا من عتيق الايام . ووقف بين يديه . واليه دفع السلطان والاجيال والملك وجميع الشعوب والامم وجميع الالسن اياه يعبدون وسلطانه سلطان الابد وملكه لا يتغير .

9 وقال اشعيا النبى ان البتول تحبل وتلد ابناً ويدعى ويسمى²⁶ عمانوئيل الذى تاويله الله معنا .

وقال ايضاً من اجل انه ولد لنا ولد وابن اعطيناه الذى سلطانه على عاتقه

²¹ S فرقناً Graf: probably following the original Syriac reading. ²² Error in Graf, not مد. ²³ P ابيه ²⁴ P omits. ²⁵ P بن ²⁶ Graf: اسمه.

7 And Solomon, the Wise, said: “Who has ascended to heaven and come down [again]? And Who has spanned heaven with His measure? Who has measured the dust of the earth, and Who has grasped the winds in His palm? Who has bound up the water into the veil [of heaven]? What is His name, or the name of His Son, if you know it?”²⁴

And Isaiah, the Prophet, said: “God sent me and His Spirit, to warn you.”²⁵

And Daniel, the Prophet, said: “God said to you, o Nebuchadnezzar, they will take your kingdom from you.”²⁶

8 And Daniel also said: “I saw thrones erected and the Ancient of Days sitting, His robe was white like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was like burning fire, and its wheels fire that burned. And a flood of fire poured out before Him, and thousands upon thousands were running in His service, and a vast myriad stood before Him, and the Judge sat and the books were opened.”²⁷

[. . .] “And I saw on the clouds of heaven [one] like a vision of a Son of Man. He came and approached until He was near the Ancient of Days, and He stopped before Him. And He was presented with authority and tribes and dominion and all the peoples and nations and all of the languages, that they might serve Him. And His authority is the authority of eternity, and His dominion does not change.”²⁸

9 And Isaiah the Prophet said: “The Virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he will be called ‘Immānuel, which is explained ‘God is with us’.”²⁹

²⁴ Prov 30:4

²⁵ Is 48:16. In the Hebrew version, but not the Septuagint.

²⁶ Cf. Dan 4:31

²⁷ Dan 7:9-10

²⁸ Dan 7:13-14

²⁹ Is 7:14

وسمى²⁷ اسمه عجباً وملاك المشورة العظما الله جبار العالمين ورب السلام²⁸ ورب الدهور الآتية الضابط الكل وسلطانه وملكه ليس له انقضاء .

10 وقال ارميا النبي سيأتى الرب . قال الرب اقيم لداوود ضوء البر وملكه بالبر والقسط . ويعمل العدل فى الارض وفى ايامه يتخلص اسرائيل ويهودا يسكن بالاطمانيّة . وهذا اسمه الرب الهنا .

وقال ميخا النبي وانت يا بيت لحم²⁹ افراتا ليس انت بصغيرة فى ملوك يهودا منك يخرج مسلط يرعى شعبى اسرائيل ومخرجه من ابتداء الدهور .

11 وقال ارميا النبي ايضاً هذا الهنا . ولا تعد معه الالهأ اخر . هذا الرب واحد الذى اوجد طريق الحكمة والاستقامة ودفعها الى يعقوب عبده واسرائيل حبيبه . ومن بعد ذلك على الارض يرى ومع الناس يتقلب .

وقال سليمان ايضاً حقاً يقيناً جلس الله على الارض .

وقال زكريا النبي هذا انسان اسمه ضوء ومن اسفل يشرق وبينى هيكل الرب ويتولاه .

وقال حبقوق النبي فى قرنة يديه يصنع جبروته فى البطن .

²⁷ Graf: يسمى . ²⁸ Graf: السلم . ²⁹ S ارض

And he also said: “For a boy has been born for us, and a son given to us, whose authority is on His shoulder. And His name is wonderful, and Angel of the Great Council, God the Almighty of the Worlds, Lord of Peace, Lord of the Coming Age, Governor of All, His authority and His dominion are His without end.”³⁰

10 And Jeremiah, the Prophet, said: “The Lord will come. The Lord said: I will raise to [the House of] David the Light of Righteousness and His dominion will have righteousness and justice, and He will carry out justice on the earth, and in His days Israel will be saved and Judah will dwell in tranquility. And this is His name: the Lord our God.”³¹

And Micah, the Prophet, said: “And you, Bethlehem, Land of Ephrata, you are not the least among the Kings of Judah, from you shall come one who has power to tend My people, Israel, whose departure is from the beginning of the ages.”³²

11 And Jeremiah the Prophet also said: “This is Our God, and we do not count other gods with Him. This Lord is the One Who makes the Path of Wisdom and Righteousness, and He presented it to Jacob, His servant, and Israel, His beloved. And after this He was seen on the earth and He moved among the people.”³³

And Solomon also said: “Truly, certainly, God sits upon the earth.”³⁴

And Zachariah the Prophet said: “This is a man, His name is Light, and from the lowest [place] He will rise and build the Temple of the Lord, and He will be entrusted with it.”³⁵

And Habakkuk the Prophet said: “In the Horn of His hands, His might is produced from [His] belly.”³⁶

³⁰ Is 9:6-7

³¹ Jer 23:5-6

³² Mic 5:2

³³ Bar 3:36-38

³⁴ Citation not found. Cf. Ps 4:8

³⁵ Zech 6:12

³⁶ Hab 3:4

12 وقال ميخا النبي وليكن فيكم رب الارباب شاهداً لان الرب خارج من بلده وهابط وسيظهر على الارض علانية .

وقال ايوب الصديق انا عالم ان مخلصى حى وفى اخر الازمان على الارض يرى .

وقال داوود النبي نظروا الى مشيك اللهم مشى الهى وملكى القدوس .

وقال يعقوب مما حكاه موسى عنه فى كتابه عند ما بارك اولاده . لا يعدم المسلط من يهودا ولا النبي من نسله حتى ياتى الذى له الملك واياه تنتظر الشعوب والامم . يربط فى الكرمه اتانه وفى القضيبي ابن حمارته ³⁰ .

13 وقال زكريا النبي افرحى جداً يا بنت ³¹ صهيون ونادى بالتهليل يا اورشليم . هوذا ملكك يأتيك باراً ومخلصاً وعفيفاً ومتواضعاً راكباً على جحش ابن اتانه . يبىد الحرب من افرام والخيل من يروشليم ويكسر قسى القتال . ويلهم الامم السلم ³² ويحتوى سلطانه من البحر الى البحر ومن الانهار الى اقطار الارض .

وقال داوود النبي ايضاً الرب ربنا ما اعجب اسمك فى الارض كلها . من افواه الاطفال والرضعان اعدت ³³ سبحاً .

14 وقال اشعيا النبي على الامم ³⁴ الله الرب اعطانى لسان التعليم لابين

رابطاً بالكرم جحشه P omits. In the margin of S in a later hand: ³⁰ S حرمة S .
الذى قبل ³⁴ S اعدت ³³ S السلام ³² S ابنة S بيت ³¹ P وفى الكرمه اتانا

12 And Micah, the Prophet, said: “The Lord of Lords is a witness among you, for the Lord is going out from His city and is descending to earth manifestly.”³⁷

And Job the Righteous, said: “I know that my Savior lives, and at the end of the ages He will be seen on the earth.”³⁸

And David the Prophet, said: “They saw Your going, O God, the going of my God and my Holy King.”³⁹

And Jacob said, in what Moses related about him in his book, when he blessed his children: “The ruler shall not disappear from Judah, nor the prophet from its descendants until the one comes to whom the authority belongs, and whom the tribes and the peoples await. He ties His donkey to the vine and to the branch the son of His donkey.”⁴⁰

13 And Zachariah the Prophet said: “Be joyful greatly, O Daughter of Zion, cry out in exaltation, O Jerusalem! See, your King is coming to you, faithful, devoted, righteous, humble, mounted upon a foal, the son of His donkey. He banishes war from Ephraim and the horse[men] from Jerusalem, and shatters the bows of battle. He inspires the peoples with peace and His authority encompasses [the land] from sea to sea and from the rivers to the edges of the earth.”⁴¹

And David the Prophet also said: “The Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Your name in all the earth! From the mouths of the children and sucklings you have prepared praise.”⁴²

14 Isaiah the Prophet said about his sufferings, which he accepted: “God, the Lord, gave to me a tongue for teaching to explain [it]

³⁷ Mic 1:3

³⁸ Job 19:25

³⁹ Ps 68:24

⁴⁰ Gen 49:11. In the margin of Sbath in a later hand: “tying to the vine His donkey foal and to the grapevine the donkey.”

⁴¹ Zech 9:9-10

⁴² Ps 8:1-2

للمضطهدين واخبرهم بالقول . انبته بالغداة وبالغداة يفتح اذنى لاسمع العلم . الله الرب فتح لى اذنى . فانا لم ارجع الى وراى ولم اقاوم ولم امارى . ولكن بذلت جسدى للضرب ووجهى للطم . ولم ارد وجهى عن الخزى والبصاق . والله الرب اعانى . من اجل ذلك لم اخزى بل جعلت وجهى مثل الحجر وعلمت انى لم اخزى . لانه قريب منى الذى يبررنى .

15 وقال ايضاً على العجائب عند مجيء المسيح المخلص للشعوب تقووا ايتهما الايدى الضعيفة وصلبوا³⁵ الركب . وقولوا لضعيفى القلوب ها الهكم الطالب جاى³⁶ ويخلصكم . حينئذ³⁷ تفتح اعين العمى واذان الصم تفتح . هناك يثب³⁸ المقعد مثل الايل ويستطلق لسان الاحرس الابكم . لان الماء قد انفجر من القفر وجرت الاودية فى الصحراء حتى تكون اجام الماء³⁹ فى مواضع العطش وتكون ينابيع الماء فى ارض الظماء⁴⁰ . ينبت العمير والقصب والبرى فى ديار بنات اوى . ويكون هناك سبيل معتدل . ويدعى طريق القدس ولا يجوز فيها نجس . ولا يكون فيها طريق الفجار .

16 وقال اشعيا النبى ايضاً . هكذا يقول الرب ظهر اسرائيل ومخلصه الذى يرذل نفسه والمردول من الشعب ومن عبيد المسلطين⁴¹ الملوك ينظرون ويقومون والساطين يسجدون له من اجل ان الرب صادق وقدوس اسرائيل الذى اجتباك . هكذا يقول الرب فى زمان مقبل استجيب لك وفى يوم الخلاص انصرك وجبلتك وجعلتك عهداً للشعوب ونوراً⁴² للامم لتعمر الارض وترث ميراث الخرابات وتقول للاسرى اخرجوا وللمحبسين⁴³ اظهروا . يرعوا⁴⁴ على الطرق ويكون مرعاهم فى جميع السبل . لا يجوعون

³⁵ P وصلوا ³⁶ Graf: read جاءى ³⁷ P حينئذ³⁷; حينئذ³⁷ S ³⁸ Graf: يثب ³⁹ P يثب ⁴⁰ S وللمحبوسين ⁴¹ S المسلطون ⁴² Graf: وسراً ⁴³ S وللمحبوسين ⁴⁴ S ليرعوا

to the oppressed and tell them of the Word. He caused it to grow in the morning, and in the morning He opened my ear to hear the knowledge. God, the Lord, opened my ear, but I did not turn back, nor did I resist nor did I oppose [it]. Rather, I sacrificed my body to beating and my face to blows, and I did not keep my face from disgrace and spittle. God, the Lord, is my Help, and because of this I am not disgraced. Rather I shall make my face like a stone, and I know that I will not be disgraced. Because near to me is the One Who will vindicate me.”⁴³

15 He also said concerning the miracles at the coming of the Messiah, the Savior, to the tribes: “O you peoples! strengthen your weak hands and make firm [your] knees. Say to those who are weak-hearted: See your God, the Seeker, comes and saves you. At that time the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be opened. Then the lame will leap like the stag, and the tongues of the speechless and dumb will be loosened. For the water will burst forth from the desert and the rivers flow in the wasteland until there are vessels of water in parched places, and water gushes forth from the thirsty earth. Living things and reeds and papyrus will grow in the lands of the jackels. There is the straight way, and it will be called the Holy Path, and no[one] unclean will be on it, and it will not be the path of the shameless.”⁴⁴

16 Isaiah the Prophet also said: “Thus says the Lord, Who aids Israel and is its Savior, Who makes Himself lowly and Who is despised by the tribes and by the servants of the those who have authority, the kings will see and the rulers will prostrate [themselves] before Him because the Lord is true and the Holy [One] of Israel Who has chosen you. Thus says the Lord: ‘In an acceptable time I have answered you, and on the day of salvation I have helped you. And I have formed you and made you a Covenant for the tribes and a light⁴⁵ to the peoples so that you will build up the land and inherit the ruined legacy, and say to the prisoners: ‘Come out!’ [and] to

⁴³ Is 50:4-7

⁴⁴ Is 35:3-8

⁴⁵ Other manuscripts have *mysterion*.

ولا يعطشون ولا يضرهم السموم والشمس . لان رحمتهم تسوسهم والى ينابيع الماء تاتى بهم .

17 وقال ايضاً على تجسده والامه صعده مثل المولود قدامه ومثل الاصل من الارض العطشانة . ولم يكن له منظر ولا بهاء ورأينه وليس له منظر وكذبناه .

وحسبناه الحقيير المتواضع من الناس . وهو رجل ذو اوجاع عالم بالالام . وادبرنا وجوهنا عنه وزرينا به ولم نعهده وهو حق صبر على اوجاعنا واحتمل الامنا .

ونحن حسبناه مجاهداً وهو المضروب فى ذوات الله . ومن اجل خطايانا هو يقتل ويتضع من اجل اثمنا وعليه ادب سلامتنا وبجراحاته نبراً . وجميعنا مثل الغنم تبددنا وكل انسان منا الى جانبه⁴⁵ انصرف والرب لقيه خطايانا جميعاً . دنأ وتواضع ولم يفتح فاه . وسيق مثل الحمل للذبح . وكان كالنعجة صامتاً قدام جاززها ساكتاً ولم يفتح فاه . وسيق من الحبس الى القضاء ومن يقدر يحدث بما لقي . من اجل انه رفع من ارض⁴⁶ الحياة ودنا منه قوم من ائمة شعبي واذن المنافق بدفنه والغنى بموته على انه لم يصنع اثماً وليس فى⁴⁷ فيه مكر .

والرب احب ان يواضعه ويؤلمه ويحمله خطايا⁴⁸ فى نفسه ليربى الزرع ويطيل الايام وينجح هوى الرب على يديه . ومن عمل نفسه يعرف ويشبع بالمعرفة ويزكى الابرار ويكون عبد الكثير⁴⁹ وخطاياهم هو يحتمل . لذلك اقسمه فى الكثير ويقسم نهب⁵⁰ الاعزاء . انه بذل نفسه للموت .

PS 50 للكثير S 49 حظايا Graf: 48 S omits. 47 الارض PS 46 جابيته PS 45 النهب

those confined: ‘Appear!’ They will graze upon the streets and their pastures will be on every path. They will not hunger, nor thirst, the hot wind and the sun will not harm them, for He Who is merciful leads them and He brings them to springs of water.”⁴⁶

17 He also said about His incarnation and His suffering: “He rose up before Him like the young plant⁴⁷ and like the root from the thirsty earth. He did not have an [attractive] appearance or beauty, and we saw Him and He did not have an [attractive] appearance and we despised Him.

We counted Him contemptible, humiliated by human beings. And He was a man of sufferings [and] acquainted with grief. We turned our faces from Him and we reviled Him and did not count Him.

And He truly bore our sufferings and carried our griefs. We reckoned Him a warrior, and He was struck by God Himself. And because of our offenses He was killed and abased because of our sin. Upon Him was the chastisement of our integrity and by His wounds we are freed from blame. We were all like sheep scattered and every person among us had gone to his own way, and the Lord has laid upon Him all of our offenses.

He was contemptible and He was humiliated and [yet] He did not open His mouth. He was driven like the lamb to the slaughter, and quiet like the sheep silent before its shearers and He did not open His mouth. He was driven from imprisonment to the tribunal. Who is able to tell what He endured? For He was taken away from the land of the living and the sin of my people drew near to Him. The hypocrite learned of His burial and the rich of His death, because He had not committed a sin and in His mouth was no deceit.

The Lord wished to humiliate Him and to cause Him to suffer and bear the offenses upon Himself, so that the seed will grow and the days will become longer and the desire of the Lord will succeed by His hand. He will see the work of His soul, and be satisfied in the knowledge [of it], and He will purify the righteous and become the servant of the many and their offenses He will bear.

Because of this, I shall give Him a share among the many, and He will give a share of the booty to the mighty. He sacrificed His

⁴⁶ Is 49:7-10

⁴⁷ Literally: the child.

واحصى مع الاثمة واحتمل خطايا⁵¹ كثير ولقى الاثمة .

18 قال زكريا النبي ولينظروا الى من طعنوا وينوحوا عليه كنوحهم على الوحيد وليكتئبوا عليه كاكئابهم على بكر .

وقال ايضاً وليفتح في ذلك اليوم منابع⁵² لآل داوود ولسكان بيت المقدس للقطر⁵³ والتطهير .

وقال ايضاً زكريا انتبه السيف على راعي اسرائيل الرجل حبيبي قال الرب العزيز اضرب الراعي تبدد الغنم⁵⁴ . اعطف يدي على الرعاة .

19 وقال ميخل النبي وضربوا بالسوط خده لراعي اسرائيل .

وقال سليمان الحكيم نبيد البار لا يشبهنا يناصر لحق كلامنا ويعيرنا باعمال السيئة ويتذكر علينا سيئات⁵⁵ اعدائنا⁵⁶ .

وقال زكريا النبي في ذلك اليوم لا يكون ضوء ولكن يكون جليد وظلمة ويكون يوماً واحداً . وذلك اليوم لا يعرف لا الليل ولا لنهار وعند وقت المساء يكون الضوء .

وقال ايضاً زكريا اخذت⁵⁷ ثمن الذي ليس له ثمن الثلثين الفضة التي⁵⁸

⁵¹ Graf: حظايا ⁵² P منابع; S معاب ⁵³ PS للفطر ⁵⁴ S الخراف ⁵⁵ S الذي ⁵⁶ Graf: اعداءنا ⁵⁷ S اخذة ⁵⁸ S الذي سات

soul to death, and was counted among the sinners, and bore the sins of the many and endured [at the hands of] the sinners.”⁴⁸

18 Zachariah the prophet said: “And truly they will look to me, the one whom they have pierced and they will weep over him as they weep over the only [child] and truly they will mourn over him as they mourn over a first-born.”⁴⁹

And he also said: “Truly on that day there will be opened a spring for the family of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for cleansing⁵⁰ and purification.”⁵¹

And Zachariah also said: “I shall awaken the sword against My shepherd Israel, the man who is my beloved. The Lord, the Almighty, said: ‘Strike the shepherd, so the sheep will scatter. I shall turn my hand against the flock.’”⁵²

19 And Micah the prophet said: “They struck the cheek of the shepherd of Israel with the whip.”⁵³

And Solomon the Wise said: “We shall destroy the righteous [man]. He is not like us. He opposes the cleverness of our speech and reproaches us for evil deeds and reminds us of the misdeeds of our enemies.”⁵⁴

And Zachariah the prophet said: “On that day there will be no light, but there will be ice and darkness, and there will be one [continuous] day. And this day will not know either night nor daylight, and evening time will be light.”⁵⁵

And Zachariah also said: “I took the price of what has no price, the

⁴⁸ Is 53:2-12

⁴⁹ Zech 12:10

⁵⁰ Not clear: قطر

⁵¹ Zech 13:1

⁵² Zech 13:7

⁵³ Mic 5:1

⁵⁴ Wis 2:12

⁵⁵ Zech 14:6-7

شارط عليه بنو اسرائيل واعطيتها اجرة حقل الفجار مدفن الغرباء كما امر الرب .

20 وقال عاموص⁵⁹ وليكن فى ذلك اليوم قال الرب اغيب الشمس فى وقت الظهر واطلم الارض فى يوم الضياء .

وقال ارميا النبى تعالوا تفسد شجرة خيرة .

وقال سليمان النبى⁶⁰ ايضاً البركة على الخشبة التى الصديق منها يظهر .

وقال اشعيا النبى ايضاً ترائيت للذين لم يطلبونى ووجدت⁶¹ عند الذين لم يسئلوا عنى وقلت هانذا هانذا وبسطت يدي كل النهار لشعب عاصٍ ممارى .

21 وقال داوود النبى فى عدة مواضع شهادة لم تترك صفيك يرى الفساد .

وقال من كان حكيماً فليفهم هذا وليعلم انفة الرب .

وقال اكل طعامى الذى كنت به واثقاً اولانى غدراً .

وقال قد⁶² قال اعداى متى يموت فيبيد ذكره . كانوا اذا اتوا لعيادتى يتكلمون بالكذب وفى قلوبهم يصوغون شرّاً ويخرجون فى الاسواق ويتحدثون .

⁵⁹ PS غاموص ⁶⁰ P omits. ⁶¹ S ووجدة ⁶² P omits.

thirty silver [pieces], with which the Sons of Israel concluded the agreement, and I gave them as a price for the field of the potters, the burial place of foreigners, as the Lord had commanded.”⁵⁶

20 And Amos said: “Truly on that day the Lord will say: ‘I shall make the sun vanish at the time of midday and I shall make the earth dark in the daylight.’”⁵⁷

And Jeremiah the prophet said: “Arise! A good tree shall become ruined.”⁵⁸

And Solomon the prophet also said: “The blessing is upon the wood by which the righteous is made manifest.”⁵⁹

And Isaiah the prophet also said: “I have appeared to the ones who did not seek me, and am found by the ones who did not ask after me. And I said: ‘Here I am! Here I am! I spread out my hand the [entire] day to a difficult and rebellious people.’”⁶⁰

21 And David the prophet said in numerous places as a witness: “You have let not your friend see the corruption.”⁶¹

And he said: “The one who is wise should understand this, and should know the scorn of the Lord.”⁶²

And he said: “He in whom I trusted, [who] has eaten my food, has betrayed me.”⁶³

And he said: “My enemies said: ‘When will he die and his memory pass away?’ When they come to see me, they speak with lies, and in their hearts they imagine mischief, and they go out into the streets

⁵⁶ Cf. Zech 11:12-14; Mt 27:10

⁵⁷ Amos 8:9

⁵⁸ Source not known. Cf. 2 Ki 3:19

⁵⁹ Wis 14:7

⁶⁰ Is 65:1-2

⁶¹ Ps 16:10

⁶² Ps 107:43

⁶³ Ps 41:9

وتشاور علىّ شاربوا الخمر .

وقال ايضاً وعند عطشى سقوني خلاً وفي طعامي جعلوا مراراً⁶³ .

وقال ايضاً سبحوه الراكب على المغارب الرب اسمه من المشرق .

22 وقال اعطى العلى صوته صوتاً عزيزاً .

وقال رتلوا للرب الذى استوا على سماء السماء وعظموه بالتسايح .

وقال ايضاً ثقبوا يدي ورجلي واحصوا عظامي كلها وقسموا ثيابي بينهم وعلى لباسي اقترعوا .

وقال ايضاً عدت⁶⁴ مع هابطى الهاوية وصرت كمن ليس له معين .

23 وقال ارميا النبى⁶⁵ على الموتى . يعيشون الموتى كما قال رب الارباب .

وقال صنفيا النبى قال الرب من الان يرجونى كيوم اقوم فيه الشهادة .

وقال داوود النبى ايضاً يقوم الله فيتفرق جميع اعدائه وتهرب شانوه⁶⁶ من بين يديه .

⁶³ مرارة S ⁶⁴ عدة S ⁶⁵ P omits. ⁶⁶ Graf: read شانوه

and tell it. And they deliberate against me, drinking wine.”⁶⁴

And he also said: “When I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink, and for my food they gave me bitters.”⁶⁵

And he also said: “Praise to the One who rides over the places of the west from the east, the Lord is His name.”⁶⁶

22 And he said: “The Most High gave His voice, a mighty voice.”⁶⁷

And he said: “Sing to the Lord, Who goes up to the heaven of heavens, and extol Him with songs of praise.”⁶⁸

And he also said: “They have pierced my hand and my feet, and have allotted all of my bones, and they have divided my clothing among them, and for my garment they have cast lots.”⁶⁹

And he also said: “I am counted among those falling into the abyss, and [I am] like the one who has no helper.”⁷⁰

23 And Jeremiah the prophet said about the dead: “The dead will live, as the Lord of Lords has said.”⁷¹

And Sophonias the prophet said: “The Lord said: ‘From now on they will wait for Me in expectation as on the day I will stand as a witness.’”⁷²

And David the prophet also said: “God will arise and all of His enemies scatter, and they flee from before Him who hate Him.”⁷³

⁶⁴ Ps 41:5-7

⁶⁵ Ps 69:21

⁶⁶ Ps 68:4

⁶⁷ Ps 68:33

⁶⁸ Ps 68:33-34

⁶⁹ Ps 22:16-17

⁷⁰ Ps 88:4

⁷¹ Not found in the prophets.

⁷² Zeph 3:8

⁷³ Ps 68:1

وقال ايضاً استيقظ الرب كالنائم وكالرجل الثمل الفائق من شرابه⁶⁷ .

وقال ايضاً الحجر الذى لقيه البتّاون هذا صار رأس الزاوية . ومن عند الرب كان هذا وهو اعجوبة فى اعيننا⁶⁸ .

24 وقال اشعيا النبى من هذا القادم من ادوم وثيابه حمر كالعصفر كمثل من صعد من المعصرة .

وقال داوود النبى ارتفعى ايتها الابواب الدهرية ليدخل ملك المجد . من هو ملك المجد . الله القوى هو ملك المجد العزيز الى الابد .

وقال ايضاً تعالى الله بالمجد والتسييح والرب باصوات الوقار والمجد .

وقال ملك الله على الامم واستوى على منبره القدوس .

وقال صعد الى العلى وسبى سبياً واعطاه الناس عطايا .

وقال ايضاً تعالى الله على السماء وكرامته على الارض كلها .

25 وقال دانيال النبى الى مجيء المسيح الملك سبع⁶⁹ سوابيع وايضاً اثنان وستون سابوعاً ومن بعد ذلك يقتل المسيح ومدينة القدس تخرب وتصير

سبعة S⁶⁹ اعيننا S; اعنا P⁶⁸ من الخمر S⁶⁷

And he also said: “The Lord is awakened like the sleeper, and like the drunken man waking from his wine.”⁷⁴

And he also said: “The stone which the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner. And this is from the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes.”⁷⁵

24 And Isaiah said: “Who is this who comes from Edom and whose clothes are red, like safflower, like one who rises from the [wine] press?”⁷⁶

And David the prophet said: “Arise, ancient doors, so that the King of glory might enter! Who is the King of glory? God the powerful is the King of glory, the Almighty forever.”⁷⁷

And he also said: “God is exalted with glory and songs of praise, and the Lord with voices of honor and glory.”⁷⁸

And he said: “God reigns over the peoples and has ascended His holy throne.”⁷⁹

And he said: “He has gone up on high and has taken a prisoner captive, and the people have given Him gifts.”⁸⁰

And he also said: “God is exalted over the heavens and His honor is over all the earth.”⁸¹

25 And Daniel the prophet said: “To the coming of the Messiah, the King, are seven weeks and also sixty-two weeks, and after this the Messiah will be killed, and the Holy City destroyed and it will

⁷⁴ Ps 78:65

⁷⁵ Ps 118:22-23

⁷⁶ Cf. Ps 63:1-2

⁷⁷ Ps 24:7-8

⁷⁸ Cf. Ps 46:5-6

⁷⁹ Ps 47:8

⁸⁰ Ps 68:18

⁸¹ Ps 57:5

للّهوان مع الملك القادم . بعد ذلك ليس لها قوام .

انتهى⁷⁰ ذلك . تمت هذا بسلا من الرب . امين .

كما هذا الكتاب المبارك بمعونة الله تعالى والسبح لله .

⁷⁰ Sbath ms. includes: تصمنت اللنسخة المنقول منها ان الى هاهنا انتها . الكلام ولم يذكر اخر الرسالة . وجد في اصل النقلة ورقة بياض كما هاهنا .

become contemptible to the king who is coming. After this it will not rise up.”⁸²

This is the end.⁸³ This is completed in the peace of the Lord. Amen.

This blessed book is finished with the help of God, the Exalted, and may He be praised!

⁸² Cf. Dan 9:25-26

⁸³ Note in Sbath ms.: “The copy from which it was transcribed includes to here where the discussion ends and no other *risāla* is mentioned. In the original copy is a white page as here.”

FROM THE TEACHING OF ABŪ RĀ'ĪṬAH
AL-TAKRĪTĪ, THE SYRIAN, BISHOP OF NISIBIS,
'ON THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE
CREDIBILITY OF CHRISTIANITY WHICH WAS
RECEIVED FROM THE PREACHING OF THE
EVANGELISTS IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES'

Introduction

Context and Addressee

Throughout all of his writings providing responses to potential questions, Abū Rā'īṭah shows a particular interest in providing a "proof" that will be acceptable to Muslims, certainly in answer to the *Qur'anic* demand that Christians produce a *burhān*, or proof, for their teachings (*Sura* 2:111, 28:75). Abū Rā'īṭah does this using all available theological and philosophical means. In several of his other treatises he turns to reason to bypass the charge of *tahrīf*, the claim that the scriptures of Christians and Jews have been altered, and for that reason are no longer reliable. Using logical deduction, he formulates arguments intended to convince Muslims that Christian teachings are not only not absurd, but actually the best possible expressions of the common understanding of the divine attributes, the *ṣifāt*. *Demonstration* also provides a "proof" of the truth of Christianity, although it is unique in Abū Rā'īṭah's writings both in its intended readership and in its form.

The proof makes up the shortest of Abū Rā'īṭah's extant works: a single page of Arabic in Georg Graf's edition (130/162, 131/197); twelve lines in the French translation by Khalil Samir.¹ Its brevity is not, however, indicative of its importance. It is a neat and succinct demonstration of the validity of Christianity based on the universal acceptance of the Christian message. Like many of Abū Rā'īṭah's other writings, little is known about the purpose of the proof and it is designated differently by the editors of the various manuscripts in which it is found. Graf's edition, which is based

¹ Samir, "Liberté," 100-102. Samir gives a full examination of the text in this article.

on a 13th century compilation of texts entitled “A Collection of the Principles of Religion” (مجموع اصول الدين) (Vat. ar. 103), entitles it: “From the Teaching of Abū Rā’īṭah al-Takriti, the Syrian, Bishop of Nisibis, ‘On the Demonstration of the Truth of Christianity Received from the Preaching of the Evangelists in the Holy Gospel’”.² The text of Abū Rā’īṭah is included along with a treatise by the Nestorian Hunayn ibn Ishāq (808-873) in the twelfth chapter concerned with the manner of discerning the truth of a religion (يشتمل على كيفية ادراك حقيقة الديانة).³ No mention is made of the original purpose or addressee.

More helpful are four manuscripts Samir has collected from two separate sources which he has used to published a new edition and French translation of the text. Two of these manuscripts provide very important information as to the origin of the text and its purpose. The first late 13th century manuscript⁴ mentions only that Abū Rā’īṭah is responding to a *Mu’tazilī*, who has asked “that he explain to him the religion of the Christians in a way that reason can accept.”⁵ The second manuscript found in the Sbath Collection (Sbath 1017),⁶ more explicitly identifies itself as: “The Response of Abū Rā’īṭah at-Takrītī, Bishop of Nisibis, to Yumāmah, the *Mu’tazilī*, Concerning His Question about the Proof of the Authenticity of Christianity.”⁷ Samir points out, I think correctly, that the name of the *Mu’tazilī* should be *Tumāmah*,⁸ a mistake that can be attributed to a scribal error. In fact, a well-known *mu’tazilī* by this name was

² Graf, *Abū Rā’īṭah*, 131/iii. This text was previously edited by Cheikho, “Honein,” 1/287, trans. 291. Cheikho’s edition was prepared from two manuscripts owned by the Université St. Joseph in Beirut of Abū Ishāq al-Mu’taman ad-Dawlah ibn al-‘Assāl’s *الدين اصول الدين*. The earliest of these can be dated to the 14th or 15th century, the second is not dated, but is written in Garshuni (*ibid.*, 293-284). See GCAL II (1947): 407-414 for a complete list of Ibn al-‘Assāl’s works.

³ Cheikho, “Honein,” 284.

⁴ Šams ar-Riyāṣah Abū l-Barakāt ibn Kabar (c. 1305). See GCAL II (1947), 438-445 for a complete list of his works.

⁵ The full title reads: قيل : سأل بعض المعتزلة الاب ابا رائطة حبيب ابن حدينة التكريتي البعقوبي السرياني اسقف تكريت من كرسى سروج ان يوضح له دين النصرانية. Samir, “Liberté,” 99.

⁶ Sbath, *Manuscripts*, 133-134. Samir notes that he did not consult the manuscript itself.

⁷ The title given by Sbath is: جواب ابي رائطة التكريتي اسقف نصيبين ليمامة المعتزلى عندما سأله عن الدليل على صحة النصرانية

⁸ Samir, “Liberté,” 100, n. 15.

a contemporary of Abū Rā'īṭah—(Abū Ma'an) Ṭumāmah ibn al-Ašras (an-Numaryī) al-Baṣrī (d.c. 828).⁹ He was active during the period which has been suggested for Abū Rā'īṭah's *floruit*, and there is no obvious reason to doubt the claim of the Sbath manuscript.

Ṭumāmah ibn al-Ašras was a student of the well-known Bišr ibn al-Mu'tamir al-Hilālī (d. 210/825),¹⁰ and the teacher of al-Ġāḥiz (775-868).¹¹ Ibn Murtaḍa places him in the seventh generation of the school of Baṣra, after Abū l-Huḍayl al-'Allaf (d. 226/840),¹² and he was a friend of the caliph Harūn ar-Rašīd (170-193/786-809), who invited him to the court at Baghdad. Ṭumāmah remained there as an adviser to al-Ma'mūn (198-218/813-833) and died during his reign. Unfortunately, he is known only through his opponents, and none of his own writings have survived. However, it is clear that he belonged to the early 'Abbāsīd movement of the *Mu'tazilah* who were concerned with the question of whether God or human beings are the creators of human actions.¹³

Since Ṭumāmah lived and was active in Baghdad, only a few miles from Takrīt, it is not unlikely that he and Abū Rā'īṭah crossed paths at some point, as the Sbath manuscript suggests, resulting in some sort of intellectual exchange. If this is true, several things about the text might be determined. First, a general date can be assigned to this text between the arrival of Harūn ar-Rašīd in Baghdad and before the death of Ṭumāmah, that is, somewhere between 790 and 828. Second, the existence of this text is evidence that actual exchanges took place between Abū Rā'īṭah and Muslim scholars, which he then used as the basis for his other treatises responding to Islam. With a notable exception (*On the Union*), Abū Rā'īṭah's other writings do not name his audience explicitly. Nonetheless, they reveal a great awareness of the scholarly debate occurring in Muslims circles of his day. This text, purporting to be a response to a well-known

⁹ See *GAS* I (1967): 615-616 for Ṭumāmah's known writings.

¹⁰ See *GAL*, S. 1, 338-339.

¹¹ al-Ġāḥiz is known to have been interested in the teachings of Christianity and wrote his *Radd 'alā an-naṣārā* as a refutation of them. Cf. Ch. Pellat, "ḌJĀḤIZ," *EF*, vol. 2: 385-387.

¹² Aḥmad ibn Yahya ibn al-Murtada, *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*, T.W. Arnold, ed. (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1902), 35.

¹³ Max Horton, "Ṭumāmā b. Ašhras," *EF*, 8/739-740. For further information, see Max Horten, *Die philosophischen Systeme* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1912), 309-317.

Mu'tazilī lends credibility to the contention that Abū Rā'īṭah was in some manner an active participant in that debate. With this in mind, the purpose and significance of the text becomes clearer. Abū Rā'īṭah intends to provide a logical proof of Christianity that does not appeal to scripture, but rather to what can be demonstrated by reason. Further, he formulates it in a manner that he expects will be acceptable to a Muslims scholar committed to the particular philosophical principals held by the *Mu'tazilāh*.

Contents

Apart from the various titles given to it in the known manuscripts, the proof itself offers no explicit information about its context. What is provided is simply a syllogism in a style that is found extensively in several other of Abū Rā'īṭah's extant writings. He begins with the proposition that Christianity must either be true or false, and those who have accepted it must either be wise (عقلاء) or ignorant (جهلاء).¹⁴

The first aspect of this brief writing that strikes one is the syllogistic form of the proof. In light of the interest in the Greek philosophical tradition in Abū Rā'īṭah's day, it is not surprising that this demonstration the rational credibility of Christianity in logical terms should come to light. The first line of Abū Rā'īṭah's exercise immediately establishes that this is a logical, not a scriptural or theological proof, by juxtaposing two opposites using اما . . . اما, "either . . . or".¹⁵ In only twelve lines he uses this grammatical construct three times to lead the reader to a logical conclusion of the truth of Christianity.

It may also strike the modern reader that in his proof through reason Abū Rā'īṭah insists on the necessity of miracles to demonstrate the truth of a religion. However, on closer examination the reason for his insistence becomes clear. A religion can only be from God and true if it is a *universal religion*, that is, one that is accessible to all people. All people, he argues, fall into one of two categories: the wise, who will accept something that is true because they are bound by intellectual integrity, and the ignorant, who will accept something

¹⁴ Abū Rā'īṭah not infrequently refers to "the ignorant and intelligent" to include all people, i.e., Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 130/131, 131/159. Samir also points out the recurrence of the terms in Paul's letters, especially Rom 1:14,22; I Cor 1:25,27; Eph 5:15. Samir, "Liberté," 104.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

that is true only by force, since they are naturally unwilling to limit their material comforts.

Second, Abū Rā'īṭah makes the argument that a true religion will appear to be contrary to what both the wise and the ignorant desire. Since religion is truly beyond human comprehension, the wise will not be able to attain certitude through rational proof. The true religion will also certainly limit worldly comforts and desires, resulting in the necessity of coercing the ignorant into accepting it against their lower inclinations. In fact, Abū Rā'īṭah argues in his extensive *Proof*, that the most common reasons why someone might convert to another religion are invalid. He points especially to the worldly temptations of wealth, power, privilege, the allowance of what is forbidden—divorce, adultery and the accumulation of wealth, and to over-powering fear for one's safety. This means that the true religion must be identified by means other than what can be rationally proven or what appears to be personally advantageous. One must be "coerced", that is, compelled, to believe that a religion is true by something beyond one's control.

According to Abū Rā'īṭah, coercion is of two types: that of the sword by humans and that of miracles by God. Coercion by the sword is never successful. Coercion can bring both wise and ignorant to accept something at least superficially against their own judgement. But accepting it does not make it *true*. Nonetheless, Abū Rā'īṭah points out, those who are wise have indeed accepted something that cannot be rationally demonstrated, and the ignorant have embraced a religion that forbids worldly pleasures. This is because of the compelling evidence of signs and miracles, not because of the sword. All people, both ignorant and wise, can see clearly that miracles are from God, while coercion by the sword is from humans. Consequently, Abū Rā'īṭah claims, miracles are the strongest confirmation that the religion in which they appear is the true religion from God. Given the numerous examples of miracles found in Christianity, Abū Rā'īṭah leaves his reader to conclude that it is the true religion. This is similar to the conclusion found in his *Proof* that the only acceptable reason to convert to a religion is because one is convinced by the authentic signs of the Apostles that are impossible to deny (§10).

In the present syllogism, the presence of miracles in Christianity is the crux of the argument. Although no context is given, the result of the demonstration is to lead the reader to the conclusion that a religion of the sword will not succeed where a religion of miracles

will. Without naming a “religion of the sword” specifically, it is clear within the known context that Abū Rā’īṭah is referring to the initial spread of Islam, and perhaps even to the Islamization policies coming into full effect in his day. For Muslims, the rapid expansion of Arab power and the subsequent influence of Islam was identified as a sign of its truth. Abū Rā’īṭah obviously rejects this, claiming that the presence of the sword may bring the population to submission, but it does not make a religion true. In fact, he implies, the apparent absence of miracles in Islam calls its basic truth seriously into question.

For most of the history of Christianity, the miracles associated with Jesus, particularly that of the Resurrection, as well as those related in the Old Testament, were seen as signs of God’s participation in and confirmation of a particular historical event. The New Testament and other early Christian writings abound with miracles that are understood to affirm God’s will in the lives of individuals and in the church as a whole. For Muslims, on the other hand, miracles associated with Muḥammad did not play a crucial role as an affirmation of the truth of Islam. In fact, the early Muslim community made very little claim to miracles. The *Qur’an* records that the Makkans refused to accept Muḥammad’s message because he did not perform miracles (*Suras* 13:7, 27; 17:94; 25:4-9). However, later Muslim tradition attributes a great number of miracles to him.¹⁶ The two most important miracles were held to be the revelation and perfection of the *Qur’an* itself, and the rapid spread of Arab control in the Mediterranean world.

Further, and particularly relevant here, the *Mu’tazilah* are known to have rejected the very notion of miracles by the saints, and were hesitant about accepting certain interpretations of eschatological *suras* that involved miracles.¹⁷ There is evidence, on the contrary, that the connection between miracles and important persons, especially Muḥammad, became increasingly significant for orthodox Muslims. By the tenth century, the second *Fiqh Akbar* contains an article affirming the belief in “signs of the Prophets and the miracles of the saints”,¹⁸ a theme that does not appear earlier.

¹⁶ Wensinck, *Creed*, 225-226.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 193. This is found in article 16 of the *Fiqh Akbar* II. For a full explanation and dating of the *Fiqh*, see *ibid.*, 188-247.

Several modern scholars have argued that the appearance of miracles as the subject of theological reflection, as well as the proliferation of traditions and legends about Muḥammad as a miracle-worker, have their roots in responses to the charge of Jews and Christians that his message could not be true if it was not accompanied by God's confirmation through miracles.¹⁹ If this is the case, then this exchange between Abū Rā'īṭah and Ṭumāmah may provide an insight into the manner in which the argument for the necessity of miracles was made. Abū Rā'īṭah makes a case for clear signs from God that reflects both the intuitions of potential converts to Islam from Christianity (if other prophets performed miracles and signs by God's leave, as the *Qur'an* says, then why not Muḥammad? How else can one know that Muḥammad is a true prophet of God?) and the argument for God's universal activity (what is the single type of proof convincing to all people?). The strength of Abū Rā'īṭah's conclusion may well have been identified by orthodox Muslims as a problematic implication of the extreme views of the *Mu'tazilah*, prompting a insistence on the existence of miracles to confirm Islam is the true religion of God.

Although the proof for Christianity offered in this brief text is a common one and adds little to what is already known of Abū Rā'īṭah's theological work, it is significant for the information it provides about those with whom he was in conversation. If it is in fact the case that this text is a remnant of correspondence between him and the *Mu'tazilī* Ṭumāmah ibn al-Aṣras, it is evidence of the close contact that he had with Muslim scholars of the period, and adds significantly to the few clues available for the context of his life and works. Further, this text adds support to the notion that Christian expectations of miracles as signs of God's confirmation of the truth of a religion contributed to their increasing importance in Islam.

¹⁹ Abdelmajid Charfi, "La fonction historique de la polémique islamochrétienne à l'époque abbasside," in *Christian Arabic Apologetics During the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir and Jorgen S. Nielsen, Studies in the History of Religions (*Numen* Bookseries), vol. LXIII (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994), 52-53.

من قول أبي رائطة¹ التكريتي السرياني اسقف نصيبين
مستدلاً به على صحة النصرانية²
المقبولة من الداعين المبشرين بها بالانجيل المقدس

جواب ابي رائطة التكريتي اسقف نصيبين ليمامة³ المعتزليّ عندما سأله
عن الدليل على صحّة النصرانية.⁴

قال لا تخلوا⁵ النصرانية من ان تكون اّما حقاً واما باطلاً
والذين قبلوها من ان يكونوا اّما عقلاء واما جهلاء

والعقلاء لا يقبلون ما لا يصح بالقياس المعقول الا بالقهر.
والجهال لا يمتنعون من الانهماك في الذات الدنيويّة الا بالقهر.

والقهر قهران اما قهر بالسيف واما قهر من الله بالايات.
ولم نرى⁶ العقلاء ممّن قبل دين النصرانية قهر بالسيف فيقولون ما لا يصح
بالقياس المعقول
ولا الجهال قهروا بالسيف فيمتنعون من الانهماك في لذات الدنيا.

وقد قبلها العقلاء بما لا يصح بالقياس المعقول
وقبلها الجهال وهي تصد عن الانهماك في لذات الدنيا.

¹ V(2) رابطة ² نصرا V(2) ³ لتمامة Read ⁴ This heading given in Sbath. ⁵ Cheikho: read تخلو ⁶ Cheikho: read نرى

From the Teaching of *Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrītī*,
the Syrian, Bishop of Nisibis,¹ 'On the Demonstration² of
the Credibility of Christianity Which Was Received from the
Preaching of the Evangelists
in the Holy Scriptures'

*The Response of Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrītī, Bishop of Nisibis, to Yumāmāh,³
the Mu'tazilī, Concerning His Question about the Proof of the Authenticity
of Christianity.*

He said: It must be the case that Christianity is either true or false
And those who have accepted it are either wise or ignorant.

Those who are wise will not accept what has not been demonstrated
to be true by a logical proof, except by compulsion,
And the ignorant are not restrained from abandoning [themselves]
to worldly things, except by compulsion.

There are two kinds of compulsion: either it is compulsion by the
sword or compulsion by signs from God.

We do not see that there are among the wise who have accepted
the religion of Christianity those who have been compelled by the
sword to accept something that is not been demonstrated to be true
by a logic proof.

And the ignorant are not compelled by the sword to refrain from
abandoning [themselves] to worldly things.

The wise have accepted [Christianity], although it has not been
demonstrated to be true by a logical proof.

And the ignorant have accepted it, although it discourages [one]
from worldly things.

¹ This ecclesiastical title is a mistaken later addition.

² Literally, "demonstrating in it".

³ Read: Tumāmāh.

وقد قهر الجميع بالآيات لا بالسيف.
والآيات ادلّ دليل على ان الدين الذي⁷ تكون فيه هو الدين الصحيح عند
الله عز وجل
والشريعة المسيحية تطابق هذه المقدمات.

⁷ V(2) omits.

All of them have been compelled by signs, not by the sword.
Signs are the surest proof that the religion in which they appear is
the true religion, according to God, the Powerful and Mighty.
And the Christian law is consistent with these presuppositions.

CHRISTOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

Introduction

Context and Date

This untitled text included in Graf's edition of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings has simply been labeled "Christologisches Gespräch" to identify its contents. The document is unlike those examined up to this point, in that Abū Rā'īṭah's thought does not play an exclusive role. Rather, it gives a brief summary of the doctrines of the Nestorians, Melkites and Jacobites as presented by representatives from each Christian community in a staged encounter before a Muslim official. All three manuscript copies in which the text is contained include a short introduction explaining the circumstances of the discussion, with slight variations.¹ The opening to two of the manuscripts reads: "It is said that 'Abd Īsū', the Nestorian Muṭrān, Abū Qurrah, the Melkite Bishop, and Abū Rā'īṭah, the Jacobite, were gathered before one of the Ministers.² He requested each of them to describe their faith in a brief statement, without making objections against either of his colleagues."

Two of the three persons mentioned are immediately identifiable: Theodore Abū Qurrah, the Melkite Bishop of Ḥarrān, and of course, Abū Rā'īṭah. Both of them are also correctly identified, Abū Qurrah as a bishop, and Abū Rā'īṭah simply as a Jacobite. The latter point is significant, since it adds credence to the view outlined above that Abū Rā'īṭah was only given the title of bishop much later, probably to supply him an ecclesiastical status more on par with the importance of his writings for the Monophysite community.

The identity of the third person, "'Abd Īsū', the Nestorian Muṭrān", is more mysterious. Graf has argued that the first Nestorian who can be associated with this name is the famous author and Metropolitan

¹ They are Bodl. ar. christ. Uri 38, Vat. ar. 1492, and Par. ar. 82. The variations are found in the first of these, which labels the text as "the eleventh treatise" (المقالة الحادية عشر) (Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 130/163, 131/iii).

² Ms. Hunt. 240 (Bodl. ar. christ. Uri 38) adds عند احد وزرا الشرق—"before one of the Ministers of the East".

of Nisibis, Ābdīšōʿ, who died in 1318. For this reason, he dates the text sometime after the middle of the fourteenth century. This has led some to conclude that the exchange depicted here was fabricated by a later writer who wished to lend an air of authenticity to his composition by placing his words in the mouths of well-known personages.³

Griffith has quite rightly rejected Graf's conclusion, pointing out that it "discounts two known persons in favor of an unknown one", as well as ignoring the numerous occasions on which Christians were called before Muslim officials to explain their doctrines.⁴ Several other factors also call Graf's dating into question. First, Graf himself admits that the paleographical evidence of Vat. ar. 1492 situates it in the thirteenth century, although it may perhaps be as late as the fourteenth.⁵ Second, it seems odd that a writer who wished to give credibility to an imaginary exchange would have pitted a contemporary figure against two well-known controversialists from at least four centuries earlier. Certainly he would have chosen someone who might conceivably been a colleague of Abū Qurrah and Abū Rā'īṭah, instead of simply inventing a name.

In fact, an actual person can be identified who fits the description of the "Abd Īsū" in question: Išōʿ bar nūn, who was the successor to the Nestorian Catholicos Timothy I. Išōʿ only occupied the position for the short period between 823 and 828 at a time when the Nestorian church was experiencing some complications internally, as well as in its relations with the Muslims authorities.⁶ The variation of the name found in *Discussion* might be the result of a mistransliteration, particularly if the editor of this text were a Jacobite or Melkite who was not familiar with the person in question.

In favor of this suggestion is the fact that Išōʿ bar nūn was Catholicos precisely at the time when Abū Rā'īṭah's literary participation in debates with Muslims and other Christians was at its height. In

³ Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 131/xxvi-xxvii.

⁴ Griffith, "Abū Rā'īṭah," 166. Several of these encounters have been edited and translated into a modern language, including: Nau, "Colloque," 225-279; Putman, *Timothée I*; Kurt Vollers, ed., "Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem (um 800 D)," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 29 (1908): 29-71, 197-221.

⁵ Graf, *Abū Rā'īṭah*, 131/xxvii.

⁶ Fiey, *Oriens Christianus*, 29, *Chrétiens syriaques*, 65-67, Jean-Maurice Fiey, *Nisibe: métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours*, CSCO 388, Subsidia 54 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1977), 81-82.

addition, Išo' bar nūn's death is known to have occurred about five years before both Abū Rā'iṭah and Abū Qurrah disappear from the pages of history. This makes all three roughly contemporary and generally the same age. In light of these considerations, it seems more likely than not that the Nestorian Metropolitan 'Abd Īsū' mentioned in *Discussion* can be identified as the Nestorian Catholicos Išo' bar nūn.

If this is correct, it adds a great deal of credibility to the document's claim to be an historical account of a meeting between the three ecclesiastical representatives before an unnamed Muslim official. Unfortunately, the editor of the text appears to have been uninterested in the circumstances surrounding the occasion of the discussion, and recorded only the names of the Christian participants and what they said. However, the date of the meeting can be narrowed to between 823 and 828, the period during which Išo' bar nūn was the Nestorian Catholicos. This neatly coincides with the time of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn's reign when it is known that such encounters were encouraged and often staged by Muslim officials. Consequently, it is possible to accept this text as an authentic report of an event organized by a minister which brought together three of the most renowned clergymen of the early ninth century.

Contents

The text of *Discussion* is simply divided into three parts, with each of the named persons presenting a brief summary of the faith of his denomination. Each one is asked first to give a short description of the community he represents, and then to provide a proof for it, following the demand for a "proof" from Christians for their belief in the Trinity and Incarnation traceable to the *Qur'ān*. In the christological discussion, each of the spokesmen is given the opportunity only to present his view without giving his opinion or arguments against any of his colleagues.

A few observations can be made about the statements given by each of the representatives. First, each of the explanations is offered in an unbiased way, with no obvious "winner" in the encounter. The only hint of the origin of the text is found in the position presented by the Jacobite, which is slightly longer and by far the most theologically complex. It is also placed last, implying that the editor wished the reader to be convinced by it. This possibility is further

substantiated by the fact that the document was preserved along with other unrelated Monophysite texts.

It is also significant that the synopsis given by each of the participants is indicative of the Christian community he represents. The terminology and explanations are common and would have been acceptable to authorities in each of the churches, making it more likely that they are based on an eyewitness account in which actual persons representing those views were present. One sees a great deal of similarity between the statements given here and Abū Rā'īṭah's own presentation of the positions of each denomination in *Refutation* §§3-5, which are clearly rooted in his own experience of debate with authoritative Melkite and Nestorian spokesmen.

The main argument made by the Jacobite is based on the ways in which something can be one, either in number, genus, or species. This is, of course, the centerpiece of Abū Rā'īṭah's defense of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in *On the Trinity*. In *Discussion*, the principle is adapted so that "number" is understood as an individual "*hypostasis*". Since it is clear that the incarnated Messiah cannot be classified as either one in genus or one in species, he must be one in number, that is, in *hypostasis*. Although this argument is not found as such in Abū Rā'īṭah's extant writings, the similarity between it and that found in *On the Trinity* is great enough to confidently associate it with him.

At the same time discrepancies can be detected between this account and details found in other writings by Abū Rā'īṭah. The most obvious difference is found in particular terms used here, especially شخص (individual *hypostasis*) and طبيعة (nature). The first of these appears throughout Abū Rā'īṭah's writings, but almost always to mean "single individual". For *hypostasis*, he uses the term اقنوم almost exclusively in all of his texts on the Trinity and Incarnation. The term طبيعة, on the other hand, is very rare in his works. One finds it in *On the Incarnation* §11 in reference to the "nature" of fire, and in *Proof* §25 in a discussion of unity of the *hypostases*. Neither is the phrase "the separation in name and meaning" (الافتراق تسمية ومعنى), which appears twice here, found anywhere in Abū Rā'īṭah's extant works.

Given the general similarity of the arguments made by the Jacobite to those of Abū Rā'īṭah, however, one must conclude some connection between the two. In light of the identification of the other two participants in the discussion and the accuracy of the general sce-

nario, it seems justified to suppose that *Discussion* is an account which reflects an actual historical event in which Abū Rā'īṭah, Abū Qurrah, and 'Abd Īsū' presented the teachings of their respective Christian communities before a Muslim official. However, it also seems likely that a later editor or compiler of the statements "updated" particular terms to coincide with current usage. In doing so, he also threw the main point of conflict between the three denominations into relief: the disagreement over the meaning of the term "*hypostasis*".

In light of this analysis, there seems to be no compelling reason not to believe that the three persons representing the Jacobite, Melkite and Nestorian positions are to be identified with the well-known figures named by the editor of the text. In favor of this is the accuracy of the report of the formulations of their doctrines, as well as the fact that Abū Rā'īṭah, Abū Qurrah, and 'Abd Īsū' can all be established as contemporaries who conceivably could have been in close proximity with each other at some point, probably in the city of Baghdad. Although the vocabulary shows some divergence from the usual terminology used by Abū Rā'īṭah, this can easily be accounted for in the editing process. One can well imagine that a later editor replaced his usual اقنوم with the more current شخص in order to more intelligibly draw the parallels between the positions of the three participants.

This text is of interest to modern scholars for two reasons. First, it clearly lays out the christological formulae of the three major confessions at the beginning of the ninth century in terms that were apparently acceptable to each of them. The account establishes that the problem lay in defining the term *hypostasis*, and the implications of the definition for each viewpoint. Further, the editor has organized the presentations of each in such a way as to draw out the differences and highlight the issues, indicating that he was aware of the root of the problem.

Second, if the three figures participating in the interview can be identified with Abū Rā'īṭah, Abū Qurrah, and 'Abd Īsū', the possibility that this is a reference to an actual historical meeting before an unnamed Muslim minister is greatly increased. It seems improbable that the summaries given in this text are a verbatim report of the presentations given. Nonetheless, the text provides valuable corroborating evidence that Abū Rā'īṭah was indeed a participant in staged discussions and *munāzarāt*, and that his writings reflect his own personal experience in them.

قيل¹ ان عبد ايشوع² المطران النسطورى وابو قرة الاسقف الملكى وابو راطة³ اليعقوبى اجتمعوا⁴ عند احد الوزراء⁵. فطلب منهم ان يصف كل واحد منهم اعتقاده بقول موجز ولا يعترض احد منهم على صاحبه.

1 فقال⁶ النسطورى اقول ان المسيح شخصان شخص لم يزل مولوداً⁷ من الاب مساوياً له فى طبيعته وجميع صفاته وشخص النسى مقتضب من مريم مساوياً لجميع الاشخاص الانسية ما خلا اختلاف الخطئة. وان اسم المسيح لا يقع على احد الشخصين دون الاخر بل عليهما جميعاً. فالمسيح شخصان وطبيعتان الاله⁸ وانسان. والبرهان على ذلك انا وجدنا الاشياء اذا اقترنت كانت لا محالة واقعة على جوهر او عرض. ولم يخلو⁹ ذلك الوقوع ان يكون عامياً او خاصياً¹⁰. وقد اتفقنا¹¹ ان المسيح ليس بعرض ولا محالة انه جوهر. ووجدنا الجوهر ليس يخلو¹² ان يكون عامياً او خاصياً. فان كانت الاسماء الواقعة عليه وقوعاً مختلفاً من الاله¹³ وانسان واقعة من طريق جوهر عامى لزم¹⁴ ان يكون اسم المسيح يعمّ الاب والابن والروح القدس ويعمّ ايضا¹⁵ الناس جميعاً ولما استحال ذلك ثبت ان الاسماء المختلفة انما وقعت على ذات الاشخاص. وهذا يلزم¹⁶ انه جوهران شخصان خاصيان جوهر الالهى وجوهر انسى.

2 وقال الملكى¹⁷ اقول ان المسيح شخص واحد وطبيعتان الهية وانسية. فهو بالالهية¹⁸ الاله¹⁹ وبالانسية انسان وهو شخص واحد الاله²⁰ وانسان من

¹ This edition does not include notes found in Graf from Za, since the sources of that printed text are unknown. ² O عبد ايشوع ³ O adds المطران ⁴ O adds عند احد وزراء الشرق ⁵ O omits. ⁶ O ابو رابطه ⁷ R ⁸ O adds ولكن يقع على غير ذلك ⁹ O adds يخلوا ¹⁰ O adds هذه المقايسة ¹¹ O adds ابو قرة اسقف الملكية ¹² O على ذات الخصوص ومتى يلزم هذا يلزمه ¹³ O مع هذه العموم ¹⁴ O الاله ¹⁵ O الاله ¹⁶ O بالاطبيعة الالهية ¹⁷ R ¹⁸ O بالالهية ¹⁹ O الاله ²⁰ O الاله

Christological Discussion¹

It is said that ‘Abd Īšū’, the Nestorian Muṭrān, Abū Qurrah, the Melkite Bishop, and Abū Rā’īṭah, the Jacobite, were gathered before one of the Ministers. He requested each of them to describe their faith in a brief statement, without making objections against either of his colleagues.

1 The Nestorian said: I say that the Messiah is two *ašhās*²—a person unceasingly begotten from the Father, the same as [the Father] in His nature and in all of His attributes, and a human *šahs* taken from Mary, the same as all human *ašhās*, the only difference being sin. The name “Messiah” is not applied to one of the two *ašhās* to the exclusion of the other, but rather [is applied] to both of them. For the Messiah is two *ašhās* and two natures, divine and human.

The proof of this is that when we find two things bound together, they necessarily occur either in an *ousia* or in an accident, and this occurrence can only be general or specific. Now we agree that the Messiah is not an accident, so it is necessary that He is an *ousia*, and we find that an *ousia* can only be general or specific. Now if the names applied to Him (that is, “God” and “human being”) are applied differently, and are applied in the manner of a general *ousia*, then it is necessary that the name the “Messiah” embrace the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as embrace the entire human being, and this is impossible, for it has been established that the different names are only applied to the being of the persons. So it is necessary that He is two individual proper *ousiae*: a divine *ousia* and a human *ousia*.

2 The Melkite said: I say that the Messiah is one *šahs* and two natures, divine and human. Through the divinity, He is God and

¹ There is no title given to this texts in the manuscripts.

² “Persons” or “individuals”. I have retained the Arabic term (*šahs*, pl. *ašhās*) here to underscore the confusion introduced by the lack of a definition of it from the outset.

جهتين مختلفتين . والبرهان على ذلك أنّا قد اتفقنا على ان المسيح واحد
 21²³ بالاطبيعة وانسان بالطبيعة ولا يخلو²² ان يكون الذى هو الاله
 بالطبيعة هو الذى هو انسان بالطبيعة او هو غيره . فان كان هو هو وجب²⁴ ان
 يكون شخصاً واحداً الالهاً فى طبيعة وانساناً²⁵ فى طبيعته²⁶ وهذا قولنا . وان
 كان الذى²⁷ هو الاله²⁸ بالطبيعة غير الذى هو انسان بالطبيعة²⁹ وكان الذى هو
 الاله³⁰ بالطبيعة هو ابن³¹ الله الازلى وكان المسيح الاله³² فى طبيعته³³ كان
 المسيح غير ابن الله وابن الله غير المسيح وهذا نقض ما عليه النصرانية .
3 وقال³⁴ اليعقوبى اذهب الى³⁵ ان المسيح شخص واحد طبيعة واحدة
 الالهية³⁶ انسية . لانى ازعم³⁷ ان الشخص الالهى اتحد بالانسى اتحاداً³⁸
 يزيل التفرقة تسمية ومعنى . فهو شخص واحد طبيعة واحدة . والبرهان على
 ذلك أنّا³⁹ اتفقنا على ان المسيح واحد فى العدد . ووجدنا الواحد فى
 المنطق لا يخلو⁴⁰ ان يكون شخصاً او نوعاً او جنساً . ولما استحل
 بالمقاييس ان يكون المسيح واحداً جنساً او نوعاً . بقى ان يكون شخصاً
 واحداً وطبيعة واحدة . وايضاً⁴¹ لما وجدنا العدد انما يقع على الامور المتفردة
 بخواصها التى هى اشخاص ووجدنا الشخص الازلى متخذاً بالشخص
 الزمنى منذ كونه⁴² استحال منهما الافتراق تسمية ومعنى ولما ارتفع الافتراق
 بطل⁴³ اثبات العدد لبطلان علته . ولو كان فى حال الاتحاد⁴⁴ اثنين وفى حل

او ان يكون الذى هو اله بالطبيعة O²⁴ اله O²¹ 22 RO يخلوا
 غير الذى هو انسان بالطبيعة . فان كان الذى هو اله هو انسان بالطبيعة وجب من ذلك
 27 O²⁵ Here the manuscript fragment of V(3) begins. انسان R²⁶
 O³² بن R³¹ اله O³⁰ ثبت هذا O²⁹ اله O²⁸ V(3) البارى
 O³⁶ V(3) omits. ابو رباطه O³⁴ وانساناً فى طبيعته O³³ اله
 O⁴¹ replaces يخلوا V(3)RO⁴⁰ قد V(1)³⁹ اتحاد R³⁸ وذلك O³⁷ الهية
 بطل من الثلثة وجهان وبقي الوجه الثالث وهو اله (نوعاً) with:
 O⁴² شخص واحد وطبيعة واحدة ومن البيان توكيداً لما اقول انا
 الاتحاد V(3)O⁴⁴ به O⁴³ بالشخص الانسى منذ حال كونه

through the humanity He is human, and He is one *šahs*, divine and human in two different ways.

The proof is this: We agree that the Messiah is one, God in nature and human in nature. It is necessary that the one who is God in nature is [either] the one who is human in nature or He is something else. Now if He is [the former], it is necessary that He is one *šahs*, God in His nature and human in His nature, and this is what we have said. And if He who is God in nature is other than He who is human in nature, and He who is God in nature is the eternal Son of God, and the Messiah is [both] God in His nature and human in His nature,³ then the Messiah is not the Son of God and the Son of God is not the Messiah, and this destroys what Christianity holds.

3 The Jacobite said: I believe that the Messiah is one *šahs*,⁴ one nature, divine and human. For I claim that the divine *šahs* is united with the human in a union which precludes [any] separation in name and meaning, for He is one *šahs* and one nature.

The proof is this: We agree that the Messiah is one in number. We find that “one” in logic can only be a *šahs* or a species or a genus. Now, it is impossible [to say] by analogy that the Messiah is one genus or species. It remains, then, that He is one *šahs* and one nature. We also find that number can only be applied to things which are differentiated in their properties ([these] are the *ašhās*). And since we find that the eternal *šahs* is united with the temporal *šahs* from the beginning of His existence, a separation between them in name and meaning is impossible. And if separation [between them] is eliminated, an assertion of number [applied to the *ašhās*] is false, because it is invalid.⁵ And if the condition of union is two, and if the condition of separation is two, then the condition of union is the condition of separation and the condition of separation is the condition of union, and this is absurd in name and meaning.

³ This phrase following.

⁴ Abū Rā’iṭah rarely uses the term *šahs* in his other extant writings, nearly always preferring *uqnūm* (*hypostasis*).

⁵ Things that cannot be distinguished from each other by separation cannot be counted.

الافتراق اثنين لكان حال الاتحاد⁴⁵ في حال الافتراق وحال الافتراق في حل
 الاتحاد⁴⁶ وهذا محال للتسمية⁴⁷ والمعنى .
 فاستحسن الوزير ما اتوا به وصرفهم⁴⁸ مكرمين . ولله الشكر دائما⁴⁹ .

⁴⁵ V(3)O الايتحاد ⁴⁶ V(3)O الايتحاد ⁴⁷ O التسمية ⁴⁸ O واصرفهم ⁴⁹ V(3);
 ولله المجد تمت المقالة الحادية عشر بسلام من الرب امين . والحمد لله والشكر O
 . والشكر كثيرا كما هو اهله .

The Wazir deemed what they brought him to be good, and he sent them away honorably.

Thanks be to God forever!

ABBREVIATIONS

- EI² *Encyclopedia of Islam*. H.A.R. Gibb, et al., eds. New ed. 9 vols. Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1966-.
- GAL Brockelmann, Carl. *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*. 5 vols. Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1937-1949.
- ODB *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Alexander P. Kazhdan, Alice-Mary Talbot, et. al. eds. 3 vols. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- PG *Patrologia Cursus Completus*. Series Graeca. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 161 vols. Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857-1887.
- TCF Willis, John R., ed. *The Teachings of the Church Fathers*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1966.

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