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CHRISTIAN ARABIC APOLOGETICS DURING THE ABBASID PERIOD (750-1258)

EDITED BY

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PREFACE

When Alphonse Mingana came from the Middle East to Wood-
brooke College, one of the Federation of the Selly Oak Colleges, he
laid the foundations in Selly Oak of a continuing interest in Islam
and Christianity in the Arab world. After a short stay at the begin-
ning of the first world war, Mingana spent many years working in
the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, but in
1932 returned permanently to Woodbrooke.[1]

In Selly Oak, Alphonse Mingana had intrigued Dr Edward Cad-
bury who was taking a very lively interest in the development of the
Colleges as a place of adult education and scholarship. Already while
he was in Manchester Mingana found himself returning to the Mid-
dle East to buy manuscripts for Dr Cadbury. In 1932 a new library
was built to house the manuscripts. By the time the collection was
completed, it numbered almost 2000 Syriac Christian and about the
same number of Arabic Islamic texts, as well as some Christian
Arabic texts. Around this collection Mingana continued researching
and teaching.

Mingana died in 1937 and was succeeded in his post by Dr John
Sweetman who continued the study of texts, writing the multi-
volume *Islam and Christian Theology*.[2] The dimension of Christian-
Muslim relations was strengthened when Dr John Taylor became
the Selly Oak Colleges' lecturer in Islam, but the focus moved
sharply away from the Mingana tradition into the contemporary
world and more especially the growing presence of Muslim commu-
nities in Britain and the rest of western Europe. Christian-Muslim
dialogue became the central theme, and this was continued by Dr
David Kerr when Dr Taylor moved to Geneva to take up the new
post on dialogue with Islam at the World Council of Churches in
1973. As Europeans began to become aware of Muslims among
them as well as the ever more obvious self-assertion of the Muslim

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[1] For a brief biography of Mingana, see Samir Khalil Samir, *Alphonse Mingana,
1878–1937, and his contribution to early Christian-Muslim studies*, Occasional Paper
no. 7, Birmingham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1990.
[2] J.W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, 2 vols. in 4 parts, London:
Lutterworth Press, 1945–67.

world, the Selly Oak Colleges decided to establish a new centre around the old lectureship. Following the recommendation of a conference of Muslim and Christian scholars held in Selly Oak, the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations was established in 1976. Its agenda was very much that of the contemporary world and particularly the European scene. It soon expanded to half a dozen academic staff and in the process widened its interests also to cover Africa, the Middle East and South and South East Asia. The Centre developed a growing postgraduate programme drawing students from all over the world and got involved in consultations, conferences and training programmes around Europe and other parts of the world. Dr Kerr moved to Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, in 1988.

The Mingana tradition was not so much forgotten as lying dormant, waiting for an opportunity and resources to be resumed. That occasion came in 1989–90, when Fr Samir Khalil Samir spent six months attached to the Centre as a William Paton Fellow. Fr Samir had for many years been engaged in reviving the study of Christian theology expressed in Arabic in a Muslim context. At the Centre we seized the opportunity thus offered us to hold a symposium based on the tradition of Mingana and represented in the manuscript collection. Fr Samir suggested the theme of Christian Arabic apologetics during the Abbasid period. He was also the key to the selection of contributors. The symposium met 24–28 May 1990 in Alphonse Mingana's first residence in Selly Oak: Woodbrooke College.

All the papers of the symposium have been brought together in this volume with the exception of one: technical reasons prevented us from including Dr Hubert Kaufhold's "Kurze westsyrisch-garšūnische Parallelen zur 3. 'Sitzung' des Elias von Nisibis".

The theme of the symposium and of this volume is one of both historical and contemporary significance. As a vernacular language Arabic was well-established in parts of Syria and Mesopotamia by the beginning of the 7th century CE, but the literary languages throughout the region, the languages in which religious thought and dogma were expressed, were the older ones of particular church hierarchies, such as Syriac, or those associated with the politically dominant elite, primarily Greek, itself also a church language. Only with the advent of Islam did Arabic become a literary language of significance, and then clearly associated with the new rulers and their new religion. A predominantly Christian population, now

under Muslim Arab rule, had to rely on its scholars and priests to help it find its role in this new state of affairs.

It was a situation of complexities and ambiguities. Much of Middle Eastern Christianity had been condemned as heresy by the former Byzantine rulers, something for which the Copts particularly had suffered. There seems to have been a generally widespread welcome at the 'liberation' from the Byzantine yoke, but the welcome did not last beyond a couple of generations, as a process of arabization and islamization took hold. Churchmen who had previously been at home in their traditional scholarly and liturgical languages now had to master a new language, one whose theological paradigms had been cast crucially in the mould of the Arabic of the Qùr°an and whose subsequent literary development had been formed by Muslim needs. These needs arose both from internal debates and conflicts and from encounter with the populations into which Islam so suddenly and massively expanded during the 7th and 8th centuries—but whatever the motivations the agenda was set by Muslim needs.

Christians could respond by adopting Arabic as their literary medium in several different ways. They could use 'Muslim' Arabic with the risk of thereby 'islamizing' the particularities of Christian faith and teaching. They could continue to think and write in their traditional literary languages and produce more or less mechanical translations into Arabic, with the concomitant risks of losing essential meanings in some instances and producing caricatures of meanings in others. Or they could become participants in a multireligious intellectual Arabic world, where their contributions were always open to being marginalized in the one sphere by the Muslim control of political power and patronage and in the other by being distanced from the broad congregations of the church.

Authors in the present volume confirm and expand on the role of the philosophical contributions representing this third way; see the contributions of Mark Swanson, Emilio Platti, and Harald Suermann. But in the process, we also see how closely linked are the circumstances of such well-known writers as Theodore Abū Qurrah, Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, and Abū Rāʾitah with the wider political, social and cultural circumstances of their times, in particular in the papers by Sidney Griffith and Abdelmajid Charfi. For a time this way seems to have been the most successful, but ultimately the possibility of the marginalization of their proponents from both their circles of refer-

ence—their Christian hinterland and their Muslim colleagues—
became reality. This trend was reinforced by a general marginaliza-
tion of philosophy as a medium of religious thinking in Sunni Islam.
However, the trend was not as thorough in Spain as elsewhere, and
the more inclusive intellectual atmosphere there contributed to the
rather longer-lasting Arabic Christian literature surveyed by P.Sj.
van Koningsveld.

The possibility of producing an 'indigenously' Arabic form of
Christian expression is explored in the paper by Samir Khalil Samir,
but we also see another form of indigenization explored by Johannes
den Heijer, here cultural and political rather than linguistic. The
greater success of the latter may have something to do with its Coptic
milieu, the theme for the second symposium planned for 1994. Cer-
tainly one of the features of Arab Christianity over the subsequent
centuries till today has been its insistence on retaining distinguishing
linguistic features to set it apart from the Islamic environment. This
need probably accounts for the failure of the fascinating experiment
of Fr Samir's anonymous author.

Of course, the interaction was not only one-way. As has been sug-
gested above, at the intellectual level the idioms and frameworks of
reference were clearly dominated by Muslim priorities. At the popu-
lar level, on the other hand, the situation may very well have been
the reverse. The circumstances of a mainly Christian population
gradually becoming Muslim through social and cultural processes
meant that much of popular culture for a long time must have re-
tained strong elements of Christian heritage, albeit itself of the
popular kind. One of the few surviving sources of this phenomenon
are the many apocryphal Jesus '*ḥadīṯ*' discussed by Tarif Khalidi.

It is beyond the scope of this volume to explore the contemporary
significance of these early Christian-Muslim interactions. Certain-
ly, they have contributed immensely to constructing sets of mutual
stereotypes which are easily and repeatedly mobilized in local and
regional conflicts in the present. Hugh Goddard's paper illustrates
very well the way in which such stereotypical views have been locked
into misunderstandings and caricatures constructed under the im-
pression of the circumstances and needs of a particular time and
place.

On the other hand it would also seem reasonable to suggest that
the experience of Christian encounter with Islam represented in the

papers in this volume is one which modern western Christianity could benefit from taking seriously.

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The Centre must record its gratitude to a number of bodies which made the symposium possible: to Woodbrooke College for its immaculate hospitality, to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham for visiting and welcoming the symposium to the city, to the British Society for Middle East Studies (BRISMES) for giving the symposium its sponsorship; to the British Council in Tunis, the British Academy, the trustees of the Mingana Fund, and the Awards Committee of the Selly Oak Colleges, all of which gave financial support; to the staff of the Selly Oak Colleges Library who put on an exhibition, described in this volume by Lucy-Anne Hunt, and gave enthusiastic help to the many visiting scholars.

The editors of this volume are indebted to Carol Bebawi who gave of her time to do some of the copy editing, to Ceri Greeves who struggled with the wordprocessing, to the authors for waiting so quietly to see their papers appear, and to the colleagues at the publishers in Leiden first for agreeing to publish this volume but most of all for their patience at times when they must have been wondering whether they were ever going to see the volume realized. The final editing of the text was done by myself, so Fr Samir must not be blamed for any shortcomings on that account.

One final point: during the symposium Fr Samir gave a public lecture on the life and work of Alphonse Mingana.[3] In his conclusion he challenged the Centre and the Selly Oak Colleges to revive the Mingana tradition of academic involvement in Christian Arabic studies. We have responded to this challenge in three ways. The Selly Oak Colleges' Library has embarked on a conservation and preservation programme for the manuscript collection. The Symposium in 1990 hopefully called itself the "First Mingana Symposium on Arab Christianity and Islam"; preparations are in hand for the second symposium, to be held in 1994 on the theme of "Coptic Arabic Christianity before the Ottomans: Texts and Contexts". And in September 1993, the Centre staff has been joined by Dr

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[3] Cf. Khalil, *op. cit.*

David Thomas, a scholar of Christian-Muslim theological debate during the early Abbasid period.[4]

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[4] See David Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

ABBREVIATIONS

BL   British Library.

CSCO   *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Louvain 1903 – .

EI2   *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. Leiden 1960 – .

GCAL   Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, coll. *Studi e Testi*, Vatican, 118 (1944), 133 (1947), 146 (1949), 147 (1951), 172 (1953).

HPC   Sawīrus ibn al-Muḳaffaʿ, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, Known as the History of the Holy Church*, vol. II, part II, *Khaël III, Senouti II (AD 880 – 1066 [sic])*. Edited by Aziz Suryal Atiya, Yass ʿAbd al-Masīḥ and O.H.E. Khs.-Burmester. Cairo: Société d'archéologie copte, 1948.

MIDEO   *Melanges de l'Institut Dominicain au Caire.*

MW   *The Muslim World*, Hartford Conn.

OCP   *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Rome.

PG   J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Paris 1857-1866.

PO   *Patrologia Orientalis*, Paris 1903 – .

ROC   *Revue de l'Orient Chretien*, Paris.

FAITH AND REASON IN CHRISTIAN KALĀM: THEODORE ABŪ QURRAH ON DISCERNING THE TRUE RELIGION

Sidney H. Griffith

The first Abbasid century or so was the period in the history of Islamic religious thought which saw the definitive development of the *ᶜilm al-kalām*, the intellectual discipline that is devoted to the reasoned justification of the truths of the divine revelation and to the exploration of the implications of revealed truth for human thought in general.[1] The eighty-some years between the reigns of the caliphs al-Mahdī (775-785) and al-Mutawakkil (847-861) were especially fruitful in this regard, marking the period within which religious debate reached such a pitch that finally al-Mutawakkil called a halt to the public scholastic disputations that his earlier predecessor, al-Maʾmūn (813-833), had notably encouraged, on the grounds that they were disruptive of the good order of society. Early in his reign (848), al-Mutawakkil put an end to the inquisition (*al-miḥnah*) which al-Maʾmūn had instituted to ensure the dominance of the rationalistically inclined Muᶜtazilites in the religious establishment.[2] Nevertheless, from this period even the casual reader of Islamic intellectual history now readily recognizes the names of prominent figures in the Muᶜtazilah movement, and their powerful adversaries, the followers of the redoubtable Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855).[3] The seldom told story of this period, however, is the partici-

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[1] There is as yet no completely satisfactory general history of the growth and development of the Islamic *ᶜilm al-kalām*. See W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh, 1973); idem. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: An Extended Survey* (2nd ed. Edinburgh, 1985); J. van Ess, *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie; zwei antiqadaritische Traktate aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Higra* (Beirut, 1977); M. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study* (Cambridge, 1981); R. Caspar, *Traité de théologie musulmane*, I (Rome, 1987).

[2] See Watt, *The Formative Period*, pp. 256-271.

[3] See J. Van Ess, "Une lecture à rebours de l'histoire du muᶜtazilisme," *Revue des études islamiques*, 46 (1978), pp. 163-240; 47 (1979), pp. 19-69; G. Makdisi, "L'islam ḥanbalisant," *Revue des études islamiques*, 42 (1974), pp. 211-244; 43 (1975), pp. 45-76.

pation of Christian *mutakallimūn* in an intellectual enterprise similar
to the one mounted by the early Muslim practitioners of *ʿilm al-
kalām*, with whom Christian thinkers sometimes took issue, even in
public debate. It was the public aspect of these controversies, and the
high profile of non-Muslims in public disputes that aroused opposi-
tion and caused al-Mutawakkil to put an end to them.[4] He even
demanded a rigorous application of the strictures against the high
social profile of *ḏimmī*s in public life.[5] Al-Mutawakkil's reign,
therefore, with the abolition of the *miḥnah* and the reinvigoration of
the application of the stipulations of the 'Covenant of ʿUmar,' pro-
vides a handy marker for the end of the first period in the history
of *kalām*, for Muslims and Christians alike.[6]

One has every reason to believe that the Islamic *ʿilm al-kalām* origi-
nally grew out of the early participation of Muslims in the styles of
scholarly discussion Christian academicians and intellectuals em-
ployed in the Greco-Syrian milieux of the Christian centres of learn-
ing in the oriental patriarchates.[7] At first, apologetics and polemics
were the business of the Muslim *mutakallimūn*.[8] Gradually, in tan-
dem with the contemporary introduction and translation of original-
ly Greek logical and philosophical works into Arabic, which spurred
the development of philosophy in Islam,[9] Muslim *mutakallimūn*,
pursuing the path of religious inquiry, built the science of *kalām* into

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[4] See, e.g., the complaints of al-Jāḥiẓ in his "Refutation of Christians," pub-
lished in J. Finkel (ed.), *Three Essays of Abū ʿOthman ʿAmr Ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ* (Cairo,
1926).

[5] See J.M. Fiey, *Chrétiens syriaques sous les Abbassides, surtout à Bagdad (749-1258)*
(*CSCO*, vol. 420; Louvain, 1980), pp. 83-105.

[6] On the 'Covenant of ʿUmar' see A.S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-
Muslim Subjects; a Critical Study of the Covenant of ʿUmar* (Oxford, 1930); A. Fattal, *Le
statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d'Islam* (Beirut, 1958).

[7] See J. Van Ess, "Disputationspraxis in der islamischen Theologie, eine vor-
läufige Skizze," *Revue des études islamiques*, 44 (1976), pp. 23-60; M.A. Cook, "The
Origins of Kalām," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 43 (1980),
pp. 32-43.

[8] See L. Gardet, "Quelques réflexions sur la place du *ʿilm al-kalām* dans les
sciences religieuses musulmanes," in G. Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in
Honour of Hamilton A.R. Gibb* (Cambridge, 1865), pp. 258-269; S. Pines, "A Note
on an Early Meaning of the Term *Mutakallimūn*," *Israel Oriental Studies*, 1 (1971),
pp. 224-240. Look for the forthcoming study by Richard C. Martin, "Warring
with Words: Rituals of Religious Discourse in the Classical Period of Islam, A.D.
850-1100".

[9] See D. Gutas, "Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristo-
tle's Philosophy: a Milestone between Alexandria and Bagdad," *Der Islam*, 60
(1983), pp. 231-267.

a formidable intellectual discipline, largely on the basis of the scho-
larly accomplishments of grammarians and grammatical theo-
rists.[10] In due course ʿilm al-kalām, in the works of its classic practi-
tioners, became what one modern commentator, Richard M.
Frank, described simply as "formal or speculative reasoning" in
religion, translating the phrase itself into English with the expres-
sion, "the speculative science." It is "a rational and conceptual and
logically regulated mode of discourse," Frank goes on to say, in
which "all of the primary doctrines are held to be rationally demon-
strable on the basis of universally acceptable assumptions and prin-
ciples. ... The mutakallimūn conceived their own discipline as an
autonomous and critically rational metaphysics." Frank concludes
that "Kalām in its way claimed to be the judge of the value not only
of all religious discourse but also of all theoretical discourse, includ-
ing that of falsafa."[11]

Christian mutakallimūn by way of contrast were apologists. For
them, kalām was principally a method of intellectually commending
the credibility of Christian doctrines in response to objections com-
ing largely from Muslims. The topical outlines of all the early Chris-
tian tracts in Arabic clearly show that the religious concerns of Mus-
lims set the agenda. The principal topics were always the unity of
the one creator God, the Trinity of persons (or hypostases) in the one
God, and the Incarnation of God the Word. The Qurʾān itself sets
this agenda, and the Christian apologists often quoted a telling
phrase or two from it in the course of their arguments. Secondary
topics for discussion were a selection of issues stemming from Chris-

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[10] See R.M. Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes; the Teaching of the Basrian School of
the Muʿtazila in the Classical Period* (Albany, N.Y., 1978). On the relationship of
philosophy and logic on the one hand, and of Arabic grammar on the other, in the
history of Islamic thought, see D.S. Margoliouth, "The Discussion between Abū
Bishr Mattā and Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī on the Merits of Logic and Grammar," *Journal
of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1905, pp. 79-129; M. Mahdi, "Language and Logic in
Classical Islam," in G.E. von Grunebaum (ed.), *Logic in Islamic Culture* (Wies-
baden, 1970), pp. 51-83; G. Endress, "The Debate between Arabic Grammar and
Greek Logic in Classical Islamic Thought," *Journal for the History of Arabic Science*
(Aleppo), 1 (1977), pp. 320-322 (English summary), pp. 339-351 (Arabic); 2
(1978), pp. 181-192 (Arabic).

[11] Richard M. Frank, "The Science of *Kalām*", a privately circulated research
paper, soon to be published. See also R.M. Frank, "Al-Ashʾari's 'Kitāb al-Hathth
ʿalāl-Baḥth'," *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales*, 18 (1988), esp pp.
103-122. For a discussion of the formalities of the fully developed *kalām* see J. Van
Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des ʿAdudaddīn al-Īcī* (Wiesbaden, 1966).

tian life and practice in which there was some matter requiring justification in Muslim eyes. Such issues were: the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, the integrity of the Holy Scriptures, the veneration of the cross or the holy icons, the practice of facing east to pray, the preservation of the relics of the martyrs, and a number of other similar matters. The Christian *kalām* tracts addressed themselves to one, two, or all of these topics depending on the scope and purpose of each work. Most of the major Christian writers in the early Abbasid period, men such as Theodore Abū Qurrah, Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rāʾiṭah and ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī wrote general apologetic pamphlets, including both the principal and the secondary topics.[12] Their methods of argumentation were parallel, *mutatis mutandis*, to the style of the discourse one may find in contemporary Muslim *kalām* texts. One supposes that the purpose of the Christian writers was primarily to justify the Christian faith in Christian eyes, in response to objections coming ultimately from the Muslim community, in the very Arabic idiom that on Muslim tongues seemed to call it into question.[13]

In the early Abbasid period the Christian apologetic campaign in Arabic also included a collection of dispute texts, either in the form of a report of a debate between a Christian and a Muslim and others, such as the one involving Abraham of Tiberias in Jerusalem around the year 820,[14] or in the form of an exchange of letters between Christian and Muslim protagonists, such as the al-Hāshimī/al-Kindī correspondence,[15] and the exchanges between Ibn al-Munajjim,

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[12] On these early writers and the topics in their apologetic works see S.H. Griffith, "The Controversial Theology of Theodore Abū Qurrah (c. 750–c. 820 A.D.); a Methodological, Comparative Study in Christian Arabic Literature," (Ph.D dissertation, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1978); idem, "Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rāʾiṭah, a Christian *mutakallimūn* of the First Abbasid Century," *Oriens Christianus*, 64 (1980), pp. 161-201; idem, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Burhān*: Christian *Kalām* in the First Abbasid Century," *Le Muséon*, 96 (1983), pp. 145-181.

[13] On this purpose of the Christian *kalām* texts, see S.H. Griffith, "The First Christian Summa Theologiae in Arabic: Christian *Kalām* in Ninth Century Palestine," in R.J. Bikhazi and M. Gervers (eds.), *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto; Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991), pp. 15-31.

[14] See G.B. Marcuzzo, *Le Dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade avec ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Hāšimī à Jérusalem vers 820* (Rome, 1986).

[15] See Armand Abel, "L'apologie d'al-Kindī et sa place dans la polémique islamo-chrétienne," *Atti della Accademica Nazionale dei Lincei*, 361 (1963), pp. 501-523. A new edition of the Arabic text, together with a French translation, is avail-

Hunayn ibn Isḥāq and Qusṭa ibn Lūqā.[16] There are also dispute texts in which the Christian *mutakallim* appears at the caliph's court, defending his faith in response to questions posed by the caliph himself, or on his behalf. Such are the accounts of the patriarch Timothy I at the court of al-Mahdī, and of Theodore Abū Qurrah before al-Maʾmūn.[17]

The point here is not to provide a comprehensive list of Christian Arab *kalām* texts in the early Abbasid period, but to call attention to their existence and to the varied forms of the Christian *kalām* already available in this formative period of Arabic thought in the world of Islam. In this milieu Christian religious thinking found an opportunity for a development of doctrine that went beyond the initially apologetic mode in which it was rooted. Christian *mutakallimūn* actually adopted a way of presenting the traditional teachings of the church in an Arabic idiom conditioned by the Islamic frame of reference in the midst of which they lived. In other words, Christian *kalām* was an exercise in what modern day commentators might call 'inculturation', a process in which the doctrinal development consisted in the exploration of new dimensions of Christian truth, when that truth was considered from a hitherto unavailable or unexploited frame of reference. To appreciate the development, one must take both poles of reference into account, the Christian and the Islamic.

Commentators often seem to miss the full significance of the bipolar reference of the vocabulary and of the structure of the arguments one finds in early Christian *kalām* texts in Arabic. As a result of this lapse of attention, scholars have also often seemed to suggest that the apologetic writers intended simply to translate a traditionally Greek or Syriac statement of the faith into Arabic, without allowing any

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able in Georges Tartar, "Dialogue islamo-chrétien sous le calife al-Maʾmūn (813-834), les épitres d'al-Hashimī et d'al-Kindī" (2 vols., Ph.D. Thesis, Strasbourg, 1977; Combs-la-Ville, France: Centre Évangélique de Témoignage et de Dialogue, 1982).

[16] See Kh. Samir and P. Nwyia, *Une Correspondence islamo-chrétienne entre Ibn al-Munajjim, Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq et Qusṭā ibn Lūqā* (Patrologia Orientalis, vol. 40, fasc.4, no.185; Brepols: Turnhout, Belgium, 1981).

[17] See Hans Putman, *L'église et l'islam sous Timothée I* (Beirut, 1975); R. Caspar, "Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le Catholicos Timothée I et la calife al-Mahdī", *Islamochristiana*, 3 (1977), pp. 107-175. Father Ignace Dick is at work on an edition of the Arabic text of the Abū Qurrah/al-Maʾmūn dispute texts. In the meantime, see G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (vol. II, Studi e Testi, 133; Vatican City, 1947), pp. 21f.

definitive significance at all to those nuances of the terms they employed which suggested an Islamic or Qur'ānic view of the matter at hand.[18] The result of this approach is to allow the traditional Greek (or Syriac) definitions of terms totally to control one's understanding of what an Arabic writer has said. And it has the further consequence of blinding the modern reader to any view of the common ground to which the writer was appealing in his effort to commend the truth of Christianity to speakers of Arabic whose very vocabulary, especially in the religious lexicon, was already conditioned by the Qur'ān and the thriving culture of the Muslims.

In this connection one must remember that the primary audience for Christian apologetics in Arabic were the members of the Christian communities themselves. The purpose would in all likelihood have been to prevent conversion to Islam and to show that Christians could answer Muslim challenges to their beliefs, rather than to convert Muslims to Christianity. To achieve this purpose the apologetic tracts would have had to carry conviction in the same terms in which Christian doctrines and practices were being challenged.

To give point to these general statements about Christian apologetic texts in Arabic, the purpose of the present communication is to study a single text from the earliest period of Christian *kalām*, Theodore Abū Qurrah's tract "On the Existence of the Creator and the True Religion." In addition one hopes the study will complement some earlier work done by the present writer on the general theme of comparing religions as a topic in Christian apologetics in the Islamic milieu,[19] as well as to afford the opportunity for a few reflections on the role of reason in justifying faith, according to thinkers in the first generation of Christian *mutakallimūn*.

Among Christians the Melkite scholar and controversialist Theodore Abū Qurrah (c. 750 – c. 825), probably an Edessan by birth, sometime monk of Mar Sabas monastery in the Judaean desert, and for a short period of time the bishop of Harran (705 – 812 A.D.) in Mesopotamia, was the earliest person whose name we know to write original theological works in Arabic.[20] As for documentary evi-

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[18] In this regard see, e.g., the terminological studies of Rachid Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes (750-1050)* (Paris, 1985).

[19] See S.H. Griffith, "Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians," *Proceedings of the PMR Conference*, 4 (1979), pp. 63-87.

[20] See I. Dick, "Un Continuateur arabe de Saint Jean Damascène, Théodore

dence from the Christian Arabic manuscripts preserved at Sinai for earlier works, one finds reference to the use of the language by monastic writers as early as 772 A.D., and perhaps as early as the 740s.[21] But for all practical purposes at the moment, Abū Qurrah ably represents the earliest generation of Christian *mutakallimūn*.

Abū Qurrah was known beyond the confines of his own Melkite confessional community. Abū Rā'iṭah, for example, complained about what he regarded as Abū Qurrah's sophistries in the mutual attempts to win the allegiance of an Armenian prince.[22] And there is the record in the *Fihrist* of the Muslim bio-bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm to testify that the Muʿtazilite writer of Baghdad, ʿĪsā ibn Ṣābih al-Murdar once wrote a book "Against Abū Qurrah, the Christian."[23] These two testimonies, plus the ample evidence of the so far unpublished accounts of Abū Qurrah's debates at the court of the caliph al-Maʾmūn, not to mention the evidence of the published works of Abū Qurrah in Arabic and Greek,[24] all serve to

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Abuqurra, évêque melkite de Ḥarrān; la personne et son milieu," *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 12 (1962), pp. 209-223, 319-332; 13 (1963), pp. 114-129.

[21] See the discussion of the MS, in which the year 772 appears as the date for the Arabic translation of the story of the Sinai martyrs, in S.H. Griffith, "The Arabic Account of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ an-Najrānī al-Ghassānī", *Le Muséon*, 98 (1985), pp. 337ff. Actually another Sinai MS may carry an even earlier date. It is Sinai Arabic MS 154 (Kamil, 111), which in addition to an Arabic version of the Acts and the seven Catholic Epistles includes an original theological work in Arabic in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity. See Margaret Dunlop Gibson (ed.), *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles, ... with a Treatise 'On the Triune Nature of God'* (Studia Sinaitica, no VII; Cambridge, 1899). The treatise, as published, is incomplete. A new edition, with new information regarding the date of the MS, will appear under the direction of Father Khalil Samir S.J., from Rome's Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies.

[22] See G. Graf (ed. and trans.), *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rā'iṭa* (CSCO, vols. 130 and 131; Louvain, 1951), vol. 130, p. 73.

[23] See Bayard Dodge (ed. and trans.), *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm; a Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture* (2 vols.; New York, 1970), vol. I, p. 394. See J. Van Ess, "Eine Predigt des Muʿtaziliten Murdār," *Bulletin d'études orientales*, 30 (1978), pp. 307-318.

[24] The published works of Abū Qurrah in Arabic are; I. Arendzen, *Theodori Abu Kurra de Cultu Imaginum Libellus e Codice Arabico nunc Primum Editus Latine Versus Illustratus* (Bonn, 1897); C. Bacha, *Le oeuvres arabes de Theodore Abou-Kurra, évêque d'Haran* (Beirut, 1904); idem, *Un traité des oeuvres arabes de Theodore Abou-Kurra, évêque de Haran* (Tripoli, Syria and Rome, 1905); G. Graf, *Die arabischen Schriften des Theodor Abu Qurra, Bischofs von Ḥarran (ca. 740-820)* (Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur- und Dogmengeschichte, Band X, Heft 3/4; Paderborn, 1910); L. Cheikho, "Mīmar li Tadūrus Abī Qurrah fī Wuǧūd al-Ḥāliq wa d-Dīn al-Qawīm," *al-Machriq*, 15 (1912), pp. 757-774; 825-842; G. Graf, *Des Theodor Abu Kurra Traktat über den Schöpfer und die wahre Religion* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des

attest to the high public profile he enjoyed as a religious controversialist in his own lifetime. More than three and a half centuries after his death, the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, Michael I (d. 1199), recorded the memory of Abū Qurrah preserved in the Syrian Orthodox Church that "because he was a sophist, and engaged in dialectics with the pagans (*ḥanpê*, i.e., the Muslims) and knew the Saracen language, he was an object of wonder to the simple folk."[25] So one may safely conclude, that among the Arabophone Christian writers of the first century of Christian theology in Arabic, Theodore Abū Qurrah was truly a *mutakallim*, one of whom not only his fellow Christians took notice, but one whom even the Muslim *mutakallimūn* took the trouble to refute.

Theodore Abū Qurrah's "Treatise on the Existence of the Creator and the True Religion," as its modern editors have called the work,[26] offers the reader a busy apologist's rule of thumb, a rationalist's stratagem for discerning the true religion; it features an original scheme for presenting descriptions of the nine religious communities whose doctrines the author thinks his contemporaries might be expected to recognize; it argues in favour of Christianity's claim to be the only one of these nine religious communities whose history and doctrines warrant acceptance as fulfilling all the conditions set out in the tract for discerning the true religion. One may con-

Mittelalters. Texte und Untersuchungen, Band XIV, Heft 1; Münster, Westphalia, 1913); I. Dick, "Deux écrits inédits de Théodore Abuqurra," *Le Muséon*, 72 (1959), pp. 53-67); S.H. Griffith, "Some Unpublished Arabic Sayings attributed to Theodore Abū Qurrah," *Le Muséon*, 92 (1979), pp. 29-35; I. Dick, *Théodore Abuqurra, Traité de l'existence du Createur et de la vraie religion; introduction et texte critique* (Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien, 3; Jounieh and Rome, 1982); idem, *Théodore Abuqurra, Traité du culte des icones; introduction et texte critique* (Patrimoine Arab Chrétien, 10; Jounieh and Rome, 1986). For Abū Qurrah's works preserved only in Greek see *PG*, vol. 97, cols. 1461-1610. For the manuscripts of unpublished works attributed to Abū Qurrah, see Graf, *GCAL*, vol. II, pp. 7-16, and J. Nasrallah, "Dialogue islamo-chrétien a propos de publications récentes," *Revue des études islamiques*, 46 (1978), pp. 129-132.

[25] J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le syrien; patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)* (4 vols.; Paris, 1899-1910), vol. III, p. 32 (French), vol. IV, pp. 495-496 (Syriac).

[26] One now has available the new critical edition of the Arabic text by Ignace Dick, *Théodore Abuqurra, traité de l'existence du createur et de la vraie religion* (Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien, 3; Jounieh and Rome, 1982). See too J. Nasrallah, "Regard critique sur I. Dick, Th. Abû Qurra, De l'existence du Createur et de la vraie religion," *Proche Orient Chrétien*, 36 (1986), pp. 46-62; 37 (1987), pp. 63-70. George Haddad is preparing an English translation of the tract as his Ph.D. dissertation at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California.

veniently give an account of the treatise, which for brevity's sake is hereinafter called simply "On True Religion," under three broad headings: a general description of the work; an analysis of the style and structure of its more original arguments; and finally a discussion of the work in terms of its principal intellectual and social milieu: Christian apologetics in the context of the early history of Arabic and Islamic ʿilm al-kalām.

I. General Description of the Tract "On True Religion"

A. *The Text*

The "Treatise on the Existence of the Creator and the True Religion" has survived, without a title of its own or explicit mention of its author's name, in a single manuscript kept in the library of the Melkite monastery of Dayr al-Shir, near Beirut. The manuscript contains four other works clearly ascribed to Theodore Abū Qurrah, all of which are known from other sources, and were published by Constantin Bacha in 1904.[27] Louis Cheikho SJ, first published "On True Religion" in the periodical *al-Machriq* in 1912, and in the very next year Georg Graf brought out a German translation of the work.[28] Both of these scholars unhesitatingly attributed "On True Religion" to Abū Qurrah, citing in it his characteristic style of writing and method of arguing, along with a number of almost verbatim parallels between "On True Religion" and other works which consistently carry Abū Qurrah's name in the manuscripts. Louis Cheikho formulated the title one now gives the work, when he first published the text in 1912. His made-to-order title neatly describes the subjects of discussion in the two main divisions of material in the treatise: the existence of the creator; the true religion.

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[27] See n. 24 above.

[28] See n. 24 above for the bibliographical details. Graf, *GCAL*, vol. II, p. 15, mistakenly reports that Louis Cheikho also included "On True Religion" in two further publications of Christian Arabic texts that he edited, *Seize traités théologiques d'auteurs arabe chrétiens* (Beirut, 1906), pp. 56-87; and *Vingt traités théologiques d'auteurs arabe chrétiens* (Beirut, 1920), pp. 75-107. The error is repeated in Joseph Nasrallah, "Dialogue islamo-chrétien, a propos de publications récentes," *Revue des études islamiques*, 46 (1978), p. 130. What is actually repeated in Cheikho's two collections is another treatise by Abu Qurrah, "On the Authority of the Mosaic Law, and the Gospel, and on the Orthodox Faith," first published by Bacha in 1904, in his collection of Abū Qurrah's Arabic works, and issued separately, with a French translation in 1905. See n. 24 above.

Thanks to the work of the Reverend Ignace Dick, of the Greek Catholic archdiocese of Aleppo, Syria, there is now a new critical edition of the Arabic text of "On True Religion".[29] Father Dick worked directly from the unique manuscript in Dayr al-Shir to produce his edition, which corrects many errors and "improvements" of the Arabic diction in Cheikho's original publication. Father Dick is also the modern authority on the biography of Abū Qurrah,[30] and he gives it as his opinion that Abū Qurrah wrote "On True Religion" as the first of his Arabic compositions, at the outset of his monastic life in Mar Sabas monastery in Judaea, perhaps between the years 780 and 785. He bases his judgement on the fact that in this work Abū Qurrah quotes none of his other Arabic works, whereas in the other compositions he frequently refers to or quotes from "On True Religion".[31] This fact, for Dick, as it had been for Cheikho and Graf, is sufficient evidence to prove the authenticity of the work, as well as to show its early date.

B. *The Argument*

The basic premise of the apologetic argument in "On True Religion" is the claim that one may recognize the one religion "according to which God wants to be worshipped,"[32] in the religion of that one of the confessional communities of the author's day whose doctrine about God, whose directives regarding the permitted and the forbidden, and whose concepts of reward and punishment most nearly accord with what a reasonable person should expect to be true, on the basis of one's own knowledge of the imperfections of human nature. Abū Qurrah argues that Christianity alone of the religions of his day fulfils these reasonable expectations.

The modern reader will immediately recognize the essentially ra-

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[29] See. n. 26 above. The new edition is the distillate of Father Dick's doctoral dissertation, where one will find in addition to the text, a French translation and an extensive analysis of its contents: "Théodore Abuqurra, évêque melkite de Harran (750?-825?); introduction générale, texte et analyse du traité de l'existence du createur et de la vraie religion," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation; Université Catholique de Louvain, 1960).

[30] See n. 20 above.

[31] Dick, *Traité de l'existence du createur*, Arabic introduction, p. 120. For a concordance of the parallel passages in Arabic see pp. 110-119; in French see Dick's 1960 dissertation, pp. 110-123.

[32] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 199.

tionalist, even the Neo-Platonic character of this scheme.[33] But present too is what by Abū Qurrah's day would already have become a traditional Christian optimism about what the unaided human intellect can know about God. In its details, however, there are some original apologetical elements in "On True Religion", which owe their inspiration to the Islamic intellectual milieu in which Abū Qurrah functioned as a *mutakallim*. But before giving an account of these special elements, it will be useful briefly to outline the reasoning of the integral work. One may follow the direction of the organization of the treatise itself, to speak first of the Creator God, and then of the True Religion, whose identity the author hopes to disclose.

i. *The Creator God*

The first step in the argument is to demonstrate from reason that a creator God exists, and that one might reason a way to a knowledge of how truly to describe God. This task is the burden of the first portion of Abū Qurrah's treatise.[34] It is in fact a quick sketch of his view of the possibilities of human knowledge in general. The sketch is a necessary propaedeutic for the argument he will set up later in the treatise for the discernment of the true religion.

Beginning from the perceptions of the five senses, Abū Qurrah argues, the human mind is able to reason its way to the conclusion that all material things, living and non-living, are composed of the four mutually discordant, but basic elements: earth, air, fire and water. From the experience of single things composed of these elements, he claims, the mind is further able to achieve a knowledge of the kinds and species of all concrete things. This knowledge is rooted in direct experience. In addition to what a person may come to know in this experiential way, Abū Qurrah goes on to argue, one's mind is also capable of becoming aware of supra-sensible realities on the basis of their effects (*āṯār*) in observable phenomena. Furthermore, from one's observation of the activity (*fiʿl*) of concrete things, one may come to certain conclusions about how to compose an adequate description (*ṣifah*) of them in their own proper natures. This is Abū Qurrah's theory of knowledge in a nutshell.

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[33] See Gerhard Klinge, "Die Bedeutung der syrischen Theologen als Vermittler der griechischen Philosophie an den Islam," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 58 (1939), pp. 346-386, esp. pp. 376-386.

[34] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, pp. 173-198.

Abū Qurrah uses these ideas about the theory of human knowledge to undergird his argument from reason that a Creator God exists. The argument is that from what one knows about the natures of the elements that make up the world, one might legitimately conclude that the world must have a maker (*ṣāniʿ*), who is indescribably more powerful (*qawī*) than a whole conglomeration of the elements put together to compose the world. From this point in the argument Abū Qurrah then proceeds to generate a list of other attributes or descriptions of the maker of the world, which must be true of him, given the evidence of the effects of his actions in observable phenomena. He must be wise (*ḥakīm*) beneficent (*ḥayyir*), gracious (*fāḍil*), merciful (*raḥīm*), tolerant (*ṭawīl al-rūḥ*), long-suffering (*ḥamūl*), patient (*ṣabūr*), gentle (*ḥalīm*), and just (*ʿādil*). These descriptive attributes may be inferred from the behaviour of the maker of the world, from the symmetry of order in the world, and from the maker's tolerance of human beings and their errant ways. Furthermore, Abū Qurrah argues, the maker of the world is not properly a 'maker' at all, but a 'creator (*ḫāliq*)'. To produce the effects he has produced he must himself be eternal (*lam yazul*) and unchanging, and not in any way originated (*muḥdaṯ*). This is the description of a creator, Abū Qurrah points out, not a mere maker. He then sums up his conclusions as follows:

> Since there is only an uncreated creator, and a non-creating creation, and nothing else between them, . . . , we know that he [i.e., the creator] is an eternal God (*ilāhun lam yazul*), uncreated, the creator of everything from nothing. There is no creator other than he.[35]

Abū Qurrah brings this rather summary argument to a close with the remark that there is no way available to us among the normal channels of human knowledge to know whether or not this unique creator is one or more in terms of person or individuality (*wajh*). He says,

> Whether the creator is one, two, or more, there is not among creatures any indication of it by the way of effects and actions. . . . Therefore creatures do not in this way show the creator to be a single, unique person (*wajh wāḥid fard*).[36]

One should have no trouble in recognizing Abū Qurrah's purpose

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[35] Ibid., p. 195.
[36] Ibid., p. 198.

in constructing this epistemological preamble to his general apology for Christianity. While it is not composed with any particular philosophical subtlety, it does reflect the author's attempt to ground his arguments in a simple, almost commonsensical theory of knowledge which enables him to make a show of proving from reason what he and the Muslims, who are his principal dialogue partners, already believe about God from revelation. This purpose is evident in the fact that nearly every one of the adjectives (*sifāt*) Abū Qurrah ascribed to God here is familiar as one of the Qur'ān's *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*, the beautiful names of God (*Ṭa' Ha'* (20):8; (*al-Isrā'* (17):110). Furthermore, his employment of the phrase *wāḥid fard*, an expression used by the Muslim *mutakallimūn* in Abū Qurrah's day to describe God's 'oneness', is another indication of his real apologetic purpose. His intention was to commend Christian faith in the Arabic language, already quintessentially attuned to the intellectual requirements of Islam.[37]

From this preamble Abū Qurrah moves to set up his scheme for discerning the true religion by comparing the several religions of his time and their doctrines with what he thinks can be learned from reason about God and his ways with human beings. This methodology will allow him subsequently to argue that only Christianity's peculiar doctrinal claims follow logically upon the principles of the theodicy he has expounded.

ii. *The True Religion*

Abū Qurrah lists nine religious groups that were familiar to his contemporaries, or about which his contemporaries were so knowledgeable that each group could be considered as in some way making an appeal for the allegiance of the people of the age. The groups are: the ancient pagans, the Mājūs, i.e., the Zoroastrians, the Samari-

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[37] The expression was to become the preferred phrase to express God's unity for the Baṣrah Muʿtazilite Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 915), according to al-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamdānī, *al-Mughnī* (15 vols.; Cairo, 1960), vol. V, p. 245. On the subject of Muslim arguments for the existence of the creator God who is one, see H.A.R. Gibb, "The Argument from Design, a Muʿtazilite Treatise Attributed to al-Jāḥiz," in S. Löwinger and J. Somogyi (eds.), *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume* (Part I; Budapest, 1948), pp. 150-162; M.E. Marmura and J.M. Rist, "Al-Kindi's Discussion of Divine Existence and Oneness," *Medieval Studies*, 25 (1963), pp. 338-354; W.L. Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (New York, 1979); J. Van Ess, "Early Islamic Theologians on the Existence of God," in Kh. J. Semaan (ed.), *Islam and the Medieval West, Aspects of Intercultural Relations* (Albany, N.Y., 1980), pp. 64-81.

tans, the Jews, the Christians, the Manichaeans, the Marcionites, the followers of Bardayṣān, and the Muslims. Under the rubric of the name of each one of these nine religious groups, Abū Qurrah very briefly describes each one's doctrine of God, its teaching about what is permitted and forbidden in human conduct (*ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*), and the character of the reward or punishment that each group proposes as the appropriate recompense for human behaviour. In each instance Abū Qurrah names the messenger (*rasūl*) which each group claims is sent by God, whose message is recorded in the scripture (*kitāb*) possessed by that group.[38] After reviewing all nine groups he comes to the following preliminary conclusion:

> When I thought about the doctrine (*qawl*) of each one of them, I saw that all of them were in both agreement and disagreement about three things. Regarding their agreement, with the exception of one or two, each one of them claims to have a God, to have things permitted and forbidden, and reward and punishment. Regarding their disagreement, they disagree about the descriptions (*ṣifāt*) of their Gods, about their things permitted and forbidden, and about their reward and punishment.[39]

From this point, Abū Qurrah goes on to recall the attributes of God which he had sketched in the earlier part of his treatise, especially those indicating God's goodness and graciousness. He proposes that one would expect that a God who is truly good and gracious should send a messenger and a scripture to his creatures, when it would have become evident that creatures were deviating from true worship. God would want to lead them back to Him. In the face of so many claimants to this divine mission, however, only two possibilities are open. Either none of the self-proclaimed messengers of God has in fact come from God, or only one of them has actually been sent by God. Abū Qurrah says of these messenger:

> From what one knows of God's graciousness and of his solicitude in the matter of his creation, it is likely that there is one among them. But what sort of stratagem is there for recognizing this one?[40]

The answer which Abū Qurrah gives to the question is as follows:

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[38] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, pp. 200-210.
[39] Ibid., p. 211
[40] Ibid., p. 212.

> We must . . . . leave the scriptures aside and ask the intellect, 'How, from the likeness of man's nature, do you recognize God's attributes (*ṣifāt*), which neither the senses perceive, nor do intellects attain them, and how too the good and the bad, the ugly and the beautiful, the reward which will delight it forever, and its punishment and everlasting misery?' When we are advised of this, and we have recognized it, we may compare these scriptures which are in our possession, and the scripture in which we find it we may recognize to be from God; we may acknowledge it, accept it, and do away with every other one.[41]

On the basis of this stratagem Abū Qurrah proceeds to argue that of the doctrines of all the contemporary religions, Christianity's teaching alone rings true to what the human intellect can recognize about God's attributes, about what should logically be permitted and forbidden to human beings, and about what should reasonably be their ultimate reward or punishment.

a. *The Doctrine of God*

Taking his cue from the 'apophatic' theology of John of Damascus,[42] Abū Qurrah argues that the Christian descriptions (*ṣifāt*) of God are more credible than those of the other eight religions whose doctrines he has described. Abū Qurrah explains that Christians describe God in terms of the perfections they observe in human nature, abstracting from them all the imperfections or limitations that accompany them in this world.

> We say that from the similitude of the perfections of our own nature, by surpassing them to the point of dissimilarity (*al-ḫilāf*), our intellects are capable of catching sight of God, who is not to be seen, together with His attributes (*ṣifāt*), according to which He must be worshipped.[43]

The point of dissimilarity (*al-ḫilāf*), Abū Qurrah goes on to explain, is to be understood as comparable to the difference between a person and the image of himself which he may perceive in a mirror. From the image he may infer certain descriptive predicates that truthfully apply to him. But he is in fact different from his mirror image.[44]

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[41] Ibid., pp. 217f.

[42] See John of Damascus' method described in his "De Fide Orthodoxa," *PG*, vol. XCIV, cols. 800 A-C and 848 B.

[43] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 219.

[44] Ibid., pp. 219-220. See also Abū Qurrah's Greek *opusculum* III, *PG*, vol. 97, col. 1496.

When God is the subject of inquiry, of course, the difference between God and the creatures in whom his perfections are mirrored is infinite. Affirmations about God, according to the requirements of the "apophatic" theology, have the "force of a transcendant negation," to borrow John of Damascus' expression.[45] They deny all imperfection of Him, and to this degree the descriptive predicates bespeak perfection in God which are dissimilar to the perfections seen in His creatures. In God there is the fullness of perfection.

Taking the Adam of the biblical creation accounts as his point of comparison, because Jews, Christians and Muslims all in theory accept the biblical accounts of the creation of the first man, Abū Qurrah next reminds his readers that there are certain descriptive predicates that one may reasonably take to apply to the creator, precisely because they apply to Adam, his creature. Like Adam, God can be said to be existent (*mawjūd*), living (*ḥayy*), knowing (*ʿalīm*), wise (*ḥakim*). He has all of the perfections, in fact, which Abū Qurrah mentioned earlier in the treatise as characteristic of the creator God. Missing from the earlier list of perfections, however, are three distinctly human traits that Abū Qurrah now argues one can hardly deny to the creator if one is to be logically consistent in the search for knowledge of God. Adam possessed the perfection of generation (*al-wilādah*), in that he generated his own kind; Adam generated his sons. Furthermore, he possessed the perfection of emanation (*inbiṭāq*), in that Eve emanated from Adam as his own kind. Adam also possesses the perfection of headship (*riʾāsah*). He exercised fatherly headship over Eve and his sons, who were of his own kind. Since these perfections are found in human creatures, Abū Qurrah argues, they cannot logically be denied of God, the creator of Adam and of all subsequent humans.

Abū Qurrah had admitted earlier that one cannot determine from the effects of God's creative actions whether or not He is one or more in terms of person (*wajh*). Now he argues that on the basis of the analogy with Adam, his creature, one must be able to say that God, like Adam, can be described as exercising fatherly headship, and as generating his like. Consequently, there must be one generated (*mawlūd*), if God is truly to be described as a generator (*wālid*). There must be someone emanating (*munbaṭiq*) from him, if God is

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[45] "Dynamin hyperochikēs apophaseōs," *PG*, vol. XCIV, col. 800.

truly to be described in terms of the perfection of the emanation (*inbiṯaq*) of his like from him, as Eve from Adam. So, according to Abū Qurrah, the only logical way to ascribe these perfections to God, without injury to the divine unity, is to speak of three divine persons (*wujūh*) in one God, as do the Christians. After a long discussion of the implications of the terms employed in this argument, Abū Qurrah concludes ''From what the intellect deduces from the similitude of Adam's nature, God is three persons: one generating, and one being generated, and one emanating.''[46]

Finally, Abū Qurrah ends his discussion of the doctrine of God with the claim that his whole line of apologetical reasoning, which postulates a knowledge of God built on what one might infer from the similitude of Adam, is an argument that the scriptures justify. He says,

> So there is verified the saying of the one in whose speech there is no lie, when God said: 'God created man; according to the likeness of God he created him' (Genesis 1:27). This pertains to the attributes of God (*sifāt Allāh*).[47]

One may easily observe the *a posteriori* character of Abū Qurrah's apology for the doctrine of the Trinity. Clearly the doctrine comes first, and this quick defence of it is elaborated to suit the circumstances of the writer's own immediate purposes. His aim is not to prove the doctrine, but to argue in favour of the adequacy of Christianity's description of God when it is compared with the descriptions proposed by other religious groups, particularly the Muslims. In Abū Qurrah's day a major issue among the Muslim *mutakallimūn* was to determine what one might call the ontological status of the perfections that are predicated of God in the divine attributes, the *ṣifāt Allāh*, as they were called, or the ''beautiful names'' of God, to repeat the Qurʾān's phrase (e.g. *Ṭāʾ Hāʾ* (20): 8).[48] A very specific concern on the part of the Muslim scholars was to avoid any formulation of their views about the *ṣifāt* which would seem to support the Christian teaching about there being three divine hypostases

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[46] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 228.

[47] Ibid. loc. cit.

[48] On the concerns of the Muslim scholars regarding this topic see Richard M. Frank, *Beings and their Attributes* (Albany, N.Y., 1978); D. Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam; exégèse lexicographique et théologique* (Paris, 1988).

(*aqānīm*), or persons (*wujūh*), to use Abū Qurrah's terminology,[49] in the one God.

b. Ḥalāl/Ḥarām, *Reward and Punishment*

Abū Qurrah employs the same basic method of inquiry that he had used to explore the doctrine of God when he comes to consider ethical doctrines as indicators of the true religion. He states his conviction as follows:

> We say again, just as from the similitude of our nature our intellects are capable of deducing for us the attributes of God which are not seen, so also from our nature they deduce for us the knowledge of the permitted and the forbidden, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad, what benefits us and profits us, and of the command (*amr*) which we are able to carry out.[50]

Abū Qurrah proceeds to build up this argument through a series of simple propositions that are intended to win the reader's ready approval. What follows is a very summary sketch of his proposals.[51]

We immediately, Abū Qurrah says, recognize the wrongdoing which a companion may inflict on us. We dislike it, we recognize that it is wrong. We know it should be something forbidden (*ḥarām*). It is wrong to do to your companion the harm which you do not want him to do to you. What makes a person capable of doing such a wrong is his desire to have something which his companion possesses.

Each one of us also recognizes right conduct when he sees it, i.e., what is permitted (*ḥalāl*). It is that one should do for his companion the good which one wants the companion to do in return. What makes a person capable of doing such a good is the renunciation of worldly desire, beginning with the desire for possessions. The ultimate purpose for such renunciation is love (*al-ḥubb*). A person

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[49] Abū Qurrah's use of the Arabic term *wajh* for a 'person' of the Trinity reflects the use of the Greek word *prosōpon* in similar contexts. Other Arabic writers chose other terms. See S.H. Griffith, "The Concept of *al-uqnūm* in ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's Apology for the Doctrine of the Trinity," in Samir Khalil (ed.), *Actes du premier congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes, Goslar, septembre 1980* (Orientalia Christiana analecta, 218; Rome, 1982), pp. 169-191.

[50] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 229. The last phrase in this quotation is Abū Qurrah's affirmation of what he elsewhere calls free-will. See S.H. Griffith, "Free Will in Christian *Kalām*: the Doctrine of Theodore Abū Qurrah," *Parole de l'Orient*, 14 (1987), pp. 79-107.

[51] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, pp. 229-239.

prefers those whom he loves to himself. The perfect person, one who is an imitator of God (*šabīh bi'llāh*), loves all men in this preferential way.

Our minds are able to recognize what accrues to the benefit (*al-niʿmah*) of our nature in this life, as well as what contributes to its misery (*šaqāʾ*). Since this recognition is a fact of human experience, from that fact we should be able also to infer what will bring benefit or cause misery to our nature in the next life.

The basic fact about this life according to Abū Qurrah's line of reasoning is that every created thing is unstable, requiring the support of something external to itself for its subsistence (*al-qiwām*). A man, for example, depends on food, drink, and air to breathe for his life.

God has equipped every created, living thing with a craving (*al-šahwah*) for that by which it subsists. He has also provided the creature with an instinctual movement (*al-ḥarakah*) toward what he craves, and a quest (*al-ṭalab*) for it. The natural elements which God has also created are the sources (*maʿādin*) which provide the benefits for living things. The misery of living beings is not to attain the requisite natural elements. For human beings, for example, the natural elements provide food, shelter and clothing.

But human beings also have a craving for things which are not of this world. For these needs too God must have provided sources (*maʿādin*) to satisfy the craving. Human beings want to live forever, with bodies freed from every imperfection and disability. They want a full knowledge of good and evil, as well as the possession of every grace or perfection (*faḍl*).

God alone can be the source of the fulfilment of these desires. If this conclusion is correct, then Abū Qurrah reasons that God must offer himself to human beings in such a way that he satisfies the cravings he has implanted in human nature. God himself, then, is the ultimate benefit (*al-niʿmah*) of human nature and its reward. The misery (*al-šaqwah*) of being without God is the punishment of those who do not attain him.

Abū Qurrah discusses these issues at much greater length than this brief sketch of his argument indicates. Nevertheless, it should be clear that it is his basic contention that the propositions under review are the lessons one may learn from the study of human nature. One must then search among the available religions, he contends, with their scriptures and with their alleged messengers from

God, to discover which one of them preaches a doctrine that is in accord with what one will have learned from the study of human nature to be the true human good. Not surprisingly, Abū Qurrah concludes that Christianity, with its Gospel, is the only one of the nine contemporary religions that fills the requirements for the true religion he has elaborated.

iii. *Comparing Religions*

The final section of "On True Religion" sets forth the comparison of the tenets of Christianity with the doctrines of the several other contemporary religions, for the purpose of demonstrating to Abū Qurrah's satisfaction that Christianity alone professes doctrines truly in accord with what one might rationally conclude to be the truth, from an honest consideration of the existential requirements of human nature. The clear statement of the method is as follows:

> Let us bring forward all the religions which we have encountered, so that we might look into the doctrine of each one of them—into how it describes God, and also, from its own point of view, how it describes the permitted and the forbidden, reward and punishment. The one we find agreeing with what our own nature has taught us we will know for certain is the truth which has come from God, according to which alone—no other—God must be worshipped. We should receive it, accept it, and take our stand on it; we should worship God in it, and do away with, dismiss, and detest anything else. We have looked into this matter, and we have found none of them to describe what we may approve, except the Gospel.[52]

It is clear from this statement of his method that Abū Qurrah now quickly dismisses any detailed consideration of the non-Christian religions under the headings of the doctrine of God, the permitted and the forbidden, and the ultimate reward and punishment. Earlier in the treatise he had provided a thumbnail sketch of each of the nine contemporary religions precisely according to this scheme.[53] Now it remains for him summarily to conclude that Christianity alone maintains what a study of human nature should lead an unbiased person to expect to be taught in the true religion. Under each heading he shows the shortcomings of the other religions, particularly of

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[52] Ibid., p. 240.
[53] Ibid., pp. 200-210.

Islam, the principal contender for the allegiance of people in Abū Qurrah's world.

a. *The Doctrine of God*

Of all the religions, Abū Qurrah points out that Christianity alone confesses that the one God is a Trinity of persons, as one should expect from a consideration of 'generation' as an essential perfection of human nature, and from the testimony of the scriptures to the fact that Adam, made in God's likeness (Gen. 1:27), was not only the generator of connatural sons, but the one from whom woman first proceeded, a mate connatural with the man (Gen. 2:23). Other religions are either polytheistic, Abū Qurrah says, or in their monotheism they explicitly teach the contrary of what the study of human nature suggests is a true description of God. Islam is a case in point, because Muslims are the people whom Abū Qurrah quotes as saying that God is one (*wāḥid*), "uniquely eternal (*ṣamad*), neither generating, nor generated."[54] For one readily recognizes in the statement a quotation from the Qurʾān (*al-Iḫlāṣ* (112): 2-3). Contrariwise, Abū Qurrah argues, one should recognize that the Gospel-inspired Trinitarian description of God is the true one because, of all the scriptures, the Gospel is the one which "has brought us what our own nature has taught us out of its likeness to God."[55]

b. *The Permitted and the Forbidden*

According to Abū Qurrah, the Gospel alone of the contemporary scriptures promotes a morality that is in accord with what the study of human nature suggests is a credible ethic for human beings: the abandonment of the values of this world; the love of God, and preference for Him over creaturely goods; the love of human beings, and a preference for them over lesser beings; the imitation of God in patience, in the willingness to forgive, and in satisfaction with what is good. Other religions not only do not positively command true virtue of this sort, Abū Qurrah argues, but they permit what is forbidden. In particular, he charges, they condone violence: "They will take up their swords and go out against those who have not wronged them, to kill them and to plunder them. This is the

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[54] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 242.
[55] Ibid. loc. cit.

opinion of all the religions."[56] More specifically, Abū Qurrah
might have added, this was the charge that Christian polemicists, in
his day and later, most persistently brought against Islam; they
claimed it was a religion spread by the sword.[57] And, in Abū
Qurrah's view, a religion which condones violence of this sort is not
in accord with the ethical values that a study of human nature
teaches one to accept. Consequently, according to him, such a
religion cannot be the true one, according to which God should be
worshipped.

c. *Reward and Punishment*
With many quotations from the Gospel, particularly the Gospel ac-
cording to St John, Abū Qurrah argues that this scripture alone of
the scriptures of the contemporary religions promises eternal life
with God as the reward for a virtuous life—an eternal life appropri-
ate to the deepest longing of human nature. One anticipates this
eternal life with a programme of asceticism in this world. And it is
at this point that Abū Qurrah locates the telling difference between
what the Gospel proposes, and what the other religions he has re-
viewed teach about the reward of the good life. He concludes, in
regard to the Gospel command to curtail the enjoyment of the earth-
bound values of food, drink and sex, that

> This commandment does not occur to the mind of anyone of the other
> religions, nor does it arise in their thinking at all, because their think-
> ing is entirely concerned with this earth: with eating, drinking,
> bloodshed and bodily pleasure; they do not recognize anything else,
> not do their souls have a regard for anything except this, like animals,
> which have no ambition for anything else.[58]

Accordingly, Abū Qurrah argues that from the point of view of his
estimation of the ultimate human happiness, Christianity alone
posits an eternal reward for the good life which is appropriate to
what human nature actually suggests is the true human fulfilment.
Therefore, Christianity alone is the religion in which God wants to
be worshipped.

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[56] Ibid., p. 246.
[57] See. S.H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad, his Scripture and his Mes-
sage according to the Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac from the First
Abbasid Century," in T. Fahd (ed.), *La vie du prophète Mahomet* (Colloque de Stras-
bourg, 1980; Paris, 1983), pp. 99-146.
[58] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 252.

Again, the contention that Islam teaches that sensual gratification in the next world is an appropriate reward of religious life in this world, was a charge with which Christian apologists and polemicists regularly upbraided the Muslims in the ninth century. They pointed to the Qurʾān's seeming license of hedonistic behaviour for Muslims even in this world, and to its lush description of paradise, as a garden of eternal earthly delights.[59] In fact, earlier in the present treatise Abū Qurrah had himself strung together several such descriptive phrases from the Qurʾān as a fair statement of Islam's doctrine of the reward that awaits all true believers.[60] so it is not surprising that he now uses this alleged advocacy of eternal sensual delight as his final reason for rejecting the religious truth claims of Islam, and of all the other non-Christian religions. Of course, such a charge does not fit all the other religions. But by now it is clear that for Abū Qurrah the real challenge to Christianity in his milieu did not come from all the other religions, but from Islam, to whose tenets his Arabophone Christian readers may have been strongly tempted to submit.

iv. *Subsidiary Considerations*
At this point Abū Qurrah's argument in "On True Religion" is essentially complete. Its very novelty, however, must have been among the factors which prompted him to consider two further issues, almost as appendices to the main argument. They are the situation of the Mosaic dispensation in the Christian scheme of things, and the place of miracles and other motives of credibility in the Christian apologetic enterprise.

a. *Moses and Prophets*
Throughout the course of the argument in "On True Religion", Abū Qurrah put an accent on the Gospel as the uniquely Christian scripture. In fact, at one point he puts it forward as the Christian claim that theirs is the true religion, "which Christ, the son of God, gave us in the Gospel."[61] Since the Gospel is thus the quintessence of all things Christian, and the one scripture to which a reasonable

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[59] See. S.H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad, his Scripture and his Message."

[60] See Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 210. The *catena* of Qurʾān quotations includes phrases from *al-Māʾidah* (5): 117; *Muḥammad* (47): 15; *al-Ṭūr* (52): 20; *al-Raḥmān* (55): 74.

[61] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 205.

person should give his allegiance, as Abū Qurrah has argued, a question might naturally arise concerning the Christian acceptance of the scriptures of Moses and the other prophets. If the latter can in some way be seen as legitimating belief in Christ, and as preparing for his economy of salvation, yet they differ from the Gospel, how can a Christian accept them? Are they not among the scriptures to be rejected in favour of the Gospel alone, on the showing of the argument advanced in "On True Religion"? Abū Qurrah's answer speaks for itself:

> We do not now give our credence to Christ and his command in answer to the scriptures of the prophets. Rather, it is in answer to Christ's saying that they are prophets, and in answer to the fact that we have seen his economy written in their scriptures, that we give our credence to them, that they are prophets.[62]

This answer keeps the focus of Abū Qurrah's thought on Christ and the Gospel as the sole witnesses in favour of Christianity's truth, allowing the testimony of Moses and the prophets, but excluding any other messenger or scripture claiming to come from God—most notably in the present context, Muḥammad and the Qurʾān. Later in his career, if Dick's dates for "On True Religion" are correct, Abū Qurrah returned to these considerations in another long Arabic treatise, "On the Authority of the Mosaic Law, and the Gospel, and on the Orthodox Faith."[63]

b. *Miracles and Motives of Credibility*
The very last section of "On True Religion" is a brief resumé of the more conventional ways Christian apologists in Abū Qurrah's day argued that the Christian religion is truly from God. In the first place he reviews what he considers to be the earthly, more dishonourable reasons why people might be led to give allegiance to a particular religious community: social prestige, force, wealth, or license. And he argues that none of these inducements are available as inducements to accept Christianity; rather, the opposite is the case. Therefore, miracles are the best evidence of God's approval, Abū Qurrah proposes, and no miracle is more striking, he suggests, than the moral miracle of the spread of Christianity among all peo-

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[62] Ibid., p. 258.
[63] See n. 28 above, and the text in C. Bacha, *Un traité des oeuvres arabes de Theodore Abou-Kurra*, cited in n. 24 above.

ples and languages, not only without the benefit of the worldly inducements to conversion, but in face of every hardship to the contrary. Moreover, the apostles, the carriers of Christianity to all corners of the world as Abū Qurrah knew it, worked miracles by divine power, in the name of Jesus Christ, he claimed, and so there can be no doubt in a reasonable mind, he concluded, that Christianity is the religion according to which God wills to be worshipped.[64]

Abū Qurrah developed these more conventional apologetical arguments rather extensively in other works. He devoted one short treatise to an examination of his list of the unworthy reasons why people might accept a religion, and in it he argued that no one could logically embrace Christianity for any of these reasons.[65] Abū Qurrah also wrote another short tract listing the positive marks of the true religion which he claimed Christianity alone possesses.[66] And in the major treatise, "On the Authority of the Mosaic Law, and the Gospel, and on the Orthodox Faith,"[67] Abū Qurrah argued at considerable length that the miracles of Jesus, and those worked by the apostles in Jesus' name, are the best testimonies to the truth of Christianity. For now, however, at the end of "On True Religion," he has been content very briefly to call the reader's attention to these more conventional apologetical arguments, almost as an afterthought to the presentation of his rationalist scheme for the comparison of religions as a device intended to disclose the true religion. At the outset of his exposition of this comparative methodology he made the claim for it that on its own merits it is an argument sufficient to prove the truth of Christianity. "With it," he said, "we might come to know that our own nature will teach us which of the messengers of God, and which of his scriptures are the truth, which have come from God, and which of them is His true religion, according to which He wants to be worshipped, together with His perfect attributes, and which of them is His true command and prohibition, reward and punishment."[68]

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[64] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, pp. 259-270.

[65] See Bacha, *Les ouevres arabes*, pp. 71-75.

[66] See Dick, "Deux écrits inédits," pp. 62-65.

[67] See n. 63 above.

[68] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 199.

II. An Original Apologetic Methodology

There are essentially three elements in Abū Qurrah's tract "On True Religion" that highlight his original apologetic methodology among the early Christian writers in Arabic. Two of them are deeply rooted in his own orthodox heritage, as well as in the Arabic religious culture of the Islamic caliphate. The third one is more idiosyncratic. The first of them has to do with the fundamentally Neo-Platonic intellectual scheme, humanly to discover the truth about God, according to the method which Abū Qurrah's Byzantine ancestors in Christian thought called the process of *kataphasis/apophasis*—attributing every intelligible natural perfection to God, while denying to Him any imperfection which may accompany the perfection in humanly observable reality.[69] With this line of thought is integrated Abū Qurrah's apology for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, in terms of the perfections traditionally ascribed to God in the Qur'ān's *ṣifāt Allāh*.

Secondly, in terms of apologetic originality, there is Abū Qurrah's scheme for discerning the true religion among the several contenders for this designation in the Islamic milieu of the first Abbasid century. Here he took advantage of the next logical implication of the analogical reasoning process he had used to explore God's attributes. If one may truly learn about God by a consideration of the natural perfections of the world, it follows that the true religion must be the one which most aptly gives an account of these perfections in both God and man. For the purpose of passing the contemporary religions in review from this perspective, Abū Qurrah devised a scenario in language familiar from the Qur'ān: the image of the messenger from God (*rasūl Allāh*), together with a scripture (*kitāb*) for which the claim is made that it is from God. Only one of the several claimants can be true, according to Abū Qurrah, but on this score his judgement is in contrast to the statement of the Qur'ān about Muḥammad and the believers, each one of whom "believes in God and His angels, and in His scriptures and His messengers; we make no distinction between any one of His messengers (*al-Baqarah* (2): 285)." Perhaps Abū Qurrah took his position precisely in opposition to this allegation.

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[69] See the remarks of John of Damascus, in his De Fide Orthodoxa, *PG*, vol. XCIV, col. 845.

Finally, the third original element in "On True Religion" is what one might call the tract's personal character. Throughout the work Abū Qurrah casts the narrative in the first person. And he further highlights the personal search for the true religion which must have faced every intellectual in early Abbasid Baghdad, by putting his readers in mind of an innocent but ingenious person from beyond the pale of civilization, who would suddenly find himself faced with a choice between the very religious communities whose doctrines would have been most familiar to the *mutakallimūn* of early Abbasid times.

It will be useful briefly to discuss somewhat further each of these areas in which Abū Qurrah showed some ingenuity and originality in the apologetic stance he adopted.

A. *Discovering the Truth about God*

The first section of "On True Religion" presents an argument for the existence of God, a reasoned method for discerning the attributes of God, together with a logical appreciation of the names of God that bespeak the divine perfection. Furthermore, there is in it the contention that while the unaided human reason cannot discover the truth of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, it can nevertheless demonstrate that such a doctrine is logically consistent with what one can know about God through the rigorous exercise of reason. Throughout the proceedings, however, it is clear in the very diction of the tract that the author assumes Biblical, even Qur'ānic faith in his readers, whom he expects to be convinced of the coincidence of meanings in the rational and scriptural languages about God which he has been investigating.

Abū Qurrah's proof for the existence of God includes a thumbnail theory of knowledge, together with a short-hand presentation of the arguments for God' existence, which owe everything to the achievements of his intellectual ancestors in Syria/Palestine, particularly Nemesius of Emesa (fl. c.390), Dionysius, the Pseudo-Areopagite (fl. c.500), and John of Damascus (d. c.749),[70] three practi-

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[70] Ignace Dick called attention to Abū Qurrah's debt to John of Damascus by designating him "un continuateur arabe" of his immediate ancestor in Mar Sabas monastery. See n. 20 above. Georg Graf provided the textual citations to back up this designation, throughout the notes to his German versions of Abū Qurrah's Arabic works. See n. 24 above. Other scholars have studied specific concepts and

tioners of that unique Neoplatonism which, for want of a better term, I. P, Sheldon-Williams once called simply 'Christianism', "a philosophical system constructed upon Christian doctrine. While Christian theology interprets the doctrine, 'Christianism' uses it as the basis for a rational account of the universe."[71] What Abū Qurrah does in "On True Religion," as Gerhard Klinge has shown,[72] is to translate this intellectual construction into the Arabic idiom of the Islamic milieu. But the milieu was not simply a patient recipient of Greek ideas translated into Arabic. By Abū Qurrah's day, however long Christians may have spoken Arabic in Syria/Palestine prior to the rise of Islam,[73] the public language of the Caliphate had in fact become an Islamic idiom, instinct with the religious paradigms of the Qur'ān and its interpreters.[74] These distinctive paradigms inevitably governed religious discourse in Arabic, and so they shaped Abū Qurrah's apology for the Christian doctrines *de Deo uno et trino*.

Abū Qurrah's defence of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity speaks in the idiom of one of the major doctrinal controversies in the Arabic-speaking world of the Muslim *mutakallimūn*, namely the debate over how one should understand the divine attributes (*ṣifāt Allāh*) that are revealed in the Qur'ān. By putting his argument in

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terminology in Abū Qurrah's works, showing their continuity with earlier Byzantine thought. See, e.g., Ernst Hammerschmidt, "Einige philosophisch-theologische Grundbegriffe bei Leontios von Byzanz, Johannes von Damaskus und Theodor Abu Qurra," *Ostkirchliche Studien*, 4 (1955), pp. 147-154. And it is now well known that the work of John of Damascus himself was that of a systematizer, a summarist, who drew heavily on the accomplishments of earlier thinkers such as Nemesius and the Pseudo-Denys. See J. Nasrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas, son époque, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris, 1950); B. Studer, *Die theologische Arbeitsweise des Johannes von Damaskus* (Ettal, 1956).

[71] I.P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Greek Christian Platonist Tradition from the Cappadocians to Maximus and Eriugena," in A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 425, n. 3.

[72] See Klinge, "Die Bedeutung der syrischen Theologen," n. 25 above.

[73] The case for a widespread Christian presence among Arabs in Syria/Palestine prior to the rise of Islam is presented in Irfan Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs* (Washington, D.C., 1984); idem, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1989). See also J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in the Pre-Islamic Times* (London & New York, 1979); M. Sartre, *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine* (Bruxelles, 1982).

[74] See A.N. Poliak, "L'arabisation de l'orient semitique," *Revue des études islamiques*, 12 (1938), pp. 35-63; J. Wansbrough, *Qur'anic Studies; Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford, 1977), esp. pp. 85-118.

the terms of the controversy, Abū Qurrah not only makes an attempt to commend a tenet of Christian faith by finding a common ground in the language of contemporary Muslims, but he also shifts the theoretical grounds on which Christians themselves customarily thought of justifying the doctrine of the Trinity. And in this shift one might see an element of originality which Abū Qurrah's apologetic methodology contributed to the Christian discourse about God, at least in Arabic. It is true that in regard to the divine attributes, as in so much else, John of Damascus may have served as tutor to Abū Qurrah,[75] but the latter is the one who first developed this argument in defence of the Trinity in Arabic, with all its resonances with the Qurʾān and other Islamic parlance, initiating what would become a standard approach to the subject among Christian Arab apologists of later times. And it is noteworthy that in taking this step, Abū Qurrah made an advance into the world of Islamic religious thought beyond the simple quotation of the Qurʾān for purposes of Christian apologetics, a method that had already been employed by earlier, now anonymous Christian writers in Arabic.[76]

B. *Discerning God's True Messenger*

Long before Abū Qurrah's day Christian writers were in the habit of composing heresiographies, for the purpose of identifying and describing religious tradition with which they differed. Most immediately available to Abū Qurrah would have been the *De Haeresibus* section of the John of Damascus' *Pēgē Gnoseōs*. Here Abū Qurrah would have found a statement of the errors of almost a hundred groups that John had identified, including the ancient pagans, the Jews, the Gnostics, assorted Christian denominations, and perhaps even the Muslims, or 'Ishmaelites', at the very end.[77] Abū Qurrah

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[75] See Griffith, "The Controversial Theology of Theodore Abu Qurrah," cited in n. 12 above, pp. 169-172, and p. 357, n. 152.

[76] See G. Graf, "Christlich-arabische Texte, zwei Disputationen zwischen Muslimen und Christen," in F. Bilabel and A. Grohmann (eds.), *Griechische, koptische und arabische Texte zur Religion und religiösen Literatur in Ägyptens Spätzeit* (Heidelberg, 1934), pp. 1-31; M.D. Gibson, *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles; . . . with a Treatise on the Triune Nature of God* (Studia Sinaitica, 7; London, 1899). See n. 21 above.

[77] See Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam, the "Heresy of the Ishmaelites"* (Leiden, 1972). See the new critical edition in B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* (IV Liber de haeresibus; Berlin and New York, 1981), pp. 420-438.

himself in many of his own works was not slow to identify and vigorously refute the errors of persons whom he regarded as heretics.[78] But both the method and the spirit are markedly different in the list of contemporary religions in "On True Religion". Although he owes an obvious debt to the earlier heresiographers,[79] here Abū Qurrah simply passes in review the nine most prominent, contemporary religious communities, including the Christians, naming their distinctive scriptures and the messengers who claimed a commission from God. Then he evenhandedly describes the tenets of each group according to the requirement of the stratagem he had devised for discerning the true religion; he gives an account of each one's doctrine of God, and of each group's teaching regarding the permitted and the forbidden, and the ultimate reward or punishment. In "On True Religion" the presumably Christian reader is expressly invited to "leave the scriptures aside and to ask the intellect" to decide which group is the true religion, according to which God wants to be worshipped.[80] This exercise in what one might call an archaic 'comparative religion', albeit from a position of *parti pris*, is unique in the Christian apologetic literature up to Abū Qurrah's day. As we shall see below, younger Christian contemporaries of Abū Qurrah explicitly rejected this approach, and one knows of no

[78] In his Arabic works Abū Qurrah regularly refuted "the heretics," often by name. See S.H. Griffith, "The Controversial Theology of Theodore Abū Qurrah," cited in n. 12 above. A feature of Abū Qurrah's personal creed is that after each dogmatic phrase he names the heretics it was meant to rebut. See Dick, "Deux écrits inédites," pp. 56-59.

[79] Regarding Abū Qurrah's sources for his account of each religion, see S.H. Griffith, "The Controversial Theology of Theodore Abū Qurrah," pp. 231-244, 372-377.

[80] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, pp. 217f. Klinge found this appeal to the intellect to be characteristic of what he calls the "Syrian philosophy of religion." And in regard to Abū Qurrah's adoption of it as the basic premise of his apologetics in "On True Religion", Klinge goes on to point out that the premise is in "the clearest possible contradiction to this man's other statements," Klinge, "Die Bedeutung der syrischen Theologen," p. 377. In fact the premise reminds one of Paul the Persian's expressed conviction in an earlier day that knowledge, acquired by logic, is better than belief. See D. Gutas, "Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle's Philosophy: a Milestone between Alexandria and Baghdad," *Der Islam*, 60 (1983), pp. 247-250. In this connection, one should remember that Abū Qurrah was no stranger to Aristotle's logic; perhaps he even translated the *Analytica Priora* into Arabic. See Griffith, "The Controversial Theology of Theodore Abū Qurrah," pp. 26-28. Furthermore, Abū Qurrah was an active participant in Syriac intellectual life, having written thirty treatises in that language, as he himself claims. See Bacha, *Les oeuvres arabes*, pp. 60f.

other comparable intellectual stratagem to demonstrate the rational claims of Christianity until the time of the schoolmen in thirteenth century Europe.[81]

Aside from the rationalist stratagem to prove the truth of Christianity, the centrepiece of Abū Qurrah's originality is the scheme he adopts to present each of the nine contemporary religions. He brings them forward in roughly the chronological order of their appearance: the ancient pagans, the Mājūs, the Samaritans, the Jews, the Christians, the Manichaeans, the Marcionites, Bar Dayṣān, and the Muslims.[82] The scenario is one of successive messengers from God, each one with a scripture claimed to be divine, in which his distinctive religious doctrines are recorded.

The idea of successive messengers from God is, of course, not new with Abū Qurrah. As noted above, this idea was an important element in Muhammad's sense of his own mission (cf. al-Baqarah (2): 285). And the scenario of a succession of messengers or prophets from God, with Muhammad as the final one in the succession, the "seal of the prophets" (al-Aḥzāb (33): 40), became an important element in Islamic apologetics.[83] Abū Qurrah's originality consists in accepting this scenario, but arguing, implicity, that being chronologically last in the series of messengers should offer the Muslim claimant no advantage in the effort to convince anyone who is searching to find the true religion, because one must discern God's true messenger, not by chronology, but by the deployment of the rational stratagem for recognizing God's true message on the basis of what

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[81] Even among Muslim thinkers in the ninth century, it is interesting to note in passing, some writers rejected the position of al-Jāhiz (d. 869), who thought human reason could discover the creator God, and now the need for a divine messenger. See G. Vajda, "La connaissance naturelle de Dieu selon al-Jāhiz critiquée par les muʿtazilites," *Studia Islamica*, 24 (1966), pp. 19-33. Later *mutakallimūn*, however, seem to have been confident of their abilities rationally to justify doctrines of faith. See R.M. Frank in the studies cited in nn. 10 & 11 above.

[82] Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, pp. 200-210.

[83] See R. Bell, "Muhammad and Previous Messengers," *The Muslim World*, 24 (1934), pp. 330-340; A. Jeffery, "Muhammad among the Prophets," in *A Reader on Islam* ('S-Gravenhage, 1962), pp. 333-336; W.A. Bijlefeld, "A Prophet and More than a Prophet?" *The Muslim World*, 59 (1969), pp. 1-28; A. Schimmel, *And Muhammad is his Messenger* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1985). See also the following important studies on the expression 'seal of the prophets': G.G. Stroumsa, "'Seal of the Prophets,' the Nature of a Manichaean Metaphor," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 7 (1986), pp. 61-74; C. Colpe, "Das Siegel der Propheten," *Orientalia Suecana*, 33-35 (1984-1986), pp. 71-83.

one can know about God through the exercise of human reason. As *suasiones*, at the end of "On True Religion", Abū Qurrah includes, as we have seen, elements from the more traditional Christian apologetics, arguments based on miracles and prophecy. Abū Qurrah buttresses his argument with an appeal to a feature seemingly unique to Christian apologists in the Islamic milieu, an argument based on the absence of certain features in Christianity, so negative in their import that in a reasonable person's judgement, according to Abū Qurrah, the verification of their presence in connection with any religion should disqualify it from being considered God's preferred religion.[84]

Abū Qurrah's accounts of the nine religious communities and of their characteristic beliefs are interesting in their own right, from an historical point of view. Here is not the place to investigate them in detail, due to the press of other concerns. But one should notice in passing that in the choice of religious groups to consider, Abū Qurrah was very much in the current of early Abbasid intellectual life with his list. Muslim writers also discussed the beliefs of the major communities of dualists, Jews, Christians, and Muslims,[85] and they often also included explicitly discussions of the three groups who represented the principal heretical communities of the Syriac-speaking Christian world: the followers of Marcion, Mani and Bar Dayṣān.[86] In this, as in so many other ways, therefore, "On True Religion" is a Christian document unmistakably at home in the Islamic milieu of early Abbasid times, a tract tailor-made, so to speak, to suit the requirement of the intellectual searcher of that day who might have been interested in comparing the truth claims of the several religious communities to whom he had access.

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[84] On this theme see S.H. Griffith, "Comparative religion in the Apologetics of the first Christian Arabic theologians," *Proceedings of the PMR Conference*, 4 (1979), pp. 63-87. See also G. Vajda, "La prophétologie de Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Raqqī al-Muqammiṣ, théologien juif arabophone du ix e siècle," *Journal Asiatique*, 265 (1977), pp. 227-235; S. Stroumsa, "The Signs of Prophecy: the Emergence and Early Development of a Theme in Arabic Theological Literature," *Harvard Theological Review*, 78 (1985), pp. 101-14. See too S. Stroumsa, *Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ's 'Twenty Chapters' ('Ishrūn Maqāla)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989).

[85] See, e.g., the groups whose tenet Nāṣiʾ al-ʾAkbar (d. 905 A.D.) reviewed in his *Kitāb al-awsāṭ* in J. Van Ess, *Frühe muʿtazilitische Häresiographie* (Beirut, 1971), pp. 73-127 (Arabic).

[86] See G. Vajda, "Le témoignage d'al-Māturidī sur la doctrine des Manichéens, des Daysanites et des Marcionites," *Arabica*, 12 (1966), pp. 1-38, 113-128.

C. *A Personal Search*

A feature of the tract, "On True Religion," which one has thus far ignored is the fact that the narrative voice of the author is often in the first person. He speaks in the singular as he states the basic convictions on which the argument is built, as in the declaration that "I say that by the senses the mind attains a knowledge of the parts of the natures of this world."[87] But he frequently switches to the plural as he is carried along in the enthusiasm of the investigation, ultimately to conclude, for example, that "we infer"[88] the maker of the world and his attributes, on the basis of evidence first perceived by the senses.

In the first major part of the work, where the purpose is to affirm the ability of human knowing eventually to come to recognize the existence of God-the-Creator, and to infer (*istidlāl*) his attributes (*sifāt*) "from his effects and his actions"[89] in the world, the appeal to personal experience takes the form of a succession of 'thought experiments' on the basis of which the author will deduce certain conclusions about the constituents of all physical reality from a sequel of imaginary settings in real life. For example, the following picturesque excerpt may give a fair sense of the whole procedure, both rhetorically and substantially.

> One day I was thirsty, and I took a draught of sea-water to drink. When I tasted it, and it did not agree with me, I spat it out and it went straight down until it came to rest on the ground. From the fact that I could not drink it, and from the fact that I had put it into my mouth and held it, and since I spat it out and it went down until it came to rest on the ground, I learned that all sea-water I had seen or not seen is like this draught: I cannot drink it; all of it is containable, holdable; and that it does not come to rest until it finds something to carry it and to support it.[90]

In the second major part of "On True Religion," where the purpose is to argue that Christianity alone of the contemporary religions is the true religion, the appeal to personal experience takes a novel turn. Abū Qurrah tells the story of an imaginary Arcadian's tour of

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[87] See the typical language in Dick, *Traité de l'existence*, p. 173.
[88] Ibid., p. 189.
[89] Ibid., pp. 189, 196.
[90] Ibid., pp. 175-176.

the nine most prominent religious communities of the civilized
world. The writer presents the following scenario:

> Let me say I grew up in the mountains; I had not learned how it was
> with people. One day, because of a need which occurred to me, I went
> down to the cities, to the society of men, and I saw them in different
> religions.[91]

Following this scenario the protagonist then encounters representa-
tives of the nine contemporary religions, one after the other, in
roughly the chronological order of their first appearance in the
world, from the ancient pagans to the Muslims. Abū Qurrah pro-
vides an account of each of the religions, as they successively invite
the newcomer's allegiance. He takes note of their teachings, their
scriptures, if they have them, and the messengers whom they claim
to have come to them from God. Then he takes stock of the sit-
uation:

> When all these had met me, inasmuch as I had reflected on the doc-
> trine of each one of them, I noticed all of them agreeing on three
> things, and also disagreeing about them. As for their agreement, each
> one, except for one or two, claimed to have a god, things permitted
> and forbidden, reward and punishment. As for their disagreement,
> they disagreed about the attributes (sifāt) of their gods, about their
> things permitted and forbidden, and about their reward or punish-
> ment.[92]

The problem now was to discover the stratagem (al-ḥīlah)[93] for
recognizing the true religion among all these claimants. For Abū
Qurrah argued that it stands to reason that the good, wise, creator-
God whom the human intellect can discover, would have sent a mes-
senger and a scripture to enlighten people about the true religion.
And as a suasio in defense of the rational stratagem he had devised,
Abū Qurrah went on to propose an allegory. He described a king,
who had a beloved son, whom his father sent on a far journey in the
company of a skilled and trusted physician. The son fell ill while far
away, and when his father heard of it, he sent a messenger with a
prescription for the remedy which would bring health to the son.
The king's enemies heard of the affair and sent their own mes-
sengers with prescriptions for harmful medicaments, hoping to

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91 Ibid., p. 200.
92 Ibid., p. 211.
93 Ibid., p. 212.

damage the king and his son. But the wise physician, whom the father had sent to accompany the son on his journey, counselled him to conduct a scrutiny among the self-proclaimed royal messengers, to determine in which message he would find the right prescription for the illness. He was to read each message to see which one of them carried a true description of himself and his condition,

> And when among them there was only one description (ṣifah) to bear a resemblance to him, the document in which it occurred would be the one in which there was the true description of his illness and the beneficial remedy.[94]

The application of this story to Abū Qurrah's apologetical method in "On True Religion" is immediately evident. But he draws out the point very explicitly, to put an accent on his high estimation of the power of reasoning in religious life. He says:

> The aggrieved king is God, be He blessed and exalted; His son is Adam and his seed, whom He created; the physician is the intellect (al-ʿaql) which he was given, with which to know God, to know the good and to do it, to know evil and to avoid it.[95]

The most nearly comparable stories in Arabic of which one knows, which likewise accord such a high place to the discerning power of reason in the search for the true religion are the philosophical novels which appeared in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from the hands of Muslim apologists. One thinks of the story of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, as told by Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185/6), or of the Kitāb Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq by Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 1288).[96] To be sure, Abū Qurrah's simple allegory and his simple first-person narrative of how one might construct an apology for Christianity from reason do not match the literary or philosophical elegance of these tales. But Abū Qurrah wrote some three and a half centuries earlier, and what is striking is his trust in the power of human reasoning to find God and the true religion. This conviction set him apart, even among the Arabophone apologists within his own Christian community.

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[94] Ibid., p. 216.

[95] Ibid., p. 216.

[96] On these two important works in Muslim philosophical apologetics see L. Gauthier, *Ibn Thofail, sa vie, ses oeuvres* (Paris, 1909); G.F. Hourani, "The Principal Subject of 'Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān'," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 15 (1956), pp. 40-46; L.E. Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzan* (New York, 1972); A.-M. Goichon, "Ḥayy b. Yakẓān," *EI²*, vol. III, pp. 330-334; M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht, *The Theologus Autodidactus of Ibn Al-Nafīs* (Oxford, 1968).

III. The Apologetic Milieu

The apologetic milieu in which Abū Qurrah wrote "On True Religion" was basically twofold, Christian and Muslim. One may rather quickly situate the tract in regard to these two poles of reference, and say a final word about Abū Qurrah's place in Christian apologetics in Arabic in the Abbasid period.

A. *The Christian Milieu*

A striking feature in "On True Religion", to which one has already called attention, is the writer's seeming optimistic confidence in human reason's ability to discover God and the religion according to which alone God wants to be worshipped, to paraphrase the language of the tract. This confidence is entirely consistent with ideas that Abū Qurrah voiced in other Arabic works, although he did not elsewhere develop them so clearly as he did in "On True Religion." For example, in the Arabic treatise in which he did most to advance the traditional apologetical arguments from miracles and prophecies, the treatise "On the Authority of the Mosaic Law, and the Gospel, and on the Orthodox Faith," Abū Qurrah also said, "Reason definitely leads to Christ and Christ validates the truth of Moses and the prophets."[97] Furthermore, in yet another place he advanced the principle that "one who is right in his faith administers it with reason."[98] Earlier in the same work he had already come to the following conclusion:

> Of all people there is none for whom reason, on reflection, grounds a judgement equivalent to direct experience that he has become a believer by the administration of his reason, except someone who has come to Christianity as a religion.[99]

Other Christian apologists who wrote in Arabic, who were more or less contemporaries of Abū Qurrah, did not share his confidence in reason's power fully to uphold Christianity's claims. ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, for example, openly opposed precisely the sort of apologetic programme which Abū Qurrah advanced. ʿAmmār characterized it as the work of a disputatious person (*al-mutaʿannit*), and he described

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[97] Bacha, *Un traité des oeuvres arabes*, p. 16.
[98] Bacha, *Les oeuvres arabes*, p. 32.
[99] Ibid., p. 26.

such a person's approach as one ruling out the appeal to miraculous signs as the best evidence of the true religion. According to ʿAmmār, the disputatious person's apologetic programme involved a reliance on reason to such a refined extent that it would be inaccessible to ordinary people. ʿAmmār's own apology for Christianity, by way of contrast, was firmly rooted in the evidence of miraculous signs, and he claimed that "unquestioning acceptance of the signs springs from the use of reason. But unquestioning acceptance on the part of any-one whose mind has conducted research independently of the signs springs from ignorance."[100]

Another contemporary, Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rāʾiṭah, the Jacobite *mutakallim* who called Abū Qurrah a sophist,[101] was also suspicious of any rationalistic attempt to prove the truth of Christianity from reason alone. Such an attempt, he argued, could only hope for success among the learned, while the masses had in fact been the ones to convert to Christianity in the beginning. For Abū Rāʾiṭah, only the constraint of the sword, or the overpowering force of the divine evidentiary miracles could explain Christianity's power in the first centuries to carry conviction among the generality of peo-ple. And he argued that unlike in the case of the triumph of Islam, the sword in fact played no role in the spread of Christianity.[102]

To be fair to Abū Qurrah, one should not leave the impression that he espoused only the rational proof from reason as the most ef-fective apologetic argument for the truth of Christianity. In the trea-tise, "On the Authority of the Mosaic Law, and the Gospel, and on the Orthodox Faith," to mention only one place, he argued at length that only evidentiary miracles are sufficient proof of divine approval for a religion, of the sort that might appeal to all kinds of people, the stupid, the mediocre, and the intelligent.[103] But in "On True Reli-gion," it is clear, he also makes a strong case for the apologetic

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[100] M. Hayek (ed.), *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, apologie et controverses* (Beirut, 1977), p. 29. See also Griffith, "Comparative Religion," pp. 70-73.

[101] See Graf, *Die Schriften des Abu Rāʾiṭa*, vol. 130, p. 73.

[102] See Abū Rāʾiṭah's position explored in Khalil Samir, "Liberté religieuse et propagation de la foi ches les théologiens arabes chrétiens du ixᵉ siècle et en Islam," in *Witness of Faith in Life and Worship* (Tantur Yearbook, 1980-1981; Jerusa-lem, 1981), pp. 97-121. See also S.H. Griffith, "Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rāʾiṭah, a Christian *Mutakallim* of the First Abbasid Century," *Oriens Christianus*, 64 (1980), pp. 161-201.

[103] See Bacha, *Un traité des oeuvres arabes*. See also Abū Qurrah's Greek *opusculum* 21, *PG*, vol. XCVII, cols. 1547-1552.

power of reason—much beyond what his Christian contemporaries were willing to claim for it.

B. *The Islamic Milieu*

Throughout the present study of "On True Religion", one has been at pains to notice the many instances in which Abū Qurrah made an obvious, or not so obvious, appeal to the thinking of the Muslim *mutakallimūn* who were his contemporaries, or who came shortly after his time. There remains an issue of this sort that has not yet come to the fore in the discussion, and it has to do with the general organization of the tract, and the sequence of the subjects it addresses.

More than a decade ago Shlomo Pines called attention to the fact that the compositional pattern of the early Islamic *kalām* works, particularly those of the Muʿtazilites, who followed the order of their famous five *uṣūl*, or basic principles, match the order of topics as they are presented in John of Damascus' *De fide orthodoxa*. On the basis of an examination of a selection of Islamic texts from ʿAbd al-Jabbār to al-Shahrastānī, Pines said:

> In all the texts that have been cited, with the single exception of *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ*, the first section deals with the sources of knowledge. The exposition of theological doctrine begins in all these texts with the demonstration that the world, i.e., all things directly known to man, are created and must have a Creator. This proof is followed by an argumentation proving that God is one, which is succeeded by a discussion of the question of what God is or may be said to be; this involves the problem of the divine attributes.[104]

No reader of Abū Qurrah's "On True Religion" can miss the fact that Pines' remarks provide an almost exact outline of the tract's contents, as far as they go. So far, of course, they correspond to what a Muʿtazilite writer might have discussed under the principle of *al-tawḥīd*, or the confession that God is one. But Abū Qurrah's tract goes on to discuss the permitted and the forbidden, and the reward or punishment that one's conduct in this world might elicit in the world to come. Perhaps it is not completely fanciful to correlate these

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[104] S. Pines, "Some Traits of Christian Theological Writing in Relation to Moslem Kalām and to Jewish Thought," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of the Sciences and the Humanities*, 5 (1976), pp. 112f.

further topics to what a Muʿtazilite writer would have discussed under his third and fifth basic principles, *al-waʿd wal-waʿīd*, 'the promise and the threat,' and *al-ʿamr bil-maʿrūf wal-nahy ʿan al-munkar*, 'commanding the right and forbidding the wrong.' The fact that Abū Qurrah's tract deviates from the order of topics as a Muʿtazilite writer would have discussed them need mean no more than that Abū Qurrah felt no obligation to follow the conventional practice in this matter.[105] Perhaps in Abū Qurrah's day the order of the principles had not yet been so rigorously set as they would eventually come to be. Furthermore, one notices that there is no discussion of the second Muʿtazilite principle, justice (*al-ʿadl*), in "On True Religion." But Abū Qurrah dealt with this issue in a separate Arabic treatise, "On Human Freedom.[106] So in his Arabic works Abū Qurrah actually covered all of the principles, with the exception of the fourth one, the so-called 'intermediate position', which seems to have been a uniquely Islamic concern.[107]

Pines argued that the conventional compositional pattern of the works of Islamic *kalām*, inasmuch as they mirrored the method of reasoning, or the order of topical exposition in Christian works such as John of Damascus' *De fide orthodoxa*, "may have reflected to a considerable extent those employed (in writing or in oral instruction) by Christian theologians who lived in the Islamic empire."[108] What one sees in "On True Religion" confirms this judgement. But it also suggests another construction to be put on the evidence, namely that Christian writers such as Abū Qurrah consciously construed their apologetics to conform to the predominant thought patterns of the Muslim *mutakallimūn*, in whose realm they had to conduct their own apologetic campaigns, and in whose language they hoped to commend the veracity of Christian doctrines.

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[105] One notices a similar disorder in later Jewish, and even Muslim texts. See Pines, "Some Traits of Christian Theological Writing," p. 113, n. 34. See also H.A. Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

[106] See Bacha, *Les oeuvres arabes*, pp. 9-22. See also S.H. Griffith, "Free Will and Christian *Kalām*: the Doctrine of Theodore Abū Qurrah," n. 50 above.

[107] See the discussion in W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 229ff.

[108] Pines, "Some Traits of Christian Theological Writing," p. 115.

C. *Abū Qurrah's Christian* Kalām

Theodore Abū Qurrah is the earliest Arabophone Christian *mutakal-lim* whose name we know. He was a contemporary of such influential early Muslim *mutakallimūn* as the Baṣrian Muʿtazilites, Ḍirār ibn ʿAmr (d. 815), Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. betw. 840-849 at an advanced age), al-Naẓẓām (d. 846), and the Baghdādī scholars Bišr ibn al-Muʿtamir (fl. 819) and, of course, al-Murdār (d. 841), the one who took notice of Abū Qurrah's work and wrote a refutation of it.[109] In the pages of ''On True Religion'' one finds Abū Qurrah addressing himself in a summary and short-hand way to intellectual issues which also interested these Muslim thinkers. Christian apologists in the next generations will discuss them in more detail, men such as Israel of Kashkar (d. 872) and Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī (d. 974), to name only two writers whose apologetical works are easily available in modern editions.[110] And within the Melkite community, in the intellectual centres that the Palestinian monasteries became in the second half of the ninth century, Christian writers continued to produce apologetic works after the manner of Abū Qurrah himself. One example is the now anonymous composite work which is a compendium of Christian theology in Arabic, the work which the present writer calls somewhat provocatively, the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*, written at the monastery of Mar Charitōn between 850 and 877.[111]

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[109] In addition to the studies cited in nn. 3 and 23 above, see also J. Van Ess, ''Ḍirār b. ʿAmr und die 'Cahmīya'; Biographie einer vergessenen Schule,'' *Der Islam*, 43 (1967), pp. 241-279; 44 (1968), pp. 1-70; R.M. Frank, *The Metaphysics of Created Being according to Abū l-Hudayl al-ʿAllāf* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archeologisch Institut, 1966); idem, ''The Divine Attributes according to the Teaching of Abū l-Hudayl al-ʿAllāf,'' *Le Muséon*, 82 (1969), pp. 451-506.

[110] See Bo Holmberg, *A Treatise on the Unity and Trinity of God by Israel of Kashkar* (Lund, 1989); E. Platti, ''Une cosmologie chrétienne,'' *MIDEO*, 15 (1982), pp. 75-118; idem, *Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe; sa théologie de l'incarnation* (Leuven, 1983); Kh. Samir, *Le traité de l'unité de Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī (893-974)* (Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien, 2; Jounieh & Rome, 1980).

[111] See Kh. Samir, ''Theodorus Abū Qurrah,'' [Arabic], *Journal of the Iraq Academy; Syriac Corporation*, 7 (1983), pp. 138-160; idem, ''Note sur les citations bibliques chez Abū Qurrah,'' *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 49 (1983), pp. 184-191; idem, ''Kitāb jāmiʿ wujūh al-imān wa mujādalah Abi Qurrah ʿan ṣalb al-Masīḥ,'' *al-Maçarrat*, 70 (1984), pp. 411-427; idem, ''Date de composition de la 'somme des aspects de la foi','' *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 51 (1985), pp. 352-387; idem, ''La 'Somme des aspects de la foi,' oeuvre d'Abū Qurrah?'' in Kh. Samir (ed.), *Actes du deuxième congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 226; Rome, 1986), pp. 93-121; Sidney H. Griffith, ''A Ninth Century *Summa*

Kalām for Abū Qurrah was primarily an exercise in Christian apologetical dialectic rather than "the speculative science" or the "critically rational metaphysics" it was eventually to become for the Muslim *mutakallimūn*.[112] Nevertheless, as "On True Religion" amply shows, Abū Qurrah did put considerable stock in the persuasive power of dialectical discourse. And while his early confidence in the apologetic power of reason was widely shared by his contemporary Arabophone Christian apologists, there was one writer who did hold somewhat comparable views. Ironically, it was Nonnus of Nisibis, Abū Qurrah's Jacobite adversary in a Christological debate in 815 or 816 at the court of the Armenian prince Ashāt Msaker, who in later life wrote an apologetical treatise in Syriac that exhibits a similar appeal to reason.

According to the current scholarly opinion, Nonnus of Nisibis wrote his apologetic treatise between 856 and 862, while he was in detention at Samarra as a result of the policies of the caliph al-Mutawakkil.[113] The treatise takes the form of an answer to a request from a nameless inquirer to give an account of how the Christians can show that God is one and not many, how the one God is also three, and how the Word of God, one of the Trinity, can be said to have become incarnate, without thereby imputing an impropriety to God.[114] What follows is a carefully composed *kalām* tract in Syriac, complete with arguments designed to demonstrate not only the veracity of these doctrines but also to show the superiority of Christianity to traditional paganism, Judaism and Islam.

There are many points of similarity between Nonnus' treatise and Abū Qurrah's Arabic apologetic works, which neither time nor space will allow one to discuss here. What is immediately relevant is to mention the appeal Nonnus makes in the course of his arguments to "commonly received ideas (*maḥshḇōtô gawwōnōyōtô*)"[115] instead of to proof texts from the scriptures or to the evidentiary value

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Theologiae Arabica," ibid., pp. 123-141; idem, "A Ninth Century *Summa Theologiae Arabica* and the 'Sectarian Milieu,'" *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, to appear; idem, "The First Christian *Summa* in Arabic," n. 13 above.

[112] See refs. to the work of R.M. Frank in n. 11 above.

[113] A. Van Roey, *Nonnus de Nisibe, traité apologétique; étude, texte et traduction* (Louvain, 1948), pp. 45f.

[114] Ibid., p. 1*.

[115] Ibid., pp. 6* and 21*. see the appeal for proof, "ἐκ κοινῶν καὶ ὁμολογουμένων ἐννοιῶν" in Abū Qurrah's Greek *opusculum* XXII, *PG*, vol. 97, col. 1553A.

of miracles. Furthermore, he more than once makes such a claim as the following one about the arguments he has deployed: "These are the sorts of things we Christians put forward to counter those who contend against the holy scriptures—such things as reason, with its love of industry and love of truth, will test, appraise, apprehend, justify and approve."[116]

Among the particularly original arguments Nonnus puts forward in his treatise one might notice the claim that Jesus the Messiah is arguably the very Word of God and God himself because he was 'wise', 'powerful', 'just', and 'good' to a degree that can only be reasonably explained as "something befitting divinity ($pa^{\circ}yut$ $^{\circ}All\bar{o}h\hat{u}t\hat{o}$)."[117]

The success of the argument depends on the currency of the discussion of the ontological status of these very divine attributes ($sif\bar{a}t$ $All\bar{a}h$) among the contemporary $mutakallim\bar{u}n$, Muslim and Christian.

Another thesis that Nonnus proposes to prove from reason is the contention that Christianity, and not paganism, Judaism, or Islam, is the true religion because on examination of these religions Christianity is arguably the only religion to emerge as the divinely warranted force one can identify as a reasonably sufficient cause for the manifest religious transformation that occurred in the world after Christ's coming.[118] Nonnus' arguments for this thesis accord well with arguments Abū Qurrah also used in his comparison of the religions of his day.

The point here is to say that both Theodore Abū Qurrah and Nonnus of Nisibis, the one in Arabic and the other one in Syriac, in the very first era of serious Christian apologetics in the Islamic milieu, adopted the conventions of the burgeoning $^{\circ}ilm$ al-$kal\bar{a}m$ to make their respective cases. One may see in the works of both writers exercises in a certain "inculturation" of Christianity into an Islamic thought-world that also promised a doctrinal development in the appreciation of the truths of their faith on the part of the Christians themselves. Accordingly, one might now look back on these and other such accomplishments of the Christian thinkers in the first Abbasid century or so, and think of them as constituting what one

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[116] Van Roey, *Nonnus de Nisibe*, p. 32*.
[117] Ibid., p. 21*. The argument unfolds on pp. 15*-22*.
[118] Ibid., pp. 9*-14*, 23*-34*.

might call the 'patristic' period of the Christian-Muslim dialogue. The discourse is apologetic, but not polemical. Neither is it compromising. The author of the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*, for example, brands as hypocritical any suggestion on the part of Christians that they might own the first phrase of the Islamic *šahādah*. He points out that "their saying 'there is not god but God' is the same as what we say in words, but it is different in meaning.'[119] Then he goes on to discuss God's unity and trinity, and the incarnation of the Word God in a way that owes its form to the new paradigm for God-talk that came into the world of religious discourse with Islam. Here is a doctrinal development, and the true ground of dialogue between religions. Theodore Abū Qurrah helped to initiate this development in his Arabic tract, "On True Religion".

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[119] BM Or., MS 4950, f. 5ᵛ. See Griffith, "The First Christian *Summa* in Arabic," n. 13 above.

LA FONCTION HISTORIQUE DE LA POLÉMIQUE ISLAMOCHRÉTIENNE À L'ÉPOQUE ABBASSIDE

Abdelmajid Charfi

1. Introduction

La polémique entre musulmans et chrétiens pendant les cinq siècles du califat abbasside de Bagdad (750-1258) est considérée généralement comme un phénomène qui appartient à l'histoire. Aujourd'hui, on parle plus volontiers de dialogue. Ceux qui s'intéressent aux contacts entre les deux communautés peuvent utiliser l'un ou l'autre des éléments jugés encore valables qui se trouvent dans cette littérature polémique ancienne. Mais les quelques familiers des textes qui s'y rapportent vont rarement au delà de l'analyse du contenu, de l'explication des mobiles des auteurs et de l'évaluation de la portée des arguments développés.

C'est pour cette raison que notre intérêt a porté sur un aspect de cette polémique qui nous semble occulté et qui pourtant devrait être élucidé pour dépasser la simple approche descriptive ou la manipulation idéologique, en vue d'une meilleure intelligibilité. Nous nous sommes demandé à ce propos quelle a pu être la fonction de cette polémique. Nous avons d'ailleurs utilisé sciemment le singulier, car la fonction d'un tel phénomène ne peut être valablement appréhendée que sous son aspect global, même si ses constituants sont multiples—et ils ne peuvent pas ne pas l'être. C'est de la conjonction de facteurs différents, appartenant à des niveaux divers: proprement religieux, intellectuels, sociaux, éthiques, politiques ou économiques, que résulte cette fonction historique assumée par la polémique entre les adeptes des deux religions, de façon consciente et délibérée ou inconsciente, implicite.

Si l'on s'en tient exclusivement aux polémiques qui nous sont parvenues, qu'elles soient sous forme de monographies écrites spécialement pour la réfutation du christianisme ou de chapitres inclus dans des traités d'hérésiographie ou de théologie, et quelle que soit l'étendue de ces polémiques qui peut varier de quelques pages à des

volumes de plusieurs centaines de folios, on constate qu'on a affaire à trente trois textes d'inégale longueur et d'inégale importance.[1] Cependant, nous allons les considérer ici comme formant un corpus unique élaboré pendant toute la période abbasside par des auteurs différents, avec des variations dont quelques unes sont hautement significatives, des reprises assez fréquentes et même une évolution plus ou moins régulière.

Essayons tout d'abord de cerner le profil des auteurs. Nous constatons que les théologiens sont largement majoritaires. Jusqu'à la fin du IVe/Xe siècle, ce sont surtout les mu'tazilites qui sont les initiateurs du genre et ceux qui lui ont imprimé ses principales caractéristiques. De grands noms émergent parmi cette catégorie: al-Jāḥiẓ (m.869), al-Nāši' al-Akbar (m.906), Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq (m.910), le cadi 'Abd al-Jabbār (m.1025). Les ash'arites, essentiellement, prennent ensuite le relais et on retrouve parmi eux des figures aussi célèbres que al-Bāqillānī (m.1209) mais pas exclusivement puisqu'aussi bien le shi'ite zaydite al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (m.860) que le fondateur de l'école māturidite Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (m.944) et le célèbre ẓāhirite Ibn Ḥazm (m.1064) ont participé à ces polémiques. Les philosophes tels al-Kindī (m.vers 866), Abū l-Ḥasan al-'Āmirī (m.992) et Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī (m. après 1000) étaient eux aussi de la partie, ainsi que des jurisconsultes et des tradionnistes comme al-Qaffāl (m.976), al-Bājī (m.1081) et al-Ḥazrajī (m.1186).

Curieusement, sur les trente trois auteurs des oeuvres en question, uniquement deux sont d'anciens chrétiens convertis à l'Islam. Il s'agit de 'Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (m. après 855) et d'al-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb (m. vers 988). Ils est par ailleurs remarquable qu'exceptés al-Bājī et al-Ḥazrajī qui, bien qu'appartenant à la même époque, vivaient tous les deux en Espagne et subissaient les contrecoups de la Reconquista, nos auteurs semblent rarement répondre à des objections émises par des contemporains chrétiens qui auraient pris l'initiative de polémiquer avec les musulmans ou à des oeuvres particulièrs qui les auraient choqués dans leur foi ou dans leurs convictions.

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[1] La liste de ces textes se trouve, pour les VIIè-Xè siècles, dans notre ouvrage: *Al-fikr al-islāmī fī al-radd 'alā al-naṣārā ilā nihāyat al-qarn al-rābī'/al-'āšir*, Tunis, 1986, pp. 128-163, et, pour les XIe-XIIIes., dans la bibliographie que nous avons établie dans *Islamochristiana* (Rome), no. 2 (1976), pp. 196-201, et no. 4 (1978), pp. 249-260.

2. Remédier au Déséquilibre Démographique

Qu'est-ce qui a donc pu pousser ces auteurs, qui viennent, somme toute, d'horizons assez divers, à réfuter le christianisme? Un premier élément de réponse nous est fourni par la situation démographique respective des musulmans et des chrétiens dans le cadre de l'empire musulman à l'époque abbasside. En effet, les arabes musulmans ne représentaient au début de l'ère considérée qu'une minorité parmi les populations autochtones du Proche et du Moyen-Orient. Certes, cette minorité détenait les postes clés dans la vie politique et administrative et même économique, mais la rapidité des conquêtes au cours des premières décennies de l'épopée musulmane n'a pas signifié pour autant la conversion immédiate des habitants indigènes qui se sont retrouvés sous l'autorité des nouveaux maîtres musulmans. Certains gouverneurs de province ne voyaient même pas d'un oeil favorable cette conversion, car elle signifiait la perte d'une partie importante des sommes perçues sous forme d'impôt foncier (*ḫarāj*) ou de capitation (*jizyah*).

Nous sommes donc ici en présence d'une divergence d'intérêts entre les politiques, d'une part, qui préféraient avoir affaire à des sujets desquels on n'exige que des devoirs, et les religieux, d'autre part, pour lesquels l'extension de la communauté musulmane, dont les membres ont des devoirs mais aussi des droits, est une obligation qu'ils entendent remplir malgré les difficultés de toutes sortes.[2] Or les chrétiens représentaient une partie importante, sinon la majorité, de ces populations autchtones: en Syrie-Palestine et en Egypte et, à un degré moindre, en Iraq, au Maghreb et même en Perse. Aucun régime ne pouvait se permettre à la longue ce déséquilibre démographique. Il s'est alors agi de les convaincre de la supériorité de l'Islam vis-à-vis de leur religion traditionnelle, ce qui, joint aux attraits moraux et matériels de la conversion à l'Islam, serait de nature à leur faire sauter le pas.

A ce niveau, il est impératif de ne pas établir des analogies faciles avec la situation dans le monde moderne. En effet, aussi bien l'organisation sociale à cette époque que le niveau intellectuel moyen ne permettaient guère le passage individuel d'une religion à une autre. La conversion se faisait en quelque sorte par le haut, c'est-à-dire que

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[2] Cf. à ce propos Aḥmad Amīn, *Duḥā al-islām*, 5e éd., Le Caire, 1375/1956, I, p. 383.

le commun des hommes suivait en règle générale l'attitude des classes supérieures qui détenaient le monopole du savoir et du pouvoir. Et, justement, ce sont ces classes-ci qui pouvaient être attirées par les avantages de la conversion et qui étaient donc les plus perméables à la propagande islamique véhiculée, entre autres, par la polémique contre le christianisme.

De fait, il est inconcevable que des gens sensés, comme l'étaient nos auteurs, prenaient la peine de faire des recherches longues et difficiles sur les dogmes chrétiens, les controverses théologiques entre les sectes chrétiennes et leurs écritures saintes s'ils n'étaient pas certains qu'une partie, au moins, de leur public pouvait être formée de chrétiens capables de lire leur littérature et susceptibles d'être influencés par les arguments qui y étaient développés, et s'ils n'étaient pas convaincus que c'était ce public là qui pouvait amener d'une manière ou d'une autre les couches inférieures de la société chrétienne à adhérer en grand nombre et en communautés entières à l'islam.

On pourrait nous rétorquer, à ce sujet, que ce ne sont là que des extrapolations non fondées et non corroborées par des documents historiques incontestables. Mais, en l'absence de ces preuves matérielles, ne sommes-nous pas en droit de faire valoir les lois sociologiques et psychologiques universelles, sans lesquelles on est réduit à considérer l'effort considérable fourni par les polémistes comme un jeu ou comme un luxe intellectuel gratuit qui ne correspondait à aucune exigence historique objective! Ce qui n'est manifestement pas le cas.

3. Intégrer les Néophytes

Evidemment, les chrétiens à convertir n'étaient pas la catégorie unique du public ciblé par les polémistes. Ils avaient probablement en vue davantage les chrétiens plus nombreux convertis pour d'autres raisons et qui ne pouvaient pas ne pas garder sinon une forme quelconque de leurs anciennes croyances, du moins une certaine sensibilité chrétienne. ''En embrassant l'islam,'' dit M. Talbi, ''les nouveaux convertis ne se dépouillèrent pas subitement de tout leur passé chrétien, juif, manichéen ou autre, et de leurs habitudes mentales. Ils ne subirent pas de lavage de cerveau préable et ils ne devinrent pas non plus subitement amnésiques. Ils posèrent et se

posèrent donc les mêmes questions qui les avaient traditionellement préoccupés".[3]

Or, la culture dominante dans l'aire gréco-sémitique n'était point propice au syncrétisme comme c'était la règle en Inde et dans l'ensemble de l'Extrême-Orient. L'islam et le christianisme, religions missionnaires et universalistes concurrentes, se voulaient exclusifs de toute autre croyance et n'admettaient qu'une uniformité des dogmes et de la pratique religieuse. Les 'clercs' musulmans n'étaient pas enclins, en conséquence, à tolérer les séquelles des autres religions en général et du christianisme en particulier. D'où leur acharnement—le mot n'est pas très fort—à mieux protéger l'islam contre les contaminations, à monter en épingle les divergences, à durcir les lignes de partage et à traquer toute velléité d'interprétation non conforme à la tradition dominante.

En somme, les facteurs qui auraient pu être enrichissants étaient perçus comme des facteurs de discorde et d'affaiblissement de la communauté musulmane. Et pourtant, l'attitude du Coran était loin d'être univoque. Ses rappels fréquents de la continuité de la révélation, essentiellement à travers les prophètes bibliques, et son insistance sur le fait que la rupture se situe en premier lieu avec la polythéisme, ne prédisposaient pas fatalement au dogmatisme ou à l'exclusivisme. Ce sont donc les contraintes proprement historiques qui on infléchi la compréhension du message coranique dans le sens d'une rigueur accrue vis-à-vis des "gens du livre". Tout se passe comme si l'islam naissant avait peur de se diluer dans les religions qui occupaient déjà le terrain. Ses représentants et ses porte-paroles ont tout fait pour affirmer son originalité et sa validité, opération qui nécessitait une mise en perspective par rapport à ce qui est différent du lui et non réductible à ce qui fonde son identité et sa légitimité.

Les polémistes ont ainsi joué le rôle de gardiens du domaine réservé de l'islam. Ils pressentaient le danger, réel à l'époque, d'une véritable implosion dont les protagonistes, même à leur insu, étaient les néophytes qui venaient, en l'occurrence, du christianisme, et les générations issues des mariages et des concubinages fréquents entre musulmans et chrétiennes. En omettant de prendre en considération la logique interne du système islamique instauré progressivement depuis la mort du prophète, on risque, à notre sens, de ne pas com-

[3] M. Talbi, "Du nouveau sur l'I'tizāl en Ifriqiya au IIIe/IXes.", *Revue Tunisienne des Sciences Sociales*, no. 40-43 (1975), p. 54.

prendre les ressorts intimes qui ont déterminé l'entreprise polé-
mique contre le christianisme et lui ont tracé ses orientations fon-
damentales.

4. L'ÉLABORATION THÉOLOGIQUE

Cependant, les promoteurs de la polémique islamochrétienne
avaient besoin d'un arsenal conceptuel qui n'était pas encore en-
tièrement disponible. Ce n'était donc pas l'effet du hasard que la
polémique était allée du pair avec l'élaboration du *kalām*, la théo-
logie musulmane proprement dite. Il n'y avait point de coïncidence
fortuite entre le développement des deux activités; elles étaient
plutôt complémentaires et interdépendantes. C'est la raison pour la-
quelle les théologiens se sont taillé la part du lion parmi les auteurs
qui ont formulé des griefs contre la doctrine chrétienne.

Deux concepts clés émergent à ce propos de l'ensemble des préoc-
cupations des théologiens-polémistes. Le premier concerne naturel-
lement Dieu, son unicité, ses noms et ses attributs. On sait que les
musulmans ont défendu âprement un monothéisme strict qui ne
réserve aucune place à la filiation divine. La transcendance absolue
de Dieu excluait toute possibilité d'incarnation et s'opposait, de ce
fait, de plein fouet, à la trinité chrétienne. Et c'est là justement qu'ils
étaient obligés de donner aux termes coraniques de *kalimah* (Verbe)
appliqué à Jésus et de *rūḥ al-qudus* (Esprit Saint) des définitions qui
les éloignent de la conception chrétienne qui en fait des personnes
consubstantielles au Père. Nous assistons ainsi au passage d'un lan-
gage symbolique, souvent elliptique, celui de Coran, à un langage
qui fait appel aux catégories logiques de la philosophie grecque,
celui du *kalām*, et qui finit par représenter la grille de lecture obligée
du texte fondateur.

On n'insiste jamais assez sur les conséquences de ce passage, car
au texte qui maintient une zone commune avec le christianisme se
superposent d'autres textes qui tendent à délimiter les frontières
respectives, au risque d'appauvrir la visée du Coran et de réduire
les interprétations multiples dont il est susceptible à une seule val-
able qui est celle de l'orthodoxie. De ce fait, on a glissé impercep-
tiblement d'une tentative légitime, peut-être même nécessaire, de
comprendre le message, de l'interpréter, de le rendre intelligible et
cohérent, à une confiscation du sens. D'où l'ambivalence de la
théologie—de toute théologie—qui, positivement, affirme des véri-

tés et apporte des solutions à des problèmes aussi bien rationnels
qu'ontologiques, et qui en même temps, et c'est l'envers de la
médaille, ne peut s'empêcher de rejeter ce qui sort de son cadre
étroit. Et c'est, bien entendu, toujours l'autre, le différent de l'in-
térieur comme de l'extérieur, qui en fait les frais.

Le second concept concerne la révélation et son corollaire la
prophétie. Il n'est pas inutile à ce sujet de rappeler que le message
du prophète de l'islam a été, plus que tout autre message prophé-
tique, sous l'éclairage intense de l'histoire, et qu'il a été révélé pen-
dant une vingtaine d'années, dont les dix dernières en particulier,
à Médine, se passaient en présence d'un groupe de plus en plus im-
portant de fidèles en mesure de témoigner des moindres faits et
gestes du prophète. Le message était transmis oralement, puis con-
signé par écrit sur des objets de fortune, mais surtout mémorisé par
les compagons. Il se présentait lui-même comme un rappel (ḏikr) et
aussi comme la Parole et le Livre de Dieu. L'ensemble formait le
qurʾān ou le furqān, des racine qrʾ (lire) ou frq (distinguer).[4] Ce n'est
qu'une vingtaine d'années après la mort du prophète que s'est con-
stitué le corpus officiel appelé musḥaf qui a servi à la dévotion et à
la réflexion musulmanes concernant le Coran. C'est ainsi que la
Parole s'est faite livre en langage humain, qu'un attribut divin est
devenu objet manipulable: calligraphié, lu, interprété, vendu, etc.

De là est née la fameuse querelle à propos du Coran créé ou incréé
du temps des califes abbassides al-Maʾmūn et al-Muʿtaṣim, qui ne
s'explique que par le souci des muʿtazilites de préserver la transcen-
dance et donc de repousser toute idée d'incarnation. Pour ces théo-
logiens jouissant de l'appui officiel, pas plus que la Parole ne pouvait
s'incarner en Jésus comme le croient les chrétiens, cette Parole ne
devait s'incarner dans le Coran comme le croit le commun des
musulmans. Ainsi, s'est imposée l'idée que le prophète n'est que le
fidèle transmetteur passif de la Parole de Dieu. Et cette conception
a été appliquée systématiquement aux révélations antérieures à
l'islam. D'où le parallélisme établi entre Jésus et Muḥammad et
entre l'Evangile et le Coran et non entre Jésus et le Coran. Les polé-
miques en sont venues, par conséquent, à être le reflet fidèle de cette

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[4] Cf. à ce sujet notre article "La révélation du Coran et son interprétation,
positions classiques et perspectives nouvelles", *Lumière et Vie* (Lyon), t. 32, no. 163,
(Juillet-août 1983), pp. 5-20.

conception de la révélation, leur tâche se limitant le plus souvent à l'illustrer et à la défendre en faisant appel aux notions de *taḥrīf* pour la Bible et de *tawātur* pour le Coran.

Le résultat est donc le même: de l'élaboration théologique à l'intérieur de l'islam découle immédiatement une certaine vision du christianisme qui n'est pas complètement étrangère à l'infléchissement de la théologie islamique dans le sens d'une démarcation de plus en plus nette vis-à-vis des conceptions chrétiennes. Le christianisme a servi à la fois de catalyseur et de repoussoir. On ne peut parler à son encontre de fascination, il représentait plutôt une référence à écarter afin de maintenir la pureté de l'Islam et d'établir qu'il ne dépend en rien des religions antérieures.

5. LA RECHERCHE DES RACINES

Néanmoins, il y a au moins deux thèmes classiques dans la polémique où la dépendance à l'égard du christianisme est patente. A ce titre, ils méritent qu'on s'y attarde quelque peu. Le premier thème est celui des annonces de Muḥammad dans les écritures chrétiennes. A l'origine, il y a l'affirmation du Coran que le prophète *ummī* (gentil) a été annoncé dans la Thora et l'Evangile,[5] et que c'est Jésus lui-même qui, s'adressant aux fils d'Israël, leur a annoncé la venue d'un prophète dont le nom est Aḥmad.[6] Le Coran n'en dit pa plus et il ne semble pas que les premières générations musulmanes avaient une connaissance de la Bible suffisamment poussée et surtout directe qui leur permettait d'y trouver ces annonces. Il fallut attendre ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī, un chrétien converti à l'Islam à un âge avancé, pour qu'une recherche systématiques de ces annonces soit entamée.

Une analyse de la liste des prophéties concernant Muḥammad qui se trouve dans le *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawlah* de Ṭabari[7] fait ressortir clairement qu'il s'agit, en fait, dans la plupart des cas, de ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler les textes messianiques dans lesquels les chrétiens ont vu des annonces de Jésus et qui sont réinterprétés de telle façon qu'ils puissent s'appliquer à Muḥammad. Ṭabari disposait-il d'un recueil de ces textes un usage dans sa communauté d'origine?

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5 Coran 7,157.
6 Coran 61,6. Cf. aussi C. 48,29; 6,20 et 13,43.
7 Edité par A. Mingana au Caire en 1342/1923 et réédité depuis à Beyrouth et à Tunis.

L'hypothèse n'est pas à exclure. En tout cas les fragments qu'il a rassemblés ou simplement réinterprétés n'ont cessé d'être repris par les auteurs musulmans postérieurs qui semblent en cela tributaires de son travail. Le phénomène inauguré par Ṭabarī est intéressant dans la mesure où l'Ancien Testament a été interprété par les chrétiens à la lumière du Nouveau et que l'un et l'autre ont été réinterprétés à la lumière du Coran par les musulmans. Nous avons là l'exemple frappant de l'application d'une même méthode d'approche des Ecritures qui aboutit à des conclusions différentes, sinon franchement divergentes, et la preuve éclatante que l'appartenance à une même mentalité, aux mêmes cadres de pensée, ne préjuge pas de l'identité des résultats, car ce sont en dernière analyse les présupposés des uns et des autres qui déterminent les solutions des problèmes auxquels ils sont confrontés.

La même constatation s'applique au thème consacré par les polémiques aux miracles du prophète de l'islam. En effet, le Coran ne parle guère de ces miracles. Mieux, il les nie en s'opposant aux incrédules qui demandent à Muḥammad des preuves de son message de la même nature que les prodiges accomplis par les autres prophètes.[8] Mais la piété musulmane n'a point admis que son prophète en soit démuni, qu'il ne soit qu'un simple humain chargé d'une mission divine. Divers récits ont été alors forgés progressivement pout établir, sur le moule des miracles de Jésus en particulier, que Muḥammad a bien réalisé des miracles, dont la multiplication de la nourriture, le jaillissement de l'eau d'entre ses doigts, la guérison des malades et des blessés, l'influence sur les éléments naturels et la connaissance des intentions secrètes de certaines personnes sont les exemples le plus souvent cités.

Que peut-on déduire de cet intérêt accordé aux prophéties et aux miracles sinon que l'originalité de l'Islam est ici battue en brèche par ceux-là mêmes qui la défendaient, parce qu'ils s'étaient vus contraints sous l'effet de la conscience mythique dominante à rechercher des racines dans le fonds biblique disponible afin de mieux asseoir ce qu'ils considéraient comme les attributs indispensables de tout prophète et, à plus forte raison, du dernier et du plus illustre à leurs yeux.

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[8] Cf. Coran 17,93-94; 18,110; 21,34; 41,6, etc.

6. Les Antagonismes Sociaux

En plus de ces facteurs pour lesquels nous disposons d'assez d'indices nous autorisant à leur accorder une place de choix dans l'explication de la fonction historique de la polémique islamochrétienne, nous sommes également en mesure de déceler d'autres facteurs qu'on pourrait qualifier d'indirects sans que cela signifie qu'ils sont moins importants. Et bien qu'à ce propos les analogies soient souvent trompeuses, il n'est vraisemblablement pas faux de rapprocher la représentation que se faisaient les musulmans de la minorité chrétienne qui vivait parmi eux, de la représentation que se font aujourd'hui en Europe occidentale les mouvements nationalistes xénophobes de la minorité musulmane émigrée. En effet, dans les deux cas, l'exaspération des sentiments se fait jouer particulièrement dans les moments de crise économique. On oublie alors l'apport de la minorité dans l'essor de l'économie au cours des périodes d'expansion, pour ne retenir que son poids dans les périodes de reflux. Un sentiment de jalousie assez vif anime en conséquence les plus démunis à l'encontre des quelques personnes appartenant à la minorité qui ont réussi par leur mérite propre et malgré toutes les difficultés inhérentes à leur condition.

Les informations fournies par les historiens arabes de l'époque abbasside indiquent souvent que les lieux de culte et les quartiers chrétiens, à Bagdad par exemple, étaient pris à partie les premiers lors des soulèvements populaires contre les pénuries et la chèrté de la vie. Non que la masse des chrétiens était favorisée par rapport à la masse du peuple musulman, mais il y avait un certain nombre de chrétiens privilégiés qui occupaient parfois des postes importants à la cour califale et dans l'administration (secrétaires de chancellerie, financiers, médecins, etc), ce qui faisait d'eux un bouc émissaire facile et une cible commode pour les mécontents. Ces mouvements d'intolérance populaire, remarque justement Cl. Cahen, ''sont au total rares et ne sont pas plus graves que ceux qui opposent les sectes musulmanes entre elles. Ils sont moins graves que ce qui se passe à la même époque dans l'Empire Byzantin voisin contre ses minorités religieuses juives ou pauliciennes''.[9]

Il arrivait aussi que le pouvoir lui-même cherchait, par des mesures discriminatoires, à indiquer cette minorité chrétienne à la

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[9] Cl. Cahen, *L'Islam des origines au début de l'empire ottoman*, Paris, 1970, p. 101.

vindicte populaire. Le rôle des polémistes, dans ce cas, consistait à justifier ces mesures et à occulter leurs mobiles véritables. C'est, à notre avis, la signification qu'il faudrait donner, par exemple, à l'ouvrage qu'al-Jāḥiẓ écrivit contre les chrétiens du temps d'al-Mutawakkil, leur reprochant leur train de vie et leur arrogance intolérables.[10]

Les griefs purement religieux figuraient, bien sûr, en bonne place, mais on dirait qu'ils n'étaient là que pour mieux cacher l'enjeu réel de la polémique et instruire un procès déjà entendu. Contre les melchites en particulier, on pouvait retenir, en supplément, le risque d'intelligence avec l'ennemi byzantin puisqu'ils partagaient avec lui l'appartenance à une même ''secte'' qui reconnaît les articles définis par le concile de Chalcédoine (451).[11]

Malgré ce constat, nous devons reconnaître que le faible écho des croisades dans la polémique contre le christianisme pose un problème qui n'a pas encore trouvé une solution satisfaisante. Face à un mouvement d'une ampleur considérable dans les contrées syro-palestiniennes, nous n'assistons ni à une production nettement plus importante de polémiques, ni à un renouvellement et à une adaptation du genre en fonction des données nouvelles. L'enigme, en fait, reste entière. Tout compte fait, peut-être bien que la nouveauté du phénomène des croisades n'était pas perçue. Un témoin privilégié de son temps comme al-Ġazālī, contemporain de la première croisade, n'en souffle pas mot, lui qui est pourtant l'auteur d'un traité contre la divinité du Christ.[12] Les croisades représentaient en somme des invasions similaires à celles qu'en avait tant connues le Proche-Orient arabe. Leurs mobiles religieux n'apparaissaient pas clairement aux yeux des musulmans et ne suscitaient donc pas un émoi particulier.

7. DÉFENSE ET ILLUSTRATION D'UNE CIVILISATION

Ainsi, la polémique contre le christianisme n'était tributaire des conditions historiques particulières que dans une mesure limitée.

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[10] *Al-radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, édité par J. Finkel au Caire, 2e éd, 1382 H.

[11] C'est, à titre d'exemple, la raison probante de la rigueur affichée par al-Bāqillānī dans son *Tamhīd*, éd. McCarthy, Beyrouth, 1957, à l'égard des Melchites. Cf. A. Abel, ''Le chapitre sur le christianisme dans le Tamhīd d'al-Bāqillānī,'' *Etudes d'orientalisme dédiées à le mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, Paris, 1962, I, pp. 1-11.

[12] *Al-radd al-jamīl li ʾilāhiyyat ʿĪsā bi-ṣarīḥ al ʾ-injīl*, Paris, 1939.

Elle obéissait, d'une certaine manière, à sa logique interne propre et s'inscrivait dans le cadre d'une production intellectuelle où elle occupait, en dernière analyse, une place marginale. On peut affirmer, sans risque de se tromper, qu'elle était destinée davantage aux musulmans qu'aux chrétiens. Les polémistes cherchaient, avant tout, à conforter leurs coreligionnaires dans leurs convictions et à les immuniser, en quelque sorte, contre le christianisme autant que contre les autres religions non-islamiques (judaïsme, manichéisme, zoroastrisme ...) et même contre les "hérésies" nées de l'Islam, telles que shi'isme extrémiste et les sectes esotériques.

Sous la défense de l'ordre établi se profile la défense de toute une manière d'agir, de croire, de vivre, d'espérer et de mourir, d'une vision du monde et de la condition humaine, bref d'une civilisation qui était en son temps la plus riche et la plus performante. Un auteur aussi anti-conformiste qu'Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq, en rupture de ban avec la majorité des "intellectuels" de son époque, accusé de "*zandaqa*" et d'athéisme et villipendé par l'ensemble des biographes qui se sont intéressés à lui, n'aurait pas écrit une réfutation des dogmes chrétiens[13] s'il n'avait pas les sentiment de participer par son oeuvre à la défense de la civilisation islamique. Sa polémique correspondait tellement bien à la sensibilité musulmane qu'elle était passée, presque sans retouches, dans les polémiques postérieures. Ses arguments purement rationnels et sans le secours d'aucune référence scripturaire, qu'elle soit biblique ou coranique, n'ont cessé d'être repris, nous dirions même pillés (car personne n'osait avouer sa parternité et les lui attribuer explicitement) par des auteurs qui ne partageaient, par ailleurs, ni sa démarche intellectuelle ni ses idées à propos des autres sujets internes à la pensée musulmane.

Un autre exemple significatif nous est fourni par le philosophe Abū'l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī qui consacre le dernier chapitre de son livre *Al-iʿlām bi-manāqib al-islām*[14] aux "allégations" (*šubah*) des ennemis

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[13] Il aurait même écrit trois réfutations d'inégale longueur (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist*, Téhéran, 1391/1971, p. 216) dont une seule nous a été conservée dans la refutation qu'en a faite le célèbre philosophe chrétien Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī. La partie concernant l'incarnation a été récemment éditée et traduite par E. Platti dans le *Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalum*, t. 490-491, *Scriptores arabici*; t. 46-47, Louvain, 1987.

[14] Edité au Caire en 1387/1967. Cf. M. Arkoun, "Logocentrisme et vérité religieuse d'après al-Iʿlām d'al-ʿĀmirī", *Studia Islamica*, fasc. XXXV, repris dans ses *Essais sur la pensée islamique*, Paris, 1973, pp. 185-231.

de l'islam (dont les chrétiens) pour les réfuter. Al-ʿĀmirī, qui sur un autre plan n'est pas tendre par exemple pour les *fuqahāʾ*, considère qu'aussi bien les réalisations pratiques de l'islam que ses dogmes, ses pratiques cultuelles, ses valeurs, son éthique et l'ensemble des sciences et des connaissances qui lui doivent leur essor, sont des preuves éclatantes de la supériorité de cette religion. Mieux que les monographies consacrées à la polémique et que les chapitres inclus dans les traités théologiques et intéressant le christianisme, l'ouvrage d'al-ʿĀmirī (qui est une entreprise globale) indique comment s'insère la polémique islamochrétienne dans la littérature apologétique musulmane, au moment où les sujets musulmans de l'empire abbasside étaient absolument sûrs de la justesse de leur cause et intimement convaincus que Révélation, Vérité et Histoire ne se conjuguent, pour ainsi dire, harmonieusement qu'islamiquement.

8. Conclusion

Au-delà donc des polémiques prises à la lettre et considérées comme des manifestations isolées d'une certaine animosité envers le christianisme, nous avons cru discerner qu'elles jouaient une fonction riche et multiple qui exige d'être placée dans son contexte historique particulier, celui d'une culture et d'une civilisation qui étaient en pleine élaboration au début de l'ère abbasside, puis avaient atteint des degrés élevés de réalisations spirituelles, intellectuelles et pratiques. Or, tout se passait dans le cadre d'une société sascralisée où les frontières entre le religieux et le temporel, le sacré et le profane n'étaient guère distinctes.

Enfin, les polémistes des trois premiers siècles abbassides avaient fait preuve, à côté de leur intransigence, d'un bel esprit de recherche et d'ouverture. Ils ne s'étaient point contentés des quelques indications coraniques éparses qui se rapportent au christianisme mais avaient creusé dans l'histoire des écritures et des dogmes chrétiens et avaient suivi, presque à la loupe, les divergences entre les sectes chrétiennes. Ensuite, les polémistes des deux derniers siècles abbassides suivirent le mouvement général descendant de leur civilisation. Leurs oeuvres, pareilles en cela à la majeure partie de la production de leur époque, ne brillaient guère par leur originalité. L'innovation laissait la place à la compilation pure et simple et l'esprit d'initiative démissionnait au profit de l'arrangement de la somme impressionnante des matériaux accumulés par les précurseurs.

III

THE EARLIEST ARAB APOLOGY FOR CHRISTIANITY
(C. 750)

Samir Khalil Samir, S.J.

1. Introduction

The text I am presenting today is not unknown. Those who were present at Louvain-la-Neuve on the 1st September 1988, may remember that I had already presented this Apology.[1] I will not therefore repeat what I have said there. I shall only give a résumé of my earlier paper. My main purpose today is to give a clearer idea of its contents, by quoting various passages in Arabic, in order to give you a feeling of this Apology.

In 1980, at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (P.I.S.A.I., Rome), I had to give a ten hour course in English on "Arab Christian apologetics". I therefore looked for the English translation of these texts. The only one I could find was an anonymous treatise, edited and translated by Mrs. Margaret Dunlop Gibson in 1898, entitled: "On the triune nature of God".[2] It is a translation of: *Fī tatlīt Allāh al-waḥīd*.[3]

1.1. *A Casual Discovery*

Since the students attending the course did not know Arabic, I wanted to quote some parts of this Apology in English.

I found some problems in the edited Arabic text, and decided to order a microfilm of the Arabic manuscript Sinai 154 from the

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[1] See Samir Khalil Samir, *Une apologie arabe du christianisme d'époque umayyade*, in Samir Khalil Samir (ed.), *Actes du troisième congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes*, vol. 15, *Parole de l'Orient* (Kaslik, Lebanon, 1990).

[2] See M.D. Gibson, *Studia Sinaitica*, vol. VII (London, 1899), pp. 74-107 (Arabic), 2-36 (English) and VIII-XI (Introduction).

[3] I do not know whether this title is to be found in the Arabic original or is due to Mrs Gibson. I have the impression that is it not in the manuscript. I think that *al-ṭālūt al-muwaḥḥad*, "the unified Trinity", is in the Arabic original, but not *al-tawḥīd al-muṯallaṯ*. This expression would be very interesting, if authentic.

Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.). While comparing the manuscript with the edited text, I was very much surprised: each time Mrs. Gibson used ". . ." (Mingana too used the same system), this could mean then either one word missing, or a few words, or a few lines, or even a whole page, and that without any explanation! The more I compared the two texts, the more I discovered important lacunae in Mrs. Gibson's edition.

Another great surprise was that these lacunae are very readable today on the manuscript. On the other hand, some passages of the printed edition, which were apparently perfectly legible when Mrs. Gibson prepared her edition, are not readable today. Generally speaking, her reading of the manuscript is good enough, even if not perfect.

I really do not know how to explain these two contradictory facts. Perhaps the pages were stuck together and therefore unreadable at that time, and the Mount Sinai Expedition of 1951 was able to un-stick them before filming the manuscript. Or perhaps Mrs. Gibson used some chemicals to read the uncertain pages, as she did with other manuscripts (one must bear in mind that infra-red lamps were not available at that time), thus gradually obliterating the writing and rendering any photography useless.

Anyway, the conclusion was clear: I had to prepare a new edition of this document, seeing that I had discovered over ten totally unknown pages, not to mention smaller lacunae and mistakes made in the reading of the manuscript. On one of these pages, I found the date, as I shall explain further on.[4]

1.2. *The Manuscript*

We will now examine the age of the manuscript and its origin. Since it is incomplete, can it be completed? A careful examination of its hand-writing shows some very peculiar features which confirm its antiquity.

1.2.1. *A Very Old Parchment*

This manuscript, the *Sinai Arabic 154*, is a very old parchment.[5]

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[4] See below, 2.1.

[5] This manuscript is not to be confused with the so-called "Codex Arabicus" (*Sinai Arabic 514*), a famous palimpsest with five levels, datable from the tenth century.

Prof. Aziz Suryal Atiya who, together with Dr. Murad Kamel, took part in the expedition to Mount Sinai and wrote a detailed catalogue of the manuscripts based on his personal examination of the collection, dated this manuscript from the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth,[6] that is about 800 A.D.

According to my own experience of Arab Christian manuscripts, I believe his estimation to be correct. If this is true, our manuscript would be one of the oldest known Arab Christian codices, if not the oldest one.

This manuscript is preserved at Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. It is possible that it was written for this Monastery, but elsewhere, namely in the Monastery of Mar Saba or in that of Mar Khariton. In fact, many old manuscripts from the Sinai Monastery come from these two monasteries, south of Jerusalem. It is certainly a South Palestinian manuscript of Melkite origin.

Today, our manuscript is incomplete. Some parts of it can be found elsewhere. An accurate research has to be made in order to reconstruct the complete manuscript, if possible. I have identified a part of it at the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris: it is part of Arabic Ms no. 6725. I copied it, and I hope to be able to publish a reconstitution of some sections. Other parts of the manuscript are spread around the world.

Even so, our Apology is incomplete. I was able, however, to add about ten pages at the end of Mrs. Gibson's edition, plus some pages here and there. But it is still incomplete, and it is impossible to evaluate the extent of what is missing. I am still hoping to discover the end of our Apology, maybe in the newly discovered Sinai Collection, which is in fact a very old one, and which has been briefly presented by Yianni Meimaris in 1985.[7] The extant part of our

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[6] See Aziz Suryal Atiya, *A hand-list of the Arabic manuscripts and scrolls microfilmed at the library of the Monastery of St Catherine, Mount Sinai* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), p. 66: ca. 8th-9th cent. AD; ideam, *Catalogue raisonné of the Mount Sinai Arabic Manuscripts* (Alexandria: Al Maaref Establishment, 1970, vol. I, translated into Arabic by Joseph N. Youssef, pp. 296-298. The original English text was never published. Before his death in September 1988, Professor Atiya gave me the only original text he had, the one which he had written in pencil in 1951 while in the monastery. I am still hoping to find a publisher ready to publish it.

[7] See Yanni [Yiannis] Meimaris, *Katālūj al-Mahtūtāt al-ᶜarabiyyah al-muktašafah ḥadītan by-Dayr sānt ātarīh al-muqaddas bi-Ṭūr Sīnāʾ* (Athens: The National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1985). See K. Samir's review, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 52 (1986), pp. 441-444; and K. Samir, "Nourveaux fragments d'homéliare arabe de l'Ambrosienne", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 52 (1986), no. 214-219.

Apology comprises today 41 folios of the codex (from folio 99 *recto* to folio 139 *verso*).[8]

1.2.2. *A Singular Writing*

The hand-writing also confirms the antiquity of the codex. Some graphic features are of particular interest. I will give some examples of this writing, based on the microfilm taken by the 1951 Expedition and not on a direct examination of the manuscript itself. I would like to thank the Library of Congress and Saint Catherine's Monastery for providing me with a copy of it, and for giving me the permission to have it published.

The way the *qāf* is written seems to be absolutely unique in the Arabic script. It is always written like this ـڢ. This is in fact the Maghribi *fāʾ*. I first thought it was a mistake, but it is undoubtedly a *qāf*. And here is a double mystery: first, the fact that we find in the Mashriq this kind of *fāʾ*, which is normally only attested in the Maghrib; second, the fact that in this manuscript it is a *qāf* and not a *fāʾ*. I would be very grateful if somebody could offer me an explanation or produce another example of these two peculiarities.

The final *hāʾ* is always written like this ـح.

The *mīm* is written like a big triangle ◿.

The copyist has an eye for presenting his page, and takes great pains in justifying and perfectly filling the lines. That is why, we find two opposite characteristics:

(a) If a word cannot enter on the line, he simply cuts it, something which is forbidden in modern Arabic. Thus for example the word *rasūl* is written with *rāʾ* on one line and *sūl* on the other.

(b) If the word is too short, he adds a stroke about 1 cm long, until he reaches the theoretical end of the line, in order to achieve a perfect justification. That is why this manuscript has some really beautiful pages.

All this is a sign of great antiquity. I wonder whether this can be found in 10th century manuscripts. I do not remember of having come across such particularities. It would be interesting to determine when these characteristics first appeared in manuscripts and

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[8] For some unkown reason, the numbers of the folios in Mrs Gibson's edition of our Apology have always three units more than in the manuscript. Thus this text starts, in her edition with fol. 102 *recto* which in fact corresponds to folio 99 *recto* of the Manuscript; and ends with fol. 136 *recto* (corresponding to fol. 133 *recto*).

when they disappeared, and where. Arabic palaeography has not yet made very great progress.

1.3. *Date of the Apology*

Our text is indirectly dated. Unfortunately, it uses a system which is as yet unknown. We therefore cannot give a precise date. Here are the facts.

1.3.1. *The Text Containing the Date*

What was for me a great discovery was that I found the date, in a page not previously published by Mrs. Gibson, because it was unreadable at that time. According to my division of the text into small paragraphs, the date is to be found in no. 367 of my edition, or in folio 110 *verso* which would correspond to folio 113 *verso* of Gibson's edition.[9]

This is the text where I found the date (no. 367-369):

367 If this religion was not truly from God, it would not have stood firm nor stood erect *for seven hundred years and forty-six years*;

368 whereas the nations were fighting them [*sic*][10] and were not able to make ineffective[11] a religion that God had stood erect and created.

369 By my life, in this fact there is an admonition, for who wishes to think and to know the truth!

367 ولو لم يكن' هذا الدين حقا[12] من الله
لم يثبت' ولم يقم'[13]
ــنذ' سبع مئة سنة دست دأربعين سنة.

368 والاسم يقاتلونه[14]
لا يستطيعون أن يـبطلوا[15]
دينا[16] أقامه الله وصنعه.

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[10] We would normally expect "fighting it". This could be a graphic mistake (*yuqātilūnahum*, instead of *yuqātilūnahū*). But it could also be that the author still had the Apostles in mind.

[11] *Abṭala* means also "to declare false" and refers to No. 366.

[12] MS حق.

[13] MS يقوم

[14] MS يقاتلونهم

[15] MS يبطلون

[16] MS دين

369   فَلَعَمري، إن في هذا
لمن أراد أن يتفكر ويعرف الحق، عبرة!

The date is very clear: 746. But not its interpretation. The author
says: ''This religion would not have stood firm (*yaṯbut*) nor would
not have stood erect (*yaqūm*) for 746 years'' Whence does he start
his computation?

We have a similar problem in the *Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān*. We find the
following: ''825 years, since *ṯubūt wa-iqāmat hāḏā al-dīn*''.[17] The
parallel is absolutely amazing: the same idea and even the use of the
two key-words: *ṯubūt* and *iqāmah*. If I am not mistaken, I was the first
one to indicate in 1984 this date (825 years), in an article I wrote in
Arabic on *Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān*.[18]

This parallel is very important. It shows that this is not a vague
expression, but on the contrary a precise one. It is a technical ex-
pression, using two identical terms. The way our author writes out
the date confirms this assertion: ''seven hundred years, and forty-
six years''. Normally, one would say (in Arabic as well as in
English): ''seven hundred and forty-six years''. Furthermore, if this
was an approximative date, the author would have used a round
figure, for instance: ''seven hundred and fifty years''.

All this proves that we have here a technical expression and a pre-
cise date. How is it to be interpreted? That is the question.

1.3.2. *Interpretation of the Date*

Now, how are we to date both texts? First of all, 79 years had
elapsed between our text and the *Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān*. Of this we are
sure and that is important: our text is much older than the other one.
So we do have at least a relative chronology.

If we want to obtain an absolute chronology, the question then is:
Where do we start? Considering our actual state of ignorance, we

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[17] See K. Samir, ''Kitāb ''Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān'' wa-mujādalat Abī Qurrah
ʿan ṣalb al-Masīḥ'', *al-Masarrah*, 70 (1984), pp. 411-427, here pp. 412 and 425
(notes), where I quoted the text of chapter 22 (MS London, British Library Or.
4950, fol. 156 *recto*,) and not only the well-known sentence of chapter 21.

[18] See note 18; see also K. Samir, ''Date de composition de la 'Somme des
aspects de la foi' '', in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 51 (1985), pp. 352,387, especial-
ly pp. 376-380; and *idem*, ''La 'Somme des aspects de la foi', oeuvre d'Abu
Qurrah?'' in K. Samir (ed.), *Actes du deuxième congrès international d'études arabe chré-
tiennes (Oosterhesselen, septembre 1984)*, coll. *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 226 (Rome
1986), pp. 93-121, here p. 95.

are obliged to make various hypotheses, because we have no idea what was in the mind of these Melkite Palestinian authors when they said *ṯubūt wa-iqāmat al-dīn*. We can make three hypotheses regarding this starting point: the Incarnation; the beginning of Jesus' preaching and his public life; the end of Jesus life (Crucifixion/Resurrection, Ascension/Pentecost).

If we assume the *incarnation* to be the starting point of this *ṯubūt wa-iqāmat al-dīn* (i.e. *al-dīn al-narāniyyah*), then the date would 746 years from the Incarnation.

But again what does it mean? We know that in the case of the Era of Incarnation, which is used by some Coptic and Ethiopic authors, one has to add eight or nine years to obtain what we call AD or CE. At first, I thought, reasonably, that the date was 746 plus eight or nine years, which gives us 754/755 AD.

But further inquiries into the Melkite manuscripts of Sinaitic or South Palestinian origin (namely, the Monasteries of Mar Saba and Mar Khariton) have undoubtedly proven that in these manuscripts the case was exactly the opposite: one had to subtract eight or nine years, instead of adding them. This I established on the basis of the correspondance with the Hijra Era, as I wrote in a previous article.[19]

So if the starting point is to be the Incarnation, then this text is to be dated from 737/738 AD, which is quite an old date for a Christian Arabic Apology, and certainly the oldest known one. This is also important because we are then taken back to the Umayyad period. Up to the present day, it was thought that Arabic Christian theology started only under the Abbasids.

This dating does indeed make sense. In fact, during the Umayyad period, the Melkites are the main Christian group in Palestine and Syria.

Now if the starting point is to be the beginning of Jesus' Ministry, then we have to add some 30 years, thus dating our Apology from circa 767/768AD. Finally, if we assume the starting point to be the Ascension or the Pentecost, then we have to add another three years. Our apology would then date from 770/771AD.

It is clear that the question is still open. In any case, it is the oldest known datable (if not dated) document. It is earlier than Timothy

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[19] See Khalil Samir, "L'ère de l'Incarnation dans les manuscrits melkites du 11ᵉ au 14ᵉ siècle", in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 53 (1987), pp. 193-201.

I's discussion with the Caliph al-Mahdī, datable from 781AD. Earlier than Abū Qurrah, whose first works can be dated from circa 785AD. (Unfortunately, none of his writings are dated). Our text is also earlier than Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī, who wrote, more or less, between 815 and 830AD. It is important to establish this fact, because there are some connections between Abū Rāʾiṭah's writings and our Apology.

The vocabulary and expressions used by our anonymous author denotes Syriac influence, which could confirm an ancient Palestinian origin. For example: he speaks of *al-ḫalā waʾl-furqān* as of two synonyms.[20] But *furqān* in Arabic is not the equivalent of *ḫalā*, while in Syriac *furqonō* does indeed mean ''deliverance'' or ''redemption''.[21] It is therefore a Syriacism. In fact, Mingana had already remarked that this Qurʾanic word was borrowed from Syriac.[22]

2. STRUCTURE OF THE APOLOGY AND ITS PREFACE

2.1. *Structure of the Apology*

2.1.1. *Preliminary Remark*

At this point, I have to make a preliminary remark. It is difficult to discover the structure of this treatise, and that of each part of it. This author (like many of his time) did not divide it into parts or chapters or sections.

While working on Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, I also found it difficult to establish the structure of the text, not because it was lacking (even though this is not explicitly indicated), but because the ideas are very subtle and sophisticated. Yaḥyā's mind is over-structured, but devious. Thus it was difficult for me to follow the trend of his thought in all his meandering. Nevertheless, after reading the text about ten

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[20] See No 195: *Wa-kāna allāhu arḥama al-rāḥimīn bi-ḫalqihi, wa-aḥaqqa man tawallā ḫalāṣahum wa-furqānahum min fitnat Iblīs wa-ḍalālātihi.*

[21] See A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾan* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), pp. 225-229. ''Not only is *furqonō* the common word for *salvation* in the Peshitta and the ecclesiastical writers (. . .), but it is the normal form in the Christian-Palestinian dialect, and has passed into the religious vocabulary of Ethiopic (. . .) and Armenian'' (p. 227). Furthermore, *forqō* is the normal word for ''The Saviour''.

[22] See Alphonse Mingana, ''Syriac Influences in the Style of the Kurʾan'', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 1927, p. 77-98.

times, I eventually discover its structure—which was clearly indicated indeed by Yaḥyā himself.

Here, the problem is different. It is difficult to choose the right titles and thus indicate the structure of the text, not because of the complexity of the author's mind, but because his style is very fluid. It is much more of an oral type, where ideas follow each other by association, rather than by a logical sequence. There lies the problem.

This is why the divisions and the structure I propose are really only an experiment, without any certainty at all. I may improve on it some years hence.

2.1.2. *Structure of the Text*

The text can be divided into an introduction and two major parts. The first part corresponds to 36% of the extant text and the second to the remaining 64%. I will centre my study today on the introduction and the first part. This represents therefore less than a third of the complete Apology.

That is why, I shall now treat briefly of the second part of our Apology. This part is essentially a series of "Testimonia" (*šawāhid*), i.e. of Biblical quotations. They aim to establish the divinity of Christ, and all the mysteries of his life (from the Incarnation to the crucifixion and death). The text we possess ends abruptly with the crucifixion. One would imagine that the complete text will have contained quotations on the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, and maybe on the Holy Spirit.

The quotations, however, are not given alone. Every one of them is commented upon and annotated, showing its relationship with the mystery of Christ. It is very interesting to note that, in an Apology of Christianity written for Muslims (the numerous Qurʾanic quotations bear witness to this purpose), two thirds of it contain almost nothing but Biblical quotations. This is also a sign of antiquity.

2.1.3. *Structure of the First Part*

The first part (the only one I am presenting in this paper) can be divided into four chapters.

The numbers following the chapters refer to my own division of the Apology into small "verses". This system has the advantage of giving a precise idea of the length of each chapter. Furthermore, these numbers will not change whatever the publication.

1. Trinity	17-118
2. Incarnation	119-211
3. Redemption, which ends with Christ as Mediator	212-314
4. Veracity of Christianity	315-384

This structure indicates that the author, when presenting the Christian faith, does not go into details, but goes straight to the main mysteries of the Christian faith. The last part (which includes in fact an exposition on the divinity of Christ) is a sort of conclusion showing that Christianity is the true religion. The first three chapters are more or less equal in length, with an average of 98 verses each (101, 92 and 102); the fourth one is shorter (69 verses).

2.2. *The Preface (no. 2-16)*

The Preface is composed of three sections:

1. God's praise	2-5
2. Prayers to God	6-12
3. Invocation	13-16

2.2.1. *God's Praise (no. 2-5)*

The Introduction, like any *fātiḥah* of an Arabic work, is very beautiful. It is written in *saj*ᶜ. It is moreover very simple and easy to understand (this is not always the case with *saj*ᶜ). Here is the text:

1 O God, in Your mercy,
    we are favored in truth and rightness!
2 Praise be to God,
    before whom nothing was,
    and who was before everything,
3 after whom there is nothing,
    and He is the heir of all things,
    and to Him all things return;
4 who kept the knowledge of all things,
    by His knowledge,
  and nothing but His intellect[23]
    is sufficient for this;

---

[23] Gibson read ᶜ*amaluhu*, instead of ᶜ*aqluhu*. She therefore translated it "His work", instead of "His intellect".

5 in whose knowledge is the end of all things,
   and He counts everything by His knowledge.

<div dir="rtl">

1 اللهم، برحمتك توفقْـنا للصدق والصواب!

2 الحمد لله، الذي لم يكن شيْ قبله،
  وكان قبل كل شيْ.

3 الذي ليس شيْ بعده،
  وهو وارث كلّ شيْ،
  وإليه مصير كل شيْ.

4 الذي حنفظ بعلمه علْمَ كل شيْ،[24]
  ولم يسعْ لذلك إلا عقله.

5 الذي إلى علمه انتهى[25] كل شيْ،
  وأحصى[26] كل شيْ بعلمه.

</div>

You may have noticed the expression *kull shay⁾* is repeated seven
times in a few lines. The author will conclude the second section with
a *kull shay⁾* repeated three times in one verse (no. 12).

In no. 4-5 we have four times the word "knowledge" (*ᶜilm*) and
once "intellect" (*ᶜaql*). This aims at clearly giving this Apology its
stature: a search for knowledge, which can only come from God.

2.2.2. *Prayers to God (no. 6-12)*

6 We ask you, o God, by Your mercy and your power,
   to put us among those who know Your truth
   and follow Your will and avoid Your wrath,
7 and praise Your beautiful names[27]
   and proclame Your excellent examples.[28]

                                            * * *

8 Your are the compassionate,
   the merciful, the most compassionate;
9 You are seated upon the Throne[29]

---

[24] Gibson, عمله

[25] MS and Gibson, انتهى

[26] MS وأحصا

[27] This is a typical Muslim expression, which occurs four times in the Qur⁾an.
See Qur⁾an 7:180; 17:110; 20:8 and 59:24.

[28] Mrs Gibson translates: "and adore Thy excellent names in Thy sublime at-
tributes."

[29] This is a Qur⁾anic quotation. Six times in the Qur⁾an, when speaking of
God, we find: *Ṯumma istawā ᶜalā al-ᶜarš* (7:54; 10:3; 13:2; 25:59; 32:4 and 57:4); and
once (20:5): *Al-Raḥmān ᶜalā l-ᶜarš istawā*.

and You are higher than the creatures,

and You fill all things.

10 You make your own choice,

and nothing is preferable to you;[30]

You judge, and no one can judge You;

You are rich toward us,

and we are poor toward You.[31]

11 You are near to those who approach You,

You answered those who call on You and implore You.

12 So You are, O God, the Lord of all things,

and the God of all things,

and the Creator of all things.

<div dir="rtl">

6 نسألك³² اللهم، برحمتك وقدرتك،

أن تجعلنا ممن يعرف حقّك،

ويتبع رضاك، ويتجنب³³ سخطك،

7 ويسبح بأسمائك الحسنى³⁴،

ويتكلم³⁵ بأمثالك العليا.

8 أنت الراحم الرحمان³⁶ الرحيم،

9 على العرش استويت

وعلى الخلائق عليت

وكل شيء مليت³⁷

10 تخير، ولا يُخار³⁸عليك،

تقضي، ولا يُقضى³⁹عليك،

تستغني عنا، ونفتقر اليك،

11 قريب لمن دنا⁴⁰منك،

مجيب لمن دعاك وتضرّع⁴¹ إليك

</div>

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[30] Mrs Gibson translates: "Thou doest good and art not done good to."

[31] Or: "You do not need us, and we need you."

[32] MS and Gibson.

[33] Gibson.

[34] MS

Gibson

[35] Gibson, *om.*

[36] Gibson. *om.*

[37] Read مليت. The passage of *verba tertiae hamzatae* to *tertiae ya'* is very frequent in South Palestinian manuscripts and in Ancient Arabic. See Blau, section 7.7. I have kept the spelling of the manuscript in order to preserve the *saj'*.

[38] Gibson تخار

[39] MS يقضا

[40] Gibson دنى

[41] MS تضرع

12   فانت اللهم رب كل شيء،
وإلاه كل شيء،
وخالق كل شيء.

2.2.3. *Invocation (no. 13-16)*
Then comes the *duʿāʾ*:

13 Open our mouths, and loosen our tongues,
   soften our hearts, and lay open our breasts,[42]
14 to praise Your name, which is noble,
   high and great, blessed and holy.
15 For verily there is no God before You,
   and no God after You.
16 To You [shall we] return,
   and You are the All Powerful.

13   افتح أفواهنا، وانشر ألستنا،
ولين قلوبنا، واشرح [43]صدورنا،

14   لنسبح اسمك الكريم،
العلي العظيم،
المبارك المقدس.

15   فانه لا إله قبلك،
ولا إله بعدك.

16   إليك المصير،
وأنت على كل شيء قدير.

2.2.4. *Remark on the Qurʾanic Allusions*
The numerous Qurʾanic allusions are unmistakeable.

What is interesting in this preface, is that it could have been equally written by a Muslim. There is not a single allusion to anything Christian. He could have used words like *kalimah* or *rūh* to suggest the Trinity, or quote some verses from the Qurʾan dealing with Christ. There is nothing at all here which evokes Christianity. On the contrary, many expressions are typically Muslim.

What is even more interesting, is that the Qurʾanic allusions we find here, are not quotations. In a way, quoting the Qurʾan is quite

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[42] This is a Qurʾanic expression, which occurs five times. See Qurʾan 6:125; 16:106; 20-25; 39-22 and 94;1. This last reference is important. God speaks to Muhammad and says: *A-lam našraḥlaka ṣadraka?*
[43] MS داسرع

easy: you just take the *Fihris* of Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī . . . or some other Concordance of that time, and you look for what you want. That's all. But to insert the quotation in such a way that it becomes so much a part of the text that it is difficult to identify, this is much more difficult. This means that the text you quote (in this instance the Qurʾan) is already a part of you.

I have the feeling that this is what happened to our author. One could speak of inculturation to describe that phenomenon. In other words, there is one Arabic culture, but two religions. Each thinker tries, with all the legitimate means at his disposal, to account for his faith in the one and same Arabic culture. This is, I think, a true dialogue.

3. TRINITY (NO. 17-118)

I will not develop this chapter, but just give some examples of it. The chapter can be divided into four sections:

1. The Trinity is well-known since the Beginning 17-46
2. Trinitarian Analogies   47-71
3. Impossibility of comprehending the Trinity   72-87
4. Arguments in favour of the Trinity   88-118

3.1. *The Trinity is Well-Known Since the Beginning (no. 17-46)*

The "unified" Trinity is to be found since the very beginning of the Creation. The Angels proclaimed it in their hymn,[44] and God created everything by his Word and his Spirit[45] who are one God. God has shown it in the revealed Books (*al-kutub al-munzalah*): the Torah, the Prophets, the Psalms and the Gospel.

Therefore the author starts with the Creation, and shows that the Trinity was already present, in the first page of Genesis (*fī raʾs al-tawrah*) (no. 34).[46]

3.2. *Trinitarian Analogies (no. 47-71)*

A. Section 2 presents seven analogies which can be applied to the Trinity (*amṯilah ʿalā al-ṯalūṯ*): three of them are taken from nature,

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[44] See Isaiah 6:3
[45] See Psalms 33:6.
[46] See Rachid Haddad, "La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes 750-1050", *Beauchesne Religions*, 15 (Paris, Beauchesne, 1985), pp. 104-114.

and four from the human being. Most of them can in fact be traced back to the Church Fathers, and it would be easy to furnish the references.

Here is a summary of these analogies, and their relation to patristic theology.[47]

1. The sun: the disk, the rays and the heat (*ṭabaqah, shuʿā* and *suḫūnah*). This is the most classical analogy, found in almost all treatises, and known today to every Arab Christian child.

2. The eye: the eye, the pupil and the light (*ʿayn, ḥadaqah* and *nūr*). To the best of my knowledge, this analogy is unique in Arab Christian theology, and does not seem to be of patristic origin.

3. The human being (*insān*): soul, body and spirit (*nafs, jasad* and *rū*). This is a rather common analogy with Christian authors.

4. The tree: root, branches and fruit (*aṣl, farʿ* and *ṯamar*). This analogy is borrowed from the Treatise on the Heresies by John of Damascus.

5. The source: fountain, river and lake (*ʿayn al-māʾ, nahr* and *buḥayrah*). This one is also borrowed from the same treatise of John of Damascus.

6. The human mind: spirit, mind and word (*rūḥ, ʿaql* and *kalimah*). This is also an analogy common to the Church Fathers.

7. The mouth: mouth, tongue and word (*fam al-insān, lisān* and *kalimah*). This last analogy, rather unique in Arab Christian theology, reminds me of the analogy of the finger developed by Sawīrus b. al-Muqaffaʿ: there are three phalanges but one finger.

B. These analogies are obviously no "demonstration" of the Trinity. They aim to show that we can find, in nature, a threefold expression of the one and same reality. They are nevertheless interesting historically, because they represent an archaic explanation of the Trinity. In later times, Christians will develop this kind of argument less and less.

It is noticeable that the order of succession of these analogies is not a logical one. The author starts with the sun (nature), then he moves to the eye and the human being, then returns to nature using the tree and the source and finally goes back to the body in the two final analogies. I suspect that our author is not writing in a very logical way, at least regarding the details. He has in mind a general outline, and

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[47] For 52, see *Ibid*, pp. 115-127.

then writes freely, according to his inspiration, and probably without having the possibility of correcting himself.

3.3. *Impossibility of Comprehending the Trinity (no. 72-87)*

This theme is recurrent in Patristic literature, particularly the Cappadocean Fathers (more especially Gregory of Nazianze commonly called "the Theologian") and John of Damascus. These authors are well-known to Arab Christian theologians.[48]

It is impossible to understand and comprehend God, and especially to comprehend the Mystery of Trinity (*idrāk al-ṯalūṯ*). This is the so-called "apophatic theology": you cannot say anything about God, you can only say what God is not. It is a "negative speech".

You could find the same theme in the writings of Arab Christian Melkite authors of the 8th-9th Century, for example: Abū Qurrah, the *Jāmiᶜ wujūh al-īmān*, the *Kitāb al-burhān*. Later on, this theme is used by Coptic authors (Sawīrus b. al-Muqaffaᶜ in the tenth Century, or al-Ṣafī b. al-ᶜAssāl in the thirteenth century). It is a major theme in Christian Arabic literature. Our author insists on the incomprehensibility of God and the Trinity.

Why is this theme so frequently found in Christian Arabic apologetical literature? There is probably a double reason for that.

First of all, it is a classical topic in the Patristic literature, and Arabic Christan authors have been deeply influenced, and nourished, by Biblical and patristic literature. It also corresponds to the Oriental feeling of the sacredness of God, which is theirs. God lives in inaccessible light.[49] And therefore we cannot say anything precise about Him. Anything we might say is already wrong. We can only say: God is not this, or He is not that.

Secondly, this same feeling is shared by Muslim theologians, whether they were influenced by Christian theology or not. Therefore Arab Christian apologists felt it was important to develop this theme. This is particularly true when they had to speak about the Holy Trinity, which is, both for themselves as well as for their Muslim readers, the most sensitive Christian mystery.

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[48] For 53, see *Ibid*, pp. 85-98, especially p. 87.
[49] 1 Timothy 6:16.

3.4. *Arguments in Favour of the Trinity (no. 88-118)*

This section provides us with three arguments which "prove" the Trinity.

The first argument is that both the Bible and the Qur'an use the plural when speaking of God.[50] If the use of this argument by the Church Fathers is a classic *locum theologicum*, the same argument applied to the Qur'an is new. The author quotes three texts from the Qur'an.[51] To the best of my knowledge, this argument will not be made use of very much in later Arabic Christian apologetics.

Personally, this kind of argument does not convince me very much, but it was nevertheless very often used. A well-known example is the Biblical quotation "Let us create Man in our image".[52] Abū Rā'iṭah al-Takrītī makes use of the same quotations, adding some new Biblical material.[53]

Our Apology quotes (in no. 95-96) two other verses from the Qur'an, one regarding God's Word[54] and the other regarding the Holy Spirit.[55]

The second argument deals with the Triune God which is attested in the Qur'an and in the Gospel. Again, quoting the Qur'anic verses regarding Word and Spirit (*kalimah wa-rūḥ*), the author shows that these texts are a clear reference to the Christian Trinity (*ṯalūṯ*) (no. 97-105).

Finally, in the third argument, the author argues that the totality of the Trinity is in Christ, so that Christ is part of the Trinity. He also says that the totality of the Triune God is in Christ. This argument is based on the divine theophany at Christ's Baptism.

4. THE NECESSITY OF INCARNATION (NO. 119-211)

This chapter may be divided into an introduction, six sections and a conclusion:

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[50] For 54.1, see *ibid*, pp. 109-115.

[51] Qur'ān 90:4, 54:11 and 6:94.

[52] Genesis 1:26.

[53] See Georg Graf, "Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rā'iṭa", *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 130 (Arabic Text), Louvain, 1951, pp. 19f = 1st Treatise, Nr 16-17.

[54] See Qur'ān 4:171: *Innamā al-masīḥ ʿĪsā ʿbnu Maryam rasūl allāhi wa-kalimatuhu alqāhā ilā Maryam wa-rūḥ minhu. Fa-āminū bi-llāhi wa-kalimatihi [sic]*. The authorized text has: *Fa-āminū bi-llāhi wa-Rasūlihi*. I do not know whether this is a mistake on our apologist's part, or if it is an old Qur'ānic variant.

[55] See Qur'ān 16:102: *Qul: nazzalahu ruḥ al-qudus min rabbika bi 'l-ḥaqq*.

I shall comment on only the first section, the introduction and the conclusion.

4.1. *Two Different Approaches*

On hearing this title, you might have thought of Yahya b. ʿAdi's treatise entitled: "On the necessity of Incarnation" (*Fī wujūb al-taʾannus*).[56]

It may be interesting to remind ourselves of the argument used by Yayā b. ʿAdī, and the way he presents it. Here is a summary: God is the Most Generous (*al-jawwād*). The Most Generous gives generously the best of what is (*al-jawwād yajūd bi-ajwad al-mawjudāt*). Now, the best Existant is God himself (*wa-ajwad al-mawjudāt ḏāt Allāh*). Therefore, if God is God, he gives himself generously (*fa-yajūdu Allāh iḏan bi-ḏātih*).

Then Yaḥyā answers to a hypothetical objector who affirms that this is impossible. The impossibility cannot be on God's side: because this supposes either an incapacity (*ʿajz*) in God, that which is unthinkable, God being The Almighty (*al-qādir*), or his refusing to communicate Himself, a refusal which would stem from a lack of generosity (*buḫl*) on His part, and this would be opposed to His very nature of *jawwād*.

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[56] This is the true title of one of the small treatises of Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī. Unfortunately, in Augustin Périer's edition, we have: *Maqālah fī wujūd altaʾannus*, accompanied by a note informing us that all three manuscripts used by the editor have *wujūb*. The translation is even more confusing: Traité sur le *mode* de l'Incarnation. See Augustin Périer, *Petits Traités apologétiques de Yaḥyâ ben ʿAdî* (Paris, 1920), A very brief summary of this treatise is given by the Coptic theologian al-Ṣāfī b. al-ʿAssāl, in chapter 11 of his Short Chapters; see Khalil Samir, "Al-Ṣafi Ibn al-ʿAssāl. Brefs chapitres sur la Trinité et l'Incarnation. Introduction, texte arabe et traduction, avec un index-lexique exhaustif", *Patrologia Orientalis*, 42, fasc. 3 = No 192 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), here pp. 732-737.

On the other hand, the impossibility cannot be on Man's side: the only thing which could prevent the union between two existants is that they are opposed and contradictory (*mutaḍāḍḍān*). How could God be opposed to Man, since He created him, and did create him according to His own image?

The union (*ittiḥād*) between God and Man is therefore necessary and possible. It did effectively take place.

As you can see, we have here a very clear and logical presentation of the Necessity of Incarnation, based on the very nature of God recognised as the *jawwād*, the Most Generous. I admit that I like this argument, and I think it is far from being stupid!

Back to our Apology, we find nothing of the kind. It is completely different. We find no philosophical or logical approach, but a purely Biblical one.

Our author starts with the creation of Adam and the Fall. He then goes through the Bible, exposing what is usually called "the History of Salvation": the Deluge (*al-ṭūfān*); the story of Abraham; the story of Moses: the sins (*zallāt*) of the people of Israel (*Banū Isrāʾīl*), and how God sent Moses to them with many signs (*wa-ayyadahu bi'l-āyāt*), how He tried to save His people and guide them (*hadyuhum*). How the People disobeyed (*ʿaṣā Allāh*), and how God promised the Messiah to save them. But they moved away from God, so He sent His prophets to guide them, but they were unable to save the people. So God decided to save them Himself.

This corresponds to the Salvation narrative we find in the Eucharistic Prayer of most Oriental liturgies. It is a liturgical and homiletical development, based on the Bible.

4.2. *The Introduction (no. 119-121)*

The introduction of Chapter 2 gives the structure of this Chapter:

119 As for Christ, He saved and delivered people,
      and we will show that also, if God wills:
120 How God sent His Word and His light,
      as mercy and guidance to people,[57]

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[57] It is worth noting once more that our author incorporates in his text some Qurʾānic allusions to Christ. In the Qurʾān, Christ, God's Word, is first of all a sign (*āyah*) for the people (19:21; 21:91; 23:5); but this is not mentioned here. He is also mercy (*raḥmah*) (19:21) and his Good News is guidance and light (*hudan wa-nūr*) (5:46), and this is used here.

and was gracious to them in Him.

121 And why He came down from Heaven,

to save Adam and his lineage[58]

from the Devil and his darkness and his error[59]

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119   أمَّ في المسيح، فخلَّص الناس ونجَّاهم.
فسنيـن [60] ذلك، إن شاء الله:

120   كيف أرسل الله كلمته ونوره،
رحمة للناس وهدى [61]
ومنّ عليهم به.

121   ولِم نزل من السماء
وخلاصا [62] لآدم وذرِّته
من إبليس وظلمته وضلالته.

</div>

4.3. *Creation of Adam* (no. 122-127)

122 For God (may His name be blessed

and sanctified and exalted !)

123 created, of His bounty and His great mercy,

the heavens and the earth

and all that is therein

in six days.[63]

As for the expression "mercy and guidance" it is of Qurʾānic origin, but in a reversed form: "guidance and mercy" (*hudan wa-rahmatan*). It occurs thirteen times in the Qurʾan in nine different *sūrahs*, all of them Mekkan (the expression will never be used at Medina), and always used to qualify the divine Message. We can be even more precise: with one exception (27:77), all the quotations belong to the third Mekkan period.

However, the expression "Mercy and Guidance" is never applied to Christ or to the Gospel, but three times to Moses (6:154; 7:154 and 28:43), and ten times to Muhammad and his Message (6:157; 7:52; 7:203; 10:57; 12:111; 16:64; 16:89; 27:77; 31:3 and 45:20).

[58] Please note, for the time being, the expression *Ādam wa-ḏurriyyatuhu* (No. 121b). It is important in order to understand what is called "original sin". This expression is used again by Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī (about AD 820) in his treatise on the Incarnation. See Samir, pp. 225f.

[59] Mrs Gibson did not understand this No. 112, confusing *limā* with *lam*. She translates "There came down to Adam and his race from Heaven no Saviour from Satan and his darkness and his error".

[60] MS and Gibson فسانين . The use of ل instead of س as a mark of future is very common in South Palestinian manuscripts. See Blau, section 8.1.

[61] MS وهدا

[62] MS and Gibson خلاص

[63] See Genesis 1:1 to 2:4.

124 And He created Adam of dust,
   and breathed into him the breath of life,
   so Adam became a living soul.[64]
125 Then He made him to dwell in the Garden.[65]
   And He created for him,
   from his rib, his wife.[66]
126 He commanded them to eat
   of every tree in the Garden;
   but of the tree of good and evil,
   they should not eat;
127 for in the day that they should eat thereof,
   they should surely die.[67]

122 إنَّ اللهَ (تبارك اسمه، وتقدَّس، وتعالى!)[68]
   خلق، بفضله ورحمته العظيمة،

123 السموات والأرض وما فيهما
   في ستة أيام،

124 وخلق آدم من تراب،
   ونفخ[69] فيه نسمة الحياة
   فكان[70] آدم نفسا حيّا[71]

125 ثم أسكنه الجنة
   وخلق له من ضلعه زوجته.

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[64] Genesis 2:7.

[65] This again is a Qur'ānic reminiscence. The expression occurs twice in the Qur'ān, in Sūrat al-Baqarah and in Sūrat al-Aʿrāf: Yā Ādam uskun, anta wa-zawjuka, al-jannah (2:35 and 7:19). These Qur'ānic verses remind us of the Biblical verse: God planted a Garden in Eden which is in the East, and there he put the Man he had fashioned (Genesis 2:8). It is however clear, from this comparison, that our Apology is here much closer to the Qur'ān than to the Bible.

This sentence of our Apology will be used again by Abū Rā'iṭah, in his treatise on the Incarnation (treatise II of Graf's edition in CSCO 130; see above, note 54), 185 of our edition: Wa-askanahu jannatahu, wa-awʿadahu malakūtahu.

[66] See Genesis 2:21-22. The creation of Eve from Adam's rib is not in the Qur'ān. This is a typical Biblical narrative.

[67] Numbers 126-127 are an almost literal quotation of Genesis 2:16-17. In the Qur'ān, we do not find all these details, but a sort of summary in Aʿrāf 7:19: "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in the Garden. So eat from where you desire, but did not go near this tree, for then you will be of the unjust."

[68] MS وتعالى

[69] Gibson ونفخ

[70] Gibson وكان

[71] MS and Gibson, نفس حيى

<div dir="rtl">

126 دُأوصاهُما (أَنْ)[72] يأكلا
من كل شجرةٍ في الجنَّةِ ،
وأمَّا من شجرة الخير والشرِّ ،
فلا يأكلا منها:

127 فإنَّهما، يومَ يأكلان [73] منها،
موتًا[74] يموتان.

</div>

4.4. *Sin of Adam and Punishment (no. 128-133)*

4.4.1. *The Text*

128 And the Devil envied them,
    and wished to put them out from the honour of God.
129 And he came to Eve, the wife of Adam,
    and said to her:
    Thus hath God said:
    "Eat not of the tree of knowledge,
130 for He knoweth that when ye eat of it,
    ye shall become gods like Him".[75]
131 And the Devil made [that] beautiful to them,
    and deceived them;
    so Eve ate of it,
    and gave her husband to eat.[76]
132 And they were naked,
    and became aware of their nakedness,[77]
    and covered themselves with fig-leaves.[78]
133 So God drove them out of the Garden,
    and they lived over against it,
    and God made a wall of fire to the Garden.[79]

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[72] My addition

[73] MS and Gibson يا كلا

[74] موت

[75] Numbers 129-130 are a paraphrase of Genesis 3:1-5.

[76] For this number, see Genesis 3:6.

[77] The term *saw'āt* is typically Qur'ānic, where it occurs five times, always in the plural form and always in connection with Adam's disobedience. See Qur'ān 7 (*al-A'rāf*): 20, 22, 26 and 27; and 20 (*Taha*):121. It means the genital organs, and consequently "shame, disgrace".

[78] For this number, see Genesis 3:7. In the Qur'ān, God gave them clothes (*libās*): O children of Adam, we have sent down to you clothing to cover your shame (*saw'ātikum*) (*A'rāf* 7:26).

[79] For this number, see Genesis 3:23-24: So God expelled Adam from the Garden of Eden to till the soil from which he had been taken. He banished the Man, and in front of the Garden of Eden he posted the cherubs, and the flame of a flashing sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.

128 فحسدهما إبليس،
وأراد أن يخرجهما من كرامة الله.

129 فأتى[80] هوّاء، زوجة آدم،
فقال لها: كذلك[81] قال الله
"لا تأكلا من شجرة العلم"؟

130 "إنّه قد علم أنَّ،[82] متى[83] تأكلان[84] منها،
تكونان إلاهين مثله."

131 فزيّن لهما إبليس (ذلك)،[85] وغرّهما،[86]
فأكلت منها هوّاء، وأطعمت زوجها.

132 فعُريَا،[87]وبدت[88] لهما سوءاتهما،
واستترا بورق التين.

133 فأخرجهما الله من الجنّة، وسكنا مقابلها،
وجعل الله حائط الجنّة من نار.

4.4.2. *Iblīs's Envy (no. 128)*

Here the author introduces a theme which will become important in later theological tradition, namely the Envy of the Devil (*ḥasad Iblīs*) (no. 128a).

It is a Biblical theme, the *pthonos Diabolou*. It is to be found in the Book of Wisdom, one of the Greek books of the Old Testament, which is a theological reflexion on Genesis 3:

> ''It was the Devil's envy
> that brought death into the world,
> as those who are his partners will discover''.[89]

This theme is to be found, word for word, in the liturgical tradition.

Our text speaks of a ''wall of fire'' (*ḥāʾiṭ al-jannah min nār*). There is no allusion to such a wall in the Bible. It could simply be a graphic mistake for *ḥāfiẓ* (instead of *ḥāʾiṭ*), both being graphically very similar (حائط and حافظ), since dots were not used at that time. The text would therefore read: and God made a *guardian* of fire for the Garden.

[80] MS نأتى
[81] MS and Gibson لذلك
[82] My addition
[83] MS متا
[84] MS and Gibson تأكلا
[85] My addition
[86] MS وعرّهما
[87] MS فعريا
[88] MS and Gibson وبدات (sic!) It is a hyper-correction. For this phenomenon, see the numerous examples given in Blau (index).
[89] Wisdom, 2:24.

It occurs for instance in the Coptic Eucharistic Prayer of St. Basil, in the Prayer for Reconciliation (*Ṣalāt al-ṣulḥ*), which is recited daily:

wa'l-mawt alladī daḫala ilā al-ʿālam bi-ḥasad Iblīs hadamtahu bi-ẓuhūr ibnika al-wāḥid al-muḥyī, rabbinā wa-ilāhinā wa-muḫalliṣinā Yasūʿ al-Masīḥ.

"And death which entered into the world through the envy of Satan, You have destroyed it by the life-giving manifestation of Your Only-begotten Son, our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ".[90]

Ⲫⲛⲟⲩϯ ⲡⲓⲛⲓϣϯ ⲡⲓϣⲁⲉⲛⲉϩ

ⲫⲏ ⲉⲧⲁϥⲕⲱⲧ ⲙ̀ⲡⲓⲣⲱⲙⲓ ⲉ̀ϩ̀ⲣⲏⲓ

ⲉⲝⲉⲛ ϯⲙⲉⲧⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ ·

Ⲟⲩⲟϩ ⲫ̀ⲙⲟⲩ ⲉ̀ⲧⲁϥⲓ̀ ⲉ̀ϧⲟⲩⲛ

ⲉ̀ⲡⲓⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ : ϩⲓⲧⲉⲛ ⲡⲓⲫⲑⲟⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̀ⲧⲉ

ⲡⲓⲁ̀ⲓⲁ̀ⲃⲟⲗⲟⲥ ·

Ⲁⲕϣⲉⲣϣⲱⲣϥ ϩⲓⲧⲉⲛ ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ

ⲉ̀ⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̀ⲣⲉϥⲧⲁⲛϧⲟ ⲛ̀ⲧⲉ ⲡⲉⲕⲙⲟⲛⲟ-

ⲅⲉⲛⲏⲥ ⲛ̀ϣⲏⲣⲓ ⲡⲉⲛⲟ̅ⲥ̅ ⲟⲩⲟϩ ⲡⲉⲛ-

ⲛⲟⲩⲧ ⲟⲩⲟϩ ⲡⲉⲛⲥⲱⲧⲏⲣ ⲓⲏⲥⲟⲩⲥ

ⲡⲓⲭ̀ⲣⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ ·

In the same sentence (no. 128b), we find the theme of Man's honour (*al-karāmah*). Adam is invested with God's honour. This is probably the reason why Iblīs, who had lost God's honour, is jealous of Adam. This will become another important theme in the Arabic Christian tradition.

We are reminded of the way the Qurʾan presents the relationship between Iblīs and Adam. God asked the angels to adore Adam. They

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[90] See the Coptic and Arabic text in the Coptic Catholic Edition of the *Khūlājī al-Kanīsah al-Iskandariyyah* (Rome, 1687M/1971), pp. 266f.

all obeyed, except Iblīs who refused, because he was too proud.[91]
That means that Man is higher in dignity than Iblīs. And the com-
mentators will explain this refusal, by saying that Iblīs, being a spirit
created from fire (nār),[92] was therefore higher in dignity than Man
who was created from mud (ṭīn). God's order was therefore humi-
liating.

This Qurʾanic interpretation of Iblīs's refusal to adore Adam is
absent from our Apology, probably because the author felt that this
theological assertation was not compatible with the theology of the
Bible.

4.5. Propagation of Adam's Sin (no. 134-136)

134 And Adam transmitted by inheritance[93]
    disobedience and sin and death,
    so that this ran on in the lineage of Adam.
135 No human being was able,
    neither prophet nor other person,
136 to save the lineage of Adam
    from disobedience and sin and death.

134 دورّث آدم المعصية والخطيّة والموت،
    فجرى[94] ذلك في ذرّيّة آدم.

135 لم يستطِع[95] أحد من الناس،
    لا نبيّ[96] ولا غيره،

136 أن يـخـلّـص ذرّيّة آدم
    من المعصية والخطيّة والموت.

4.5.1. Adam's Sin is Inherited (no. 134)

For our author, Adam's sin is part and parcel of Mankind's in-
heritance. We have here the germ of what is called today "original
sin". The Arabic Christian theologians however did not use this ter-

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[91] This theme occurs five times in the Qurʾān, always with the same wording:
When we said to the angels: "Adore Adam", they adored, except Iblīs. Iḏ (in 7:11
we have ṯumma) qulnā li'l-malāʾikah: "usjudū li-Ādam", fa-sajadū illā Iblīs. See 2;34,
7:11, 17:61, 18:50 and 20:116.
[92] See Qurʾān 7:12 = 38:76: Qāla [Iblīs]: Anā ḫayr minhu. Ḫalaqtanī min nār, wa-
ḫalaqtahu min ṭīn.
[93] Mrs Gibson understood the Arabic as being wa-waraṯa instead of wa-warraṯa)
and therefore translated: "And Adam inherited....".
[94] MS فجر ا
[95] MS and Gibson يستطِع
[96] MS نبيا

minology. They prefered to give a description of the reality of this
sin. Our apologist therefore speaks of the transmission of death in
"Adam's lineage" (*durriyyat Ādam*) through inheritance (*warrata*). If
it is inherited, this means that death is transmitted indefinitely to all
of Adam's descendants.

In the following century, Abū Rā'iṭah al-Takrītī will use a similar
expression. He speaks on five different occasions, but in a similar
context, of "Adam and his lineage" (*Ādam wa-durriyyatuh*). There is
such a solidarity between Adam and his descendants, that even the
Creation is described as "God created Adam and his lineage".[97]
Therefore Adam's sin is passed on to his descendants because of this
solidarity. Thence his understanding of original sin.

Mankind inherited from Adam a triple inheritance: "disobe-
dience, sin and death". This is also of Biblical origin, where it is
clear that sin is the consequence of disobedience. We have already
remarked[98] that "It was the Devil's envy that brought death into
the world",[99] and with it sin.

More explicitly, Saint Paul writes that sin entered the world
through one man, and through sin, death",[100] and further on in
the same epistle: "the wage paid by sin is death".[101] In another
epistle, Paul says that "Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will
be brought to life in Christ".[102]

4.5.2. *No Human Being Could Save Adam (no. 135)*

The apologist insists on the fact that no human being could save
Adam. This again might be of biblical origin, though I cannot prove
it.[103] Something similar can be found in the Coptic liturgy of Saint
Gregory, in the Prayer of Reconciliation (*ṣalāt al-ṣulḥ*):

> *Wa-ʿindamā saqaṭa [Ādam], bi-ğawāyat al-ʿaduww wa-muḫālafat waṣiyya-
> tika al-muqaddasah, wa-aradta an tujaddidahu wa-taruddahu ilā rutbatih al-
> ūlā, lā malāk wa-lā ra'īs malā'ikah, wa-lā ra'īs ābā', wa-lā nabī i'tamantahu
> ʿalā ḫalāṣinā, bal anta bi-ğayr istiḥālah tajassadta wa-ta'annasta.*[104]

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[97] See Samir, pp. 225f.
[98] See above, 4.4.2.1.
[99] Wisdom 2:24.
[100] Romans 5:12.
[101] Romans 6:23.
[102] 1 Corinthians 15:22.
[103] Unfortunately, I cannot find the Biblical reference.
[104] See the Coptic and Arabic text in the Coptic Catholic Edition of the *Khūlāğī
al-Kanīsah al-Iskandariyyah* (Rome, 1687M/1971), p. 471.

> And when [Adam] fell, through the seduction of the enemy having violated Your holy order, and when You wished to renew him and to restore him to his previous dignity, You did not entrust neither an angel, nor an archangel, nor a patriarch, nor a prophet, with our salvation; but You Yourself, without any change, became Man and incarnate.

The author says: "No human being was able, neither prophet nor other person, to save the lineage of Adam from disobedience and sin and death" (no. 135-136). This sentence prepares the way to the affirmation of the necessity of incarnation. Why does mankind need a saviour? Because no human being was capable of saving it. Our apologist does not speak of Christ here, but it is obvious for any Christian reader that he is paving the way for a later affirmation saying that no one was able to save mankind from death, except He who is stronger than Iblīs, namely God Himself.

Here the necessity of the Incarnation is founded on Adam's sin and its propagation through mankind. To utterly defeat Iblīs, and save mankind from this sinful inheritance, one needs Him who is stronger than Iblīs namely God, but who is at the same time a human being like Adam namely Christ.

We come upon the same argumentation, though in different terms, in the writings of many an Arabic Christian apologist. For example, Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī in the ninth century and later in the tenth century, Sawīrus b. al-Muqaffaᶜ, where it appears in almost every page of his treatises on Incarnation and on redemption.

Here ends the first section of this chapter. The next four sections develop the history of salvation, according to Scripture. It is a very simple narrative, on which Jews, Christians and Muslims would agree. There are few theological comments, but more short spiritual and homiletical commentaries. Section 6 is a collection of biblical quotations, classical in Patristic literature. It shows how the Prophets desired and awaited the Coming of God, who would save mankind from its sin and degradation.

This brings us to the end of the chapter, which we will reproduce and comment.

4.6. *Conclusion: Christ Realises the Prophecies (no. 207-211)*

207 What is more clear and more luminous
       than this prophecy about the Christ?[105]

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[105] Mrs Gibson translates as follows: "What shall I shew and make clear from this prophecy about the Christ?".

208 When the prophets prophesied and said:
    He is God and Lord and Saviour.
209 It is He who came down from Heaven
    to save His servants,
    without departing from the Throne.
210 For verily, God and His Word and His Spirit
    are on the Throne and in every place,
    complete without diminution.
211 Heavens and earth and all that is therein
    are full of His honour.

207 فماذا أبيَن وأنور من هذه النبوّةَ على المسيح؟
208 حين تنبّأ الأنبياء وقالوا
إنّه إلاه ورب ومخلّص.
وهو الذي هبط من السماء خلاصا[106]لعباده،
ولم يفارق[107] العرش.
فإن الله وكلمته وروحه
على العرش وفي كل مكان
تام لا يتقص،
امتلأت[108] السموات والارض وما فيهما من كرامته.

The prophecies our apologist quoted in section 6 are clear and obvious for him: they concern Christ. Christ, God's Word, is the only one who came down from Heaven without leaving the Throne (al-ʿarsh).

We may say that this chapter comprises two movements: the first one shows the necessity of the incarnation, in order to save mankind from its disgrace and decay, for only God can save man. The second movement shows that the descent of God on earth, while still remaining in Heaven, applies only to Christ.

5. REDEMPTION (NO. 212-314)

The chapter on incarnation takes us naturally to the next chapter, the redemption, which can be divided into six sections and a conclusion.

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106 MS and Gibson خلاص
107 MS and Gibson فارق
108 MS and Gibson املت. The disappearing of the *hamzah* in *verba tertiae hamzatae* is very frequent in South Palestinian manuscripts (see for instance below n. 163) and in Ancient Arabic. See Blau, section 7.7.

1. God himself, in His mercy, undertook the salvation of Mankind
   from the hands of the Devil, 212-228
2. God sent his Word to defeat the Devil, 229-250
3. God destroyed the Devil by his Incarnated Word, 251-260
4. So God sent his Word down to the Virgin Mary, 261-274
5. Christ saved Adam and his lineage from the Devil, 275-289
6. Because Christ accomplished God's works, 290-306
   Conclusion: Christ is the Mediator between God and Man,
   307-314

This plan gives a short survey of the chapter. I shall quote and comment only the first three sections and the conclusion.

5.1. *God Himself, in his Mercy, Undertook the Salvation of Humanity from the Hands of the Devil (no. 212-228)*

5.1.1. *Text and Translation*

212 When God saw
        that His creatures were destroyed,
        and that Satan has gained mastery over them,
213 and that all nations and all people worshipped him,[109]
        to the exclusion of God,
214 and that His prophets were asking Him
        to save Adam's lineage from the Devil's [power
        of] destruction and misguidance;
215 and that the fall of Adam and his lineage
        was more severe than that any human being
        would be able to restore them to health
    and to heal them of their wound;

                                        * * *

216 then God made Himself profuse in His mercy on them,
        and freely bestowed His compassion on them.
217 He did not see fit
        (may His name be blessed and sanctified!)
        to suffer His creatures to perish.
218 Nor did He see fit,

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[109] Folio 106 *recto* (= 109a in Mrs Gibson's edition) is missing in her edition and replaced by five asterisks. Her translation starts again with no. 229.

having created human beings in His mercy,
to leave them:
to worship Satan, to the exclusion of Himself,
219 to sacrifice their sons and daughters to idols,
and to commit forbidden and rebellious acts against God.

* * *

220 The Devil vaunted himself over God's creatures,
because he had defeated and enslaved them.
221 No human being was able
to save them from his hand.

222 Indeed, God did not see fit
that any human being should undertake
the salvation of Adam's son and his lineage.

* * *

223 Therefore, God [Himself] undertook that, in His   mercy,
and saved them from the hands of the Devil
and from his [power of] misguidance,
224 in order that God
be thanked and worshipped and praised,
for His grace and largesse and favour upon them,
and His mercy and salvation upon them.
225 It did not behove this salvation and this great   mercy
that any human being should undertake it,   but rather
God.

* * *

226 Thus it pleased God,
in His mercy and compassion and favour,
to undertake the salvation
of His worshippers and creatures,
227 in order that they thank Him, and worship Him,
and know that God is their Lord,
the most merciful of those who show MERCY to His
creatures.
228 And God made this and their salvation
known to His creatures.

212 ·   فلمَّا رأى[110] الله خلقَـه قد هَلكُوا وقد استحـوذ الشيطان عليهم،
وقد استحوذ الشيطان عليهم،

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[110] MS لـ

213 وعِبَدَهُ كل أُمَّةٍ وكل قومٍ¹¹¹
من دون الله
وأنبياءه يرغبون إليه أن يُخلِّص
ذريةَ آدم من الهَلَكَة وإبليس وضلالته،
وكانت سقطةُ آدم وذريتِه
أشدُّ من أن يستطيع أحدٌ من الناس
أن يعينَهم ويشفيَهم من فرمتهم

216 توسَّع ¹¹²الله عليهم برحمته،
ومَنَّ عليهم برأفته.

217 ولم يَرَ¹¹³(تبارك اسمه وتقدَّس!)
أن يُضيعَ خلقه.

218 ولم يرَ¹¹⁴أن يكون خلق الناس برحمته،
فيترُكهم¹¹⁵ يعبدون الشيطان من دونه،

219 ويذبحون بنيهم وبناتهم للأصنام،
ويرتَكبون¹¹⁶ المحارم ومعاصي الله.

220 وإبليس يفتخر على خلق الله
بأنه قد قهَرهم وتعبَّدهم.

221 وليس يستطيع أحد من الناس
أن يُخلِّصهم من يده.

222 ولم يَرَ¹¹⁷ الله أن يلبِّي أحدًا¹¹⁸ من الناس
خلاصَ ابن¹¹⁹ آدم وذريتِه.

223 فتولَّى الله ذلك برحمته،
فخلَّصهم من يدي إبليس وضلالته،

224 لكيما يُشكَر الله ويُعبَد ويُحمَد،
بنعمته عليهم ومنه وفضله
ورحمته وخلاصه لهم.

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111 See note 109.
112 MS فتوسع
113 MS يرا
114 MS يرا
115 MS added ان
116 MS ويرتكيون (a frequent mistake in the MS.)
117 MS يرا
118 MS احد
119 MS بن

225 ولم يكن ينبغي، لهذا الخلاص ولهذه الرحمة العظيمة،
     (أنْ)[120] يليها أحداً[121] من الناس، الا الله.

226 فأحبَّ اللهُ، برحمته ورأفته وفضله،
     أن يلي خلاص عباده وخلقه

227 لكيما يشكروا له، ويعبدوه،
     ويعلموا أن الله هو ربهم،
     أرحم الراحمين بخلقه.

228 وصار الله أعلم بهذا خلقه وبخلاصهم.

5.1.2. *Commentary*

There are two groups of key words, in this section. The first group describes the action of the Devil against Man, and God's reaction on behalf of Man. The second expresses the ''feeling'' of God towards Man. Let us examine these key words.

The action of the Devil against Man is described by words like: destruction,[122] misguidance,[123] fall,[124] perish,[125] wound,[126] defeat[127] enslave.[128] We have in all nine occurrences of these words. God's action on behalf of Man is described by one word: to save (*ḫallaṣa*) and its action is salvation (*ḫalāṣ*). These two words are found eight times in this section.[129] These words show the structure of our page. The author describes first the bad action of the Devil (no. 212-215), and then the reaction of God: His decision to save Man (no. 216-219). But since no one was able to save Man (no. 220-222), God undertook to do it Himself (no. 223-228).

The second group of key words describes God's ''feeling'' towards fallen and enslaved Man. We find this feeling in two passages: no. 216-218 and 223-227.

There is something like an overflowing of emotions from God's side: favour,[130] grace and largesse,[131] compassion,[132] but, above all

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[120] My addition.
[121] MS أحبـ
[122] 2 times: No 212 (*halaka*) and 214 (*halkah*).
[123] 2 times (*ḍalālah*): No 214 and 223.
[124] once: No 215 (*saqṭah*).
[125] once: No 217 (*ḍayyaʿa*).
[126] once: No 215 (*qarḥah*).
[127] once: No 220 (*qahara*).
[128] once: No 220 (*taʿabbadahu*).
[129] See nos. 214, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226 and 228.
[130] once: No 226 (*faḍl*).
[131] once: No 224 (*niʿmah* and *mann*).
[132] once each: No 216, 226 (*raʾfah*).

mercy[133] which appears eight times in these few lines. These words occur thirteen times in this section. God reveals Himself as the *Raʾūf*, the *Raḥmān*, the *Arḥam al-Rāḥimīn* (no. 227).

What motivates God to save Mankind is His mercy and compassion. We have already seen, in the preface of the Apology, how often the author used the root *raḥmah*, simply because God is *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*. At first I was rather surprised not to find, even once, the words *maḥabbah* or *ḥubb* (charity or love) in this chapter, nor in the other chapters. The importance of this concept in Christian thought, especially when speaking of the incarnation, is well known by everyone, since it is rooted in the Gospel:

> Yes, God loved the world so much
> that He gave His only Son,
> So that everyone who believes in Him
> may not be lost,
> but may have eternal life.
> For God sent His Son into the world
> not to condemn the world,
> but so that through Him
> the world might be saved.[134]

Why then did our apologist not use it? The reason, I think, is simple: this word does not really belong to the Arabic Islamic vocabulary, and our author writes also for Muslims, if not primarily for them. So he replaced this "Christian" term by some "Islamic" equivalents, the ones I mentioned above, and especially *raḥmah*.

We encounter the same phenomenon in Abū Rāʾiṭah's writings, an author whose way of thinking is closely related to that of our apologist. Elsewhere I have stressed this particularity of Abū Rāʾiṭah without, however, mentioning our Apology.[135]

5.2. *God Sent His Word to Defeat the Devil (no. 229-250)*

5.2.1. *The Argument*

If God had wanted to destroy Iblīs, while on His Throne, He could have done it, for nothing is impossible for Him (no. 229-230). But, because Iblīs had seduced and defeated Man and thought he

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[133] Eight times: No 216, 218, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227 and 227 (*raḥmah*).

[134] John 3: 16.

[135] In the new edition I prepared of Abū Rāʾiṭah's treatise on Incarnation, I found only once the word *maḥabbah*. For the use of other terms in his treatise, see Samir, pp. 197f.

could continue to do so, God decided to destroy Iblīs by means of this same seduced and defeated Man (no. 232-237).

God has therefore sent, from His Throne, His Word which comes from Him. The Word has put on this weak and defeated Man, through whom the Word destroyed and defeated Iblīs (no. 238-243). If God had not defeated him by means of this Man, Iblīs would have never come to repentance; for he would have said: Indeed God has defeated me, for He is the Almighty; but I have defeated Man that God had created with His own hands (no. 244-250).

5.2.2. *Text and Translation*

229 If God (to Him be might and power!)
      had wanted to destroy the Devil
      while He was on the Throne,
      He would have done so.
230 For He is omnipresent, and omnipotent:
231 nothing that He wills is impossible for Him,
      neither in Heaven nor on earth
232 But the Devil has already allured Adam, and seduced him,
      and caused him to inherit death and disobedience.
233 He drove him out of the Garden, and vaunted himself over him
      and his lineage.
234 The Evil One imagined that he would always defeat and weary
      Adam's lineage,
235 and that no one was able to save them from his misguidance.

                                        * * *

236 Thus it pleased God to destroy and overthrow him by means
      of this Man who has been seduced and made weak,
237 And he destroyed him and put him beneath him, by means of
      his disobedience against God, as he saw it.

                                          * * *

238 Thus God sent from His Throne His Word,
      which is from Himself,[136]

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[136] Our apologist combines here two ideas: one Biblical (God sent His Word) and one Qurʾānic (this Word is from God). It is an allusion to *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān*, where we twice find the expression "A Word from God" applied to Christ. See Qurʾan 3: 39 and 45: *Inna Allāha yubašširuka bi-Yaḥyā, muṣaddiqan bi-kalimah min Allāh, wa-sayyidan, wa-ḥaṣūran, wa-nabiyyan min al-ṣāliḥīn* (v. 39); and *Yā Maryam, inna Allāhu*

and saved Adam's lineage.

239 He put on this weak, defeated Man,
    [taking it] from Mary the Good,

240 whom God elected over [all] women of the world,[137]
    and He veiled Himself through her.[138]

241 And He destroyed and conquered the Devil,
    by means of him,
    and overthrew him
    and left him weak and contemptible,

242 not [any longer] vaunting himself over Adam's lineage,
    and severely distressed,

243 when God defeated him
    by means of this Man whom he had put on.

* * *

244 If God had destroyed the Devil,
    without having put on this Man
    by means of which He overthrew him,

245 the Devil would not have felt
    distress or repentance.

246 In that case, the Evil One would have said:
    "I have prostrated and seduced

247 "and driven out of the Garden the Man
    that God created by His hand,
    according to His likeness and form.

248 "I have snatched him away from God,
    and caused him to inherit[139] disobedience and death.

249 "So if God had overcome me,
    there is nothing astonishing in that:

250 "God is omnipotent, the Doer of what He wills,
    nothing that He wills is impossible for Him".

---

yubašširuki bi-kalimah minhu, ismuhu al-Masīḥ ʿĪsā ibn Maryam, wajīhan fī al-dunyā wa'l-āḫirah, wa-min al-muqarrabīn (v. 45).

[137] This is almost a literal quotation of Qurʾan 3:42.

[138] This is an important theme in Arab Christian theology, common to all three denominations: Melkites, Nestorians and Jacobites. The Virgin Mary is the Veil (*ḥijāb*) through which God revealed Himself in Christ. In No 311 (see *infra*, 741 and note 173), the *Ḥijāb* is Christ: "God veiled Himself through a Man (*insān*) without sin".

[139] Here a page is missing in Mrs Gibson's edition, which corresponds to No 248b to 263.

229   ولو أنّ الله (له[140] العزّة والقدرة!)
أراد أن يُهلك إبليس،
وهو في المرض[141] فعل.[142]

230   لأنه في كل مكان،
على كل شيء قادر،

231   لا يُعجزه شيء[143] أراده،[144]
في السماوات[145] والأرض.

232   ولكن كان إبليس قد صرع[146] آدم،
وأفتنه، وأوزاه الموت والمعصية،

233   وأخرجه من الجنّة
وأنتصر عليه وعلى ذريّته.

234   وظنّ الخبيث أنّه لا يزال
يقهر ذريّة آدم ويتممهم،

235   وليس يستطيع أحد
أن يخلّصهم من ضلالته.

236   فأحبّ الله أن يُهلكه ويكبّه[147]
بهذا الإنسان الذي أفتين واستضعف.

237   وأهلكه وجمله تمته،
بمعصيته الله فيما كان يرى.[148]

238   فأرسل الله من عرشه كلمته، التي هي منه،
وخلّص ذريّة آدم.

239   وليس هذا الإنسان الضعف المقهور
من مريم الطيبة.

240   التي اصطفاها الله على نساء العالمين،
فاحتجب بها.

241   وأهلك به إبليس[149] وأكبّه،
وكبّه[150] وتركه ضعيفًا ذليلًا،

---

140 MS and Gibson وله
141 MS العرس
142 = لفعل
143 MS شيا
144 MS اراه (plus a small *dal* over the *ha*ʾ.
145 MS السماوت (sic)
146 MS ضرع (but *daraʿa* is always written in the MS (ن ذرع
147 MS يكبّه
Gibson وبطيه
148 MS برا
149 Gibson الشر (sic).
150 = وكبّه

242 لا.يفتخر علـى ذريّة آدم، شديد ¹⁵¹ المعسر،

243 حين قهره الله
بهذا الانسان الذي (لبسه.

244 ولو أنَّ الله أهلك إبليس
من دون أن يلبس هذا الانسان
الذي)¹⁵² كبّه ¹⁵³ به

245 لم يكن إبليس يجد المعسرة والندامة.

246 وإذن لقال الخبيث:
"إنّـي قد صرعت ¹⁵⁴ وأُتقنتُ

247 وأُخرجتُ من الجنّة الانسان
الذي خلقه الله بيده على شبهه ¹⁵⁵ وبمثاله

248 وقبضته من الله
وأورثته ¹⁵⁶\\¹⁵⁷ المعصية والموت.

249 فإن كان الله غلبني،

250 ليس ذلك بعجب:
الله قادرٌ، فاعلٌ لما يريد،
لا يُعجزه شيٍ، ¹⁵⁸ اراده.

5.3. God Destroyed the Devil by His Incarnated Word (no. 251-260)

In the previous section, we have seen how God sent His Word (*kalimatuhu*) to defeat the Devil (*li-qahr Iblīs*).

Here the author explains how Christ humiliated Iblīs, who had humiliated mankind. So Christ took revenge over the Devil and washed the insult made to mankind. The apologist uses the words *ḥazā* and *dalla*.

Now, mankind can at last lift up its head again, and live with honour and dignity (*karāmah*). Now, Iblīs looks at Man's dignity with distress and envy. Freed from slavery, Man can ascend to Heaven to praise and magnify God together with the good angels, those who, according to the Qurʾan,[159] obeyed God. All this is due

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[151] MS طبه
[152] This line is added in the margin of the MS in the same handwriting.
[153] Gibson سديد
[154] Gibson ضرعت
[155] Mrs. Gibson presents this word as doubtful. It is very readable today.
[156] MS and Gibson وارثه
[157] Folio 107 recto (= 110a in Mrs Gibson's edition) is missing in her edition, and replaced by five asterisks. Her translation starts again with Nr. 263c.
[158] MS شيا
[159] See note 92.

to Christ, God's Word and Spirit. He came to restore Man's dignity and humiliate Satan.

5.3.1. *God Put the Devil to Shame, so that People Despise Him*

251 Therefore God destroyed and overthrew the Devil,
    by means of the Man[160] which He put on from us;
252 in order that he does not vaunt himself
    over Adam's lineage
    because he had defeated and seduced them.
253 Thus it pleased God to put the Devil to shame,
    and to make him weak.
254 And in order to make clear to people
    that he is a weak, rebellious servant,
    God cast him out of Heaven because of his rebellion,[161] that
    they do not fear him, but despise him.
255 And He make his worshippers and the friends of his obedience
    deride and despise him,
    when formerly he had defeated and enslaved them!

251 فلذلك أهلك الله إبليس،
واكبّه بالانسان الذي لبسه منّا.

252 لكيما لا يفتخر على ذريّة آدم
بأنّه قهـرهم وأفتنّهم.

253 فأحبّ الله أن يخزي إبليس،
وأن يجعلـه ضعيفا.

254 وليبيّـن[162] للناس أنّه عبدا عاصيا ضعيفا،
ألقاه الله من السماء بمعصيته،
فلا يتـقوه ويحقـرونه.

255 وجعل عباده وأولياء طاعتـه
يستهزئون[163] به ويحقـرونه،
بعدما كان قد قهـرهم وتعبّـدهم!

---

[160] Man, here, means Christ.
[161] This is an allusion to the Christian vision of the Fall of the Angel, the Morning Star (Lucifer, in the Latin Vulgate), based on Isaiah 14: 12-15.
[162] MS بين
[163] MS يستهزدن. For this feature, see above, note 108.

5.3.2. *Conclusion: Man's Honour, and the Devil's Shame*

This third section ends with a beautiful homiletic invitation to admire God's deeds in favour of mankind. This text is typical of our Apologist's style. He blends together theology, homiletics and spirituality. It is not an arid text with a rational presentation although it is well constructed as we shall see.

In fact, this conclusion is not only beautiful, but it is also a small well-structured text, with two exclamations (no. 256), followed by their explanation (no. 257-258 and 259-260). The first question is: Look what God has done for us!. The author then exposes God's action against the Devil. At first, it seems as if he does not answer the question: what has God done "for us"? But God's action against the Devil is precisely our liberation and our salvation. Indeed, God is not interested in the Devil, but in Man. The second question is: Look how God propelled us towards the Kingdom of Heaven!. The answer is "through Christ, His Word and His Spirit".

Here is the text and its translation.

256 Look, O Man:
>   What has God done for us!
>   And how has He propelled us
>   towards the Kingdom of Heaven!
257 He overthrew the Devil,
>   and reduced him to the lowest rank.
258 And He left him weak and severely distressed,
>   seeing in us God's honour with which He honoured us.
259 And He propelled us towards Heaven,
>   through Christ, His Word and His Spirit[164],
260 and made us to be with His angels,
>   praising and magnifying His great name.

256   فانظرْ: أيُّها[165] الانسان،
       ماذا عمل الله بنا؟

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[164] The use of this expression is interesting. In fact, a Christian will never call Christ *Rūḥ Allāh*, Spirit of God. This is clearly Qurʾānic. See Qurʾān 4:171: "The Messiah, ʿĪsā son of Maryam, is only an Apostle of God, and His Word which He communicated to Maryam, and a Spirit from Him" *Innamā al-Masīḥu ʿĪsā ibn Maryam Rasūl Allāhi wa-Kalimatuhu alqāhā ilā Maryam wa-rūḥminhu*). No human being is called in the Qurʾān "a Spirit from God", except ʿĪsā.

[165] MS أيُّها. This spelling is very frequent in South Palestinian manuscripts. See Blau, section 9.2. Sometimes it also occurs in the Qurʾan, as T. Noldeke has already noted in his *Geschichte des Qurans, iii. Geschichte des Korantexts*, 2nd edn. by Gotthelf Bergstrasser and Otto Pretzl (Leipzig, 1938), 10, n. 1, and 28.

257   ،وكيف دفعنا إلى ملكوت السماء
       ،وأُكبّ إبليس، وأُنزِله أسفلَ المنازل

258   ،وترَكَه ضعيفًا، شديدَ الحسرةِ
       .يرى[166] فينا كرامةَ الله التي أكرَمنا

259   ،ودفعنا الى السماء
       ،بالمسيح كلمته وروحه

260   ،وجعلنا مع ملائكته
       .نُسبّح ونُعظّم اسمه العظيم

5.4. Conclusion: Christ is the Mediator between God and Man (no. 307-311)

Here is the argument of this conclusion. Man is unable to see God
and live (no. 290). That is why God had mercy upon him, and
wanted to restore his dignity (no. 309), which would allow him to
see God and live. How can this be? Through Christ, the only Media-
tor between Man and God (no. 307, 310-311). Christ is the *ḥijāb*,
the Iconostasis. Only through Him is Man able to have access to
God and come closer to Him (no. 311).

The word *ḥijāb* applies, in Oriental Christian theology, both to
Christ and to the Virgin Mary, as we have seen earlier[167]. It is in-
teresting to note that, in the Oriental Churches, the *ḥijāb* is con-
cretely the Iconostasis which separates the faithful from the sanc-
tuary, the Holy of Holies (*quds al-aqdās*). Christ is mystically the *ḥijāb*
which gives access to the Holy of Holies, to God; and the Virgin
Mary, in a lesser degree, does the same by giving us access to Christ.

Here is the conclusion of this chapter.

307   Christ is the Mediator between us and God.[168]
      [He is] God from God, and [He is] man.[169]
308   Mankind was not able
      to look towards God and to live.[170]

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[166] MS برا

[167] See note 139.

[168] This affirmation is Biblical, and occurs often in St Paul and particularly in
the Letter to the Hebrews. See 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is only one God, and there
is only one Mediator between God and mankind". See Hebrews 8:6, 9:15, 12:24.

[169] This is in part a quotation from the Nicean Creed: "*Deus verus de Deo vero*".

[170] See Exodus 33:20: "God said: 'You cannot see my face, for man cannot see
me and live'".

309 So God willed mercy to His creatures
and honour to them.
310 Thus Christ was between us and God
God from God and a Man,
the Judge of Mankind by their deeds.
311 For that reason God veiled Himself
through a Man (insān) without sin.[171]
So He showed us mercy in Christ,
and brought us near to Him.

307 والمسيح هو الوسيط[172]بيننا وبين الله،
إلاه[173] من الله، وإنسان.

308 لم يكن يستطيع الناس
[174]أن ينظروا[175] الى الله ويحيوا.[176]

309 فأراد الله رحمة بخلقه
وكرامة لهم.

310 فكان المسيح بيننا وبين الله،
إلاها من الله وإنسانا[177]
الديان للناس بأعمالهم.

311 فلذلك احتجب[178] الله بإنسان من غير خطيّة
فرحمنا بالمسيح، وقرّبنا إليه.

Once again, what motivates God is His mercy (raḥmah). The aim of this motivation is the possibility offered to mankind to look towards God (no. 308), to see Him and to come nearer to Him (no. 311). It is a mystical vision of the human destiny. That is why the only possible intermediary between God and Man, the only Mediator, is Christ (no. 307, 310-311).

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[171] We have seen above (No 240) that God "veiled" Himself (iḥtajab) through Mary, "whom God elected over [all] women of the world, and He veiled Himself through her". Here, the Ḥijāb is Christ.
[172] MS and Gibson الوسط
[173] MS and Gibson الاؤا
[174] My addition.
[175] MS and Gibson ينظرون
[176] MS and Gibson يحيون
[177] MS and Gibson انسان
[178] MS احتجب,(sic).

6. THE VERACITY OF CHRISTIANITY

This last chapter of the first part of the Apology can be divided into four sections and a conclusion. I shall translate some passages from this chapter with the exception of the fourth section.

1. Christ sent the Spirit according to his promise, proving His divinity 315-340
2. Christ transformed his disciples by teaching them the "Our Father", 341-350
3. The disciples preached Christ in the whole world, and Christianity spread despite persecution 351-369
4. Christianity comes from God, as Gamaliel said 370-380
   Conclusion: Christ gave the disciples the power of doing miracles, because He is God 381-388

6.1. *In Heaven Christ Decreed to Send the Spirit (no. 315-340)*

Reading this text, I am reminded of what Dr. Abdelmajid Charfi has said about the six main keys to the reading of the Muslim controversies (see Dr. Charfi's paper elsewhere in this volume). One of them reminds me of what we see here. We could say that the argument is: the spreading of Christianity (*intišār al-masīhiyyah*), after the ascension of Christ into Heaven, proves the veracity of Christianity.

When Christ ascended into heaven, He promised to send the Paraclete (*al-baraqlīt*), the Holy Spirit (no. 320). And the Holy Spirit descended upon the Disciples ten days later (no. 306). Only God can "decree in Heaven", and Christ, because He is God's Word.

Let us see the conclusion of the first section (no. 330-3401). Someone acquainted with the Christian tradition will recognise many expressions taken from the liturgical Creed.

330   Who is He that can decree in Heaven, and bring His decree to pass, except God only

331   Indeed, Christ decreed in Heaven, and He decrees [now].

332   And sent to the Apostles the Holy Spirit, as He had promised them[179]

333   If He were like Adam, or like any people,
            prophet or otherwise,

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[179] See John 16:7: "It is for your own good that I am going, because unless I go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you".

334 He could not decree in Heaven, nor could He go up to Heaven;[180]

335 and would remain on the earth, as Adam remained, and Noah and Abraham, and Moses and the Prophets[181]
and the Apostles, all of them.

336 But He is the Word and the Light of God, God from God.[182]

337 He came down from Heaven, to save Adam and his lineage[183] from the Devil and his misguidance.

338 He went up to Heaven where He had been,[184] in His honour and His power.

339 And He filled the hearts of the people who believed in Him with strength and with the Holy Spirit,

340 that they might praise God and His Word and His Holy Spirit in Heaven and in earth.[185]

330   فمَـن هـذا الذي يستطيع أن يقضـى في السماء،
فيجوز قضاؤه[186] إلا الله وحـده؟[187]

331   فقـد قضى[188] المسيح في السماء، ويقضي.

332   وأُرسِل الى الحواريـين[189] روح القـدس،
كما وعـد كـم .

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[180] See John 3:13: "No one has gone up to heaven, except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven"; and Ephesians 4:8-10: "It was said that he would "when he ascended to the height, he captured prisoners, he gave gifts to men". When it says "he ascended", what can it mean if not that he descended right down to the lower regions of the earth? The one who rose higher than all the heavens to fill all thing is none other than the one who descended".

[181] Our apologist has chosen the most famous Qurʾānic prophets before the coming of Christ. His enumeration corresponds to what we find in Qurʾān 3:33-34: Inna Allāha iṣṭafā Ādam wa-Nāḥ wa-āl Ibrāhīm wa-āl ʿImrān ʿalā al-ʿālamīn, ḏurriyyatan baʿḍuhā min baʿḍ. These great figures are also of particular importance in the Bible: they all were the object of a special Covenant with God.

[182] This is an allusion to the Nicean Creed. The same expression occurs in No. 381 (see below, section 6.4 and No. 217) and elsewhere in this Apology.

[183] This is, once more, a quotation from Nicean Creed.

[184] This suggests the pre-existence of Christ. See John 1:1-2.

[185] The Trinity is praised in Heaven by the angels, and on Earth by the Christians.

[186] Gibson قضاه

[187] Gibson وقـذه (sic).

[188] Gibson قضا

[189] Gibson المحواريون

333   ‫ولو كان مثلَ آدمَ،‬
       ‫أو مثلِ أمهِ من الناس‬
       ‫(نبيّ¹⁹⁰ أو غيره)،‬

334   ‫لم يستطعْ أن يقضيَ في السماء،‬
       ‫ولا أن يطلعَ إلى السماء،‬

335   ‫وليقي¹⁹¹ في الأرض،‬
       ‫كما بقي آدم ونوح وإبراهيم‬
       ‫وموسى والأنبياء والرسل كلهم.‬

336   ‫ولا كنتُ كلمة الله ونورهِ،‬
       ‫إله من الله‬

337   ‫نزل من السماء،‬
       ‫لخلاص آدم وذريتهِ من إبليس وضلالته.‬

338   ‫وصعد إلى السماء حيث كان،‬
       ‫في كرامته وسلطانه.‬

339   ‫وملأ قلوبَ الناس الذين آمنوا به‬
       ‫قوةً ودرعِ القدس،‬

340   ‫لكيما يسبّع الله وكلمته ودروع القدس‬
       ‫في السموات والأرض.‬

6.2. *Christ Teaches the* Our Father *(no. 341-350)*

The second section, which is very short, contains the text of the *Our Father* (no. 341-347), together with a brief commentary (no. 348-350).

The Arabic text of the *Our Father* is not a very conventional one. It corresponds neither to Matthew[192] nor to Luke,[193] but combines both versions being, however, closer to Matthew. It is in fact a liturgical version.

We note with interest his translation of the famous sentence: *ton arton ēmon ton epiousion, dos ēmin sēmeron.*[194] He translates it: *Rizq kafāf* [*sic*], *aʿṭinā yawman bi-yām* = Our sufficient daily bread,[195] give it to us day by day.

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[190] MS and Gibson ‫نييا‬

[191] Gibson ‫ويبقى‬

[192] See Matthew 6:9-15.

[193] See Luke 11:2-4.

[194] = Matthew 6:12.

[195] According to Hans Wehr's Dictionary, the word *rizq* means "livelihood, means of living, subsistence; daily bread, nourishment, sustenance" (First Edition, p. 336b).

This is his very short commentary:

348 So has Christ shown the light of God amongst people,
349 and made them like angels of God on earth, having defeated the
    lusts of the world and its love.
350 God's will (or pleasure)[196] in them, as it is in the angels.

<div dir="rtl">

348   فأظهر المسيح نور الله في الناس.

349   وجعلهم مثل ملائكة الله في الأرض،

قد علموا شهوات الدنيا وحبها.

350   وكان مسرة الله فيهم،

لما هو في الملائكة.

</div>

It seems clear that, for our apologist, Christ's main teaching is the
Our Father. But I cannot yet discover why he inserted it here.[197]

By means of this prayer, Christ renders men similar to angels on
earth, accomplishing God's pleasure and will. We find again the
author's mystical vision of the human destiny. In no. 307-311, he
says that the aim of God was to make Man able to look towards Him
and come closer to Him.[198] He now completes his vision saying
that Christ has enabled us to live on earth like the angels in Heaven.

6.3. *The Preaching of the Apostles and the Spreading of Christianity* (no. 351-368)

Christ sent the Apostles, investing them with the power of making
miracles in His name (no. 354). This means again that Christ acts
like God. Henceforth, they guided all the nations towards the true
God (no. 356 and 362), although they were persecuted everywhere.
But the more they were persecuted, the more they attracted people
to Christianity. And our author concludes by saying that this
religion comes from God (*hādā al-dīn min Allāh*).

A large part of this section (no. 357-369), is almost totally lacking
in Mrs. Gibson's edition. It includes the passage presented at the
beginning of this paper to establish the date of the Apology:

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[196] It is always difficult to translate the word *masarrah*, with all its religious con-
notations and which translates to the Greed word *eudokía*.. It is an important term
of the New Testament, which belongs to the style of Matthew, Luke and Paul. Alto-
gether, we find nine occurences in the New Testament.

[197] Probably, the main reason is what I have said earlier in 3.2 B, when treating
of the analogies. The author has not a strict logical style.

[198] See above, 5.4.4.

6.3.1. *Weakness of the Apostles and Power of Christ*

The reader will note the opposition between the frailty of the twelve apostles (no. 357-359) and the effectiveness of their preaching: the entire world was converted (no. 362-363). This is due to Christ's support (no. 360-361 and 362).

357 Verily they were twelve men,
       poor, weak, strangers among people,[199]
358 without any possessions,
       without any authority in the world,
359 without any money to bribe with,
       and without any acquainted person[200] or relationships
       with which to make claims upon anyone.[201]

                              * * *

360 But Christ was with them
       [who was] better than the whole world
       and stronger in authority than the world.
361 [He was] giving them strength and consolation
       by means of the Holy Spirit
       and showing them His light and his dignity
    in every place and in every time.

                              * * *

362 So they guided all the nations,
       from the East of the earth to the West,
       by means of the name of Christ.
363 And they saved them
       from the misguidance and the seduction of the Devil.

357   وإنما كانوا اثني [202] عشر رجلا
       مساكين ضعفاء، غرباء في الناس،
358   لا ملك لهم، ولا سلطان في الدنيا،

---

[199] See below, No 386: "Their cause was established in all the world, although they were strangers and poor".

[200] The word *maʿrifah* means "knowledge", and that is how Mrs. Gibson translated it. But is also means "an acquainted person, and acquaintance, a friend" (Hans Wehr), and I adopted this translation because of the following word which is its synonym (*qarābah*).

[201] The remainder of our passage (No. 360-372) is missing in Mrs Gibson's edition, who could not read folio 110 *verso* (f. 113b in her system).

[202] Gibson انا

<div dir="rtl">

359 ولا مال يصانعون به،
ولا معرفة ولا قـرابة يدلون بها إلى أحد.

360 ‏[203]\\ ولا كنَّ المسيح كان مثهم
أفضل من الدنيا كلـها
وأشى سلطانا[204] من الدنيا،

361 يـقوّ بهم ويمنـر بهم بروح القدس،
ويبريهم ينوره و كرامته
في كل مكان، وفي كل حين.

362 فهدوا الأمم كلـها،
من مشارق الأرض ومغاربها،
باسم المسيح.

363 وأنقذوهم من ضلالة إبليس وفتنته.

</div>

6.3.2. Non-Violence of the Apostles

Again, there is another paradoxical situation: the apostles did not combat anybody, but they were combatted by all. And yet they have won this spiritual war: truth, light and guidance spread everywhere (no. 343-345).

I suspect that we have here a discrete allusion as to how, right from their birth, Christianity and Islam spread: Christianity in a non-violent manner, while Islam in a violent way. In later Arab Christian Apologetics, this theme will become the most important one.

364 They did not fight anybody,
    and they did not force the people,
    until the truth and the guidance were manifested.

365 And the people fought them:
    the Jews threatened them,[205] from one side;
    and the Pagans[206] who adore the idols,

---

[203] Folio 110 verso (= 113b in Mrs Gibson's edition) is missing in her edition, and replaced by five asterisks. Her translation starts again with no. 373b.

[204] MS سلطان

[205] The manuscript has *yawāʿidūhum*, the third verbal form of *waʿada*, which means "the Jews made an arrangement with them". I interpreted it as if it was the equivalent of the fifth verbal form: *yatawaʿʿadūhum* = "the Jews threatened them".

[206] The author does not use the word "*waṭanī*" for pagan or heathen, but *ḥunafāʾ*, the plural of *ḥanīf*. It is the original meaning of this Syriac word, which the Qurʾan borrowed and used to mean those who adored God without belonging to a monotheistic religion, like Abraham who was (according to the Qurʾan) a *ḥanīf*. For the Qurʾanic use of the word, see Jeffery, pp. 112-115. See also Alphonse Min-

from another side.

366 But God manifested, by means of them,

> the light over the darkness,
>
> the guidance over the misguidance,
>
> and the truth over the falsity.

<div dir="rtl">

364   لم يقاتلوا أحداً[207]
ولم يـكـرهوا الناس،
حتـى ظهـر الحق والهدى.[208]

365   والناس يـقـاتلونهم:
ويواعدهم[209] اليهود من جانب،
والحنفاء الذين كانوا يعبدون الأصنام من جانب.

366   فأظهر الله بهم النور على الظلمة،
والهدي[210] على الضلالة،
والحق على الباطل.

</div>

In the second part of our Apology (the part I am not dealing with in this paper), we find a clear defence of non-violence in religious matters, especially in Christianity. Having presented the miraculous cure of the man with a withered hand,[211] our author comments as follows (no. 687-689):

687 And so God wants the faith of people.

688 He does not want that any one

> should believe in Him unwillingly (*karhan*);[212]
>
> there is certainly no reward in unwillingness.

689 But God wants people to believe in Him freely,[213]

> and that God should be liable for their reward in truth.

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gana, "Syriac Influences in the Style of the Ḳurʾān", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 1927, p. 97.

[207] MS احمد

[208] MS والهـدا

[209] MS ويواعدهم (= ويتوعدهم)

[210] MS والهـدا

[211] See Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11.

[212] Cf. Qurʾan 2:256: "*Lā ikrāh fī al-dīn. Qad tabayyana al-rušd min al-ǧayy*". However, see also 3:83: "*A-fa-ǧayr dīn Allāhi yabǧūna, wa-lahu aslam man fī l-samāwāt wa'l-arḍ ṭawʿan wa-karhan?*"; "*Wa-li'llāh yasjud man fī al-samāwāt wa'l-arḍ ṭawʿan wa-karhan*" (13:15); and 41/11: "*Fa-qāla lahā [= li'l-samāʾ] wa-li'l-arḍ: aʿṭiyā ṭawʿan aw karhan*".

[213] Mrs Gibson translate "obediently" (p. 27, 8th line from bottom). I suppose that here *ṭ*āiʿīn* is an equivalent of *ṭawʿan*.

662   و كذلك يُريد الله إيمان الناس،

663   لا يُريد أن يؤمن به أحد[214] كرهًا،
        فإنه لا أجرَ في الكره.

664   ولكن يُريد الله أن يؤمن به الناس طائعين،
        فيكون أجرُهم على الله بحق.

6.3.3. Conclusion: Christianity Comes from God[215]

367 If this religion was not truly from God,
     it will not have stand firm and stand erect
     since seven hundred years and forty-six years;
368 where as the nations were fighting them [sic] and were not able
     to make ineffective
     a religion that God had stand erect and created.

369 By my life, in this fact there is an admonition,
     for who wish to think over and to know the truth!

6.4. Conclusion: the Veracity of Christianity (no. 381-388)

The conclusion does not call for any commentary. It is a good summary and explanation of what was previously said. Here is the text:

381 If the cause of Christ were not true
     and if He were not God from God,[216]
382 the cause of the Apostles would not have been established, nor
     their teaching,
383 and they would not have been able to guide the nations who had
     never worshipped God at all.

* * *

384 But Christ supported the Apostles by the Holy Spirit,
     and they did all miracles.
385 Thus, by this, they guided the nations
     to the light of God and His worship.
386 Their cause was established in all the world,
     although they were strangers and poor.[217]

---

214 MS and Gibson أحمدا

215 For this section, see above, section 1.3.1.

216 This is again an allusion to the Nicean Creed. The same expression occurs
in No 336 (see above, section 6.1. and note 182 and elsewhere in the Apology.

217 See Numbers 337-359: ''Verily they were twelve men, poor, weak, strangers

387 Thus God raised their memory,[218]
     and people accepted their saying,
     and God made ineffective the misguidance, through them.

                          * * *

388 May God be praised in everything,
     Him is the glory, Him the might and the power,
     in Heaven and on earth!

381 ولو لم[219] يكن أمر المسيح حقاً،[220]
      ولم[221] يكن إلهاً[222] من إله،

382 ما استقام أمر الحواريين[223] ولا تعليمهم،

383 ولم يستطيعوا أن يبدوا الأمم
      الذين لم يعبدوا الله قط .

384 ولاكنّ المسيح أيّد الحواريين[224] بروح القدس،
      وعملوا الآيات كلّها.

385 فبذلك هدوا الأمم إلى نور الله وعبادته،

386 واستقام أمرهم في الدنيا كلّها،
      وهم غرباء مساكين.

387 فرفع الله ذكرهم،
      \\[225]وقبل الناس قولهم،
      وأبطل الله الضلالة على أيديهم .

388 والله المحمود في الأمور كلّها،
      سبحانه[226] له السلطان والقدرة
      في السعادات والأرض.

---

among people, without any possessions, without any authority in the world, with-
out any money to bribe with, and without any acquainted person or relationships
with which to make claims upon anyone''.

[218] Here ends the text of Mrs Gibson's edition; folio 11 *verso* is lacking.

[219] MS الم but the *alif* is cancelled.
Gibson الم

[220] MS and Gibson حق

[221] MS لم (the *waw* is added above the word.)

[222] MS and Gibson اله

[223] MS and Gibson الحواريون

[224] MS الحواريون

[225] Folio 111 verso (= 114b in Mrs Gibson's edition) is missing in her edition,
and replaced by five asterisks. Her translation starts again with no. 400a.

[226] MS وسبحانه

6.5. *Remark on the Arabic Word for "Apostles"*

In this chapter, the word "Apostles" is frequently used. Our apologist generally uses the Arabic word *hawāriyyūn*[227] and rarely the word *rasūl*,[228] which is the usual term among Christians.

This term *hawāriyyūn* is rather widespread in the Nestorian tradition, especially in the elegant style, for example in the five rhymed translations of the Gospels dating from the ninth/tenth century. These translations use only the term *al-hawāriyyūn*. But I do not remember having come across this word in the Melkite tradition. I would be glad to know if someone found it in a Melkite text, for example in Abū Qurrah's writing or in *Jāmic wujūh al-īmān*.

Someone might think: once again we have here a trace of a Syriac influence, *hawāriyyūn* being a Syriac word. In fact it is not so. It is an Ethiopic word borrowed by the Qur'ān.[229] So this use cannot be attributed here to a Syriac influence, but to a Qur'ānic one.

7. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Up to now, I have summarised the first part of the Apology. There follows the second and longer part, which supports the first one with Biblical testimonia (*šawāhid*). I will not enter into it today. But I would like now to make part of two reflections: one on this Apology, the other on apologetical literature in general.

7.1. *Some Reflections on this Apology*

I shall now give a brief account of my personal thoughts on this Apology, and indicate those of its characteristics which I judge interesting.

7.1.1. *Lack of Philosophical Thought*

As already said, philosophical thought is totally absent from this Apology. Sometimes, there is even, as I emphasized twice, a lack of logic. And I also have the impression that the author did not revise his text. This can be confirmed by the fact that our author sometimes announces a future section and adds the phrase "If God wills" (*in šā' Allāh*).[230] This seems to suggest that he had not reread his text.

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[227] See here No 312, 360 and 362.

[228] See here No 315.

[229] For the origin of the term *hawāriyyūn* and its use in the Qur'ān, see Jeffery, pp. 115f.

[230] See for instance Nos 119 and 314.

7.1.2. *A Biblical and Patristic Apology*

Our Apology is more of a biblical and patristic type than of a philosophical one.

This is not mainly because our author quotes abundantly from the Bible, and indeed he does especially in the second part of this apology, which is twice as long as the first and essentially a chain of biblical quotations.

But, of greater importance, is the structure and the style of the argumentation. The development of the ideas often sticks to the Bible and follows it, with few additions. The theology underlying our Apology is also biblical. It is a "primitive" theology, if I may say so.

That is why, it seems to me that this Apology is not particular to one given Christian community, let us say the Melkite, but it is an ecumenical one. It is a Christian apology, based on what is common to all Christians.

7.1.3. *A Spiritual and Homiletic Apology*

This Apology is spiritual, sometimes even mystical, and always homiletic, aiming to edify the reader. He does not really "prove" Christianity, and I think he does not even try to prove it. But he shows that Christianity is beautiful and beneficial to Mankind. It is a very different approach.

And this is my critique of most apologies. They want to prove too much. In the long run, it is not so interesting. In my opinion, the apologist has to strive to show that his religion or opinion makes sense, he can even try to "prove" the veracity of his opinion or religion, knowing however that he is not really "proving" it. Finally, the main purpose of an apology is to try to show that what you believe is beautiful.

7.1.4. *The Qurʾānic Influence*

The quotations from the Qurʾān are quite frequent. We do not find as many citations as one would find, for instance, in the works of Elia of Nisibis (975-1043). And we do not get the impression that the author is trying to use the Qurʾān systematically to expound his point of view. He uses it in a discreet manner.

Of greater importance is the author's assimilation of the Qurʾān. As we have said, he introduces many Qurʾānic terms and expressions in his style. It is certainly not a scholarly "exercise". Reading the Apology, one gets the impression that the author writes rather

spontaneously, and that these expressions are not artificial, even if their use might have been calculated to impress the reader. After all, an apology has to be written with "art".

This fact is very important. It means that the author is impregnated with the Qurʾānic culture. He does not live in a "Christian ghetto", nor does he use what some might call a "Christian Arabic" vocabulary or style, and much less a "Christian Arabic grammar". He shares with Muslims (and probably also with Arab Jews) the common Arabic culture, which carries many Qurʾānic words and expressions, and a certain style and even some Muslim thoughts (see, for example, the allusion to Adam and Iblīs).

As a consequence of that common thought and life, we found not a single controversial verse in this Apology. It is a plain and irenic explanation of the Christian faith. This text has been written for Christians. But certainly the author always kept in mind those Muslims who might read his work. That is why we have this happy combination of different sources.

In so doing, he has brought into Arabic Christianity all that he could draw from the Islamic and Qurʾānic heritage, and he introduced it into his theology. On the other hand, he has presented Christian theology to Muslims in a Muslim garment. He has really strived to avoid all confusion (he is undoubtedly Christian in his theology), or pan-religious thinking. He has avoided the temptation of syncretism. He really acculturated himself to the Qurʾānic and the Islamic tradition. While not rejecting the slightest part of his faith, he acquired for himself what he thought was good and useful and presented it to his Christian readers.

These are the characteristics traits of our Apology. In short, even if simple and not always very logically structured our treatise has the great advantage of presenting the Essence of Christian faith in a language understandable to the Muslim. This does not necessarily mean "in a convincing way". This Apology will inspire other apologists, in particular Abū Rāʾiṭah Ḥabīb al-Takrītī.

7.2. An Attempt at Periodisation

Now let us try to assign our Apology to its place in the apologetical movement of the Abbasid period. I shall try to trace the evolution of this genre, and make an attempt (even if a very poor one) at periodisation.

7.2.1. *First Phase: a Biblical and Homiletical Approach*

We are here at the very beginning of the apologetical movement. It is therefore difficult to determine whence it proceeds. Our Apology represents the first phase in the great apologetical literature. Two years ago I tried to show that, according to the documents in our possession, the Arabic Christian theology probably originated in Palestine in Melkite circles.[231] Our Apology confirms this intuition, and takes us back at least half a century.

Of course, the Syrians (Jacobites or Nestorians) had a rich theological tradition, and were probably more in contact with Muslims than the Melkites. But they usually wrote in their own Syriac language rather than in Arabic, whereas the Melkites rapidly dropped the use of their Greek language and adopted Arabic as their *lingua franca*.

For example, the famous discussion between the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī and the Catholicos Timothy the Great, which took place in 781, was certainly held in Arabic, and is the earliest known extensive debate of this kind. But the *aide memoire* of the debate, written by Timothy himself in a letter to the monk Sergios and published by Dr. Alphonse Mingana,[232] was written (unfortunately for us!) in Syriac. It therefore cannot be considered an Arabic Christian document. The handed-down edition of this work in twenty-two questions and answers (a totally artificial division) is of a much later date, probably the 10th/13th Century.[233] As for the almost complete Arabic edition, it is a recent translation of a Syriac text.[234]

I will assign to this same period the numerous apologies of Theodore Abū Qurrah, and the apologetical section of the anonymous *Summa theologica* entitled *Jāmiᶜ wujūh al-īmān*.

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[231] See Samir Khalil Samir, "Une apologie arabe du christianisme d'époque umayyade", S.Kh. Samir (Ed.), *Actes du troisième congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes (Louvain, septembre 1988)*, in press.

[232] See Alphonse Mingana, *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi*, coll. "Woodbrooke Studies" 11 (1928).

[233] See Robert Caspar, "Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le Catholicos Timothée I et le calife al-Mahdī (IIe/VIIIe siècle): "Mohammad a suivi la voie des prophète", *Islamochristiana*, 3 (1977), pp. 107-175. I have prepared a new edition to be published shortly.

[234] See Louis Cheikho, "La discussion religieuse entre le calif al-Mahdī et Timothée, le Catholicos" (in Arabic), in *Al-Mashriq*, 21 (1921), pp. 359-374 and 408-418. Republished in *idem, Trois traités de polemique et de théologie chrétienne* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1923), pp. 1-26.

See my edition of this text (with titles and logical divisions) in Hans Putman, *L'Eglise et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780-823)*, coll. "Recherches de l'I.L.O." B3 (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1977), pp. 7-57 (in Arabic). The French translation and the study are by Rev Hans Putman.

This first phase covers a period which ranges from more or less the middle of the Eighth to the middle of the Ninth century.

7.2.2. *Second Phase: a Mixed Biblical and Philosophical Approach*

The second phase could be represented at best by someone like Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī. He follows the same trend of our Apology, and I am strongly inclined to think that he is an indirect disciple of our apologist, but with a much more philosophical touch. He perfectly combined both approaches: the biblical-homiletical tradition and the logical-philosophical approach.

He has a very logical approach. The small treatise on the truth of Christianity shows very clearly how logical is Abū Rāʾiṭah.

> Christianity must necessarily be
> either true or false,
> And those who accept it [must be]
> either intelligent or ignorant.
> *Lā taḫlū al-naṣrāniyyah min an takūna*
> *immā ḥaqqan wa-immā bāṭilan,*
> *w-allaḏīna qābilūha min an yakūnū*
> *immā ʿuqalāʾ wa-immā juhalāʾ.*

This style, *immā . . . wa-immā*, so often repeated in a few lines, clearly shows how logical Abū Rāʾiṭah's way of thinking and writing was.[235] But at the same time, his approach is very Biblical and Qurʾānic, with a homiletical style, as I showed in my study of some pages of his treatise on the incarnation.[236]

In this second phase we could include some other authors of the ninth century, for example, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī,[237] ʿAmmar

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[235] See Khalil Samir, "Liberté religieuse et propagation de la foi, chez les théologiens arabes chrétiens du IXe siècle et en islam", *Tantur Yearbook* 1980-81 (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 93-164, here pp. 97-121.

[236] See Samir, pp. 216-236, especially pp. 235f.

[237] See his great apology of Christianity. The only exception in this apology is the section on the Trinity, which is philosophical; all the rest is historical, moral and so on. This section is almost literally identical to the treatise on the Trinity of Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī. That is the main reason why I am inclined to think that al-Kindī really borrowed it from Abū Rāʾiṭah, and not the contrary. Georges Tartar argues differently. See Georges Tartar, *Dialogue islamo-chrétien sous le calife al-Maʾmūn (813-34). Les épîtres d'al-Hāshimī et d'Al-Kindī* (Paris, Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1985), pp. 70f.

al-Baṣrī[238] and Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī.[239]

Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq would belong to the same phase. He is certainly a philosopher, even though he is more known as a physican. He gives a very logical turn to the apology he wrote in answer to an invitation by Ibn al-Munajjim to become a Muslim.[240] Nevertheless he ignores the Biblical-homiletical approach, and yet he does not fully belong to the third phase like, for instance, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī.

I will also add to this list the Melkite physician and mathematician, Qusṭā b. Lūqā al-Baʿlabakkī, a great thinker and a very fine apologist of Baghdad, who wielded logical thought with great skill. But he also extensively used historical, literary and even psychological arguments when answering to the same Ibn al-Munajjim who sent him what he called a ''geometrical proof'' (burhān handasī) of the veracity of Islam.[241]

This second phase covers the period ranging from the middle of the ninth century to the beginning of the tenth.

7.2.3. Third Phase: a Very Philosophical Approach

The third phase is a really philosophical one, represented essentially by Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī and his disciples.

Yaḥyā is the head of the Aristotelian Christian philosophical school of Baghdad. For 24 years (from the death of al-Farābī in 950 to his own death in 974) he was the greatest philosopher of the Islamic world. He was the founder of the Aristotelian school of Baghdad, which was continued by his disciples and their disciples: Abū ʿAlī ʿĪsā b. Zurʾah (d. 1008), Abū al-Faraj ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ṭayyib (d. 1043) and others. The school ended with al-Muḥtār b. Buṭlān, in the middle of the eleventh century. This school is a purely philosophical

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[238] See Michel Hayek, ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, Apologie et Controverses, coll. Recherches de l'ILO B5 (Beyrouth, Dar el-Machreq, 1977), pp. 13-83. A French translation of the two Arabic books, with acomplete index-lexicon, has been made by Rev Maurice de Fenoyl, and will be published shortly in the ''Sources Chrétiennest'' series (Paris).

[239] See Giacinto Bulus Marcuzzo, Le dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade avec ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Hāšimī a Jérusalem vers 820. Etude, édition critique et traduction annotée d'un texte théologique chrétien de la littérature arabe. coll. Texte et Etudes sur l'Orient Chrétien 3 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1986).

[240] See Khalīl Samir et Paul Nwyia, Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne entre Ibn al-Munaǧǧim, Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq et Qusṭā Ibn Lūqā. Introduction, texte et traduction, in Patrologia Orientalis vol. 40, fasc. 4 = No 185 (Turnhout, 1981). Ḥunayn's text is on pp. 686-701.

[241] Ibid, pp. 592-685.

one. In the writings of these scholars we find no homiletics and almost no Biblical references (even though Ibn al-Ṭayyib was a great exegete who left an abundant *Tafsīr* of the whole Bible!).

7.2.4. *Fourth Phase: a Spiritual Humanistic Approach*

Finally, we have a fourth phase, which is a sort of renewal of the second phase. These apologies present the Christian faith to Muslims on the basis of the Bible and the patristic liturgical tradition, as in the second phase, in a clear and logical manner. The Greek Aristotelian philosophy is sometimes explicitly used and sometimes only in an indirect way. The Qurʾānic and Islamic tradition are more systematically used. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the authors will introduce a touch of literary beauty. The climax of this phase is reached between the 11th and the 13th centuries.

One of the best representatives of this apologetical tradition is probably Elia of Nisībīs (975-1043). He can be very logical when he wants, as in his seven treatises on the Trinity. The *Dafʿ al-Hamm* (or even the *Majālis*) is really delightful to read, so much so that the Vizir Abū al-Qāsim b. ʿAlī al-Maġribī asked him to write it down and send him a copy. Elia is also very courteous, very humane in his relationships, and extremely polite, and under no circumstances provoking.

To this period I will assign another apologist, from the tenth century, a bishop like Elia but very different from him. He lived in al-Ashmunayn, in Upper Egypt. His was a totally different context, where Greek philosophy was not widespread. I am speaking of Sawīrūs b. al-Muqaffaʾ. His writings are sometimes very popular and sometimes profoundly theological. He often produced two different editions on the same topic, in order to reach all kinds of readers. We have to bear in mind that the philosophical phase and the famous school of Baghdad were unknown in Egypt. The Copts will discover them only in the 13th century, thanks to Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī re-assimilated by the Awlād al-ʿAssāl.[242]

Other apologists will present the Christian faith in a simple way in their sermons. One of the most beautiful texts I know of, is the

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[242] The Copts have handed down the works of Yahya b. ʿAdi. They are also those who transmitted many Jacobite treatises. Even Nestorian authors, like Abu al-Faraj ʿAbdallah b. al-Tayyib and Elia of Nisibis have not been transmitted by their fellow Nestorians but by the Copts, their theological opponents!

Rawḍat al-farīd wa-salwat al-waḥīd of Simᶜān b. Ḥalīl b. Maqārah who wrote towards the end of the 12th century. Unfortunately no one has studied this text, although it is one of the most attractive and profound books of this period. Simᶜān wrote his book in *sajᶜ*, in twelve chapters, each chapter the size of a booklet. He aim at presenting the Christian faith (dogma, ethics and spirituality) in a spiritual and accessible way.

On the same lines and at the same time in Irak, Mārī b. Sulaymān (d. 1193) wrote, also in *sajᶜ*, his famous encyclopaedia entitled *Kitāb al-Majdal* which contains long dogmatic and spiritual sections. It is a masterpiece of the form.

7.2.5. *Conclusion*

We can now trace the evolution of the apologetic literature. The starting point is a simple biblical and patristic presentation of the Christian faith. This is followed by a mixture of Bible, patristics and philosophy. Then comes the purely philosophical school of Baghdad, with a rather dry and abstract presentation. Finally, comes a sort of synthesis of the previous phases, sometimes written in a very refined style. This is how I see the development of Arab Christian apologetics, beginning with our text.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST IN THE EARLIEST ARABIC MELKITE APOLOGIES[1]

Mark N. Swanson

I. Introduction

A. *"A Stumbling Block to Jews and Folly to Gentiles"*

"A stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" is the way the apostle Paul described the preaching of Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:23). With these words he identified the cross of Christ as that which for many people in the first-century Mediterranean world was *the* great obstacle to serious consideration of Christian claims. For the sake of their missionary effectiveness, Christian preachers and teachers had no choice but to address the paradox that the one whom the Church worshipped as Lord and God (John 20:28) *died*, and that by the hideous, and to Jews accursed, means of crucifixion.

The attempt to explain or mitigate the paradox begins in the New Testament itself, and it was a central concern of the Fathers of the Church, who brought great erudition, imagination and energy to the problem. They searched the scriptures, developed new exegetical methods, and compiled impressive catalogues of Old Testament *testimonia* to Christ's passion and death.[2] They developed a variety of strategies for interpreting the cross, paradoxically, as a sign of God's power and victory,[3] a project made considerably easier by Constantine's conquests "in this sign", and the establishment of Christianity as the official faith of the Roman Empire. They speculated on ways in which the very shape and placement of the cross

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[1] For abbreviations used in this article, see end.

[2] See for example, Gregory T. Armstrong, "The Cross in the Old Testament According to Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem and the Cappadocian Fathers," in: Carl Andresen ánd Günter Klein (eds.), *Theologia Crucis – Signum Crucis: Festschrift für Erich Dinkler zum 70. Geburtstag*, Tübingen: J.C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1979, pp. 17-38.

[3] See, for example, Daniélou, pp. 294-303, and Stockmeier, pp. 44-51.

betokened its cosmic significance.[4] As Christian teachers pondered the scriptures, speculated, engaged Jews and pagans in debate, and carried on their work of evangelism, catechesis and preaching, they produced a rich and complex body of cross-centred rhetoric and theology, iconography and liturgy, the intricacy of which is made clear in Peter Stockmeier's excellent thesis on the cross in the teaching of St. John Chrysostom.[5]

With the Muslim conquest of much of the Christian East, a new group of people was added to those who, like "the Jews and the Gentiles" of St. Paul's letter, found the cross a "stumbling-block" and "folly". That this was so is not surprising. To the extent that the cross retained any of the imperial/military significance that it had gained since the vision of Constantine, within the new Islamic order it was a symbol of a hostile and despised power. Also, it was the symbol of a community of persons from among the *ahl al-kitāb* who, to a Qurʾānic way of thinking incredibly, turned down the invitation to join their new rulers in their confession and worship.[6] Furthermore, the fact that Christians kissed and prostrated themselves before this symbol no doubt convinced many Muslims that it was little different from the idols which the pagan Arabs had worshipped before the coming of Islam.[7]

Finally, the cross was the sign of an event, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which, according to the standard interpretation of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* (4): 157, simply had not happened: ولكن صلبوه . وما قتلوه وما شُبّه لهم. Now, it has been questioned whether Muslims had always interpreted this verse as denying the crucifixion of Christ. Louis Massignon, for example, suggested that this "docetistic" interpretation of *al-Nisāʾ* (4): 157 had its origins in radical Shiʿite speculations and that it made its way into Sunnite exegesis around

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[4] Daniélou, pp. 303-15.

[5] In addition to Stockmeier and Daniélou, I would mention as a very helpful introduction to the patristic material Andreas Spira and Christoph Kleck (eds.), *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa: Translation and Commentary. Proceedings of the Fourth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, Cambridge, England: 11-15 September, 1978* (coll. Patristic Monograph Series, No. 9), Philadephia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1981. For bibliography on the cross in the early church, see Stockmeier, IX-XVI, and also Maurizio Flick and Zoltán Alszeghy, *Il mistero della croce: Saggio di teologia sistematica*, Brescia: Queriniana, 1978, pp. 441-461.

[6] See for example, *Sūrat al-Māʾida (5)*: 82-83 for a description for what, Qurʾānically, was *supposed* to happen when Christians heard the Qurʾān recited.

[7] See below, section II, D,1.

150 A.H./767 A.D.[8] Against this, however, we know that John of Damascus (d. c. 750 A.D.) refers to this interpretation in the famous Ch. 100/101 of his *On Heresies*,[9] and I hope to show that it was probably also known to the anonymous author of the ancient apologetic treatise preserved in Sinai ar. 154.[10] The Islamic exegetical tradition attributes a form of this interpretation to the great authority on the traditions of the *ahl al-kitāb*, Wahb b. Munabbih (d. c. 730 A.D.).[11] In the absence of other evidence, there would seem to be no reason not to accept that already in the first Islamic century it was understood among Muslims that *al-Nisā²* (4): 157 denied the historicity of the crucifixion of Christ.

There were, therefore, political, social, religious, and scriptural reasons for Muslim offence at the cross. This offence appears to have manifested itself in a number of iconoclastic incidents which Christian historians recorded,[12] and to have led to legislation forbidding public display of crosses.[13] However, the earliest Islamic polemical literature which we possess has remarkably little to say about the cross, concentrating instead on the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation.[14] This reticence on the Muslim side is mirrored in the various *majlis*-reports and collections of responses to debate questions that have come down to us on the Christian side.[15] Here too the Trinity and the incarnation are the main topics of dis-

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[8] Louis Massignon, "Le Christ dans les Évangiles, selon Ghazali," *Revue des Études Islamiques*,6 (1932), p. 535.

[9] Bonifatius Kotter (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos herausgegeben vom Byzantinischen Institut der Abtei Scheyern: IV. Liber de Haeresibus. Opera polemica* (coll. Patristische Texte und Studien, Band 22), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981, (Haeres. 100/22-25).

[10] See below, section II, B,2.

[11] See Mahmūd Muhammad Šākir and Ahmad Muhammad Šākir (eds.), *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-qurʾān*, Cairo: Dār al-Maʾārif, 1956-69, vol. 9, pp. 368f.

[12] Sidney Griffith brings together several reports of such incidents in his "Theodore Abū Qurrah's Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images," *JAOS*, 105 (1985), pp. 62-65.

[13] Such as what we find in the so-called "Covenant of ʿUmar;" see A.S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects*, London, 1930, pp. 6f.

[14] For the early Islamic polemical literature against Christianity, see ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Šarfī, *Al-fikr al-islāmī fī al-radd ʿalā al-naṣārā ilā nihāyat al-qarn al-rābiʿ/al-ʿāšir*, Algiers: Al-muʾassasah al-waṭaniyyah li'l-kitāb, and Tunis: Al-dār al-tūnisī li'l-našr, 1986. On this particular point, see p. 378.

[15] For bibliography, see the "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chrétien" published in installments in *Islamochristiana* (1975-).

cussion. Questions about the cross or the death of Christ appear
almost incidentally, and when they do, it is the same questions (for
example, concerning Christians' reverencing the cross, or the ques-
tion whether or not Christ died of his own will) that recur in text
after text.

ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Šarfī (Charfi) has commented on this reticence
about the cross, asking whether it reflects Muslims' reluctance to
challenge history-like Christian claims, or whether Muslim con-
troversialists assumed that Christian claims about the cross would
collapse by themselves once the doctrines of the Trinity and the in-
carnation had been effectively challenged.[16] Perhaps we might sug-
gest the following (slightly artificial) distinction: while material im-
ages of the cross, with their political and sociological as well as
religious overtones, gave great offence to Muslims' sense of *identity*,
it was claims that God was somehow triple, or that the man Christ
was the Son of God, which gave the greatest offence to their norma-
tive *ideology*. Public display of the cross may have been a provocation
to the sensibilities of many Muslims, who in some cases were roused
to iconoclastic action and restrictive legislation. For a Muslim po-
lemical theologian, however, the claim that Jesus Christ had been
crucified was merely *wrong*, whereas the claim that he was Son of
God and one of a triplicity in the godhead was *blasphemous*.[17] It was
this blasphemy which his polemics had necessarily to address.

B. *This Study*

The present study is an attempt at a brief survey of the ways in which
the first great Melkite theologians to write in Arabic defended, dis-
cussed, and invoked the cross in the religious situation brought
about by the Islamic conquests and the rapid Arabization/Islamici-
zation of traditionally Christian societies. Obviously these the-
ologians did not write about the cross "from scratch". Rather, they
drew upon the patristic heritage, sometimes engaging this heritage
in conversation without any apparent reference to the new religious

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[16] See note 14 above.

[17] To borrow a term from the discussion of whether or not Christ died of his
own will (see below, note 32): *al-iftirāʾ ʿalā al-ilāh*. Obviously, for the Muslim the
blasphemy reaches a climax when the two claims are taken together: God ... died.
See below, section II, C,1.

situation.[18] When they did turn to this situation, however, they could draw upon a complex body of discourse about the cross as it had developed in the earlier controversies with Jews and pagans. They did not, however, simply repeat this traditional material, but reshaped and developed it in an attempt to address the new apologetic situation.

Two bodies of work provide the foci for this study: first, the Arabic writings of Theodore Abū Qurrah,[19] and second, the "Summation of the aspects of the faith", *Jāmiᶜ wujūh al-īmān*.[20] The latter work has frequently been attributed to Abū Qurrah, and although the question of its authorship is still (to the best of my knowledge) unsolved,[21] in this paper I shall simply speak of "the author of the *Jāmiᶜ*," the better to give full recognition to contrasts between its teaching and that of the standard body of Abū Qurrah's works. Occasional reference will be made to other Arabic Melkite works of the eighth and ninth centuries, including the ancient apology preserved in Sinai ar. 154,[22] the *Masāʾil wa-ajwibah ᶜaqliyyah wa-*

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[18] An example may be the explanation of Mt. 12:4 = Lk. 11:30 (Christ's "three days and three nights among the dead") in the *Jāmiᶜ wujūh al-īmān*, Chapter 17, Question 28 (BL or. 4950, ff. 110b-112a). While it is not impossible that Muslim polemicists of the period asked how the three days and nights were completed, I can find no evidence that they did so. Instead, we seem to be dealing with an intra-Christian debate, in which the author of the *Jāmiᶜ* accepts one ingenious patristic move (that the count begins when Christ gave his disciples his body to eat and his blood to drink), rejects another (that the darkness on the afternoon of Good Friday counts as a night), and adds some refinements of his own. On the history of this particular problem see Hubertus Drobner, "Three Days and Three Nights in the Heart of the Earth: The Calculation of the Triduum Mortis according to Gregory of Nyssa (De Tridui Spatio p. 286, 13-290, 17)," in: Spira and Kleck (eds.), *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa* (see note 5 above), pp. 263-78.

[19] *GCAL* II, pp. 7-16; Nasrallah, pp. 104-24; Dick, *Créateur*, pp. XV-XXV, XLIX-LVI (French), 59-92 (Arabic); Samir Khalīl, "Tiyūdūrus Abū Qurrah," *Majallat al-Majmaᶜ al-ᶜIlmī al-ᶜArabī, al-Qism al-Suryānī*, 7 (1984), pp. 138-60. The most extensive theological study of this material is Griffith, *Theology*.

[20] *GCAL* II, pp. 16-19; Nasrallah, pp. 138-42; Khalil Samir, "Date de composition de la 'Somme des aspects de la foi'," *OCP*, 51 (1985), pp. 352-387. Sidney Griffith's edition will soon be appearing in the Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.

[21] See Samir's study cited in the previous note, and watch for Griffith's conclusion.

[22] *GCAL* II, pp. 27f; Nasrallah, pp. 145f. A partial edition and English translation were published by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles, from an Eighth or Ninth Century MS in the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, with a Treatise, 'On the Trinune Nature of God'* (coll. Studia Sinaitica n. VII), London: 1899, pp. 74-107 and pp. 2-36. Samir is preparing a new edition of this important work.

ilāhiyyah of Sinai ar. 434,[23] and the *Kitāb al-burhān.* of Peter of Bayt Raʾs.[24]

One question that presents itself in a survey of this sort is this: what shall be made of the well-known report of a debate between Abū Qurrah and various Muslim *mutakallimūn* in the presence of the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn?[25] Georg Graf regarded this report as clearly inauthentic,[26] but many later writers have been disposed to find in it some larger or smaller kernel of historical truth.[27] The question imposes itself here because the best-known manuscripts[28] of the debate contain three passages about the cross.[29] However, the oldest manuscript that we possess, the Vatican Borgia Arabic MS 135[30] which was copied in 1308 A.D. (and not 1408 A.D., as reported by Graf),[31] contains *none* of these passages, which suggests that they were added in a later recension of this popular debate-

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[23] ff. 171a-181b. This text was brought to the attention of scholars by Rachid Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes (750-1050)* (coll. Beauchesne Religions, 15), Paris: Beauchesne, 1985, p. 38, who dated it c. 780 A.D. The present writer is preparing an edition of this text.

[24] *GCAL* II, pp. 35-38; Nasrallah, pp. 143ff. Edition and English translation: Cachia/Watt. On the question of authorship, watch for Samir Khalil Samir, "La littérature melkite sous les premiers abbassides," forthcoming in the *OCP*, with further discussion in the present writer's "Some Observations on the 'Pseudo-Eutychian' *Kitāb al-Burhān*," to be published.

[25] *GCAL* II, pp. 21f; Nasrallah, pp. 124f.

[26] Georg Graf, *Die arabischen Schriften des Theodor Abū Qurra, Bischofs von Ḥarrān (ca. 740-820): Literarhistorische Untersuchungen und Übersetzung*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1910, 77-85. Although Alfed Guillaume made a case for the work's essential authenticity ("Theodore Abu Qurra as Apologist," *MW* 15 (1925) 42-51), Graf reaffirmed his negative judgement in *GCAL* II, 21-23.

[27] For example, Griffith, *Theology*, pp. 22f; Dick, *Créateur*, pp. 75f; Nasrallah, p. 125.

[28] Those most frequently cited are Paris ar. 70, ff. 147b-215b, and Paris ar. 198, ff. 21b-82a (see, for example, Griffith, *Theology*, pp. 59-63). Of these, Paris ar. 70 preserves the older recension of the debate-report.

[29] In Paris ar. 70, we find these at ff. 175a-176b (question about the death of Christ), ff. 180b-184b (Christian veneration of the cross), and ff. 192a-193b, 212a-214a (Christ's freely chosen death, and the guilt of the Jews). Note, by the way, the displacement of pages in this MS, which has created a certain amount of confusion; c.f. Gérard Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, Première partie: *Manuscrits chrétiens*, Tome I, Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1972, pp. 50f. The "missing" leaves between f. 211 and f. 212 are to be found at ff. 192-93, as the Coptic page numbers immediately reveal.

[30] This text is at ff. 157b-172b.

[31] *GCAL* II, p. 21, repeated by Nasrallah, p. 124. The colophon concludes (f. 172b): و كان الفراغ منه يوم الأربعا تموز، تاريخ ألف وست مائة وتسعة عشر سنة
الإ سكندر . Tammūz 1619 in the Era of Alexander = July 1308 A.D.

report. This is not to say that these passages cannot be genuinely Abū Qurrah. Indeed, the passage about Christ's freely chosen death and the guilt of the Jews is clearly dependent on Abū Qurrah's well-known argument.[32] In what follows, therefore, we shall not hesitate to quote these passages, even if a certain scepticism about their authenticity may be the best starting point for their study.

Let us now turn to the texts, organizing our investigation under the following heads: the *necessity* of the cross, the *reality* of the cross; the *scandal* of the cross; and *existence under the sign* of the cross.

II. Arabic Melkite Discourse about the Cross

A. *The Necessity of the Cross*[33]

Both Abū Qurrah and the author of the *Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān* seek to explain the *necessity* of Christ's death on the cross, and develop some considerations concerning the *efficacy* of this death. Let us examine each author in turn.

1. *The "Just Ground" for the Forgiveness of Sins*

Theodore Abū Qurrah devoted a treatise to explaining that the sins of human beings may only be forgiven through divine redemptive suffering.[34] Briefly, he argues as follows: God sent down the *Tawrāh* to Moses, with its unrelenting demand for perfect obedience and love: "Among God's precepts was that people should love him with *all* their hearts and with *all* their strength and with *all* their souls and with *all* their intentions."[35] Human beings have all fallen short of the demands of this Law, and are therefore liable to the punishments stipulated therein. Repentance (*al-tawbah*) fails to bring about

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[32] قال المسيح مات باختياره أو رغما عنه , Nasrallah, p. 122, #5; Griffith, *Theology*, pp. 50-63; S.H. Griffith, "Some Unpublished Arabic Sayings Attributed to Theodore Abū Qurrah," *Le Muséon*, 92 (1979), pp. 29-35; Samir Khalīl, "Kitāb 'Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān' wa-Mujādalat Abī Qurrah ʿan ṣalb al-Masīḥ," *Al-masarrah*, 70 (1984), pp. 411-27. We shall leave a discussion of this text for another occasion.

[33] In response to a question raised at the Symposium I should stress that the word "necessity" as I use it here must not be understood in terms of compulsion or syllogistic deducation.

[34] ميصر في أنه لا يغفر لأحد خطيته إلا بادجاع المسيح التي حلت به في شأن النّاس وأن من لا يؤمن بهذه الأوجاع ديقـربها للآب عن ذنوبه فلا مغفرة لذنوبه أبدا. *GCAL* II, p. 13, #5; Nasrallah, p. 119, #2, f. Edition: Bāšā, pp. 83-91.

[35] فكان من فريضة الله هناك أن يحبه النّاس بكل قلوبهم وبكل قوتهم وبكل نفوسهم وبكل نياتهم , Bāšā, p. 83/5-6 (Dt. 6:6; Mk. 12:30 and parallels).

the perfect love and obedience that the Law requires. God does not mitigate his demand for wholehearted obedience (to do so would be for him to share his sovereignty with the devil!), nor does he in mercy simply brush aside the claims of his Law (which would be to make his Law *bāṭil*, void, and himself *ʿabaṯ*, a joke). But, then, what "just ground" (*sabab ʿadl*) might there be which would preserve the integrity of God's Law, and yet allow human beings to attain God's favour and forgiveness?[36] The answer, according to Abū Qurrah, is the incarnation and passion of the eternal Son of God:[37]

وتأنّس من روح القدس ومن مريم المطهّرة، فخرج إلى العالم متعرّضاً أن تـمـلّ
به العقوبة التي   كان كل واحدٍ منّا استوجبها بخطيئة نفسه، من الضرب والفضيحة
والصلب والقتل. لأنه لو لم يتجسّد، لما كان لهذه الأوجاع سبيل أن تصل اليه،
لأ نه في جوهره الإلهي لا يُرى ولا يُمسّ، ولا يصل اليه ألم ولا وجع ولا أذى.
ولكن حيث تجسّد، اتّسع السبيل الى هذه الآلام أن تنفذ اليه، بأن عرّض لـها
جسده.   وأمكن من ظهره أن يُجلد بالسياط، ومن رأسه أن يُطرق له عليه، ومن
وجهه أن يُبصق فيه، ومن يديه ورجليه أن تُسمّر، ومن ضلعه أن يُطعن في[sic]
الحربة. فتجشّم هذه الآلام بالحقيقة في جسده (ولم ينفذ منها شيء إلى طبيعته
الإلهية) وأنجز خلاصنا ...

> *Translation*: He became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and from Mary the purified one, and went out into the world exposed to the punishment coming upon him, [the punishment] which every one of us deserved because of his own sin: beating, humiliation, crucifixion, and death. If he had not become incarnate these pains would have had no way to reach him, because in his divine nature he is invisible and untouchable, and no suffering or pain or harm reaches him. But inasmuch as he became incarnate, a way was devised for these sufferings to penetrate to him in that *his body* was exposed to them. He made it possible that his back be flogged with a whip, that he be smitten upon the head, that his face be spat upon, that his hands and feet be nailed, and that his ribcage be pierced by a spear. He truly bore these sufferings in his body (although none of them penetrated to his divine nature) and accomplished our salvation.

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[36] Bāšā, pp. 83ff.

[37] Bāšā, p. 86/1-9. Throughout this study, Arabic texts are reproduced from published materials or manuscripts without change, except with respect to punctuation, or the addition of *hamzah*, some vowel signs, etc. Translations should be regarded as preliminary attempts made without word-indices (apart from the partial indices in Dick, *Créateur*, pp. 275-98, and Dick, *Icones*, pp. 229-72) or other tools.

Thus did Christ "become a sacrifice and an offering to the justice of the Father."[38] Because he is one in substance with the Father, his sacrifice/offering far more than discharges the claims of the Father's Law against sinful human beings. Therefore he opens the way to forgiveness for those who believe in him and who offer up his pains to the Father.[39]

There are a number of observations that may be made here. First, the argument is clearly formulated with Muslims in mind. Abū Qurrah attempts to build on beliefs common to Christianity and Islam: that God sent down (*anzala*) the *Tawrāh* to Moses, that he demands human obedience, that he is the Judge who will punish disobedience, that he has not acted *bāṭilan* or *ʿabaṭan*.[40]

Second, we should notice the *centrality* of this argument to Abū Qurrah's apologetic christology. The treatise on the necessity of redemption is the first in a series of three linked treatises, the second of which deals with the possibility of the incarnation,[41] and the third with the divinity of Christ.[42] Whatever the new apologetic arguments offered in the second and third treatises, the argument for the necessity of redemptive suffering is foundational for the entire set. Abū Qurrah therefore offers a "cross-soteriology" which, at least in his specifically apologetic work, lies at the heart of his thinking about the incarnation.

Third, the *efficacy* of the redemption worked by Christ on the cross

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38 صار زنيمة ُ وقربانا لمدل الآب , Bāšā, p. 138/2 (from the letter to David the Jacobite, see below, note 44).

39 See the dramatic passage at Bāšā, pp. 87/14-88/7, which takes the form of an address of the Father to the Son.

At the Symposium it was suggested that I had read Abū Qurrah through strongly Anselmian lenses, and indeed, in the draft of the paper read there I had used a number of terms, notably "satisfaction," with insufficient care. There are, however, some striking similarities between Abū Qurrah's treatise and the *Cur Deus Homo*, due no doubt to elements common to both authors' projects: the development of a "rationale" for the death of Christ that takes as it starting-point doctrines presumed common to Christians, Jews, and Muslims, and that works out to be an exploration of the received two-nature christology. A detailed comparison of the two works must be left for another occasion.

40 Cf. *Āl ʿImrān* (3):191, *Ṣād* (38):27; *al-Muʾminūn* (23):115.

41 ميمر فى الرد على من ينكر لله التجسّد والحلول فيما أحب أن ّ يحل فيه (من خلقه)، وأنه فى حلوله فى الجسد المأخوذ من مريم (المطهرة بمنزلة جلوسه على السماء) ; *GCAL* II, p. 13, #6; Nasrallah, p. 120, #2, j. Edition: Bāšā, pp. 180-86.

42 ميمر يحقق ان لله ابناً هو عدله فى الجوهر ولم يزل معه ; *GCAL* II, p. 13, #7; Nasrallah, p. 119, #2, g. Edition: Bāšā, pp. 91-104.

depends on his *true humanity*, which can suffer, and on his *true divinity*, which alone gives redemptive value to these sufferings. This latter point receives special stress in Abū Qurrah's vigorous polemics against the Nestorians and Jacobites,[43] which must be understood as an impassioned defense of the redemptive efficacy of Christ's death. According to Abū Qurrah, the problem with *both* the Nestorian shielding of divinity from humanity in Christ *and* with the Jacobite doctrine of the ''one composite nature'' is that they deny *God*'s incarnation, suffering, and death, and thus destroy our hope. In a passage directed against those who hold the doctrine of ''one composite nature'' in Christ, but which could equally well have written against the Nestorians, Abū Qurrah writes:[44]

فذلك منهم كفر بتجسُّد الكلمة، أي أنّ ذلك مستأصل أنّه صار انسانا، وأنّ
الإله وُلد متجسدا ونصبَ وأُصيب أو أنّه أتمَّ تدبير خلاصنا وقضاه. ومن
قبلهم قد أبادوا رجاءنا إذا كانوا يرون هذا لأنّه إن كانت هذه الأشياء لا تُنسب
إلى الإله (في الوجه الذي ذكرنا)، فبأيّ نحو من العدل أو بأية حجّة خُلصنا من
إبليس والموت والخطيئة والناموس؟
فليست أهل هذا الرأي، فإنهم عن الشيطان يناصمون! فقد كان (لعمري!) يتمنّى
أن يكون الذي صلب على الجلجلة ليس بإله، وإن كان الإله متّصلاً به. فإذا
هو قد استراح من الخزي بالمز، وثبَّت سلطانه، دوى يُصرِّع على الأمم بصكّ
الخطيئة الذي كتبه آدم أبونا، وكان يُحرز أبناء الأنفس تحت يديه في مطبق
الجحيم، والأجساد كانت تُفرق حتّى لا يكون إلا الفساد الكامل الذي حلّ بها، والبِر
لم يكن يُشرق رأساً في أولاد آدم.

Translation: And that [doctrine] of theirs is unbelief in the Incarnation of the Word, that is, it uproots [the teaching] that he became man, and that God (*al-ilāh*) was born incarnate and was tired and afflicted, or that he perfected and accomplished the economy of our salvation. For their part they have destroyed our hope, if they believed this, because if these things are not attributed to God (in the way that we have mentioned), by what manner of justice or by what argument have we been saved from the Devil, death, sin, and the Law?

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[43] See especially Abū Qurrah's treatise on the death of Christ ميمر في
(موت المسيح..); *GCAL*, II, p. 13, #8; Nasrallah, pp. 118f, #2, c; edition: Bāšā, pp. 48-70), and his letter to David the Jacobite (رسالة في إجابة مسألة كتبها أبو قرة القديس
; (إلى صديق له كان يعقوبيا فصار أرثوذكسيا عند رده الجواب عليه *GCAL*, II, p. 13, #10; Nasrallah, pp. 119f, #2, h; edition: Bāšā, pp. 104-139).
[44] Bāšā, p. 137/8-13.

Let the people who hold this opinion be silent, for they are disputing on behalf of Satan! For he (by my life!) had desired that one who was crucified on Golgatha *not* be God, even if God were joined to him. For in that case he [Satan] would have been relieved of his shame without a struggle; would have consolidated his authority; would continually be brandishing before the nations the bond of sin which our father Adam wrote; and would be guarding the host of souls under his hand in the dungeon of Hell, while the bodies would have been immersed until there was nothing but the complete corruption which had come upon them; and righteousness would not have shone at all among the children of Adam.)[45]

For Abū Qurrah, neither Severan Monophysitism nor Nestorianism truly allows the claim that the one who was crucified and died was *God (al-ilāh)*.[46] It is true, of course, that Abū Qurrah carefully marks off his Chalcedonian understanding of the death of God (*al-ilāh*) from any claim that "God (*Allāh*) died *in his divine nature*,"[47] a notion which receives some of Abū Qurrah's most violent abuse.[48] But this does not change the fact that the death of the one who was truly God stands at the heart of Abū Qurrah's theology, because it is upon that that our salvation depends.

2. *Evidence for Belief in the General Resurrection*

The *Jāmiᶜ wujūh al-īmān* is less systematic than the work of Abū Qurrah, and in Chapters 5-8 the author piles up a number of motivations for the incarnation in general, and for the cross in particular.[49] Like Abū Qurrah he can make his starting point the inexorable demands of the Law which we are unable to fulfil. Christ redeems us by fulfilling the demands of the Law where we have fallen short, and also by taking upon himself the curse which we had

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[45] The deception and defeat of Satan by the incarnation/cross is an important theme in our literature. See below, section II, C,2. A more thorough discussion of this theme will be left for another occasion.

[46] See also Bāšā, p. 58/10-11.

[47] إن الله مات في طبيعته الإلهية, Bāšā, p. 56/12.

[48] Bāšā, pp. 56/10-57/12.

[49] The author of the *Jāmiᶜ* gives the following as motivations for the incarnation: (Ch. 5) to honor humanity; (Ch. 6) to teach humankind about God's triunity; (Ch. 7) to free us from slavery and deliver us from the curse of the Law; (Ch. 8) to give us knowledge of life after death, and to save us from Satan. These chapters (BL or. 4950, ff. 29a-39b) were published, with a few omissions, by Maᶜlūf. Chapter 9 (BL or. 4950, ff. 39b-41b) restates (in an unsystematic way) many of the ideas of Chapters 7 and 8.

incurred through our disobedience, and that by becoming himself accursed, though blameless, through his crucifixion (Dt. 27:46; 21:23; Gal. 3:10-14).[50]

The *Jāmiʿ*'s dominant argument for the necessity of the cross of Christ, however, is that through *Christ*'s death and resurrection we have the hope of the *general* resurrection.[51] In response to a Muslim's question about Christ's human activities,[52] for example, the author responds that God assumed a human "veil" (*ḥijāb Allāh alladī iḥtajaba*)[53] for three reasons, the third (and most fully developed) of which is as follows:[54]

... ليمثّل لهم بنفسه ما يستدلّون به على بعثته الأموات ببدله بشرَه الذي احتجب به للموت بالصلب المشتهر، وقيامته بعد ثلثة أيام. ولأن الشيطان ليس في طبيعته ما في طبيعة الانسان من الحاجة والحسّ بالمكاره وقد يغرّ الناس بتجليته لهم في صورة الانسان، لذلك المسيح ربّنا أكل وشرب وسما مساعي الانس، وظهر منه الحاجة والحسّ بالمكاره ليتحقّق بذلك بشرَه ويتحقّق موته وقيامته، فيقتاس به المؤمن ببعثته الأموات عامّةً'. له المجد على ذلك!

Translation: . . . to enact for them in himself that from which they could infer his raising the dead, [that is,] his giving the humanity in which he had veiled himself over to death by public crucifixion, and his resurrection after three days. Because Satan does not by his nature share in human nature's [bodily] needs or experience of adversity, even though he may deceive people by appearing to them in human form, therefore Christ our Lord ate, drank, went the ways of human beings, and was seen to have [bodily] needs and the experience of adversity. Thus was the reality of his humanity confirmed, and also the reality of his death and resurrection, from which the believer by analogy deduced [the credibility of] his raising the dead in general. For that, glory be to him!

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[50] Ch. 7 (BL or. 4950, ff. 32a-34a = Maʿlūf, pp. 1017ff).

[51] See, for example, Ch. 8 (BL or. 4950, ff. 34b-39b = Maʿlūf, 1019-23), Ch. 9 (BL or. 4950, ff. 39b-41b), and the passages cited below.

[52] Ch. 18, Question #4 (BL or. 4950, ff. 118b-119a).

[53] BL or. 4950, f. 118b/17.

[54] BL or. 4950, f. 119a/2-11. The other reasons given for God's *iḥtijāb* are: (1) to provide his worshippers with a way to draw near to him and to listen to what he says to them; (2) to fulfill the demands of the Law, and to free those who believe in him from slavery and to enable them to lead a life of imitating Christ (ff. 118b/18-119a/1).

We note the apologetic nature of this argument. The author's use of the terms *ḥijāb* and *iḥtajaba* to describe the incarnation are an attempt, as he makes explicit elsewhere,[55] to exploit *Sūrat al-Šūrā* (42):51, مجاب ورا أو من دره إلا دميا الله أن يكلّمه ليشر كان وما . And his main point is surely this: that although Muslims say that they believe in the general resurrection, it is the death and resurrection of Christ which alone provide a sound warrant for that belief.

Similarly to what we saw previously with Abū Qurrah, the efficacy of what God does in the cross and resurrection of Christ required that he be truly divine and truly human. The emphasis on his true divinity takes the form of the insistence that Christ was entirely capable of avoiding suffering, but for our sake underwent it *freely*.[56] For the author, to claim otherwise is to cut oneself off from Christianity.[57] Even the cry of dereliction from the cross is the free act of one who speaks not on his own behalf, but on behalf of sinful and suffering humanity.[58] Furthermore, Christ *managed* the details of his passion, including his public death by crucifixion at the time of the feast and his immediate burial in a new and unoccupied tomb, so as to maximize the number of witnesses to his death and resurrection, and to leave gainsayers without a valid argument.[59]

And yet, as the passage cited above makes clear, the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection as a "preview" of the general resurrection requires that his be a *real* humanity subject to all the conditions of human existence,[60] and not a counterfeit form of humanity such as that sometimes assumed by Satan. For if Christ's real humanity were in doubt, then no analogy could be drawn between what happened to him and what will happen to us. It is for this reason that Christ's post-resurrection appearances to the disciples, and particularly that to Thomas, are important. By seeing him and touching him they verified that he was truly the human being they had known, who had undergone death and resurrection, and thus they had a sure ground for hope in the *general* resurrection.[61]

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[55] Ch. 18, Question #3 (BL or. 4950, f. 117b).
[56] See, for example, Ch. 8, BL or. 4950, ff. 37b/17-38a/1 = Maʿlūf, 1021/end-1022/2.
[57] Ch. 14, *wajh* 11 (BL or. 4950, ff. 81a-b).
[58] Ch. 17, Question 11 (BL or 4950, ff. 102b-103b).
[59] Ch. 8, BL or. 4950, ff. 39a-b = Maʿlūf, pp. 1022f); Ch. 17, Question 25 (BL or. 4950, ff. 109b-110a). For the same sort of argument in Chrysostom see Stockmeier, p. 43.
[60] See also, for example, Ch. 9, BL or. 4950, ff. 40a-b.
[61] Ch. 17, Questions 29 and 30 (BL or. 4950, ff. 112a-b).

B. *The Reality of the Cross*

Given the fact that already John of Damascus was aware that Muslims denied the reality of the crucifixion of Christ, it is surprising that the works surveyed here—for the moment we put to one side the alleged debate of Abū Qurrah at the court of al-Maʾmūn—do not cite the *locus classicus* for this denial, *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* (4):157. This does not mean, however, that the first Melkite writers to compose theological treatises in Arabic were unaware of this Muslim denial, nor that they were unconcerned to defend the historicity of Christ's death upon the cross.

1. *The Consequences of Denial*

It is true that after reading the treatises of Abū Qurrah or the *Jāmiʿ*, one is tempted to conclude that these works simply take the historicity of the crucifixion of Christ for granted. There is some truth in this judgement, but the word "simply" is out of place. It would be better to say that, for these works, the reality of the cross of Christ is placed beyond question by the densely-woven coherence of the writers' entire scriptural/theological fabric, which would be unravelled by the denial of historicity to the crucifixion, with results that Muslims as well as Christians could only find grotesque.

This is most easily illustrated by returning for a moment to Abū Qurrah's treatise on redemption. We have already seen how he attempts to establish, in terms convincing to Muslims, the inevitability of divine redemptive suffering if transgressors of the *Tawrāh* are to be forgiven.[62] The alternatives to this divine redemptive suffering, according to Abū Qurrah, are these: either that God allows the Devil to share in the worship and service due him, *or* that God's Law is null and void, and God himself is a joke, *or* that human beings are doomed to eternal torment.[63] To such possibilities the only response can be: *ḥāšā li-llāh*, God forbid![64] According to Abū Qurrah, therefore, the reality of the cross may not be denied without consequences too horrible to contemplate. This is summarized in the title he himself gave to his treatise: "That no one's sin is forgiven except by the pains of Christ ... and that *whoever does not believe in these pains*

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[62] See above, section II, A,1.
[63] Bāšā, pp. 84f.
[64] Bāšā, pp. 84/14, 85/2,10, 89/17.

... *will never have forgiveness of his transgressions.*"[65] The idea had been expressed long before the advent of Islam by St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "For if He was crucified in fancy only, salvation is a fancy also, since our salvation comes from the Cross."[66]

2. *The Testimony of Scripture*

The testimony of *Scripture*, in particular the prophecies of the Old Testament, to the suffering and death of Christ plays a very important role in the early Arabic Melkite apologies. Indeed, a scriptural defence of the reality of the crucifixion of Christ may be found in the oldest Arabic apologetic treatise in our possession, the treatise on the Trinity and the incarnation of the Word of God found in Sinai ar. 154.[67] Near the end of the treatise there is a discussion of the cross of Christ, which begins as follows:[68]

وهذا ما اتنبأ أنبياء الله على صلب المسيح، الذي فدا[نا به] من ضلالة
إبليس وأعماله: تنبأ موسى، الذي كلّمه الله وضرّم وجهه، حين لم يكون
يستطيع أن ينظر إلى وجهه أحد من بني إسرائيل. تنبأ على صلب المسيح وقال
(f. 137b) لبني إسرائيل في التوراة التي أنزلها الله عليه: "لترون حياتكم
معلّقة مقابل أعينكم ولا تؤمنون بها." فأي حياة علّقت مقابل أعين بني
إسرائيل، ولم يؤمنوا بها، الا نور الله؟   فافهم ما تنبأ الأنبياء بروح القدس
على المسيح، الذي صُلب، وصلب الخطية وأهلك إبليس بصلبه.

Translation: And this is what the prophets of God prophesied concerning the crucifixion of Christ, through which he redeemed us from the error of the Devil and his works:

Moses prophesied, to whom God spoke and caused his face to blaze [so that] none of the Children of Israel were then able to look at his face. He prophesied concerning the crucifixion of Christ and said to the children of Israel in the *Tawrāh*, which God sent down to him:

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[65] See note 34 above.

[66] *Catechesis* 13,37 (*PG* 33, 816C-817A); English translation by Leo P. McCauley and Anthony A. Stephenson, *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, Vol. 2 (coll. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 64), Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1970, p. 29.

[67] Recently, Samir discovered a date on a page left unpublished by Margaret Dunlop Gibson in her edition of 1899: 746 years since the establishment of Christianity, which may correspond to 738 A.D.

[68] Sinai ar. 154, ff. 137a/11-137b/9. F. 137a is rather badly faded, and my transcription should be checked against Samir's edition when it appears.

"You shall see your life hanging before your eyes, and you shall not believe." [Dt. 28:66][69] What life was hanging before the eyes of the children of Israel, in which they did not believe, other than the Light of God? So understand what the prophets have prophesied by the Holy Spirit concerning Christ, who was crucified, and who by his crucifixion crucified sin and destroyed the Devil.)

The author goes on to discuss another text which was understood as a prophecy of Christ's crucifixion, the story of the bronze serpent in the wilderness (Num. 21:6-9).[70]

We should take special note of the author's introduction to the citations from the Pentateuch. He stresses that these are prophesies of the prophet *Moses*,[71] to whom God spoke directly—one thinks of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* (4):164: وَكَلَّمَ اللّٰه مُوسى تَكليما —and to whom God sent down (*anzala*) the *Tawrāh*. The author, in introducing the prophecies of the Cross to his Muslim addressees, appears to be at pains to emphasize the reasons why they should be ready to accept these prophecies. It is probably not too much to assume that the author knows that his readers will be disinclined to believe in the historicity of the crucifixion of Christ, and therefore gives what he considers to be Qurʾānic reasons for accepting the prophecies of the cross in the Pentateuch, and therefore for heeding his exhortation: "So understand what the prophets have prophesied by the Holy Spirit concerning Christ, *who was crucified*..." In one way or another, all later apologists for the crucifixion of Christ will make the same exhortation.

For Abū Qurrah, for example, the Old Testament prophecies of the passion and death of Christ bear witness to the internal, intra-textual consistency of the doctrines he defends. If the treatises

[69] The use of Dt. 28:66 as a prophecy of the cross is first attested in Melito of Sardis, and frequently thereafter. The development of this exegesis has been carefully studies by Jean Daniélou, "Das Leben, das am Holze hängt: Dt. 28,66 in der altchristlichen Katechese," in Johannes Betz and Heinrich Fries (eds.), *Kirche und Überlieferung, Festschrift für Joseph Rupert Geiselmann*, Freiburg/Br.: Herder, 1960, pp. 22ff.

[70] Sinai ar. 154, ff. 137b-139a. For a study of these and other passages and their patristic exegesis, see Armstrong, "The Cross in the Old Testament" (see note 2 above).

[71] One is reminded here of the earliest Muslim-Christian religious discussion for which we have a text, that between the patriarch John III of Antioch and the emir ʿAmr b. Saʿd, in which the emir insisted that the Christian confine himself to citations from *Moses*. François Nau, "Un colloque du Patriarche Jean avec l'Émir des Agaréens," *Journal Asiatique* (2e série), 5 (1915), pp. 250/23-251/1.

attributed to Abū Qurrah in the manuscript Aleppo Sbath 1324[72] are genuine, then Abū Qurrah compiled catalogues of Old Testament *testimonia* to the redemptive economy of Christ,[73] catalogues no doubt similar to those we find, for example, in the *Jāmiᶜ wujūh al-īmān* Chapter 13,[74] or the *Kitāb al-burhān* in Books II, III, and IV.[75] In any case, in a number of his published treatises Abū Qurrah cites some of these prophecies,[76] and emphasizes that *all* of the prophets have mentioned Christ's sufferings,[77] that these prophecies are well known,[78] and that the texts are readily available, not only from the Christians but also from their adversaries the Jews.[79] For Abū Qurrah, not only does the scripture bear witness to the cross, but the cross of Christ is a hermeneutical key for interpreting the whole of scripture: "If in the Old or the New Testament you hear [the words] 'forgiveness' or 'mercy' or 'repentance', know that none of that exists except through the cross of Christ and the shedding of his blood, for otherwise the Law would be void, and God [himself] a joke."[80]

3. *The Testimony of Place*

Very briefly, we might mention that there is the barest hint in Abū Qurrah of yet another approach to defending the historicity of the crucifixion of Christ. In the Appendix to his *Treatise on the Existence of the Creator, and on the True Religion*,[81] Abū Qurrah tells the story of the Apostle Thomas, who raised a dead man to life "in the

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[72] *GCAL*, II, pp. 15f, #13; Nasrallah, pp. 122f, #6, A. See Paul Sbath, *Bibliothèque de manuscrits Paul Sbath: Catalogue*, Tome III, Cairo: H. Friedrich, 1934, pp. 115f.

[73] Aleppo Sbath 1324, 5 and 6, the latter of which is directed against the Jews.

[74] BL or. 4950, ff. 55a-76a. On the passion and death of Christ: ff. 61a-63b.

[75] Cachia/Watt, Part II.

[76] E. g. Bāšā, pp. 86ff.

[77] Bāšā, p. 87/7, 144/19 (which is from the ميصر فى تحقيق ناموس موسى
المقـدس ···, see note 110 below).

[78] Bāšā, p. 149/4, which is likewise from the ميصر فى تحقيق ناموس موسى
المقـدس ···.

[79] Bāšā, p. 98/6-7.

[80] فإن أنت سمعت من كتب الله العتيقة والحديثة "مغفـرة" أو "رحمة" أو
"توبة"، فاعلم ذلك أنه لا يكون إلا بصليب المسيح وسفك دمه، ولو لا هذا لكان
الناموس باطلا والله عبثا, Bāšā, p. 89/15-17.

[81] فى وجود الخالق والدين القويم, *GCAL*, II, pp. 14f, #12; Nasrallah, pp. 120ff, #3; edition: Dick, *Créateur*.

name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified *in Jerusalem.*"[82] The particular geographical *location* of the crucifixion of Christ is an aspect of, and in a certain sense a witness to, its reality. This witness of place had been exploited by Cyril of Jerusalem in his catechetical lectures,[83] and *towards the end of the ninth century would be exploit*ed by the author of the *Kitāb al-burhān*, who gives a long list[84] of "the relics of Himself and places of his sanctification"[85] which are "witnesses confirming all that the book of the Gospel says of [Christ's] story and His acts,"[86] including his passion and death.

4. *The "Abū Qurrah" Debate: "They Did Not Kill Him..."*

Up to now we have seen that interpretation of or argument with the Qur'ānic text *al-Nisā'* (4):157 does not play a role in the apologies we are studying. In the best-known manuscripts of Abū Qurrah's debate at the court of al-Ma'mūn, however, this passage is cited *twice*, once by Abū Qurrah himself, and once by one of his Muslim interlocuters. The first passage, cited according to Paris Arabic MS 70, is as follows:[87]

فقال له رجل من أهل البصرة: وَيحك يا أبو قرّة! أ ليس المسيح
إلا هُك؟

قال: نعم.

قال: فقد مات الإلهك؟

قال: أليس تزعمون أنّ المسيح مات؟

قال له البصري: نعم.

قال: فأخبرني، المسيح الآن هو في السماء (f. 175b) أم في الأرض
أو في القبر؟

فقال: لست أدري غير أنّ المسيح قد مات.

قال أبو قرّة: ما هذا جواب! أخبرني أين هو، في السماء أو في
الأرض؟

قال: في الجنّة.

قال له أبو قرّة: فأخبرني متى صعد إلى السماء، أو متى دخل إلى
الجنّة؟

قال البصري: أخبرني[88] أنت، هو في السماء؟

[82] Dick, *Créateur*, p. 269 (#48).

[83] *Catechesis* 10, p. 19; 13, pp. 38ff (*PG* 33, pp. 685-88; pp. 817-21), where Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, the house of Caiphas, Golgotha, and the sepulchre are mentioned among the witnesses to the passion of Christ.

[84] Cachia/Watt, paragraphs 310-65. The translations that follow are those of Watt.

[85] آثاره وأماكن قدسه , Cachia/Watt, par. 310.

[86] شهادات محقّقة لكل ما نطق به كتاب الإنجيل من قصته وفعاله , *ibid.*

[87] Paris ar. 70, ff. 175a/4-176b/1.

قال : نعم!
قال : كيف علمت ذلك؟
قال أبو قرّة: (f . 176a) من كتابك حيث يقول في صورة النساء:
"ما قتلوه ولا صلبوه
... بل رفعه الله إليه." ويقول أيضاً: "يا عيسى ابن مريم، إنني متوفّيك
ورافعك إليّ، ومطهّرك على الذين كفروا بك، وأجعل الذين اتّبعوك
فوق الذي [sic] كفروا بك.   وأنت ديان العالمين."
قال جماعة من الحضور في المجلس: صدقت والله يا أبا قرّة!
(f .176b) لقد والله افتضع صاحبنا!

Translation: A man of the people of al-Baṣrah said to him: Woe to you,
Abū Qurrah! Isn't Christ your God?

[Abū Qurrah] said: Yes!

[al-Baṣrī] said: And your God dies?

[Abū Qurrah] said: Don't you claim that *al-Masīḥ* died?

[al-Baṣrī] said: Yes.

[Abū Qurrah] said: Then tell me, is *al-Masīḥ* now in heaven, or on
earth, or in the grave?

Then [al-Baṣrī] said: I don't know anything other than that *al-
Masīḥ* has died.

Abū Qurrah said: That is not an answer! Tell me where he is: in
heaven or on earth?

[al-Baṣrī] said: In the Garden (*al-janna*).

Abū Qurrah said to him. Then tell me, when did he ascend to
heaven, or when did he enter the Garden?

[al-Baṣrī] said: *You* tell *me*, is he in heaven?

[Abū Qurrah] said: Yes!

[al-Baṣrī] said: How do you know that?

Abū Qurrah said: From your Book, where it says in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*
[(4):157]: "They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him ... but
God raised him to himself." And it also says [*Āl ʿImrān* (3):55]:[89] "O
ʿIsā son of Mary, I am causing you to die and raising you to myself,
and purifying you from all those who disbelieved in you. And I shall
make those who followed you to be above those who disbelieved in
you. And you are Judge of the worlds."

A group of those present at the session said: "By God you're right,
Abū Qurrah! By God you've put our colleague to shame!)

There are several features in this text which strain credibility.[90] Is

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[88] Word added in the margin.

[89] The use of 3:55 to counter Muslim claims that Jesus did not die is attested in
the discussion of Timothy I with the caliph al-Mahdī (*GCAL*, II, pp. 115ff, #2;
Putman/Samir; Caspar), Putman/Samir, 36 (Arabic), #188; Caspar, p. 141, #30.

[90] Note the errors in the Qurʾān quotations. The quotation of 4:157-58 omits
the famous ولكن شبه لهم, although this will be cited later in the controversy
(and is included in other manuscripts). As for the citation of 3:55, the phrase

it really possible that a ninth-century Christian could have suggested
to a hostile Muslim *mutakallim* that standard Muslim belief was that
Jesus had in fact died, and that the *mutakallim* would have meekly
agreed with him? Is it really possible that a Christian could have
cited al-Nisā' (4):157-58 in *support* of his claim that Jesus had in fact
died and been raised to heaven, and that a group of *mutakallimūn*
would applaud him for his astuteness?[91]

The second text where *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4):157 is cited is the fol-
lowing:[92]

قال الدمشقي: "ما قتلوه ولا صلبوه ولكن شُبِّه لهم. رفعه الله إليه"
لأنه كلمته وروحه.

وقال أبو قرَّة: نحن معقّون في الأمرين! إن كان صلبه تشبُّها
نهو مثل ذلك. وإن كان حقًا فقولنا حقّ. غير أنّا لا نشك فيه وفي

(f. 182b) أنه صُلِب ودُفِن وقام، وقد تيقّنـا قدرته بصعوده إلى السماء.

فدلّـنا بجوهريته أنه إلاه ابن إلاه.

> *Translation:* al-Dimašqī said: "They did not kill him, nor did they
> crucify him, but it appeared so to them. God raised him to himself"
> [*al-Nisā'* (4):157-58] because he was his Word and his Spirit.
>
> Abū Qurrah said: We are right both ways! If his crucifixion was in
> appearance, then he is so [God's word and Spirit?]. And if it was a
> fact, then our doctrine is true. However, we do not doubt in him, and
> in that he was crucified and buried, and that he rose. We have become
> convinced of his power by his ascension into heaven. And thus he indi-
> cated to us in his essence that he is God and Son of God.)

This is closer to the sort of exchange we might expect between Chris-
tians and Muslims, but is still not at all convincing. Not only does
al-Dimašqī's question appear to be artificially formulated, but also
Abū Qurrah's rather obscure response seems to declare victory
where, in fact, nothing had been gained.

We would conclude, then, that both of the passages in this debate-
report that refer to *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4):157 are artificial constructs by

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وأنت ديّان العالمين, replaces the Qur'ānic phrase about *God's* judgement of those
who differ concerning Jesus.

[91] A quick comparison with the discussion between Timothy I and the caliph al-
Mahdī suffices to show how improbable this exchange is. There it is al-Mahdī who
introduces the quotation from *al-Nisā'* (4):157, and when Timothy responds with
Āl 'Imrān (3):55, he insists "He has not died yet, but will die," (Putman/Samir,
36 (Arabic), #189; Caspar, p. 141, #30) which was the standard Muslim under-
standing of the Qur'ānic references to Christ's death.

[92] Paris ar. 70, ff. 182a/4-182b/4.

someone with a rather superficial knowledge of Islam and without any real experience of debate with Muslim scholars. Neither passage is to be counted among the genuine sayings of Theodore Abū Qurrah.

C. *The Scandal of the Cross*

1. *"The Word of the Cross is Folly to Those Who Are Perishing"*

This text, 1 Cor. 1:18, is cited by Abū Qurrah[93] who in several places points out that those outside the faith find Christian teaching, in particular the attribution of fear, shame, pain, dereliction, and death to the incarnate Son of God, to be folly,[94] an abomination,[95] less sensible than the delerium of sleep,[96] and unacceptable to wise and foolish alike.[97] Therefore the image of Christ crucified provokes the mockery[98] and abuse[99] of the unbelievers, who likewise abuse those who remain loyal to Christ crucified, asking them: "Are you not ashamed that *this* is your God?"[100]

2. *Traditional Responses*

The Christian church has always been aware of the scandalous nature of its teaching, and, as we pointing out at the beginning of this essay, has looked for ways to blunt the scandal. One move in the Church's confrontation with Judaism, in particular, was to demonstrate that the entire economy of salvation in Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament.[101] We have already seen how this argument continued to play a role in the Church's confrontation with Islam.[102]

Another move was the gradual transformation of the cross into a sign of *power*, and this too plays a role in the literature now under survey. The two passages that refer to the crucifixion in the *Masāʾil*

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[93] Dick, *Icones*, p. 94 (Ch. 2, #16).

[94] حمق, see previous note.

[95] شنع, Bāšā, p. 147/15.

[96] Dick, *Icones*, p. 92 (Ch. 2, #11).

[97] Dick, *Icones*, p. 94 (Ch. 2, # 16); Dick, *Créateur*, p. 263 (Ch. 16 #23).

[98] تهزُّؤ, Dick, *Icones*, p. 173 (Ch. 16, #17).

[99] تعيير, Dick, *Icones*, p. 214 (Ch. 24 #11).

[100] ما تستحون من أن هذا إلٰهكم؟, Dick, *Icones*, p. 215 (Ch. 24, #19).

[101] See the literature cited in notes 2 and 69 above, and also Daniélou, pp. 294-303, and Stockmeier, pp. 220-28.

[102] See above, section II, B,2.

wa-ajwibah ʿaqliyyah wa-ilāhiyyah of Sinai ar. 434 are of this sort. One mentions the wonders which, according to Mt. 27:51-54, took place upon the death of Jesus,[103] and counts the dead who then rose from their graves alongside "the world, the Gospel, the prophets, the Qurʾān, the demons, and the angels" as witnesses of Christ's signs.[104] The other refers to miracles done in the name of the *Crucified* as evidence of the divine power.[105]

This transformation of the cross into a sign of power was accelerated by the Christianization of the Roman Empire, and the cross's transformation into a symbol of *imperial, military* power. The Church fathers were not unwilling to exploit this aspect of the cross in their apologetics.[106] However, arguments based on Christian political or military might would hardly seem to be useful in the literature produced in the Abbasid empire at the zenith of Abbasid strength. Therefore it is with considerable septicism that we read just such an argument in the report of Abū Qurrah's debate before the caliph al-Maʾmūn:[107]

ونحن نُعظّم الصليب لأسباب كثيرة ظهرت منه. ومعجزة منه أنّه ليس

يخرج ملك لمحاربة عدوّه ومعه علامة الصليب إلا وكانت الغلبة له.

> *Translation:* We magnify the cross for many reasons which have appeared from it. One of its miracles is that there is no king who goes out to battle his foe, and has with him the sign of the cross, but that the victory is his.

This is an argument that may have been effective in fourth-century Constantinople, but that in ninth-century Baghdad would have been not only astonishingly tactless, but quite unbelievable as well. Now, it is not to be denied that some early Arabic Christian texts attribute to the cross almost magical powers in mundane affairs; thus we read in the *Kitāb al-burhān* that the cross is "a protection for

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[103] For the importance of these wonders for early Christian cross-apologetics, see Stockmeier, pp. 45-48.

[104] ...العالم والإنجيل والأنبياء والقرآن والشياطين والأملاك والموتى يوم صلبه يشهدون بآيات المسيح والمجيه, Sinai ar. 434, f. 179a/9-11.

[105] Sinai ar. 434, ff. 178a/15-178b/1. We have already noted Abū Qurrah's report of St. Thomas' raising the dead man in the name of the Crucified, section II, B,3 above.

[106] For Chrysostom, for example, see Stockmeier, pp. 214f.

[107] Paris ar. 70, f. 181b/3-7.

[the Christians] against every ill, a repellent of every evil, a source of strength for every weakness, and a remedy in every affair."[108] But in general, in our literature the cross is a sign of the victory over *Satan*. For example, the author of the *Jāmiᶜ* writes that we brandish the cross before Satan and mock his ignorance, because by preparing the cross for Christ with intent to destroy him, he in fact undid himself.[109]

3. *The Scandal Transformed into Proof*

If our literature is not lacking in traditional approaches for dealing with the scandal of the cross, this does not mean that it is devoid of *new* approaches developed in the confrontation with Islam. Abū Qurrah, in several treatises, argues that the scandalous nature of Christianity's teaching is, paradoxically, an indication of Christianity's truth.[110] For Abū Qurrah, what he calls *qunūᶜ al-ᶜaql al-sūqī*, "the ready persuasion of the mercantile mind,"[111] is a factor which makes the spread of a religion comprehensible on purely psychological or sociological grounds, regardless of its truth or falsehood. Christianity, however, with its paradoxical and scandalous teaching has no appeal whatsoever for the common mind; quite the opposite. But this means that the secret of its remarkable spread lies elsewere.[112]

Abū Qurrah concludes that Christianity's spread cannot be explained on the basis of material, psychological, sociological, or political factors—the reader is left to infer for himself that the case is different with Islam (or Judaism)—and argues that this spread can only be due to the evidentiary miracles performed by the apostles. And once people came to belief on the basis of the miracles, the Holy Spirit, who Abū Qurrah says was poured out upon them *through the*

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[108] وهو حفظاً لهم من كل سوء ودفع لكل شر وتقوية لكل ضعف وصلاح
لكل أمر... , Cachia/Watt, par. 288 (translation altered).
[109] Ch. 18, Question 8 (BL or. 4950, f. 120b/2-10).
[110] The Appendix (Ch. 16) to في وجود الخالق والدين القويم (Dick, *Créateur*, pp. 259-70);في تحقيق الإنجيل وأن كل ما لا يحققه الإنجيل فهو باطل(*GCAL*, II, p. 12, #2; Nasrallah, p. 119, #2, d; edition: Bāšā, pp. 71-75); the first part of
ميمر في تحقيق ناموس موسى المقدس والأنبياء الذين تنبأوا عن المسيح والإنجيل الطاهر
الذي نقله إلى الأمم تلاميذ المسيح المولود من مريم العذراء، وتحقيق الأرثوذكسية
الذي ينسبها الناس إلى الخلكدونية وإبطال كل ملة تنتحل النصرانية سوى هذه الملة
(*GCAL*, II, pp. 11ff, #1; Nasrallah, p. 120, #2, i; edition Bāšā, pp. 140-54).
[111] Bāšā, p. 71/3.
[112] For example, Bāšā, p. 73/5-18.

cross of Christ,[113] led them into the understanding of that which to their unenlightened minds had been strange and scandalous.

The possibility of this transformation of the scandal of Christian teaching into evidence for its truth does not mean that this teaching cannot be a stumbling block also for Christians. Therefore, at the end of one of his treatises, Abū Qurrah prays ''We ask God that he send the Holy Spirit into our hearts that we not be ashamed of the pains which he underwent for us.''[114]

4. *The Cross as Crisis*

If, for Abū Qurrah, the cross of Christ is a stumbling-block, we can also say, with a change of image, that for him it stands over against human beings as a great question mark, a demand for a response which must be Yes or No, faith or rejection, loyalty or shame. Nowhere is this more clearly expressed than in the final and climactic chapter of the treatise on the veneration of icons.[115] At the beginning of this chapter, the paradoxical character of Christian worship is set out: Christians bless (*yamunnūn*) Christ by their prostration to his icon, and especially do they *bless* him when they picture him as *shame*fully crucified (*maṣlūban mafḍūḥan*).[116] These icons of the crucified Christ are what provoke the "outsider" to say: "Woe to you! Are you not ashamed to have that one as your God?" In this the loyalty of the Christians is tested; they should respond, with voices raised: "Yes! That is our saviour, and our hope, and our joy!" Their loyalty is like that of the martyrs, who gloried in the Cross of Christ before kings, and it earns the same reward. On the other hand, to be embarrassed at the icon of the crucified Christ is to lose everything, no matter how much one has suffered otherwise for his sake.[117]

Before the end of the treatise there is an objection:[118]

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[113] Bāšā, p. 75/6-7; p. 98/12-13.

[114] ونسأله أن يقذف في قلوبنا بروح القدس لئلا نستحي من أوجاعه التي لقيها
عنا , Bāšā, p. 90/13-14.

[115] ميمر قاله أنبا ثاوذورس أسقف حرَّان المقدس، وهو أبو قرة، يثبت فيه أن
السجود لصورة المسيح إلا قنا، الذي تجسد من روح القدس ومن مريم العذراء المطهرة
وصور قديسيه واجب على كل نصراني...; *GCAL*, II, pp. 13f, #11; Nasrallah,
pp. 117f, #1; edition: Dick, *Icones*. The final chapter, (Ch. 24) is found at pp. 212-18.

[116] Dick, *Icones*, p. 212 (Ch. 24, #2).

[117] Dick, *Icones*, p. 215 (Ch. 24, #18-23).

[118] Dick, *Icones*, p. 216 (Ch. 24, #26-28).

وإن قال قائل: إنّ البِرّانيّين قد يعيّرونّا بصليب المسيح من غير أن
يرِدوا هذه الصور، فليعلمْ هذا أنّ الداخلين كنائسنا من أولئك ، لو
لم يكن في كنائسنا هذه الصور لكان أكثرهم لا يخطر على قلوبهم
ما قد ذكرنا.
فأمّا الصور، فهي التي تشهّيهم أن يعيّرونا.

Translation: If someone says, "The 'outsiders' may mock us because of the cross of Christ *without* seeing these icons," let that person know concering those ["outsiders"] who enter our churches, that if they do not see these icons in our churches, it would not occur to most of them to react in the way we have mentioned. As for the icons, they are what arouses their desire to mock us.

Remarkably, Abū Qurrah believes that it is right and salutary that "outsiders" mock the Christians for their faith in the crucified Christ, and therefore the icons of the crucifixion are *necessarily* present. They stand in the churches and provoke a crisis. Irresistably, they demand a decision, a Yes or a No. For the "outsider," the usual reaction is one of rejection and mockery, although that is not necessarily the case. Earlier in the same treatise Abū Qurrah tells the story of the blind Jew Ananias, whom the Holy Spirit brought to faith before an image of Christ crucified.[119] For the Christian, the icon with the mockery it provokes provides the acid test of faith, a test which is a participation in the trials of the martyrs, and beyond which lies participation in their reward.

D. *Existence under the Sign of the Cross*

"By my life! All the people of the world have known that the Christians have no sign (*sīmah*) except the cross by which we are known in the world, and by Christ on the day of resurrection..."[120]

Thus does the anonymous author of the apologetic treatise in Sinai ar. 154 remind us that those who do not take offence at Christ crucified take his cross as their *sign*.[121] In what follows we shall take

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[119] Dick, *Icones*, pp. 173f (Ch. 16, #17-22).

[120] لعمري! لقد علم الناس أجمعين من اهل الدنيا أنه ليس للنصارا سيمة إلا الصليب 'فيما نعرف في الدنيا ويوم القيامة عند المسيح إذا جاء يدين الأحياء والأموات بأعمالهم, Sinai ar. 154, f. 140a/12-19. A few lines earlier on the same page we read that the cross is also *Christ's* sign which he will have in his hands when he returns. This connection between the return of Christ and the appearance of his cross developed at a very early date. See Daniélou, pp. 290-94.

[121] Similarly in the *Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān*, Ch. 8, Question 8, BL or. 4950, f. 120a/14, where the word for "sign" is علامة.

a brief look at the cross as the Christians' sign, a sign by which their worship is made distinctive, and a sign under which their lives are to be led.

1. *Worship before the Cross*

Chapter 23 of the *Jāmi' wujūh al-īmān*[122] is a practical guide to Christian prayer and "proper church behaviour" which weaves together detailed "how-to" instruction, pastoral advice, and theological considerations. Included in the contents of this chapter is instruction for crossing oneself before prayer, and for approaching and venerating the cross in church.

As for making the sign of the cross, the author of the *Jāmi'* insists that this be done *whenever* and *wherever* one pray, whether at church or at home.[123] This practice of making the sign of the cross before prayer clearly has its function in preserving and asserting Christian identity in a society where others are praying, but in different ways. One might recall from the story of the neo-martyr 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Najrānī[124] how the young Christian fell in with Muslim raiders, and prayed with them.[125] The author of the *Jāmi'* intends to instill in his readers practices that clearly mark off Christian from Islamic prayer, whether or not performed in a church.

As for Christian veneration of the cross, this had not of course gone unnoticed by Muslims, who asked for its justification. In Chapter 18 of the *Jāmi'* we find its author's response.[126] He gives the standard answers: that we honour that through which we have obtained great benefit, that we honour but do not *worship* the cross, and that Christian veneration of the cross can be no more objectionable than Muslim veneration of the black stone of the Ka'ba.[127] But in addition to these reasons the author of the *Jāmi'* offers something new;[128] that when Christ departed from the believers and ascended

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[122] BL or. 4950, ff. 166b-173b.

[123] BL or. 4950, ff. 167a-b.

[124] *GCAL*, I, pp. 516f; edition: Sidney H. Griffith, "The Arabic Account of 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Najrānī al-Ġassānī," *Le Muséon*, 98 (1985), pp. 331-74.

[125] Griffith, "The Arabic Account," (see previous note) p. 362/6.

[126] Question #8 (BL or. 4950, ff. 120a-b).

[127] BL or. 4950, ff. 120a-b. Compare "Abū Qurrah"'s answer to the same question in Paris ar. 70, ff. 180b-182a.

[128] The passage about the cross as a sign of victory over the Devil, mentioned above, section II, C,2, is also part of the author's response.

into heaven, he left behind with them his cross *ḫalafan minhu,* as a "substitute" for himself.[129]

Returning to Chapter 23 on prayer, we find that this *representative* function of the cross is strongly stressed. Early in the chapter the author tells his readers "that the cross is Christ our Lord in his body,"[130] and that therefore "our prostration before the cross is like our prostration to Christ our Lord."[131] The material cross in the front of the church, therefore, has the same dignity as the Eucharistic elements (Christ's body and blood) or the Gospel (Christ's word).[132] The cross, like the altar upon which the Eucharistic elements are placed and like the Gospel book, *faces* the congregation, thus all the more strongly communicating the reality of Christ's presence to the worshippers (and, therefore, the necessity of behaving with reverence and decorum!).[133]

Since the material cross in the church is an effective sign of Christ, it is a great aid to worship. The author writes:[134]

وينبغي للمومن، اذا قام بين يدي الصليب، أن يلمحه ويشتغل به، فإن
ذلك هو أجمع لفهمه، ويهوي بفكره نحوا المسيح ربّا كأنّه بين يديه مصلوب،
ما دام في صلاته لأن الصليب به كانت هدايتنا ورشدنا، وبه وكون [sic]
ما نرجوا في الآخرة. وبالصليب افتخر أولياء الله وبه كان ظفرهم

Translation: It is necessary for the believer, when he stands before the cross, to behold it and occupy himself with it (which is the most effective way to concentrate his understanding) and to aspire in his thought toward Christ our Lord as though he were crucified before him, as long as he is in prayer. [That is] because it was through the cross that there came our guidance and our rectitude[135] and the existence of that for which we hope in the hereafter. [It was] in the cross that the friends of God boasted, and in it was their triumph.)

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[129] BL or. 4950, f. 120a/10-13.

[130] وأن الصليب هو المسيح ربنا ببدنه, BL or. 4950, f. 168a/6.

[131] فسجودنا قبالة الصليب كسجودنا للمسيح ربنا, BL or. 4950, f. 168a/8-9.

[132] BL or. 4950, f. 170b/5-7.

[133] BL or. 4950, ff. 171b-172a. It is perhaps significant for the question of authorship of the *Jāmiʿ* to note the lack of mention of *icons* here.

[134] BL or. 4950, f. 168b/3-10.

[135] The juxtaposition of هداية and رشد here is reminiscent of Qurʾānic passages such as *al-Jinn* (72):2 or *al-Kahf* (18):24.

2. *Life under the cross*

It is not only while at prayer in the church that one is to occupy oneself with the cross. For the Christian, the whole of one's Christian life, the life that begins with the signing of the cross at baptism,[136] is to be lived under the cross. In what follows we gather together several remarks of Theodore Abū Qurrah.

Christian life is a struggle to live up to the baptismal covenant made between us and God, so that "we do not cast off in commerce with sin that which we have acquired through his pains."[137] This life is sustained by the *Eucharist*; perhaps Abū Qurrah has the Eucharist (*al-qurbān*) in mind when he speaks of our offering (*qarraba*) the pains of Christ to the Father.[138] This life is to be one of the self-denial and long-suffering love which are characteristic of God himself, the call to which can be discerned in Christ's word: "Take up your cross and follow me."[139] And throughout this life we require Christ's guidance and discipline, "so that we may have a share in his kingdom just as he grants us a share in his pains."[140]

It is worth stressing that Abū Qurrah does not regard having "a share in the pains of Christ" as a merely metaphorical way of speaking. We have already seen how he regards the patient bearing of verbal abuse because of one's loyalty to the crucified God as a sharing in the trials of the martyrs. Nor is actual physical suffering out of the picture. In the introduction to his treatise on the veneration of the icons, Abū Qurrah mentions the icons of Christ *and* of the saints "who stood firm in the Holy Spirit, followed in his course, participated in his pains, adorned themselves in patience with the finery of his cross, and became noble leaders of the believers, whose mention spurs them on to imitate them and to win a crown like theirs."[141] In many cases, obviously, the crown of the saints was the crown of martyrdom, the ultimate adornment "with the finery of [Christ's] cross." In the first Abbasid century, as the Arabic

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[136] BL or. 4950, f. 167b/5-8.

[137] لكيلا نلقى ما قد اتّخذنا بأوجاعه تجارةً للخطيئة, Bāšā, p. 90/18. We have read نلقى rather than نلقى.

[138] See above, section II, A,1.

[139] Dick, *Créateur*, p. 244 (Ch. 13, #8).

[140] كيما نشركه في ملكوته كما يُشركنا في أوجاعه, Bāšā, p. 91/1-2.

[141] ...الذين تصلبوا برِدع القدس، فجروا في ميدانه وشاركوه في أوجاعه، وتزينوا صبرا بحلية صليبه، وصاروا ائمة كراما للمؤمنين، ذكرهم يهيجهم إلى الإقتداء بهم والفوز بمثل إكليلهم, Dick, *Icones*, pp. 87f (Ch. 1, #2).

accounts of Anṭūniyūs Ruwaḥ[142] or ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Najrānī[143] indicate, winning the crown of physical martyrdom was not merely a communal memory from the distant past. As the author of the *Jāmiʿ* points out, Christ's call to bear one's cross is a call to be prepared to endure crucifixion and death for his sake.[144]

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is to be hoped that this quick survey has demonstrated something of the *complexity* of discourse concerning the cross of Christ in the early Arabic Melkite apologies, and at once its *continuity* with the cross-discourse of the Fathers[145] *and* the *originality* of its presentation in the new apologetic situation. At several points in this essay we have noted how this material has been shaped in the hope of making it accessible to Muslims. At the same time we have seen how our authors use this material to exhort their Christian readers to unbending steadfastness of faith.

In the case of Theodore Abū Qurrah, it is not at all inaccurate to speak of his work as an apologetic "theology of the cross". His argument for the necessity of divine redemptive suffering stands at the very heart of his system. The paradox of the cross—the paradox that *God died*, however carefully that phrase is construed—is vividly present throughout his writings. Especially in the treatise on the icons, Abū Qurrah presents Christ crucified as *the* great stumbling-block, the point at which one stands or falls, at which one confesses or rejects the faith of the Church. Abū Qurrah's response to the challenges confronting his Church brought on by the rapid Arabization and Islamicization of Syro-Palestinian culture in the first Abbasid century is to assert the particularity of the Christian faith precisely at this scandalous point: the shameful death of the one confessed as Lord and God.

We have seen that the cross of Christ also plays an important role in the *Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān*. This work, however, chooses a different

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[142] *GCAL*, I, p. 524; Nasrallah, pp. 165f; edition: Ignace Dick, "La passion arabe de S. Antoine Ruwaḥ, néo-martyr de Damas (+ 25 déc. 799)," *Le Muséon*, 74 (1961), pp. 109-33.

[143] See note 24 above. For similar literature, see Nasrallah, pp. 154-68.

[144] *Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān*, Ch. 17, Question 10, BL or, 4950, f. 102a/5-6.

[145] The references to patristic material in the footnotes, though inadequate and incomplete, should indicate this.

point at which to focus its assertion of Christian particularity: the doctrinal complex of Trinity and incarnation, as is clear from the work's full title, "Summation of the aspects of the faith in the trinity of God, and the incarnation of God the Word from the pure virgin Mary."[146] This difference in emphasis between the works of Abū Qurrah and the *Jāmi*ᶜ corresponds to the differing kinds of offence to Muslims' sensibilities that we noted at the beginning of this essay, offence caused by the cross on the one hand, and offence caused by the doctrines of Trinity and incarnation on the other. Therefore we may say that between Abū Qurra's work and the *Jāmi*ᶜ *wujūh al-īmān*, ninth-century Arabic-speaking Melkites had a comprehensive body of apologetics concerning those things that Muslims found most scandalous about Christian teaching and practice.[147] And between the two, they also had a firm exhortation to resist any temptation to be ashamed of the cross, upon which died the one who must unwaveringly be confessed as God.[148]

ABBREVIATIONS

Bāšā

Quṣṭantīn Bāšā, *Mayāmir Tāwudūrus Abī Qurrah usquf Ḥarrān*, Beirut: 1904.

Cachia/Watt

Pierre Cachia (ed.) and W. Montgomery Watt (trans.), *Eutychius of Alexandria: The Book of the Demonstration (Kitāb al-Burhān)*, 2 parts (coll. CSCO vols.

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[146] جامع وجوه الإيمان بتثليث وحدانية الله وتأنس الله الكلمة من الطاهرة العذرى مريم, BL 4950, f. 2a/10-11. Griffith has discussed the doctrinal content of the work in several articles, most recently: Sidney H. Griffith, "The First Christian *Summa Theologiae* in Arabic: Christian *Kalām* in Ninth-Century Palestine," in Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (eds.), *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries* (coll. Papers in Medieval Studies 9), Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990, pp. 15-31.

[147] It comes as no surprise that the oldest copies we possess of Abū Qurrah's treatise on the icons and the *Jāmi*ᶜ *wujūh al-īmān* are to be found together in the same manuscript, British Library oriental manuscript 4950.

192-93, 209-10 = ar. t. 20-23), Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1960-61. (References will be made to *paragraph* number.)

Caspar

Robert Caspar, "Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le catholicos Timothée I et le calife al-Mahdī (IIe/VIIIe siècle) 'Mohammed a suivi la voie des prophètes', *Islamochristiana*, 3 (1977), pp. 107-75.

Daniélou

Jean Daniélou, '*Théologie du Judéo-christianisme*' (coll. Bibliothèque de Théologie, Histoire des Doctrines Chrétiennes avant Nicée I), Paris: Desclée & Cie, Éditeurs, 1958, pp. 290-315.

Dick, *Créateur*

Ignace Dick, *Théodore Abuqurra: Traité de l'existence du Créateur et de la vraie religion: Introduction et texte critique* (coll. Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien 3), Jounieh: Librairie Saint-Paul, 1982.

Dick, *Icones*

Ignace Dick, *Théodore Abuqurra: Traité du culte des icones: Introduction et texte critique* (coll. Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien 10), Zouk Mikhaël, Lebanon: Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien, 1986.

GCAL

Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 5 vols. (coll. Studi e Testi 118, 133, 146, 147, 172), Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944-53.

Griffith, *Theology*

Sidney H. Griffith, *The Controversial Theology of Theodore Abu Qurrah (c. 750 – c. 820 A.D.): A Methodological, Comparative Study in Christian Arabic Literature*, Ann Arbor, Mi.: University Microfilms International, no. 78-19874, 1978.

Maʿlūf

Lūwīs Maʿlūf, "Aqdam al-Maḥṭūṭāt al-Naṣrāniyyah al-ʿArabiyyah," *al-Mašriq*, 6 (1903), pp. 1011-23.

Nasrallah

Joseph Nasrallah, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du Ve au XXe siècle*, Vol. II, tome 2, 750-Xe X., Louvain: Peeters and Paris: chez l'auteur, 1988.

P.G.

J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series Graeca, 161 vols., Petit Montrouge: 1857-66.

Putman/Samir

Hans Putman, *L'Église et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780-823)* (coll. Recherches publiées sous la direction de l'Institut de Lettres Orientales, Beirut, Nouvelle Série, B. Orient Chrétien, 3) Beirut: Dar el-Machreq Éditeurs, 1975. (The Arabic text was edited by Samir Khalil.)

Stockmeier

Peter Stockmeier, *Theologie und Kult des Kreuzes bei Johannes Chrysostomus: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Kreuzes im 4. Jahrundert* (coll. Trierer Theologischen Studien, Band 18), Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1966.

THE ROLE OF JESUS IN INTRA-MUSLIM POLEMICS OF THE FIRST TWO ISLAMIC CENTURIES

Tarif Khalidi

It is all too often the case that when we reflect upon the role of Jesus in Arabic Islamic literature, we see him primarily as a figure in Muslim-Christian polemics where, in his Qur'anic or Ḥadīt guise, he is opposed by the Muslims to the Jesus of the various Christian communities. My present topic is less well known. It concerns the Jesus who appears in Islamic pietistic literature as a figure not in Christian-Muslim but in intra-Muslim polemics, where he played a role of considerable importance in a number of Muslim controversies of the first and second centuries of Islam. Furthermore, Christian-Muslim polemics involved, on either side, a relatively small number of scholars and theologians. The popular Muslim Jesus, on the other hand, was the Jesus whose stories and sayings were enshrined in numerous works of *adab*, piety, *zuhd*, *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*' and Sufism. Here, and not in polemics, was the place where the great majority of Muslims encountered Jesus, apart, of course, from their encounter of him in his circumscribed and essentially polemical appearance in the Qur'an or essentially apocalyptic appearance in Ḥadīt.

These sayings and stories have had an almost uninterrupted existence in Islamic literature. Four collections, three published and one (my own) unpublished, of this corpus exist, but fundamental questions remain that have to do with their size, nature and ultimate significance.[1] In the first place, even the exact total of these stories and

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[1] The three published collections are (i) M Asin et Palacios, "Logia et Agrapha Domini Jesu apud Moslemicos Scriptores, asceticos praesertim, usitata", *Patrologia Orientalis*, xiii (1919), pp. 335-431; xix (1926), pp. 531-624; (ii) Michel al-Hayik, *al-Masīḥ fī al-Islām* (Beirut: n.p., 1961); (iii) Ḥannā Manṣūr, "Aqwāl al-Sayyid al-Masīḥ ʿind al-kuttāb al-muslimīn al-aqdamīn," *al-Masarrah*, 1976, pp. 45-51, 115-122, 231-239, 356-364; 1977, pp. 107-113; 1978, pp. 45-53, 119-123, 221-225, 343-346, 427-432, 525-528, 608-611.

sayings is not known and, given the massive quantity of Islamic literature that still needs to be examined, may not be known for decades. No attempt has been made to cross-reference even the material already published. Hence, a figure of around five hundred is all that one can hazard at present. In the second place, while some attempts have been made to trace the origins of these sayings and stories back to Jewish, Gospel/apocryphal and early Christian writings—and these three origins seem to account for a sizeable proportion—many still remain uninvestigated.[2] In the third place, no attempt at all has been made to explore the *isnāds* of this material, an essential prerequisite for any understanding of their provenance and their circulation in Islamic society. Finally, little or no attempt has been made to scan them *in toto* in order to determine their polemical or doctrinal significance in the Islamic context. Only tentative answers can be offered here to some of these complex and obscure questions. Of the four problems I have outlined, namely size, origin, *isnād* and polemical/doctrinal significance, my attention will be focused mainly on the last two, viz. the *isnād* and significance of this corpus. I shall bypass any discussion of the Jesus of the Qurʾan and the Ḥadīt because, while the Qurʾanic and Ḥadīt images may be, broadly speaking, termed the Islamic prototype of Jesus, neither image displays the wide polemical and doctrinal spectrum of the Jesus of Islamic literature to be analyzed here.

I shall first of all posit the view that the emergence of the literary Jesus can best be seen within a certain intellectual framework in which, broadly speaking, periods of apocalyptic intensity were followed by the imposition of conformity to communal or political ideals. Where the first two centuries of Islam are concerned, my argument is that the early apocalyptic mood which accompanied the first conquests and civil wars was followed by Umayyad societal conformism. The coming of the Abbasids brought another mood of apocalyptic intensity which was in turn followed by Abbasid societal conformism. Evidence is mounting that the *fitan* and *malāḥim* genre, where Jesus is a prominent figure, was probably among the very

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[2] A good summary of these attempts is in W.M. Thackston, Jr., transl. *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978); p. 354, n. 119. I have not seen D. Wismer, *The Islamic Jesus, An Annotated Bibliography of Sources in English and French* (New York – London: Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, 58, 1977).

earliest strata of Ḥadīṯ.[3] To this must be added recent research on some of the earliest Umayyad *ġulāt* groups whose strong chiliasm included the figure of Jesus as a central actor in the expected drama of the "Hour".[4] But states which seek to consolidate their dominions pursue, generally speaking, a vision of a legitimizing past rather than that of an on-rushing future. In the case of the Umayyads and Abbasids, the purveyors of this legitimizing past were the corps of *fuqahāʾ* and *ʿulamāʾ* while the apocalyptic and other moods were generally purveyed by the *quṣṣāṣ* and *qurrāʾ*. In the ensuing tension between these two visions, the lines between the purveyors of each were also more tightly drawn.[5] The *quṣṣāṣ* and *qurrāʾ* were either domesticated, i.e. taken into custody by the legitimizing Establishment,[6] where Jesus eventually became an irrelevant and

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[3] I have in mind especially the recent research of Wilfred Madelung and Lawrence Conrad: see W. Madelung, "The Sufyani between tradition and history," *Studia Islamica*, 63 (1986), pp. 5-48; idem, "Apocalyptic prophecies in Hims in the Umayyad Age," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 31 (1986), pp. 141-185; Lawrence I. Conrad, "Apocalyptic Tradition and Early Islamic History," paper presented at the Seminar on Early Islamic historiography, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 28 January, 1985. Professor Madelung, who very kindly read this paper and made pertinent comments, to be acknowledged below in some footnotes, argued in a letter to me dated June 11, 1990, that the apocalyptic mood continued unabated throughout the Umayyad period and petered out from the caliphate of al-Maʾmūn. My own view is that while this may have been so in theory, this mood tended in fact to intensify or recede in reaction to political developments.

[4] See W.F. Tucker, "Abū Manṣūr al-ʿIjlī and the Manṣūriyya," *Der Islam*, 54 (1977), pp. 66-76. For Jesus in early Ismaʿīlī views, see Ṭābit ibn Sinān et al. *Tārīkh akhbār al-qarāmiṭah* ed. Suhay I. Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Amānah, 1971), p. 10.

[5] See the biographies of some of these early, government-linked, experts in al-Dahabī, *Tarājim rijāl rawā Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq . . . ʿanhum*, ed August Fischer (Leiden: Brill, 1890) and Abū Zurʿah, *Tārīkh*, ed. Šukrallāh al-Qawājānī (Damascus: n.p., 1980), 1, pp. 198ff. The antipathy between the two visions can be seen, e.g., in the report concerning Sufyān al-Ṯawrī's (d. 161/778) antipathy to *quṣṣāṣ* in Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-Maʿrifah* (Haidarabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif, 1952), p. 112, confirmed in Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1958), 7, p. 281. See also, for a similar sentiment, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, n.d.), 1, p. 15, as well as other reports collected in Muḥammad ʿAjjāj al-Ḥaṭīb, *al-Sunnah qabl al-tadwīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1971), pp. 210-213, and in G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 11, n. 7 and p. 162. See also the comments on *quṣṣāṣ* in Raif G. Khoury, "Un écrit inédit attribué à Wahb b. Munabbih," *Al-Machriq*, 64 (1970), pp. 600-604 and in G.H.A. Juynboll, "On the Origins of Arabic Prose," *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. G.H.A. Juynboll (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), pp. 165ff.

[6] See the reports in Abū Zurʿah, *Tārīkh*, 1, p. 351 (no. 723, repeated in no. 1701) and 1, p. 202 (no. 156) where the Caliphs al-Walīd I and ʿUmar II attempt the imposition of uniformity. The "official" *quṣṣāṣ* seem to have been well regarded

circumscribed apocalyptic figure in canonical Ḥadīt; or else they turned to various forms of opposition directed against societal injustice,[7] where Jesus became a relevant moral and political force. Another way of putting it would be to say that the first and second moods of apocalyptic intensity produced a Jesus who was either incorporated eventually as an apocalyptic symbol into canonical Ḥadīt or else became the literary Jesus of intra-Muslim polemics. But more on this later.

I shall now move to a closer examination of the origins of this literary Jesus in his Islamic environment. This is now made easier by the recent edition and publication of several second- and third-century texts which bring us nearer than before to the period of the genesis of the literary Jesus and the atmosphere in which he grew.[8] For while the three published collections derive the bulk of these sayings from 4th-6th century A.H./10th-12th century A.D. authors, where *isnād*s are often scanty, these early texts now appearing frequently preserve the original *isnād*s of the literary Jesus, thus enabling us to form a more accurate idea of his early Islamic habitat. Based upon

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right until the end of the Umayyad period: see Abū Zurʿah, *Tārīkh*, 1, p. 607 (no. 1724). The office of *qāṣṣ* seems to have been sometimes combined with that of *qāḍī*: see Abū Zurʿah, *Tārīkh*, 1, p. 200 (nos. 146-148), but not without mounting tension. In general, see the articles "Ḳurrāʾ" and "Ḳuṣṣāṣ" in *EI²*.

[7] See, especially, Martin Hinds, "Kufan Political Alignments and their background in the mid-seventh century A.D." *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2 (1971), pp. 346-367, where many *qurrāʾ* became Ḥārijite as economic tensions grew in Kufa. See also the valuable information in Ibn al-Jawzī, *K. al-quṣṣāṣ waʾl-mudakkirīn*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṣabbāġ (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islamī, 1983), pp. 176f. and p. 346 and *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisāʾi*, pp. xi-xxxiv, *passim*. Interesting references to the *quṣṣāṣ* of Kufa may also be found in Yūsuf Ḥulayf, *Ḥayāt al-Shiʿr fī al-Kūfah ilā nihāyat al-qarn al-thānī liʾl-hijrah* (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, 1968).

[8] Principally: Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Earliest Extant Work on the Ḥadith: Sahifat Hammam ibn Munabbih* (Paris: Publications of Centre Culturel Islamique, 1961); ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Mubārak, *K. al-Zuhd waʾl-Raqāʾiq*, ed. Ḥabib al-Raḥmān al-Aʿẓamī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1966[?]); Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-ʿIlal wa-maʿrifat al-rijāl*, ed. Waṣiyyallāh ʿAbbās (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islamī, 1988), idem, *K. al-zuhd*, ed. Muḥammad Zaġlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1988); idem, *K. al-waraʿ*, ed. Muḥammad Zaġlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1988); Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *K. al-ṣamt wa-ādāb al-lisān*, ed. Najm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ḥalaf (Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islamī, 1986); idem, *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil* (Beirut: Dār al-Nadwah al-Islāmiyyah, 1988); idem, *K. al-Ihwān*, ed. Muṣtafa ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1988); Abū Ḥaytamah al-Nasāʾī, *K. al-ʿilm*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islamī, 1983); Abū Rifāʿah ʿUmārah ibn Waṭīmah al-Fārisī, *K. badʾ al-halq wa qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, ed. Raif Georges Khoury (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1978).

these early texts, a number of general observations can now be made about their earliest transmitters or narrators.

The great majority of these early Jesus sayings, approximately eighty-eight in number, are ascribed to personalities who died between the late first and the late second centuries, with the death dates of many of them falling in the middle decades of the second century. The traditional generational classification of these personalities would be that of Successors (*tābiʿūn*) or Successors of Successors (*tābiʿū al-tābiʿīn*). In their great majority the sayings are narrated by them on their own authority prefaced with such phrases as "We were told" (*uḫbirnā*) or "It came to our knowledge" (*waṣalanā*) and so forth, without further ascription to any Companion, from whom Muhammadan Ḥadīṯ would normally be derived. If any Companion at all is cited, it is Abū Hurayrah or Ibn ʿAbbās, and the greatest single contributor of these sayings is, as is well known, Wahb ibn Munabbih.[9] But none of these figures, if investigated, will shed much light on the true polemical home of the literary Jesus since the first two, Abū Hurayrah and Ibn ʿAbbas, are statistically insignificant as transmitters while the second, Wahb, stands near the very beginning of this tradition, indeed *is* this tradition of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* and is thus shared by *all* the cultural zones of the early Islamic empire.

On the other hand, my contention here is that Iraq, more particularly Kufa, was in all likelihood the original home of the literary Jesus. To begin with, some of the earliest narrators are Kufan and antedate Wahb (d.c. 110/728), e.g. Ḥaytamah ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān (d.c. 80/699), Sālim ibn Abī al-Jaʿd (d. 97/715) and ʿĀmir al-Šaʿbī (d. 103/721). These Kufan founding fathers of the tradition were followed by other personalities who were either Kufan or closely associated with Kufan circles, such as Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah (d. 198/814), Muḥammad ibn Sūqah (d. c. 135/752), al-Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ (d. 187/803), Hilāl ibn Yasāf (d. mid 2nd/8th), Juwaybir ibn Šabramah (d. 140-150/757-767), Mālik ibn Miġwal (d. 159/775-6), Jaʿfar ibn Burqān (d. 154/771) and ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797). Basra is represented by Qatādah (d. 117/735), Mālik ibn Dīnār (d.c. 130/747-8), Hišām al-Dastawāʾī (d. 153/770) and Ṯābit

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[9] On him, see Raif Georges Khoury, *Wahb b. Munabbih* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1972). The question of his qadarism and then later recantation may, however, be relevant to my argument later on: see infra, n. 17 and Khoury, *Wahb*, pp. 270ff.

al-Bunānī (d. 127/744-5). Mecca is represented by Wuhayb ibn Abī al-Ward (d. 153/770), Medina by Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), Syria by Saʿīd ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 167/783) and Egypt by ʿUbaydallāh ibn Abī Jaʿfar (d. 135/752). This is not an exhaustive list (I counted a total of forty-three narrators) but it does include most of the major narrators, especially those who transmitted Jesus sayings on their own authority. Many of them are described as *quṣṣāṣ* or *qurrāʾ* and almost all are also described as *zuhhād* and *ʿubbād* and are included in later biographical dictionaries of pious men, primarily Abū Nuʿaym's *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ* and Ibn al-Jawzī's *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah*. Almost all are also authors of short moral epigrams or sermons and many relate *Ḥadīt qudsī* on their own authority.[10]

The case for a primarily Kufan origin can, I think, be buttressed further if one first examines the literary Jesus closely for polemical content and then attempts to show how these polemics reflected the moral and political orientation of the *quṣṣāṣ* and *qurrāʾ* who were the major purveyors of this tradition.

The doctrinal polemics of the first two centuries of Islam must always be approached with caution. It would be dangerous, to begin with, to read 3rd and 4th century theological schools back to the first two centuries or to take literally the rigid classifications of later heresiographers as being an accurate picture of early moods.[11] In

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[10] On the origins and development of *hadīt qudsī*, see William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977). Some of the more pertinent references to these transmitters are as follows: for Sālim ibn Abī al-Jaʿd, Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahḏīb al-Tahḏīb* (Haydarabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif, 1325-27 A.H.), 3, pp. 432f (described as *tiqah*); for Ḥaytamah, Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ramaḍān and Saʿīd al-Laḥḥām (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1989) 3, pp. 59f (friend of the poor; narrator of *hadīt qudsī*); for Sufyān, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah*, 2, pp. 154-158 (narrates Jesus-like sayings); for al-Fuḍayl, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah*, 2, pp. 159-164 (friend of Sufyān; *ʿābid, zāhid*; narrates Jesus-like sayings); for Mālik ibn Miġwal, *Tahḏīb*, 10, p. 23 (described as *ʿābid*); for Jaʿfar ibn Burqān, *Tahḏīb*, 2, pp. 84ff; for ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Mubārak, see the introduction to his *K. al-zuhd*, n. 8, above; for Mālik ibn Dīnār, Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ* (Cairo, 1932-38), 2, pp. 357-389 (relates many Jesus and Jesus-like, as well as anti-*qurrāʾ* sayings); for Ṭabit, see *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah*, 3, pp. 175ff (described as *qāṣṣ*, weeper, *mudakkir*, but a trustworthy *muḥaddit*); for Wuhayb, see *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, 8, pp. 140-161 (described as often weeping and fainting and narrates Jesus sayings similar to his own as well as *hadīt qudsī*; Sufyān and Fuḍayl narrate from him; narrates anti-*ʿulamāʾ hadīts*); for Juwaybir, see Abū Rifāʿah, *K. badʾ al-ḥalq*, pp. 98f. (of French text). There is much information on other transmitters in Abū Rifāʿah, *K. badʾ al-ḥalq*, pp. 73-130 (of French text).

[11] See, especially, Josef van Ess, "Early Development of Kalam" in: G.H.A. Juynboll, ed. *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, pp. 109-123.

fact, the word "mood" is probably the most accurate characterisation of intra-Muslim doctrinal polemics of the first two centuries. If this is kept in mind, then I think it would be fair to describe the overall mood of the literary Jesus as consistent with *irjāᶜ*, anti-*qadarī* and possibly anti-*Ḫārijī* as well. A great deal of documentation would of course be needed to substantiate this view and the literary Jesus, as an entire corpus, and somewhat like the Muḥammadan Ḥadīt, was never the exclusive preserve of any one mood, party or sect. In addition, the early figures who related the Jesus sayings on their own authority may be expected to have exercised subtlety in ascribing their own views to Jesus, thus making it difficult to pinpoint the original doctrinal or polemical intention.

Given these caveats, one can proceed to a few outstanding polemical theses. In the first place, it may be observed that a general atmosphere of *zuhd* tended to predispose these narrators to renunciation of the world, to leave the final computation of human sins to God and to accept a kind of division of labour whereby kings would be left to rule while the pious are left with divine wisdom.[12] It also meant that the anger of these early *zuḥhād*, as expressed in Jesus' sayings, was vented in this period largely against their own kind, specifically those of their own number (*fuqahāʾ*, *ᶜulamāʾ*, *quḍāt*, *qurrāʾ*, *quṣṣāṣ*) who had, so to speak, "betrayed" their mission to the community in favour of royal service.[13] An attitude of sadness prevails

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[12] See, e.g., Ibn al-Mubārak, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 96, no. 284 ("As kings have left you *ḥikmah*, so you leave the affairs of this world to them"), related by Wuhayb [cf. Abū Rifāᶜah, *K. badʾ al-ḫalq*, p. 337, ll. 14-16: "As for kings, if you do not contend against them they will not contend against you in your religious belief", related by Sālim ibn Abī al-Jaᶜd.] Themes of renunciation of the world are too numerous to cite. On leaving the fate of sinners to God, see Hamidullah, *The Earliest Extant Work of the Hadith*, p. 78, no. 41 ("Jesus sees a man stealing, who swears he is not, and says: 'I believe God and falsify my eye'"), related by Hammām ibn Munabbih. See also such *ḥadīts* as in Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 122, no. 344 (Jesus on stoning the adulterer: "Let no man stone him who has done what he did") from Sufyān from Abū al-Hudayl; also Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 93, no. 301 ("If God wishes to extend his mercy, he does so"), related by Wahb, and further, p. 93, no. 302, p. 94, no. 307, p. 95, no. 311; Abū Rifāᶜāh, *K. badʾ al-ḫalq*, p. 339, ll. 14-16 ("Do you not see how God does not deny men mercy because of their sins?") related by Sālim ibn Abī al-Jaᶜd.

[13] Here, too, numerous references may be cited, e.g.: Ibn al-Mubārak, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 507, no. 1447 ("Do not make your living from the book of God"), related by ᶜAbd al-Jabbār ibn ᶜUbaydallāh ibn Sulaymān, on whom see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdīb*, 12, pp. 152f; p. 520, no. 1474 ("The *ᶜālim* in error is the cause of greatest *fitnah*"), related by ᶜUbaydallāh ibn Abī Jaᶜfar, on whom see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdīb*, 5, pp. 176f; Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-ᶜilal*, 3, p. 172, no. 4767 ("Jesus will sit on the pulpits of Jerusa-

towards the building of mansions and palaces which may, historically speaking, be a reference to Umayyad and Abbasid extravagance and reflect the sense of neglect felt in Kufa and Basra.[14]

Opposition to Shiʿite chiliasm is another theme. Here, the expectation of the Mahdi with whom Jesus stands in intimate eschatological dependence, was, as is well known, a central doctrine of some *ġulāt* groups. The literary Jesus, on the other hand, asks Jibrāʾīl about when the "Hour" is supposed to come, and whenever the "Hour" is mentioned in his presence he cries out aloud and says, "It is not fit for the son of Maryam to remain silent when the Hour is mentioned in his presence".[15] A critique of his apocalyptic role is implied here, marking the beginning of a process which later resulted in a Sunnite denial of any Mahdi except Jesus[16] who, later still, becomes the distant eschatological figure of canonical Ḥadīt.

Anti-*qadarī* and anti-*Ḫārijī* polemic is perhaps to be approached with even more caution. Whatever else qadarism may have implied

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lem as a fair judge for twenty years"), related by Wahb; idem, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 121, no. 390 ("Woe to you, evil scholars who take salaries and abandon good works"), related by Hishām al-Dastawāʾī; idem, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 144, no. 478 ("Jesus said to the *qurrāʾ*: Salt of the earth, do not become corrupt") related by Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah who himself attacks *qurrāʾ al-mulūk* in Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-waraʾ*, p. 77, no. 346; Abū Rifāʿah, *K. badʾ al-ḫalq*, pp. 335f. ("The most hateful of *ʿulamāʾ* and *qurrāʾ* to God are those who like to occupy the leading places in gatherings...their punishment shall be doubled") related by Saʿīd ibn ʿAtiyyah al-Saʿdī and ʿAbdallāh ibn Ziyād ibn Samʿān, on whom see Abū Rifāʿah, *K. badʾ al-ḫalq*, pp. 105 ff. (of French text): cf. a saying of Fuḍayl through Sufyān ("An ignorant man will be forgiven seventy times before a *ʿālim* is forgiven once") in: Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-waraʾ*, p. 21 no. 62. See, further, Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 98, no. 327; idem, *K. al-ʿilal*, 3, p. 351, no. 5551; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1978), 1, pp. 176, 190; 2, p. 5.

14 On sumptuous buildings, see Ibn al-Mubārak, *K. al-zuhd,* p. 225, no. 640 and p. 198, no. 563 and Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 146, no. 486.

15 Ibn al-Mubārak, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 77, nos. 228 and 229.

16 See Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ*, 1, p. 155 and cf. A.J. Wensinck *et al.*, *Concordance et Indices* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 6, p. 80 (referring to Ibn Mājjah). Michel al-Hayik, *al-Masīḥ fī al-Islām*, pp. 243-278 collects materials on the coming of Jesus in the last days from Ḥadīt and later, mostly Sufi, sources and asserts (p. 242) that implied in these traditions is Abbasid-inspired anti-Fatimid polemic. My view is that "Jesus as the only Mahdi" tradition is probably earlier: cf. the strange saying of Wahb: "A voice called from heaven: 'Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā is the lord of all who are of woman born and Jirjīs is the lord of martyrs'" (Ibn Ḥanbal, *K al-zuhd*, p. 122, no. 396). Professor Madelung's view is that I give undue importance to the Šīʿite *ġulāt* groups in making Jesus an eschatological figure in Islam. My own view is that the *political* role assigned to Jesus by these groups was more intense than any Sunnite belief in his role.

as regards the question of responsibility for sins, and whether they are ascribable to God or man, the qadarites were seen by the Umayyads as a potentially dangerous opposition movement which held them accountable for their political misdeeds. Here, I think, the literary Jesus throws his authority behind a distinctly individual rather than public or political accountability. Sins (*ma'āṣī*) are hateful, but the remedy is not public agitation but private devotion. Leaving kings alone, as we saw above, would fortify this mood. Then again, the prevailing tone of withdrawal from the world coupled with sayings which depict Jesus as being totally dependent on God for his *rizq*, a critical word in *qadarī* polemics, and unable to do anything to advance his own cause, are anti-qadarite in their general thrust.[17]

A case can similarly be made for an anti-*Ḥārijī* spirit in the literary Jesus. If we posit Azraqite *Ḥārijī* violence as the major *Ḥārijī* current of the mid-Umayyad period, then the emphasis in these sayings on God's infinite mercy and the injunction not to judge sinners or to adopt an attitude of righteous superiority towards them, or harden the heart against them, may well be directed against Ḥārijism, especially when one adds to this the frequent admonitions to withdraw from worldly affairs.[18]

Ibn Saʿd records the following Ḥadit from ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAmr transmitted, interestingly enough, by Sālim ibn Abī al-Jaʿd: "The happiest people with the Mahdi are the Kufans".[19] Whether or not

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[17] The most important saying as regards *qadar* is in Abū Rifāʿah, *K. badʾ al-Ḥalq*, p. 293, ll. 14f ("Jesus said 'Qadar is a mystery [*sirr*] of God; therefore do not ask about the mystery of God'"), related by Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah from ʿAmr ibn Ṭāwūs from Abū Hurayrah from the Prophet; see also the discussion of this problem by the editor of this work, pp. 167ff (of the French text). On the attitude to *ma'āṣī*, see, e.g., Ibn al-Mubārak, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 121, no. 355 and on *rizq*, p. 48, no. 150 and cf. van Ess, "Early Development of the Kalam", p. 115. On the helplessness of Jesus, see Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-zuhd*, pp. 146f, nos. 489 and 490, related by Jaʿfar ibn Burqān. On Wahb and *qadar*, see *Tahdīb*, 11, p. 168, where it is said that he recanted his *qadarī* views after having read "more then seventy" prophetic books!

[18] In addition to the references given in n. 12, above, see, e.g. Ibn al-Mubārak, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 44, no. 135 ("The hard heart is far from God... do not regard the sins of men as though your are gods [*arbāb*] but regard them as though you were servants [ʿabīd]") narrated by Mālik ibn Anas. See also Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-zuhd*, p. 124, no. 402 where ʿAbdallāh ibn 'Umar states "God loves the strangers [*ġurabāʾ*] most of all... They are those who escape with their religion intact [*al-farrārūn bi-dīnihim*]. They shall be joined to ʿĪsā ibn Maryam on the day of resurrection".

[19] Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 6, p. 10. Professor Madelung believes that this *hadit* is not

this is a veiled critique of Shiᶜite chiliasm, it does in my view fortify the case for a primarily Kufan and secondarily Basran origin of the literary Jesus. Kufa was an early and important centre for groups known as *qurrāʾ* and *quṣṣāṣ*. But Kufa also lay in a zone of ancient Christian influence and in the first two Islamic centuries, Islam and Christianity were undoubtedly far more transparent to each other than they were to become later on.[20] Kufa was also home to groups called *ᶜubbād, zuhhād, rabbāniyyūn, bakkāʾūn* and *tawwābūn*. The very frequent instances where Jesus' sayings are also ascribed directly to the Kufan narrators themselves makes this transparency all the more visible.[21] Although it is not easy to define the *qurrāʾ* and *quṣṣāṣ* as distinct functional groups in this period, their links with the *zuhhād* and *ᶜubbād* are clear.[22] Jesus as a figure in early Islamic polemics most probably originated among these groups.

But perhaps one can be even more specific. Economic and political developments helped to break up these groups into three broad divisions: those who made their peace with the government of the day, however reluctantly; those who went into active opposition, and a large group in the middle who remained, on the whole, politically neutral. The *quṣṣāṣ* and *qurrāʾ* who joined the *Hawārij* or various revolutionary Shiᶜite groups did so partly at least because of the deteriorating socio-economic status.[23] On the other hand, mounting

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a veiled critique of Šīᶜite chiliasm but meant to counter Syrian apocalyptic traditions which threatened Kufa with destruction and that the Kufans evidently reacted by claiming a special relationship with the Mahdī.

[20] It is odd that the literary Jesus was not used by Christians in contra-Muslim polemic in connection with the *taḥrīf* controversies, i.e. that it was the *Muslims* who were guilty of *taḥrīf*, since so much of the literary Jesus is non-Gospel.

[21] It would not, I think, be an exaggeration to say that Jesus was in fact a psychological *alter ego* to those "weepers" and "fainters" among the *zuhhād* of the first two centuries of whom we hear so much in Ibn Saᶜd, *Tabaqāt,* vol. 6, in Abū Nuᶜaym's *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, and Ibn al-Jawzī's *Ṣifat al-ṣafwah,* e.g. Fuḍayl, Wuhayb, Ṭābit and others. Jesus' sayings, both literary and gospel, ascribed directly to Kufan and other narrators are very numerous: see, e.g., Abū Nuᶜaym, *Ḥilyat,* 8, pp. 142, 146 (Wuhayb); Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat,* 2, p. 160 (Fuḍayl) and 2, p. 157 (Sufyān); Abū Nuᶜaym, *Ḥilyat,* 2, pp. 358, 359 and cf. pp. 369, 380 and cf. p. 386 (Mālik ibn Dīnār); Ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-zuhd,* p. 215, no. 799 (Sufyān says that none was more intent on imitating Jesus than Abū Ḏarr); p. 455, no. 1910 (Sufyān); p. 516, no. 2189 (Wahb); p. 543, no. 2333 (Abū Muslim al-Ḥawlānī—cf. Ibn al-Mubārak, *K. al-zuhd,* p. 225, nos. 639 and 640 where the same saying is ascribed to ᶜAbdallāh ibn ᶜUmar *and* Jesus).

[22] See Ibn Saᶜd, *Ṭabaqāt,* vol. 6, passim and cf. Charles Pellat, *Le Milieu basrien et la formation de Ǧāḥiz* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1953), pp. 108ff.

[23] See n. 7, above.

pressure by, first of all, the Zubayrid counter-Caliphate, and soon thereafter by the Umayyads, on such groups to abide by uniformity of legal judgements and often to accept regular government salaries was soon to produce groups called *fuqahā'* and *'ulamā'* who drew upon their heads the resentment of Iraqi pietistic circles.[24] In the middle stood groups who looked on both the revolutionaries and the Erastians, if one may use the term, with a good deal of distate. It is to this middle group that most of the purveyors of the literary Jesus belong, and with whose attitudes and aspirations he most naturally agrees.[25]

It was not my intention in this paper to analyse the entire corpus of the literary Jesus as it developed after the first two centuries of Islam. But a few remarks may be in order as regards the later development of that corpus. It would be fair to say that no substantial alteration in its over-all polemical deployment occurred in later centuries. The Sufi movement, as it began to mature in the third and fourth centuries, developed a more distinctly Sufi Jesus, a development which reached its climax with Ibn 'Arabī and al-Ġazālī.[26] To the short sayings and *mawā'iz* of the earlier corpus were later added many stories of the infancy and miracles of Jesus. Into this corpus also there crept sayings that are not complimentary to *'ubbād* and *zuhhād*, perhaps a reflection of counter-Sufi sentiment. But the corpus was also supplemented by sayings and stories that tend to fortify the basic themes which were characteristic of its form in its first two centuries of existence.[27]

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[24] My own view is that the class referred to as *fuqahā'* originated in all likelihood with the Zubayrid counter-Caliphate (64-73/683-692): see al-Baġdādī, *Al-Kifāyah fī 'ilm al-riwāyah* (Haidarabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif, 1938), p. 355, and is connected with the transition from *ḥadīt* on *fitan* and *malāḥim* to, *ḥadīt* on licit and illicit. There is much information on the resentment against the early *fuqahā'* in Abū Zur'ah, *Tārīh*. Professor Madelung believes that the bulk of *ḥadīt* on *fitan* and *malāḥim* was post-Zubayrid.

[25] It is noteworthy that neither Ḥārijites, Šī'ites nor "official" *'ulamā'* are found among the transmitters of the literary Jesus. Among the last category, such luminaries as 'Urwah, al-Zuhrī, Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab, Sufyān al-Tawrī and so forth are almost never found. Professor Madelung is of the opinion that the middle ground in Kufa cannot be described as "politically neutral" but that Kufa was overwhelmingly anti-Umayyad and pro-Alid. His view is that the contrast is between political activists and political quietists and that the literary Jesus represents the quietist mood. I agree about the situation in Kufa but I argue for the existence of a middle *group* who shunned both the revolutionaries and the "Erastians" (whom one might be tempted to call *traditores*).

[26] This is discussed in al-Ḥāyik, *al-Masīḥ*, chapter 6.

[27] See my "The Arab Jesus", *Theological Review of the Near East School of Theology*, 10/1-2 (April–November, 1989), pp. 3-20.

DER BEGRIFF *ṢIFAH* BEI ABŪ RĀ'IṬAH

Harald Suermann

1. Vorbemerkungen und Fragestellung

Abū Rā'iṭah benutzt in seinem ersten Brief ''Über die Heilige Dreifaltigkeit'' in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Islam einen Begriff, der für den islamisch-christlichen Dialog im arabischen Raum noch von einiger Bedeutung sein wird. Es handelt sich um den Begriff Attribut (arab. *ṣifah*). Dieser Begriff ist zentral für die islamische Lehre von den Attributen Gottes und wird mit dem Entstehen des Kalām in Verbindung gebracht. Dabei geht Wolfson zum Beispiel[1] davon aus, daß die Frage nach den Attributen Gottes von seiten der Christen in die Diskussion über das islamische Gottesbild eingebracht wurde. Während Griffith mit anderen eher die Ansicht vertritt, daß die frühen christlichen arabischen Autoren von der islamischen Theologie beeinflußt sind.[2] In diesem Aufsatz soll der Frage nachgegangen werden, inwieweit die Attributenlehre des Abū Rā'iṭah in der Tradition des islamisch-christlichen Dialogs bzw. in der Tradition der patristischen Theologie steht.

Zunächst soll dargestellt werden, wie Abū Rā'iṭah im Zusammenhang mit der Erklärung der Trinität den Begriff Attribut verwendet. Anschließend werde ich der Frage nachgehen, inwieweit der Begriff Attribut/*ṣifah* und die Attributenlehre schon in dem islamisch- christlichen Dialog vor Abū Rā'iṭah benutzt worden sind. Danach soll gefragt werden, wie die Attributenlehre in der christlichen Literatur außerhalb des Dialogs im Vergleich zu der von Abū

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[1] H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Cambridge, Mass. 1976. Folgende Abkürzungen werden benutzt: Griffith = Sidney H. Griffith, ''Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rā'iṭah, a Christian mutakallim of the First Abbasid Century'', *Oriens Christianus*, 64 (1980), pp. 161-201; Abū Rā'iṭah = Georg Graf, *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb ibn Ḫidma Abū Rā'iṭa* (coll. *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 130-131 = *Scriptores Arabici*, 14 (Text) und 15 (Übersetzung)), Louvain 1951.

[2] Griffith, p. 170; vgl. Morris S. Seale, *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers*, London 1964.

Rā'iṭah hier gebrauchten Darstellung aussieht. Dabei werde ich nicht die gesamte Geschichte der christlichen Lehre von den Attributen behandeln, sondern nur auf einige Ausschnitte eingehen. Im Hintergrund steht hier die Frage, inwieweit sich Abū Rā'iṭah auf christlich-überlieferte Lehre bei seinem Begriff stützt. Das Ergebnis dieser Untersuchung wird auf die Frage eine Antwort geben, was hier an Neuem auf Seiten der Christen in den Dialog eingebracht wird. Auf das sich anschließende Problem, woher das Neue kommt und ob eventuell die islamische Theologie die christliche beeinflußt hat, wird hier nicht eingegangen.

2. DIE ABHANDLUNG ÜBER DIE DREIFALTIGKEIT BEI ABŪ RĀ'IṬAH[3]

Abū Rā'iṭah beginnt seinen Brief nach einer längeren Einleitung mit der Aufzählung von Attributen, die die Muslime Gott zuschreiben und denen die Christen zustimmen können:

> Denn ihr stimmt mit uns überein und auch ihr bezeugt von dem, woran wir festhalten, dass es Wahrheit ist, indem ihr es uns nicht verwehrt, folgendes zu behaupten: Gott ist einer, der immer war und immer sein wird, lebend, wissend, sehend, hörend, ohne Genossen sowohl in seiner Wesenheit (*jawhariyyah*) als auch in seiner Herrschaft. Er ist der erste und der letzte, der Schöpfer des Sichtbaren und Unsichtbaren, bedürfnislos, vollkommen in seinem Wesen, unbestimmbar für die, welche eine Bestimmung machen, erhaben über Unvollkommenheit und Schwäche, von dem Teilung und Trennung nicht ausgesagt werden kann, der da herrscht und mächtig ist, der tut, was er will. (Er ist) unsichtbar, nicht fühlbar, unbegreiflich, unbegrenzt und umfaßt doch alles im Wissen.[4] [Der Text ist den Muslimen in den Mund gelegt.]

Im Anschluß daran erklärt Abū Rā'iṭah, daß diese Attribute die Einheit Gottes (*al-tawḥīd*) nicht aufheben:

> Was euren Anspruch betrifft, daß die rechte Begründung euch eigen und das Zutreffende und die Wahrheit in eurem Lehrsätze sei, zumal auch wir es euch bezeugen, daß Gott bei allen ihm zukommenden Attributen doch nur einer ist, so brauchen deshalb die Bekenner der Wahrheit gewiss etwas Zutreffendes nicht zu bestreiten und abzulehnen, wer immer es auch zu eigen hat. Vielmehr nehmen sie es aufs

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[3] Vgl. zum folgenden: Griffith, pp. 178-191; Rachid Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes 750-1050* (coll. *Beauchesne Religions*, 15), Paris 1985, pp. 188-233.

[4] Abū Rā'iṭah 3;4.

bestimmteste an mit schönstem Lob und besten Worten gegenüber denen, welche es aussprechen. So etwas macht ihnen Ehre und gibt ihnen das Zeugnis, dass sie mit Eifer nach dem Rechten verlangen und die Wahrheit nach bestem Können aufnehmen.[5]

In diesem Abschnitt deutet Abū Rāʾiṭah die Behauptung der Muslime an, daß die Einheit Gottes nicht durch die Vielzahl der Attribute in Frage gestellt wird. Diese Aussage kommt also nicht von den Christen, aber die Christen stimmen ihr zu. Dies ist ein erster Hinweis darauf, wer das Problem der Attribute Gottes—nach Meinung von Abū Rāʾiṭah—aufgebracht hat: die Muslime, die Christen hingegen stimmen dieser Auffassung voll und ganz zu.[6]

Abū Rāʾiṭah behandelt im Anschluß daran die Aussage, daß Gott einer ist. Er stellt dabei zwischen derselben Aussage bei Christen und Muslime einen riesigen Unterschied in der inhaltlichen Auffassung dieser Aussage fest.[7] Die christliche Auffassung faßt er zusammen:

> Wir bestimmen ihn [= Gott] als einen, der in der Substanz ein einziger, vollkommener ist, nicht in der Zahl; denn er ist der Zahl nach, das heißt in den Personen (*aqānīm*), drei.[8]

Für Abū Rāʾiṭah folgt aus der Aussage, daß Gott einer ist, auch, daß er drei ist. Die Diskussion erfolgt auf der Basis der aristotelischen Philosophie, besonders der Topik. Das "Einssein" ist zwar streng genommen auch ein Attribut Gottes, unterscheidet sich aber grundlegend von den anderen Attributen Gottes. Es ist keine Beschreibung Gottes wie "lebend, wissend, sehend, hörend" etc., da es kein Handeln Gottes beschreibt.

Erst nachdem er Gott als ein und drei der Zahl nach bestimmt hat, geht Abū Rāʾiṭah auf die anderen Attribute Gottes ein:

> Was eure Behauptung angeht, daß Gott lebend, wissend, hörend, sehend ist, und eure Meinung, daß wir hierin mit euch übereinstimmen und für euch Zeugen der Wahrheit sind, so wollen wir nun alles genau betrachten bezüglich dieser Attribute, nämlich lebend, sehend und wissend: Sind sie selbständige, absolute Namen oder relative Namen, welche die Beziehung eines Dinges zu einem anderen anzeigen?

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[5] Abū Rāʾiṭah 4;4.
[6] Zur Verwendung islamischer Theologie bei Abū Rāʾiṭah vgl. Griffith, *passim*.
[7] Abū Rāʾiṭah 5;4-5.
[8] Abū Rāʾiṭah 8;7.

Wir müssen betrachten, was die relativen Namen sind, und was die absoluten, selbständigen.[9]

Abū Rāʾiṭah geht dabei nicht vom Inhalt der einzelnen Eigenschaften Gottes aus, also davon, was es heißt, daß Gott sehend ist, wie Gott sieht oder was Gott sieht, sondern er unterscheidet zunächst verschiedene Kategorien, wobei er aber nicht den Begriff Attribut verwendet, sondern den Begriff Name (*ism*). Der Wechsel im Begriff ist schon bedeutsam. Name ist hier nicht gleich Attribut, aber auch nicht Name im herkömmlichen Sinne. Graf trifft die Sache wohl richtig, wenn er in der Übersetzung an einigen Stellen statt Name Begriff ergänzt.[10] Der Wechsel von "Attribut" nach "Name" bzw. "Begriff" ist mehr als ein Wortwechsel. Die "Attribute" werden zwar in "Begriffen" wiedergegeben, aber "Begriff" beschreibt erheblich mehr als nur "Attribute" und umfaßt auch "Namen von Gegenstände" wie "Feuer", "Stein" etc.

Abū Rāʾiṭah kennt zwei Kategorien von Namen: absolute und relative. Die absoluten Namen bezeichnen Dinge, die keinen Bezug auf andere Dinge haben, z.B. Feuer. Relative Namen jedoch haben eine Beziehung zu etwas anderem, z.B. Wissender und Wissen. Diese Beziehung ist wesentlich, d.h. es gibt keinen Wissenden ohne Wissen. Eine genaue Beschreibung des Verhältnisses beider gibt Abū Rāʾiṭah nicht.[11]

Nach dieser Begriffsklärung behandelt Abū Rāʾiṭah die Frage, wie denn nun die Attribute Gottes zur Substanz (*jawhar*) sich verhalten. Er kennt zwei Möglichkeiten: entweder gehören sie seit der Ewigkeit zu seinem Wesen oder er hat sie durch seine Tätigkeit erworben. Der Sache nach wird hier die Unterscheidung zwischen *ṣifāt al-ḏāt* (Wesensattribute) und *ṣifāt al-fiʿl* (Tätigkeitsattribute) gemacht. Indem Abū Rāʾiṭah die unannehmbare Konsequenz vor Augen führt, daß Gott einmal ohne Leben, Weisheit und Wissen war, wenn die Muslime antworten, daß alle Attribute erworben sind, auch lebend, wissend und weise, führt er den muslimischen Partner zum Gegenangriff, daß bei der Annahme, daß es Attribute wie wissend und lebend gibt, die Gott ewig zugeschrieben werden, es für Gott unweigerlich etwas Erschaffenes und ein Geschöpf gibt,

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[9] Abū Rāʾiṭah 9;7-8.
[10] z.B. Abū Rāʾiṭah 9.
[11] Abū Rāʾiṭah 9;8.

bevor er noch sich mit etwas davon im Werk befaßte.[12] Damit ist
das Problem der Attribute gestellt. Abū Rā'iṭah formuliert es so:

> Es gibt nur zwei Möglichkeiten—entweder ist Gott, der Herrliche
> und Erhabene, allein immerwährend, und was außer ihm ist, ist zeit-
> lich, oder man nimmt an, daß auch das Geschöpf ewig ist.[13]

Abū Rā'iṭah stimmt mit den Muslimen überein, wenn er die letztere
Annahme ausschließt, daß Geschöpf und Schöpfer ewig sind. Im
weiteren wird dem Muslim eine Antwort in den Mund gelegt, die
eine Lösung des Problems bieten soll: "Weil er mächtig ist, zu er-
schaffen, wann er will, deshalb muß ihm eine Schöpfung zuge-
sprochen werden, auch bevor er erschafft."[14]

Abū Rā'iṭah antwortet darauf, daß Gott dann auch schon immer
die Hölle und die Auferstehung zugeschrieben werden muß, hält
dies aber für Muslime für unannehmbar. Abū Rā'iṭah sieht hier
eine Verwischung des Unterschieds zwischen "natürlichem" und
"erworbenem Attribut".[15] Im Anschluß daran bietet er seine, die
christliche Lösung des Problems:

> Wenn Gott nicht aufhört, lebend (und) wissend zu sein, so ist also das
> Leben und das Wissen ewig. Und wenn sich die Sache so verhält, wie
> wir dargetan haben, so sind ohne allen Zweifel diese auf ihn
> bezüglichen (Attribute), das heißt das Leben und das Wissen, ent-
> weder etwas anderes als er (selbst), so wie der Genosse zum Genossen
> in Beziehung steht, oder sie sind (etwas) von ihm. (Das Verhältnis)
> «von ihm» ist wieder von zweierlei Art: Entweder (sind sie) ein Akt,
> der von ihm (in der Zeit) gewirkt wird (. . .) oder sie sind etwas von
> seiner Substanz. Wenn sie von seiner Substanz sind, so wieder auf
> zweierlei Art: entweder etwas Vollkommenes von einem Vollkomme-
> nen oder Teile von einem Vollkommenen. Teile können in der Aus-
> sage über Gott nicht angenommen werden, weil er darüber erhaben
> ist. Somit besteht kein Zweifel, daß sie Vollkommenes von einem
> Vollkommenen sind.[16]

Zunächst fällt hier auf, daß von den drei vorher ausgewählten At-
tributen nur zwei weiter in den Ausführungen diskutiert werden.
Wir gehen weiter unten noch auf dieses Phänomen ein. Desweiteren
ist beachtenswert, daß Abū Rā'iṭah das Verhältnis von Leben und

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[12] Abū Rā'iṭah 9-10;8.
[13] Abū Rā'iṭah 10;9.
[14] Abū Rā'iṭah 10;9.
[15] Abū Rā'iṭah 10-11;9.
[16] Abū Rā'iṭah 11;10.

Wissen zu Gott selbst unter der Annahme, daß Leben und Wissen
etwas anderes ist als Gott, mit dem Verhältnis Genosse zu Genosse
vergleicht. Hier wird vom Wort her auf den Sachverhalt angespielt,
der im Islam *širk* heißt. Dieses Vokabular läßt vermuten, daß das
Problem der Attribute im Zusammenhang mit dem *širk* schon vor
dem hier behandelten Brief bei den Muslimen diskutiert wurde.
Schon durch das Vokabular ist klar, daß die Muslime dieses Ver-
hältnis ablehnen. Wenn er sich mit dem kurzen Hinweis, daß Gott
darüber erhaben ist, daß Teile in ihm sind, begnügen kann, so muß
Abū Rāʾiṭah davon ausgehen, daß die Muslime nicht nur die äußere
Einheit Gottes, sondern auch die innere annehmen. Der ganze
Abschnitt verweist also auf eine schon recht entwickelte muslimische
Theologie hin, die durchaus das Problem der Attribute Gottes dis-
kutiert hat.

Für Abū Rāʾiṭah können die Attribute nur Vollkommenes vom
Vollkommenen sein. Er bietet drei Alternativen für die nähere Er-
klärung dieses Verhältnisses: 1) Sie sind getrennt und geschieden.
2) Sie sind verbunden und vereinigt. 3) Sie sind getrennt und ver-
bunden zugleich. Die beiden ersten Aussagen führen aber nach Abū
Rāʾiṭah zum Widerspruch zu anderen Aussagen über Gott, nämlich
im ersten Fall widerspricht es der Unbegrenztheit Gottes, denn et-
was Getrenntes müßte außerhalb sein und somit eine Begrenzung
Gottes voraussetzen. Im zweiten Fall würde es gegen die innere Ein-
heit Gottes verstoßen, da Teile angenommen werden müßten. So
bleibt nur die dritte Alternative.[17] Diese—zugleich getrennt und
verbunden—ist nach Abū Rāʾiṭah für Muslime eine unerhörte An-
nahme. Er verweist nun darauf, daß die Christen nicht in gleicher
Hinsicht die Trennung und die Verbundenheit annehmen. Das
Problem des "zugleich verbunden und getrennt" trat in ähnlicher
Weise auch bei der Abhandlung über die Einheit Gottes auf, der
zugleich in jeweils verschiedener Hinsicht einer und drei ist. Bei der
folgenden Erklärung des "zugleichs" wechselt Abū Rāʾiṭah die Ter-
minologie. Der Begriff Attribut ist nicht mehr der zentrale Begriff,
sondern die drei Begriffe der Trinitätstheologie: Wesen (*jawhar*),
Hypostasen (*ašḫāṣ*) und Personen (*aqānīm*), wobei die Hypostasen
für ihn die Personen sind.[18]

Dieser Wechsel in der Terminologie kommt etwas überraschend.

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[17] Abū Rāʾiṭah 11-12;10.
[18] Abū Rāʾiṭah 13ff;11ff.

Die ganze Darstellung des Problems der Attribute Gottes scheint also eine Hinführung auf das Problem der Trinität als eines Gottes in *drei* Personen zu sein. Aber nicht in dem Sinne, daß nun der dreieinige Gott mit Hilfe der Lehre von den Attributen erklärt werden kann, sondern so, daß man bei der Behandlung der Attribute Gottes in eine Problematik geführt wird, die der Problematik der Dreieinigkeit ähnelt. Für Abū Rāʾiṭah ist der Begriff Attribut nicht mit Hypostase und Person gleichzusetzen. Er setzt nirgends diese drei Begriffe gleich, indem er etwa sagte, die Attribute Gottes sind die Hypostasen oder die Personen. Es ist aber nur noch ein kleiner Schritt bis dahin. In einem späteren Teil,[19] wo er auf die Frage antwortet, warum die Christen in Gott gerade drei Personen annehmen, setzt er indirekt Wissen und Geist mit der zweiten und dritten Person gleich, wobei gleichzeitig unausgesprochen unter Gott "Vater" als dritte Person zu verstehen ist. Hier zeigt sich eine gewisse Begriffsunschärfe, wenn er den Begriff Gott einmal gebraucht, um vom Wesen des einen Gottes zu sprechen, und ein andermal darunter "Gott Vater" versteht. Die relativen Attribute werden so zu den Personen in Parallele gesetzt. So wie sich die beiden Attribute zu Gott selbst verhalten, so verhalten sich auch die Personen zur Substanz. Wobei die Attribute, die hier zur Anschauung herangezogen werden, in einem gewissen Rahmen beliebig sind. Es findet hier nicht nur keine—naheliegende—Identifizierung von Attributen und Personen statt, (etwa: der Geist ist der Heilige Geist), sondern die Auswahl der Attribute ist einer gewissen Beliebigkeit unterworfen. Weiter oben sprach Abū Rāʾiṭah von Leben und Wissen, hier von Wissen und Geist. Die Tatsächlichkeit der drei Personen, also die Tatsache, daß es nicht vier oder mehr sind, wird nicht durch die Reduktion der Attribute Gottes auf drei Grundattribute gelöst, sondern Abū Rāʾiṭah will sich die Antwort der Muslime auf die Frage, warum Gott einer ist, auch für die Dreiheit zu eigen machen.

3. Der Begriff ṣifah im islamisch-christlichen Dialog vor Abū Rāʾiṭah

In der arabischen Übersetzung[20] des Dialoges zwischen al-Mahdī

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19 Abū Rāʾiṭah 21;18.
20 Zum Verhältnis zwischen der syrischen und der arabischen Überlieferung

und Timotheos finden wir in der ersten Sektion, Abschnitt 10 (Ausgabe Putman) den Begriff *ṣifah*: ''Der Christ ist Sohn und geboren vor aller Zeit; und wir sind unfähig, diese Geburt zu untersuchen oder sie zu verstehen, denn Gott ist unbegreifbar in all seinen Attributen.''[21]

Der Kontext ist ein christologischer. Es geht hier nicht um die Trinität als solche, sondern um die Unbegreiflichkeit Gottes und seines Handelns. Der Begriff kommt nur an dieser Stelle im arabischen Text vor und wird im eigentlichen Abschnitt über die Trinität nicht wieder verwendet. Hier benutzt Timotheos die klassischen Begriffe der Trinitätslehre, nämlich Natur, Substanz, Hypostase. Das Problem der Attribute Gottes wird hier nicht weiter entfaltet.

Putman stellt an dieser Stelle meines Erachtens zu unrecht die Frage, ob hier griechischer oder islamischer Einfluß vorliegt, da er die spätere Verwendung des Begriffs *ṣifah* im Zusammenhang von Einheit und Dreiheit Gottes voraussetzt.

In diesem Dialog des Patriarchen Timotheos I mit dem Kalifen al-Mahdī benutzt der Patriarch Analogien, um die Trinität zu erklären: die der Sonne, ihrer Strahlen und ihrer Wärme sowie die des Apfels, seines Geruches und seines Geschmacks. Die bekannte Frage, ob Geist und Wort geschaffen oder ungeschaffen seien, und ob Gott einmal ohne Geist und Wort gewesen sei, taucht auch in diesem Dialog auf. Vater, Sohn und Geist werden als drei Personen und eine Substanz dargestellt. Timotheos erklärt, daß der Sohn nicht der Geist ist und der Geist vom Sohn im Hinblick auf Qualifikationen und Attribute verschieden ist, während der arabische Text die Verschiedenheit auf die Proprietäten bezieht. In dem syrischen Text fügt weiter unten Timotheos hinzu: ein einziger Gott mit drei persönlichen Attributen, statt wie im arabischen dreifach in den Hypostasen.[22]

Der syrische Text, der von Putman im Gegensatz zu Browne[23]

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siehe Hans Putmann sj, *L'Église et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780-823). Étude sur l'Église nestorienne au temps des premiers ʿAbbāsides avec nouvelle édition et traduction du dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdi*, (coll. ⟨Recherches⟩, Nouvelle série B. Orient chrétien 3), Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1986, pp. 172-188 (hereafter cited as Putmann, *L'Église*).

[21] Putmann, *L'Église*, 215;8.

[22] Alphonse Mingana, *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi*, (coll. ⟨Woodbrooke Studies⟩ II) pp. 1-162, hier p. 26; Putmann, *L'Église* 228;17.

[23] L.E. Browne, ''The Patriarch Timothy and the Caliph al-Mahdi'', *The Moslem World*, 21 (1931), pp. 38-45.

für den älteren gehalten wird, benutzt an drei Stellen den Begriff Attribut, wobei die letzten beiden für die inhaltliche Bestimmung des Begriffs bei Timotheos von Bedeutung sind. Timotheos ordnet die Attribute den Personen zu und nicht der Substanz. Die arabische Übersetzung trifft wohl die Sache, wenn dort statt durch *ṣifah* der syrische Begriff durch *ḫāṣṣah* übersetzt wird. Aus diesen beiden Stellen geht deutlich hervor, daß Timotheos den Begriff Attribut anders als Abū Rā'iṭah gebraucht.

Es gibt jedoch einen unedierten Text, Brief 40 des Timotheos an den Priester und Doktor Sergius,[24] der nach der Analyse von Sākō[25] die drei Personen, *qnōmé*, als drei göttliche Attribute präsentiert und erklärt. Es gibt in Gott Operationen *ad intra*, nämlich die Generation und die Spiration. Timotheos benutzt philosophische Argumente wie die Unterscheidung von Attributen der Essenz und Attribute des Akts. Der Gesprächspartner des Timotheos ist ein aristotelischer Muslim (*Muʿtazilit*). Die Edition dieses Textes ist ein Desiderat, der vielleicht neues Licht auf die Bedeutung der Attributproblematik im christlich-islamischen Dialog werfen kann. Ich konnte allerdings bisher den Text nicht einsehen.

In Dialogen vor der Zeit von Abū Rā'iṭah sind mir weitere Stellen unbekannt, wo der Begriff Attribut verwendet wird.

4. DAS PROBLEM DER TRINITARISCHEN PERSONEN IM ISLAMISCH-CHRISTLICHEN DIALOG VOR ABŪ RĀ'IṬAH

Es gilt nun einen kurzen Blick auf die Versuche zu werfen, die den Muslimen die Dreieinigkeit Gottes erklären wollen. Auch hier gehe ich von Texten vor der Zeit von Abū Rā'iṭah aus. Die älteste Art, die Trinität den Muslimen vorzustellen, ist die Erklärung von Bibelstellen, die in der Tradition der Väter ausgelegt werden. Im Dialog zwischen dem jakobitischen Patriarchen Johannes I und Saʿīd ibn ʿĀmir wird im Zusammenhang mit der Frage nach der Gottheit Christi auch das Problem der Trinität angeschnitten. Der Emir bittet darum, die Richtigkeit des christologischen und trinitarische Bekenntnisses mit vernünftigen Argumenten und Zitaten aus dem

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[24] Ms. Vat. syr. 605ff. 216v-244v.

[25] Louis Sākō, "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chrétien. Auteurs chrétiens de langue syriaque", *Islamochristiana*, 10 (1984), pp. 73-292, hier pp. 283-284 (hereafter cited as Sākō).

Pentateuch darzulegen. Im weiteren werden jedoch nur Schrift-
zitate angeführt.[26]

Johannes von Litharb führt den Begriff der Person in die Diskus-
sion ein. Er sagt, daß Gott eine Essenz, eine Gottheit, eine Kraft,
ein Wille, eine Souveränität und eine Operation ist und nur unter
dem Aspekt der Person drei Personen ist. Der uns nur in abge-
kürzter Form überlieferte Dialog erklärt keinen Begriff, sondern
zitiert nur Aussagen der Bibel zum Beweis.[27]

In dem Johannes von Damaskus zugeschriebenen Dialog
zwischen einem Sarazenen und einem Christen,[28] und im *Liber de
haeresibus*, Kapitel 100,[29] kommt Johannes von Damaskus auf den
Geist und das Wort Gottes zu sprechen. Johannes von Damaskus
antwortet im Buch der Häresien den Muslimen, die die Christen
anklagen, Beigeseller zu sein, mit einem Argument *ad hominem*.
Johannes stellt zur Erklärung der Trinität die Frage, ob Geist und
Wort Gottes geschaffen oder ungeschaffen sind. Sollte der Muslim
antworten ''ungeschaffen'', so kann darauf verwiesen werden, daß
Christus, der im Koran Wort und Geist Gottes genannt wird, un-
geschaffen und somit Gott sei. Sollte der Muslim mit ''geschaffen''
antworten, so muß gefragt werden, ob Gott einmal ohne Geist und
Vernunft gewesen sei. Johannes schließt den Gedankengang mit der

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[26] Sākō, pp. 277, 278; Henri Lammens, ''A propos d'une colloque entre le
patriarche Jean Ier et ʿAmir ibn al-ʿAsi'', *Journal Asiatique*, série XI,13 (1919),
pp. 97-110; François Nau, ''Un colloque du Patriarche Jean avec l'Émir des
Agaréens'', *Journal Asiatique*, 2e série, 5 (1915), pp. 225-279; Harald Suermann,
''Orientalische Christen und der Islam. Christliche Texte aus der Zeit von 632-
750'', *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, 67 (1983), pp. 120-
136, hier pp. 122-128.

[27] Harald Suermann, ''Ein Disput des Jôhannàn von Lîthârb'', *CIBEDO. Bei-
träge zum Gespräch zwischen Christen und Muslimen*, 5/6 (1989), pp. 182-190; Harald
Suermann, ''Huitième partie: Auteurs chrétiens de langue syriaque: Une con-
troverse de Jôhannàn de Lîtârb (début VIIIe siècle)'', *Islamochristiana*, 15 (1989),
pp. 169-174.

[28] J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*, 94, Paris 1857-1866, col.
1585a-1596b. 96, 1335-1347; D.S. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, Leiden 1972,
pp. 99-122; Paul Khoury, ''Jean Damascène et l'Islam'', *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 7
(1957), pp. 44-63; 8 (1958), pp. 313-339, hier pp. 313-339; P. Bonifatius Kotter
osb, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos IV Liber de Haeresibus. Opera polemica*,
Berlin, New York 1981, pp. 419-438.

[29] J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca* 94, Paris 1857-1866,
vol. 764a-773a; Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, pp. 51-95; Adel-Théodore
Khoury, *Les théologiens byzantins et l'Islam. Textes et auteurs (VIIIe-XIIIeS.)*, Louvain,
Paris 1969, pp. 47-65; Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, IV, pp. 1-67.

Überlegung ab, daß Gott nicht von seinem Wort und seinem Geist getrennt werden kann.

> Wenn also in Gott sein Wort ist, ist es evident, daß dieses auch Gott ist. Übrigens ist es ja besser Beigeseller zu sein, als Verstümmler Gottes, indem man ihm sein Wort vorenthält oder ihn wie ohne Seele präsentiert.[30]

Johannes scheint hier der späteren Lehre der Attribute Gottes, so wie sie Abū Rā'iṭah verwendet sehr nahe zu sein. Er gebraucht jedoch nicht den Begriff, noch argumentiert er wie Abū Rā'iṭah. Ziel seiner Argumentation ist es nicht zu beweisen, daß Gott immer schon Geist und Wort hatte—daß setzt er gleichsam voraus— sondern daß Christus ewig, und somit Gott ist. Es kann aber festgestellt werden, daß hier die Attributenlehre anfanghaft und unentfaltet vorliegt. Daß Johannes als möglich annimmt, daß der Muslim entweder antwortet, der Geist und das Wort sei geschaffen, oder antwortet, daß er ungeschaffen sei, verweist auf die innerislamische Kontroverse um die Attribute Gottes. Johannes nutzt hier diese Kontroverse für seine eigene Argumentation, ohne aber gleichzeitig eine christliche Theologie in diesem islamischen Kontext zu entwickeln, wie es Abū Rā'iṭah tut.

In direkter geistiger Nachfolge des Johannes steht Theodor Abū Qurra. Sein Opuskel 36 entspricht dem zitierten Ausschnitt der oben genannten Kontroverse.[31]

5. CHRISTLICHE ATTRIBUTENLEHRE

Es soll und kann hier nicht die christliche Attributenlehre vor der islamischen Zeit dargestellt werden. Die folgenden Ausführungen haben einen gewissen zufälligen Charakter: es sind nur einige Punkte aufgegriffen, die mir in diesem Zusammenhang wichtig erscheinen.

Es ist interessant, daß schon Tertullian die Einteilung der Attribute in absolute und relative insinuiert. Dies wird dann später durch die Kappadozier, Ephrem und Augustin präzisiert.[32]

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[30] Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, IV, pp. 62ff.

[31] J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca* 97, Paris 1857-1866 col. 1588A-1592C; Khoury, *Les Théologiens byzantins et l'Islam*, pp. 80f.

[32] J. Stöhr, "Attribute Gottes", in Joachim Ritter (Hrsg), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 1, Stuttgart, 1971, pp. 614f, hier p. 614; A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, E. Amann, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 4, Paris 1930ff, pp. 1142f.

In der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Arianismus beschäftigen sich die Theologen in besonderem Maße mit den Attributen und der Einheit Gottes. Diese Kontroverse läßt sich in mancher Hinsicht mit der Kontroverse um die Einheit und die Attribute Gottes vergleichen, die zwischen Christen und Muslimen zur Zeit Abū Rāʾiṭahs und später geführt wurde. Für die Arianer und Eunomianer waren die Begriffe, die gebraucht wurden, um die göttlichen Vollkommenheiten zu bezeichnen, alle synonym und durch den Terminus *agennésia* ersetzbar. Eunomius behauptete, daß Worte nur dann wahr sind, wenn sie Objekten entsprechen, und daß jedesmal, wenn ein Objekt mit mehreren Namen bezeichnet wird, diese verschiedenen Namen keine verschiedene Bedeutung haben, oder sich im Objekt selbst eine Diversität befindet. Die beiden Gruppen negierten jede Unterscheidung zwischen den Attributen und der Essenz Gottes, um die Einfachheit und innere Einheit Gottes zu bewahren.

Basilius, Gregor von Nyssa und Kyrill von Alexandrien hielten dieser Gruppe zunächst die Vielzahl der biblischen Namen Gottes entgegen. Nach ihnen wären alle Namen, wie der Gerechte, der Barmherzige etc. sinnlos, wenn sie nur dasselbe bezeichneten. Sie ziehen diese Ansicht sogar ins Lächerliche: Wenn die Arianer und Eunomianer gefragt würden, was unter dem Begriff Richter auf Gott angewendet zu verstehen sei, so müßten sie antworten: derjenige der ohne Anfang und Ende ist. Sie vertreten unter Berufung auf Aristoteles ein anderes Verständnis der Attribute Gottes. Dabei gehen sie davon aus, daß die Namen nur durch die Vermittlung eines Konzepts Dinge bezeichnen. Eine Vielzahl von Konzepten ist aber mit dem vereinbar, was in sich eins ist, ja es gilt sogar, daß eine Vielzahl von Konzepten um so notwendiger ist je mehr etwas erhaben und vollkommen ist. Die Arianer und Eunomianer ziehen für die Attribute Gottes den Schluß, daß die göttlichen Namen verschiedene Bedeutungen haben und verschiedenen Ideen entsprechen. Die Vielzahl der Ideen teilt Gott nicht wirklich und betrifft nicht seine Einfachheit. Sie teilen ihn nur geistig, *katʾ epinoian*. Diese geistige Teilung hat ihre Ursache in der Unzulänglichkeit des menschlichen Geistes und der überwältigenden Erhabenheit des göttlichen Seins.[33]

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[33] A. Vacant *et al*, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 2, Paris, p. 2231.

Verglichen mit der Attributenlehre, wie sie Abū Rāʾiṭah bietet,
geht es hier um dieselbe Frage, wie sich die Vielzahl der Attribute
Gottes mit der Einheit und Einfachheit Gottes verbinden läßt. Die
Lösung, die Basil, Gregor von Nyssa und Kyrill von Alexandrien
bieten, unterscheidet sich aber radikal von der des Abū Rāʾiṭah. Für
diese Väter ist die Vielzahl der Attribute in der Unzulänglichkeit des
menschlichen Geistes begründet, der viele Konzepte benötigt, um
sich das erhabene Sein Gottes vorzustellen. Abū Rāʾiṭah hingegen
konzentriert sich auf relative Namen, um so auf die reale Existenz
dreier Person in dem einem Gott zu verweisen.

Johannes von Damaskus und Theodor Abū Qurra werden des
öfteren als die christlichen Autoren betrachtet, durch die Muslime
auf das Problem der göttlichen Attribute gestoßen wurden.[34] Es soll
hier nicht der Frage nachgegangen werden, ob und wie weit die
Theologie dieser Autoren von den Muslimen zur Kenntnis genom-
men wurde, sondern es soll hier nur auf ihre Lehre von den At-
tributen eingegangen werden, soweit sie nicht schon oben darge-
stellt wurde. In der Darlegung des orthodoxen Glaubens[35] zählt
Johannes, ähnlich wie Abū Rāʾiṭah zu Anfang seines Briefs, Eigen-
schaften Gottes auf: anfanglos, ungeschaffen, ungezeugt, unverän-
derlich, unsterblich, ewig etc. Diese Eigenschaften werden dem
einen Gott zugeschrieben. Nachdem er so den einen Gott beschrie-
ben hat, sagt er, daß der eine Gott in drei vollkommenen Hypostas-
en erkannt wird. In Anlehnung an das Nicäo-Konstantinopo-
litanische Glaubensbekenntnis beschreibt er die Eigenschaften
(*idiotês*) der Personen:

> Und wegen des Vaters hat der Sohn und der Geist alles, was er hat,
> d.h. weil der Vater es hat, ausgenommen das Ungezeugtsein und
> Ausgehen. Denn nur in diesen persönlichen Eigentümlichkeiten un-
> terscheiden sich die heiligen drei Personen voneinander. Nicht durch
> die Wesenheit, sondern durch das Merkmal der eigenen Hypostase
> sind sie ohne Trennung unterschieden.[36]

Die Substanz (*usia*) ist sachlich-real (*pragma*), während die Unter-
scheidung der Hypostasen begrifflich (*epinoia*) ist. Die begriffliche
Unterschiedung erstreckt sich nur auf die Eigentümlichkeiten (*idiô-*

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[34] H.A. Wolfson, ''The Muslim Attributes and the Christian Trinity'', *Harvard
Theological Revue*, 49 (1956), pp. 1-18.
[35] J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus comletus. Series graeca*, 94, Paris 1857-1866, I,8.
[36] J.P. Migne, *loc. cit.*

mata) der Vaterschaft, Sohnschaft und der Hervorgehens. Diese
Eigentümlichkeiten beziehen sich nicht auf die Substanz, sondern
nur auf die gegenseitigen Beziehungen der Hypostase. Die Substanz
Gottes wird nicht vom Denken erfaßt, sie bleibt verborgen.

Der Schüler des Johannes von Damaskus, Theodor Abū Qurra,
rezipiert seinen Lehrer getreu. In seinem Orthodoxen Glaubens-
bekenntnis sind uns die den griechischen entsprechenden ara-
bischen Termini überliefert. Für Hypostase wird immer der Begriff
uqnūm verwendet. Für ihn hat jede der Hypostasen ihre *ḫāṣṣah ḏātiy-
yah*, nämlich "ungeboren", "geboren" und "gehaucht". Er spricht
nirgends von den *ḫawāṣṣ* oder den *ṣifāt* der göttlichen Substanz.[37]

Nach Johannes von Damaskus und Theodor Abū Qurra wird der
Begriff der Eigenschaften, ein Begriff zur Beschreibung der unter-
scheidenden Charakteristika der göttlichen Personen. Diese Eigen-
schaften, oder besser Proprietäten, der Hypostasen wurden immer
wieder in der patristischen Theologie diskutiert. Sie sind aber ein
anderes Problem als das der Attribute Gottes und können somit
nicht zum Vergleich mit der Attributenlehre von Abū Rāʾiṭah her-
angezogen werden. Ein Einfluß auf die islamische Theologie der
Attribute scheint mir ausgeschlossen. Bei Johannes von Damaskus
und Abū Qurra werden Gott zwar Eigenschaften zu geschrieben,
aber nicht seiner Substanz. Aus den Gott zugeschriebenen Eigen-
schaften werden nicht die Personen abgeleitet oder auch nur erklärt.
Wird von den Personen gesprochen, so bezieht sich der Begriff
Eigenart auf die unterscheidenden Charakteristika der Personen.

6. Zusammenfassung

Fassen wir zusammen: Abū Rāʾiṭah hat mit Hilfe der relativen
Wesensattribute versucht, den Muslimen die Drei-Einigkeit Gottes
zu erklären. Diese relativen Attribute implizieren die Existenz von
zwei verschiedenen Dingen, die notwendig aufeinander bezogen
sind. Das Verhältnis zwischen dem einen Wesen Gottes und den
Dingen, die durch die relativen Attribute bezeichnet werden, be-
stimmt er als zugleich getrennt und verbunden. Dieses "Zugleich"
erklärt er aber an Hand der Termini Wesen, Hypostasen und Per-
sonen. Obwohl eine Identifizierung von Hypostase bzw. Person mit

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[37] I. Dick, "Deux écrits inédits de Théodore Abūqurra", *Le Muséon*, 72 (1959),
pp. 53-67, hier pp. 56ff.

den relativen Wesenattributen sich nahelegt, vollzieht er diesen Schritt nicht explizit.

Verglichen mit den anderen Dialogen aus seiner und vor seiner Zeit bietet Abū Rāʾiṭah hier etwas Neues. Zwar benutzt auch Timotheos den Begriff *ṣifah*, aber er bezieht ihn nicht auf das Wesen, sondern auf die Personen.

Der Sache nach unterscheidet sich die Frage, ob Gott einmal ohne Geist und Wesen war, von der Fragestellung des Abū Rāʾiṭah, wenn er fragt, ob Gott einmal ohne Wissen war. Denn nicht das Attribut wird in Parallele zu den Personen gesetzt—das würde bei der Vielzahl der Attribute zu einer Vielzahl von Personen führen—sondern die Notwendigkeit von mehreren verschiedenen Dingen bei relativen Attributen wird zur Erklärung der Notwendigkeit der Drei-Einigkeit Gottes herangezogen.

Die wenigen Beispiele aus der Patristik weisen in dieselbe Richtung. Begriffe wie Wesensattribut und Tätigkeitsattribut, absolute und relative Attribute sind zwar in der christlichen Theologie bekannt, aber es wird meines Wissens in der Lehre von den relativen Wesensattributen keine Parallele zur Trinitätstheologie gezogen. Die Attribute werden auf das Wesen Gottes bezogen und gelten für alle Personen, oder es sind Attribute, die nur einer Person zugeschrieben werden. Das sind dann die Proprietäten der Personen.

Abū Rāʾiṭah hat somit einen neuen Ansatz in die Theologie eingeführt. Inwieweit er hier durch die islamische Theologie angeregt wurde und inwieweit sich seine Theologie in der islamischen Umwelt bewährt hat und so zu einer "Theologie im Islam" wurde, diese Fragen sind eigene Untersuchungen wert.

YAHYĀ B. ʿADĪ AND HIS REFUTATION OF AL-WARRĀQ'S TREATISE ON THE TRINITY IN RELATION TO HIS OTHER WORKS

Emilio Platti

1. Yahyā b. ʿAdī

The Christian theologian and Arabic philosopher Yahya b. ʿAdī was born in 893 A.D. and died in 974; he is so famous, that he needs no introduction. I quote only the words of Gerhard Endress in his bio-bibliography:[1] "Most authors mention Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus († 940) and Abū Nasr al-Fārābī († 950) as Yahyā's teachers in philosophy. Al-Bayhaqī calls him *afḍal talāmiḏat Abī Naṣr*. Ibn al-Nadīm adds that he belonged to the community of Jacobite Christians and this fact is confirmed on every page of his apologies for Christian doctrine. He was born in the Syriac Christian town of Takrīt, and so we understand the importance of the Syriac patrimony for his work as a translator. Unfortunately, much of that work has been lost. Abū Hayyān al-Tawhidī informs us about meetings of intellectuals which he attended and the circle of disciples which gathered around him.[2] This translator, copyist and writer Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā b. ʿAdī was called Al-Takrītī al-Mantiqī al-Faylasūf.

Many of his philosophical treatises have only recently been published, although most of them were rediscovered in the 1970's. As for his apologetical and theological works, most have already been published, and the remaining works will be published in the near future. We hope that Father Khalil Samir can continue the publication of the *Patrimoine arabe chrétien* and present the *Maqālah fī iṯbāt ṣidq al-injīl* ("the proof and the truth of the Gospel, demonstrated by

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[1] Gerhard Endress, *The Works of Yahyā b. ʿAdī. An analytical inventory*, Wiesbaden, 1977.

[2] Emilio Platti, *Yahyā b. ʿAdī Théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe*. (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 14), Leuven, 1983 (referred to as: Yahyā).

means of the syllogism''). I have begun work on editing the last part of Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī's *Reply to Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq's Refutation of the creed of the three Christian sects, the Jacobites, the Nestorians and the Melkites.*

2. THE REFUTATIONS BY YAHYĀ B. ʿADĪ

As to the working method of Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, most of his apologetical works are written in the form of a rebuttal; he quotes, most probably in extenso, an already existing refutation of the Christians by a Muslim—or a refutation of the Jacobites by a Nestorian—and replies paragraph by paragraph.

This methodology has the following consequences:

1. Important works of Muslim writers that otherwise would have been lost are still extant; as are *The Refutation of the Christians* by the famous philosopher Abū Yūsuf Yaʾqūb ibn Isḥaq al-Kindī,[3] the defence of the Nestorians and their view that Christ is two substances, by Aḥmad Abū 'l-Ḥusayn al-Miṣrī,[4] and of course the only remaining complete treatise by Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq, *The Refutation of the creed of the three Christian sects.*

2. We do not find the ideas of Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī presented in a systematic, coherent exposition, but dispersed here and there, in observations on particular refutations. Sometimes, we have the impression that the arguments presented should be elaborated, or even that he is contradicting himself; the reason is that the author, at that point in his reply, did not see the necessity of giving more details or of being more explicit.[5]

3. Certain arguments may be given in a particular reply, which we do not find on another occasion, where they would be appropriate, so that we have the impression of an evolution in Yaḥyā's think-

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[3] Augustin Périer, ''Un traité de Yaḥyā ben ʿAdī: Défense du dogme de la Trinity contre les objections d'al-Kindī'', *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 3/2 (1920-21), pp. 3-21 (referred to as: Al-Kindī). Idem., *Petit traités apologétique de Yaḥyā ben ʿAdī*, Paris, 1920 (referred to as: Petits traités).

[4] Emilio Platti, *La grande polémique antinestorienne de Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī I.II.* CSCO 427/Ar. 36 and 428/Ar. 37, Louvain, 1981 and CSCO 437/Ar. 38 and 438/Ar. 39, Louvain, 1982.

[5] Robert Henry de Valve, *The Apologetic Writings of Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī: Their Significance in the History of the Muslim-Christian Encounter and Their Impact on the Historical Development of Muslim and Christian Theology*, Meriden, Connecticut, 1973, Unpublished Dissertation (referred to as: De Valve), p. 50: ''Instead of refuting the difficulties in their entirety, he follows his adversary step by step and his arguments are cut up into small slices. Any one objection is thus refuted many times''.

ing. Striking, for example, is the great difference between the arguments given in his reply to al-Kindī on the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and his demonstration of the errors of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq on the same question. It is, in fact, extremely difficult to evaluate exactly this hypothetical evolution of his ideas: we are not sufficiently sure of the chronology of the treatises of the author.

4. In this case, the so called *Petits traités apologétiques*, edited by Augustin Périer and the *Traité sur l'Unité* edited by Father Samir, have their importance. The author is developing his ideas without referring to another text with an autonomous structure of argumentation. There is one exception: the *Petit Traité apologétique no. III* is of the same kind as the greater apologies, with the exception that the author of the questions related to the Trinity is not mentioned by name.

3. Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad b. Hārūn al-Warrāq

Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad b. Hārūn al-Warrāq, native of Baghdad, is the famous *zindīq*, freethinker, who was accused of being a heretic, as was his disciple, Ibn al-Rāwandī. Al-Masʿūdī mentions that Abū ʿĪsā died in 247 A.H./861-2, but there is no unanimity in the sources on this question.[6] Some even mention 297 A.H./909 or 910. We know the title of ten books attributed to him and when we consider the titles of these works (*Refutation of the Magians; A Recounting about the Sects of the Adherents of Dualism with a refutation of them; Refutation of the Jews; Refutation of the Christians*), we see that his main interest was the religious movements of his time.[7] Ibn al-Nadīm says that ''Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad b. Hārūn b. Muḥammad al-Warrāq was one of the brilliant theologians who was a Muʿtazilī, but confused the doctrines so that he has been accused of belonging to the sect of the adherents of dualism'', but nowhere in the *Refutation of the Christians*, does he give the impression that he is not a sincere Muslim. The refutation ends with the quotation of Sūrat al-Iḫlāṣ (S. 112), which is appropriate at the end of a refutation on the doctrine of the Incarnation...

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[6] Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq—Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, *De l'Incarnation*, ed. E. Platti, CSCO 490/Ar. 46, Louvain, 1987 (referred to as: Al-Warrāq ed.); transl. E. Platti, CSCO 491/Ar. 47, Louvain, 1987, p. XIII (referred to as: Al-Warrāq tr.), p. IX.

[7] Al-Warrāq tr., p. XIII.

4. ABŪ ʿISĀ AL-WARRĀQ'S TREATISE ON THE TRINITY

At the beginning of the edition of the treatise of Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq on the Incarnation,[8] in the first paragraph, we find this question: "Is the union the work of the (divine) Word, or is it the work of the three hypostases?". One could ask why this treatise starts with this question immediately linking the question on the union with the Trinity. In fact, the treatise on the Incarnation is the second part of one book which begins with the questions on the Trinity, and continues on the Incarnation.[9] It seems that it is only in the manuscripts now available, Egyptian Coptic copies from the 13th century, that one can find this division into 150 and then another 201 paragraphs, beginning where the theme of union is introduced. This does not exclude the possibility that it was Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī who made the division, but there is no doubt about the original unity of the whole work, as it appears in the title given by Ibn al-Nadīm: *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā l-firaq al-ṯalāṯ min al-naṣārā* (The Refutation of the three Christian Sects).[10]

The reason for editing the first part, on the Trinity, after the second part, was a very practical one: we studied all the treatises of Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī on the Incarnation first.[11]

The structure of the introduction itself gives a strong indication of the unity of the whole treatise:

The first 15 paragraphs are a short presentation on the faith of the Christians, treating the Trinity as well as the Incarnation. The first eight paragraphs present the Christian faith on the Trinity, and it is obvious that paragraphs 9 to 15, related to the Incarnation, are the continuation of the preceding paragraphs on the Trinity.

In fact, in preparing the edition, I noticed that nobody seems to have studied this first part of the work,[12] with the exception of

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[8] Al-Warrāq tr., p. 1.

[9] Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq says twice that he wants to complete this refutation of the three great Christian communities by a presentation of other Christian sects, like the Arians, the Macedonians, the Sabellians, the followers of Paul the Samosta and others (al-Warrāq tr., p. 177); Trinity, #12.

[10] R. Tajaddod, *Kitāb al-Fihrist li'l-Nadīm*, Tehran, 1971.

[11] The demonstration by Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī of the errors of Muḥammad b. Hārūn, known by the name of Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq, in his book on the refutation of the three Christian sects, the Jacobites, the Nestorians and the Melkites, does not have a title at the beginning of the first part on the Trinity (referred to as: Trinity). The second part is that contained in al-Warrāq ed.

[12] Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosopher Kindī and Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī on the Trinity,*

Augustin Périer. This is obvious from the beginning. Nobody has noticed: (1) the particular character of this introduction—the first 15 paragraphs, the short presentation of the Christian faith; (2) that the whole refutation of Christianity corresponds to this introduction; (3) that Yahyā b. ʿAdī continuously repeats the same arguments. Only Augustin Périer mentions how Yahyā b. ʿAdī constantly repeats, almost to the point of exaggeration, the analogy of the unity of the (divine) substance and the Trinity of the hypostases with the unity of the person of Zayd, who is also Zayd the physician, Zayd the geometrician and Zayd the scribe.[13]

5. THE INTRODUCTION TO THE TREATISE ON THE TRINITY

Before any comment on the whole treatise, it seems logical to start with the brief summary given by Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq of the creed of the Christians in the first eight paragraphs:[14]

1 "The Jacobites and the Nestorians claim that the Eternal is one substance (*jawhar*), three hypostases (*aqānīm*), and that the three hypostases are the substance, while this substance is the three hypostases".

2 "The Melkites, the people of the religion of the King of the Rūm, claim that the Eternal is one substance having three hypostases, and that the three hypostases are the substance, while the substance is not the three hypostases; neither do they say that, in number, there is a fourth (entity)".

3 "These three sects, the Jacobites, the Nestorians and the Melkites, claim that one of these three hypostases is Father, that another is Son and that the third is Spirit...".

Études philosophiques offertes au Dr. Ibrahim Madkour, Cairo, 1974. Idem., 'The Philosopher Kindī and Yahyā b. ʿAdī on the Trinity', in *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Cambridge/London 1976, pp. 318-336. Avril Mary Makhlouf, *The Trinitarian Doctrine of Yahyā b. ʿAdī: An appraisal*, in PO 10 (1981-1982), pp. 37-50. Idem., *The Doctrine of the Trinity in Certain Early Arabic Christian Writers with Special Reference to the Influence of the Islamic Environment*, Edinburgh, 1965, Unpublished Dissertation. Henry Robert de Valve, *The Apologetic Writings of Yahyā b. ʿAdī*, 1973.

[13] Augustin Périer, *Yahyā ben ʿAdī, un philosophe arabe chrétien du Xe siècle*, Paris, 1920, pp. 150-191 (referred to as: Périer), pp. 156, 167, 171: "Et nous sommes condamnés à entendre encore une fois l'inévitable comparaison de Zéid qui revient bien une centaine de fois au cours du traité".

[14] The Arabic text will be published in *MIDEO* 20 (1991), I.D.E.O., Cairo. We are preparing an edition containing the whole of the polemic on the Trinity for the collection CSCO.

4 "... that the Son is the Word, and that the Spirit is the Life; what they call the Holy Spirit".

5 "They claim all together that the three hypostases are in accordance (*muttafiqah*) in the substantiality and are different (*muḫtalifah*) in the hypostaticity, each one of them being a particular substance assembled by the common (*ʿāmm*) substance".

6 "They claim that the Son is continually generated (*mawlūd*) by the Father, that the Father continually generates (*wālid*) the Son and that the Spirit proceeds (*munbaṭiq*) continually from the Father".[15]

7 "They claim that the generation of the Son from the Father did not happen in the way of generated beings, but in the way the word is generated by the intellect, or as a part of the fire is generated by the fire, or as the light of the sun is generated by the sun".

8 "They disagree in the interpretation of the term 'hypostases'; some of them say that the hypostases are 'properties' (*ḫawāṣṣ*), others say they are 'persons' (*ašḫāṣ*), others say that they are 'attributes' (*ṣifāt*). Others are saying something else, but while they disagree about the terms they use, the meaning of what they say is the same or near one another".

The Treatise on the Trinity of Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq, from paragraphs 16 to 150 is a refutation of these eight paragraphs. The method used is exactly the same as described by al-Kindī at the beginning of his refutation of the Trinity: "To refute the Christians and annihilate their dogma of the Trinity, according to the principles of logic and philosophy, while giving a short summary of their doctrine";[16] in the same manner Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq gives a short presentation of their doctrine, and refutes it by analyzing the internal contradictions or stating that the logical conclusions are absurd. Except for the quotations of sūrah 112 at the end of the work, no reference is made to any revealed text.

6. THE CONTENT OF ABŪ ʿISĀ'S TREATISE ON THE TRINITY

In the introduction and presentation of the Christian faith, the fifth paragraph is of particular importance. In the discussion about the

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[15] Al-Warrāq adds "It is possible that instead of *munbaṭiq*, they use [the term] *fāʿid*, to improve the expression". We will see that Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī also used *munbaʿiṯ*.

[16] *Petits traités*, p. 118.

Unity of God and his Trinity, what matters is the possibility of any differentiation in the Unity. This question is expressed in the terms *ittifāq-iḫtilāf*, accordance and difference. If one considers the whole of the treatise on the Trinity, it appears that about 510 terms are used in connection with accordance and difference: *iḫtilāf, muḫtalif, yaḫtalif; ittifāq; ḫilāf, muḫālif, yuḫālif, wifāq, muwāfiq, yuwāfiq; taġayyur, mutaġayyir*... That is to say, this question occurs on almost every page.

The question is presented in the following way:

(#16) The divine substance is one; and you claim that it is eternal; is it *muḫtalif*, differentiated, or not?

(#19) If it is, is it a difference of the substance?

(#17) Or is it a difference of the hypostases? Is the substance in that case something other than the hypostases?

(#18) Is it a difference of properties and not of the substantiality? But are these properties not in fact, for you, the substance itself?

(#90) What is the origin of the properties of the Father, of the Son and of the Spirit? What is the origin of the difference: is it the substance or another principle?

(#28) If the latter, you are positing two eternal entities.

(#31) Is it possible that you affirm a difference on one side and accordance on another?

(#44) Is the substance different from the hypostases only under certain aspects? If so, again what is the reason for this difference?

(#47) Is there not also under this aspect an eternal entity other than the eternal substance of God, so that you still affirm two different eternal substances?

(#61) How can the substance be the substance and the hypostases the hypostases, without two eternal entities?

(#125) If there is any difference, is it ultimately a difference in the number, in the genus, in the species or in the qualification (*al-waṣf*)?—This question reminds us of the refutation of al-Kindī, who based the whole reply on the *Isagoge* of Porphyrus and asks if the three hypostases are eternal genera, eternal species, eternal differences, accidents or properties, or individualities.

(#79) Or are you just saying that there is only a difference in the expression (*fī al-ʿibārah*)? But in that case let us stop speaking about difference ...

(#51)   If there is any difference is it not because something is hap-
         pening accidentally to this (divine) substance and to its
         hypostases (*li-ᶜāriḍin yaᶜriḍu fihimā aw fi aḥadihimā*)?
(#62)   Should the hypostases then be accidents? Abū ᶜĪsā al-
         Warrāq points out that according to the Christians them-
         selves "nothing can happen accidentally to the substance
         or to the hypostases".
(#64-65) Can we not speak about three hypostases and in addition
         a fourth entity, the substance? Three and one is something
         other (*ġayr*) than three; is it three or four?—This question
         about the number also reminds us of the refutation of al-
         Kindī, and the *Petit traité IV*[17] in the most simple question:
         "The Christians say: three is one, one is three, this is obvi-
         ously false ...".[18]

7. YAḤYĀ B. ᶜADĪ, HIS REPLY TO AL-KINDĪ AND HIS TREATISE ON THE UNITY[19]

The answer to all these objections is to be found in the following
hypothesis by Yaḥyā b. ᶜAdī in his treatise on the Unity: "Others
say that the Creator is one in one sense and many in another (*wa qāla
āḫarūn: bal huwa wāḥid min jihah wa-kaṯīr min jihah*)".[20] In his answer
to the Muslim authors al-Kindī and al-Warrāq, but also to others,
Yaḥyā b. ᶜAdī emphasizes that they omit certain subdivisions of the
one.

To al-Kindī, he underlines that the Christians say on the one
hand, that the Creator is one, and that his quiddity is one (*al-qawl
al-dāll ᶜalā māhiyyatihi wāḥid*), but they also say, on the other hand,
that He is three, as far as He is good, wise and powerful (*jawād,
ḥakīm, qādir*); the reason is that He possesses in Himself the 'reality'
(*al-maᶜnā*)[21] of Bounty (*jūd*), the 'reality' of Wisdom (*ḥikmah*), and

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[17] *Petits traités*, p. 46.

[18] Al-Kindī, p. 16.

[19] Khalil Samir, *Le traité de l'unité de Yaḥyā b. ᶜAdī* (Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien, 2), Rome-Jounieh, 1980, cf. p. 163.

[20] Périer, Yaḥyā, p. 124.

[21] Cf. Al-Warrāq tr., p. XVIII: "Le terme qui pose le plus de problèmes est in-contestablement *al-maᶜnā*." Périer translates by '*notion*', also in this case. His con-clusion is in fact completely unacceptable: "voilà, certes, du nominalisme le plus pur" (Périer, p. 98). We have not found an adequate translation for the term *al-maᶜnā*; we use the term 'reality', and we designate by this term the aspect of *res*, an *aliquid* which is signified, equivalent to *al-amr*.

the 'reality' of Power (*qudrah*). Every one of these 'realities' is other (*ġayr*) than the other two, so that we call the substance good, wise and powerful.

This is not a contradiction, for we can use ''one'' in the sense of one in subject and many in definition; for example the man Zayd: he is an individual, one in subject, but he is multiple in definition; Zayd is a mortal, rational animal. In this way Christians say that the Creator is one.

These attributes of Bounty, Wisdom and Power are also found in the *Treatise on the Unity* and Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī refers to this treatise explicitly in paragraph 70 of his refutation of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq; but in the whole refutation this argument is far from having the importance it has elsewhere.

The definition of the Creator given in this paragraph 70 is as follows: ''He is one substance (. . .)[22] characterized as eternal; the 'reality' (of eternal) is other than the 'reality' of 'substance'; we attribute also [to the substance] being good, wise and powerful,[23] being the cause of the existence of all being out of himself and being the cause of the generation of all things generated''.

In the definition given at the beginning of the reply to al-Warrāq he defines the Eternal (*al-qadīm*) in the following way: ''the Eternal (. . .), the Creator is a substance who is an intellect, wise, powerful, eternal, the cause of the existence of all things existing, and of the generation of all things generated''.

One may remark that he does not repeat the attribute of bounty either here or in the same definition on paragraph 112. The reason is that his argumentation does not imply in this work a reference to this analogy. But he does not deny the arguments used in the former works. The same thing can be said about the comparison with man, ''a rational, mortal animal''.[24] This argument is used by Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī on several occasions,[25] but only sparsely in his reply to Abū ʿĪsā.

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[22] Here follows the definition of substance: ''That which is not in a subject, nor is a part of it, and what does not need something else in which it finds itself in order to exist''; we find this definition often in the works of Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī: cf. Yaḥyā, p. 74*.

[23] See also Trinity, #46.

[24] Trinity, #19.

[25] Cf. Yaḥyā, pp. 137, 118f.

8. The Definitions in Paragraph 1 of the Reply to Abū ʿIsā

In the first paragraph of his refutation of Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī defines the most important terms used by Christians in relation to Trinity, such as:
- the definition of "Eternal", already mentioned;
- the definition of "substance", in a particular sense, "what is not in a subject";
- the definition of "accident" as "what is in a thing, but not as a part of this thing";
- the definition of "one", in its different sense enumerated in the Treatise on the Unity, the reply to al-Kindī, and on several other occasions: the 'one' is used either (1) in genus; (2) in species; (3) in relation; (4) in number, the indivisible and the continuous; (5) in the definition; (6) in the subject; he stresses in a particular way the difference between the one in the sense of the definition and the one in the sense of the subject.
- the definition of "hypostasis"; the Syrians apply the term to the individual thing, one in number, such as Zayd and ʿAmr; but the Christian ʿulamāʾ (...) apply this term in a particular way when they use it in relation to the Creator (jalla wa-taʿālā): they apply the term "hypostasis" to three different 'realities': to the 'reality' named 'Father', to what they name 'Son' and to what they name "Holy Spirit'. In fact, the Creator is a substance, in the sense Yaḥyā mentions: He is one in subject, but we can correctly attribute to him different qualifications, three attributes, whose 'reality' is different one from another, from one point of view, and in accordance from another point of view. These three 'realities' are the hypostases.
- The Christians give the name "Father" to the substance they call the Creator, intelligent as a pure intellect (idā ʿaqala ʿaqlan mujarradan); they give the name "Son" to the Creator, intelligent as acting the intellection of his essence (ida ʿaqala ʿāqilan li-dātihi— intelligent of his essence); and they give the name "Holy Spirit" to the Creator, intelligent as object of the intellection of his essence (idā ʿaqala maʿqūlan li-dātihi—intelligible of his essence)".
- We can add to these definitions what Yaḥyā is saying in #100. If the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are by definition the (divine) substance, the Creator, the Christians can give six different meanings to the name "God—Allāh". This seems a

strange position, but we find it on several occasions in different works of Yaḥyā:[26] (1) God, the Creator; (2) the hypostasis of the Father; (3) the hypostasis of the Son; (4) the hypostasis of the Spirit; (5) Christ as far as he is the union of God and man; (6) 'god' taken in the general sense of 'who is adored (*ma'būd*) and venerated (*mu'aẓẓam*)'.

9. THE REPLY OF YAḤYĀ B. 'ADĪ TO ABŪ 'ISĀ AL-WARRĀQ

9.1. *The Divine Substance and the Hypostases*

From the first paragraphs, Yaḥyā b. 'Adī disagrees with Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq, who assumes that "the Jacobites and the Nestorians claim that the Eternal is one substance, three hypostases, that the three hypostases are the substance, while the substance is the three hypostases": No, the substance is not the hypostases!

Al-Kindī, in his refutation of the Christians, had a better perception of their point of view; he quotes them as saying that "the reality of the substance exists in every one of the hypostases which are in accordance (*muttafiqah*) with this substánce; every hypostasis has property differentiating it (*tuḫālif*) continually from this (substance) as from each other.[27]

For the first time in his reply to Abū 'Īsā, Yaḥyā presents the analogy with the individual Zayd; he will repeat this approximately thirty times:

- We can say of the individual Zayd that he is a physician, a geometrician or a scribe. But is Zayd the physician, Zayd the geometrician or Zayd the scribe the same Zayd as such? No. In each case we have a different 'reality'.
- On the other hand, we cannot of course say that there are three individuals Zayd.
- As it was established, the 'reality' pointed out by 'Zayd the physician' is different from the 'reality' 'Zayd the geometrician'. These is, however, no incompatibility between the different aspects of the 'reality' Zayd.
- Neither can we conclude that we have Zayd on the one hand and that there is a Zayd the physician, the geometrician, the scribe

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[26] Yaḥyā, p. 103.
[27] Al-Kindī, p. 4.

on the other hand; there are not two individuals Zayd either. Whoever bids welcome to Zayd as a guest, welcomes also the physician, the scribe or the geometrician.

- The conclusion follows: There is only one subject, Zayd, but we can attribute to him three qualifications really existing in him.
    The same thing occurs with the divine hypostases:

- In the expression of the quiddity of the (divine) substance, given in the definition, we find a difference between the quiddity of the Father, of the Son and of the Spirit, given in their definition. In each case we find a different 'reality'.

- On the other hand, there is no question of speaking of three divine substances, three gods or three lords.

- Nevertheless it remains true that three 'realities', who are distinct from one another, belong to the (divine) substance who is one. There is no incompatibility between them.

- Neither is there the substance on one side and the hypostases on the other: whoever adores one of the three hypostases adores God;[28] whoever adores the Father, adores God; and the same for the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- The conclusion is evident: there is only one (divine) substance, but we can qualify the substance in different ways, as three different 'realities' belonging to it. When we talk about God the Father, we refer to the divine substance, under the aspect of his Paternity. It is the same for the Filiation of the Son and the Procession of the Spirit. The paternity (al-ubuwwah), the Filiation (al-bunuwwah) and the Procession (al-inbiʿāt) can be attributed to God: they are attributes of God.[29]

9.2. *The Properties of the Hypostases*

The reason for the difference between the hypostases, is the properties (ḫawāṣṣ) of the hypostases: to generate is the property of the Father (al-īlād), to be generated is the property of the Son (al-tawallud), to proceed is the property of the Holy Spirit (al-inbiʿāt or al-inbitāq). The differentiation is possible given the existence of these properties in the hypostases; in the 'reality' of the hypostasis we find the 'reality' of the substance, to which is attributed this property, which is joined to this substance (lāḥiq).

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[28] Trinity, #57.
[29] Trinity, #99.

– The reason for the difference between the hypostases, is the properties.
– The reason for the accordance between the hypostases, is the substance: *ma'nā al-jawhar mawjūd fī kull wāḥid min al-aqānīm.*

In this sense we can correctly affirm that the hypostases are a substance, while the 'reality' of the substance is one of the two 'realities' which constitute those hypostases.

This position of Yaḥyā b. 'Adī is clearly expressed at the end of his *Petit traité apologétique no. 1:*[30] ''The Creator is a single substance without multiplicity in any point of view in so far as He is a substance'' (there are neither three gods, nor three substances); ''but He possesses three attributes—if you want, you can say 'three properties'. If we join them to the substance, the composed entity (*al-mujtama'*) resulting from the substance and each one of these attributes, is different from the entity composed by the other attributes (and the substance), by reason of his attribute (*ṣifah*) or property (*ḥāṣṣah*). (The difference) comes from the properties and not from the substance''.

We find a corresponding text in Yaḥyā b. 'Adī's reply to Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq in paragraph 71. This is not surprising: we will see that there are more similarities between the reply to Abū 'Īsā and this *Petit Traité No. 1.*

Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq did not understand the position of the Christians as well as al-Kindī did. He simply states that some Christians claim that the hypostases are the properties,[31] and in paragraphs 141-148, al-Warrāq raises the question of how they understand the statement that the hypostases are the properties (*inna al-aqānīm ḥawāṣṣ*).

On several occasions Yaḥyā b. 'Adī corrects Abū 'Īsā's interpretation: ''The Christians do not claim that the hypostases are the properties, while the properties are entities entering in the 'reality' of the hypostases; they are not the hypostases''. ''And with regard to the properties, they say that each of them is a part of the two parts of each of the hypostases, not the hypostases themselves; they do not

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[30] *Petits traités*, p. 22. The same idea is also expressed clearly in *Petit traité apologétique No. IV*: ''Il est correct d'affirmer du Créateur qu'il est une substance unique ayant troi propriétés que les chrétiens appellent *hypostases* [in the translation of Périer we find always the term 'personnes' for *aqānīm*]''.

[31] Trinity, #141.

affirm that the Son is a property: the 'reality' of every hypostasis is constituted by the 'reality' of the single substance (on the one hand) and the properties (on the other)".[32]

When al-Warrāq quotes Christians using some attributes to qualify God, saying that *al-ḥikmah* or *al-nuṭq* of God are the Son, or that the Life (*al-ḥayāt*) of God is the Spirit, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī denies that this is a correct account of their point of view: "In fact, the Christians do not believe that *al-nuṭq* is the Son (. . .) although they sometimes do [express themselves in that way] for more convenience, saying that *al-nuṭq* is the Son, or that *al-ḥikmah* is the Son—or that *al-ḥayāt* is the Spirit".

In a note at the end of the first *Petit traité*, Augustin Périer remarks that Yaḥyā often repeats the idea of the composition of the hypostases. That is another similarity between the reply to Abū ʿĪsā and this small treatise.

In comparison with other texts, we discover, however, a surprising fact. In the refutation of al-Kindī, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī himself is saying just what he is denying in his reply to al-Warrāq: he states that the hypostases are the properties of the single substance (*wa-dālika anna hādihi al-talātah al-aqānīm hiya ʿindahum ḥawāṣṣ li-dālika al-jawhar wa-hiya ʿindahum ṣifāt yūṣaf bihā al-jawhar al-wāḥid*),[33] " . . . because it is good, wise and powerful, Bounty is called by the Christians 'Father', Wisdom is called 'Son' and Power is called "Holy Spirit'''. He is doing just the same in his *Petit traité apologétique no. IV*,[34] even in the title: *It is correct to state that the Creator is a single substance possessing three properties called by the Christians 'Hypostases'*.

9.3. Are the Properties Accidents?

Once it is confirmed that the hypostases find their differentiation in their properties, what is the status of these properties?

In paragraph 106, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī presents the definition of the property. He quotes literally the text of Porphyrus's *Isagoge*[35] and

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[32] Trinity, #142.
[33] Al-Kindī, pp. 5 and 15.
[34] *Petits traités*, p. 44.
[35] Porphyrus, *Isagoge* 12, pp. 11-19; the translation quoted by Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī here is not identical to that of Abū ʿUtmān al-Dimasqī edited by ʿAbdurraḥmān Badawi, *Organon Aristotlis III* (Islamica, VII), Cairo, 1952. Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī refers also to Porphyry in his refutation of Quryāqus, Yaḥyā, ed. pp. 41*, 169-170 (#30): "c'est une des conditions du propre d'exister toujours dans la chose à laquelle il

his subdivision into four senses. One will refer also to Aristotle and his definitions of the property.[36] But what we have to consider here is in particular the first sense given by Porphyrus: "What occurs (*ya'rid*) in one species only, although not in every member of the species, as healing and measuring occur in man (*ka'l-ṭibb wa'l-handasah li'l-'insān*)". One can easily recognize two out of the three elements of the comparison of Yaḥyā: Zayd, the physician, the geometrician and the scribe.

Wolfson notes that, in Yaḥyā's refutation of al-Kindī, Yaḥyā refuses to say "that the hypostases are accidents in the peculiar sense of the term";[37] on the other hand, we have already mentioned that in his reply to al-Kindī, Yaḥyā does not make the distinction between hypostases and properties, as he does in his reply to Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq.

In the comparison "Zayd, physician, geometrician, scribe", Yaḥyā b. 'Adī enters into the question. To be a physician, a geometrician and a scribe, is an essential qualification of Zayd the physician, Zayd the geometrician, Zayd the scribe, but not an essential qualification of Zayd. The same thing occurs for the hypostases: that the Father generates, that the Son is generated and that the Spirit proceeds, are essential qualifications of the Father, of the Son and of the Spirit, but they are not essential qualifications of God. For the substance of God, it is only a joined characteristic.[38]

And this is exactly the meaning of the *property*: A 'property' is a predicate which does not indicate the essence of a thing, but yet belongs to that thing alone, and is predicated convertibly of it".[39]

The question of the property as an accident is raised explicitly in paragraph 46, where Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq asks the question in the following way: "If (the Christians) put forward an eternal (entity) other than the (divine) substance, this cannot be something other than a substance or an accident; if it is a substance, they put forward

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appartient en propre", cf. Porphyry, *Isagoge* 21, 4: "the 'property' is defined as that present always and only to the entire species".

[36] Aristotle, *Organon, Topica* 102a18-19 and 128b15-21: "a 'permanent property' is one like the property that belongs to God...".

[37] Al-Kindī, pp. 9 and 18: "The Christians do not also say that the hypostases are accidents in the particular sense of the term, for, while they apply to them the term property, they do not mean thereby that they are accidents; they rather consider each of the hypostases a substance" (Wolfson, p. 324).

[38] Trinity, #132.

[39] Aristotle, *Organon, Topica* 102a18.

two eternal and different substances; if it is an accident, they put forward an eternal accident''; (and according to Abū ꜤĪsā this seems incompatible with the convictions of the Christians).

The answer to Yaḥyā b. ꜤAdī is clear: ''This is what the Christians answer to this question:
- The substance is in accordance with the hypostases through the existence of the substance as a part of the 'reality' of each of the hypostases;
- It is different, taken separately, and in the constitution of the hypostases by the properties.
Indeed, if these properties are added to the 'reality' of the substance [the result is] the constitution of the 'reality' of the hypostasis.
- The 'reality' which is other than the substance, is called 'property'. Now, in a correct perception of things, we ought to say that [property] is *of the nature of the accident*. But [the Christians] are reluctant to apply in this case the term 'accident' to the properties, while Revealed Books do not use [these terms] to qualify the Creator. The authorities of the Christians did not use the term 'properties'.

And with regard to eternal accidents, it is not impossible to speak about them''.[40] We have the impression that this point of view is also confirmed by what Yaḥyā b. ꜤAdī puts forward in his *Petit traité no. IV.*

This is clear; but in paragraph 51, where Abū ꜤĪsā al-Warrāq considers that it is inconceivable that something should happen accidently (*yaꜤrid fīhi šayʾun*) to the eternal substance and to its hypostases, Yaḥyā b. ꜤAdī answers with a reference to the definition given at the beginning, that the parts of a thing are not necessarily accidents. We can find the same answer also in the *Petit traité No. III.*[41]

9.4. *What is the Cause of the Hypostases?*

To this question of the eternity of the hypostases, Yaḥyā b. ꜤAdī re-

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[40] *Petits traités*, pp. 56f: ''Si leur différence est accidentelle, elle n'est donc pas substantielle, et le principe qui les différencie doit être ou la paternité, la filiation, la procession (*al-inbiꜤāt*), ou quelque chose d'autre. Et si (l'adversaire) répond: C'est bien la paternité, la filiation et le procession, et rien d'autre, il est en conformité de sentiment avec tous les chrétiens''.

[41] *Petits traités*, p. 40.

plies in his refutation to al-Warrāq[42] and to al-Kindī[43] "that it is indeed possible to find numerous causes which do not precede their effects.[44] In such a way, every one of the hypostases can be eternal; there is no need for them to be caused by [temporal] generation (*takawwun*); this would imply that the hypostases were caused in time. So he argued in paragraph 6: "The Father is the cause of the existence of the Son (*ʿillat wujūdihi*), but not [the cause of his temporal] generation (*lā ʿillat takawwunihi*)".

In the same paragraph we find also the analogy of the intellect, commented upon by most scholars: "Since [we say that] the intellect who is intelligent of his essence is the cause of his existence as intelligent (*kamā al-ʿaql al-ʿāqil ḏātahu ʿillah li-wujūdihi ʿāqilan*) and so as the intelligent is caused (*maʿlūl*) by him, since he is the reason (*sabab*) of his existence, in the same way they say of the Spirit, who proceeds (*munbaṭiq* or *munbaʿiṯ*) or emanates (*fāʾiḍ*) that the Father is the cause of his existence issued from it (*ḥārijan*); just as the intelligible is issued from the intellect (. . .)"; "the Creator was not first unintelligent, to become intelligent afterwards (. . .); just as He was not first unintelligible of his essence to become intelligible afterwards". It is well established that Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī was directly influenced by his master Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī[45] in this intellectual conception of God.

9.5. *The Intellect, the Intelligent and the Intelligible*

As we have shown, this analogy is also mentioned in the definitions of the beginning of the reply to Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq, in the very first paragraph. Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī repeats his position in paragraph 42; and there he refers to his short treatise *Fī al-tamṯīl li-taṯlīṯ bi'l-ʿaql wa'l-ʿāqil wa'l-maʿqūl*, probably the *Petit Traité apologétique no. II*. Here also, the *Petit Traité No. I* summarises very clearly the ideas issued in connection to the objections to Abū ʿĪsā.

But it is striking that this very important analogy is in fact so scarcely mentioned in this refutation of Abū ʿĪsā (five or six times), in particular, when we compare it to the numerous repetitions using the comparison with Zayd:

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[42] Trinity, #72.

[43] Al-Kindī, pp. 7 and 17.

[44] Wolfson, p. 324: an eternal uncaused composition is possible.

[45] Emilio Platti, "Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, philosphe et théologien", in *MIDEO* 14 (1980), pp. 167-184, p. 175; de Valve, pp. 69f.

- In paragraph 42 Ibn ʿAdī states that "the essence of the pure intellect is the cause (*sabab*) of the existence of the intellect, the intelligent and the intelligible".
- The analogy is repeated in paragraph 8 of the discussion on the Incarnation in the reply to Abū ʿIsā, on a very important issue: to prove the possibility for a human being to unite with God by the way of the Incarnation, understood as an intellectual union between the intelligent, the Son, and not the Father or the Spirit, the intellect or the intelligible; this position has been explained already in the *Petit Traité apologétique No. II*. As we showed elsewhere, this extremely important argument unites the fundamental Christian doctrines in one intellectual conception of God.[46]
- The analogy is also implicitly in the definitions of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in paragraph 84: The Father is "a substance, intellect, eternal, wise (*ḥakīm*), powerful (*qādir*), cause of the existence of everything created, he is generating and not generated and does not proceed"; the Son is "a substance, intellect as acting the intellection of his essence (intelligent of his essence), eternal, wise, powerful, cause of the existence of everything created, he is generated, does not generate and does not proceed"; the Holy Spirit is "a substance, intellect as object of the intellection of his essence (intelligible of his essence), eternal, wise, powerful, cause of the existence of everything created; he proceeds, does not generate and is not generated".[47]

10. YAHYĀ B. ʿADĪ AS THEOLOGIAN

From this brief summary of the major themes included in the reply to Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq, in relation to other polemical work, we can conclude that above all, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī is a theologian: he applies the adage *fides quaerens intellectum*.

For Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, the Christian dogma of the Trinity, revealed by Revelation, likewise the dogma of the Incarnation, cannot be annihilated by applying the law of contradiction[48] opposed, as is currently done in the polemical Muslim literature: Christ cannot be

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[46] *MIDEO* 14, p. 176: the text referred to is not from the discussion on the Trinity, but is from paragraph 8 of the discussion on the *Incarnation* in the refutation of Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq!

[47] Compare with the definition of the divine substance #8.

[48] De Valve, p. 49.

God and man at the same time, God cannot be one and three at the same time. In all these cases Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī points out that the conditions of the contradiction are not fulfilled, that unity is not absolute, and that, under other aspects, multiplicity is possible. This is the meaning of different analogies and distinctions to be found in his apologetical work.

- Take for example the packages on board a moving ship: they are in motion, while the ship is sailing from Mosul to Baghdad, and they are at rest, while they are well fixed on board.
- The differentiation of the one, one in subject, many in definition; and, on the other hand, the doctrine of the attribute of God, his Bounty, Wisdom and Power.
- Wolfson and Makhlouf describe in detail the exposition of the Trinitarian doctrine, illustrating it by the image reflected by two mirrors which face one another presented in the *Petit traité No. I.*
- The comparison, Zayd, physician, geometrician, scribe, as Yaḥyā says, is "equivalent to what the Christians say [about Trinity]" (*hāḏa al-miṯāl muʿādil limā yaqūl al-naṣārā*).[49]
- In the case of the Trinitarian doctrine, and also for the doctrine of the Union of God in Christ, he refers explicitly to *De anima* of Aristotle as well as to Alexander of Aphrodisias to explain the validity of the intellectual analogy of the intellect, the intelligent and the intelligible.[50]

Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī's comparisons and analogies allow him to discuss with Muslims and Nestorian Christians the doctrine of his Jacobite Christian faith on a rational basis,[51] without referring to the authority of a revealed text. In his confrontation with famous Muslim authors, he is not always presenting the same solutions; sometimes he contradicts himself; evidently there is an evolution in his ideas.

But finally the fundamental questions raised by him as a rejoinder to the opponents are always the same: Why should God not reveal Himself under the three aspects of his hypostases, designated by the Christians in different ways, based on what the Scriptures are saying

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[49] Trinity, #97.
[50] Trinity, #42.
[51] De Valve, pp. 58f: "Ibn ʿAdī is obviously searching for rational foundations he can use to defend the dogmas of the faith. . . . It was Yaḥyā's goal to develop doctrines of Christianity from reasonable syllogisms and analogies without using revelation".

to them? Why should God not be present in a human being, as we understand it from the Gospels? There is no indication that this would be impossible. There are a lot of indications that God can indeed reveal himself as such.

Note. Recent publications:

Sahban Khalifat, *Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī. The Philosophical Treatises. A critical edition with an introduction and a study*, Amman, 1988.

Carl Ehrig-Eggert, «Die Abhandlung über den Nachweis der Natur des Möglichen von Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī (gest. 974 A.D.)», *Veröffentlichungen des Institutes für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*, herausgegeben von Fuat Sezgin, A. Reihe, Band 5, Frankfurt am Main, 1990.

Marie-Thérèse Urvoy, *Traité d'éthique d'Abū Zakariyyāʾ Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī* («Etudes chrétiennes arabes»), Paris: Cariscript, 1991.

David Thomas, *Anti-Christian polemic in early Islam. Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's «Against the Trinity»*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

APOLOGETIC ELEMENTS IN COPTIC-ARABIC HISTORIOGRAPHY: THE LIFE OF AFRAHĀM IBN ZURʿAH, 62ND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA

Johannes Den Heijer

1. Introduction

Christian Arabic apologetic literature produced by Copts before their "golden age" (the thirteenth century A.D.), is limited mainly to the works of the famous tenth-century theologian, Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, bishop of al-Ušmūnayn.[1] In most of his apologetical texts he seeks to refute Nestorianism, Chalcedonianism and Judaism, but occasionally, Sawīrus deals with Muslim ideas as well.[2] Some of his works are extant today. Other texts he wrote must be considered lost, but they are mentioned by Mīḫāʾīl, bishop of Tinnīs, who on several occasions dealt with Sawīrus in his biographies of patriarchs. Mīḫāʾīl's series of biographies, written in 1051, is one of the Coptic sources of the Arabic text known as the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, compiled at the end of the eleventh century by the Alexandrian deacon Mawhūb ibn Manṣūr ibn Mufarrij.[3] At one instance, Mīḫāʾīl gives a list of Sawīrus' works,[4] which was later copied and slightly adapted by the famous Coptic encyclopaedist, Abū al-Barakāt ibn Kabar.[5] Elsewhere, Mīḫāʾīl

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[1] Samir, *Flambeau*; *GCAL*, II, pp. 300-318.

[2] Notably in the "Second Book" of his *Kitāb al-Majāmiʿ*, and in his *Kitāb al-Bayān*, see *GCAL*, II, pp. 308, 312. See also Samir, *Miṣbāḥ al-ʿaql*, p. 13, who quotes *Tafsīr al-amānah* for a discussion with Muslim scholars.

[3] Den Heijer, *Mawhūb*. For Mīḫāʾīl's contribution, see pp. 9f and 149-154.

[4] *HPC*, II, ii, pp. 109f/transl. pp. 164f.

[5] Abū al-Barakāt ibn Kabar, *Miṣbāḥ al-ẓulmah fī īḍāḥ al-ḫidmah, li'l-qass Šams al-Riʾāsah Abū al-Barakāt al-maʿrūf bi-Ibn Kabar*, (edition Samir Khalil, Cairo 1971), pp. 306f. Separate edition of the list in W. Riedel, "Der Katalog der christlichen Schriften in arabischer Sprache von Abu'l-Barakat", *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 5 (1902), pp. 635-706, esp. p. 654, transl. pp. 686f, and (in a corrected version) in Georg Graf, "Zwei dogmatische Florilegien der Kopten, A. Die Kostbare Perle," *OCP*, 3 (1937), pp. 49-77, particularly pp. 60ff, n. 5. See also Samir, *Miṣbāḥ al-ʿaql*,

relates two episodes where Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffaꜥ discusses religion with a Muslim *qāḍī* (probably al-Qāḍī al-Nuꜥmān),[6] and with a Jewish protégé of the vizier Yaꜥqūb ibn Killīs (himself a Jewish convert to Islam),[7] respectively. Both dialogues, however, are of a level rather unworthy of Sawīrus' reputation, based on his real apologetic and polemical works. In the first anecdote, he wittily demonstrates that a dog, which happens to pass by the *qāḍī*'s company, cannot be a Christian but must be a Muslim, since it eats meat and abstains from drinking wine on a day on which Muslims fast and Christians drink wine.[8] The second story, in which Sawīrus contends that the Jews are unworthy of a discussion before the caliph,[9] is not completely without value for our topic, for it seems to indicate, albeit rather vaguely, that a culture of religious debate did exist at the Fatimid court in Sawīrus's days.[10] Notably, the passage where the caliph, al-Muꜥizz, is quoted as saying that the discussants should be allowed to express themselves freely, without anger,[11] may reflect such an atmosphere. In other respects, though, these stories are perhaps not to be accepted as serious accounts of genuine religious dialogues. Their nature rather corresponds to many other instances in Mīhāꜣīl's biographies of patriarchs, and, indeed, in the contributions of most other authors of the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*. These texts are actually a complicated mixture of history and legend, of fact and fiction. To be sure, their intrinsic value lies, not in their reference to actual historical events, but in their reflections of attitudes and mentalities. In quite a few cases, their real message is interconfessional polemics, or, at least, an assessment of the relations between their own religious commu-

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pp. 25ff. Mīhāꜣīl also presents another author of polemics: al-Wāḍiḥ b. Rajā, a Muslim convert to Christianity. Mīhāꜣīl gives a short description of his works at the end of a lengthy account of the sufferings he underwent after his apostasy from Islam, see *HPC*, II, ii, p. 110, transl. pp. 164f, discussed by Samir, *Miṣbāḥ al-ꜥaql*, pp. 20-23.

[6] This, at least, is the identification provided by Marius Canard, art. "al-ꜥAzīz bi'llāh", *EI2*.

[7] On this vizier, see Marius Canard, art. "Ibn Killis" in: *EI2*. For the identification of his protégé, Mūsā Ibn Elꜥazar, see Samir, *Flambeau*, p. 154.

[8] *HPC*, II, ii, pp. 92f, transl. p. 138. Quoted by Samir, *Miṣbāḥ al-ꜥaql*, pp. 17f.

[9] *HPC*, II, ii, p. 93 / transl. pp. 138f. Quoted by Samir, *Miṣbāḥ al-ꜥaql*, pp. 18ff.

[10] Cf. also the discussion by the Syrian bishop Yuꜣannis Ibn al-Sammāꜥ with al-Muꜥizz, in the presence of Sawīrus, see Samir, *Miṣbāḥ al-ꜥaql*, p. 17.

[11] *HPC*, II, ii, p. 93/transl. p. 139.

nity and the others, translated, so to speak, into the language of narrative.[12]

Therefore, it may be useful to study, besides explicit religious apologies and polemics, also one example of this less sophisticated level of expression of relations between Islam and Christianity in Egypt in the Fatimid period.

2. The Life of Afrahām Ibn Zurᶜah in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*

The example I should like to elaborate on here is the story of the movement of the Muqattam hill outside Cairo, which forms the main part of the biography of the 62nd Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, Afrahām (Abrahām, Abrām) or Ephraim (Afrām) ibn Zurᶜah (975-978), in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*. This Life belongs to the above-mentioned series written by Mīhāʾīl, bishop of Tinnīs.

In the beginning of the biography, we are told how Ibrāhīm (as he was called as a layman), a wealthy Syrian merchant in Cairo, is chosen for the patriarchate. After an account of his first measures, the author tells us how the Fatimid caliph, al-Muᶜizz, invites Afrahām to send one of the bishops to his court, in order to discuss religious affairs with his vizier, Yaᶜqūb ibn Killis, and his friend, a Jew called Mūsā. Afrahām dispatches Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffaᶜ. As an example of Sawīrus' wisdom, Mīhāʾīl tells the story about the dog, and then turns to the discussion with Mūsā in front of the caliph, to which I have referred earlier. In his anger about this discussion, Ibn Killis, the vizier, suggests to al-Muᶜizz that the falsity of Christianity should be demonstrated. He quotes Matthew 17:20: "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain: Move from here to there, and it will move (. . .)". Consequently, Ibn Killis says, the patriarch must be told to try to move the Muqattam hill by his prayers. The caliph summons the patriarch to his court, and threatens him that, if he is unable to produce such

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[12] This approach is based on the work done by John Wansbrough on early Muslim historiography: *The Sectarian Milieu. Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford 1978), passim. Although Wansbrough's method, in its turn, is based on biblical studies, his emphasis on interconfessional aspects makes his work particularly useful for comparison with Oriental Christian texts from a setting where Islam is involved.

a miracle, all Christians in Egypt will be put to the sword. Afrahām leaves in distress, and spends three days and nights praying and fasting. Finally, he beholds a vision of the Virgin Mary, who provides him with instructions to work the miracle. Following these instructions, Afrahām seeks the assistance of a one-eyed water-carrier. This man turns out to be a former tanner, called Simᶜān, who now spends all his time feeding the poor. Simᶜān instructs the patriarch how to proceed. Subsequently, Afrahām, accompanied by the whole Coptic community of Cairo invites the caliph, his vizier Ibn Killīs, the Jew Mūsā, and all the military chiefs, to the foot of the Muqattam hill. For a long time, the Christians exclaim: "Kyrie Eleison" and prostrate themselves three times. After each prostration, the mountain is lifted from its place. Awe-inspired, the caliph tells Afrahām that he wants to do any favour the patriarch may ask for. When al-Muᶜizz insists, Afrahām seeks his permission to rebuild the demolished churches of Abū Marqūrah and al-Muᶜallaqah. The caliph agrees and personally sees to it that the rebuilding activities can begin and that the opposition of some of the Muslims is crushed. Mīḫāʾīl concludes his biography of Afrahām by relating his death, and by way of an appendix, he adds the story of the Coptic official Abūʾl-Yumn Quzmān ibn Mīnā, which does not concern us here.[13]

Most episodes of this biography are centred around the Muqattam miracle. Its message is obvious: despite the political preponderance of the Muslims, any challenge to the Christian faith is vain. In the second part, though, the story can also be read as an expression of allegiance to the Fatimid court: once the caliph has been convinced of the truthfulness of the Christians, he emerges as a committed protector of their interests, and their loyalty to him is beyond question.

3. The Life of Afrahām ibn Zurᶜah in MS Paris syr. 65

I am not interested here in the question whether some historical event could possibly underlie this miracle account. What does matter here is the later development of the story. The later Vulgate version of the story in the *History of the Patriarchs*, which probably stems from the thirteenth century A.D., does not contain any significant

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[13] The Life of Afrahām ibn Zurᶜah is published in *HPC*, II, ii, pp. 91-100, according to the "Vulgata" recension of the *HP*. The original (primitive) recension is in MS Paris ar. 303, ff. 188r-200r. On these two recensions, see Den Heijer, *Mawhūb*, pp. 14-80.

variants as compared with its eleventh century primitive version edited by Mawhūb.[14]

But outside the *History of the Patriarchs*, the story also appears separately in a number of hagiographical manuscripts.[15] The version of the story found in one of these manuscripts was edited and translated in 1909-1910 by L. Leroy, who already pointed at some deviations from the *History of the Patriarchs*.[16] The Syrian provenance of the manuscript, Paris syr. 65, is obvious, since it is written in Garšūnī (in 1594), and the colophon of the story mentions one Qūriyaqūs (Cyriacus), a monk from the region of Diyār Bakr (Diyarbakir) as its scribe[17] (not as its author, as Leroy writes in his translation[18]). Moreover, some scribal errors seem to indicate that this version of the story was copied from a manuscript which was also written in Syriac characters.[19] As regards the contents, its main points of interest are the following:

3.1. *Various Details*

Several details in the story differ substantially from the original version in the *History of the Patriarchs (HP)*. Thus, the reason why the former tanner, Simʿān, has lost one of his eyes, is given in rather vague terms in the latter version, which simply states that he had culled it out because it had "beheld what was not mine with lust",[20] whereas the Garšūnī MS contains a relatively lengthy account of how this had come about, including the bewildered reaction of the woman in question and her friends.[21] Furthermore, the ver-

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[14] All these variants are of a stylistic and linguistic nature. In other parts of the *HP* however, the differences are sometimes considerable (see reference in preceding note).

[15] Den Heijer, *Mawhūb*, pp. 26f.; *GCAL*, II, p. 306.

[16] L. Leroy, "Histoire d'Abraham le Syrien, patriarche copte d'Alexandrie", *ROC*, 14 (1909), pp. 380-389 (translation), pp. 390-400 (Ar. text); 15 (1910), pp. 26-33 (translation), pp. 33-41 (Ar. text); pp. 218ff (additional note on Abraham the Syrian).

[17] The manuscript was produced in Hama, see H. Zotenberg, *Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques et sabéens (mandaïtes) de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris 1874), pp. 31ff.

[18] Leroy, *ROC*, 15 (1910), p. 41/transl. p. 33, interprets the expression ʿalā yad ... ("at the hand of ...") as "Elle a pour auteur (...)".

[19] The present author is preparing a study on the textual history of the biography of Afrahām ibn Zurʿah, as contained in the *HP*, in the MS dealt with here, and in other versions mentioned later in this paper.

[20] *HPC*, II, ii, p. 95/transl. p. 42.

[21] Leroy, *ROC*, 14 (1909), pp. 397f./transl. pp. 386f.

sion edited by Leroy includes an episode where the caliph tells the Muslims and Jews present to pray at the foot of the mountain before the Christians do so. In this manner, the strength of the Christian prayer is contrasted with those said by the other two communities.[22] Perhaps the most significant difference in details concerns the actual movement of the mountain itself. In the *HP*, it is lifted, or rather, moved up and down, three times, but in Leroy's version, it is moved from one place to another, piece by piece.[23]

3.2. *A Dialogue on Religion*

The second point of interest, is the presence, in the Garšūnī version, of a dialogue between the patriarch Afrahām and the caliph al-Muʿizz, following the miracle. I hasten to point out, however, that it is not a very interesting dialogue from a theological or literary point of view. The caliph only asks short questions and the patriarchs answers are purely scriptural, devoid of rational or philosophical elements, and, as far as I can see, far too general to be linked to influences from other than biblical sources. The contents of this dialogue can be summarised as follows. To the question of the caliph whether the Christians believe that God has married to beget a son, Afrahām paraphrases and quotes the Gospels on the Annunciation and the Incarnation, and then switches to the importance of baptism. Perhaps a more interesting point is his contention that the Qurʾān recognizes the belief that God's spirit was inspired to Mary, followed by some other parallels between the Qurʾān and the New Testament. When the caliph wonders whether there really is not any dualism in the Christian concept of Christ as both the splendour and the image of God, the patriarch explains the Trinity in conventional terms, and underlines the incapability of the human mind to contain these matters. After the third, rather unclear, question, the patriarch goes on to compare Christ's sojourn on earth with the way kings and other rulers sometimes mingle with the masses incognito, and to refute some of the things the Jews have said about Jesus Christ. The dialogue proper is concluded by a reference to some of Christ's miracles, and the mission of the Apostles.[24]

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[22] Leroy, *ROC*, 14 (1909), pp. 398ff./transl. pp. 387f.

[23] *HPC*, II, ii, p. 96/transl. p. 143; Leroy, *ROC*, 14 (1909), p. 399/transl. p. 388.

[24] The actual dialogue is followed by a few remarks in which Afrahām belittles the importance of Islam and emphasizes the glory of Christianity. Leroy, *ROC*, 14 (1909), pp. 399f./transl. pp. 388f.; 15 (1910), pp. 33-37/transl. pp. 26-30.

3.3. *The Conversion of Al-Mu'izz*

The third point in the version edited by Leroy is a rather controversial one. As a result of the conversation just described, al-Mu'izz is reported inviting Afrahām to ask him any favour. Afrahām asks the caliph to diminish the amount of poll-tax (*jizyah*) due from the Christians. This, the caliph says, will be done, but he wants the patriarch to ask for something more significant. Afrahām then invites al-Mu'izz to take care of the salvation of his soul. The caliph asks the patriarch to baptize him. The patriarch, however, points out that he first has to give up his secular power and withdraw from the company of the Muslims.[25] At this point, the version of the Paris MS rejoins the version of the *HP* by relating how the patriarch obtains permission to rebuild the aforementioned churches.[26] The issue of the caliph's wish to convert is no longer mentioned until the end of the story, where it is stated that al-Mu'izz disappeared mysteriously and left to a monastery, where he was baptized and became a monk. His departure, it is said, has become proverbial for a situation where a person suddenly disappears.[27] I will come back to this particular point in a moment.

4. The Life of Afrahām ibn Zur'ah in MS Paris ar. 282

These, then, are the main differences between the versions of the Life of Afrahām in the *HP* and in the Paris Garšūnī MS. Of course, one would like to know where and when the latter version originated and how the important additions and modifications have entered it. At the present state of research, I am unable to answer this question. It does seem unlikely, however, that this version as such is a Syrian reworking of Mīḫāʾīl's text, as Leroy seems to suggest.[28] Such a supposition is countered by a comparison of Leroy's version with another Paris MS, Ar. 282, written in Egypt in ordinary Arabic script in 1650-1651.[29] Although it is thus more recent than the Garšūnī MS, written in 1594, the version of the Life of Afrahām contained in it is similar to Leroy's version, but also shares charac-

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[25] Leroy, *ROC*, 15 (1910), pp. 37ff./transl. pp. 30f.
[26] *HPC*, II, ii, p. 96/transl. p. 144; Leroy, *ROC*, 15 (1910), p. 39/transl. p. 31.
[27] Leroy, *ROC*, 15 (1910), p. 40/transl. p. 32.
[28] See above, note 17.
[29] Gérard Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes. Première partie, manuscrits chrétiens*, I, nos. 1-323; Paris 1974, pp. 251ff.

teristics with the version of the *HP*. For instance, it does include the episode of the dog's eating and drinking habits,[30] like the *HP*[31] and unlike the Garšūnī MS. Also, the information on Abū'l-Yumn here occurs at the same point in the story as in the *HP*,[32] whereas the Garšūnī version abridges it and transposes it to a point earlier in the narrative.[33] Finally, towards the end of the story, both the Egyptian MS and the *HP* contain two short accounts without relevance for our topic,[34] both of which are missing in the Garšūnī MS. Therefore, we can regard the text in the Egyptian MS as an intermediate step between the *HP* and the version in MS Paris syr. 65, or, to put it in other terms, as the earliest known witness of a reworked version of the Life of Afrahām. This still does not tell us when the theological conversation and the conversion of al-Muʿizz were introduced into the story, but it is at least probable that this happened within a native Egyptian tradition. At this point, incidentally, I must mention one subtle but important difference between the Egyptian and the Garšūnī MSS. The sentence, occurring in the latter, which explicitly states that al-Muʿizz went to a monastery and was baptized there,[35] does not occur in the Egyptian MS, and might be considered a later addition in the Syrian version. In this version, which is closer to the original, all we read is the caliph's wish to be baptized and his mysterious disappearance.[36]

5. LATER DEVELOPMENTS

In 1931, Murqus Simaika Pasha, the founder of the Coptic Museum in Cairo, sought official recognition from the Egyptian government for the story of the Muqattam miracle, including al-Muʿizz's conversion to Christianity. In relation to this controversial demand, the lawyer and historian, Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh ʿInān, in his book *Miṣr al-islāmiyyah*, dismisses it as a legend (*usṭūrah*). In his severe criticism, he points at the weakness of the sources for the story. One of those sources is oral transmission by Coptic priests in their sermons.[37]

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[30] MS Paris ar. 282, f. 156r-156v.
[31] See above, note 7.
[32] MS Paris ar. 282, ff. 182r-184v; *HPC*, II, ii, pp. 98f./transl. pp. 147-150.
[33] Leroy, *ROC*, 15 (1910), p. 40/transl. p. 32.
[34] MS Paris ar. 282, ff. 181r-182r; *HPC*, II, ii, pp. 97f./transl. pp. 146f.
[35] See above, note 26.
[36] MS Paris ar. 282, f. 180r-180v.
[37] Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh ʿInān, *Miṣr al-islāmiyyah wa-tārīḫ al-ḫiṭaṭ al-miṣriyyah*, Cairo, 1931, pp. 77-87.

Now one may suppose that during the annual commemoration of the patriarch Afrahām ibn Zurᶜah, priests would make use of the Coptic *Synaxarium*. This text, however, contains a version of the biography which does include some phrases identical to the reworked version dealt with here, but otherwise follows the account of the *HP* rather closely, albeit in a summarized form.[38] This leaves us wondering just how Coptic priests, over the centuries, transmitted the Muqattam miracle, and when they added the conversion of al-Muᶜizz, not included in the *Synaxarium*.

Muḥammad ᶜInān also attacks the story from the point of view of chronology. He is probably right when he points out that al-Muᶜizz had been dead for several years when the Muqattam miracle occurred, according to the *HP*.[39] He may have overlooked one point however, i.e. the possibility of mistaken identity. Afrahām was the contemporary not only of al-Muᶜizz,[40] but also of his son al-ᶜAzīz, and it is easy to imagine how, in the course of time, the two caliphs and their names were confused in the Coptic collective memory, particularly since al-Muᶜizz reigned in Egypt for only two years and a half. In this context, it is interesting to note that Abū Ṣāliḥ, writing in the late twelfth century, has the story in a form largely based on the *HP*, with some details from the reworked version, but that he systematically substitutes "al-Muᶜizz" with "al-ᶜAzīz".[41]

To add to the confusion, both the Egyptian and the Syrian versions of the reworked story sometimes refer to al-Muᶜizz with the term *al-Ḥākim*, "the ruler". Particularly, the reference to the proverbial disappearing of the caliph uses *al-Ḥākim* in the Syrian version, in a way that makes it look like a proper name ("parents would

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[38] *Synaxarium Alexandrinum*, ed. I. Forget, I-II (coll. *CSCO*, Scriptores arabici, Series tertia, Textus, 18-19), Beirut–Paris, 1905-1912; (Versio: 19), Louvain, 1926, I, pp. 136-139/transl. I, pp. 178-181.

[39] At least, if one accepts (as does ᶜInān) the tradition which dates the reconstruction of the church of Abū Marqūrah to approximately 980 A.D., ᶜInān, *Miṣr al-islāmiyyah*, p. 83, quoting Alfred J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Cairo*, Oxford 1884, I, p. 127. No such date, however, is mentioned in the *HP*.

[40] Al-Muᶜizz passed away in Rabīᶜ al-ṯānī 365 A.H., or December 975 A.D. Afrahām was consecrated in Ṭūbah 691 A.M., or January 975 A.D., see Kāmil Ṣāliḥ Naḥlah, *Kitāb tārīḫ wa-jadāwil baṭārikat al-Iskandariyyah al-Qibṭ* (coll. *Tārīḫ al-ummah al-qibṭiyyah*, 4), [Cairo,] 1943, pp. 88f.

[41] Abū Ṣāliḥ, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some Neighbouring Countries attributed to Abû Sâlih the Armenian*, edited and translated by Basil T.A. Evetts, with added notes by Alfred J. Butler (coll. Anecdota Oxoniensa, Semitic Series, 7), Oxford 1895, pp. 44-47/transl. pp. 116-119.

say to their children: 'God willing, you will disappear from me like the disappearing of al-Ḥākim' '"). It is perhaps because of such instances that we find, at least in some MSS from Egypt, an account largely identical to the versions studied here, but with systematic substitution of al-Muʿizz's name by that of al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (996-1021), and with introductory remarks explicitly dating the narrated events to his caliphate.[42] This confusion is easy to understand, for al-Ḥākim's mysterious disappearance is well known. Since this confusion has been attested so far only in a recent MS,[43] I am unable to say when this identification with al-Ḥākim may have come about, but interestingly, the great thirteenth-century Syriac author Barhebraeus relates that, like Saint Paul, al-Ḥākim witnessed Christ and retired in a monastery in the desert of Scetis.[44]

6. CONCLUSION

The story found in the Egyptian MS Paris ar. 282 is the earliest witness known today of a reworked version of the Life of Afrahām, based on the already strongly legendary account by Mīḫāʾīl of Tinnīs, but adding to it a conversation on religion and a report on the caliph's conversion.[45] To judge from the phrasing of its preface,[46] this reworking was manifestly meant for oral presentation in church,

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[42] MS Paris ar. 4777/4788, see Gérard Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes. Première partie, manuscrits chrétiens*, II. Manuscrits dispersés entre les Nos. 780 et 6933, Index, Paris, 1974, pp. 27ff., 38ff.

[43] Considering Graf's description, it could also exist in MS Cairo, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Hist. 49, dated to 1663-1664 A.D., but I have not been able to study this MS. See Georg Graf, *Catalogue de manuscrits arabes chrétiens conservés au Caire* (coll. Studi e Testi, 63), Rome: Vatican City, 1934, pp. 185f.; Marcus Simaika Pasha, *Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, the Patriarchate, the Principal Churches of Cairo and Alexandria and the Monasteries of Egypt*, II, Cairo 1942, p. 282.

[44] Barhebraeus, *Ktabā dMaktbanūt Zabnē = Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. Paul Bedjan, Paris, 1890, p. 210; Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû 'l Faraj, (. . .) commonly known as Barhebraeus (. . .)*, I, English Translation, Oxford, 1932, p. 189, quoted by Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la Religion des Druzes*, Paris 1838, I, p. 416; see also Josef Van Ess, *Chiliastische Erwartungen und die Versuchung der Göttlichkeit. Der Kalif al-Hakim (386-411 H.)* (coll. Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1977:2), Heidelberg, 1977, pp. 83f., note 459.

[45] The study announced above (note 18) will include a critical edition of the biography, in which MS Paris ar. 282 will be used as principal witness of the text.

[46] MS Paris ar. 282, ff. 152v-153r; Leroy, *ROC*, 14 (1909), p. 390/transl. pp. 380f.

maybe instead of the somewhat less spectacular account found in the *Synaxarium*, but we have no idea whatsoever as to when it may have been produced. At any rate, the story has been kept alive until the twentieth century through channels now unknown, which allowed confusion between the caliphs al-Muʿizz, al-ʿAzīz and al-Ḥākim to further distort the story. In my opinion, its transmission and repeated adaptation over a period of some 900 years, is supportive of its importance as a legendary expression of a Coptic attitude towards Islam and Fatimid rule. The kind of texts that express this attitude are hardly as edifying as "real" apologetic literature, but I hope that the example I have presented here shows that they nevertheless deserve to be taken into account as well.

CHRISTIAN ARABIC LITERATURE FROM MEDIEVAL SPAIN: AN ATTEMPT AT PERIODIZATION

P.Sj. VAN KONINGSVELD

The history of the Christian Arabic literature in Medieval Spain has yet to be written. True, various authors have already made contributions to this effect. In this respect one should first of all think of Francisco Javier Simonet, the well-known author of the *Historia de los Mozárabes* ("The History of the Mozarabs"). In his *Glosario de voces ibéricas y latinas usadas entre los Mozárabes* ("Glossary of the Iberian and Latin Words used by the Mozarabs"), Simonet has included an introductory study in which, among other things, he reflects upon the Christian Arabic literature from Spain, above all upon the Arabic translations of Latin texts. He did so, as he himself put it "to prove that the Muslims of our country received the beneficial influence of the ancient Christian-Hispanic learning and civilization through three intermediaries". In the first place "by means of the Mozarab or Spanish Christians subject to the Caliph of Cordoba".[1] "Consequently, then, just like the oriental Christians in the service of the Arabs of those countries translated the learned works of the Greek authors, the Spanish Mozarabs took it upon them to translate and explain into the language of their masters many monuments of the Latin-Hispanic literature".[2]

The Arabic translation of the *Collectio Conciliorum*, on the other hand, was, according to Simonet, meant for internal Christian usage. This may be deduced from the remark that the Christians had been forced to translate this important text (in the eleventh century) into Arabic because their knowledge of Latin had become far too poor: "Great, then must have been the extent to which, already in the tenth century, the Latin language had been forgotten and Arabic was being used among the Mozarabs, when they realized the

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[1] Simonet, *Glosario*, LIV-LV, cf. L-LIV.
[2] *Ib.*, L.

need for translating from the one language into the other a compila-
tion of Canons, a work meant for the priests and theologians, rather
than for the common Christian people".[3] With regard to the
Arabic canonical manuscript Simonet also made some observations
in other publications. In 1891 he published the Arabic text of the
decrees of the Third Council of Toledo, reconstructing them from
the Escorial Manuscript.[4] In his *Historia de los Mozárabes* Simonet
moreover dedicated Chapter 37 to the "Literary Studies of the
Mozarab people".[5] In this chapter he, among other things, repeat-
ed his view that this Arabic translation dates back from the eleventh
century and was meant "for the clergy of those days, who under-
stood the Arabic language better than Latin".[6] In other parts of the
Historia de los Mozárabes also, one can find valuable information on
the Christian Arabic literature from Spain.[7]

A publication completely dedicated to this subject is the one pub-
lished by Heinrich Goussen in 1909.[8] His study contains the
description of some Arabic manuscripts and is organized according
to the following topics: "Bible and Exegesis", and "Fathers and
Councils". Goussen's remarks regarding the Arabic manuscript of
the Councils, however, add very little to those already made by
Simonet.[9]

Of great value, furthermore, are the articles the late Italian
Arabist, Giorgio Levi della Vida, dedicated primarily to some
historical texts of the Christian Arabic literature from Spain.[10] In
his footsteps the Arab scholar, ʿAbd al-Rahmān Badawī, published
the Arabic translation of the "Book of Orosius" in Beirut in
1982,[11] and, based upon this edition, the German Arabist, Hans
Daiber, made a careful analysis of the passages in the text derived
from other sources besides the chronicle of Orosius.[12]

Finally, in 1976 I myself published a study of the Latin-Arabic

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[3] *Ib.*, XIV; cf. XXXII-XXXIII; CXXXVIII-CXL.

[4] Simonet, *Concilio III de Toledo*, pp. 85-130.

[5] Pp. 711-731.

[6] *Ib.*, 723; cf. 720-9.

[7] *Ib.*, XXIII, XXXIV, 56, 231, sqq, 321-4, 343, 348, 351-3, 458, 499, 621-4,
622-3, 637, 639, 660.

[8] *Die christlich-arabische Literatur der Mozaraber*, Leipzig 1901. 31 pp.

[9] *Ib.*, 19-21.

[10] Cf. G. Levi della Vida, *Note* (1971).

[11] Urūsiyūs, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿālam* (1982)

[12] Daiber, *Orosius' Historiae adversus paganos* (1986).

glossary of the Leiden University Library, containing, among others, a reconstruction of the Christian Arabic sources the Mozarabic author of this dictionary derived his material from. Four years ago in Toledo I spoke about the Christian Arabic literature in Christian Spain in the twelfth century, and recently I completed a study on the Arabic manuscripts circulating in Medieval Christian Spain.[13]

Even though all these publications indeed contain *material* to construct a history of the Christian Arabic Literature in Spain, no one as yet has made the slightest attempt at even giving a rough sketch of that history. There are indeed a number of reasons why writing such a history is extremely difficult. We first of all have no knowledge of any kind of historiographic tradition existing among the Christians of al-Andalus themselves. The very scanty historical data preserved about them have often been deduced from more or less accidental remarks made by Islamic authors. An additional problem is that the sources of our knowledge of the Christian Arabic literature in Spain have been handed down only fragmentarily. In the year 1126 a great number of Christians from Al-Andalus were deported to North Africa.[14] Other Andalusian Christians fled to Christian Spain. This constituted the end of the Christian Arabic culture of Al-Andalus. For a while, both in North Africa and in Christian Spain, the Mozarab Christians managed to retain their own cultural identity. One cannot but assume, however, that in North Africa they eventually were Islamized, whereas in Christian Spain they lost their knowledge of Arabic in the course of the thirteenth century. The decline of the Mozarabic culture in Spain depicted here is probably the most significant historical cause of the very fragmentary condition in which the written remnants consists of Arabic annotations in the margins of Latin manuscripts which were carefully preserved, mainly in ecclesiastical libraries.[15] Of the remaining manuscripts written in nothing but Arabic only a small part is known to have been in the possession of Mozarab Christians. The fact that some of the Christian Arabic texts from Spain

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[13] *The Latin-Arabic Glossary*, Leiden 1976; *La apologia de Al-Kindī*, Toledo 1989; *Andalusian-Arabic Manuscripts*, Tel Aviv – Leiden, 1991 and Frankfurt 1991 (supplementary notes).

[14] Simonet, *Historia*, 750 sqq.

[15] Cf. van Koningsveld, *The Latin-Arabic Glossary*, pp. 45-52: "Visigothic manuscripts with glosses in Arabic".

have been preserved at all must quite often first and foremost be
attributed to Muslim or Jewish owners. The Arabic text of the ever
so famous *Calendar of Cordoba*, which will be discussed later on, has
been preserved in but a single manuscript. In the middle of the
fourteenth century this manuscript was copied in Hebrew characters
by a Jewish physician, probably in Huesca.[16] And the only re-
maining manuscript of the Arabic Orosius—in Washington at the
moment—was of Islamic ownership, as may be deduced from anno-
tations in the margins containing, among others, a polemic based on
Islamic theology and directed against the Christian belief in the
Trinity.[17] The Arabic fragment of an anonymous Mozarab univer-
sal history, of which Levi della Vida has made a study, was dis-
covered by the Tunisian scholar Hasan Husnī ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in
the library of the mosque of Sidi Oqba in Cairouan.[18] Both manu-
scripts probably originated in Spain because some Latin notes in
Visigothic handwriting are to be found in the margins.[19] It should
moreover be pointed out that many Christian Arabic texts from
Spain are only known to us from quotations in the writings of
Islamic and Jewish authors.

In the ensuing discussion I will try to make a start of writing a his-
tory of the Christian Arabic literature in Spain, by focusing either
on one important author or on some texts of primary significance for
each of its four centuries. Consequently, an attempt will be made at
answering the question regarding the period of time in which the
Arabic texts of the *Collectio Conciliorum* should be situated.

If the data which have been at our disposal so far are to be trusted,
the Christian Arabic literature was started in Spain in the latter half
of the ninth century, after the storm of the "martyrs of Cordoba",
about which so much has been written, has almost abated. And it
seems as if this literature, just like some kind of Pallas Athena, was
born in full armour. This occurred in the person of Ḥafṣ ibn Albar
al-Qūtī who, in 889, completed an Arabic translation in rhyme of
the Psalms, which he did with the consent of Valentius, bishop of

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[16] Cf. Fück, *Zum Kalender*, 336-7.

[17] Photographs of this manuscript are in Leiden, Cod. Or. 12.641. The
polemic annotation is at fol. 110a and 118b.

[18] Photographs of this manuscript are in Leiden, Cod. Or. 12.604.

[19] Orosius: Leiden Or. 12.641, fol. 79a; *Mozarabische universele geschiedenis*
(Leiden Or. 12.604, phot. no. 34). Both manuscripts are on paper folios.

Cordoba.[20] This translation of the Psalms is the only writing of Ḥafṣ's in Arabic which has been preserved in its totality—be it only in one single manuscript.[21] In the Arabic sources some quotations from other works by Ḥafṣ have however been preserved, enabling us to form a somewhat clearer picture of the activities of this prolific author.

The Spanish-Arabic historian Ibn al-Qūṭiyya (born in 977) mentions "Ḥafṣ ibn Albar, Judge of the Christians" as one of the descendants of Romulos, the third son of Witiza, king of the Visigoths. Literally Ibn al-Qūṭiyya says: "Romulos acquired a thousand estates in the east of Al-Andalus. He chose Toledo as his residence. His descendants include: Ḥafṣ ibn Albar, Judge of the Christians".[22] The British Arabist Dunlop was the first to suggest that Ḥafṣ might have been the son of the famous Alvaro of Cordoba, who died in 861, one of the leaders of the movement of the martyrs in the ninth century, and the author of various writings in Latin.[23] I consider this identification to be correct. The greatest respect with which several contemporary writers, such as Juan de Sevilla and Abbot Esperaindeo, address Alvaro in letters also point that way. Thus, in a letter to Alvaro Juan de Sevilla greets him with the words: "inlustri eximio celsoque Albaro Ioannes". And Esperaindeo writes him: "Inlustri simo mihi domino ac venerabili (. . .) inclyto Albaro Speraindeo". In other letters we find: "Vale in Domini Iesu Christo, serenissime frater"; "serenitas vestra, excellentia vestra, vestra benignitas, celsitudo vestra", etc. The publisher of Alvaro's epistolarium, father José Madoz, is therefore right in pointing out: "Although this orchestration of noble titles conforms very much to the exigencies of urbane behaviour, and of a courteous and diplomatic treatment, it seems in any case to secure a special rank of nobility in the apologist of Cordoba. Only Romano, Count of the Christians, received in the Epistolarium, the Book of Epistles of Alvaro such a treatment".[24] To this it must be added that in a letter

[20] Cf. D.M. Dunlop, *Hafs ibn Albar—the Last of the Goths?* JRAS 1954, 137-51; id., *Sobre Hafs ibn Albar Al-Qūtī Al-Qurtubī.* "Al-Andalus" 1955, 211-3.

[21] Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS & 120 sup (cf. Löfgren and Traini, *Catalogue of Arabic manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, Vol. 1, 1975, pp. 24-5, no. XXIII).

[22] Ibn al-Qūṭiyya, *k.Iftitāh Al-Andalus.* Ed. Ibrāhīm Al-Abyārī. Cairo-Beirut 1982, p. 31.

[23] Dunlop, *Sobre Hafs*, p. 212.

[24] *Epistolario de Alvaro de Cordoba*, 15-20 ("Familia").

Alvaro explicitly refers to his own *Gothic descendancy*. We again quote
Father Madoz's introduction: "Thus, in the last letter he (Alvaro)
writes to the apostate Eleazar he arrogantly boasts of belonging to
the Gothic race, to those who were feared by Pirrus, by Alexander
and by Caesar, so he says, copying the glorious titles which were
praised by Orosius, and later on by St. Isidorus in the people identi-
fied with Spain)".[25] All references confirm the view that Alvar was
indeed one of the descendants of the Visigothic nobility; that he was
the father of Ḥafṣ ibn Albar; that they were both direct descendants
of Witiza, via Romulus.

In a special introduction, a *urjūza* of 143 verses, Ḥafṣ elaborates
upon the reasons why he has done his translation of the Psalms in
rhyme. He mentions an earlier translation of the Psalms (in prose),
in which the text had been translated word by word, in an artificial
way. As a result both the poetic style as well as the meaning of the
Psalms had been spoiled. "The psalm verses are all written in the
original, non-Arabic language, all in a strict metre. This is a
pleasant rhythm to which one can sing, and which is understood by
him who is an expert in melodies. The chanting of the Psalms is done
according to certain melodies to which one sings, and which have
their own measures". Ḥafṣ has thought it fitting to use the Arabic
rajaz metre with double rhyme in his translation because, as he re-
marks, it resembles the metre used by the Christians in iambic
verse.[26]

Ḥafṣ states that in his translation he has followed Hiëronymus's
version, which is the text of the *Vulgata*. Indeed, in comparing the
Arabic psalter manuscripts which circulated in Spain, I have be-
come aware of the fact that Ḥafṣ follows the *Vulgata* wherever it devi-
ates from the *Vetus Latina*. The Arabic prose translations of the
Psalms which circulated in Spain, on the other hand, show a prefer-
ence for the *Vetus Latina*.[27] This does not imply, however, that these
prose translations were also done in Spain, and based on the *Vetus
Latina*. There is a possibility that we are confronted here with trans-
lations originating in the east and based on a Greek or Syrian ver-
sion of the Bible closely related to the *Vetus Latina*. This has as yet
to be looked into more closely. It must be admitted that the texts of

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[25] Op.cit., 16-17.
[26] Dunlop, *Hafs b. Albar*, pp. 139-141.
[27] P.Sj. van Koningsveld, *The Latin-Arabic Glossary*, pp. 52-4.

these prose translations indeed make a poor, very stilted impression, so that it is quite possible that Ḥafṣ's criticism is actually directed against these translation circulating in Spain.

In his introduction Ḥafṣ is well aware of some people possibly criticizing his work. He explicitly defends himself against this: "Throughout this entire work I have consulted (our) authorities, in whom I have put all of my trust. They have given it their approval, inspired it, expressed their sincere wish for it (. . .); these people excel in the religion, they are bright lights in the realm of sacred learning. Those who have already rejected the world and who, with respect to it, have become like the dead who have already left it. All of them inspired me and urged me on. They considered this a pious work, a treasure-trove for the forgiving of sins in the Hereafter. I have moreover performed it with the approval of the excellent bishop of the Church, Valentius, who is noted for his sublime qualities, the best bishop now as well as in the past".[28]

Ḥafṣ admits he is well aware that some will ridicule his work. They are consumed by jealousy and animosity. They would however not have been capable of such a work, even if they had toiled at it all of their lives. Ḥafṣ dates his work as follows: "It was written in the year 889 in the ear of Christ our Lord, who guides the soul on the right path (. . .) Whoever may read our book after us, after we have already passed away, tell him to pray for us".[29]

Even though only one manuscript of this work has been preserved, Ḥafṣ's rhymed version of the Psalms in Arabic must have enjoyed great popularity, as may appear from the quotes from this translation to be discovered in not only Christian, but also in Islamic and Jewish authors, from both Islamic and Christian Spain.[30] Also other works of Ḥafṣ's were widely known. In Al-Qurtubī's anti-Christian polemic from the beginning of the thirteenth century five references to utterances of Ḥafṣ ibn Albar's are to be found. First of all attention if paid to "the statements of Ḥafṣ ibn Albar" in which he is claimed to have elaborated on the Trinity from a point

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[28] MS Ambrosiana & 120 sup, fol. 12a-12b.

[29] *Ib.* fol. 13a.

[30] Cf. van Koningsveld, *Glossary*, 54 as well as notes 248 and 249; id., *Psalm 150 of the Translation by Hafs ibn Albar Al-Quti* (1972); id., *New Quotations from Hafs al-Quti's Translation of the Psalms* (1973), 315; Neubauer, *Hafs al-Qouti* (1895), 65-9; Ḥafṣ's psalter is also quoted in Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Iʿlām*, 427 (= Psalm 110:4).

of view grounded in logic and philosophy.[31] Elsewhere the same Islamic author quotes observations of Ḥafṣ's from "one of his books" on the Christian view regarding fasting, and on the seven Feasts the celebration of which is laid down by Canon Law. Each of these passages is written in the form of a *responsum*, an answer to a concrete question put to Ḥafṣ with reference to a certain aspect of the Christian religion. Al-Qurṭubī remarks in this respect that Ḥafṣ was one of the most penetrating minds of the Christian "priests", who was better versed in Arabic than any of them. Above all the latter remark from an Islamic author such as Al-Qurṭubī is no mean compliment. The reason for this, according to Al-Qurṭubī, was the fact that Ḥafṣ grew up under the protection of Muslims, studying their branches of learning and surpassing all (other) Christians in this. Yet, when Ḥafṣ starts to speak about the learning and doctrines of the Christians, then his language becomes a stutter and his power of expression fails him, because he then lowers himself to their perverted opinions and their stupid convictions. Can the merchant of perfumes restore what time has decayed?[32] Elsewhere the same Al-Qurṭubī quotes more of Ḥafṣ's *responsa* dealing with the background and meaning of several Christian rites, such as Holy Mass, the blessing of houses using salt, and the crossing of oneself. These quotes convey the impression that the questioner to whom Ḥafṣ explains various aspects of the Christian religion is not a Christian himself. When Ḥafṣ, for example, states: "Where the salt is concerned with which *we* bless our buildings and houses, and of which *you* want to understand the reason why", then the impression is positively conveyed that the one asking the questions ("you") is not included in the "we", in the sense of "we, Christians".[33]

The title of Ḥafṣ ibn Albar's book, from which Al-Qurṭubī quotes, is probably *The Book of the Fifty-Seven Questions*. The fact is that Al-Qurṭubī actually quotes more passages from this book, but then

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[31] "Wa-ʿalā minwālihi nasaja Ḥafṣ ibn Albar *fī aqwālihi*": Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Iʿlām*, 58.

[32] Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Iʿlām*, 422-25: "wa-qāla Ḥafṣ ibn Albar minhum fī baʿd kutubihi wa-qad saʾalahu sāʾil ʿan siyāmihim" (p. 422); "Qāla Ḥafṣ: fa-inna 'lladhī aradta ʿilmahu min al-aʿyād al-sabʿa allatī amara 'l-Qānūn bi-siyānatihā fa-hiya maʿrūfa" (p. 424).

[33] *Ib.*, p. 427: "Qāla Ḥafṣ: Iʿlam anna ʾilladhī aradta maʿrifatahu min khabar al-qurbān wa-sharḥihi ...''; p. 430: "Qāla wa-aradta fahm dhālika''; p. 430-11: "Qāla Ḥafṣ: Innamā nusallibu ʿalā wujūhinā li-annā wajadnā fī-kutub ulamāʾ inā al-sālifīn ...".

without mentioning the name of the author.[34] In these quotes the Trinity, and the reward and punishment in the Hereafter are, among other things, dealt with. In these quotes, also, the author again speaks about "we", in the sense of "we, Christians", when trying to explain the doctrine of the Christian faith.[35] In view of the rather obscure way in which Al-Qurtubī at times quotes the name of Ḥafṣ as the author, and at other times the title of his work, it seems justified to assume that his quotes are of an indirect nature and that he therefore did not have the book itself at his disposal. Whatever may be the case, the quotes Al-Qurtubī has provided us with bare testimony to us, in which a Christian author explains the main articles of the Christian faith to a non-Christian, probably Muslim questioner. From his answers it appears that Ḥafṣ was well acquainted with the Biblical and Patristic authors. Thus he discusses, for example, the views on the Trinity of Arius, Tertullian and many others.[36]

A Spanish Arabic source quoting one of the writings by "Al-Qūtī", which probably should be identified as being the work of Ḥafṣ al-Qūtī also, is the *Ethica* by the eleventh century Jewish writer Salomo ibn Gabirol.[37] Based on these quotes the only thing that can be said about this book is that it must have been a compilation of moralistic and paraenetic maxims with a Biblical bias to them. Thus one of the utterances goes as follows: "The best you may hope for with regard to your enemies is that you may be able to move them into feeling love towards you again, if that is possible".[38] The other passages quoted by Ibn Gabirol contain utterances of the same tenor.

We might be allowed to expect that Ḥafṣ, being a prolific writer with a profound knowledge of the Latin sources, should certainly have done so under his Latin or latinated name. Such a name, which

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[34] *Ib.*, 61, 80-81, 88, 128, 432-3.

[35] *Ib.*, 61: "Hadhā ṣāḥib *Kitāb al-Masāʾil al-Sabᶜ wa-'l-Khamsīn*. Yaqūlu fīhā: Lā naqūlu …"; *ib.*, 80: "Hadhā ṣāḥib *Kitāb al-Masāʾil* yaqūlu (…): fa-nuʾminu …"; *ib.*, 81: "Wa-qāla ṣāḥib *Kitāb al-Masāʾil*; lasnā nuʾminu …"; *ib.*, 432: "Qāla ṣāḥib *Kitāb al-Masāʾil*: Lasnā nantaziru …".

[36] *Ib.*, p. 81.

[37] Cf. Neubauer, *Hafs al-Qouti*, 68-9 and Ibn Gabirol, *The Improvement* (ed. Wise), the Arabic text, pp. 22, 28, 29, 40, 42 and 44; transl. pp. 62, 72, 74, 92, 95 and 99.

[38] "Afdal mā tanzuru bihi fī amr aᶜdāʾika an taruddahum ilā mawaddatika in amkana dhālika". (Ibn Gabirol, *op.cit.* pp. 28; transl. 72).

he certainly must have had, in concurrence with the usage of having two names, a Latin and an Arabic one, prevailing among the Andalusian Christians from the ninth and tenth centuries, and known to us from many examples, is however not known of him. For the time being the remark with have to do that activities of Ḥafṣ Ibn Albar Al-Qūtī coincide in time with those of other famous authors from Cordoba, such as Samson and Leovigildus, who are solely known by their writings in Latin.[39] Just as in the case of Ḥafṣ ibn Albar, both these authors were on very friendly terms with Bishop Valentius of Cordoba, supporting him, among other things, in his conflict with Hostegesis. Samson was both abbot and a teacher, and he was, among other things, known for his knowledge of Arabic, which was the reason why he was often sent for by the Court of Cordoba in order to translate important documents from Arabic into Latin for the sake of the international diplomatic exchange between Al-Andalus and the Christian states of Europe. Because of his office as "Judge of the Christians", Ḥafṣ ibn Albar also will have maintained regular contacts with the Court. From Arabic chronicles it appears that, besides bishops, several such officials holding the same office acted as Latin-Arabic translators and as interpreters at the Court of Cordoba.[40] A comparative study of the Arabic texts of Ḥafṣ's seen within the broader context of contemporary Latin literature may as likely as not shed more light on the fascinating personality of Ḥafṣ ibn Albar Al-Qūtī, which for far too long has remained shrouded in a cloud of mystery.

The obscurity of Ḥafṣ ibn Albar Al-Qūtī may be deduced from the fact that in their historical surveys Simonet and Lévi-Provençal mention his name only briefly, just once, as "Judge of the Christians", and wrongly assign him to the tenth century. The fact that he actually was *the* celebrity of the Christian Arabic literature in ninth century Spain was still unknown to them.

THE TENTH CENTURY

The case of Bishop Recemundus, who lived in the tenth century and whose Arabic name was Rabīc ibn Zayd, is an entirely different matter. With respect to him both Latin as well as Arabic sources contain

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[39] Cf. Simonet, *Historia*, 487-502.
[40] Cf. e.g. van Koningsveld, *Glossary*, 56-9; Simonet, *Historia*, 622-3; Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, 3/218-20.

interesting information, which has not escaped the attention of modern historians.[41] "Recemundo", Simonet says, "called Rabī͑ ibn Zayd by the Arabs, born in Cordoba and endowed with privileged talents, acquired extensive knowledge both of Latin and of Arabic literature".[42]

Lévi-Provençal calls him:

> The only church dignitary from Al-Andalus, during the era of the Caliphate, about whom we possess a certain amount of information (. . .) and whom ͑Abd al-Rahman III sent as a delegate to the Court of Otto I of Germany in 955, on the occasion of which he, at the wish to the Caliph, was appointed to occupy the episcopal see of Elvira, vacant at the time. The worthy compliment of that mission inspired al-Nāsir to send him, after his return to Spain, to Constantinople and Syria for the purpose of acquiring artistic objects destined to adorn his residence at Madīnat-al-Zahrā. Much later Rabī͑ ibn Zayd continued to play an important part at the Court of al-Hakam II, who held his philosophical and astronomical learning in high esteem, and for whom he compiled, up till the year 961, the famous *Calendar of Cordoba*.[43]

This text, subdivided according to the months and seasons of the solar year, is a highly valuable historical source providing us with extensive information not only on Christian Feasts and liturgical practice, but also with respect to zodiacal signs, agricultural and administrative customs, as well as to medical advice regarding diet and hygiene for each month.

The *Calendar of Cordoba* was written in Arabic bearing the title "Book about the Subdivision of the Seasons and about Matters Promoting the Well-Being of the Body".[44] The name of the author mentioned in the only manuscript left of the Arabic text is *Abū 'l-Hasan ͑Arīb ibn Sa͑d Al-Kātib*.[45] The Latin translation, which was composed at a later date, however reads: "Harib filii Zeid episcopi quem composuit Mustansir imperatori", meaning: "(The book) of ͑Arīb ibn Zayd, the Bishop, which he composed on behalf of Caliph (Al-Hakam) Al-Mustansir".[46]

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[41] In particular cf. Simonet, *Historia*, pp. 603-18.

[42] *Ib.*, 606.

[43] *España musulmana*, 123.

[44] Cf. *Le Calendrier de Cordoue* (ed. 1961), p. 187: "tamma kitāb ͑Arīb fī tafsīl al-azmān wa-masalih al-abdān".

[45] *Ib.*, p. 3 (cf. p. 187: ͑Arīb).

[46] *Ib.*, 3.

With this discrepancy between the Arabic original and the Latin version in mind, Dozy, in the previous century, was the first to develop the ingenious theory that the text as we now have it is a combination, or rather an interpolation of two texts. One of the texts, some sort of almanac comprising above all astronomical data, would have originated with the author ʿArīb ibn Saʿd al-Kātib, who died in 980;[47] the other one would have been a Christian liturgical calendar compiled by Rabīʿ ibn Zayd.[48] Saavedra went even further by defending the view that the Latin text was corrupt. This should be emended as follows: "Harib filii [Sad liber, cum additamentis Rabi filii] Zeid", meaning: "The book of ʿArīb, son [of Saʿd, with the additions of Rabīʿ, son of] Zayd".[49] Simonet subsequently added a theological argument to this: "The Arabic text cannot originally have been written by a Christian, because on p. 4 of Dozy's edition a passage from the Koran as God's Word has been copied, a quote omitted in the Latin version".[50]

Where I am concerned I would like to propose that the *Calendar of Cordoba* has but one single author, namely Bishop Recemundo, alias Rabīʿ ibn Zayd. The thirteenth century Andalusian author, Ibn Saʿīd, mentions the *Calendar* in a supplement he has written to the famous epistle by Ibn Hazm on the "Excellent Qualities of the Scholars from Al-Andalus". Ibn Saʿīd mentioned the *Calendar* as part of the section on astronomy. He literally says the following: "Where astronomy is concerned, Ibn Zayd, the Bishop of Cordoba, wrote essays about it. He belonged to the bosom friends of (Caliph) Al-Mustansir ibn al-Nasir Al-Marwāni. On this (subject) he wrote the book *Subdivision of the Seasons and Matters Promoting the Well-Being of the Body*". About the phases of the moon and everything connected therewith one finds mentioned in this book everything of which the intention may be subscribed to, and the initiative of the author to put it forward may be applauded".[51]

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[47] Cf. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. *ʿArīb*.

[48] *Le Calendrier*, VIII-X; Simonet, *Historia*, 613; Lévi-Provençal, *España musulmana*, 134-5.

[49] Saavedra, *Estudio*, 15.

[50] Simonet, *Historia*, 613.

[51] Apud Al-Maqqarī, *Analectes*, 125: "Wa-ammā 'l-tanjīm, fa-li-Ibn Zayd Al-Usquf Al-Qurtubī fīhī tasānīf wa-kāna mukhtassan bi-'l-Mustansir ibn al-Nāsir Al-Marwānī wa-bihi allafa: *kitāb Tafsīl al-azmān wa-masālih al-abdān* wa-fīhī min dhikr manāzil al-qamar wa-mā yataʿallaqu bi-dhālika mā yustahsanu maqsiduhu wa-taqrībuhu".

Ibn Saʿīd apparently saw a manuscript in which Bishop Rabīʿ ibn Zayd was mentioned as the only author of the text. For that reason it seems plausible to me that in the tradition of the text a corruption of the name is mentioned as the result of the consonants having been switched: instead of Rabīʿ one has read ʿArīb. In the Arabic text left to us (be it though in just one single manuscript) the name of the father, *Zayd*, was "emended" into *Saʿd, the secretary (Al-Kātib)* at a subsequent stage, under the influence of the far greater fame of ʿArib ibn Saʿd Al-Kātib who, among other things, was the author of the supplement to the Arabic chronicle of Al-Ṭabarī. Besides, in contrast with Bishop Rabīʿ ibn Zayd, this author is not anywhere in the Arabic sources mentioned for having been active in the field of astronomy or for having compiled a calendar. In my opinion, therefore, where the author's name if concerned, the Latin translation is more reliable that the original, fourteenth century manuscript. The fact that the Arabic manuscript offers a shorter version and that the Latin tradition is much closer to the original has indeed already been pointed out by the German Arabist Fück.[52]

Bishop Rabīʿ ibn Zayd was a scholar above all specialized in profane scholarship. The thirteenth century author, Ibn Abī Usaybiʿa, who in his renowned history of medical science mentions several important Christian physicians from Al-Andalus,[53] says that the physician, Ibn Al-Kattani, who died in Zaragoza circa 1029, was a pupil of "bishop Abū 'l-Hārith", who in turn had been a pupil of "Rabīʿ ibn Zayd, the Bishop-Philosopher".[54] ("Philosopher" here means practitioner of profane scholarship, or scholar, as a synonym for the Arabic word, *Al-Hakīm*). He may be compared to a Christian physician-scholar such as Yuhannā ibn Māsawayh who, in the beginning of the ninth century, was in the service of Caliph Al-Maʾmūn, in Baghdad. Of Ibn Māsawayh a text is known called "*The Book of the Seasons*" (*Kitāb al-Azmina*), which bears a strong resemblance to the *Calendar of Cordoba*. In this book, also, first the four seasons are discussed, and then astronomical, meteorological and agronomical data are provided for each month, each time also including advice on diet and hygiene. Again, also in the Calendar

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52 Fück, *Zum Kalender*, 356-7.
53 *ʿUyun*, nos. XIII, XIV, XV, XX, XXIX; Ibn Juljul, *Tabaqāt* 93. 96-8.
54 Ibn Abī Usaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, 34-5.
55 Le livre des temps d'Ibn Massawaïh, ed. Sbath, Le Gaire 1933.

of Baghdad important Christian Feasts are elaborated upon.[55] One may assume that Bishop Rabī', who among other things travelled to Jerusalem, must have known this work: some expressions from the *Calendar of Cordoba* literally fit the text of Ibn Māsawayh's booklet.[56] Just like his illustrious predecessor in Baghdad, the Bishop of Cordoba tried in his work, from a point of view of astronomy and meteorology, to convey to the Caliph an impression of the life of the natives in his realm. Around the middle of the tenth century that population, especially in the countryside, was still largely Christian. For that reason, mentioning the Christian Feasts was utterly proper and, just as with Ibn Māsawayh, to be considered utterly proper and, just as with Ibn Māsawayh, to be considered as an intrinsic part of the text and not as an interpolation added later on. ''I have mentioned in this book all the Feasts of the Christians falling on specific dates, Feast after Feast, listed under the months concerned. I have mentioned them for the sake of increasing knowledge and of assisting those who wish to become informed about such matters''. In this passage of the *Calendar of Cordoba* we find not an interpolation but the author himself speaking.[57]

We should not in the least feel surprised at a Bishop of Cordoba quoting a verse from the Koran,[58] for one thing, only to explain the meaning of an Arabic word. The language of the Koran occupies a prominent position within the grammatical and lexicographic tradition of the study of Arabic, and we must assume that Christians in Al-Andulus, when studying Arabic, complied with this tradition. In any case, we have no data at our disposal concerning a separate Christian tradition of the study of Arabic in 'l-Andalus. This possibly also explains why the Arabic translations of Latin texts, done by Christians in Al-Andalus in the tenth century, reveal such a significant influence of the specifically Islamic idiomatic usage. Thus, the Arabic translation of the Gospels, which Ishāq ibn Balshk completed in Cordoba in 946 is impregnated with islamically coloured idioms. Each Gospel in this translation starts with the Arabic formula: ''In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful'',

[56] *Livre*, p. 243, 5-6 and *Calendrier*, 157, 6; *Livre*, p. 245, 11 and *Calendrier*, p. 175, 8-9, etc.
[57] *Le Calendrier*, 20/1.
[58] *Ib.*, 6-7 (Sūra 28:76).

the formula with which also each chapter, or *sūra*, of the Koran begins. In Matthew 2:6, for example, the *populum meum Israël* is translated, not as *Isrāʾīl shaʿbī* ("Israel, my *people*"), but as *Isrāʾīl ummati* ("Israel, my *community*"), in which *ummah* is above all the term used in Islam to refer to the *community of the faithful*, which comprises all of the Muslims.[59] Such specifically Islamic idiom can also be found in the *Kitab Hurushiyush* (the "Book of Orosius"), the adaptation in Arabic of the *Historiae adversus paganos*, which was also written in Cordoba, probably by Asbagh ibn Nabīl, "Judge of the Christians", during the Caliphate of Al-Hakam II.[60] This translation, in which Orosius's chronical had been extended by, among other things, the history of Spain after the Arab invasion, was of great interest to Arab historians and geographers, in the west as well as in the east of the Islamic world, as may be judged by the great number of its passages having been quoted in their own works.[61] In this translation also we find expressions from the Koran. For example, in the story of the seven sleepers (from Ephese), which the translator has provided with the gloss, "(they are) the inhabitants of the cave". This gloss is a reference to Surah 18:9 of the Koran, which by no means implies that the translator was a Muslim, but at the most that he was taking an Islamic reading public into consideration.[62]

Whereas in the ninth century, in the writings a someone like Ḥafṣ ibn Albar, the emphasis was completely on the Bible and on the Christian faith, in the tenth century the scope of the Christian Arabic literature of Spain was considerably widened. In the person of Bishop Recemundo we made the acquaintance of a dignitary of the Church who focused on profane scholarship and whose students' students also included a Muslim scholar.[63] During that same era, for one thing under the influence of Caliph Al-Ḥakam, various Latin texts were translated into Arabic in Cordoba. Among them were, besides Biblical texts, also historical ones and others.[64]

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[59] Cf. van Koningsveld, *Glossary*, 55.

[60] *Ib.*, 56-59.

[61] Urūsiyūs, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿālam*, ed. Badawi, pp. 9-47; cf. Kuhayla, *Kitāb al-tawārīkh* (1985-6).

[62] Cf. H. Daiber, *Orosius*, 1986, 203, 240.

[63] Ibn Abī Usaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, 32-2; cf. Sāʿid al-Andalusī *Tabaqāt*, 193.

[64] Cf. van Koningsveld, *Glossary*, 52-60.

THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

In the eleventh century a different element was added to this histori-
cal development, namely that of Arabic poetry, not in the form of
metrical psalms but as sheer poetry. Thus, the sources provide us
with some fragments from poems by Ibn Al-Mir'izī, a Christian
man of letters in Seville. In one of these fragments he describes a
sporting-bitch which he had presented to Al-Mu'tamid Ibn 'Abbād,
ruler of Seville and its dependencies:

> I know of no greater joy to a hunter
> and nothing in which an enthusiastic
> and passionate man may revel more
>
> Than a sporting-bitch with flapping ears
> and a sleek neck without a bit of fat
>
> Shaped like a bow, but flashing away
> like an arrow after its prey
>
> She follows her nose, which takes her
> to the hidden, invisible game
>
> Send her, if you please, after a flash of lightning—
> That flash of lightning will not escape her![65]

Another Christian poet from the eleventh century lived in Toledo.
It was the originally Muslim theologian Abū 'l-Qāsim Ibn Al-
Hayyāt, who after the conquest of Toledo by Alfonso VI had been
converted to Christianity. An Arabic source tells us about him that
"For fifty years he had led a retired and pious life and had not
trespassed once. But after the Christians had seized Toledo, he had
the tonsure applied (literally: he had the middle of his head shaved)
and girded up the habit. A friend spoke to him about this, and said:
'What has happened to your powers of judgement?' He replied: 'I
only did this after my powers of judgement had reached full maturi-
ty!' He then recited a poem from which the following stanzas have
been taken:

> He changed colour like a real chameleon
> and beheld the world with eyes wide open
>
> Each of us refers to the Merciful with the front of his body,
> and gives evidence of Him openly and from an innermost conviction

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[65] *Al-Mugrib*, ed. Shawqī Dayf, vol. 1, p. 269; Al-Maqqarī Analectes, *vol. 2*,
350-1.

> Of a religion which denies my Creator
> I would never have embraced the principles.

The Arabic source quoted also adds to this that King Alfonso VI made use of the services of Abū 'l-Qāsim Ibn Al-Khayyāt by having him draw up a threatening letter addressed to the ruler of Seville, the already mentioned Al-Muʿtamid Ibn ʿAbbād.[66]

THE TWELFTH CENTURY

After the deportation of the Andalusian Christians to North-Africa the centre of Christian Arabic literature was shifted to Christian Toledo. In this period of the Reconquista and the Crusades some texts aimed at fighting Islam were written, in Toledo, by Christian authors in Arabic.[67] Other Arabic examples of Christian-Islamic polemics are the threatening letters sent by Christian kings to Islamic rulers in Al-Andalus and in North Africa. A number of these letters have been preserved in Arabic chronicles.[68] In my opinion the date to be assigned to the Arabic annotations made in several Latin manuscripts in Visigothic script must also go back to this period. They bear witness to the serious study of Latin texts made by Arabophonic Christians. The same applies to the Latin-Arabic glossary in the Leiden University library, which according to an Arabic annotation was copied in Toledo on behalf of a Mozarab Christian called Jibriyān ibn ʿIsā ibn Abī Hujaj. In this annotation the glossary is mentioned by the title of *Kitāb al-Shurūh*, which is the literal translation of *Liber Glossarium*.[69] In this glossary we also find all kinds of Arabic translations of Latin texts, such as that of the *Liber Etymologiarum* by Isidorus of Seville, of the Gospels by Ishāq ibn Balashk and of the Psalms by Hafs ibn Albar Al-Qūtī.[70] This, from a cultural-historical point of view, highly valuable document, comprises the tail-piece of the Christian Arabic literature of Spain, as known to us from the sources.

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[66] *Ib.*, vol. 2, 22.

[67] Cf. van Koningsveld, *La apologia de Al-Kindī en la España del siglo XII* (1989).

[68] E.g. in the anonymous manuscript *Al-Hulal al-mawshiyya fī dhikr al-akhbār al-marrākushiyya.* (Ed. Zakkār-Zimāma, Casablanca 1979); cf. McKay and Benaboud, *Alfonso VI* 91979); id., *Yet again Alfonso VI* (1984).

[69] Van Koningsveld, *Glossary*, 38-9.

[70] *Ib.*, 61-5.

THE ARABIC COLLECTIO CONCILIORUM

To what period does the Arabic version of the *Collectio Conciliorum* go back? It should before all else be noted that we know this version from only three sources. First of all from some references made by the already mentioned Muslim author, "Al-Qurtubī", from the beginning of the thirteenth century. In reflecting upon baptism, he first of all quotes "the letter from Bishop Leon to the Bishops of Sicily". This passage can be found literally in Liber IV titulus 24 of the Arabic Conciliar manuscript of the Escorial. The same applies to some quotes pertaining to homosexuality, incest, sodomy and manslaughter.[71] Al-Qurtubī refers to the Arabic *Collectio Conciliorum* as "their books with respect to the fiqh". (Fiqh in Islam is the doctrine of religious law). He calls the precepts which he quotes from the *Collectio*, *qawānīn*, "canons". In some introductory remarks he says:

> Know that these people (i.e. the Christians) have made *qawānīn* for themselves, about which they have agreed and which bind them together, without actually the rightness of such *qawānīn* having been founded on the authority of the Tawrāt (the Old Testament) or of the Injīl (the Gospels). Whosoever amongst them acts against such *qawānīn* they at times call a heretic, at other times an infidel. It is a sin with them to step outside (of the boundaries) of such *qawānīn*. These sins, moreover, are subdivided into unforgivable and forgivable sins. When they forgive the sin of one of them they allow him to enter the church and to participate in holy mass. If they do not forgive him, however, they remove him from the church, cast him out and threaten him. Neither do they accept his (testimony as) proof. They demand atonement and that atonement is determined according to what their priests think proper and consider in compliance with their purpose. At times they oblige the sinner to render a service to the church, at other times they keep him from entering the church but force him to stand outside (of the church) as some kind of humiliation. This may last for years. Sometimes he must pay a sum of money either to their king or to them, or to their churches.[72]

It is clear that Al-Qurtubī refers here to the Arabic translation of the Councils, even though he refrains from mentioning the Arabic title. The title of the Arabic version may however be deduced from the

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[71] Qurtubī, *Iʿlām*, 403-407; Biblioteca Nacional Madrid MSS 4877 (copy of the Arabic conciliar manuscript by Casiri) fols. 197a sq. (Liber 5, tit. 17); 194 bis a sq. (Liber 5, tit. 12); 195b; 199a (Liber 5, tit. 17); 198 bis b (Liber 5, tit. 16).

[72] *Iʿlām*, 405: Masʾala fī ghufrān al-asāqifa wa-ʾl-qissīsīn dhunūb al-mudhnibīn wa-khtirāʿihim al-kaffāra li-ʾl-ʿāsīn".

manuscript of the Escorial. In it we find on fo. 229a: "Beginning of the fourth book of *Al-Qānūn*"; on fol. 307b, "end of the sixth volume of *Al-Qānūn al-muqaddas*"; on fol. 333b, in a copied colophon, we furthermore read: "I, Vincentius, the sinful priest and servant of the servants of Christ have completed this eighth volume of *Al-Qānūn al-muqaddas*"; finally, on fol. 433b: "End of the tenth volume of *Al-Qānūn al-muqaddas*". Based on this information one may, in my opinion, safely assume that the Arabic version bears the title: *(kitāb) Al-Qānūn al-muqaddas*, the "Book of the Holy Canon". An alternative is: *(Kitāb) al-qawānīn al-muqaddasa*, "Book of the Holy Canons". The Andalusian scholar Ibn Hazm, who died in 1064, refers, in his *History of Religions*, also to the Arabic Conciliar decrees. He talks about "the books dealing with the major Councils of patriarchs and bishops and their minor Councils, as well as with their Canon Law, as it has been laid down in their rules of law issued by King Rodrigo and applied by the Christian from Al-Andalus".[73] Based on this we may conclude that the Arabic *Liber Canonum* was already circulating in Al-Andalus in the former half of the eleventh century, also among Muslims. The fact that the Arabic text was distributed on a wide scale may also be deduced from the fragments preserved in the National Archives in Lisbon. These contain some passages from the first of a total of ten *Libri*.[74]

Contrary to what has been claimed by previous authors, the Escorial manuscript is not dated. However, it does contains, at the end of the seventh and the eighth *Libri*, the texts of colophons copied from earlier manuscripts. These colophons are dated 16 October, 1087 Era (i.e. 1049 A.D.), and "11 March" (no year) respectively.[75] The colophon following *Liber* 8 refers to a manuscript copied on sheets of paper.[76] The manuscript of the Escorial, on the other hand, was copied on sheets of parchment. In this colophon several other manuscripts of this work are moreover mentioned. The writer states that he hopes to acquire an extra copy in order to correct the defects of his own.[77] From this it appears that by 1049 our text had become widely distributed.

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[73] Ibn Hazm, *Al-Fisal*, vol. 2, p. 3.

[74] Liber I, tit. 21, 22, 23, 24 and 27; cf. Blanco, pp. 114-5.

[75] Fols. 333a and 394.

[76] "Wa-ʾshtaraytu lahu nahwa miʾa wa-khamsīn waraqa min al-kāghid" (fol. 394b).

[77] "Hatta nuqābilahu bi-ghayrihi in shāʾa 'llāh. Fa-in wajadtuhu nāqis shayʾ akmaltuhu wa-baʿathtu bihi ilayka" (*ibidem*).

The translator of this Arabic version is unknown. Paying attention to the nature of the idiomatic usage, we notice that it is as much like the language we have encountered in Ishāq ibn Balashk's Gospel translations of 946 as two peas in a pod. Just like the Gospels, the ten *Libri* were indicated by means of the word *Mushaf*, which has a typically Islamic colour and is specifically used for the Koran. Just as in the case of the Gospels, the *Libri* of *Kitāb al-Qānūn al-muqaddas* start with the Islamic *basmala*: "In the name of the Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful". Now and again we also find typically Islamic prayers, such as: "God is sufficient to me. Truly, He is an excellent Guardian!" The typically Christian terms, on the other hand, such as, for example, the names of Church offices, have been left untranslated and were only arabicized as to form, as has been rightly noted by Simonet in his *Glosario*. The historico-cultural significance of the Arabic Council tranlsation is that it indeed presents a text which is accessible to both Muslims and Christians, not only from a purely linguistic point of view, but also in a cultural and a religious sense. Just as in the case of Ishaq's translation of the Gospels and Asbagh ibn Nabīl's translation of Orosius, the spirit pervading this translation is that of the peaceful coexistence of Islam and Christianity, under Arab rule. This is the spirit of the reign of Caliph Al-Hakam II Al-Mustansir bi-'llāh who indeed held broadminded views of scholarship and was deeply interested in the culture and history, also of his non-Muslim subjects. Already during the reign of Al-Mansūr ibn Abī ʿAmir the wind in Cordoba was, in this respect, blowing from a different quarter. The manuscripts of classical scholarship which Al-Hakam II had collected so diligently were dumped underneath stones in a well, and it was that same Al-Mansūr who, in 997, had the big church of Saint James of Compostella destroyed.[78] I believe, therefore, that the conciliar translation was realized during the reign of Al-Hakam. Possibly a man like Bishop Recemundo, alias Rabīʿ ibn Zayd, may also have had a hand in this. My dating of this translation may well be verified by comparing the translation techniques applied in the translations of the *Gospels*, of *Orosius*, and of the *Councils*. These techniques, I believe, are to a large extent of a homogenous nature. I therefore incline to evaluate the *Collectio Conciliorum* as a historical memorial to the sym-

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[78] Cf. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, vol. 2, 218, 233.

biosis between Islam and Christianity, dating from one of the rare periods of peaceful coexistence experienced in the relations between Islam and Christianity in the course of the history of Medieval Spain.[79]

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[79] Cf. J. Abu-Haidar, *A Document* (1987).1.

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THE PERSISTENCE OF MEDIEVAL THEMES IN MODERN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DISCUSSION IN EGYPT

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this paper indicates immediately that its subject-matter is rather different from the main body of material under discussion at the symposium, mainly because it is concerned with material from the modern rather than the Abbasid period, but also because it is concerned more with material by Muslim than by Christian authors. Yet because the groundwork of much discussion in the modern period was laid in the Abbasid period it is useful to leap across the centuries and see to what extent more recent material reproduces some of the features of that period and to what extent new themes have emerged, and also to leap across barriers between communities in order to discern the thoughts of Muslim writers.

OUTLINE OF MEDIEVAL THEMES

Before proceeding to the modern material, however, it is necessary to outline my scheme of themes which dominated medieval discussion. No great authority is claimed for this, as it is simply one of a number of options, but my suggestion is that five major subjects were discussed, some of which were further sub-divided.

1. Jesus/Christology
Within this most important theme there were two sub-themes:

a. Jesus' identity (the question of who is, or was, Jesus; questions of his divine and/or human natures; discussion of Incarnation).

b. Jesus' function (the questions of his task and purpose on earth, including discussion of the crucifixion and of any idea of redemption. Very importantly this also included a very positive stream of thought within the Islamic community, that which saw Jesus' significance as lying in his function as teacher and example, charac-

teristics which were emphasized in the Shīʿī tradition and among the Sufis).

2. The Trinity

This, too, was a repeated area of discussion, focusing on the credibility or otherwise of the doctrine. Christian apologists for the idea of Trinity often attempted to link discussion of it to Muslim discussion of the question of God's attributes.

3. The Bible: Christian (and Jewish) Scriptures

Here again there are two sub-themes:

a. Textual authenticity (the question of *taḥrīf* (corruption) of the Biblical text, and in particular whether the corruption lay in the text itself or in the interpretation of the text).

b. References to Muḥammad (the question of whether or not there are references in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures to the coming of Muḥammad).

Clearly there was some considerable tension between these two sub-themes, in that those who sought to find references to Muḥammad in the Bible (sub-theme b.) used, and thus implicitly accepted the value of what other writers (sub-theme a.) rejected.

4. Christians

Here the discussion was of a more practical nature, concerning the position of Christians (and also Jews) within Islamic society, the question of *dimmīs* (protected minorities) and *ahl al-kitāb* (people of the book). In particular, were the Christians to be viewed as "nearest to the believers" (Qurʾān 5:82) or "to be brought low as unbelievers" (Qurʾān 9:29)? Both these positions were capable of justification with reference to the Qurʾān.

5. The historical corruption of Christianity

This argument, as represented in, for example, the writings of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, was slightly later in emerging than some of the earlier themes, and it centred on where and when exactly the Christian community went astray from the original message of Jesus. Paul and Constantine were presented as the main agents of this corruption by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who was thus able to draw a sharp distinction between original Christianity and the later Christian communities still extant in Islamic times.

Clearly these five themes were by no means separate and discrete areas of discussion, for there was much inter-linking and cross-fertilizing between them, but they may serve as a workable scheme upon which to base analysis of more modern material.

MODERN EGYPTIAN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DISCUSSION

The main question which this section of the paper will attempt to answer is whether these medieval patterns are reproduced in modern Egyptian discussion or whether there is change and significant development. The material upon which discussion of the question will be based is 65 books published in Cairo between 1940 and 1980, and available in Cairo bookshops at the end of that period.[1]

The first part of the answer must be that all the medieval themes outlined above are indeed reproduced in modern Egyptian discussion by Muslim authors. In a rough breakdown of the material, the largest number of books, significantly, fits into category five of the scheme above, that is the historical corruption of Christianity. This is thus the main theme of modern Muslim discussion, and 12 books (Nos. 1, 6, 9, 19, 30, 35, 36, 51, 57, 58, 60 and 62) fit into this category, though they may include discussion of other themes too. In addition, there are the following other studies on medieval themes:

Theme 1a, one modern study (no. 43) on the Incarnation.
Theme 2, two modern studies (Nos. 42 and 52) on the Trinity.
[Additionally, linking themes 1 and 2, there is one modern study on God (No. 53)]
Theme 3a, five modern studies (Nos. 5, 16, 34, 40 and 65) on the Bible, which suggest its corruption by varying methods and to varying extents.
Theme 3b, four modern studies (Nos. 11, 54, 59 and 61) on prophecies of Muḥammad in the Bible.
Theme 4, five modern studies (Nos. 8, 20, 21, 33 and 46) on the position of Christians, or more generally on the inter-relationship of Christians and Muslims, some being more irenical than others.

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[1] Authors, titles, publishers and dates of publication are listed in an Appendix to this paper, in alphabetical order of author. During the rest of this paper reference will be made to the numbers of the books as listed in that Appendix. For an annotated bibliography of the 65 books, see *The Muslim World*, 80 (1990), pp. 251-277.

In addition there are three books (No. 7 (on angels and revelation), and Nos. 22 and 56 (on a variety of themes)) which are broadly traditional, if not medieval, in style and content. Altogether then, these studies make up a total of thirty-three books, or just over half the total. It is therefore the remaining thirty-two books which are in many ways the most interesting.

Firstly, however, there is another question which must be asked regarding the books to which reference has already been made, namely how does modern discussion of these themes compare with medieval? Even if, in other words, the themes are the same, is the treatment of the themes different at all? The main answer here must be that much of the modern Egyptian material is similar in content and style to the medieval material, concentrating, for example, on the irrationality of Christian beliefs, and the change and development which has taken place with reference to both beliefs and practices during the course of Christian history.

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contain significant remarks on Christianity in the course of reflec-
tions on wider contemporary issues; and then there are some in-
teresting pieces of literary work, which include a short piece of
drama on the idea of incarnation (No. 47), and a collection of poetry
and some short stories which muse on the relationships between
Christians and Muslims (Nos. 63, 21, 2ii and 38ii).

There are then three new themes which are discussed by a num-
ber of different works. One of these is fairly critical, and the remain-
ing two are more positive in their insights concerning Christianity.
The more critical one centres on discussion of imperialism, mission
and Orientalism, which are presented as a kind of unholy alliance
working together over the course of the last two centuries to subvert
the world and faith of Islam. There are five studies of this theme
(Nos. 10, 15, 17, 31 and 55). Egyptian works on this subject build
upon a work first published in the Lebanon in 1953, on mission and
imperialism,[6] but they also then develop it via the addition of dis-
cussion of Orientalism, and this is the Egyptian contribution to this
theme.

By far the most interesting, however, are the remaining works,
(Nos. 2iii, 3, 4, 12, 26, 27, 28, 29, 37, 38i, 45, 50 and 64). Here we
have completely new material that goes beyond the medieval materi-
al in content, style and intention, and is more full of insight and
empathy than any of the material discussed so far. Two main themes
can be found in this more positive material.

The first is essentially biography of Jesus. A number of works
have appeared which loosely fit into this category, and which open
up new ground (Nos. 12, 50 and 64). To some extent this is a de-
velopment of theme 1b of the medieval themes, on the function of
Jesus, as these modern biographies concentrate on Jesus as teacher
and example. They are not therefore utterly new, but they do quote
explicitly from the New Testament, particularly from the Sermon
on the Mount and the sayings of Jesus concerning the kingdom of
God, and in the case of one biography, that of al-ʿAqqād, (No. 12),
a recognizably "critical" (in the technical sense of the word) ap-
proach to the biography is adopted, making use of the discovery of
the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, and thus breaking new ground.

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[6] Muṣṭafā Ḫālidī and ʿUmar Farrūḫ, *Al-tabshīr wa'l-istiʿmār fī'l-bilād al-ʿara-
biyyah* (mission and imperialism in the Arab world), Al-maktabah al-ʿaṣriyyah
li'l-ṭibāʿah wa'l-naṣr (Beirut), 1953.

The second, and this is utterly new, centres around the symbolism of the cross. A number of works, (Nos. 2iii, 3, 4, 26, 37 and 45) including plays, novels, short stories and poems, as well as scholarly articles dwell on this theme, and are united in that they all discern positive significance in the cross as a symbol. They are not therefore making statements about the historical significance of the cross; rather they are using it as a metaphor, but the choice of the cross for this purpose is extremely significant. Even though these works are works of fiction, rather than works of "theology" or explicit studies of Christianity, they are of considerable interest in that they recognize the significance of the cross firstly as an indication of the extent of the human capacity for evil, and secondly as a powerful symbol of suffering for those who themselves suffer. These points are by no means restricted to Egyptian writings as there are a number of parallels in, for example, Palestinian poetry, but the Egyptian material does provide clear evidence of breaking new ground.

The remaining works in this more positive category (Nos. 27, 28 and 29, by Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn, and No. 38i, by Najīb Maḥfūz) again contain extremely interesting insights into particular aspects of Christianity, in some cases cognate to their authors' works discussed above, and in other cases ranging more widely over the relationship between Islam and Christianity. (See, for example, No. 29, on religion in general, and No. 27, Vol. I, pp. 74-84, a discussion of the parallels between early Christian debate about the Incarnation and early Muslim debate about the createdness or otherwise of the Qurʾān.)

SUMMARY

To summarize, then, it must be said that of the material on Christianity produced in the modern period in Egypt, that on traditional themes is greater in volume than that which breaks new ground. The material on traditional themes, however, is not simply a reproduction of old arguments, for new sources are used in the discussion of those traditional themes. Additionally, new themes have emerged, with one adopting a more critical view of Christianity, and two showing a more creative and innovative approach. Material demonstrating this more creative approach may be less in volume than that on more traditional themes, but its significance is greater.

Concluding Remarks

Three brief points may be made in conclusion in order to link the medieval and modern periods: firstly, one interesting parallel between medieval and modern material is the role played in its production by converts. Four of the modern books (Nos. 10, 11, 42 and 43, on mission and imperialism, prophecies of Muḥammad, the Trinity and the Incarnation respectively) are by two Coptic converts to Islam, and a fifth (No. 16, on the Bible) is by a French convert to Islam, all of whom can thus be seen to be exercising a similar function to that of writers such as ʿAlī Ṭabarī and Ibn Ḥazm in the medieval period. The converts' experience of Christianity from within, particularly of the activities of Christian missions, is very powerful indeed in making their respective cases.

Secondly, one interesting difference between the medieval and the modern discussions is the one-sidedness of the discussion. In the modern period it has become a particularly Muslim discussion, and therefore where, we may ask, are the Christian apologists, the heirs to the tradition which made such an important contribution to medieval discussion? The answer lies partly in the fact that many of the most significant attempts at modern Christian apologetics by Christian authors, such as the work of Ibrāhīm Lūqā,[7] are more about Islam than about Christianity.[8] While this may be a welcome advance on the earlier ignorance among Christians about Islam, it clearly does little to elucidate Christianity.

Thirdly, with reference to the general situation in Christian-Muslim relations in Egypt, some attention must be given to the question of why it is that in Egypt the more polemical tradition of discussion between the adherents of the two faiths is so persistent. The main answer, I think, lies in simple demography, namely in the population balance between the Christian and Muslim communities. In this respect Egypt is unique for two reasons: firstly the balance of the population is unique, in that some 85 % of the popula-

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[7] See especially *Al-masīḥiyyah fī'l-islām* (Christianity in Islam), first published in 1938, 2nd ed., Al-Maṭbaʿah al-tijāriyyah al-ḥadīṭah, 1958.

[8] See, for example, Naẓmī Lūqā, *Muḥammad: al-risālah wal-rasūl* (Muḥammad, the message and the messenger), Dār al-kitāb al-miṣrī, 1958, and *Muḥammad fī ḥayātihi al-hāṣṣa* (Muḥammad in his personal life, 1959, reprinted Maktabat Ǧarīb, 1978; and Bushrā Zakhārī Mīḫāʾīl *Muḥammad rasūl allāh: hakaḏā basharat al-anāǧīl* (Muḥammad the apostle of God—so the gospels proclaimed), ʿĀlam al-kutub, 1972.

tion is Muslim, and the remaining 15% Christian.[9] Secondly, the Egyptian situation is unique because of the homogeneity of the two communities; a relatively unified Muslim community, in other words, encounters a relatively unified Christian community.[10]

What we have, therefore, in Egypt, is a minority which is big enough to seem threatening to the majority, a minority which is small enough to feel threatened by the majority, and a majority and a minority both of which are big enough to produce a number of hot-heads, to put it no more strongly than that. When this is combined with economic stagnation, which leads to social rivalry and competition for scarce resources, accentuated by the fact that the population of Egypt is now rising by one million every eight months, there are major problems. It is for these reasons that the situation in Egypt in relationships between the communities is inflammatory, and for these reasons that the situation there is quite different from the situation in, for example, North Africa, where Christians are not an issue for the internal political economic or social situation. In North Africa, therefore, the measured, serious, critical study of Christianity is possible. In Egypt, however, I doubt whether this is a realistic prospect in the immediate future. This aspect of the contemporary Egyptian situation also suggests some interesting parallels with the situation in the Abbasid period, especially in the time of al-Mutawakkil, with his prohibition of debate between Christians and Muslims because of the threat posed to public order by such activities, and his rather harsh decrees concerning the position of Christians within society. With respect to the future this parallel perhaps has some rather unfortunate implications.

APPENDIX

[List, in alphabetical order of author, of all works under discussion]
1. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, Manṣūr Ḥusayn, *Daʿwat al-ḥaqq aw al-ḥaqīqah bayn al-masīḥiyyah wa'l-islām* (The Call of Truth or the Truth between Christianity and Islam), Al-šarikah al-miṣriyyah li'l-ṭibāʿah, 1963. 2nd ed. (inc. commentary on replies to the first edition), Maktabat ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn, 1972. (629 pp.).

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[9] The statistics are extremely unreliable on this point, but these figures are somewhere in the middle between the extremes which are quoted in some quarters.

[10] There are, of course, differences within each community over a number of different questions, but when compared with the situation in countries like Syria or Iraq, both communities are far more uniform in Egypt than in either of those areas.

2. ʿAbd al-Quddūs, Iḥsān,
   Short Stories:
   i. "Allāh maḥabbah" (God is love), in *Al-wisādah al-ḫāliyah*, (The empty
      cushion), Dār rūz al-yūsuf, 1955, pp. 89-102, translated by T.J. le Gassick
      in *I am Free and other stories*, General Egyptian Book Organisation, 1978,
      pp. 31-44.
   ii. "Anā wa'l-samāʾ" (Heaven and I), in *Šafatāhu* (His lips), Dār al-hilāl, n.d.
      pp. 27-31, translated in *I am Free and other stories*, pp. 63-69.
   iii. "Martyr in Dishna", translated in *I am Free and other stories*, pp. 45-54. [I
      have been unable to locate the Arabic original of this story.]
3. ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, Ṣalāḥ, *Maʾsāt al-ḥallāj* (The tragedy of al-Ḥallāj), Dār al-ādāb,
   Beirut, 1965, (203 pp.), reprinted by Dār al-qalam, Cairo, 1966, translated by
   K.I. Semaan, "Murder in Baghdad", *Arabic translation series of the Journal of
   Arabic Literature*, I, Leiden: Brill, 1972.
4. ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, Ṣalāḥ, "Al-ẓill wal-ṣalīb" (The shadow and the cross), in *Aqūlu
   lakum* (I say to you), Dār al-ādāb, Beirut, 2nd ed., 1965, pp. 60-71, reprinted
   in *Dīwān Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr* (The collected works of Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr),
   Beirut: Dār al-ʿawdah, 1972, pp. 148-154, translated in *Modern Arab Poets*, ed.
   I.J. Boullata, Heinemann, 1976, pp. 78ff.
5. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Aḥmad, *Isrāʾīl ḥarrafat al-anājīl* (Israel corrupted the
   Gospels), Maktabat wahbah, 1972. (93 pp.).
6. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Aḥmad, *Al-masīḥ fī maṣādir al-ʿaqāʾid al-masīḥiyyah—ḫulāṣat
   ʾabḥāṯ ʿulamāʾ al-masīḥiyyah fī'l-ġarb* (The Messiah in the sources of Christian
   beliefs—a summary of the researches of Christian scholars in the West),
   Maktabat wahbah, 1978. (327 pp).
7. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Aḥmad, *Al-waḥy wa'l-malāʾikah fī'l-yahūdiyyah wa'l-masīḥiyyah
   wa'l-islām* (Revelation and angels in Judaism, Christianity and Islam), Dār al-
   nahḍah al-ʿarabiyyah, 1979. (95 pp).
8. Abū Rayya, Maḥmūd, *Dīn allāh wāḥid—Muḥammad wa'l-masīḥ akhawān* (The
   religion of God is one—Muḥammad and Jesus are brothers), Dār al-karnak,
   1963, 2nd ed. *Dīn allāh wāḥid—ʿalā alsinat jamīʿ al-rusul* (The religion of God is
   one—on the tongues of all prophets), ʿĀlam al-kutub, 1970. (174 pp).
9. Abū Zahra, Muḥammad, *Muḥāḍarāt fī al-naṣrāniyyah* (Lectures on Christiani-
   ty), first published 1942, 5th printing Dār al-fikr al-ʿarabī, 1977. (237 pp).
10. Aḥmad, Ibrāhīm Khalīl, *Al-istišrāq wa'l-tabshīr wa-ṣilatuhumā bi'l-imbirāliyyah al-
    ʿālamiyyah* (Orientalism and mission and their relation to world imperialism),
    Maktabat al-waʿy al-ʿarabī, 1973. (200 pp).
11. Aḥmad, Ibrāhīm Khalīl, *Muḥammad fī al-tawrāh wa'l-injīl wa'l-qurʾān* (Muḥam-
    mad in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qurʾān), Maktabat al-waʿy al-ʿarabī,
    n.d. (231 pp).
12. Al-ʿAqqād, ʿAbbās Maḥmūd, *ʿAbqariyyat al-masīḥ* (The genius of Christ),
    Maktaʿat dār aḫbār al-yawm, 1953, (222 pp), 2nd ed, *Ḥayāt al-masīḥ* (The life
    of Christ), Dār al-hilāl, 1958, (199 pp).
13. Al-ʿAšmāwī, Muḥammad Saʿīd, *Ḥiṣād al-ʿaql* (The harvest of reason), Dār al-
    kitāb al-lubnānī, Beirut, 1974. (192 pp).
14. Badawī, ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad, *Maryam al-batūl*, (The Virgin Mary), Dār
    al-anṣār, 1978. (155 pp).
15. al-Bahī, Muḥammad, *Al-fikr al-islāmī al-ḥadīth wa-ṣilatuhu bi'l-istiʿmār al-ġarbī*
    (Modern Islamic thought and its relationship with Western imperialism),
    Maktabat wahbah, 1st printing 1957, 8th printing 1975. (552 pp).
16. Bucaille, Maurice, *Dirāsat al-kutub al-muqaddasah fī ḍawʾ al-maʿārif al-ḥadīthah* (A
    study of the holy books in the light of modern knowledge), Dār al-maʿārif,
    1978. (290 pp), (translated from the French).

17. Diyāb, Maḥmūd, *Qaḍāyā fikriyyah wa-ṯaqāfiyyah* (Intellectual and Cultural Problems), Al-hay'ah al-miṣriyyah al-ʿāmmah li'l-kitāb, 1975. (122 pp).

18. Fahmī, Muḥammad ʿĀrif Muṣṭafā, *Yasūʿ al-masīḥ wa'l-ʿimām ʿalī* (Jesus the Messiah and Imām ʿAlī), Maṭbʿat al-kaylānī, 1971. (135 pp).

19. Faraj, Muḥammad Kamāl (ed.), *Izhār al-ḥaqq* (The Demonstration of Truth), Al-'Ahrām publications, 1978. (751 + 176 pp).

20. Fawzī, Ḥusayn, *Sindabād al-miṣrī* (The Egyptian Sinbad), Dār al-maʿārif, 1961. (397 pp).

21. al-Ghazālī, Muḥammad, *Al-taʿaṣṣub wa'l-tasāmuḥ bayn al-masīḥiyyah wa'l-Islām* (Fanaticism and co-operation between Christianity and Islam), Dār al-kutub al-ḥadītah, n.d. (368 pp).

22. al-Ghazālī, Muḥammad, *Qaḍā'if al-ḥaqq* (Bombs of Truth), Al-maktabah al-ʿaṣriyyah, Beirut, n.d. (224 pp).

23. Hanafī, Ḥasan, *Qaḍāyā muʿāṣirah* (Contemporary problems), Vol. I, *Fī fikrinā al-muʿāṣir* (On our contemporary thought), Dār al-fikr al-ʿarabī, 1976, (319 pp), and Vol. II. *Fī al-fikr al-ġarbī al-muʿāṣir* (On comtemporary western thought), Dār al-fikr al-ʿarabī, n.d., (527 pp).

24. Hanafī, Ḥasan, *Religious Dialogue and Revolution—essays on Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1977. (245 pp).

25. Hanafī, Ḥasan, *Namādij min al-falsafah al-masīḥiyyah fī al-ʿaṣr al-wasīṭ* (Examples of Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages), 2nd printing, Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1978. (294 pp).

26. Ḥusayn, Muḥammad Kāmil, *Qaryah ẓālimah* (An evil village), first published 1954, 4th printing Maktabat al-nahḍah al-miṣriyyah, 1974, (263 pp), translated by A.K. Cragg, *City of Wrong*, Djambatan, Amsterdam, 1959, and Seabury Press, New York, 1966.

27. Ḥusayn, Muḥammad Kāmil, *Mutanawwiʿāt* (Miscellaneous Essays), 2 vols, Dār al-nahḍah al-miṣriyyah, 1958, (220 pp and 234 pp).
    See especially:
    i. Volume I, pp. 27-38, "Aḥsan al-qiṣaṣ" (The best of stories), translated by A.K. Cragg, "The Exodus: an Egyptian view", in *The Muslim World*, 49 (1959), pp. 30-40.
    ii. Volume I, pp. 74-84, "Miḥnatān mutašābihatān" (Two Similar Trials).
    iii. Volume II, pp. 3-28, "Maʿnā al-ẓulm fī al-qur'ān al-karīm" (The meaning of "ẓulm" in the Qur'ān), translated by A.K. Cragg, "The Meaning of ẓulm in the Qur'ān", in *The Muslim World*, 54 (1964), pp. 4-13.

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AN EXHIBITION OF MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE
A. MINGANA COLLECTION, BIRMINGHAM

LUCY-ANNE HUNT

A selection of manuscripts, most of them illustrated, was on display in the Central Library of the Selly Oak Colleges during the symposium *Christian Arabic Apologetics in the Abbasid period (750-1258)*.[1] This selection included some of the Christian Arabic manuscripts acquired by A. Mingana during journeys made to Egypt, Sinai, Syria and Mesopotamia in 1924, 1925 and 1929, sponsored by Edward Cadbury.[2] Also shown were several Syriac, Greek and Armenian illustrated manuscripts and bindings from the Mingana, Rendel Harris and J.B.Braithwaite collections, and Islamic Arabic texts. These, with other manuscripts in the holdings of the Selly Oak Colleges' Library, are included in a recent survey of illustrated manuscripts and bindings.[3]

During his forays to the Middle East, Mingana evidently had no particular concern with illustrated manuscripts. His view was that "One does not usually look for artistic drawings in Christian Arabic MSS., but good geometric patterns may be seen ... and crude miniatures of some saints ...".[4] The interest of these books emerges when it is seen how their 'illustration' broadly interpreted, functions as the visual counterpart to the text. As such they represent a precious aspects of the religious and cultural life of the Chris-

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[1] Study and photography of the manuscripts was undertaken through the courtesy of the Selly Oak Colleges Library Committee. I am also grateful for the helpful assistance provided by the library staff, especially M. Nielsen and P. Lambe, in the mounting of the exhibition and the production of the handlist. Fr.Kh. Samir kindly gave advice on some of the texts.

[2] A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, II, *Christian Arabic Manuscripts and Additional Syriac Manuscripts,* (Cambridge, 1936), p. v, stating that the additional Syriac manuscripts were acquired after 1933.

[3] Scheduled to appear in the journal *Manuscripts of the Middle East* (Leiden).

[4] Mingana, *Christian Arabic Manuscripts*, p. vi.

tian east. Three manuscripts displayed may be taken as examples to demonstrate this.

Fig. 1, of M. Chr. Arab. 93 [Cat. 43] fol. 5v. reproduces the beginning of the Arabic version of a treatise on repentance attributed to St. Ephrem. This is from a section of a manuscript of Spiritual and Ethical Treatises, translated from the Greek, produced in 885 A.D. at Mar Saba at the request of Anba Ishaq for the monastery of Mount Sinai.[5] An invocation, with the title of the treatise, is marked to assist the reader with a chevron design which divides the discourse from the preceding one. An enlarged dot, like a simplified 'coronis' paragraph mark, directs the eye to the new text, further emphasised by the dotted line under the opening phrase. Similar visual clues are common in other medieval eastern Christian manuscripts, especially Coptic.[6] Highlighting of the initial words of the text to assist in recitation appears in Qurʾān manuscripts of the same date. Fig. 2 reproduces a bifolium of a fragmentary third century A.H./ninth century A.D. Qurʾān in Kufic script on vellum (M. Ar. Isl. 1563, [Cat 1]). The opening words of the new sūrah (sūrah 16) are gilded.[7]

An important manuscript in the Mingana collection is a Coptic-Arabic Ritual of Consecration of a new church (M. Chr,. Arab. 61 [Cat 22]) dated 1308 A.D. Its decoration includes a cross frontispiece (Fig. 3) preceding the text of the consecration of the altar.[8]

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[5] Mingana, *Christian Arabic Manuscripts*, pp. 57ff (no. 43). For the reconstruction of the eight Birmingham folios with MS Strassbourg or. 4226 and Leningrad folios, and their date, see Kh. Samir and P. Yousif, "La version arabe de la troisième démonstration d'Aphrahat (sur le jeûne)," in Kh. Samir (ed.) *Actes du deuxième congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes* (Oosterhesselen, septembre 1984) (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 226) (Rome, 1986), pp. 31f with references.

[6] T. Petersen, "The Paragraph Mark in Coptic Illuminated Ornament," in D. Miner (ed.), *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle Da Costa Greene*, (Princeton, 1954), pp. 295-330; N.S.H. Jansma, *Ornements des manuscrits coptes du monastère blanc*, (Groningen, 1973), *passim*.

[7] D. Hopwood (ed.), *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, IV, *Islamic Arabic Manuscripts*, (Oxford, 1963, rpt, Zug, 1985), 1f, no. 1 refers to the red and brown diacritical marks as being partly by a later hand. For a parallel, see M. Lings, *The Quranic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination*, World of Islam Festival Trust, (London, 1976), p. 18 with Pl. 2.

[8] Mingana, *Christian Arabic Manuscripts*, no, 22 (Coptic-Arabic 2). The text is used in G. Horner, *The Service of Consecration of a Church*, (London, 1902), *passim*. The cross in Christian texts of the eighth to ninth centuries is discussed in the paper by M. Swanson, "The Cross of Christ in the earliest Melkite Apologies," elsewhere in this volume.
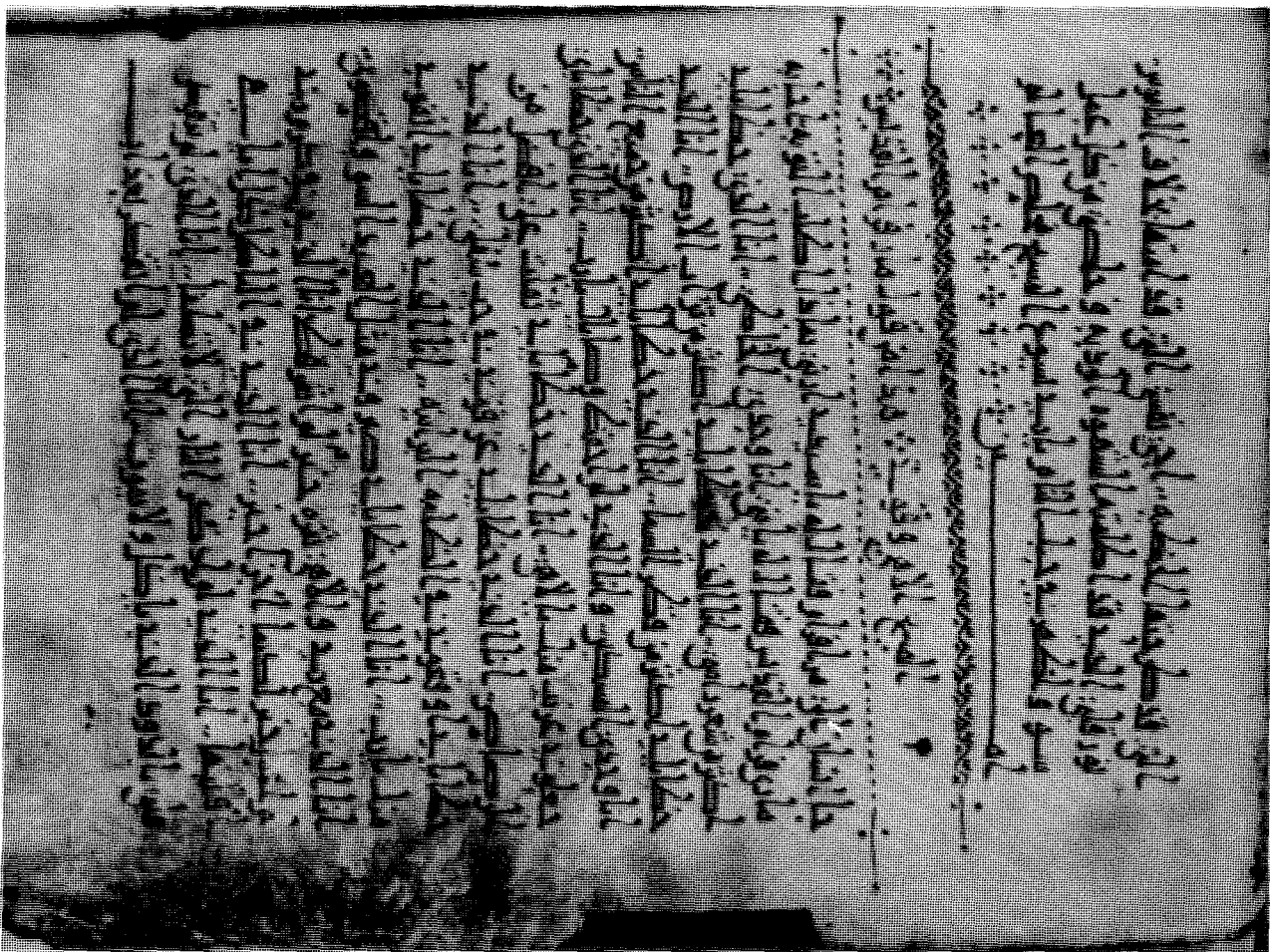
Fig. 1. MS. Mingana Chr. Arab. 93 [Cat. 43], fol. 5v, Treatise on Repentance attributed to St. Ephraem.
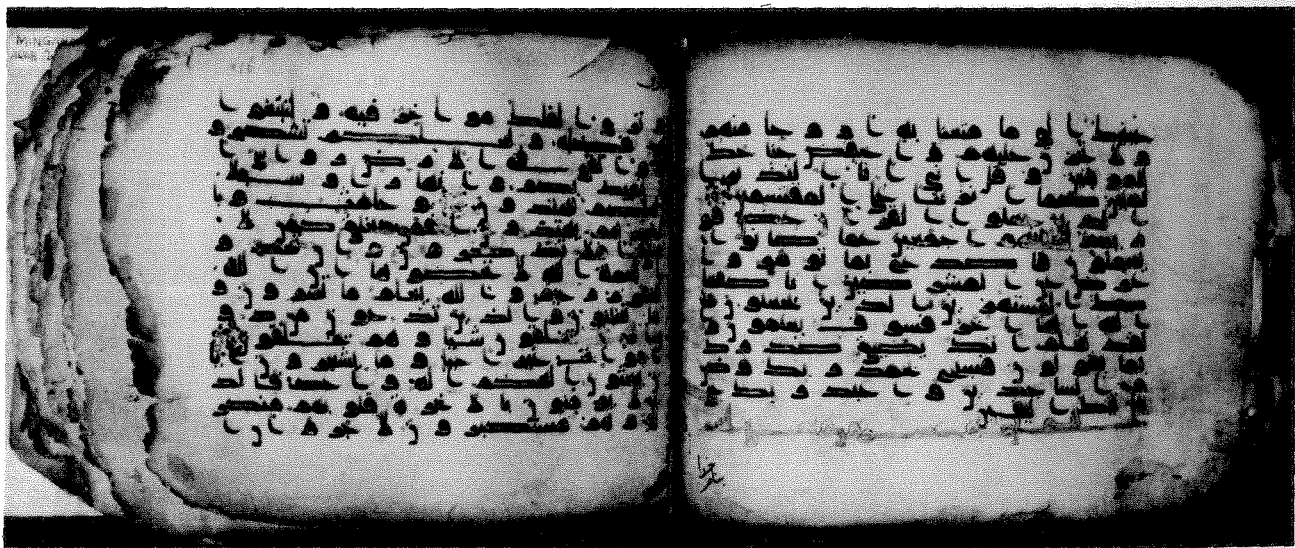
Fig. 2. MS. Mingana Ar. Isl. 1563 [Cat. 1], Qurʾān, fols. 15v-16r.
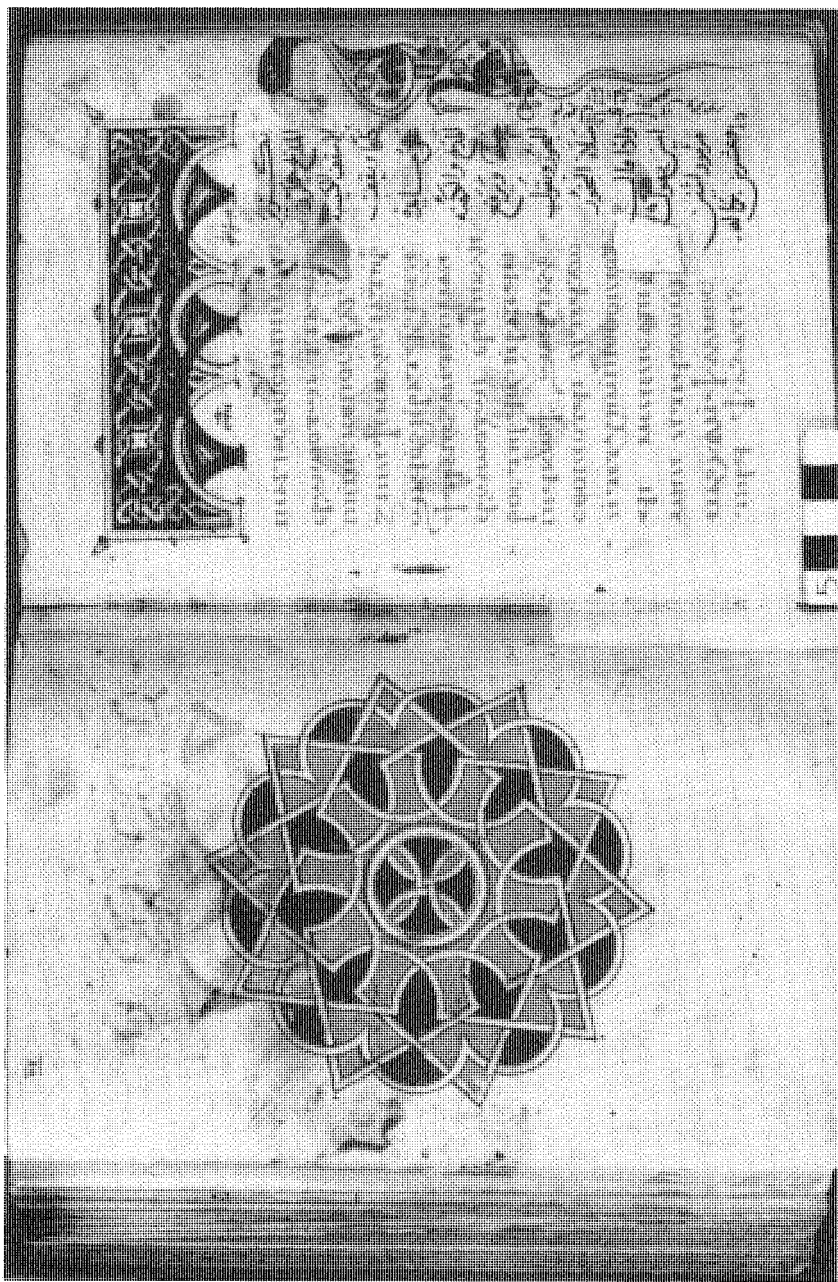
Fig. 3. MS. Mingana Chr. Arab, 61 [Cat. 22]. Ritual of Consecration of a Church,
fols. 203v-204.

Fig. 4. MS. Mingana Syr. 560 [Cat. 560]. Tooled binding of Gospel Book.

This ritual presence of the sign of the cross complements its position-
ing on the carved carriers of wood which separate the sanctuary, or
haikal, from the nave of Coptic churches. Two pairs of intricately
carved cross panels headed the screen doors constructed before the
Baptismal chapel of al-Muʿallaqah, the Hanging Church, in Old
Cairo in 1301-2.[9] The more general appearance of crosses on the
binding of easter Christian books is attested by a later example in
the Mingana collection, the Syriac Gospels M. Syr 560 [Cat 560]
(Fig. 4) dated 1491 A.D.[10] These examples attest to the symbolic
focus of the cross within the liturgical furnishings and books of the
eastern churches. Illustrated manuscripts and bindings, then, con-
tribute to the importance of the Mingana collection.

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[9] L.-A. Hunt, "The al-Muʿallaqah Doors Reconstructed: An Early Four-
teenth-Century Sanctuary Screen from Old Cairo," *Gesta*, XXVIII/1, (New York,
1989), pp. 61-77.

[10] Made at a Monastery of St George and St. Abel: A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the
Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, I, *Syriac and Garshuni Manuscripts*, (Cambridge,
1933), 1039.

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