

JOHN OF DAMASCUS
ON THE MUSLIM HERESY
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GENERAL INFORMATION
ON ISLAM / DIALOGUES

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
ANTI-ICONOCLAST
John of Damascus
d. circa 752 A.D.

John of Damascus (Johannes Damascenas), an eminent theologian of the Eastern Church, derives his surname from Damascus, where he was born about the close of the seventh century. His Arabic name was al-Mansur (the victor), and he received the epithet Chrysorrhoas (gold-pouring) on account of his eloquence.

His father Sergius, a Christian, held high office under the Saracen Caliph, in which he was succeeded by his son. John wrote (c. 730) several treatises in defence of image-worship, which the emperor, Leo the Isaurian, was making strenuous efforts to suppress. He then surrendered his worldly goods and betook himself to the monastery of St. Sabas, near Jerusalem, where he spent the rest of his life. He was ordained priest by the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

In his last years he travelled through Syria, contending against the Iconoclasts, and visited Constantinople at the imminent risk of his life

during the reign of Constantine Copronymus. With him the "mysteries," the entire ritual, are an integral part of the Orthodox system, and all dogma culminates in image-worship. He died probably about 752.

One of his more important books is entitled *De Haeresibus* which, among other tractates, contains an account of Islam. According to Keller "this brief treatise was the armory for all future controversial writings against Islam in the Eastern church." The translation given below was made by the Rev. John W. Voorhis from the Greek text of J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 94, 1864, cols. 764-773; sec. 101, Latin text in parallel columns.

Professor Bell of Edinburgh University, in his book *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, refers also to John of Damascus pp. 207-211:

As showing how that took place I take two things which occur in the works of John of Damascus. John's father was a Christian who was employed in an official position at the court of the Umayyad caliphs at Damascus. He himself in early life occupied a similar position and began his literary activity there before he withdrew to the monastery of Saba where the latter part of his life was spent. In the introduction to his great dogmatic work in which he treats of the heresies, he devotes a section to Islam. There is also included in his works a *Dialogue with a Saracen*, which is a kind of manual for the guidance of Christians in their arguments with Muhammadans. It is not the only work of that kind which has come down to us from that early time. It is not, perhaps, so interesting as we might expect from the situation to which it belongs. But the very fact of such a work having been composed is itself suggestive. It proves what in itself is inherently likely—that arguments of that kind were fairly frequent.

“Islam” in *On Heresies*

(A) There is also, prevailing unto now, the deceptive¹ error² of the Ishmaelites, a fore-runner of the anti-Christ. It takes its origin from Ishmael, who was born by Hagar to Abraham; for which reason they are called Hagarenes and Ishmaelites. But they call themselves Saracens, as those (sent away) empty by Sara, Σαρρα κενου³ because of that which was said by Hagar to the angel. “Sara sent me away empty, Σαρρα κενεν.”⁴ These then, served idols and worshipped the morning⁵ star and Aphrodite, whom they also named in their own tongue “Chabar,”⁶ which indeed signifies “great.” Accordingly until the time of Heraclius they openly served idols. From that time until now a false prophet arose for them surnamed Mamed, who having happened upon the Old and New Testament, in all likelihood through association with an Arian monk, organized his own sect. And when by a pretence of godliness he had gained the favor of⁷ the people, he declared that a scripture⁸ had been brought down to him from heaven. Wherefore when he had inscribed in his book⁹ certain things worthy of ridicule, he gave it to them as as object to be revered.

(B) He says there is one God, maker of all things, not begotten nor begetting (Qur’an 112:3). He says that Christ is a Word of God and His Spirit (Qur’an 4:169), but created (Qur’an 3:52) and a servant¹⁰ (Qur’an 43:59) and that He was born without seed from Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron (Qur’an 19:29).¹¹ For the Word of God and the Spirit came in unto Mary and she bare Jesus (Qur’an 4:169; 19:16-21), a prophet and a servant of God (Qur’an 43:59); and that the Jews unlawfully determined to crucify Him, and when they seized Him, they crucified Him in appearance only (Qur’an 4:156);¹² but the Christ Himself was not crucified, nor did He die, for God took Him into heaven unto Himself (Qur’an 4:156) because He loved Him.¹³ And this he says, that, when Christ had come up (Qur’an 5:116) into the heavens, God asked Him saying: “O Jesus, did you say, ‘I am the Son of God and God?’” And Jesus answered, “Be gracious unto me, Lord; You know that I said not so, nor did I count myself above being Your servant (Qur’an 4:170); but erring¹⁴ men wrote that I said this thing,¹⁵

and spoke falsely against me and have been deceived." And God answered and said to Him, "I know that you did not say this thing."¹⁵ And in this book he tells of many other marvels, worthy of ridicule, and he insolently boasts¹⁶ that this scripture was brought to him from God. But then we say, "Who is the witness that God gave a scripture to him?"¹⁷ Who of the prophets foretold that such a prophet would arise?" And they are quite at a loss. (But we point out in contrast that) Moses received the Law when God appeared at Mt. Sinai in the sight of all the people [in cloud and fire, in darkness and storm; and that all the prophets, beginning with Moses and in succession, foretold the advent of Christ and that the Christ was God and that a Son of God would come in the flesh, be crucified, die and be raised up and that this one would judge¹⁸ the living and the dead. And then we say,¹⁹ "How is it that your Prophet did not so come with others bearing testimony concerning him; and how is it that God did not give him the scripture of which you speak, when you were present, as God gave the Law to Moses while the people looked on and the mountain smoked, that you also might have certainty?" They reply that God does as He wishes. This, we say, we know: but in what manner did this scripture come down to your Prophet, we ask. They answer that at a time²⁰ when he fell asleep the scripture came down upon him.²¹ In jest we say to them that since he received this scripture while he was asleep and since he was not sensible of the divine influence, there was fulfilled in him (the saying) of the popular proverb²²]²³

(C) Again we ask,²⁴ "How is it that when he commanded us (you?) in your scripture to do nothing or receive nothing without witnesses,²⁵ you did not inquire of him 'First, do you yourself show through witnesses that you are a prophet and that you have forth from God: and what scripture testifies of you?' They keep silent, having been put to shame. (Then we point out further) Forasmuch as it is not lawful for you to marry a wife without witnesses, or to do business, or to acquire (possessions); and (forasmuch as) you neither allow one to receive an ass or any beast without witnesses; but faith alone and scripture you receive without witness. For the one who delivered this scripture to you has no verification from any source, nor is any previous witness to him known; yet, while he was asleep, he received this (scripture)."

(D) And they call us "*Hetairiastai*" (Associators)²⁶ because, they say we set beside God an associate when we say that Christ is Son of God and God. To whom we say that the prophets and the Scripture transmitted this, and you receive the prophets as you stoutly insist. If then we say wrongly that Christ is the Son of God, it is they who taught and delivered this to us. And some of them say that when we have read such things into²⁷ the prophets, we then attribute such things to them. Others say that the Hebrews, because they hated us, deceived us by writing those things as though they had been written by the prophets in order that we might be destroyed.²⁸

(E) Again we say to them: "Since you say that Christ is Word of God and Spirit, how is it that you revile us as *Hetariastai*? For the Word and the Spirit are not separated one from the one in whom they are by nature. If therefore His Word is in God, it is evident that the Word is also God. But if the Word is outside of God, then according to you God is without reason and without life.²⁹ And so, fearing to provide an Associate for God, you have mutilated Him. It were better for you to say that He has an Associate than to mutilate Him and to treat Him as stone or wood or some insensible thing.³⁰ Wherefore³¹ you speak falsely of us when you call us '*Hetariastai*'; but we call you '*Koptai*' (Mutilators) of God."

(F) And they malign us as being idolaters because we bow before³² the cross, which indeed they despise. But we say to them: "How is it that you attach such significance to a stone in your Kabatha,³³ that you kiss it³⁴ and embrace it?"³⁵ And certain of them say that upon it Abraham had intercourse with Hagar; and others that to it he fastened his *camel* when he was about to sacrifice Isaac.³⁶ To them we reply, "The Scripture says that the mountain was wooded,³⁷ and pieces of wood were there, some of which, when he had split it for the burnt offering, Abraham laid upon Isaac; and that he left the *asses* behind with the servants. Why are you so foolish? For there is not much wood to be found there,³⁸ nor do asses travel through there."³⁹ They are put to shame. Nevertheless they say it is the stone of Abraham. Then when we say, "Let it be Abraham's (stone) as you maintain. But you are not

ashamed when you kiss it simply because Abraham had intercourse with a wife⁴⁰ upon it or because he fastened a camel to it; yet you take us to task because we worship before the cross of Christ through which⁴¹ the power of demons and the deceit of the devil have been destroyed?”⁴² And this stone, about which they speak, is the head of Aphrodite whom they worship, whom they call Chaber; (for) upon this stone, even until now, an engraved image is apparent to those who scrutinize it carefully.

(G) This Mamed, as has been said, drew up many foolish sayings; and to each of these he gave a title, such as the passage⁴³ “Concerning the Woman.” In this (passage) he permits by law that one may openly take four wives, and may take a thousand concubines if he is able, or as many as his hand can support beyond the four wives (Qur’an 4:3); and he permits by law that one divorce whomsoever he pleases and that, should he desire it, for such cause⁴⁴ one may take another. Mamed had a co-worker named Zeid.⁴⁵ This man had a beautiful wife whom Mamed desired. When they were seated together, Mamed said, “O thou, God has commanded me to take your wife.” And he replied; “Thou art an apostle; do as God has said to you; take my wife.”⁴⁶ Or rather, that we may tell it from the beginning,⁴⁷ he said to him; “God commanded me that you should divorce your wife.” And he divorced her. After many days he said; “But God commanded that I should take her.”⁴⁸ Then when he had taken her, and when he had committed adultery with her, he made such a law: “Let him who desires it, divorce his wife. But if after the divorcement he shall return to her, let another (first) marry her. For it is not lawful (for him) to take her, unless she shall have been married by another (Qur’an 2:230).⁴⁹ And if indeed a brother divorce her, let his brother, if he be willing, marry her.” In the scripture⁵⁰ itself he declares such things; “Till the ground which God has given you, and beautify it; and do this thing and in such manner,”⁵¹ — not to say, as he does, things altogether shameful.

(H) Again, there is a passage,⁵² “Concerning the Camel⁵³ of God” (Qur’an 17:61; 26:155) of which it says, there was a camel from God; it drank the whole river and was not able to pass between two mountains because there was not sufficient space. Now, it says, there were people

in that place and they drank the water on one day, but the camel drank on the next day (Qur'an 54:28). And when the camel had drunk the water, it nourished them, supplying milk instead of water. Then there arose certain evil men and they killed the camel, its offspring, which, (the passage) says, when the mother had been destroyed, cried out to God; and He took it to Himself. To them⁵⁴ we say, "Whence was that camel?" They say it was from God. And we say, "Was not another camel brought together with this one?" But they say, "No." "How," we say, "did it bring forth then? For (otherwise) we are confronted with a camel without father, without mother and without genealogy. But when it had brought forth, it suffered evil. Yet there does not appear the one who put the female to the male;⁵⁵ and the small camel was taken up. Your Prophet, then, to whom you say God spoke, why did he not learn regarding the camel, where it fed, who milked it and took the milk? Was it destroyed when it encountered evil men as the mother; or did it enter into Paradise as your forerunner, from which (camel) comes your river of milk about which you talk so foolishly? For you say three rivers flow for you in Paradise; of water, of wine and of milk.⁵⁶ If the camel, your forerunner, is outside of Paradise, it is clear that it has been destroyed by hunger and by thirst, or that others enjoy its milk. In vain therefore does your Prophet boast that he associated with God; for the mystery of the camel was not revealed to him. But if it is in Paradise, it drinks again the water; and you will dry up for want of water in the midst of the luxury of Paradise. But if you desire wine from the river flowing by, since there is no water, for the camel drank it all, in drinking unmixed wine you become inflamed, are overcome with drunkenness and fall asleep; and when you are heavy with sleep and debauched by wine, you miss the pleasures of Paradise.⁵⁷ How is it then that your Prophet did not consider these matters, lest perchance they should befall you in the Paradise of luxury? He has not even considered where the camel now lives. But neither did you ask this dreamer to tell you about the three rivers. But we plainly declare to you that your wonderful camel, your forerunner, had entered into the souls of asses, where you also, brutish as you are, are about to go. But there is outer darkness and punishment unending, a roaring fire, a worm that dieth not and demons of Tartarus."⁵⁸

(I) Again Mamed says (in) the passage, "Concerning the Table," that Christ asked from God a table and it was given to Him (Qur'an 5:114). For God, it says, said to Him, "I have given to you and to yours an incorruptible table."

(J) Again (he gives) a passage, "Concerning a Heifer," and he says many other foolish things, worthy of ridicule, which, then it may be fitting to pass by on account of the multiplicity of them. Those who had wives he ordained by law should be circumcized,⁵⁹ and he gave commandment not to keep the Sabbath and not to be baptized; and he gave direction to eat some of the things which are forbidden on the law and to abstain from some of the others; but the drinking of wine⁶⁰ he forbade altogether.⁶¹

The Discussion of a Christian and a Saracen

(Translated from the Latin and Greek texts of J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 94, 1864, cols. 1885-1898.)⁶²

(K) If you are asked by a Saracen: "What do you call Christ?" say to him, "The Word⁶³ of God;" nor think that you say amiss, for He is called in Scripture, the Word and the Arm of God and the Power of God and many such things. Moreover do you in turn ask him, "What is Christ called by your scripture?" Then he too will be eager to ask you another question, seeking thus to escape you. But by no means do you reply to him until indeed he has answered that which you will have asked him. For necessity will compel him to answer you by saying, "By my Scripture he is called the Spirit and the Word of God." Then again ask him, "By your Scripture is the word said to be created or uncreated?" If he will say, "Uncreated," say to him, "Behold, you agree with me. For everything not created, but (existing) uncreated, is God." If, however, he will have said that the Word and the Spirit is created, then inquire; "Who created the Word of God and the Spirit?" For if compelled by necessity he will reply "God Himself created (the Word and the Spirit)," then do you again say, "Therefore before God created the Spirit and the Word, He had neither Spirit nor Word."⁶⁴ When he

hears this, he will flee from you since he has no answer.

(L) But if indeed *you* are asked by a Saracen "Are the words⁶⁵ of God created or uncreated?" for the Saracens set these problems before us, desiring to show more forcibly that the Word of God is created, which He is not; and if you say, "Created," he will say to you, "Behold, the Word of God is created." If however you say, "Uncreated," straight-way he will reply to you; "Behold, all the words⁶⁶ of God are created, but they are not gods. And behold you acknowledge that Christ, since He is Word⁶⁷ of God, is not God;" wherefore say, neither created nor uncreated. But thus reply to him: "I acknowledge only one Word⁶⁸ of God Who is uncreated. But I do not call all scripture λόγιοι, that is 'words' of God; but ρήματα, that is 'formal words'⁶⁹ of God." And the Saracen (will say), "How then does David say, 'The words⁷⁰ of the Lord, pure words?'" Say to him, "Because he spoke figuratively⁷¹ and not literally,⁷² that is not with the normal and established significance of the words." And the Saracen will say: "What is figurative interpretation and what is literal interpretation?"⁷³ Reply: "Literalness refers to the established and fixed meaning of a thing. Figurative interpretation, however, involves a secondary⁷⁴ meaning." And the Saracen (will say), "Does this link the prophet with his own characteristic mode of speaking?" Say to him, "It was the custom of the prophets to speak figuratively, such as this, 'The sea saw and fled.'⁷⁵ Behold, the sea has no eyes, nor is it a living thing. And again in the same way the prophet addresses it as if it were alive, 'What is it to you, O sea, that you have fled?' and so forth. And again (here is) an illustration of our position. For God said to Cain, 'Cursed art thou from the earth which hath opened its mouth to receive the blood of thy brother from thy hand.'⁷⁶ See, there he has said 'mouth' figuratively. And, 'My sword shall devour flesh.'⁷⁷ For a sword cuts, it does not swallow down." And thus ρήματα, that is, formal words, that which is able to be spoken and (formally) expressed, he has called λόγιοι, that is concepts,⁷⁸ that is a meaning conceived inwardly in the mind or formed by thought;⁷⁹ but, as has been said, (the formal words or terms are) ρήματα.⁸⁰

(M) If the Saracen should say to you, "How did God come down into the womb of a woman?"⁸¹ speak thus to him; "Let us use your Scripture and my Scripture. Your Scripture says that God first cleansed his Mary above all flesh of woman, and the Spirit and the Word of God descended upon her.⁸² And my Gospel says, 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you.'⁸³ See, there is one voice and one mind in each saying. But perceive this, however, that according to our interpretation⁸⁴ the Scriptures speak of the descent and ascent figuratively, not literally. For He (God) is spoken of as descending and ascending literally [κυριολογικῆ]⁸⁵ according to the philosophers. However, God Who holds all things is (Himself) held by nothing. For a certain one of the prophets has said: 'Who measured the sea with his hand and the heaven with (the) span (of his palm) and the earth by a handful?'⁸⁶ And well (it is said). For all the seas are but cradled⁸⁷ in the hand of God; and His palm (measures) all the heaven; and all the earth (is but) a handful. How therefore can it be that He Who holds all things in His own hand descends and ascends?"⁸⁸

(N) And if you should be asked by a Saracen, "If God was Christ, how did He eat and drink and sleep, and (how) was He crucified, and (how) did He die and such things?"⁸⁹ Say to him, "Because the eternal Word of God created all things, even as my Scripture and yours testify, He created from the body of the holy virgin a man, complete and living and intelligent; that one ate, drank and slept; (He was) indeed the Word, that is the Word of God; but the Word of God did not eat, drink or sleep; nor was He crucified, nor did He die; but the flesh which He assumed from the holy virgin, that (flesh) was crucified. For you know that Christ was two-fold [in nature], but one in person.⁹⁰ For it is not said, 'The Word of God is eternal and after the assumption of the flesh is *anypostaticum*,'⁹¹ that is, He is not (divinely personal nor of divine) nature.⁹² For a fourth person is not placed alongside the Trinity after the inexpressible union with the flesh."

(O) And if the Saracen should ask you, "He Whom you call God, did He die?" do you reply: "He did not die;" relying confidently on the

proof of Scripture. For Scripture speaks concerning this. For natural death came against the memory of men, mastering it, that is, subduing all things even as in us. But the first man, in the state of perfection, slept,⁹³ and was deprived of a rib.

(P) And the Saracen (says): "Behold, I am wounded in some part of my flesh, and the pierced flesh forms a wound and in the wound a worm is made: who therefore formed it?" Say to him, as we have said before, that after the first week of the creation of the world, we do not find anything whatsoever, either a man forming (anything), or (anything)⁹⁴ that has been formed; but by command of God which He commanded in the first week, He finished (all) that which is made. However, after the transgression the earth was condemned to bring forth thorns and thistles. As our body also was condemned at that time even until this day it produces lice and worms."

(Q) Saracen⁹⁵: What do you say is the cause of good and of evil?⁹⁶

Christian: Of all the good [we say the cause] is God, but (God) is not the cause of evil.

(R) S: And what do you say is the cause of evil?

C: This is from our own rashness and from the cunning of the devil.

(S) S: How is this so?⁹⁷

C: Because of free will.

(T) S: What then? Have you free will, and are you able to do whatever you wish?

C: I have been formed by God with free will.⁹⁸

(U) S: [Why so?]

C: (That) when I do good, I fear not the law, but rather I am rewarded and granted mercy by God. In like manner also, the devil⁹⁹ and he sinned and God thrust him forth from his estate. But perhaps you will reply to us, [saying thus,] what sort of things are good and bad?

(V) S: Behold the sun and the moon and the stars are good; make (good and evil) one from these.¹⁰⁰

C: [Not for the sake of (attaining) this conclusion] do I speak to you;¹⁰¹ because (on my own responsibility) as a man¹⁰² I do good and evil; good (for example) in praising God,¹⁰³ in prayer, in deeds of mercy and in such things; and evil, in fornication and theft. But if you say that good and evil are a consequence of [the commandment] of God, then according to you God will be found unrighteous which He is not. For since, as you say, God commands the fornicator to commit fornication and the thief to steal and the murderer to kill, they are worthy of honor; for they have done the will of God. And your lawgivers also will be found false; for they command that the fornicator and thief be beaten and the murderer be put to death, though (according to your point of view) they did the will of God.

(W) S: Who forms the unborn child in the womb of the mother?¹⁰⁴ (This he asks) desiring to show that God is the cause of evil.¹⁰⁵ Behold, God is (made) a partner with the fornicator and adulterer.

C: We in no wise find the Scripture saying that after the first week [of world creation] God formed or created anything. [And if you are doubtful about this, point out anything whatsoever which has been fashioned or created by God after the first week (of creation); but it is not possible to do this.]¹⁰⁶ For all the visible creation¹⁰⁷ was made in the first week. For God made man in the first week and commanded him to beget and to be begotten, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." And because man had life within himself, having seed with life within itself, he made seed to develop in his own life. So that man begat [man] even as the divine Scripture says: "Adam begat Seth, and Seth begat Enos, and Enos begat Cainan, and Cainan begat

Malaleel,"¹⁰⁸ and so forth. And it does not say, "God fashioned Seth, or Enos, or any other." [And from that time until now we know that men have been begotten and have begotten; and so by the favor of God the world has continued since from the beginning,¹⁰⁹ all grass produces and is produced: for God said;] "Let the earth bring forth herbs of grass;"¹¹⁰ and by command of God [each tree brought forth; and so likewise both herb and plant had from itself seed and power (of life); and (the) seed of every plant and herb, having life within itself,] falling on the earth [of itself] or sown by another, again brought forth; not fashioned¹¹¹ by anyone, but responding to the commandment¹¹² of God. And behold I, as indeed I said at the start, since I am of free will, whether I sow, whether¹¹³ unto my own wife or unto one belonging to another, I use¹¹⁴ my own free will, and she brings forth and it comes to pass in response to the first command of God; not that even now God fashions each day and (creatively) works; since in the first week God made the heaven and the earth and all the world in six days, and on the seventh day ceased from all His (creative) works which He had begun to do; even as my Scripture bears testimony.¹¹⁵

(X) S: How then does God say to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and from the womb I sanctified thee?"¹¹⁶ [Thus certainly¹¹⁷ God formed him in the womb.]

C: Adam, having in his own loins life and the power of generating seed, begat Seth, even as I said; and Seth, Enos and each man, holding in his loins his son, (begat him); and the son (in turn) begat until the present. But in respect to the (statement), "From the womb I sanctified thee," [have in mind her¹¹⁸ who truly begat children of God according to the testimony of the holy Gospel.]

(Y) S: Do you say those who do the will of God are good or evil?

[C: Do you wish to say that Christ suffered against His will? And if I say to you (that those who do the will of God are) good, you will say to me, "Come then, accept indeed the Jews as those who did the will of your God."¹¹⁹

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(Z) S: Indeed I was intending to say this to you.

C: What] do you say is the will of God? I say it is forbearance and longsuffering.... When God said, "Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit fornication, thou shalt not kill," did He will that we should steal or commit fornication or kill?

(AA) S: No; for if He (so) willed, [He did not say this.

C: Glory to God that you have confessed.] For see, you have agreed with me in this and that God does not will that we should steal or commit fornication or murder. And if now, rising up, I steal or commit fornication or kill, what do you say in regard to it? (Does the situation reveal) God's will or forbearance and longsuffering?

(AB) S: Which according to you is greater, the one who sanctifies or the one who is sanctified?¹¹⁹

C: When you come with your slave to the bath, when you are bathed and cleansed by him, who do you say is greater?¹²⁰ That pitiable slave, bought with silver, or yourself who have been cleansed by him [being also thus his master?]

(AC) From the controversies with the Saracens of one¹²¹ (Theodore, surnamed Abucari, bishop of Cari) using¹²² the language of John of Damascus.

(AD) Saracen: Tell me, O Bishop; was not the world full of idols before Moses proclaimed Judaism?

Theodore: Certainly.

(AE) S: When Moses was teaching men to practice Judaism, which part of the world seems to you to have shown piety; the part which received Judaism or the part which continued to worship idols, unper-

suaded by Moses?

T: The part which received (Judaism).

(AF) S: Then, when years after, Christ came proclaiming Christianity, which part seems to you to have shown piety, the part which received Christianity, or the part which continued unchanged in Judaism?

T: The part which received Christianity.

(AG) S: Then, when years after, Muhammad came proclaiming the Magarismos,¹²³ which part seems to you to have shown piety, the one which accepted the Magarismos or the part which continued in Christianity, unpersuaded by Muhammad?

T: The part which continued in Christianity.

(AH) S: The last conclusion you have not set forth in conformity with the preceding.¹²⁴

T: Is it necessary for me to draw a conclusion from false premises? For Moses and Christ did not become worthy to be received (simply) because they were preaching and teaching, as you have assumed, so that Muhammad also should be believed because of his preaching and teaching; but consider the record concerning each which is trustworthy. [Here follows an account of the miracles of Mose's staff and the hand in his bosom (Ex. 4:1-8).] And God said to him, "If they will not believe the first sign, nor the second, make the water blood." And so after Moses had been sent, he did (thus); and his words were confirmed by his works. Is this so or not?

(AI) S: Entirely so.

T: Christ came confirming in Himself his mission from God; (for) testimony was borne (to Him) not only by the prophecy of Moses; but He establishes Himself by signs, wonders and mighty works after that prophecy.¹²⁵

(AJ) S: By what things?

T: By birth without the aid of seed any by a mother unjoined to a man and by a birth from a virgin; by the change of water into wine; then after this, not obscure but very well known (are) the giving of sight to the blind, the cleansing of the lepers, the strengthening¹²⁶ of the palsied, the healing of various diseases, the manifestation of His deity upon the mountain, the driving out of demons, the satisfaction of many thousands from a few loaves and fish, the raising of the dead as from sleep and finally¹²⁷ the regeneration of sinful human nature.¹²⁸ What do you say to these things, O Saracen? Did Christ establish Himself by demonstrations less than the signs of Moses?

(AK) S: In no wise.

T: This one, who was foretold by Moses, who by so many and such signs has demonstrated that He came from God, declared to His disciples, saying, "The law and the prophets (were) until John the Baptist. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."¹²⁹ Where then is your Prophet? That is not obscure.

Notes:

- [1] Lit. - "people-deceiving."
- [2] σκεία taken as σκία. Figuratively, spiritual darkness or error. Cp. Mt. 4:16; Lk. 1:79; Jn. 1:5 and 8:12, I Jn. 1:5 and 2:8-11. The Latin text here uses "*superstitio*."
- [3] Transliterated to English - Sara(k)cenous.
- [4] Transliterated to English - Sara(k)cenen.
- [5] Lit.- "morning-bearing."
- [6] Arabic *akhbar* means "greater."
- [7] Lit. - "put himself into the hands of." Thus, thrust himself upon. Perhaps, "foisted himself upon."
- [8] Lit. - "a writing," and so regularly.
- [9] Lit. - "in the book with him."
- [10] Or - "but indeed a created servant."
- [11] Leo, parag. AH - ed.
- [12] Lit. - (they crucified) his shadow, form, outward appearance. Gr. σκίαν.
- [13] Leo, parag. AM - ed.
- [14] Lit. - "men, the transgressors."

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[15] Lit. - word.

[16] The Greek verb (φυσάττομαι) is properly used of spirited horses; to neigh or snort.

[17] Leo, parag. G and AH - ed.

[18] Lit. - "would be judge of."

[19] Lit. - "When we say - they reply."

[20] Lit. - "at such a time."

[21] *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Salat, ch. 162, hadith 790, Vol. 1, p. 220 - ed.

[22] The proverb is wanting in all the authorities for the text. - Savas shows Lequien as suggesting Plato's: "You are spinning me in dreams." Cf. Savas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, p. 135, note - ed.

[23] That which is enclosed in brackets is lacking in 2 Reg. and in older translations.

[24] Lit. - "again we ask ... they keep silent."

[25] Qur'an 2:282; Leo, parags. G and AH - ed.

[26] "A name given to the Christians by the Muhammadans, because the former believe that God has a compeer." See Sophocles' *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*.

[27] Lit. - "allegorized."

[28] Qur'an 2:56; 5:16, 45; etc. Leo, parags. H, J and K - ed.

[29] ἄλογος-ἄπνοος - without word and breath (i.e., life or spirit).

The writer has just used above λόγος and πνεῦμα. The initial α has a negative force.

[30] Lit. - "some of the insensible (or senseless) things."

[31] Lit. - "so that."

[32] Lit. - "worship."

[33] probably for the Ka'ba.

[34] al-Kindi, parag. DI - ed.

[35] The Muslim accusation of the veneration of the cross was often countered by the Christian accusation of the veneration of the Ka'ba: Leo, parag. AX, Religious Dialogue, parag. AU - ed.

[36] This accusation does not seem to have any merit in any of the major Islamic sources. The Qur'an describes Abraham's relation to the Ka'ba differently - cf. 2:121 - ed.

[37] That is, with growing, living wood i.e., trees; in contrast to the following word that refers to cut wood, split pieces of wood.

[38] That is, around the Ka'ba.

[39] The Greek is simply, "travel through." Perhaps the meaning is, "travel through so far," i.e., from Palestine to Arabia.

[40] Hagar.

[41] The Greek could mean "through whom" i.e., Christ. But the Latin text reads "*crucem - per quam.*"

[42] Religious Dialogue, parag. AT - ed.

[43] Lit. - scripture.

[44] I.e., the mere desire to take another is sufficient cause.

[45] Zayd. - Zayd was Muhammad's adopted son (Qur'an 33:37) - ed.

[46] Leo, parag. AX - ed.

[47] I.e., completely.

[48] Qur'an 33:37 (rough paraphrase) - ed.

[49] Leo, parag. AY - ed.

[50] I.e., the Qur'an.

[51] Qur'an 2:223 (rough paraphrase), Leo, parag. AX - ed.

[52] Lit. - "scripture."

[53] Qualifying modifiers indicate the feminine gender for "camel" throughout the passage, i.e., "she-camel." - There is no sura known by this title. - ed.

[54] Lit. - "whom."

[55] ὁ βιβλάσας - see Liddell and Scott *Lexicon*, unabridged, 8th ed.

[56] Qur'an 47:16; Leo, parag. BD - ed.

[57] John of Damascus misses an obvious contradiction here; he knew that Muhammad had forbidden the drinking of wine for Muslims (parag. J; Qur'an 2:216) and yet that wine would be drunk in Paradise (parag. H; Qur'an 47:16) - ed.

[58] It is extremely hard to believe that John of Damascus could have

said this to any Muslim and have survived the consequences. Peter the bishop of Maiuma was put to death for naming Muhammad a "false prophet" and "forerunner of the Antichrist" in 743 A.D. (Savas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, pp. 54, 68-9 quoting Theophanes) - ed.

[59] Leo, parag. AQ; Jahiz, parag. T - ed.

[60] See note 57 above - ed.

[61] The translator desires to acknowledge the helpful suggestions of Professor W. P. Armstrong.

[62] The Greek text for the opening part is fragmentary. This section is thus translated from the Latin text.

[63] Latin - *Verbum*; Greek - λόγος.

[64] The Greek πνεῦμα and λόγος have also the force of "life" and "reason." Thus, God originally would have been inanimate and unreasoning, - blind force.

[65] Latin - *verba*; Greek - λόγια, "sayings."

[66] Latin - *eloquia*; Greek - λόγια.

[67] Latin - *Verbum*. Note change in term from 66.

[68] Latin - *Verbum*; Greek - λόγος.

[69] The Greek λόγος does not represent a formal word or term alone, which is ρῆμα; but refers to the mental concept or idea which, expressed or unexpressed, is a λόγος.

[70] Latin - *eloquia*; but the parallel Greek term is λόγια. That is, David would seem to contradict the statement just made by the Christian.

[71] Latin - *tropologicæ*, a transliteration of the Greek term.

[72] And so also, Latin - *cyriologicæ*.

[73] The Latin is, "*Quid est tropologia et cyriologia?*"

[74] Latin - *infirma*.

[75] Psalm 114:3 - ed.

[76] Genesis 4:11 - ed.

[77] Deut. 32:42 - ed.

[78] Latin - *verba*; but here used with *λόγια* in reference to the inner meaning behind the expressed word. The formal term (*ῥῆμα*) must be distinguished from the spiritual reality which, in figurative use, it may represent. The formal words of Scripture (*ῥήματα*) are created; but the spiritual reality of Christ, figuratively called "the Word" (*λόγος*) may be uncreated.

[79] Latin - *ratione*.

[80] The Muslim's question as to whether the words of God are created or not points to the influence of the Mu'tazilites (Editor's Preface to Jahiz, note 3) - ed.

[81] Gaudeul, "Leo and 'Umar," *Islamochristiana*, p. 144, BNM 4944, parag. 47; Leo, parag. AT - ed.

[82] Qur'an 3:37, 40; 66:12 - ed.

[83] Luke 1:35 - ed.

[84] Latin - *propriatatem*, "proper signification."

[85] The Latin would be *cyriologice*.

[86] Isaiah 40:12 - ed.

[87] Latin - *simplex comprehensio manus Dei*.

[88] An allusion to Deut. 30:12,13 (Septuagint); Prov. 30:4; Rom. 10:6, 7 - ed.

[89] Cf. Qur'an 5:79 - ed.

[90] Latin - *hypostasis*, the word used of the Persons of the Trinity.

[91] Impersonal, transliterated from the Greek *ἀνυποστατικόν*; not hypostatical or personal in reference to the hypostases or Persons of the Trinity.

[92] This is what is *not* said. The meaning seems to be that the incarnation did not destroy the divine person or nature of the second Person of the Trinity. Or, the force may be that Christ was a true Being, i.e., Christ had a true Person and true natures (human and divine as stated in the preceding sentence); but this does not mean the Person of Christ's Being is distinct from the second Person of the Trinity. See the next sentence.

[93] I.e., did not die, as perfect man?

[94] Or, a man that has been formed.

[95] From this point the translation is based on the Greek text.

[96] Cf. Qur'an 14:4; etc.

[97] Lit. - because of what?

[98] Man has free will that he may be rewarded for the good and punished for the evil which he does. Cf. the fuller Latin text.

[99] The Latin text supplies: "deceived the first man through free will, and he sinned." The Greek text is broken and the Latin would indicate that "the one thrust forth" is man.

[100] Lit. - "make one from these." That is, make good and evil alike arise from the nature of creation. Or perhaps the meaning is, in the realm of nature all is good; there is no evil in nature and apparent evil there is good.

[101] Or, if we follow the second interpretation in the above footnote, the meaning might be, "not for the sake of discussing whether evil is inherent in nature (sun, moon and stars) do I talk to you." The Christian wishes to discuss evil in the realm of man and personality.

[102] I.e., as one created with the capacity and responsibility of moral choice and action.

[103] Lit. - "in respect to" or "by" praise of God.

[104] The Greek forms are plural.

[105] The Greek text is broken. The Latin supplies: "For if you reply saying, 'God forms the unborn child in the womb of the mother,' the Saracen will say to you."

[106] Lit. - this is not possible to be pointed out.

[107] Lit. - visible created things.

[108] Gen. 5:3-12 (condensed) - ed.

[109] Lit. - from then.

[110] Gen. 1:11 - ed.

[111] I.e., created.

[112] I.e., the original commandment of God.

[113] Lit. - even if.

[114] Lit. - using my own free will, she brings forth.

[115] Gen. 2:2 (Septuagint) - ed.

[116] Jer. 1:5 (Septuagint) - ed.

[117] Greek, *πᾶντως*, "wholly."

[118] Could this be a reference to the Church? The Christian refers the prophecy of Jeremiah to spiritual birth, not to physical.

[119] The Latin supplies: C.- I know what you wish to say. S.- If then you know, answer me. C.- If I shall say to you, "the one who sanctifies," you will say to me, "Come then, worship John the Baptist, who baptized and sanctified your Christ." S.- Thus I was intending to say to you - cf. Religious Dialogue, parag. T - ed.

[120] Lit. - whom do you have to say is greater.

[121] Lit. - of him.

[122] Lit. - through the voice of.

[123] See Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of Roman and Byzantine Periods*. The Greek *μαγαρισμός* (pollution, defilement) by a bitter linguistic trick is used in travesty by John of Damascus for Muhammadanism. Drop the first letter and we have *ἀγαρισμός* (same as *ἀγαρισία*), Greek for Muhammadanism, - derived from Ἄγαρ, Hagar. So John in his book *On Heresies* (Migne text, col. 764) refers to Muhammadans as

Hagarenes. The Latin text here has "Magarismum Eslamismumve."

[124] This is a good example of how the Islamic doctrine of progressive revelation was and still is being applied in dialogues with Christians - ed.

[125] See Appendix A - ed.

[126] σφίξις taken as σφίγξις (from σφίγγω), a binding tight. Thus the strengthening or tightening of relaxed muscles in palsy or paralysis to normal conditions of control.

[127] Lit. - in general, on the whole.

[128] Lit. - of the nature of sins.

[129] Luke 16:16, paraphrase - ed.