

‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s Arabic Apologetics



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‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s Arabic Apologetics

The Book of the Proof concerning the Course of the Divine Economy
and
The Book of Questions and Answers

Translated by
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GORGAS
PRESS
2022

Gorgias Press LLC, 954 River Road, Piscataway, NJ, 08854, USA

www.gorgiaspress.com

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2022



ISBN 978-1-4632-4458-3

ISSN 1539-1507

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication
Data**

A Cataloging-in-Publication Record is available
from the Library of Congress.

Printed in the United States of America

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My grateful thanks to:

David Thomas who introduced me to ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, facilitated the publication of my Mingana Symposium papers on ‘Ammār, and invited me to contribute the article on ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī for *Christian-Muslim relations. A bibliographical history, vol 1 (600–900)*.

Sidney Griffith for encouraging me to translate ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s writing.

Carol Rowe for her collaboration with me in the translation of sections one to four of ‘Ammār’s Book of the Proof.

Wageeh Mikhail for his invitation to me to comment on his translation of ‘Ammār’s Book of the Proof.

Ayman Ibrahim for commenting on section one of my translation of ‘Ammār’s Book of Questions and Answers.

David Singh for publishing several journal articles and book chapters of mine concerning Christian theologians in dialogue with Muslims in the early Islamic period.

INTRODUCTION TO ‘AMMĀR AL-BAṢRĪ’S APOLOGETIC WRITING

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

‘Ammār al-Baṣrī was an East Syrian diophysite (Nestorian) theologian active in the first half of the ninth century, whose birth and death dates are unknown. He wrote two apologetic works to defend Christian beliefs in the face of Muslim criticisms, “The Book of Questions and Answers”,¹ and “The Book of the Proof concerning the Course of the Divine Economy”.² Since Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d.c. 840) wrote a “Refutation of ‘Ammār the Christian in his reply to the Christians”, according to the *Fihrist* of ibn al-Nadīm (d.c. 995),³ it is probable, as Sidney Griffith ar-

¹ ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, ‘The Book of Questions and Answers’ (*Kitāb al-masā’il w-al-ajwiba*), in M. Hayek, (ed.) *‘Ammār al-Baṣrī: Apologie et Controverses*, (Beyrouth: Dar al-Mashreq, 1977), 93–265.

² ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, ‘The Book of the Proof concerning the Course of the Divine Economy’ (*Kitāb al-Burhān*), in M. Hayek, *‘Ammār al-Baṣrī: Apologie et Controverses*, (Beyrouth: Dar al-Mashreq, 1977), 19–90. See W.Y.F. Mikhail, ‘‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s Kitāb al-Burhān: A Topical and Theological Analysis of Arabic Christian theology in the Ninth Century’, (PhD, University of Birmingham, 2013). He has produced an English translation of the Book of the Proof in an appendix to the thesis.

³ See B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm, a Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture, vol. 1*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 388.

gues, that ‘Ammār was attempting to answer this leading Mu‘tazilī thinker.⁴ The Book of the Proof concerning the course of the Divine Economy may be the later of the two treatises, according to Michel Hayek, because it contains a reference to the Caliph al-Mu‘taṣim (r. 833–842), who attacked Amorium in 838 just before the death of Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf.⁵ ‘Ammār dedicated The Book of Questions and Answers to the Commander of the believers, a title given to Caliphs of the Islamic empire. Michel Hayek has suggested that the Caliph was al-Ma‘mūn (r. 813–833), since he was in the habit of hosting conferences on religious matters including Muslim, Jewish and Christian scholars.⁶ “The Refutation of the Trinity” by Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq (d. 860) says that, “One Trinitarian theologian has presented arguments in support of the essence and the hypostases, that the one he worships lives eternally by “life” and speaks eternally by “speech”, and that life and speech are two properties which confer perfection on His essence”.⁷ This choice of life and speech as the essential properties of God reflects ‘Ammār al-Başrī’s way of writing about the Trinity, and it seems likely that he is the un-

⁴ See S.H. Griffith, ‘The Concept of Al-Uqnūm in ‘Ammār al-Başrī’s Apology for the Doctrine of the Trinity’, in, S.K. Samir (ed.) *Actes du Premier Congrès International d’Études Arabes Chrétiennes*, (Rome: PISIO, 1982), 169–90, pp. 180–181; and S.H. Griffith, ‘Ammār al-Başrī’s Kitāb al-Burhān: Christian Kalām in the First Abbasid Century’, *Le Museon* 96 (1983) 145–181, pp. 169–172. See also D. Thomas ‘Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf’, in, D. Thomas and B. Roggema (eds) *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History 1*, (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 544–549.

⁵ ‘The Book of the Proof’, p. 38. M. Hayek argues for this identification in his introduction on pages 19–20.

⁶ See M. Hayek, ‘Ammār al-Başrī. La Première Somme de théologie chrétienne en langue arabe, ou deux apologies du christianisme’, *Islam-ochristiana* 2, (1976), 69–133, p. 73.

⁷ Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq, ‘Refutation of the Trinity: The First Part of the Refutation of the Three Christian sects’, (ed.) and (trans.) D. Thomas, in *Anti-Christian polemic in early Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 66–181, pp 131–132.

named *mutakallim* here. While *The Book of Questions and Answers* may be attempting to answer the kind of questions raised by Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf in his lost refutation of ʿAmmār,⁸ *The Book of the Proof* appears more in the form of advice for Christians in dealing with Muslim concerns about the beliefs and practices of Christians.

THE EARLY NINTH CENTURY CONTEXT FOR ʿAMMĀR AL-BAṢRĪ'S WRITING

After the Arab army conquered the lands to the east of the Euphrates River the reaction of the Christian population can be seen in the writing of the Patriarch of the East Syrian church at the time of the conquest. While Zoroastrianism was the official religion of the Sassanians who ruled the region, the largest Christian community was the East Syrian church that had spread across the whole area after the exile of Nestorius in the fifth century to this land beyond the Roman Empire. Some Syriac speaking Christians had embraced the teaching of Jacob Baradaeus in the sixth century. He had gathered those who believed that Christ had one divine nature in a human body into the West Syrian church to rival the already established Nestorian church that held that Christ had two natures, divine and human. So, when the Muslim governor of the area related to Christians, he dealt primarily with the majority group, the East Syrians.

It appears from a letter written by Ishoʿyahb III of Adiabene, Patriarch of the East Syrian church from 649–59, who witnessed the conquest of the Arabs in 637, that the New Mus-

⁸ Sara Husseini notes that similar questions were raised by other Muʿtazili intellectuals who were active in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. She argues that since there is no reference to the name of his addressee it is possible that ʿAmmār is responding to Muʿtazili thought as he experienced it in Basra rather than to one particular scholar. See S.L. Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God: Three Christian Scholars and Their Engagement with Islamic Thought (9th Century C.E.)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 110.

lim rule was not immediately hostile to the life of the church. In his letter to another East Syrian leader, called Simeon, he accepts that God allowed the Arabs to govern them. However, he expresses surprise that the Arabs had taken a very positive view of the church, when he says, “not only do they not oppose Christianity, but they praise our faith, honour the priests and saints of our Lord, and give aid to the churches and monasteries”.⁹ This is in marked contrast to the testimony of Christians in Palestine and Egypt who mentioned the suppression of aspects of church life immediately after the Arab conquest.¹⁰ The notion that God willed the success of the Muslim invaders is shared by the unnamed East Syrian author of “The Chronicle of Khuzistan” written after 652.¹¹ Robert Hoyland argues that this somewhat positive assessment of the Arabs by East Syrian Christians can be ascribed to Isho‘yahb’s good relationships with the Muslim governor. There was also the reality that Christians “had no lost or diminished sovereignty to lament”, so they sought “freedom to pursue their worship unmolested in return for political loyalty and payment of taxes.”¹² The fact that East Syrian Christians had been accustomed to difficult circumstances under the Sassanians as a minority meant that it was easier for them to be positive about their new overlords in comparison with Christians in other parts of the Middle East who had been accustomed to being the majority and who had lost the authority to decide how to live their lives.

⁹ See R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it: a survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam*, (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), p. 181.

¹⁰ See I.M. Beaumont, ‘Early Christian attitudes towards Islam’, in *Routledge Handbook on Christian-Muslim Relations*, (ed.) D. Thomas, (Routledge: London and New York, 2018), 107–114, p. 107–109.

¹¹ See H.G.B. Teule, ‘The chronicle of Khuzistan’, in *Christian-Muslim relations. A bibliographical history, volume 1 (600–900)*, (eds) D. Thomas and B. Roggema, (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp 131–2.

¹² Hoyland, p. 25.

By the end of the seventh century, East Syrians were turning to apocalyptic styles of writing to interpret their life under Muslim rule. “The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius” was written in Syriac in 691–2. There is a description of seven millennial periods based on the book of Daniel. Muslims, called “the sons of Ishmael”, rule in the fifth millennium but will be superseded by the Greeks in the sixth millennium who will establish a Christian kingdom. Yet many Christians will forsake the church to become Muslims under Muslim rule, fulfilling the prediction of Jesus in his parable about the separation of the sheep from the goats.¹³ This latter point reflects the reality of the late seventh century experience of the East Syrian church that significant numbers of their community had transferred their religious allegiance to Islam. This flow of Christians to the Islamic fold was understood by another East Syrian writer as the judgment of God on Christians for their lack of devotion to Him. The monk, John of Penek, wrote “The Book of main points” between 686 and 693 in which he declared that God had sent the Muslims to punish Christians for their unwillingness to turn from their sins.¹⁴

When Arabic became the language of administration in the early eighth century, it was clear to Christians that they had to accommodate Muslim rule as a fixed reality. This prompted two approaches to Islam by East Syrian writers. Firstly, some turned to a polemical critique of beliefs and practices of Muslims, while others used Muslim beliefs and practices as an apologetic for Christianity. An example of the latter comes in “The Disputation between a monk of Bēt Hālē and an Arab notable”, written in Syriac by an East Syrian Christian who places the dialogue in the 720’s when Maslama was governor of Iraq. The author be-

¹³ See L. Greisiger, ‘The apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (Syriac)’, in *Christian-Muslim relations. A bibliographical history, volume 1 (600–900)*, (eds) D. Thomas and B. Roggema, 163–71, pp. 164–167.

¹⁴ See L. Greisiger, ‘John bar Penkāyē. The book of main points’, in *CMR 1*, pp. 176–81.

believes that the Qur’anic understanding that Christ is “the Word of God and his Spirit” shows that Muhammad knew Luke 1:35, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most-High.”¹⁵ This dialogue between the Muslim and the monk portrays Muhammad in a positive light.

Arab: Tell me the truth, how is Muhammad our prophet considered in your eyes?

Monk: As a wise and God-fearing man who freed you from idolatry and brought you to know the one true God.

Arab: Why, if he was wise, did he not teach us from the beginning about the mystery of the Trinity as you profess?

Monk: You know, of course, that a child, when it is born, because it does not possess the full faculties for receiving solid food, is nourished with milk for two years, and then they feed it with meat. Thus also Muhammad, because he saw your simpleness and the deficiency of your understanding, he first taught you of the one true God ... for you were children in terms of your understanding.¹⁶

Muhammad is said by the monk to be a man who believed in the one true God after receiving Christian teaching. However, he decided not to teach the truth of the Triune nature of the one God because the Arabs were too childlike to understand such advanced teaching.

This apologetic use of Islam to back up Christianity is also seen in the attitude of the East Syrian Patriarch, Timothy I (d. 823), when he was invited to answer questions posed by the Muslim Caliph, al-Mahdī, in 780 in Baghdad. One of the questions concerned the denial of the Christian belief in the crucifixion in the Qur’an. The Caliph quoted Q4:157, “They did not crucify him” and sought Timothy’s response. Timothy did not

¹⁵ B. Roggema, ‘Disputation between a monk of Bēt Hālē and an Arab notable’, in *CMR 1*, 268–273, p. 270

¹⁶ See Hoyland, p. 538.

comment on the quoted text but instead quoted Q19:33, where the infant Jesus says, “Peace be on me, the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I am raised alive”, and said that this must mean that Jesus died and was brought to life. Al-Mahdī did not accept the chronological reading of the text, and explained that Jesus is not dead but will die in the future. The Caliph demonstrates that Muslim exegesis of this text had determined that Jesus did not die at the end of his life, but was taken alive to heaven from whence he would return to earth and then subsequently die. Timothy reacted by arguing that there could be no ascension to heaven without Jesus going through the process of dying. “If Jesus is not dead he would not have ascended to heaven. But it is affirmed by you that the ascension of Jesus to heaven and his resurrection took place a long time ago, as your book testifies”.¹⁷ Timothy did not argue against the truthfulness of the apparent rejection of the crucifixion of Jesus in the Qur’an, but leaned on the interpretation of another Qur’anic text to question the standard Muslim view of the end of Jesus’ life represented by al-Mahdī.

The more polemical approach to Islam can be seen in the early ninth century “Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā” which exists in both West and East Syrian writings. The story goes that a Syrian monk called Sergius Baḥīrā met a youthful Muhammad in Arabia and had a vision of him becoming the future leader of the Arabs. So, Sergius Baḥīrā taught Muhammad about God in a way that fitted his undeveloped culture, and, for example, passed on to him the idea of physical pleasures in the afterlife because he imagined they would be more acceptable to Arabs than the more spiritual experience of the afterlife believed by Christians. Nevertheless, he did manage to pass on the essence of the Trinity in the Qur’anic recognition in Q4:171 that Christ is a “Word of God and a Spirit from Him”. But the full Christian

¹⁷ ‘Dialogue between the Caliph al-Mahdi and the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I’, in H. Putnam, *L’Église et L’Islam sous Timothée I (780–823)*, (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1975), appendix, p. 45.

teaching was toned down after the death of Sergius Baḥīrā, under the influence of a Jew named Kaʿb al-Aḥbār on Muhammad.¹⁸ It is said in “The Affair of the Qur’an” found as an appendix to an East Syrian version of the “Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā” that the Qur’an was first written by the Syrian monk Baḥīrā, but that a Jew named Kaʿb al-Aḥbār added the laws about the lex talionis and divorce. The governor of Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf, found that the text of the Qur’an was corrupt and ordered that all copies be destroyed. He then consulted Christian leaders who explained the Bible to him and he incorporated some of this into the final version which he named “the Qur’an”. This latter point shows Christian knowledge of the Islamic tradition that al-Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf divided the Qur’an into sections and chapters.¹⁹

The variety of Christian approaches to Islam within the East Syrian community is found among Christian communities which had to cope with rule by Muslims. The Coptic church in Egypt, the Chalcedonian Melkite churches in Palestine and Syria, and the West Syrian Jacobite church in Syria produced writers who show the same range from polemics to apologetics. By the ninth century, writing was being produced in the language of the Muslim rulers who had insisted on Arabic being the language of government and administration. The advent of the House of Wisdom in Baghdad as a center for reception of Greek learning meant that Christians who were involved in the translation of Greek thought into Arabic were able to engage with intellectual Muslims through the medium of Arabic. Three Christian writers in particular were active in debate with Muslims in Arabic, Abū Qurra (d.c. 830) from the Chalcedonian Melkite church in Harran, Syria,²⁰ Abū Rāʾiṭa (d.c. 830), from the West Syrian Jacobite

¹⁸ B. Roggema, ‘The legend of Sergius Baḥīrā’, in *CMR I*, pp. 600–3.

¹⁹ B. Roggema, ‘The affair of the Qur’ān’, in *CMR I*, pp. 595–6.

²⁰ See J.C. Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abu Qurrah*, (Provo UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), and N.G Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: a study of Theodore Abu Qurrah’s Theology in its Islamic Context*, (Boston and Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

church in Takrit, Iraq,²¹ and ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī from the East Syrian church in Basra, Iraq.

Basra was a centre for Muslim intellectual enquiry during the eighth and ninth centuries. The school of the Muʿtazila was founded by Wāṣil ibn Aʿṭāʾ (d. 748), a pupil of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī in the early eighth century, who followed his teacher in holding that humans had free will to obey the commands of God. Muʿtazili thinkers also believed that a Muslim who sins does not become an unbeliever, and that the unity of God requires that his attributes can have no existence in His essence. This meant that the Qurʾan could not be thought of as the eternal speech of God but must be regarded as the word created by God in time. ʿAmmār was a Basran theologian who evidently contributed to debates with leading Muslim intellectuals in Basra, given that the leader of the school of the Muʿtazila in Basra, Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d.c. 840), wrote a “Refutation of ʿAmmār the Christian in his reply to the Christians”. ʿAmmār’s two works demonstrate a familiarity with Muʿtazili thought that no doubt arose from his personal encounters with members of the school of Basra, especially Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf.²²

ʿAMMĀR’S APOLOGETIC METHOD

ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī shares the apologetic perspective of his own Patriarch Timothy who led the East Syrian church until 823, and Timothy was clearly known to ʿAmmār who was probably only a generation younger than Timothy. Just as Timothy was capable of debating with the Caliph and other Muslim spokespersons, ʿAmmār was known among Basran intellectual circles for his views, given that Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf was the leading scholar in the city. ʿAmmār learned from Timothy how to avoid

²¹ See S.T. Keating, *Defending the ‘People of truth’ in the early Islamic period. The Christian apologies of Abū Rāʾīṭa*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

²² See M. Beaumont, *The Theology of ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī: Commending Christianity within Islamic Culture*, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2021), pp. 1–21, for more background details to ʿAmmār’s writing.

directly criticising the Prophet Muhammad, and how to use the Qur’an to defend Christian faith and practice. ‘Ammār does not engage in the polemical approach of other East Syrian writers who openly allege that the Qur’an was initiated by a Christian monk, or was influenced by Christian leaders who advised its editor. On the contrary, he appears to accept that the Qur’an was the product of the Prophet Muhammad, who brought a series of teachings that sometimes accorded with the Bible and at times diverged from the previous scriptures. The fact that ‘Ammār refers to prophets recognised in the Qur’an as well as in the Bible to argue his case demonstrates that he was attempting to build on the narratives in the Qur’an about these prophets, such as Abraham and Moses. This deference to the Qur’an is seen especially in his including David as a prophet, despite him only being called a king in the Bible. References to David along with Solomon, made by ‘Ammār, show that he is aware of their being mentioned together several times in the Qur’an, and when ‘Ammār relates the story of Samson, he does not name him, most likely because Samson is unknown in the Qur’an.

While ‘Ammār is willing to relate some biblical characters to their Qur’anic identity, he is not willing to do the same for Jesus or the apostles. He does not engage with the stories about Jesus and his disciples in the Qur’an. This is probably because to do so would highlight the utter disparity between the stories of Jesus in the gospels and those in the Qur’an. Following his technique of referring to Qur’anic texts that support Christian teaching, it seems to be true that he finds nothing positive relating to Jesus in the Qur’an on which he could build his portrait based on the gospels. When he does expound the content of Jesus’ teaching in the gospels, ‘Ammār points out the discrepancies between these instructions and the overall teaching found in the Qur’an. In the final analysis, ‘Ammār responds to the Muslim allegation that Christians altered the original teaching of Jesus that actually corresponded to the Qur’anic account by turning the accusation around. It is rather the case that the gospels represent accurately the teaching of Jesus, and implies, as a result, that the Qur’an has a completely different story, without coming out directly with that criticism.

ʿAmmār tends to depend on appealing to human rationality rather than on divine revelation. He continually speaks to rational people to support his arguments. Thus, he appeals to rational people to agree with him that God had a plan to be gracious and generous to human beings from the outset of their being created to the finality of their being granted eternal life after their death which resulted from the disobedience of the first man, Adam. Now this Biblical story is roughly comparable with that in the Qurʾan, except that the latter does not actually include the account from Genesis of death being a punishment for the disobedience of the first human couple. Yet, ʿAmmār appeals to Muslims to view the Biblical account as rational, without identifying the discrepancy between the Biblical and Qurʾanic accounts. So, when ʿAmmār puts forward the argument from the Apostle Paul in Romans 5 that Jesus Christ was the second Adam who perfectly obeyed God in contradistinction to the first Adam who fell into rebellion against God, and that as a result, the obedient death of the second Adam cancelled the death imposed on the first Adam for his disobedience, and that the resurrection of the second Adam gave the certainty of resurrection to the descendants of the first Adam, he depends on the rationality of his Muslim hearer to endorse the Pauline perspective.

This appeal to reason undergirds ʿAmmār's defences of the Trinity and the Incarnation. He concedes that a rational person might regard the Trinity as irrational, given the shared view between Christians and Muslims that there is one creator of the world. The Muslim unitarian position could easily be felt to be more logical than the Christian Trinitarian view. His technique is to defend the Trinity from the accusation of irrationality which was a constant feature of interactions with Muslims who had been instructed in the Qurʾan not to speak of three when speaking of God, for God is one and has no associates. Muslims claimed the high ground on rationality in any debate with Christians about God. ʿAmmār appeals to the attributes of speech and life in God to argue for the truth of the triune nature of God. He distinguishes these two attributes from others that are named in the Qurʾan as belonging to the essence of God, and hopes to

convince Muslims that an accurate perception of these two attributes will demonstrate the rationality of the Christian view that God the Father, along with God the Word, and God the Spirit, are one God in three hypostases. If speech and life are essential to God then the Word and the Spirit are these essential qualities. The Christian view is then true to the way God is.

‘Ammār’s defence of the Incarnation is based on attempting to demonstrate that it should not be thought impossible for God to enter the world He created by uniting with a human being that He had created. In fact, argues ‘Ammār, the grace and generosity of God is most fully seen in this action. In other words, in order to show most clearly to human beings His desire to bless them with eternal life, He chose to become united with one human being, to make it crystal clear that He intended to grant life after death to those who were trapped in their failure to obey Him. The death and resurrection of this one human would be a sign that God willed to bring other humans through death to life. By denying this story, Muslims undervalue the generosity of God. If the generosity of God is the agreed principle in the debate between Christians and Muslims, then ‘Ammār thinks that he can win the argument over which account is the most generous.

‘Ammār also depends on the generosity of God to defend the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. Baptism is an illustration of the death and resurrection of the Incarnate one, so that those who go through baptism in water participate in the death and resurrection of the second Adam who guarantees life after death. The Eucharist is another illustration of the death of the Incarnate one. Jesus Christ commanded baptism and granted the Eucharist of his body and blood as a way of remembering his death to defeat death for others, by enabling their disobedience to be negated by his obedience. Both baptism and Eucharist are signs of the generosity of God towards His creatures, since they point to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the foretaste of the resurrection of those who believe that God planned to be generous to human beings in this way.

**TEXT AND CONTENTS OF THE BOOK OF THE PROOF
CONCERNING THE COURSE OF THE DIVINE ECONOMY**

There is one manuscript of ‘The Book of the Proof concerning the Course of the Divine Economy’, held in the British Library, MS BL – Add. 18998. It was copied in Cairo on the fourteenth of Hator, 1014, of the Holy Martyrs, which is Sunday the seventeenth of November, 1297 CE. The edition of the manuscript, published by Michel Hayek in Lebanon in 1977, is the basis for the English translation presented here. Hayek’s edition is an excellent reproduction of the manuscript.

The Book of the Proof concerning the Course of the Divine Economy is in twelve sections; Proof of the Existence of God, Proofs of the True Religion, Reasons for the Acceptance of Christianity, Refuting the allegation of the Corruption of Scripture, Debate about the Trinity, Discourse on the Union of divinity and humanity in the Messiah, Confirmation of the Incarnation, Discourse on the Crucifixion, Discourse on Baptism, Discourse on the Eucharist, Debate about the veneration of the Cross, and Debate about eating and drinking in the afterlife. The collection of these twelve topics is rightly classified by Hayek as the first Systematic Theology in the Arabic language.²³

The first three sections are designed by ‘Ammār to place Christianity in the context of the challenge faced by alternative religious views available in Southern Iraq. Proving the existence of one Creator relates to the fact that the Zoroastrian religion dominant to the east of the Euphrates river meant traditionally that Jewish and Christian believers in one Creator were in the minority over against those who held that there were two divine beings who were in competition to rule the world. Despite the reality that Islam was now the official religion of the area,

²³ See M. Hayek, ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī. La Première Somme de théologie chrétienne en langue arabe, ou deux apologues du christianisme’, *Islamochristiana* 2, (1976), pp. 69–133.

‘Ammār still felt the need to defend the oneness of God by appealing to Greek philosophers to support monotheism.

The second section relates to the Islamic dominance of ‘Ammār’s world. He was in the habit of debating with theologically minded Muslims in Basra who held that one of the reasons Islam had been sent by the one Creator was to remind wayward Christians to turn back to the truth of the oneness of God from their affirmation of the threeness of God and the supposed divinity of Jesus. ‘Ammār attempts to argue that Christianity is actually the true religion sent by the one Creator.

He does this in the third section by pointing out the way that people from various nations and languages accepted the truth of Christianity. The fact of the widespread reception of the message concerning Jesus Christ in the known world shows that people were willing to accept that the message rang true for them in pursuit of their spiritual aspirations. This is in marked contrast to the way Islam was imposed on the same range of people by force, argues ‘Ammār.

Section four deals with the Muslim allegation that the Christians altered the teaching of Jesus when they put together the gospel accounts. ‘Ammār argues that it was historically and psychologically impossible for the disciples of Jesus to so change the teaching of Jesus as to falsify it. They were willing to lay down their lives for the sake of passing on the teaching of Jesus and making other disciples for him.

The fifth section on the Trinity is an attempt by ‘Ammār to demonstrate that the oneness of God is not compromised by the Trinity. By examining the attributes of God believed in by Muslims, he isolates two of them as essential to God among the rest that are attributes of his will to act. The essential attributes are speech and life without which, ‘Ammār argues, God cannot exist. These essential attributes are in reality the Word and Spirit of God to which both the Bible and the Qur’an testify.

The sixth and seventh sections are concerned with the status of Jesus. Muslims honored him as a messenger of God who was sent to the Jews to turn them back to true worship of the one Creator, according to the portrait of Jesus in the Qur’an.

Section six relates to the Christian belief that there was a union of divine and human natures in Jesus. ʿAmmār attempts to show how the East Syrian view of the relationship of the two natures in Jesus is faithful to the gospel accounts. In doing so he shows that his intention in this systematic theology was to defend an East Syrian perspective over against other Christian communities, to help his fellow East Syrians to be confident in their particular view, whether defending it in discussion with other Christians or with Muslims.

Section seven turns to the possibility of the incarnation of God in Jesus, which was denied by Muslims. ʿAmmār argues that it is better to believe that the Creator entered the world that He had created, than to believe, as Muslims did, that God was completely transcendent above His creation. By becoming incarnate, God shows His desire to bless human beings, by uniting with one human being for the sake of all the rest.

Section eight on the crucifixion of Jesus is designed to help Muslims understand the importance of the death of Jesus on the cross, which they deny. The death of the incarnate one quite precisely demonstrates the generosity of God in defeating death and opening up eternal life for human beings who were trapped in death without hope of an afterlife. Since the incarnate one died and was resurrected to life, there is a guarantee that those who believe in him will escape through death to life eternal.

Sections nine and ten on baptism and the Eucharist deal with Muslim criticism that these are not essential for the practice of true faith in God. ʿAmmār seeks to point out that they were both commanded by Jesus so that his followers would have two kinds of ways of remembering him. Baptism would illustrate Jesus' death and resurrection by the believer going under the water of death and rising up out of the water to new life. The Eucharist would illustrate the nature of Jesus' death in the eating and drinking, and afford another opportunity to remember the impact of his death on behalf of humanity.

Section eleven concerns Muslim criticism of Christians who venerated the cross. Middle Eastern Christians from the various communities all were in the habit of touching the cross as an act of thanksgiving for the death of Jesus. ʿAmmār points out that

Muslims were in the habit of kissing a black stone when they performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, so he is not sure why Muslims find it distasteful for Christians to kiss the cross.

The final twelfth section appropriately concerns the afterlife. Muslims believed that in the afterlife they would enjoy the physical pleasures of eating, drinking, and marriage, given that the Qur’an appeared to promise these. ‘Ammār indicates that, according to the teaching of Jesus in the gospels, human beings in heaven would be like the angels who do not marry. As a result, the Christian view is that in heaven there is no eating, drinking or marriage.

TEXT AND CONTENTS OF THE BOOK OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The text of ‘The Book of Questions and Answers’ comes after the text of ‘The Book of the Proof concerning the Course of the Divine Economy’ in the British Library manuscript. Hayek presented the two texts in the order of the manuscript even though he believed that The Book of Questions and Answers was written before The Book of the Proof concerning the Course of the Divine Economy. The same order is preserved in the English translation offered here.

The Book of Questions and Answers is in four sections; Concerning the establishment of the timelessness and oneness of the Creator and the demonstration of the creation of the world – in twenty-eight questions, On the Reliability of the Holy Gospel – in fourteen questions, On the establishment of the oneness of the Creator in three hypostases – in nine questions, On reasons for the Incarnation of the Word and what follows from it – in fifty one questions.

Section one opens with an appeal to the Commander of the Believers, a title given to Caliphs, in which ‘Ammār addresses him as the upholder of faith in the one Creator over against those who disbelieve. He will attempt to establish proofs of the oneness of God which the Commander upholds. He will also put forward proof that his own religion adheres perfectly to the oneness of God and asks the Commander to promote this fact

among Muslims, some of whom fail to recognise this truth. ʿAmmār is clearly under pressure to prove that Christianity is not equivalent to polytheism, a problem most evident in the way he composes his dedication. By beginning with proofs for the oneness of God, ʿAmmār can begin with what unites Christians and Muslims, before turning to what divides them.

Proof for one Creator lies in the way human beings are fashioned from the four basic elements of fire, air, earth, and water, agreed by most Greek thinkers to be the elements of the structure of the world, with a rational mind that makes humans unique among creatures, agreed by some Greek thinkers to be the mark of divine work. If a Zoroastrian questions the oneness by arguing that there are two creators, then he should be pointed to the orderly way that the four elements are controlled and guided to a good end. There is no chaotic struggle between forces of good and evil. ʿAmmār uses Qurʾanic language to sum up his case for one Creator rather than two. A rational person is convinced that there is one Creator of the universe who had no partner, opponent, helper, or associate.

ʿAmmār turns to the reason for the one God to create the world. He does so out of kindness and generosity, not out of compulsion. This prompts the question, why God created suffering and evil if he was so kind and generous. The answer lies in the value that suffering has for the development of human character, so that ultimately, experiencing evil ought to result in stronger qualities emerging in people. Then their experience of death induces them to seek to please their Creator who will grant them another life after death in which there will be no suffering. The Zoroastrian eventually comes back with the challenge to prove that evil was not introduced by another creator. ʿAmmār replies that the one Creator allowed humans to strive against weakness and suffering in order to overcome them. This was part of his benevolent plan to strengthen human society by giving humans the opportunity to overcome evil with good. The issue of God forgiving or punishing wrongdoers is raised. If God is so kind why should he condemn the weak? The answer is in the will of humans to defeat evil. God made them free to choose good or evil. Therefore, He will honor those who freely chose

good, and judge those who chose evil. This ability to choose good over evil is essential to the working of society. In his concluding words to the final question in section one, ‘Ammār argues that the benevolence of the Creator is the example that humans follow for being kind to others. Since He made them happy, they should make other people happy. Since He forgave their wrongdoing, they should forgive those who wronged them. Since He did not compel people, they should not compel others.

Section two on the reliability of the gospels opens with the questioner wondering why the Creator did not send someone to guide humans in achieving good rather than evil. ‘Ammār replies that God did precisely that. The gospel which he sent has been set down in a book that is in the possession of many nations. But how can anyone be sure that the book was not written by different people who collaborated in its production? This objection is one that Muslims were now in the habit of making to the Christian scriptures that they had become acquainted with after ruling Christians for two centuries. ‘Ammār points out that the teaching in the book accords with the plan of the Creator to encourage humans to do good. They are urged to love their enemies, and to do to others what they would like others to do to them. Such love prevents prevents someone from stealing from another, ill-treating him, or killing him and forbids anything that might make his Creator angry with him.

Another proof for the authenticity of the book is the fact that those who brought the message contained in it invited idolaters who were following Satan to accept the new teaching of love for God and for other humans. They did not use force to compel them to accept this, nor sell the message for financial gain, because they were acting out of love for these polytheists. Here is an oblique reference to the fact that Islam was imposed by force on polytheists by the conquering Muslim armies, and that Jews and Christians, who were regarded as substandard monotheists, were obliged to pay an annual fee for retaining their religion.

Since there are many competing religions that each claims to be true, the questioner asks, how can the Christian book be distinguished from the rest? ‘Ammār indicates that along with

not using force or selling for financial gain, the bearers of the gospel did not make life easy for people by allowing them to indulge their passion for pleasure with slave girls like some sects do. Here is an oblique reference to the way Islam permitted sexual licence with slaves. They most certainly could not be accused of using magic spells to dupe people into believing them as others have done. Rather, the messengers who brought the book demonstrated signs and wonders from God Himself. Here is yet another oblique reference, this time to the Qur'an which affirmed that Jesus brought signs and wonders to the Jews to urge them to return to God, reminding them of the signs and wonders that Moses had brought to defeat the polytheistic Egyptians and release the Jews from slavery.

As for the teaching of the gospel, it was so hard to accept that it must have been the truth of this tough regime that persuaded people to accept that it was the true message from the one Creator. Rational people might be put off by much of it. The book talked about a virgin becoming pregnant without a husband, and giving birth to the Son of God who died by crucifixion, was raised to life, ascended to heaven and sat down at the right side of God to rule every creature. He will return to raise the dead and judge both angels and humans. The righteous will be granted happiness but the unrighteous will be sent to hell. He also sent messengers to command faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, one Creator, one Lord. He called on people to renounce the pleasures of this world to enjoy the reward of a better life in heaven. How could these nations accept this kind of teaching with pleasure? Rational people regard such teaching as too demanding and farfetched.

Section three on the establishment of the oneness of the Creator in three hypostases begins with a question about how Christians can claim that they believe in one Creator when they speak of a Trinity. How can three be one? 'Ammār answers that the one eternal substance eternally exists in three substantial properties that are not differentiated or divided, so He is not three in number. He goes on to argue that since the Creator is eternally living, He is necessarily endowed with life and speech, and does not understand why his questioner rejects life in God

and the wisdom that is in his speech. The question then is raised, why in addition to God being living and wise is he not hearing, seeing, powerful, merciful, almighty and kind? Why specify threeness and not fourness, fiveness, sixness or more? ‘Ammār argues that attributes such as hearing and seeing are not essential to God in the way that life and speech are. Animals can hear and see but cannot speak intelligently like humans, who are made in the image of God. Attributes such as compassion, justice, and generosity are revealed by those that have speech to demonstrate them, like humans who speak intelligently and unlike animals who cannot do this. The essential attribute in all of this is speech, which humans share with God.

The Muslim asks whether calling three properties three persons suggests that Christians are setting up three gods. ‘Ammār replies that he does not call them persons because persons have bodies and the three properties do not. He calls them hypostases in the Syriac language and prefers to use this term in Arabic. Why then are the three properties called Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? This was because Jesus asked his disciples to use these names. The names Father and Son might be rejected because it is thought that they can only apply to humans who generate offspring. The relationship of Father and Son concerns how they share rule, authority, godhead, lordship, might, and wisdom. God has the absolute right to name Himself in this way.

The Muslim raises the issue of perfection. If the Father is perfect God, and the Son is perfect God, and the Holy Spirit is perfect God, then either they are three perfect gods or not all of them are perfect. ‘Ammār responds by indicating that in His oneness God is perfect. Therefore, all three properties share this perfection of the one God, and it is not necessary to say they are perfect gods. Even with human beings like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is said that they share one common humanity. God does not have divisions and distinctions so it is not possible that His hypostases are substances with countable aspects.

Section four on reasons for the incarnation of the Word and what follows from it opens with the question, If God who is beyond time enters time how can he maintain his timeless nature? ‘Ammār appeals to realities in the created world that combine

two apparent opposites to support the combination of the eternal and contingent in the Messiah. He refers to the combination of fire and coal and fire and the wick of a lamp. One cannot talk about the Messiah without accepting the uniting of the eternal Word of God with the created human nature. The objection then arises, the Messiah is a contingent being so the eternal is swallowed up in the resulting human being. ʿAmmār replies that when the Eternal God united with the humanity He did not share with the humanity in his essential being. The Muslim then claims that the Christian view of Jesus involves the embodiment of God who is non-physical by definition. The reply is that God did not become embodied but the Messiah possessed two hypostases, divine and human, from which he united as one Messiah. The Muslim persists with rejecting the apparent embodiment of God. How is it possible that God was not contained in this body that was taken? ʿAmmār insists that God was not restricted by dwelling in the body. We do not talk of the Messiah as the body of God, he points out.

ʿAmmār turns from answering the Muslim to critiquing Christians who speak of the humanity of Jesus as the body of God. They claim that Mary bore God. They can be accepted if they say that Mary bore God over all who is the Messiah. Here the East Syrian Diophysite case is made against the Miaphysite West Syrians and Copts as well as the Chalcedonian Melkites who though holding to a union of divine and human natures in Christ agreed with the Miaphysites that it was appropriate to call Mary the bearer of God. The Muslim asks why the East Syrians speak about the humanity as the temple of God and not the body of God? Because the godhead dwells in the Messiah but is not embodied in the Messiah, replies ʿAmmār.

The Muslim turns to the relationship between the divine and human in the Messiah. He asks whether the Christian believes in an assembly of the two into one human being or whether they were mixed and blended into a being that meant that the two original natures no longer existed. ʿAmmār denies that there was any contact conferring the eternity or any composition or mixing or blending or corruption that happens to created bodies. This raises the question, how is it possible that

the eternal Word of God was not limited or required to be accidental? ‘Ammār concedes that there is no way to arrive at an answer to the question how God became incarnate and united with the body.

Then why did God become incarnate, asks the Muslim. Because of His generosity, replies ‘Ammār. While God’s generosity called him to create the world, He wanted to complete His kindness to human beings by becoming human to include them as sons and share His lordship with them and grant honor to each individual human being.

Could the Messiah have behaved in a way that affected the favor of God, asks the Muslim. ‘Ammār confirms that the Messiah was free to choose what was pleasing and right, and he was not protected from experiencing evil. The Muslim then asks, If God did not determine that the humanity always performed in the same way as the divinity then how could the humanity be completely at one with the divinity? ‘Ammār responds by pointing out that the proof of the equality came at the end of the life of the Messiah. He says he has already indicated that the humanity obeyed the commands of God. The Muslim asks whether the Christian belief is that the humanity was made perfect at the moment of conception when the divinity united with the humanity. The reply is that the Messiah had to merit what he had been granted at the moment of conception.

The discussion turns to the ending of the life of the Messiah. If Christians claim that he suffered death on the cross at the hands of his enemies how can this be reconciled with the nature of God that transcends suffering and death? ‘Ammār argues that his being raised from death brought about the subjugation of death with its pain and shame. Two illustrations from life follow to support this argument. The first introduces the prizefighter who competes against an arrogant opponent. Despite the arrogance of the challenger the fighter uses his utmost strength to attack and defeat the boastful one. The second illustration is of a doctor who offers people a new medicine. They will only trust his medicine when he proves that it works.

The Muslim turns his attention to the Qur’anic assumption that Jesus was no different from other prophets. Did not other

prophets such as Moses and David preach the same message as Jesus? ʿAmmār asks which of the messengers of God who were before the Messiah described the afterlife and its rewards and punishments? The unspoken reply must be that only Muhammad spoke of them, but he came after Jesus.

The Muslim suggests that it would have been better that the Messiah was raised up in a spiritual manner without his enemies achieving their desire to kill him. This reflects the way Qurʾan 4:157–158 was interpreted by Muslims to teach that the Jews sought to kill the Messiah but God raised him to himself without them achieving their goal. ʿAmmār rejects the suggestion by pointing out that people would be left in doubt that he had truly been raised if he was simply taken to heaven alive before their eyes. The Muslim wonders why did he not come down from the cross like those who crucified him asked him at that time saying, “Save yourself and come down from your cross so we can see and we will believe in you”. ʿAmmār retorts, they suggested this out of mockery, so he did not want to give them what they asked for. Why did he not rise from his tomb and appear to all those who saw him crucified, asks the Muslim. If he wanted to prove his resurrection more widely he would have needed to appear to all the people on earth, says ʿAmmār.

The Muslim turns to the question, how can the Messiah be seated at God’s right-hand interceding with him for others? ʿAmmār replies that being seated at the right-hand side of God is another way of saying that he was raised to the authority of God, and his intercession for others depends on the fact that the Messiah presented himself on the cross as a pure sacrifice to God to put right what had happened as a result of the sin of Adam which brought about the fall of humanity into death. The Messiah makes void the sin of Adam from the descendants of Adam by his righteousness and his purity, he removes death from them which Adam deserved by his falling into error, and he merits life for them by offering his flesh and his blood. The Muslim asks if Christians do not claim that God created Adam to die before he sinned, and created him and his descendants according to this, raising them from death, before the Messiah gave them life. ʿAmmār does not go along with this. He states that God imposed

death as a punishment on all the descendants of Adam. It was only the Messiah who was able to achieve the lifting up of their fall, because his purity was exchanged for the sin of Adam.

The Muslim wants an admission from the Christian that the Messiah was called a servant of God. The Christian position is that the Messiah did not fall into disobedience throughout his life so the title ‘servant’ is not suitable for him. The servant is one who is entangled in his sin, as the Messiah said, “The servant is nothing but a servant of sin.” ‘Ammār accepts that the Messiah is called the servant of God by the prophet Isaiah who says, “He became a servant to many because he suffered for their sins”. This means, “He suffered for their sin by his death which invalidates their sin, and this is the meaning of his saying that he became a servant of many”. The Messiah agreed with Isaiah when he celebrated the last supper with his disciples and said to them, “Drink this all of you for this is my blood which is my agreement poured out for you”. The Messiah meant that when he gave his body as a sacrifice and his blood as an offering, he would remove sin and death from the people of the world, and would grant life and bliss to everyone.

THE BOOK OF THE PROOF CONCERNING THE COURSE OF THE DIVINE ECONOMY

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE GRACIOUS AND KIND.

WITH THE HELP OF GOD, MAY HE BE EXALTED, AND WITH THE EXCELLENCE OF HIS GUIDANCE, WE START TO COPY¹ 'THE BOOK OF VERIFICATION OF THE FAITH'. IT INCLUDES THE UNITING, THE PROOF OF THE INCARNATION, THE EUCHARIST, AND EATING AND DRINKING IN THE AFTER-LIFE. IT ALSO INCLUDES 'QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS'. TO OUR LORD BE THE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER, AMEN.

SECTION ONE: PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD²

At the outset, Greek sages such as Plato and Aristotle speak about the condition of the world, I mean air, water, fire and other things similar and analogous, as intimidating.³ However,

¹ According to the colophon, the British Library manuscript was copied in Cairo on the fourteenth of Hator 1014, of the Holy Martyrs, (Sunday the seventeenth of November 1297 CE) by a Coptic scribe, in al-Jūdārīya, near al-Mu'iz li-Dīn Allāh al-Faṭīmī Street.

² This heading is not in the manuscript.

³ The fourfold division of the cosmos by Stoic philosophers in which two active elements, fire and air, relate to two passive elements, earth and water, is assumed by 'Ammār to be reliable as a ground for under-

the fact that these and all beasts of prey, despite their strength, have resisted destroying human life, proves to you the Creator’s direction of what is in this world for the welfare and benefit of human beings.⁴ ... They avoid humans and keep away from them so that they do not destroy them by the strength that is in their nature.⁵ ... They become an army isolated from the place of human dwelling, intimidating and terrifying⁶ ... and increase. At any future point no human can feel safe from them overpowering him and taking his life.⁷ ... Their power fails to shorten his life. Human beings become familiar with these weak things which have no power to destroy humanity, rather humans have the power to destroy them. This is the clearest evidence that the Creator made these destructive killers uneasy about humans so that they would not destroy them. Humans became used to these weak things that had no power to destroy them, with the result that it stimulated awareness of their departure from this world, and that this world is not a place of rest or security because of its many evils and tribulations. Therefore, these damaging and painful things became of greater benefit to human beings than delightful and enjoyable things, because the latter nourish their bodies while the former strengthen their souls, and stimulate them to seek a world where there is no adversity or tribulation, and cause them to withdraw from this world on account of the tribulations that it has brought them.

As for death, who is not aware of the evidence it provides for the Giver of life? For the One who gives life is the One who takes it away, and only He has the authority to take what be-

standing the make-up of the world. For Stoic physics and metaphysics see K. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfield and M. Schofield, *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 407.

⁴ The following word is unclear in the manuscript.

⁵ The following word is unclear in the manuscript.

⁶ The following word is unclear in the manuscript.

⁷ The following word is unclear in the manuscript.

longs to Him and the power to do so. We know that on the Day of Resurrection, by our being saved from death, we will all join together in knowing the One who has saved us from death, without doubt or disagreement. We will know the superiority of the enjoyment of life over death when we are saved from adversity, and death will increase our delight in our abundant joy, just as the pain of hunger and thirst increases the pleasure of food and drink. All diseases and illnesses train us in this world by showing us what may befall us which we cannot fend off. They make us break away from trespasses and sins and urge us to do good. They induce us to withdraw from this transitory world, and they instill in us a desire for the eternal abode. There are many reasons which would take too long to describe and people of sound mind will be satisfied with a few of them.

Since the existence of the Creator is evident from the testimonies of His creation to Him, I⁸ ... should also join in the consensus of people in the whole world, in spite of their differences, in the assertion that there is only one God, since the consensus never lies. We observe that the three largest religious communities, I mean Christianity, Judaism and Islam, despite their differences, bear witness unanimously that God is one. We observe the Magians,⁹ the Manichaeans,¹⁰ the Daysanites,¹¹ and others like them, despite their polytheism, testifying that there are two eternal beings, saying that one of them is a god and the other a devil. Yet, in spite of their error, they believe in only one god, since they do not call the other one a god, but rather call him

⁸ The following word is unclear in the manuscript.

⁹ Magians were followers of Zoroaster whose religion posited an opposition between good and evil deities, and was the main religious tradition in Persia before the Islamic period.

¹⁰ Manichaeism was founded by Mani in the third century CE, and was a development of Zoroastrian dualism with elements taken from Christianity.

¹¹ Daysanites followed the teaching of the Syrian Bār Dayṣān (b. 154 CE), who held to dualistic views of the power of good and evil.

filthy and accursed. We observe the Greek sages such as Plato and Aristotle testifying that God is one. Aristotle, in his book about the state of the world and the heavens, after speaking about heaven and earth, and air, water and fire, and other substances of the world, says, “We must now speak about the one who is the cause of all of this. For when we speak about all these things it is not good to omit to speak about the one who is their cause”. He says a little further on, “He is the true God, the gracious One, the Director, the Liberator of all. The heavenly beings proceed from his power, and thereafter one thing after another, resulting in earthly beings”.¹² In another of his books known as ‘The Book of Existence and Decay’, after saying that the sun and the stars move and guide everything, he says, “Above these is another who directs them and who is not directed and nothing moves him, for He is everlasting, unchanging and unfaltering, and one in number”.¹³ Plato says, “The forms of all things exist in the knowledge of the Bestower, like the mark on a seal, and after He created everything it is like the mark in the clay, which not being separated from the seal can be seen in the clay”.¹⁴

As for the idol worshippers, although they call their idols gods, they say that above them is a god above whom there is nothing else. Therefore, since all people of the world, whether Christians, Muslims, Jews, Magians, unbelievers, philosophers, or idol

¹² This is a reference to Aristotle’s belief in a mover of all that exists who moves without being moved, a being that is eternal, substantial and actual expressed in his *Metaphysics*. See Aristotle, ‘Metaphysics’, 12, 7. 1072a 23–26, in J. Barnes, (ed.) *Aristotle Works 2*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 1694.

¹³ Aristotle, ‘Metaphysics’, 12, 7. 1072a 23–26, in J. Barnes, (ed.) *Aristotle Works 2*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 1694.

¹⁴ ‘Ammār reports Plato’s argument in his *Timaeus* that a demiurge created intelligence in the soul and the soul in the body, such that his work was the fairest and the best. See Plato, ‘Timaeus’, 30bc, in E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (eds), *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 1162–1163.

worshippers, without meeting together or conferring, agreed to say that the substance of God is one, then who is more ignorant than one who disagrees with the consensus of the whole world, together with the testimonies of created things to their Creator? Is this not like one who says that the sun has no light, disagreeing with the whole world in this?

Although the polytheists have displayed ignorance in postulating along with God another thing which they have called a devil who is eternal, they have nevertheless agreed in stating that the substance of God is one, though they are ignorant of the oneness of the Eternal One that is firmly fixed in the natural disposition of minds. As one of the people of truth has said, "It is not rational for there to be two without there being one, though it is rational for there to be one without there being two". For example, if you have one child it is possible for you to obtain two, though if you have two, one of them must have been the first. It would not be possible for there to be two before one, though one before two is possible. The temporal before the eternal would not be possible, though the eternal before the temporal is possible. Thus, it is clear that the Eternal must be One, and that all things are after Him. In the least of what we have described there is proof for whoever is distinct from beasts of his Creator, the Wise, whose attributes are pre-eminent. To Him be much praise.

SECTION TWO: PROOFS OF THE TRUE RELIGION¹⁵

Since we have demonstrated the existence of our Creator, may His name be blessed, we should also present rational proofs, apart from any uncritical tradition, that the beginning of understanding of religion on earth is that He desired a religion for all of His creatures. We shall present three proofs.

Firstly, we know that He, may He be glorified and exalted, is wise and generous, because we have seen His wisdom in making

¹⁵ This heading is not in the manuscript.

this world a fine and perfect abode out of conflicting things whose strengths He balanced by His foreknowledge and profound wisdom, until He made them equal, and none directed itself against another in such a way that the structure of the world would disintegrate and be destroyed.¹⁶ In addition, we have seen His wisdom in the formation of our bodies and other things, and we have witnessed His generosity, in creating us without Him having need of us, in setting us in this world, and in subjecting all that is in it to us, so we conclude that He will not destroy what He has made. For we do not see a wise person make something and then destroy it. No! that is one of the characteristics of an ignorant person who comes to regret what he has done. If God destroys our bodies in death, this does not contradict our conclusion that a wise person does not destroy what he has made. This is because we have seen that wise people destroy in order to improve, like the seed that they sow in the soil to obtain fresher and more nourishing grain. They soak it with water so that it rots, and large quantities of grain are newly produced from it in a form which it has acquired through its being renewed. We have seen them breaking up the ground and working it so that it will be serviceable to them and bring forth what will adorn it. They cut down plants and burn them, and in this way the plants become useful to people. They chop wood so that it serves a useful purpose for them. They wet the soil with water and change its nature so that it is useful to them for building. In the same way, we must give up the idea that our Creator has destroyed our bodies in death, for we know and trust that He did not want to destroy us through this because it would not have been a wise action, but rather He renews us to a higher, more magnificent and more perfect form than the one we now

¹⁶ Since Al-Ash‘arī reports that the Mu‘tazili scholar Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf held that God did not create out of need, but rather out of generosity, it is probable that ‘Ammār is setting out his agreement with him here. See Al-Ash‘arī, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn wa-Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*, (ed.) M.M. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyah, 1969), pp. 182 and 236.

have. He does this for reasons that prevent the affirmation of arguments from being refuted when they are clarified.

If we accept as true that He only destroys our bodies in order to renew them, then we must believe in their resurrection and life. If He created us out of His generosity and not out of need for us, and set us in this transient world in which we are surrounded by hardships and adversities, then we must know that He has not yet completed His generosity from which He created us in His mercy towards us, and that He will do this when He renews us and fulfills His grace and generosity towards us. Then it will become true for us, since there is no doubt that He is going to transfer us from this abode to another, that He would not refrain from telling us what He has prepared for us. Indeed, He has sent us the good news about this and set it down in a book lest we forget, and so that future generations may inherit it and have great joy in it.

Secondly, even if He created human beings in a form in which it is possible for some of them to harm others, we have no doubt that He commanded them to love one another and forbade them from harming one another. He has not failed to do this, nor neglected to make clear or inform them what they had to do. He gave them evidence of Himself, by commanding them and forbidding them, since they would not have had any natural knowledge of Him without being instructed. Thus, He set down His commands and prohibitions in a book which all their descendants would inherit and put to good use.

Thirdly, since in His kindness and generosity He has prepared for us a sublime eternal world, we have no doubt that He will regard our prayers to Him in ways that are most beneficial to us. This would not happen unless He commanded us to attain it by our own striving and effort, because we see that when someone achieves something by his own merit and accomplishes it by his own work and effort, it brings him more pleasure than something that is given to him gratuitously and freely granted to him, like one who receives as a gift what he did not ask for, or acquires something by trickery, and he has greater pleasure and pride in it, and people praise him for it more, unlike one who is

provided for unreasonably and succeeds unworthily. So, we must know that He has commanded people to do good and to strive in service with this aim, and that He set this down in a book lest it be forgotten, so that future generations would inherit it and act according to it.¹⁷

Therefore, it is clear that God has a religion on earth which He desires for all His creatures. We see that there are many religions and that the followers of each religion claim that it is the religion of God. So, we must treat their claims equally, and be careful about relying on any of them unless the argument that it is the religion of God is true in our eyes, and then we will believe in it and accept it and have nothing to do with the others. The argument can only be true in one of two cases: either we see in it the signs which human beings cannot imitate, and as a result, we testify about it that it is from God and we accept it as our religion and have nothing to do with the others; or we see by rational evidence that nothing resembling it refutes the existence of the signs at the time of its appearance, even though they may have disappeared after it became well established and powerful. Everyone unanimously claims this about their religion, but to accept one claim rather than another is ignorance and an unquestioning acceptance of tradition. Equally, the acceptance of all their claims with all the contradictions and accusations of falsehood between them is inconceivable and impossible.

¹⁷ Wageeh Mikhail points out that these three criteria for knowing the true religion, the attributes of God, the permitted and the forbidden and reward and punishment, are also set out by Abū Qurra (d. c. 830) in his *Treatise on the existence of the Creator and the true religion*. See I. Dick, (ed.) *Maymar fī Wujūd al-Khāliq wal-Dīn al-Qawīm li-Thāwdhūrus abī Qurrah*, (Jūniya: al-Maktaba al-Būlusīya, 1982), and W.Y.F. Mikhail, *‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s Kitāb al-Burhān: A Topical and Theological Analysis of Arabic Christian Theology in the Ninth Century*, (PhD, University of Birmingham, 2013), p. 64.

There is nothing more probable in the investigation of the claim of each of them and the search for knowing its truth so that we become aware of its aim, than the agreement of all of them that God made His signs appear through the one who proclaimed it during the first appearance of each religion, to guide people by the signs to His religion. His proofs were established for them by the appearance of signs which they were incapable of imitating, so that His religion, rather than any contrary to it, might appear true to them, through them seeing signs the like of which were not within human power to perform.¹⁸ Thus, they would be obliged to accept it and they would inevitably be punished if they went against it. Since it is the case that God guides people to His religion and sets His proof before them, He manifested signs.

We have seen people in our day disagreeing about their religions, divided in their communities, with each claiming that his religion is the religion of God, and that what contradicts it is not from God. We know that there is one religion of God among them all, since truth is one and does not contradict itself, and whatever contradicts it is false and erroneous. That God has ceased to promote signs in our time, even though people need guidance, and need to distinguish the religion of God from that which contradicts it, and need to move away from the many religions which are not from God towards the religion of God, can only be for one of two reasons: it may be, when He had to inform people about His religion and lead them to it and set forth to them the argument for it by the appearance of the evident signs of His religion, that He then withdrew what was necessary for guidance by removing evident signs of His religion and the certainty of the proof of it; or it may be, when He made

¹⁸ ‘Ammār alludes to Q2: 23–24, 10:38, 11:13, and 52:33–34, which repeat the challenge to the hearers of the message of the Prophet to come up with their own message from God since they reject his, calling Muḥammad a fraudulent forger of sayings. Yet they can only bring false messages from gods that do not exist.

His religion appear by its true signs and visible tokens, and knowing that intelligent people would be compelled to testify against the signs being confirmed and accepted in the world if He removed the signs of His religion, that He withdrew their appearance from the human eye so that by mental effort a deduction would be drawn about His religion, and that He did not set forth the signs before their eyes as a form of compulsion forcing people to accept the religion and thus negate praising them for this and so reverting to what God dislikes by compelling them to obey Him.

The first suggestion, which involves God changing the guidance that was necessary and withholding the necessary direction to His religion by the manifestation of His signs, cannot be true and no religious person would say so. We are obligated, therefore, to take the second possibility, that God, having revealed His religion through His signs and having set forth His argument by them, and having known that His religion would compel intelligent people to testify that His religion was established in the world through the signs and tokens, removed their appearance from human eyes. Only a stubborn person says that the religion of God and His book can be recognized from among other religions and books without signs, and that by examining what the religions throughout the world call people to do, and by studying with his mind their books and the books that refute them, and by scrutinizing and examining them closely until he discerns the religion which has the truest meaning, the soundest doctrine, and the most correct teaching, he might judge that it is from God, by virtue of the truth of its meaning, the soundness of its doctrine, and the correctness of its teaching, unlike other religions.

I say to this person, you have demanded far too much from people and you have plunged them into an ocean which God knows He has not given them the means to cross, nor did He demand that they cross it. This is because there are two kinds of people: sharp, subtle people and slow, dull people. There are many dull people but few subtle ones. So, if He had demanded of them what you propose, it would only lead the dull people to aliena-

tion in their minds and actions concerning what they need for their lives through studying the books of different and conflicting people in the world, and weighing them in order to choose the soundest in meaning and the truest in teaching, so that they could decide that it was from God. Among the different groups of people there is the person who expresses an opinion about his religion and negates what contradicts it, who is more perceptive among them, and who may be incapable of this until he sees for himself, apart from others, that he possesses the truth. Perhaps he is wrong and his mind, though subtle, may fail to recognize the truth. So how can common people attain such knowledge when sharp-minded ones among the different groups failed to? God is far above demanding from people what they cannot bear.¹⁹

Subtle people may also find themselves in a situation on which they do not have a united opinion, for we have seen the sages and the philosophers disagreeing about the nature of the visible world and contradicting each other in their numerous books about this. So how could they not have differed on the subject of religion which is much more profound and deep than the nature of the world? Rather, there can be no doubt that they disagree about the knowledge of it far more than they disagree concerning the knowledge of the nature of the world. This is also harmful for subtle-minded people, leaving them even further from the perception of the true religion than dull-witted people. Furthermore, if God had known that His religion could be recognized from among all these religions by this argument, He would have confined His religion to this argument when He revealed it, and would not have produced any signs through His messengers. At the time when people saw the messengers, with the extent of

¹⁹ This is the first reference to a Qur'anic text in the treatise, though 'Ammār does not indicate chapter and verse to his reader. Q22:78, 'He has chosen you and has not imposed difficulties on you in religious duties,' is the basis for 'Ammār's argument, which he seeks to build on revelation rather than on reason.

their knowledge on account of what had been revealed to them and with their ability to explain the truth by their words, the people were more aware of the revelation of signs to them though the messengers than we are in our time, when we do not have them and must depend on ourselves to acquire the knowledge of God without them.

If God did not instruct the messengers to clarify this by words without signs when they were more able than us to do it, then He would not charge us with it, considering that we are too weak to communicate what the messengers did more adequately. Thus, it is obvious that God, may He be glorified and exalted, because He knew that burdening people with what you have wanted, oh stubborn person, would have been harmful to both the common people and the exceptional ones, and would have deprived them of what is needed for them to know the truth, sent His messengers and revealed His signs through them just as religious people have affirmed, to gather together by this means, the sharp-minded and dull-witted people in the knowledge of the truth of His religion, without giving subtle people any advantage over slow-witted people in the knowledge of the truth. He completely removed the miracles from each group, restricting them to those who first showed the signs which cannot be imitated, and made both accept His teaching. Therefore, the sharp-minded person had no advantage in deducing through his subtle mind what others could not, and the dull-witted person was not slower to grasp what the sharp-minded person perceived. For the truth was accessible to sight through the appearance of the signs to the eyes, compelling acceptance of the words of the one who manifested them, not by intellectual investigation or by sharp-minded consideration and perception. Thus, what God, may His name be blessed, was pleased to confer on both kinds of people through signs which neither of them could imitate, was more beneficial than what you wanted, which is that everyone accepts tradition by his intellect. If each person claims that his tradition is his own and is not derived from anyone else, and that it is not necessary for each person to judge others, then the tradition of each one is his own thought and he must follow his desire and his pleasure and the testimo-

ny of his own reason to attain that which no one else is capable of. As for all their traditions, the signs which cannot be imitated satisfy their search for truth in such a way that cannot be mistaken for falsehood.

So, by employing reason there is the tradition of the signs, whereas by employing ignorance there is the tradition of each person searching with his reason apart from signs, as we have described with reference to the inequality of people's minds and the claims of each person that he has attained what no one else has attained, the religion of God, may He be blessed and exalted. His revelation of the signs through His messengers is more beneficial to people and more likely to draw them to the knowledge of His religion, and the investigation of the signs is more essential for them than what he demanded of them. The claim of each person to whom God revealed the signs through His messengers is my evidence for this. Therefore, the error in what the stubborn person has stated about this is clear, and we return to the matter that we had to affirm, that God removed the signs in our time because intelligent people are bound to testify that His religion was established in the world by the signs, so He did not need to continue to reveal them to the eyes.

I know that intelligent people are not bound to affirm one particular religion as being established in the world by the signs of God unless they find no other means on earth by which it could have been permanently established. If in our view it was possible for it to have been established through some earthly means which would have allowed people to be led to agreement on one religion, there would be no need to testify that it had been established by signs. When you find something that leads people to one conclusion about a religion and about those like it, then you know that it is not the religion of God from which He removed the signs. For intelligent people are bound to testify to that religion by signs because if God knew that there would be something in His religion that people might accept as establishing it in the world, then He would not have removed the signs from it, just as He did not remove them in the time of the children of Israel when they were one people, and it was possible to

imagine numerous other earthly causes, apart from the signs, for its establishment. It was not until the time when the revelation of the Christian religion drew near that God manifested greater signs, and then He removed them after it was established throughout the world, from the east to the west. This eliminated the possibility of there being earthly causes for its establishment, so that it was no longer possible for minds to imagine that any of them had established His religion. So, in this way it is known that intelligent people are bound to testify that His religion was established by signs apart from anything else, and the argument against them is compelling if they deny the signs, for there is no other cause that can be imagined.

For this reason, the Messiah our Lord said to his apostles when he sent them out, “Do not carry a stick or a rod or gold or silver, and do not wear sandals or two shirts or two garments, and similar things”.²⁰ He removed from his apostles all earthly causes by which people are supported and honored, so he dissuaded the inhabitants of the world from accepting earthly causes by removing them in favor of the signs of God, apart from anything else.

Therefore, since we have made it clear that intelligent people are bound to acknowledge that the religion of God was established in the world by the signs of God, and since no other reason can be found for its establishment, I will begin to examine one by one those religions that claim to have the signs. So, in each religion in which we can recognize a cause that establishes it, or that it was accepted on account of collusion, we know that it is not the religion of God that He intended for all of His creatures or that He wanted to be extended to them all.

The first religion I will deal with is the religion of the Torah which God did not intend for all of His creatures, so He did not make intelligent people bound to see that it had signs. He made it a distinct religion which He did not extend to include all of

²⁰ Matthew 10:9–10.

His creatures. This is why He did not remove the signs from it until it had died out.²¹ The witness of the signs would testify to it. When it died out, and its prophets, kings, priests, and offerings ceased to exist, it became obvious that the religion of the Torah had ended. God did not make it a religion that was established from Himself so that it must be accepted. He did not intend it for all of His creatures, although it testified to the religion which was extended to include all of His creatures that was sent down in order for them to abandon it. So, it could only be established for intelligent people in this way.

Thus, I say that it is possible to imagine five causes of its establishment apart from signs: firstly, the sword; secondly, bribery and corruption; thirdly, fanaticism; fourthly, approval; and fifthly, collusion.

As for the sword, since the Children of Israel were in one territory and kingdom, it would have been possible for the king to compel those under his authority to accept what he said and submit to it, since the population would be led by whoever rules over them and would keep his commands.

As for bribery and corruption, since the Children of Israel were slaves in Egypt and escaped from there, they could have been led ...²²

... and Ḥamza ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and others among them about this. And if others among them differ then it does not negate fanaticism.²³

²¹ ‘Ammār recognizes the Muslim view that God sent the Torah, the book of Moses, to the Children of Israel as his sign to them according to Q3:3, 5:44, 6:91, 11:17, 46:12 and 62:5.

²² The manuscript appears to lack a folio here in which ‘Ammār continues his examination of Judaism, and then begins to criticize some Muslims for being fanatical.

²³ Ḥamza ibn ‘abd al-Muṭṭalib was the paternal uncle of the Prophet of Islam, who converted to Islam and became a leading military figure.

As for collusion, perhaps those who responded to him at the beginning out of worldly ambition agreed to collude in testifying about him with regard to whatever they liked of the signs which they described. They could have set that up as they wished and forced it on those whom they conquered by the sword, even though the book on which they agreed rejected the signs and stated that the one to whom they were attributed was asked to perform them as they were performed by the prophets before him, but he did not perform them, according to his saying, “And We refrain from sending the signs, only because the men of former generations treated them as false: We sent the she-camel to the Thamūd to open their eyes, but they treated her wrongfully: We only send the Signs by way of terror”.²⁴ This was after they asked him to perform signs, and their description of what Moses and Jesus had performed.²⁵ Another example is his saying, “They swear their strongest oaths by God”,²⁶ that if they saw a sign they would believe. Say, what might be said of them if the signs came yet they did not believe because their minds and hearts were fixed just as they did not believe in him at the beginning of his venture? Ibn ‘Abbās, who was a witness to the situation, explained it as meaning that the Christians, the Jews, and the polytheists met together and swore by God that if they saw a sign from the Prophet they would believe it. So, he replied to them that this had been sent down to him concerning their request.²⁷

So, these religions that might have been established by these things, or by some of them, are not the religion of God from which He removed the signs after He had established it in order

²⁴ Q17:59.

²⁵ The signs performed by Moses are mentioned in Q3:3, 5:44, 6:91, 11:17, 46:12, and 62:5. Jesus performed signs according to Q2:87, 253, 3:49–50, and 5:110, 112–115.

²⁶ Q6:109.

²⁷ ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, (d. 687 CE), was a cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad and one of the first interpreters of the Qur’an.

to stir intelligent people into bearing witness that at the time of its appearing signs were clearly seen by the eyes that looked upon them. For God did not remove the signs from His religion until He closed off the various earthly causes. Thus, it cannot be imagined that it was established by any of them in order to compel intelligent people to say that it had been established in the world by signs, and the proof of God to His creatures is based on this.

SECTION THREE: REASONS FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY²⁸

As far as the Christian religion is concerned, I do not see it in a people of one family or one country whose people speak one language making it possible for them to collude together on one opinion that they liked, as was the case with the religion of the Children of Israel. Nor is it in one kingdom in which they might have a common opinion, where the king could gather them together under one religion, as is the case with the religion of Zoroaster, or with what was accepted on account of a common opinion like the religion of Mani and similar religions, Nor is it in one kingdom with one language where they might be compelled by the sword to accept it, as is the case with the religion which came after Christianity.²⁹ Rather, in every kingdom, every language and tongue in the east and west, among the lowly and the prosperous throughout the earth, among white and black, in nations that dislike each other's language, they became enemies and could not be united to be in collusion for it to be established by the compulsion of the sword, or set up in the world by clan-nish fanaticism, or by bribery and corruption. They became separated by their languages, living apart in their countries, op-

²⁸ This heading is not in the manuscript.

²⁹ 'Ammār decides not to name the religion here, though he has been content to name other religions in the discussion. He is sensitive to the charge of denigrating Islam by arguing that Muslims deliberately forced their religion on those they conquered.

posed in their kingdoms and the situation of their world, situated apart from each other by the seas which God made as a barrier lest they join themselves together and destroy each other because of the diversity of their kinship and the differences of their races and skin colors.

If someone says, the nations did not collude in this religion, but those who proclaimed it did conspire together and led the nations to accept it by trickery, we say, if we go along with what you say, we must judge according to what we have seen, and by reason and analogy. You know that people follow what they are born into and what their customs are, how their bodies develop, and what they have inherited from their fathers and ancestors, and their reluctance to abandon these things. But it is not possible after what we have seen, that a community should convert to another religion in our time, or the time which preceded us, from what they were following, unless for compelling reasons.

So, let us put forward, between us and you, all of the reasons why people might transfer from what they followed to another religion that was proclaimed to them. Since we have informed you that we can assume that there were worldly causes for the establishment of all religions that are in the world, we will examine them one by one with respect to the spread of the Christian religion in order to show you that it is free from them, and that it cannot be assumed that it was established by them, unlike in the establishment of other religions. Rather, intelligent people are bound to look to other reasons, namely signs and wonders. There are six reasons in addition to collusion which we may ascribe to the proclamation of a religion by those who proclaim it. So, let us examine whether it is possible for them to be received without signs.

The first is the sword; the second is desire for wealth, leadership and power; the third is fanaticism; the fourth is approval; the

fifth is permission in law; and the sixth is trickery and delusion by magic.³⁰

As for the sword, the Christian religion forbids it, so how can it be imagined that it was established by it? For no one who proclaims a religion uses compulsion by the sword and then writes in the book that he presents to those he has conquered by it that he does not use it and that he forbids it. This must be understood as robbery and a great lie, since it would have contradicted his action, and it is unacceptable.

We have already seen that the Torah used the sword, not rejecting it but rather describing and depicting its use. Likewise, the religion of Islam³¹ used the sword, not rejecting it but rather describing and depicting its strength and how it invaded territory by using it.³² But the impetus of those who proclaimed the

³⁰ Sidney Griffith points out that some of these categories are also found in the treatises of Abu Qurra and Abu Ra'ita (d.c. 830). Abu Qurra mentions ethnic bigotry, license and power, in his 'Treatise on the True Religion', in C. Bacha, *Les oeuvres arabes de Théodore Aboucara, Évêque d'Harar*, (Beyrouth: imprimerie Alfawaid, 1904), pp. 71–75, and Abu Ra'ita has license, personal preference, collusion, and ethnic bigotry, in his *epistle on the confirmation of the Christian Religion*, in *Des Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb ibn Hidmah Abū Rā'itah*, (Louvain: L. Durbeck, 1951), pp 131–132. Griffith shows that each author carried on his apology in his own terms and that we cannot determine who originated the argument. But since no similar argument can be found in previous Christian writing this form of argument was first developed by Abu Qurra, Abu Ra'ita and 'Ammār. See S.H. Griffith, 'Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians,' in *Proceedings of the PMR Conference 1979, vol. 4*, pp. 63–87, p. 74.

³¹ 'Ammār now names Islam for the first time in the treatise, perhaps because he can join Muslims and Jews together as relying on the sword to defend and take territory rather than simply indict Muslims for their violent enforcement of Islam.

³² 'Ammār hardly needs to appeal to the Qur'an to verify the historical reality that the area from which he writes was taken by force early in the history of the Islamic movement, and that he is living in a situation

Christian religion was the Holy Gospel in which is found the prohibition of the sword. The reception of the Gospel by the nations, and their testimony in the east and the west, without any collusion among them, that they had not been compelled by the sword, and that it was not used on them, bears witness that the Christian religion was not established by the sword and that those who proclaimed it did not use it. For it is impossible that innumerable nations in the east and the west could agree, without communicating or meeting or getting together, because of the disagreement between the kingdoms that are in opposition to each other, the remoteness of countries from each other, and their differences in language and race, to testify that those who proclaimed to them this religion were weak fishermen with no authority and no sword, if they had compelled them all by the sword.

And how is it possible to allege, since their testimony agrees with that of the twelve helpless men, that they conquered mighty, powerful kings and strong, invincible kingdoms when their proclamation was incompatible with the power of authority and rule? It is not possible to assume that the kings helped them or complied with them unless they were overpowered by them. In this, everyone in the world who opposes the Christian religion, such as the Jews, the Magians, the Muslims and others, agrees that the disciples of the Messiah did not compel people with the sword or use it. The most that the Jews could accuse them of was magic and trickery not the sword. Similarly, the

where the exercise of Muslim rule has encouraged the migration of many Christians to the fold of Islam. Yet his implication is that God commanded the use of the sword to promote the spread of Islam according to the Qur’an. Q2:190–193, 216–218, 244–246, 3:142, 4:74–77, 84, 95, 5:54, 8:72, 9:12–16, 29, 36, 38–39, 86–88, 111, 123, 16:110, 47:4, 48:15–17, 57:10, 59:6, and 61:4 all testify to this obvious difference from the command of Christ to leave the sword behind when preaching the gospel.

Magians and the Muslims attributed the acceptance of the disciples to signs.

So how has the whole world come to agree on their being free from using the sword? It is clear to thinking people that the disciples did not use the sword to establish their religion, and that the issue is as was written in the gospel concerning the prohibition of it, along with the prohibition of the whip, the rod, gold and silver, and every worldly cause by which their religion could have been established, so that nothing but the signs can be imagined as the cause for the establishment of their religion. Our argument for denying the use of the sword by the Christian religion is well founded, clear, and attested by the existence of the prohibition of the sword in its book. Anyone who would refute it by making a contrary claim against us needs firm evidence for his claim from the testimony of rational people which he will never find. Even if he finds the words he needs, intelligent people will never testify against a religion which was established throughout the whole world, in all its languages, that commands submission, humility and meekness, and forbids anything that contradicts them, and that explains the prohibition of the sword in the saying, "Whoever uses the sword dies by the sword".³³ This is not what intelligent people would accept since it is accepted by individual judgement and the varying pieces of evidence that support it. People testify that those who proclaimed it were poor fishermen. They do not testify that it was established by the sword, but to it being free from that. Therefore, it is true that the Christian religion was not established by the sword.

As for bribery and corruption, how is it possible, if the whole world has agreed unanimously without communication or collusion that the apostles were poor fishermen? Their Book which was in their possession says so, as it also relates that their lead-

³³ See Matthew 26:52, where Jesus told Peter to put his sword away rather than attempt to defend him from his enemies.

er, Simon, said to a crippled man at the gate of Jerusalem who had ask him for alms, “We do not have gold or silver to give you, we only have what our Lord has given to us. In the name of the Messiah, get up and carry your mattress, and stand up and go to your home”.³⁴ Can anyone accuse them of offering a bribe with gold or silver? Since their book prohibited them from possessing gold or silver as the Holy Gospel reports that the Messiah, to whom be praise, said to them, “Do not carry a whip or a rod or gold or silver”,³⁵ is it possible that that they offered a bribe with gold or silver? If they had showed people that they were contravening what they had been commanded, and had lied to them when they said, “We do not have gold or silver”, people would not have accepted their words and would not have paid attention to anything they said, and no one would have accepted the Christian religion from them. When they commanded something, people would have called them liars, nor would people have accepted their book, and the signs they performed would have been of no effect.

Now, since we have seen that the leading kings and sages of the peoples and races of the nations accepted their book in which they were commanded, as their Lord commanded them, not to carry gold or silver, and that they were poor, not having gold or silver, we conclude that their book with its teaching concerning this matter would not have been accepted unless they were truthful, because their words, their beliefs, and their book were not contradictory, according to the nations. How can you accuse fishermen, about whom all the kings and nations of the world attested without collusion to their lowly state and poverty, and about whom it had been made clear in their book that they were poor, of bribing the kings of the world to accept their proclamation and giving freely to them what they desired? Rather, their book declares the opposite of this by forbidding them from covetousness, wealth, power, and pride, and whatever resembles

³⁴ Acts 3:6.

³⁵ Matt 10:9–10.

these. So, it is clear that it is not at all possible to mention bribery and corruption in the establishment of their proclamation.

As for fanaticism, by my life, if it had been only the Jews and no others who had followed the Messiah, we would have said they became fanatical about him. However, since innumerable different races followed him, how is it possible to mention fanaticism among different groups of people who would surely oppose someone who was not from their group? On the contrary, this would have to be completely discounted with regard to them.

As for approval and what opinion may invent and what may arise in thought and be accepted by reason so that it can be assumed that this is a cause of its acceptance apart from signs, I have seen that the Christian religion goes against all that. For those who proclaimed it preached things and reported news that no opinion could invent, that could not arise in thought, that could not cross anyone's mind, or be imagined by reason.

We will summarize in ten points to prove what we have said above, by the will of God, may He be exalted.

First: At the beginning of their message, they said that a young virgin became pregnant without intercourse or impregnation, which had never been witnessed in the world.

Second: They said that she gave birth without losing her virginity, so she was a nursing mother while still being a virgin, which is contrary to reason.

Third: They said that this baby boy was the Son of God, which is denied by the nations in general that speak of God's oneness in terms of distinctiveness and uniqueness.

Fourth: They said that this Son of God was crucified, died and was buried. Since they attributed power to him and then they abased him in humiliation, this is clearly contradictory.

Fifth: They said that after his death and burial he was resurrected and he rose from the tomb alive, and that is unknown to naturally intelligent people.

Sixth: They said that after his resurrection from the tomb he ascended to heaven, and that is too far-fetched to be accepted.

Seventh: They said that after his ascension to heaven he will descend to earth to raise the dead and to send the good to bliss and the wicked to hell, which is not something that would have crossed the minds of the people of the world.

Eighth: They called for the worship of the crucified one, and they did not oblige people to comply with this because it implied humiliation and repulsiveness which is contrary to desire and pleasure, but they coaxed them until they constrained them to carry a heavy burden by accepting this through distributing their wealth to the poor and giving themselves up to death for his sake, as well as what is similar to that.

Ninth: They proclaimed another world, but they did not promise people any pleasure which they knew from what they had seen in this world. Rather, they commanded them to renounce this world and disdain the pleasure of food and drink and marriage and so on. They also called them to another world, informing them that they would not eat or drink or marry there. They warned them against what they knew was pleasurable in this world and the next.

Tenth: The summary, conclusion, and perfecting of all this, is that they called them to believe in God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is something that would not arise in thought or be invented by opinion. Opinion may invent the idea of good and evil according to what people see of good and evil in the world, or may invent the idea of one God according to what they see of the order of things and their testimony that one God exists. However, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit would not be invented by opinion so that it might be assumed that opinion would accept this, like other things we have described.³⁶

³⁶ Wageeh Mikhail indicates that that these ten points are also found in the argument of Abū Qurra in his *Treatise on the Existence of God the*

Which of these points can be accepted by reason or invented by opinion or arise in thought so that it might be assumed as a cause of its acceptance? On the contrary, they are all considered repugnant, despicable, and incredible. What is more repugnant than calling people to worship one who was crucified, to submit to the cross, and to have faith in the unity in trinity?

So, it is clear that the Christian religion was not established because intelligent people thought well of it, nor were opinion, pleasure or power the reason for its acceptance, for it opposed the power of rulers and kings, and people were subjected to the cross and bearing injustice and shame. It opposed reason and the wisdom of the wise by contradicting what is not in their wisdom, and by refuting it. It opposed pleasure by prohibiting desires and pleasures while commanding devotion to fasting and prayer.

As for permissiveness in the law, even though we may say that permissiveness is one of the matters that may win people over, it is only taken up from those who proclaim something that intelligent people accept and rely on afterwards. But if it is something that intelligent people do not accept, the religion will not be accepted though permissiveness in the law, and intelligent people would not be led to it because they are opposed to it. Among the first things which tighten the law is burdening intelligent people with what they cannot comprehend, and loading their thinking with what they cannot understand. Therefore, I say, there is no religion under heaven which prohibits desire more, destroys pleasure more, and has more restrictive commands than the Christian religion. For intelligent people know that there is no desire that has more power over men than desire for women, because God made it natural in them when He established their substance. Through it, the population of the world has increased and the world has prospered. We are told

Creator and the True Religion, pp. 259–270. See W.Y.F. Mikhail, ‘Ammār al-Başri’s *Kitāb al-Burhān*, p. 100.

that David the prophet, despite his purity, desired women so intensely that he murdered a man for his wife;³⁷ and that Solomon, the son of David, a fount of wisdom and an ocean of proverbs, so desired women that they defeated his wisdom;³⁸ and that God set up a man, one of the giants, over the children of Israel to give them victory, and he brought them victory and killed a thousand of their enemies with the jawbone of an ass, and God caused water to flow out from that jawbone when he was thirsty and he drank from it, but that afterwards he desired women so much that because of them he fell into the hands of his enemies who put out his eyes.³⁹ A man from among the rulers in our time set out from his kingdom with his whole army and went to Byzantium in search of a woman in a certain fortress. We have not seen rulers behaving like that for the sake of any other worldly pleasures.⁴⁰ One of the sons of David the

³⁷ See 2 Samuel 11:1–27. ‘Ammār’s use of the term “prophet” for David is an indication of his awareness of Muslim sensibilities, since David is listed among the prophets (*al-nabiyyin*) in Q4:163, and was chosen from among the prophets (*al-nabiyyin*) to be gifted with the psalms (*al-zabūr*) in Q17: 55.

³⁸ I Kings 11:1–9 relates how Solomon’s marriages to several foreign princesses led him to worship their deities. While not openly discussing the permission in the Torah for a man to have more than one wife, ‘Ammār is attempting to engage a Muslim reader in the stories of two prominent men from the Bible, David and Solomon, whose names appear linked together in the Qur’an at Q21:78–79, 27:15–16, 34:10–14, and 38:30.

³⁹ See Judges 16:1–21. However, the person is not named here because the name “Samson” would be unfamiliar to a Muslim audience.

⁴⁰ The caliph al-Mu‘taṣim destroyed Amorium in 838 CE. Michel Hayek refers to poetry that records that the caliph was motivated to capture Amorium to rescue a woman he desired. See M. Hayek, *Apologie et Controverses*, p. 19. This is the only piece of data that shows that the Book of the Proof was written after 838 CE.

prophet committed debauchery with his sister, and his action was notorious and became well-known.⁴¹

Those who proclaimed the Christian religion commanded kings and others, no matter how overwhelming their desire for women might be, that a man should marry only one woman. And even if she is afflicted by all kinds of illness, which in turn would not allow them to be together, he is forbidden to look at a woman besides her until death. They treated kings and their servants alike and showed no special kindness to kings by favoring them over their servants. They also commanded them to distribute their wealth among the poor, to fast a lot, to devote themselves to prayer, to value submissiveness and humility, and to despise the pleasures and desires of the world, to the extent that some people began to fast all the time, some fled to the mountains and hid themselves in caves with wild beasts, some lived in monastic cells, and some chose to withdraw to their monasteries, devoting themselves to fasting and prayer. And in return for striving, they did not promise them any pleasure that could reasonably be compared with what they suffered, but only what they knew to be arduous for them by way of giving up food, drink, and marriage and other things like them. What place is there here for referring to permissiveness in the law when they were giving commands to give up the world and its pleasures and desires completely? Thus, it is clear that permissiveness in the law was excluded for them, and it cannot be the case that it is assumed of them.

As for the fantasies of sorcery, I have seen Christians warning people to be on their guard against them and cautioning them not to be deceived by them, and assuring them by other means than them, such as raising the dead, healing the sick and ill, opening the eyes of the blind, and other similar things. I have discovered that they have exerted themselves to declare their

⁴¹ See 2 Samuel 13:1–19 where Amnon, son of David, raped his half-sister Tamar.

innocence from the fantasies of sorcery, and to make a clear distinction between their actions and the actions of magicians. People have declared them innocent of such things, even after not ceasing to test them based upon three qualities.

Firstly, people noticed the signs which guaranteed their actions. Just as people rush to see the wonders of the masters of clever tricks and such like, or just as when a cry goes out that something is amazing people hurry to see it and may spend a lot to get hold of it, so if they did not do what they had promised to do when people hastened to see it, they would have been exposed and their lying would have been made clear, and people would not have accepted their book or paid any attention to what they said.

Secondly, no one who proclaims a religion can guarantee the acceptance of his proclamation through performing anything without being asked about the conditions he has imposed on himself. If he performed what he proclaimed his call would be accepted, but if he did not perform it then it would not be accepted since he had not met his conditions. So, you should know that since their religion was accepted on the basis of the conditions they had imposed on themselves, then it was not accepted before they had been asked on what basis they had guaranteed it and had performed it.

Thirdly, no one with any illness among the types of illnesses, or any sort of chronic illness among categories of chronic illnesses, nor a blind person, nor a one-eyed person, nor anyone with any other ailment who upon hearing of someone claiming to have the power to heal him, would not rush to him because of his need for a healthy body. If people hurry to doctors who do not claim to have the power to heal by words which have no harm in them, but give people drastic and unpleasant treatments, how would people not rush to someone who claimed to have the power to heal by words which do not cause any pain or trouble for them. So, you should know that because of their assurance of this, everyone who had something like what we have described would have rushed to them. If they had not healed through their hands and if they had not performed what they had promised

them, then they would have been exposed to everyone, and their proclamation would have come to nothing and people would not have accepted their religion. Therefore, it is true for everyone that they established the religion through signs that magicians could not imitate, and not by fantasies of magic that have no truth in them.

So, we are compelled, seeing the absence from the Christian religion of earthly reasons by which other religions were established, to testify that it was accepted and established by the clear signs of God, and spread throughout all the different nations because of His true tokens. We are bound to accept the testimony about this from His books, since they report that the ones who proclaimed it performed great signs, and all the nations have accepted their books with all that they contain about this. If they had not performed the signs that they recorded that they had performed in their books, then their books would not have been accepted, nor would a word of what they said have been believed, for they would have demonstrated lies and falsehoods by recording in their books what they had not done. And also, if they wrote in their books about what they had not done or if they committed such foolishness, then people would not have accepted these false writings which were evidently untrue. For example, if a man in our time proclaimed a religion which he preferred, and wrote a book that he presented to those to whom he said that he had performed great signs in their presence so that they had accepted his religion because of them, and yet he had not done anything of this because he was a liar, people would have rejected his book without accepting a single word of it.

Thus, since we have seen these great kingdoms, numerous nations, and different languages agreeing together despite their different countries, kingdoms, and languages to adopt the religion based on the books they have in their possession in the belief that those who presented the books to them had performed great signs, we have concluded that they did indeed do this. For if they had not done it, these nations would not have agreed to accept their books and to testify that they performed them.

**SECTION FOUR: REFUTING THE ALLEGATION OF THE
CORRUPTION OF SCRIPTURE⁴²**

Since we hold it to be true that the Christian religion was established by signs, and that the gospel is the book of God made generally available to all peoples, and that God removed the signs and did not manifest them visibly after it was established in the world through them to convince intelligent people to accept that it was the book of God which was confirmed by His signs and wonders, then the whole world was bound to accept it and believe it. We are under no obligation to those who disagree with us to refute the allegations against it that it has been corrupted because of a lack of signs in our age. Since God desires to guide His creatures, His book is as true in the world now as it was at its inception, convincing intelligent people to bear witness to its veracity. It is the clear sign among the people and does not need the appearance of any other sign or wonder to fulfil this purpose, because of its veracity and its confirmation of that which was revealed in it.

But we are minded to clarify to lovers of truth the impossibility of mentioning corruption in the universally available book of God, which is for all God’s creatures. So I say, since we have shown it to be impossible that the book of the gospel was accepted without heavenly signs, because it was not enforced by the sword or established by earthly reasons but it was accepted in the world on account of clear signs and manifest tokens, it is also impossible that it has been corrupted without this being by force of signs. For since it was only accepted on account of the compulsion of signs, it follows that any charge of alteration or corruption could only be made after the compulsion of signs had been implanted in the hearts of the people. Signs were not performed by those who corrupted the books of God. Therefore, it is correct that no corruption of it happened after the nations accepted it, and that it is fixed in the form in which it was. We

⁴² This heading is not in the manuscript.

must also judge that which has gone before us by that which we have witnessed. If we imagine one city from among the cities in which there are different kinds of religions, our minds cannot conceive the agreement of one of them to corrupt their scriptures because of the variety of peoples' opinions and the lack of their compliance with each other, without someone who unites them on one thing.

The proof of this is that we see a division in each religion in the interpretation where some disagree with others so are not compliant with each other. If it was possible for people to agree to join together to alter what was brought down to them when they disagreed over the interpretation, then their difference in interpretation makes obvious the impossibility of what is claimed about their agreeing to alter what had been brought down to them. If there was compliance to agree on one thing or another concerning altering what had been brought down to them, then they would also have agreed on one thing in the interpretation. Therefore, it is evident that they did not agree and did not alter their scriptures unless someone gathered them together for one thing and prompted them to do it, because there was no one king among the kings of the Christians in the world who gathered them together to prompt them to alter the scriptures. It is clear that this would have been impossible.

If someone says that the widespread variety of opinions among all of them proves that there was corruption, as is said of the religious community of Byzantium, the religion of the king and similar statements, we say that Christianity is not in one country or in one kingdom, like other religions are. So which kingdom is accused of the corruption when you claim that its king has united everyone in it to do it? If you say, "Byzantium", we will concede this to you by forgiving you for this, because if you accuse the King of the West of wanting to corrupt his book then you will not find that he could have done this by himself since people had been instructed by it until they died. How then could the King of Byzantium do what others could not have done to corrupt a book, and give it up to those who disagree about it in

everything, and remove from it what he disagreed with and disliked, and confirm in it what he agreed with and liked?

But we will grant this to you until its capacity is narrowed and it is no longer possible to forgive you for it, so you know that we have not left you an excuse, and it becomes obvious to you that the allegation of corruption is absurd. We say, o you who claims that the king of Byzantium has corrupted the gospel which is in his possession, how is it that no difference is found between his gospel in his language and the gospels which are in languages which differ from his and are not under his power, and how is it that they have not received his instruction about the corruption? Therefore, the King of Byzantium is acquitted of the charge of having changed his gospel by the testimony of all the Gospels in many languages which were not under his power and that they did not receive instructions from him, because they agree with his text and his text agrees with them.

If he comes back and says, every King has prompted the people in his kingdom to corrupt the gospel, we say, but there are Christians whose king is not a Christian. We answer you regarding Christian kings, and then we turn to those whose king is not a Christian. We say, we said, was there some agreement among the Christian kings throughout the world concerning what was to be changed, what was to be removed, and what was to be left in its state? Or did each and every one of them on his own, change, add or delete? If you say, there was agreement, we say, you have arrived at what we have shown you is impossible, concerning the agreement of people with one another and the harmony of their opinions. In addition, where did you gain knowledge that one of them or all of them agreed on this corruption? It is either based on your own assumption, or on them informing you, or on your witnessing them when they gathered together to do it. I do not think that you claim to have witnessed them, or that they informed you. It is only your own assumption, and with the truth of your own assumption alone, you have not attained what would negate the certainty of the whole world. It is only your saying, and with the truth of your own

saying and your claim alone, you have not attained what would negate the book of God in the whole world.

I also ask you, where did they gather together, and in whose kingdom? It must be the case that all of them traveled to the kingdom of one king. Who is he? How did they trust one another, and how did everyone submit to the other, and how do you know this?

You may say, the messengers differed among themselves. I wish I knew what they wanted with all of this desire for corruption! Was it the exaltation of the Messiah that they wanted? Then why did they not remove from the gospel what demeans him from the description of childhood, upbringing, eating, drinking, crucifixion, death, burial, and other things? Why did the Jews and the other nations at that time neglect to record this and to inform them about it, when we see them claiming that the messengers did what they did not do? Or was it his demeaning that they wanted? Then why did they not withdraw his book at the beginning, since their aim was to demean its owner by removing from it what exalts him, such as his saying that he is the judge on the Day of Judgment, the Lord of the worlds, God the Creator of all things, and similar things to these?

Or did they want to remove his commands that were hard for them, and to affirm what was easy? Then why did they not withdraw the book at the beginning when it would have been easier for them? They could have invented a book for themselves as they desired and could have set down in it that when the Jews wanted to kill the Messiah and came near him he breathed on them and burned them, that he was raised to heaven alive, that death did not overcome him, that suffering did not affect him, and that a man may marry as many women as he wants. They could have forbidden the discipline of their bodies by fasting, commitment to prayers, and the abandonment of pleasure, just as the Magians did. This would have been more pleasurable and easier for them. Yes, and they could also have set down in it what they thought would be pleasurable for them in the afterlife, sexual intercourse, eating and drinking and the like, since their contempt for the book of God had reached the

point that they corrupted it as they wished. Yet they did not remove the hard things from it, such as his call to them to worship one who was crucified – I do not know anything harder for kings and those who have authority, power, and pride than belief in the worship of one who was crucified – such as his forbidding a man to marry more than one woman, such as his command to them to be humble and submissive, to bear injustice, to desist from pleasures and desires, and to be committed to fasting and prayers, and what is similar to them. Since they did not change what was burdensome for them to what was easy for them, as we have described, then it is clear that they did not change one letter of the book of God from its place.

If one of the people of insight says, we claim that it was not possible for them to corrupt the revealed text, they did corrupt the revealed text from its purpose and its meaning, but they did not corrupt the actual words themselves, we say, the gospel commands us to baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁴³ It states that the Word is eternal, and is God, by whom all things were created,⁴⁴ that the Spirit is the Lord,⁴⁵ that there is no marriage, or food or drink in the after-life⁴⁶ and many other things which are too countless to mention. This and many other similar things are in the text of the book without interpretation. See if any of these agree with your book.

As for the Son, you say, “The skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to completely collapse, since

⁴³ See Matthew 28:19.

⁴⁴ See John 1:1–2.

⁴⁵ See Matthew 12:32 where Jesus warns that sinning against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, and John 14:17, 25; and 15:26 where Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father.

⁴⁶ See Matthew 22:30, where Jesus denies that at the resurrection people will be married, and states that they will be like the angels with a different form than the physical body which needs food and drink to be sustained.

they name a son for the Most Merciful”.⁴⁷ And you say, “The Jews and the Christians say, We are sons of Allah, and His beloved. Say, Why then does He punish you for your sins? No, you are only human beings that He has created: He forgives whom He pleases, and punishes whom He pleases”.⁴⁸ As for the Father, you deny Him by your denial of the Son. As for the Spirit, you say the opposite, “It is from the command of the Lord”.⁴⁹ You say that it comes from the Lord, yet the book of God says it is the Lord. As for the Word, you say it is created, yet the gospel says that it is eternal and is God.⁵⁰

Regarding marriage, food and drink in the afterlife, you affirm these, yet the Gospel negates them. How then can the Gospel be turned in the direction of the meaning of your Book? This is absolutely impossible. If it was not for the weakness of your argument about this, I would have multiplied the testimonies which invalidate your statements. But I find it sufficient to refute you by your own words.

Therefore, it is clear that the gospel was not corrupted or altered, either in its revealed text or in its meaning, from what Christians agreed upon, and that it is the book of God which demands that the people of the world believe in it, submit to it, and accept all that is in it, whether clear or ambiguous things or things which are hidden from the knowledge of our opponents, so that the hearts of those who have not examined the books of God and have not known their ways are kept from believing in them. If they had been convinced of the truth, they would not have negated things that are clear from the book which they

⁴⁷ Q19:90–91.

⁴⁸ Q5:18.

⁴⁹ Q17:85. ‘Ammār pointedly contrasts the gospel as “the book of God” with the Qur’an which he regards as a human document only.

⁵⁰ Wageeh Mikhail argues cogently that the reference to the Word being created is probably a reference to the Mu’tazili doctrine of the createdness of the Word of God, according to Al-Ash’ari, *Maqālāt*, pp. 245–257. See Mikhail, ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s *Kitāb al-Burhān*, p. 134.

have condemned by their crude minds or misunderstood their hidden meaning. They have found fault with the book after it compelled them to witness that it was the sign of God which humans cannot imitate that was affirmed in the world. But they prefer what is easier for their tongues and hearts, and only accept things at first glance on account of their good appearance, without the patience to penetrate into their hidden depths, and if they contradict their good appearance, they discard them. They act like children who prefer what is easy for them and what appears good to them, and this is their wrongdoing. They are like the person who follows a broad path such as this by his ignorance, and pursues pleasure, which leads him into a thicket where a lion will eat him, instead of following a narrow and difficult path which will lead him to what is good for him.⁵¹

SECTION FIVE: DEBATE ABOUT THE TRINITY

We begin by asking them about the One who is spoken about lightly on their tongues, and who is easily believed in by them without them attempting to verify their knowledge of Him, in order to show that there is a contradiction in their belief in Him between the clear meaning of their beliefs and their representation of the Creator as lifeless, without life and word yet they describe Him as living and speaking. Then we will explain what we believe for those who want to benefit from it because we must question them over their teaching. How can they prove their claim that their book was established by signs from God? But we do not have to prove to them again that the gospel was accepted because of signs, so they should only ask us about something which it tells us and calls us to do, in terms of the soundness of our inquiry and our advice. This is like when wit-

⁵¹ See Matthew 7:13–14, where Jesus calls his listeners to enter the kingdom of God through a narrow gate rather than go through a wide gate that leads to destruction. He warns them that many people go through the wide gate but few go through the narrow one that leads to life because only a few find it.

nesses testify before the judge about the boundaries of a house, when the judge asks them to bear witness to it one after another.

I say, tell me, oh you who believes in the One, do you say He is living? If he says, yes, we say, does He have life in His eternal essence, as the soul of a human being has life in his substantial essence, or, is this life accidental, as a body has life which it receives from the outside and does not have life in the essence of its substance? If he says, He has life in His eternal essence, then, he says what we say. But, if he says, He does not have life in His eternal essence, nor does He have accidental life, we say, then do you not say He is living to confirm that He has life in His eternal essence and that it is not accidental? If he says, yes, we say, how are you entitled to use the name “the living One” when the name “the living One” is derived from life, since we call a human being “living” as long as life is in him, but when his living spirit leaves him, we call him “dead”? Since you are permitted to call Him living when his life is neither essential or permanent, and is not accidental by account of nature or nurture, you must call earth “living” even though it has no life, and you must call water “living” even though it has no life, and similarly, air, fire, and sky, and other inanimate things. This is because we only know what a thing is called by what it has. It is not called by what it does not have. Therefore, these four elements and what is similar to them are not called “living” because they have no life in their essences. Animals are not called “speaking”, because there is no speech in their essences. But the soul of a human being is called “living” and “speaking” because it has life and speech in its essence.

It is clear that he does not call Him “living” since he does not affirm that He has life and speech as we have explained, and he deprives his God of life and makes Him lifeless. May God be greatly exalted above that! We ask him again, why do you call Him living when you do not want to attribute life to Him? If he says, in order to deny that He is dead, we say, you must affirm what you have fled from in your saying that you have denied this, because if you call Him “living” in order to deny that He is

dead, you are absolutely obliged to attribute death to Him when you deny Him life and do not make it necessary for Him. This is because there is no difference between calling Him “living” in order to deny that He is dead, and not making life necessary to Him. So, you have made death necessary to Him, because if the name “living” denies the name “death”, then life remains under the name “death”. Similarly, we witness that everything which does not necessarily have life, whether it is essential or accidental, must without doubt be subjected to death since death is the opposite of life.⁵²

It is as if you say, this person is seeing, and we ask you, does he have sight? If you say, no, then you were lying in calling him “seeing” because the name “sight” has to be given to someone who has sight, and your saying, I did not want to affirm sight in him by my saying that he is seeing, but I wanted to deny blindness in him, demonstrates that while you wanted to deny that you have affirmed blindness, you have denied sight when affirming blindness. In the same way, the name “living” is only necessary when the meaning of life is necessary, and the name “death” is only negated when life is affirmed. So you, no matter what you want to claim by mentioning its name, you deny death. You can only call someone “speaking” when he has word in his essence. Just as you would never call an animal “speaking” because it does not have word in its essence, yet you would call the soul of a human being “speaking” because it has word in its essence. The opposite of speech is only negated by affirming word, and if it is not affirmed it follows, without doubt, that its opposite must be affirmed.

It is clear that the source of life and wisdom can only be described by the names “life” and “wisdom”. But he has negated

⁵² Sidney Griffith argues that the opponent of ‘Ammār is Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf who held that to say that God is living is to say that he does not have death. See S.H. Griffith, ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s Kitāb al-Burhān, p. 169.

their meaning and necessitated that God is non-living and non-speaking. Since he has fled from affirming the Word and the Spirit lest he makes three realities necessary in the essence of the Creator and nullifies his confession of the oneness of God, he has ended up completely nullifying the Creator, making Him lifeless, without life or word like idols which are called “gods”. But in His books God condemns those who worship them because they worship gods that have no life and no speech. He describes Himself in all of His books as having Spirit and Word. Just as He said by the mouth of David, “By the word of God the heavens were made, their starry hosts by His breath”,⁵³ and He said by the mouth of Job, “The Spirit of God created me”,⁵⁴ and He said by the mouth of Isaiah, “The word of our God stands forever”,⁵⁵ and from the mouth of David again when he said, “The word of our God stands firm in the heavens”,⁵⁶ and again, “Because of the word of God I praise God”.⁵⁷ Their sayings about the Word and the Spirit are too numerous for us to count or list in this writing.

We say, we are blameless before God concerning the accusation of speaking of three gods.⁵⁸ Rather, in our saying the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we only want to affirm the teaching that God is living and speaking. The Father is the one we refer to as having life and word. Life is the Holy Spirit, and Word is the Son. This is not, as our opponents attribute to us, that we make a female partner for God, and a son from her.⁵⁹ May God be exalted far above that. Just as the word is generated from the

⁵³ Psalm 33:6.

⁵⁴ Job 33:4.

⁵⁵ Isaiah 40:8.

⁵⁶ Psalm 119:89.

⁵⁷ Psalm 56:4.

⁵⁸ See Q4:171, where Christians are urged not to say ‘three’ when speaking of God.

⁵⁹ See Q72:3, “Our Lord is greatly exalted; He has not taken a female partner or a son.”

soul⁶⁰ ... but the understanding of subtlety and ambiguity cannot be achieved by the imaginations of the spiritual angels and the prophets who have been sent. We do not hold to a literal interpretation of the written letters for the word of the soul, which you suspect is happening. Because speech has four aspects: there is heard speech made apparent by the voice; there is visible speech made visible through writing; there is speech generated from the soul which is not expressed by the lips, is not made visible by ink, and is unseen by the eyes; there is the power of the soul by which we can deliver speech, have the power to do things, direct affairs, have authority over people, and subjugate animals. For this reason, it is the teaching of the people belonging to the Christian religion that the power of the soul is in the Word of God, but our imaginations fail to achieve complete understanding of this.

What they say about the life, I mean the Holy Spirit, is that it is essential and eternal, and it is not the life of accidental bodies which have no permanence or eternity, but it has not ceased to be and it will not cease to be, and has no need of anything and will not need anything forever and ever. For this reason, their saying that He is living and speaking is sound. It does not follow from this that they have spoken about three gods. Because we see that the soul, when word and life are affirmed in it, does not for that reason become three souls. Fire, when heat and light are affirmed in it, does not become three fires. The sun, when light and heat are affirmed in it, does not become three suns. Just as the soul, fire, and the sun are truly like this, so it is by the confirmation of substantial life and word in the soul that it becomes a living and speaking soul. If this were not so, it would be inanimate. By the confirmation of the heat and light in fire, it is completed by them and becomes a fire, and does not become water or anything else, and if it loses heat and light, it is not called “fire”. In the same way, the sun with its light and heat is

⁶⁰ In the manuscript there are two words following this that are not easy to understand.

called “the sun”, but if it were to lose light and heat, it would darken and become cold and would not be called “the sun”. You find that the soul, with its word and life is one soul, fire, with its heat and light is one fire and the sun, with its light and heat is one sun. Their threeness does not negate their oneness, and their oneness does not negate their threeness.

If someone says, how can you call the Word and the Spirit hypostases in God,⁶¹ but you do not call the word of the soul and its life hypostases, nor the heat of the fire and its light, nor the light of the sun and its heat? We say, we do this because of the perfection of the Creator and His being exalted far above His Word and His Spirit lacking perfection. Because for us, the hypostasis is a perfect thing, not deficient, and it does not need anything else for its establishment. These powers of the soul, the sun, and fire which we have mentioned lack perfection in power in comparison to the Creator since they are created. Because of this imperfection, they are not called hypostases. We did not give you these comparisons of created things with the Creator to imply that created things are perfect like the Creator, with the intention that just as you would call the three realities by which the Creator is known “hypostases” because of their perfections, so you would also call the three realities by which the created substances are known “hypostases”.⁶² If this were the case, then what would be the superiority of the Creator over created

⁶¹ The use of the term “hypostases” on the lips of the questioner is surprising given that the Christian has not introduced his definition of the Trinity. Theologians from all three main denominations in the Islamic empire agreed that God is one in essence and three in the hypostases of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They inherited this definition from Greek and Syriac traditions, and used the Syriac word for hypostases as (*qunūm/raqānīm*) when writing in Arabic.

⁶² Sara Husseini has pointed out that ‘Ammār does not use the term (*khawāṣṣ*) “property” for the hypostases in *The Book of the Proof* as he does in *The Book of Questions and Answers* but rather the term (*ma‘ānī*) “reality”. See S.L. Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 138.

things, if everything that you find in the Creator you necessarily relate to created things?

When we make this comparison, even though nothing can be compared with God,⁶³ the comparison is made to Him in the similarity that we have found in one thing known in three realities. The threeness of its realities does not negate the oneness of its substance, nor does the oneness of its substance negate the threeness of its realities. But it is established in its substance by its oneness, and in its realities by its threeness. This comparison cannot be similar in all things to what it has been compared with. Just as if someone had asked you to make him a statue of a king whom he had never seen, and when you sculpted it, he did not find it moving, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or walking, and he said to you, That man moves, sees, hears, tastes, smells, and so on, but this one has none of these qualities, so how can you say that you have made it like him? He would have treated you harshly because it was impossible for you to make the statue identical in every way to the one whose likeness you had made. If this was not called a likeness then surely it would be the original thing, particularly when the thing which is represented by it is not in your power to represent in all aspects. For this reason, we cannot give you a comparison from created things to the Creator in every aspect, because they are not alike, and you will not find any created thing perfect like the Creator to the extent that it has what the Creator has, so that it would be like the Creator in all aspects. From what you have witnessed, we have given you something that is one in its substance and three in its realities, so that this possibility is not denied, but we do not make it equal to the Creator. This is just like when you say that the Creator is one in reality. You do not want

⁶³ See Q42:11, where the Creator is described as making pairs of humans and animals but that these should not be compared with Him. The Mu‘tazilī Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf is reported to have relied on this text to deny that God could be compared to anything in His creation. ‘Ammār is clearly engaging with his argument.

to compare Him to an accident which is apart from the substance since He is one in reality.

You must not specify your Creator, in your belief in Him, by the lowliest things you witness. For you know that things are only identified in four types: either "substance" as when you say a human being; or "hypostasis" as when you say Moses, David or Solomon; or "power" as in the heat of fire or a ray of the sun; or "accident" as in the blackness of what is black and the whiteness of what is white. Substances and hypostases are the most perfect of these four things, because all substances have power, such as the heat of fire and the rays of the sun, yet they also carry accidents. Every substance also has two powers, such as the earth which has coldness and dryness, such as water which has coldness and wetness, such as fire which has heat and dryness, and such as air which has heat and wetness. All these things are one in their substances and three in their realities. Hypostases also are similar, just as when you say Moses, David and Solomon, then each of them exists by himself without depending on the other. But accidents and powers which are one in their realities do not exist by themselves as substances and hypostases do, for they need the substances which support them and are in them.

Yet you have appealed to the lowliest and poorest things, and to those things which depend on others for their sustenance. You have described your Creator by means of them and you have confessed His oneness in reality in comparison to them. Because heat is only in the reality of heat, coldness is only in the reality of coldness, whiteness is only in the reality of whiteness, and blackness is only in the reality of blackness. In your narrow description of Him, you are not allowing Him to have life and word so that He is complete in His essence by His life and His word. You could have attributed to Him the most honorable realities you could have found and not attributed to Him the most despicable, the meanest, and poorest realities you have witnessed. When Christian people found that the Creator is One yet known in three realities, and since substance to them was the most perfect reality that they could find which includes several hypostases, just as the substance of a human being includes all

of the hypostases of humanity, and since they wanted to affirm what they had validated before people, they called it “substance”. Since He is perfect and complete it was not appropriate that His realities be attributed to what they found to be lacking completeness, and since they witnessed hypostases being complete in themselves, not needing or lacking anything like accidents which depend on substances, which generally are one in reality, they called them “hypostases” after they had found this also mentioned in the gospel. What they have attributed to the Creator, that is declaring His oneness in substance and threeness in hypostases, is like what they found to be the most perfect of things. Similarly, since you found accidents and powers which are one in their meanings to be lowly, unlike that which was one in substance yet known in three realities, you have described the oneness of your Creator’s reality in the lowliest way.⁶⁴

If someone says, since you have affirmed that God has word and spirit, and you have said that He and these two are three hypostases, why do you not also affirm in Him, hearing, sight, wisdom, knowledge, authority, power, mercy, understanding, compassion, kindness, generosity, grace, will, and other similar substantial qualities? Just as you have called Him “living” and “speaking” by affirming life and word in Him, so you should also call Him “hearing”,⁶⁵ “seeing”,⁶⁶ “wise”,⁶⁷ “knowing”,⁶⁸ “au-

⁶⁴ Sidney Griffith argues that ‘Ammār once again critiques the position of Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf who believed that the adjective “knowing” designates an act of knowledge that is God. ‘Ammār points out that such a description of God makes Him an accident, that He is an accidental act of knowledge that is one. See S.H. Griffith, ‘Ammār al-Başrī’s Kitāb al-Burhān, p. 172.

⁶⁵ God is called “hearing” (*ṣamīʿ*) thirty-five times in the Qur’an.

⁶⁶ God is called “seeing” (*baṣīr*) twenty-nine times in the Qur’an.

⁶⁷ God is called “wise” (*ḥakīm*) seventy-eight times in the Qur’an.

⁶⁸ God is called “knowing” (*‘alīm*) ninety-six times in the Qur’an.

thoritative”,⁶⁹ “powerful”, “merciful”, “forgiving”,⁷⁰ “compassionate”,⁷¹ “kind”,⁷² “gracious”, “willing”, and other similar names. We say, we have arrived at this because we have found that life and speech belong to the origin of the essence and structure of the substance, and all the other qualities lack what these two have. For we see that earth is inanimate and that bodies have been made out of it because the reality of life separates it from what was formed from it, and for this reason we call bodies “animate beings”, but not the earth. Then we also see that animate beings are divided by the reality of speech, so that some of them are called “speaking”, I mean human beings, and the rest that remain speechless deserve to be called beasts and animals. Hearing, sight, mercy, forgiveness, compassion, generosity and kindness are only united together in the situation of the substance where there is no separation between any of them, because we see in one substance hearing and non-hearing, seeing and non-seeing, forgiving and merciful, and unforgiving and unmerciful, generous and kind, and ungenerous and unkind. Substances are not subject to these differences, and they do not change their situation so that they become divided into other substances, as we have seen the reality of life separating from the earth what is formed from it, so that they are called animate beings while it remains inanimate and lifeless. We have also seen the reality of speech separating the substance of animate beings so that some of them are called beasts and animals while others are called speaking. For this reason, we have affirmed life and speech in our description of the substantial essence of the Creator, since we have found that these two are original to the substance. Indeed, God has attributed them to Himself, and testimonies in His Books attest to this. We will demonstrate this in

⁶⁹ God is called “authoritative” (*qawī*) nine times in the Qur’an.

⁷⁰ God is called “forgiving” (*ghafūr*) seventy-six times in the Qur’an.

⁷¹ God is called “compassionate” (*rahīm*) ninety-two times in the Qur’an.

⁷² God is called “kind” (*karīm*) five times in the Qur’an.

detail later, explaining it more clearly than in this context, God willing.

As for hearing and seeing, you must not attach them to God as substances, because they are two members of the body installed in bodies which have been composed, but God does not have a body in which two members can be installed. However, we intend by saying hearing and seeing to mean knowing because we comprehend things by hearing and seeing, and God has spoken to us by what we can understand. He affirmed in Himself what is in us to make us understand His comprehension of things, because we would not have understood what we had no comprehension of except by this means.

As for justice, compassion, kindness, generosity, grace, mercy, and forgiveness, these are actions, since He uses them with His creatures. When He punishes them on the basis of what they deserve, they call Him “just”; when He is compassionate towards them, they call Him “compassionate”; when He favors them, they call Him “kind”; when He is generous and gracious to them, they call Him “generous” and “gracious”; when He is merciful to them and forgives them, they call Him “merciful” and “forgiving”. These actions are attributed to one who is speaking. Since speech is essentially affirmed in him, He can employ them and use them. For we do not say, we have seen a just lamb, or a kind or a generous elephant, or a compassionate or a gracious horse, or a merciful or a forgiving bull, because animals lack speech that the qualities of these and similar actions come from.

As for the will, there are two kinds. One of them is the will of compulsion, such as the will of what is not speaking, for what it performs by it is dictated by its nature, like ants which gather in summer what will sustain their life in winter, without discernment or wisdom on their part, but by what is natural to them. The other is the will of choice, such as the will of someone who chooses one thing, thinking about it before doing it for his benefit and the benefit of others. The will of choice is only attributed to someone who has word, for when word is affirmed in his substance he can choose, since making choices is a quality which is

not possessed by what does not have word. Will is not from the direction of the substance because it has nothing to do with differentiating us from animals, because we share wills with animals, and we are not differentiated from them by what we have in common but by the reality of speech which is affirmed in us by our superiority over them. As a result, we achieve what they do not by our differentiation from the inanimate earth, not by the existence that we share with them, but by the particular life that we have apart from them.

Similarly, our differentiation from animals is not by the life that we share with them, but is by the particularity of speech which we have. Likewise, it is not by the wills which we share with animals that we are differentiated from them, for the wills existing in us and in them became a will of choice in us because we have the quality of speech but a will of compulsion in them because of the absence of speech. So, the will is not in the structure of the substance, like life and speech. We have shown it to be true that will does not differentiate one substance from another like the substance of the animate beings is differentiated from the earth by life and the substance of those who speak is differentiated from other animate beings by speech.

This is demonstrated when we say, God wills us to do this or that, and He does not will such and such, and we want to worship Him and we do not want to deny Him. We say, He wanted us to worship Him in Jerusalem, but He does not want us to do the same today. But we cannot say the same about life and speech which are in the structure of the substance, as if God was living at another time, or was speaking then and is now not speaking. No, not according to what ought to be said about Him, what those with speech claim for Him by their speaking about the Noble Names.⁷³

⁷³ Q7:180, 17:110, 20:8, and 59:24 mention the most excellent names of God, *al-asma' al-ḥusna*, though 'Ammār calls them *al-asma' al-sharifa*.

As for power and strength, they are of two kinds. One is physical and the other is spiritual. As for the physical, it is like the strength of an elephant carrying men by its huge body, and like the strength of a camel carrying a burden by the strength of its body and its members. As for the spiritual, it is like the subtle strength of the soul, I mean its word by which it shows its commands and prohibitions and by which it hears things and obeys them. Yet animals, which have stronger bodies than humans are subdued by spiritual power which directs the affairs of the world and controls its economy. So, the power and strength of God are not in members, as we have described the strength of physical beings, because He does not have a body. But this is like the strength of the soul that we have mentioned, I mean His word by which heaven and earth were established.

As for wisdom and knowledge, they are only attributed to a speaker who has wisdom. We do not call “wise” or “knowledgeable” what is not speaking just as we do not say, I saw a knowledgeable donkey or a wise bull. But we call speakers “wise” and “knowledgeable” just as we call Aristotle “wise” on account of the rightness of his words in composing books of logic, and we call Galen “knowledgeable” because of what he composed in medical books and his achievements in medicine. Wisdom and knowledge are connected to the word since they are only attributed to one who has word. So, when you see someone who has word understanding existing things as they are and distinguishing between them, then you call his word “knowledge”. When you see him understanding by his word how they exist and the reasons for their existence, you call it “wisdom”. If wisdom and knowledge were other than what we have described, since you see some people who are wise and others who are not wise, some who are knowledgeable and others who are not knowledgeable, it would entail that their substances should be different and be differentiated from each other so that the substance of the wise is not the substance of the one who is not wise, and the substance of the knowledgeable is not the substance of the one who is not knowledgeable. Just as when you see some animate beings speaking, such as human beings, and others not speaking, such as beasts, you conclude that the sub-

stance of the one speaking is not the substance of the one that cannot speak, I mean spiritual speech. If the expression of the latter is prevented by illness, then his speech and his thinking are not negated in his soul and are not excluded from the substance of those who speak.

Similarly, we say of the Word of God when we see Him knowing things as they are and surrounding them by His comprehension, we call it “knowledge”. When we see Him governing their administration and directing them, we call it “wisdom”. Therefore, it is demonstrated that wisdom and knowledge are connected to the word and that they are only attributed to the wisdom and knowledge of one who speaks, who has word. So, it is clear that nothing ought to belong to the structure of the substance and the essence of its nature except life and word. For this reason, the Holy Gospel and the books which preceded it, attribute the Spirit and the Word to the essence of the Creator. Christianity was not obliged by this to incorporate partition or division in the Creator, because partition and division only apply to bodies, and God does not have a body. We do not see the subtle spiritual soul embodied, partitioned, or divided by affirming life and word in the essence of its substance, but by our conjecture, we know that this not by its becoming embodied, or being partitioned or divided. We do not see fire becoming embodied, or being partitioned, or divided by our affirming heat and light in it, for we know that it is the subtlest element because it is invisible in its essence, intangible, and untouchable but hidden in bodies by its subtlety, and that it is a substance which is not felt, and does not burn by its heat, yet because of its subtlety, its heat and light are assumed to be in it and of it. Likewise, it shows the heat and light which are in its essence, when it appears by its relationship with that which is other than it, and it is not divided or partitioned with its subtlety and the existence of these meanings in it.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Sara Hussein shows that ‘Ammār engaged more fully with Muslim thought about the attributes of God than any of the other contemporary

Therefore, God, may His praise be magnified, since we also know by conjecture that He is One, exists in three realities, as long as we do not assume that He has any partitions or divisions, since these are applicable to bodies, and He does not have a body. We find this in some of His creatures, without them being divided or partitioned. This is to be accepted on the basis of what He announced to us in His book which He authenticated to us by its appearing with His overwhelming signs. We believe that He is one substance known in three hypostases; that He surrounds heaven and earth without being limited; that He is invisible, eternal, never ending; and that He lasts forever and ever.

**SECTION SIX: DISCOURSE ON THE UNITING [OF DIVINITY
AND HUMANITY IN THE MESSIAH]**

Since we have explained what we believe in our faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that we believe that He is one Creator of everything who embraces all things, we leave aside the questions and answers that could be multiplied concerning this, not wanting to lengthen the book, and we turn to what they condemn us for saying, that the Messiah is the Son of God. They stirred up people against us by their account about us that we say that “God took a female companion and had a son from her”.⁷⁵ May God be greatly exalted far above that. When we mention that God manifested His plan in a body of ours, they allege that we say that He descended into the womb of Mary and His essence was confined in her, and when we mention that the Messiah was crucified, they allege that we impute weakness to God, and when we mention baptism, taking the Eucharist as

Christian theologians writing in Arabic. However, she argues that despite the fact that he does not consider hypostases to be attributes, by following the logic of comparing hypostases to attributes, he ran the risk of undermining the Trinity by making the Son and the Holy Spirit mere attributes of the Father. See S.L. Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 200.

⁷⁵ Q72:3.

the body and blood of the Messiah, and our belief that our reward in the eternal world is not in marriage, food or drink, they oppose us in all of this. We will prove in all of this the grace of God towards spiritual and physical beings, and His revelation of life from death to human beings, and of their ascent from earth to heaven, the place of eternity and immortality.

I will begin with what they found to be most repulsive and most repugnant to them, when it became lodged in their hearts that we say that “God took a female companion and had a son from her”.⁷⁶ I say about all of this that before God we cannot be suspected of saying that He took a female companion. Even if one of us could exalt himself above that, how could he attribute this to his Creator? May God be greatly exalted far above that. But we call the Word of God “Son” just as the gospel reports. We do not say that the Word of God is a body. But since you find one of His creatures, I mean the spiritual and subtle soul, generating its own words in a way which you do not understand or comprehend, why do you not say this about the Word of God which is beyond the comprehension of both spiritual angels and human beings?

I would like to ask them why they find repugnant our calling the Word “Son” just as in the books of God? Is it perhaps because we find that our sons only exist through sexual intercourse, which we are ashamed to reveal, and we consider the sperm by which they exist to be dirty so that that we cleanse ourselves of it, yet their creation comes from it, and they remain in the darkness of the womb for nine months, then they come out by strong labor pains through a narrow uterus with a lot of blood? Therefore, we inform them that we are blameless before God from all of this, because in our opinion the Son does not have a body and he does not possess members, or flesh or blood. His eternal birth is not from the body of a woman, rather he is the Word of God that is not confined or perceived. His generation is

⁷⁶ Q72:3 is repeated here.

far above the description of the generation of light from the sun and speech from the soul.

If it is because our sons exist in a moment of time, then we inform them that the Son is eternal and has no beginning in time. If it is because the sonship of our sons changes when they become fathers and then they become grandfathers, and then after that they die, so that what they were called before is negated, then this is a proof of the weakness of the meaning of what they were called. We inform them that their sonship is changed and transferred to something else until it too is negated, which is the case because these names are not from their own essences, but they are borrowed from fatherhood. The sublime sonship which is in the essence, does not change, is not transferred, and is not negated, but becomes an example of sonship so that others can be inferred from it, even though the example does not contain the completeness of the thing that it represents. It is known that a son of ours is not an act of the father but is from his substance, and that fatherhood does not precede sonship, since a man is not called a father until he has a son, so fatherhood and sonship must be together. It is also the case with the Word of God when called “Son”, it is not an action of His, but is from the essence of His substance. It was not His act but it was from His substance. His substance is eternal, it does not cease to be and He is never without it. If He had been without Word at any point in time, it would have to be said that He was not speaking or knowing. If a father from among us, in his being created at the time of his appearing, before the name of fatherhood was applied to him, precedes the son in his being created at the time of his appearing, it is because they are two created bodies, a created one creates, one is after the other. In addition, fatherhood and sonship do not belong to the essence of them, but they were loaned names of what belongs to the Creator in His essence, because He has given us all of the noble names which He has in His essence, such as “living”, “wise”, “knowledgeable”, and “speaking” among others.

It can only be inferred from the naming of the Word as “Son”, since we know that a created son is from the essence of the sub-

stance of the father and is not his act, that the Word is from the substance of God and is not His act, not that God is a body in which another body was created. But since fatherhood and sonship are two properties created together in us, one cannot lack the other, since a father and son from among us are created in time. We must know that fatherhood and sonship in the essence of the Creator are eternal, one did not precede the other, since there is nothing in the essence of the Creator that is created or which precedes or follows. When an example is given to us about one thing, we do not apply it to everything, but we limit it to the meaning that is intended by it. Just as when our Creator calls us by His noble names which belong to Him in His essence, such as “living”, “wise”, “knowledgeable” and “speaking”, so that it can be inferred from their nobility that they are His and that they are not from our essence, then He favors us by granting us these names. We are not permitted, since we have seen them created in us because we are created, to say that they are also created in the Creator, for He is eternal. But since they are in reality from the Creator and are given to us on loan, we must say that they are eternal in Him. While they are temporal for us, they are eternal for Him, since in us they are changing and transitory in this world.

We find the names “fatherhood” and “sonship” the noblest of these names, the greatest blessing to us, and the most valued by us. Since by the blessing of what we were given of these names from one spirit in male and female, the world has become full of humans, males and females, and the world has flourished so that it is known that the world is multiplied and maintained by them. Although the properties of the Creator who created the world did not begin with them, He multiplied us by naming us by them. If the blessing of what was loaned to us by these names was not what was meant earlier by Adam being called “living”, “knowledgeable”, “speaking”, and similar things, surely he would have died along with his wife, they would have been destroyed, the world would have been destroyed, and by its destruction, the afterlife would also have been destroyed. So, the blessing, increase, and maintenance of creatures is only by what we have been honored with by the Creator who has named us

by what He has in His essence of fatherhood and sonship, because they are not in our essence, since if we were to return to it, we would only find death and our return would be to that from which we originated, I mean, the dead earth.

If it is because our sons have bodies, then we inform them that the meaning of fatherhood and sonship, from our point of view, is not that of a physical father. They have nothing of this in their essence, because a man may remain for some time without being called a father until another body is created from him, and so they both together are entitled to the names “fatherhood” and “sonship”, and then the name “sonship” is handed on from the son when he is named “father” which is not taken away from him by death.

So why, oh listener, do you have an aversion to our mentioning fatherhood and sonship when they are not physical? It is possible that one human being proceeds from another human being like him without the first being called a father and the second a son, just as Eve proceeded from Adam, yet she was not called his son, and he was not called her father, and just as fruit comes from a tree, yet the tree is not called a father, nor the fruit a son. This is also the case with beasts when they give birth, they are not called fathers and sons, just as you say lion cubs, dog pups, and lambs of sheep, and they are not called sons or fathers lest they share with human beings in the dignity of fatherhood and sonship which are two properties of the Creator.

Oh, human being, your Creator, may His praise be exalted, has honored you with what is not in your substance. You suppose that it is from your essence, and this has become an imperfection for you, and you have changed what is worthy of praise to slander and rebuke. We will tell you after this that the Son of God does not have a body but embraces everything, is not limited, and cannot be comprehended by rational minds.

If it is because of the honor and praise given to Him, according to them, when it is said that, “He does not beget and is not begotten”,⁷⁷ then the one who says this should know that if the praise given to Him, according to them, when it is said that, “He does not beget and is not begotten”,⁷⁸ then praise should be given to worms, bedbugs, mosquitoes, nits, and everything that is formed in an embryo and comes into being; and praise should be given to locusts, for they plant something which has no form or life, then it takes form and comes into being shortly after that; and praise should be given to sparrows, swallows, wasps, chickens, hens and all kinds of birds which lay eggs, for birds do not give birth to birds; and praise should be given to trees, plants and herbs; yes, and to what does not have life, grains, seeds, rocks and stones; and to the whole of nature; and to what is inanimate, I mean earth, water, air and fire. Each of these does not beget and is not begotten.

If all these animate beings and inanimate things which we have mentioned are the lowliest in the world, and if human beings that have fatherhood and sonship are the most exalted in the world; yes, and if the animate beings which beget and are begotten, even though they are not called fathers and sons lest they share with human beings in this dignity, are more exalted than those things which do not beget and are not begotten, then it will be clear to them that they only see deficiency and despicability in that which does not beget and is not begotten, and honor and high rank in that which is begotten and begets. If that which was not begotten is the most exalted thing, then Eve who was not begotten would have been more exalted than anything; and Satan who does not beget and is not begotten would have been more exalted than Abraham the friend of the Most Merciful.⁷⁹ If fatherhood and sonship were deficiencies then there would be nothing in the world more deficient than human be-

⁷⁷ Q112:3.

⁷⁸ Q112:3 is repeated here.

⁷⁹ See Q4:125, where Abraham is called the friend of God.

ings who live in it, and there would be nothing higher in rank than beetles, worms, bugs, mosquitoes and everything we have described of animate beings and inanimate things. Each of them does not beget and is not begotten.

Since we have found that a human being is the most dignified of all things, and more honored by God than them or even the angels, we know that dignity and exaltation are in what is begotten and begets. If this depended on choice then He would have given them high rank and dignity; yet He did not make the human deficient or base, since despicability and deficiency are in that which does not beget and is not begotten. We are certain that our dignity and our high rank are given to us by the application of the names, “fatherhood” and “sonship”. They are properties of the Creator, may His praise be exalted, as He reported in His pure and holy book which was established in the world by the resurrection of the dead and wonders which cannot be described. We know that our Creator has not left out any of His properties and His noble names which He has in His essence, but He has called us by them, such as “living”, “knowing”, “wise”, “speaking”, “king”, “powerful”, “mighty”, “strong”, “capable”, “kind”, “generous”, “merciful”, and similar things that are in Him. A human being is called by all of these names yet the Creator alone merits them and not His creation. Praise be to Him for His favor, His beneficence and blessing.

If it is because they see them in human beings, and according to them it is not appropriate to attribute to God what human beings have, then we say that if a human being is called “living”, “knowing”, “generous”, “kind”, “gracious”, “full of favor”, and what is similar to these, then they cannot call the Creator by them as well.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Wageeh Mikhail points out that Abū Qurra argues in a similar way for similarities between God and Adam, and observes that many human characteristics can be ascribed to God. See Abū Qurra, ‘Treatise on the Existence of God’, pp. 224–7, and W.Y.F. Mikhail, ‘*Ammār al-Baṣrī’s Kitāb al-Burhān*’, pp. 206–7. See also M. Beaumont, *Christology in Dia-*

If they say, all of these names belong to the Creator yet He has preferred and honored us by calling us by them, we say, Why do you not also include fatherhood and sonship? Is this too amazing, or too human? It is by His being amazing, and the greatness of His power, and the blessing of His name that the world multiplied, and so we are found in it, and by our existence in this world we will find the world which does not pass away.

If they say, they are deficiency in us, we have enumerated for them aspects of deficiency yet we have excluded them from fatherhood and sonship which are amazing, beyond comprehension, and too exalted to be described. What argument do they have, after the removal of the mention of deficiency, in their neglecting to add them to these names which we have mentioned? I would like to oppose them over what, according to them, they find to be a deficiency, like mercy which only exists for them by pain to the heart through it being squeezed, and anger which does not exist for them until it changes what existed before it, and contentment which only happens for them for the cause of advancing their knowledge of what was decreed for them after it, so that they exclude that and also everything that is similar to it from the Creator. Because if there is anything that they find deficient, according to them, they do not attribute it to their Creator, so they must not attribute to Him mercy, contentment, discontent, anger, and what is similar to them. Yet if

logue with Muslims: A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries, (Oxford: Regnum, 2005), pp. 69–70, for a comparison of the arguments of Abū Qurra and ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī concerning fatherhood and sonship. Abū Qurra argues that God’s attributes of hearing and wisdom do not imply that human hearing and wisdom are the same and therefore it follows that divine begetting is not the same as human begetting. So the title, “Father” should be acceptable to Muslims since anthropomorphic titles attributed to God such as seeing and hearing do not demean Him. See Abū Qurra’s treatise, ‘God has a Son who is equal in nature and who exists forever with Him’, in C. Bacha, *Les oeuvres arabes de Théodore Aboucara, Évêque d’Haran*, (Beyrouth: imprimerie Alfawaid, 1904), 91–104, p.94.

they do not attribute these to Him, surely it will entail they themselves being judged by Him, for they do not believe in Him and His books which describe these things about Him. They may come back and say, we name Him by these things, yet we exclude from Him the deficiency that is evident in us. I say, why do you not attribute to Him fatherhood and sonship, while excluding from Him the deficiency which exists in us? I do not think they have an argument besides being afraid of this, for their hearts are not on intimate terms with Him because of their timidity concerning what they might experience in the future from Him, because of fear of the appearance of things without examining their inmost secrets.

SECTION SEVEN: CONFIRMATION OF THE INCARNATION

As for the revelation of the Creator to His creatures in a human being from among us, and that just as He, may His names be hallowed, embraces heaven and earth and neither the subtlety of the spiritual angels nor the innermost thoughts of humans can comprehend Him, similarly the profundity of His direction, grace, generosity and kindness in His revelation to His creatures cannot be known, and only His knowledge which embraces all things is capable of comprehending this. Nevertheless, in any event, we will mention some of what His books have indicated about Him concerning this, even though we know that they mention only a few things which weak human beings have a capacity to understand. We will explain this in a way that should compel rational people to believe it.

Before we explain the grace of the Creator to His creatures in this, we must mention what preceded His grace to them and His kindness and generosity to them, so that what we will explain about the beginning of these, which our opponents join us in affirming will be a witness for us against their disagreement with us when we describe the completion of His grace to His creatures, since there is a resemblance between the beginning of the generosity of God which they do not mention and the completion of His favor which they deny. He indicated this by the resemblance of these two actions of the One who is known by

them, who began by providing a little and then completed it with abundance, and made them proceed from smallness to greatness, just as He made the mind of a human being and his body proceed from small to great, and from having little to having much knowledge.

So, I say that the Creator, may His praise be exalted, is eternally one, living, knowing, and independent of others, and He made by His kindness and generosity creatures which can be divided into two kinds, visible and invisible, physical and spiritual. Both kinds are then divided into three kinds: the kind which is living and speaking, such as spiritual beings; the kind which is living but not speaking, such as beasts, animals, birds, and insects; and the kind which is inanimate, not living, such as heaven, earth, water, fire, air and other inanimate things. Then He created humanity from all of this, and established him as one person whose spirit comes from spiritual beings, and whose body comes from physical beings. He gathered in his body the power of the four elements, heat, cold, dryness and humidity. So, he became a representative of all the creatures, and the two types regarded as spiritual and physical were joined together in him. The power of the four different elements of which the world is made are found in him in order to demonstrate, by the gathering together of everything that is opposite and contradictory in him, that their Creator is one despite the differences in them, and that He gathered all of them in one thing which He made from them all. He includes all of His creatures when He honors an individual human, since he is their representative like a noble person who is given something great. Just as He acquired for him two great things, one of them is earth and the other is heaven, and He made him dwell at first in the lowest of these two houses, that is earth, after He had it decorated with all the lights hanging from its ceiling, and supplied him with servants, and provided him with food, drink, clothing and everything that he needed. He made him king over everything on earth and made subject to him what is on the land and in the sea, in order to transfer him afterwards to heaven, where he, through the difference between the two houses, will know the excellence of the honor which he will achieve compared with what he had been transferred from,

and his happiness will be on account of what he experiences other than that.

Since we have explained the grace and generosity of God to humanity then we say, The Creator, may He be exalted and glorified, since He commenced humanity by joining together in humanity both spiritual and physical creatures from His generosity, as we have described, then rational people must know that the Creator will complete what He commenced so that nothing is left undone of any of His actions, since the Creator created humanity from His generosity and not from His need, and it is not possible to attribute to the Creator the beginning of grace which is not completed, for He is generous and not stingy. The commencement which we have described, and His making a house for us that He called for to be built and completed, must testify to His generosity and kindness in the completion of what He began.⁸¹ So, we will briefly mention four reasons, that are known to be reasons, why the Creator revealed Himself to His creatures to complete what He had commenced in humanity from His generosity and kindness, thus manifesting His wisdom and justice through this.

The first reason manifests His wisdom and justice and His love for His creatures in drawing them step by step to knowing Him, and establishing Himself among them, since He could not be comprehended by the way they comprehend and understand. As this is attested to in His plan, according to what we have mentioned, to reveal Himself in a body like ours, I say that God, may He be exalted and glorified, did not imprint His knowledge in our substance as He imprinted knowledge of things in what has no word without them learning about them, like a bee which

⁸¹ Wageeh Mikhail shows that Abū Qurra and Abū Rā’īṭa both cited the generosity of God as the reason for the incarnation. For Abū Qurra see his treatise ‘A Reply to the One who Refuses to Attribute the Incarnation to God’, in C. Bacha *Les Œuvres arabes de Théodore Aboucara*, 180–186, p.180, and for Abū Rā’īṭa see S.T. Keating, *Defending the “People of Truth”*, p.120. See Mikhail, pp. 226–227.

has imprinted in it the knowledge of collecting honey and of making hives where it puts the honey, and like a spider which has imprinted in it the knowledge of making a house for itself.⁸² He did this so that our praise for knowing Him would not be futile like praising a lamb for its gentleness and its state of calm would be futile since this is its nature, and blaming a wolf for its cunning and recalcitrance would be futile, since these things are imprinted in it. If God had imprinted knowledge of Him in our substance, surely, He would not have found any of us who was ignorant of Him or did not know Him, or anyone who was ignorant of Him at one time and then changed to knowing Him at another time, since our substance was one, and for that reason we needed our Creator to make Himself known to us, since He called us to know Him, and ordered us to worship Him, yet He is not limited to a place, but embraces all places. For He and all angels and humans are comprehended by our senses, since we only comprehend things by them, and our minds only know what is indicated by them. Indeed, many people have disagreed in classifying what is indicated by them, to the extent that what we comprehend by them is what is true for us, yet what our minds deduce does not resemble anything which our senses perceive. What is not pictured in the imagination is not firmly fixed in the soul, and believing in it is exceptionally difficult, and it is only possible through words, as well as through the conviction of evidence that the senses have also perceived.⁸³

If you achieve your deduction and you want to verify it for yourself, and you do not find that it is fixed in your imagination, its existence will be negated by you. We have already seen all people joining together to affirm their bodies because they comprehend them by their senses, yet disagreeing about their souls,

⁸² The Qur'an has two *sūrah*s 16 and 29, named after these two insects, the bee and the spider.

⁸³ Wageeh Mikhail points out that the same argument is made by Abū Rā'īṭa. See Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth"*, p. 116. See Mikhail, p. 230.

since their senses do not comprehend them, in spite of the evidence of the logic, wisdom, direction, and closeness of their souls that indwell their bodies, so that many people negate them and deny that they have souls, yet they speak with the logic of their souls when they negate them. Many disagree about this, and the theories they discuss about this are too lengthy to mention.

God, may His praise be exalted, knew that our knowledge of Him was not firmly fixed in our souls, that our worship of Him was not pure and that it was not pleasant for us, since our sight did not perceive Him, and our imagination did not conceive Him until our souls were convinced of His existence, and doubt about Him was banished from our hearts. Since it would only be by appearing to us, by speaking to us by means of what our senses could perceive, commanding and forbidding us, and calling us to worship Him in only one place and not any other since we could not worship Him in every place, He spoke to Adam, Abel, Cain, Noah, and Abraham, as if He were human, just as the Torah says. He commanded them and forbade them, and they saw Him. He spoke to Moses from a bush, just as our opponents believe,⁸⁴ and He spoke to him from a cloud just as a man speaks to his friend, according to what the Torah reports. Then, after that, He commanded the children of Israel to build a house of stone with an ark of wood so that He could dwell in it, and He spoke to them from it, and received their sacrifices as if He were contained in it. He called it His house, since the house belonged to Him. He was known by His acquaintance with it, by His living in it, in order that their sight, their thinking, and their worship of Him and their prayers to Him should be directed towards one place, as if it contained Him. This was so that their thoughts

⁸⁴ See Q27:7–9. Mikhail notes that Abū Qurra does not understand how Muslims who believe that God appeared to Moses in the burning bush can so easily deny the manifestation of God in the Body of Christ in his treatise, ‘A Reply to the One who Refuses to Attribute the Incarnation to God’, p. 185. See Mikhail, p. 230.

would not wander everywhere searching for Him and not finding Him, since He cannot be seen, and imaginations cannot perceive Him. Thus, He became contained and confined, while not being affected by anything which depended on Him, so that people might turn back from denying Him and disbelieving in Him.

We have already seen that those who disagree with our teaching refer to their book for the direction of God concerning what they should do, which is similar to what we have described of the need of people for the direction of God for them. They say that God said He is a hearer and seer,⁸⁵ and this is not because He has hearing or sight but because He spoke to people in a way they could understand. They say that He attributed the properties of hearing and seeing to Himself even though He is exalted far above them. Similar to this is His saying that, although He knows everything, He forgets,⁸⁶ He provides,⁸⁷ He is angry,⁸⁸ and He is pleased,⁸⁹ and what is like these things that belong to creatures and are not appropriate for the Creator. Similar to this is His saying that He has a house which He commanded them to pray towards from every place,⁹⁰ as if He were in it and not anywhere else, and the house were only known by its owner dwelling in it and by his acquaintance with it. He made them believe that the house confined Him in order to affirm Himself among them, and to show the need for people to turn their faces towards one place which He referred to Himself. If He spoke to them from that house, or spoke to their prophet just as He spoke to Moses from the bush, or spoke to the priests of the children of Israel from the ark, then this would have been the strongest con-

⁸⁵ "God is hearing and seeing," is found ten times in the Qur'an in 4:58, 134; 17:1; 22:61, 75; 31:28; 40:20, 56; 42:11; and 58:1.

⁸⁶ Q9:76.

⁸⁷ Q16:91.

⁸⁸ Q16:106; 47:28; 48:6; and 58:14.

⁸⁹ Q5:119; 48:18; and 9:100.

⁹⁰ Q2:144, and 149–150.

firmation of His being among them, and the clearest proof of His kindness to them, that the house was His house by appearing in it and speaking from it just as He spoke from other places. There is no difference between us and them in what we have mentioned, and there is no defect in it, for He spoke to Moses from what is less than this, I mean a miserable, dishonorable and fruitless bush.

Since we have explained the need of people for this and described the direction of God for them and the conviction of our opponents being like this, then they and all rational people who believe in the books must know that the appearance of God to people in a human being from among them is a better likeness of His favor, His generosity, and His kindness, and is a stronger confirmation of His being and His existence among them, and is a clearer proof of His kindness to them and His honoring them in His appearing in the image and likeness of a human being, than in a house of stone, an ark of wood, a miserable tree, a cloud, and similar things. He has not neglected to do what was better and more like Himself. But they ask us to confirm this for them from His books and from that which proves to rational people that He did indeed do it, so that they will not deny that He did it, but will be convinced that His favor is in it. This is confirmed for them, and they ought to accept it and believe in it.

The second reason is that which demonstrates His love for His creatures, His pleasure in introducing joy to them, His removal of doubts from them, His showing kindness to them, and giving them their wishes and desires. I say about it that there is nothing more desirable to human beings, or more delightful to their eyes, or more pleasing to their souls than knowing everything until nothing is hidden, just as we see people exerting great effort to count the stars, study alchemy, predict omens, tell fortunes, and so on, and people rushing to look at tricks of magic and so on, because they desire to understand and comprehend their reality. So, when it is reported to them that a prophet has appeared, they long to see him and find favor with him. What is of greater value, more important, or more desirable to them

than seeing their Creator, the one who brought them into being, who is in charge of their development, who made heaven and earth for them? This is like when Moses, son of ‘Imrān, the prophet, wanted this, so he asked his Lord to show Himself to him,⁹¹ and it is like many of our opponents who say they will see God on the day of resurrection.⁹² There is no grace greater in value to them or more important to them than seeing Him. Similarly, we see many people, through their desire to see their gods which they name idols, regarding them with His name and worshipping them. Therefore, rational people must know that God, since He is not comprehended, and since it was from love for His creatures and consideration for them which He shows in His actions and reveals from His grace and generosity, did not withhold from giving to His creatures their wishes and desires by appearing to them in a body which their senses can grasp. Since all of this is the case, He lifted them up and benefitted them and did not demean or diminish Himself, but rather He demonstrated His generosity by doing it. Since He began by appearing to them in the form of a human being without a real body, and in a bush, and an ark of wood, and other things apart from them, it is understandable that He would do this in a real body of theirs, which was more honorable for Him, and by which He honored them more and His grace was greater, and by His generosity and kindness He was more like them and more fitting for them, and He did not hold back from doing what was fitting for them. If they ask us to verify the truth of this for them, then it cannot be

⁹¹ Q7:143.

⁹² Q75:22–3. Mikhail argues that ‘Ammār does not say that “all Muslims” believe that they will see the face of God, but refers rather to “many of our opponents”, a clear reference to the variety of Islamic interpretations and understandings of the abovementioned text. According to Al-Ash‘arī, abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf argued that God can only be seen by the heart. But the adherents of the *ḥadīth* and *sunnah*, on the other hand, maintained that on the Day of Resurrection God will be seen just as “humans can see the crescent moon”. See Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, pp. 218, and 321. See Mikhail, pp. 236–237.

denied by them, because His action is better and more similar to the favor of God and His generosity. Thus, He does this, and they must accept it and believe it.

Concerning the third reason which demonstrates His favor and justice, we say, since God commanded His servants to obey Him and forbade them from disobeying Him, prepared for them His reward for obedience and His punishment for disobedience, informed them that He would judge every human being according to his deeds, that He is not comprehended, and that eyes cannot see Him, rational people must know, since according to them it is revolting that the judge is hidden from those he judges, which is not just according to them, and which is not good according to God either, that in the place where a division between heaven and hell is decided and carried out, the judge sees the one he judges, while the one being judged by him does not see the judge. God is all the worthier for doing what is more fitting and better than His creatures. They know that He spoke to us in His books, not according to His power, but according to what we can understand by ourselves. He spoke to us about Himself though He did not have to do it, and on the day of resurrection, the day when He will judge us, He will not treat us according to His power, but according to His justice. He must appear to us in something which our senses can perceive, but since He cannot reveal Himself in His essence, He therefore made this a veil between us and Him. Thus, the hopeful and the fearful will fix their eyes on the one from whom the judgment will come, and they will gaze on Him. The obedient person does not expect a decree concerning his reward where he cannot see anything, and the fearful person is not condemned to punishment without seeing the judge. If He were to do the opposite of what He had informed us about in His books, in His words to us which we can understand before our coming to Him and standing before Him, He would reduce us to poverty when we receive what is due to us, and so we would be compelled to accept what is imposed on us. This is not like His actions, or His justice, or His wisdom. The worthiest, the most notable, the most honorable, the noblest and the most similar thing for His veiling is the substance of a human being.

Concerning the fourth reason which demonstrates the completion of His grace and generosity, we say, since our Creator did not create us because of His need, but in order to bestow grace on us by His generosity and to fashion us into His nobility, then there is nothing greater in value to us, or more profound in honoring us and honoring all of His creatures which are gathered together with us, since He gave us authority in this passing world over everything which is in it, than that He completes this by giving us authority in the eternal world. Since we have the names of rule and authority which we do not possess in our essence, yet our Creator has conferred on us what He possesses and is entitled to, they will not be taken from us in the situation of our reward in the eternal world. By being elevated through His dignity in the situation of our reward in the eternal world, we will be worthier and more deserving of the strength of the meaning of this, and God, by completing the generosity which He commenced, will be more like His generosity.

After having demonstrated in this context how the names of rule and authority could be established in one of us so that they include everyone, and since we have mentioned some of the reasons which the books of God indicate concerning the direction of the manifestation of the Creator to His creatures in a human being from among humanity, and we have compelled rational people to know the truthfulness of this and to give up rejecting it, since it is more like the favor of the Creator and His blessing, His power, His justice and His wisdom, then we will produce an answer from each section concerning the meaning of the direction of God in this so that there will be one arrangement that is not disunited to the one who inspects it. So we say, since God, may His praise be glorified, made humanity by His generosity and kindness and knew that humanity would need to know Him and to have evidence of His generosity, because human sight does not perceive Him and a human mind does not completely grasp Him, He made Himself known to humanity in a way that a human being could comprehend, that his senses could perceive, and in which his soul could be at peace. Thus, He set out His plan for doing this and appeared to humanity in His image at one time, in a bush at another time, in a cloud at another, and

appeared to humanity in other ways too. Was there anything of greater value to humanity, more important and more desirable than His appearing to human beings in what was closer to human beings than the things in which He had appeared, than in an image which does not have a body and does not change and such like? Rather, He appeared in a real body from the substance of humanity through which a human beings could know Him, and through which the human soul could be at peace, and by His appearing to human beings in this body humans are given dignity, honor, and authority, just as the soul gives the body its life and speech. Then He completes the authority that He gave humans over some of His creatures by making it extend over the rest of His creatures, and by this he reaches the highest rank of honor. This is the reason He created humanity, not because He needed humanity. When He judges humans, He will have a body which humans can look at, and the judgment will not be delivered to any human being without him knowing where the judgment comes from.

He, may His praise be glorified, manifested Himself for this and other reasons which are not mentioned by most of the various people of the world in their search for Him, in their confusion concerning Him, and in their remoteness from knowing Him, because eyes do not perceive Him, and minds do not completely comprehend Him, except through the direction, the power, and the authority, without the movement of His essence from one place to another, or it becoming affected by one condition after another. It was through what was more honorable for Him than the things in which He had previously appeared, that He would bring the souls of people closer to His existence than by means of apparitions, a bush, a cloud, an ark of wood, and a house of stones. So, His grace and generosity to His creatures are more apparent and more visible, and He has honored them more and more, I mean, a man, His image, from the Virgin Mary, without a particle of sperm. He spoke to people through him, He addressed them by his tongue, He put them at ease when they looked at him, and He brought them close to Himself, since they had been remote from Him after being deceived by Satan. He made them victorious over their enemy and gave them power

over him, and called them to know Him, without a messenger between Himself and them, by a tongue united with a body of theirs. This is rather like the soul that shows its logic and wisdom from a lifeless body, without a messenger between itself and it, but through uniting with it and showing its life and its wisdom in it and benefiting it with what it has, so that what it possesses of life and speech becomes essential and substantial to it which are acquired from it without lacking anything, and without the body being separate from it. For this reason, one name applies to both of them, I mean the name of a human being and the meaning of it. When it is said that a human being spoke, understood, knew, was capable, and planned, this indicates the soul, since the origin of speech and wisdom is in its essence. When it is said that a human being ate, drank, grew taller and broader, and died, this indicates the body which is nourished by food and drink, and grows, and increases in height and breadth, even though its essence is inanimate.

Since a command of God is above all other commands, none of which can be compared with it, for this reason the manifestation of the Creator in our body by the plan to unite authority and power with it without any limitation took place in the same way as the limitation of the soul in the body. He gave one name to him along with the body in which he veiled Himself from us, I mean, the name "the Messiah". When it is said that He is eternal and will never cease to exist, and that He is Creator and God, this indicates the Creator who is invisible, and who, by His grace, spoke to us from our body in which He veiled Himself, so that by this plan He came closer to us and spoke to us from our substance, though He encompasses heaven and earth, after He had been used to speaking to us from what was distant from our substance, and remote from us.

When it is said He is created, timebound, eating and drinking and similar things, this indicates our body in which He veiled Himself from us. So, the name "the Messiah" indicates the Creator and His creature. He is Creator who is invisible in His divinity, and created when seen in his humanity, just as a human being indicates spirit and body, for he is spiritual in his spirit and

physical in his body. Since we have found this in the creature, even though the creature falls short of the perfection of the Creator, how much more fitting is the perfection and exaltation of this in comprehending the Creator. Since the created soul, which falls short of the perfection of power and generosity, gave the body in which it was veiled what it possessed of life and speech so that the body became one with it in living and speaking, how much more fitting it is that we know that the Creator perfects the gift, perfects the honor, and bestows the gift and the grace in this to His creatures. Indeed, by His generosity, a generosity that cannot be compared, after it was known that He dwelt in heaven and that He was called this because of the honor of its location and the exaltation of its place, He became one who dwelt in our body with the plan to become closer to His creatures without being limited or confined by it, and though He indwells it, He also encompasses all things.

He showed His power, His direction, and His authority in the body and spoke to people in their languages, telling them that He was their Creator who is eternal just as He wanted to confirm His existence to them, and spoke to them from visible things and made this real by giving life to the dead, sight to the eyes of the blind, hearing to the ears of the deaf, speech to the mute, healing to the sick, and cleansing to the leprous. This was to demonstrate that, when He gave life to the dead by authority and power, He was the One who made them dead, and when He gave sight, hearing, speech and healing, He was the One who had done this in the beginning when He made this person blind and that person deaf or mute or leprous, when he said, “If you do not believe in me, believe in my works”.⁹³ He sent messengers to all the people in their various languages which He had created for them, so that they would know that the One who divided the languages and made them different was the One who called them to know Him, and that nobody else could do that but He Himself. He commanded them to announce

⁹³ John 10:25.

His manifestation in a body of theirs, to tell people what He had demonstrated in it of His power, might, and authority, to announce what He had prepared for them in His Kingdom, to call them to worship Him and obey Him, and to proclaim good news of life for their bodies after death, and their destination in the life which does not perish.

The messengers communicated His commands to all people, after He had forbidden them from carrying with them anything with which people of this earth strengthen themselves. He gave them the power to perform sublime signs the like of which creatures cannot perform. Then they announced the good news to the people of the world who had disagreed about Him, whose teaching about His commands had multiplied, whose desires were separated from Him, who gave His name to others among stars and idols and other things, who disagreed with each other because of Him, and most of whom were confused about His commands since they neither saw Him nor comprehended Him. The messengers proclaimed to them that their Creator had appeared to them in a body of theirs, spoke to people from it, demonstrated His authority and power in it, took it with Him in His honor and made it reign, gave it life after it was dead, and raised it to heaven above His angels so that it will remain a veil between Him and them and the rest of His creatures for eternity.

They performed sublime signs in His name, and by this means they affirmed that He was their Creator, so, the people accepted what they announced and their joy became greater by His honoring them through appearing to them and by His raising their substance. They gave up searching for the Creator, and they believed that He is one, known in three hypostases, that He is in all places and not contained in any place, that He appeared by His plan without any limitation, and that He enjoyed being with them. They discarded the books which those who were confused about His commands had written before His appearance, which called stars and idols and other things by His name. They began to worship Him, suppressed worldly desires for His sake, and submitted to accepting the teaching of the fishermen who were His apostles. As a result, their victory could not have

been by the power and might of authority, but because of the appearance of sublime signs through their hands.

What greater grace, what more abundant favor, what more obvious generosity is there than this by which God has sealed His generosity and kindness which He initiated in us. What conclusion concerning this situation more clearly indicates the initiation of His favor to us since He began by creating us than how much we failed to praise His grace in this. Although He was in the universe by Himself, yet He gave us a share in the universe along with Himself by creating us. Although He was the only One who was living and speaking, yet He gave us a share by making us living and speaking along with the angels. Although He alone had authority over what He had created, yet He gave us a share by granting us authority over what is on earth. Then, since He wanted to seal our situation by completing His grace, He brought us to the goal of His generosity and kindness so that we would know that He had created us for this reason and not because of His need for us. According to us, there is no greater grace to us than His manifestation to us, His appearing in us, and His completing the authority which He had given us over what is on earth by giving us authority over what is in heaven. He manifested Himself in a human being from among us and took him with Him in authority and dignity after the first human being fell from his standing through his disobedience, and after his exile from paradise on account of the wrath against him, and his being made subject to death after having been cut off from any hope of life. When humanity despaired of having any mercy or salvation from death, his Creator manifested Himself to him in his substance to raise him from death and to make him a ruler who has authority over what is in heaven and on earth.

What greater grace is there for the creature than his Creator bringing him to this degree of honor, dignity, rule, and authority. What ignorance is greater than the ignorance of the one who

despises his honor and dignity. Although he likes one of the angels to speak to him in the form of a human being, he despises his Creator for speaking to him through a human being.⁹⁴ Although he likes his Creator to speak to him from a bush, he despises Him for speaking to him from his body. Although he likes rule and authority over this base earth, he despises them over the noble heaven.⁹⁵ Although he likes authority over some people in this passing world, he despises authority over the angels in the eternal world. Although he likes to have a share of the permanence and eternity which his Creator possesses in His essence, so that he may stay living, remain and not perish, he despises having a share in his Creator's rule and authority. Although he wants dignity and honor through the revelation of something from the unseen world through a servant from among the angels, he despises knowing everything from the unseen world by the manifestation of the Creator of the angels to him. Although he wants to enhance the favor and kindness of his Creator by describing Him as the One who gave him authority over the beasts of the land and the fish of the sea, he despises describing Him as the One who gave him authority over the spiritual angels, all the human beings, and all the creatures. Therefore, the goal of his Creator has become related to the imperfection of his substance and the earthly nature of his body, and is not related to the favors and grace of his Creator and to His generosity and kindness which He had made him accustomed to. Since He took one of the human beings with Him into His authority and rule, all spiritual and physical beings entered into the honor and dignity of this, because he is one of the spir-

⁹⁴ Q 19:17 says that when God sent His angel to Mary, the angel appeared to her to just like a man.

⁹⁵ Q17:61 reports that God commanded the angels to bow down before Adam, and 17:70 says that God gave the sons of Adam honor and favor beyond that given to the rest of His creatures. Humans who enter the garden of bliss are given rest, security, leisure, food and drink, and spouses, according to Q35:34-35, 36:55, 37:45-47 and 44:51-55. However, they are not given authority and rule there.

itual beings in his spirit and one of the physical beings in his body. As a result, he is ruler over them all, and this rule is demonstrated to them afterwards by the most amazing wonders.

Since one after another of the children of Israel ruled, so it was said that kingship belongs to the children of Israel. Just as one after another of the non-Arabic speaking nations ruled it was said that kingship belongs to the non-Arabic speaking nations. Just as one after another of the Arabs ruled it was said that kingship belongs to the Arabs. However, He is king over them, and kingship for them is through him, because he is from them, and his dignity and honor rest on them, so that it will be said that no one has been promoted over the people of this kingdom, because the honor of one king from among them rests on them all, since he is from their race.

For this reason and for an even greater reason than this, the honor of the spiritual and physical creatures is through the honor of a human being from humanity, and by him they are raised in their souls above the baseness of the souls of slaves, and their common people and their leaders are raised from slavery to the rank of sonship, since the honor and dignity that belongs to their Creator have become theirs through a human being who is from among them in his spirit and body together. Their joy will be greater in their eternal dwelling because of this, despite the description of it being weaker. Even if all who are in heaven and earth and what is between them had one language, they would not arrive at a description of this great grace or the thanksgiving for it through all eternity.

Why do our opponents despise this great grace and huge honor that creatures fail to comprehend and to give thanks for? What deficiency affected God when He manifested Himself in a miserable, fruitless bush, and spoke to Moses who was a mute shepherd?⁹⁶ What deficiency affected Him in His manifestation in a

⁹⁶ Q20:27, and 26:13 record Moses asking God to remove his speech impediment.

human being from among us, who are more honorable and loved than the bush which He created for us, and in His speaking to all people, including philosophers, wise men, kings, powerful, good, and excellent people, since they are more numerous than a mute shepherd who at first neither listened nor obeyed?⁹⁷

Also, what deficiency affected God when He gave humans authority over what is on earth, so that it will affect Him when He gives them authority over what is in heaven? Will the generosity not be greater in the eternal situation? Is His initiating humanity in his perishable place of dwelling on earth not a witness to the completion of his situation by transferring him to heaven which never perishes? Is His giving humanity authority over what comes to an end on earth not a witness that He will terminate and complete it for him by giving him authority over what never comes to an end in heaven? Nevertheless, He did not bring together what He intended all at one time without initiating him with a little and terminating him with a lot, like a man who begins with milk in his infancy and completes it afterwards with food.

Why, O man, does your Creator intend honor and high rank for you, yet you want baseness and meanness for yourself? Why do you grudge His granting you the goal of His generosity and kindness? This does not lessen His rule or authority, just as what He offered you before of His kindness did not lessen Him. It is as if you want to make Him as grudging as you are. It is as if you were to purchase a slave with money, give him authority over your property and all that you possess, give him authority over all your people and inform them that whoever honors him hon-

⁹⁷ Q20:25–35 show how Moses responded to the call of God at the burning bush to go before Pharaoh in Egypt and demonstrate the signs of God to him. Moses pleaded for help with his speech impediment and asked that his brother Aaron help him speak to Pharaoh so Pharaoh would understand what Moses was trying to say. In Q28:33, Moses says to God that he is afraid to appear before Pharaoh because he killed an Egyptian and fled to the wilderness to save his life.

ors you, whoever obeys him obeys you, and whoever opposes him or does not submit to him despises you and opposes you. In such a way you do not trust Him concerning yourself and your authority, and you do this through your fear of Him, damaging yourself and diminishing your great authority, but this is the very least of what your Creator made for you. How can you deny this about your God who is perfect in kindness and complete in generosity, who does not fear what is perishable for Himself or what is diminishing for His rule, and who does not have the deficiency that you have, according to what we have described about what you have done?

How much more appropriate it is for you to know that your Creator does what you fail to do, in a way that cannot be described and words cannot explain. However, it is evident that He has not neglected to do this. These books of His declare this, before His doing it and after His revelation of it, and confirm your understanding of what your Creator granted to you, despite your neglecting to examine His Books and to understand His plan, in order that you confess His majesty and greatness and thank Him for His deeds, favor and grace.

If you had not stigmatized the books as altered and corrupted, I would not recall for you three prophecies about this. I mention them so that whoever trusts that the books are authentic will examine them. The prophet Isaiah said, “This virgin will conceive and bear a son whose name will be ‘Emmanuel’, meaning ‘our God is with us.’”⁹⁸ This means that God will manifest in a body of ours, and He will unite it with Himself so that it will become one Messiah, and so our God will be in a body of ours. The prophet Isaiah also said, “A child has been born to us, a son, a ruler, and a king. His authority is on his shoulders”.⁹⁹ The prophet David said, “Who is the man you have mentioned, the son of man who you have chosen, and who you have made a

⁹⁸ Isaiah 7:14.

⁹⁹ Isaiah 9:6.

little lower than the angels? Then you crowned him with praise and glory, and gave him authority over everything your hands had made, and subjected everything under his feet”.¹⁰⁰ He means that he was lower than the angels by his death, then after this he mentioned the greatness of his authority. David also said, “He sent His word and healed them, and saved them from the grave”.¹⁰¹ He means that God sent His Son to the children of Israel and to the rest of the nations, and healed them from the disease of sin, and delivered them from worshipping idols and from death, by what he explained to them about the knowledge of God. The prophet Daniel said, “I saw coming on the clouds of heaven someone like a man, who approached the Ancient of Days and they led him into His presence. He gave him rule, authority and power so that the nations and tongues would serve him. His authority is an authority which is cannot perish, be destroyed, or pass away”.¹⁰²

Prophecies about this are too numerous for us to count or mention in this book.¹⁰³ What is more beneficial to people than examining the books of God? They speak of this plan of God, and people will accept this and their souls will be at peace in the presence of their Creator speaking to them from a body of theirs. There is no greater proof of His presence than this. Yet the case is that they deny Him and stumble in seeking their Creator, who is in every place and in a specific place without being comprehended, and they do not have a proper plan by which

¹⁰⁰ Psalm 8:4–6.

¹⁰¹ Psalm 107:20.

¹⁰² Daniel 7:13–14.

¹⁰³ Mikhail points out that Timothy, Abū Rāʾīṭa, and Abū Qurra all used these sets of verses to support the incarnation. See A. Mingana, ‘The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 12, (1928) 137–298, p. 187; Keating, *Defending the “People of Truth”*, p. 130; and Abū Qurra, ‘God has a Son who is His Equal in Nature and who Exists Forever with Him’, in Bacha, *Les Œuvres de Théodore Aboucara*, 91–104, pp. 99–100. See Mikhail, p. 240.

they can ever be saved. Since the Creator is neither understood nor comprehended, some of them have come to a place of total unbelief and denial concerning Him. Some of them adhere to the confession of two principles which are two visible bodies.¹⁰⁴ Some of them say that God is primordial matter.¹⁰⁵ Some of them adhere to idols, calling them by His name and worshipping them, since they have never seen Him, never comprehended Him, and never believed in His plan. Some of them, from a religious community in our time, in order to confirm their Creator to themselves, represent Him among themselves as limited, seated on a throne,¹⁰⁶ ascending from one heaven to another, and descending from one heaven to another.¹⁰⁷ Some of them make Him limited to a known space and known forms, and they de-

¹⁰⁴ He refers to Manichaeans and their dualistic view that the world consists of the two fundamental entities of good and evil.

¹⁰⁵ He refers to the view of Aristotle that God is primordial matter. The Greek term *hyle* was transliterated into Arabic as *hayūlā*.

¹⁰⁶ God is said to be seated on a throne according to Q7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4 and 57:4. It is interesting to note that Abū Qurra refers to God being enthroned in the Qur’an in his apology concerning those who deny the possibility of the incarnation. He argues that just as speaking of God as seated on a throne does not limit God to this location, so the body which God took does not limit Him to the body. See Abū Qurra, ‘God has a Son’, in Bacha, *Les Œuvres de Théodore Aboucara*, pp. 181–182. Abū Rā’īṭa also argues that, since Muslims believe that God is seated on the throne and yet is not limited to it, they should accept that Christians believe that God is incarnate and yet is not limited to the incarnation. See Abū Rā’īṭa, ‘Letter on the Incarnation’, in S.T. Keating, (ed.) *Defending the ‘People of Truth’ in the Early Islamic Period. The Christian Apologies of Abū Rā’īṭah*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 222–297, p. 258. However, ‘Ammār does not use the throne texts from the Qur’an to argue for the incarnation. Perhaps he believed that the comparison was not suitable to convince Muslims of the truth of the incarnation.

¹⁰⁷ Q2:29, 17:44, 23:17, 86, 41:12, 65:12, 71:15 and 78:12 speak of seven heavens.

termine that He is not more than these.¹⁰⁸ Some of them, while wanting to honor Him, make Him visible light that enlightens them from the light of the resurrection, and the day of reckoning of the awards of paradise and hell.¹⁰⁹ Some of them, in order to know and understand Him, say that He has two hands like their hands, and two feet like their feet.¹¹⁰ Some of them are embarrassed by this, and say that He is not seen or comprehended.¹¹¹ They deny the plan that God has made known, which confirms His presence to His creatures, and they reduce the issue to what the Creator is in His essence without His plan by which He makes known His presence to His creatures in a way which they can understand. So, when their thoughts wandered in search of something that they could understand they found nothing. Thus, they approximated Him to things in their souls, without any admission from their mouths that there was no evidence to prove it. Their custom has come about without love or fear, since love and fear only relate to things that can be imagined.

They also confess that they are in need, since God sent a book down to them, of Him making His words about Himself like their words about their limited selves, when mentioning hearing, seeing, approval, displeasure, and what perhaps is appropriate only to be applied to physical beings. In order to confirm Himself to them, He made necessary to Himself what is neces-

¹⁰⁸ ‘Ammār refers to the followers of Dāwūd al-Jawāribī, who held that God has flesh and blood and even members and limbs such as hands and feet, according to Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, pp. 258–259.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Ammār refers to the *Hishāmites* were a sect of the *Rāfiḍa* who followed Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam. They held that God is a shining light who shines like a round pearl, according to Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, p. 102.

¹¹⁰ Another group of *Rāfiḍa* maintained that God looks like humans and has hands, feet, ears, eyes, nose and mouth, according to Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, pp. 105 and 259.

¹¹¹ ‘Ammār refers to the Mu‘tazila who believed that God has no body, and that no form or image can represent God, according to Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, pp. 87, 216, and 226.

sary to bodies. Yet they do not put into practice what they have learned about this, and they neglect to perform what they were commanded to do by Him, and they do not accept the truth from us, which they were commanded to accept as a witness to them concerning this.

If they had gathered together to examine the books of God, and come to know His plan to manifest Himself in a human being from among them and to speak to them through him, surely they would have given up searching heaven and earth for Him, and they would have had confidence in the plan for Him to be present in a body of theirs, and their souls would be at peace about this, and they would have accepted His teaching that although He is in every place He appeared in a specific place by the plan. If their thinking had become focused, it would have finally reached the body from which He speaks to them, and they would have settled on it and would have achieved their search and found rest in it. They would have accepted that they offer Him worship, and they would have given up what they had been satisfied with in the search for an unseen Creator who had already brought the search closer to them by appearing in a body that could be seen. They would not have been content with the disagreements in their teaching and the imperfection of their doctrine that we have described.

If they say that Christians disagree, we say this only concerns the created body. Some of them call it a hypostasis, and others reject that. As for the Creator, they do not disagree about Him, and their teaching about Him is that He is One who is not comprehended. Their agreement about the Creator manifesting Himself in a body of theirs is greater than their agreement about the body itself. Their teaching is that He is One, known by three hypostases, and that He is in every place, not limited, or comprehended. Their disagreement is about the body which they see, so that some of them say one hypostasis, and others say two

hypostases, whereas their agreement is that the one in whom the Creator manifested had a body and a soul.¹¹²

Surely the generosity of the Creator, His grace, His favor, His gentleness towards His creatures, His blessing of His creatures, His goodness to them, and His honoring them by His manifestation to them for the reasons we have described, are obvious. And among these many reasons, we have made known only some of them, because we dislike writing at length about them and other people know more about them than we do. May abundant praise be to God for His grace and goodness.

SECTION EIGHT: DISCOURSE ON THE CRUCIFIXION¹¹³

As for what they slander us for saying that the Messiah was crucified,¹¹⁴ and their accusing us of attributing weakness to God or deficiency to the Messiah by this, they claim against us that we invented lies about God and attribute to Him what “makes the heavens almost burst open because of it, the earth split apart, and the mountains crash down completely”.¹¹⁵ Weakness is not introduced to God, yet we have been accused of perpetrating this crime against Him. How is weakness introduced to God when we say that the Messiah was crucified? According to them,

¹¹² ‘Ammār describes the dispute between the miaphysites who held that the divine hypostasis indwelt the human body and the diophysites who held that there was a union between the divine hypostasis and the human hypostasis. He concedes that the miaphysites believed that the Messiah possessed a human soul as well as a body, despite the criticism by diophysites that the miaphysite belief tended towards viewing the Messiah as possessing only a divine mind in a human body. Diophysites like ‘Ammār were convinced that the Messiah must have both divine and human centers of thinking, feeling, and decision.

¹¹³ This heading is not in the manuscript.

¹¹⁴ ‘Ammār does not quote the denial of the crucifixion in Q4:157, “They did not kill him, they did not crucify him” but he clearly alludes to it.

¹¹⁵ Q19:90.

he is a prophet lower than their prophet in rank, and is not so exalted by them that the heavens would almost burst open by this happening to him. Since He is exalted above what they claim that we say about God, then neither weakness nor imperfection has been introduced to God.

How do they accuse us of diminishing him in our report that he was crucified, when, according to them, Christ is a prophet? They say that he was far more honored by God than being called “crucified”. I wish I knew what they would say of John, son of Zechariah, about whom they confess that he was beheaded, and that his head was given to a slave-girl, a dancer, who had asked that it be given to her.¹¹⁶ Was it because of his insignificance to God that He neglected him until this happened to him? But they recognize his being favored by God, and they do not introduce weakness to God by speaking of one they greatly praise.¹¹⁷ Yet they impose on others the same thing, according to them, attributing weakness to God through bias, prejudice, and lack of justice.

If our innocence from what we have been accused of has been demonstrated, then we must show what we know of the plan of the crucifixion of the Messiah in his humanity, and the benefit of this for all humanity. I say, most people before the coming of the Messiah were in error and unbelief, and philosophers and wise men were joined together with crude and ignorant people in not knowing that after death, which separates their bodies from their souls, they would be raised from their graves and

¹¹⁶ The story of John the Baptist being beheaded is found in Mark 6:14–29, but is not reported in the Qur’an. However, ‘Ammār is probably relying on the fact that John the Baptist is mentioned in Q19:15 as dying and being raised up in similar language to Jesus dying and being raised up in Q19:33.

¹¹⁷ Q3:39 records that angels appeared to John’s father Zachariah and announced that John would be born to him as a result of his prayer for a son, and that John would be noble, chaste, and a prophet bearing the word of God.

come to life. This was because they had never seen a human being freed from death, remaining alive, being raised to heaven, and not returning to death, and according to them, this would be the most completely impossible thing that could happen. God, may His Names be made holy, through love for His creation, wanted His creatures to be happy by revealing to them life for their bodies, and releasing them from the problem of death which He had imposed upon them since it is the greatest misfortune that falls on them in this world, and subduing their enemy Satan since he was the reason for the sin of Adam which caused death to enter the world. God wanted to remove death from them, lift them up from their fall, bestow on them His grace, and bring them the good news of His kingdom which He had prepared for them in the eternal world which never ends or passes away, where no evil overtakes them, where no hardship or misfortune affects them, where death, destruction, corruption or change do not touch them. God wanted what He had prepared for all of them to come to pass in one of them, since the time of the resurrection of all of them had not yet come, and since one thing can be applied to all, then the resurrection of their substance is more certain for them than what is restricted to words, for action is better than speech.

For these reasons, with all that we have explained before, He appeared in a body of theirs, veiled Himself in it, spoke to people from it, entrusted Himself to them and honored them by veiling Himself in it, united Himself in authority and dignity with it, then He put it to death to give life to it before them, and He raised it to heaven, proceeding ahead of them.

He made his death public, right in front of their eyes, just as when a person wants to make something public, he makes it known so that people can see it, raising it above them and setting it in front of them. So, when people looked at what the Creator veiled Himself with from them, which had died, his death was obvious to them and they knew that it was from their substance that death happened in the constitution his body, and what appeared of his suffering was known to be of their substance. After he arose from the tomb alive and ascended into

heaven to be there forever, they knew for certain that all of them in their substance would be raised from the tombs and would be rescued like him from the authority of death. This was because he was equal to them in their substance, and that anyone who would make himself like him in righteousness and purity would attain heaven just as he did. The happiness will greatly increase of those afflicted by death which separates their bodies from their souls, of those who are immersed in the grief which it causes, in its clinging to them and in its permanence in all of them, when it is proved true to them that one of them has escaped from the fate of death for them. Death will become for them similar to sleep between this world and the hereafter, their hope will be enlarged, and they work in search of what has been prepared for them in His kingdom. Death will be despised by them, because it is evident that it has no hold over them. Their happiness will greatly increase by what is mentioned about life for them.

So, O dying man, this is the grace of God and His gift to you through the crucifixion of the Messiah which you find repugnant. You turn what ought to be thanksgiving for it to disbelief in it and slander of it.

SECTION NINE: DISCOURSE ON BAPTISM

As for that with which you ridicule and sneer at, concerning baptism which we highly esteem by declaring that it negates sin, I reply to them that I am completely and thoroughly surprised about the obvious thing which they have neglected, their own problem which they themselves did not examine. This is that when sperm, through which the visible human form is created that heaven and earth are created for, is ejaculated from one of them, he is not content to wash the place it came from as he does with his putrid waste from which only worms and similar things are formed, but he washes everywhere from the crown of his head to his feet. He calls this washing of that clean thing

from which God created humans, “purification”,¹¹⁸ and claims that his sin is forgiven on account of each strand of his hair, and a good deed is counted to him. They have neglected to be surprised at this, and this is the true surprise, yet they are surprised at baptism, which is an illustration of the resurrection from the dead. The Messiah our Lord, since he died in the humility of his humanity, and was buried and was raised, wanted to confirm this to us, and to represent it to us in such a way that we would not forget him and we would be reminded that we would be raised from the tomb just as he was.

Understand that the likeness of a thing represents the thing it resembles, but it is not the actual thing. It is as if you wanted to make a likeness for yourself of a certain city built of stone, marble, teak and pine, decorated with gold and silver and such like, so it is represented by you with ink and dyes on parchment skin. Even though the city measures a parasang of land,¹¹⁹ there is no disparity between the city in its capacity, length, width, size, gold, silver and similar decorations and its representation with ink on parchment skin, that would nullify this representation, with its smallness and vulgarity, from being an illustration of the city with its greatness and nobility.

Likewise, since the Messiah was buried in the ground and rose from it alive having been delivered from death, God wanted to give us an illustration of this even though there is nothing like death in this world or any equivalent to life in the other world. There was no illustration closer to us on this earth, by which he could illustrate for us his burial and his resurrection, than water, because from it and from dust we have been formed, and water in his body is closer to air than to earth and fire.

Since he had been buried in the ground dead and raised from it alive, he commanded us to remember this by burying our bodies

¹¹⁸ ‘Ammār refers to the Muslim practice of total body washing after ejaculation of semen.

¹¹⁹ A parasang was equivalent to 3.5 square miles.

in water and rising from it, so that we might remember that the true resurrection of our bodies is like this, by his burial in the ground and his resurrection from it, and so that we would understand and remember that the resurrection is true since its illustration is in our bodies. This is because the likeness of a thing that exists proves the truth of the thing which it resembles.

In addition, when God created Adam from clay, He formed him from dust and water, and Adam was pure, without sin. But Satan deceived him, so God condemned him to death on account of the sin. Yet God wanted to renew him from death to life. He truly did this for one human being, and made him an illustration for all humans, until the time comes when He gives them life through him. Thus, their renewal is by means of the illustration of becoming alive through water which, along with dust, initiated their creation. This is like a potter who makes a vessel out of clay, forming it from dust and water, but since the vessel is damaged before it is put in the fire, the potter renews his work with water alone in order to rescue it. Similarly, since death damages us, the Creator renews our created state with water alone on account of the illustration which He has given us, until the time of the renewal of creatures with actual life. It is like when we are baptized in water then we are adorned with the life that is illustrated and death is extinguished.¹²⁰

Just as something is only prepared for which has an illustration of it, so Our Creator, may He be exalted and glorified, brought us into this world by two births: one of them is from the loins of our fathers, and the other is from the wombs of our mothers. Our birth from the fathers is by seed which does not have hu-

¹²⁰ ‘Ammār refers to the potter remaking a damaged pot from Jeremiah 18:1–13. Khalid Chalfoun indicates that Theodore of Mopsuestia, who was regarded as the founding father of the East Syrian church, used the picture of the potter in his discussion of baptism. See P.K. Chalfoun, ‘Baptême et Eucharistie chez ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’, *Parole de l’Orient* 27 (2002), 321–334, p. 325.

man form, or life, or motion. Our birth from the mothers is by completion of the human body and its form, and the perfection of its humanity with its soul. In the same way, He also brings us into the other world by two births: one of them precedes the arrival of the other, and announces it. One is from water, an illustration of the resurrection from the earth and life from death, and the other is actually from the belly of the earth, real life, something perfect and complete. The first birth from the loins of our fathers, which is far from true human nature, resembles the birth from baptism into the truth of real life which it illustrates. The second birth from the wombs of our mothers by the perfection of humanity and the reality of the earthly life resembles our birth from the earth in the perfection of the spiritual condition which we will have and the reality of the eternal life in which we will be renewed.

For this reason, we say that sin is negated in baptism because it is an illustration of death from this world which has sin, and of life in that world which does not have sin. If the extinction of death is true in our bodies, then sin which was the cause of our death is negated. We know that sin is extinguished, for it was the thing which was the cause of death and through which it entered, because we have received an illustration of its extinction for all of us, and one of us has really negated it.

SECTION TEN: DISCOURSE ON THE EUCHARIST

As for what they also reject of our saying that the Messiah named the Eucharist, which we receive, his body and his blood, we inform them that the Messiah, our Lord and our God,¹²¹ because he wanted it, in what he intended by it, to be the truth concerning his body by his teaching and his will, could perhaps have named himself with the names of others, and perhaps he

¹²¹ This is the first time that ‘Ammār has given the title, “our God” to the Messiah. He already has argued that it not appropriate to speak of the Messiah as the body of God, so this title comes as a surprise here.

could have named others by his name, just as Matthew said that he spoke to those who were good on the Day of the Resurrection when he will appear to judge spiritual and physical beings, “I was begging and you gave to me, I was hungry and you made me full, I was sick and you visited me”, and similar sayings which are in the Gospel. He said something similar to those who were evil and judged them for the opposite of what the good had done. They say to him, “When were you like this, oh our Lord”? and he said, “Everything that you did for one of these little ones, you did for me, and you did it to me”.¹²² In the secret of his love for good deeds, and his happiness in generosity and benevolence, there is nothing greater than his putting himself in their place. This is not an imperfection on his part, rather, out of his generosity and the abundance of his grace he took upon himself their name in his saying, “Lend to God a good loan”.¹²³ He put himself in their place and put them in his place because the lender is a rich giver, and the borrower is given what he lacks, as we have described.

Just as it is appropriate that he named himself with the names of others, similarly, it is needless to say that it is appropriate that others are named with his name. With respect to this, he named the bread and the wine, which he made as the Eucharist, his body and his blood, because the concern of the Messiah, our Lord, was to fulfil all of his aims by showing the eternal world and the resurrection from death. For there is nothing in this world harder for its people than death, and nothing more valuable for them than salvation from it, and attaining life which does not pass away and after which death does not come.

Because the Messiah died in his humanity, rose up and ascended to heaven, demonstrating by this the resurrection of people of his substance and his human nature from the tombs and their

¹²² See Matthew 25:35–40.

¹²³ Q2: 245 asks, “Who will lend to God a good loan”? Q64:17 affirms. “If you lend to God a good loan, He will return it double it to you”.

accession to life, he wanted to leave them something by which they could remember his death for them in order that their resurrection might be demonstrated by his resurrection, so that his death and resurrection would not be forgotten, since it was in this that there would be life for all of them. He was not satisfied with reminding them by words without making corporeal for them something they could take in their hands, on which he had put the name of his body that had died, had risen, and had ascended to heaven, just as he gave an illustration of his death and resurrection in baptism. When they take the Eucharist in their hands, because he is the one who named it his body which died and rose, they remember the resurrection and eternal life. Sadness is dispelled from them by remembering the death and they rejoice by remembering the life, and they become like those who have taken confidence in the life which is in their hands, for there is nothing more certain to humans than what they can touch with their hands, and what their palms can hold. For this reason, before his death while he was still alive, he gave his disciples bread so that they would not doubt that it was to be his body, when he said to them, "Eat, this is my body which is offered for the forgiveness of sins, and this is my blood which is shed for the pardon of transgressions".¹²⁴ He did not intend by this that the essence of that bread and that wine was his body and his blood, because his teaching was not about the essence of bodies which do not have the power to demonstrate life or salvation from death. But his teaching was about the meaning of life which was revealed in his body by his resurrection from the grave and his escape from death. He said, "This which I give to you is my body", meaning, the life which appeared by the resurrection of my body from the tomb and its escape from death is what you should remember, and it will appear to you as you take this bread to which I have given the name of my body. It is my body in the meaning of its appearance to you, and a remembrance for you of eternal life which my body has attained by its

¹²⁴ Matthew 26:26–28.

resurrection from the tomb. So, our life from death and our resurrection from the tombs have been depicted for us and illustrated to us by the physical bread and wine which he named his body and his blood. By his death, his resurrection from the tomb, and his ascension to heaven, we know that we will rise from the tombs and that we will come alive from death like he did, since it was in the aspect of our substance that he died, and his rule over death and life is our rule.

As for naming his body and his blood an offering for the people of the world, this was according to the law of God for the Children of Israel, because they used to offer sacrifices to God for their sins. As a result of the sin of Adam, the Creator decreed death for him, and it passed on to his descendants until God renewed the second Adam who was without seed, who He made a veil between Himself and His creatures, as we described before.¹²⁵ He always acted in accordance with righteousness, and no sin was found in him, as the prophet Isaiah described him, “God was so pleased with His creature who bore their curse and burned the deed for their sins”.¹²⁶ It was necessary that God removed death from him and from the people of his substance on account of his righteousness, just as He decreed death for Adam and the people of his substance on account of his disobedience. It is as if he represented all people of his substance in negating the sin which was the reason for the entry of death into the presentation of the animals which were sacrificed and offered to God for the sins of the Children of Israel. It was necessary that he should negate death and demonstrate life on account of his righteousness, just as death was necessitated, and life was negated on account of the disobedience of the first Adam.

¹²⁵ ‘Ammār refers to the Messiah being called the second Adam by Paul in Romans 5:12–19. Mikhail points out that this was an important theme in the writing of Theodore of Mopsuestia. See Mikhail, p. 305.

¹²⁶ This is a summary of Isaiah 53:4–12.

The negation of death is only demonstrated by his being placed under it, defeating it, and coming out of it. Thus, he makes it clear by this means that death has no authority or power, and it was negated, and life was established in its place. Because it is said of a human being who experiences death, even if he has a long life, that death is on him as it is on the people of his substance, he only revealed the negation of death after he had accepted it, then he revealed its negation and termination. So, he died for the creatures, not because it was necessary for him, since he had not sinned as Adam sinned, on whom death was decreed, but to make real the negation of death for him and for the people of his substance. He died in order to demonstrate that he was of the substance in which death was experienced, and he rose up to demonstrate the negation of death from him and from them, and that death was not necessary for him as it was for the people of his substance, since he had no sin. Rather, he escaped into life and negated the authority of death as he escaped from death. As a result, the people of his substance knew that what was decreed for them of death on account of the sin of Adam had been negated for them on account of his escape from it, on account of his being equal to them in substance, and that all of their substance is joined in his body, since the substance of all people is one. Having demonstrated the negation of the sin by which death was necessitated for the offspring of Adam, he took the place of the offerings which were presented to God for the negation of sins. Those were an illustration of him, and he truly negated sin by negating death which had entered on account of sin. Those offerings did not negate death which had entered on account of sin, yet he did indeed negate death and revealed life from it by ascending into that place where there is no death, that is, heaven.

SECTION ELEVEN: DEBATE ABOUT [THE VENERATION OF]

THE CROSS

As for their mocking our veneration of the cross, we will turn the argument back on them. Much more surprising than this is their veneration of a stone which the polytheists used to honor

and venerate.¹²⁷ The wood is truly closer to fruitfulness than the stone.

If they say, we do not intend to venerate the stone, then we say, similarly, we do not intend to venerate the wood. As for what we mean by honoring this emblem, it is as if we are describing the manifestation of our Creator in the body which was crucified on it, and the revelation to us of the resurrection, the life, and the negation of sin. By touching the emblem of that on which the body which was the veil of our Creator was crucified, we intend to magnify our Creator and to bring us closer to Him. Just as we venerate the king by magnifying the hoof of his horse and the dust under his feet in addition to his footwear and his coat, and just as we and you touch the coat of a man who is close to God through worship, we want by this to become close to our Creator by touching the coat of one of His servants who obeys Him. If we touch the coat to honor a man who obeyed the Creator, how much more appropriate is it that we touch the emblem of that on which the veil and clothing of the Creator were crucified. Ignorance should not prevent us from doing this, since we do it to that which is lesser and smaller, as well as to that which is more important and greater, unless a power occurs in our substance that also makes us too proud to venerate the hoof of the king's horse, the coat of the devout man, and the clothing of the Creator. That would be ignorance and error.

We have explained our meaning in venerating the cross. If we go back and ask why you venerate the stone, what would your answer be? If you say, because it came from heaven, then we say, we heard that God has forbidden honoring the stones which He created in this world because people have taken them as idols to worship. So, what makes honoring and venerating that which came from heaven the worthiest thing in this world to you, when God is the Creator of everything? If they say, this is

¹²⁷ ‘Ammār refers to the stone on one of the corners of the *Ka’ba* which pilgrims on the *Hajj* to Mecca attempt to kiss.

on account of Abraham,¹²⁸ then we say, so, you venerate a stone on account of Abraham, and you reject the veneration of wood on account of the veil of the Creator, I mean, the humanity of the Messiah. If they say, God required us to do this, then we say, it is not true when you say that God prescribed it, since you have already confessed that He prohibited you from doing such a thing, and He commanded you to fight the polytheists over it. If this is not so, what meaning is there in worship by venerating the stone? No meaning for this can be counted as acceptable to rational people, so, we drop the debate about this because we know the result of it.¹²⁹

SECTION TWELVE: DEBATE ABOUT EATING AND DRINKING IN THE AFTERLIFE

As for what they reject of what is in the gospel concerning the abolition of marriage,¹³⁰ eating, and drinking in the afterlife, they presume that this lessens the reward for good people. We will come back to them with the opposite of what they mentioned, because what they mentioned is the lessening, the decrease, and abolition of the reward, but what the gospel mentioned is the correct reward, and the obvious grace that rational people reject. This is because we know that God, may He be exalted and glorified, made us in this perishable, imperfect, and

¹²⁸ Abraham, according to Q2:125–127, was the builder of the *Ka'ba* in Mecca.

¹²⁹ John of Damascus was the first extant Christian apologist to have compared Christian veneration of the cross to Muslim veneration of the stone. See B. Roggema, 'Muslims as Crypto-Idolaters: A Theme in the Christian Portrayal of Islam in the Near East', in D. Thomas, (ed.) *Christians at the Heart of the Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1–18, pp. 6–7.

¹³⁰ In Mark 12:25, Jesus states that when the dead rise they will not marry in the afterlife but will become like angels. It was on this basis that it was thought that humans would no longer need to eat and drink in the afterlife if they were to become like angels.

base world which encompasses us with detestable things, illnesses, diseases, many afflictions, and destructive death. He made our physical condition weak, imperfect, subject to afflictions. He also made our life sustainable only with what comes from its soil and is produced from it. He did this so that our weakness and our need might be demonstrated, and so that we would be prevented from the pride and arrogance which would harm our souls. Our life would become dead because, although while we are living and speaking, we manage the whole world, our life only continues to be established by something which comes from the soil and is produced from it. When we lose what sustains our life in particular, I mean eating and drinking, surely, He will transfer us from this base world and from this weak and imperfect condition to a strong and venerable condition. After this base life which is only established by something other than itself, He will transfer us to an eternal life in which there will be no need and no weakness. Then we will know the benefit of what we have become, since it is the aim of the reward prepared for us when we were in that previous condition. But our happiness and our joy in it will be different from what we have experienced in this passing world, and of the weakness of our physical condition when we were in it, and of our need for things in this world to sustain our life which among other things include eating and drinking.

For this reason, it is clear that God, may His name be blessed, has revealed in His book that He will elevate the situation of His reward to sustaining their life by happiness without weakness or need. He will make their condition in that world a completely strong and not weak condition, not sustained by eating and drinking, and not increasing or advancing by it from a small state to a large state. Surely, it will continue by the power of the Creator, not by something weak other than that. The happiness of the creatures with the Creator will last forever and ever, and for all eternity, in one perfect state that is not sustained by the taste of one kind of food after another, or one kind of drink after another, or marriage one time after another, considering how the differences of these things would multiply. Rather, God will join them with His righteous angels in rank, power, dignity, en-

durance, and eternal happiness forever and ever. I do not think that the opponents claim that the reward of Gabriel, Michael and all the angels who are close to God is imperfect or base, or that the pleasure in taking women, food and drink is more than the pleasure of the angels in other things than these.¹³¹

As for what they mention of food and drink and marriage, all of these things were put in this world for us to preserve the base situation which He made us share with animals. So, it is obvious to rational people that since the opponents place a need of these things where there is no need for such things which are redundant and imperfect, then they have diminished the reward of God, may He be exalted, by imperfection, and need, and all that the animals share with us. They have not elevated us by the excellence of the recompense of God and the abundance of His reward from the existence of these animal pleasures which we only share with animals, and from these things which are base and of an earthly situation, and are for us a situation of need, with which the Creator planned to mitigate the destruction of our rank, and which we assign to being compost, manure and waste.

If the debate were not to be prolonged and the book become much longer than it is, I would have shown at length the imperfections in what they say, but we put it forward for the one who may not understand. Praise God, our Creator and our God, for what He has informed us from His books, and for guiding us by His instructions, with abundant and eternal praise, forever and ever.

May God first of all forgive the one who reads this, the one who hears it, the one who owns it, and the one who wrote it, and afterwards their parents, and baptized children, and everyone together. It was completed on the fourteenth of Hatur in the

¹³¹ Mikhail points out that Abū Qurra argues that the ultimate reward is attained when humans become God-like in his 'Treatise on the Existence of God', p. 237. See Mikhail, p. 312.

year 1014¹³² of the Holy Martyrs, in the house of al-Yasah al-Dafs in Al-Jawdariya.

¹³² This is equivalent to 1298 CE.

THE BOOK OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT,
ONE GOD

THE FIRST SECTION OF THE BOOK OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
WRITTEN BY ʿAMMĀR AL-BAṢRĪ TO DEFEND THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE
ONENESS AND DEITY OF THE CREATOR, MAY HE BE HIGHLY PRAISED AND
MAY HIS NAMES BE GLORIFIED AND HE BE EXALTED

THE SECTION IS IN THREE PARTS¹

SECTION ONE: ON ESTABLISHING THE TIMELESSNESS AND ONENESS OF THE CREATOR AND THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE CREATION OF THE WORLD²

in twenty-eight questions

¹ The three parts are not indicated clearly in the manuscript.

² ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī begins his questions and answers with proof of the oneness of the Creator. This would be a shared belief among Christians and Muslims. However, the questions appear to be posed by someone who believes in two creators, such as a Zoroastrian who believed in two beings who struggled for supremacy over the world, one that created good and the other that created evil. Ammar is attempting to establish common ground with Muslims here.

May God preserve the Commander of the believers in the splendor of his glory and grace, bring to completion in him of the majesty of his rank and honor, bestow on him continuous favor, bless him with an abundant portion, protect him when he attempts to carry out the plans which God has bestowed on him, grant him help and support for his caliphate and rule, and adorn him with success and prosperity in everything.³

May God inspire the Commander of the believers and grant him providential success in commanding the religion of God, as he strives in his strength, is confirmed in his knowledge, and establishes arguments against those who reject it, deny it, oppose it, turn away from it in deviating from the truth by their disgraceful opinions, made weak by confusion, ruined by the deception of their thinking, until he achieves an explanation of this for the Muslims, gathering them together, forgiving their opinions, discerning when he hears the words they speak, interpreting their arguments by the discriminating mind which God has conferred on him, and the gift which he has given him by bestowing on him the capacity to understand, and the refinement of his perception, to make known the truth, and to show the true way, confirming good sense and success, averting them from false opinions and wrong desires, treating their wrongdoing in the right way with justice and fairness when he speaks and returning them to the right path when they have turned aside, so that God will lift up those who have stumbled among them, and rescue by his efforts those who he is concerned for among them, those who are careless in the confusion of their error, desiring

³ ‘Ammār dedicates the book to the Caliph, “The Commander of the believers”. The editor of the Arabic text of the Book of Questions and answers, M. Hayek, argues that this is Caliph al-Ma’mūn (r. 813–833), who was in the habit of holding conferences on religious issues that included Jews and Christians along with Muslims. See M. Hayek, ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī. La Première Somme de théologie chrétienne en langue arabe, ou deux apologies du christianisme’, *Islamochristiana* 2, 1976, 69–133, p. 73.

them to be close to God and to find favor with him and to seek his generous rewards.

An exposition like mine, as a result of my weakness, and my confession of incapacity and inadequacy, is merely an attempt from my diminishing strength, so my proposal falls short of what is required in this matter when it reaches the Commander of the believers. May God strengthen him, in order to attain the security which is proper for him to gain. May God honor him, since my shortcoming lessens the full achievement of it after I had hoped for help promised to those who rely on Him for their inspiration and vindication, as He says, "Do not let yourselves become anxious about what you will say, and when you are questioned about what you will reply, for your speech will be inspired at the time you need it".⁴ I hope, with my allegiance to my religion, that it becomes satisfactory, as a sound and clear statement. If what I hoped and expressed does occur, then the gratitude is to His great power, immense kindness, and purifying grace. If it proves inadequate, then the inadequacy is more expected from a weak person, who is incapable of searching the matters of the merciful and kind God. The Commander of the believers, may God strengthen him, is more fitted to advance and guide in these matters.

In this book, may God strengthen and support the Commander of the believers, I pursue arguments about the Creator, may He be praised and exalted. I discuss the truth of His oneness and lordship, may He be greatly praised and may His names be glorified. By Him, I establish arguments against those who do not believe in Him, so that they yield to His plans by proof that is irrefutable and by demonstration that cannot be invalidated. I begin with the first of their questions concerning the denial of the Creator, exalted is He, in order to compel them with that which intelligent people are persuaded about His existence, in Whom is assistance and guidance.

⁴ Luke 21:14–15.

Question One

If a questioner from the people of unbelief asks, what is the evidence for the truth of what you say about the existence of the Creator, and that the world was created by His work? We say, the evidence for this is our existence. The world is an abode composed of contrasting and different elements, I mean earth, water, fire and air.⁵ The first of our proofs, that these elements are made and that they have a Maker, is what we see of their composition, and the proportion of their power despite differences in their nature and contrasts in their substance. When considering their harmony and intricacy, as well as their establishment and setting up, they are not tangled, despite their opposing appearance. They are not in harmony of their own accord. There is power for the compatibility of one world without the power of a composer to force these elements to work together and subject them to agree together. He, by his power, is its establisher. He controls its complex structure, determining the role of each of its elements, whether agreeing with or opposing the other.

If you imagine in your mind that the One who holds it up would forsake it in the blink of an eye, then you are deluded in your idea that its elements are not stable regarding their harmony and coherence, without disintegrating or collapsing, even for the blink of an eye. Because if you remove earth in your imagination, water will not exist afterwards, for there is no place for water unless it has a solid substance to settle on. Conversely, if,

⁵ ‘Ammār appeals to the Greek concept of the four basic elements of the world for his proof that the world was created. The Stoics who first proposed the four elements did not hold to a Creator of them. The four-fold division of the cosmos by Stoic philosophers in which two active elements, fire and air, relate to two passive elements, earth and water, is assumed by ‘Ammār to be reliable as a ground for understanding the make-up of the world. For Stoic physics and metaphysics see K. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfield and M. Schofield, *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, p. 407.

in your imagination, you get rid of water, there cannot be any permanence for the world or its people because of the presence of fire and its heat. Likewise, if you imagine the removal of fire, then there is no sustenance for any natural thing, due to the wetness of water and its coldness. If you think of eliminating air, you cannot form any conception of the essence of the world. Therefore, rational people conclude that the world can only exist by the coherence and cohesion of these four natural elements. From their cohesion and coherence, along with their sustenance and setting up, rational people conclude that they have a composer who manages their interaction, balances the differences in their condition and what emerges from it, and endows them with life, making them a dwelling place for that which He created.

Furthermore, if you examine your body, the composition of its members, and the assembly of your organs, surely you have clear proof inside you that does not require any consideration of that which is outside you. Your body testifies that you have a Maker and Creator who wisely composed you and skillfully assembled you from these four elements with which He also created the whole world.

The first of these elements in your physical make up is air. It is within the interior of your ribs in your side, in the skin of your stomach, and inside the cranium of your head which your Maker formed as a good protection for your brain, for all senses, and for the veins by which the knowledge of things passes to your soul and mind, I mean the eyes, ears, mouth, nostrils, and such members which are put together inside and outside of you. This is what you find of the nature of air in your being. You know your continued need for it to live, to inhale it, and the need for it in your various movements, between desire and delight, standing and sitting, and similar movements of yours. Then your brain does not deny what it sees of the wetness woven in your flesh and blood, from the nature of water, pointing to its shortage inside you in order to quench your thirst from it, because of the severity of the fire within you, in various times and circumstances.

Do not deny the nature of fire existing in you, as you feel its heat and the severity of its effects in your members, especially in times of shortage, due to the scarcity of water and coldness. You persistently find it sensed in your being, as long as your life lasts.

Then you find the harshness of the nature of the earth from which your creation was formed in you. As evidence, consider your body’s reception of growth in weaning after infancy and childhood because of being nourished from the earth’s vegetation and the strength of its plants. This proves that you are formed from earth and you are created from its dust. You thus know that you have no life and no existence except through it, in it, and on it.

These four elements, from which the structure of the world is composed, are found in the construction of your body. Your reason cannot deny this. To the witness of reason, no clearer or more obvious evidence is needed, for the existence of your Creator, than His composition of your body from these different and opposing characteristics, and His creation of a rational soul that He constructed within human beings by His power and His wisdom.

Question Two

If the questioner agrees, as a result of this evidence, that the world and humanity together are composed of these elements, and then says, what evidence is there that the capabilities of these elements, heat, cold, wetness, and dryness are made and created?⁶

We say, the evidence for this is their submission and their compliance to that which is produced in them, from composition,

⁶ ‘Ammār is involved in a discussion with alternative Greek opinion to that of the Stoics. Plato held that the Demiurge formed the world from already existing materials. See Plato’s *Timeaus*.

connection, and mixture, then their reception of what happens to them, from change and movement from one condition to another. There cannot be beneficial movement and change in their makeup unless they are caused and made. This is the clearest evidence concerning their creation and their response to what occurs in the world.

Likewise, the reception of the universe to that which emerges from the four elements, whether adversities or accidents, absolutely demonstrates their existence and the beginning of their occurrence. This is similar to when you use earth. You purify it, burn it, and distinguish between one thing and another from it. You introduce corruption to its substance, from intrusion to destruction, and such like. Then you use water. You gather it according to what you can collect, whether little or much. You separate between one thing and another from it, and you do not find it possible to escape from doing this. Then water and fire submit to being used together as you desire and how you will. You subjugate them for yourself when you form things with them, and use them, for that purpose, as made and created things. There is no doubt and no dispute about this for a rational person.

With regard to this, the claim of those who speak of eternal material is invalid. They claim that from this material the Maker made use of varieties of substances and determined the types of forms. This is only so if that material, which has been existing, governs the eternity of possession and prevention of the reception of alteration and change from one condition to another.⁷

If they refuse to concede and say, no, that material which has been existing did not govern the possession and prevention of the reception of alteration, then we respond by questioning, what is your argument against the one who denies that the Crea-

⁷ ‘Ammār gives the answer of Aristotle that there cannot be an endless chain of reproduction of material without an unmoved mover at the origin of everything. See Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

tor had a substance from which He made something? One says, but if there was not in his power and the timelessness of his eternity the capacity to create the substances from nothing, then he rather brought them into being from his own nature and created them from the essence of his substance.

Is there any foundation for your rejecting this argument without referring to their claim itself, since it is necessary to deny the admission of abruption to the material which has been existing? So, if the rule of that which has been existing for possession and prevention is natural, then the rule of that which has been founded likewise occurs in the reception of alteration of contingent properties in the existence of the world and its creatures. Or what share is found in the pre-existence of matter in the pre-existence of eternity, according to their claim that it is compelled and forced by what divides it, separates it, and causes the abruption in it, by the determination of the forms and their movement from one situation to another? Who delegated to them the ruling, so that they judge over two eternal entities, one of which is found powerful and capable while the other driven and lowly?

If they say, matter does not change in its essence, but rather receives determinations and forms without change or corruption affecting its essence, as in the case of a potter who makes all types of vessels and all kinds of forms from clay without affecting the essence of the clay with corruption or change, we say your case, upon my life, does not match the earlier claim, does it? What analogy is there between your claim that bodies are created from what is not a body, spirits from what is not a spirit, and life from what is not life, and the clay of the potter? If he forsakes the forming clay, from which he shapes his vessels in their form, it will remain clay eternally. Yet, if he burns it in fire in order to remove the trapped moisture within it, he changes it by this means from the substance of clay to become pots. By which of the two conditions do you judge the owner of the material concerning his making of his material objects? If you propose that all that he creates from it does not change from its

original material condition, then in that case neither substance nor spirit is found in what he creates from it.

If you say, but he has already changed it through the introduction of contingent characteristics into what is not material, you have made necessary the introduction of alteration and corruption to matter. You have also made necessary the possibility of change and corruption to the essence of all that is eternal and perfect. Yet you fault the proposal of the one who claims that the eternal Creator introduced contingent characteristics into the essence of his substance and generated from them these elements, forms, and images. Or, you withdraw from that hastily by admitting that the things are recently created or produced and not from matter.

If they say, on the contrary, we propose that matter is newly created and not eternally pre-existent, we say, if you mean that the described newly created matter is these elements which we began to describe and established that the creatures were produced from them, we support your meaning and we do not oppose you because of what we see from them, although you mean by it another essence which precedes it.

We say, provide us the truthfulness of that with a clear proof, just as we have established to you the essences of the four elements and their existence, as well as the emergence of creatures from them by the evidence from the mind and senses together. If they say, the proof is what experts judge that the elements precede all of the creatures and that, based on knowledge, something only comes from something else, we respond, you have admitted that matter is newly created and that it is the origin of the elements. So, from which thing is matter newly created? Is it produced from another preceding matter? Or, if it proceeded from something that existed before it, then you have transformed it into the eternal which is endless.⁸

⁸ In questions one and two ‘Ammār has shown his ability to defend the one Creator in dialogue with Greek philosophy. His credentials as a

Question Three

If they question, if you insist that things sensed and imagined are all created and temporal, then what is the evidence that their Creator and designer is one rather than two opposing entities, as we see their opposition in the world, between life and death, health and illness, wealth and poverty, good and evil, light and darkness, and benefit and harm?⁹

We say in response that what we see of the cooperation of these contrasting created beings, transient opposites, and divergent things which result in benefit for the affairs of the world and its people is evidence that their Creator and director is One who is powerful and wise, not two competing ones. We see this from the firmness of the abode of the world, in the equilibrium of these opposing elements, water, fire, air and earth, and in what we witness of the continuance of cold, the succession of moisture, and the frequency of rain in the time of winter that nourishes its people from the vegetation of the earth and gives life to what is germinated in it. This continues to persist until it makes the fruit, by which it is produced, strong. Then an opposing time is given to the earth afterwards, from heat, dryness, sand storms, and hot winds that cause the moisture to dry from its nature, thus allowing the one nourished by them to live by them.

In spite of the differences in these periods of time from the dryness of summer and its heat after the dampness of the rain and its cold and the freezing condition of the day, the soundness of the bodies of humans and animals is something a rational person cannot fathom. If the days of the ages are extended to maintain cold, excessive dampness, and rain, then the fruit which

serious philosopher have been established before the Caliph al-Ma'mūn who himself recognized the fundamental significance of Greek thinking in the establishment of truth.

⁹ Now that ‘Ammār has proved that there is one Creator of the world, he turns his attention to those who hold to two creators such as Zoroastrians and Manicheans.

benefits from the strength of the excessive heat and the daylight sun and its dryness will rot, and likewise, the bodies of humans and animals will decay and corrupt without doubt. Therefore, there is a Wise One who, in his directing our lives, sometimes warns of the harm caused by expediting or delaying the time of the heat and cold from their proper time. Rational and intelligent people are guided by Him so that there is no benefit for the condition of their lives and no survival for the nature of their bodies without the contrast of these seasons and the difference of these periods which they experience. If such a contrast were due to the opposition between two directors, instead of what is seen of the beneficial outcomes, there would be contention and corruption.

As for the difference in the conditions of the people of the world concerning wealth and poverty, this is also the clearest evidence of the oneness of the Wise One. The perception of this is indeed conventional after He made known by His wisdom that which is beneficial to each condition among those from whatever rank He granted them. He ensured the establishment of their condition and the flourishing of their living altogether. If He had not set them up like this in different ranks, making some of them kings and others helpers of kings, and some of them wealthy and others dependent on the wealthy, it would not be possible for them to dwell in this abode, within this configuration, alive. Since He created them with this make-up, which requires food, drink, clothing, and other needs in order to stand among other things, for reasons which we will explain in the remainder of our book, they are unable to live, apart from helping each other. For this reason, He made some of them rich and others needy so that needy and poor people would depend on that which rich people possess, so they live for that which enhances their condition and the situation of their life. Some of them are farmers and others are grocers, some are carpenters and others are blacksmiths, in addition to various other professions which are indispensable for the community.

If the condition of all of them ended up in a prosperous land, then their abilities would be confined and constrained in the

development of their essential life, because it would not be possible for each of them to employ himself to establish his life. Each one would become his own farmer, grocer, carpenter, blacksmith, weaver, and tailor, providing himself with everything he needs without the help of others. On the contrary, their situation is set up and their condition is organized in such a way that the difference in their conditions in the two statuses results in their cooperation to maintain their situation.

If rich and poor people both want to be leading workers and managing directors, then the state of the rich and poor would result in grave hostility between the workers who would be driven to conflict and corruption and not to cooperation and reform.

As for the difference in the world between life and death, and benefit and harm, we will begin to explain the reasons for this in what we have concluded concerning the futility of the argument of those who claim that the world has two directing competing makers. We will begin the discussion of this which we will prove in question eleven, if God, Exalted and Almighty, wills.

Question Four

If he says, what would you refuse to accept if the two who created were cooperating and compatible, not opposing and conflicting, and each of them created various types of creatures that are beneficial for the world and its people, both cooperating in one coherent management, according to what we see from the good outcomes of situations, as you have described?

We say, we refuse to accept this since we are convinced that He who is able by His power to create creatures from nothing, is also all-powerful, with no ignorance or impotence, to create complete perfect creatures for logical and beneficial reasons. If one of these two deities created the heavens, the earth, or one of the elements described, what do you suppose? Did he want to create this entire world, or merely the created element itself? If he wanted to create other than this element alone, then we cannot conceive any of these elements in isolation to be good for

anything. An element cannot benefit anyone without these elements cooperating in harmony with each other, as we have established earlier in our argument. As the earth has no use in itself, and no support for living creatures on it, and no sustenance for them without heat, so there is heat with fire, fire with water, and water with earth.

It is not a trait of the Almighty and Wise One to invent what has no benefit for His creatures. If, by creating one element alone He wanted to create this whole world altogether, then He created some and neglected others, leaving some to be completed by another deity, then this would have been ignorance or impotence without doubt. This is not one of the attributes of the One who is able by His wisdom to create a group of creatures from nothing.

Question Five

If he says, but who can deny that the two deities cooperated in the creation of all creatures? We say in response, cooperation in making things can take various forms. There is the person who makes something by his bodily members, like someone who transports a heavy amount of soil when his members are unable to carry it by seeking help from another person to carry it, or a constructor of a building who needs help to assist him in building it, and so forth, from actions whose doer needs to use his bodily members to make them. These are the characteristics of the one who possesses assembled joints and composed members. Composition and assembly are not attributes of the Eternal One, but such is an attribute of one who is composed and contingent and who has a creating composer.

There is cooperation in commanding and forbidding like the governor who seeks help from his officers and assistants, when the rest of the people oppose him and he is unable to overcome them by himself, to make them obey him. This is the attribute of a humiliated failing person who uses the power of others to accomplish his affairs and who does not deserve to be described as having power over the creation of bodies since he is unable to execute his own command to fulfill what he wills.

Question Six

Yet if he says, perhaps their cooperation and opposition are due to the inner will and volition not because of the commanding and forbidding that appear from them, we say in response, how is it possible for two wills to be in the perfect making of that which we see in these creatures? Or does the cooperation itself not demonstrate the weakness of two helpers and their incapacity together, as well as their impotence and ignorance, since each of them uses his companion’s help without any need of help? Or how could agreement concerning this creation and the control of this government be achieved by the will of two failing, weak, and impotent beings? Or is it not ignorance for anyone to claim that there was cooperation of volitions and wills in the making of things, and not that these things were made by a prime mover?

The discussion about this aspect is finished and a rational person is convinced by this analogy that the Creator of these creatures is One,¹⁰ Almighty and Wise,¹¹ who has no helper in creating them, and no supporter for Him in their production. Rather, He is the One, the Creator,¹² the Determiner, and the Controller of its government. He has no partner, opponent, helper, or associate.¹³

¹⁰ God is called “one” twenty-one times in the Qur’an.

¹¹ God is called “wise” seventy-six times in the Qur’an.

¹² God is called “creator” eleven times in the Qur’an.

¹³ That God has no partner, helper or associate is stated seventy-three times in the Qur’an. ‘Ammār sounds like a Muslim Mu‘tazili *Mutakallim* using language familiar to his debating partners. The first six questions of his *Book of Questions and Answers* set out how he intends to carry on the presentation of his arguments as conforming to the principles of the Mu‘tazila, and so gain a hearing from them and the Caliph who is their patron.

Question Seven

If the questioner returns afterwards and says, what prompted the One to create these creatures? Did He have a need for them, or was it an amusement and a passion? If it was a need, it makes him contingent, after he has been self-sufficient in his endless eternity. When one has no power to get rid of the point of need from himself, and he falls short of preventing the elimination of wealth in his substance, how can he have the power to make something from nothing? But if he is incapable of the multiplication of himself, then he is even more incapable of creating what is more difficult. If He created it for amusement or passion, then amusement and passion are not among the attributes that you claim the perfectly Wise has in his essence in composing the creatures and organizing their affairs, as we see in the agreement of these natural qualities and the precision of their organization.

We say, these two characteristics, need and amusement, are, upon my life, banished from the Ancient, the Almighty, the Wise, may He be exalted and magnified. Rather, He created these creatures out of kindness, generosity, and grace. This is because of his generosity, his goodness, his liberality, and his magnanimity.

Question Eight

If the questioner says, who was He kind and generous to when no-one, as you claim, was with Him before the creation of any of His creatures that He might be generous towards?¹⁴ We say in

¹⁴ The reason for the emergence of dualism can be put down to the problem of evil. If both evil and good coexist in the world then one solution was to posit two coexisting powers of good and evil. For monotheists, there could only be one power at work in the creation of the world. It must follow that the one power created both good and evil together. This issue preoccupies 'Ammār in the succeeding set of questions in his *Book of Questions and Answers*.

reply, in the time of His eternity none of the creatures were with Him that He might be generous towards. However, this does not make any difference to you since He bestowed His grace and showed His kindness, whether He made the creation of the one who received them early or late. Rather, the truth will emerge from an investigation into these kinds of matters by His kindness and what these characteristics are like by His wisdom. He began by creating every good thing of His creatures for the one man upon whom He wanted to bestow favor, then He created him afterwards, and honored him by them. This is like the lover who possesses generosity and kindness, who when he wants to honor his beloved and to make perfect his righteousness, begins by preparing what is beneficial for the beloved by making ready what would establish her situation and well-being, then afterwards he leads her to what would set her up well so that he would not burden her after she enters his home. For this reason, the Generous One began through his generosity and wisdom by setting up for his worshippers the abode of the world and that which is in it, before He created them. Then He created them in it and bestowed these things lavishly on them. There is no better grace or greater generosity than His forming them as His own, in this noble state of life, intelligence, speech, understanding, capability, and choice, after coming into being from nothing.

Question Nine

If he is ignorant of the virtue of this grace and says, we do not presuppose for Him in creating us as His, placing us in goodness and grace, because if we were not anything yet, we did not possess a dislike of privation. Happiness is known in adversities yet there was no adversity us because we did not exist yet, was there?¹⁵

¹⁵ The dualist exposes the danger for the monotheist of ignoring the reality of cruelty in the world as a means of defining kindness.

We say, O, you ignorant unbeliever in the grace of his Creator, is it not necessary today if you are an existing thing that you turn back to nonexistent nothing? If he says, I do not dislike that, then he is stubborn in the face of the knowledge of rational people and tells of that which contradicts his conscience, because his judgement in his nature is like the judgement of all substances of animals. There is no dispute and no doubt about that for someone who has a brain.

If he says, I dislike the day after I came to exist, then he made it necessary for his Creator, who skillfully created him alive and sound, to be thanked for his grace, and to be praised for what He began and continued concerning his existence and His goodness in creating him and setting him up in life.

Question Ten

If he says, Since He is powerful and generous and He already knew the powerful might of His benevolence in His creation of them, why did not He make what He willed for His creation before the time when He created them by ten thousand years?

We say, in regards to how rational people judge in general, considering that He created them by his grace and generosity, He was not in need of them. It is more appropriate that the creation would not be in whatever way possible because of the aim of the grace towards them and the utmost kindness towards them. Undoubtedly, if He had been intending, in His goodness, to create time, in order to bring forth in it their creation, this would not have been possible except by the occurrence of action and the commencement of making. If He, may His name be exalted, in His foreknowledge, saw that it was possible for a time to come in which their creation would be more suitable and rewarding for them than the time at which He began to generate their creation, then it would be more useful knowing His caring for them if He purposefully created at that time before the time when he generated them. If it was before that by ten thousand years, then he would have not withheld it from them.

In addition, just as there is no disadvantage for the last over the first in what He produced in creating the first before them, in like manner there is no disadvantage for the first over the last in what delayed the creation of the last after them, because the grace of existence established equality between them. Similarly, there is no harm for them altogether if their creation is delayed by a thousand years, since the virtue of existence covered the first and the last of them.

Furthermore, we inform you, despite this, that your question is impossible, for it turns into unending discussion. This is because, if it is possible for you to say, why did not He create them before the time at which He created them by ten thousand years, it is also possible for you to say, if not before ten thousand years, then before a hundred thousand years, and then you can also say, after that by a million years, and even more than this, until you say in your concluding question that the creatures are eternal and have no beginning. This is obvious ignorance. It is an impossible situation which cannot occur, since the one who brought this forth and began its creation is eternal without a beginning.

Question Eleven

If he says, Since He is powerful, wise, and generous, as you have described, why did He create them susceptible to pain, suffering, harm, and complaining, ending all their affairs in death, and not creating them perfect, with no pain, corruption, or death?

We say, if He had created them in a condition bypassing pain and disease, then they would not experience death or change. But, on the contrary, He created them in this state which is capable of impacting their condition including death so that it would transfer them from this condition and this abode to a better situation and abode. This is because His power to create them and to create the characteristics from which He created them from nothing testifies that it was not impossible to create them immortal, yet He created them mortal. The fact that He was prompted by His generosity to create them out of His kindness and grace and not that He was in need for them testifies

that He was not a miser. However, He did not fashion them to feel no pain, but He created them to feel pain. His wisdom in that which resulted from the excellence of the composition of their bodies and nurturing them with rational souls demonstrates that He was not grudging in maintaining them in life when He made them to die and perish. But what shows the excellent qualities of these virtues in His creation of them surely declares to rational people that His desire for them was not this corrupt edifice nor keeping them in this perishing abode. Rather, He created them out of His generosity in their misery, revealed to them His power in nurturing them, and demonstrated to them His wisdom in constructing their souls within their bodies. He could say openly to rational people, when He allowed death and destruction to affect them, that He has for them another destination to which He would raise them. He would establish in them that which He had already begun through His generosity, and would complete in them that which He had already granted them of His grace and goodness.

Question Twelve

If he says, if He did not wish this condition and this state for them, then what induced Him to create them in their condition, and not create them in a condition which he intended to transform them into later in the other abode, to which He decided to transfer them afterwards? We say, He intended us to have three characteristics, whose great benefits are evident and not hidden to creatures. The first is that He began by fashioning them in this reprehensible state, this poor constitution, and this lowly habitation, so that when He afterwards fashioned them in that perfect constitution, they would know that to which He brought them from that condition which they had at first. Thus, their substance would be greatly advanced above the lowly dishonorable condition to a noble exalted condition which would be their happiness and delight.

The second is that since He wanted to make them happy by His raising them from this condition and this abode to that habitation, and since He knew that their happiness would not be per-

fected and their joy would not be great in this condition except by their acquiring it or their meriting it, He began by creating them in this abode and made it a market for their store. He supported them with the capacity of willing and enlightened their hearts with the lights of intelligence and understanding. Then He set them free to move to and fro in its roads by their deeds, so that if they would merit His virtues by their good deeds, they would be in their happiness and their glory in what they would achieve from them like the conquerors of a magnificent kingdom who have shown bravery, strength, and striving.¹⁶

The third is since He wished them to acquire such excellent qualities by their deeds in order to complete their happiness and their joy by such means, He formed them in a condition susceptible to both pain and pleasure. Then He filled the abode of their birth which He had prepared for their creation with beneficial and harmful circumstances so that if they suffer hardships in their afflicted bodies, then they deserve from Him a reward for them, and so that if they also strive with that which affects them with its pleasure and pain, and come to know by this means the core of joy and calamity, they would realize the way their Lord rewards and punishes. Thus, they strive to please Him by desiring His reward by avoiding His anger and fearing His punish-

¹⁶ While ‘Ammār does not quote from the Qur’an, he does enter into the discussion of the Qur’anic concept of ‘acquiring’ (*iktisāb*). He shows familiarity with the view of Ḍirār ibn ‘Amr, who understood Q2:286, “God will not burden any soul beyond what it can bear; it will be rewarded for the good which it has acquired, and will suffer for the evil which it has acquired”, to mean that God creates human actions which are acquired by humans. ‘Ammār argues against Ḍirār ibn ‘Amr and with Ḥasan al-Başri (d. 728) and Abū l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf that God did not decree beforehand which actions human beings would acquire. He gave humans free will to decide which actions to acquire. For the Basran tradition of defending free will see Ḥasan al-Başri’s letter to the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik’, in A. Rippon & J. Knappert, (eds), *Textual sources for the study of Islam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 116–121.

ment. If He had not prepared for them in this abode beneficial and harmful circumstances and made them all susceptible to both, then there would not be a reason for them to acquire the reward, and then they would not discern what is reward and what is punishment. The one who seeks His reward would not know what is good, and the one who is cautious about His punishment would not avoid evil.

After they learn from what they received from the harm and benefits of this world, then they realize they have a wise, powerful, and just Creator who is pleased by some of their actions though others displease Him. They become certain that He rewards them for what they all deserve from both actions and so they strive to acquire his favor and avoid what must incur His anger. If the utmost goal were to create them in this divided condition for their perfect happiness by it, He would have not determined to create them afterwards in a perfect condition, would He? No matter how hard they strive, they also incur harm in their bodies. They seek to engrave their souls with such harm, just as someone kneels in obedience, and accepts hunger and thirst in order to perfect the delight of food and drink. This is from the kindest grace of the Magnanimous and the Generous, since He generously makes what they temporarily suffer from the exertion of their prayers, the practice of their fasting, and their abandonment of the comforts of their life, and whatever He has provided to urge them to their reward, for the sake of their happiness and their delight.

Then also look at this Wise One and the exceptional kindness of this Gracious and Generous One. Since He willed that they would be delighted with what He brought them of His kindness and willed to perfect their happiness by that which He granted them of His reward, He imprinted on them a specific condition as if He intended to withdraw His blessing from them temporarily. Then He created them perishable and naked, and He made them ignorant and susceptible to pain so that they would make themselves knowledgeable and not in pain by the goodness of their deeds. This is why He made them imperfect and needy. Similarly, He began by lowering them into this base dishonora-

ble abode so that they themselves by their own power and the goodness of their actions would deserve to dwell in that other honorable abode. This is like someone who shows repeated kindness to please his beloved by matters that are not necessary for him which decrease his happiness. Then He committed them to the unhappiness of death, which is a state between the two conditions and abodes, so that they might not feel the duration of time passing for them until the completion of their time, lest they be worried and troubled by the delay of what they deserved from the favor and grace prepared for them, the passing away of the time given to them all. But He graciously grants them the praiseworthy death, being affectionate to them and liberating them by removing what is distasteful to them. He made death within them by His kindness and mercy like a flash of lightning between their sleeping and their end. Thus, death too as their ultimate destiny, which He prepared for them in His goodness, is useful and beneficial for them all.

Question Thirteen

If the questioner says, since He brought down death for them to shorten the length of time for them and to bring near to them what they deserve of paradise, what prevented Him from removing death entirely between their deeds and their reward? He could send whoever among them that acted wisely and completed his time to the abode of blissfulness without causing him to swallow the unpleasantness of this death which occurs to the first and last of them.

We say, what prevented Him from doing that is His fairness to them and His justice to both righteous and immoral people. If He were to send the one who completes his time and whose deeds He investigates to the habitation of punishment without sending them all at one time, then His giving priority to the first before the last in what they deserve of reward and punishment, despite the many ages between them, would be a shortcoming for the people of goodness concerning their afterlife, and injustice to the people of evil in comparison to the earlier ones, because the good ones would be in bliss while the evil ones would

suffer for thousands upon thousands of years before the others come after them. Additionally, there would be no evidence of that injustice in the earlier world and the initial creation, as justice demands the promotion of the creation of the first and the delay of the creation of the last, otherwise the last will not receive the same portion of the universe and destruction at the end as that portion which the first received initially. They are all equal in that which they receive from the delight of existence and the sadness of nonexistence. Yet, if He had given precedence to some of them and not others to that destiny without death, then giving priority to the first to speed up their destiny rather than the last would not be in harmony, because of His justice and the universality of His fairness.¹⁷

Question fourteen

If he says, since He did not send some of them and not others to that which they justly deserved what prevented Him from keeping the first of them alive until the end of the time of the last of them in this abode, then send all of them for that which they deserved altogether?

We say, what prevented Him from doing that is His mercy and His compassion for His own ones, the people who obey Him. Because if He kept the first of them until the end of the time of the last, with what they have obliged themselves to offer Him from continued serving, weariness of work, and bearing of hardships, in order to send them together at the same time, then He would be surely imposing on the first hardship of serving and

¹⁷ ‘Ammār represents the Christian consensus that there is an intermediate state between death and resurrection to eternal life. Muslims too held to the centrality of the Day of Judgement as effecting all humanity together as clearly taught in the Qur’an in 2:281, “Be in awe of the day when you are brought before God. Then each soul will be rewarded for what it has merited and none will be treated unjustly”. ‘Ammār makes common cause with Muslim convictions about the intentions of God in relation to humanity.

weariness of work, the pain of which the last only experience at the end. This is not appropriate for His mercy towards them and His justice to them.

Question fifteen

If a questioner says, was not He capable of doing with them that which is appropriate for His justice and His mercy without making them die, by casting away from them the provision of service after a time of their living and then keeping them on in this earthly condition without service?

In reply we say, if He did this for the first of them, they would be a stumbling block for the last of them and corruption for those who came after them. If they witnessed their fathers and their ancestors eating, drinking, and leading a life of ease with no prayer or fasting, and not working and not being acquisitive, their sons, without doubt, would follow the path of their fathers, and they would imitate their actions. The expected outcome would be that the mention of service would be extinguished from their hearts, and then it would be obvious that their neglect of serving their Creator would lead to the abolition of the knowledge of Him from their hearts entirely. Thus, instead of what was intended by introducing their creation in this abode so that they acquire His reward by their deeds, His creating them in it would become harmful, evil, and corrupt for them. Thus, death, in all cases, is grace and mercy decreed to the first and to the last of them before their final residing in the abode of their destiny.

Question sixteen

If he says, since He knew that maintaining the first while they neglected to serve Him would be a stumbling block and corruption for the last, what prevented Him from creating all of them together at the same time, so that when they reach the end of their deeds, He would send those who deserve paradise to blissfulness and those who deserve punishment to punishment, without devastating them, before that, by the loss of life?

We say to him, two issues prevented Him from doing this. The first is His compassion for His own ones, the people who obey Him among them. The second is the excellence of His view of all of them overall.

Concerning what He showed of His compassion for the people who obey Him from among them, since He anticipated in His foreknowledge that not all of them would perform good deeds at the same time, and that there would be among them one who performs his good deeds after a long period of his life, while another performs his good deeds after a short time because he sees His favor and kindness, He prepared for the one who mends his path and completes his actions for the end of ages, when all those who intend to repent from their wrongdoings to Him would return. They are punished by the long times separating them from their blissfulness. This is more appropriate for them, because of their weak natures and the susceptibility of their created substance to be snared by evil most of them follow lusts which lead to evil deeds and they pursue transgressions after they perform good deeds, despite the fact that they become good afterwards. If they did not see death warning them of their situation in the morning and evening, then not one of them would ever repent after his fall from his rank and his righteousness in his affairs, unless the appearance of death was delayed among them.

Do we and you not see that godly people who forsake wrongdoing and seek to perform good deeds because of what they learned from the calamities of those who have gone before them and because of what earlier generations received, when they transgressed, of the various punishments which their Lord brought down on them? If a Master created them all at the same time, then not one of them would have taken advice from another, nor would they persist in the good manner by which they were exhorted through counsel and example.

In this way, the virtue is evident in differentiating between the time of their creation and the time of their death. Thus, He made apparent the reasons for the usefulness and the guidance

of not creating them all in one action or to send them all away at one time.

The second issue, through which He purposefully sought the goodness of all of them, is that since He foreknew that their happiness and their bliss would not be complete through what they receive of His reward without them acquiring it and deserving it, He knew that it would not be justifiable for them to acquire the reward unless they were offered merits from good deeds. Thus, He caused them to love the excellence of their good deeds by His forbearance. He also multiplied their good deeds by the amplification of their good towards the people of their substance, through the affection and forgiveness of some of them towards others.

Then, by His kindness, He also wanted the flow of these virtues to run among them to call them to this and exhort them to it. Thus, He knew through His foreknowledge that there is no reason that can be justified for this, that is more splendid and more conducive to them, than love and affection for one another. Then He also willed, by His kindness, to establish a reason for love to run among themselves, a reason which delivers them to love. He did not find a greater and more conducive reason for it than the propagation of offspring. Then He also wanted to establish a reason for the kinship between them through which He urges it among them and causes it to run in their nature. He did not find a more appropriate or right reason for that than the reproduction of children.

Since He willed, by His generosity and kindness, to establish their creation and set up a reason for propagation among them, He did, as it fits His wisdom, create them in the beginning as one pair, implanting in their nature the possibility to propagate and generate offspring. Then He then brought forth from them male and female offspring. Then He caused them to bring to birth descendants after descendants, and He generated from them progeny after progeny. As the protection of childbirth and the sanctity of lineage reveal to us, He did this to call them to love one another, and show compassion to one another, like that which we see in an individual who sacrificially gives himself

and his possessions to divert harm from his father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, kin, and relatives, loving them and being affectionate to them.

If hostility might arise between brothers and relatives due to rivalry in this miserable livelihood, then that does not invalidate our argument concerning the majority of their people, considering that rational people observe that peace, well-being, affection, and sympathy keep occurring between relatives as well as the relatives of the descendants of their kind.

If, instead of the reproduction taking place among them, He created each individual among them according to his situation as children, then it would have been more plausible, especially with their striving for these worldly desires, with the result that wars do not vanish and hatred does not cease to exist among them, almost destroying each other, as we see from the continual wars between foes and foes of their kind. In that case, instead of them being created in this world to deserve rewards by their good deeds, they would arrive at the calamity of punishment which would encompass them all.

Indeed, the Wise and the Kind One intends for them, as He caused them to bring to birth offspring from offspring and generate descendants after descendants, and as He created plenty of them from the few, and the few from the fewer of them, until the diminution reached one couple that was the least of the least, to possibly give birth to them in the way of reason and the manner of success. If He had not caused this connectivity to flow between them, then love would not flow among them. If love had not flowed among them, then they would not have been affectionate to one another. If they had not been affectionate to one another, then they would not merit the reward from their Lord. If they had been granted the reward without meriting anything of their Lord's kindness, then what they were given would not complete their happiness and their bliss. But they will indeed be happy as a result of what they have merited, and they will merit what they have acquired. They will acquire that for which they have longed. They will long for what they love, and they will love those to whom they are related. They will be re-

lated to those with whom they have a kinship, and they will have a kinship with those to whom they give birth. The flow of all these virtues stems from their reproduction, for which the Wise One did not consider generating the creation of them all in one action.

Question seventeen

If he returns and says, if what propelled Him to bring death upon them was that He wanted to decrease ages for the people who obeyed Him among them, then why did He also bring death down on those who were transgressors and evil, although it was appropriate for Him if the matter was as you described, to remove it from them and not bring it upon them?

We say, concerning what they deserve from Him by their rebellion, they would deserve death. He brings His punishment closer in time to them, just as He brings the eternal bliss of the people of bliss to its people. However, because of His mercy and kindness He refused to do the same, by bringing death closer to them, without abundantly granting them His compassion and His mercy. It is praiseworthy that which prompted Him to disregard bringing death down at the time when it could have come down upon them. He wanted to attempt to separate them from the ages of their transgressions. If He perpetuated the age entirely then He would lift death up from them. Since He knew of their persistence in their transgressions till the end of the days of their earthly life, as they kept causing their shoulders to carry from the earth the manifestation of that which they also caused their bodies to carry from it by the neglect of death coming down upon them, He was considering them and generously caring for them through His kindness towards them.

Moreover, if He kept the wicked alive without the good, and caused the good to die without the wicked, then surely the life of the wicked would be overcome by their corruption, and would become harmful to all the people of their groups. Because of their desire for life in this world, it would be inevitable for them that not one of them would be concerned about goodness in his soul, let alone working on it, as long as he lived in the

world. Indeed, it is even more suitable for them, since they compete in transgressions, as they desire life, rush to immorality and flee from death. Therefore, these two characteristics show the usefulness of death and its dominance over the good and evil among them.

Question eighteen

If he says, if He is merciful, kind, and gracious to the two groups together, why did He not bring death upon the one who He knew would be rebellious and wicked in his childhood and youth, and let everyone else live, so that no one in His creation would deserve His punishment?

In reply we say, the believers and the righteous ones are not all sons of righteous believers in every instance. Most of them are children of the wicked ones and the people of transgression. No doubt as we see from their haste towards the doors of corruption and their inclination towards the pursuit of carnal lusts, that in many of their ages they have passed through times when goodness and righteousness had vanished from among them, and no good human being could be found among them on the earth.

In addition, there is no doubt as we see many of them return from their rebellion, that their past ancestors, in every period of their ages, have perhaps been instructed by the teachings of their Lord, the Most-High, and returned repentant from their evil deeds. Following that way, they have continuously alternated, from time to time, between ways of goodness and corruption, since He first caused their creation on earth. If He, may His praise be exalted, had purposefully intended the killing of the one whom He knew would be a wicked unbeliever in his childhood and youth, then surely reproduction would be abolished and descendants would have become extinct after the creation of the first of them. But since He knew by His wisdom and His foreknowledge that the wicked could bring forth the good, and that the good could give birth to the wicked and the good, and for that reason they would accept freely their nature, he knew that there was no escape from removing the wicked from among them except by nullifying the way of reproduction entirely from

among them. For that reason, He gave them over to that by which He imaged them from intelligence and understanding, as well as to that by which He established for them the path for doing good or evil. Thus, He did not forbid death for the one with evil, nor did He keep the righteous eternally alive because of his righteousness without the wicked.

Question nineteen

If he says, why did He not kill the one from among them in his childhood and youth whom He knew would be disobedient and wicked, and who would not bring forth children and offspring?

We say, if He put to death someone in his childhood for this reason, then it would be necessary, due to His justice, that He put to death all those whom He knew would be disobedient and wicked as little children. If He made them all to follow this law, the matter would have surely resulted in cutting off the path of procreation from them entirely. Surely it would not have been necessary for the Gracious and the Kind One to be partial to some of His enemies, the unbelievers and those who disobeyed His commands, and not others, with the result that He himself allowed a law which would eventually lead to the nullification of the creation of all of the people of their substance. Or do you not know that, having created them so that they bring forth each other for the reason which we have already proposed, He had made some of them a deposit of others, and thus the corruption of the container of the deposit itself would not prevent Him from reproducing His deposit from it, despite the changes in its situation?

Question twenty

If he says, how can you claim that if He brought death upon one of the children due to His knowledge of what would be of his evil deeds, surely it would have been necessary for Him, according to His justice, to bring death upon everyone that He knew would be rebellious and evil in his childhood and youth? This is what we have seen in bringing death upon some children and not others, and you do not regard that as unjust among His ac-

tions. He is thus in one of two positions: either He already knows that they will be pious and doers of good when they are alive, yet He prohibits them from a path of acquiring that which would complete their happiness by that which He gives them, or He already knows that they will be unbelievers and doers of evil, and thus, because of His justice, He is right to have them accompanied by all of those whom He knows will be rebellious and evil.

We say, when did we claim to you that all reasons for death are those which He brings upon them? Is it not the case that we described to you earlier in our writing that He created them all with a composition liable to harm and illness? It was not reasonable to mention the illnesses and the harmful matters disseminated upon the nature of their bodies in the house of their birth. However, we inform you once again that, when He created them with this weak and frail composition, He did not prevent many of the damaging illnesses and harmful matters from affecting their nature so that they would become worthier through the emergence of death from this than many of their origin, and also so that He could exhort them to make haste to what would be suitable as their reward for good deeds. He informed them, by that which He made possible for them to be freed from this in most of their cases, that just as He created them capable of attaining that which would make them better or worse from their actions, similarly, He also freed their bodies to obtain what would harm or benefit them from these things. I mean that which would profit them from the benefits of the limitation of food and drink, and the opposite of that from the change in what their bodies get used to, and that upon which their nature settles. I mean the harm which contradicts and opposes that from the excess in food, and the overabundance that weakens their nature and sickens their bodies, bringing them death and decay.

Likewise, He freed their hands to do these things to as many human beings as they could, especially to their offspring as children. If their hands had not been freed in doing so, then there would have been no freedom of ability by which they would

acquire the virtues of the afterlife. Most of what afflicts the children, especially the illnesses and what exposes them to death, is nothing but a consequence of their fathers who raise them. The first consequence is the corruption of the state of mind which results from different ways that the child’s parents look after him at the beginning of his creation. If a child was rescued from that, he would be imminently susceptible to the effects of the womb, in which he was carried, from being hidden from heat and dryness and from the decay of dampness and excess of cold, or from the tightness of the place for his growing and rearing there, or from the corruption of strength which comes to him from the food of the mother carrying him. From these places before his emergence to the wide world he is on the brink of sicknesses and the commencement of death. If he is spared of this and comes to this world safely, he will not be safe from the alienation of his own character and from what attacks him of the heat’s harshness, the wind’s roughness, and the exchange of the gentle strength which he possessed in the womb before his birth.

Then, as he also grows up afterwards and becomes adapted to eating food and consuming drinks, if he becomes negligent through them out of his satisfaction, his body will decay and his flesh will fail. If he takes for his body more than what is sufficient for his needs, this will imminently sicken it, cause it to be ill, so that it will end up in death. There is no need which arises before he reaches the stage of taking care of himself that does not endanger him by exposing him to damage. Therefore, what mostly leads these children to death, as we have described, is but the bad management of their nourishment.

If the diseases and the illnesses which lead to death were not affecting the adults who bring them on themselves, then the diseases would be brought more quickly on their children because of their weak nature when coping with accidents which they had not been accustomed to before. However, we know and do not deny that God might bring death upon them by many other circumstances, about which no one but He himself could know and comprehend its causes.

However, because of what we have verified of His constant justice towards them and the goodness of most things which come to all of them, and that such areas which He knows concerning the reasons for their death are hidden from us, we are generally certain that He has ordained them and caused them by His justice and His wisdom for the good of those who have passed on and of those of them who have been brought to an end. Likewise, there is also no doubt about His determination for the goodness of the community in the preservation of those who remain from among their men and women. Since we do not know the quintessence of His organization of these ones and those ones with respect to the hardships and illnesses happening to them and their children, like we necessarily know that God created the world and what is in it, and created our bodies and installed spirits in them, then He will undoubtedly bring death upon each one of us on the day it happens. We do not know how He created the world or how He installed spirits in our bodies or when death will come to any of us. So, this does not negate our knowledge of His creation and His directing it, as well as His management of it for the good of all of us entirely, because we are a community of human beings. Since we have not been given knowledge of everything completely, we cannot affirm knowing it all either.

Question twenty-one

If he says, why do you not inform us about these illnesses and diseases which you have described? Who created them? Who brought them upon children and others? Is there another Creator alongside Him who created them? Is there someone other than Him who causes the illnesses to come upon them?¹⁸

¹⁸ The questioner raises the possibility of a Zoroastrian response to the problem of evil, with the concept of a second divine being wrecking the good work of the first divinity.

We say, the diseases and illnesses are not from created beings in themselves, and the Creator is not the one who brings them all upon His servants. By bringing illnesses upon them He intended that the substantial nature of this construction would require being built on a well-designed equilibrium. He made a place for them to receive the corruption of increase and decrease based on the reason why He made their being in this construction. He created for them what would maintain their bodies from food and drink. He made for them minds by which they would know what would be good for them and what would be good for their children from providence and what would spoil them from the decrease and increase in it. If they became negligent in what is good for their bodies without having sufficient means for their need, they would be harming their bodies and exposing them to destruction. And if they burdened their bodies above their sufficient means, they would be damaging them and abandoning them to corruption. By “sufficient means for their needs” I did not mean satisfying their hunger and quenching their thirst, because bodies can manage shortage of their sufficient means. Rather, I mean the very least of the strength upon which their bodies stand and their flesh lives. They perish if they become negligent in maintaining their nourishment. This is similar to our speaking about food and drink which were created for their benefit and their good and not for their damage and corruption. According to what we have mentioned of their situation relating to food and drink, he goodness or corruption, whether little or in excess, must be considered as necessary and not impulsive with respect to the one who gives these to them.

Question twenty-two

If the questioner says, apart from the creation of the children and the good people becoming happiness and goodness to them, and the creation of the wicked people becoming misery and harm to them, how did His mercy and kindness not prevent Him from creating them when He already knew the defect which would overcome them?

We say, your question is impossible since we have told you of the defect because of which it is not right for Him to raise the wicked from among the good. That is to say that if a Creator created every human of them as an individual person in his own composition, then that might have been the case. When you see some of them good and others wicked it leads to a discussion and a question: namely, why did He create the one whom He knew would deserve His punishment, if He is merciful and generous?

If the issue is about what testifies to the manner of the emergence of many of them from a few of them in regards to His creating the one spirit which was the very least possible to develop their substance, then He made in their nature and the nature of their descendants the capability of multiplication, reproduction, productivity, and the means for coupling and sexual union as they desired, and the abstinence from that if they disliked it. Then He set them free in the freedom of their nature, to be changeable in their actions as they wished, and by their abstinence, without Him coercing them, from that which they desired or disliked. So, what blame is there for Him in His creation as you have mentioned of those righteous and licentious ones among them, if the careless nature leads them to being freely capable and leads them to immorality? Or, is there a condition which brought upon themselves this misery apart from themselves? Did He not give them minds to distinguish between what would be good for them or bad for them? Did He not make the way for them to obtain what would be beneficial for them and to avoid what would be harmful for them? Was He not patient with them when they did not believe in Him by extending their time limit? Did He not make an easy path for them to repent of their transgressions? Thus, what good remains that He had not already done for them? If their souls' greed induces them to prefer their carnal lusts to the works of their Maker, then they deserve from Him the exclusion from that which the diligent workers deserve for their hard work and striving. See how He has provided for them the way, according to plain justice among them, so that it becomes an example for them of what they might merit of a reward from their Lord.

Question twenty-three

If he says, if it is not right that He gives the evildoers the reward of those who merited that reward by their hard work and their endeavor, then what is His comfort in punishing them and taking vengeance on them? On the contrary, if He is generous, kind, and patient as you have described, it is right for Him to forgive them and not to punish them for their ample transgressions.

In response we say, just as He has no anxiety about what the people of reward gain from their reward, similarly He has no comfort from what comes upon the people of punishment from their punishment. But how is it for the evil doers if He graciously bestows His pardon and forgiveness on them and does not bring upon them what they deserve of His punishment? Would they not suffer punishment within themselves of regret, grief, sorrow, and sadness due to the sustenance which the gainers receive from their Lord’s reward? This would reveal their hidden scandals and the blemish of their faults?

Question twenty-four

If he returns and says, what kind of loss is there for Him and for the people who obey Him if He raises the evildoers, by his favor towards them and by His forgiveness and His pardon, to the same position as those who obey Him and please Him by their effort and the goodness of their conduct?

We say, there is no loss for Him or for the doers of good if His action is right. But what gives us proof is what we know of His kindness and His generosity, although if He were to do so with the rebels among them, then the doers of good would have merited more from Him of that which He already gave them. In any case, He raises the state of the good people in rank, and causes the rebels to catch up with them in what they deserved from Him because of the virtue of their affliction and the maturity of their good deeds, raising them to a higher rank than initially, and assigning them to the eternity which has no end. Indeed, because of His kindness and justice it is right for Him to favor

them with a higher rank than that of the rebels. If the rebels are only punished by their exclusion from this higher rank then the longing and sadness about how they escaped from the severity of the danger of punishment will be sufficient misery and pain for them. This is only the case if He showers His favor upon them by what cannot be desperately sought by them from Him, namely the forgiveness for what they deserve of His punishment.

Question twenty-five

If he says, if it is not right that the evildoers attain the rank of the doers of good, as you claim, then is there a difference and distinction between the two groups in this exalted state which you have described, in this perfect world which you have discussed, and in the destiny of their final abode? If there is no difference or distinction between them in any of these states, then the evildoers have undoubtedly caught up with the doers of good in their most honorable states?

We say, concerning the eternal abode and the perfect world, indeed they will be all equally in it, except that there will be happiness and joy for the people of good and distress and unhappiness for the people of evil. Because remaining in eternal bliss and the knowledge of its continuation is joy and happiness to its people, and the extended stay in punishment with the certainty of the knowledge of the continuation of punishment is distress and pain to its people. Concerning the destiny to a place for their fate, it is not right that the Just and the Wise One makes it equal between them. Because we find that He has places with different and distinct states like the sky with its elevated honor, as well as the earth with its lowly indecency. However, there is no doubt about His raising the people of good to the highest and most honorable places while putting the people of evil in the most despised and lowliest places.

Question twenty-six

If he says, if He willed that what He would give them of this grace would be by their meriting it, then rather than creating

them doers of good who would merit it by their goodness and their righteousness, what prevented him from creating them capable of doing bad deeds, and imposing his punishment on those who do evil deeds?

We say, His wise power prevented Him from commanding what is impossible for his creatures. What you ask of Him in this instance is inconceivable for his essence and the purity of His person. That is because someone does not merit the names “doer of good” and “doer of evil” unless he is accomplished in each of the following three qualities: capability, intelligence and choice. Whoever achieves obedience to his Creator by intelligence, choice and capability, if he follows the obedient path, then he is considered righteous and good. As for the one who is created by the decree of His Creator, and his constitution is imposed on him, then he is not considered by what is unavoidably imposed on him. So, he is not called “good” or “evil” and his deeds do not count towards him being righteous or immoral. Therefore, he also does not merit reward or punishment. This is just like Him creating the nature of a wolf according to aggression and attack and the nature of a lamb according to gentleness and peace. Since they are not found contrary to what they have been created for by being unavoidably changed, then the gentleness of the lamb is not counted as righteousness and the ruthlessness of the wolf is not counted as immorality. As a result of their instincts that have been formed in them, they also do not merit reward or punishment. Likewise, this is evidence against what you ask.

He has indicated that if he had imposed a way of life on the substantial nature of human beings, they would not afterwards find a way to change their good or bad way of life, and there would be no possibility for them to acquire the reward immediately. Rather, human beings are uniquely considered as righteous or immoral among all creatures, since they have been created capable of choosing the deeds by intelligence and preference, and they choose by themselves what they choose. Indeed, they are capable of choosing the good that they choose. For that reason, their obedience is counted to them as righteousness, their re-

ward is acquired, their happiness is completed by what they obtain, and their joy is increased by what they deserve.¹⁹

Question twenty-seven

If he says, if there is equality between them in capability and intelligence, why are their wills not equal in choosing the deeds? When capability and intelligence are produced in them as they claim, they choose the way of graciousness and fairness, but we do not see how this benefits them in the choice of their wills at all.

We say, He was right in His kindness and correct in His wisdom when He made them like this. Indeed, He did it and will complete it, I mean that He imparted to their substantial nature the knowledge of good and evil and the capability and means to choose excellent good deeds and pursue good actions. But they transgressed in what is right by their own covetousness and resorted to the cravings of their bodies. It was a key to their iniquity and their wrongdoing that they willed the soundness and

¹⁹ ‘Ammār once again critiques the view of Ḍirār ibn ‘Amr, who held that God creates human actions which are acquired by humans. ‘Ammār believes that God created human beings with minds that were capable of choosing what was right, and He did not want to make decisions for them ahead of time. Humans can only be counted righteous after they have proved their ability to make right choices. In order for them to merit their reward they have to be able to acquire good deeds without God deciding in advance that they should acquire them. The lengthy refutation of determinism by ‘Ammār shows how important this debate was among Basran Muslim intellectuals between upholders of human free will such as Ḥasan al-Baṣri and Abū l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf and promoters of divine determinism of human actions such as Ḍirār ibn ‘Amr, and how ‘Ammār wanted to demonstrate that he aligned with the upholders of human free will. Since Caliph al-Ma’mūn supported the latter, ‘Ammār is able to demonstrate to the Caliph, to whom he dedicates this book, that Christians agreed with the *mu’tazila* led by Abū l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf on this important doctrine.

the fairness of others for themselves, and they condoned the arrogance and the hostility from themselves towards others. In their choice of this they became deceived in their minds and they continued in the falseness of what is contrary to the inescapable truth.

Question twenty-eight

If he says, if it happened after this error among them and their straying from the path of the rightness of their opinions, then there can be no argument brought by their Creator against them about their own neglect of the truth and their own choice of what contradicts it.

We say, no, by my life, the argument is His proof of what He pressed upon them before they chose for themselves, as a proof against them that could not be opposed. This is that if He filled their minds with knowledge of the excellence of what He would bring them by extending His beneficence to them and advancing his justice to them, He would require them to act by cooperating together as He dealt with them. Or, as he clearly showed kindness by His grace which He bestowed on them liberally in creating them, then He was just towards them after that, and fulfilled for them what He had pledged to them concerning their sustenance. Likewise, He required them to work with kindness, faithfulness, justice and fairness between themselves. Since the beneficence of their Creator made them happy, it was necessary for them to do good to their friends. Since it made them happy that He pardoned their wrongdoing, it was necessary for them to pardon those who wronged them. Since it made them happy that no-one compelled them it was necessary for them that they did not compel anyone. Since they loved that they were not robbed, it was necessary for them that they did not steal. Since

they loved that they were not ill-treated it was necessary for them not to ill-treat others.²⁰

This is the way of truth which God established as His religion. On it He set up in this world the structure of His creation, and with it He wished to please His servants. Therefore, whoever does it succeeds and is victorious, and whoever strays from it is unsuccessful and loses.

May the glory be to the Holy Trinity now and forever, amen.

This completes the first section of the argument to prove the oneness of the Creator and His Lordship. May God be praised and blessed.

SECTION TWO: ON THE RELIABILITY OF THE HOLY GOSPEL

In fourteen questions

Question One

If the questioner returns afterwards and says, if this Creator is kind, generous, merciful, and compassionate as you have described, then He saw the deviation of His creatures from His path and their turning aside from His way, why did He not warn them out of His kindness and mercy? What prevented Him from sending His messengers to them concerning this and to deal with it?

In reply we say, He did indeed show His kindness to them and He warned them by His promise to them that they would merit their punishment by being divided in their languages. This was because of His basic justice towards them all. He urged them

²⁰ Ṣammār argues that the fall of Adam should not be used an excuse for the notion that God determined the actions of Adam's descendants after punishing Adam for his rebellion. All human beings are free as Adam was to obey or disobey. His rebellion set a bad example yet the underlying purpose of God was to enable humans to see the advantages of choosing good rather than evil.

concerning all that their minds had departed from the truth. He encouraged them to accept this by revealing His signs through those who carried them to their nations.

Question Two

If he says, what prevented Him from sending His messengers to them about this and providing a revelation of His signs through His messengers concerning His promise to them was perhaps so that they would seek permission to abandon what He had prescribed for them and so that they would choose for themselves what contradicted it?

In reply we say, He was prevented by what He told us clearly of His intention to grant an abundant reward to people who pay attention to, search for and seek the true path. If He did not provide a warning to them in every circumstance by His messengers and His signs through the existence in their minds of the possibility of attaining knowledge of Him and following the merits of His way, then that would have been a situation set up on what He did not desire for them. At the outset, He would have urged them to the necessity of knowing Him, compelled them to the necessity of obeying Him, and made them end up with the limitations of the animals which He does not permanently praise. He would have beaten them with His rod to force them to do the actions He had compelled them to do. But He revealed the signs authenticating what he had sent down to the people of that epoch to whom He sent down His promise, whereas it would not have been for them if antecedent evidence had been provided for them without the signs authenticating what had been sent down to them. Then that prevented their punishment afterwards, because He wanted them to choose the reward for acquiring knowledge of His promise by urging them to follow His path by their own obedience and practice. That was after He had made their path easy in the direction of knowing Him, and had given them the power to achieve what He had promised them.

Question Three

If he says, what was His promise by which the truth of His religion became acceptable and with which He taught them to obey him and His religion? How did He provide the way for the people of that epoch to find and know him so that they could do what He required of them?

In reply we say, His promise is like His justice and agrees with His kindness. I mean His gospel that has been explained and His book that has been propagated and disseminated in the possession of the nations and peoples.

Question Four

If he says, what was His evidence then in this gospel that He sent down for the person who did not witness His messengers and who did not see the signs and wonders that He bestowed on them?

In reply we say, His evidence today exists for the person who did not witness His signs just like they existed for the person who witnessed them when they saw them. This has various characteristics. Firstly, there is existence of the principles of the true religion agreeing with all of the norms of the Generous Benefactor, without misguided leaders inventing their false laws which they fabricated in their books and their creeds. These were heard in his prompting to gracious actions in His teaching to the common people, “Love your enemies and bless those who curse you, do good to those who do evil to you, and pray for those who drive you from your countries and expel you from your native lands”,²¹ and like his teaching in what he said about justice, “As you want to be done to you, you should do to everyone”.²² In the keeping of these two commandments is avoidance of all evil deeds such as murder, adultery, theft, anger, envy,

²¹ Luke 6:27–28.

²² Luke 6:13.

lying, false witness, and prevention of the desire for women, authorization of the separation of married couples, and similar things on the path of corruption. This is the love which prevents someone from killing his friend, from taking his possessions, from stealing his money, from envying what he has, from removing him from his home, from bearing false witness against him, from ill-treating him, violating him, or dominating him in any of his concerns. Then he forbids a man from separating from his wife, forbids her from provoking him to choose another woman, and forbids any offense that might make his Creator angry with him.

Question Five

If he raises an objection at this point and says, perhaps those who accepted this religion and this book set up a conference concerning it and made it up among themselves to attract people to their cause and obey them, without God having sent this down to them and commanding them to proclaim it.

In reply we say, the pretext disappears from this and doubt about it is annulled by its characteristics that witness to its truth so that signs of its authenticity are obvious.

Firstly, he told us about his authority and his uniqueness by these characteristics without anyone contradicting him. If he is himself the sole possessor of all excellent qualities without exception, then rational people will consider this evidence of his being sent on behalf of the Noble and Generous One who brought creatures into being by His grace, who favored them with existence, and then fulfilled what He had agreed to provide for them.

Secondly, The Wise One demonstrated His basic justice towards all His creatures by disseminating it among them through various languages. No-one from the people who spoke these various

languages was forced to accept it by means of a language other than the language and tongue known to him.²³

Thirdly, rational people observe from discernment of what is indicated of signs of the supernatural from hidden things and hidden secrets such as his teaching when he said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like”, and he meant by that his religion, “a mustard seed which is the smallest and most delicate of all seeds, when it has grown becomes the tallest of all garden plants matching trees by its size”,²⁴ and when he said, “This proclamation is like a net cast into the sea and is filled with all kinds of fish”,²⁵ and when he said, “This religion is like fine yeast added to three measures of flour and it leavens the whole batch”,²⁶ and when he said, “This proclamation is like a banquet that a king gave for his son and invited people special to him and they all refused his invitation, so when he became aware of their refusal he commanded his servants to go into the streets and bring to the banquet whoever they met, whether disreputable or reputable people”.²⁷

These parables he demonstrated by his speech, then he described them in his promise, depicted them in his book, and told people about the reality of the demand of his religion by them. When he likened it to a mustard seed in its delicateness and the greatness of the power of its growth, he meant by this a limit to his proclamation, then an improvement in the condition of his religion and its promotion, and its appearance to all he had created on the earth among various nations without distinction,

²³ ‘Ammār makes an oblique contrast to the fact that Islam was propagated in Arabic and that Muslims never sought to proclaim the message of God in the languages of those they ruled. By default, the untranslated Qur’an demonstrates that it does not reflect the wisdom and justice of the Creator towards humanity.

²⁴ Matthew 13:31–32.

²⁵ Matthew 13:47.

²⁶ Matthew 13:33.

²⁷ Matthew 22:2–10.

like plants from the mustard seed which rise up to be the tallest of all garden plants. Likewise, his good news begins in people and his hearers become accustomed to his words like the yeast which brings a large quantity of dough to fermentation. Likewise, his religion includes different kinds of people like the net includes different kinds of fish. As for his teaching about the refusal of the guests of the king to accept his invitation, he meant by this that the refusal of the rebellious invited people was known by God before anyone obeyed him or accepted his invitation. As for his command that his servant invite the reputable and disreputable, this is what his book reports about his command to his messengers to summon the people from the worship of captivating idols, people who were following Satan, with a free invitation which they did not adulterate with fear of a sword or desire for wealth, just as he had commanded them in forbidding such things, and they accepted his invitation and his original invitation was fulfilled.

Fourthly, the clear evidence from the ancient remains of what happened concerning the appearance of his signs and the sending down of the miracles through those who offered his invitation is like fire, which is appropriate as an analogy for what we are describing about this situation. Since fire was created to support the world, to be useful and to destroy, for cooking and burning, and the remains of its activity from burning, ashes, smoke and fumes, are evidence to rational people of the existence of their source and its presence, since it has left the remains of its activity, despite being lost to human sight after having left its remains. This is similar to the Wise One, may He be greatly praised, since He sent his messengers and performed His miracles and signs through them to establish His religion and His invitation among people, to nullify worthless religions by them, to attract the hearts of immoral people by them, and to gather those who had been scattered by them, then rational people are convinced by what they witness of the agreement among the tribes of our nations. Since we make the analogy with our disagreements about wisdom among ourselves, and we cannot make an account of His wisdom in everything He requires of us, then we also study the names and the attributes

describing the One who made the creatures, we depict them by our intelligence and we distinguish them by our imagination. As a result, we attach to everything a name for its aspect and to every descriptive its meaning.

Concerning what is described of His attributes, “life” and “wisdom”, we judge them to be two substances from His substance, not two actions from His activity, nor two limbs from His essence. When His power and strength are described, may His glory be exalted, we do not imagine them to be bodily power and physical strength like the strength of the camel, the elephant, the lion or the bull, or animals like them. But we are absolutely certain that His power is spiritual and wise, not bodily or physical. We know that He, may His praise be magnified, showed kindness by creating these natural characteristics, by combining these substances, by empowering these forms, and by directing these things through His wisdom, which is His power that is none other than His wisdom. So, the analogy convinces us from the evidence of His actions to decide that His power is His wisdom. We do not in addition mean by His wisdom, an acquired wisdom like the wisdom of those who achieve it by kind actions. In the timelessness of His eternity, may His glory be exalted, He is not devoid of His wisdom which He then acquired for Himself afterwards. Rather, we mean by His wisdom, His eternal word which is always with Him as a substantial property from the source of His substance and the essence of His nature. Even though the names differ from this one property which does not differ in its essence in this respect, this is to distinguish the circumstances because of which human beings need to distinguish between these names. When human beings want to describe the precise source of wisdom in their description by knowledge of the characteristics, they name it “His intelligence”. When they want to describe it by what made firm the formation of what He formed and the empowerment of what He empowered, they name it “His wisdom”, and when they want to describe it by command and prohibition, and speech and utterance, they name it “His strength”. All of this refers to His substantiality which is not possible to imagine truly except as a property of substantiality from the source of the substance and His essence. Do not

presume, you hearer of our teaching, that the names differ in this one property. You have heard someone describing the spiritual person as an intelligent person, or a logical person, or a rational person, or a perceptive person, or a wise person. He wants to describe that person by what he has of the nature of speech and the substantiality of the word.

Likewise, it is true for us, when we describe His desire and His will. If we are to understand either of the two aspects, we must imagine them: either as natural by instinct, like the desire of the animals whose nature compels them to seek for what will support them, or as wise by choice, like someone who desires something to do good with it for someone else. Upon my life, if you believe, concerning the things that He willed into existence and the creatures which He desired to bring into being, that He supported them by goodness from His own being and by sustenance from the essence of His substance, like the characteristics we have described, then you are obliged to say that it is proper for His eternal will to be a compulsory desire and not a chosen desire. But if it is found, may His praise be exalted, that He never desired anything or will ever desire anything from the sublimity of His substance out of need or compulsion but only if there is goodness for someone else out of kindness and generosity, then rational people would consider that proof that His will is a will of choice and not a will of compulsion. This refers to the substantiality of speech which exists in a will of kindness and generosity. You will not understand them as kindness and generosity unless they are spoken and wise, nor decide that they are kindness and generosity unless they are reasonable and informed. When kindness and generosity are described by their source, or by their action, then by compassion, mercy, fairness, forgiveness, and such qualities, we are convinced that He is described by them, and they are spoken of Him before the things in His creation which He made by them. So, since He is kind in creating them, and generous in His grace towards them, He is called “Gracious” and “Generous”. Since He helps them in time of trouble He is called “Compassionate” and “Merciful”. Since He fulfils what He undertook to do for them out of His compassion, He is called “Fair” and “Trustworthy”. He is like this in all

similar situations. These are also attributed to the substantiality of speech which generated these things as we have described. He has no generosity or grace without speech, and no justice or fairness without judicious intelligence.

Concerning what is attributed to Him of hearing and seeing, if it is from a lack of knowledge of people of the sublimity of His substance that they attribute to Him limbs and members, and composition and combination, then their ignorance is the reason why they describe His being and His attributes by their own hearing and seeing. But that is because when they look at themselves, they only grasp sounds by hearing with their ears and they only distinguish between bodies and colors by the sight of their eyes. From the weakness of their opinion, they consider that their Creator only attains knowledge of things by a path they have achieved, and they named Him for that reason, calling His being "hearing" and "seeing".

But in strict truth, His substance is exalted far above hearing and seeing, just as it is exalted far above iniquity and taste. This is because these limbs and feelings combine in individual creatures so that they can gain knowledge of things, since they are created at the outset incapable of gaining knowledge of them without touching and investigating them. But He, may His praise be exalted, in His spirit and in His wisdom, does not need limbs which direct people that have weak, physical, and created limbs from their origin. He is not truly described as hearing and seeing, just like He is not described as smelling, tasting, or touching. Indeed, we have already noticed that He understands differently sounds heard by the ears of creatures, not with ears and hearing. He knows the essence of the image which is perceived by the sight of the one who sees the shapes of bodies which He created. He sees without eyes or sight. He understands how food nourishes, in the pleasure of it, without a palate or tongue. He understands how the nose and the nostrils smell without a nose or nostrils. He understands how roughness and softness feel without a hand or touch. Rather, He compels the scattered peoples to join together and agree about things they differ over, to be in harmony about their different desires, to

accept what He sent down to them in His book, and what He called them to in His way and His path as evidence for them and a proof of their dissimilarity from Him, in what happened in the past concerning the revelation of signs and the sending down of wonders through those who proclaimed this.

Question Six

If he says, how can we distinguish between the agreement and harmony which were in the signs and the proof and what was invented by humans without signs and proof? We have seen scattered nations professing different religions, and possessing different books containing commands and prohibitions, laws and duties, reports of resurrection and being raised to life, and rewards and punishments. Each group claims that their book is the promise of God to His creatures which His messengers gave them and He revealed through them His signs and His proof.

We say, do you mean that by research, consulting the peoples, and by observation, the differences between what was invented by humans and the agreement which was from the signs and the proof will become clear to you? It will be evident to you that you will first of all understand that the people of this world did not invent a religion and a law from a book, so a group of people cannot be criticized for the reception of a religion without one of six characteristics which we will describe for you.

Consent: this includes the ornamentation of the words of those who proclaim the establishment of polytheism or monotheism or anything else. This is similar to what the rational early Greeks devised from the subtlety which deceived their minds and engaged their hearts, such as the oneness of a circle by the name of oneness, such as the teaching of the materialists who claim that things do not pass away or come to an end but appear and disappear according to what we see of their condition, such as

the teaching of Zoroaster, Mani, Daysan, Marcion,²⁸ and others like them who established two eternal creators, and two principles mixed together, and who, by the witness of their false teaching, misled many people to whom they presented this by the corruption of their arguments and the apostasy of their proclamation.

Concession in the law and making duties easier: we see this in the haste of many people to make concessions in them to obtain desire and pursue passion, like a sect which is founded on the incitement of slave girls, daughters and noblemen by permitting all that people crave and endless pleasure.²⁹

Sword: used by the killer or in the rule of the conqueror which is deeply hated by people and which leads them to fear and loathe it.³⁰

Incentives and gifts that the world desires: so that hearts eagerly accept the proclamation of what opposes the truth and the religious teachings which oppose what is eternal, through a longing for the power of the will and an escape from necessity and need.³¹

²⁸ Marcion taught in Rome from 140 CE that the God of the Old Testament was the Demiurge who created the world but was less than the Supreme Being who was the God of the New Testament, Jesus the God of love, who had come to destroy the work of the Demiurge.

²⁹ ‘Ammār alludes to the lax rules about sexual behavior permitted by Islamic law.

³⁰ Here is implied criticism of the way Islam imposed its laws by force on conquered peoples.

³¹ ‘Ammār probably has the incentive of tax breaks in mind. Christians were regularly converting to Islam to avoid paying the annual poll tax for remaining in the Christian community.

Protection and Tribalism: like someone who follows his chief, his people and the head of his clan, in consenting to his falsehood and corruption, on account of tribalism and protection.³²

Control of Spirits and magic similar to this as you see or reaches you from the actions of a magician: Are these characteristics not in all the tricks of the charlatans who draw people to accept what they invented from their books and spread abroad from their religious teachings? There is nothing in the world equal to the trickery we have described. For example, if a people among the misguided peoples attracted one man from a religious community and succeeded in transferring him from his religion to their religion without any defect that we have described, then he would always stay attached to it.

We see many kingdoms and various peoples and types of scattered nations and people with different languages, I mean Romans, Europeans, Hebrews, Barbarians, Ethiopians, Nubians, [unknown nations], and all the nations of the Arabs, the Peninsula, Syria, and other Arab tribes, the Persians, and other groups of people who believe in this book and boast about its excellence and honor.

Therefore, O reader, look into this and see if these characteristics are connected to it and are evident in it. If you find that it is possible that one of these six characteristics which we have described exists then I am sure without doubt that it is a falsehood invented by people. If you find it absent from all that is original then it is absolutely certain that it is the book of God which He sent down, His promise which comes from Him to His creatures, received through His messengers by means of signs and wonders. From the aspect of its reception by these diverse nations there is evidence of the way in which it originated and was re-

³² ‘Ammār probably has in mind the fanatical loyalty of the Arab armies who conquered the Middle East to the message of Islam brought by their leader, Muḥammad.

vealed from Him, and the cause of its being was established and accepted.

Question Seven

If you say or a questioner says, perhaps the acceptance by these peoples was by approval of what was collected in it of things that hearts incline to, such as the oneness of God professed, such as the arguments of Zoroaster, Mani, Daysan, and Marcion, and such as the subtle teaching of the ancient Greeks.

We say, by my life, there is no disputing that many people are attracted to things whose appearance is adorned, whose futility is camouflaged, whose flaws are covered over, and whose defects are hidden by their refined appearance, and so they approve of them. Given that its appearance is deemed to be ugly and its report is found to be repulsive, and minds have an aversion to its ugliness and hearts are alarmed at its vulgarity, then there is no way to suspect its acceptance by means of compliance to accept it by approving of it.

So, let us recite to you what people were invited to accept from the information in this book. See if you will not find in it information approved by those who possess reason concerning its reception and its acceptance by their approval of it?

It says at the outset of its teaching that a girl, a virgin, a maiden becomes pregnant and gives birth to a child without a husband. Then it is proclaimed that the one born of the virgin is the Son of God. Then it is said that after that he was crucified and killed, and that after his crucifixion, his being killed, and his burial, he was resurrected and raised to life. Then it is said that after his resurrection and being raised to life, he ascended to heaven and sat down on the right side of God above the angels and the Cherubim and Seraphim. Then it is said that he was given rule over every creature and that humans and angels together serve him.

Then it is said that he will return to earth to raise the dead and resurrect those who are in their graves. He will judge angels and

humans on the day of resurrection, and he will promote the righteous to happiness and commit the unrighteous to hell.

Then it is said that he sent messengers, commanding them to summon people to faith and belief in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, one Creator, one Lord. Then he called people after this to renounce the world and abandon its enjoyment. He did not announce a greater reward for those who trusted in him than being in heaven like the angels.

The information from this community is based on what this gospel proclaims and this is what they believe in. How can they possibly claim that the nations accepted it and received it with pleasure? Rather is it not clear to everyone who has reason that it repulsive, demanding, burdensome, false, untruthful and unsuitable?

Question Eight

If he says, was this perhaps because it permitted the stirring up of desire and the attaining of pleasure and because it lightened and eased his duties and laws?

We say, any rational person already also knows a leader whose people ask for permission to satisfy their desires and pursue their pleasure relating to women and seeking for many of them. Then what follows this is an addiction to comfort in eating, drinking, entertainment and similar things. We know that there is no way to attain these things without possessing the ability to acquire wealth and gain treasure.³³

What this book commands and urges people to do is contrary to all of that, when it says, “Whoever divorces his wife and takes another woman has committed adultery, and whoever forsakes

³³ ‘Ammār alludes to the permission granted in Islam for a man to marry more than one wife, and to have concubines, but that such a lifestyle requires more than average wealth.

his wife, except for indecency, has sinned greatly”.³⁴ It is asserted clearly here that it is forbidden to a man to take a woman other than his one wife.³⁵

Then it says, “Buy what you can acquire of the whole earth and give it as charity to the poor, and compare yourselves to the birds of the air which do not grow tired and do not accumulate for tomorrow, likewise do not be anxious about tomorrow and say, what will we eat, what will we drink and what will we wear”.³⁶ In his command to keep to one wife and forbidding divorcing her, then in his urging to give money to the poor, and his parable about the birds of the air, he cut off all worldly pleasure and desire. This was also the case when he urged humility, bearing injustice, patience in experiencing wrong, and devotion to prayer and fasting. He threatened the one who abuses his brother or who looks at a woman lustfully with the punishment of hell. Yet you consider all of this to be concessions and a means of attracting gullible people to a false religion.

Question Nine

If he says, perhaps people submitted to accepting it because they were forced to do it by the ruling authority and the sword.

We say, this also is not possible for the confession of the preachers because of what he commanded them when he sent them saying, “I am sending you as lambs among wolves. So, go but do not take a club or a stick on your mission”.³⁷ If he had intended that they conquer people by a sword, why did they confess that they were forbidden to take a club or a stick? Surely, their con-

³⁴ Luke 16:18, and Matthew 19:9.

³⁵ ‘Ammār decided to show how the gospels contradict the permission for a man to divorce in the Qur’an, and the permission for a man to marry up to four wives, without actually quoting the Qur’anic texts.

³⁶ Matthew 5:52.

³⁷ Matthew 15:9–16.

fession shows that they did not use a sword, club or stick in their preaching.

Question Ten

If he says, could it not be that its acceptance was because of greed for money that was given?

We say, he also set out teaching about this for their confession when he gave directions for their mission saying, “Do not take gold, silver or copper”.³⁸ This shows that they were forbidden to offer anyone money or a bribe.

Question Eleven

If he says, perhaps it was accepted as a result of the tribalism and fanaticism of those who brought the book and called them to serve Him.

We say, by my life, if those who accepted it from them were only from the same people and clan, you could possibly say that they called them to it by means of tribalism and fanaticism. If different nations, diverse peoples, various types of communities, and dissimilar kingdoms joined together in a relationship based on tribalism and submitted to serving a dead Jew, despite the particular reasons of hatred, war and animosity between them and the Jews, then a rational person cannot believe this but only an ignorant person can.

Question Twelve

If he says, perhaps it was because they saw magic from those who preached to them.

We say, how is that possible, when they pledged with their tongues and announced to the crowds the testimony that they themselves had been sent by demonstrating the clear signs and

³⁸ Matthew 15:9.

true wonders by their hands, since he said, “Go and call the nations to this religion, drive out demons, heal the sick and the lepers by my name, and if you drink deadly poison in my name it will not harm you”?³⁹

There is no doubt that it was like this. Some of the people who heard the teaching believed, responded to their call after seeing and understanding, followed them in front of the crowds by accepting the truth of what the messengers proclaimed along with their testimony that they had been sent through the demonstration of the signs which they showed with their hands. If they had been exposed by these followers as being contrary to what they had proclaimed about themselves, surely the crowd would have been awakened to their falsehood and not one of those people would have felt obliged to accept their proclamation. How and why did they become accepted by leading kings, philosophers of the nations and astronomers of the peoples who are entrusted with all kinds of science, from the practice of medicine, the wisdom of philosophy and the precision of mathematics, and who obeyed them? This could only happen apart from their investigation and study of all that they had tried to discover by themselves, that is despite their books recording the futility of magic and such like for the people, and warning about it. Since they did not fail to investigate their demands by means of true signs, without their approval of the trickery of magic or the absence of what is contrary, they believed for themselves that their being sent was based on the truth.⁴⁰

Question Thirteen

If he says, perhaps the nations accepted the truth of their teaching and affirmed their proclamation without asking them any-

³⁹ Mark 16:15–18.

⁴⁰ ‘Ammār depends on the developed scientific method of generations of Christian doctors to refute the charge of magic tricks, rather than on miraculous healing at the hands of the original disciples.

thing about it. If they did not examine what they brought to discover their lies and the falsehood of their proclamation then they did not enter properly into their religion.

We say, how is it possible for thirty different kingdoms to agree to accept these difficult and detestable commands yet to fail to ask the preachers about what impact they would have on themselves. You do not hear about or see any man from the nations of this world leave the religious community he was raised in for another religious community apart from one of the characteristics which we have described. Their tolerance to accept the preachers' book and their believing the truth of what the preachers proclaimed could not get going without their asking for the proof of the preachers' proclamation. In each of their countries a person who was struck down from weakness, chronic illness or possession by Satan, desired healing from his illness and he showed this to them or he was brought to them and he was healed by them. Would this not have prompted the inspection of the miracle that had happened to them? This is similar to people who follow vice, possessors of amulets and possessors of charms or who are affected by blindness or are lame or crippled and who attempt to preach to people in front of the crowd. If the crowd witnessed their miracles which they themselves had pledged to perform, the crowd would be convinced of their lying and the falsehood of their proclamation, and would not pay attention to any of their teaching, and would not believe one word of their book. However, when you see these great kingdoms and large nations agreeing together to be subject to their book, according to what the book reports of assuring the people of the transmission of what had been passed on to themselves and their mission, are you not absolutely convinced that what they brought would have been examined with the greatest care and serious questioning. They would have noticed any weakness concerning what they had inquired about them and their mission. Yet they submitted to obeying them and following their proclamation.

Question Fourteen

If he says, as for what you believe about the preachers at the outset of their proclamation, their dealing with people, how they refused to give money, or to use the sword, and such things, perhaps after the nations obeyed them and the peoples became subject to them, they gave up from this way of acting and then they invented this book to refute themselves. So, they set up, what their mission prohibited, an accusation of the outcome after what they had done among the people.

We say, we believe that there are two characteristics by which the preachers were innocent of the accusation of difference between what they set up and what was in their book. Firstly, if the preachers dealt with the people by any of the characteristics which they refrained from, and then they wanted the verification of their religion afterwards and so they invented their book at the outset making it agree with their behavior and making it commend their actions, then they proclaimed in it the urging of their very mission by doing it. By my life, if they wanted to establish the outcome and set up their religion on contradiction, then what was more appropriate to the affirmation of themselves than their contradicting what was originally from their Creator and their transgressing the instructions for their mission. Rather, since we see their setting up what they had been instructed and their advancement of it, and then we see the nations being established afterwards on what the preachers had put forward by their hands at the outset, we ourselves are certain that the actions of the preachers were the same as what they established in their testimony. If their establishing was, as you claim, different from what they practiced by their actions, then when they presented their book to the people, they did not establish such a difference afterwards in their religion.

Secondly, if these nations accepted the preachers' book, they were all animals and beasts in understanding and knowing whether there was righteousness or corruption in it. According to what you have claimed, if you see abstention from the sword and the prohibition of such actions in the book, and the preachers acted as they acted by using the sword when they had first

spurned it, then at the end they established their religion by what was prohibited to them of the use of the sword and acquisition of wealth. Surely the nations would have noticed the corruption of the preachers whose cause would have been nullified and they would have rejected their religion and refused their book. They would have been absolved of the blame for their rigidity and would have been set free from the harshness of their way of life. Then the nations would have returned to what they were at first in their religious community and the ease of the way of life of their ancestors. It is not possible for rational people to be ignorant of the innocence of the nations in what was given to them all concerning violence, offense, deception and leading astray. The truth is that happiness spread among them through the revelation of signs and wonders. You can see the leaders of the nations, and the philosophers of the peoples in various ethnic groups, different languages and distant lands, adhering to their book with such constancy from the east to the west of the earth, since the day they accepted it from their hands to this day. Along with what we have said about this, there are rational people from all sorts of nations who cling to a book which gives evidence of their religion. Their manner of life and their different actions to which their nations were summoned were not a diversion or an amusement, because they did not believe in their book and their share in the consequences, so that it is clear from their manner of life that this is different from what they were summoned to. On the contrary, it is absolutely clear that their manner of life was similar to what the people of the book called them to.

For example, we do not doubt the one who proclaimed the Torah, when his tribes were enjoined to stand together on the religion of the Torah. Since the beginning of his proclamation to the tribes of his religion there was no difference at all in his proclamation about the unity of God and the right way of life set out in the Torah. If his actions and the beliefs of his preaching differed from the way of life in his book, then surely the tribes might have accepted his religion but would not have submitted to his book.

Likewise, there is no doubt about the proclamation of the book of Mani, since his people remain together committed to the religion of his book, and that since the beginning of the proclamation of his religion no difference has been seen from himself from what he proclaimed about idolatry evident in his book. If his actions and the beliefs that he proclaimed differed from the way of life in his book then surely his people might have accepted his teaching but would not have submitted to his book.

Likewise, there is no doubt about the author of the book of Zoroaster, since his people remain together committed to the religion of his book, and that since the beginning of the summoning of the people to his religion, no difference has been seen from himself from what he proclaimed about idolatry evident in his book. If his actions and the beliefs that he proclaimed differed from the way of life in his book, then surely his people might have accepted his religion but would not have submitted to his book.

Likewise, there is no doubt about the author of the writing of the Qur'an, since his people are together committed to the religion of his Qur'an, and that since the beginning of the summoning of the people to his religion, no difference has been seen between his actions and the beliefs that he proclaimed about the unity of God and the way of life set out in his Qur'an. If his actions and the beliefs that he proclaimed differed from the way of life in his book, then surely his people might have accepted his religion from him but would not have submitted to his book.

Likewise, it is so concerning the past, and the beginning, and what is to come among all kinds of nations. If we take you back after your affirmation concerning the people of your book, then we could say, but you corrupted your book by proclaiming in it this message with the agreement of your leader. How can it be acceptable for us in relation to our proclamation and your proclamation for you to extract proofs of the truth of your proclamation by negating our proclamation? If we are not in agreement about you extracting evidence against us, then your confirmation of the sending down of our book and our denial of the sending down of your book are both evident.

If you will ask us about the absence of corruption from the two versions of proclamation, when we compare them together, the outcome of your question will also be that when you present your belief in the sending down of what is in your hands, by introducing all that is in your hands, then what is in our hands will establish what you reject and will reject what you proclaim, and will be in all its aspects contrary to everything that you describe.

If you put forward another question and say, but if there is agreement in the current transcription of our books in the nations that is evidence of the prevention of corruption and the declaration of the source from which they originated and began, such as we have set out in the establishment of this argument for the assent of your judgment, we will say, you have spoken the truth. Similarly, the transcribed books in the hands of the nations scattered among the lands containing different peoples are preserved from corruption, and they demonstrate the sound agreement of the peoples before they accepted them as a result of signs and wonders. Therefore, you must accept this without doubt that this is your conviction about the origin of these books being sent down.

This completes the second section by the help of God and his blessing, and to Him be the praise in the establishment of the Holy Gospel.

SECTION THREE: ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ONENESS OF THE CREATOR IN THREE HYPOSTASES

In nine questions⁴¹

We begin our discussion by setting forth what the people who oppose us find contemptible in our description of the oneness of the Creator, the essence of the Creator, may His praise be exalted, in three aspects, which is the case, after our establishment of

⁴¹ The manuscript has “in nineteen questions”.

the authenticity of the books which speak of this. Just as when two adversaries take their dispute about houses or property to an arbitrator and one of them sets out proof that the house in its measurements and its legal status is his and not his adversary's, and people generally surely regard the judge to be obliged to hand over the house in its entirety without examining the proof door by door or brick by brick. Likewise with us, when we regard ourselves obliged to accept the authenticity of the books which speak of these things which we have set out as proofs of the veracity of what we have held to be true, we do not have to set out the argument letter by letter or word by word. But we will graciously comment on the questions we receive to elucidate for the benefit of the person who requests knowledge of this wholeheartedly and with true sincerity.

Question One

If a questioner from the opposition asks, saying, what is the evidence for the truth of what you claim concerning the threeness and oneness of the Creator? How is it possible that one is three or the three is one, when you also introduce in your establishment of His oneness and your belief that He is one, that there is none like Him and that He has no image or likeness?⁴²

We say, concerning the existence of one being three and the three being one, by my life, that his existence in this sense is not possible because the number one is not the number three. Concerning the meaning that we intend in our teaching, we mean that the one eternal substance eternally exists in three substantial properties (*khawāṣṣ*) not differentiated or divided.⁴³ All three

⁴² The questioner is set up as a Muslim who quotes the Qur'anic conviction that God is one and that there is none like Him.

⁴³ By selecting the Arabic term *khawāṣṣ*, 'Ammār avoids giving the impression that the three members of the Trinity are individual persons, which the Qur'anic texts seem to imply, and Muslims tended to understand. By choosing properties over persons, he is able to argue that

properties belong to the one eternal substance which indicates that He is not three in this particular meaning. He is not divided or partitioned in His essence or in His perfection. He is not three in number, in the sense that He is one, one in number, but He has three properties. This is our belief about the oneness of His substance and the threeness of his properties, may He be glorified and exalted.

Concerning what we have shown about our interpretation of what we have mentioned about this, and with respect to our conviction that He is one in His essence, single in His nature and His eternity, there is none like Him in His substance and there is no similarity between His actions and the actions of His creatures. We have found every maker of a thing and doer of it among the creatures not free in relation to his making of that thing in the movement of his members and the use of his limbs. His movements demonstrate his limits, and his limbs show his constitution and his composition. His composition and his constitution prove that someone previously composed him, constituted him, put him together, and is the master of his constitution. So, it necessarily follows that we know without contradiction that the work of one who does not have a creator, the actions of one who does not have members in his essence, and the deeds of one who does not have a body or movement in his nature, is not like the work of the one we have described who is endowed with limbs, members and movement. On the contrary, we truly know, when we found His essence exalted above these attributes then we found Him to be a creator, an inventor, who invents and brings into being. He invents something by command and decree without movement or effort, and by will and decision without trouble or help.

It will not be possible to imagine the will, the decision and the decree unless He possesses word or speech. Speech cannot be

oneness adheres to the one eternal substance, who has three substantial properties.

imagined unless He has life. From the point of view of the affirmation of our teaching, it is necessary that the improbability of any similarity between the substance of the Creator and the substances of His creatures, and between His work and the works of His creatures, proves that He has three properties and one substance for all eternity: the essential substance which His life depends upon, His word which is the source of His wisdom, and His life which is the source of His spirit.

Concerning what we have also shown about the oneness of the substance and the threeness of His properties, when we set out to examine the situation of this created world, we arrived at the notion of the existence of a source preceding it which originated it and brought it into being. Then when we studied the creatures generated by his favor, creatures which do actions from the nature of whatever properties they have, like earth which comes into being and deteriorates, and fire which burns and cooks, and cultivates and degrades, and similar things from natural actions, the properties of their natural actions, we say, is it conceivable that the Creator of these creatures is like these non-existent substances which he favored with life? We say, could the one who created these creatures with instinctive natures from outside their own existence, make them and yet have no power to prevent them coming into being? We find types of His creatures created according to what is seen in them of the appearance of the creatures from the beginning of their existence, and they show that the Creator precedes them, knowing that their existence is intended and chosen, not innate and necessary. This is because the natural actions that they do are immediate and they stop at once, just as there is no way for fire to continue burning once it has consumed firewood which is sometimes burnt and sometimes not burnt. So, it is with all these natures known by the properties of their actions.

If there was an action of the Creator, may His praise be exalted, from the aspect of a natural action which we have described, either there was a way to stop His action beforehand, or this cessation was prevented and afterwards the action was performed, then it did not exist before Him in His eternal state as

an obstacle intervening between His nature and the creatures He finally generated.

If we say, on the contrary, His creatures are eternally newly formed and created like natural actions which they always do naturally, the claim is impossible and contradicts itself. Because if we say that His creatures are eternally newly formed, we are obliged to call the creatures eternal and time bound together, and the same applies to the one who says that the Creator is eternal who brings His creatures into being, or who says that the Creator is eternal and exists eternally.

Indeed, if to rational people this idea that He is eternal in His existence before creating newly created creatures is firmly impossible, then He brought them into being by power and might, and this is impossible if He willed to create them. His timelessness is uninterrupted as we have described Him creating them newly formed, and this is evidence that His timelessness being uninterrupted is by will and choice, and His bringing into being what was newly created is good, designed, and chosen. The one who holds that it is impossible that His action is by His will and His choice is obliged to hold that it is certainly true that He initiated the life He initiated by design and power.

Then we also see many kinds of creatures doing remarkable actions, like the offspring which are the most despised of creatures and altogether inferior, yet they survive among similar creatures who are alike devoted in effort, in movement and in gathering their food which they work for when it is possible on the days when they can gather their food. Likewise, all kinds of living things, among animals, beasts of prey, kinds of birds, reptiles in the water, and insects in the earth, work in accordance with what their nature is set up to do and are not elevated to the level of others that are formed for the demands of living sufficiently.

We say, is it possible to imagine this living, eternal substance making these creatures in such a way that He transferred His nature to His creatures, giving them the proper condition of the state of His nature and the improvement brought about by His

very own essence, like animals naturally disposed to the necessity of the way of their nature, bearing by necessity what the essence of their nature is set up to do? We find that, out of the timelessness of His freedom from which He ultimately brought them into being, and His being above any necessity to bring about their existence, He certainly satisfied their hearts by empowering them with merciful concern. Therefore, He created them from His utmost elevation to bestow goodness on them among other things, and to be gracious to those for whom He brought his creation into being, not to obstruct them with necessity itself or establish them in the state of His own nature.

When it is firmly established in our minds that He set up in his creation for the improvement of the creatures among other things, favoring them and intending goodness for each of His creatures out of generosity and kindness, then our minds are convinced that He will not show the generosity of kindness and mercy except by His intelligence or wisdom. This is as a result of His preceding intention by which He determined to be generous and kind.

When we see from the wonder of this world, the perfection of its structure, the joining together in it of opposites, and the wise manner of its administration, then it is evident to us that He created it, composed it, and manages it from the source of His all-encompassing intelligence and it flows from His all-encompassing wisdom. This is just like the true copies of the form of the creatures compel rational people in an initial inquiry to discover the proof of how a substance began and was brought into being, and in a second inquiry to discover the proof about His gift in creating it after composing it by granting life to it from His eternity. Likewise, it is evident from a third inquiry into the wise manner of His administration of it, and what preceded it from His prior intention to bring it into existence among other things. These necessarily testify to the substantiality of His word and the eternity of His wisdom. Whichever way you devote your thinking to these creatures, your opinion will be drawn, without any doubt, to the certainty that their Creator

and Administrator is one in His substance yet three in His properties.

Question Two

If he says, from our point of view we see from the perfection of the making of the creation and the wise manner of its structure complete evidence that its Maker, its Creator, and its Administrator is One, Living and Wise. As a result, we would be misled by futile thought if, first of all we insisted on His existence, then secondly we asserted life for Him and thirdly wisdom, and we counted this threeness by division and separation.

We say, as for separation and division, these are not among attributes of one who does not have a body or of one who exists in His eternity. Rather, these are attributes of created, composed and joined up bodies. As for your saying that the perfection of this world and the wise manner of its structure prove that the Creator is One, Living, and Wise, and that there is no reply to you, we have already informed you previously that the One who created the world by His Word and His Spirit is undoubtedly one in His substance, alone in his nature, no division affects Him, and no separation reaches Him. But how is it possible for rational people that believe, with the certainty that He is a substance elevated above separation and division, that the meaning of the saying of the one who says “He never ceases to live” has the same meaning as his saying “He never ceases to be wise”. We have already seen many nations founded on themselves and their notables and they are devoid of life. Then we have seen types of animals together existing by themselves and they are devoid of speech. If the meaning of “existing by themselves” is the same meaning as “living” and the meaning of “living” is the same meaning as “speaking”, then surely every nation existing by themselves without doubt lives and speaks, and rocks, stones and iron surely exist by themselves worthy to be described as living and speaking also. However, if you find them existing by themselves and nations arranging them, and they are devoid of life and speech, you must call them “dead”. Likewise, those that possess movement being equated with those that speak existing

by themselves, and existing by their life, and are devoid of speech, you must call “animals” and “insects”. This is because without speech they are devoid of the meaning of existence, the substantiality of existence, in the substance of those who speak.

For this reason, if their Creator is found to be eternally living, we must acknowledge that He is necessarily endowed with life and speech. I do not understand why these deniers reject establishing eternal life and substantial wisdom in the eternal creator. Do they consider that this necessitates separation and division in His substance? If they think that, then they have negated their conception when they know that He does not have a body and cannot be separated and divided in His origins. If they think that this necessitates composition and formation in Him, then we have already shown that He is not composed or formed since He does not have a body, and He does not have a Creator who composed Him. If they deny this because their senses do not lead them to admit that a substance has life and speech unless it is created and formed, we say that they also deny that He exists living and wise, because their senses do not lead them to admit that He exists living and wise unless He is brought into being and created. They deny that He is a maker and producer, because their senses do not lead them to admit a creator and producer, unless He is brought into being and created. They deny that He has dominion, power and authority, because their senses do not lead them to admit dominion, power and authority unless He is brought into being and created.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The fear of attributing to the Creator that which adheres to created beings lies behind the Muslim denial that He is necessarily endowed with life and speech. Applying attributes of created beings to the Creator would bring Him down to the level of His creation. Abū l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf was known to deny that the statement “God is living” meant that God had the attribute of “life”. For Mu‘tazili thinkers like him it was not possible to affirm that God had attributes, since these were characteristics of created beings only. The complete otherness of the creator from His creation necessitated that He be free from any of the

On the contrary, you know that the agreement between the Creator and his creation in these things is such that He existed before the sharing of names. Concerning the meaning, there is no similarity or agreement between the Creator and his creation. Likewise, there is no similarity between them and Him in life and speech apart from the sharing of the names.

Moreover, it is necessary that we come back to those who deny what we say and ask them about the God that they worship and ask, do you believe that He is eternally living and wise? No doubt they will say, yes. Then we will say to them, tell us about the meaning of your saying that He is eternally living. Do you mean that He is eternally wise? If they say, no not at all, the two different words have one meaning, we will say, then indeed you are obliged to accept three meanings of eternal, the two different attributes and the description of them as one, so you have ended up with what you have found fault with. If they say, but each word has one meaning without any difference, then they have indeed gone beyond the limits of reason. Then they are without doubt obliged to acknowledge that this obtains for everything that is living and wise. So, the insects and the animals, if they are found to be living, are without doubt wise and capable of speech.

If they say, but we are permitted to hold that the two meanings are one in their particular origin without being equal to the other, we say, since you want by this to clarify the saying about Him that He is living alone, then you imagine the hearers of your saying disagreeing with what you have affirmed with your minds, because the minds of the hearers will not imagine as you

characteristics of the creatures He created. ‘Ammār argues on the contrary that the Creator shares His attributes with His creation. He shares His life with animate beings and he shares His speech with rational beings. But the life and speech of the Creator are altogether different from the life and speech of created beings.

do that the meaning of life and the meaning of wisdom are one and the same.

If they say, but we intend, by our saying life and wisdom, to keep Him from ignorance and death, so we are not obliged to regard life and wisdom as you claim we are obliged, we say, if you call Him life and wisdom then you negate your claim about death and ignorance, and when you reject life and wisdom, you call Him one who is ignorant and one who dies. There is no difference between your rejection of death and ignorance and calling Him for that reason living and wise, and your rejection of life and wisdom and your calling Him for that reason ignorant and dying.⁴⁵

If they say, but we are right to call Him by the most glorious, perfect and honorable names and not by the basest, meanest and vilest names, we say, if the names living and wise become in your opinion the best names which are worthy of glorifying the eternal One who has no life or wisdom, according to you, because they are possessed by humans who are one of the kinds of creatures, then also you do not glorify Him with honor and praise by means of anything that humans possess. Indeed, hu-

⁴⁵ ‘Ammār has chosen to begin on ground familiar to Muslim intellectuals who were attempting to determine whether the names of God referred to actions of God. Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf is reported to have denied that the names did refer to actions of God. He argued that it is acceptable for created human beings to be described as performing an act of knowing by virtue of which they can be said to be knowing, but it is necessary to interpret “God is knowing” as “there is an act of knowing that is God”, and “there is an object that he knows”. See R.M. Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes; the Teaching of the Basrian school of the Mu‘tazila in the Classical Period*, (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1978), p 12. Abū al-Hudhayl was concerned to defend God’s unity (*tawhīd*) by denying that there is an entity called “knowledge” that can be identified in God. ‘Ammār deals with this reticence by isolating life and speech as inherent qualities in God which are distinct from actions that are not.

mans are praised by being described as good, attractive, clean, beautiful, noble, skillful, graceful, elegant and similar things, so they also glorify Him by all these praiseworthy things, and they reject any of them that are contrary and different. So, what prevents you from glorifying Him by what humans especially are praised for among all creatures? You find many kinds of inanimate aspects of creation praised for all kinds of aspects, like the sun is praised for the beauty of its light, the radiance of its heat and the eminence of its form, and like fire, by the fineness of the volume of its substance, the power of its heat, is praised for its impact. They are called for that reason a body, giving light, brilliant, radiant, burning, and ripening. So, will you reject futile thought and will you decide that you will not designate Him by the names wise and living, apart from many of the characteristics by which animals and inanimate aspects of creation are praised, unless two meanings exist, and two particular characteristics are established for life and wisdom in His substance apart from what they are necessarily called?

If our questioners come back and say, do you not believe, along with your saying that He is living and wise, that He is hearing, seeing, powerful, merciful, almighty and kind? This is as if you have made life and wisdom essential to Him, and you have made spirit and word to be two substantialities when you call him living and wise. Do you not also establish in him hearing, sight, power, might, mercy and kindness as substantialities when you call him hearing, seeing, powerful, merciful, almighty and kind, and everything similar to these? Do you not specify in him threeness which you have described apart from fourness, fiveness, sixness or more, according to what we have described?

We say, no, by my life, if the situation is as you have described, surely the outcome would be as you have argued. However, do you know the difference between the names and the attributes which are worthy of Him prior to the properties of His substance, and the names and the attributes which are derived from Him prior to the properties He planned and performed which are spoken of Him as an explanation, for reasons that we will make clear, not because they are necessary in him or exist in his

substance? If you know this, then why do you make this argument, according to what you disagree with, that they are equal? If you are ignorant and blind about this surely you reject what you must agree with, and you already know that the outcome for the one who is blind and ignorant to the truth rebounds on his people. If this is the case, because there is no disagreement among you who are ignorant and blind, then what we deny, by my life, is an ignorant person who puts his people in the worst situation such as you have done by error and mistake.

We will show this by fitting arguments not unfamiliar to rational people. They will increase your understanding when a reply is given to you from our teaching. It will not make us a burden to you if we begin by an introductory path along which we can direct your hearts to understanding what we wish you to perceive about this.

Know firstly, oh people, that there will never be a substantial separation between aspects of the substances in their differences in terms of hearing, sight, power, mercy and what is similar to them. Because we have already seen and know various substances that have various differences between them that all are hearing and seeing, such as the substance of humans and species of animals and kinds of birds who together share hearing and seeing yet who do not share essence or substance. Then we have already seen those that have a substance, among whom are those who hear and those who do not hear, those who see and those who do not see, those who are powerful and those who are weak, and those who are merciful and those who are cruel. I mean various people with differences in these characteristics, yet they have the same substance with no differences in it. Those who have the same substance do not imagine some of them living and others dead, some of them speaking and others incapable of speech, I mean mental substantial speech and not utterance passing through the lips and tongue. Perhaps the hearer imagines, when we say “not human unless living, speaking and dying”, that we exclude dumb people from the substance of humans when they lack the capability of expressing their thoughts through their lips. However, we mean by this,

substantial speech implanted in their essence. So, it is known by this that there is a difference between the substances of animals and inanimate things, when there is life which itself is the distinctive mark by which their substance is known. Then the substances of animals are distinguished afterwards by speech which itself is also the distinctive mark by which their substance is known. Therefore, life and speech are among the properties of the structure of the substance and the form of the essence and nature. As for hearing and sight, they are not of the structure of the essence of the nature and do not share in the form of the substance. As for power, capacity and capability, we make a distinction in the substances because they have two different causes. One of them is bodily and corporeal, which is the natural capacity of the bodies of animals, such as we have seen a camel carrying up to a thousand distances and an elephant bringing a resting camel to the ground by its capability, killing it by its bull-like capability, and similar actions which are related to the capabilities of bodies. The other is mental and spiritual, I mean intelligence which is the capacity of the creative mind, which is intellectual refinement that we see from the creation of bodies, the representation of forms and the formation of stature and similar things from created things empowered with wise minds and spiritual intelligence.

Likewise, intention and will exist from two aspects. One of them is natural by instinct, like the intention of livestock and insects and things like them among the animals that desire what their nature is based on for sustenance by eating and drinking. The other is intelligent by thought and choice, like firm reliance on things considered to have beneficial effects, and like belief in things that result in profit for others and the wellbeing of people apart from oneself, being gracious and generous to them.

Concerning mercy, compassion, justice, kindness, generosity, graciousness and what is like them, they are the effects revealed by substances that possess speech and thought in particular, but not from any substances that lack intelligence and speech. You will not see a merciful donkey or a gracious horse or a just camel or a fair lion, or any kind of animal that lacks speech being

described by any of these attributes. This is because they lack a substantial cause from which these effects that we have described arise. Moreover, none of these effects exist in the place of speech in their substantial structure because the effects arise from a cause that does not exist in the situation of the original cause.

According to this example, we terminate our argument about everything that the mind and the senses together have achieved. We will not continue arguing about the truth by means of analogy which gathers together this thinking about the essence of His word and spirit, or anything else like them.

Question Three

If he says, is He in need of His word and His spirit or does He not need them? If you claim that He is in need of them then surely you have described Him with need, weakness, and deficiency. If you claim that He does not need them then they are removed from Him just as you have removed from Him what is indispensable like hearing, seeing and such like.

In reply we say, you are in discussion with people who are rational and intelligent not with animals and insects. We have already pointed out to you that a rational person can only think of the spirit and the word as two substantialities in the substance, so how can you pose this question, when you already are certain of this. Is the eternal One in need of what are to Him two natural substances? What do you say if a questioner asks you, does fire need heat and dryness, and does water need coldness and wetness? Do you not know that this is obstinate talk, a senseless question, since you know that the conduct of the substance of fire is by its heat and dryness, and indeed becomes fire by its heat and dryness, and the conduct of the substance of water is by its coldness and wetness, and indeed becomes water by its coldness and wetness? But you can pose the questions, does fire need bread and wood for its appearance and its outworking? and does water need earth and dryness for its make-up and composition? and things like this that are outwith the essence and nature of a thing.

Likewise, you cannot ask the question, does the eternal Creator need what are to Him two natural substances? This would be like you asking, does the eternal living and speaking One need His spirit and His word? If you ask, does fire need its heat and dryness? This would be like you asking, does fire need its nature and essence? Moreover, if you are permitted to ask, does the eternal, living and speaking One need a place or a location or hearing or sight, or anything that he created and made, you will be told, God forbid that we impute any kind of need to him.

This ends our attempt to explain the truth of the oneness of the substance of the Creator and the threeness of his properties by rational analogies.

Besides this, it would be remiss of us if we did not appeal to citing what we have of previous testimonies in the books that God sent down concerning the establishment of what might compel the minds of rational people. There is no way to argue that a defect in our religion could be to our glorification through the futile fabrication of the books of God, and by the claim that we and our enemies the Jews agreed with us and together with us concocted the fabrication of these books and corrupted them according to what our religions agreed with.

Understand, oh hearer, what Moses the prophet of God recounted in his book when he spoke about when God wished to create Adam. He said, “We are creating a man in our image and our likeness”,⁴⁶ and he did not say, by my image and my likeness, but, by our image and our likeness. By saying, our image and our likeness, he indicates His oneness and His threeness in one saying. He says in another place, “Let us go down and we will separate their languages”.⁴⁷ Ezekiel the prophet of God reports God saying, “In that time I will make the children of Israel know my power and my strength because the Lord is our name”. Daniel says that God called to Nebuchadnezzar with his own voice,

⁴⁶ Genesis 1:26.

⁴⁷ Genesis 11:7.

“we say to you oh Nebuchadnezzar”. These words from His speaking, may He be blessed and exalted, “we are creating”, “we will separate”, “they say”, “our name”, “our image and our likeness”, are not permitted to Him, by any of the people who speak Syriac, Arabic or Greek, except to show numbers, the number being confirmed as the first and the second. The Arabs also do not consider it permitted in his saying, “May He be exalted” and “Let us go” in one alone by himself as by himself particularly. I also do not permit one who possesses intelligence to claim that God means by his saying, “Let us separate their languages” that He called on the angels or any of his creatures for help in what He willed in the separation of languages.

Moses says, when Adam ate of the tree that God forbade him to eat from, God said, “Now Adam has become like one of us”.⁴⁸ If he says like us, then the speaker claims that he is permitted as one person to say, “we”, “like us”, “we are creating”, “we will go down”, “we provide”, “we raise up”, and “we do”, and he means by this himself particularly. But he says, “like one of us”, showing without doubt that it is permitted to count the first and the second.

He also says in the beginning of the prayer, “Hear oh Israel the Lord your God, the Lord, He is one”.⁴⁹ He instructs them by this that there is threeness in His properties and yet He is one in His substance.

Job says, “The spirit of the Lord created me”.⁵⁰ God’s prophet David says, “By the word of God exist the heavens and by his spirit all its armies”.⁵¹ He says in another place, “His word created the winds and the waves”.⁵² David also says, “May the

⁴⁸ Genesis 3:22.

⁴⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4.

⁵⁰ Job 33:4.

⁵¹ Psalm 33:6.

⁵² Psalm 147:18.

word of God be praised”.⁵³ He says in another place, “He sends his word and heals them and delivers them from corruption”.⁵⁴ David also says, “You send your spirit and change them”.⁵⁵ The prophet Isaiah says, “God sent me and his spirit”.⁵⁶

This is the essence of one divinity, one substance and one Creator. They describe how they call Him God, Creator, Eternal, and Worshipped. Some of them describe God, may His glory be exalted, with two eyes, two ears, two hands and two legs from the aspect of interpretation and metaphor, yet they do not describe Him from the aspect of their description of His word and His spirit in creating creatures and directing things. Not one of them says that God created the creation by His hearing or by His sight, or by His ears, or by His eyes, or by His hands, or by His legs or by anything except His word and His spirit. If God, may His greatness be exalted, has been described in some of His books as having created the creation or performed an action by His hand or by His arm, and you explain His speech, you will find that the meaning of by His arm and by His hand is His command, His prohibition, and His will, generated from His word and His spirit, not the essence of His word and His spirit. When He is described by either His word or His spirit, they call Him Creator God unlike all the other attributes with which He describes himself.

Question Four

If he says, if you call these three properties three persons then the hearers of your teaching may think you are setting up three gods.

We say, we do not call them three persons, and nobody should think that we call them persons, because the person, according

⁵³ Psalm 147:19–20.

⁵⁴ Psalm 107:20.

⁵⁵ Psalm 138:7.

⁵⁶ Isaiah 6:8.

to us, is each body limited by its parts and its limbs separating it from what is like it among bodies. But we call them in the Syriac language three hypostases. This is the language we will use after we have shown the meaning of the hypostasis and what it is. Understand what we discuss with you and know that it is not something that you call it in your language. It will only make your heart tremble if it is not one of four things that we describe to you. Concerning substance, this is like universal humanity, fire, water and things like them. Concerning power from the strength of the substance, this is like speech from a human being and heat from fire and movement from water, and similar to what is based on the essence of a thing and what gives it life. Concerning contingency in the substance, this is like whiteness in snow and blackness in tar and the condition, the contingency, and the limitation and what is like them. Concerning a hypostasis of the substance, this is like a servant of God by his soul and his body from humanness, and like the angel Gabriel by the property of his hypostasis from the angels, and what is like this among the spiritual and physical hypostases.⁵⁷

These four things encompass all that is thought and sensed. There is nothing that can be experienced apart from thinking and sensing, and there is no possibility that anything is outside these four realities. Two of them exist by themselves, and they are the substance in general and the hypostasis in particular. Two of them do not exist by themselves and only exist by what is other than them, and they are the elemental power and the opposing contingencies in bodies and properties. The hypostasis in the Syriac language as we have indicated means the perfect particular property, self-sufficient, and not being compelled by others in the existence of its essence.

⁵⁷ ‘Ammār appeals to the categories of Aristotle, substance (*jawhar*), power (*quwa*), accident (*‘ard*), and then he adds hypostasis (*qunūm*) to them. The essence and the hypostasis are alike in that they exist without depending on anything else, whereas power and accident depend on something else for their existence.

When the leaders who established these theological issues in the past considered that there was one maker of these created contingent things and they wanted to establish his existence and the oneness of his essence in the face of the ignorance of his oneness and his existence, they did not find in the things perceived anything more perfect in its essence or higher in its life or more self-sufficient from relying on others in the existence of its essence than the substance, so for that reason, they called it a substance. Then when they saw in this one substance properties known as we have described as the source of the main cause of the creatures and his spirit and his word, they did not find that they could also specify any of them by a name from the four things that we have described as limited, and they found that it was not possible to classify them under the names power and contingency in order to raise them up from division, separation, deficiency or necessity. Then in addition, since none of these diverse hypostases exists by the support of the universal substance that would justify the use of the name of the common substance, they did not find a name from the names described at first by it and similar to its perfection among the hypostases. For that reason, they called them hypostases.

This was after they found from the teaching of the Messiah about this the permission to name them hypostases, when he said, “Since there is life in the Father in His hypostasis, so He conferred life on His Son so there is life in his hypostasis”.⁵⁸ If the Father has a hypostasis, then the Son has a hypostasis, and so the Spirit also must have a hypostasis. It is amazing how rational people reject calling it a substance that includes particular hypostases, as we have seen. They do not reject from their description one meaning in any of its aspects when they see any circumstance where there is one meaning, like elemental power and the opposing contingencies which are not self-sufficient in various bodies. They do not find a meaning equal to oneness in realities like heat known by oneness of heat, like movement cat-

⁵⁸ John 5:26.

egorized by oneness of movement, like whiteness specified by oneness of whiteness and like blackness distinguished by oneness of blackness.

By my life, if our description by oneness and threeness is false and futile because some of His creatures exist like that, and their description is by one meaning, then compelled power and lowly contingencies exist like that, false and futile. If all our speech falls short of the truth concerning the One who is great in His essence and glorious in His life, then surely by my life, we have reported it by the best method that can be found among the names and attributes together. But the truth of what we have described is in how we have advanced what we have advanced, and the falsity of what they have described is in how they have been ignorant of what they have said and how they have not understood the falsity of what they have described.

Question Five

If he says, why do you call these three hypostases which you have written down, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? We say, they are called these names at first and they are known by those who had the right to name them, I mean the apostles chosen and commissioned to announce the good news given to them by the Lord of the worlds.⁵⁹ They were the ones who depicted them like this in his glorious gospel in an account of the teaching of his sending them to the nations and peoples when he said, "Go and win over all peoples and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit".⁶⁰ When the blessed Matthew, who was the author of the first part of the book that the Lord commissioned, described them this way, what he wrote about them with this terminology was obscure, and he ended his teaching by these words that mean a summing up. The victorious beati-

⁵⁹ ‘Ammār gives Jesus the name of God "The Lord of the worlds" found in the Qur’an forty-one times.

⁶⁰ Matthew 28:19.

fied John, who was the author of the fourth part, saw by the heavenly wisdom that was given to him that people would not accept through blindness what the first evangelist reported because of the obscurity of the reporting of it. This is a warning to the one who believes that he receives a phrase of the teaching of the evangelist reporting Father and Son, that he means by them fatherhood and sonship like fatherhood and sonship common among animals in their generation and reproduction. This is like the one who is quick to show an insight and a concern for the danger of corruption that frightens him out of his slowness. So, the fourth evangelist made the opening of his writing an interpretation of the teaching of the Son with which the first evangelist ended his previous report. He said, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and always existed with God. Everything exists by him and nothing in creation exists without him”.⁶¹ Then he continues in his writing to call the Word “Son” and he says clearly and openly, “Nobody has seen God; his Son is the one who makes him known”.⁶² If God the Word is the Son, and he was Messiah in his clothing, then he is the one who preached to the people and declared to them by the exalted essence of God how to achieve insight. Then the Son testified to them about the Spirit and eternal life when he said to his apostles, “The Holy Spirit who is the Spirit, the Spirit of truth who is poured out from the essence of God, will inspire you, and enable you to recall everything that I have told you, and he will direct you to the whole truth because he will be with you and will empower you, but the people of this world will not see him because they cannot comprehend him”.⁶³

This shows what their gospels announce in beautiful detail of their naming the Eternal, Living, Speaking Father, and his eternal Word and his eternal life as Spirit.

⁶¹ John 1:1–3.

⁶² John 1:18.

⁶³ John 14:17, 26.

I cannot understand why these opponents find objectionable the naming by the book of these realities, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Is it because they only understand Father and Son in terms of sleeping with a woman and sexual intercourse? Then there would be a disparity in time and conditions, such as they understand between those who father creatures and their sons. There is a disparity in their persons and a difference in time and period between them. If it is like this then we say to them, you deny your description and your naming of Him as kind and merciful. We do not consider that you understand mercy and kindness unless they are contingent, such as when the heart shrinks and the heart grieves. You deny your description of Him as almighty and conqueror, because you do not understand might and victory unless they are tyranny, oppression, and blame. You deny your description of Him as great, splendid, and exalted, because you will not understand greatness and exaltedness unless they are embodied, solid, and crude. You reject your description of Him as wrathful and angry, because you do not understand wrath unless it is changeable and movable from situation to situation.

Or they change their minds and think that if He has the attributes of creatures perhaps the attributes of the Creator agree with some of their names, then there is no agreement between them in the essence of their original reality. Likewise also, if the attributes of created animals agree with the properties of the substance of the Creator, may He be magnified and exalted, in the names of fatherhood and sonship, then there is no agreement between them in the essence of their reality from the aspect of things joined together. But if we seek further concerning what exists, it is possible that rational people may be led from opposition and difference between various created things to the difference between eternal fatherhood and sonship and the generation of creatures. Surely the difference between fatherhood and sonship is greater and so much further than the difference that exists between different and contrary things, by weaknesses upon weaknesses that cannot be counted.

How do rational people conceive of thinking about the word of God? When they describe the names Father and Son, they mean by them fatherhood and sonship like fatherhood and sonship known from fatherhood among creatures and their offspring. But this meaning cannot exist at all in the substance of the Creator, may He be glorified and exalted, since there is nothing like Him among all things that exist. He has never been described to people of times past in the previous books by a clear statement according to what is described in the gospel and what follows it of books of God in existence. Through the knowledge of the Wise One, may He be glorified and exalted, of the weakness of the minds of the ancestors in their understanding of His essence because of the alienation of their minds, they would not be burdened in their faith and belief in the oneness of God. We have told you that He was not specified by fatherhood and sonship to those who lived in previous generations before the gospel because there was no need to indicate a description of them until the Son appeared embodied. The people of his time needed the greatness of his kindness towards them in his becoming human from the humanity of their substance to be preached to them and announced to them. He indicated this by his remarks about his Father and the fatherhood of his Father to him and the eternity of the Spirit poured out from the essence of his Father on them.

If the Son, may his name be glorified and exalted, had not named these three hypostases, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and also not depicted by his command what that generation bequeathed in the glorious gospel, people would not have attempted to name them this way by their own thinking. Similarly, if you investigate the names and the attributes with which the worshippers of their Lord name and describe Him, you will surely find that all of them originate and derive from the books of God sent down which tell them what He himself has chosen to be His names and attributes. You will not find that people invented them of their own accord. For example, He names Himself in the Torah and other places in His books, Loving, Living, Desiring, Grieving, Arguing, Sighing, Enticing, and things like that among His names which He notified in describing them

to His worshippers at various times, like when He said to Moses, "If Pharaoh asks you and says to you what is His name, then say to him Living and Desiring",⁶⁴ and like when He also said to Moses when He called him from the desert saying, "Oh Moses, I am the Lord who revealed myself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by the name the Almighty God, and the name of the Lord has been disclosed to you".⁶⁵

Therefore, you see Him showing you in His speech that He is the One who commissioned His helpers and His prophets with what He had chosen of His names created by Himself. He is the One alone who chose the names he wanted for his essence apart from His creatures. He told them at various times name after name, by His will and intention. It was not the case that the worshippers attempted to choose names for Him or ascribe names to Him by themselves, or that He would cease His generosity and His kindness towards the worshippers who called Him what they had chosen of their own accord from the defectiveness of their names.

He called Himself a king, and Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar were called kings, and David and Solomon were kings. He called Himself God, and Moses His servant was called God. He called Himself Lord, and some of the people were called lords. He called Himself Mighty, and Samson was called mighty. He called Himself Wise, and Solomon was called wise. There are many other names that cannot be counted. So, if there is agreement in the names, then likewise, they also agree with Him in their meaning.

We do not want to frighten you, oh listener, when you hear His books naming Him with the meaning Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so that you believe that they are like fatherhood and sonship which pertain to creatures before their birth. Rather it is like He has rule, authority, godhead, lordship, might, and wisdom, ac-

⁶⁴ Exodus 3:13, 4:5.

⁶⁵ Genesis 17:1, Exodus 3:15, 4:5.

ording to what He called Himself and described Himself by them. He has the absolute right to do this, but creatures do not. Likewise, He also has fatherhood, sonship and the eternal Holy Spirit, just as He has named and described the properties of His substance by absolute right which creatures do not have.

Question Six

If the questioner says, is it not possible that you have established these meanings by analogous words which you call upon from before the books appeared? Therefore, in your proclamation of these meanings you do not have certainty about them. On the contrary, in your proclamation of them you are doubtful and not certain. Perhaps the truth is less than what you believe.

We say, what surprises rational people is to be directed without the book so we do not deny it. On the contrary, we have established that rational people do not perceive of their own accord the meanings of Father, Son and Holy Spirit without the instruction of the book. Just as they also only perceive any of the names of the Creator and His attributes from the instruction of the book. No book is worthy to be accepted by blind faith. However, rather than by the blind faith of tribal nations and by the mere submission to it of nomadic people, it was worthy to be accepted because of its perfection through the signs which appeared from the hands of those who proclaimed it. These signs convinced them without searching for what surprised their minds from the direction of their understanding such as rational people do today, and the signs prevented blind faith and submission to the announcement of the names, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Even though it was difficult for the state of their minds to agree with these different ideas, when diverse peoples saw the actions of these signs and the results of these wonders they accepted what was proclaimed and established it as their religion, as we have shown you in the previous discussion.

Question Seven

If he says, do you claim that the Father is perfect God, and the Son is perfect God, and the Holy Spirit is perfect God? If you say, yes, you must name them in life and speech three perfect Gods. If you say, no, not all three of them are perfect God, unless they are joined together as one perfect God, you have made them unequal and you have made them parts of one perfect God. There is absolutely no escape for you from choosing one of these two ways of speaking.

We say, the name “God” is interpreted by us in two senses, firstly substantially and secondly contingently, but both of them do not apply to the Creator, may He be exalted and glorified. Concerning substantially, He has a property that no other has, that is His attribute of oneness which nothing other than Him has. If the meaning of His divinity is the meaning of His substance, and the meaning of His substance is the meaning of His divinity, then there is no difference between them and there is no division from any one aspect of all the aspects, and no partnership with any of the created substances in the name of God substantially at all.

Concerning contingently, others share it with Him. This is described, like the name of the gods derived from Him in the adoration and obedience to what was named and His own description of god for His saints and His chosen ones, or when His worshippers, saints, obedient ones and chosen ones call Himself their god. Note His speaking by the tongue of His prophet David, “If you do not fulfil my promise and you do not carry out my law, I will not be your God and you will not be my people”.⁶⁶ Then the stars are called gods because they are worshipped, when David says, “Our Lord is greater than all the

⁶⁶ Psalm 81:8–12.

gods”,⁶⁷ and in another place, “We did not forget the name of our Lord and we did not stretch out our hands to another god”.⁶⁸

These sayings indicate gods who are contingent or dependent upon adoration and prostration, they are not gods that are substantially eternal. Because it is unthinkable that the Wise One means by His saying, “I am for you and I am not for others”, anything less than that He is God who is substantially eternal. Just as it is unthinkable that He says, “I am for you living and I am not for others living”, when life for Him is substantially eternal. Likewise, David does not mean by his saying, “Obey me” to people whose God is the Lord, that he, David, is eternal divinity, because eternal divinity always means that God existed substantially before the creation of the people. David never existed in the sense that his people worshipped him or would worship him.

If we have succeeded in the interpretation of the two meanings then our teaching can be understood first of all concerning the substantiality of the Godhead of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, may they be glorified and exalted. We have already said that the Father is perfect God, I mean that He has an eternal substance which is a perfect property. And the Son is perfect God, I mean that he has an eternal substance which is a perfect property. Then all of them together are one perfect God, or one common universal eternal substance. When we speak with this meaning that all of them in his particular property is perfect God, we do not have to say that they as three together are perfect Gods. Like when we say that each of them in his particular property is a perfect substance, we do not have to say that as three together they are perfect substances which share one common universal divinity, or one common universal eternal substance.

⁶⁷ Psalm 4:2, 77:13, 86:8, and 95:3.

⁶⁸ Psalm 44:20.

Do you not see that each of the three people, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, share one common universal substance, since each of them in his property is a perfect substance and they are not altogether three perfect substances? But if we are required to name the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, three perfect Gods, there would be difference in the substance, so they would become together three perfect substances counted as three Gods each considered perfect. Like a bird, a lion, and a donkey, if each of them in his own substance is perfect then their substances differ so that the three of them are not counted together as one perfect substance, but the three substances are considered perfect. Likewise, if each of the eternal properties deserves to be called a perfect substance then they should be enhanced and elevated by the names, “power”, “obligatory honor”, “divisions” and “portions”. Therefore, there would be no difference or distinction between them in substance. When they are together, they would not become three substances considered perfect, but one common universal substance. Likewise, if the meaning of His substance is the meaning of His divinity, and the meaning of His divinity is the meaning of His substance, and each of His properties is perfect God in His property, they would not become together three perfect Gods since they share one perfect divinity, but one common universal God.

Question Eight

If he says, your saying that each of them is not a particular perfect substance, when you mean by this that it is a perfect complete hypostasis, if you make them become together three perfect complete hypostases then you are required to make them become three perfect complete Gods.

We say, we would be required to do that if we had said to begin with that the meaning of His divinity is the meaning of His hypostases and the meaning of His hypostases is the meaning of His divinity and the meaning of His substance. Concerning when we began to say that the meaning of His divinity is the meaning of His substance, then each of them in this meaning is a perfect substance in His property, it is necessary that the name of the

divinity follows, whether generally or particularly, with the name of the substance, whether generally or particularly, if the meaning of one is the meaning of the other.

Concerning the name of the hypostasis, it does not follow or apply to the name of the particular substance in every aspect. Rather we have already said about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that each of them is a perfect hypostasis, and likewise, each of their properties is a perfect substance. Then we have said that the three of them together are perfect hypostases. It is not appropriate for you to say that they are perfect substances altogether as three, because the common universal substance does not stop you from imposing the name of countable substances on the collected hypostases in their common universal nature. This proves to you that the meaning of the hypostasis does not apply to the meaning of the particular substance in every aspect. Then if the meaning of the hypostasis also applies to every aspect of the meaning of the particular substance, how can there be a difference between the reason why the essence of the Eternal is called a substance and the reason why the properties of his substance are called hypostases? But the difference between the reasons also proves to you that the meaning of this is not the meaning of that in every aspect. The reason why the essence is called a substance is because He willed it to concur with His existence and to establish His being. The reason was not so that the properties of His substance be called hypostases that He willed the existence of His essence and being, but to exclude the necessity of imperfection from it and the possibility that it might be considered like aspects, parts, power and contingency of the substances that are composed of composite parts.

Our saying that the Father is a perfect hypostasis, the Son is a perfect hypostasis and the Holy Spirit is a perfect hypostasis, and the three of them together are perfect hypostases, does not compel us to say that together they are three perfect Gods when we say that each of them is perfect God. Just as we are not compelled to say that together they are three perfect substances when we say that each of them is a perfect substance. But each of them in his property is a perfect substance, and together they

are one perfect substance. They are only three hypostases when they are together as three hypostases, like they are only three properties when they are together as three properties. This is because the hypostases differ and the properties differ. For this reason, it is necessary to say three hypostases and not three properties, and there are no differences in the substance. Likewise, it is necessary that He is called one substance.

Do you not see that when there are three flames in a fire, each flame appears to exist by itself so that each of them is a perfect substance in its essence or a perfect fire in its original nature, after they are counted? There is no escape for you from saying three flames and three things, but as has been described, there are not three fires or three substances but one fire and one substance. Likewise, when you see three drops of water, each drop appears to exist by itself or to be a perfect substance in its essential nature. If you want to join them together by numbering them there is no escape for you from saying three drops and three appearances, but you are not entitled to say three waters or three substances, but one water and one substance.

Likewise, if each of the properties of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, may they be glorified and exalted, is one perfect God or a perfect eternal substance and perfect eternal hypostasis, then the three of them are not together three perfect Gods or three perfect substances. But together they are three perfect hypostases and three perfect properties.

Some philosophers have called the hypostases of one substance substances whose aspects are countable, and they appeal to this to divide them and distinguish them one from another. If there is a reason for calling hypostases of one substance substances with countable aspects of what is divided and distinguished, then it is not possible that the names of the substances are countable aspects.

Likewise, if the substance of the Eternal, may He be glorified and exalted, has divisions and distinctions, then it is not possible to call the hypostases substances with countable aspects. Perhaps a person says that no substance can possibly have divisions

and distinctions, and it is not possible for it to have countable hypostases. Then we must oblige him to follow us concerning these properties of the Eternal, the well-known names of the hypostases. They are necessarily more perfect and exalted than the names, power and contingency, not because hypostases as hypostases are well known. Just as when we apply the name of the common substance to the essence of the Eternal, we intend to establish His intention, not because He has a substance with countable aspects. When we call His properties with this meaning, we are not compelled to call them three substances. Since we do not call them three substances, we are not obliged to call them three Gods but three hypostases in one substance like they are three properties in one God. This proves that we have deservedly applied to each of these hypostases the name of the divine substantiality by rational analogy.

Concerning the testimonies of God in His books sent down about the perfect divinity of each of them, then there are more than can be counted. We are content to refer to what we mentioned above from our book where the Father calls Himself Lord, God and Godhead. Likewise, His Word is called Lord, God, Creator and Godhead. Likewise, His Spirit is called Lord, God, Creator, and Godhead. Then we describe them together as One Lord, One God, One Creator and One Godhead. So, you should understand by this that each of them in His property is essentially eternally perfect, and the three of them are together united in one divinity, one universal substance in countable hypostases.

Concerning what you ask us about this from the aspect of divinity derived from the earlier worship of deities, and it is said to us, do you not claim that the Father is perfect God or perfect Godhead, the Son is perfect God or perfect Godhead, and the Holy Spirit is perfect God or perfect Godhead? Surely you are obliged to say that together they also are three perfect Gods or three perfect Godheads.

We say, that would be required of us if we say that we are permitted to worship the Father sometimes apart from the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹

Question Nine

If he says, do you claim that the Father is living and speaking, the Son is living and speaking and the Spirit is living and speaking? If we say, “no”, he replies, then each of them dies, but if we say, “yes”, he replies, then each of them has life and speech. You say that he is not living without life and when each of them....⁷⁰

Ears are essential for hearing and eyes are essential for sight. It is not permitted to say, a man and his ears are two hearers and a man and his eyes are two seers. But he is one hearer and one seer. It is not permitted to call the ears hearers and eyes seers, unless they are originally one who hears and sees and hearing and seeing depend upon him.

If a man is described as living, hearing and seeing, then he is living by his spirit, speaking by his word, hearing by his ears, seeing by his eyes. His spirit that is his life is described as living speech, his ears by which he hears as hearing, and his eyes by which he sees as seeing. This does not negate the description of the Spirit of the Creator as living and speaking, with the meaning that the Spirit is the source of the eternal, speaking life by the speech of the Father ...⁷¹

The substance with the property of existence that has existence, life and speech does not exist without life and speech. Existence is an essential attribute of the substance and an essential aspect of existing things. Life is an essential attribute of the substance and an attribute of the substance of existing things. Speech is an essential attribute of the substance and an attribute of the sub-

⁶⁹ A folio appears to be missing at this point in the manuscript.

⁷⁰ The following words are not clear in the manuscript.

⁷¹ The following words are not clear in the manuscript.

stance of existing things. Likewise, for the substance with the property of existence, life is existence, life and speech. The life and speech of the substance are not non-existent. Life is an essential attribute for the substance and for the living an essential aspect. Existence and life are two attributes of the substance of the one who speaks.

In summary, the divine substance is described by the three properties, existence, life and speech ...⁷² Another power exists in the Powerful One which is not the power of His divinity ...⁷³ the will of His divinity. Likewise, it is appropriate to say that the divine substance exists as a living speaker, and the speaker exists as living. It is not necessary for the living one to have another life apart from the life of the substance, or for the speaking one to have another speech apart from the speech of the substance.

Whoever wants to examine this and what follows from it may consult the outline of the reply of Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Adī to Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq.⁷⁴

SECTION FOUR: ON REASONS FOR THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD AND WHAT FOLLOWS FROM IT

In fifty-one questions⁷⁵

⁷² The following words are not clear in the manuscript.

⁷³ The following words are not clear in the manuscript.

⁷⁴ The copyist of the manuscript adds this sentence from his vantage point in the thirteenth century. Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Adī [d. 974] wrote a reply to the refutation of the Trinity by Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq [d.855].

⁷⁵ The title and numbers of questions are not in the manuscript. Michel Hayek, the editor of the Questions and Answers has re-numbered the questions in this section on the incarnation as questions one to fifty-one. However, the manuscript has three separate sets of numbers. Hayek’s questions one to two are not numbered in the manuscript. His questions three to eleven are numbered eleven to nineteen in the manuscript. His questions twelve to fifteen are numbered one to four in the

Question One

[The question and the beginning of the answer are missing]⁷⁶ ... the union of the two substances. When we specify the two hypostases in relation to their establishment together as two essences it will show what differences there are between the two substantialities. Because the uniting which was between them was not a substantial uniting in which one of them was transferred from the essence of its particular substance to the substance of its owner and then they became one substance brought together but not as they were. Rather it was a uniting from the aspect of sonship and relationship to the Father characterized by the essence of fatherhood. If they were established according to their two natures, and the oneness of their establishment was without any difference between their substantialities, then there is no division between their hypostases. It was not that a powerful one over them became three with them, since their oneness was the result of it making them so.⁷⁷

Question Two⁷⁸

If he says, you tell us that the Messiah is one reality in his Messiahship. Is he eternal or contingent? If you claim that he is eternal then surely you negate his created contingent humanity

manuscript. His questions sixteen to fifty-one are numbered one to thirty-six in the manuscript. The questions are recorded in the manuscript in the order presented here, so it seems logical to follow Hayek's reorganisation of the question numbers.

⁷⁶ The first question is missing in the manuscript but the answer shows that the question was concerned with the relationship between the divinity and humanity in Jesus. The question probably was, "Does the uniting of the divinity with the humanity not mean that the essential natures of divinity and humanity resulted in a third reality which has lost the essential natures that were joined together"?

⁷⁷ The first ten questions relate to how the eternal Word of God could enter into time in the divinity of the Messiah.

⁷⁸ The question number is not in the manuscript.

which you claim is one of his two natures. Then you have attributed what pertains to him of types of contingency to what is uniquely eternal, not to a created contingent thing as you have described. If you claim that he is eternal and contingent together, you negate the oneness of the one reality which you have described and you have returned to saying what you have denied, since you claim that he cannot be said to be one together as two and the two are him, with what you have described him being eternal and contingent or two substances which are eternal and contingent.

We say, but the Messiah is contingent from the aspect of his Messiahship which began after he became Messiah.⁷⁹ We mean by this that the Eternal Word and the created contingent human being became one contingent Messiah, since the oneness does not limit the reality of the one Messiah except by the joining of the two substances and their uniting. Concerning the eternal of the two substances of the Messiah, it is eternal, and he is not the Messiah in the timelessness of his eternity before the joining. But when he was conceived as a contingent human being he developed by his incarnation and by his taking contingency with him, and the eternal and the human became one contingent Messiah.

For this reason, it must be said that the Messiah in the reality of his Messiahship is contingent, and that the eternal of his two substances existed before the joining. For example, an eternal fire and a contingent coal become one contingent live coal, and an eternal fire and a contingent wick become one lamp. The fire does not exist in advance before being united with the coal and the wick as live, and is not one lamp before being united with the coal and the wick. A live coal or a lamp are not included in

⁷⁹ Discussion of Jesus as “the Messiah” demonstrates that ‘Ammār is willing to engage with the Islamic language of the questioner, for this title is used for Jesus in the Qur’an in 3:45, 4:157, 5:17, 5:72, and 9:31. The name “Jesus” is not used by ‘Ammār in the defence of the incarnation because it is not given to the Messiah in the Qur’an.

the meaning of the lamp or the live coal at all. Likewise, in the timelessness of his eternity before becoming incarnate in the created humanity and uniting with it, the eternal substance was not Messiah and was not included in the reality of the Messiah.

Question Three⁸⁰

If he says, are the two substances united? If you claim that they already existed and were not united, in other words are not the Messiah, you must answer the question, when the messenger was conceived as a human being like other humans and not the Son of God that you claim, was he Messiah by the uniting of the two hypostases? Because the first existence of the creature is when it is in the womb after conception. If you say, however, that they did not exist at all apart from the uniting, it will be said to you, what is the point of you continuing to call them two in the joining in one from one aspect among other aspects, and not at all at the same moment apart from one Messiah?

In reply we say, one of the two substances existed eternally as we have explained, and it did not exist alone before the existence of the created Messiah, but when it was formed as a creature in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who was equally a creature. The two natures were united there and they were formed together as the Messiah, the Son of God.

Concerning our continuing to name the two of them, this is not from the aspect of uniting because the two united in the reality of one Messiahship and the aspect of one sonship, so that they became one Messiah and one Son, being joined and made without transfer of their essences,. But when we continue to name the twoness of the two which we have demonstrated, they are not transformed into each other. This means that the two hypostases exist according to what separates them.

⁸⁰ Questions three to eleven are questions eleven to nineteen in the manuscript.

In our way of thinking, when we speak about two natures and two hypostases in the one Messiah,⁸¹ may the hearers understand that we do not mean that this uniting between the substances and the hypostases is a substantial or hypostatic uniting, or that each of the two substances is changed by the other by the humanity being equal to them, since each of the two hypostases becomes equal to the other apart from hypostatically. But each of the two hypostases apart from the uniting which took place and the two natures do not exist in their essentiality from the aspect of one Messiahship and one Lordship as we have intimated.

Question Four

If he says, tell us about the Messiah that came from each of the two substances and hypostases, what is he, if he is not a substance and not a hypostasis? Do you claim that he is contingent, not existing by himself, and his essence is without a substance or a hypostasis? If you claim this, then you must exclude him from one substance of the two. Or do you claim that this contin-

⁸¹ ‘Ammār here gives the definition of the uniting of the Church of the East. That there were two substances and two hypostases in the uniting is the distinctive formulation of the East Syrians to which ‘Ammār is faithful. He upholds the Church of the East denial that the uniting is substantial or hypostatic, though he does not explain at this point that the uniting was of the will of the divinity with the will of the humanity, which was also the belief of the East Syrians. It is notable that he does not set up the Muslim questioner to interrogate the definition of two natures and two hypostases in the Messiah. This most probably reflects the reality that Muslims found such a construct as far too complicated to engage with. For them, Jesus was a profoundly spiritual human being, one of the four key messengers of God, alongside Abraham, Moses and Muhammad. The notion that he was divine as well as human was the central anathema to Islamic thought. There was little point for Muslims debating whether Jesus had a divine nature as well as a divine hypostasis.

gent being was born, grew up, ate, drank, died, was crucified and then was raised alive and ascended to heaven?

In reply we say, among names there are names that are attached to substances in isolation, like the name universal humanity is attached to the substance of universal humanity in particular. Among them are names attached to hypostases in isolation like the name of Adam is attached to the hypostasis of Adam in particular. Among them are names attached to things classified as uniting together different hypostases, like the name of one necklace attached to many substances classified as made together from pearls and sapphires and things like that, and like the name of one live coal is attached to coal and fire joined together and composed, and names like these made up from various substances.

We say, we mean by our saying “the Messiah” an isolated substance and not an isolated hypostasis and neither a contingent being that is not self-subsistent, like our opponents believe about us. But we say, as we have said, that the meaning of the name “the one Messiah” is classified from the two substances or the two hypostases, God and humanity, by uniting and composition. This is like the meaning attached to one necklace of various substances from pearls and sapphires and such like by composition and joining together, and like the meaning attached to the name of the live coal and coal and fire in one composition. One necklace is not a substance, nor a hypostasis, nor a contingent being in a substance or a hypostasis. But each necklace and live coal means being imagined and understood by the joining together of each of its two substances by composition, and the uniting of the two substances existing by the attachment of their two essences.

Likewise, the Messiah is the Son of God in one meaning comprising two hypostases, divine and human, established by the attachment of their two essences, and likewise, the Messiah is

the Son of God, when by their uniting they are one Messiah, one Son and one Godhead.⁸²

Question Five

If he says, if the two hypostases do not merit the name of the Messiah except by what is other than them, or by the uniting which is between them, then they do not therefore become by themselves one Messiah. On the contrary, when they become one Messiah it is a contingent being other than them. May you be forgiven for your description of the Eternal One receiving createdness and contingency, which is sheer ignorance and blindness.⁸³

In reply we say, by my life, just as fire or coal do not merit the name of a live coal without the two being joined together and composed, likewise, it is not appropriate to use the name of the Messiah for the hypostasis of the divinity and the hypostasis of the humanity in their isolation without their agreement and their uniting in what they united together in.

Concerning what is contingent about this uniting by what is created between them, it is attached to the human being attracted to these excellent qualities, bestowed on him by these particular gifts. It is not the case that the Eternal is contingent in this contingency or is created by this creation. When He lifted the humanity from the rank of the people of his substance from servanthood to the rank of Lordship, it remains in the rank of servanthood when in the rank of Lordship. When He made the hu-

⁸² Here ‘Ammār involves the title, “Son of God” in his exposition. He will discuss the meaning of this title later but introduces it at this point in anticipation of the discussion of Fatherhood and Sonship, the usual Christian terms for the relationship between God and the Messiah.

⁸³ It certainly is sheer ignorance and blindness from a Muslim perspective that Christians insist on holding a union of eternal and contingent realities. The otherness of God dictates the impossibility of His substance uniting with created humanity.

manity itself equal to His power, rule and authority, He did not make Himself equal to the humanity in the limitation of the nature of its substance.

Likewise, the humanity in his sonship united with the eternal divinity attributed to his Father. He did not unite with it in his human sonship dependent on his mother. Do you not see how fire gives to the live coal its heat and its attribute yet it does not share with the live coal in its dirtiness, and it is joined with its heat and its redness yet does not share in its blackness and its coldness.

Likewise, the Eternal received the humanity and its meagerness together and united with it in all that was in it of sonship and meagerness, yet he did not share with the humanity in anything that he had in his essential being. Since some of his aforementioned mother had indeed been attached to the Eternal, many of the characteristics existing in the humanity are interpreted figuratively in the uniting described between them, so we are not at all obliged to apply them to his true nature.

Question Six

If he says, was this humanity an existing human being in the womb of the Virgin Mary before it became incarnate as a body and a dwelling place?⁸⁴ If we say, yes, he says, how was his existence unused and neglected before the time of his uniting, when according to your claim he was not created, apart from uniting with a body and a temple? If we say, but he did not exist

⁸⁴ The questioner asks about the incarnation for the first time here. Incarnation (*tajassud*), the action of taking a human body, was coined by Christian theologians who wrote in Arabic. Abū Qurra may have been the first to use the term in his treatise 'A Reply to the One who Refuses to Attribute the Incarnation to God', but it became standard terminology in the ninth century, and so would have been used by Muslims in dialogue with Christians as depicted by 'Ammār in this instance.

before his existence came about, he says, how is it possible that he united with what is nonexistent?

In reply we say, understand that our saying about what was taken from the Virgin Mary is the same as our saying about what was united, created and taken from her. Our saying about what was taken from the Virgin Mary is the same as our saying about what was united and created from the Virgin Mary, and our saying about what was united and created from her is the same as our saying about what was conceived in her and given birth by her. What was taken from her was elemental material like the material created in the natures of animals from the bodily seed of their offspring. Concerning what was united and created from the material taken from her, it was a body ready to breathe by itself as a sign established in her of perfect humanity. Concerning the conception of him and the birth from her, the Messiah possessed two hypostases, divine and human, from which he united as one Messiah. When we come to speak about what was taken and united and born, then the reply is understood from us to the question about what was taken from the Virgin Mary, did it exist in her nature before being taken or not? We say, certainly the material that was taken existed established in the nature of the chaste Virgin Mary before it existed. Concerning the body growing created from the material, it was created and united together at the same time, after the form of his creation existed. Likewise, the Messiah existed joined together in his perfection with what was taken and united together at the same time. Also, the chaste Virgin Mary conceived the Messiah existing by his hypostases. Then when the time of her pregnancy was complete, she gave birth to him, a perfect Messiah.

Question Seven

If he says, tell us about this created being taken from Mary. Was he Son of God or not Son of God?⁸⁵ If you claim that he was Son

⁸⁵ The Muslim knows that Christians call the Messiah, “Son of God”.

of God, you make two sons for God which is impossible. If you claim that he is not Son of God, it will be said to you, did Mary give birth to him or not? If you say, yes, are you not required to say that she gave birth along with the Son of God to him who is not the Son of God, and you must make the eternal property born from her contingent. Surely your belief at first that she gave birth to the Son of God is followed by your denial that the one taken from her was the Son of God.

In reply we say, we have already told you at the beginning of our discussion that he was only the Son of God as the Messiah, and the Messiah only existed by the connection of the two hypostases. Therefore, it necessarily follows that what was taken from Mary was not the Son of God by separating him from the other. Neither is the other Son of God by separating him from the body which he made his temple after his uniting with a body. But when you think of the Son of God since the time of the incarnation, the indwelling, the uniting and the pregnancy, then the oneness of that which was united is joined together in the name and shares the same meaning. If it is right that one of the two is named separately Son of God without the other after the uniting and the incarnation, then surely the one which is in origin eternally Son of God is being called Son of God according to his separateness from the other after the uniting and the incarnation as Son of God.

But He willed by His kindness and generosity to take possession or monopolize the essence of the sonship, its name and its relationship, after taking the humanity with which He became incarnate from her and He bestowed favor on what came from her apart from Him in one aspect of all the aspects. In other words, from the hour of the conception of the Messiah, He brought the humanity together with the secret which he possessed of the Lordship, the authority, the rule and the power and everything to do with His kingship, and whatever was established in His eternity, as we have mentioned concerning the eternity of the substance. Indeed, He made the humanity equivalent in everything, and made it become with Him one thing without loss and without decline in anything at all, while He did not empty His

substance of the eternity which He never disowned at all in any circumstance whatever.

If that which never ceased to exist in the timelessness of his eternity, may he be exalted and glorified, a Son to his Father substantially, out of his kindness and generosity, willed, after the uniting, that he be called Son in isolation without the portion of humanity taken from her, then how exactly does the uniting bestowed on the humanity not merit being called Son in isolation without the one that took it and shared it with himself? If it is not appropriate that he be called Son of God in isolation, then he is either separated from sonship with God or he is not Son of God at all.

Just as the body of a human being is formed from the seed of his father, and the body is not entitled to be named a man in isolation without the soul united with it, and without the father that generated him as a son, so there is no sharing of the two of them in a share which is not divided between one humanity and one sonship together equally. So, there is no non-human sonship and that which is not a son of a human being cannot stay alive. Whatever is united with the soul, as in changeable animal bodies and moving animal bodies, from the portion of the humanity and the section of the sonship, is essential to him, and he cannot live without the two of them. Indeed, it is absolutely right that the body of a human being should be called one of the aspects of a human being and one of the substantialities of sonship of a human being.

Likewise, with regards to the hypostasis of the humanity of the Messiah made from the nature of the Chaste Mary, it is not appropriate that he be called Messiah in isolation without the hypostasis of the divinity. Nor should he be called Son of God without the hypostasis of his humanity. Because he shares the bodies of humanity and the bodies of animals, he is only the Messiah from a portion of them, and he is only the Son of God from a portion of sonship of God. But it is truly absolutely necessary that the humanity of our Lord is called one of the substantialities of the Son of God and not the name “Son of God”. From the time the Chaste Mary became pregnant by the concep-

tion, each of the two substances or each of the two hypostases became one humanity as we have described. Since that time, the Son of God is no longer prior in his eternal substance to his timebound substance, and the name of his divinity is no longer prior to the name of his humanity. But when you call him the Messiah or describe him as Son of God since that time, then indeed you make the two hypostases in common by the uniting which gives the meaning of equivalence between them in this sonship and makes equal the movement between them.

Question Eight

If he says, if there is no Son of God apart from the Messiah, and there was no existence for the Messiah apart from the two united substances, and you claim that the Messiah was born from Mary, and he ate, drank, walked about and was changeable, then surely you claim that Mary gave birth to two united substances, and together they ate, drank and were changeable.

In reply we say, when we describe everything from the birth of the Messiah, his eating, his drinking, his growing up and his changeableness that we have described, we are not required to accept the argument about our speaking of this according to what you have argued. We will put forward an analogy and we will demonstrate to you our teaching in what we say.

Do you not see, oh man, that you were born from your mother as a complete human being, eating and drinking, and from the beginning of your birth from her as a small delicate weak child you became a great tall large man? Since you exist in your body and your spirit and do not exist in your humanity apart from the joining together of the two natures and the agreement of the two substances of the body and the soul, then do you now claim that your mother gave birth to your soul and your body together at the same time, and the two ate, drank, walked about, were changeable, developing, growing, susceptible to hunger, fullness, leanness and fatness? If you claim this then, although you are certain that the souls are souls, the outcome is that they were made from opposite subsisting elements, because when bodies are submitted to these conditions and these contingencies

in earthly constructs in which they develop, they are composed from one part and another. In the time of igniting of the heat of a fire and its dryness and its excess, it needs the coldness and wetness of water to alter its close union. In the time of the superiority of the coldness and wetness of water it needs the heat and dryness of fire to set up the dryness of its temperateness. Likewise, it needs for its growth, development and nourishment, the source that nourishes it, meaning the fruit existing from the nature of earth, water, fire and air. From this it is known that a human being only has the bodily relationships that he shares with created things. Mothers only give birth to what undergoes growth and development, and a child only undergoes growth and development when he grows from things which existed before the growth and the increase. Likewise, he will only need food and drink when what is in him limits the possibility of increase and decrease. Either he is taken down by decrease from the aspect of his temperateness entirely by the introduction of his decrease, or he is prevented from increasing the condition of his temperateness by what is lowered through the departure of his increase.

If spiritual souls are affected by these circumstances, contingencies and weaknesses, then, without doubt, they are composed from these opposing elements. If there is a composer of these elements, then, without doubt, they are physical beings that are thick and heavy and bodies that are fat and gross, and they are not spirits that are delicate and refined and souls that are fine and light. Because it is impossible that it is generated if it is thick, and that it is a delicate spirit if it is composed and blended. But when a body is blended with something heavy it results in the existence of something more distinct in thickness and heaviness than the two bodies which it was produced from.

If you reject this analogy and the belief based on it and you say, but, without doubt, the souls eat, drink, increase and decrease, then you must know for certain that there is no place for food and drink to affect them unless they give birth from two bodies and the two are influenced by the power that affects them, like you see bodies affected by heaviness, thickness, gravity and

weightiness. If food and drink were also original to the soul, then, without doubt, they would increase its body, its weight and its gravity by the power that comes from them.

According to the analogy of your claim that when the weight of a dead human being is a rotl then his spirit has separated from his body, the weight of his body must become half of what it was when he was living, or it decreases in part of its weight. Therefore, it is obvious to rational people that the spirit has indeed been made complete in its weight by eating and drinking by the power of their share in it.

But you have not taken into consideration that you forget that when the soul is separated from the body, the body increases in weight and heaviness. Surely your knowledge that the soul was generated from the lightness of its spirituality in the body, means that the body profited much from the weight that was generated in it, without the heaviness of food and drink and their weight being passed on to its essence.

Therefore, you have seen the spirits testify from every aspect of their essence that they are not in need of food and drink, and that they are not made, and they are not composed from material that preceded them. They do not receive increase or decrease whatsoever. Since they are prevented from having increase and decrease, they do not grow and they are not susceptible to becoming larger or smaller from one situation to another. They do not go through conception, birth and upbringing by means of food and drink. When you understand the truth of these things according to the truth that pertains to their condition, you will become certain that your mother, who gave birth to you as a complete man who has a spirit and a body, did not give birth to your spirit and your body. Your mother gave birth to you as a man who has a spirit and a body by your body being affected by birth, growth, decrease and increase, not by your spirit being weakened by these realities, conditions and frailties.

Now we do not say that the divinity of our Lord, may he be glorified and exalted above every analogy, takes the place of the spirit from the humanity in its exaltation, and its being raised

above the conditions of the createdness of physical bodies. We say, the Chaste Virgin Mary gave birth to her son, a perfect Messiah, who had two perfect substances, divine and human. She did not give birth to him by both of the substances, but she gave birth to him by his humanity taken from her. By his humanity he was nourished, ate, drank, developed and grew, not by his divinity. Also, his humanity from the aspect of his spirit, is like all human beings who have the substance of his humanity. They are born, eat, drink, and are nourished by their physical bodies, not by their souls and their spirits.

We have also said that the Messiah was generated from his Father in an eternal generation, and we do not claim that his Father generated him in both of his substances. But we say that each was generated from his Father and his mother that generated him from the aspect of the substance that was natural to him or her. In other words, his Father generated him by an eternal divine generation from the aspect of his divinity, and his mother generated him by a timebound humanity. So, despite the different conditions and the alternative generations, he is one Messiah who has two substances, one Son who has two hypostases.

Question Nine

If he says, in that case the Messiah was born from two births, one of them from the Father and the other from the mother. Surely you are required to acknowledge that he was Messiah in his birth which was eternal from the Father before his birth which was timebound from the mother. How can you claim that the Messiah was formed as Messiah with the two essential substances and the uniting of the two hypostases at the moment of the conception and pregnancy?

The reply is, No. We do not claim that the Messiah was born twice, but we say that the Messiah our Lord had two births of two kinds and by two methods. The hypostasis of his divinity was eternally born from the Father, and was not eternally born from him at a particular moment. There was no beginning for it and no ending. Understand this from our discussion.

Concerning his birth from the mother, created at a particular moment, it began and ended. So, at the time of his birth from the mother in his humanity he was also born from the Father in his divinity. The two births came together at that time. Therefore, that which began came to an end, and that which did not begin remained according to what was eternal in it without end. From this aspect, our saying that the Messiah had two births is correct, since he was Messiah in the condition of his Messiahship. Since the Messiah existed with two united hypostases, then he was born at the time of his birth from the mother in his humanity, and his birth from the Father was truly in his divinity. His divinity was an eternal birth from his Father before time and transience, and before the existence of created things. It endures forever, and has no beginning, no ending, and no termination. This is like the establishment of the birth of the spiritual word from the essence of the speaking soul as the creation of a living speaking soul. This is also like the establishment of the birth of the rays from the heart of the sun as the creation of a brilliant enlightening sun. Even if these examples and analogies negate and lessen the importance of this birth, then our drawing of the analogy from the sun and the soul to the establishment of the eternity of his birth means that it is at a particular moment without beginning and ending and without change and termination.

Question Ten

If he says, it appears you claim that the eternal of the two substances of the Messiah requires sonship from the Father and necessitates fatherhood from Him because he was born from Him in the eternal substance. As for the timebound created humanity which was not from the substance of the Creator, how could he have sonship from His eternal Creator which was not from his created substance and how was His fatherhood necessary for Him?

In reply we say, Fatherhood was necessary for Him and sonship was required by the uniting which was granted to him and to the people of his substance. Because the true sonship was re-

quired from one of two aspects, either by the birth or by the uniting, according to what we claim in interpreting it.

If the one who is eternal, may his praise be exalted, was eternally born from his Father, he merits sonship in his birth from his Father substantially. Then he desired by his grace and kindness that the substance of humanity share in his sonship and affirm the truth of the Fatherhood of His Father. So, they came to know by his benevolence and power that he only confirmed the understanding of this to from the aspect of the uniting. He formed from their substance by his kindness and power a pure righteous person, became incarnate in him, and took him as clothing for his divinity to confirm the truth of the sonship which is eternal and to make that conform to it, just as we know from the material with which your body was made into a body that it was from the seed of your father. Then a body with all its parts was formed from the sperm. After the creation of the body was complete and its parts were created came a living soul which was not from the seed of your father. Then your body was formed from the seed of your father, yet your father did not give birth to your soul, nor was it not from the nature of his sperm. Nevertheless, you were formed from the seed of your father as one son by the right of your father.

As the constitution of your family is based on sonship from your father by the nature of generation, and the inheritance is by the union and the uniting with the essence which is from the nature of generation, likewise, the sonship of the Messiah is merited from and authenticated by his Father from two aspects, from the hypostasis of his divinity with which he was born from all eternity, and from the hypostasis of his humanity with which he was united at the time of his birth in the aspect of his exalted sonship according to the attributes and the examples.

Question Eleven

If he says, how is it possible that he became incarnate, clothed himself and indwelt in it, and he was not contained by it when it constrained him, and he was embodied with it and it enclosed him.⁸⁶

In reply we say, since it was not the manner of the eternal in His creating, there was no resemblance to Him by His action. For example, light was created a clear light in the beginning of creation, as He said in the chapter concerning the creation. Then there was the indwelling of light on day four in a small, heavy and dense body. He bound it, formed it, and made it a place and a source for light to develop an elevated earth. Light empowered the earth without being embodied in it, constricted within it, or being contained in it, yet light is the environment surrounding it and giving life to it. Likewise, more favorable than this is the place of the eternal substance, which is not contained by a body constraining it or a place constricting it, when taking flesh to himself by becoming incarnate in it, and taking a temple to dwell in to be a place from which to speak to people. The body which he clothed himself with did not give life to him, his

⁸⁶ The questioner reflects the view of the Mu‘tazila that God cannot be compared to anything in His creation. The Qur’an testifies of God’s transcendence in Q112. “Say, He is God the One, the Eternal. He did not beget, nor was He begotten. There is no one like Him”. This is expanded in Q42:11 to include the false comparison of creatures with the Creator. “The Creator of the heavens and the earth made partners for you from among yourselves, and partners for the animals, to multiply you. There is nothing like Him. He is the hearing and seeing One”. The implication of these texts is that those human beings who think that God can be compared with anything in His creation are totally mistaken. Q42:11 was interpreted by the Mu‘tazila as closing the door on any attempt to regard God as possessing creaturely characteristics, and thinking of God being involved in space and time. Questions eleven to twenty-four deal with the problem for the Muslim of the confinement of God in a human body.

dwelling place did not constrain him or govern him, and his temple from which he spoke to people did not restrict him, but he surrounded it, gave life to it, and was made visible by it.

Do you not see that your spiritual soul affects the whole of your body through the humanity and the existence of all your parts? Yet it did not decrease or increase when it made its home and its place... [the sentence is incomplete]

Question Twelve

[the question is lacking]⁸⁷

We say, it is not that we have determined to believe that God took a body for Himself or that the Messiah must be called the body of God since then. It is the case that, when he established one Messiah and one Son at the time of His becoming human in him and from the flesh in which he incarnated, it was necessary that the body was attributed to the Messiah and was not the body of God. Since the incarnation was in origin from God and not from the Messiah, then God never became incarnate.

This is like when the soul becomes incarnate in a body and so the body has a soul. One human being is established from the composition of the two of them. The body is called the body of the human being and the soul is called is the soul of the human being, not a body of the human being or a soul of the human being. Since the soul is not composed of the body then the unity of the human being is never established from the two of them.

⁸⁷ There seems to be a missing folio in the manuscript. Question twelve must have been “Why do speak about the body of God”? Question twelve has the following introduction in the manuscript. “In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, One God. To Him be eternal glory. We begin with the help of God Almighty and His excellent guidance nine questions and answers on the incarnation according to the Christian religion. Question one.” Questions twelve to fifteen are entitled questions one to four in the manuscript.

So, we also say in another saying and another analogy that the Word of God became human not according to the meaning of the one who says, the water is salty, or hardens in its essence and becomes salt. This is like his saying that milk curdles or thickens in its essence and becomes cheese, and it is like his saying that the child becomes a man or develops in his essence and becomes a man. On the contrary, it is according to the meaning of the one who says, a person puts on clothes or dresses in clothes. It is like his saying that a person takes up arms or dresses in weapons, and it is like his saying that a person puts on a turban or dresses in a turban. It is not that he becomes a turban or weapons or clothes. This is similar to our saying that the Word of God became incarnate and became human, or produced a body and clothed himself with it, or created a human being and clothed himself with him, or constructed him as his hypostasis in order to appear in him, and for his speech and actions to be made visible in him, and in order that He would be united with him in his sonship. We say, when he ordered the two of them to come together in the moment of the taking and the uniting as one Messiah, it has to be said that the humanity of the Messiah and the humanity of the Son were together. It was not a case of the humanity of God or the humanity of the divinity. It also has to be said that and it was the Word of God alone who took humanity to Himself. It was not the case that the human being who was clothed in the humanity in the beginning was the Messiah joined together with him.

Do you not see that if you take a shirt made from silk and clean it completely of silk in order to establish one long garment from it, you do not say, "I have cleansed the long garment and I have not taken the cleaning of the long garment and the essence of the long garment according to its existence, rather I have taken the cleaning of the shirt especially, and given it its cleanliness by the cleaning. After I have changed the cleaning on the inside and I have made a new long garment from the two at the time of the composition of the two of them, I have abolished the new long garment from it together"? The cleansing of the long garment and the inside of the long garment are spoken about.

For this reason, we say, the Word of God exalted above any analogy is the One who began to take the body as His humanity. With His becoming human or His clothing Himself, it was necessary that the uniting of the two of them and the oneness of the Messiah were established by the composition of the two of them. So, the attribution of the humanity to God and the attribution of God to the humanity were abolished. The attribution of the two of them together must be made to the one Messiah established from the two of them. Moreover, it is necessary that the humanity is called the humanity of the Messiah and the divinity is called the divinity of the Messiah, not the humanity of the divinity or the divinity of the humanity.

It is astonishing that when some rational people name him, they claim that he is one substance and one hypostasis.⁸⁸ They intend to promote the truth of the union between the divinity and the humanity, and the joining of the number two in all aspects in the oneness of the Messiah as the one established from the two of them. Then they call the body of the Messiah the body of God, and they reject the setting up of the two hypostases and the formation of the two substances, and they negate the oneness of the Messiah in the strength of their fleeing from it.⁸⁹ This is because their naming of the body as the body of God necessarily establishes the twoness of the substances in the Messiah, that is God and his body. This is the result of promoting their twoness and negating the oneness of the Messiah established from the two of them who has the substance from each of them attributed to him. This is like one who claims that by calling the

⁸⁸ At this point, ‘Ammār introduces the opinion of Christian Miaphysites that the Messiah had only a divine nature in a human body, such that the thinking, feeling and willing of the Messiah arose from that divine nature. Hence his body was entitled to be called the body of God.

⁸⁹ ‘Ammār points out to the Muslim questioner that Christian Miaphysites make life difficult for Muslims in that they talk about the body of God. ‘Ammār dissociates himself from them and urges his Muslim interlocutor to reject their teaching.

human being one substance, he intends to promote the union of the soul and the body and the establishment of the oneness of the human being formed from the two of them, and the joining of the number two in the oneness which became necessary by their composition. Then he names the body of the human being the body of the soul, and he names the soul of the human being the soul of the body. By doing this, he negates the oneness of the human being by attributing to him his soul and his body, and he necessitates twoness of the soul and body as two dissimilar and defective items rather than the union and the composition. If this is not so, then where is the oneness of the human found, the one who possesses the soul and the body, when it is said the body of the Messiah is the body of the eternal God, and the eternal divinity has the body? The oneness of the Messiah is negated by this attribution to him of his divinity and his humanity. It is absolutely certain that the twoness of the godhead and the human being are promoted by their defectiveness in the union and the composition.

They might reply to us, saying, how do you find the oneness of the one Messiah which is from the divinity and the humanity, when it is said, the body of God and the divinity of the body? Perhaps the cunning person among them says according to himself, we mean by naming the two of them the body of God, and by our saying that Mary bore God, what the Apostle Paul said, "the Messiah is God over all".⁹⁰ If the Messiah is God over all, and the body is the body of the Messiah, and Mary bore the Messiah, then the body is the body of God and Mary bore God.

It should be said to them, No, by my life, your saying is a saying of one who believes that the Messiah is God over all, and not that Mary bore the Messiah. If you believe that the Messiah is God over all, and Mary bore the Messiah who is God over all, you have cancelled the name of the Messiah from within and you have attributed the bearing of Mary to God and not to the

⁹⁰ Romans 9:5.

Messiah. As a result, you are not permitted to say that the body is the body of the Messiah or that Mary bore the Messiah.

Is it not made clear in our above writing that it is the greatest absurdity that a woman bore God and not the Messiah simultaneously? The capacity of the pregnancy, the birth, the growing up, the death and what is like them is found particular to the name “the Messiah”. However, he substitutes the name of God after thinking about the Messiah, by changing the attribution of these particular things without thinking of the Messiah at all.

This also is because, since he is the Messiah, may he be exalted and glorified as God, then God is not the Messiah, because the name of God rests upon the Messiah and on others who are not the Messiah, such as the Father and the Spirit. For this reason, it is not possible to say “the body of God” and that “Mary bore God”, without beginning to think of the Messiah when speaking of the body as the body of the Messiah and that he is God over all.

Rather, you know before this that it is the greatest mistake to say that Sarah bore the human being, and that she bore Isaac who was a human being. This is because since Isaac was a human being then the human being was not Isaac because the name of the human being Abraham rests upon Isaac and his father Abraham as well as others apart from them among people. So, it is impossible to say that Sarah bore the human being without beginning with the name which she bore such as Isaac who was a human being.

Moreover, if he says that Sarah bore a human being who was Isaac, his saying will not be treated harshly. But he cannot dispense with the names “Isaac” and “God” before or after. For this reason, the one who says that Mary bore God is not correct until he begins to think about the Messiah. It should not be said that Mary bore the Messiah, God who is God over all. If it is said that Mary bore God over all who is the Messiah, his saying will not be treated harshly. There is no doubt in this from thinking about the Messiah from time to time.

In any case, we ask you, where do you find God, may He be exalted and glorified, mentioning in any of His books that Mary bore God and that this body was the body of God? Matthew mentions at the outset of his gospel, “This is the account of the birth of Jesus the Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham”,⁹¹ not, this is the account of the birth of God, son of David, son of Abraham. He says, “This was the birth of Jesus the Messiah”, not this was the birth of God, and he said “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea in the days of Herod the king”,⁹² and so on, and he did not say, when God was born in Bethlehem, and so on.

Luke says that the angels announced good news to the shepherds saying to them, “A savior has been born to you, the Lord, the Messiah, in the town of David”,⁹³ and he did not say, God has been born to you in the town of David.

How can you continue to say that Mary bore God without thinking of the Messiah? We hear you reciting together that the name of God rests upon the Father and rests upon the Son separately and rests upon the Holy Spirit separately and rests upon the three hypostases together. Perhaps you mean, by your saying that Mary bore God, that she bore the Father or the Spirit or the three hypostases together. In any case, we have no doubt concerning your rejection of her bearing God in all situations which he is the Messiah, existing in his divinity and humanity. In conclusion, we say what we said at the outset, that we reject this by our clear discrediting of the teaching of ignorant people.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Matthew 1:1.

⁹² Matthew 1:2.

⁹³ Luke 2:11.

⁹⁴ ‘Ammār concludes his argument with Miaphysite Christians. Questions eleven to twenty-four deal with the problem for the Muslim of the confinement of God in a human body.

Question Thirteen

If he says, when he willed to be that human being as an eternal body, why do you claim that he willed something yet did not complete what he willed? Rather he had already completed what he willed, and if his intention in what he willed was in the form of the likeness of a human being as an eternal body, there is no other meaning equivalent to this.

The reply is, you call the human being the eternal body of God. But since his intention was to become human, he willed that it was necessary for him to have a share of the sonship, and the oneness of the Messiah that was established in him was necessarily attached to the body. Then his will was not accomplished without the intention that he willed.

Question Fourteen

If he says, why is it that you name the humanity the temple of God and you do not name it the body of God, since you have already claimed that He dwelt in it as He became incarnate in it?

In reply we say, we do not say that he became incarnate in it and dwelt in it together. For this reason, we name it the temple of God and we do not name it the body of God, because the incarnation depends upon the uniting of the two substances, and the indwelling does not depend on their uniting. In other words, the incarnation from the two substances in the oneness of the Messiah is attributed to the body, and the indwelling, which is not established from these two as one oneness, is attributed to the temple. Therefore, it establishes his connection to his eternal abode.

We should not be misunderstood concerning what we have told you about the spirit of the human being. When it is incarnated in his body, and if his body is inspirited by his spirit, then the oneness of the human being is established by the composition of the two of them before the body of the human being and the spirit of the human being. So, it is not the body of the spirit or the spirit of the body. If a human being lives in a house that he

built himself, and the house is one oneness to him, then the house is always attributed to him. But the attribution of the house is established to a particular person living in it, not to the person who built the house.

Likewise, when the Word of God became incarnate in the human being and became human in that way as the godhead in the human being, and made the human being divine by his godhead, and established the oneness of the Messiah by the uniting of the two of them, he attached the human being and the godhead to the one Messiah joined together from the two of them. Then it is said that the body is the body of the Messiah, and the divinity is the divinity of the Messiah. The indwelling is not established from these two as one Messiah. It is attributed to him as a house to dwell in according to the attribution to God eternal. So, we speak of the dwelling of God or the temple not the dwelling of the Messiah.

We only say about this what the Messiah taught us when he informed us of his secret that the Trinity indwelled him perfectly concealed. This was in his saying, "My Father who dwells in me is the one who does these deeds".⁹⁵ Then this is also followed by another testimony from the tongue of his beloved servant the apostle Paul when he said, "Jesus the Messiah is the one in whom all the perfection of divinity dwells".⁹⁶ Then the testimony confirms that life created the bodies. There is no teaching in any of this proving that the three hypostases became incarnate and took him with them, because he provided testimony himself that he by his divinity and his humanity was one Son, not one Father or one Spirit.

If the Father and the Spirit also became incarnate in him and took him as their property like indwelling him, he would also have called himself in many situations "Father" and "Spirit". If the indwelling necessitated what the incarnation and the uniting

⁹⁵ John 5:19.

⁹⁶ Colossians 1:19.

necessitated, it would not have been evident that he called himself “Eternal Son” rather than calling himself “Father” and “Spirit”, as if the indwelling of the Father and the Spirit in him was like the Son indwelling him.

But from this we certainly know that the oneness of the Messiah and the oneness of his sonship were not established by the indwelling of the divinity in the humanity, but by the Son being conferred with the property of humanity through the incarnation and the uniting of the two of them. For this reason, we speak of the body of the Messiah but not the body of God. Since the oneness of the Messiah was not established from the aspect of the indwelling, then the temple is called the temple of God but not the temple of the Messiah.

Question fifteen

If he says, how can you defend your claim that the properties and the hypostases are not evident one to the other, and that it is not possible for them to know each other? Then their indwelling is in ... [the sentence is incomplete]

[the beginning of the sentence is missing] the eyes between them, and the perceptions are enlightened by it, and the desire of them uses it to make contact without any separation happening between them at all. Indeed, then you see its heat in harmony with its light in what is cooked, and bread that is baked, and meat that is roasted by it, without them being evident one to the other.

Likewise, the sun works by the difference in its properties, from its setting, its light and its heat. It harmonizes its light with sight and its heat with the movement of bodies without them being evident one to the other. Likewise, the soul exists by the difference in its properties, from the origin of its essence, its necessities and its thinking. It dwells in the heart, and is embodied with the heart and the mind from its spiritual properties without any of members, without them necessarily being evident one to the other. This is the witness to what we have described of differ-

ence and uniting of the mind from the properties of the soul with the essence of the heart.

May God be merciful to the speaker who is the witness of this against such tongues as we have described in our writing above. May God forgive the one who is the witness of all these issues.

If this is possible in the properties of created, timebound, and limited human bodies that unite together with one another without separation occurring in them, then this is also possible and necessary in the properties that are eternal, elevated from difference, partition, division and limitation. The Messiah, may he be glorified and exalted, did not take a body, and did not unite. His humanity is ascribed in some places to the Word of God as a temple and dwelling place for the hypostases, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Question sixteen⁹⁷

If he says, if the Son became incarnate without the Father and the Spirit, why did the Father and the Spirit not become incarnate without the Son?

In reply we say, when the Son became incarnate with this humanity and took it for himself in his sonship then he is called, with respect to the eternity, the Son of God the Father, dishonor could not adhere to the Father and deficiency could not reach the Son from it. Since he was indeed eternal in a previous time, his followers and the people who obey him are called sons and beloved ones by his generosity and his kindness. If any of his creatures were called “father” or “spirit” this would not have increased his exaltation and would only belittle his generosity and his kindness and so it was not at all possible.

⁹⁷ Above question sixteen is the heading, “Questions and answers that clearly demonstrate from the four gospels and other writing. Question one.” Questions sixteen to fifty-one are numbered questions one to thirty-six in the manuscript.

If the Father, may He be exalted and glorified, became incarnate in humanity instead of the Son and took humanity for himself in his fatherhood like the Son took it for himself in his sonship, then it would be necessary, by this analogy, that the humanity with the eternity be called “Father”. It is impossible to attribute eternity to the sonship of the created humanity and to ascribe to humanity the eternity of the fatherhood of the Father in saying this.

Likewise, also, if the Spirit became incarnate, it would be necessary that they be called with him “holy spirit”. This name is too exalted to be used to name things that are made and composed. It is impossible that it can describe bodies that are contingent and created. But since the Father, may His glory be magnified, wanted His eternal generosity to be perfectly fulfilled in His creatures, and His eternal grace to be perfectly completed according to the perfection of His will, then He revealed to the angels and the humans together the name of His fatherhood that He had hidden eternally in heaven. Through His eternal Son generated from Him, He took a body from His creatures, taking it for Himself in His sonship, and by this means granted a share in His fatherhood to it and to the people of its substance from the angels and the humans. Therefore, they would together be entitled to inherit His precious honorable treasure which He will give them in His kingdom. As a result, His taking the body for His Son without Himself and His Spirit is greater in His wisdom and exaltation and worthier in His kindness and mercy than taking it for Himself or His Spirit.

Question seventeen

If the questioner says, how do we know the truth of what you claim about the incarnation of the Son and His taking humanity to Himself in His sonship which you have described, and what is the way to know this? If this continues to be what you think, and there is no error in what you claim, then give evidence that you are right.

In reply we say, we know this from the witness of God in his old and new books, then from the testimonies of the Messiah after

that in his works showing evidence of this from him. If you read you will see and understand and if you see you will know and become certain.

As for the Old Testament, the Father says by the tongue of David his prophet, "From eternity you are my son who I have begotten".⁹⁸ This demonstrates clearly that the Messiah was generated by the eternal divinity of the Father who is also the speaker, when He made a child born in his humanity from the mother. He did not interpret His saying according to the meaning that he was only a child, a growing young person, composed from the four pillars, according to what we have said before, but that what was made originally from the four created contingent pillars was generated from the Eternal Father.

David also says, "Your throne O God will endure for ever and ever. The scepter stretched out is the scepter of your rule. You love righteousness and hate evil. For this reason, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness preferring you to your brothers".⁹⁹ Understand the interpretation of this noble saying which the prophet uttered by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit given to him about the two substances of the Son from one aspect. He informed us that the Messiah, who the eternal God established in his high rank by his divinity, was anointed in his humanity by the Holy Spirit who created him, glorified him, exalted him on the earth by the acclamation of those who saw him, and preferred him to his companions, I mean the prophets and messengers who preceded him before his appearance.

Isaiah says, "A child will be born to us and a son will be given to us. His authority will be on his shoulders and his name will be called, wonderful, God, almighty. His peaceful rule will be made known by the increase of his authority".¹⁰⁰ Do you not see how this saying also necessitates the divinity of the Son as well as his

⁹⁸ Psalm 2:7.

⁹⁹ Psalm 45:6-7.

¹⁰⁰ Isaiah 9:6-7.

humanity, since he announces that the one who, by his divinity, is almighty God of the worlds and creator of the times is also the son born in his humanity.

He says in another place, “The virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son, and his name will be called Immanuel and the interpretation of this is, our God is with us”.¹⁰¹ This means that what indwelled the virgin in the pregnancy and the birth was his humanity derived from the virgin as we have described. He was called “our God is with us,” meaning our eternal God is with us by this indwelling in his pure temple taken from the changeable substance of our community. If not, then it is not conceivable that the virgin became pregnant by the essence of our eternal God, and no human being was sent who merited being called “our God is with us”. Rather, it means that the pregnancy of the virgin and her giving birth resulted in the son according to the property of his humanity in the temple formed from our substance. The name “our God” was given to him before the property of His eternal being descended into the body taken from our nature. There was no shame in His uniting with the humanity by His grace from all of His wealth of the name of the divinity, the essence of the lordship, the rule, the authority and the power at the time of his conception, and taking it to Himself for all eternity. These are the testimonies in the Old Testament about the oneness of the Son by the uniting of his two natures.

Concerning what the New Testament continues with testimonies about this, there are more than can be counted and collected in this place. We will select from them what they announce about this in the will of God, and we will begin with what the four pillars say announcing the truth of this, since the gospel was at the heart of their teaching, and what each one of them gathered of his teaching in his relationships and his situation. This is evidence, proof, and clarification of the initial understanding about

¹⁰¹ Isaiah 7:14.

what we have mentioned of the incarnation of the divinity, and the humanity in the sonship of this one son that we have discussed.

Matthew says in the beginning of his writing, "This book is about Jesus the Messiah, son of David, son of Mary, son of Abraham".¹⁰² Mark says, "This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God".¹⁰³ Luke says. "When the angel came to Mary to tell her of the conception, he said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come and the power of the Most-High will be upon you and as a result, the one who will be born from you will be righteous and pure, and he will be called the Son of God'".¹⁰⁴ John says, "The Word was eternal, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was eternally with God. Everything was created by him, and without him nothing was created that exists".¹⁰⁵ Then follow his words in the same manner until he calls the Word "Jesus the Messiah the Son of God". Do you not see Matthew testifying that he was a human being in his humanity from the substance of humanity from the seed of David, from the offspring of Abraham, and John testifying that he was eternally existing in his divinity, and he was the creator of everything, and everything exists by him, and he rules everything with his hand? Mark and Luke testify to the uniting of the eternal and the human in one sonship and one Messiahship, since they complete their teaching about him by calling him "Jesus the Messiah the Son of God".

The group was truthful in what they said, and right in what they described. God forbid that they lied in differing in their descriptions in the situation and agreement of their attribution in the aspect of his created humanity from the substance of Adam, from the offspring of Abraham, and the seed of David. John de-

¹⁰² Matthew 1:1.

¹⁰³ Mark 1:1.

¹⁰⁴ Luke 1:35.

¹⁰⁵ John 1:1-2.

clared how he was named from the essence of His eternal divinity, from the substance of His Father, from the nature of His Father. Mark and Luke complete the teaching about the oneness of the Son and the incarnation of the two substances when they call him “Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God”. Each of them testifies afterwards that he was the Messiah, the Son of God. They did not testify to that by themselves but by the Holy Spirit who authorized the truth of their teaching to be altogether true, and the reception of their writing by the signs and wonders which God caused through their hands. He was the one who caused this teaching by their words, made them speak these testimonies with their tongues, and moved their pens afterwards to what they continued to say about his development, his circumstances, his deeds, and his actions demonstrating this.

Matthew said, when he announced that someone searched in pursuit of the child to kill him, “The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph when he was dreaming and said to him, ‘Get up and take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt’”.¹⁰⁶ Then he said in another place, “When Jesus entered a town in Galilee and the demons sprang out and were aroused by him, and were made alert, they said, ‘What do you want with us, O Jesus? O Jesus, Son of God, have you come here before the appointed time to destroy us?’ Then Jesus rebuked the demons by his word and drove them from the interior of the people by his command”.¹⁰⁷

Who thinks it is permissible to say that the substance which cast out the demonic spirits from the interior of people by his word is a weak and shameful one in its origin and its nature that fled from Herod? Is it not evident to every reasonable person that the divinity whose word the demonic spirits submitted to, is the one who brought them into being by creating them by his power and authority, and that the person who fled in fear from Herod lest he kill him was the humanity that faced up to Pilate after-

¹⁰⁶ Matthew 2:13.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 8:29.

wards when he was killed and crucified? All who described this agree in saying this from the same aspect, meaning one Messiah and one Son.

Matthew also says that he fed seven thousand men from four loaves of barley.¹⁰⁸ In another place he says that he was hungry from his fasting, and approached a fig tree seeking from it what would satisfy his hunger.¹⁰⁹ This shows that the power which defeated the hunger in his nature was not from the essence which created from four loaves that fed the stomachs of thousands of hungry people. Yet the two commands were spoken by one Messiah.

He says that he came to the daughter of Jairus who had died, and he spoke a command to her, "O little girl, get up", and the little girl immediately got up.¹¹⁰ He said at the time when he came into the hands of those who would kill him when he begged saying, "O my Father take this cup away from me".¹¹¹ This makes known that the substance which gave life to the dead person by his command is not the substance which begged his Creator and life giver to take the cup of death away from him in his essence and his nature. All of the eyewitnesses were thinking of one Messiah and one Son.

Mark says that Jesus was sleeping in a boat, and a wind blew so strongly that it might sink the boat, so his disciples came to him and woke him up. When he woke from his sleep, he reproached the sea by his word and calmed it, and it became calm by his command.¹¹² This also demonstrates that the substance which reproached the wind and the sea by his word was not the sub-

¹⁰⁸ Matthew 15:36–38; though Matthew mentions four thousand men and seven loaves.

¹⁰⁹ Matthew 21:18–19.

¹¹⁰ Mark 5:22, 41. However Matthew 9: 18, and 25, do not mention the father's name or record the words of command.

¹¹¹ Matthew 26:39.

¹¹² Mark 4:37–39.

stance which was in the habit of sleeping by its origin and its nature. All of the commands were reported from one Messiah and one Son.

Luke says the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and said to them, “I announce to you the greatest joy for all peoples of the world. For to you is born in the town of David a savior who is the Lord, the Messiah”.¹¹³ He says after this, “The child Jesus grew and developed in his stature and his wisdom and in the grace that was on him”.¹¹⁴ Do you not see how it is announced that the Messiah who is Lord and savior by his divinity is the one who was born from the substance of Adam by the essence of his humanity. He was the child who grew in his stature and his breeding through the grace that was on him in what was given for his understanding and his wisdom. It may seem inconceivable that he was the Lord and the savior by his glory and his greatness while he was the growing child receiving the wisdom and increasing from the grace from outside him day by day by in his essence and his substance. Yet the sayings speak of the one Messiah and the one Son.

John says that Jesus said to his disciples, “Our beloved Lazarus has died yet I am glad that I was not there for your sake so that you may believe”.¹¹⁵ He says that he came to the tomb of Lazarus four days after he had been buried, and it made him weep and his tears ran down.¹¹⁶ Then he called to the door of the tomb with a loud voice and said, “Lazarus, come out”, and the dead man rose up at his command and came out of the tomb alive by his word.¹¹⁷ This shows that the eternal divinity which did not leave him, or shift from one place to another, and gave life to the dead by the command of understanding and authority, was not the humanity which was alarmed and wept and

¹¹³ Luke 2:10–11.

¹¹⁴ Luke 2:52.

¹¹⁵ John 11:14–15.

¹¹⁶ John 11:17, 35.

¹¹⁷ John 11:43–44.

made him sad. Yet the two descriptions are made of one Messiah and one Son.

This is some of what the gospel has recorded of his variability, his condition, his works and his actions showing the difference of his two substances and the oneness of his sonship. We will mention now his sayings in which his condition can be seen. John says that Jesus said to his disciples, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the son of man will be delivered into the hands of the wrongdoers who will do what they want to him, and he will be killed and crucified, and on the third day he will rise up".¹¹⁸ He says in another place that Jesus said that day to a crowd of people, "I am the bread of life which has come down from heaven".¹¹⁹ He says in another place that he met the one who was born blind of his father, and after he opened his eyes he said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God? The man said to him, 'Who is he, my lord, that I might believe in him?' The Messiah said to him, You have already seen him, and he is the one who is talking to you and speaking to you".¹²⁰

These three sayings that the Messiah spoke about himself do not have only one meaning with another similar to it. The evidence is obvious and the testimony is clear from the evidence of his two substances and the embracing of the two of them in one sonship from his saying, "I am the man who will be despised, humiliated, killed, crucified and raised alive", and "I am the bread which has come down from heaven", and "I am truly the Son of God".

He says in another place that Jesus said to a crowd of Jews, "You want to kill me, yet I am a man who speaks the truth to you".¹²¹ In another place he says that Jesus said to the Jews, "Abraham your father hoped to see my day, and he did see it

¹¹⁸ Mark 10:33–34, but not in John's gospel.

¹¹⁹ John 6:35, 38.

¹²⁰ John 9:35–37, though John has "the son of man".

¹²¹ John 7:19.

and was happy”. The Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old and already you have seen Abraham”. Jesus replied to them, “Truly I say to you that before Abraham came into existence I already existed”.¹²²

He said in another place that Jesus said to a crowd of Jews, “You want to kill me since I have announced to you that I am the Son of God. If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe in me”.¹²³ Do you not see that he said, “I am a man of flesh speaking to you in truth and you want to kill me”? His gospel announces before this that he was a human being born of the seed of Abraham after more than forty generations. Then he said, “I already existed before Abraham your father who hoped in me”. He said, “I am the Son of God and I do the works of my Father. I create just as my Father creates”. How is he not right when he says, “I am a man of flesh, and I will be killed, and before Abraham I existed eternally, and I am truly the Son of God”, unless the contingent seed of Abraham was established in him, and the eternal divinity of the Creator of Abraham existed in him, and the one sonship of his humanity and his divinity was shared together.

These are also some of the sayings which relate to his two substances and the oneness of the sonship in his two hypostases. So, the thinking of God is clear about this Son from all of His books. Either He has brought about the son thinking about Himself, or He has described something of his work and actions. He has explained this by clear evidence and solid testimony of his two substances united, and his two hypostases which are from his divinity and his humanity.

Question eighteen

If he says, what is the meaning of this union and agreement which you claim between the divinity and the humanity, and

¹²² John 8:56–58.

¹²³ John 10:37.

what is your doctrine about it? Do you mean that the divinity and the humanity were assembled from the two of them, and became one human being from the two of them, or do you mean that they were mixed and blended from the two of them, and became a contingent nature from the two of them, like what is created resulting from corrupt bodies impacting one another? What do you mean to tell us?

In reply we say, we mean by this that when the Word of God took this humanity to himself as a body and a temple and a dwelling, the humanity taken for this merited the reality of the sonship, and shared it with the one who was incarnate, and they were equal together in it. Also, here they were equal in everything that we have described of His lordship, His rule, all of His authority, and all of his wealth. It was not possible for him to have equality in the substance of the eternity of his essence and his spirituality without a contact conferring the eternity of any of that, or composition, mixing, blending, corruption, or anything that happens to created bodies in their results and their situations. But this was higher and more exalted than anything that the imagination can describe of contingent created things.

This is our doctrine concerning the nature of this unity and agreement between the divinity and the humanity, nothing else.

Question nineteen

If he says, you suppose you can talk to yourselves about what you call His sharing of the authority, rule and lordship that he possesses, and what is possible in these and things like them. Why do claim that he has been granted these as a gift? Concerning what you have described of His incarnation and His being made with a human body, and his dwelling in it and how he was, how was it possible for Him not to be touched, composed, limited or required to be accidental?

In reply we say, we must reply that He did what He did. Yet concerning how he did this, then we are not required to reply. It is like if a questioner asks, Did God create the creation? His question is not rejected and it is not said to him, you ask a pro-

found question that it is not possible to arrive at an answer to. Rather it is said to him, yes, you have already found created creatures, and you know that they have one Creator who created them without work, trouble, toil or movement.

If he comes back a second time and says, what created things did He create without movement or work? It is said to him, you ask a profound question that it is not possible for creatures to arrive at an answer to. Concerning if He was already created, then already they know. Concerning what He created of the world and its peoples, then they are not ignorant. Concerning how He created, and how He made without movement or work, there is no way to make this known and describe it, because creatures do not do any action without moving and working. Likewise, there is no reply to the questioner about how God became incarnate, and united with the body in the process of incarnation with respect to the sonship. We must reply to the questioner who asks, Did He become incarnate and did He unite? Concerning the meaning of His incarnation and His uniting, we have already stated what you have heard. Concerning how He became incarnate, and how He united, there is no way to arrive at an answer.

We can be absolutely sure without any doubt that the eternal substance, may He be exalted and glorified, was beyond touching bodies, mixing with them, blending with them, being composed with them, being limited by them, and receiving contingency and accidental qualities from them. We necessarily reject such things from the affirmation of the uniting and the incarnation, when we talk about it from his books.

Question twenty

If he says, if you cannot describe the manner of this incarnation and uniting, then tell us why He became incarnate and united, and what called Him to this. You have already claimed that the Wise One does not do anything futile with no meaning.

In reply we say, The Wise One, may His glory be magnified, is beyond doing anything futile with no meaning. Likewise, His

incarnation and His uniting were not futile or meaningless. Rather, His generosity, kindness, goodness and power called him to begin to make His creation. They called him finally to make restitution by His grace, and to complete His goodness by His incarnation in the humanity taken from His creation. It was necessary to be human by His incarnation to share His sonship. He made His lordship possible when He included all creatures in the honor that He extended to each individual human among all human beings.

Question twenty-one

If he says, which honor did He extend in the beginning to each human being among them, in sharing His honor and His lordship with them? If this incarnation was correct for Him, after he wished to complete His grace to the creatures when the creation began, why did he not take all of them as his body?

In reply we say, there is a difference between the essence of the large world in which He gathered all the creatures and the small world in which He honored human beings, and poured out His grace on them from among the essence of the large world. This is like him attaining rule by the achievement of merit, and adhering to it as a result of abundant and huge merit showing this nobility by which the achievement of one person confers happiness on the substance of all.

For example, when the distinction of rule is conferred on one man from a people of a house so that the ruler has made him come close to himself and favored him and entrusted him with his command and his authority, by this means, the high rank which one person possessed was shared among the people of the house. Likewise, all of the creatures are honored by the honor of the one person who is chosen from among them all.

Concerning the impossibility that He united with the bodies all of the creatures, He did not wish by His wisdom that His grace should be imposed in such a way that the people would not be happy, and that they would not know His grace to them by the imposition of His power, and they would not find the possibility

for thanksgiving for the immensity of its significance. If He poured out the grace on similar human natures, then surely His grace would be unknown, the people would not be happy, and they would not be led to the grace that they would achieve from being thankful for it. But since He willed to complete His aforementioned grace to all of the creatures by this favor which He made available to them, He did this as One who befits His wisdom and bestows His gifts in such a way that the people know His favor and they continue to be thankful to Him according to the understanding that began from the significance of His power, I mean without the understanding of those who have a rational, spiritual and bodily substance.

Moreover, along with what He willed by this incarnation to accept the substance of those who are rational with which He himself incarnated in one particular person from the people, and harmonized the substance of His sonship with it, He wanted to appear in it to activate His generosity and complete His grace and His goodness to those who needed them. So, he brought to them the status of His divinity and the rank of His lordship, and united with all of the creatures in a union by means of which He raised them to a rank of divinity they could not reach. This is because the one with the rank of divinity resolved to do this, and let go of his lordship until they became high above everything else that exists. By His exalting them over everything, His elevation of them would be completed, and all of the creatures would be honored by His honor. If He had taken the bodies of everything that He had made, then they would not receive grace by His wisdom and justice that serve everything compared with one from among all of them, if all of them equally were bodies for Him. But He became incarnate for all of them by His power by which He would raise them through the service of one of them. They would only reach the rank of divinity to which He would raise all of them by the one who He took from all of them and raised to the highest heaven by the measure of His power. Likewise, if He had taken the bodies all human beings to Himself, it would have been impossible for all of them to achieve the rank which He raised them to by the raising of the one person who He chose from among them.

Question twenty-two

If he says, why did He choose an earthly person from this world from among human persons for this incarnation and this merit rather than a noble spiritual person from among the angels?

In reply we say, if he incarnated in a person from among the angelic persons rather than being incarnated in a person from among human persons, then His life and His kindness would not have embraced all of the creatures, since there is no genuine comparison between spiritual and bodily beings in the original essence of their substance. But He willed, may He be exalted and glorified, to treat all of the creatures equally in what He always intended for the advancement and honor of their lives by the generosity of His wisdom. So, He created one created being, and gathered together in him from all of what He created of the substances of the animate and inanimate beings, their bodies and spirits. Then He settled the consequence from the seed of the one that He created, and chose from them all a clean, pure, immaculate person and incarnated in him, and took him into His rule and His authority. Then He raised him to the highest place, and called all the spiritual beings to praise him and glorify him when they bow before him in their glorifying, acclaiming, celebrating and singing. For example, they recite this to themselves, and announce the achievement of the objective of this member of their substance who reached the status which they similarly would achieve.

Question twenty-three

If he says, how did He favor with equality and fairness this one human being by this merit to all of them apart from any other person from the people of his substance?

In reply we say, He favored him apart from any other person from the people of his substance in order to favor all of the people of his substance with his goodness, his purity, and his making them glad.

Question twenty-four

If he says, how did this make them glad with his goodness when you have already claimed that the actions by which he merited these things from his Creator were necessary since the time of the conception? Were they in him when he was in his mother? Were actions which merited them forbidden by his Creator to someone else who was also in the womb of his mother? If the actions did not merit a reward, and no other person could merit what he was necessarily excluded from, how is it possible for the Wise One to be fair in favoring one of the children with some of the gifts by excluding others?

In reply we say, the Wise One did not prevent His generosity effecting the world in the creation of actions of His creatures that preceded His knowledge that He would not favor any who were corrupt. He only chose those who were devoted to righteousness and goodness, the best ancestors, and those most worthy of a reward, like those whose actions distinguished them from any others among his creatures, including Samuel and Jeremiah to whom he said, “Before you were conceived in your mother’s womb I knew you, and before I took you from the womb I purified you, and made you a prophet to the people”.¹²⁴ Likewise, He did not deny that He, may He be glorified and exalted, presented these gifts to the person who He had especially made to depend on them, knowing that all of the people of his substance would experience goodness, gladness, and kindness through him.

Question twenty-five

If he says, what is the evidence that he was the most favored of all of the creatures and the most favored Son from all of the people of his species?

¹²⁴ Jeremiah 1:5.

In reply we say, the evidence for this is clear from the preference of the Creator Himself to favor him apart from any other. Since, may His glory be exalted, the Wise One was not ignorant and the Equitable One was not oppressive, there is no doubt that He did not find any creature of the creation more favorable, more righteous, or more entitled to these gifts than the one He had chosen from among them. If there was in the creation one who preceded him in being made glad, righteous and good, then the Wise One would have been ignorant of his place and there would not have been a beginning of his gifts to any of his creatures similar to him.

Question twenty-six

If he says, was he capable of experiencing difficulty, evil and change from being made glad and good after the incarnation of the Creator Himself? If you claim that he was capable of these, then surely you believe that he was not protected from evil and wrongdoing, and so he did not benefit at all by the incarnation of the Creator Himself. Perhaps, he did not remain in his righteousness and his goodness, and even turned away from them for a short period of time. If you claim that he was not like this, then surely you must admit that he was compelled in his righteousness, his goodness, and his avoidance of what was difficult and forbidden. There would be no praise for creatures for their obedience if they were forced to do it. Then another who was righteous, and who obeyed his Lord by his will, would necessarily display this by His grace.¹²⁵

In reply we say, certainly he was free and capable, and therefore, he was not protected. We do not know what you mean by protection, except that you claim that protection is being prevented or forced and being naturally disposed to avoid what is forbidden. If you claim this, then we will say to you that he was

¹²⁵ Questions twenty-six to forty-two deal with the suffering and death by crucifixion of the Messiah.

not prevented by force, but he was prevented, like other human beings, by command, preventing him by the force of his desire and his will.

Concerning your saying that he did not benefit from the incarnation of the Creator Himself who did not prevent him from experiencing what is difficult and forbidden, surely by my life, he benefitted from the incarnation of the Creator Himself when he merited the honor of His divinity, the splendor of His lordship and the equality with Him in his sonship.

Concerning protection meaning the compulsion to renounce the protector, then he did not allow himself any opportunity to use this at all, like you have said. On the contrary, he benefitted those who were opposed to compulsion and force and who disagreed with them, by freeing and empowering them, and through this means he acquired the essence of life and goodness for those who were given the grace of the incarnation and the union.

Question twenty-seven

If he says, did any merit the gifts which they were given from the incarnation and the union and so forth? If they merited them then there is no praise for those who were given them after they were given, and there is no grace from him to them if they possessed the merit from him by necessity. If it was by necessity from him, then surely the gift he imposed on them was out of place.

In reply we say, concerning His incarnation, surely it was by grace and kindness from Him to them and to the people of his substance. Just as we have said, it was a confirmation of the commands given by Him that he merited them when He took to himself a body. Since he achieved his being made glad, then he invited people to experience what he achieved. Concerning those He made equal with him by conferring the honor of experiencing the lordship, rule, authority and what is like them, and granting them by the incarnation of the Creator Himself, the Magnanimous saw the necessity of affirming them with these

merits through the incarnation of Himself. This is like the rule of the Magnanimous and Beneficent when he willed to complete His grace to people, and to complete His goodness to them. In order to love them with the greatest generosity that was possible for Him to give, to take them to Himself with the utmost closeness that He could find a way to be close, to support them, and to give Himself to them, His son was born among them, who mediated between Him and them, the son who merited the reward of the rule and authority of his Father, and all of what He possessed completely. This is the principal character of His affinity with the people, and His associating Himself with them as a gift from Him to them by bestowing his grace on them. Concerning the reward of the rule and the authority of the one born from Him and from them, then merit must be not be by bestowal of grace from Him to His son and not to them.

Likewise, also, the One who became incarnate must have become incarnate in the body of the people who have the substance of the body at the point of His own incarnation. Concerning what is like this, then it is by the merit and the entitlement of His incarnation, as we have described.

Question twenty-eight

If he says, did his Creator determine that He give up what He bestowed of His grace to him from the incarnation and the union, and withdraw from him what He had given him of rule, authority and power? If you claim that He did not determine to do this, it will be said to you, did He determine about the assumed humanity what He would withdraw and He did not take back what was given and the grace bestowed by Him? If you say, the power returned to incapacity of the assumed after being removed. If you say, no, He determined that He refused to take back the grace He had bestowed on him, it will be said to you, so you believe that He had already withdrawn from him what was given. By doing this He also nullified your claim that the Creator included him in everything He had, and made him like Himself in rule, power, authority, and strength, and made him

equal in everything without addition or subtraction, with the exception of the essence of His substance.

In reply we say, your question is absurd from the outset, and is altogether impossible from two aspects and two absurdities. Because if He united with him and made him one with Him in power, strength, authority, and as one reality, then the created one would only will nothing what the Creator willed and the Creator would only will anything what the created one willed. It is inconceivable that the creature desired to give up the merits that he craved.

Also, if He had already made him equal with Himself in force, power, and strength, and made him with Him one reality, it would be absurd afterwards to describe one of the two as lacking and the other complete. It would be as if God, may He be glorified and exalted, willed to make two creatures from His creation equal in force, courage, patience, and strength. Surely it would be absurd to say that this one is more forceful than that one, or that one is more forceful than this one. You must say that it was not possible for the Creator to make the humanity with which He became incarnate one with Him in power, just as it was not possible for Him to make two creatures from His creation equal in force. It is you who describes your Creator by the incapacity to do what He wills, and not us.

If you hold that He determines what He wills, and it is possible for Him to achieve by the weakest of His creatures the force that human beings lack, then it is absurd, after his achievement of this condition, to say that he lacks such and such, and his power increases by such and such.

Likewise, since He became incarnate in this human being and united with him in His power of which there is no greater, then He made him equal to Himself in every circumstance that He made him equal in. He did not make any division or difference in anything at all between him and Himself. Therefore, it is absurd to say that one of the two of them is lacking and weak, and the other is powerful and strong.

Question twenty-nine

If he says, how can you claim that there is no division or difference between the two substances in glory, authority, and strength, when you have already described the created one in terms of the obedience of one who is contingent, transitory and frail? You ought to raise the substance of the Creator above that altogether. The mark of difference is much greater and much further away than this, and the evidence negating what you call their uniting and their equality in what you have described is clearer and more obvious than this. If you claim that He did not unite in the substance, in other words, his substance and the substance of the created one did not become one substance, and for that reason, He was prevented from receiving the contingent and the transitory from the substantiality of the created one, it will be said to you, so in which glory or strength then did he unite and make him equal, that brought the eternal substance of the Creator from being almighty to being transitory, and brought the substance of the created one to submit even to death?

In reply we say, no, we already told you in our previous presentation that He did not make him equal in substance, but He made him equal in the conditions of glory, strength, majesty, and greatness which were described of the substance, and not from the nature and the substance of that with which he clothed Himself and became incarnate in, and united with, as a temple and a dwelling.

Concerning your saying that the submission of the created one is a result of his living in the transitory state without the substance of the Creator, the evidence is clear concerning the difference between the two of them in glory, strength, authority, and power against negating what we have called their equality in this and similar things. Therefore, your error in this is great, because we said that we were clear that the created one submitted to these transitory and weak conditions. Sometimes the created one lacked perfection because of them, and lacked the patience that He necessarily possessed eternally, and so He finally made

him equal by lifting him and exalting him above them, and by making him compliant to them like his eternal maker.

Question thirty

If he says, do you not say, with respect to all of what his Creator united with him and made him equal with Himself, He had already made him perfect in his actions at the moment of his conception?

In reply we say, no, we do not claim this. On the contrary, we say that he is like one who inherits. Since he would merit all the wealth of his father who gave him the inheritance at the time of his being conceived in the womb, then he would merit it after childhood. If he was in the situation of infancy, and being brought up by teachers and instructors, then the one who gave him the inheritance would not hand it over to him without him being trained by the discipline and strengthened in the knowledge of things. Likewise, the humanity eternally merited all that was from his Creator since the time of his conception, and His incarnation in His sonship. He merited all that was changeable in his circumstances. Moreover, none of the virtues that he merited after being weaned appeared until he finished being managed as a result of Him willing that he complete this by actions. Then he became equal in all that he merited in heaven and on earth, and in exaltation above evil and pain, just like the one who testified about himself after his resurrection saying, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth”.¹²⁶ It was not as if he was given the authority at that time, and he did not mean by this, now I have become free, and I have escaped from all claims that I had received as a pledge under those changeable conditions that were outside me and outside the equality of my rule and my authority.

This is just like a man purchasing land for himself for a great price yet not paying one coin of the price, and having a claim on

¹²⁶ Matthew 28:18.

the condition that the price is called an installment. The land becomes his property from the time that the name of the purchaser is placed on it, but he still has to pay the price in installment after installment, and the land is mortgaged for what remains of its price until the final installment is submitted, and then his land is handed over to him in its entirety. With this he is permitted to say, now I possess my property and I have a right to my land.

Likewise, our human nature chosen from our substance from among all of the creatures became property for him after the time his Maker took a body for Himself. He did not finally take possession of it without unavoidably accomplishing these claims. Also, there was no way for him to make payment for these claims apart from paying for them by installments. Firstly, there was an installment as a payment for them in the evidence of his appearing in the substance of his humanity from conception, childhood, upbringing, by all kinds of nourishment from breast milk, food, drink and such things. They clearly testify to his humanity, that he would be instructed by them in the grace of the conditions arising from them in his incarnation in the substance of their humanity.

Secondly, he performed the laws of the Torah which were prescribed for the people of Israel in particular. He also taught the people that he was from the seed of Israel and from the descendants of Abraham to whom God had promised to take the humanity of the Messiah from his descendants, and that God had fulfilled in him what He had promised. He taught them by his performance of the laws and his practicing them that the laws were truly from God, and he quoted from them among the testimonies he spoke concerning himself.

Thirdly, he performed what he made clear to the people by announcing to them his resurrection and the Day of their resurrection and their eternal life in happiness which would never end. He called both the commoners and the nobility to repent, to be doers of excellence and goodness in exchange for punishment, and what is like that from what his messengers commanded the best people to perform.

Fourthly, he sacrificed himself through being killed and crucified because he willed to guide people and save them from error and unbelief, and then from wrongdoing and death according to what we have determined by interpreting him afterwards, in order for them to merit by this what was determined by him calling all the people of his substance to venerate him and prostrate before him. He was like the Creator, may He be exalted and glorified, requiring veneration, prostration, praise and thanksgiving from His creatures, His very own creatures and His creatures who were given all that they needed from this abode to support their lives. Likewise, the Messiah merited by his humanity the veneration, prostration, praise and thanksgiving from all humans because he saved them from wrongdoing and death by the death which he bore to save them.

Fifthly, he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection from death to verify what he had promised them concerning the resurrection of their bodies and their reward for what they had acquired for themselves and the good works they had done, and to give them a generous reward.

When he finished his plan by these five points, he appeared after the resurrection and said, “I have given you the authority of heaven and earth”,¹²⁷ meaning I have given up and let go of my rule and my authority from the obligation which I had, and the people of my authority have become pledged to it.

Question thirty-one

If he says, but his saying this proves that he was at that time given the authority of heaven and earth.

In reply we say, look at his saying before this, “My Father already gave me everything” and his saying in another place when he made a confession to his Father and announced what he had been entrusted from his rule and his authority. He said, “All of

¹²⁷ Matthew 28:18.

what is yours, oh my Father, is mine, and all of what is mine is yours. Indeed, from you is everything that you have given me, oh my Father".¹²⁸

This is what you have heard from him showing you that he was given the authority of heaven and earth before that time. But he did not take possession of this until after he was raised up, and he did not require people to venerate him and prostrate before him before suffering death and pain on their behalf. Similarly, he required this of them after bearing the pain of being killed and being made naked on the cross in order to save them.

Question thirty-two

If he says, if everything was already perfect then he was strong, powerful and great, what was it that called for their removal when his enemies caused the loss of them through weaknesses, pains, death and shame? But according to what you have described of greatness and strength, it should have been right for him to refuse what would cause the loss of them through death, afflictions and weaknesses.

In reply we say, we have already told you about the weaknesses that were given to him which were not refused when he experienced loss through these pains and weaknesses. Moreover, his greatness and power called him to his suffering and submission when he was given them. This surely is made clear by his resurrection after submitting to them, his being made powerful after their subjugation of him, suppression of him, superiority over him, and his being raised above their authority.

Do you not see how a brave hero who is presumptuous in his power stands against his competitor, despises him, and is arrogant towards him before he attacks him, until the competitor reaches him with the utmost power and strength and launches an attack on him, and then after his attack the hero defeats him?

¹²⁸ Matthew 11:27.

Likewise, the Messiah submitted to weaknesses and pains which were given him, without resisting, despising, or being arrogant about them, until they achieved their goal through his death through which he was resurrected by his power alive and exalted above all of them.

This is also like a skillful and kind doctor who wants to show the proof of his knowledge and skill that people demand from him and as a result people trust his science, copy his knowledge, and compete for his medicine. They do not find the proof confirmed for them and firmly established in their hearts until they call for deadly poison and he drinks it before them. When the poison takes effect in his stomach, he takes some of his medicine which follows the poison, and he lives since the poison does not harm him at all because of his medicine. At this point the people looking on know the excellence of his knowledge, and they compete to demand his medicine.

Likewise, the Messiah was made alive by the power of the All Knowing, since He was the cause of his appearance in the world to save people from their errors, to win them over from following Satan to following their Lord, to fill their minds with certainty concerning what he preached to them of the resurrection of their bodies, and their going to the place of blessing which he promised to the followers of goodness among them, and to make them happy by his kindness to them. He desired that he himself would bear the pains and the afflictions in reforming them, and that he would die in their presence and rise up in plain sight before them to give them confidence in what he preached to them about this, so that they would be certain that he was capable of fulfilling for them what he had promised them of resurrection from their deaths. He demonstrated to them the heavenly blessing for their faith and good works, and their possessing an inheritance for obeying him and following him in their religion according to what they had expended for him out of their obedience, generously giving them the reward that they would merit.

As we have mentioned, what called him to submit to his enemies when they brought death upon him, when they achieved

their goal in putting him to death, was his will for those who followed him to rise to life by the power of his lordship, and to verify for them his promise to nullify death in the afterlife for the people of his substance.

Question thirty-three

If he says, is it not rather that the prophets and messengers who lived before he came called the people to obey their Lord and preached to them about the resurrection from their deaths, and some of them were killed and some of them were opposed by the people? It was the same situation for the Messiah as their situation, and not one of them did by himself what the Messiah did by submitting himself to his enemies. Rather the Messiah called them to obey God, renounce the world, believe in the resurrection, the eternal abode, rewards and punishments, and the necessity of following all that he himself did. Moses and David and the rest of the prophets and messengers were not called to this, and they were content to set forth their argument according to what they called to, without doing what the Messiah gave himself up for. If the preaching was united and the teaching was united and their reception by all the people was similar, then surely there was no reason why the Messiah should give himself up apart from them.

In reply we say, which of the messengers among the messengers of God who lived before the Messiah have you found described to you dealing with the issue of the afterlife and its rewards and punishments, and who called everyone to renounce the world and reject its happiness? The Torah and the Psalms and what else is in the books of the prophets and messengers are available to you to examine and study with the utmost care. See if you can find in any of them a single point that agrees with what you have described. Concerning what they preached about the practice of their laws and the promises and threats they declared, you will find that they only made promises about this world, and not one of the tribes of Israel achieved them.

Have you not heard what is recorded in the Torah of Moses speaking to the children of Israel concerning their outrageous

behavior, when he gathered them in the desert of Horeb? He said to them, “You have seen the work of God against your enemies on your behalf, yet you have not kept His commands, and you have not done deeds that obey Him. Now these conditions and promises of His are before you, my command that I present to you. I say to you, follow your Lord and keep His commands with all your heart, and establish His practices with all your strength. Then He will bless you and unite you together, and He will bless the fruit of your wombs and the fruit of your land, and He will multiply you and multiply your livestock and your goods, and He will lengthen your lives in the land, and He will deliver you from your enemies, and He will establish you in the land which He gave to your ancestors to make it an inheritance for their descendants, the land of the Canaanites, the Amorites, and the Hittites, the land which flows with milk and honey. You will live there in security, eating and drinking, being content and at peace. If you do not obey God your Lord, and you do not follow His practices, and you do not do what He commanded with all your heart, and you become mastered by depravity, then God will scatter your unity. Your enemies will overpower you, take possession of your property, exile you to their lands, and enslave you. You will become terrified, scared, and alarmed by all the nations for all the days of your life, because you did not obey God your Lord, and you did not do what He commanded, and you did not follow His practices”.¹²⁹

These are the commands and similar things that Moses preached to the children of Israel. The prophets and Messengers who came after him followed his example. Concerning the commands of the Messiah, this is what he said, “Whoever wants to gain his own life should give it up, and whoever gives up his own life for my sake in this world that is passing away will keep his life in the eternal world”.¹³⁰ He also said, “Whoever leaves his nation, his brothers and sisters, his father and mother, and wife, and

¹²⁹ Deuteronomy 6:1–5, 7:1, 12–13, 8:19–20, 28:15, 25, 36, and 64–67.

¹³⁰ Matthew 10:39, and 16:25.

follows me, I will reward that person thirty, sixty and a hundred-fold".¹³¹ After this saying one of his disciples said to him, "Oh our Lord, we have already left everything we had and followed you, so what will happen to us"? The Messiah replied saying, "Truly I say to you who have left everything and followed me, that in the world to come, when I sit on my glorious throne, you will also sit on twelve seats, and you will judge the twelve tribes of Israel, and when I am in heaven you will be with me forever".¹³²

He did not say to them that when you follow me, and you have worked to obey me, and you have left everything for my sake, I will increase your offspring, sheep, cattle, livestock and goods, and I will reward you with the land of your enemies, and I will give you a long life on the earth, and I will provide food and drink for your bodies. On the contrary, he said, "But in this world you will be driven out, rejected, and hated by all people, and you will be afflicted for my sake by all kinds of afflictions, and you will be put to death because of me by all kinds of killings, and a time will come when someone will kill one of you believing that he will become closer to God on account of it, and whoever among you patiently bears this tribulation to death will live".¹³³

These are the commands and promises of the Messiah to his disciples and the people of his religion, by which he confirmed the commands and promises of the Torah. By my life, if your first glance at them is to look at them with a blind eye, then you will find, as you have said, that they are both almost the same. If you lift the veil of darkness from your eyes, the great differences and the distance of the divergences between them will be made clear to you. Then you will not deny that the Messiah imposes on the people of his religion such afflictions that he imposes on

¹³¹ Matthew 12:50, 13:23, 19:29.

¹³² Matthew 19:27–28.

¹³³ Matthew 24:9.

them, which they bear patiently in this world because of the reward for them, since he himself suffered for their salvation the pains of death, and the afflictions which he imposes on them are softened through love and compassion and affection.

Question thirty-four

If he says, when he came alive from the dead to those people of his time and appeared to them in marvelous power, what was his proof to them that would verify what he had announced to them of their resurrection from the dead such that he gave himself up in humiliation and destruction that would not affect any other person than him?

In reply we say, but by my life, his proof had already been established for them apart from what he showed them from his miraculous deeds. But they themselves refused his offer to verify this for them and to follow him obediently with sincere loyalty by not cooperating together to accept his offer to verify the spiritual resurrection and lifting up to the heavenly kingdom. So when he did not find anyone more entitled than himself to take priority in the justice of his decision to have that honorable situation which he called people to, out of the merits by which he would offer the highest honor from his Creator by which they would merit the life and the relationship from him apart from all the people of his substance, and there was no-one who was able to release him from what he suffered of aversion to death in plain view of them, then he was raised spiritually alive in plain view of them and was lifted up to life by his ascension to heaven in plain view of them to confirm in their hearts his promise to them of their spiritual ascension to life in their resurrected state.

Question thirty-five

If he says, what if he wanted to verify for them the issue of the resurrection and being raised to heaven and did not die such a death before their eyes but was raised in plain view of them, as you claim, in a spiritual heavenly manner without his enemies

being able to achieve their desire by humiliating and killing him?

In reply we say, if he died in the same way that someone dies on his bed while sleeping then was raised up and became alive, surely this would leave the hearts of people in grave doubt concerning this issue. Indeed, most of them would doubt about him, thinking that he did not die at all, and moreover, he would be a worker of deception. Surely, they would be justified in saying, if he was arrogant in his power and he was successful through his strength, and he surpassed his enemies who took him in custody publicly to kill him, then how could he be raised alive in full view of those who witnessed his being killed?

They know by his previous teaching that he could not escape from dispelling doubt from the hearts of the people concerning his death unless by his appearing to them with his body, choosing the right time by his kindness and planning the occasion by his appearing to them with his wisdom, until he found the opportunity to do what he willed. When his enemies who had gathered together in the crowd of people to kill him abused him, he saw that the opportunity had now come which he had looked for to dispel doubt from the hearts of the people by releasing himself into their hands at that point and leaving them to do what they wanted, killing him and crucifying him by his desire, choice and will. This would remove doubt from the hearts of everyone about his death and his giving himself into the control of the enemies, unlike dying like someone dies on his bed while sleeping.

Question thirty-six

If he says, what was the sufficient satisfaction to the onlookers in seeing him being put to death if his enemies carelessly crucified him like a thief, a robber and similar immoral people?

In reply we say, it was not the humiliation and nakedness of those who were habituated to stealing, immorality and fighting, because their concerns were uncovered, their shameful acts were openly proclaimed, and were publicly condemned. Con-

cerning the one who bore this ill-treatment, injustice and hostility, and who suffered voluntarily to release gifts to people, saving them from destruction from the fault of sins by the grace of his innocence and from the filth of offenses by his purity, that was to him honor, praise and glory.

Do you not see that he did not share any of the reasons which cause people to die, which spread abroad their reputation? So, he did not make his reputation widely known, and there was not a huge crowd of people who saw him die by crucifixion. The Messiah, may his glory be magnified, intended to present an examination of his death to all who were in his presence who would spread abroad the matter of his death and his being killed. Then this also agrees with what united the minds of the enemies of grace who crucified him and were notorious in killing him. They willed what he himself willed.

Question thirty-seven

If he says, what if he wanted to free himself to announce the issue of his death by disregarding them and his crucifixion? What kept him dead after his death on the cross, as you claim, until he required to be placed in the tomb and to be buried in the ground? Did he not come down from his cross after which his dead spirit appeared to them alive, like those who crucified him asked him at that time who said, “Save yourself and come down from your cross so we can see and we will believe in you?”¹³⁴ If he came down at that time alive before their eyes surely it would have been the completion of what he willed to prove himself in his resurrection. Then by this means he would have affirmed the proof of his power, strength, and lordship to those who had completely rejected him. Perhaps many of them would have believed in him, and become members of the people who followed him, and he would have turned back those who had defeated him from the people of his nation.

¹³⁴ Matthew 27:40, 42.

In reply we say, if the question of the crowd itself was related to the aspect of mockery and testing, then God Eternal, may His praise be glorified, would have been angry at the question of the mockers, and would have prevented the questioners who were putting Him to test. For example, He demonstrated this and made it clear by the tongues of the two blessed ones, Moses and David, when He said, "If the children of Israel complain against their Lord and test Him in their hearts and ask Him for food and drink in the time of their hunger and thirst, then God will forbid their testing Him by their questioning Him, and He will send down His punishment on all of them".¹³⁵ This characteristic is widely known in the books of God about His anger against those who test Him and mock His saints. The foremost among these is surely, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test and do not tempt Him in your hearts".¹³⁶

It was the same with the Messiah, may his praise be glorified. When those who crucified him asked him to come down from his cross according to the aspect of mockery and harassment and testing, he did not think that he should give them what they asked for, but it increased the punishment for them and provoked the bringing down of his vengeance on them.

Concerning if he came down from the cross alive in the condition of that which separated his spirit from his body, surely he would be suspected of what he had warned of the entry of suspicion and doubt into the hearts of the people about his death. He knew that if he came down from the cross alive at the hour of his death, surely many of the people who harassed him, caused trouble to him, and oppressed him, would say, "How can we know that he died a real death? Perhaps he lowered his head dramatically to deceive the onlookers into thinking that he had most certainly died, and this was compounded by the burial in the tomb after the crucifixion where he stayed for a short time

¹³⁵ Exodus 20:1–13, and Psalm 95:8–11.

¹³⁶ Deuteronomy 6:16.

in the ground in the presence of the keepers of the dead in order to remove the accusation and the opinion about the truth of his death from the hearts of the people”.

Also, it was just as he promised people that he would make their bodies come alive after death, and he showed them a proof of that in the immediate resurrection of his body from death. Likewise, when he promised them that he would raise their bodies and resurrect them from the ground, he wanted to demonstrate a proof of this in his body, so he was buried in the tomb dead and raised from the ground alive.

Question thirty-eight

If he says, instead of his proclamation announcing the issue of his death by killing, crucifixion, and burial, if he wanted to be raised up, and to verify this by the issue of the raising and the resurrection, what prevented him from rising from his tomb publicly in the light of day? Then he would have appeared alive in public to all who saw his death on the cross. But you claim that he rose in the sight of only a few people, and he appeared to a group who were only a tenth of the number of those who witnessed his death on the cross.

In reply we say, what prevented him from this is in four parts concerning his intention to appear to them according to the way of truth and reason. The first of these is that when he rose in that glorious spiritual condition in which he rose, he did not make accessible to his killers an opportunity to see him, and he only made the reality of it accessible to the pure and the good. Just as God, may His praise be glorified, did not appear to any of His creatures from the direction which could be seen by them except to the practitioners of goodness, charity, and purity among them. Also, not everyone to whom he appeared was certain that he saw except the people of purity, goodness and chastity. Likewise, the Messiah our Lord, may his mention be elevated, did not make available to those who opposed him and killed him an opportunity to see him in his heavenly spirituality, so he hid it from them because of their evil deeds. Concerning those

like them among the people of his sect and his followers then they saw him, spoke to him, ate with him, and drank with him.

Secondly, if he appeared to all of the people in this refined condition in which he rose, surely he would have made an excuse for his killers to increase their hostility to the grace extended to them in their delusion and oppression. Surely they would have been saying without doubt, "Did we not say before this that it was by the chief of the demons that he performed wonders and cast out demons, and his demon which was with him appeared to people by his form to lead the people of his group astray and to convince them that he had verified his promise when he said that he would rise after three days".¹³⁷ And in particular, he would have put grave doubt into the hearts of the people by lying to them and deceiving them, when they lost him after forty days following his resurrection. They would have said, "If he had been truly and certainly raised up, he would not have stayed with his friends in the way that he stayed with them before". By my life, would it have been proper for him to stay on the earth after his resurrection forever? On the contrary, he suffered the pain of being killed, the anguish of the crucifixion, and the degradation of being underground in order to be raised alive. Then he completed his miracles and fulfilled his promises by the ascension to heaven after his resurrection.

Thirdly, if he wanted to make his preaching open to all human beings equally among all the peoples of the earth, then he did not think by his impartiality that he should appear to people of one town without appearing to people of all the nations. If he had taken upon himself to appear to people of every land, then he would have had to announce to each of them that he had been killed, crucified, buried, and raised alive, and he would have reached them in such and such a place. There was no escape for him from treating them with justice, if he preached to them what he proclaimed to them in the same way, and demon-

¹³⁷ Matthew 9:34.

strated to them the proof of what he had proclaimed to others like them to whom he appeared, that he had suffered being killed, crucified, and buried and then he had been raised from death after three days in the tomb. It would have been impossible in his spiritual nature to nullify the reception of the pains, agonies, death and change.

Fourthly, because he wanted the apostles to show to the people the greatness of his divinity and the exaltation of the glory of his lordship in his resurrection in his own name to the east and west of the world, they called the peoples of the nations to follow him and worship him, and they told them about his crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension, and they showed the awesome miracles of casting out demons, giving life to the dead, and healing the sick in his name. When the onlookers saw the strength which was demonstrated by his name through his apostles who had been close to him by serving him, it was this that demonstrated to them the truth he wanted to demonstrate of the greatness of his lordship. Since he had also entrusted the signs of this to them by his very own body, he wanted all the signs which the aforementioned apostles performed by his name to show that he was God the Almighty Creator by his divinity in which he appeared as a human being in a body from the people of the world to save them all by his hand. The Messiah, may his praise be exalted, already strengthened his direction in sending his apostles to confirm the miracles they would perform without him by reason of his resurrection and his ascension, when they raised a man from the dead and said, “Rise up in the name of Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, died and was raised”, and he rose up from death at that moment. Likewise, their deeds were done by different types of people in the world and the peoples believed them because of their actions, and the peoples obeyed them by following them, and because of them, kings and tyrants submitted to serving their sender, and were convinced that he was the Lord, the Merciful, the Kind who had freely suffered the agonies, the pains, the crucifixion, and the abyss, in the body of his humanity to save them.

Question thirty-nine

If he says, if his apostles established the proof of his resurrection and ascension to heaven to the people without him by the signs which they performed in his name, then what was the proof that he set free his enemies by himself? He had been content to die a similar death in the sight of his apostles. Then he was raised in their sight perfectly alive and was raised to heaven, according to their testimony. Then he sent them with the confirmation of the signs to whoever he willed and wherever he willed.

In reply we say, by my life, if he was absolutely confident in his apostles and the sound judgment of their minds, so that he was content not to make known his death and his resurrection to anyone apart from them, then he was not satisfied to be negligent to his enemies so that they could achieve their accusation of him. But you have heard him continually warning them of doubtful thoughts, and continually reproaching them for lack of certainty, when he said to them, "You must believe and not doubt; tell this mountain to move and fall into the sea and it will move".¹³⁸ This proves that he was not confident about their faith and their certainty, and there was no security for them from thoughts of doubt in all the adversity that would befall them. Yet he took them to fight kings of the earth and armies of demons.

The concerns of the Messiah, may the memory of him be exalted, were more wonderful, greater and more refined than those of his apostles who had simple minds and foolish intellects. In the short time which they had to accompany him, to know him and to be certain of him, they achieved what they were certain of, so they were able to reject doubt from themselves in every adversity that would befall them. But he continued to warn them about doubting his situation and disbelieving his condition with the result that they might be on the point of running away from him and giving up following him, and he indicated that

¹³⁸ Matthew 21:21.

when he would be removed from the earth, he would be present with them. Indeed, there were more who accompanied him like them, but when they heard various sayings of his, when he preached sometimes from the situation of his divinity and sometimes from the condition of his humanity, they found his sayings repulsive, their hearts turned away from him, they left him and stopped following him. This is just as you have heard him in the gospel saying to his disciples when they heard his words one day, “What anxiety is produced by these words, how repulsive they are, and who is able to hear them”.¹³⁹ It also said, “Many of them left him when they heard his teaching and stopped following him”.¹⁴⁰

This is just like Simon their leader, when he said to him, “Tell me, Oh my master, to come to you walking on the water”.¹⁴¹ He told him to come, and as Simon walked a few steps doubt entered him, and he was about to sink when the Messiah rescued him and reproached him saying, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”¹⁴² Likewise, Simon doubted him when the Messiah’s enemies took him and Simon denied him.¹⁴³ Thomas denied knowing him and rejected being his disciple when they said to him, “Our master has risen”. He said, “I will not believe this until I see the marks of the nails with which his hands were nailed, then put my hand into the place where the spear was thrust into his side”. When the Messiah showed him what he doubted, he was satisfied and he believed.¹⁴⁴

Doubt continued to fill their hearts in every situation. If instead of many of that crowd witnessing his death and their hearts being struck so that he could verify the truth of his announcement, he died a real death in the sight of his apostles and then rose

¹³⁹ John 6:60.

¹⁴⁰ John 6:66.

¹⁴¹ Matthew 14:28.

¹⁴² Matthew 14:29–31.

¹⁴³ Matthew 26:70, 72, and 74.

¹⁴⁴ John 20:25, and 28.

completely alive in their sight, then surely they would have deserved to deny seeing him later and they would say, "Perhaps he told us and he informed our hearts, but he certainly did not die according to what he presented to us". Surely their enemies without doubt would have discredited them concerning this and doubt upon doubt would have increased in them concerning it. They would not have deserved to be apostles with so much doubt which would have undermined their certainty to offer signs to the crowd, just as Simon did not deserve to be clothed with the power of the Spirit after doubt had overcome him in the twinkling of an eye.

If doubt did not prevent worshippers from receiving the power of the Spirit, then why were the prophets, the apostles, and the ones chosen at first for the mission sent to the kinds of people who did not believe in them. But the Messiah, may his memory be exalted, wanted to make his messengers fit for the mission by offering the signs and the power of the miracles. He did not die a death in their sight so that doubt could enter which might prevent them from giving the signs in their mission to the people. But he presented himself in the sight of his enemies so that they would take control of him to kill him by crucifixion, so that no one would find it possible to challenge them about his death.

When he removed the reasons for doubt from them by what their eyes saw of him and observed of him from the evidence of the opponents who heard them, and their hearts were safeguarded from notions of doubt, first of all he made it possible for them to see his spiritual reality from the resurrection and then last of all after the resurrection he sent them to the nations to offer the signs. For this reason, he did not veil his death from the sight of his apostles, without them witnessing his death on the wooden cross publicly.

Question forty

If he says, if in his being killed and his crucifixion he was righteousness for particular people, guidance for all of them from error and unbelief, and their salvation from the punishment of the fire, then it was in agreement with the will of the Messiah

and he desired it, how do you believe that the Jews sinned in pursuing his being killed and his crucifixion? Rather were they not recompensed for their actions?

In reply we say, if you were to moderate speculation about the justice of the judgement of God and the integrity of His ways, surely you would understand that the one who kills a person without intention and premeditation has no punishment placed on him in the justice of His judgement. For example, if a man places his foot on the stomach of someone in the darkness and kills him without premeditation or intention, or commits an error by mistake and does it against the same person, there would not be a judgement against him for killing that person.

Concerning the premeditated and intended killing of a person, if he is considered to have determined to do the action that he intended to perform, then the penalty for the killer at his judgement must be truly against him. For example, if a man attacks another man with his sword and hits him intending to kill him, then he withdraws the strike from killing him, then the one who hits is charged by being given the same strike as the one he hit, and he has merited punishment from God as a killer without doubt.

The Jews did not have a conviction of premeditated intention in killing the Messiah to save people or pursuing the satisfaction of the Messiah. Rather their inducement for their long-standing oppressive behavior was their strong envy and their malicious custom of killing the prophets of God, His saints, and His messengers. God will punish them with the same intention of theirs in killing the Messiah, and in killing those among His saints who they pursued after killing him. God will not reward them for their killing. He was patient with those who were patient among his saints by giving them happiness and reward for bearing up, and granting blessings and glory to them. But there is misery and punishment for their killers.

They should understand that God forgives many of those who shared with the killers of the Messiah in his being killed for their wrongdoing if they regretted what they did to the Messiah

and repented of their error and wrongdoing. Many of those who did not witness what happened to him and who approved of the opinion of the crowd in their actions, already shared this with them. What was imposed on the crowd was imposed on them in order to make known that by intention and thought the worshipper merits a reward from his Lord, and similarly by them he merits a punishment from Him, especially when the thought agrees with the action.

Question forty-one

If he says, how are the Jews blamed for their actions when the Messiah interceded for them to his Father when he was on the cross, when he said, “Oh my Father, forgive them because they do not understand what they are doing”?¹⁴⁵ From each of two aspects it is possible to verify that he was forgiving them for this: one of them is that the Messiah forgave them from his own accord; the other is that he announced that they did not understand what they were doing. It is not a sin to be ignorant in committing a crime. If you say that he did not forgive them during his crucifixion, then you have failed because you have given him a rank which his request did not achieve. If you claim that his request was accepted for them, then there would have been no fear for them and no punishment for their actions.

In reply we say, people have explained this saying according to various aspects. Some say that he meant by his saying, “Oh my Father forgive them”, oh my Father overlook them, give them respite, and do not be in haste to punish them, so that they complete their sins and then you punish them for the totality of their sins. This is like when their sins were completed in the time of Titus the Roman who destroyed their houses, ravaged their land, killed those he killed, and captured those he captured among them. Some say, on the contrary, that he meant, oh my Father overlook them so that they may repent, as if many of

¹⁴⁵ Luke 23:34.

them might regret what had happened inadvertently and might repent of their offence. Some say that he issued a sincere call for them to be forgiven because they did not understand what they were doing in their treachery, when he said that they did not know what they were doing. Some say that he made the request about the Roman soldiers who were under Pilate, and that these were the ones who did not know him and did not understand who he was.

As for us, we say that he did not mean any of these aspects at all, and the purpose of his request was not a request for them to be forgiven or for them to be overlooked. Rather, we say this saying should be judged according to the way of truth and reason. Just as in all of what he called people to, of righteousness and goodness, and commanded them to follow the habits of the god-fearing, the submissive, and the pure, he began to do all of them and did not himself lack any of them, but he also urged people to do them so that they would merit abundant rewards for them. Likewise, since he clearly entrusted them to love and bless those who cursed them, to do good to those who persecuted them, and to pray for those who attacked them and were violent to them,¹⁴⁶ then he also wanted to urge them to do what he was entrusting them to do. He prayed for his killers who had attacked him at that time so that those who heard him forgiving his enemies would benefit from praying for those who were violent towards them, and would merit abundant rewards in the afterlife from their Lord. He did not intend to ask for them to be forgiven when he prayed for them, nor did he need to if forgiveness for them made him happy without supplicating his Father for them, since he did not make a distinction between himself and his Father in administering the punishments and rewards of the servants. He had begun to inform about himself that he had the authority to forgive the wrongdoing and sins of the people of the earth, and that he had given authority to his apostles to forgive the sins of people when he said, “Everyone

¹⁴⁶ Matthew 5:10–11.

whose sins you forgive will be forgiven, whoever does not forgive will not be forgiven, whatever you set free on earth will be set free in heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven”.¹⁴⁷

Was it possible from the authority to forgive sins that he gave to his followers that they could forgive people their wrongdoing and sins and they would set free in heaven what they had set free on earth and they would bind there what they had bound on earth? However, it was to teach that he wanted by this particular saying to reinforce for them the need to pray for those who persecuted them.

Concerning the Jews, they did not benefit from his request for them. Just as it does not help the sinner to ask for forgiveness from the person he sinned against if the intention of the one making the request is to request a reward for himself, so likewise, there was no benefit for the Jews in the request of the Messiah that they be forgiven if the intention of his request for them was his desire to teach people how to merit rewards by praying for those who do evil to them. On the contrary he increased shame upon shame and punishment upon punishment for them.

Concerning his saying that they did not know what they were doing, he did not mean that they were ignorant of what they themselves did. Because if they were animals and beasts, they would have been ignorant that they had exerted effort to kill him and crucify him. But he meant by this that they do not know me in my divinity and my lordship, and surely their ignorance of these has brought evil upon me in doing what they have done to me.

Isaiah the chosen prophet had spoken to the religious leaders about their ignorance of his commands when he said, “If they had understood, they would not have done evil by crucifying the

¹⁴⁷ Matthew 16:19, and 18:18.

divine majesty”.¹⁴⁸ It was not by way of their knowledge of his divinity that he blamed them, or by way of their ignorance of his lordship that he forgave them. Rather, he blamed them for their own evil reaction to his performance of good deeds to them in his giving life to their dead, healing their sick, curing their chronically ill, and demonstrating to them signs the like of which had not been heard or seen. All this he did in their plain sight to guide them out of a desire for their good. Yet they did not esteem him or thank him for his good deeds, nor did he convince them either.

Question forty-two

If he says, what hostility was there between them and him when they saw the signs from him that you have described, so that they did not accept his teaching, and they did not negate the reason for his command, but they killed him by crucifixion for this? Rather, there is no doubt that if they had seen the signs from him which you have mentioned, surely they would have accepted his teaching for that and other reasons without ending up killing him by crucifixion.

In reply we say, why would the hostility which was between him and them not have been similar to the hostility between them and the saints of God? They saw their signs and they killed who they killed among them, rejected who they rejected among them, and opposed who they opposed among them. But hostility sprang up between Moses and those who God had saved by his hand from the oppression of Pharaoh, and took them from the land of Egypt by great signs, yet they wanted to stone him to death,¹⁴⁹ just as Moses complained about their actions from time to time to his Lord. There was hostility between them and Aaron who they wanted to kill when they gave him gold jewelry to

¹⁴⁸ Hebrews 6:6.

¹⁴⁹ Exodus 17:4.

make an idol for them that they could worship.¹⁵⁰ There was hostility between Elijah and them when they saw his signs which authenticated his prophethood, yet they wanted to kill him,¹⁵¹ just as he complained to God about them time after time.

There was hostility between Isaiah and those who wanted to verify the truth of his prophethood morning and evening, and they killed him by cutting him in half by a saw.¹⁵² There was hostility between Jeremiah and them when they saw a proof of what he announced to them of the kinds of afflictions which they would experience from their enemies, and they killed him by stoning.¹⁵³ There was hostility between them and Zechariah who did not die until he witnessed all the secret thoughts which he announced to them in his prophethood about their captivity and their return, and they killed him by slitting his throat between the altar and the temple.¹⁵⁴ There was hostility between them and the prophets who they killed like Elijah, when he interceded with his Lord for them and said, "Oh Lord, they have killed your prophets and pulled down your altars and I am the only one left and they want to kill me".¹⁵⁵

By my life, how can we deny that their hostility to the Messiah was similar to the preceding hostility between them and the saints of God, some of which we have described? But if we were to carry the analogy of their evil, wickedness, sinfulness, covetousness, and greed for what pertains to their stomachs, we would find their killing those prophets and messengers from the past who came before the Messiah stranger than their killing the Messiah.

¹⁵⁰ Exodus 32:22–24.

¹⁵¹ 1 Kings 19:1–2.

¹⁵² *Ascension of Isaiah* 5:13; Hebrews 11:37.

¹⁵³ Jerome, *Against Jovinian* 2:37 mentions that Jeremiah was stoned to death by his fellow Jews in Egypt for protesting at their idolatry; Jeremiah 11:19, 21; 26:8; 38:4; Hebrews 11:37.

¹⁵⁴ 2 Chronicles 24:21; Hebrews 11:37.

¹⁵⁵ 1 Kings 19:10.

Likewise, the prophets and the messengers before the Messiah were guiding them and urging them in relation to what they would obtain of goodness in this world. In other words, when they accepted their teaching and repented towards God for their evil deeds, and they pleased Him with the least of their actions, He gave them their means of living, caused the fruit of the earth to grow for them, gave them authority over their enemies, and did good to them in every circumstance of theirs, as his provision for them. When they disobeyed him and departed from his commands, he forced them to be scattered, gave authority over them to their enemies who took them to their lands and made them their slaves, because of their power.

As for the Messiah, he commanded them to reject what they were choosing from the concerns of this world and to perform the actions that would give them success in the afterlife. This was after the disappearance of their country which was gobbled up as a little piece of flesh in the mouth of their conqueror who stripped their leaders of their rank, and they became slaves to his messengers who caught those who were fleeing from their homes rather than submit to them. They killed the Messiah who was urging them to leave these things he deemed to be weak through the signs which he showed to them. It was not strange that they killed the prophets who showed them how to be strong in relation to the setting up of their rule, the establishment of their authority, and the welfare of their means of living.

Question forty-three

If he says, after these things which you have described, what was the purpose of the Messiah saying to his apostles, “Go and win over all peoples and baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”?¹⁵⁶ He set up for them and those who followed them a stumbling block of doubt about the oneness of their Creator and a reason for difference of opinion

¹⁵⁶ Matthew 28:19.

about it among them. No, if he had been merciful to them, and had grieved with them, he would have left them continuing to believe in the oneness of their Maker, without commissioning them with a belief that their reason would find offensive. Either you give us an argument by which you prove that all of this is explained more suitably for them, or you hold that He was not the Wise One commissioning His creatures with what was a stumbling block and means of corruption to them. Surely this was an invention of your spiritual leaders who were in charge of the corruption of your books.

In reply we say, God was much more merciful to His creatures and valued them as much more important than them being baptized for something that he commissioned as a stumbling block to them and corruption to them. But it was only from grace that He was kind to them in the condition of their substance even though it was concealed from them. He wanted to make this known to them by His gentleness and His mercy, and He revealed it to them so that they would thank Him profusely for making their reward abundant. As a result of the power of His grace towards them He deserved their thanksgiving for it on account of what would increase their thanksgiving for Him making their reward more abundant afterwards.

However, the intention of the Messiah in what he commissioned them to do, and his aim in all that he did among them, was more perfect for their benefit and more suitable for their wellbeing. His aim in everything that he commissioned them from his grace on the day he sent them, and it could not be on the day he helped them, was a grace more exalted in destiny yet not greater in importance than the grace because of which we need to remember these names. It is the grace of the incarnation and the uniting by which he demonstrated to their substance the knowledge of how to obey their Creator. When the Messiah, may his glory be exalted, informed them by his sayings and actions of the knowledge of what was hidden from them, he meant the union of his divinity and his humanity. Then the time came when he wanted to leave them, and he wanted to make known to them how the divine sonship which was indicated to them by

this description was proved true in his humanity taken from their substance, and how it was verified in his saying, “Before Abraham existed I am”,¹⁵⁷ and in his saying, “I have come down from heaven”,¹⁵⁸ and “I and my Father are one”,¹⁵⁹ when he said, “Go and baptize the peoples in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”.¹⁶⁰ In other words, they understood that he was the eternal Son from the eternal Father, when he was the one who said, “I have come down from heaven”, and “Before Abraham existed I am”, and “I and my Father are one”. By his taking a body from your substance, your substance merits the sonship of your Creator, and now you should devote your thanksgiving for his generous provision of your reward. If he told you about his oneness that he did not have sonship from his divinity and his humanity from the beginning, and then this is followed by the description of the Father and the Son as two eternal beings at the end, surely he said the right thing among them that he was eternal and human when united and composed, and God became a Son, and surely they realized that the reality of being sons of God was bestowed by God on their humanity, and surely the sonship which the Messiah claimed as sonship through his humanity among them was by a free invitation not by a necessary duty.

But since he wanted to establish the truth of this in their hearts, he told them about the eternity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to inform their minds about the truth of the sonship from their humanity united with the eternal Son who was telling them that he had come down from heaven, that he was before Abraham, and that they owed him the profound thanksgiving for meriting from him their abundant reward. This was the aim of the Messiah in presenting the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the objector will raise an objection

¹⁵⁷ John 8:58.

¹⁵⁸ John 6:51.

¹⁵⁹ John 10:30, 17:11, and 22.

¹⁶⁰ Matthew 28:19.

about the interpretation of the saying of the Messiah, "I have come down from heaven". He might say, if he meant by this his eternal divinity, then how could he be eternal, have no limits, and no place restricting him from moving from one place to another, and then come down from heaven to earth? You claim he was eternal in the earth since the earth existed just as he was eternal in heaven since heaven existed.

In reply we say, we have mentioned in our above writing that the actions of God, may His glory be exalted, are not like the actions belonging to bodies. Likewise, His coming down is not a movement from one place to another. God has said in many places in his books, "I have come down", "I have seen", "I have descended", and "I have risen". This is not according to what we know of the coming down of creatures, their descent, and their appearance. But He means a presentation of His marks and His effects in the earth and a declaration of His teaching and His commands to the people of the world. Likewise, the Eternal One from the hypostasis of the Son, may His glory be exalted, means by His saying, "I have come down from heaven", that I am the Most High in heaven, I have become incarnate in a body from the people of the earth, I have shown from it My power, authority, and lordship, and by My uniting with it, I have become one of the people of the earth with the substance of the people, just as he, by his uniting with Me, becomes one of the people of heaven endowed with My nature. This is the meaning of the saying of the Eternal One, "I have come down from heaven".

Question forty-four

If he says, if he was presenting the name of the Father and the Son, and perhaps the Son united with the humanity like you claim, then what was his purpose in mentioning the name of the Spirit? Surely it was sufficient to only mention the Father and the Son.

In reply we say, He wanted to mention two things in particular. The first of these is that he mentioned the Father in other places and mentioned the Son in other different places. Then he made a connection between the two names at the time when he want-

ed to announce the unity between the two substances. Likewise, when he mentioned the Spirit in different places, he was considering the Father and the Son themselves, like when we say fire is the hidden source of heat and dryness. Likewise, when the aim necessitated presenting a description of the death of the eternal substance by the termination of his properties, the Messiah was not permitted to mention the name of the Father and the Son and fail to mention the name of the Spirit.

Question forty-five

If he says, how was it permissible for the Messiah to say to his apostles after that, “I am going away and I will send to you the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete”?¹⁶¹ You claim that the Holy Spirit is God the Creator like the Father and the Son. Is it possible that God the Creator can send God the Creator? How are God the Creator and God the Creator and God the Creator not three gods who created?

In reply we say, he did not mean by his saying, “I will send to you the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete”, I will send him like someone sends his slave or his servant or like a creature sends a creature like him. But the thinking behind his saying was about the way that God spoke previously in his books, “I have come down”, “I have descended”, “I have seen”, and “I have risen”. This was indicating his actions, deeds, and the power of his signs. Likewise, the Messiah meant by his saying, “I will send to you the Spirit, the Paraclete”, I will appear among you, and signs and wonders originating from the Spirit, the Paraclete, will happen through you. Concerning their performance, the Paraclete is mentioned here, and the issue is attributed to him. His intention was to inform them of the manner in which the Spirit, the Paraclete, shows him and shows his Father in divinity and authority, and without the Spirit, the Paraclete, these signs could not be seen through them. Since there are three eternal hypostases

¹⁶¹ John 14:16, 26; 16:7, 13, and 15.

equal in authority, and agreement in nature, when he mentions the Father, in the first instance, he specifies him by actions, as in his saying, "My Father who is dwelling in me is the one who does these actions".¹⁶² Then, secondly, he specifies himself when he says, "I do as my Father does and I create as my Father creates".¹⁶³ Likewise, since the Holy Spirit was in his life, his lordship, his authority, and his eternity, like the Father and the Son, he wanted to make the mention of him an instance of specifying him by his doing the signs and wonders just as he specified the Father and the Son in the two instances before, to demonstrate by this that there is no separation between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in power, and no difference in authority and lordship. This was the aim of the saying of the Messiah to his apostles, "I will send to you the Spirit, the Paraclete".

Concerning your question, how can the Creator and the Creator and the Creator be three Creators? By my life, if we counted them like you have described as Creator and Creator and Creator, surely there would no doubt be three Creators. On the contrary, we do not name each of them Creator, Maker, and Originator without his companion, because each of them creates by one desire and one will, and we do not have to name each of them Creator and Creator and Creator so that they without doubt become in one sentence three Creators. We must count them Creator and Creator and Creator so that they become three Creators if we speak about the power and will of each of them in particular without his companions.

Do you not see that you have named the sun, without doubt, a sun which gives heat, cooks food, gives light, and burns with fire? So, it is not appropriate for you to add these together as a sun, a sun and a sun, and then you make them become in one sentence three suns and three burning fires. Because the sun gives heat, cooks food, and burns with fire, by one heat and one

¹⁶² John 5:19–21.

¹⁶³ John 5:19–21.

power, not by one of these in particular, cooking food, burning with fire, and giving heat, by the heat and the power within it without its companions. On the contrary, the source of the heat, its ability to cook food, and its ability to burn with fire, is the heat from the rays and their ability to burn, and the heat of the rays and their ability to cook food, and to burn with fire, is the heat emanating from them extending to the earth, and their ability to cook food and burn with fire. For this reason, they become in a sentence one sun, one giver of heat, and one burner with fire.

So according to this example, we say that the Father, may His glory be exalted, is Creator, Maker, and Originator, and the Son is Creator, Maker and Originator, and the Holy Spirit is Creator, Maker and Originator, and not three in three sentences, or three makers, and not counting either Creator, Creator, and Creator. When you separate them by their particular names, Creator, Originator and Maker, each of them creates and makes with one will and one desire. This one will and one desire and one authority is together the Creator. It is not that each of the three creates and makes and organizes by his will and desire without his companions. Rather, the will of the Father and his creation is the will of the Son and his creation and the will of the Spirit and his creation.

Likewise, the group together is one Creator, one Maker, and one Originator by the analogy that we have used to describe the substance of the sun and its characteristics and its actions.

Question forty-six

If he says, what is the meaning of your saying that the Messiah is sitting on the right-hand side of God interceding with him for us? Does God have a right-hand side for the Messiah to sit at? When the Messiah wishes something, does he need to intercede with him for others?¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Hebrews 7:25, and 8:1.

In reply we say, concerning what is said about his sitting on the right-hand side of God, the meaning of it is what we have described about it in our above writing about his being raised to all the authority of God, and then about him preparing to raise from the judgement one of the people in the resurrection to God.

Concerning what he said about interceding with God to grant eternal life to those who seek forgiveness for their wrongdoing from God the Savior, and the continuation of this intercession for it, he presented his person on the cross as a pure sacrifice to God to put right what had resulted from the sin of Adam which brought about their fall into death from God. This is just like what you have heard being said in the Torah about what is like this and analogous to it, that God forgave the sins of the children of Israel by the sacrifice of rams, bulls, and birds, and by the shedding of their blood forgave their wrongdoing.

If the blood of birds, animals, and insects mediated with God in the forgiveness of the sins of people, then his kindness and mercy are more clearly shown if He pardons the sins of people by the shedding of the blood of His pure and immaculate Son, who offered himself as a voluntary sacrifice in exchange for the sins of people.

Likewise, also it cannot be denied, thanks to the One who is gracious and kind, since it was by a small lapse committed by one person that death and loss were inflicted on all people, that it would be by the perfect righteousness of one person that life and success would be granted to all who share the substance of human beings. Indeed, the Kind and Generous One, out of keenness to do what resembles His favor and kindness in tolerating this, created them and attracted them to the merits of His grace. His grace towards the creatures through the Messiah, may his glory be exalted, is the more perfect for them of the two characteristics, as we have said. In other words, he removes the sin of Adam from the descendants of Adam by his righteousness and his purity, then he removes death from them which Adam deserved by his falling into error, and then he merits for them life by offering his flesh and his blood.

Question forty-seven

If he says, how does he make their sin void when we have seen all people sinning and doing wrong? Then you have claimed that he threatens sinners with punishment that never ends. How does he remove death from them? Since the world began has there not been more death from the time of the appearance of the Messiah until today, and has the lifespan of people ever been shorter since then until now?

In reply we say, we do not mean by our teaching that he made void the sin so that he forced them not to sin or do wrong, or that he released them from sin so they could commit it how they wished. We do not mean by our teaching that he removed death from them except that he transferred them by death from this world to the world of life. Instead, we mean by the making void their sin that he endured on their behalf the burden of the sin of Adam their ancestor, which was the reason for the death of all of them, by his righteousness which put right the rupture of the sin of Adam their ancestor. We mean by the removal of death from them the granting of resurrection and life in the hereafter by his righteousness in order to discard death in this world which Adam brought about for their substance by his sin.

Have you not heard what the Torah recounts of the acceptance of Adam by God, “The day you eat of this tree you will certainly die”?¹⁶⁵ Then it relates that Adam lived after he ate from the tree for so many years, so you know that he meant by his saying, “The day you eat of this tree you will certainly die”, the day you eat of it you will deserve death.

As a result, we say about the Messiah abolishing death that he grants the resurrection by raising up all people. It is not that he lifted death altogether from people since the hour he granted the resurrection. Just as God makes them all share in the sin of Adam their ancestor and his death in this world even though

¹⁶⁵ Genesis 2:17.

they do not share in his sin action by action, similarly, He makes them all share in the righteousness of the Messiah who became incarnate from them, and in his resurrection at the appointed time, even though they do not share in his righteousness action by action.

Has not God demonstrated what this status is like, and what is analogous to it, in his books concerning how he continues to treat his creatures? This is seen in the saying in the Torah, “Abraham interceded with God for the people of Sodom, saying, ‘Oh Lord, if you find in this town fifty good people turn away your anger and your vengeance because of the fifty good people.’ God said to him, ‘If I find fifty righteous people there, I will forgive all of the people because of the fifty good people’. Then he did not stop coming back to his Lord until he ended up with five, and God said to him, ‘If I find five righteous people there, I will forgive all of the people for the sake of the five’”.¹⁶⁶

Then in another writing is recorded the story of Ghahar son of Kumi and his action which resulted in the death of many faithful people among the children of Israel because of his treachery.¹⁶⁷ In another writing is recorded the turning away of God’s anger from all the people by the prayer and supplication of the priest when he prays to Him and intercedes with Him to remove death from them.¹⁶⁸ Do you not see Him, the Eternal One, blaming many people for the sin of one person and pardoning many people through the righteousness of one person. This was in the manner of what He did at first when He conferred sin and death for the crime of one person who was the son of everyone. It is like His action at the end when He will confer resurrection and life on everyone through the righteousness of one person which will happen in the hereafter for everyone.

¹⁶⁶ Genesis 18:24–33, but Genesis says from fifty to ten.

¹⁶⁷ Numbers 16:1–50.

¹⁶⁸ Numbers 16:46–48.

Question forty-eight

If he says, do you not claim that God created Adam to die before he sinned, and created him and his descendants so that He would raise them and resurrect them from death, before the Messiah came? If He created them at the beginning according to these two circumstances together, then why did the sin of Adam bring the harm of death upon them, and why did the righteousness of the Messiah and the offering of his flesh and blood give them life?

In reply we say, do you not see that God, may His glory be exalted, created Adam and his descendants originally by willing goodness and grace for them originally. He willed that this goodness would be beneficial for them, and that their happiness would be completed by the grace which He decided to grant to their substance, so He made this by acquisition and merit. He created them originally also to raise them to life which He decided to grant them. He willed that this be completed by the happiness that He intended for them, and then He wanted them to acquire this by their effort. Yet He knew by His foreknowledge that not one of them would achieve righteousness and good works that would merit life which would appear in the twinkling of an eye. Then He knew that He would offer a day that would reduce the evils that happened before the Messiah and the sins that would come after him by his righteousness and goodness. This would free them by his kindness, his compassion, his generosity, and his sharing the substance of all the people in the hour of his death and by raising them to life which were the two particular results he intended for them. At first, He began to treat them by judging them, and he imposed on the descendants of Adam their ancestor the verdict for disobeying Him. Then he imposed death as a punishment on all of these descendants, until one chosen from their substance achieved the lifting up of their fall. His joy and purity were exchanged for the sin of their ancestor, his meriting resurrection from death was exchanged for the fall of their ancestor, and their being judged by him was exchanged for the judgement which the Creator imposed on the descendants of their ancestor. His justice, may His glory be ex-

alted, was like those who require that their forgiveness can only be made binding by the life which they merit from their relative, just as, at first, He required that the penalty for the crime of these descendants was the death which their ancestor acquired for them.¹⁶⁹

Do you not see the action of the Kind and the Merciful One from this partnership which he granted to his creatures, as a judicious and compassionate Father does for his children, when, despite their weakness, He demonstrated the resurrection by means of sustaining them, and despite their lack of strength and energy to acquire it, He poured out his wealth on them? Then He became incarnate by one man from His children and made known the benefit of his resurrection by all that would benefit their circumstances, and his suitability for all that he assumed of their concerns. He participated with all of them in all that was for and against them, and made himself equal with them in their acquisition of wealth. After the fall descended on them restricting their capacity, their relative had the power to help them to reject what was distasteful for them, so that he could support them in their midst in all suffering they might experience to achieve their eternity and wealth.

Likewise, the Merciful Father, may His glory be exalted, did this for His creatures since he knew their weakness in achieving what they might deserve from obeying him. He gave life to their dead, He granted them the reward of the resurrection which they did not merit because of their fall, He chose them by his mercy, and He shared with them the strength from their relative to bear what he bore of their concerns. Then He began to reclaim the debt of their ancestor through their relative. When he offered his body and his blood as a sacrifice, this was like the customs which took place in the past among people of their substance who offered the body and blood of animals to redeem them from their sins. He suffered at the time of his death on the

¹⁶⁹ Romans 5:12–21.

cross which was followed by his being raised to life. So, he cancelled the suffering with bliss, and destroyed this carnal appetite which was the result of the fall into death.

Question forty-nine

If he says, if this situation that you claim is true, why have people died since the Messiah came until today? No, if this situation is right as you have described, he would have dismissed death from people since then and they would not have died.

In reply we say, the Messiah did not restrict this grace to those who would come after him apart from those who came before him. Rather, he included his grace towards those who came before him along with those who came after him. If he dismissed death from those who were after him apart from those who were before him, then surely the justice of the Generous One would not have included all of His creatures, if He made the first of them among the descendants of their ancestor share in his death, and prevented the ones who came after them from sharing in the future from the righteousness and life of their relative. This would also be proof of the injustice of dismissing from those who came after them the share in his death that he granted to those who came before them among the descendants of their ancestor.

But He willed, may He be greatly exalted, that people from each of the two groups which shared their reward would only find it from that obedience to suffering death which He gave to the first and to the last group together. When He demanded the above-mentioned actions from them that would bring about prosperity after the death of all of them, He showed compassion to them afterwards and granted to their descendants the right to life for all of them.

Question fifty

If he says, in everything that you have described about the doing of merits, good works, obedience, and submission to death and suffering, are you not demonstrating that he was a servant

among servants? What prevents you from naming him a servant, since these attributes are only given to a servant among servants? Then you have also believed that God has named him, in some of his books, “an obedient servant”, so why do you reject what he does not reject?

In reply we say, his merits, humility, obedience, and death, and what is like them, demonstrate that he was far from the name of a servant and the humiliation of servanthood. Because the merits which shame did not spoil, the humility which pride did not spoil, the obedience which haughtiness did not spoil, and the righteousness which was not spoiled by anything that corrupted it, were from pure actions related to the names of the servants not related to the actions of the servants. This means that the servant, according to us, is one who is entangled in his sin, and intimidated by his misdeeds, as the Messiah said, “The servant is nothing but a servant of sin”.¹⁷⁰ If the humility, obedience, submission, and death of the Messiah are a petition for the salvation of the people who benefit from his righteousness and grace, as we have explained in the above writing, then he does not deserve to be named a servant from the aspect which has described his merits, obedience, and humility.

Concerning what you said about God naming him a servant, by my life, He did name him a servant. God, may His glory be exalted, was right to name him a servant, but not from the aspect which you have considered. He named him “Stone”,¹⁷¹ “Sun”, “Star”, “Lamb”, and “Lion”.¹⁷² The Messiah also named himself “Bread”, “Door”, “Way”, “Light”, “Life”, and “Resurrection”.¹⁷³ He was named and he named himself by all of these names, yet their meaning is not the meaning given to the things he was likened to. Likewise, God named him a servant yet it did not mean

¹⁷⁰ John 8:34.

¹⁷¹ Matthew 21:42–44.

¹⁷² Revelation 5:5–6, 21:23, 22:16.

¹⁷³ John 6:35, 10:7, 14:6, 11:25.

what you imagine this to mean, but it was according to the true meaning which was rightfully his by necessity from time to time. Can any person be found on earth who was more deserving of the name of servanthood according to this meaning, since the time the Messiah merited this to the time when he completed it, may his glory be exalted.

This is because the first sin required the name “servant” to be given to Adam and his descendants. As the Messiah judged the servant to be the servant of sin, then he was the one responsible for them, and the one who paid the cost of this sin and their death was a person whose humanity made an offering for them by paying the price for the descendants. This servanthood which was absolutely imposed on all of his descendants was necessary for him to accept.

The saying of God by the tongue of his prophet is fulfilled when he says, “He became a servant to many because he suffered for their sins”.¹⁷⁴ This means that he suffered for their sins by his death which invalidates their sins, and this is the meaning of his saying that he became a servant of many. Then it is also made clear when he says, “The sin was attached to himself, so that surely his eyes will see the fruit of what has been sown, and the days of his life will be lengthened, and the delight of God will be placed in his hands”.¹⁷⁵ This means that, by assuming the sin that was the reason for the servanthood and the death of his body, he will lengthen his life when God harvests the fruit of what was sown in exchange for his flesh and blood. God wanted to grant life to his body because of his mediation. For this reason, he paid the price of sin for them and this necessitated the name of the servant being given to him for their sake through the offering of his flesh and blood which he offered as a ransom for them. Then he was raised from death, which happened to him on their behalf, and he negated sin and nullified servant-

¹⁷⁴ Isaiah 53:11.

¹⁷⁵ Isaiah 53:10.

hood from them and from himself. He was like a man who enters the house of the regional governor and sees a crowd of the people from his own house and flesh and blood demanding the governor's wealth, and making him angry for asking for it to relieve tax burdens and other things. Some of them are hit, some of them are put in the stocks, and some of them are punished with various kinds of punishment. Then the governor leaves them and shows mercy to them. He still shows kindness until he comes to the king and says to him, "Oh king, I am the guarantor to you of all that is owed to you by this crowd and their guarantor of them to you, so set them free and confine me in their place". So, the king set them free on account of the guarantee of the guarantor and the guarantor became a servant, a prisoner in his body for their sake. The king commanded the confinement of the governor in prison in their place. Then the king still demanded money after money until he had received in full all of what was due to him until the governor and the people became free together of any obligation to the king.

Likewise, the Messiah was the helper of the people of the world, when he entered the abode of the world, and it did not take him long before he saw the people of the world as servants of the one who ruled the world through the debt of their ancestor who created it for the world. He felt pity for them, was merciful to them, and came to the ruler of the world and asked him that he might guarantee what they owed him of the debt of their ancestor Adam. He made himself a servant, a prisoner in their place, so that what was due to them would be placed on him. So, he guaranteed this and confirmed it from himself on their behalf, and he made himself a servant, a prisoner in their place. Then the ruler commanded his confinement in the prison of the world until he completed the offering of his body and blood after a time of being righteous, pure, and good. He offered his body and blood as a completely voluntarily pure offering of himself, so the value of what was demanded of him for that was greater than the value of what he guaranteed for the people of the world.

Then he deserved by merit the servanthood he did not reject which negated the servanthood which was imposed on him by

his guaranteeing the debt of the people of the world. The word of the Lord on the tongue of his prophet and intimate friend Zachariah testifies to him when he says, “You are the savior by your blood which is your agreement that sets people free from the pit which does not have water in it”.¹⁷⁶ This means that he set free the prisoners from the snare of death, when there was no hope for them, and no helper to help them, by shedding his blood in his death which was their ransom. When he was upset with his apostles, he only gave this reason which was one of the two reasons for offering his body and blood in death that he proposed to them.¹⁷⁷

In another place in his teaching and actions concerning drinking the cup on the night of the Passover, when he drank from it and then gave it to them to drink, he said to them, “Drink from it all of you, for this is my blood which is a covenant poured out for you”.¹⁷⁸ He had already said before this, “The bread which I give is my body which I give for the life of the people of the world”.¹⁷⁹ This means when I give my body as a sacrifice raised on the wooden cross and my blood as an offering poured out on the ground, I will remove sin and death from the people of the world, and I will grant life and bliss to everyone.

This also confirms the saying of the prophet of God, Isaiah, when he says, “He was killed for our sins, he was humbled to give us life, and on him was the wellbeing of us all, because we by his wounds are healed, and by his afflictions we are cured. All of us like sheep went astray, and the Lord laid on him the sin of us all”.¹⁸⁰

It is said in another place, “At that time, meaning the time of the one who distinguishes truth from falsehood, death will be

¹⁷⁶ Zechariah 9:11.

¹⁷⁷ Mark 10:45.

¹⁷⁸ Matthew 26:27–28.

¹⁷⁹ John 6:51.

¹⁸⁰ Isaiah 53:5–6.

swallowed up in victory”.¹⁸¹ This means that the Messiah himself defeated the authority of death by granting raising to life and the resurrection. Then he sent the apostle named Paul as the mocker of the enemy who has been defeated and beaten, when he says, “Where is your sting, oh death, and where is your victory, oh hell?”¹⁸² Then he proves this by saying, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law”.¹⁸³ He means by sin the previous rebellion as the cause of death, and he means by the law the obligation which God placed between himself and Adam when he prohibited him from eating from the tree, which he imposed on those apart from him in the flesh, all the inheritors of Adam.¹⁸⁴

Question fifty-one

If he says, your arguments defend your saying that the afterlife is better than this death. But what benefits are there in that life over life in this world, when you claim that there is no eating, drinking, marriage and other pleasurable things in the eternal abode? But if these things remain for people in this world who are blessed by few or many blessings, would it not be better for them and more beneficial for them to remain in this life, since there will be no pleasures in the afterlife?

In reply we say, but the benefits of that life over this life are great and are not unknown to rational people. Because that life has no want in it, no need spoils it, and no affliction affects it, and it is shielded from every want, need, and affliction. Indeed, death will not exist, since there will be no need for it. Since it will be more sublime and far better than this earthly life, then the afflictions and wants will be left behind there.

¹⁸¹ Isaiah 25:8.

¹⁸² 1 Corinthians 15:55.

¹⁸³ 1 Corinthians 15:56.

¹⁸⁴ Genesis 3:17–19.

Do you not see, oh wise one, that there is no pleasure for those who eat food from their food, and those who consume drink from their drinks, unless hunger and thirst have started before in their stomachs, because they consume what pleases them from their food and their drink. Likewise, this is their condition in all that affects them from their appetites. From this it is demonstrated that there is no way to bring about pleasures except by prior appetites, and there is no existence for appetites except by needs and wants. When the wants are removed, the appetites are negated, and when the appetites are negated, the pleasures are annihilated.

Is it not clear to you, in our above writing about this, that the absence of these defects in the afterlife is because of procreation and the absence of acquisition? When procreation is negated, acquisition is abolished. Then the afterlife provides a new spiritual heavenly physique, which removes and lifts the need for blessing by appetites and pleasures. Rather, humans are given spiritual heavenly blessings like the blessings of the spiritual heavenly angels who do not need the pleasures of eating and drinking. Perhaps there is no pleasure for the angels like what has previously been mentioned.

This completely ends question thirty-six. This completely ends the writing of this book which authenticates the Orthodox faith. To our Lord be the everlasting eternal glory, amen.

Remember, Oh Lord, your poor, sinful servant who is plunged into a sea of sin and error from so many sins which are not possible to name. Remember, Oh Lord, your poor, sinful servant plunged into a sea of sin and error from so many sins which are not possible to name, which are more numerous than the number of grains of sand on the sea shore. Forgive him, oh Lord, for his sins and his errors, and his parents, the parents of his parents, his people, his brothers, his fathers in the confession, his confessor in God, and all baptized children. We ask and intercede for all who are at rest and are waiting who pray to God for the forgiveness of errors, that God will forgive them their errors, because He is powerful in all things, and His answers are fitting. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.

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