# THE DISPUTATION BETWEEN A MUSLIM AND A MONK OF BET HALE: SYRIAC TEXT AND ANNOTATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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Martin Tamcke's prolific bibliography is notable for his focus on the Church of the East and for a series of influential studies of this church's long history of dialogue with others, whether local Christian rivals, Muslim scholars, Mongolian shamans, or Lutheran missionaries. His own professional life in Göttingen, where he is Director of Intercultural Theology within the Faculty of Theology, is also distinguished by his remarkable commitment to bringing different ethnic and religious groups into constructive dialogue within a supportive environment. It is a great pleasure, therefore, to offer my honoured colleague this edition of an early example of the Church of the East's engagement with Islam as a token of my respect and appreciation for his own work.

#### Introduction

The 'Disputation between a Muslim and a monk of Bēt Ḥālē' (henceforth *Disputation*) has been much discussed in recent secondary literature on early Christian-Muslim relations, but the lack of a published edition and full translation has restricted its substantive analysis to those with access to images of the one extant Syriac manuscript, and has left all others dependent upon scholarly summaries of its contents. Various editions have been promised, but none have appeared, and as a result my own transcription and translation, originally prepared for my students in Oxford, have been circulating more and more widely. This article seeks to make this important text openly available to all who have an interest in the subject of early Christian-Muslim dialogue.

## Origins and date of the Disputation

The *Disputation* presents itself as an account (sent as a letter to one Father Jacob for the benefit of his brethren) of an informal discussion held in the monastery of Bēt Ḥālē between an anonymous monk (who later redacted the discussion, in the form of questions and answers) and an anonymous notable Muslim who is said to have served the emir Maslama.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For an excellent summary see B. Roggema, 'The Disputation between a monk of Bet Ḥālē and an Arab notable', in D. Thomas and B. Roggema (eds), Christian-Muslim Relations 1 (600-900), (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), p.268-273. See also the ground-breaking articles of S.H. Griffith, 'Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian texts. From Patriarch John (d. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286)', in B. Lewis and F. Niewöhner (eds), Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter (Wiesbaden, 1992), p.251-273; id., 'Disputing with Islam in Syriac: The Case of the Monk of Bêt Hālê and a Muslim Emir', Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies 3:1 (2000); and G.J. Reinink, 'The beginnings of Syriac apologetic literature in response to Islam', OC 77 (1993), p.165-187; id., 'Political power and right religion in the East Syrian disputation between a monk of Bet Ḥāle and an Arab Notable', in E. Grypeou, M. Swanson, and D. Thomas (eds), The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam (Leiden, 2006), p.153-169; id., 'From Apocalyptics to Apologetics: Early Syriac Reactions to Islam', in W. Brandes and F. Schmeider (eds), Endzeiten: Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen (Berlin, 2008) p.75-87; id., 'The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs in an early East Syrian apology against Islam', in D. Bumazhnov, E. Grypeou, T.B. Sailors and A. Toepel (eds), Bibel, Byzanz und Christlicher Orient: Festschrift für Stephen Gerö zum 65. Geburtstag (OLA 187; Leuven, 2011) p.329-342; R. Hoyland, Seeing Islam as Others Saw It (Princeton, 1997), p.465-472. Needless to say, I am endebted throughout the article and edition that follows to these earlier works.

With the dismissal of the Muslim's translator (§4), the conversation is presumably thought to have been continued in Arabic, although the report is written in Syriac. Their discussion covers many issues, including the question of the theological significance of the Islamic conquests; fidelity to the commandments of Abraham (notably circumcision and sacrifice); Christ's divinity and suffering; the Trinity; the status and teaching of Muḥammad; Christian use of crosses, images, and relics; Christian prayer towards the East; and the ability of Muslims to enter the Kingdom of God. Arguments depend heavily on scriptural exegesis and proofs from nature, rather than on more philosophical argumentation.

The *Disputation* is a Christian text, with no attempt made to outline or defend core Islamic beliefs, and so it inevitably ends with the Muslim conceding intellectual defeat. And yet the tone of the debate remains remarkably positive. The monk describes Muḥammad as 'a wise and God-fearing man, who freed you (i.e. the Muslims) from the worship of demons, and caused you to know the one true God' (§32). This clearly falls short of Islamic teaching, and yet avoids the bitterness of much Christian polemic. The monk refers to the Qur'ān and what he believes to be its constituent parts (§48), and engages with citations from it (§29-30).<sup>2</sup> He also states that righteous Muslims will be admitted to the Kingdom of God, albeit with a lesser status than Christians (§58). The Muslim, who is described from the outset as being 'well educated in our Scriptures and their Qur'ān' (§2), accepts proof texts from the Old Testament, and makes use of a Christian tradition concerning the image of Christ sent to King Abgar of Edessa (§47). He acknowledges the diligence of the Christians in prayer and fasting (§3), quotes the Prophet's praise of monks (§53), and states that God will not reject Christians who are free of sin (§53).

There is little reason to suppose that this text provides a record of an actual historical discussion, but, as often with Christian apologetic texts, it does reflect real points of debate between Christians and Muslims, and seeks to provide polished (if unsophisticated) Christian answers to questions about their beliefs and practices. Whether a contemporary Muslim would have found them persuasive is an entirely different question.

The denominational origins of the *Disputation* are clear, not only from the fact that it is attributed in its title to a monk of the Church of the East monastery of Bēt Ḥālē, and is only preserved in East Syriac manuscripts, but also from the title 'blessed' (and only 'blessed') given to Mary (§30), the words of the Eucharistic institution (§26) which appear to reflect those of the East Syriac liturgical anaphora of Nestorius, and the reliance on the *Acts of Mar Mari* (§46-47). More general Syriac origins are indicated by arguments based on biblical citations taken from the Peshitta, the regular use of Syriac exegetical traditions, and dependence on the *Legend of Sergius Baḥira*³ and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See G.J. Reinink, 'Bible and Qur'an in early Syriac Christian-Islamic disputation', in M. Tamcke (ed.), Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages (Beirut, 2007), p.57-72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> For the question of dependence see below. The early 9<sup>th</sup> century legend exists in both an East and a West Syriac tradition. It is cited below from the edition and translation, with critical study, of B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam (Leiden, 2009). For a concise overview see B. Roggema, 'The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā', in D. Thomas and B. Roggema (eds), Christian-Muslim Relations 1 (600-900), (Leiden, 2009), p.600-603. See also K. Szilágyi, 'Muḥammad and the monk. The making of the Christian Baḥīrā legend', Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 34 (2008), p.169-214; R.G. Hoyland, 'The earliest Christian writings on Muḥammad. An appraisal', in H. Motzki (ed.), The Biography of Muḥammad. The Issue of the Sources (Leiden, 2000), p.276-97.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This text was of West Syriac origin, and was composed around 691/2. In addition to early translations into Greek and thence into Latin, it also circulated in the Church of the East at an early date – though the *Disputation* is itself an important piece of evidence for the date of this circulation. For an overview see L. Greisiger, 'The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (Syriac)', in Thomas and Roggema (eds), *Christian-Muslim Relations 1* (600-900), p.163-171. Citations below are to the critical edition and translation of G.J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO 540, 541: Leuven, 1993).

There is far less certainty about the dating of the Disputation. The monastery to which the monk is said to belong (in the title only) is that of Bet Hale. There are two known monasteries of this name, both belonging to the Church of the East. The first, also known by the Arabic form of its name as Dair at Tīn, was in the north of Iraq, in Adiabene on the banks of the Tigris, just below the confluence of the Great Zab, and very close to Ḥadīta.<sup>5</sup> It only appears in the historical record between 754 and 780, at which point it clashed with the church hierarchy.6 The second monastery of this name, and by far the most famous of the two, was located much further south, in Bet Aramaye, in the desert north-west of Hira and Kūfa. Tit was founded by Rabban Mar Hūdāhwi (عوديه المعرفي in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century, on a spot said to have been revealed in a divine vision seventy years earlier, before Hūdāhwi's birth, to Mar Babai the Scribe who lived nearby in a cave. After the founding of the monastery, Mar Hūdāhwi transported the remains of Mar Babai and his disciple Mar 'Abdā the elder and reburied them there, and hence the two other names of his foundation, the monastery of Mar 'Abda, and the monastery of Ma'arre ('the caves'). The monastery of Bet Hale appears to have survived until at least the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and produced many famous monks who became monastic founders and leaders. 9 Its traditions also link it and its spiritual forebears to the Umayyad rulers. Hūdāhwi's teacher, Mar 'Abdā the younger, is said to have healed 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād (d. 686), an Umayyad governor of Basra and Kūfa, who later visited the saint's tomb to give thanks for his healing and to offer gifts to the monks, 10 and Hūdāhwi himself is said to have healed the withered arm of the daughter of Mu'āwiyah ibn 'Abī Sufyān (602-680), the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, by baptising her. 11 It thus seems most likely that the *Disputation* presents itself as having taken place in this latter monastery, in the desert of Hīra.

The earliest known reference to the *Disputation* is to be found in the 13<sup>th</sup>-century catalogue of Syriac literature which was written in verse by 'Abdisho of Nisibis (d. 1318). His laconic entry reads: 'and Abraham of Bēt Ḥālē, a disputation against the Muslims (tayāyē)'. While it is possible that this refers to a different text, this seems unlikely. This is the only source for the attribution of the *Disputation* to an author named Abraham. Unfortunately Abraham is not a very distinctive name among Syriac monks, and so not only is it unclear whether the name was found by 'Abdisho in the manuscript tradition or was his own attribution to a famed monk of the monastery, but which Abraham this might be, in either case, is also uncertain. The *Chronicle of Siirt* refers<sup>14</sup> to one Abraham of Ḥīra who was a companion of Mar Ḥūdāhwi and helped Mar 'Abdā the younger to build the monastery of Gamrē, and the *Book of Chastity* mentions<sup>15</sup> another Abraham from the monastery who was a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> J.-M. Fiey, Assyrie chrétienne. Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq, vol. I (Beirut, 1965), p.102.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas, Bishop of Margâ A.D. 840* (London, 1893), IV.5, Syr. p.198-199, 201, Eng. p.385-387, 391; J.B. Abbeloos and T.J. Lamy, *Gregorii Barhebræi Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, vol. 3 (Louvain, 1877), col.165-172.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> J.-M. Fiey, Assyrie chrétienne III. Bé<u>t</u> Garmaï, Bé<u>t</u> Aramāyé et Maišān nestoriens (Beirut, 1968), p.221-223.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See A. Scher and R. Griveau (eds), *Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert)* II.2 (PO 13.4; Paris, 1919), p.546-550 [226-230], 586-595 [266-275]; J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Le Livre de la Chasteté composé par Jésusdenah, évêque de Baçrah* (Rome, 1896), §74-76, 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> See Chabot (ed.), Le Livre de la Chasteté, §79-87.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Scher and Griveau (eds), Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert) II.2, p.589 [269].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Scher and Griveau (eds), Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert) II.2, p.594 [274].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> J.S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 3.1 (Rome, 1725), p.205; Y. Habbi, *Abdišo' of Sob († 318), Catalogus Auctorum* (Baghdad, 1986), p.110, line 929-930. See A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn, 1922), p.211.

י סובנטב לכה ביש יירו לניגו לרטבר אייו יי

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Scher and Griveau (eds), Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert) II.2, p.586-587 [266-267].

<sup>15</sup> Chabot (ed.), Le Livre de la Chasteté, §83.

friend of Mar Yoḥannan the Blue  $(zr\bar{o}q\bar{a}/azraq)$  who later became bishop of Ḥ̄ra (late  $7^{th}/early~8^{th}$  century), <sup>16</sup> and who rebuilt a monastery near Baghdad. Either of these could have been possible contenders for 'Abdisho, but he may of course have had no more certainty about the identity of the supposed author than we do. His entry for the *Disputation* is sandwiched between those for John of Bēt Garmai (late  $7^{th}/early~8^{th}$  century) <sup>17</sup> – who is credited with writing, among other works, the life of Mar Ḥ̄ud̄aħwi – and Solomon of Ḥad̄ta (second half of the  $8^{th}$  century) <sup>18</sup> who was taken prisoner by the second Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754-775) and imprisoned in the other, northern, monastery of Bēt Ḥālē for three years. So 'Abdisho seems to have dated the text to the mid- $8^{th}$  century, unless he or his source was simply clustering authors linked to (a conflated) Bēt Ḥālē.

'Abdisho's dating may simply, of course, have been due to the mention in the text of 'the emir Maslama'. He is usually (and most plausibly) identified with the best known 'emir' of that name, <sup>19</sup> Maslama (d. 738) the son of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 685-705), who was a prominent general and from 710 the governor of the Jazira, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and in 720-721 the governor of the two Iraqs. <sup>20</sup> This reference to an Umayyad leader has led some scholars to argue that even if the *Disputation* is not actually a product of the period of Maslama's governorate, it must nevertheless pre-date the Abbasid revolution of 750, after which it is thought unlikely that an Umayyad figure would have been selected to provide a historical context. While the proposed dating may be correct, this argument underestimates the abiding fame of Maslama, who is regularly referred to in Syriac chronicles<sup>21</sup> and, more importantly, entered both Christian and Islamic legend because of his siege of Constantinople in 717-718. Indeed, although the siege actually ended in failure, in later Islamic retellings it was transformed into a victory. <sup>22</sup> Furthermore, as we have seen, the traditions surrounding the founders of the monastery of Bēt Ḥālē had already established links with the Umayyad rulers, and these traditions were preserved into the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Another passage that has sometimes been taken as evidence for an early 8<sup>th</sup>-century date for the *Disputation* is the section (§48) in which the monk states: "I believe that in your case also, Muḥammad did not teach you all your laws and your commandments in the Qur'ān, but there are some of them which you learned from the Qur'ān, and some of them are in the sūra of the Cow (جَهَمَةُ مُعَمَّةُ مُعَمَّةُ مُعَمَّةُ مُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّمً وَمُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّمً وَمُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّمً وَمُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّمً وَمُعَمَّةً مُعَمَّمً وَمُعَمَّمً وَمُعْمَّمً ومُعْمَّمً ومُعْمَّم ومُعْمَّمً ومُعْمَّمً ومُعْمَّمً ومُعْمَّمً ومُعْمَّمً ومُعْمَّم ومُعْمَّمً ومُعْمَّم ومُعْمَّم ومُعْمَّم ومُعْمُعُمُّ ومُعْمَّم ومُعْمُعُمُّ ومُعْمَّم ومُعْمُعُمُّ ومُعْمُعُمُ ومُعْمُعُمُ ومُ

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Fiey, Assyrie chrétienne III, p.123.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> See Baumstark, Geschichte, p.203-204; Assemani, Bibliotheca Orientalis, vol. 3.1, p.203; Budge, Book of Governors, I.31 (Syr. p.58-59, Eng. p.101-103).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> See Baumstark, Geschichte, p.214; Assemani, Bibliotheca Orientalis, vol. 3.1, p.205-210; Budge, Book of Governors, IV.5/7 (Syr. p.198-199, 201, Eng. p.385-387, 391); H. Gismondi (ed.), Maris Amri et Slibae De patriarchis Nestorianorum commentaria (4 vols.; Rome, 1896–1899), Arabic 68-69, 72, Latin 60-61, 63.

<sup>19</sup> Another, later, possibility would be the Abbasid general Maslama b. Yahyā al-Bajalī, who came from

Another, later, possibility would be the Abbasid general Maslama b. Yaḥyā al-Bajalī, who came from Khurāsān, fought in Syria, and was made governor of Egypt in 789. See P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980), p.179. Alternatively, given that the text is not a report of an actual debate, but a literary fabrication, it is also quite possible that the name was chosen just as an Arabic name known to have been used by members of the ruling classes, like referring to an English king named Henry or George, or a French king named Louis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> See G. Rotter, 'Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān', EI<sup>2</sup>, vol. 6, p.740.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> For a list of references to him in Syriac, Greek, and Arabic chronicles see M. Canard, 'Les expéditions des Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende', *Journal asiatique* 208 (1926), p.61-121, esp. p.80 n.5.

p.80 n.5.

See Canard, 'Les expéditions des Arabes', p.94-102; R. Guilland, 'L'expédition de Maslama contre Constantinople (717-718)', *Al-Machriq* (1955), p.89-112; E.W. Brooks, 'The Campaign of 716-718, from Arabic Sources', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 19 (1899), p.19-31.

<sup>.</sup> سورة البقرة In Arabic .

independent text. Is this evidence that at the date of the Disputation's composition the Qur'ān had still not undergone its final redaction, and the sūra of the Cow was still an independent text?<sup>24</sup> Or is it better understood as an example of the rather confused way in which knowledge of Islamic holy texts circulated among the Christians for some time after the rise of Islam? John of Damascus in his Book of Heresies, written in Greek before 743, also refers to an Islamic writing called 'the Cow', 25 but along with this he also mentions writings called 'the camel of God', and 'the woman'. There is no sūra named 'the camel of God', although some have sought to find parallels elsewhere in the Qur'an (e.g. Q 7.73, 54.27, 91.13), and while 'the woman' resembles the name of sūra 4, al-Nisā', 'the Women', the contents of the Qur'ānic text are quite different from those described by John.<sup>26</sup> More significantly, the early 9<sup>th</sup>-century Syriac Legend of Sergius Baḥira (a polemical text which relates the influence of a Christian monk on Muhammad) has a section<sup>27</sup> in which the monk says he will write 'a great book of commandments and laws' for Muhammad and place it on the horn of a cow, so that Muhammad could claim that the book had descended from heaven, and could say that since the earth was not worthy to receive it, the cow had taken it on its horn. The text continues 'And until this day it is called the sūra of the Cow' (عوده كعدة ). Now it should also be noted that the Disputation is remarkable for the fact that it includes mention (§34) of Muhammad having been taught by Sergius Bahira, and scholars have long been uneasy about this early use of the double name for the famous monk, which, if an early 8th-century date for the Disputation is accepted, would be by far the earliest occurrence of it. A simple solution to these related problems is, of course, that the author of the Disputation knew some form of the Syriac Sergius Bahira legend, including its reference to the sūra of the Cow, and one consequence of such knowledge is that an early 8th-century date for the composition of the Disputation is no longer possible.

The two other texts mentioned by the monk as being sources of Islamic laws and commandments are GYGY (معند), and TWRH (معند). The meaning of these terms is far from obvious. In an unpublished paper delivered at the Oxford Patristics Conference in 1991, Han Drijvers suggested that the first of these terms was a corruption of the Arabic injīl, Gospel presumably producing the hypothetical Syriac transcription انجیل), and the second was the Arabic word for Torah, tawrāt (توراة , which more closely matches the preserved Syriac letters asias). Drijvers' suggestion has been very widely accepted, but there seems to me to be several difficulties with it. (1). It is not clear why the monk would use the Arabic term for Gospel here, when the Muslim's question to him (§47) employed the usual Syriac term for the Gospel, 'ewangeliyōn (, ιοκλίου), from the same Greek original as the Arabic, εὐαγγέλιου), and the monk uses this Syriac word not only in the next paragraph of his reply (§48), but on all other occasions (§18, 30, 58). Similarly, the use of the Arabic term for Torah is puzzling, given that elsewhere (§40) the monk uses the standard Syriac term for Torah, 'ōrāytā (پافتىد), which is borrowed from Jewish Aramaic). (2). The usual Qur'ānic order, following the order of revelation, would be 'Torah and Gospel' (e.g. Q 5:68), <sup>28</sup> and so this cannot simply be a case of the repetition of a Qur'anic formula. (3). It is possible to read the monk's reply as implying that Muhammad was responsible not only for the Qur'an, but for these other texts

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> See A.-L. de Prémare, ''Abd al-Malik b. Marwān et le processus de constitution du Coran', in K.-H. Ohlig and G.-R. Puin (eds), *Die dunklen Anfänge. Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam* (Berlin, 2005), p.179-210.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> P.B. Kotter, Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos, vol. 4 (PTS 22; Berlin, 1981), 'heresy 100', p.60-67.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> See de Prémare, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān et le processus de constitution du Coran', p.185-187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> East Syriac recension 16.14-15, see Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, p.282-285.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See C.P. Adang, 'Torah', in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 5 (Leiden, 2006), p.300-311.

too. The verb used ('some which you learned from...') does not require this interpretation, but it is one possible, and quite natural, reading of the text. Such a reading would, of course, exclude the identification of these latter texts with the Gospel and Torah.

An interesting parallel to the mention of 'the Spider' is provided by the 8<sup>th</sup>-century West Syriac Chronicle of Zuqnīn,<sup>31</sup> in a damaged passage describing the circumstances surrounding the martyrdom of Cyrus of Ḥarrān by a Muslim governor<sup>32</sup> in 769-770, after he had reconverted to Christianity. The chronicler reports that many Christians voluntarily came to Ḥarrān to apostatise to Islam before the governors, and would then turn on the remaining Christians and taunt them. The words of their terse taunt have been reconstructed by Amir Harrak as follows:<sup>33</sup>

<sup>34</sup>, אור אבי בי איני בי איני בי אור בי איני בי They were saying to us, 'You are godless, and you are hol[ding on, as it were, to the web] of a spider'.

Harrak convincingly argues that this taunt, with its clear reference to a spider, is only intelligible in the light of sūra al-'Ankabūt, Q 29:41, which reads:<sup>35</sup>

The likeness of those who have taken to them protectors, apart from God, is as the likeness of the spider that takes to itself a house; and surely the frailest of houses is the house of the spider, did they but know.

<sup>31</sup> J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Incerti auctoris chronicon anonymum Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, vol. 2 (CSCO 104; Paris, 1933), p.385, line 11-12; English translation by A. Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnin, Parts III and IV, A.D.* 488–775 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), p.324.

<sup>32</sup> al- 'Abbās b. Muḥammad (d.802), brother of the caliphs al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr, and governor of the Jazira from 759-772.

<sup>35</sup> I cite the English of A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London, 1955).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> S.H. Griffith, 'Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian texts' (1992) [see n.1 above], p.260, n.39 (sūra 29); id., *Syriac Writers on Muslims and the Religious Challenge of Islam* (Mōrān 'Eth'ō 7; Kottayam, 1995) p.33 (sūras 29 and 9).

The usual Syriac word for repentance is tyābutā, 2000.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> A. Harrak, 'Christianity in the eyes of the Muslims of the Jazirah at the end of the eighth century', *Parole de l'Orient* 20 (1995), p.337-356, esp. p.343-347. See also A. Harrak, 'Piecing together the fragmentary account of the martyrdom of Cyrus of Ḥarrān', *Analecta Bollandiana* 121 (2003), p.297-328.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> This is the absolute form of the noun, here written, as often, with a redundant final *yodh*. See T. Nöldeke (trans. J.A. Crichton), *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (London, 1904), §50.B.

If Harrak is correct, as I believe he is, then it would seem that for the author of the Chronicle of Zugnīn this polemical use of the Our'ān was not only typical of taunts made against Christians in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, but he could also presume that his Syriac Christian readers would recognise the allusion to 'the spider' (using the Syriac word, as in the Disputation), and the way in which this Qur'anic passage was used against them. This in turn raises the strong possibility that the Islamic writings listed by the monk in the Disputation were not known to him as literary works that circulated independently of the Qur'an, nor were they the names of a few sūras whose names had haphazardly been mentioned to him in conversation and which he mistakenly took to be independent works, but that they were known to him precisely because they were being cited by name against Christians in public contexts. A reference to sūra 9, at-Tawba, would fit well into such a pattern, since Q 9:29 is the Qur'ānic basis for the imposition of the jizya tax on the Christians, 36 and Q 9:30-35 contains classic attacks on the core Christian belief in Christ as Son of God, and on the excessive authority accorded to monks, and on their avarice.<sup>37</sup> That an 8<sup>th</sup>-century monastic writer in Iraq should have heard frequent mention of at-Tawba as a justification for Islamic laws, practices, and beliefs hardly seems surprising.

Another section that looks promising for dating purposes is §10, in which the monk responds to the Muslim's statement (§9) that: 'this is the sign that God loves us, and is pleased with our religion, that he has given us authority over all faiths and all peoples'. The monk replies by reformulating this as a question concerning kingship as a mark of divine favour. He notes that for over two thousand years there were no kings at all, and that there were then pagan kings. So kingship is clearly not an essential part of the divine plan, and neither is it contingent upon correct belief. He then notes that the kings of Israel were often replaced by gentile kings as punishment for Israelite transgressions. Since God punishes his people by means of foreign rulers, the implicit suggestion is that the Islamic rulers are being so used to punish the sinful Christians (and this is made explicit in §56). The monk then points out that the Muslims control only a small part of the earth, and that (non-Muslim) kings still rule elsewhere in the world. He mentions twenty-two kings in the North (a tradition taken from the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius), and for the South he mentions various cities and regions that still have kings. The implication is that these are non-Muslim kings, and yet Rayy (not far from Tehran) was under Islamic rule since the 640s; Hamadān (central Iran) since 645; Mery (Khurāsān) since 651; Gurgān, (near the Caspian Sea) since 716/7. How can this be explained? All of these cities were episcopal sees of the Church of the East, and they continued to have bishops long after the Islamic conquest of their regions, <sup>38</sup> and so one can reasonably presume that they were in communication with the leaders of their church in Iraq. The early 8<sup>th</sup> century even saw the establishment of new monasteries near Merv and Rayy, which implies that local conditions were favourable to Christians.<sup>39</sup> Although we have few letters from the 8<sup>th</sup> century to prove that communications were open, at least not until those of Catholicos Timothy (r. 780-823) who refers to many of these cities, none of these cities is so remote that one can plausibly argue that an Iraqi monk of the early 8<sup>th</sup> century would have been unaware that they had fallen to Islamic rule. I would suggest, therefore, that the most likely explanation is that they are the product of a much later writer who is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> For an overview of divergent analysis of this passage, see P.L. Heck, 'Poll Tax', in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 4 (Leiden, 2004), p.151-155.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> The antagonism towards the Christian monks of Q 9:31, 34 contrasts with the more positive view of Q 5:82, a passage paraphrased by the Muslim notable in §53 of the *Disputation*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> See J.-M. Fiey, Pour un Oriens Christianus novus. Répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux (Beirut, 1993).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> See J.-M. Fiey, 'Les communautés syriaques en Iran des premiers siècles à 1552', *Acta Iranica* 3 (1974), p.279-297 (esp. p.288) [rpr. in J.-M. Fiey, *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Irak des origines à 1552* (London, 1979), I.].

retroprojecting the names of cities which he believes may still have been free at the purported date of the *Disputation*, that is at the time of Maslama. Historical error of this sort seems more plausible than the contemporary ignorance implied by an early 8<sup>th</sup>-century date for our text.

Support for a later date may also be provided by the curious statement (§10) that 'in the territory of the Romans<sup>40</sup> four kings reign'. Reinink asked,<sup>41</sup> with some hesitation, whether the 'four kings' might refer to the tetrarchy (two augusti and two caesares) of the emperor Diocletian (r. 284-305), a system which was instituted in 293 and ultimately ended around 313. Such a reference seems highly unlikely in an 8<sup>th</sup>-century Syriac author, but no one has yet come up with a better alternative explanation. Possibly the author had heard mention of various kings in Roman territory, understood broadly to be the lands north and west of the Islamic empire, and so this is a general statement to that effect. But 'four' is quite specific, and contrasts with the 'many kings' said to rule in 'the land of the Cushites and of the Indians'.

I would like to make a different suggestion, based on numismatic evidence. During the short reign of the Byzantine emperor Leo IV (r. 775-780), gold solidi were struck at the Constantinople mint portraying the bust of Leo IV side by side with that of his son Constantine VI on the obverse, and busts of his father Constantine V and grandfather Leo III on the reverse (see fig. 1).<sup>42</sup> Constantine VI was associated with his father as co-emperor in April 776, and so the solidus must have been produced after this.



Fig 1. Solidus of Leo IV (type 1)

(With permission of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc., www.engcoins.com)

A second type of the solidus was issued with Leo IV and his son seated on a double throne on the obverse, and with two busts on the reverse as before (see fig. 2). 43 Grierson has argued 44 that this issue dates from 778, following a Byzantine victory over the Arabs at Dabiq. 45

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Bēt Rōmāyē.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Reinink, 'Political Power', p.163, n.42.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> See W. Wroth, Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum, vol. 2 (London, 1908), p.393, pl. XLV.20; P. Grierson, Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, vol. 3.1: Leo III to Michael III (717-867) (Washington, 1973), p.325-335, DOC 1b; D.R. Sear, Byzantine Coins and their Values (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London, 1987), SB 1583. (I am very grateful to Dr. David Salt for allowing me to consult him concerning these coins, though he is not, of course, responsible for any errors of interpretation I may have introduced.)

Wroth, Catalogue, p.394, pl. XLV.21; Grierson, Catalogue, DOC 2; Sear, Byzantine Coins, SB 1584.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Grierson, *Catalogue*, p.325. The legend on the coins, which puzzled numismatists for a long time, is also explained by Grierson.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> See E.W. Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs in the time of the early Abbasids', EHR 15 (1900), 728-747 (esp. 735); C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813* (Oxford, 1997), p.623, AM 6270, for a description of Leo and his son sitting enthroned at the triumph.



Fig 2. Solidus of Leo IV (type 2)
(With permission of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.)

Bronze folles<sup>46</sup> and half folles were also issued at Constantinople<sup>47</sup> with these images of 'four kings', though they are rarely as well preserved as the gold coins.

Now the question arises, how would a writer in Islamic territory come to see coins minted in Constantinople? Gold is gold, whatever its form, and so it is possible that some travelled east in the usual ways, as a consequence of trade or plunder. However, it is noteworthy that in 782 the Byzantine forces suffered a series of heavy defeats, and a large army from Syria and Mesopotamia led by Hārūn (r. 786-809) the son of al-Mahdi (r. 775-785) advanced all the way to Chrysopolis (modern Üsküdar) on the Bosphoros, facing Constantinople. As a consequence the Empress regnant Irene (d. 803), the widow of Leo IV, agreed to pay tribute to the Arabs twice a year, and according to al-Ṭabari this amounted to 70,000 or 90,000 dinars in gold, silver, and goods, and he also notes that the tribute was paid. So it is certain that vast quantities of Byzantine currency, presumably including large numbers of coins minted during the reign of the recently deceased Leo IV, were travelling east at this period. It is clearly impossible to prove that the reference in the *Disputation* to the Romans having four kings was based on a misinterpretation of the coinage of Leo IV, but such an interpretation is plausible, and the imagery was available. If this suggestion finds any support, then it will clearly have important consequences for our dating of the *Disputation*.

In summary, the *Disputation* is a product of a Syriac author belonging to the Church of the East. The text is a literary composition that claims to be the reworking of a private discussion that took place in the monastery of Bet Hale (most likely intended to be the one of that name located in the desert north-west of Hīra), and it is said that it took place during the life of the 'emir Maslama' (probably to be identified with the Umayyad emir Maslama, d. 738). Most previous commentators have therefore sought to date the text to approximately 720, when Maslama became governor of the two Iraqs. Such a date is not compatible with the Disputation's erroneous claim that in the time of Maslama a number of major cities in Iran. which were also Church of the East episcopal sees, had non-Islamic rulers. It is also incompatible with a reference to Sergius Bahira by this name, whose legend is thought to date to the early 9<sup>th</sup> century. On the contrary, it seems likely that the *Disputation*'s assertion that the sūra al-baqara, 'the Cow', was independent of the Qur'ān was reliant upon the legend of Sergius Bahira, and so postdates it. It has also been argued that the other texts mentioned in this passage (§48) are not the Gospel and Torah, but two further sūras of the Qur'ān, and that one of these ('the Spider') was being used in anti-Christian polemic in the late 8th century. It has further been suggested that the ignorance concerning the timing of the Islamic conquest of the listed Iranian cities could also reflect a later date, and, far more tentatively, that the reference to the Romans being ruled by four kings might be a consequence of the sudden

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Wroth, Catalogue, p.395-396 (again two types), pl. XLVI.3, 4; Grierson, Catalogue, DOC 4, 6; Sear, Byzantine Coins, SB 1586, 1587.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> A similar bronze follis, but no gold solidi, was also issued at the Syracuse mint. See Grierson, *Catalogue*, DOC 8, 6; Sear, *Byzantine Coins*, SB 1590.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> See Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs', p.738; Mango and Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p.629, AM 6274; J.A. Williams (trans.), *Al-Tabari: The early Abbasi Empire*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1989), p.213.

influx into Islamic territories of the coinage of Leo IV in 782, two years after his death. A late 8<sup>th</sup>- / early 9<sup>th</sup>-century date would also place the *Disputation* in a period when Syriac and Arabic-writing Christians were producing numerous apologetic texts against the claims of Islam, to varying degrees of philosophical sophistication, and no longer seemed interested in the apocalyptic hopes of the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, as typified by the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, a text which the author of the *Disputation* knew and used, but whose (now dated) apocalyptic fervour he ignored.

## **MANUSCRIPTS**

As so often with texts produced within the Church of the East the extant manuscript witnesses to the *Disputation* are relatively late – due not to the climate, but to the endless assaults of forces hostile to the continued presence of the Assyrians in their homelands, assaults which target not just the people but also the monuments and storehouses of their culture. This is, of course, a phenomenon that is tragically being repeated in our own days.

The text of the *Disputation* is edited below from the single Syriac manuscript to which I had access, *olim* Diyarbakir Chaldean Archbishopric ms. 95,<sup>49</sup> now preserved in the library of the Chaldean cathedral in Mardin.<sup>50</sup> It contains a collection of forty-three disparate hymns, prayers, theological opuscula, and exegetical notes, and was named by a later donor as 'The Book of the Garden, or of Gleanings'<sup>51</sup> (the latter term, *luqāṭē*, being a standard term for selected short texts or extracts).<sup>52</sup> Earlier studies of the *Disputation* have tentatively dated the manuscript to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, but a note after item 8, a poem on Rabban Hormizd by Sargis bar Wahlē of Azerbaijan (late 15<sup>th</sup> / early 16<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>53</sup> states that the poem was completed (i.e. copied) on the 27 Adar (March) 1894 of the Greeks, that is A.D. 1583,<sup>54</sup> in the monastery of Mar John the Egyptian.<sup>55</sup> Since the manuscript is lacking one or more quires at the end there is no final colophon, but it is reasonable to presume that the whole manuscript was finished later in 1583.

I have not had access to the two other known witnesses believed to be extant. The first of these, Mardin Chaldean Bishopric ms. 82,<sup>56</sup> was copied in 1890,<sup>57</sup> and contains, after some

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> See A. Scher, 'Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés à l'archevêché chaldéen de Diarbékir', *Journal asiatique* X.10 (1907), [p.331-362; 385-431], p.395-398 (ms. 95, item 35).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> For an account of the remarkable survival of the Diyarbakir manuscripts during the first world war see W.F. Macomber, 'New finds of Syriac manuscripts in the Middle East', in W. Voigt (ed.), XVII. Deutscher Orientalistentag vom 21. bis 27. Juli 1968 in Würzburg (ZDMG Supplement 1.2; Wiesbaden, 1969), [p.473-482], p.479-480. On the basis of his visits to the library in Mardin between 1965-1967, Macomber produced an unpublished checklist of the manuscripts of the cathedral library in which ms. olim Diyarbakir 95 received the shelf mark Macomber 60.3. Digital images of the manuscript are now accessible through the Hill Museum and Monastic Library (www.hmml.org), where it has been assigned the reference CCM 00398.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> In Syriac באבג גם בלסמעני.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> It is written on paper, in a single column, and contains 345 folios, measuring 27 by 17.5 cm. The *Disputation* is on ff. 267r-274v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> See Baumstark, GSL, 330-331. Macuch, GSNL, 35-36. The text was edited (from a different manuscript) by E.A.W. Budge, *The Life of Rabban Hôrmîzd and the Foundation of his Monastery at Al-Kôsh: A Metrical Discourse by Wahlê, Surnamed Sergius of Âdhôrbâijân* (Semitistische Studien 2/3; Berlin, 1894). <sup>54</sup> The copyist was a priest and monk named Joseph.

Located in lower Dera, on the banks of the Tigris near Finik, in Qardu (Corduene). See J.-M. Fiey, *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours* (CSCO 388; Louvain, 1977), 197-199. According to a further marginal note, the manuscript was later (before 1698) donated to the church of Mar Pethion in Diyarbakir.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> See A. Scher, 'Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés dans la bibliothèque de l'évêché chaldéen de Mardin', *Revue des bibliothèques* 18 (1908), [p.64-95], p.87 (ms. 82, item 6). In Macomber's unpublished checklist it has the shelf mark Macomber 100.11. The majority of the manuscripts from Mardin have now been digitized and catalogued by the Hill Museum and Monastic Library, but this manuscript is

other works,<sup>58</sup> a collection of polemical texts relating to Islam (in which the *Disputation* follows the history of Sergius Bahira).<sup>59</sup> The second is *olim* Alqosh, Couvent de Notre Damedes-Semences, ms. Scher 144.<sup>60</sup> This manuscript, another 'Book of Gleanings', although containing a quite different selection of texts to *olim* Diyarbakir ms. 95, was dated on the basis of its script to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *Disputation* follows the history of Sergius Bahira and a note on the caliphs. The volume was already missing from the monastery library by the time of Vosté's visit in 1926.<sup>61</sup> According to Fiey<sup>62</sup> it had been removed by Mgr. Jérémie Timothée Maqdassi,<sup>63</sup> and in 1965 it was still in the possession of his heirs in Baghdad.

A fourth witness, Siirt ms. 112,<sup>64</sup> was dated by Addai Scher, on the basis of its script, to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It contained a very mixed collection of texts, with the *Disputation*, at the end, following the History of Sergius Bahira. Unfortunately, the same tragedy which led to the murder of Bishop Scher<sup>65</sup> in 1915 also resulted in the destruction of this manuscript, along with most other volumes of his episcopal library.<sup>66</sup>

## NOTES TO THE EDITION

Since the text is edited from a single manuscript, *olim* Diyarbakir Chaldean Archbishopric ms. 95, there are no textual variants. Corrections to the text, or to its punctuation, are enclosed in square brackets [], and are explained in the notes. Orthography has not been altered or standardised. The manuscript provides occasional vowels, but these I have omitted.

The manuscript is written in a single unbroken column. I have subdivided the text into numbered paragraphs, on the basis of changes of speaker or of content. There are also a few unnumbered paragraphs, introduced to facilitate the side by side reading of the text and translation.

The title of the *Disputation* and the indications of speaker ('the Muslim says', 'the monk says') were written in red ink in the manuscript. This has not been reproduced here, and so the loss of rubrics indicating the speakers requires a minimal addition of punctuation, which is indicated by brackets.

<sup>57</sup> The scribe was Mgr. Elia Millos (1831-1908), Chaldean bishop of Aqra. The mansucript was written on paper, 23 by 16 cm, and contains 89 folios.

<sup>58</sup> Named at Park through 18 of the Scribe and 18 of the Scribe at 18 of the 18 of the Scribe at 18 of the 18 of the Scribe at 18 of the 18 of the 18 of th

missing, and so appears to have been separated from the Mardin collection at some date after Macomber's visit. (My thanks to Dr. Adam McCollum for confirming this.)

Namely: Barhebraeus' *Book of the Dove*; a biography of Barhebraeus; a collection of useful counsels. Subsequently a later copy of Barhadbshabba's *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* was bound in at the front of the volume.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> The other texts are a section of Bar Salibi's refutation of the Muslims, and (at the end) another section against 'the idolators'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> See A. Scher, 'Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques conservés dans la bibliothèque du couvent des Chaldéens de Notre-Dame-des-Semences', *Journal asiatique* X.7 (1906), [p.479-512; X.8 (1906), p.55-82], p.76 (ms. 144, item 6).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> See J.M. Vosté, 'Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du couvent de Notre-Dame des Semences près d'Alqos (Iraq)', *Angelicum* 5 (1928), p.3-36, 161-194, 325-358, 481-498; reprinted as a separate volume, with the same title (Rome / Paris, 1929).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> J.-M. Fiey, Assyrie chrétienne. Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq (Beirut, 1965), vol. II, p.465.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Bishop of Zakho from 1892-1929.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> See A. Scher, Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés dans la bibliothèque épiscopale de Séert (Kurdistan) avec notes bibliographiques (Mosul, 1905), p.81-82 (ms. 112, item XXII).

<sup>65</sup> See S.P. Brock and G.A. Kiraz, 'Scher, Addai (1867-1915)', in S.P. Brock, et alii, (eds.), Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage (Piscataway, NJ, 2011), p.361-362.

#### DISPUTATION BETWEEN A MUSLIM AND A MONK OF BET HALE

I have attempted to produce a translation that remains close to the underlying Syriac, without descending into 'translationese'. Words that I have supplied in the translation to aid the reader are placed within parentheses ().

Folio breaks and their numeration are included in the Syriac text, and in the facing English translation I have also indicated the approximate place of the break with a vertical line. Earlier articles on the *Disputation* numbered its folios from 1a to 8b, rather than using the actual folio numbers. I hope that the following table will make cross-reference easier:

1a	267r	3a	269r	5a	271r	7a	273r
1b	267v	3b	269v	5b	271v	7b	273v
2a	268r	4a	270r	6a	272r	8a	274r
2b	268v	4b	270v	6b	272v	8b	274v

ارد مادن سن الماد من الماد من الماد من الماد من الماد الماد

Again, by (the help of) God we will write down the Disputation that took place between a certain  $\mathrm{Muslim}^{67}$  and a certain  $\mathrm{Monk}^{68}$  in the Monastery of Bēt Ḥālē.

[1] مهل دیده ده دسه مستحد ملا مسلمه تورده دهم معدد دهم معدد و با معدد و با

[1] Because, O our brother and beloved of my soul, Father Jacob, it pleased you to request of us, of our weak self, with gentle persuasion, the account of our debate<sup>71</sup> concerning the apostolic faith (that took place) due to the son of Ishmael,<sup>72</sup> and since it seemed to me that it would be profitable if I were to retell (our discourse)<sup>73</sup> to your brethren, and because I know that it would be useful for you, so then, I shall set it down in (the form of) question and answer, as is appropriate.<sup>74</sup> Praise be to Him

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> 'Abdisho of Nisibis (d. 1318) refers to an Abraham of Bēt Ḥālē who composed a disputation against the Muslims (Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 3.1, p.205), see introduction above.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> A monastery in Bēt Aramāyē, southern Iraq, in the desert north-west of Ḥīra and Kūfa near Kūfa and Ḥīra, founded in the middle of the seventh century (see introduction).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Read عند (omit )? Although the opening sentence is rather convoluted, there seems to be no following main verb governing this noun, and so the prefixed d- appears otiose.

<sup>71</sup> The verb 'QB (عسد) also has the sense 'to dispute', 'to debate', as well as 'to investigate'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> The ancestor of the Arabs, according to Gen.16:1-16, 21:9-21. The term 'Ishmaelites' was used of Arab bedouin by early Christian writers, and was later applied disparagingly to the Muslims (since Ishmael was the son of Abraham's second wife Hagar, a slave who was cast out).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> The Syriac words for 'disputation' (בּבֹב,), 'account' (בּבֹב,), and 'debate' (בּבּב,) are all masculine, but from this point on the pronominal suffixes presuppose a feminine object. This might simply be a scribal error, but I have taken it to be the author's mental anticipation of 'discourse' (בּבֹב,), which he is about to mention.

who gives strength to the weak, and aids those who call upon His name!

وده دم درمود درددد سمعد حدود عقدها دحسه، دری سلمه هدی همد دی سم هشدا، هم عودی بعدد حمله، وبعملده حمدسعوهمی، حد ولقهمه، ووردها دحله، عدید،

Now, just as it is right that a wise builder lays down a solid stone at the beginning of the foundations of his building, so also we weak ones, let us begin and complete our discourse with our Lord Jesus Christ (the chief corner stone),<sup>75</sup> through (the aid of) your prayers and the prayers of all the Saints.

[2] Now, O master, that Muslim man was one of the notables<sup>76</sup> who (served) before the emir<sup>77</sup> Maslama, <sup>78</sup> and by reason of an illness he had (contracted) he came to us, and he remained with us for ten days. And he assumed with us a freedom (of speech), and was well educated in our Scriptures and their Qur'an. And when he had observed our worship which is carried out, with its (appropriate) rites, seven times (a day),—just as the blessed David said: 'Seven times a day I have praised you for<sup>79</sup> your ordinances, O Righteous One', 80—he called me to him. And because he was a man who for a long time had acted as the steward81 of the emirate, and because of his high-status (and) my subordinate-status, he spoke with us at first through a translator, whilst criticising us in

Collections in Syriac Literature', in A. Volgers and C. Zamagni (eds), *Erotapokriseis: Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context* (Leuven, 2004), p.145-163.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> See Mt 21:42, (|| Mk 12:10, Lk 20:17), Acts 4:11, Eph 2:20, 1 Pt 2:7.

The Literally 'the known ones'  $(id\bar{\iota}'\bar{e})$ .

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Syriac 'amīrā, a loan word from Arabic, provided with the Syriac emphatic state final ālaf. See 'emirate', 'amīrūtā below.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Possibly referring to Maslama (d. 738), the son of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, who was a prominent general and from 710 the governor of the Jazira, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and in 720-721 the governor of the two Iraqs (see introduction).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Or perhaps 'on account of', if the ordinances are understood not to be the reason for praising God, but the commands that require praise to be offered seven times a day.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Ps 118:164. (The Peshitta reads 'your ordinances, righteous one', whereas the Hebrew MT and Greek LXX read 'the ordinances of your righteousness'.)

<sup>81</sup> Syriac rab baytā, a traditional Aramaic term.

(the matter of) our faith.<sup>82</sup>

[3] And (the Muslim) says: By night and day

you are most diligent in prayer, and you do not cease, and you surpass us in prayer, and in fasting, and in your petitioning | of God. But, according to my way of thinking, your religion<sup>83</sup> will not allow your prayer to be received (by God).

[4] سيديد دهدد.] ديم هكك هعب محمدته ودملك عمى دق ديد دي وووس. مهك ولمحدودته معدك دده، ووحمع ومكر حبات وحمله صب تتمدد حبك وحو عمت دید. دفع مجک وه. حسمته משבב. ג' ביל משמיש בבו ניש جمدكك عددد. مكك خمد دكم ممدكميد. مهلک دحد تحلا داری اوده محد دم صدر سمسمدسم أوص كم ويعدك عصر سودد. دكم <u>پات دُت دیم. هیک دِندِک دید دِحک جگیر</u> المدا دهد. كد وده كعسده مكك عملین منتممی دلا در عندد در مصممه محد دیم صدر: ۱۹۵۰ نود دید نصت دید تنفتي. ه حك موح ودهم كي دمود. حو كه نعم مع حدد: ۱۹۵۰ حروبه محل معر حك هكن ونوك ديم وعددد ديمية. هيك دنده ديد دخددد دست کک حکوه دسكة بعر ديك مي.

[3] منعد المسد]. دهك كم معكمه

وحد محمد المركز والم الماد والم الماد والم الماد والم

اليع وهدة الما حدثاليا المام ا

تېگەھد.

وحرومد

تركوه: كك يبعج.

دهمستك علمهمده.

ەنتدىمە,

[4] The Monk says: Speak with me humbly so that I too may speak with you as is fitting! For you are putting your question overbearingly, and our will is prepared for us to take refuge in silence, because when a man is silent, even if he is a fool, he is reckoned among the wise!84 But if you wish to learn the truth with precision, talk to me without a translator. Because when you make such an inquiry of me, it is right that we should speak with one another with precision, even though you are very great. For I know that in every matter, whatever it may be, I must treat you with honour on account of your authority and greatness. But since you require of me the truth about my faith, you should know that I will pay no regard to your status, 85 and (as for you), speak whatever you have (on your mind), without departing from the Scriptures. And even though we are of low estate, 86 accept from us whatever statement you recognise to be the truth, for I know that the truth is loved by all who fear God.

<sup>82</sup> Syriac haymānūtā, 'belief, faith'.

<sup>83</sup> Syriac tawdītā, 'confession, religion'. See G.J. Reinink, 'Bible and Qur'an in early Syriac Christian-Islamic disputation', in M. Tamcke (ed.), Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages (Beirut, 2007), p.57-72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> See Prov 17:28.

<sup>85</sup> Or 'I will show you no deference'. Literally 'I will not take (notice) of your face / person', a common idiom.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Or 'inadequate'.

[5] كند دهدد.] وعدد دسمت دكره دكره كالمحتدم، حكمه، كالمحتدم،

[5] The Muslim says: We do (indeed) love the truth, but we do not accept all your Scriptures.

[6] The Monk says: Speak out about anything whose truth you doubt, and we, as far as we are able, will provide an answer, either from the Scriptures, or from rational argument, and whatever you recognise to be the truth you should accept.

[7] The Muslim says: I know that everyone's faith is dear to him, but tell me the truth: is our religion not better than all the (other) religions on earth?

[8] سىدىد دىخة[.] دىنى دىح.

[8] The Monk says: In what way?

[9] The Muslim says: If you want, (in that) we are vigilant concerning the commandments of Muḥammad and the sacrifices of Abraham, or, if you would rather, (in that) we do not create a son for God, | (one) who is visible and passible like us. And also (in) other ways; for we do not worship the cross, or the bones of martyrs, or images as you (do); and you mislead people who are *hunafā* \*87 and say to them: 'Everyone who is baptised and confesses the Son, his sins will be forgiven him'. 88 And this is the sign that God loves us, and is pleased with our religion, that he has given us authority over all faiths and all peoples. And behold, they are our slaves and

<sup>87</sup> The Syriac ḥanpā (pl. ḥanpē) usually means 'pagan', but post-7<sup>th</sup>-century writers sometimes play on its similarity to the Arabic ḥanīf (pl. ḥunafā'), 'monotheistic believer', and so use it to mean 'Muslim'. See S.H. Griffith, 'Chapter Ten of the Scholion: Theodore Bar Kônî's Apology for Christianity', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 47 (1981), p.158-188 (esp. p.176); F. De Blois, 'Naṣrānī (Ναζωραῖος) and ḥanīf (ἐθνικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam', Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 65 (2002), p.1-30.

<sup>88</sup> See Acts 2:38.

subjects! And so I want you to give me an honest answer about these things, without paying any regard to my status, and without protecting yourself with falsehood!

[10] سيديد دهدد.] عديد دهد يعد دهكدي حدہ حدہ كوعده دكقب لهه ويد. هذب عقد. وهدمب ەدەتكى مەدەب عقىر. كى مەدد ككد كك نددد. وحمد لموقد دهك معدود كبحدد: مكم عومي يك يذين وحمده مكمد سته: دکتدس فهدم صوه: محمدم دهکم مر معد دمهودم مده سته معهم، حد مدخر ومود حمد وتعويح المرود: ودا المود كهه، دكه: حبد مكب قلدة دكقة. محمد دمكي دمدير ڊ ڪتڌمڊ . ەدەققىد. مخصەم، نە دەھەمدىد. تەسىم ەدە دىدىسى دىن مەمەمىسى [10] The Monk says: You may well say that you are kings and (that) the whole world has been subjected to you. Formerly, however, from the beginning of our creation until the flood, (that is) two thousand years plus two hundred and forty-two years, 89 there was no king upon the earth. And after the flood there reigned Nimrod the giant, the first king on the earth. 90 And after him there were pagan kings worshipped created things. who And afterwards there reigned<sup>91</sup> some of the people of the Jews, and along with them (some) pagans also, (for) when the people of Israel angered God, God would punish them by means of these kings of the peoples. And after the kings of the Hebrews there reigned the kings of the Medes and of the Persians, and along with them (the kings) of the Romans also, in this quarter of the East in which we are dwelling.

The Hebrew and Peshitta text of Genesis date the flood to 1656 after creation, but the Septuagint, Hippolytus, and Eusebius all date it to 2242—see W. Adler, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 26: Washington, D.C. 1989), p.47-50—and hence it entered some parts of the Syriac historiographical tradition, such as the West Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin*. It is rather surprising to see it cited here by the monk, since, by contrast, the East Syriac chronicler Elijah of Nisibis (d. 1046) keeps to the Peshitta dating—or so it would seem from his dating of Noah's fathering of Shem (1556), and Shem's fathering of Arpachshad (1658); see L.J. Delaporte, *La Chronographie de Mar Élie bar-Šinaya, métropolitain de Nisibe* (Paris, 1910), p.6. Nor was the Septuagint date adopted by the *Cave of Treasures* (ed. S.-M. Ri, *La Caverne des Trésors: les deux recensions syriaques* [CSCO 486, 487: Leuven, 1987]), XIV.15, XVII.22) or the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (II.3), both of which date the flood to the last year of the second millenium.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> See Gen 10:8-12; *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* III.5; *Cave of Treasures* 24:24-26. For Nimrod in Syriac tradition see D. Taylor, 'The Patriarch and the Pseudepigrapha: Extra-biblical traditions in the writings of Kyriakos of Tagrit (793-817)', in F. Briquel Chatonnet and M. Debié (eds), *Sur les pas des Araméens chrétiens. Mélanges offerts à Alain Desreumaux* (Cahiers d'études syriaques 1; Paris, 2010), p.35-61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Reading عدي as Aph'el P3M perfect. It is also possible to read it as an S3M verb, with God as its subject, 'He caused to reign'.

دلا حول هله والله والله

But in those (other) three quarters (of the world) many kings were reigning who were not (even) aware of our presence in the world. In the North, then, twenty-two kings reign. <sup>92</sup> In the West, however, in the land of the Cushites and of the Indians, <sup>93</sup> there are many kings, and in the territory of the Romans <sup>94</sup> four kings reign. <sup>95</sup> In the South there are many kings. In Merv, <sup>96</sup> in China, <sup>97</sup> in Sīrandīb, <sup>98</sup> in Rayy, <sup>99</sup> in Hamadān, <sup>100</sup> in Gurgān, <sup>101</sup> in Gīlān, <sup>102</sup> in the territory of the islands, <sup>103</sup> various kings <sup>104</sup> reign. But you sons of Ishmael, you control a small part of the earth, | and it is not the case that the whole of creation is subjected to your authority.

[11] كىنى دىخد. بعدوى قىلىدى دەقتىلا. دەقىد خىك بەلىم دەھدى كى. [11] The Muslim says: Leave (to one side) the kings of the (four) quarters, and reply concerning these (other) things which I said to you.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> See *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* VIII.3-10, and the twenty-two peoples descended from Japheth who were imprisoned by Alexander the Great behind the gates of the North.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> The 'Cushites' are the Nubians and Ethiopians. 'Indians' (Syriac hendwāyē) is a term often used in Late Antiquity, by both Greek and Syriac writers, not only for the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, but also for the people of South Arabia and Ethiopia, or indeed in general for any dark-skinned people. See J.Y. Nadeau, 'Ethiopians', Classical Quarterly 64 [n.s. 20] (1970), p.339-349; U.P. Arora, 'India, vis-à-vis Egypt-Ethiopia in Classical Accounts', Graeco-Arabica 1 (1982), p.131-140; A. Dihle, 'The Conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman Literature', Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Association n.s. 10 (1964), p.15-23; A. Mingana, 'The Early Spread of Christianity to India', BJRL 10 (1926), 435-510 (esp. 443-446).

<sup>94</sup> Bēt Rumāyē. Or 'among the Romans'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> For the suggestion that this statement was influenced by the circulation in the east of Byzantine coins of Leo IV, depicting four crowned figures, see the introduction above.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Merv, or Marw, in Khurāsān. Under Islamic rule since 651.

 $<sup>97 \</sup> S\bar{\imath}n = \text{China}.$ 

 $S\bar{i}r$  and  $S\bar{i}b = Ceylon / Sri Lanka$ .

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Rayy, not far from Tehran. Under Islamic rule since the 640s.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> Hamadān (ancient Ekbatana), central Iran. Under Islamic rule since 645.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Gurgān, southeast corner of the Caspian Sea. Under Islamic rule since 716/7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Gīlān, southern shore of the Caspian. It was not conquered by the Arab armies, but there was a gradual conversion of the population to Islam after the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>103</sup> In Syriac texts, 'the islands' can refer either to the 'maritime islands' (בובי בישיב) of the Persian Gulf, or to the 'islands of the seas' (בובי בישיב) of the Indian Ocean, but the former are more frequently mentioned, and only they had Church of the East bishops. See J.-B. Chabot (ed.), Synodicon orientale ou recueil de synodes nestoriens (Paris, 1902), p.674; J.-M. Fiey, 'Diocèses syriens orientaux du Golfe persique', in F. Graffin (ed.), Mémorial Mgr Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis (Louvain, 1969) p.177-219 (esp. p.209-210).

<sup>104</sup> Malkē malkē, a case of distributive repetition: 'various kings', or 'kings after kings'.

[12] سىدى ئىدة[.] سد سد بى عقدلى. ئىد بىدىد. ەبە مى دىمكى ئىم مدلىر دىلەرە. بىدى ئىك ئىدا دىدى. [12] The Monk says: Speak each of your questions before me, and as soon as you have heard the response (given) concerning it, then add whatever you wish.

ود المحمد المعند المعن

[13] The Muslim says: Tell me first why you do not believe in Abraham and in his commandments, even though he is the father of the prophets<sup>106</sup> and of the kings, and Scripture bears witness to his righteousness?

[14] سىچىد دىخة[.] دىچە مەدىخ تىد دىم كى دىختەم دىكى دىم، كەمدتەم، دىخد دىم دىكتو دىم. [14] The Monk says: Which belief concerning Abraham do you ask of us, and which commandments of his do you wish us to perform?

قىخ درىء مىدر.] جەمەھە مەسى ھىلار قىخ درىء مىدر دىم. [15] The Muslim says: Circumcision and sacrifice, because he received them from God.

[16] سىجىد دىخة[.] عدىددى دىددەم دىد دەمەم دىخىد دوخكە، دىد وجىدەم دەدد دېكك ددەدە كەمىد، دىك دىدەم دەدد دېكك ددەدە كەمىد، دىك دىدەم دەدد دېكك ددەدە كەمىد، دىك دەدەم كەردىد دېكك ددەدە كەمىد، دىدەم كەردىد دىكة دىدەم كىدىد دىكة دىكة دىدەم كىدىد دىكة دىدەم كىدەم كىدەم دىدەم كىدەم [16] The Monk says: It is true that Abraham is the father of the prophets and of the kings, and his righteousness is also clear to all who read the Scriptures. But like a shadow in the place of a body, and speech in relation to a deed, so also is the guidance of our father Abraham in relation to the new things which Christ performed for the salvation of our lives. <sup>107</sup>

[17] كىن دىخة[.] دىنى دىخار.]

[17] The Muslim says: In what way?

[18] سبولم نغذ[.] هيك ويحدد دهدد. عدمت كند عدديك دمية حدد كند عدديكس، وهدد. هديد. وهي

[18] The Monk says: Since you are a man who reads and is thoughtful, listen to me clearly, for it is written thus in the Gospel of Matthew:

Abbreviation, at the end of a line, for סבר הואס , 'and in his commandments'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> A common Islamic title for Abraham.

This typological exegesis of the Old Testament (and creation), in which types or symbols find their fulfilment in Christ, is standard in Syriac exegesis and theology. See S.P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem.* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; *Cistercian Studies* 124; Kalamazoo, 1992); R. Murray, 'The theory of symbolism in St Ephrem's theology', *Parole de l'Orient* 6 (1975), p.1-20.

Abraham David. fourteen 'From to generations, and from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian exile to Christ. fourteen generations.'108 And even though the number of the generations was (indeed) deficient, 109 yet the blessed Matthew (also) wanted to confirm with regard to the commandments and laws that were given to us from time to time—that is, at one time by means of prophets and revelations, and at (another) time (by means of) prophets and kings, and at (another) time (by means of) judges and priests,—even as I said previously, (namely, that) all of them bore the (mere) shadow of the truth. 110

ه مدود وتعلم ودوقه دوه ووسه المودد وكا المودد المودد المودد ومعلمه والموده والموده والموده والمودد وا

(So) also, the eating of the sacrifice of Abraham bore the symbol of the sacrifice of Christ. Just as | (the command of) circumcision was given to him, which is the sign of those who accept the Law, so also our Lord gave to us (baptism), the type of his death and of his burial and of his resurrection. 111 And just as in that time anyone

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Mt 1:17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> In fact, Syriac (and Greek) biblical exegetes were uncomfortably aware that Matthew had omitted various generations, and that his arithmetic was suspect. Isho'dad of Merv (fl. 850) notes that Luke counted 43 generations from David to Christ, whereas Matthew had 28 generations, and he claims that the real figure was 32. He denies that Matthew was in error, but argues that 14 was a purely symbolic number for the Jews, and hence it was used by Matthew. See M.D. Gibson, *The Commentaries of Isho'dad of Merv*, vol. 1 (*Horae Semiticae* 5; Cambridge, 1911), p.10-12.

the government of God does not remain the same, but operates in sundry and diverse manners so as to help men, desired to establish his doctrine from the government that had been amongst them. From Abraham, indeed to David, they were without kings, but were submissive to those who were called judges; from David to the Captivity they were under kings who were from David; after David they were under High Priests' (see Gibson, *The Commentaries*, p.10). Here in the *Disputation* the rulers mentioned for each period are slightly different, and the eras are given in reverse order (judges and priests; prophets and kings; prophets and revelations), but the nature and purpose of the analysis are closely related.

type of Christian baptism. Within the Syriac tradition it is found already in Aphrahat (fl. 340) and Ephrem (d. 373): see R. Murray, Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Edinburgh, 2004), p.50-53; G. Saber, La théologie baptismale de Saint Ephrem: Essai de théologie historique (Kaslik, 1974), p.38-43. It is still repeated by Ishō bar Nūn, see Clarke, Selected Questions, qu.26, p.31.

who was not circumcised was not called a son of Abraham, so also today anyone who is not baptised is not called a Christian.

[19] كنيد دهد[.] نديد دهيموديد كه حدّهاسد الله كوهده المحاة 112 كم حدّ التدوس. دلا دهد ك دحد دهوره دسره [בַ]גדבֹסק. גבֹףג בַבְּתּים בַּמִדְּיִתּוֹ.

[19] The Muslim says: I know that baptism among the Christians is like circumcision among the sons of Abraham, but tell me, how is the sacrifice of Abraham a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ?

[20] ۵۳۵ ۵۲ نغذ[.] عبدها وأم ووحد دجهند هوب دست عمه مدر تكلين بمه فعد دمدر كيقد درودسف حص صعيسة. وسقة دخك حموه دىىھست. كەقھى دەسىقە دھد، دىك באפה: סוֹא בנאפבל נשמת על מבדעו. אברן בולמסאם למבן הסמי סומ בובית المجه مع جلالا. ولا محدد له مدح. ووا دمدد مله تدليد. ددود دوكدد ديمت مير. دست توسعه دد دلاههه دلا دهدهه.

The Monk Abraham [20] says: commanded to offer up his son as a sacrifice, so that he might be a type of our Lord who was going to suffer for us. 113 And the fact that he took two lads<sup>114</sup> along with him is a type of the two thieves who were crucified along with Christ. And the sticks upon the shoulder of Isaac<sup>115</sup> are a type of the cross of our Lord which was upon His shoulder. And the fact that Isaac was bound upon the altar 116 is a symbol that (Christ's) divinity accomplishing it. 117 And that (passage): ' "Remove your hand from the boy, and do nothing to him"  $^{118}$  ... and behold a lamb hanging on the tree', 119 it is a symbol of the

<sup>112</sup> This word is added in the margin.

See Gen 22. For the Syriac interpretation of the offering of Isaac, see S.P. Brock, 'Genesis 22 in Syriac Tradition', in P. Casetti, et al., Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy: Études Bibliques offertes à l'occasion de son 60e anniversaire (Göttingen, 1981), p.1-30; and G.J. Reinink, 'The lamb on the tree. Syriac exegesis and anti-Islamic apologetics', in E. Noort and E. Tichelaar (eds), The Sacrifice of Isaac. The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and its Interpretations (Leiden, 2002), p.109-24. See also N. Calder, 'From Midrash to Scripture: The Sacrifice of Abraham in Early Islamic Tradition', Le Muséon 101 (1988), p.375-402.

<sup>114</sup> See Gen 22:3. (The Peshitta calls them كلته 'youths', rather than الملته 'lads, boys', as here. The same paraphrase is found in Isho'dad, and probably reflects the influence of Syriac translations of Greek Antiochene exegesis, which presume the LXX reading δύο  $\pi$ αῖδας.) <sup>115</sup> See Gen 22:6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> See Gen 22:9.

<sup>117</sup> In this typically dyophysite exegesis, found in both Greek and Syriac authors, Isaac is understood to be a type of Christ's divinity, and the ram/lamb a type of Christ's humanity. It was not only miaphysite exegetes who objected to such typology, but also some Church of the East writers such as Theodore bar Koni: see Reinink, 'The lamb on the tree', p.120.

Gen 22:12. (The words are spoken by the angel of the Lord calling from heaven.)

<sup>119</sup> Gen 22:13. Here, however, the Peshitta text has been heavily modified for theological purposes. The Peshitta's reference to a 'ram' (222) has been replaced by a 'lamb' (222) in order to improve the connection

body which He received from us, which suffered on the cross, whilst His divinity was unharmed.

لا سعة ورا ومصحور وما ووهوها الما المعمورة والمعومة المعمود المعمود المعمود الما المعمود المع

[21] The Muslim says: How is it possible, as you have said, that the divinity, which was with Him on the cross and in the tomb, did not suffer and was not harmed?

[22] The Monk says: Truly it was with Him, but not through mingling and mixture and confusion, as the heretics say, but through will. 120 And (as for) how it was unharmed and did not suffer, hear two proofs which are most trustworthy for those who love God. Just as (when) the sun rests<sup>121</sup> upon a wall, and you take a pickaxe and you demolish the wall, the sun is not stunned and neither | does it suffer, so also the body (which Christ took) from us died, and was buried, and arose, whilst the divinity did not suffer. And just as iron which they leave in the fire, if they do not throw it into water for any (time), when they seek it, it increases its effectiveness, so also the eternal Son who inhabited the temple (of the body<sup>122</sup> received) from us, on the cross and in the tomb and in its resurrection He was with it, and He

with Christ, 'the lamb of God' (see Jn 1:29, 36, 1 Pt 1:19). And instead of being 'caught in a branch' (באס באל,), it is 'hanging on the tree' (אבל בגלבלג), which reinforces the link with the cross. This is already found in Ephrem, and may be due to an even older tradition: see S.P. Brock, 'Jewish traditions in Syriac sources', JJS 30 (1979), p.212-232 [esp. p.219-220], and his 'Genesis 22 in Syriac Tradition'.

The heretics that the monk has in mind here are almost certainly the Syrian Orthodox miaphysites, who did make some use of 'mixing' terminology in their christological writings, although they totally rejected any possibility of confusion. They were also accused of theopaschism, the concept that divinity suffered in Christ, by both Church of the East and Chalcedonian theologians. For these concerns, and the Church of the East's emphasis on a voluntary union, see S.P. Brock, 'The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the fifth to early seventh centuries: Preliminary considerations and materials', in G. Dragas (ed.), Aksum Thyateira: A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodius (London, 1985), p.125-142; L. Abramowski and A.E. Goodman, A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts (2 vols.; Cambridge, 1972).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> See Jn 2:21 ('He spoke about the temple of his body'), a verse frequently cited in Church of the East christological texts, and 1 Cor 6:19.

showed its effectiveness. 123

[23] The Muslim says: My mind agrees with what you say because there is a similarity. But it is not right that you should forget the mention of sacrifice,—either, if you wish, concerning Abraham, or, if you would prefer, concerning Christ, for He also, as you say, 124 was indeed sacrificed, and you testify that He is the Son of God.

[24] سىدىد دىدة[.] كت معصد دسى در محمود دسى در دولمات دي محمود دي درايا كان دولمات دي درايا كان دولمات دي درايا كان دولمات درايا كان دولمات درايا كان دولمات درايا كان دولمات درايا كان كان درايا كان كان درايا كان درايا كان كان كان كان درايا كان كان كان كان كان كان كان كان كان

[24] The Monk says: He is right and well our sacrifice, if you consider, for it is in Him that we take delight every day.

[25] كىد دىدة[.] دىي دىم.

[25] The Muslim says: In what way?

 [26] The Monk says: Because from Abraham to Christ (sacrifices were offered). But Christ, before He suffered, took bread in His holy hands, and blessed and broke and gave (it) to His disciples, and said: 'This is my body which is broken for your sakes. Take and eat of it, all of you. And let it be for you for the remission of debts'. And likewise He also

See also letter 2 (ed. Braun, p.41, line 9-11)  $^{124}$  As is well known, Islamic tradition does not believe that Jesus died on the cross: see G.C. Anawati, " $\bar{I}s\bar{a}$ ",  $EI^2$ .

<sup>125</sup> A few words appear to have dropped out of the text here: perhaps אַבָּבּעָם 'sacrifices were offered' (and so omitted by homoioteleuton, due to יאבעה ?).

ورده مده حلحه، [۱] محدد [موسه، المورده مدد المورد مده مدد المورد المور

gave thanks over the cup, and said: 'This is my blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Take and drink of it, all of you. So do in commemoration of me. Whenever, therefore, you eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, you shall recall my death until my (second) coming.' 127

 And so, from Christ until now, all Christians take delight in His sacrifice. The bread is of wheat, and the wine is of the vine, and by the mediation of priests and through the Holy Spirit it becomes the body and blood of Christ, just as He entrusted to us. And we are freed from | animal sacrifices and from bloodshed, as the Spirit foretold by the mouth of the blessed David: 'I will not eat the flesh of calves, and the blood of kids I will not drink'. 128

[27] بسد دهد المحل هذه دد دبده دهده دهده المحدد دهده المحدد المح

[27] The Muslim says: I consider that you have spoken these things well. Now, tell me again, given that God is high and exalted, and is incomprehensible and invisible and ineffable and inexplicable, and is in every place but is not limited by any place, why do you thrust Him down into baseness and proclaim that He has a Son? And given that

By error the manuscript reads (P2M perfect) instead of (PM participle with P2M enclitic propoun) which is required by grammar and context

pronoun) which is required by grammar and context.

127 Comparison with Mt 26:26-28, Mk 14:22-24, Lk 22:17-20, 1 Cor 11:24-25, reveals that this is not a citation of any one New Testament account of the Last Supper. It therefore seems likely that it is taken from an East Syriac eucharistic liturgy. Of the three major anaphoras, that of Addai and Mari has no words of institution, and that of Theodore of Mopsuestia is significantly different in form. The anaphora of Nestorius, however, has a form of Christ's words which matches very closely with those recorded here. (The Maronite 'Sharrar' has a related form, reworded as a direct address to Christ.) Although the anaphora of Nestorius, in its Syriac form, is thought to date back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the earliest manuscript witness to the anaphora dates to the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century, and so this citation is of some importance. For an excellent overview, plus an English translation, see B.D. Spinks, *Mar Nestorius and Mar Theodore the Interpreter: The Forgotten Eucharistic Prayers of East Syria* (Alcuin Club / GROW Joint Liturgical Studies 45; Cambridge, 1999). For a detailed commentary, see R. Matheus, *The Order of the Third Sanctification* (OIRSI; Kottayam, 2000).

<sup>129</sup> This word was added in the margin.

ڊھەدِىد.

He is one, (why) do you say 'Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit'?

[28] سبوط دخذر.] [دهده] عددده سو دمه دهده محدد محدد المحدد المحد

[28] The Monk says: You said truly that He is one, but He is known in the three persons (qnōmē) of Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, for He is one nature (kyānā), one power (haylā), one will (sebyānā), one authority (šultānā), a hidden being (tītyā gnīzā) without beginning or end, the Mighty one, and Creator, and Lord, and Maker of all created things.

And we know Him in threefold manner, both from that (passage): 'Let us make man in our image according to our likeness'; <sup>132</sup> and from that (one): 'Let us go down and there divide (their) languages'; <sup>133</sup> and from the fact that the prophet saw in the midst of the temple the seraphim crying 'Holy, holy, holy! Mighty Lord! Heaven and earth are filled with His praises!' <sup>134</sup> It is this utterance which bears the symbol of the Holy Trinity. <sup>135</sup>

وها محمد المعدد المعد

And from the fact that when Christ was baptised there was a great wonder that is ineffable: the Son who was baptised, and the Spirit who descended, and the Father who cried out and bore witness from above, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am pleased'. <sup>136</sup> And in accordance with that which He said: 'I am ascending to my Father who sent me, <sup>137</sup> and I will send to you the Holy Spirit, the

<sup>130</sup> By error the manuscript reads عجة (S3M perfect, 'he said') instead of عدد (S2M perfect, 'you said').

<sup>131</sup> This word was added in the margin.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Gen 1:26. (This traditional Christian proof text, and the following one, depend upon the fact that God speaks in the first person plural, 'we', suggesting simultaneous unity and plurality.)
<sup>133</sup> Gen 11:7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup> Isa 6:3. (Isaiah mentions one Lord, but reports a triple sanctus, 'holy!', indicating the Trinity.)

<sup>135</sup> Since the previous passages only indicate unity and plurality, not the threefold plurality.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> Mt 3:16-17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> See Jn 16:5.

Paraclete, who will perfect you in all powers'. And 'Go forth (and) make disciples of the four quarters (of the world), and baptise them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 139

بمعبد 22~ בצמצב [منعتم المعنية عند المعنية مسميعه المعنية الم ١٥ تنبير سر ١٨٥هر. ١١ همنحت تهده 2012 ړی وحهدًا وحملدًا. وحمل سةمد. حمكند ەھمىدىك . XTO A-2 توتكىمەه. وتحوية بدكس بودد حوت همود. وينا ويأد مع حسسه ١٠٠٥ دوب معدل حن دريه و محدد حيية نعد هدة. محدد دف سب هوديب حملهمه دبع وجع كك وعبعد سو الموره ولا معولك، ومعجور ومعهودا مكسمده وديد وهومص وهودد. سمنة مهمدود حده، ومنح ومهم ومحدي ومحسد، منتد نتد. وممهلتب سنةم. مهك ددموس دكم معمس مدس دفسته وسوب دكتوكه. وعودي دهوسه. هجي لك كتود، ك صميدك حيده مع دكتتدد.

And just as the sun is a single sphere, and from it procede | illumination and warmth, (and) a human also is one, but is composed of bones and flesh and hair, so also God is one, and is known in three persons  $(qn\bar{o}m\bar{e})$ , and they are distinguished by their particular properties. And just as someone might light a fire in winter time, and warm himself and benefit from its heat, but if he should extend his hand into it and investigate its nature he will be burnt by it, so also we confess the Trinity, as it was delineated above, to be one and indivisible, 141 and it is proclaimed and confessed in threefold manner, and whoever (so) believes and confesses is further enlightened by it, but if someone should investigate and pry (into it) he will surely be burnt and his life shall be brought to an end. For just as a potter's vessel is not able to judge that which pertains to his fashioner or the origin of his existence, 142 so also the nature of the Maker is not known by those who are made.

And (as for) that which you said, 'Why do you produce a son for (God)?', tell me, you son of Ishmael, whose son do you make him, he who

ەقد دەھدە دىكىد ئىدىمە، كە ددد. دىده. كد. دىم دد دىكىكدر.] دد هده. ئىدىمە، كە، كەه دىكەلدد مىدە، ئىھد

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> See Jn 14:26 – a very loose paraphrase.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> Mt 28:19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> By scribal error the manuscript reads \_\_\_\_\_\_.

The Syriac word 'Trinity'  $(tl\bar{t}\bar{a}yut\bar{a})$  is feminine, but all the forms here are masculine, either through erroneous grammatical incongruence, or because the writer has the masculine noun 'God' (' $al\bar{a}h\bar{a}$ ) as his mental subject.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup> See Isa 29:16, 64:8; Rom 9:21.

.معمعمعه عدم عدمهمعه. عد هدمجر، وهم معمعهم is called by you 'Isā son of Mariam, 143 and by us Jesus Christ?

[29] كىدى ئۇد[.] ئى دھى ھىھد [سدى] دىكى. ئە ھەدىكى كى ھدھ دىھد. ھىلمە دىكەن مدەسە.

[29] The Muslim says: According to Muḥammad our (prophet),—we also bear witness to what he said,—(He is): 'The Word of God and His Spirit'.<sup>145</sup>

[30] مسجد دفخ المحكنة دفخهه .. مهجد هدم دم دمبلاه بلتدك هدمك هدمك محلام هدمك المحكنة والمحلم المحكنة والمحتمد المحكنة والمحتمد المحكنة والمحتمد المحكنة والمحتمد المحكنة والمحتمد المحتمد الم

[30] The Monk says: And you speak well! But Muhammad received this saying from the Gospel of Luke, in accordance with what the angel Gabriel proclaimed (when) he declared it to the Blessed Mary: 146 'Peace be with you, who are full of grace! And our Lord is with you, blessed among women! For the Holy Spirit shall come, and the power of the Most High<sup>147</sup> shall rest upon you. Because of this, He who shall be born of you is holy, and He shall be called the Son of the Most High'. 148 Now, consider your saying, and understand what you have heard from Muhammad, because you bear witness that he proclaimed Him to be 'the Word of God and His Spirit'. Now, I require one of two things from you; either you alienate | the Word of God and His Spirit from Him, or you correctly proclaim Him to be the Son of God.

[31] كسد دهدور.] موجد حدمه وده ك

[31] The Muslim says: Here we must take

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> There is considerable discussion of the origins of the Islamic name for Jesus: see G.C. Anawati, "Īsā', EI²; N. Robinson, 'Jesus', in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 2003), p.7-21. Jesus is described as 'son of Mary' twenty-three times in the Qur'ān.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> Conjectural addition by the editor; see §31 below.

 $<sup>^{145}</sup>$  See Q 4.171. On this much discussed passage, see the articles on Jesus in the Islamic tradition cited above. In the *Legend of Sergius Baḥira* 14.14, it is Sergius who is said the have taught this definition to Muḥammad: for an excellent discussion of this see B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, p.104-113.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> 'The Blessed Mary' ( $tub\bar{a}n\bar{t}t\bar{a}$  Maryam) is a classic Church of the East title for Jesus' mother. Chalcedonian Syriac (Byzantine Orthodox) and Miaphysite Syriac (Syrian Orthodox) texts normally refer to her as 'the Godbearer',  $y\bar{a}ldat$  ' $al\bar{a}h\bar{a}$  (corresponding to the Greek Θεοτόκος), but this was unacceptable to Church of the East theologians.

<sup>147</sup> Literally 'the High one', 'the Exalted one'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> Lk 1:28, 35 (some variants from Peshitta text).

دِمهمه، دهم دهد هم عددد. موسمد سده دهه، معم سعیت تهمیته، refuge in silence! But tell me the truth, Muḥammad our prophet, how is he reckoned in your eyes?

فع درهد، دستونی بخود، محمد موشد مدوده میدد. معادی محمد درهداری محدد معدد موسد مدودد. معادی محدد معدد معدد موسد موسد [32] The Monk says: A wise and God-fearing man, who freed you from the worship of demons, and caused you to know the one true God.

[33] كىند دىخة[.] محدد بوت كلى دود سصحد مب عددند. كد دكه كل ددود دهكنهنامد دن دديمه برخدن. [33] The Muslim says: And (so) for what reason, given that he was wise, did he not teach us from the beginning<sup>149</sup> about the mystery of the Trinity as you term (it).

[34] The Monk says: You should know, O man, that a child when he is born, because he does not possess fully-formed 150 senses (capable) of receiving whole food, they feed him with milk for two years, and (only) then do they give him food (consisting) of bread. 151 So also Muhammad, because he saw your childishness and your lack of knowledge, he first caused you to know the one true God, teaching which he received from Sergius Bahira. 152 Because you were childlike in knowledge he did not teach you about the mystery of the Trinity, so that you should not go astray after multiple gods. For you might perhaps have said, 'Since Muhammad proclaimed three, let us make seven others, since ten would be even more powerful!', and (so) you would have run after the worship of carved-idols, as previously.

<sup>151</sup> See Heb 5:12-14; 1 Cor 3:2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> This goes against the punctuation, which seems to read 'given that he was wise from the beginning', but it fits better with the reply that follows.

<sup>150</sup> Literally 'whole', 'healthy'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>152</sup> Sergius Baḥira is the Christian monk said in Islamic tradition to have acknowledged Muḥammad's prophetic status, and in Christian tradition to have been Muḥammad's tutor. See Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*.

[35] كىد دىند[.] دى جنود دد كت كت حمس مودند مدد. دسك حماده كلته، حدود حماده حدد. [35] The Muslim says: As I see it, this matter is exceedingly difficult, that the Creator should replace the worship of carved-idols with the worship of created things.

[36] ישיביל זמָבְניי בּנִיבְנִישׁ בּנִבְנִינּי בְּסִבְּנִיּי

[36] The Monk says: Truly, it (would be a cause) of total perdition!

دُهْرُدَى، [كولاهُدُ] مَدِبِ عَهْدُ مَكُولِدَهُ مَلْكُومِهِ وَهُرُدِيهِمِ مَعْدُدُهُمُ وَهُرُدُهُمُ الْمُولِدِي وَهُرُونِهُمْ الْمُكِلِيْةُ الْمُؤْدِي وَلَمْكُونِهُمْ الْمُكْلِيْةِ مِلْكُومِهِ [37] The Muslim says: So then, your practice is difficult (to justify), that you worship images, and crosses, and the bones of martyrs!<sup>154</sup>

[38] سبدم نخذ[.] أدِم كه تكِتدَ، مكر معدهم دِحةد، دِك، بعك تعكم، بك عكلت مهرجم بعك دِمه دِبعك دِك، مهددك مع عمةك. [38] The Monk says: A rational man and a reader of books<sup>155</sup> should not speak haphazardly, but should (first) do some research and then speak, so that when he speaks he will not be criticised by his hearers!

[39] The Muslim says: I do not | believe that any criticism (can be levelled) against a person who is ignorant about a matter, and seeks to question and to learn about it.

 [40] The Monk says: If you seek to learn, listen clearly, and accept whatever I adduce for you as proof from the Torah<sup>156</sup> and the prophets.

مسوسة مناعدة[.] عددوسه مسحك يده

[41] The Muslim says: Truly, I will accept a proof (taken) from the Old (Testament).

[42] سيديد دهدور.] مدي دهد ك هكده

[42] The Monk says: So then, tell me, did the

<sup>153</sup> The manuscript reads, by error, کے کھنا ('image', singular).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>154</sup> For the discussion which follows, and its possible socio-historical background, see the full discussion in Reinink, 'The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs' (2011) [see n.1 above].

<sup>155</sup> Or possibly 'the Scriptures'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>156</sup> The standard Syriac term for Torah, 'ōrāytā (المهندي), is cognate with the Hebrew term and is borrowed from Jewish Aramaic.

حدد حدد دنوس ده در.

Hebrews worship the work of (human) hands, or not?

[43] كسد دفد[.] عدندده هكده. عدم دب حك دهمد دهددا موه. كود دسد دهمم בנבג מחבלש הפפ. [43] The Muslim says: Truly they (so) worshipped. But whenever they were (so) worshipping they would receive a judgement of punishment. 157

[44] سبيد دهدو.] كم هكيه هده ودهه حيقودهم سقعلا. [44] The Monk says: (So) it is not the case that they worshipped and (so) were delivered by dumb objects?158

[45] كسد دهد[.] ديد كه ندكيد. ديم در ندد دمه دهد كد. [45] The Muslim says: I do not know. If you know, tell me!

[46] سيديد دهدور.] ديد عصمه دف عدمه دمهودر دمودر رزح مور مده عده حيد معدمك. حد عوسه مع معادس، مه دكستدم صعهد هود ولصهديد صعع هود. ودب ביבפנו בלשבבו הם בלדבאנו שנהב הפיו. ه كتديد مسعى مود. محمد دف مدد، معسد ط دِيمَا تعمسطال طعمس مطعلك كمكودة مد مدوير كم كر مدوتمير حد نغذ. دلا ندس لحه..

[46] The Monk says: I have heard, and have also read, that a pillar of light travelled before the children of Israel when they went out from Egypt, 159 which gave light to the Hebrews but made darkness for the Egyptians. And know, that just as that pillar gave light for those of the household, 160 and made darkness for the outsiders, so also our Lord Christ when He comes at the (general) resurrection will long for and receive his worshippers, but will reply to the unbelievers, saying: 'I do not know you'. 161

ورحويد دسميد به ديسيد. به ديدد صميد

And just as that bronze serpent which Moses

<sup>157</sup> The Muslim presumably has in mind, primarily, the story of the golden calf which was worshipped by the Israelites while Moses was on the mountain: see Ex 32. The story is mentioned five times in the Our'ān. See G.R. Hawting, 'Calf of Gold', in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān, vol. 1 (Leiden, 2001), p.273-276.

158 See Ps 115:5, Isa 46:7, Jer 10:5, 1 Cor 12:2.

See Ex 13:21; 14:19-20; Josh 24:7. The biblical texts describe the pillar as a 'pillar of fire', (nurā, 224) rather than as a 'pillar of light' (nuhrā, 22002) as here.

This substantive adjective  $bayt\bar{a}y\bar{a}$  'of the house', hence 'member of the household', could apply in this instance to the 'house of Israel', but the term was developed in Syriac Christian usage to indicate someone who belongs to 'the household of God', in other words a believer. This concept is contrasted, as here, by the adjective barāyā, an 'outsider', one who is outside the household of God, or more specifically the church. This adjective thus came to be applied to anything or anyone considered secular, profane, or heathen. <sup>161</sup> Lk 13:25, 27; see Mt 7:23.

 set up in the wilderness, anyone who was bitten by a snake would be saved when he gazed upon it, 162 so (also) anyone who is wounded by Satan, 163 whenever he draws near, in suffering and remorse, and worships before the cross, he will be saved from Satan, through the aid of the mercy of the Lord of the cross.

ودورد وبعدهددده عدم عدم وغود اودمها وورمها ومدد عدم المحدد المورد المورد المورد ومدا المورد المورد ومدا المورد المورد المورد ومدا المورد المو

And just as Joshua bar Nun, whenever he cast himself down upon his face before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, <sup>164</sup> he would receive power from the divine grace, and would subdue all his enemies, so also the priest when he casts himself down | upon his face before the altar of the Lord, (the altar) of Christ, he receives power and aid against the demons who are the enemies of truth.

 And there are many proofs such as these in the foreshadowing of the Old (Testament)—if you investigate you will find them—which depict the type of the fulfilment of the new things which were given to us by our Lord. And when we know with certainty that our Lord is the Son of God, and (when) He is reckoned by us as Lord and Saviour and Judge, we must do whatever he commands us. And we worship and honour His image because He impressed (it) with His face and delivered it to us, <sup>165</sup> and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>162</sup> See Num 21:8-9. The typological link between the serpent raised up by Moses and the crucified Jesus is already found in Jn 3:14, and is regularly repeated in later Christian apologetic literature: see Reinink, 'The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs', p.333.

Who is identified, of course, with the serpent in Paradise, Gen 3:1-5, 13-15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>164</sup> See Josh 7:6. The interpretation of the wooden ark as a type of the cross is also found in the treatise on the cross published by P. Bedjan, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita. De perfectione religiosa* (Paris / Leipzig, 1909), p.589-600, esp. p.591 line 11; J.P.M. van der Ploeg, 'Un traité nestorien du culte de la Croix', *Le Muséon* 56 (1943), p.115-127; and the discussion in Reinink, 'The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs', p.333-334.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>165</sup> This is an allusion (as the Muslim recognises in the next paragraph) to the image of Christ's face which, according to tradition, he impressed upon a cloth and sent to King Abgar of Edessa. This follows the narrative found in the *Acts of Mar Mari* §3—ed. A. Harrak, *The Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle* (Atlanta, 2005), p.6-7—

whenever we look at his icon it is Him we see. And we honour the image of the king because of the king.

[47] پسد دهد او دهد که عصد که مندخدد دروسه دم حکم دروسه دم حکم دروسه مد او مدخوه مد کمه مدروسه دروسه مدروسه دروسه دروسه

[47] The Muslim says: And even I have heard (this), and I know that it is an icon that He impressed with His face and sent to Abgar, the king of Edessa, and it is right that all who believe in Christ should honour his image as (Christ in) his entirety. But for what reason do you worship the cross, since He does not command you (to do so) in his Gospel?

[48] سبوبد دخد[.] هخذ ددد ودهد دمه، حکمه، معمه، وهمونت، حکمه، دخی، دکد دیم هممه، وجهد دخی، دخیمه دخیمه دخی، دخیمه دخی، دخیمه دخیمه

[48] The Monk says: I believe that in your case also, Muḥammad did not teach you all your laws and your commandments in the Qur'ān, but there are some of them which you learned from the Qur'ān, and some of them are in<sup>170</sup> the Sūra of the Cow, and in (that of) the

rather than that in the *Doctrina Addai* f.3b-4a, ed. G. Howard, *The Teaching of Addai* (Chico, 1981), p.8-11, where the portrait is painted by an artist named Ḥanan. Harrak tentatively dates the *Acts of Mar Mari* to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, though others have suggested a 7<sup>th</sup>-century date. See A. Cameron, 'The History of the Image of Edessa: the Telling of a Story', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), p.80-94; H.J.W. Drijvers, 'The Image of Edessa in the Syriac Tradition', in H.L. Kessler and G. Wolf (eds), *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (Villa Spelman Colloquia 6: Bologna, 1998), p.13-31; Brock, 'Transformations of the Edessa Portrait of Christ', JAAS 18.1 (2004), p.46-56; S.H. Griffith, 'Crosses, Icons and the Image of Christ in Edessa: The Place of Iconophobia in the Christian-Muslim Controversies of Early Islamic Times', in P. Rousseau and E. Papoutsakis (eds), *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown* (Aldershot, 2009), p.63-84.

166 R. Hoyland, Seeing Islam as Others Saw It (Princeton, 1997), p.471, n.54, quite reasonably proposed that (which he read as 'aleptōn, D stem P2M perfect, 'you taught') be corrected to ('alepkōn, D stem S3M perfect with P2M object suffix, 'he taught you'), as in the previous line. However, the previous occurrence says that Muḥammad taught you 'in the Qur'ān', whereas here we have 'from the Qur'ān'. This may suggest that we either correct ('Ileptōn, G stem P2M perfect, 'you learned'), or keep it as an orthographic variant of this form.

167 Surat al-Baqarah (سورة البقرة عفه كحسفة), 'the Cow', the second sūra of the Qur'ān. See introduction.

آوه For معدم , read معدم (w-ba-gwāgay), 'and in "the Spider", that is, sūra 29, al-'Ankabūṭ (العنكبوت). Drijvers suggested in an unpublished paper that it is a corruption of the Arabic al-Injīl, 'the Gospel' (الجنكبو), and so he would presumably have read here معدمه (omitting the Arabic definite article). For discussion, see introduction.

<sup>169</sup> For אים , read ישם , read ישם (wa-b-tawbah), 'and in "Repentance", that is, sūra 9, al-Tawbah (ישפرة التوبة). Drijvers suggested reading it as al-Tawrat, 'the Torah' (דער , and so he would presumably have read ישב , and so he would presumably have read ישב , and so he would presumably have read ישב ). For discussion, see introduction.

<sup>170</sup> Or 'some of them (he taught you) in'.

ەھدەە، دەسى كى دەدسى دىيى كەمھى دىلىسى كحددەلەر، دىن مىكى ھەرى. دىسەت كى دەدسى دىنى مىكىلى دىمەدد. Spider, and in (that of) Repentance. So also in our case, some of the commandments our Lord taught us, and some of them the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of the Apostles his servants, and some of them he set up through the teachers (of the church), and he showed us the way of life<sup>171</sup> and the path of light.

وه دوسه المهاد والماد والماد

And as for the cross, listen honestly; we worship the cross because through it we were freed from error, and through it we were delivered from death and Satan. And (as) clear proofs, the four quarters (of the world) bear its sign, <sup>172</sup> and the four elements bear its symbol, <sup>173</sup> and the four rivers of paradise <sup>174</sup> depict its likeness, and the four Apostles who wrote down the Gospel of our Lord | carry its likeness; and a bird, unless it carries and depicts its likeness, it is unable to fly; <sup>175</sup> and a person, in the stretching out of his hands <sup>176</sup> bears its type; and flowers and blossoms and grasses receive its sign.

And why are we mentioning all the things which are like it, when we should learn the truth from the cross itself?<sup>177</sup> For demons are put to flight by it, and all the sick are healed by it, and lepers are purified by it, and through

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>171</sup> The term 'life' in Syriac is synonymous with 'salvation'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>172</sup> For another occurrence of this common type in the Syriac tradition, see Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 18:3, ed. E. Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide* (CSCO 154: Louvain, 1955), p.70; and so also Narsai, Homily 30, ed. A. Mingana, *Narsai doctoris syri homiliae et carmina* (Mosul, 1905), vol. II., p.121.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>173</sup> See also Narsai, Homily 30, ed. Mingana, II., p.121.

<sup>174</sup> See Gen 2:10-14

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>175</sup> See Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 18:6 (ed. Beck, p.70): 'But if the bird gathers in its wings, / thus denying the extended symbol of the Cross, / then the air too will deny the bird: / the air will not carry the bird / unless its wings confess the Cross': translation by S.P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Kalamazoo, 1992), p.59.

Possibly when praying with outstretched arms, but Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 18:12 (ed. Beck, p.71) states that the type is present even when a person stretches out his arms to put on his tunic.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>177</sup> For a very similar list of wonders performed by the Apostles through the cross, see the treatise on the cross published by Bedjan, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita*, p.591-592, and the Latin translation in van der Ploeg, 'Un traité nestorien du culte de la Croix'.

it we walk on water, and through its power we may enter fire, and we drive away wicked beasts through its sign, and the unclean are cleansed by it, and brides are blessed by it, and, greater than all of these things, baptism is effected through it, and the mysteries of the body and blood of Christ are consecrated through its sign, and we receive priesthood through its power, and, in absolute summary, through it we are at ease and are guarded against all injuries of the body and soul.

دولمورد ودرومه وروسا والمورد وروسا والمورد وروسا والمورد والم

And we trust that on the day when Christ the king manifests himself from heaven the sign of his victory will precede him, 178 to the dishonour and shamed faces of the denying Jews<sup>179</sup> who crucified upon it Christ their Lord as an object of shame and scorn. But now it is a humiliation and a shaming of faces for themselves, so that whenever they look upon it they are put to shame and lament. For through its power the emperor Constantine also defeated all enemies who warred against him. 180 And anyone who is a Christian and does not worship the cross, and does not gaze upon it as though on Christ, truly he is lost from life. And when we worship the cross, it is not as though we are worshipping the wood, or iron, or bronze, or gold, or silver, but we are worshipping our Lord, God the Word, who

همصكيس وحيوها وونس مكم معيسال مع عطية ونمة موهوم سعة ووحومه. كحوددة ەكتەمم دقر دىمودىر حەودى دەمە، ومە علمه. لعيسة طدّهم، لسعود ملتموسة. وحلامه تەقىد. كسوهيهه وحك المحمد فستوس مكح دٍړي ەھممىسى. تەھىكىيەھ وجد تسكم تكلوحقة والعقده كمره، محك دحدهكسة وه مكيكسة كه هكد. مدي وتصعيسه كه ښنن حه. عندنيم يحبد وه مح ستن. هجد فهديم كيكسد. كد دي في دكسهد ده كعدوكم مكسعم. مكومهم مكهم فكوسم كه. دكم سم كعدة فلدسم. كدكهم مكلا. دخمة حصحك دمع، محصد سعد دوحمهد.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>178</sup> See Mt 24:30. This is greatly expanded in the *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius* XIV.2-4.

There is very similar wording in the Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius XIV.4, although there the Jews are not singled out for attack.

The story of Constantine's vision of the cross was well known to all early Christians, and turns up in many different Syriac texts. It is noteworthy, however, that a dramatic hymn on the subject was included in one of the main liturgical books of the Church of the East, the *Hudrā*: T. Darmo (ed.), *Ktābā da-qdām wa-d-bātar wa-d-hudrā wa-d-kaškōl wa-d-gazā w-qālā d-'udrānē 'am ktābā d-mazmōrē*, vol. III (Trichur, 1962), p.726-733. For an English translation see S.P. Brock, 'Two Syriac Poems on the Invention of the Cross', in N. el-Khoury, H. Crouzel, and R. Reinhardt (eds), *Lebendige Überlieferung: Prozesse der Annäherung und Auslegung. Festschrift für Hermann-Josef Vogt zum 60. Geburtstag* (Beirut / Ostfildern, 1992), p.55-82 (esp. p.70-82).

dwelt in the temple (received) from us, 181 and (dwells) in this sign of victory. 182

[49] The Muslim says: These (words) about the cross are also sufficient, because you have (fully) elucidated them. But now, I ask you to no aid through them once the soul departs from the body.

tell me why you worship the bones | of martyrs, because I know for certain, that even though (the martyrs) be most righteous there is

[50] سىدىد دىدد.] مدى سىدىد كى دحمد دهوسم. ندسم ددكه، كند تحک دوی درموری و محدوی کا معملی، ەدحوىد دىقىد دكحك حد ددوكس تقىد سيوب كوه. وحد تديير حكة تدكور حسيدد. ودكري تتديمي كم حسمي. مهجد ومعدده ەتحك ەكچك بىيە. تدِسكة به معنكس دِنتدِس بحسه ، مهك دېندمىم ەھەدىم دەھج مەم، دحك دکمه، مسد ک به مسد. هم دک معدد. كم يعكست معدد.

[49] كىد دخة[.] مدى مدى دخك المار دخك

هفتار. محكك ديسةم ديس. سعد دس سفيد

مى دەدمد كد. دمهك مدد فهدمه،

كلقعه ا<sup>273</sup> وهقود. مهك ونوف سه

سمىمدىم. ددك كت ودسس دك كوددد

كه حمه، من دمعن معن ما فهدد.

[50] The Monk says: These things also we will make known to you, in so far as we are capable. We know, then, that God is in every place, but is not confined by place; and just as fish, wherever they go, water is conjoined with them, so the whole of creation is confined by God, but God is not confined by his creation, but is conjoined with all, and dwells in all, and especially in those who fear him, and in those who do his will. For we know and bear witness that (God the Word) said to them: 'Anyone who honours you, honours me; and the one who honours me, honours the one who sent me'. 183

And (so) our service before the martyrs is not in vain, for our worship is offered to God the Lord of All, and we honour the martyrs since God has appointed them to be a fount of aid in the midst of his churches, that they might pour forth and give healing to all who are afflicted

מבשבה פרשין שיוחים مةدد. مجدم دا كدهد مدحك ممعددد. ەكھىۋد مستدىس دەس دىك، دكهد. سكد ۆھەە*ە* ′ حدده ۱۵۰ ەھەردەمى جەەر. ەڭۋە دىلاد

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>181</sup> That is, the human body: see Jn 2:21 (and §22 above).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>182</sup> For Christ's dwelling in the cross, see the treatise on the cross published by Bedjan, Mar Isaacus Ninivita. De perfectione religiosa, p.589-600, esp. p.590, line 15; van der Ploeg, 'Un traité nestorien du culte de la Croix'; and the discussion in Reinink, 'The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs', p.334.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>183</sup> A modified form of the saying found in Mt 10:40, Mk 9:37, Lk 9:48, Jn 13:20 (with 'accepts'/'welcomes', . هنتمة ,replaced by 'honours', هنتمة). See Jn 5:23 for a negative version of this saying which does have هنتمة

همند ستلا ودهقه، تلاهمه، كهه فرديم، ده عدم له فرديم، ودو ديم همدا ديم ديمويد، تعدم لي مديم، كه مديم، مديم، مديم،

and take refuge in them. And He who dwells in them and works miracles and signs through their bones, it is Him we worship. 185 And you also (O son of Ishmael) anticipate that today, through the power of the prayers of the martyrs, He will bestow health on you on account of them.

مكتك ە قدەخد. בנבצג مكحد ددخيد. ك دوخص دمكك كمجم هود تعهمه حك دلي وتنب خدكم تككم تككو مر مقسمه دوسمه ومكمر به ونيلة هذلا. حد بلت تذ صبوه، دلمهرم. دلا سحتمد فذحب كم معمعية م. وحتب ددوه دِمكم، ومعسم كهور، دِمهوه، تنب طبه ومكم مهكمهم. ممد دهود عدده. وهمحكم دغدكس. در در دك معمدهد محمد ملكه. له حلسهد مهدم لا معجلس.  $\sim$  or our large |273v| large  $\sim$  41  $\sim$  12 حممكتب[.] محدد دك ديكم دديمتم سحتعد دحمه دكهد. دهمه دغتم دعكم تحقمهم مهكقمهم عجم علمه محمك كەھ معجم مستعديم دكورد دكر موهدم هودهم كتت ددوه دِهكم عصيد. دينميهه، يقيد معكتيد And just as rational and discerning people when they desire to enter before an earthly king, do not go in haphazardly, just as they wish, without the intercession of a friend of the king, or of the door-keeper, even though (the king) is of the same nature as them. But wise people approach his servants, and the counsellors of the king, and they urge them that they should make the request of the king on their behalf. And when they have done this, they go in easily and receive everything for which they ask. But if without permission they should yet enter with a petition, not only will they receive no benefit, but they will also attain loss | and damage for their person. So also, those who are wise in the household of God, when they wish their requests and prayers to enter in before God, they will not,

<sup>.</sup> جيكة هجه. The manuscript reads, in error, جيكة هجه.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>185</sup> Unlike most other Christian churches, the Church of the East preserved in Late Antiquity the ancient Christian belief in 'the sleep of the soul' from the moment of the individual's death until the general resurrection and last judgement, and this was still being defended by the Catholicos Timothy (d.823). One important consequence of this belief was that the martyrs themselves could not (at least not according to official Church teachings) respond to prayers, or act through their relics, but it was God who performed healings and miracles through the relics in response to Christian devotion. The tension that existed between official theology and popular belief can be seen at the end of the next paragraph where the prophets, apostles, and martyrs are said to act as intercessors with God. For an overview see D.G.K. Taylor, 'Hagiographie et liturgie syriaque', in A. Binggeli (ed.), L'hagiographie syriaque (Études syriaques 9; Paris: Geuthner, 2012), p.77-112 (esp. p.89-90). For an informative 6th-century treatise on the martyrs and their relics in the Church of the East, see A. Scher (ed.), Traités d'Isaï le docteur et de Hnana d'Abiabène sur les martyrs, le vendredi d'or et les rogations (Patrologia Orientalis 7.1; Paris, 1911). On the 'sleep of the soul' see O. Braun, 'Zwei Synoden des Katholikos Timotheos I', Oriens Christianus 2 (1902), p.283-311; F. Gavin, 'The Sleep of the Soul in the Early Syriac Church', Journal of the American Oriental Society 40 (1920), p.103-120 (Gavin is heavily dependent on Braun); Paul Krüger, 'Le sommeil des âmes dans l'œuvre de Narsaï', L'Orient Syrien 4 (1959), p.193-210; N. Constas, "To Sleep, Perchance to Dream": The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature', Dumbarton Oaks Papers 55 (2001), p.91-124.

ەھۋدى كەحقد.

then, present (them) to God rashly or in an unsophisticated manner, but first they petition the counsellors of the Heavenly King, who are the prophets and the apostles and the blessed martyrs.

ورئ وحومتمير حرب مهردمان وحومه روم در مارسد، وموهه ورسندم حمیودان در مارسد، ومارس And in brief, all of our worship, whether (directed) towards the icon or towards the cross, or the refuge in the martyrs to which we hold fast, it is Christ their Lord whom we worship, and through petition to the members of his household we make our offerings.

[51] پلید دمد[.] معد سدد تخد هیه دمهم. مدد کدرهم عدمه، عجمه مدد کدرهم عدمه، عجمه مدد درهم درسید فادیمه.[.]

[51] The Muslim says: Now I ask you to tell me one thing; given that God is in every place, why have you abandoned all the (other) quarters, and worship (only) to the eastern quarter?

[52] سيوم نظار] ودو دهما دهد دهده دهد دهوسالا ووسالا وده والمحال والم

[52] The Monk says: Both because it is the chief of the quarters, and also (because) the paradise of Eden is in the East. And in the beginning God placed us there in honour, and through our weakness we were cast out from our honour and from our exaltation. And now at every moment our eyes gaze out there, and for there we wait (in hope), and towards there we worship, and we offer a prayer that to there we might return. And Christ our Lord also prayed to the East, and the holy apostles received from Him (the teaching of) worship to the East, and they passed (it) on to us thus.

<sup>186</sup> The Hebrew text of Gen 2:8 states that the garden of Eden was planted miqqedem, and this was translated by the Septuagint as κατὰ ἀνατολὰς, 'in the East'. By contrast, the Peshitta translated it as σ, 'from of old', and this was understood by Ephrem and Isho'dad of Merv, among others, as indicating that it was planted on the third day of creation, when the trees were created. The Septuagint interpretation, however, became well known to Syriac exegetes and theologians at a very early date, and so is often cited in their commentaries (see Isho'dad, ad loc.).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>187</sup> In Mt 24:27 Jesus states that the (second) coming of the Son of Man will be like the lightning that comes from the East, and this is the most common justification for Christian prayer towards the East. There are no obvious Gospel passages in which Jesus himself is said to pray towards the East.

معسرهم درمونیه فردم. معدد مدده مهدمم درمونیه فردم. معدد مدده And see, (this is) a sure proof that they received it from our Lord, that all the churches on earth worship towards the East, and all Christians, those who believe in the Messiah, even if they differ in their confessions, which are seventy-two, <sup>188</sup> they worship towards the East, and proclaim the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

ودك ها محمد همود آدد كي همقد وديد ومدر الله الله الله الله الله ومدر اله ومدر الله و

And also from the Old (Testament) I will show you proofs that are most trustworthy. And if you wish, from that (passage) concerning the tabernacle which Moses commanded (to be placed) at the east gate, 189 saying: 'The lord of the camp shall go in and out by it perpetually', 190 and also the priests and the levites who | were honoured were dwelling at the east side. 191 And (so) also the blessed David: 'From the East He gave voice, a mighty voice'. 192

 [53] The Muslim says: Truly you possess the truth, and it is no error, as (some) people have supposed! And Muḥammad our prophet also said: 'As for those who live in monasteries, and those who dwell on the mountains, they will enjoy the kingdom'. And truly, everyone who holds to your belief with this way of thinking, as you have repeated (it) before me, and is cleansed from iniquity and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>188</sup> See Lk 10:1, where some Greek witnesses and the Old Syriac Gospels (plus the Diatessaron, Ephrem, Acts of Thomas, Doctrina Addai etc.) read 'seventy-two' apostles, and the majority of the Greek witnesses and the Peshitta read 'seventy'. A famous hadīth also refers to the seventy-two sects of the Christians (and seventy-one of the Jews, and seventy-three of the Muslims); see W.M. Watt, 'The Great Community and the Sects', in G. von Grunebaum (ed.), *Theology and Law in Islam* (Wiesbaden, 1971), p.25-36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>189</sup> See Ex 27:13-15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>190</sup> This appears not to be a biblical citation. See Ex 33:7-8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>191</sup> See Num 3:38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>192</sup> Ps 68:34.

The scribe originally write this and the previous word in the reverse order, but then indicated the correct order with superscript 1 and 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>194</sup> See O 5.82.

حده عددًد. دخک حدهم دمدتد[.] سد عدد در وخدد دهد کد. sin, God will not reject him. However, whilst I accept the truth of everything that you have said, (and) even though I have greatly wearied you, yet I wish to learn the whole truth from you concerning all the particularities. (So) answer me one small question.

[54] سبجد دهد [.] هده عدد که[.]

[54] The Monk says: What is your question?

[55] The Muslim says: I acknowledge that your religion is seemly, <sup>196</sup> and also that your way of thinking is better than ours, (so) for what reason did God deliver you into our hands? And (why) are you led away by us like sheep to the slaughter, <sup>197</sup> and (why) are your bishops and priests being killed, and the rest (of you) are being subjugated and belaboured by night and day by the impositions <sup>198</sup> of the king which are more bitter than death?

 [56] The Monk says: Moses said to the children of Israel, 'It is not because of your righteousness that God will lead you in to the promised land so that you might inherit it, but because of the wickedness of its inhabitants'. <sup>199</sup> And you also, you reigned for a period of sixty years, <sup>200</sup> and (then) you were driven away by Gideon the Hebrew, and he killed four of your kings, <sup>201</sup> 'Ōrib, Zīb, Zābaḥ,

The word  $\delta q \bar{a} l \bar{e}$  can mean not only 'burdens' but also 'taxes', 'tributes', (especially in the context of persecution and affliction), but 'by night and day' perhaps suggests less specific impositions.

199 See Deut 9:4-6. Based on the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* XI.5.

<sup>196</sup> Literally 'beautiful', but it can also have the sense 'virtuous', or even 'correct, right'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>197</sup> See Ps 44:24, Rom 8:36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>200</sup> The Arabs are being identified here with the ancient Midianites mentioned in the biblical book of Judges, as in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* V.2-7. According to Judges 6:1 the Lord gave the people of Israel into the hand of Midian for just seven years, but the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* V.5 states that the sons of Ishmael ruled the land for sixty years.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>201</sup> Judges 7:25, 8:21. This last verse also notes that '[Gideon] took the crescents that were on the necks of their camels', a reference that may have reinforced their connection with the Muslim Arabs in the minds of Christian readers.

 and Ṣalmana'. <sup>202</sup> And the children of Israel also, even though they were a mighty people, yet they were enslaved by the Egyptians for four hundred years. <sup>203</sup> (And) when they were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar they served in bondage in Babylon for seventy years. <sup>204</sup> And they were (also) delivered into the hand of the Assyrians. <sup>205</sup>

And you also, sons of Ishmael, God did not give you power over us because of your (own) righteousness, but because of our sins, and because the Lord loves us and does not wish to deprive us of his (heavenly) kingdom. For it is said: 'He whom God loves | He chastises', 206 and 'if you (remain) without chastisement you will be strangers, and not sons'. 207 The good and merciful God desired to chastise us in this passing world of brief and fleeting life so that there (in His kingdom) He might cause us to inherit eternal life.

[57] The Muslim says: I said to you from the start that whatever you know to be true, tell me, and do not have regard for my status. And now I adjure you by Christ—for I know that you love Him better than your own life—tell me the truth in as much as you know (it): Will the sons of Hagar<sup>208</sup> enter the kingdom, or not?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>202</sup> In the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* V.6 the same four 'tyrants' are mentioned.

See Gen 15:13, cited in Acts 7:6. (Ex 12:40 gives a period of 430 years.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>204</sup> See Jer 25:11, Dan 9:2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>205</sup> The Assyrian captivity preceded the Babylonian conquest, though this might not be obvious from the monk's words.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>206</sup> Heb 12:6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>207</sup> Heb 12:8.

The mother of Ishmael according to the Bible (see Gen 16:15), and some post-Qur'ānic Islamic traditions. The Muslims were called 'hagarenes' by Greek- and Syriac-speaking Christians from an early date, but it would be surprising indeed if a real Muslim would have used this as a label for his fellow believers.

[58] ړمخد[.] دەمىمىد. عمد הסמם מביבו. مب نخذ حده بهلمه بهديد مسير. دحك دكر مح 77 ددت دِيكِمِينَ يَضِدُ كِم يَنْقُدُمُوهِ، يَنْجَيْنُ مُعْجَمِّةً دىمىكد كحدد محد. دكمد معمس مهد ھڌھے در مجن وممكور لمخد كم سعوف لمصا لمصا العديد كي. وحك وكل صميكو مع مدد ەدەسىد. كى مىمك كىمكىمەم دىكەد. يىلا رك ومع وورس لام المعالم المعال حكىده: حنقد ودسسم كم معسدد. حدم شعت که دیم دکندد: مکه دیم حدد[.] [58] The Monk says: By Christ through whom you have adjured me, hear (the words) from His holy mouth as He speaks in the Gospel of the blessed John: "Anyone who is not born again shall not see the kingdom of God". Nicodemus says to Him, "How can an old man be born again? Is he able to enter his mother's womb again for a second time and be born?" Jesus says to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, that anyone who is not born of water and the Spirit shall not enter the kingdom of God". 209 But if there should be someone who who has fine deeds (to his credit), he may live through grace in (those) mansions<sup>210</sup> which are far removed from the torment, but he shall be considered as a hired hand, and not as a son (and heir).<sup>211</sup>

[59] The Muslim says: I testify that if it were not for fear of the government, and public shame, many would become Christians. But as for you, may you be blessed by God, for you have given me great ease through your speech with me.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>209</sup> Jn 3:3-5. The passage is generally understood to refer to baptism.

Kingdom, albeit as second-class citizens, appears to be drawing on old Syriac traditions.

The contrast may be drawn from Lk 15:19, 21, where the prodigal son declares that he is no longer fit to be called a son, but should be treated as one of the hired hands.

The scribe appears originally to have written established (a nonsense word), before correcting it.

[60] The Monk says: To Him from whom is everything, and in whom is everything, and through whom is everything, to Him be praise from spiritual beings and corporeal beings and from my feeble self who have proclaimed Him! Glory be to His name, and on us be His mercy and His grace, for ever and ever, amen.

[60] سبوبد دهدور.] كنه وحد هده وحد محمد وهبر المحمد وهبر المحمد وهبرات المحمد وهبرات المحمد وهبرات المحمد وهبرات وهبرات