

THE DISPUTATION BETWEEN A MUSLIM AND A MONK OF BĒT ḤĀLĒ: 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,¹ 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.

¹ For an excellent summary see B. Roggema, 'The Disputation between a monk of Bēt 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 Bēt Ḥālē 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 Bēt Ḥālē 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 Apocalyptic to Apologetics: Early Syriac Reactions to Islam', in W. Brandes and F. Schneider (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 indebted 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).² 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 Hālē, 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 Bahira*³ and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.⁴

² 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.

³ For the question of dependence see below. The early 9th 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 Bahirā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden, 2009). For a concise overview see B. Roggema, 'The Legend of Sergius Bahirā', 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 Bahirā 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.

⁴ 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 Bēt Ḥālē. 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 Ṭīn, 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 Ḥādīta.⁵ 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 Bēt Aramāyē, in the desert north-west of Ḥīra and Kūfa.⁷ It was founded by Rabban Mar Ḥūdāhwi (ܘܕܘܗܘܝ) in the mid-7th century,⁸ on a spot said to have been revealed in a divine vision seventy years earlier, before Ḥūdāhwi's birth, to Mar Babai the Scribe who lived nearby in a cave. After the founding of the monastery, Mar Ḥūdāhwi 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 'Abdā, and the monastery of Ma'arrē ('the caves'). The monastery of Bēt Ḥālē appears to have survived until at least the 11th 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. Ḥūdāhwi's teacher, Mar 'Abdā the younger, is said to have healed 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād (d. 686), an Umayyad governor of Baṣra and Kūfa, who later visited the saint's tomb to give thanks for his healing and to offer gifts to the monks,¹⁰ and Ḥūdāhwi 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 Ḥīra.

The earliest known reference to the *Disputation* is to be found in the 13th-century catalogue of Syriac literature which was written in verse by 'Abdisho of Nisibis (d. 1318).¹² His laconic entry reads: 'and Abraham of Bēt Ḥālē, a disputation against the Muslims (*ṭayāyē*)'.¹³ 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* refers¹⁴ 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* mentions¹⁵ another Abraham from the monastery who was a

⁵ 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.

⁶ See E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas, Bishop of Margā 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 Barhebraei Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, vol. 3 (Louvain, 1877), col.165-172.

⁷ J.-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne III. Bēt Garmāi, Bēt Aramāyē et Maišān nestoriens* (Beirut, 1968), p.221-223.

⁸ 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 Baṣrah* (Rome, 1896), §74-76, 78.

⁹ See Chabot (ed.), *Le Livre de la Chasteté*, §79-87.

¹⁰ Scher and Griveau (eds), *Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert) II.2*, p.589 [269].

¹¹ Scher and Griveau (eds), *Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert) II.2*, p.594 [274].

¹² 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.

¹³ ܘܕܘܗܘܝ ܕܘܕܘܗܘܝ ܕܘܕܘܗܘܝ ܕܘܕܘܗܘܝ ܕܘܕܘܗܘܝ .

¹⁴ Scher and Griveau (eds), *Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert) II.2*, p.586-587 [266-267].

¹⁵ Chabot (ed.), *Le Livre de la Chasteté*, §83.

friend of Mar Yohannan the Blue (*zrōqā* / *azraq*) who later became bishop of Ḥīra (late 7th / early 8th century),¹⁶ 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 7th / early 8th century)¹⁷ – who is credited with writing, among other works, the life of Mar Ḥūdāhwi – and Solomon of Ḥadīta (second half of the 8th century)¹⁸ 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-8th 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,¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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 chronicles²¹ 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.²² 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 11th century.

Another passage that has sometimes been taken as evidence for an early 8th-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 (سُورَةُ الْبَقَرَةِ: *b-ṣūrat ‘al-baqara*), and in GYGY (جيجي), and in TWRH (تورح).” The first reference appears unambiguous, and seems to indicate the second and longest sūra of the Qur’ān, ‘the Cow’,²³ although the monk clearly considers it to be an

¹⁶ Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne III*, p.123.

¹⁷ 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).

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Another, later, possibility would be the Abbasid general Maslama b. Yaḥyā al-Bajālī, 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.

²⁰ See G. Rotter, ‘Maslama b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān’, *EI*², vol. 6, p.740.

²¹ 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.

²² See Canard, ‘Les expéditions des Arabes’, p.94-102; R. Guiland, ‘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.

²³ In Arabic سورة البقرة .

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?²⁴ 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'ān (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.²⁶ More significantly, the early 9th-century Syriac *Legend of Sergius Baḥira* (a polemical text which relates the influence of a Christian monk on Muḥammad) has a section²⁷ in which the monk says he will write 'a great book of commandments and laws' for Muḥammad and place it on the horn of a cow, so that Muḥammad 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' (ܨܘܪܐ ܕܥܘܘܐ). Now it should also be noted that the *Disputation* is remarkable for the fact that it includes mention (§34) of Muḥammad having been taught by Sergius Baḥira, 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 Baḥira 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 (ܓܝܓܝ), and TWRH (ܛܘܪܗ). 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 (ܝܢܝܠܝܠ, presumably producing the hypothetical Syriac transcription ܓܝܓܝ), and the second was the Arabic word for Torah, *tawrāt* (ܛܘܪܐ), which more closely matches the preserved Syriac letters ܛܘܪܗ. 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 (ܐܘܘܢܓܝܠܝܘܢ, from the same Greek original as the Arabic, εὐαγγέλιον), 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 (ܘܪܝܬܐ, 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),²⁸ and so this cannot simply be a case of the repetition of a Qur'ānic formula. (3). It is possible to read the monk's reply as implying that Muḥammad was responsible not only for the Qur'ān, but for these other texts

²⁴ 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.

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

²⁶ See de Prémare, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān et le processus de constitution du Coran', p.185-187.

²⁷ East Syriac recension 16.14-15, see Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥirā*, p.282-285.

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

If Harrak is correct, as I believe he is, then it would seem that for the author of the Chronicle of Zuqnān this polemical use of the Qur'ān was not only typical of taunts made against Christians in the late 8th 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'ānic 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'ān, 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.³⁷ That an 8th-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; Merv (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,³⁸ and so one can reasonably presume that they were in communication with the leaders of their church in Iraq. The early 8th century even saw the establishment of new monasteries near Merv and Rayy, which implies that local conditions were favourable to Christians.³⁹ Although we have few letters from the 8th 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 8th 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

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ 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*.

³⁸ See J.-M. Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus novus. Répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Beirut, 1993).

³⁹ See J.-M. Fiey, 'Les communautés syriaques en Iran des premiers siècles à 1552', *Acta Iranica* 3 (1974), p.279-297 (esp. p.288) [repr. 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 8th-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 Romans⁴⁰ four kings reign’. Reinink asked,⁴¹ 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 8th-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).⁴² 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.cngcoins.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 argued⁴⁴ that this issue dates from 778, following a Byzantine victory over the Arabs at Dabiq.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Bēt Rōmāyē*.

⁴¹ Reinink, ‘Political Power’, p.163, n.42.

⁴² 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* (2nd 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.)

⁴³ Wroth, *Catalogue*, p.394, pl. XLV.21; Grierson, *Catalogue*, DOC 2; Sear, *Byzantine Coins*, SB 1584.

⁴⁴ Grierson, *Catalogue*, p.325. The legend on the coins, which puzzled numismatists for a long time, is also explained by Grierson.

⁴⁵ 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 folles⁴⁶ and half folles were also issued at Constantinople⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸ 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 Bēt Ḥālē (most likely intended to be the one of that name located in the desert north-west of Ḥīra), 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 Baḥira by this name, whose legend is thought to date to the early 9th 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 Baḥira, 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

⁴⁶ Wroth, *Catalogue*, p.395-396 (again two types), pl. XLVI.3, 4; Grierson, *Catalogue*, DOC 4, 6; Sear, *Byzantine Coins*, SB 1586, 1587.

⁴⁷ 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.

⁴⁸ See Brooks, ‘Byzantines and Arabs’, p.738; Mango and Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p.629, AM 6274; J.A. Williams (trans.), *Al-Ṭabari: 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 8th - / early 9th-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 7th 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. 95,⁴⁹ now preserved in the library of the Chaldean cathedral in Mardin.⁵⁰ 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’⁵¹ (the latter term, *luqātē*, being a standard term for selected short texts or extracts).⁵² Earlier studies of the *Disputation* have tentatively dated the manuscript to the early 18th century, but a note after item 8, a poem on Rabban Hormizd by Sargis bar Wahlē of Azerbaijan (late 15th / early 16th century),⁵³ states that the poem was completed (i.e. copied) on the 27 Adar (March) 1894 of the Greeks, that is A.D. 1583,⁵⁴ in the monastery of Mar John the Egyptian.⁵⁵ 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. 82,⁵⁶ was copied in 1890,⁵⁷ and contains, after some

⁴⁹ 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).

⁵⁰ 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.

⁵¹ In Syriac ܡܘܩܬܐ ܕܗܘܪܡܝܘܘܢ.

⁵² 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.

⁵³ 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 Âdhôrbâjân* (Semitistische Studien 2/3; Berlin, 1894).

⁵⁴ The copyist was a priest and monk named Joseph.

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ 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,⁵⁸ a collection of polemical texts relating to Islam (in which the *Disputation* follows the history of Sergius Bahira).⁵⁹ The second is *olim* Alqosh, Couvent de Notre Dame-des-Semences, ms. Scher 144.⁶⁰ 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 19th 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 1926.⁶¹ According to Fiey⁶² it had been removed by Mgr. Jérémie Timothée Maqdassi,⁶³ and in 1965 it was still in the possession of his heirs in Baghdad.

A fourth witness, Siirt ms. 112,⁶⁴ was dated by Addai Scher, on the basis of its script, to the 15th 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 Scher⁶⁵ in 1915 also resulted in the destruction of this manuscript, along with most other volumes of his episcopal library.⁶⁶

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.

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.)

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

⁵⁸ 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.

⁵⁹ The other texts are a section of Bar Salibi’s refutation of the Muslims, and (at the end) another section against ‘the idolators’.

⁶⁰ 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).

⁶¹ 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).

⁶² 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.

⁶³ Bishop of Zakho from 1892-1929.

⁶⁴ 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).

⁶⁵ 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.

⁶⁶ For details see Macomber, ‘New finds’, p.479.

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

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] [10] مسجداً أخذت [.] أخذت أخذت الله قتلتم
 نهتم مهلكا حلا لحد صاعدت:
 له صمد به فم آمذ تبأ جدت
 له كفنا. أمذ لكفم عتت. مهلم
 مهذلم مهأمم عتت. لذ مهذ مللم لك
 مذلم. مهذ لم كفن مللم صممه لممذ:
 مللم صملم لك مذلم. مهآم قلم
 متفد بلتلم فلمم مهه: مهآم مللم
 مم مم ذممه ذم مذ متفد مممه. مم
 مملم مهه مم ذملم للمم: مذم مهه
 لممه المم مم مللم قلم ذملم. مهآم
 قلم ذملم. مللم قلم ذملم
 مهذمه. مهلممه لذ ذممهلم. مممه
 مهذ ذملممه. مممه صمهلممه.

[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 who worshipped created things. And afterwards there reigned⁹¹ 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.

⁸⁹ 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-Sinaya, 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 millennium.

⁹⁰ 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.

⁹¹ Reading ܠܡܠܝܚ 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'.

דעלכע. זאל נאך א גאנצע וועלט
 זען אירע טענות.

refuge in silence! But tell me the truth,
 Muḥammad our prophet, how is he reckoned
 in your eyes?

[32] מוסיבא זאגט. [.] אירע שטענדיג
 זען זיך. אירע גאנצע וועלט
 זען זיך אירע טענות.

[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] מוסיבא זאגט. [.] אירע שטענדיג
 זען זיך. אירע גאנצע וועלט
 זען זיך אירע טענות.

[33] The Muslim says: And (so) for what
 reason, given that he was wise, did he not
 teach us from the beginning¹⁴⁹ about the
 mystery of the Trinity as you term (it).

[34] מוסיבא זאגט. [.] אירע שטענדיג
 זען זיך. אירע גאנצע וועלט
 זען זיך אירע טענות. אירע גאנצע
 וועלט זען זיך אירע טענות. אירע
 גאנצע וועלט זען זיך אירע טענות.
 אירע גאנצע וועלט זען זיך אירע
 טענות. אירע גאנצע וועלט זען
 זיך אירע טענות. אירע גאנצע
 וועלט זען זיך אירע טענות. אירע
 גאנצע וועלט זען זיך אירע טענות.
 אירע גאנצע וועלט זען זיך אירע
 טענות. אירע גאנצע וועלט זען
 זיך אירע טענות. אירע גאנצע
 וועלט זען זיך אירע טענות. אירע
 גאנצע וועלט זען זיך אירע טענות.

[34] The Monk says: You should know, O
 man, that a child when he is born, because he
 does not possess fully-formed¹⁵⁰ 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 Muḥammad, 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
 Baḥira.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 Muḥammad
 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.

¹⁴⁹ 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.

¹⁵⁰ Literally ‘whole’, ‘healthy’.

¹⁵¹ See Heb 5:12-14; 1 Cor 3:2.

¹⁵² 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 Baḥirā*.

[35] ܦܩܣܢ ܕܦܘܕܐ. [ܕܥܝܢ ܕܢܫܘܐ ܕܢܐ ܦܩܝܬ ܦܩܝܬ
ܕܥܫܐ ܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܫܘܕܢܐ. ܕܥܫܐ ܕܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ
ܕܫܘܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ.]

[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] ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܦܘܕܐ. [ܕܥܫܐ ܕܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ
ܕܫܘܕܢܐ.]

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

[37] ܦܩܣܢ ܕܦܘܕܐ. [ܕܥܝܢ ܕܢܫܘܐ ܕܢܐ ܦܩܝܬ ܦܩܝܬ
ܕܥܫܐ ܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܫܘܕܢܐ. 153 ܕܥܫܐ ܕܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ
ܕܫܘܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ.]

[37] The Muslim says: So then, your practice is difficult (to justify), that you worship images, and crosses, and the bones of martyrs!¹⁵⁴

[38] ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܦܘܕܐ. [ܕܥܝܢ ܕܢܫܘܐ ܕܢܐ ܦܩܝܬ ܦܩܝܬ
ܕܥܫܐ ܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܫܘܕܢܐ. ܕܥܫܐ ܕܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ
ܕܫܘܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ.]

[38] The Monk says: A rational man and a reader of books¹⁵⁵ 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] ܦܩܣܢ ܕܦܘܕܐ. [ܕܥܝܢ ܕܢܫܘܐ ܕܢܐ ܦܩܝܬ ܦܩܝܬ
ܕܥܫܐ ܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܫܘܕܢܐ. ܕܥܫܐ ܕܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ
ܕܫܘܕܢܐ.]

[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] ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܦܘܕܐ. [ܕܥܝܢ ܕܢܫܘܐ ܕܢܐ ܦܩܝܬ ܦܩܝܬ
ܕܥܫܐ ܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܫܘܕܢܐ. ܕܥܫܐ ܕܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ ܕܫܘܕܢܐ
ܕܫܘܕܢܐ.]

[40] The Monk says: If you seek to learn, listen clearly, and accept whatever I adduce for you as proof from the Torah¹⁵⁶ and the prophets.

[41] ܦܩܣܢ ܕܦܘܕܐ. [ܕܥܝܢ ܕܢܫܘܐ ܕܢܐ ܦܩܝܬ ܦܩܝܬ
ܕܥܫܐ ܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܫܘܕܢܐ.]

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

[42] ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܦܘܕܐ. [ܕܥܝܢ ܕܢܫܘܐ ܕܢܐ ܦܩܝܬ ܦܩܝܬ
ܕܥܫܐ ܫܘܕܕܢܐ ܫܘܕܢܐ.]

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

¹⁵³ The manuscript reads, by error, ܕܥܝܢ ܕܢܫܘܐ (‘image’, singular).

¹⁵⁴ 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].

¹⁵⁵ Or possibly ‘the Scriptures’.

¹⁵⁶ The standard Syriac term for Torah, *’ōrāytā* (ܐܘܪܝܬܐ), is cognate with the Hebrew term and is borrowed from Jewish Aramaic.

ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ.

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

[43] ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ.

[43] The Muslim says: Truly they (so) worshipped. But whenever they were (so) worshipping they would receive a judgement of punishment.¹⁵⁷

[44] ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ.

[44] The Monk says: (So) it is not the case that they worshipped and (so) were delivered by dumb objects?¹⁵⁸

[45] ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ.

[45] The Muslim says: I do not know. If you know, tell me!

[46] ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ.

[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

ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ. ܘܗܘܘܢ ܘܥܒܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܘܢܝ ܗܘܢܝܢ.

And just as that bronze serpent which Moses

¹⁵⁷ 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 Qur’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.

¹⁵⁹ See Ex 13:21; 14:19-20; Josh 24:7. The biblical texts describe the pillar as a ‘pillar of fire’, (*nurā*, ܢܘܪܐ) rather than as a ‘pillar of light’ (*nuhrā*, ܢܘܗܪܐ) as here.

¹⁶⁰ This substantive adjective *baytāyā* ‘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.

¹⁶¹ Lk 13:25, 27; see Mt 7:23.

ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ

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.

ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ

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,¹⁶⁴ 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.

ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ
 ܘܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢܝܘܢ

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,¹⁶⁵ and

¹⁶² 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.
¹⁶³ Who is identified, of course, with the serpent in Paradise, Gen 3:1-5, 13-15.
¹⁶⁴ 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.
¹⁶⁵ 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] ܦܣܝܢ ܕܡܘܨܘܢܐ.] ܘܗܝ ܟܕ ܚܘܨܐ ܟܕ.
ܘܢܝܚܝܢ ܕܝܚܘܨܝܢ ܗܝ ܕܝܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.
ܘܚܘܨܝܢ ܕܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.
ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.
ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.
ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.

[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] ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܘܨܘܢܐ.] ܘܗܝ ܟܕ ܘܨܝܢ ܕܝܚܘܨܝܢ.
ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.
ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.
ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.
ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.
ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ ܚܘܨܝܢ.

[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 in¹⁷⁰ 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 6th century, though others have suggested a 7th-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 ܕܘܨܝܢ (which he read as 'aleptōn, D stem P2M perfect, 'you taught') be corrected to ܕܘܨܝܢ ('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 ܕܘܨܝܢ to ܕܘܨܝܢ ('ileptōn, G stem P2M perfect, 'you learned'), or keep it as an orthographic variant of this form.

¹⁶⁷ *Surat al-Baqarah* (ܘܨܝܢ ܕܘܨܝܢ), 'the Cow', the second sūra of the Qur'ān. See introduction.

¹⁶⁸ For ܘܨܝܢ, read ܘܨܝܢ (*w-ba-gwāgay*), 'and in "the Spider"', that is, sūra 29, *al-'Ankabūt* (سورة العنكبوت). Drijvers suggested in an unpublished paper that it is a corruption of the Arabic *al-Injīl*, 'the Gospel' (انجيل), and so he would presumably have read here ܘܨܝܢ (omitting the Arabic definite article). For discussion, see introduction.

¹⁶⁹ For ܘܨܝܢ, read ܘܨܝܢ (*wa-b-tawbah*), 'and in "Repentance"', that is, sūra 9, *al-Tawbah* (سورة التوبة). Drijvers suggested reading it as *al-Tawrat*, 'the Torah' (توراة), and so he would presumably have read ܘܨܝܢ.

For discussion, see introduction.

¹⁷⁰ Or 'some of them (he taught you) in'.

ܘܡܚܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܠܗ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ

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 life¹⁷¹ and the path of light.

ܘܥܠܝܢ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ

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,¹⁷² and the four elements bear its symbol,¹⁷³ and the four rivers of paradise¹⁷⁴ 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;¹⁷⁵ and a person, in the stretching out of his hands¹⁷⁶ bears its type; and flowers and blossoms and grasses receive its sign.

ܘܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
 ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ

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

¹⁷¹ The term 'life' in Syriac is synonymous with 'salvation'.

¹⁷² 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.

¹⁷³ See also Narsai, Homily 30, ed. Mingana, II., p.121.

¹⁷⁴ See Gen 2:10-14.

¹⁷⁵ 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* (2nd ed.; Kalamazoo, 1992), p.59.

¹⁷⁶ 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.

¹⁷⁷ 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'.

•••••

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.

•••••

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] •••••

[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] •••••

[52] The Monk says: Both because it is the chief of the quarters, and also (because) the paradise of Eden is in the East.¹⁸⁶ 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,¹⁸⁷ and the holy apostles received from Him (the teaching of) worship to the East, and they passed (it) on to us thus.

¹⁸⁶ 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 Peshiṭta translated it as *מִן מִבְּרַח*, ‘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.).

¹⁸⁷ 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.

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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,¹⁸⁸ they worship towards the East, and proclaim the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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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

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[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'.¹⁹⁴ 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

¹⁸⁸ 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 ḥadīth 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.

¹⁸⁹ See Ex 27:13-15.

¹⁹⁰ This appears not to be a biblical citation. See Ex 33:7-8.

¹⁹¹ See Num 3:38.

¹⁹² Ps 68:34.

¹⁹³ The scribe originally write this and the previous word in the reverse order, but then indicated the correct order with superscript ܐ and ܘ.

¹⁹⁴ See Q 5.82.

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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] ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ [ܘܠܟܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ].

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

[55] ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ [ܘܠܟܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ]. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ.

[55] The Muslim says: I acknowledge that your religion is seemly,¹⁹⁶ 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,¹⁹⁷ 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 impositions¹⁹⁸ of the king which are more bitter than death?

[56] ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ [ܘܠܟܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ]. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ. ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܟܝܢܐ.

[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’.¹⁹⁹ And you also, you reigned for a period of sixty years,²⁰⁰ and (then) you were driven away by Gideon the Hebrew, and he killed four of your kings,²⁰¹ ‘Ōrib, Zīb, Zābaḥ,

¹⁹⁵ The manuscript by error reads *ܠܫܝܚܐ*, but this is corrected in the margin to *ܠܫܝܚܐ*.

¹⁹⁶ Literally ‘beautiful’, but it can also have the sense ‘virtuous’, or even ‘correct, right’.

¹⁹⁷ See Ps 44:24, Rom 8:36.

¹⁹⁸ The word *šqālē* 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.

²⁰⁰ 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.

²⁰¹ 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.

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[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) mansions²¹⁰ which are far removed from the torment, but he shall be considered as a hired hand, and not as a son (and heir).²¹¹

[59] مسجدي زكذلي. [.] انا تصدقت
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[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.

²⁰⁹ Jn 3:3-5. The passage is generally understood to refer to baptism.

²¹⁰ This response is built upon Christ’s words in Jn 14:2, ‘In my Father’s house there are many mansions’. According to Ephrem, ‘in the delightful mansions which are at the fences (of Paradise) / do the souls of the just and righteous reside’, *Hymns on Paradise* 8.11; ed. E. Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Paradiso und contra Julianum* (CSCO 174: Louvain, 1957), p.35. In *Hymns on Paradise* 7.26-28 (ed. Beck, p.31-32) he implies that he himself is too defiled to enter Paradise itself, and so asks God for permission to live by the fence (presumably in the mansions), from where he will be able to see both the delights within the Garden, and the torments of Gehenna. Here, he says, he will be able to eat the crumbs that fall from the table of Paradise like the dogs that eat the crumbs from their masters’ table. This is an allusion to Mt 15:22-28, where a Canaanite woman uses this image to overcome Jesus’ reluctance to heal her daughter, because she is not Jewish. The idea that the mansions might be an appropriate place for repentant sinners and strangers is also found in later writers, such as Narsai: ‘May your mercy be a guide / for the ignorant stranger / and teach him the path on which he may travel / to the mansions of the kingdom on high’, *ܡܢ ܫܩܝܢܐ ܕܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ* (Hom. 9, ed. Mingana, I.154-155). So the monk’s assurance that Muslims will enter the Kingdom, albeit as second-class citizens, appears to be drawing on old Syriac traditions.

²¹¹ 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.

²¹² The scribe appears originally to have written *ܕܡܠܟܘܬܐ* (a nonsense word), before correcting it.

[60] מִיִּשְׁרָאֵל וְכָל־הָעוֹלָם לְפָנָיו כִּי־לֹא־יֵשֶׁת׃
כִּי־הוּא־הוּא־הַיְיָ־אֱלֹהֵינוּ׃ לְפָנָיו כִּי־לֹא־יֵשֶׁת׃
וְכָל־הָעוֹלָם לְפָנָיו כִּי־לֹא־יֵשֶׁת׃
לְפָנָיו כִּי־לֹא־יֵשֶׁת׃ לְפָנָיו כִּי־לֹא־יֵשֶׁת׃
לְפָנָיו כִּי־לֹא־יֵשֶׁת׃

[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.