

An Arabic-to-English Translation of the Religious Debate between the Nestorian
Patriarch Timothy I and the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mahdī

Thesis

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By

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Abstract

This thesis offers, for the first time, a complete Arabic-to-English translation of the debate between Nestorian Patriarch, Timothy I (a. 779-823), and Muslim ‘Abbāsid Caliph, al-Mahdī (r. 775-785). An analysis of the various editions of the Arabic and Syriac versions of the debate is included. The primary editions of the debate consulted for this thesis were Samir K. Samir’s critical edition of the Arabic text named *MS 662* of the Bibliothèque Orientale à Beyrouth, and Alphonse Mingana’s edition of the Syriac text named *Mingana 17* taken from the Convent of Alqosh in northern Iraq. In analyzing the various editions of the debate, the goal is to establish the primacy of the Syriac text in its relationship to the Arabic text. This analysis is largely based upon the existing work of Hans Putman. In the translation and analysis of the debate, significant differences between the Syriac and Arabic versions of the debate are noted. In addition to the translation and analysis of the debate, a general introduction to Timothy I and his accomplishments as Nestorian Patriarch as well as an outline of the proposed purpose of Timothy’s text during late antiquity and the medieval period are offered.

Dedication

This thesis would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support of my professor, advisor, and friend, Dr. Georges Tamer

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Preface

Origins of the Thesis

This work is the result of the various intersections of my graduate coursework here at The Ohio State University. During my time at Ohio State, I have studied Arabic and Islamic Studies under Dr. Georges Tamer, Syriac and Aramaic under Dr. Sam Meier, and Near Eastern Culture, specifically late antique Persia, under Dr. Parvenah Pourshariati. Somewhat unexpectedly, these courses and topics were constantly intersecting and overlapping one another. Therefore, when deciding upon a thesis topic, I did not want to concentrate my studies in one area, while completely abandoning the others; hence, I decided to work on a topic that dealt with a variety of aspects from all three of the aforementioned fields. I concentrated my work on the medieval debate between the Nestorian Patriarch, Timothy I (d. 823), and the 'Abbāsīd Muslim Caliph, al-Mahdī (d. 785). The exploration of this text allowed me the unique opportunity to study both Syriac and Arabic. This topic also afforded me the opportunity to explore the field of pre-modern Christian-Muslim relations.

I would specifically like to extend my gratitude to Professors Tamer, Meier, and Pourshariati for not only guiding me to this topic, but through it as well. I would also like to thank the faculty of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at The Ohio State University for allowing me to present

my research at their quarterly graduate student colloquium, and receive their immensely beneficial criticisms and suggestions.

Text and Translation

As stated, I have used the edited Arabic text produced by Samir K. Samir as it appeared in *L'église et l'islam sous Timothée I (780-823): étude sur l'église nestorienne au temps des premiers 'Abbāsides avec nouvelle édition et traduction du dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdi* published in Beirut by Dar el-Machreq Éditeurs in 1975. In regards to the Arabic text, I have created virtually a facsimile of Samir's version, although in several locations minor corrections have been made. These corrections have been bracketed and justified in the footnotes accompanying the corrections. I maintained his numerical breakdown of the text, as well as nearly all aspects of his punctuation and grammatical markings. I have mimicked his style and organization in my English parallel translation. In addition to simply translating the Arabic text, I have compared the Arabic version of the debate to the Syriac version of the debate as well. In my translation of the Arabic text, I have added footnotes pertaining to significant and noteworthy differences between the two versions of the debate.

There are many methods in translating a medieval text into modern languages, and I follow a very particular one. First, I prefer to stay as literal as possible, within the bounds of creating comprehensible English. I prefer to limit idiomatic phrases. In my opinion, this allows the reader to understand how I specifically understood the text. Second, if at all possible, I try to maintain the

original word order of the text. I do not rearrange various phrases in an attempt to create a more flowing English translation. Third, I try to represent every Arabic word in the text with an English equivalent. For instance, if the Arabic text has a phrase with three Arabic words, I try to create an English sentence with three words. Although this style may seem rigid, there will be no confusion for the reader as to how I understood the Arabic text. Additionally, Timothy quotes the Bible extensively, and for these, I translate his quotations simply as I did other parts of the text.

Part 1: Introduction

The Debate and Its Interlocutors

The Nestorian Church and Timothy I

The 8th century saw the rise of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty (750-1258), which essentially shifted the powerbase of the Islamic Empire into the direct heartland of the Nestorian Church, Mesopotamia.¹ Now, the newly founded capital of the ‘Abbāsīd Empire, Baghdad, became home to both the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph and the Patriarch of the Nestorian Church. It was Patriarch Timothy I (779-823) who opted to move the Nestorian patriarchal residence from Ctesiphon to the newly established ‘Abbāsīd capital in Baghdad.² During the early years of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, the caliphs largely assumed the role the Sassanians³ had previously held in Mesopotamia, and in many ways they treated the Nestorians as the preferred Christians of the empire. In effect, the Patriarch of the Nestorian Church became the official representative of all Christians living under ‘Abbāsīd rule.⁴ This is not surprising considering the fact that the Nestorian Church had, by the

¹ The Nestorian Church is known under several names, including: The Church of the East, The East Syriac Church, The Holy Apostolic Church of the East. From henceforth, the church will strictly be referred to as the Nestorian Church. For more information on the Nestorian Church, see Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

² See Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 60.

³ The Sassanian Empire was centered in Ctesiphon and existed from approximately 224-651. They were the imperial rivals of the Roman and Byzantine Empires.

⁴ Baum and Winkler, 60.

time of Timothy, expanded to various regions of the Far East. Timothy was instrumental in establishing various Nestorian metropolitans in Turkestan, China, and Tibet.⁵ By the end of Timothy's near 50 year-long reign as patriarch, the Nestorian Church had 230 dioceses and 27 metropolitans.⁶

In addition to the sheer demographic and geographic size of the Nestorian Church, Nestorian Christians were also a very useful subject people of the 'Abbāsīd Empire. The Nestorians were not only one of the largest contributors in the 'Abbāsīd translation movement,⁷ making them an intellectually beneficial community, but they were also one of the largest ethno-religious mercantile groups in the world,⁸ so, they were commercially beneficial to the 'Abbāsīd Empire as well. 'Abbāsīd Baghdad was home to two of the most important men in the world, the Muslim 'Abbāsīd Caliph and the Christian Nestorian Patriarch. The 'Abbāsīd caliphs controlled an empire from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, while Timothy and other Nestorian Patriarchs controlled a religious community, which was multiethnic, multilinguistic, and controlled trading networks from western Turkey to central China.⁹

During the 8th and 9th centuries, no figure effectively directed the affairs of the Nestorian Church more so than Patriarch Timothy I. Timothy was born in the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁷ For more information on the 'Abbāsīd translation movement, see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsīd Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁸ For more information on the expansion of the Nestorian Church in the east, see Alphonse Mingana, "The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East: A New Document," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Manchester: University Press, 1925), 297-371.

⁹ Ibid., 297-307.

village of Ḥazza near Adiabene in 727.¹⁰ Timothy was educated at the monastic school in Bašōš, a small village in northern Mesopotamia in the region of Ṣafṣāfa,¹¹ where he studied Greek and Arabic.¹² In addition to studying Greek and Arabic, he studied Biblical exegesis and Aristotelian philosophy as well.¹³ Not only was he possibly trilingual, speaking Syriac, Arabic, and Greek, but he was involved in multiple significant translations of Greek and Syriac texts into Arabic as well as effectively maintaining cordial Nestorian-Muslim relations during his nearly half decade tenure as head of the Nestorian Church. Al-Mahdī is believed to have commissioned Timothy to translate the *Topics of Aristotle* from Syriac into Arabic.¹⁴ Timothy is also believed to have written hundreds of works on a multitude of topics, some of which include: science, philosophy, liturgy, theology, and law.¹⁵ Timothy served as Patriarch of the Nestorian Church from 779-823.¹⁶

As Wilhelm Baum states in *The Church of the East: A Concise History*,

Timotheos I (780-823) came to office through simony but developed into one of the most important ecclesiastical writers and most capable organizers of the Apostolic Church of the East,

¹⁰ See Hans Putman, *L'église et l'islam sous Timothée I (780-823): étude sur l'église nestorienne au temps des premiers 'Abbāsides: avec nouvelle édition et traduction du Dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdi* (Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq éditeurs, 1975), 11.

¹¹ Putman, 14.

¹² See Erica C.D. Hunter, "Interfaith Dialogues: The Church of the East and the 'Abbāsids." In *Der Christliche Orient und seine Umwelt: Gesammelte Studien zu Ehren Jürgen Tubachs anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags*. Studies in Oriental Religions, Vol. 56, Edited by Karl Hoheisel and Wassilios Klein (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 289-303, 291.

¹³ Putman, 15.

¹⁴ Hunter, 291.

¹⁵ Putman, 20-23.

¹⁶ Hunter, 289.

which by then had extended into India and China.¹⁷

Amidst his wide array of writings survives one of the most famous Christian-Muslim debates of the medieval period. Timothy theologically disputed the Caliph al-Mahdī over a two-day period, in 780 or 781, amidst the caliphal court.¹⁸ The debate has survived in both Syriac and Arabic versions; however, the Syriac version of the debate is believed to have been penned by Timothy himself, while the Arabic is generally considered to be a later translation of the Syriac by an anonymous author. Erica C.D. Hunter states,

Royal scribes may have taken the ‘minutes’ of the discussion in Arabic but their records have not survived. Instead an ‘Apology of Christianity’ was preserved in a Syriac letter, written by Timothy to an anonymous correspondent, who is believed to have been Sergius, metropolitan of Elam.¹⁹

Regarding the Syriac text, Alphonse Mingana stated,

It is not necessary to suppose that every word in it was uttered verbatim, but there are strong reasons for believing that it contains as faithful an analysis as could possibly be made under the circumstances of the questions and answers of the Caliph and Patriarch.²⁰

¹⁷ Baum and Winkler, 60. For more information on the simoniacal election of Timothy as Nestorian Patriarch, see above n 10, 16-19.

¹⁸ For an essential introduction to the text, see Alphonse Mingana, “*Timothy’s Apology for Christianity*,” Woodbrooke Studies 2, (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd, 1928), 1-162, 11-15.

¹⁹ Hunter, 292. For comprehensive work on Timothy’s letters to Sergius, see Raphaël J. Bidawid, *Les lettres du patriarche nestorien Timothée I: étude critique avec en appendice: La lettre de Timothée I aux moines du Couvent de Mār Mārōn (trad. latine et texte chaldéen)* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1956); Thomas Hurst, “The Syriac Letters of Timothy I (727-823): A Study in Christian-Muslim Controversy” (Ph.D. Diss., Catholic University of America, 1986).

²⁰ Mingana, 11.

During the first centuries of the Arab-Islamic conquests, Christians clearly held an advantage, in regards to polemical and apologetical skill, over the nascent Islamic community. Christians had been in dialogue with various religions from the time of Christ and the Early Church. With the advent of Islam, many Christian apologists and polemicists, specifically while in dialogue with Muslims, simply recycled many of the skills prior Christians had developed to religiously engage Jews.²¹ Due to his background and education, Timothy was fluent in Syriac, Arabic, and Greek; consequently, he would have been able to utilize nearly the full arsenal of pre-Islamic Christian authors, which J.W. Sweetman, in his *Islam and Christian Theology*, insinuated he did.²² Sweetman claims that many Syriac and Arabic apologists, during the early Islamic period (650-850), used the works of numerous earlier Christian writers, including: Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258), Aphraates of Edessa (4th century), Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403), John Chrysostom (347-407), Gregentius Bishop of Zafār in South Arabia (6th century), and John of Damascus (d. 749).²³

Precisely at the time of Timothy, Arabic was not simply coexisting with Syriac, but rather it was in the process of supplanting it. Within the span of approximately 100 years, roughly 650-750, Aramaic went from a *lingua franca* to a dying and nearly dead language.²⁴ The various versions of the debate held

²¹ See J.W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology; A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945), 65-75.

²² *Ibid.*, 65-83.

²³ *Ibid.*, 66,75.

²⁴ See Mark N. Swanson, "Arabic as a Christian Language?" available at http://www.luthersem.edu/faculty/fac_home.asp?contact_id_mswanson. At the same website see also the author's companion piece, "Early Christian-Muslim Theological Conversation among Arabic-

between Timothy and al-Mahdī are very indicative of this process. For example, even though Timothy recorded his debate in Syriac, the debate was believed to have been held in Arabic and shortly after Timothy's Syriac text began circulating throughout the Christian communities of the Near East, an Arabic rendition of the debate began circulating as well.²⁵ Alphonse Mingana, in his preface to his Syriac-to-English translation, stated, "This colloquy was naturally conducted in Arabic..."²⁶ What makes the Arabic rendition of the debate so interesting, is that it is written in an extremely accessible form of Arabic. The Arabic used to record the debate represents an intermediary form of Christian Arabic, which is not as simplified as the earliest forms of Christian Arabic, nor as advanced as the Arabic of writers like Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 873) or Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (d 974).²⁷ While the text employs numerous analogies and Aristotelian logic, it still maintained a simplified form of Arabic, which avoids any highly elaborate and unnecessarily ornate language, quite contrary to the triple negatives used in the Syriac version of the text. The writer of the Arabic version of the debate kept in mind the language abilities of the Christian Arabic speaking communities who would be reading the text.

Speaking Intellectuals;" Sidney H. Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic: The Languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51. *Dumbarton Oaks*, (1997): 11-31.

²⁵ Mingana, 11.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ For an early example of simplified Christian Arabic, see Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles, with a Treatise on the Triune Nature of God*. *Studia Sinaitica*, 7 (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1899). For an example of highly complex Christian Arabic, see See Samir K. Samir and Paul Nwyia, *Une Correspondance Islamo-Chrétienne entre Ibn al-Munaḡḡim, Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq et Qusṭā ibn Lūqā* (Turnhout, Belgique: Brepols, 1981).

The Purpose of Timothy's Text in Late Antiquity and the Medieval Period

Timothy's text is so unique in that it covers, within a relatively short space (approximately 30 pages), virtually every topic of contention between Christians and Muslims. The text of the debate, in both its Syriac and Arabic form, seemingly served a three-tiered purpose in society: 1) The text functioned as a form of theological instruction and introduction. It exposed Christians to biblical and Qur'ānic verses fundamental to Christian-Muslim dialogue; 2) The text served as an important source of Christian ecumenical literature in a time of intense Christian sectarian struggle for power under new dominion. Timothy largely disregarded Christian rivalry and spoke for a theoretically universal church; 3) The text comprehensively engaged common Muslim objections and criticisms of Christianity. Timothy was one of the first Christians of power to confront and respond to the challenges of Islam and by recording his account, he allowed Christians to utilize and build upon his dialectical skills for further encounters with Islam. Timothy's debate with al-Mahdī is unique among the dialogical works, not only due to the fact that it is easily the most well-known, but also because it served as a prototype of sorts for nearly all later dialogical works.²⁸

The theological discussion covers a wide-variety of issues, some of which include: Jesus' birth and resurrection, Mary's virginity both before and after the birth of Jesus, the Trinity, the integrity of the Old and New Testaments, biblical prophecies, Muhammad's status as a prophet, the divine nature of the Qur'ān, and

²⁸ See David Bertaina, *An Arabic account of Theodore Abu Qurra in Debate at the Court of Caliph al-Ma'mun: Study in Early Christian and Muslim Literary Dialogues*, (Thesis PhD Semitics, Catholic University of America, 2007), 139.

religious customs, such as direction of prayer and circumcision.²⁹ When discussing all of the aforementioned topics, Timothy uses various philosophical and logical arguments to defend his stances all the while addressing these crucial and highly sensitive issues with the utmost probity and polemical intellect.

In his debate with al-Mahdī, Timothy instructs Christians how to answer highly sensitive and even dangerous questions, with practical, honest, and non-religiously compromising answers. For example, when al-Mahdī asks, “What do you think of Muhammad,” Timothy answered by stating all the positive things, which Muhammad enacted upon his people, such as belief in one God and abandoning the worshipping of idols; however, he never stated that Muhammad was a prophet. Timothy stated, “Muhammad followed in the path of the prophets.”³⁰ Is this a conciliatory or passive acceptance of the prophethood of Muhammad on the part of the Patriarch? More likely, it was a simple rhetorical device to be used by Christians when debating Muslims, which enabled them to maintain a non-compromising answer, which at the same time did not offend their Muslim overlords. In many ways, Timothy’s text became a template for later debates.³¹ Not only did the questions of other dialogical texts not sway far from Timothy’s and al-Mahdī’s, but the analogies and style used did not drastically change either.

²⁹ For more information on the contents of the debate, see Putman, 189-200; also, see the section titled “Contents of the Debate” in this thesis.

³⁰ See sections 158-162 of the Arabic-to-English translation in this thesis.

³¹ In later Christian Arabic texts, such as the debate between Theodore Abū Qurrah and Caliph al-Ma’mūn as well as the apology of al-Kindi, the influence of Timothy’s text is quite evident. For the English and Arabic text of Abū Qurrah’s debate, see above n 28. For the English and Arabic text of al-Kindi’s apology, see William Muir, *The Apology of Al Kindy: Written at the Court of Al Māmūn (Circa A.H. 215, A.D. 830), in Defence of Christianity against Islam* (London: S.P.C.K., 1911).

In the end, how did this text and others like it benefit the Christian community? Timothy's debate gave a Syriac and Arabic version of a highly educated Christian leader's answers to Muslim objections to Christianity. Essentially, for Nestorian Christians, this was the best their community had to offer in response to the challenges of Islam. Was the purpose for composing these dialogical texts to show a Christian leader outwitting a Muslim of significant status? It is more probable that the true purpose of these dialogical texts was not to crown a Christian victor over a Muslim one, but rather to establish an A-Z religious guidebook for Christian-Muslim relations. This guidebook of sorts intended to prevent future Christian conversion to Islam, which beginning in the 8th century, seems to have been a noticeably growing problem in the Christian communities throughout the entire Near East. Timothy's debate functioned as a medieval guidebook for tactfully criticizing Islam and Muhammad, while defending and encouraging the doctrines of Christianity.

The Versions of the Text

Dating the Debate

The debate between Timothy I and Caliph al-Mahdī is a very important text, both in its Syriac and Arabic forms. Before reading the actual text of the debate, several important issues must be addressed in order to properly contextualize and understand the significance of the debate. First, determining when the debate occurred is both very important and somewhat problematic. Alphonse Mingana suggested in his preface to his translation of the Syriac text that he believed the debate took place around the year 781 or 782.³² This suggestion is largely based upon a passage found in the Syriac text, which references al-Mahdī's son Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809) and his campaigns against the Byzantines, which occurred in 779 or 780.³³ In speaking about Hārūn, Timothy stated,

He is now called by everybody 'Heir Presumptive,' but after your long reign, he will be proclaimed King and Sovereign by all. He served his military service through the mission entrusted to him by your Majesty to repair Constantinople against the rebellious and tyrannical Byzantines.³⁴

However, this passage does not unequivocally answer the question as to when the debate occurred. According to Hans Putman's brief description of the various

³² Mingana, 11.

³³ Putman, 184; Mingana, 83-84.

³⁴ Mingana, 84.

versions of the debate, François Nau noted that if the debate had truly taken place in 781 or 782, then Timothy would never have called Hārūn al-Rashīd “Heir Presumptive,” because at that time al-Mahdī’s eldest son Mūsā al-Hādī (r 785-786) was the heir to the ‘Abbāsīd throne.³⁵ As a result of this discrepancy, Nau believed the Syriac version of the debate was written in 799; however, Putman claims this date to be arbitrary and difficult to justify.³⁶ Putman, in his analysis of the debate, believes that the discussion between Timothy and al-Mahdī was written between the years 786, which represent the year when Hārūn came to power, and 794, which represents the year Sergius, Metropolitan of Elam, was consecrated.³⁷

The Syriac and Arabic Editions of the Debate

Both the contents and the various versions of the debate are very crucial when analyzing the relationship between Christians and Muslims during the first ‘Abbāsīd century (a. 750-850). It is not only one of the fullest surviving Near Eastern Christian apologies, but it is also one of the earliest. In regards to the Nestorian apologetical engagement of Islam, it might possibly be the first.³⁸ As previously stated, the debate exists in both Syriac and Arabic, which makes the debate doubly useful; however, because the debate exists in two languages and in multiple manuscripts, it also presents even more problems, which have to be

³⁵ Mingana, 84; Putman, 185.

³⁶ Putman, 185.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 172.

addressed, when critically examining the various versions of the debate. Establishing the primacy of either the Syriac or Arabic text is quite important and depending on one's conclusions can carry significant cultural implications for the Christian communities of the 8th and 9th centuries.

The Syriac text of the debate is known to have been contained amongst the 50 plus Syriac letters written by Timothy to Segius, Metropolitan of Elam.³⁹ It was published in 1928 by Alphonse Mingana accompanied with an English translation under the title *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi*.⁴⁰ Mingana's translation was based on a 13th century manuscript taken from the Convent of Alqosh named *Mingana 17*.⁴¹ Several later recensions were done on this text after Mingana.⁴²

The Arabic text had first been published by Louis Cheikho in *al-Machriq* XIX (1921), 359-374 and 408-418 under the title,

المحاورة الدينية بين الخليفة المهدي وطيماتاوس الجاثليق،

which can be translated as “The Religious Debate between the Caliph al-Mahdī and Timothy the Catholicos.”⁴³ For his edition of the text, Cheikho used a 19th century manuscript from Mosul known as *MS 662* of the Bibliothèque Orientale à

³⁹ Putman, 173.

⁴⁰ Mingana, above n 19.

⁴¹ Mingana, 14; Putman, 174.

⁴² The following recensions are listed in Hans Putman's introduction to the versions of the debate. See above n 10, 174. Putman stated, “Recensions of this text have been done by: E. Tisserant in D.T.C., t. XV, 1130-1131 and 1133-1136; R. Strothmann in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1928, 202-206; A. Rücker in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 1929, 109-111; F. Nau in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 1929, 241-244; R.J. Bidawid, *Les Lettres du Patriarche Nestorien Timothée I, Studi e Testi*, 187, Rome, 1956, 42-43.

⁴³ Putman, 174.

Beyrouth.⁴⁴ Like Cheikho, Samir's edition of text is based on the *MS 662*, although with several changes.⁴⁵ However, this 19th century Arabic manuscript does not contain the earliest version of the debate in Arabic. In the same library, the Bibliothèque Orientale, there exists an Arabic manuscript known as *MS 548*, which dates to the 16th century.⁴⁶ In the Bibliothèque Nationale à Paris, two earlier manuscripts dating to the 14th century are also in existence.⁴⁷ Hans Putman implies that these earlier versions of the Arabic text are condensed versions of the Syriac text, which represent the essential aspects of the Syriac debate between Timothy and al-Mahdī.⁴⁸

Establishing the Syriac Primacy of the Debate

When attempting to determine the primacy of either the Syriac or the Arabic version of the debate, there exists argumentation in favor of both. In 1931, Laurence Browne proposed that the much longer Syriac text was derived from an earlier Arabic *Vorlage*, now lost.⁴⁹ He opined that the Syriac text had been embellished to show a “stronger Nestorian bias” and highlighted several passages to support his argument.⁵⁰ Contrary to Browne, Hans Putman argues for the

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 185-187.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 174-178.

⁴⁹ See L.E. Browne, “The Patriarch Timothy and the Caliph al-Mahdi,” *Muslim World* XXI (1931): 38-45.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 42.

primacy of the Syriac text and he compares and contrasts literary and dogmatic aspects of both the Syriac and the Arabic text to support his conclusions.⁵¹

First, the most striking difference between the Syriac and Arabic versions of the debate is the length. The Syriac version of the debate takes place over a two day period, while the Arabic version of the debate is limited to one day. Therefore, the Syriac text is approximately twice as long as the Arabic text. However, the length of the Syriac and Arabic texts, in and of itself, does not sway the argument in favor of the primacy of either the Syriac or the Arabic. Although it stands out as the most noticeable difference between the two texts, its evaluative worth is much less significant than other disparities found between the two texts. However, Putman does mention that, generally, the shorter reading of a text is often older than the longer reading; therefore, based on length alone, the length of the texts could favor the primacy of the Arabic text.⁵² Irrespective of the length, the Arabic version of the debate, although much shorter than the Syriac version, is much more stylistically coherent and logically flowing.⁵³ The reader of the two versions of the texts will almost immediately begin to notice significant textual incongruities between the Syriac and Arabic texts. The differences between the two versions of the debate are very calculated and very enlightening when attempting to determine the primacy of either the Syriac or Arabic text. Once the two versions of the text are compared and analyzed the reader will be able to confidently realize that the redactions, omissions, and additions made by the

⁵¹ Putman, 172-188.

⁵² Ibid., 175.

⁵³ Ibid., 175-180.

Arabic translator and editor of the Syriac text are not haphazard, but represent a calculated rarefaction of the Syriac text. Hans Putman states that,

It is not difficult, in fact, to demonstrate and to prove that A. [the Arabic text] is based on S. [the Syriac text], and that variations compared with S. come from the hand of the Arabic translator who wanted to eliminate certain repetitions, soften overtly Nestorian tendencies, and complement (the text with) scriptural and biblical references.⁵⁴

In his work on the two versions of the text, Putman compares and contrasts the literary differences between the the Syriac and Arabic text.⁵⁵ He notes several locations in the debate where the Arabic text has removed certain illustrations and explanations. For example, when comparing Arabic (230) with Syriac (50) the two versions of the debate are quite different.⁵⁶ In the Syriac rendition of the section, the fact that the Edomites descend from Abraham's children from Keturah is present,⁵⁷ however, in the Arabic edition, this section has been removed. By removing this section, the Arabic translator is refining Timothy's line of argumentation. In the biblical tradition, both Hagar and Keturah are considered concubines of Abraham; therefore, the Arabic translator of the text

⁵⁴ Putman, 176. The original French reads, "Il n'est pas difficile, en effet, de le démontrer et de constater que A. s'appuie sur S., et que les variantes par rapport à S. proviennent de la main du traducteur arabe qui a voulu supprimer certaines répétitions, adoucir des déclarations de tendance trop nestorienne compléter des références scripturaires et bibliques. Additions in [] have been added to the section for clarifications.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 175-183.

⁵⁶ When comparing and contrasting various sections of the Syriac and Arabic texts, the Arabic number in parenthesis corresponds to the paragraph number in the Arabic-to-English translation in this thesis. The Syriac number corresponds to the page number of Alphonse Mingana's English translation.

⁵⁷ See Gen. 25.

wanted to maintain a certain distance from the topic of concubinage.⁵⁸ In another example, after a discussion of the culpability of the Jews regarding the crucifixion of Jesus, Putman draws attention to an important divergence between the two versions of the debate. Arabic (216) ends the discussion of the culpability of the Jews and an entirely new section of the debate begins; however, Syriac (47-48), follows the discussion of the culpability of the Jews with a significant section discussing the authorship of the Gospel, which is completely absent from the Arabic text. Putman rightfully claims that this additional section dealing with the authorship of the Gospel, which can be found in the Syriac text only, does not coalesce logically in the sequence of Timothy's argument. When comparing Arabic (228-237) and Syriac (52-54) the additional material found in the Syriac text actually obfuscates the logical procession of the debate rather than elucidating it. Both versions of the text are discussing the implications of Deuteronomy 18:15. Timothy and al-Mahdī debate if Muhammad was the prophet predicted in the aforementioned Biblical passage. The Arabic version has removed two long sections from the Syriac text. First, following this discussion of Deuteronomy, the Syriac has a fairly long section discussing the role of Jesus in the death of his mother. In the Syriac text, the Caliph initiates the discussion by asking, "What is the punishment of the man who kills his mother?"⁵⁹ After the discussion on this topic, the Syriac text has an additional section, which has been removed from the Arabic text. The Caliph initiates this discussion by asking, "Is

⁵⁸ Putman, 177.

⁵⁹ Mingana, 52.

Jesus Christ good or not?”⁶⁰ In regards to both additional questions found in the Syriac text, Timothy offers sufficient and acceptable answers; however, Putman is absolutely correct when he claims that these additional sections found in the Syriac text, which are absent in the Arabic text, do not logically fit into Timothy’s line of argumentation. Putman claims that the omissions by the Arabic translator have made the Arabic text more logical.⁶¹ In the section following the discussion of Deuteronomy, the Arabic text states, “And our king said to me: ‘Surely, your speech would be agreeable and your announcement good, if you would accept Muhammad amongst the prophets;’” likewise, the Syriac text states, “And our King said to me: ‘If you accepted Muhammad as a prophet your words would be beautiful and your meanings fine.’”⁶² Following the additional discussions found in the Syriac text, this statement does not logically flow. Examples of this nature are very important in attempting to determine the primacy of the Syriac or Arabic text, because they represent a refinement of the Arabic text in comparison to the Syriac text.⁶³

There are also several examples where the Arabic text contextualizes and clarifies certain sections of the Syriac text. Again, when comparing Syriac (37) with Arabic (134-135) significant differences between the two versions become quite apparent. The Syriac text reads, “And our King asked: ‘Who is then the rider on an ass, and the rider on the donkey?’ – And I replied: ‘The rider on an ass is

⁶⁰ Ibid., 53.

⁶¹ Putman, 178.

⁶² Mingana, 54.

⁶³ For several more examples on the literary differences between the two version of the text, see Putman, 176-178.

Darius the Mede, son of Assuerus, and the rider on the camel is Cyrus the Persian, who was from Elam.”⁶⁴ In the Arabic text, the section reads,

And our victorious King said to me: “Who is the one who is said to have been seen riding a camel?” We answered him saying: “That this verse was given by the Prophet Isaiah when he said: ‘I saw a pair of cavalymen, one riding a donkey, and one riding a camel.’” And our King asked me: “Who is the rider of the donkey and the rider of the camel?” So, I answered him: “That the rider of the donkey is Darius, son of Artaxerxes the Mede; and the rider of the camel is Cyrus, the Persian who is from Elam.”⁶⁵

The Arabic text adds the reference to Isaiah, which helps to contextualize the discussion.⁶⁶

The Arabic text simply corrects the Syriac text on several occasions as well. In the Syriac (41), Timothy confuses a biblical passage from Isaiah with another passage from Jeremiah. The Syriac text reads, “And the prophet Jeremiah said, ‘Wood will eat into His flesh and will destroy Him from the land of the living. I gave my body to wounds and my cheeks to blows, and I did not turn my face from shame and spittle.’”⁶⁷ In reality, the Prophet Jeremiah stated the first sentence of the quotation, while the Prophet Isaiah stated the second sentence of the quotation. The Arabic (194-195), accurately identifies the second sentence as a prophecy found in Isaiah. In another scriptural reference, this time referring to the Qur’ān, the Arabic text clarifies and corrects the Syriac text. The Syriac (41),

⁶⁴ Mingana, 37.

⁶⁵ See Arabic sections 134-137 in this thesis.

⁶⁶ For other examples where the Arabic text elucidates the Syriac text by adding Biblical context, see Putman, 179.

⁶⁷ Mingana, 41

states, “It is written in Sūrat ‘Īsa, ‘Peace be upon me the day I was born and the day I die, and the day I shall be sent again alive.’”⁶⁸ However, considering the fact that Sūrat ‘Īsa does not exist in the Qur’ān, Arabic (187) clarifies this statement by saying, “Surely, it is written in Sūrat ‘Īsa; however, we saw these verses in Sūrat Maryam, namely: ‘Peace be upon me, the day I was born, the day I will die, and the day when I will resurrect.’” Comparing these several passages allows Putman, in his analysis, to conclude that it seems apparent that the Syriac text is older and that the Arabic translator omitted several passages he deemed repetitious and uninteresting as well as adding several passages to either clarify or correct mistakes made in the Syriac text.⁶⁹

The previous section of analysis primarily focused on literary aspects that helped refine the Arabic rendition of the debate. However, an analysis of the two versions of the text brings forth several dogmatic and theological differences as well. There are several clear examples of where the Arabic translator overtly changes or omits several theologically Nestorian passages. For example, when comparing Arabic (28) with Syriac (19), both of which deal with the Incarnation, dogmatic differences are quite apparent. The Arabic text omits the following, which is found in the Syriac text only, “In the same way, the Word of God, together with the *clothings of humanity* which He put on from Mary,⁷⁰ is one and the same Christ, and not two, although there is in Him the natural difference

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Putman, 179.

⁷⁰ In Mingana’s translation of the Syriac text, he notes that the expression “clothings of humanity” is a “semi-Nestorian” phrase. See Mingana, 19.

between the Word-God and His humanity.”⁷¹ The Syriac text continues with several passages explicating the nuances of Dyophysitism.⁷² In another example, Nestorian elements have been removed from Arabic (87), which exist in the Syriac (29). The Arabic text omits the following passage,

There is also another reason for our conduct: Jesus Christ walked in the flesh thirty-three years on the earth, O King. In the the thirtieth year he repaid to God all the debt that human kind and angels owed to Him. It was a debt that no man and no angel was able to pay, because there has never been a created being that was free from sin, except the Man with whom God clothed Himself and became one with Him in a wonderful unity.⁷³

In his footnote on this passage, Mingana states, “This teaching is that of Theodore of Mopsuestia.”⁷⁴

In addition to literary and dogmatic differences between the two versions of the debate, there also exist significant terminological differences as well, specifically in regards to the Trinity. Take for instance, the divergent Syriac and Arabic responses to the question, “Do you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?” The Syriac (22) answers the question, by stating, “The belief in the above three names, consists in belief in three Persons, and the belief in these three Persons consists in the belief in one God.”⁷⁵ In contrast to the Syriac text, Arabic (41) states, “Oh King, surely confessing in these three names is confessing in

⁷¹ Ibid., 19.

⁷² Ibid., 19-20.

⁷³ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁴ Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428) was an Antiochian theologian whose teachings were fundamental to the Nestorian Church.

⁷⁵ Mingana, 22.

three hypostases. I mean the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: these are one God, one nature, and one essence.”⁷⁶ The Syriac text represents a somewhat generic and underdeveloped response to the question, while the Arabic text uses a more sophisticated Trinitarian terminology.⁷⁷

Overall, a literary, dogmatic, and terminological comparison of the Syriac and Arabic texts strongly supports the primacy of the Syriac over the Arabic. The literary omissions often times were done in order to help the logical flow of the argument by eliminating sometimes superfluous and obfuscating passages. The literary additions, likewise, often helped contextualize and clarify certain passages that were lacking a proper frame of reference in the Syriac text. The terminological differences clearly indicate that the Syriac was the more general while the Arabic text used a more technical Trinitarian vocabulary. Therefore, Browne’s claim that the Syriac text was a later embellishment of an older Arabic text is highly unlikely. Considering the literary and terminological differences between the two texts, it would seem highly improbable that a Syriac translator would effectively add Nestorian theological elements to the text, but would on occasion disrupt the logical flow of the argument with long disconnected and uncontextualized passages, confuse biblical and qur’ānic passages, and use a terminologically simplified Trinitarian vocabulary.

⁷⁶ See Arabic section 41 in this thesis.

⁷⁷ For further terminological differences compare and contrast Arabic (60) and (69) with Syriac (22) and (25); Putman, 183.

Samir's Edition of the Debate

Samir's critical edition of the Arabic text is justified considering the fact that on several occasions Louis Cheikho's edition of the Arabic text is insufficient and inaccurate. For instance, Louis Cheikho, in the incipit of his Arabic edition of the text, does not include the final section. In its totality, the incipit states,

المحاورة الدينية التي جرت بين المهدي أمير المؤمنين وطيماتاوس الجاثليق الباطريك
النسطوري في القرن الثامن بعد المسيح
قد ترجمت حديثاً من اللغة السريانية الى العربية،

which translates as, "The Religious Debate, Which Took Place between al-Mahdī, the Emir of the Believers, and Catholicos Timothy, the Nestorian Patriarch, in the 8th Century after Christ: Recently Translated from Syriac to Arabic." However, in Cheikho's version of the Arabic text the line of text, which reads, "Recently Translated from Syriac to Arabic" is not included.⁷⁸ On several occasions, Cheikho seemingly deliberately omitted sections of the text where Timothy honors and respects Muhammad. For example in Arabic (164), which reads,

And as the Prophet Moses did with the sons of Israel, who had made a calf of gold and worshipped it, that is to say he killed (them) with the sword and destroyed all those who worshipped the calf; likewise, Muhammad did as well when he exhibited his zeal⁷⁹ on behalf of the Creator (May the Most High be praised), whom he loved and honored more than himself, his tribe, and the sons of his nation.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid., 175-176.

⁷⁹ The Arabic literally says "the zeal," but it is referring back to the phrase, "غيرة محمد تشبه غيره" therefore it has been translated as, "his zeal."

⁸⁰ See Arabic section 164 in this thesis.

Cheikho omitted the phrase “whom he loved and honored more than himself, his tribe, and the sons of his nation.”⁸¹ Samir also made several stylistic and grammatical corrections and alterations to Cheikho’s edition as well.⁸²

However, Samir’s critical edition of the Arabic text, as it appears in Hans Putman’s *L’église et l’islam sous Timothée I (780-823)*, is in certain ways lacking and difficult to properly utilize. Samir’s edition lacks detailed descriptions of the manuscripts he consulted in creating his critical edition. In his edition, Samir makes several changes, corrections, and comparisons to the previous version of the text; however, his critical edition does not equip the reader of the text with the proper information to accurately navigate his additions to the text. Regardless, this relative shortcoming does not hinder a proper understanding of the Arabic text.

⁸¹ For more information on Cheikho’s omissions, see Putman, 185-186.

⁸² For more detail on the stylistic and grammatical corrections of Samir, see Putman, 186-187.

The Contents of the Debate

The Sequence of the Discussion

The debate between Timothy and al-Mahdī covers a wide-variety of topics. The dialogue begins with a substantial discussion on the character of Jesus Christ as seen from both a Christian and Muslim perspective. Al-Mahdī initiated the debate by stating, “Oh Catholicos, it is not befitting for a man like you, knowledgeable and possessing experience, to say about God Most High that he took a woman and begat from her a son.”⁸³ Timothy responds by attempting to differentiate between the eternal and temporal births of Jesus, by using several analogies taken from nature. Next, the debate logically progresses to a discussion of the Virgin Mary. The major disagreement between the two interlocutors is not the possibility of the virgin birth, but the perpetual virginity of Mary, which Timothy supports and al-Mahdī rejects. Like the previous topic, Timothy uses several analogies to support his argument. In addition to several biblical examples, which support the possibility of birth devoid of damage to the bearer, Timothy uses parallels taken from nature, such as the production of fruits from trees and scents from flowers.⁸⁴ Quite early in the debate, the philosophical education of Timothy becomes evident. Timothy uses both philosophical and theological arguments throughout

⁸³ See Arabic section 3 in this thesis.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

his debate with al-Mahdī. The discussion continues regarding Jesus' simultaneous existence as both a man and God. For al-Mahdī, the dual nature of Jesus was unacceptable and the fact that he frequently returns to this issue represents his continued skepticism of Timothy's arguments regarding this topic.

After Timothy and al-Mahdī had felt one another out, al-Mahdī then defended the Islamic view of Jesus using biblical references. Timothy and al-Mahdī discuss John 20:17, which states, "Surely I will go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."⁸⁵ For al-Mahdī, this verse represents a sort of schizophrenia regarding Jesus. Al-Mahdī then asks, "How is it possible that the spirit begets, since it does not possess organs of procreation?"⁸⁶ This question is in reference to the Trinity. The initial discussion sequentially and segmentally built up to a comprehensive argument regarding the Trinity. The discussion parallels the various church councils, which only over an extended period of time, comprehensively defined the Trinity. Timothy continually emphasizes that al-Mahdī, which implies all Muslims, did not properly understand the hypostatic nature of Jesus.

The previous sections of the debate coalesced when al-Mahdī asks Timothy, "Do you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?"⁸⁷ Timothy labored quite extensively to show that he believed in the demonstrable possibility of the hypostatic nature of Jesus. He used multiple analogies taken from the Bible.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 38.

He quotes several passages from Psalms, Isaiah, John, and Matthew.⁸⁸ Again, Timothy does not limit himself to a theological justification of the Trinity; he also used several philosophical illustrations as well. However, al-Mahdī shows a continual disapproval of the Trinity. Following Timothy’s analogies regarding the Trinity, al-Mahdī asks, “And how is the Son not the Spirit and the Spirit not the Son?”⁸⁹ The discussion of the Trinity ends with neither interlocutor being adequately persuaded by the other.

After discussing the Trinity, Timothy and al-Mahdī shift the topic of conversation to more practical issues, namely: circumcision, baptism, and prayer. Al-Mahdī seems perplexed as to why Christians do not follow certain aspects of Jewish Law, particularly circumcision. For example, al-Mahdī stated, “Why then, are you not circumcised? If your leader and guide, Jesus Christ, had been circumcised, then it obliges you by necessity to be circumcised as well.”⁹⁰ Timothy answers this question by explaining how Christ abolished certain Jewish practices, such as circumcision, through his abrogation of the Torah. In Timothy’s mind, Jesus was the realization and embodiment of Jewish Law; consequently, the physical act of circumcision found in the Old Testament prefigured the spiritual circumcision, i.e. baptism, found in the New Testament. Al-Mahdī then asked Timothy whether or not Jesus prayed and in what direction had he prayed?⁹¹ Timothy confirms that Jesus had prayed and that he prayed in the direction of the east. The section revolving around circumcision, baptism, and prayer is very

⁸⁸ Ibid., 47-56.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 59.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 76.

⁹¹ Ibid., 84-88.

important when distinguishing how Timothy and al-Mahdī perceived God. Al-Mahdī's line of questioning represents an overt admonishment of the Christian belief in the Incarnation and Christian anthropomorphism of God. The crux of the issue was not whether circumcision or baptism was required or whether Jesus prayed in the direction of the east rather than the west, but that Jesus engaged in the human and earthly acts of circumcision, baptism, and prayer. In al-Mahdī's eyes, God does not need to be circumcised or baptized or pray in the direction of the east. In essence, al-Mahdī insinuated that Christians not only improperly worshiped God, but that they were not true followers of Jesus either.

After that, al-Mahdī segued into the topic of Muhammad's prophethood. Al-Mahdī states, "What is the reason that you accept Christ and the Gospel from the testimony of the Torah and of the (Books) of the Prophets and you do not accept the testimony of Christ and the Gospel regarding Muhammad (Peace be upon him)?"⁹² In response to this question, Timothy defended his belief in Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and second coming, largely based upon prophecies found in Isaiah, Psalms, and Daniel.⁹³ Then al-Mahdī suggested that the Paraclete,⁹⁴ which is referenced in the New Testament, was Muhammad. After determining that the Paraclete is the Spirit of God, which created the heavens and the earth and dwelt with the Apostles after the death of Jesus, Timothy concluded

⁹² Ibid., 92.

⁹³ Ibid., 93-101.

⁹⁴ The Paraclete is an epithet given to the Holy Spirit throughout the New Testament. The word Paraclete comes from the Greek word παράκλητος often translated as, "Comforter." For passages concerning the Paraclete, see Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.

that it is impossible that Muhammad was the Paraclete.⁹⁵ After a short discussion on the possible corruption of the Bible, al-Mahdī returned to another biblical passage, which he believed foresaw the coming of Muhammad. Al-Mahdī asked, “Who is the one who is said to have been seen riding a camel?”⁹⁶ Timothy recognized that al-Mahdī was referring to a prophecy found in Isaiah, which reads, “I saw a pair of cavalymen, one riding a donkey, and one riding a camel.”⁹⁷ Al-Mahdī believed the rider on the donkey to be Jesus and the rider on the camel to be Muhammad. Timothy believed the rider on the donkey to be Darius the Mede and the rider on the camel to be Cyrus the Persian.⁹⁸ Al-Mahdī’s line of questioning illustrated that, by the time this debate took place, Muslims had begun to use biblical passages and references when justifying their belief in the prophethood of Muhammad.

As a result of his renunciations of the prophethood of Muhammad, next Timothy demonstrates his diplomatic skills. Al-Mahdī asked, “What do you say about Muhammad?”⁹⁹ Timothy responds by chronicling the good deeds of Muhammad regarding his enthusiasm for monotheism. Timothy claimed that Muhammad not only deserved the praise of all mankind, but that Muhammad displayed a religious zeal like that of Moses and Abraham; Timothy even stated, “Muhammad had followed in the path of the prophets.” He concluded that

⁹⁵ See Arabic sections 102-121 in this thesis.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 134-137.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

Muhammad was honored by God.¹⁰⁰

The debate then transitions to the topic of the death of Jesus on the cross. Al-Mahdī initiated the discussion by asking, “Why do you worship the cross?”¹⁰¹ Again, this section revolves around the divergent Christian and Islamic perceptions of Jesus and God. In al-Mahdī’s view of God, not only is God not a man, but surely he did not die on the cross. Al-Mahdī is criticizing what he saw as a Christian paradox. If Jesus was God, as Christians believe, then he cannot die because God is eternal. He emphasized the fact that the Jews overpowered him and facilitated his crucifixion. Al-Mahdī emphasized throughout the debate that Jesus prayed, was baptized, and was able to be crucified, although he was not actually crucified in the Islamic tradition, because he wanted to emphasize that Jesus Christ was absolutely man and absolutely not an incarnation of God. In response to this, Timothy uses both biblical and qur’ānic passages to defend his belief in the death and resurrection of Christ. He quotes numerous passages from both the Old and New Testaments as well as passages from Sūrat an-Nisā’, Sūrat Maryam, and Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān.¹⁰² Overall, the interlocutors did not see eye to eye. Timothy argued from the perspective that Jesus was both man and God, while al-Mahdī argued from the perspective that Jesus was a man, who belonged in the line of the biblical prophets. The concepts of God and Jesus held by both Timothy and al-Mahdī were so divergent that neither of their arguments realistically affected the others.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 158-171.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 175.

¹⁰² Ibid., 175-216.

Timothy and al-Mahdī quickly discuss the abrogation of the Old Testament by the New Testament and then shift the discussion back to the topic of the prophethood of Muhammad. Al-Mahdī again uses biblical passages to support his belief in Muhammad’s prophethood. He stated,

Did Moses (Peace be upon him) not say publicly to the children of Israel, in Deuteronomy: ‘Surely the Lord will raise for you a prophet like me from amongst your brothers.’¹⁰³ And who are the brothers of the children of Israel other than the Ishmaelites and who had been a prophet like Moses other than Muhammad?¹⁰⁴

Al-Mahdī clearly believed this biblical passage referred to Muhammad. However, Timothy gave an interesting ethnological rebuttal to al-Mahdi’s suggested interpretation of the biblical passage.¹⁰⁵ Al-Mahdī’s return to this issue marks the importance of biblical interpretation in establishing the prophethood of Muhammad. Timothy also corroborated his ethnological rebuttal with several other biblical passages, notably sections revolving around the character of John the Baptist as seen in Luke 1:13-18 and 3:16, Jn. 1:129, and Matt 3:11.

Timothy and al-Mahdī end their debate with a discussion on the integrity of the Old and New Testaments, specifically regarding the issue of whether or not the Bible foresaw the coming of Muhammad. Al-Mahdī initiated this discussion by stating, “If you had not changed the Torah and the Gospel, you would have seen Muhammad along with the other prophets.”¹⁰⁶ Timothy quoted multiple

¹⁰³ Deut. 28:18

¹⁰⁴ See Arabic section 228 in this thesis.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 229-237.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 248.

biblical passages in an attempt to show a logical congruity between the teachings of the Old and New Testaments.¹⁰⁷ In his conclusion, in regards to the prophethood of Muhammad, Timothy stated, “If the name of Muhammad was found in our books, we would have awaited with impatience his coming, as we desired to receive the ones of whom the prophets had written.”¹⁰⁸

The somewhat chaotic organization and sequence in the topics of the debate, seemingly support the possibility that this debate actually occurred and was written from memory by Timothy himself. The debate shifts back and forth between topics in a rather unorganized manner. The chaotic style and organization can be found in both the Syriac and the Arabic versions of the debate. The organization of this debate reflects a recollection of a discussion not an artificial recreation of an apologetical work.

The Use of Islamic and Qur’ānic Terminology in the Debate

A striking feature of the Arabic version of the debate is the repeated use of Islamic and Qur’ānic terminology. This feature is important in determining the degree to which the language of the Qur’ān had affected the Arabic speaking Christian communities. The Arabic version of the debate indicates that, by the first half of the 9th century, there existed a normative use of the vocabulary of Qur’ān in the writings of Arabic speaking Christians. Take for instance Arabic (56), which discusses the Apostles of Jesus. The Arabic word used in this section is حواريين, which means “Apostles.” This word is used in the Qur’ān when

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 251-257.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 268.

describing the Apostles of Jesus.¹⁰⁹ In the same section, Arabic (56), the Arabic text uses the verb عَرَجَ, when referring to Jesus' ascension to heaven. Muhammad's midnight journey (الإسراء) to Jerusalem, which is indicated in Sūrat Banī Isrā'īl 17:1 is related in Islamic sources to a journey he made to heaven known as المعراج meaning "the ascension." Both words share a common root and meaning. The Arabic translator used an Islamic specific word to denote Jesus' ascension to heaven. In another example, the Arabic name for Jesus used throughout the text is عيسى, which is the Qur'ānic name for Jesus. This term can be found over 20 times throughout the Qur'ān. Typically, Arabic speaking Christians refer to Jesus by the name يسوع, which reflects the Syriac عيسو. Similar to the Arabic term used for Apostles, the Arabic translator used another Qur'ānic word when referring to Christians. In Arabic (122), the term النصارى is used. This is the specific word used in the Qur'ān when referring to the Christians.¹¹⁰ Finally, the Arabic text uses the root ن-زل when referring to the revelation of the Bible. This can be seen in Arabic (220). This usage is important due to the fact that the same root is used self-referentially throughout the Qur'ān when describing its revealed nature.¹¹¹ These are clear examples indicating that Qur'ānic and Islamic terminology, specifically regarding Christians and Christian concepts, were being used by Arabic speaking Christians at that time.

¹⁰⁹ For more information on the term حواريين, see Qur'ānic verses: 3: 52; 5:111; 5:112; and 61:14.

¹¹⁰ For more information on النصارى, see Q2:62, 2:111, 2:113, 2:120, 2:135, 2:140, 5:14, 5:18, 5:51, 5:69, 5:82, 9:30, and 22:17.

¹¹¹ For more information on this topic, see Stefan Wild, *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān*. Diskurse der Arabistik, Bd. 11 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006).

Part 2: An Arabic-to-English Translation of the Debate

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**The Religious Dialogue, Which Took Place between al-Mahdī, the
Emir of the Believers, and Catholicos Timothy, the Nestorian
Patriarch, in the 8th Century after Christ:
Recently Translated from Syriac to Arabic**

المحاورة الدينية التي جرت بين المهدي أمير المؤمنين وطيماثاوس الجاثليق
الباطريرك النسطوري في القرن الثامن بعد المسيح:
قد ترجمت حديثاً من اللغة السريانية الى العربية¹¹²

¹¹² In Louis Cheikho's edition of the text, which can be found in *al-Machriq* XIX (1921), 359-374 and 408-418, *قد ترجمت حديثاً من اللغة السريانية الى العربية*, has been omitted.

Introduction

المقدمة

1. The abovementioned Timothy wrote to his friend a letter; he informs him in it about the dialogue, which took place between him and the Emir of the Believers, and at the end of this letter, he stated this:

١ - طيماتاوس المذكور كتب الى صديقه رسالة يخبره بها عن المحاوره التي جرت بينه وبين أمير المؤمنين. وفي نهاية هذه الرسالة يقول هكذا:

2. We had entered before these days into the presence of our victorious King and when we spoke about the divine nature and its eternity, the King said to us what we had never heard from him before, which is:

٢ - إنّنا قد دخلنا قبل هذه الأيام الى حضرة ملكنا المظفر. وعندما تكلمنا عن الطبيعة الإلهية وأزليتها، قال لنا الملك ما لم نسمعه منه قطّ، وهو:

The First Section: Christ, the Word of God, the Incarnated for Our Salvation

الباب الاوّل: المسيح كلمة الله المتجسد لخلّصنا

Introduction

المقدّمة

3. “Oh Catholicos, it is not befitting for a man like you, knowledgeable and possessing experience, to say about God Most High ‘that he took a woman and begat from her a son.’”¹¹³

٣ - ايّها الجاتليق، لا يليق برجلٍ مثلك، عالم وذو خبرة، ان يقول عن الله تعالى {إنّه اتّخذ امرأة وولد منها ابناً}.

4. Then we answered saying: “Oh King, lover of God, who is that who offered such a blasphemy about God (May he be exalted and majestified)?”

٤ - فجاوبنا قائلين: يا ايّها الملك محبّ الله، من هو ذاك الذي أتى بكذا تجديف عن الله (عزّ وجلّ)؟

5. Then, at the moment, the victorious King said to me: “So what do you, therefore, say about Christ? Who is he?”

٥ - فحينئذٍ الملك المظفّر قال لي: فماذا تقول أدّا عن المسيح؟ من هو؟

6. Then we answered the King saying: “Indeed, Christ is the Word of God, which appeared in the flesh for the salvation of the world.”

¹¹³ The Qur’ānic rejection of God siring a son can be seen in Q 6:101.

٦ - فجوابنا الملك قائلين: إنّ المسيح هو كلمة الله، الذي ظهر بالجسد، لأجل خلاص العالم.

1. Christ, the Son of God

١ - المسيح ابن الله

7. Then our victorious King asked me: “Do you not believe that Christ is the Son of God?”

٧ - ثمّ سألني ملكنا المظفّر: أما تعتقد أنّ المسيح هو ابن الله؟

8. Then I said: “Indeed, we believe that without doubt. Because, accordingly, we learned from Christ himself, since it is written about him in the Gospel,¹¹⁴ the Torah, and the (Books) of the Prophets¹¹⁵ that he is the Son of God. But his birth is not like the bodily birth, rather it is a miraculous birth, beyond the comprehension of the mind and description of the tongue,¹¹⁶ as is befitting for the divine birth.”

٨ - فقلتُ: إنّنا نعتقد بذلك دون شكّ. لأنّ هكذا تعلّمنا من المسيح نفسه، إذ هو مسطور عنه في الإنجيل والتوراة والأنبياء أنه ابن الله. ولكن ولادته ليست كالولادة الجسدانية، بل هي ولادة عجيبة، تفوق إدراك العقل ووصف اللسان، كما يليق بالولادة الإلهية.

¹¹⁴ The Arabic term إنجيل is derived from the Greek term Ευαγγέλιον, meaning “Gospel.”

¹¹⁵ The Arabic term أنبياء literally carries the meaning of “prophets”, but contextually it implies the Books of the Prophets, referring to the later books of the Old Testament.

¹¹⁶ The Syriac rendering of this clause, which reads, ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܗܘ ܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ, can be translated as, “that is higher and more sublime than intellect as well as reason.” The original Syriac word ܩܘܠܘܢ carries a similar meaning to the Greek λογος, rather than the Arabic translation “description of the tongue.”

9. Then our victorious King said: “How is that?”

٩ - فقال ملكنا المظفر: كيف ذلك؟

10. Then we said: “If Christ is the Son born before the ages¹¹⁷ then we are not able to examine this birth nor to comprehend it, because God is incomprehensible in all his attributes;

١٠ - فقلنا: إن المسيح هو ابن ومولود قبل الدهور. فلا نستطيع أن نفحص عن هذه الولادة، ولا أن ندركها. لأن الله غير مُدرك في جميع صفاته.

11. However, we may offer a parallel taken from nature: So, as rays are born of the sun and the word of the soul, thus Christ, in that he is the Word of God, was born of the Father before all ages.”¹¹⁸

١١ - ولكن نأتي بتشبيهه ما، مأخوذ من الطبيعة: فكما تتلذ الأشعة من الشمس، والكلمة من النفس؛ هكذا المسيح، بما أنه كلمة الله، وُلد من الآب قبل الدهور.

2. Christ, Son of the Virgin Mary

٢ - المسيح ابن مريم البتول

¹¹⁷ It is interesting to compare the Syriac and Arabic articulations of the eternity of the birth of Christ. In the original Syriac version, the phrase reads *ܠܚܕ ܡܚ ܕܝܡܝܢ* translated as, “beyond the times” while in the Arabic *قبل الدهور* can be translated as, “before the ages.” Both versions maintain a plural usage of time when referring to the eternity of the birth of Christ. The conception of time in both the original Syriac and the Arabic translation reflect a Greek influence. Both the Syriac and Arabic phrases “beyond the times” and “before the ages” are attempting to mimic the meaning of the Greek word *αἰών*, which can be translated into English as “age” or “epoch.” However, English usually renders the phrase as, “before all time,” which represents time singularly.

¹¹⁸ After the phrase “before all time,” the Syriac text includes the phrase, *ܡܘܨܚܐ ܡܘܨܚܐ ܡܘܨܚܐ* translated as, “as well as before all worlds.” Again the Syriac term *ܡܘܨܚܐ* or “worlds” is attempting to assert a meaning similar to the Greek *αἰών*.

12. Then our victorious King said to me: “Do you not say that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary?”

١٢ - فقال لي ملكنا المظفر: أما تقولون إنّ المسيح وُلد من مريم البتول؟

13. We answered saying: “Indeed, we say and confess that Christ was born of the Father, in that he is his Word, and he was born of the Virgin Mary, in that he is a human being; and his birth from the Father is eternal, before all ages, and his birth from Mary is temporal, without a father or marriage, and without the virginity of his mother being defiled.”¹¹⁹

١٣ - فجاوبنا قائلين: إنّنا نقول ونعتقد بأنّ المسيح مولود من الآب بما أنّه كلمته، ومولود من مريم العذراء بما أنّه إنسان. وولادته من الآب هي ازليّة قبل كلّ الدهور، وولادته من مريم هي زمنيّة، دون أب ومن غير زواج، وبدون انتلام بتوليّة أمّه.

a) How had Mary remained a virgin after the birth?

أ - كيف ظلّت مريم بتولاً بعد الولادة؟

14. Then our King, lover of God, said to me: “Surely the birth of Christ from Mary, without marriage, is written and confirmed, but how was this birth able to occur without the virginity of the bearer being defiled?”

١٤ - فملكنا محبّ الله قال لي: إنّ ولادة المسيح من مريم بغير زواج هي مكتوبة ومقرّرة. ولكن كيف يمكن أن تكون هذه الولادة دون انتلام بتوليّة الوالدة؟

¹¹⁹ In this passage, the Arabic word انتلام can be translated as “defilement.” This Arabic term is used to represent the Syriac passive participle *عبر*, which can be translated as “broken” or “loosened.”

15. Then we answered the King and we said: “Surely this matter, regarding nature, is impossible and inconceivable to occur without the virginity being defiled; moreover, neither is it possible that a man be born, nor conceived naturally without the union¹²⁰ of a man with a woman.

١٥ - فجاوبنا الملك وقلنا: إنّ هذا الأمر، نظرًا الى الطبيعة، هو مُحال، وغير ممكن أن يصير دون انتلام البتولية. ولا يمكن أن يتلد إنسان، ولا أن يُحبل به أصلًا، بغير اشتراك رجل مع امرأة.

16. However, regarding the omnipotence of the Creator of nature, this is possible. That is to say, that a virgin begets without her virginity being defiled, because God (May he be praised) is Master of everything, and for him nothing is difficult.¹²¹

١٦ - وأما نظرًا إلى قُدرة خالق الطبيعة، فمُستطاع ذلك، أي أنّ البتول تلد بدون انتلام بتوليّتها. لأنّ الله سبحانه قادر على كلّ شيء، وليس عنده أمر عسير.

b) Proof of such a possibility from the Book¹²² and from nature

ب - برهان على امكانية ذلك من الكتاب والطبيعة

17. We have proof for such in the Book and in nature. These clarify for us that the birth of a man is possible without defiling the virginity of the bearer:

¹²⁰ Often times throughout the Syriac text, when speaking of the Virgin Mary and sexually related terminology, Timothy uses euphemistic terms. For example, he uses the Syriac term ܡܘܨܚܐ, which means “marriage” or “wedlock” to imply sexual relations and coitus, rather than using more sexually explicit terminology.

¹²¹ Between paragraphs 16 and 17, there is a small statement from al-Mahdī, which has been omitted from the Arabic text. Mingana translates the Syriac as, “Then the King said: That a man can be born without marital intercourse is borne out of the example of Adam, who was fashioned by God from earth without any marital intercourse, but that a man can be born without breaking his mother’s virginal seals we have no proof, either from Book nor from nature.”

¹²² The word الكتاب here is used to denote the entire Bible, both the Old and New Testament.

١٧ - ولنا برهان على ذلك في الكتاب وفي الطبيعة، اللذين يوضحان لنا أنه يمكن ولادة إنسان دون انثلام بتوليّة الوالدة:

18. First, from the book: It had been written that Eve had been produced from the side of Adam without breaking that rib¹²³ and Christ (Peace be upon him)¹²⁴ had ascended to heaven without the firmament being divided; so, in such a way, the Virgin Mary begat her Son without her virginity being defiled and without being harmed.

١٨ - اولاً من الكتاب. قد سَطَّرَ أن حوَّاء قد أخرجت من ضلع آدم، دون أن تنشقّ تلك الضلعة. والمسيح (عليه السلام) قد صعد إلى السماء، دون ان ينشق الجلد. فهكذا مريم البتول ولدت ابنها، من دون [أن] تنتلم بتوليّتها ويعتريها ضرر.

19. Second, from nature: So, surely fruits are produced by the trees, vision by the eye, and scents by the flowers, without being divided and being separated from each other. Likewise, rays are born from the sun.

١٩ - ثانيًا من الطبيعة. فإنّ الأثمار تولد من الأشجار، والنظر من العين، والروائح من الزهور، دون انشقاق وانفصل بعضها من بعض. وكذا تتلذد الأشعة من الشمس.

20. For in this manner, Christ had been born of Mary without her virginity being defiled. And just as his eternal birth exceeds rationality, likewise, his temporal birth is miraculous.”

٢٠ - فعلى هذا المنوال، قد ولد المسيح من مريم، دون أن تنتلم بتوليّتها. وكما [أن] ولادته الأزليّة فائقة عن العقل، هكذا ولادته الزمنية هي عجيبة.

¹²³ Gen. 2:21-22.

¹²⁴ Here, the translator of the Arabic text follows the Islamic practice of stating the Arabic phrase عليه السلام, which means “Peace be upon him” after uttering the name of a messenger of God.

3. Christ is One in Two Natures

٣ - المسيح واحد من طبيعتين

21. Then our King said to me: “How is that? Was the Eternal born temporally?”

٢١ - فقال لي ملكنا: كيف ذلك، أزلّي ولد زمنيًا؟

22. Then we answered saying: “Indeed, Christ, not in that he is eternal was he born of Mary, rather in that he is temporal and human.”

٢٢ - فجاوبنا قائلين: إنّ المسيح، ليس بما أنّه ازليّ مولودًا من مريم، بل بما أنّه زمنيّ وبشريّ.

a) Is Christ eternal or temporal?

أ - هل المسيح ازلي أم زمني؟

23. So, at that moment, our victorious King said to me: “Then Christ, therefore, is two. The one is temporal and the other is eternal. So, the eternal is God from God, according to your saying, and the temporal is a man from Mary?”

٢٣ - فحينئذٍ قال لي ملكنا المظفر: فالمسيح إذاً هو اثنان: الواحد زمنيّ، والآخر أزلّيّ. فالأزليّ هو إله من إله حسب قولك، والزمنيّ هو إنسان من مريم.

24. Then we answered saying: “Oh King, surely there is neither two Christs nor two sons, rather Christ is one and the Son one,¹²⁵ possessing two natures, divine and human, because the Word of God took on a human body and became a man.”

٢٤ - فجاوبنا قائلين: أيها الملك، إنّ المسيح باثنين ولا بابنين، بل المسيح واحد وابن واحد، ذو¹²⁶ طبيعتين إلهية وإنسانية، من حيث [أنّ] كلمة الله اتخذ جسداً بشرياً وصار إنساناً.

b) Is Christ created or uncreated?

ب - هل المسيح مخلوق أم غير مخلوق؟

25. With this, the King said: “Indeed, Christ is two, the one created and fashioned and the other is not so.”

٢٥ - وعندها¹²⁷ قال الملك: إنّ المسيح هو اثنان: الواحد مخلوق ومصنوع، والآخر ليس بذلك.

26. So, I said to him: “Surely, we affirm that Christ possesses two natures distinct from one another, but we also confess and affirm that he, being of those two natures, is to be known as one Christ, and one Son.”

٢٦ - فقلتُ له: إنّنا نقرّ بأنّ المسيح ذو طبيعتين مميّزتين إحداهما من الأخرى. ولكن نعتقد أيضاً ونقرّ أنّه، من هاتين الطبيعتين مسيح واحد، وابن واحد يعرف.

¹²⁵ Hans Putman’s French rendering of this clause is quite clarifying. Putman states, “O Souverain, il n’y a pas deux Christ, ni deux Fils, mais un seul Christ et un seul Fils,” which can be translated into English as, “Oh King, there are not two Christs, nor two Sons, but one sole Christ, and one sole Son.”

¹²⁶ Appeared as ذى in MS 662.

¹²⁷ Appeared as عندما in MS 662.

c) Is Christ one or two?

ت - هل المسيح واحد أم اثنان؟

27. And our King answered us saying: “So, if Christ was one, he was not two; and if he was two, he was not one.”

٢٧ - وملكنا جاوبنا قائلاً: فإن كان المسيح واحداً، ليس باثنين. وإن كان اثنين، ليس

بواحد.

28. However, we answered him, regarding that, with this proof: “Namely, just as a man is one, regarding composition and unity, he is also two, regarding the soul and the body (those are two distinct natures: one of the two is composed and perceptible, while the other is simple and imperceptible). Likewise, the Word of God, by its incarnation, became a possessor of two distinct natures, one of the two divine and the other human, as we said;¹²⁸

٢٨ - أمّا نحن، جاوبناه على ذلك بهذا البرهان، وهو: كما أن الإنسان هو واحد من

جهة التركيب والإتحاد، وهو اثنان¹²⁹ ايضاً من جهة النفس والجسد (اللذين هما طبيعتان مميزتان، احدهما مركبة ومنظورة، والأخرى بسيطة غير منظورة)، هكذا كلمة الله بتجسده صار ذا طبيعتين مميزتين، إحداهما إلهية والأخرى إنسانية، كما قلنا.

29. However, he continues to be one Messiah and one Son, on account of the oneness of his persona.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Sections 28 and 29 of the Arabic text represent a redacted form of the original Syriac. The Syriac text has been condensed and certain illustrations have been removed.

¹²⁹ Appeared as اثنين in *MS 662*.

¹³⁰ The Arabic term شخص is used to represent the original Syriac term هني هكس, which in turn is a Syriac rendering of the Greek term προσωπον. For this reason the Arabic has been translated as “persona” rather than simply as “person.”

٢٩ - مع ذلك، لا يزال أن يكون مسيحاً واحداً وابتناً واحداً، من أجل وحدانية

شخصه.

4. Christ is the Son of God, Not His Slave

٤ - المسيح ابن الله لا عبده

a) The first objection and its response

أ - الإعتراض الاول وحلّه

30. Then our victorious King said to me: “Did Jesus (Peace be upon him) not say, ‘Surely I will return to my God and your God?’”

٣٠ - فملكنا المظفر قال لي: أما قال عيسى (عليه السلام) {إنني سأنتقل إلى إلهي

وإلهكم}؟

31. And we answered saying: “Verily, our Savior truly brought this verse, but you find another verse written before it, which deserves mentioning, namely: ‘Surely I will go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God?’”¹³¹

٣١ - ونحن جاوبنا قائلين: إن مخلصنا أتى بهذه الآية حقيقةً. ولكن توجد آية أخرى

مسطورة قبلها، التي تستحق الذكر، وهي {إنني سأمضي إلى أبي وأبيكم وإلى إلهي وإلهكم}.

b) The second objection and its response

ب - الإعتراض الثاني وحلّه

¹³¹ Jn. 20:17.

32. Then our King said: “Surely, one finds a contradiction here. How can that be? So, if he is his Father, he is not his God, and if he is his God, he is not his Son.”

٣٢ - فقال ملكنا: إنه يوجد تناقض ههنا. كيف يمكن ذلك؟ فإن كان أباه، ليس بإلهه، وإن كان إلهه ليس بابنه.

33. And we answered him saying: “Oh King, lover of God, one does not find contradiction here at all. Because, in that he is his Father by nature, he is not his God by nature, and in that he is his God by nature, he is not his Father by nature, rather he is his Father by divine nature insofar as he begat him eternally, like the birth of rays by the sun and the word by the soul. And he is also his God, in view of his human nature, insofar as he was born of Mary temporally.

٣٣ - فنحن جاوبناه قائلين: أيها الملك محب الله، لا يوجد ههنا تناقض البتة. لأنه بما أنه أبوه طبيعياً، ليس إلهه بالطبيعة. وبما أنه إلهه بالطبيعة، ليس أباه طبيعياً. بل هو أبوه بالطبيعة الإلهية، إذ هو وُلدَ أزلياً، كاتِّلاذ الأشعة من الشمس، والكلمة من النفس. وهو أيضاً إلهه، نظراً إلى الطبيعة البشرية، إذ هو مولود من مريم زمنياً.

34. Therefore, Christ is one, and he possesses two bearers; one of the two is eternal, and the other is temporal.¹³²

٣٤ - فواحد هو المسيح، وله والدان: احدهما أزلي، والآخر زمني.

Conclusion: Christ Was Born of the Holy Spirit

الخاتمة: المسيح مولود من الروح القدس

¹³² Sections 33 and 34 represent a significant reduction of the original Syriac text. Various illustrative examples and analogies have been removed.

35. Then our victorious King said to me: “How is it possible that the Spirit begets, since it does not possess organs of procreation?”

٣٥ - فملكنا المظفر قال لي: كيف يمكن أن الروح يلد، إذ ليس له أعضاء الولادة؟

36. We answered him: “How is it possible that the Spirit creates, since it does not possess organs of effectuation? So, as he fashioned creation,¹³³ without these organs, in the same way he begat the Word without organs of procreation.

٣٦ - جاوبناه: كيف يمكن أن الروح يخلق، إذ ليس له أعضاء فاعلية؟ فكما أنه خلق البرايا بدون هذه الاعضاء، هكذا ولد الكلمة دون أعضاء الولادة.

37. And just as the sun begets rays of light without organs of effectuation, in such a way - God (May he be exalted and majestified) is able to beget and create, although he is a simple, pure, and non-composed spirit; thus, he begets the Son, and the Spirit emanates from his essence, just as heat is emanated from the sun.”

٣٧ - ومثلما أن الشمس تلد الأشعة من النور، دون أعضاء فاعلية؛ هكذا الله (عز وجل) قادر أن يلد ويخلق، ولو أنه روح بسيط محض وغير مركب. فيلد الابن، ويصدر الروح من جوهره، كما أن الشمس تُصدر الحرارة.

¹³³ The Arabic phrase, خلق البرايا, is translated above as, “fashioned creation;” however, the phrase literally means “created creation.”

The Second Section: The Holy Trinity

الباب الثاني: الثالوث المقدس

Introduction

المقدمة

38. Then our King said to me: “Do you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?”

٣٨ - ثم قال لي ملكنا: أتؤمن بالآب والابن والروح القدس؟

39. I answered him: “Yes.”

٣٩ - فجاوبته: نعم!

1. Three Hypostases, and Not Three Gods

١ - ثلاثة اقانيم ولا ثلاثة آلهة

Introduction

المقدمة

40. Then he said to me: “So, surely you, therefore, believe and confess in three gods.”

٤٠ - فقال لي: فإنك إذا تؤمن وتعتقد بثلاثة آلهة.

41. Then we answered him saying: “Oh King, surely confessing in these three names is confessing in three hypostases.¹³⁴ I mean the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: these are one God, one nature, and one essence. This we believe and confess, according to what Jesus¹³⁵ (Peace be upon him) clearly taught us, and we learned that also from the prophets.

٤١ - فجاوبناه قائلين: أيها الملك، إنّ الاعتقاد بهذه الاسماء الثلاثة هو الاعتقاد بثلاثة أقانيم، أعني الآب والابن والروح القدس، الذين هو إله واحد وطبيعة واحدة وجوهر واحد. كذا نؤمن ونعتقد على ما علمنا صريحاً عيسى (عليه السلام) وتعلمنا ذلك أيضاً من الأنبياء.

a) Proof in the creations

أ - برهان في المخلوقات

42. We have proof of this in the creations. Just as our King, lover of God, is one with his word and with his spirit without being three kings and it is not possible that his word and his spirit be separated from him, nor that he be called a king without his word and his spirit; in such a way, God Most High is one with his Word and his Spirit, without being three gods, insofar, as it is not possible that the Word and the Spirit be separated from him.

٤٢ - ولنا برهان على ذلك في المخلوقات. فكما أنّ ملكنا محبّ الله هو واحد مع كلمته وروحه، وليس بثلاثة ملوك، ولا يمكن أن ينفصل منه كلمته وروحه، ولا أن يُسمّى ملكاً دون الكلمة والروح؛ هكذا الله تعالى: إنّّه واحد مع كلمته وروحه، وليس بثلاثة آلهة، إذ لا يمكن أن ينفصل منه الكلمة والروح.

¹³⁴ The Arabic term أقانيم is a rendering of the original Syriac *ܘܫܬܘܬܐ*, which was very misleadingly translated by Alphonse Mingana as “Persons.” This translation of أقانيم throughout the medieval period was often wrongfully translated by Muslim scholars as اشخاص.

¹³⁵ Here the translator of the Arabic text uses the Islamic and Qur’ānic name عيسى for Jesus, instead of using the Arabic name يسوع, which is a direct reflection of the Syriac name *ܝܫܘܥ*.

43. Likewise, the sun, with its rays and its heat, is one and is not three suns.”¹³⁶

٤٣ - كذا الشمس، مع اشعتها وحرارتها، هي واحدة وليس بثلاثة شمس.

44. At that moment, the King said to me: “Can the Word and the Spirit be separated from God?”

٤٤ - حينئذ قال لي الملك: هل يفصل الكلمة والروح من الله؟

45. Then we answered him: “God forbid, never! Just as the rays and the heat are not separated from the sun, ever, in such a way, the Word of God and his Spirit are not separated from him, ever. And, just as if the rays of the sun and its heat were separated from it, its light and heat will cease, and it is not possible to be called a sun. Likewise, God (May he be praised), if the Word and Spirit were separated from him, would be non-speaking and non-living.”¹³⁷

٤٥ - فجاوبناه: حاشا وكلا. فكما أنّ الأشعة والحرارة لا تنفصلان من الشمس قطعاً، هكذا كلمة الله وروحه لا ينفصلان منه ابداً. وكما أنّه، إذا انفصلت أشعة الشمس وحرارتها منها، يزول نورها وحرارتها، ولا يمكن أن تُدعى شمساً؛ هكذا الله سبحانه، إذا انفصل منه الكلمة والروح، يكون لا ناطقاً ولا حياً.

46. As for the speaker of such, surely one may not say that he is deprived of life and spirit, for if one would dare to say such about God, that he existed at a certain time without the Word and the Spirit, therefore, he would have blasphemed. Because the Word was with God (May he be praised), from time

¹³⁶ After section 43, in the Syriac, Timothy and al-Mahdī further discuss the status of the Word and Spirit.

¹³⁷ Here, Timothy is using the figurative speech of Epiphanius. For more information, see Sweetman, above n 21, 75.

immemorial,¹³⁸ was born as a source of speech. And, in the same way, the Spirit emanates from him eternally as a source of life.”

٤٦ - وأما الناطق لا يقال عنه إنه معدوم الحياة والروح. فإن تجاسر أحدٌ وقال عن الله إنه كان موجودًا في زمان ما، دون الكلمة والروح، فقد جَدَّف. لأنَّ الله سبحانه، منذ الأزل، كان له الكلمة مولودًا كينبوع النطق. وكذا ينبثق منه الروح سرمدًا كينبوع الحياة.

b) Proof from the Book

ب - برهان من الكتاب

47. And our King said to me: “Do you have scriptural evidences that the Word and the Spirit were with God from time immemorial?”

٤٧ - وملكنا قال لي: هل لك بيّنات كتابيّة على أنّ الكلمة والروح كانا في الله منذ الأزل؟

48. Then we answered him saying: “We have, regarding that, various evidences.

٤٨ - فجاوبناه قائلين: لنا على ذلك بيّنات شتّى:

a. From the Books of the Prophets:

أ - من كتب الأنبياء:

49. First, from the Books of the Prophets:

¹³⁸ This idiomatic phrase, “from time immemorial,” has been used to represent the Arabic phrase “منذ الأزل,” which literally means “from the eternity,” to avoid awkwardness.

50. The Prophet David said: ‘By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath¹³⁹ of his mouth all its soldiers.’¹⁴⁰ He also said: ‘I praise the Word of God.’¹⁴¹ Subsequently, when teaching of the resurrection of the dead, he says: ‘You send your spirit, therefore, you create, and you will renew the face of the earth.’¹⁴² Here the Prophet David would not glorify nor praise creation, nor would he call the created and the fashioned, creator and fashioner. In another place, he speaks about the Word of God that it has no beginning and no end, when he says: ‘Forever, Oh Lord, your immutable Word is in heaven.’¹⁴³

٥٠ - قد قال داود النبي: {بكلمة الرب صُنعت السموات، وبروح فيه كلّ جنودها}. وقال أيضاً: {أُسبِحْ لكلمة الله}. ثم، إذ يُعَلِّم عن قيامة الأموات، يقول: {تُرْسِل رَوْحَكَ فَتُخَلِّق، وتجدّد وجه الارض}. فهنا لم يكن داود النبي يُمَجِّد وَيُسَبِّح للخلقة، ولا يُسَمِّي للمخلوق والجبول خالقاً ومجدداً. وفي مكانٍ آخر يتكلّم عن كلمة الله أنّه ليس له بداية ولا نهاية، إذ يقول: {إلى الأبد، يا رب، كلمتك مثبتة في السموات}.

51. And likewise, the Prophet Isaiah also, like David, speaks about the Word of God, since he says: ‘Grass dries, flowers wilt, but the Word of our God persists forever.’¹⁴⁴

٥١ - وهكذا أيضاً أشعيا النبي، مثل داود، يتكلّم عن كلمة الله، إذ يقول: {يبس الحشيش، وذبل الزهر. وأما كلمة إلها، فتدوم إلى الأبد}.

¹³⁹ Timothy used the Arabic term روح meaning “breath” in this particular Biblical verse; however, in many modern translations, the Arabic word نسمة is used to denote breath.

¹⁴⁰ Ps. 33:6.

¹⁴¹ Ps. 56:5.

¹⁴² Ps. 104:30.

¹⁴³ Ps. 119:89; In Samir’s edition of the text, the verse is listed as Ps. 118:89.

¹⁴⁴ Isa. 40:8.

b. From the Holy Gospel:

ب - من الإنجيل المقدس:

52. Second, from the Holy Gospel: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’¹⁴⁵ Next, it speaks about the Spirit in such a way: ‘In him was the life and the life was the light of mankind.’¹⁴⁶ I mean, in God was the Word and the life; that is to say, the spirit.

٥٢ - ثانياً، من الإنجيل المقدس: {في البدء كان الكلمة، والكلمة كان عند الله، وكان الكلمة الله}. ثم عن الروح يقول هكذا: {فيه كانت الحياة، والحياة كانت نور الناس}. اعني في الله الكلمة والحياة، اي الروح.

53. However, its expression ‘the Word was,’ does not indicate that it (the Word) has a beginning, but means that it (the Word) was before all ages. Then, by the expression “the Word” one does not indicate its creation, but rather its eternity, because it is not created.

٥٣ - وأما قوله، {كان الكلمة}، لا يشير بذلك أنّ له بداية، بل يعني أنّه كان قبل الدهور. ثمّ بالكلمة لا يدلّ على خلقته، بل على أزليّته، على أنّه غير مخلوق.

54. And since the Spirit is the life and the life exists in God, from time immemorial, then the Spirit exists, therefore, in God eternally and the Spirit of God, subsequently, is the life and the light for mankind.

٥٤ - وإذ كان الروح هو الحياة، والحياة موجودة في الله منذ الازل، فالروح إذاً موجود في الله أزلياً. وروح الله فهو حياة ونور للبشر.

¹⁴⁵ Jn. 1:1.

¹⁴⁶ Jn. 1:4.

55. Then, Jesus (Peace be upon him), when he used to speak to his Father, said: ‘Now glorify me, Oh Father, with that glory, which I had with you before the creation of the world.’¹⁴⁷ So, with this, he confirms that he had a glory before all creation¹⁴⁸ and that his glory does not begin, when he said: ‘By that glory, which I had with you before the creation of the world.’

٥٥ - ثمّ عيسى (عليه السلام)، لما كان يخاطب أباه قال: {الآن مجّدي يا ابتاه، بذاك المجد الذي كان لي عندك من قبل إنشاء العالم}. فبهذا يثبت أنّه كان له مجد قبل كلّ الخلائق، وليس لمجده بداية، من حيث يقول: {بذاك المجد الذي كان لي عندك قبل إنشاء العالم}.

56. And when he ascended¹⁴⁹ to heaven, he ordered the apostles¹⁵⁰ saying: ‘Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.’¹⁵¹ Jesus (Peace be upon him) would not count the created¹⁵² with the Creator, nor that which is temporal with that which does not have a beginning or an end.

٥٦ - وحينما عرج إلى السماء، أمر الحواريين قائلاً: {اذهبوا وتلمذوا جميع الأمم، عمّدوهم باسم الأب الابن والروح القدس}. فعيسى (عليه السلام) لم يكن يُحصي المخلوقات مع الخالق، ولا الذي هو زمني مع الذي ليس له بداية ولا نهاية.

Summary

¹⁴⁷ Jn. 17:5.

¹⁴⁸ The Arabic term *خلائق* can literally be translated as, “created things” or “creations” it has been singularized to follow the normative English convention.

¹⁴⁹ The Arabic term used for ascension is *عرج*; interestingly, Muhammad’s midnight journey discussed in *Sūrat Banī Isrā’īl* 17:1 is described in Islamic sources as *المعراج* meaning “the ascension.” Both words share a common root and meaning.

¹⁵⁰ The Arabic term used for Apostles is *حواريين*, which is the common Qur’ānic term for Apostles. *Hawārīyūn* can be seen in the following Qur’ānic verses: 3: 52; 5:111; 5:112; and 61:14.

¹⁵¹ Mt. 28:19.

¹⁵² The Arabic term *مخلوقات* is plural for “created things” as before its has been singularized.

الخلاصة

57. Just as logicians do not count things of a different nature with each other, (like the sun, stone, horse, pearl, copper, etc.), but they count, for example, three pearls with each other, or three stars, which are equal with each other in nature and resemble each other in everything; in such a way, Christ would not have been able to count the Word and the Spirit with God, if he had not known that the two were equal in nature [to him].

٥٧ - وكما أنّ الاشياء المختلفة بالطبيعة (كالشمس والحجر والفرس واللؤلؤ والنحاس الخ) لا يحصيها المنطقيون بعضها مع بعض، بل يعدّون مثلاً ثلاثة لآلى مع بعضها، أو ثلاثة نجوم التي مساوية لبعضها بالطبيعة وتشبّه بعضها بعضاً في كل شيء، هكذا المسيح لم يقدر ان يعدّ الكلمة والروح مع الله، لو لم يعرف أنهما متساويان بالطبيعة.

58. Otherwise, how could he have been able to render equal to God, in honor and royal power, that which is not God by nature? And how would he associate, in essence, that which is temporal with the eternal? Because, it is not slaves that participate in royal honor, but sons.”

٥٨ - وإلاّ كيف يُمكن أن يُساوي الله بالإكرام والسلطان الملكي، ذلك الذي ليس هو إله بالطبيعة؟ وهل يشترك بالجواهر من هو زمنيّ مع الأزليّ؟ اذ ليس للعبيد أن يشتركوا بالإكرام الملكي، بل للبنين.

2. Three Distinct Hypostases without Separation

٢ - ثلاثة اقانيم متميّزة دون انفصال

Introduction

59. Then our King said: “What type of distinction does one find between the Son and the Spirit? And how is the Son not the Spirit and the Spirit not the Son given that one does not find a difference with God whether he be a generator or emanator? Because you said: ‘That he is simple and not composed.’”

٥٩ - ثم قال ملكنا: أيّ تمييز يوجد بين الابن والروح؟ وكيف أنّ الابن ليس بالروح، والروح ليس بالابن؟ إذ لا يوجد فرق عند الله بأن يكون مُولِّدًا أو مصدرًا، لأنك قلت: {إنّه بسيط وغير مركّب}.

a) A philosophical explanation of the idea

أ - توضيح الفكرة فلسفيًا

60. Then we answered him saying: “Oh King, surely, regarding the essence of the hypostases, one does not find between them any distinction. However, regarding their relationship to each other,¹⁵³ one finds this distinction. That is to say that one possesses a quality¹⁵⁴ that is not born, and the other that is born, and the other that is emanated.

٦٠ - فجاوبناه قائلين: أيّها الملك، إنّ الأقانيم، نظرًا إلى الجوهر، لا يوجد بينهم تمييز البتّة، ولكن، نظرًا إلى بعضهم بعض، يوجد هذا التمييز. وهو أي أنّ¹⁵⁵ الواحد له خاصّة أن لا يولد، والآخر أن يولد، والآخر أن ينبثق.

¹⁵³ The Arabic phrase نظرًا إلى بعضهم بعض، which literally means “regarding their relationship to each other,” can be contextually translated as, “regarding the substance of each hypostasis.”

¹⁵⁴ Hans Putman, in his French translation of the text, asserts that the Arabic term خاصّة attempts to parallel the meaning of the Greek term ἰδιότης, which can be translated as “property” or “attribute.”

¹⁵⁵ Appeared as اي أنّه in MS 662.

61. So, the Father is the source of both the Son and Holy Spirit. From time immemorial, he begets the former and emanates the later and that is not through corporeal separation or disjunction, nor through means of birthing or emanative organs.

٦١ - فالآب هو مبدأ للابن والروح القدس معاً. فيولد¹⁵⁶ هذا، ويُصِدِر هذا، منذ الأزل. وذلك ليس بانفصال وانقسام جسمي، ولا بواسطة الأعضاء المولدة والمُصدرة.

62. Nevertheless, God is neither composed nor corporeal. The separation and the members spoken of are attributed to bodies, and every body is constructed. So, therefore the separation and members are also specific to constructed and bodily things, whereas God is not so. So, therefore, it is not possible that the Most High be afflicted by some form of separation and division mentioned above.

٦٢ - على أنّ الله ليس بمركّب ولا بجسمي. والانفصال والأعضاء تُقال عن الأجسام، وكلّ جسم هو مركّب. فإذا الانفصال والأعضاء هي مختصّة ايضاً بالأشياء المركّبة والأجسام. والله ليس بذلك. فإذا، لا يمكن أن يعتريه تعالى شيء من الانفصال والانقسام المذكورين.

b) An explanation of the idea through parallels from nature

ب - توضيح الفكرة بتشبهات من الطبيعة

63. And we have another comparison from nature: Which is that the soul bears the word and produces love without separation and without the means of organs. The love is distinct from the word, and the word is not the love.

¹⁵⁶ Appeared as فيلد in MS 662.

٦٣ - ولنا تشبيه آخر في الطبيعة. وهو أنّ من النفس تتلّد الكلمة وتصدر المحبة، دون انفصال وبلا واسطة الأعضاء. المحبة مميّزة عن الكلمة، والكلمة ليست بالمحبة.

64. Likewise, the sun emanates light and heat without separation or appropriate organs; so, the light is born entirely of the whole sun and the heat emanates from the sphere of the sun in its entirety.

٦٤ - وكذا إنّ الشمس تُصدر النور والحرارة، وليس ذلك بانفصال او بأعضاء مخصّصة. فالنور يتلّد كلّهُ من الشمس كلّها، والحرارة تصدر من دائرة الشمس كلّها.

65. So, the word and the love are, in their entirety, present with the soul, while the light and the heat are, likewise, with the sun, and the light is not mixed with the heat, and the heat is not mixed with the light.

٦٥ - فالكلمة والمحبة بأسرهما موجودتان عند النفس، والنور والحرارة كذلك هما عند الشمس. ولا يختلط النور بالحرارة، ولا الحرارة تختلط بالنور.

66. Likewise, this applies to the Word and the Spirit: the one is begotten, and the other is emanated from God the Father, not through separation and not through means of appropriate organs, but rather, in an incomprehensible and indefinable manner. Therefore, regarding their properties, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Son.

٦٦ - كذا الكلمة والروح: الواحد يتلّد، والآخر يصدر من الله الأب. ليس بانفصال، ولا بواسطة أعضاء مخصّصة، بل بنوع غير مُدرَك وغير محدّد. والابن لا يكون الروح، والروح لا يكون الابن، نظرًا إلى خاصّتهما.

67. So, just as the scent and the flavor emanate from the apple, therefore, the scent does not emanate from a certain part of it and the flavor from another, rather both of the two emanate from the entire apple; so, therefore, the flavor is

not the scent, nor the scent the flavor. In such a way, the Son is begotten by the Father and the Spirit emanates from him, in an indefinable manner. I mean, the eternal produced from the eternal¹⁵⁷ and the unproduced emanates from the unproduced.

٦٧ - ثمّ كما أنّ الرائحة والذوق يصدران من التفاحة، فليس الرائحة تصدر من جزءٍ منها والذوق من جزءٍ آخر، بل كلاهما يصدران من التفاحة كلّها؛ فالذوق لا يكون الرائحة، ولا رائحة تكون الذوق؛ هكذا يتّلد الابن من الآب ويصدر منه الروح، بنوع غير محدّد، أعنى الأزلي يخرج من الأزلي، وغير المصنوع يصدر من غير المصنوع.

Conclusion

الخاتمة

68. Therefore, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not separated from each other, nor confused, nor mixed; they are differentiated in the hypostases and are equal in the nature, because God Most High is unique in essence and nature, while threefold in hypostases.”

٦٨ - فالآب والابن والروح القدس لا ينفصلون من بعضهم بعض، ولا يمتزجون، ولا يختلطون. ويتميّزون بالأقانيم، ويتساوون بالطبيعة. لأنّ الله تعالى هو واحد بالجوهر والطبيعة، ومثلّث بالأقانيم.

3. Are the Three Hypostases, Therefore, Incarnated?

٣ - هل تجسّد أدّا الأقانيم الثلاثة؟

¹⁵⁷ The Arabic phrase الأزلي يخرج من الأزلي, is a rendering of the Syriac phrase ܐܘܠܡܝܢܝܢ ܡܢ ܐܘܠܡܝܢܝܢ, which simply means, “the eternal from the eternal.”

69. Then our King said to me: “If the hypostases were neither separated nor divided one from the other, then, therefore, the Father and the Holy Spirit are incarnated with the Word.”

٦٩ - ثم قال لي ملكنا: إن كان الأقانيم لا ينفصلون ولا [يفترقون]¹⁵⁸ من بعضهم بعض، فإذا الأب والروح القدس تجسداً مع الكلمة.

a) The first response: the example of the written word

أ - الرد الأول: مثال الكلمة المكتوبة

70. So, we answered saying: “Just as the word of the King when unified (that is to say when written on the papyrus)¹⁵⁹ is not to be said that his soul and his intelligence are unified (that is to say are drawn on the papyrus); although, his soul and his intelligence are not separated from the word. Likewise, the Word of God took on a body, without separation or differentiation from the Father and the Holy Spirit and it may not be said about the Father and the Holy Spirit that they took on a body.

٧٠ - فجاوبنا قائلين: كما أنّ كلمة الملك، إذا اتّحدت (أي سُطّرت في القرطاس)، ليس يُقال عن نفسه وذهنه إنّهما اتّحدا (أي رُسما في القرطاس) مع أنّ نفسه وذهنه لا ينفصلان من الكلمة؛ هكذا كلمة الله اتّخذ جسداً، من دون أن ينفصل ويفترق من الأب والروح القدس. ولا يقال عن الأب والروح القدس إنّهما اتّخذا جسداً.

b) The second response: the example of the pronounced word

¹⁵⁸ In Samir’s edition of the text, the word appears as يفترقون which has been edited to its proper form.

¹⁵⁹ The Arabic word قرطاس is directly borrowed from Syriac. In George Kiraz’s *A New Syriac Primer*, he states, “The word *مِطْطِصَة* ‘card’ shares a common ancestry with the English word card. Both come from the Greek chartés.” The word found its way into French, Italian, and English by way its Latinized form charta meaning ‘leaf of papyrus’

ب - الرد الثاني: مثال الكلمة الملفوظة

71. And just like the word, which is born of the soul, is clothed with the voice by means of the vibrations of the air without separating from the soul and the intellect and it may not be said about the soul and the intellect that the voice clothes them. (For no one will ever say that: ‘I have heard the soul of so and so or the intellect of so and so,’ rather one will say: ‘I have heard the word of so and so,’ which is not far from the soul and from the intellect and which is not separated nor differentiated from them.) Likewise, the Word of God took on our flesh and he was not separated nor distanced from the Father and the Spirit, and it may not be said – ever – about the Father and the Spirit that they clothed themselves with a body together with the Word.”

٧١ - وكما أيضاً أنّ الكلمة التي تتلّد من النفس تلبس الصوت بواسطة مفعولات الهواء، من دون أن ينفصل من النفس والذهن. ولا يُقال عن النفس وعن الذهن إنّهما لبسا الصوت (اذ لا واحد يقول قطّ {انني سمعتُ نفس فلان أو ذهن فلان}، بل يقول {سمعت كلمة فلان}، التي ليست بعيدة عن النفس والذهن ولا تنفصل وتفترق منهما)؛ كذا كلمة الله اتّخذ جسدينا، ولا انفصل ولا ابتعد عن الآب والروح، ولا يقال قطّ عن الآب والروح إنّهما لبسا جسداً مع الكلمة.

The Third Section: Christ, Our Leader and Our Guide

الباب الثالث: المسيح رئيسنا ومرشدنا

Introduction

المقدمة

72. And after we explained that, our King said to us: “Who is your leader and your guide?”

٧٢ - وبعدهما شرحنا ذلك قال لنا ملكنا: مَنْ هو رئيسك ومرشدك؟

73. I answered him: “Verily, it is Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him).”

٧٣ - جاوبته: إِنَّه يسوع المسيح (عليه السلام)

1. Why Are You Not Circumcised Like Your Guide?

١ - لماذا لا تختتنون مثل مرشدكم؟

74. Then the king asked me: “Had Christ been circumcised or not?”

٧٤ - ثم سألني الملك: هل ان المسيح كان مختتناً¹⁶⁰ ام لا؟

75. So, I answered him: “Yes.”

٧٥ - فجاوبته: نعم.

¹⁶⁰ Appeared as مختننا in MS 662.

76. Then the king said to me: “Why then, are you not circumcised? If your leader and guide, Jesus Christ, had been circumcised, then it obliges you by necessity to be circumcised as well.”

٧٦ - فقال لي الملك: لماذا إذا أنت لا تختتن؟ إذا كان رئيسك ومرشدك يسوع المسيح قد اختتن، فيلزمك من الضرورة أن تختتن أنت أيضاً.

a) Christ abolished circumcision through his baptism

أ - ابطل المسيح الختان بعماده

77. I answered him saying: “Oh King, surely Jesus Christ had been circumcised and baptized as well. His circumcision occurred after eight days, according to the injunction¹⁶¹ of the law, and his baptism occurred nearly 30 years later. He abolished the circumcision through his baptism.¹⁶²

٧٧ - فجاوبته قائلاً: ايها الملك، إنّ يسوع المسيح قد اختتن واعتمد ايضاً؛ وختانته كانت بعد ثمانية ايام، حسب أمر الناموس؛ وعماده صار بعد ثلاثين سنة تقريباً؛ وأبطل الختان بعماده.

78. Therefore, Christ observed the law, in its entirety, to attract the Jews toward salvation. However, I am not obliged to observe any law, but the Gospel. On account of that, even if Christ had been circumcised, I am not circumcised, rather I am baptized by the water and the Spirit¹⁶³ like him and I believe in him. If Christ was baptized, therefore, it is a necessity that I adhere to baptism. And

¹⁶¹ The Arabic phrase امر الناموس is a translation of the Syriac phrase ܐܡܪ ܢܝܡܘܨܐ, which was rightly translated by Mingana as, “the injunction of the law.”

¹⁶² Rom. 2:25-29; 4:9-12.

¹⁶³ Mt. 5:17; Jn. 3:5.

through this I leave the shadow and the sign, and I follow the source and the truth.”

٧٨ - فالمسيح حفظ الناموس كلّهُ ليجذب اليهود إلى الخلاص. وأنا لست مُلتزماً بأن أحفظ الناموس، إلاّ الإنجيل. لأجل ذلك فلو أن المسيح قد اختتن، فأنا لا اختتن، بل اعتمد بالماء والروح مثله. وأعتقد به. وإن المسيح اعتمد، فالضرورة تلزمني بالعماد؛ وبذلك، أترك الظلّ والرمز، وأتبع الأصل والحقيقة.

b) Because circumcision is a sign for his baptism

ب - لأنّ الختان رمز لعماده

79. Then the King asked me: “How did Jesus (Peace be upon him) abolish circumcision? And what is the sign of which you speak about?”

٧٩ - ثمّ سألني الملك: كيف أبطل يسوع (عليه السلام) الختان؟ وما هو الرمز الذي

قات عنه؟

80. We answered him: “Oh King, the Torah, in its entirety, was a symbol for the Gospel¹⁶⁴ and the sacrifices, which were written in the law, were a symbol of the sacrifice for Christ.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the priesthood and the high-priesthood¹⁶⁶ of the law were a symbol of the priesthood of Christ and his high-priesthood, and the bodily circumcision was a symbol for his spiritual circumcision.

¹⁶⁴ Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 8:5 and 13.

¹⁶⁵ Heb. 9:15; 10:11.

¹⁶⁶ The Arabic translator, by using the Arabic حبريّة, is attempting to reflect the original Syriac word ܡܫܝܚܘܬܐ, which according to J. Payne Smith's *Compendious Syriac Dictionary* means “priesthood.” The Arabic text, by juxtaposing the terms الكهنوت and حبريّة الناموس, is attempting to reflect the Syriac text, which uses the terms ܡܫܝܚܘܬܐ and ܡܫܝܚܘܬܐ ܥܘܠܡܝܐ, which again have been justifiably translated by Mingana as “priesthood” and “high-priesthood.”

٨٠ - فجوابناه: ايّها الملك، انّ التوراة بأسرها كانت رمزاً للإنجيل، والذبايح التي كانت مسطورة في الناموس كانت رمزاً لذبح المسيح، ثمّ الكهنوت وحرية الناموس كانتا رمزاً لكهنوت المسيح وحرية، والختانة الجسدية كانت رمزاً لختانته الروحية.

81. And as he abrogated the Torah by his Gospel, and the sacrifices by his sacrifice, and the high-priesthood of the law by his high-priesthood, in such a way, he had abolished circumcision which was fulfilled by the action of the hands of mankind by his circumcision (that is to say his baptism) which did not occur by the actions of the hands of mankind but by the power of the Holy Spirit. It (his baptism) is the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven and of the resurrection of the deceased.”

٨١ - وكما أبطل بإنجيله التوراة، وبذبحه الذبايح، وبحريته الحبرية الناموسية؛ هكذا قد أبطل الختانة التي كانت تكمل بفعل الأيدي البشرية بختانته (اي بعماده)، التي لم تصر بفعل أيادي البشر، بل بقوة الروح القدس. وهي سرّ عن ملكوت السماء، وعن القيامة من بين الأموات.

c) The abolition of circumcision is not contrary to the law

ت - وليس بإبطاله الختانة مضادة الناموس

82. So, our King said to me: “If Jesus (Peace be upon him) had abolished the law and all of its prescriptions, then, therefore, he was its enemy and antagonist, because antagonism is said of things which destroy each other.”

٨٢ - فقال لي ملكنا: إذا كان عيسى (عليه السلام) أبطل الناموس وجميع أوامره، فإذا كان عدواً له ومضاداً. لأنّ المضادة تقال عن الأشياء التي تنقض بعضها بعضاً.

83. We answered him saying: “Just as the light of the stars is nullified by the light of the sun, and the childish acts by the acts of maturity,¹⁶⁷ and the entire earthly kingdom by the heavenly kingdom, for that reason, it may not be said that the sun is opposed to the stars, or man to himself, or the Kingdom of God to the Kingdom of Man. Likewise, Jesus (Peace be upon him), when he abrogated the Mosaic Law with his Gospel was neither its antagonist nor its enemy.”

٨٣ - فجاوبناه قائلين: كما أنّ ضياء النجوم يبطل بنور الشمس، والأفعال الطفوليّة بأفعال الرجوليّة، والكمال والملكوت الأرضي بالملكوت السماوي، فلا يقال إنّ الشمس هي مضادّة للنجوم، أو الإنسان لذاته، أو ملكوت الله لملكوت البشر؛ هكذا، لمّا أبطل عيسى (عليه السلام) الناموس الموسوي بإنجيله، ليس هو مضادًا له ولا عدوًّا.

2. Why Do You Not Pray Toward Jerusalem Like Your Guide?

٢ - لماذا لا تصلّون نحو القدس مثل مرشدكم؟

84. So, our King said to me: “From the birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) to his ascension to heaven, where did he used to pray and worship? Was it not in the Holy House and toward Jerusalem?”

٨٤ - فملكنا قال لي: من حين ولادة عيسى (عليه السلام) إلى صعوده إلى السماء، أين كان يُصلّي ويسجد؟ ألا في البيت المقدّس وفي أورشليم؟

85. We responded to him: “Yes.”

٨٥ - فجاوبناه: نعم.

86. So, the King said to me: “So why do you worship and pray to God in the direction of the east?”

¹⁶⁷ A similar sentiment can be found in 1 Cor. 13:11.

٨٦ - فقال لي الملك: فلماذا أنت تسجد وتصلّي الله¹⁶⁸ في المشرق؟

87. We answered him: “Oh King, surely true worship is that which is performed by mankind for God in the Kingdom of Heaven. And if the earthly paradise was a symbol of the heavenly garden, and the location of the garden was in the east,¹⁶⁹ then, therefore, it is proper that we worship and pray toward the east, where the earthly paradise was, which was a symbol of the garden, as we said.”

٨٧ - فجاوبناه: أيها الملك، إنّ السجدة الحقيقية هي التي تصير من البشر لله في ملكوت السماء: وإن الفردوس الأرضي كان رمزاً عن الجنة السماوية. والحال أن الفردوس كان في المشرق. فإذًا، بالصواب نحن نسجد ونصلّي في المشرق، حيث كان الفردوس الأرضي، الذي كان رمزاً عن الجنة كما قلنا.

3. How is Christ Your God, When He Prays and Worships?

٣ - كيف المسيح آلهكم، وهو يصلّي ويسجد؟

88. At that moment, our King said to me: “What do you say about Jesus (Peace be upon him)? Did he pray as well as worship?”

٨٨ - حينئذٍ قال لي ملكنا: ماذا تقول عن عيسى (عليه السلام)؟ هل صلّى هو أيضاً

وسجد؟

89. So, we answered him: “Yes, he prayed and also worshiped.”

¹⁶⁸ The Arabic text more correctly should be written تصلي لله.

¹⁶⁹ Gen 2:8.

٨٩ - فجاوبناه: نعم، هو أيضاً صلّى وسجد.

90. Then our King said to me: “In saying this, you deny the divinity of Messiah. If he prays and worships, he is not God; and if he was God, then he would not pray nor worship.”

٩٠ - ثمّ قال لي ملكنا: أنت بهذا القول تُنكر لاهوت المسيح. إن كان قد صلّى وسجد، ليس بإله. وإن كان الهاً، فلم يصلّ ولم يسجد.

91. So, we answered him: “In that he is God, he did not worship and he did not pray, rather to him one worships and prays. In that he is a man, he worshiped and prayed and we have clarified previously that he is God and man together.”¹⁷⁰

٩١ - فجاوبناه: بما أنّه إله، لم يسجد ولم يصلّ، بل له يُسجد ويُصلّى، بما أنّه إنسان، سجد وصلّى. وقد بيّنا أنّاً أنّه إله وإنسان معاً.

¹⁷⁰ This is referring back to section 13.

The Fourth Section: Why Do You Not Accept the Testimony of the Scriptures Regarding Muhammad?

الباب الرابع: لماذا لا تقبل شهادة الكتب عن محمد؟

Introduction

المقدمة

92. After that, our King transitioned from this subject to another topic, and he said to me: “What is the reason that you accept Christ and the Gospel from the testimony of the Torah and of the (Books) of the Prophets and you do not accept the testimony of Christ and the Gospel regarding Muhammad (Peace be upon him)?”

٩٢ - بعد ذلك ملكننا انتقل من هذا البحث إلى موضوع آخر، وقال لي: ما هو السبب أنك تقبل المسيح والإنجيل من شهادة التوراة والأنبياء، ولست تقبل شهادة المسيح والإنجيل عن محمد (عليه السلام)؟

1. We Accept Christ Because One Finds Many Testimonies Regarding Him.

١ - نقبل المسيح لوجود شهادات كثيرة عنه.

93. So, I answered saying: “Oh King, surely we received regarding Christ numerous testimonies from the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets, all of which testify unanimously about that.

٩٣ - فجاوبت قائلاً: أيها الملك، إننا اقتبلنا عن المسيح شهادات كثيرة من التوراة والأنبياء. جميعهم يشهدون اتفاقاً على ذلك.

a) Testimonies about his birth and about his miracles.

أ - شهادات عن ولادته ومعجزاته

94. At times, they testify, regarding his mother, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin conceives and begets a son.’¹⁷¹ And from this we know that he had been conceived and that he had been born without the union of a man with a woman. Such was befitting for the Word of God, which was born of the Father without a mother, to be born of a mother without a father. Therefore, his second birth will be a testimony of the first birth.

٩٤ - تارةً يشهدون عن أمّه قائلين: {هوذا العذراء تحبل وتلد ابناً}. ومن ذلك نعلم أنه قد حُبل به ووُلد من دون اقتران رجلٍ مع امرأة. كذا كان يليق بكلمة الله، الذي ولد من الآب دون أمّ، أن يولد من أمّ دون أبٍ، لتكون ولادته الثانية شهادة عن الولادة الأولى.

95. Sometimes they announce for us his name, since it is said about him that: ‘He will be called Immanuel, Marvelous Councilor, Omnipotent God, Leader of the World.’¹⁷²

٩٥ - وتارةً يصرّحون لنا اسمه، إذ قيل عنه إنه {يُدعى اسمه عمّانؤئيل، وعجيباً ومشيراً، إلهاً قديراً، رئيس العالم}. .

96. At other times, they speak of his miracles and marvels thusly: ‘Behold, surely your God brings vindication; a part of God himself will come and he will redeem you. At that moment, the eyes of the blind will be opened and ears of the deaf will be opened; at that time, the lame will jump like a gazelle and the tongue of the mute will sing.’¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Isa. 7:14.

¹⁷² Isa. 7:14; 9:5.

¹⁷³ Isa. 35: 4-6.

٩٦ - وتارةً يتكلمون عن عجائبه ومعجزاته هكذا: {ها إنَّ إلهكم يأتي منتقماً، وجزاء الله نفسه يأتي ويُخَلِّصكم. حينئذٍ تفتتح عيون العميان، وتفتتح أذان الصمِّ. حينئذٍ يقفز الأعرج مثل الغزال ويترنَّم لسان الأبكم}.

b) Testimonies of his passion, his resurrection, and his second coming

ب - شهادات عن آلامه وقيامته ومجيئه الثاني.

97. At other times, they teach us of his passion saying: ‘He is pierced for our sins and abased for our crimes.’¹⁷⁴

٩٧ - وتارةً يعلمونا عن آلامه قائلين: {وهو يُذبح لأجل خطايانا، ويتَّضع لأجل أثامنا}.

98. Then, concerning his resurrection, they say: ‘Because you would not abandon my soul in hell nor allow your friend to be cast into perdition,’¹⁷⁵ and ‘The Lord said to me: “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.”’¹⁷⁶

٩٨ - ثمَّ عن قيامته يقولون: {لأنَّك لم تترك نفسي في الجحيم ولم تعط لصفيك أن يرى الفساد}. و{الرب قال لي: أنت ابني، فأنا اليوم ولدتك}.

99. Then, regarding his ascension to heaven, it is said: ‘You ascended on high, you led captivity captive, and received gifts from mankind,’¹⁷⁷ and also ‘God ascended with glory, and the Lord with a burst of the trumpet.’¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Is. 53:5.

¹⁷⁵ Ps. 16:10.

¹⁷⁶ Ps. 2:7.

¹⁷⁷ Ps. 68:18.

¹⁷⁸ Ps. 47:6.

٩٩ - ثمّ عن صعوده الى السماء قيل: {صعدت الى العلاء، وسبيت سبياً، وقبلت مواهب لبني البشر}. وأيضاً: {صعد الله بالمجد، والرب بصوت البوق}.

100. And in another place, it is said of his second coming from heaven: 'I was contemplating in the visions of the night, and, behold, coming on the clouds of heaven, like the Son of Man, he came and arrived upon the Ancient of Days, and they presented him before him. And he was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom, in order that all the people, nations, and languages may serve him. Surely, his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will never vanish, and his kingdom will never cease.'¹⁷⁹

١٠٠ - وفي محلّ آخر قيل عن مجيئه الثاني من السماء: {وكنْتُ أرى في رؤيا الليل، وإذا مع سحاب السماء مثل ابن بشر، جاء ووصل إلى القديم الأيام، وقدموه إلى قدامه. فأعطي سلطاناً وكرامةً وملكوتهً، لتتعبّد له كلّ الشعوب والأمم والألسنة. إنّ سلطانه سلطانٌ أبدي لن يُنزع، وملكوته لن ينقضي}.

Summary

الخلاصة

101. Therefore, these verses and a number of others revealingly bear-witness to Jesus Christ; however, I have never seen absolutely one solitary verse in the Gospel, in the (Books) of the Prophets or in others, bearing witness to Muhammad, his works, or his name."

١٠١ - فهذه الآيات وغيرها كثيرة تشهد جلياً عن يسوع المسيح. ولكن لم أر البتّة آيةً واحدة، في الإنجيل أو في الأنبياء وغيرهم، تشهد عن محمّد وعن أعماله واسمه.

¹⁷⁹ Dan. 7:13-14.

2. Is Not the Paraclete¹⁸⁰ a Testimony to Muhammad?

٢ - أليس الفارقليط شهادة عن محمد؟

102. At that moment, our gentle and humble King signaled me to no longer speak of this. Then he asked me again: “Do you not see a testimony to Muhammad (Peace be upon him).”

١٠٢ - حينئذٍ ملكنا الحليم الوديع أشار إليّ أن لا أقول أكثر من هذا. ثم سألتني تكررًا: ألم تر شهادة عن محمد (عليه السلام)؟

103. And I answered him: “No, Oh King, lover of mankind.”

١٠٣ - فجاوبته: كلا، أيها الملك محب البشر.

a) Who is the Paraclete?

أ - من هو الفارقليط؟

104. Then he asked of me: “Who is the Paraclete?”

١٠٤ - فسألني: ومن هو الفارقليط؟

105. So, I answered him: “The Paraclete is the Spirit of God.”

١٠٥ - فجاوبته: إنّ الفارقليط هو روح الله.

¹⁸⁰ Paraclete = παράκλητος = الفارقليط.

106. Then the King asked me: “And what is the Spirit of God?”

١٠٦ - فسألني الملك: وما هو روح الله؟

107. So, I answered him: “Verily the Spirit of God is God; it possesses the divine nature and it has the quality of emanation, as Jesus Christ taught us about it.”

١٠٧ - فجاوبته: إنّ روح الله هو الله، ذو الطبيعة الإلهية، وله خاصّة أن ينبثق، كما علّمنا عنه يسوع المسيح.

108. And our victorious King said to me: “And who is the one which Jesus (Peace be upon him) spoke of.”

١٠٨ - وملكنّا المظفّر قال لي: ومن هو الذي تكلم عنه عيسى (عليه السلام)؟

109. I answered him: “Surely, Christ said to his disciples: ‘When I ascend to heaven, I will send to you the Paraclete Spirit, who emanates from the Father, who the world is not able to receive, and he will be with you and amongst you, he who knows everything and examines everything, even the profundities of God. And he will remind you of the truth, which I spoke to you. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.’”¹⁸¹

١٠٩ - فجاوبته: إنّ المسيح قال لتلاميذه: {لَمَّا أَصْعَدَ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ، أَرْسَلَ لَكُمْ الرُّوحَ الْفَارْقَلِيطَ الَّذِي يَنْبَثِقُ مِنَ الْآبِ؛ الَّذِي الْعَالَمُ لَمْ يَقْدِرْ أَنْ يَقْبَلَهُ، وَهُوَ عِنْدَكُمْ وَفِي وَسْطِكُمْ؛ الَّذِي يَعْرِفُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ، وَيَفْحَصُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ، حَتَّى أَعْمَاقِ اللَّهِ. وَهُوَ يُذَكِّرُكُمْ بِجَمِيعِ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي قَلْتُهُ لَكُمْ. ذَلِكَ يَمَجِّدُنِي، لِأَنَّهُ يَأْخُذُ مِمَّا لِي وَيُخْبِرُكُمْ}.

¹⁸¹ Jn. 14:16-17; Acts. 1:8; Col. 2:10.

110. Then our King said to me: “All this designates the coming of Muhammad (Peace be upon him).”

١١٠ - فملكنا قال لي: هذه جميعها تدلّ عن مجيء محمّد (عليه السلام).

b) Surely, Muhammad is not the Paraclete

ب - ان محمّدًا ليس بالفارقليط

111. I answered him: “If Muhammad was the Paraclete, and the Paraclete is the Spirit of God, then, therefore, Muhammad was the Spirit of God.

١١١ - فجاوبته قائلاً: إن كان محمّد هو الفارقليط، فالفارقليط هو روح الله؛ فإذا

محمّد هو روح الله.

112. And the Spirit of God is undefined¹⁸² like God, so, therefore, Muhammad is not defined; and that which is not defined is invisible,¹⁸³ so, therefore, Muhammad is invisible; and that which is invisible is not embodied, so, therefore, Muhammad is not embodied; and that which is not embodied is not constructed, so, therefore, Muhammad is not constructed;

١١٢ - وروح الله ليس بمحدود كأنه؛ فإذا محمّد هو غير محدود. والذي هو غير

محدود، لا يُدرك بالنظر؛ فإذا محمّد لا يُدرك بالنظر. والذي هو غير مدرك بالنظر، هو غير

مجسّم؛ فإذا محمّد هو غير مجسّم. والذي هو غير مجسّم، هو غير مرگّب، فإذا محمّد هو

غير مرگّب.

¹⁸² The Arabic phrase ليس بمحدود is a rendering of the Syriac phrase لم حصصه, which is translated by Mingana as “uncircumscribed.” In J. Payne Smith’s *Compendious Syriac Dictionary* the phrase is translated as either “uncircumscribed” or “undefined.”

¹⁸³ The Arabic phrase, “لا يُدرك بالنظر,” carries a literal meaning of “is not comprehended through vision.”

113. And if Muhammad was constructed, embodied, visible, and defined, he is not the Spirit of God; and that which is not the Spirit of God is not the Paraclete, so, therefore, Muhammad is not the Paraclete.

١١٣ - وإن كان محمد هو مركّب ومُجسّم ومنظور ومحدود، ليس هو بروح الله. والذي ليس هو بروح الله، ليس هو الفارقليط، فأذاً محمد ليس هو الفارقليط.

114. Subsequently, the Paraclete is from heaven and from the Father, whereas Muhammad is from earth and from the nature of Adam; so, therefore, Muhammad is not the Paraclete.

١١٤ - ثمّ إنّ الفارقليط هو من السماء ومن الأب، ومحمد هو من الأرض من طبيعة آدم؛ فإذا محمد ليس بالفارقليط.

115. And the Paraclete also knows the depths of God,¹⁸⁴ but Muhammad acknowledged that he was ignorant of the things, which will happen to him as well as to those who believe in him;¹⁸⁵ so, therefore, he is not the Paraclete.

١١٥ - والفارقليط أيضاً يعرف أعماق الله، ولكن محمد يعترف بأنّه يجهل أيضاً الأمور التي تقع¹⁸⁶ به وبالذين يؤمنون به؛ فأذاً محمد ليس هو الفارقليط.

116. Surely, the Paraclete was with the Apostles and amongst them when Christ was speaking to them, whereas Muhammad was not with the Apostles nor amongst them; so, therefore, he is not the Paraclete.

¹⁸⁴ 1 Col. 2:10.

¹⁸⁵ Timothy here is referencing multiple passages in the Qur'ān where Muhammad claims to be ignorant of things to come. Mingana notes the Qur'ān 6:50, 7:188.

¹⁸⁶ Appeared as تصنع in Cheikho's edition of the text. See Samir's notes on this section in his critical edition

١١٦ - ثم إنّ الفارقليط كان مع الحواريين وفي وسطهم، كما قال المسيح إذ كان يخاطبهم. ومحمد لم يكن مع الحواريين ولا في وسطهم؛ فأذاً ليس هو بالفارقليط.

117. Moreover, surely the Paraclete manifested to the Apostles ten days after the ascension of Jesus (Peace be upon him) to heaven, whereas Muhammad appeared more than six hundred years later; so, therefore, Muhammad is not the Paraclete.

١١٧ - وأيضاً، إنّ الفارقليط، بعد عشرة إيام لصعود عيسى (عليه السلام) الى السماء، تظاهر للحواريين. ومحمد بعد ستمائة سنة ونيّف ظهر؛ فأذاً محمد ليس بالفارقليط.

118. Furthermore, surely the Paraclete¹⁸⁷ taught the Apostles that God has three hypostases, whereas Muhammad did not believe that; so, therefore, he is not the Paraclete.

١١٨ - وايضاً، إنّ الفارقليط علم الحواريين عن الله أنّه بثلاثة أقانيم، ومحمد لا يعتقد بذلك؛ فأذاً ليس هو الفارقليط.

119. Then the Paraclete performed many miracles and a number of signs by the hands of the Apostles, whereas Muhammad did not produce one sign by the hands of his companions or his followers; so, therefore, he is not the Paraclete.

١١٩ - ثم إنّ الفارقليط قد صنع على أيادي الحواريين معجزات كثيرة وآيات متعدّدة، ومحمد لم يصنع آيةً واحدة على أيدي أصحابه وتابعيه؛ فأذاً ليس هو بالفارقليط.

120. Additionally, the Paraclete is equal to the Father and to the Son in nature.¹⁸⁸ From that, one knows that he is also the creator of the celestial forces.

¹⁸⁷ In the original Syriac, Paraclete is replaced here by Jesus.

As the Prophet David said regarding the Spirit of God: ‘By his Spirit all the celestial and earthly forces were created.’¹⁸⁹ And the fact is that Muhammad was not a creator; so, therefore, he is not the Paraclete.

١٢٠ - ثم انّ الفارقليط هو مساوي للآب والابن بالطبيعة؛ ومن ذلك يُعرف أنّه ايضاً خالق القوّات السماويّة، مثلما قال داود النبي عن روح الله، {وبروحه خُلقت جميع القوّات السماويّة والارضويّة}، والحال أن محمّد ليس هو بخالق. فأذاً ليس هو بالفارقليط.

Conclusion: There is No Mention of Muhammad in the Gospel

الخاتمة: لا ذكر لمحمّد في الإنجيل

121. If Muhammad had been mentioned in the Gospel, it would have been necessary to declare, in the books, his coming and his name, and to mention his mother, and his people, as one finds concerning the coming of Jesus (Peace be upon him) in the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets with clarity. But none of that is mentioned about him (Muhammad) at all. And there is no mention of him in the Gospel ever.”

١٢١ - لو كان صار له ذكر في الإنجيل، لكان ينبغي ان يصرّح عن مجيئه واسمه وذكر أمّه وشعبه في الكتب، كما يوجد محرّراً عن مجيء عيسى (عليه السلام) في التوراة والأنبياء بنوع واضح. فلا شيء من ذلك مذكور عنه البتة. وليس له ذكر في الإنجيل قطّ.

3. Did You Not Falsify Your Books Suppressing the Testimonies of Muhammad?

¹⁸⁸ The Arabic phrase مساوي بالطبيعة literally meaning “equal in nature” is a representation of the Syriac ܡܫܘܘܝܘܬܐܝܢܐ meaning “equal in essence or being,” which is a representation of the Greek ὁμοουσιος meaning “equal in essence,” which is often translated into English as “consubstantial.”

¹⁸⁹ Ps. 33:6.

٣ - ألم تحرفوا كتبكم، حاذفين الشهادات عن محمد؟

122. Then our King, lover of God, said to me: “As the Jews did to Jesus (Peace be upon him), and did not accept him, likewise, the Christians¹⁹⁰ also did to Muhammad (Peace be upon him), and did not accept him.”

١٢٢ - فملكنا محبّ الله قال لي: كما صنع اليهود في عيسى (عليه السلام) وما قبلوه، هكذا فعل النصارى ايضاً في محمد (عليه السلام) ولم يقبلوه!

123. I answered him saying: “The Jews, since they did not receive Christ, deserved punishment and chastisement, because the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets are full of proofs and testimonies about him (Christ). But, we did not accept Muhammad because we did not have one proof of him in our books; therefore, we are not guilty in this.”

١٢٣ - فجاوبته قائلاً: إنّ اليهود، إذ لم يقبلوا المسيح استحقّوا الجزاء والقصاص، لأن التوراة والأنبياء مشحونة من البراهين والشهادات عنه. ولكن نحن لم نقبل محمد، من حيث ليس لنا برهان واحد عنه في كتبنا؛ فلذلك ليس لنا ذنب في هذا.

a) The accusations: You falsified the books

أ - الإتهام: حرّفتم الكتب

124. Then the King said to me: “There were in your books many proofs and testimonies about Muhammad (Peace be upon him), but you have corrupted the books and falsified them.”

¹⁹⁰ The Arabic term النصارى is Qur’anic, and means “Nazarenes.” This term can be found throughout the Qur’an in the following passages, 2:62, 2:111, 2:113, 2:120, 2:135, 2:140, 5:14, 5:18, 5:51, 5:69, 5:82, 9:30, and 22:17.

١٢٤ - فالملك قال لي: كانت موجودة في كتبكم براهين وشواهد كثيرة عن محمّد (عليه السلام)، ولكنهم أفسدتم الكتب وحرّفتموها.

b) The first objection: Where is the book devoid of falsification?

ب - الردّ الأوّل: اين الكتاب الخالي من التحريف؟

125. I answered him saying: “Oh King, from where do you have information that we have falsified the books? And where do you find such a book devoid of falsification, which taught you that we have falsified our books? Bring it, so that we may see it and adhere to it and renounce the falsified book. So from where, therefore, do you know that the Gospel is falsified?”

١٢٥ - فجاوبته قائلاً: ايها الملك، من أين لكم معلومات بأننا حرّفنا الكتب؟ واين يوجد ذلك الكتاب الخالي من التحريف، الذي تعلّمتم منه أنّنا قد حرّفنا كتابنا؟ إيثوا به، لنراه ونتمسك به ونترك الكتاب المحرّف. فمن أين إذاً تعرفون بأنّ الإنجيل هو محرّف؟

c) The second objection: What advantage would we have from (its) falsification?

ت - الردّ الثاني: أيّة فائدة لنا من التحريف؟

126. And what advantage would we have in its falsification? For if one found a mentioning of Muhammad in the Gospel, we would not have suppressed his name, but rather we would have said, ‘He has not yet come, and this is not the one of whom you speak, but he will come.’

١٢٦ - وأيّة فائدة كانت لنا من تحريفه؟ فلو وُجد ذكر محمّد في الإنجيل، لما كنّا نرفع اسمه منه. بل كنّا نقول أنّه لم يأت بعد، وليس هو هذا الذي تقولون أنتم عنه، بل مزعم أن يأتي.

127. Just as the Jews were not able to omit the name of Jesus (Peace be upon him) in the Torah and in the (Books) of the Prophets, but rather they still dispute us saying: ‘Surely Christ has not yet come to the world, but he will come.’ And with this they resemble the blind who do not have eyes and deny the appearance of the sun at midday.

١٢٧ - كما أنّ اليهود لم يستطيعوا أن يحذفوا اسم عيسى (عليه السلام) من التوراة والأنبياء. بل يخاصموننا قائلين: إنّ المسيح لم يأت بعد إلى العالم، بل سوف يأتي! وبذلك يشبهون العميان، الذين ليس لهم عيون، وينكرون ظهور الشمس في نصف الظهر.

128. Likewise, we also would not have been able to remove the name of Muhammad from the Book, but we would have opposed you regarding the time and regarding the person, like the Jews.

١٢٨ - هكذا نحن أيضاً لم نكنُ نستطيع أن نرفع اسم محمد من الكتاب، بل كنّا نضاددكم عن الزمان وعن الشخص كاليهود.

Conclusion

الخاتمة

129. But I speak the truth, if I saw a single prophecy in the Gospel regarding the coming of Muhammad, I would abandon the Gospel and follow the Qur’ān, and I would pass from one to the other, as I passed from the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets to the Gospel.”

١٢٩ - ولكن أقول الحقّ: لو رأيتُ نبوءة واحدة في الإنجيل عن مجيء محمد، لتركتُ الإنجيل وتبعْتُ القرآن. وكنت أنتقل من هذا إلى هذا، كما انتقلتُ من التوراة والأنبياء إلى الإنجيل.

4. Supplementary: The Qur'ān was not confirmed by signs

٤ - ملحق: القرآن لم يثبت بآيات

130. Then our King said to me: “What do you say about our book, was it revealed by God?”

١٣٠ - ثم ملكنا قال لي: ماذا تقول عن كتابنا؟ أليس هو منزل من الله؟

131. I answered him saying: “If it was revealed by God, I am not able to judge that, but I say that the Word of God, written in the Torah, the (Books) of the Prophets, the Gospel, and (Books) of the Apostles, had been entirely confirmed by signs and miracles, which is known by your Majesty as well;¹⁹¹ however, I say this book (the Qur'ān) was not confirmed by one solitary sign.

١٣١ - فجاوبته قائلاً: إن كان منزلاً من الله، لا أستطيع أن أحكم بذلك. ولكن أقول: أنّ كلام الله المسطور في التوراة والأنبياء والإنجيل والحواريين، قد تثبتت كلّه بآيات ومعجزات، كما لا يُخفى ايضاً دولتكم؛ ولكن أقول: هذا الكتاب لم يُثبَّتْ بآية واحدة قطّ.

132. It would be necessary that other signs and miracles appear for its verification. In the same way, when God (May he be exalted and majestified) wanted to abrogate the Old Testament, which had been confirmed by many signs and miracles, he made the Gospel its substitute by producing other signs and marvels by the hand of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and the Apostles. Therefore, he confirmed the Gospel and abrogated the Old Testament.

¹⁹¹ The Arabic phrase كما لا يُخفى ايضاً دولتكم translates literally as, “as is not hidden to your Majesty as well.”

١٣٢ - وكان ينبغي أن تُظهر بحقّه آيات ومعجزات أخرى. كما ان الله (عز وجل)،
لما اراد أن يُبطل العهد العتيق، الذي كان قد ثبته بآيات ومعجزات كثيرة، ويجعل عوضه
الإنجيل، صنع آيات أخرى وعجائب على يد عيسى (عليه السلام) والحواريين؛ فثبت
الإنجيل، وأبطل العهد العتيق.

133. Likewise, it would be required that one produce new miracles and signs in support of the confirmation the Qur'ān and abrogation the Gospel. This is because the signs and the marvels are a decisive proof of the will of the Most High; from that, your Majesty knows the conclusion.¹⁹²

١٣٣ - هكذا كان يقتضي أن يصنع معجزات وآيات جديدة، لأجل إثبات القرآن
وتبطل الإنجيل. وذلك لأن الآيات والعجائب هي برهان قاطع عن إرادته تعالى؛ ومن ذلك
تعلم دولتكم النتيجة.

5. Did Isaiah Not Prophecy About Muhammad?

٥ - ألم يتنبأ اشعيا عن محمد؟

Introduction: He Prophesied About Darius and Cyrus

المقدّمة: تنبأ عن داريوس وكورش

134. And our victorious King said to me: “Who is the one who is said to have been seen riding a camel?”

١٣٤ - وملكنا المظفر قال لي: من هو ذاك الذي قيل عنه إنه شوهد وهو راكب

جمالاً؟

¹⁹² The final sentence in the Syriac text reads, “Since signs and miracles are proofs of the will of God, the conclusion drawn from their absence in your Book is well known to your Majesty.” The implications of Timothy’s words are much clearer in the Syriac.

135. We answered him saying: “That this verse was given by the Prophet Isaiah when he said: ‘I saw a pair of cavalymen, one riding a donkey, and one riding a camel.’”¹⁹³

١٣٥ - فجاوبناه قائلين: انّ هذه الآية أتى بها أشعيا النبي، حيث يقول: {فأبصرَ ركباً أزواج فوارس، من راكب حمار، ومن راكب جمل}.

136. And our King asked me: “Who is the rider of the donkey and the rider of the camel?”

١٣٦ - وما كنا سألني: من هو الراكب حماراً والراكب جملاً؟

137. So, I answered him: “That the rider of the donkey is Darius, son of Artaxerxes the Mede; and the rider of the camel is Cyrus, the Persian who is from Elam. And he (Cyrus) seized the Kingdom of the Medes and annexed it to the Kingdom of the Persians, while Darius the Mede seized the Kingdom of the Babylonians and annexed it to the Kingdom of the Medes.”

١٣٧ - فجاوبته: أنّ الراكب حماراً هو داريوش ابن احشورش المادي، والراكب جملاً هو كورش الفارسي الذي هو من عيلام؛ وهو ضبط مملكة الماديين، وأضافها على مملكة الفرس. وداريوس المادي قد ضبط مملكة البابليين، وأضافها على مملكة الماديين.

a) The first indication: From the context of the speech

أ - الدليل الأوّل: من سياق الكلام

138. And our King asked me: “How can you confirm that?”

¹⁹³ Isa. 21:7.

١٧٨ - وملكننا سألني: كيف تُثبت ذلك؟

139. So, I answered him: “I confirm this from context, because the Prophet Isaiah had previously said, in the same mentioned scripture: ‘Arise, Oh Elam, siege Media!’¹⁹⁴ Therefore, Elam designated Cyrus the Persian, the rider of a camel, and Media designates Darius, the rider of a donkey.

١٣٩ - فجاوبته: انّني أثبت هذا من سياق الكلام؛ لأنّ النبيّ أشعيا قد قال سابقاً، في ذات الاصحاح المذكور: {اصعدي، يا عيلام، وحاصري يا مادي}. فبعيلام أشار الى كورش الفارسي الراكب جملاً، وبمادي أشار إلى داريوس الراكب حماراً.

140. Then the aforementioned Prophet said: ‘And with a cavalry of men, pairs of horses came. So, I answered and said: “It was the fall, it was the fall, of Babylon.”’¹⁹⁵ This verse clearly designates Darius and Cyrus, because the two of them destroyed the Kingdom of the Babylonians.”

١٤٠ - ثم يقول النبي المشار اليه: {وإذا بركب من الرجال، أزواج من الفرسان أتوا. فأجاب وقال: سقطت، سقطت بابل}. فيشير جلياً بهذه الآية إلى داريوس وكورش، لأنهما قرّضا مملكة البابليين.

b) The second indication: From geography

ب - الدليل الثاني: من الجغرافيا

141. Then our King asked me saying: “Why were these kingdoms compared with a rider of a camel and a rider of a donkey?”

¹⁹⁴ Isa. 21:2.

¹⁹⁵ Isa. 21:9.

١٤١ - ثم سألتني ملكنا قائلاً: لماذا شُبِّهت هذه الممالك براكب جمل وراكب حمار؟

142. I answered him saying: “Because in the region of the Medes you find the most donkeys, and in the region of Persis and Elam you find camels. So, by the mounts of donkeys and camels, the Prophet (Isaiah) designates through metaphor the regions, and by the regions the kingdoms, which were going to produce from them the two aforementioned kings.¹⁹⁶

١٤٢ - فجاوبته قائلاً: لأنّ في ناحية الماديين توجد على الأكثر حمير، وفي ناحية فارس وعلام توجد جمال. فبدوابّ الحمير والجمال يشير النبي بالاستعارة إلى النواحي، وبالنواحي إلى الممالك التي كان عتيذاً أن يخرج منها [الملكان] المشار اليهما.

143. Then the Kingdom of the Medes was on the verge to become slow and weak, whereas the Kingdom of Persia and Elam was going to become strong and energetic. So, therefore, God compared the Kingdom of Medes to a docile donkey and the (Kingdom) of Persia and Elam to a strong and vigorous camel.

١٤٣ - ثمّ إنّ مملكة الماديين كانت مُزْمعة أن تصير رخوةً وضعيفة، ومملكة الفرس أو عيلام كانت عتيدة أن تصير قويّة ونشيطة، فلذلك شبّه الله مملكة الماديين بالحمار الرخو، والفرس أو عيلام بالجمل القويّ والنشيط.

c) The third indication: From the Book of Daniel.

ت - الدليل الثالث: من سفر دانيال

144. Likewise, the Prophet Daniel compared the Kingdom of Medes to a weak bear, and the Kingdom of Elamites and Persians to a rapidly moving tiger

¹⁹⁶ In Samir's edition of the text, the final word in the section appeared as مكان. It has been corrected to its appropriate form, which is ملكان.

when he said: ‘Behold the second beast resembled a bear, raised on one side, and in its mouth between its teeth were three ribs. Then I looked, and behold the other (beast) like a tiger, which had four wings like a bird on its back.’¹⁹⁷

١٤٤ - وأيضاً دانيال النبي شبّه مملكة الماديين بالدبّ الرخو، ومملكة العيلاميين والفرس بالنمر السريع الحركة، حيث يقول: {وإذا بالحيوان الآخر الثاني كشبه الدبّ، وقف ناحيةً، في فمه بين أسنانه ثلاثة لأضلع... ثمّ كنتُ أنظر. وإذا الآخر مثل النمر، وله أربعة اجنحة مثل الطائر على ظهره}.

145. Then in Daniel, God Most High compared the Kingdom of the Medes to silver, because it is pliant, and the Persians and the Elamites to bronze because it is hardened;¹⁹⁸ so, therefore, the Prophet, by the donkey designated the Kingdom of Medes and by the camel the Kingdom of the Persians and the Elamites.”

١٤٥ - ثمّ في دانيال قد شبّه الله تعالى مملكة الماديين بالفضّة لأنها لينّة، والفرس والعيلاميين بالنحاس لأنّه صلب. فأذاً، النبي، بالحمار يُريد مملكة الماديين، وبالجمال مملكة الفرس والعيلاميين.

d) The fourth indication: From history

ث - الدليل الرابع: من التاريخ

146. And our King said to me: “Surely, the rider of the donkey was Jesus (Peace be upon him), and the rider of the camel was Muhammad (Peace be upon him).”

¹⁹⁷ Dan. 7:5-6.

¹⁹⁸ Dan. 2:32-33.

١٤٦ - وملكننا قال لي: إنّ راكب الحمار هو عيسى (عليه السلام)، وراكب الجمل هو محمّد (عليه السلام).

147. So, I answered him saying: “The arrangement of the times and events negates such a connection to Jesus and Muhammad. In this situation, the truth is learned by observing the times and prophecies of the prophets. Surely, the expression ‘donkey’ indicates the Medes, while the expression ‘camel’ indicates the Elamites and not another people.

١٤٧ - فجاوبته قائلاً: إنّ ترتيب الأزمنة والأموّر ينفي نسبة هذا المعنى إلى يسوع ومحمّد، في هذا الموضوع. وتُعلم الحقيقة¹⁹⁹ من ملاحظة الأزمنة ورؤيات الأنبياء. إنّ لفظة الحمار تشير إلى الماديين، ولفظ جمل إلى العلاميين، ولا إلى أشخاص آخرين.

148. So, perhaps people have necessarily assigned the expression ‘donkey’ to Jesus, since one finds in another place written of him, in (the Book of) Zachariah: ‘Look here, your King is coming; he is just, victorious, and humble and he rides a donkey, and a foal the son of a she-donkey.’²⁰⁰

١٤٨ - فربّما عبارة الحمار أناس يطلقونها اضطراراً على يسوع، اذ يوجد في موضع آخر مسطور عنه في زكريا: {ها هوذا ملكك يأتيك، هو عادل ومنصور وضيع، وراكب حماراً وجحشاً ابن أتان}.

149. And as for the expression ‘camel,’ it is not possible to be assigned to Muhammad ever.”

١٤٩ - وأمّا عبارة الجمل لا يمكن أن تُطلق على محمّد النبّيّ.

¹⁹⁹ Appeared as حقيقة in Cheikho’s edition. See Samir’s notes on this section in his critical edition.

²⁰⁰ Zach. 9:9.

e) The fifth indication: From the Holy Scriptures

ج - الدليل الخامس: من الكتاب المقدس

150. Our King said to me: “For what reason?”

١٥٠ - وملكنا قال لي: ولأَيِّ سبب؟

151. I answered him: “Because the Prophet Jacob said in the Book of Genesis: ‘The scepter will not depart from Judah, (that is to say the scepter of power), nor the leader²⁰¹ from his loins (that is to say the possessor of profecy), until he comes, he who possesses (that is to say Jesus Christ, the King and the Judge), and to him the people will obey.’²⁰² By mentioning this, Jacob clarified that after the coming of Jesus the prophets and prophecies would cease.

١٥١ - جاوبته: لأن يعقوب النبي قال في سفر التكوين: { لا يزول القضيب من يهوذا (أي قضيب الحكم) والمدبّر من بين رجليه (أي ذو النبوة) حتى يجيء الذي له (أي يسوع المسيح له الملك والحكم)، وله يكون خضوع الشعوب } وبذلك بيّن يعقوب المذكور أنّ، بعد مجيء عيسى، تنتهي الأنبياء والنبوات.

152. Likewise, the Prophet Daniel said: ‘Know and understand that from the going forth of the Word to rebuild Jerusalem until the (coming of the) Messiah, the Leader, (will be) seven weeks, and two and threescore weeks: and he will rebuild the street and the moat in troubled times.’²⁰³ And likewise: ‘after the two and threescore weeks, Christ will be killed and he will not have a successor,

²⁰¹ The Arabic word مدبّر is a somewhat difficult to translate. Its Arabic meaning carries a general meaning of someone who leads or directs.

²⁰² Gen. 49:10.

²⁰³ Dan. 9:25.

and the people of the Prince will come to destroy the city and the sanctuary.²⁰⁴ Therefore, the prophecy of Daniel clarified that, through Christ, the prophecies and the visions were accomplished.

١٥٢ - وايضاً، دانيال النبي قال: {فاعلم وادر انه من خروج الكلام لثبني ايضاً
أورشليم، إلى المسيح القائد، سبعة أسابيع واثان وستون أسبوعاً. ويبنى ايضاً السوق والخليج
في ضيقة الأوقات}. وكذا: {وبعد الاثنين والستين أسبوعاً، يُقتل المسيح ولا يكون له،
وشعب الرئيس الآتي يخرّب المدينة والقدس}. وبذلك بيّن دانيال النبي أنّ في المسيح تتم
الأنبياء والرؤيات.

153. And Jesus himself, likewise, said: ‘All the (Books) of the Prophets and the Torah, prophesied until John the Baptist.²⁰⁵ So, therefore, all the prophecies, which had taken place, finished with Messiah; and after Messiah there will be neither prophecy nor prophets; so, all the prophets prophesied about Jesus Christ.

١٥٣ - ويسوع نفسه قال ايضاً إنّ: {جميع الأنبياء والتوراة تنبأوا إلى يوحنا
المعمدان}؛ فاذًا، جميع النبوات التي صارت، انتهت بالمسيح، ومن بعد المسيح لا تكون نبوة
ولا نبي. فالأنبياء جميعهم تنبأوا عن يسوع المسيح.

The Conclusion: Jesus is the Seal of the Prophets

الخاتمة: يسوع خاتم الأنبياء

154. Christ taught us about the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, it does not benefit us any longer to obtain other knowledge, concerning mortal and earthly

²⁰⁴ Dan. 9:26.

²⁰⁵ Mt. 11:13.

things, after we had obtained knowledge about the mystery of the divinity and of the Kingdom of Heaven;

١٥٤ - والمسيح علّمنا عن ملكوت السماء، فلم يُعد يفيدنا ان نكتسب معرفة أخرى دائر الامور البشريّة والأرضيّة بعد اكتسابنا معرفة عن سرّ اللاهوت وملكوت السماء.

155. Because the prophets prophesied, at times, about the things of this world and of its kingdoms, and sometimes about the appearance of the Word of God in the flesh; however, Christ did not teach about human things, but of the divine things and of the Kingdom of Heaven, as we have said.

١٥٥ - لأن الأنبياء تنبأوا: تارة عن أمور هذا العالم وعن ممالكه، وتارة عن ظهور كلمة الله بالجسد. وأمّا المسيح، لم يعلمنا عن الأمور البشريّة، بل عن الأمور الإلهيّة وعن ملكوت السماء، كما قلنا.

156. So, therefore, if the prophecies were accomplished by Christ, as we have seen, and after the age of Christ, the Kingdom of God is to be announced as the power of Jesus then it is vain and, therefore, futile to believe in another prophecy, after the incarnation of the Word of God, to which one prostrates himself.

١٥٦ - فإدّا، إن كانت النبوءات قد انتهت بالمسيح كما رأينا، ومن عهد المسيح فيما بعد يُبشّر بملكوت الله كقوة يسوع، فباطلاً ادّا وعبثاً يكون اعتقادنا في نبوة أخرى بعد تجسّد كلمة الله المسجود له.

157. The good and just order is that which elevates us from bottom to top, from the human things to the divine things, and from earthly (things) to heavenly (things), whereas the declension from the top to the bottom, and from the divine things to the human things, and from the heavenly (things) to the earthly (things), therefore, is an inversed and disapproved arrangement.”

١٥٧ - لأن الترتيب الحسن والجيد هو ذلك الذي يُصعدنا من أسفل الى فوق، من الأمور البشريّة إلى الأمور الإلهيّة، ومن الأرضيّات إلى السماويّات. وأمّا النزول من فوق إلى أسفل، ومن الأمور الإلهيّة إلى الأمور البشريّة، ومن السماويّات إلى الارضيّات، فهو ترتيب معكوس ومرذول.

The Fifth Section: What Do You Say about Muhammad?

الباب الخامس: ماذا تقول عن محمد؟

Introduction

المقدمة

158. And our patient King, full of wisdom, said to me: “What do you say about Muhammad?”

١٥٨ - وملكننا الحلیم المملوء حکمة قال لی: ماذا تقول عن محمد؟

1. Muhammad Followed in the Path of the Prophets

١ - سلك محمد في طريق الانبياء

159. I answered him saying: “Surely, Muhammad deserves the praise of all speakers, which is due to the fact that he followed in the path of the prophets and of the friends of God, because all of the prophets had taught about the unity of God and Muhammad taught about that; so, therefore, he followed in path of the prophets as well.

١٥٩ - فجاوبته قائلاً: إنّ محمدًا يستحقّ المدح من جميع الناطقين، وذلك لأجل سلوكه في طريق الأنبياء ومحبي الله. لأن سائر الأنبياء قد علّموا عن وحدانية الله، ومحمد علّم عن ذلك. فإذًا، هو أيضاً سلك بطريق الأنبياء.

160. Then, just as all the prophets distanced the people from evil and wicked things and attracted them toward goodness and virtue, in such a way, Muhammad distanced the children of his nation from evil and attracted them

toward goodness and virtues; so, therefore, he followed in the path of the prophets.

١٦٠ - ثمّ كما إنّ جميع الأنبياء أبعَدوا الناس عن الشرِّ والسيِّئات، وجذبوهم إلى الصّلاح والفضيلة، هكذا محمّد أبعَد بني أمّته عن الشرِّ، وجذبهم إلى الصّلاح والفضائل. فإدّا، هو ايضاً قد سلك في طريق الأنبياء.

161. Next, all the prophets prohibited the children of mankind from worshipping devils and serving idols and they encouraged them toward serving God (May he be exalted and majestified) and toward worshipping his majesty. Likewise, Muhammad prohibited the children of his nation from serving the devils and worshipping idols and he exhorted them toward the knowledge of God and worshipping of the Most High, who is one God and there is no other god equal to him. It is, therefore, clear that Muhammad followed in path of the prophets.

١٦١ - ثمّ إنّ جميع الأنبياء منعوا بني البشر من سجدة الشياطين وعبادة الأوثان، وحرّضوهم على عبادة الله (عزّ وجلّ)، والسجود لجلالته. هكذا محمّد منع بني أمّته من عبادة الشياطين والسجدة للأوثان، وحرّضهم على معرفة الله والسجود له تعالى، الذي هو وحده إله وليس بإله آخر سواه. فقد اتّضح أدّا أنّ محمّداً قد سلك في طريق الأنبياء.

162. So, if Muhammad had taught regarding God, his Word, and his Spirit, as all the prophets had prophesied regarding this, then, therefore, Muhammad had followed in the path of the prophets.

١٦٢ - ثمّ إنّ كان محمّد قد علّم عن الله وكلمته وروحه، فجميع الأنبياء تنبأوا عن ذلك. فمحمّد أدّا قد سلك في طريق الأنبياء.

2. The Zeal of Muhammad Was Like the Zeal of Moses and Abraham.

٢ - غيرة محمد تشبه غيرة موسى وإبراهيم

163. So, who would not praise, nor venerate, nor honor the one that struggles for God, not with speech only, but with the sword as well he demonstrated zealotry on behalf of the Most High Creator?

١٦٣ - فمن لا يمدح ويكرّم ويبجلّ ذاك الذي يحارب من أجل الله؟ ليس بالكلام فقط، بل وبالسيف أيضاً أظهر الغيرة لأجل الباري تعالى؟

164. And as the Prophet Moses did with the sons of Israel, who had made a calf of gold and worshipped it, that is to say he killed (them) with the sword and destroyed all those who worshipped the calf;²⁰⁶ likewise, Muhammad did as well when he exhibited his zeal²⁰⁷ on behalf of the Creator (May the Most High be praised), whom he loved and honored more than himself, his tribe, and the sons of his nation.

١٦٤ - وكما فعل موسى النبي في بني إسرائيل الذين صنعوا عجلاً من الذهب وسجدوا له، فقتل بالسيف وأباد جميع الذين سجدوا للعجل؛ هكذا محمد أيضاً صنع، لما أظهر الغيرة لأجل الباري (سبحانه تعالى)،²⁰⁸ وأحبّه وكرّمه أكثر من نفسه وعشيرته وبنى أمته.

165. Those who followed him in the honoring of God and his fear (of God), he praised them and he honored them, and he glorified them, and he promised them paradise as well as honor and respect on behalf of God, in this world and in the hereafter, in paradise. While those who served the idols and worshipped them, he fought them and warned them of the painful chastisement in

²⁰⁶ Ex. 32:25-28.

²⁰⁷ The Arabic literally says “the zeal,” but it is referring back to the phrase, “غيرة محمد تشبه غيرة”، therefore it has been translated as, “his zeal.”

²⁰⁸ The phrase سبحانه تعالى is omitted from Cheikho’s edition of the text. See Samir’s notes on this section in his critical edition

the fire of hell, which in it the hypocrites will be burned, and in it they will remain forever.

١٦٥ - والذين كانوا يتبعونه في إكرام الله ومخافته، كان يمجدهم ويكرمهم ويمدحهم، ويوعدهم ايضاً الجنة والمجد والإكرام من لدن الله في هذا العالم وفي الآخرة بالجنة. والذين كانوا يعبدون الأصنام ويسجدون لها، كان يحاربهم وينذرهم بعذاب أليم في نار الجحيم، التي بها يحترق المنافقون وهم فيها خالدون.

166. And as Abraham did, the friend of God,²⁰⁹ who abandoned the idols and his people and followed God and worshipped him; therefore, he began to teach the oneness of God to the nations. Likewise, Muhammad did as well, when he abandoned worshipping the idols and those who worshipped them from amongst the sons of his people and others from amongst the foreigners; so, he solely honored that which is the one the True God and he worshipped him.

١٦٦ - وكما فعل إبراهيم خليل الله، الذي ترك الاوثان وأبناء جنسه، وتبع الله وسجد له، فصار يعلم عن وحدانية الله للأمم؛ هكذا صنع ايضاً محمد، لما ترك سجدة الاوثان والذين كانوا يسجدون لها من بني جنسه وغيرهم من غرباء، فأكرم فقط ذاك الذي هو وحده إله الحق وسجد له.

3. Thus, God Glorified Him and Caused Him to Reign over the Nations.

٣ - نذلك كرمه الله وسلطه على الأمم

167. On account of that, God Most High greatly honored him and put under the footstool of his feet two powerful nations that roared like a lion, whose voice could be heard in the world like thunder; I mean the nation of the Persians and the nation of the Byzantines. The first worshipped created beings in place of

²⁰⁹ The Arabic phrase, “خليل الله” is a common epithet of Abraham.

their Creator and the other attributed passion and death in the flesh to that who absolutely does not suffer nor die.²¹⁰

١٦٧ - لأجل ذلك كرّمه الله تعالى جدّاً، وأخضع تحت مواطئ قدميه الدولتين القويّتين اللتين كانتا تزاران كالأسد، وكالرعء كان يُسمع في العالم صوت كليهما، أعني دولة الفرس ودولة الرومانيين. فالأولى كانت تسجد للمخلوقات عوض خالقها، والأخرى كانت تنسب آلاماً وموتاً بالجسد لذاك الذي لا يتألم ولا يموت مطلقاً.

168. So, God Most High expanded the authority of his kingdom by the hand of the Emir of the Believers and his descendents, from the east to the west, and from the north to the south. So, who would not praise, Oh victorious King, the one whom God praises? Who would not weave the laurel of praise and honor for he who is praised and honored by God? So, therefore, I and all those who love God, for this and that (reason), speak (in such a way) about Muhammad, Oh victorious King.”

١٦٨ - فوسّع الله تعالى سلطه مملكته، بيد أمير المؤمنين وأولاده، من المشرق إلى المغرب، ومن الشمال إلى الجنوب. فمن لا يمدح، أيها الملك المظفر، ذاك الذي مدحه²¹¹ الله؟ من لا يضفر إكليل التمجيد والتبجيل لذاك الذي مدّه الله وبجلّه؟ فذلك ومثل ذلك، أنا وجميع محبّي الله ما نقول عن محمّد، أيها الملك المظفر.

4. Thus, Profess the Unity of God

²¹⁰ The translator of the of the Arabic text is critiquing Byzantine Dyophysite Orthodoxy. From the Greek, meaning “two natures,” Dyophysitism is the Christological belief that Jesus Christ possessed two natures, one divine and one human. Dyophysitism can be further broken down into Orthodox and Nestorian Dyophysitism. Orthodox Dyophysitism determines that the two natures of Jesus Christ are mysteriously and perfectly unified, while Nestorian Dyophysitism determines that the two natures of Jesus Christ are completely and absolutely separated from one another. Consequently, in Nestorian Christology, the divine nature of God is in no way connected to the suffering of Jesus Christ.

²¹¹ The word مدحه is omitted from Cheikho’s edition of the text. See Samir’s notes on this section in his critical edition

٤ - وَحَدَّ إِذَا اللهُ!

169. And our king said to me: “So, therefore, you should accept the word of the Prophet.”

١٦٩ - وملكننا قال لي: فإذًا، ينبغي لك أن تقبل كلام النبي.

170. I answered him: “Of which word do you speak our King?”

١٧٠ - فجاوبته: عن أيّ كلام يقول ملكننا؟

171. So, the king said to me: “The word that he said about God, that he is one and there is not another apart from him.”

١٧١ - فقال لي الملك: الكلام الذي يقوله عن الله، إنّه واحد وليس آخر دونه.

Conclusion: Unity in Tri-unity

الخاتمة: توحيد في تثليث.

172. I answered him saying: “The belief in one God I have learned, Oh King, from the Torah, the (Books) of the Prophets, and the Gospel and for it (belief in one God) I am devoted and, on account of it, I am willing to die.”

١٧٢ - فجاوبته قائلاً: إنّ الإعتقاد بإله واحد قد تعلّمته، أيها الملك، من التوراة والأنبياء، والإنجيل؛ وبه أنا متمسك، ومن أجله أموت.

173. And our victorious king said to me: “You believe and confess in one God as you said, but you say that this God is triune and one.”

١٧٣ - وملكنا المظفر قال لي: انك تؤمن وتعتقد بإله واحد كما قلت، ولكن تقول إن هذا الإله هو مثلث وواحد.

174. And I answered him: “I do not deny that, Oh King, but I confess that God is one and he is triune. However, he is not triune in the divinity, but in the hypostases of his Word and his Spirit. Again, he is triune and one. However, he is not one in the hypostases, but in the divinity, as we confirmed above.”²¹²

١٧٤ - فجاوبته: لا أنكر ذلك، أيها الملك، بل اعترف أن الله واحد وهو مثلث؛ ولكن ليس مثلث بالألوهية، بل بأقانيم كلمته وروحه. وأنه ايضاً مثلث وواحد؛ ولكن ليس واحداً بالأقانيم، بل بالألوهية، كما ثبتنا ذلك آنفاً.

²¹² Interestingly, throughout the Arabic version of the text, small sections of redundant examples and explications have been redacted. However, sections 157-174 of the Arabic version of the text have been appended to the original Syriac.

The Sixth Section: The Death of Christ on the Cross

الباب السادس: موت المسيح على الصليب

1. Why Do You Worship the Cross?

١ - لماذا تسجدون للصليب؟

175. So, our victorious king said to me: “Why do you worship the cross?”

١٧٥ - فملكنا المظفر قال لي: لماذا انتم تسجدون للصليب؟

176. I answered him saying: “Surely, we worship the cross, because it is the cause of life.”

١٧٦ - فجوابته قائلاً: إنّنا نسجد للصليب لأنّه علّة الحياة.

177. Then our victorious king said to me repeatedly: “The cross is not the cause of life, but of death.”

١٧٧ - فملكنا قال لي تكراراً: إنّ الصليب ليس علّة الحياة بل علّة الموت.

178. I answered him: “Oh King, surely the cross is a cause of death, as you said, but the death is the cause of the resurrection, and the resurrection is the cause of life and immortality; so, therefore, the cross, Oh King, is the cause of life and immortality; so, therefore, through it, we worship God Most High, who opened for us the wellspring of life and immortality.

١٧٨ - فجاوبته: أيها الملك، إنّ الصليب هو علّة الموت، كما قلت. ولكنّ الموت هو علّة القيامة، وهي علّة الحياة وعدم الموت. فأذا الصليب، أيها الملك، هو علّة الحياة وعدم الموت. فلذلك نقدّم بواسطته السجدة لله تعالى، الذي فتح لنا به ينبوع الحياة وعدم الموت.

179. He who said in the beginning: 'Light shines from the darkness,'²¹³ made, through bitter wood, sweet the bitter water,²¹⁴ and by way of the murderous serpent gave life to the children of Israel;²¹⁵ he has produced for us from the wood of the cross the fruit of life, and also illuminated for us from between the arms²¹⁶ of the cross rays of life and immortality.

١٧٩ - فذاك الذي قال في البدء: {إنّه من الظلام يُشرق النور} وأحلى المياه المرّة بخشبة المرّة، وبمنظر الحيّة القتّالة أعطى الحياة لبني اسرائيل، هو أخرج لنا من خشبة الصليب ثمار الحياة، وهو ايضاً أشرق لنا بين اغصان الصليب أشعة الحياة وعدم الموت.

180. As we take pains in honoring the trees and serving it, out of love for their fruits, likewise we honor the cross and venerate it, out of respect for the fruit of life, which is drawn from it.

١٨٠ - وكما أننا نبذل الجهد في إكرام الأشجار وخدمتها، حبّاً بأثمارها؛ هكذا نحن نكرّم الصليب ونوقّره، إجلالاً لثمرة الحياة التي خرجت منه.

181. Furthermore, surely the luminous rays of the love of God were to shine upon all created things visible and invisible; however, when he forsook his

²¹³ 2 Cor. 4:6.

²¹⁴ Ex. 15:23-25.

²¹⁵ Num. 21:9.

²¹⁶ The Arabic phrase اغصان الصليب carries a literal meaning of "branches of the cross."

son to death on the wooden cross,²¹⁷ out of love for the salvation of all, their life and resurrection, the rays of this life shone even brighter for mankind.

١٨١ - ثم، ولئن أشعة محبة الله الساطعة تتلألأ نحو الكلّ في المخلوقات المنظورة والغير المنظورة. ولكن لما أسلم ابنه إلى الموت على خشبة الصليب، حباً بخلص الكلّ وحياتهم وانبعاثهم اكثر، ازدادت أشعة هذه الحياة تلالؤاً نحو الناطقين.

182. So, with appropriateness, Oh victorious King, all are supposed to display their love for God by means of the cross, by which the Most High manifested his love for all.”

١٨٢ - فبالصّواب، ايها الملك المظفر، يُفترَض على الكلّ أن يُظهروا محبتهم لله بواسطة الصليب، الذي أظهر به تعالى محبته نحو الجميع.

2. Did Christ Die on the Cross?

٢ - هل مات المسيح على الصليب؟

a) It is not possible that God can die

أ - لا يمكن أن يموت الله

183. And our king said to me: “Is it possible that God can die, being what he is?”

١٨٣ - وملكنا قال لي: أيمكن أن يموت الله كأنناً ما كان؟

²¹⁷ The Arabic phrase خشبة الصليب literally means, “the wood of the cross;” however, the phrase is usually rendered in English as “wooden cross.”

184. Then I answered him saying: “Surely, Jesus, in that he is God, did not die; however, he died, in human nature, in that he is a man.

١٨٤ - فجاوبته قائلاً: إنّ يسوع بما أنّه إله لم يموت، بل مات في الطبيعة البشريّة بما أنّه إنسان.

185. Just as, humiliation is attributed to the King himself, when his purple cloak is torn in half in dishonor or (when) his royal garments are torn in derision, in a similar fashion, the death of Jesus (Peace be upon him), which happened to the body, is attributed to his divine hypostasis.”

١٨٥ - فكما أنّ الإهانة تُنسب للملك نفسه، حينما ينشقّ أرجوانه بإهانة، أو تتمزّق ثيابه الملوكيّة بحقارة؛ هكذا موت يسوع (عليه السلام)، الذي صار في الجسد، يُنسب لأقنومه الإلهي.

b) They did not kill him, nor crucify him, but it seemed as though to them.

ب - ما قتلوه، وما صلبوه، ولكن شُبّه لهم

186. So, our King said to me: “God forbid! Surely, (regarding) Jesus (Peace be upon him): ‘They did not kill him, nor crucify him, but it seemed as though to them.’”²¹⁸

١٨٦ - فملكنّا قال لي: أعوذ بالله! إنّ عيسى (عليه السلام): {ما قتلوه، وما صلبوه، ولكن شُبّه لهم}.

187. I answered him saying: “Surely, it is written in Sūrat ‘Īsa; [however, we saw these verses in Sūrat Maryam, namely]:²¹⁹ ‘Peace be upon me, the day I

²¹⁸ Sūrat an-Nisā’ 4:156.

was born, the day I will die, and the day when I will resurrect.’²²⁰ So, it is obviously clarified by these verses that Jesus died and resurrected.

١٨٧ - فجوابته قائلاً: إنه مكتوب في سورة عيسى [ولكن نحن رأينا هذه الآيات في سورة مريم]، وهي: {السلام عليّ يوم ولدتُ، ويوم أموتُ، ويوم أبعثُ حيّاً}. فيتضح من هذه الآية جليّاً أنّ يسوع قد مات وقام.

188. And in Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān: “God said to Jesus, ‘Surely I will take you and raise you up to me.’”²²¹

١٨٨ - وفي سورة آل عمران: {قال الله لعيسى: إني متوفّيكَ ورافعُكَ إليّ}.

c) Christ did not die yet, but he will die.

ت - لم يمّت المسيح بعد، ولكن سوف يموت

189. So, our King said to me: “Surely, Jesus did not die yet; he will die.”

١٨٩ - فملكنا قال لي: إنّ عيسى لم يمّت بعد، سوف يموت.

190. I answered him saying: “If Jesus had not died until now, then he would not have risen to heaven, nor been resurrected, rather he will rise and then he will be resurrected. But, if the ascension of Jesus to heaven and his resurrection were, Oh King, known and confirmed by all long ago, as was testified in your book as well, then rightly we say that Jesus had died on the wooden cross, as the prophets prophesied before his coming.”

²¹⁹ This bracketed section is an addition to the Syriac text. The added section clarifies the passage and redirects the reader to the proper Sūrah.

²²⁰ Sūrat Maryam 19:33.

²²¹ Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān 3:55.

١٩٠ - فجاوبته قائلاً: إن كان عيسى لم يموت حتى الآن فلم يصعد بعد إلى السماء، ولم يُبعث حيًّا، بل سوف يصعد فيُبعث حيًّا. ولكن إن كان، أيها الملك، معلوماً ومقرراً لدى الجميع صعود يسوع إلى السماء منذ أمدٍ مديد، وانبعثه حيًّا، كما يشهد عن ذلك كتابك أيضاً؛ فبصوابٍ نقول إن عيسى قد مات على خشبة الصليب، كما تنبأ عنه الأنبياء قبل مجيئه.

d) The prophets did not prophesy about the death of Christ

ث - لم يتنبأ الأنبياء عن موت المسيح

191. Then our King said to me: “Which of the prophets prophesied about Jesus that he would die on the wooden cross?”

١٩١ - فملكنا قال لي: وأي من الأنبياء تنبأ عن عيسى أنه يموت على خشبة الصليب.

192. I answered him: “Surely, many of them prophesied that.

١٩٢ - فجاوبته: إن كثيرين من هؤلاء تنبأوا عن ذلك.

193. So, first the Prophet David said: ‘They pierced my hands and feet. They counted all my bones, and they looked and gazed at me; they divided my garments between them, and they cast lots for my clothes.’²²² And it was said in the Gospel that all this had already taken place.

١٩٣ - فأولاً قال داود النبي: {ثقبوا يديّ ورجليّ، وأحصي كلّ عظامي. وهم نظروا وتفرّسوا فيّ، وقسموا ثيابي بينهم، وعلى لباسي اقترعوا}. وقيل في الإنجيل أنّ هذه جميعها قد جرت بالفعل.

²²² Ps. 22:17-19.

194. Then the Prophet Isaiah says of Messiah that: ‘He will be wounded for our sins, and crushed for our iniquities.’²²³ And the aforementioned prophet said regarding the person of Jesus: ‘I gave my back to those who would strike me, and my cheeks to those who would pull out my hair, and I did not cover my face from those who would blame me and spit at me.’²²⁴

١٩٤ - ثم أشعيا النبي يقول عن المسيح إنه: {يُذبح لأجل خطايانا، ويتضع لأجل آثامنا}. ويقول النبي المشار إليه بمنزلة شخص عيسى: {جسدي أعطيته للضاربين، وخدي للناثقين. لم أستر وجهي عن المعيرين والباصقين}.

195. Then the Prophet Jeremiah thusly says: ‘I was like a tame lamb one sends forth to the slaughter and they trampled me, saying: “Let us discard the branch and its sustenance, and let us eradicate him from the land of the living.”’²²⁵

١٩٥ - ثم أرميا النبي يقول هكذا: {وأنا مثل حمل داجن يُساق إلى الذبح. وإنهم فكّروا عليّ نيّات قائلين: لنلقينّ العود في خبزه، ونهلكه من أرض الأحياء}.

196. Likewise, the Prophet Daniel said: ‘Surely, Christ will be killed, and he will not have a successor.’²²⁶

١٩٦ - وأيضاً دانيال النبي يقول: {إنّ المسيح يُقتل، ولا يكون له...}.

²²³ Is. 53:5.

²²⁴ Is. 50:6 – The syntax of this sentence has been slightly changed to avoid awkward English constructions. The Arabic words ضاربين, ناثقين, معيرين, and باصقين literally mean beaters, hairpluckers, blamers, and spitters.

²²⁵ Jer. 11:19.

²²⁶ Dan. 9:26.

197. Likewise, the Prophet Zachariah speaks: ‘What are these wounds in your hands? So, he said: “Those which I was wounded by in the house of my beloveds. Oh Sword, awaken against my shepherd.”²²⁷

١٩٧ - كذلك زكريّا النبي يقول: { ما هذه الجروح في يديك؟ فيقول: هذه التي بها جُرحتُ في بيت أحبائي. يا أيّها السيف، أنتبه على راعي }.
ج - واذا تنبأوا، فهذا كان تشبيهاً

198. Therefore, the prophets said this and much more about the death of Christ and his murder and crucifixion.”

١٩٨ - فذلك وأكثر من ذلك قال الأنبياء عن موت المسيح وقتله وصلبه.

e) And when they prophesied, these were the allegories.

ج - واذا تنبأوا، فهذا كان تشبيهاً

199. Then our King said to me: “Surely, the prophets described Christ allegorically in such a way.”

١٩٩ - ثمّ ملكنا قال لي: إنّ الأنبياء تشبيهاً شبّهوا المسيح هكذا.

200. Then I answered him: “From whom did they receive this allegory, Oh King, from God or from Satan? So, if this is from God (May he be praised), how would he inspire the prophets (to do something) that does not truly exist? Since it is absolutely unbecoming of the Most High that he inspire something by which mankind be deceived.

²²⁷ Zach. 13:6-7.

٢٠٠ - فجاوبته: ممّن أتاهم هذا التشبيه، أيّها الملك. أمن الله، أو من الشيطان؟ فإن كان من الله سبحانه، كيف كان يوحى إلى الأنبياء ما ليس له وجود حقيقة؟ إذ لا يليق به تعالى مُطلقاً أن يوحى شيئاً يُعشّ به الناس.

201. And if God (May his eminence be exalted) had offered this allegory, devoid of truth, and if the Apostles had written what was revealed to them, then he is the cause of this deception for everyone; however, this condition is impossible.

٢٠١ - فإن كان الله (جلّ شأنه)، أتى بهذا التشبيه الخالي عن الحقيقة، والحواريّون كتبوا ما ووحى إليهم، فصار هو علّه هذا الغشّ للجميع. ولكنّ هذا محال وغير ممكن.

202. So, who offered such an allegory and revealed it to the Apostles? Was it Satan? But, what commonality does Satan (May God humiliate him) have with the Apostles in things specified for divine providence? And who would be so bold in saying that the cursed Devil was able to deceive the Apostles, who through divine strength suppressed and expelled him, and he fled from before them running away and wailing? So, therefore, it must be said that this was revealed by God.”

٢٠٢ - فمّن أتى بكذا تشبيه، وأظهره للحواريّين؟ هل الشيطان؟ ولكن أيّة مشاركة له الشيطان (أخزاه الله) مع الحواريّين في الأمور المختصّة بالعناية الربّانيّة؟ ومن يتجاسر على القول بأنّ الشيطان الرجيم كان يستطيع أن يغش الحواريّين الذين كانوا بالقوة الإلهيّة يضطهدونه ويطرده، وهو كان يهرب من أمامهم مدبّراً ومتولّوا؛ فإذا، يجب القول أنّ ذلك موحى من الله.

3. How Could Christ Die If He is an Omnipotent God?

٣ - كيف يموت المسيح وهو الإله القدير؟

Introduction

المقدمة

203. Then our King said to me: “Surely, Jesus Christ was honored next to God. Therefore, it is not possible that he (God) would have delivered him into the hands of the Jews so that they could kill him.”

٢٠٣ - فملكنا قال لي: إنّ عيسى المسيح كان مكرّماً لدى الله. فلم يكن يسلمه بيد اليهود ليقتلوه.

204. So, I answered him saying: “Surely, the prophets who suffered death by the Jews were not despised for such by God; so, therefore, not all those killed by the Jews are rejected and despised. This is in regards to the prophets.

٢٠٤ - فجاوبته قائلاً: إنّ الأنبياء الذين احتملوا القتل من اليهود، لم يصيروا بذلك مردولين لدى الله ومحقورين. فإذاً، ليس كلّ مقتول من اليهود مردوئاً ومحقوراً. هذا ما يلاحظ الأنبياء.

a) The death of Messiah took place according to his own will.

أ - قتل المسيح تمّ حسب إرادته

205. As for Jesus, we say: ‘Surely, the Jews truly crucified him, not because he was feeble and not because he lacked power over them, but because he endured that of his own free will, as he said in the Gospel of John: “Verily, I lay down my life in order that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down myself. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take

it up again.”²²⁸ So, therefore, Christ showed, by this, that he will suffer of his own will and not due to the fact that he was weak and the Jews strong.

٢٠٥ - وأما نظراً إلى يسوع المسيح، فنقول: إن اليهود قد صلبوه حقيقةً، لا من حيث كان ضعيفاً ولم يقدر عليهم، بل من حيث احتل ذلك بإرادته، كما قال هو في إنجيل يوحنا: {إني أضع نفسي، لأخذها أيضاً. ليس أحدٌ يأخذها مني، بل أضعها أنا من ذاتي. لي سلطان أن أضعها، ولي سلطان أن آخذها أيضاً}. فالمسيح إذاً أظهر بذلك أنه تألم بإرادته، ولا من أجل أنه كان ضعيفاً واليهود أقوياء.

206. For he who was on the wooden cross, caused the heavens to shake, the earth to quake, the light of the sun to darken, and signs of blood in the moon to appear. On account of this, rocks split, the tombs opened, and the dead were resurrected. Truly, he was neither feeble nor unable to save himself from the hands of the Jews. So, therefore, his passion on the wooden cross was of his own will and freedom.”

٢٠٦ - لأنّ الذي زعزع السماء وهو على خشبة الصليب، وزلزل الأرض وأظلم نور الشمس وأظهر علامات الدم في القمر، ومن أجله الصخور تشققت والقبور تفتحت والموتى انبعثت، لم يكن حقيقةً ضعيفاً، ولا ممن لا يستطيع أن يخلص نفسه من يد اليهود. فإذاً، تألمه على خشبة الصليب كان بإرادته وحرية.

b) But that does not mean that the Jews are innocent.

ب - ولكن ذلك لا يعني أنّ اليهود غير مذنبين

207. So, our King then said to me: “So, therefore, the Jews are not guilty for the crucifixion of Christ and his death, because they accomplished his will.”

²²⁸ Jn. 10:17-18.

٢٠٧ - فملكننا قال لي: فأذاً، اليهود ليس لهم ذنب في صلب المسيح وموته، لأنهم كملوا إرادته.

208. I answered him in such a way: “If the Jews had crucified Christ, for this purpose, that he may radiantly resurrect from amongst the dead and that he may gloriously ascend to heaven, then they are not only not guilty, but they deserve praise and commendation.

٢٠٨ - فجوابته هكذا: إن كان اليهود صلبوا المسيح لأجل هذه الغاية، وهي أن يقوم من بين الأموات منورًا ويصعد إلى السماء مُمجدًا، فليس لهم ذنب، لا بل يستحقون المدح والتبجيل.

209. But, since the purpose of the Jews, in crucifying Christ, was oriented towards his death and his demise, on account of this, they deserve chastisement and death, because they crucified Christ in order that he might descend into hell; however, God glorified him, since he resurrected him from amongst the dead and caused him to ascend to heaven.”

٢٠٩ - ولكن غاية اليهود في صلب المسيح، إذ كانت موجّهة إلى قتله وإهلاكه من الارض، لأجل ذلك يستحقون العذاب والموت، لأنهم صلبوا المسيح، لكي يهبط إلى الجحيم. فإله مجده، إذ أقامه من بين الاموات، وأصعده إلى السماء.

c) The death of Messiah took place according to his own volition and because the hatred of the Jews.

ت - قتل المسيح تمّ بإرادته وبسبب حقد اليهود

210. Our King, lover of God, said to me: “Which of these two things do you say? Did Christ want to be crucified or not? If he wanted (to be crucified) then the Jews are not guilty, because they have done his will; so, therefore, why

would they be cursed and rejected? And if he had been crucified against his will, the Jews were stronger than him; so, how is it possible that he be called God, he who was not able to save himself from the hands of his crucifiers, for their will was much stronger than his will?”

٢١٠ - وملكننا محب الله قال لي: أيّا من هذين الأمرين تقول: هل كان يريد المسيح أن يُصلب، أم لا؟ فإن كان يريد، فاليهود ليس لهم ذنب، لأنهم عملوا إرادته؛ فلماذا يكونون ملعونين ومردولين؟ وإن كان صُلبَ دون إرادته، فاليهود صاروا أقوى منه. فكيف يمكن أن يكون ويُدعى إلهاً مَنْ لم يستطع أن ينجي نفسه من يد صالبيه؟ فإرادتهم صارت أقوى من إرادته جداً.

211. I answered him and I also refuted him thusly:

٢١١ - فجلوبته وانا ايضاً معترضاً عليه، هكذا.

212. “What does our plentifully intelligent and abundantly sagacious King think? Which of these two things does he say? Did God (May he be praised) want that the angel become Satan or not? If you responded positively then it is not possible to blame Satan, since he had done the divine will and accomplished it in such a way. If you respond negatively then the will of Satan would therefore conquer the will of God and it would have been superior. Then how is it possible and how can he be called God he whose will is conquered by the will of the Devil”

٢١٢ - ماذا يفتكر ملكنا الغني الذهن والغزير الحكمة، أيّا من هذين الأمرين يقول؟ هل كان يريد الله (سبحانه) أن الملاك يصير شيطاناً، أم لا؟ فإن قلت إيجابياً، فلم يبق عتاب على الشيطان، إذ صار هكذا، لأنه صنع الإرادة الإلهية وكملها. وإن جاوبته سلبياً، فإرادة الشيطان إذا تغلبت على إرادة الله وقويت. فكيف يمكن ان يكون ويدعى إلهاً ذاك الذي غلبت إرادته من إرادة إبليس؟

213. I also say: “Did the Creator (May he be praised) want to expel Adam from the garden (that is to say paradise) or not? If you respond positively then Satan is rescued from blame, because he aided the will of God (May his essence be exalted) in the expulsion of Adam from the garden and his casting him out. And if you respond negatively then do you not say that the will of God was conquered and became feeble, since apart from his will something happened?

٢١٣ - أقول ايضاً: هل كان يريد الباري (سبحانه) أن يطرد آدم من الجنة (اي من الفردوس)، ام لا؟ فإن قلت إيجابياً، فينجو الشيطان من العتاب، لأنه ساعد إرادة الله، (جلّ شأنه)، في إخراج آدم من الجنة وطرده منها. وإن جاوبت سلبياً، فكيف لا تقول إنّ الله غلبت إرادته وأضحى ضعيفاً، إذ من دون مشيئته حدث الأمر؟

214. Likewise, the Most High Creator persists to be an Omnipotent God, although the Devil and Adam sinned against his divine will. Furthermore, Adam and the Devil are not devoid of guilt, even if God was contented with each of them (that is to say that the Devil fell from heaven and Adam was cast out of paradise); this is because the two of them were not sinners for following the will of the Most High, but due to the fact that the two of them completed their will through sin. In this way, Jesus Christ continues to be and should be called God the Possessor of Power.

٢١٤ - فكما أنّ الباري تعالى لا يزال أن يكون إلهاً قديراً، وإن أخطأ إبليس و آدم ضدّ إرادته الإلهية. ثم إنّ آدم وإبليس لا يخلوان من الذنب، وإن كان ارتضى الله بكليهما (أيّ بأنّ إبليس يسقط من السماء، ويُطرَد آدم من الفردوس)، وذلك لأنّهما لم يكونا مخطئين تبعاً لإرادته تعالى، بل لأجل تكميل إرادتهما في الخطيئة؛ هكذا يسوع المسيح لا يزال أن يكون ويُدعى إلهاً ذا القدرة.

Conclusion

215. If we said that the Jews affronted and crucified him without his will, then surely they do not have the power to save themselves from hell and malediction, even though Christ had agreed to suffer on the wooden cross out of his love for the salvation of mankind.

٢١٥ - وإن قلنا إنّ اليهود تجاسروا وصلبوه من دون إرادته²²⁹ إنّ هؤلاء لا يقدرّون أن ينجّوا انفسهم من الجحيم واللعنة. وإنّ المسيح قد ارتضى بأن يتألم على خشبة الصليب، حباً بخلص البشر.

216. Because the Jews did not crucify Jesus following his will, but rather on account of hatred and resentment toward him and he who sent him; so, therefore, this is the reason why they crucified him, in order that he die and perish from the earth. But Christ wanted to be crucified, in order that, by his death, he will give life to all, as we said.²³⁰

٢١٦ - لأنّ اليهود لم يصلبوا عيسى تبعاً لإرادته، بل لأجل البغضة والحقّد نحوه ونحو الذي أرسله فلهذا السبب صلبوه، أي لكي يموت ويهلك في الارض. وأما المسيح أراد أن يُصلّب، حتى بموته يُحيي الجميع كما قلنا.

²²⁹ Appeared as صلبوه باثمهم فلا يقدرّون in Cheikho's edition. See Samir's notes on this section in his critical edition.

²³⁰ After section 216 of the Arabic edition, a large section of the original Syriac is omitted. In this omitted section, Timothy and al-Mahdī discuss various issues concerning the Gospel, specifically its origins and possible contradictions. In the omitted section, Timothy also criticizes the Muslim conception of martyrdom.

The Seventh Section: Why We Do Not Believe That Muhammad is a Prophet

الباب السابع: لماذا لا نؤمن أنّ محمّداً نبي

Introduction

المقدّمة

217. And our victorious King said to me: “Oh Catholicos, it is necessary to know that God (May he be exalted and majestified) first gave the law (that is to say the Sharī’a) by the hand of Moses, and after that, the Gospel by the hand of Jesus; likewise, he produced salvation²³¹ by the hand of Muhammad (Peace be upon him).”

٢١٧ - وملكنّا المظفّر قال لي: أيّها الجاثليق، ينبغي أن تعلم أنّه، كما أنّ الله (عزّ وجلّ) أعطى أولاً الناموس (أي الشريعة) على يد موسى، وبعده الإنجيل على يد عيسى؛ هكذا أيضاً جعل الخلاص على يد محمّد (عليه السلام).

1. God Announced That the Gospel Abrogated the Old Testament

١ - اعلن الله ان الإنجيل ينسخ العهد القديم

Introduction

²³¹ Interestingly, the Arabic text uses the word خلاص, which generally means “salvation” to represent the word ܡܨܝܘܬܐ that is used in the Syriac text. However, the word فرقان exists, which is an Arabicized form of the Syriac ܡܨܝܘܬܐ. So, it is interesting to note that the translator of the text used a completely different word to denote salvation, when a common word existed in both Syriac and Arabic. The word فرقان is used in seven verses in the Qur’ān, including: Q 2:53, 2:185, 3:4, 8:29, 8:41, 21:48, and 25:1.

218. I answered him saying: “Oh King, regarding the Mosaic Law, which was on the verge to be abrogated, God previously announced and openly proclaimed this publicly by the mouth of the prophets.

٢١٨ - فجاوبته قائلاً: ايّها الملك، نظرًا إلى الشريعة الموسويّة التي كانت مزمعة أن تنتسخ، قد سبق الله وأعلن عنها جهراً بضم الأنبياء.

a) He announced this by the mouth the Prophet Jeremiah

أ - اعلن ذلك على فم ارميا النبي

219. So, God Most High spoke through the Prophet Jeremiah thusly: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah: Not like the covenant that I promised their fathers the day when I took them by their hand in order to bring them forth from the land of Egypt; because they broke my covenant, I grew weary of them, the Lord says: But this is the covenant that I will conclude with the people of Israel; after these days, the Lord says, I will place my law to be their foundation and I will write it on their heart, then I will be their God and they will be my people. Man will no longer teach his lord or his brother saying, “Know the Lord,” for they will all know me, all of them, from their young to their old.’²³²

٢١٩ - فيقول الله تعالى في أرميا النبي هكذا: {ها أيّام تأتي، يقول الرب، وأعاهد آل إسرائيل وآل يهوذا عهدًا جديدًا، ليس مثل العهد الذي عاهدت به آباءهم، يوم أمسكت بأيديهم لأخرجهم من ارض مصر، حيث هم نقضوا عهدي، وأنا سئمتهم، يقول الرب. بل هذا يكون العهد الذي به أعاهد آل إسرائيل، بعد تلك الايّام، يقول الرب: أجعل شريعتي في أحشائهم،

²³² Jer. 31:31-34.

وأكتبها على قلوبهم، وأكون لهم إلهاً، وهم يكونون لي شعباً. ولا يُعَلِّم أيضاً الرجل صاحبه والإنسان اخاه، قائلاً: {اعرفوا الرب}، لأنهم سيعرفونني بأجمعهم من صغيرهم إلى كبيرهم}.

220. So, these verses clearly announce the abrogation of the Old Testament (this is to say the Mosaic Law) and the revelation of a New Testament,²³³ (that is to say the Gospel and its establishment).

٢٢٠ - فهذه الآيات تُعلن واضحاً بانتساح العهد العتيق (اي الناموس الموسوي) وبانزال العهد الجديد (اي الإنجيل وإثباته).

b) He announced this by the mouth the Prophet Joel

ب - اعلن ذلك على فم يوئيل النبي

221. Likewise, through the Prophet Joel, God (May he be exalted and majestified) clearly speaks regarding the imminent signs that were to occur at the time of the abrogation of the Mosaic Law and of the establishment of the Gospel, as well as of the Paraclete Spirit, which was to be received by the Apostles, so he says:

٢٢١ - وأيضاً في يوئيل النبي يتكلم الله (عز وجل) صريحاً عن المعجزات المزمع حدوثها، في زمان انتساح الشريعة الموسوية وإثبات الانجيل، وعن الروح الفارقليط الذي كان عتيداً ان يُقبَل من الحواريين، فيقول:

222. 'It will be after this that I will pour my spirit upon all mankind; then, your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your elders will dream dreams, your young people will see visions: Even upon the slaves and upon the servants I will

²³³ The Arabic word used for revelation is انزال

spread my Spirit these days.’²³⁴ So, he designates by the Paraclete Spirit who, after the ascension of Jesus to heaven, was sent to the Apostles, as Jesus previously promised them;

٢٢٢ - {ويكون بعد هذه أني أفيض روعي على كلّ بشرٍ، فيتنبأ بنوكم وبناتكم ويحلم شيوخكم أحلاماً، ويرى شبانكم رؤى. وعلى العبيد أيضاً، وعلى الإماء، أفيض روعي في تلك الأيام}. فيريد بالروح الفارقليط الذي، بعد صعود يسوع المسيح إلى السماء، أرسل إلى الحواريين، كما سبق عيسى ووعدهم.

223. Then the aforementioned prophet says: ‘I will produce signs in heaven and on earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun will change to darkness, and the moon to blood.’²³⁵ And all this occurred, in front of everyone, when Jesus Christ suffered on the wooden cross.

٢٢٣ - ثم يقول النبيّ المشار إليه: {وأجعل معجزات في السماء وعلى الأرض، دماً وناراً وأعمدةً من دخان. الشمس تتحوّل إلى ظلمةٍ والقمر إلى دم}. فهذه جميعها جرت أمام الكلّ، عندما تألم يسوع المسيح على خشبة الصليب.

224. So, when the Prophet Joel warned with these signs, he added saying: ‘That the great and feared day of the Lord will come,’²³⁶ that day on which the Word of God, the incarnated in our nature, will appear in heaven like lightning, with force and great glory, that day on which all the forces of the heavens will be shaken and when stars will fall from heaven,²³⁷ as Jesus himself said in the Gospel.

²³⁴ Joel 2:28-29.

²³⁵ Joel 2:30-31.

²³⁶ Joel 2:31.

²³⁷ Mk. 13:25.

٢٢٤ - فلما أنذر بهذه الآيات يؤيل النبي، أردف قائلاً: {أنه يأتي يوم الرب العظيم المخوف}؛ ذلك اليوم الذي به كلمة الله المتأنس في طبيعتنا يظهر من السماء كالبرق، مع قوّة ومجدٍ كثير؛ ذلك اليوم الذي به جميع قوّات السموات تنزعزع، والنجوم تسقط من السماء، كما قال يسوع نفسه في الانجيل.

225. Then this prophet said: ‘All those who will invoke the name of the Lord will be saved.’ This is to say, all those who read the Gospel of God, and does that which he orders in it, will obtain eternal life.

٢٢٥ - ثم يقول هذا النبي: {ويكون كلّ من يدعو باسم الرب ينجو} اي: كلّ من يقرأ إنجيل الله، ويفعل بما يأمر به، ينال الحياة الدائمة.

Conclusion

الخاتمة

226. So, therefore, God, by these verses,²³⁸ far removed from every corruption and falsification, clearly declared the abrogation of the Old Testament (that is to say the Mosaic Law) and the passage from it to the New Testament (that is to say the Gospel). But, such an abrogation of the Gospel and a passage from it to something else (that is to say the Qur’ān), the Most High (May he be praised) did not teach anywhere.

٢٢٦ - فاتضح أدّا أنّ الله بهذه الآيات، المنزّهة عن كلّ غشّ وكذب، أعلن جليّاً بانتساح العهد العتيق (أي الناموس الموسوي) وبالانتقال منه إلى العهد الجديد (أي الإنجيل). ولكن عن انتساح الإنجيل، والانتقال منه إلى شيءٍ آخر (أي إلى القرآن)، لم يعلم سبحانه تعالى في موضع البتة.

²³⁸ In Arabic, the word آية carries a meaning of both “verse” and “sign.”

227. Therefore, the Old Testament was a symbol of the Gospel and the Gospel was the symbol of the Kingdom of Heaven, which nothing is more preferred than it.”

٢٢٧ - ثمّ العهد القديم كان رمزاً عن الإنجيل والإنجيل هو رمزٌ عن ملكوت السماء، الذي لا شيء أفضل منه.

2. God Did Not Signify Muhammad by Saying: “Surely, the Lord Will Raise for You a Prophet Like Me from amongst Your Brothers.”

٢ - لم يقصد الله محمّداً في قوله: {أَنَّ الرَّبَّ يَقيِمُ لَكُمْ نَبِيًّا مِثْلِي مِنْ بَيْنِ إِخْوَتِكُمْ}.

Introduction

المقدّمة

228. And our victorious King said to me: “Did Moses (Peace be upon him) not say publicly to the children of Israel, in Deuteronomy: ‘Surely the Lord will raise for you a prophet like me from amongst your brothers.’²³⁹ And who are the brothers of the children of Israel other than the Ishmaelites and who had been a prophet like Moses other than Muhammad?”

٢٢٨ - وملكنّا المظفر قال لي: أليس موسى (عليه السلام)، قال علانيّةً لبني اسرائيل، في تثنية الاشتراع: {إِنَّ الرَّبَّ سَوف يَقيِمُ لَكُمْ نَبِيًّا مِثْلِي مِنْ بَيْنِ إِخْوَتِكُمْ}؟ فَمَنْ هُم إِخوة بني اسرائيل، سوى الإسمعيليين؟ ومن صار نبيّاً مثل موسى، سوى محمّد؟

a) Explanation: “From amongst your brothers”

²³⁹ Deut. 28:18.

أ - تفسير: {من بين إخوانكم}؟

229. Then I answered him saying: “Oh King, one finds many brothers of the children of Israel, apart from the Ishmaelites, designated by this expression.

٢٢٩ - فجاوبته قائلاً: أيها الملك إنه يوجد اخوة كثيرة لبني إسرائيل في هذا الاعتبار،

ما خلا الإسمعيليين:

230. First, surely the Edomites are closer to the sons of Israel than the children of Ishmael, because the Israelites were born of Jacob and the Edomites were linked²⁴⁰ to Esau.²⁴¹ As for Jacob and Esau, they were the sons of Isaac, father of the Jews and brother of Ishmael, whom, from him, the Muslims descend; so, therefore, the Edomites are closer to the children of Israel than the children of Ishmael.

٢٣٠ - فأولاً، إنَّ الآدوميّين هم أقرب لبني إسرائيل من بني إسمعيل. وذلك لأنَّ

الإسرائيليين قد وُلدوا من يعقوب، والآدوميّين قد تسلسلوا من عيسو. وأمّا يعقوب وعيسو كانا ابني اسحاق، أبي اليهود، وأخي اسمعيل الذي منه المسلمون. فإذا الآدوميّون هم أقرب لبني إسرائيل من بني اسمعيل.

231. So, therefore, if the words, which Moses said, regarding the brothers of the children of Israel are not to be applied to the 12 tribes, but rather to their other relatives, we say that it is necessary that they be applied more appropriately to the Edomites, because they are closer to the children of Israel than are the children of Ishmael, as we have seen.

²⁴⁰ The Arabic term تسلسلوا is used here to denote a genealogical link or connection.

²⁴¹ Esau is the eldest son of Isaac and older brother of Jacob, who is the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. The story of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau can be read in Gen. 25.

٢٣١ - فأذا ان كان الكلام الذي قال موسى عن اخوة بني اسرائيل لا يُطْلَق على أسباطهم الاثني عشر، بل على أنسابهم الأخر، نقول إنه ينبغي أن يُطلق بالأحرى على الأدوميّين، لأنهم أقرب لبني إسرائيل من بني إسماعيل، كما رأينا.

232. Second, surely the brothers of the Israelites are not solely the Ishmaelites, but also the Ammonites and the Moabites.

٢٣٢ - ثانياً: إنّ اخوة الإسرائيليين ما هم الإسماعيليّون فقط، بل والعمونيّون والموابيّون.

233. Third, in addition to this, Moses did not say anything to the Ishmaelites, but rather to the children of Israel: ‘That the Lord will raise from amongst your brothers (and not from amongst strangers) a prophet like me (not different from me in teaching).’²⁴²

٢٣٣ - ثالثاً: ثمّ إنّ موسى لم يقل لإسماعيليين، بل لبني اسرائيل: {أَنَّ الرَّبَّ يَقِيمُ مِنْ إِخْوَتِكُمْ}، {وَلَا مِنَ الْغُرَبَاءِ}، {نَبِيًّا مِثْلِي (لَا مُخَالَفًا لِي فِي التَّعْلِيمِ)}.

234. This verse is similar to that which the Most High Creator addressed to his people regarding a king saying: ‘From amongst your brothers, I will raise for you a king.’²⁴³ And surely raising this king from the brothers of the children of Israel does not designate the children of Ishmael; likewise, in raising (a prophet) from amongst their brothers does not indicate the sons of Ishmael.

٢٣٤ - فهذه الآية تشبه تلك التي خاطب بها البارئ تعالى شعبه عن ملكٍ قائلاً: {مَنْ بَيْنَ إِخْوَتِكُمْ أَقِيمُ عَلَيْكَ مَلَكًا}. فكما إنّ إقامة هذا الملك من بين إخوة بني إسرائيل، لا تدلّ على بني اسمعيل؛ هكذا إقامة نبيٍّ من بين إخوتهم، لا تشير إلى بني إسمعيل.

²⁴² Deut. 28:18.

²⁴³ Cf. 1 Kings 14:14; Jer. 30:10.

b) Explanation: “A prophet like me”

ب - تفسير: {نبياً مثلي}

235. And likewise it is necessary that we recognize the comparison in this verse, when Moses said to the people of Israel: ‘Surely the Lord will raise for you a prophet like me.’

٢٣٥ - وأيضاً ينبغي أن ننظر إلى التشبيه المصرح في هذه الآية، حيث يقول موسى لشعب إسرائيل: {إنّ الرب يقيم لك نبياً مثلي}.

236. If Muhammad was a prophet like Moses, it is required that he produce many signs and miracles, as Moses did; however, Muhammad did not offer any miracles; so, therefore, he is not like Moses.

٢٣٦ - فإن كان محمد نبياً مثل موسى، كان يقتضي ان يصنع آيات ومعجزات كثيرة، كما فعل موسى. ولكن محمد لم يأت بمعجزات البتة. فإذا ليس محمد مثل موسى.

237. And then, if Muhammad had been a prophet like Moses, he would have been required to observe the Torah and teach the law that was given on Mount Sinai, including the circumcision, the Sabbath, and the festivals, as Moses used to do, but Muhammad did not do that; so, therefore, he is not like Moses.”

٢٣٧ - ثم إن كان محمد نبياً مثل موسى، كان ينبغي أن يحفظ التوراة، ويعلم الناموس الذي أعطي في جبل سيناء، ملازماً مع الختان، السبت والأعياد، كما كان يفعل موسى. ولكن محمد لم يعمل بذلك. فإذا ليس هو مثل موسى.

3. Muhammad is Not a Prophet, Because We Do Not Await Any Prophet Except Elijah

Introduction

المقدمة

238. And our king said to me: “Surely, your speech would be agreeable and your announcement good, if you would accept Muhammad amongst the prophets.”

٢٣٨ - وملكنا قال لي: إن كلامك ظريف ومعانيك حسنة، لو قبلت محمداً بين

الأنبياء.

239. I answered him thusly: “Surely, it is mentioned for us that one prophet will come to the world after the ascension of Christ to heaven and before his descent²⁴⁴ from there, as we learned from the Prophet Malachi and from the angel Gabriel, who announced to Zachariah the conception of his son John.”

٢٣٩ - فجوابته هكذا: إنه مذكور عندنا أنّ نبياً واحداً يأتي إلى العالم بعد صعود

المسيح إلى السماء، ومن قبل نزوله من هناك، كما تعلمنا ذلك من ملاخي النبي، ومن جبرائيل الملاك الذي بشر زكريّا بحبل يحيى ابنه.

240. And our king said to me: “And who is this prophet of whom you speak?”

٢٤٠ - وملكنا قال لي: ومن هو هذا النبي الذي قلت عنه؟

²⁴⁴ The Arabic word نزول literally means “descent;” however, contextually the word implies Jesus’ second coming or his return from heaven.

a) The prophecy of Malachi

أ - نبوءة ملاخي

241. So, I answered him thusly: “Surely, it is Elijah.

٢٤١ - فجاوبته هكذا: إنه إليّا

242. Because God Most High, through the Prophet Malachi (who brought the last prophecy of the Old Testament), spoke of him in such a way: ‘Remember the Law of Moses my servant, which I prescribed to him on (Mount) Horeb for all of Israel, the orders and the judgments. Behold, I am going to send you the Prophet Elijah, before the great and redoubtable day of the Lord arrives: then he will return the hearts of the fathers to their sons and the hearts of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a curse.’²⁴⁵

٢٤٢ - لأنّ الله تعالى في ملاخي النبي (الذي أتى أخيراً بالنبوءة في العهد العتيق) يقول عنه هكذا: {اذكروا شريعة موسى عبدي، التي أمرته بها في حوريب، لكلّ اسرائيل، أوامر وأحكاماً. هاإنذا أرسل إليكم إليّا النبي، قبل أن يجيء يوم الرب العظيم المخوف. فيردّ قلوب الآباء على الأبناء، وقلوب الآباء على الأبناء، وقلوب الأبناء على آبائهم، لنلا آتي أنا وأضرب الارض بالحرم}.

b) Prophecy of John son of Zachariah

ب - النبوءة عن يحيى بن زكريا

243. And the angel Gabriel, when he announced to Zachariah the conception of John, came with these very words, ‘The angel said to him: “Do not

²⁴⁵ Mal. 4: 4-6.

worry Zachariah: because your prayer has been heard; and your wife Elizabeth will beget a son, and you will name him John. And you will have joy and cheerfulness; and many will rejoice of his birth. For he will be great before the Lord, and in the womb of his mother he will be filled with the Holy Spirit; he will restore many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. He will proceed before him with the spirit and power of Elijah, to restore the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the rebels to the thoughts of righteousness, in order to prepare for the Lord a people of good disposition.”²⁴⁶

٢٤٣ - وجبرائيل الملاك لما بشر زكريا بحبل يحي، أتى بهذا الكلام نفسه: {فقال له الملاك: لا تخف، يا زكريا، لأن صلواتك سمعت وامراتك اليصابات ستلد لك ابناً، وتسميه يوحنا، ويكون لك فرح وابتهاج، وكثيرون سيفرحون بولادته لأنه يكون عظيماً أمام الرب، ومن بطن أمه يمتلئ من الروح القدس. ويرد كثيرين من بني إسرائيل إلى الرب إلههم ويتقدم أمامه بروح إليا وقوته، ليرد الآباء على الأبناء، والعصاة إلى فكر الأبرار، كي يهتئ للرب شعباً مستعداً}.

244. Behold, Oh victorious King, how is it that the angel calls Jesus Christ, ‘Lord and God?’ So, surely the preceding verses teach us the following: That is to say, just as John, the son of Zachariah, preceded the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, and announced him²⁴⁷ to all, saying, ‘Here is the Lamb of God who removes the sin of the world,’²⁴⁸ and ‘This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and the fire.’²⁴⁹ ‘This is he, the Son of God, of which I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal.’²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Lk. 1: 13-18.

²⁴⁷ The Arabic phrase أرى إياه carries a literal meaning of “he showed him;” however, in English, John the Baptist is usually said to have announced the coming of Jesus.

²⁴⁸ Jn 1:29.

²⁴⁹ Mt. 3:11.

²⁵⁰ Lk. 3:16.

٢٤٤ - فانظر، يا أيها الملك المظفر، كيف إن الملاك يدعو عيسى المسيح رباً وإلهاً. ثم إن الآيات السابقة تعلّمنا ما يأتي. أي أنه، كما أن يحي بن زكريا سبق مجيء يسوع المسيح بالجسد، وأرى الجميع إياه قائلاً {هوذا حمل الله الذي يرفع خطيئة العالم} و{هذا هو الذي يعمد بالروح القدس والنار، هذا هو ابن الله الذي لست مستحقاً أن أحلّ سيور حدائه}.

245. Thus, the Prophet Elijah will come, before the appearance of Jesus Christ from heaven, and he will precede him to warn all mankind and to urge them to be ready to meet him at (the time of) his glorious second coming and Christ's rebuking of the Anti-Christ.

٢٤٥ - هكذا سوف يأتي إليّ النبي، قبل شروف عيسى المسيح من السماء، فيسبق منذراً جميع الناس، ومحرّضاً إياهم على إن يكونوا بظهوره المجيد الثاني مستعدّين للقاءه، وموبّخاً المسيح الدجال.

Conclusion

الخاتمة

246. So, there is not a difference between John the Baptist and the Prophet Elijah, regarding the force of the spirit, which speaks through them; for it is one.

٢٤٦ - فلا فرق بين يوحنا المعمدان وإليّا النبي، نظراً إلى قوّة الروح المتكلّم فيهما، إذ أنّه واحد.

247. But John the Baptist had come and Elijah will come before Jesus, who will appear from heaven with power and great glory to resurrect men from amongst the dead, because he is the Word of God and he created, in the

beginning, all the creation; so, in the end, he will renew everything. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and his reign will not end.”²⁵¹

٢٤٧ - إلا أن يوحنا المعمدان قد أتى، وإليّا سوف يأتي أمام يسوع، الذي سيظهر من السماء بقوة ومجد كثير، ليقيم البشر من بين الأمم. لأنه كلمة الله، وخالق في البدء كل البرايا، فهو يجددها أخيراً كلّها، وهو ملك الملوك ورب الأرباب، ولملكه لا يكون انقضاء.

²⁵¹ Luke 1:33.

The Eighth Section: The Absence of Falsification in the Torah, the (Books) of the Prophets, and the Gospel

الباب الثامن: عدم تحريف لا التوراة والأنبياء، ولا الإنجيل

Introduction

المقدمة

248. Then our abundantly wise King, said to me: “If you had not changed the Torah and the Gospel, you would have seen Muhammad along with the other prophets.”

٢٤٨ - ثم ملكنا الغزيرة حكمته قال لي: لو لم تغيروا التوراة والإنجيل، لكنتم تشاهدون محمداً أيضاً مع الأنبياء الأخر.

249. So, I answered him saying: “Oh great King, surely God Most High bestowed the crown, the thrown, and the royal scepter (upon you); and with all this, he has also given you an abundant intellect and a vast and willing heart to direct the affairs of the community and of the individuals as your nation deserves. Therefore, it is befitting in your great dignity to examine all these things of which you speak.

٢٤٩ - فجاوبته قائلاً: أيها الملك المعظم، إن الله تعالى منحكم التاج والعرش والصولجان المملكي؛ ومع هذه كلها، أعطاكم أيضاً ذهنًا غزيرًا، وقلباً وسيعاً ومستعداً لتدبير أمور الجماعة والأفراد، كما تستحقّ دولتكم ذلك. فيليق بشأنكم العزيز أن تفحصوا عن جميع هذه الأمور التي تقولون عنها.

250. So, which things caused us to change the books?

٢٥٠ - فأَيُّ شيء كان يحملنا على أن نغيّر الكتب؟

1. The Absence of Falsification in the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets.

١ - عدم تحريف التوراة والأنبياء

a) The Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets testify to all the Christian teachings

أ - التوراة والأنبياء يشهدان بالتعليم المسيحي كله

251. Indeed, the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets collectively proclaim, like the sound of thunder, and teach about the divinity of Christ, his humanity, and his divine birth that took place from the Father before all ages, which nobody is able to describe at all, as the Prophet Isaiah said: ‘And who will describe his generation?’²⁵²

٢٥١ - لأن التوراة والأنبياء يصيحان جُملةً كصوت الرعد، ويعلمان عن ألوهية المسيح، وعن ناسوته، وعن ولادته الإلهية العجيبة، التي صارت من الأب قبل كلّ الدهور، التي لا يقدر أحد أن يصفها البتّة، كما قال أشعيا النبي: {وجيله من يصفه؟}.

252. So, this has been said of him and of his origin: ‘Since the beginning, before the creation of the world;’²⁵³ and ‘From a womb, before the dawn, I have begotten you;’²⁵⁴ and also, ‘Before the sun, his name existed.’²⁵⁵

٢٥٢ - فهو الذي قيل عنه وعن صدره، من البدء، قبل خِلق العالم: {ومن رحمٍ قبل الفجر ولدتك}. وأيضا: {وقبل الشمس موجد اسمه}.

²⁵² Isa. 53:8.

²⁵³ Prov. 8:23-24.

²⁵⁴ Ps. 110: 3.

²⁵⁵ Ps. 2:7; 72:17.

253. And then of his temporal birth from the mother, the Prophet Isaiah said: ‘Behold, the virgin is pregnant and will give birth to a son and he will be called Immanuel.’²⁵⁶

٢٥٣ - وثمّ عن ولادته الزمنيّة من الأمّ، يقول أشعيا النبي: {ها إنّ العذراء تحبل وتلد ابناً ويُدعى اسمه عمّانوئيل}.

254. And surely King David, Isaiah, and all the prophets have taught openly and clearly of the miracles and marvels that he was to do at the moment of his appearance in the flesh, and of the true knowledge of God, which the world will be filled with at the moment of his coming into the world.

٢٥٤ - وإنّ داود الملك وأشعيا والأنبياء أجمعين يعلمون صريحاً وواضحاً عن العجائب والمعجزات التي كان عتيداً أن يفعلها، في وقت ظهوره بالجسد، وعن معرفة الله الحقيقية التي كانت تمتلئ منها المسكونة في وقت مجيئه إلى العالم.

255. And they informed us of his passion, his crucifixion, and his death in the flesh, as we have previously said. They also spoke of his resurrection from amongst the dead, and of his ascension to heaven, and of his second coming to the world, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of the Last Judgment by which all will be judged, because he is God and the Word of the Father.

٢٥٥ - ويخبرونا عن آلامه وصلبه وموته بالجسد، كما قلنا آنفاً. ويتكلّمون أيضاً عن قيامته من بين الأموات، وعن صعوده إلى السماء، وعن مجيئه الثاني إلى العالم، وعن قيامة الموتى، وعن الدينونة التي يدين بها الجميع، لأنّه إله وكلمة الآب.

²⁵⁶ Isa. 7:14.

256. And because all of the Christian teaching was contained in the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets, for what reason would we change it?

٢٥٦ - ولَمَّا كَانَ التَّعْلِيمُ الْمَسِيحِي كُلَّهُ مَحْتَوِيًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْأَنْبِيَاءِ، فَلَأَجْلِ أَيِّ سَبَبٍ كُنَّا نَغَيِّرُهُ؟

b) How did the Christians and Jews mutually agree on the same falsification?

ب - كَيْفَ اتَّفَقَ النَّصَارَى وَالْيَهُودُ عَلَى نَفْسِ التَّحْرِيفِ؟

257. Then, if we suppose that we changed and falsified the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets, which we possessed amongst us, how were we able to change and falsify those which were in the hands of the Hebrews?

٢٥٧ - وَتَمَّ لَوْ فَارَضْنَا أَنَّنَا قَدْ غَيَّرْنَا وَحَرَّفْنَا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْأَنْبِيَاءَ الَّتِي هِيَ عِنْدَنَا وَبَيْنَنَا، وَلَكِنْ كَيْفَ كُنَّا نَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ نَغَيِّرَ وَنَحْرَفَ الَّتِي هِيَ بِيَدِ الْعِبْرَانِيِّينَ؟

258. Then, if anyone objects, saying: ‘Surely, the Christians have changed and falsified the books that were in their hands, and the Jews have done likewise with theirs,’ then we would say:

٢٥٨ - تَمَّ إِذَا اعْتَرَضَ أَحَدٌ قَائِلًا: {إِنَّ النَّصَارَى غَيَّرُوا وَحَرَّفُوا الْكُتُبَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ بِيَدِهِمْ، وَالْيَهُودُ صَنَعُوا كَذَلِكَ بِكُتُبِهِمْ}، فَنَقُولُ:

259. ‘For what reason have the Jews not changed and omitted the existing verses in their books, of which the Christian religion is proud and of which it (the Christian religion) is based upon, because you do not find an enmity in the world - previously or currently - like that between the Christians and Jews.’

٢٥٩ - لأيّ سبب لم يغيّر ويحذف اليهود الآيات الموجودة في كتبهم، التي تفتخر بها الديانة المسيحية وتستند عليها؟ إذ ليس توجد عداوة في العالم مثلما كانت قبلاً، والآن، بين النصارى واليهود.

260. And if we said that the Jews definitively changed and falsified their books, then how would we keep silent regarding these falsified verses of theirs, for it is upon them that the object of our religion rests?

٢٦٠ - وإذا قلنا إنّ اليهود غيّرُوا وحرفُوا كتبهم، فكيف نحن كُنّا نسكت عن هذه الآيات المحرّفة من هولاء؟ إذ عليها يقوم مدار ديانتنا.

261. But, neither Christians nor Jews changed or falsified the books, as is testified by the existing enmity between them, which because of it, it is not possible that they would agree with each other on such an important matter.

٢٦١ - ولكن، لا نصارى ولا اليهود غيّرُوا أو حرفُوا الكتب، كما تشهد العداوة الموجودة بينهم، التي من سببها لا يمكن ان يتفقوا مع بعضهم في كذا أمرٍ مهمّ.

Conclusion

الخاتمة

262. So, therefore, it appears that it is impossible that the Christians and the Jews would agree with one another regarding the falsification of the books. We do not deny that the Jews have disputed us on the interpretation of some words and names, and on times. But, regarding the existence of expressions and words and their truthfulness, there is no antagonism between us at all, because the expressions and the words exist with the two parties one and the same.

٢٦٢ - فاتضح اذًا أنّه لم يكن ممكناً أن يتفق مع بعضهم النصارى واليهود في تحريف الكتب. ولا تُنكر أنّ اليهود يخاصموننا في شرح بعض الكلمات والأسماء، وعن الأزمنة. ولكن، نظراً الى وجود الألفاظ والكلمات وحقيقتها، ليس مخاصمة بين بعضنا قط، لأنّ الألفاظ والكلمات هي موجودة عند الطرفين على حدّ سواء.

2. The Absence of Falsification in the Gospel

٢ - عدم تحريف الإنجيل

Introduction

المقدّمة

263. Oh King, we did not change or falsify the Torah and the (Books) of Prophets. And it is necessary that we say the same regarding the Gospel, because what the first prophets said of Christ is written in the Gospel about him. So, therefore, one is the ray of light that shines upon us from the Torah, from the (Books) of the Prophets, and the Gospel; however, with this difference, that is to say, that in the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets there had been words and symbols, while in the Gospel they appeared as facts and reality.

٢٦٣ - فيا ايّها الملك، نحن لم نغيّر أو نحرف التوراة والأنبياء. وكذلك ينبغي أن نقول عن الإنجيل؛ لأنّ ما قال الأنبياء الأوّلون عن المسيح، هو مكتوب في الإنجيل عنه. فاذًا، واحد هو شعاع النور الذي يضيئ لنا من التوراة والأنبياء والإنجيل. ولكن مع هذا الفرق، وهو: أنّ في التوراة والأنبياء قد سبق الكلام والرموز، وفي الإنجيل ظهرت الأفعال والحقيقة.

264. The Gospel warns us of that which the prophets taught regarding the divinity of Christ and his humanity, without the slightest change, because one is the Giver of the Torah and the (Books) of the Prophets, and he is God.

٢٦٤ - فالإنجيل يندرنا بما علّم الأنبياء عن لاهوت المسيح وناسوته، دون أدنى تغيير؛ لأنّ واحدًا هو معطي التوراة والأنبياء، وهو الله.

a) If we had falsified the Gospel, we would have omitted the contemptible things.

أ - لو حرّفنا الإنجيل لكنا حذفنا منه الأمور الحقيرة

265. Even if we had changed and falsified the books, we would have tried to change and falsify the things considered vile, contemptible, and contrary to our religion, like: the fear, the beatings, the passion, the crucifixion, the death, and similar things.

٢٦٥ - ثمّ لو غيرنا وحرّفنا الكتب، لكنا نجتهد في تغيير وتحريف الأمور المظنونة دنيّة وحقيرة ومضادّة لديانتنا: كالخوف والضرب والآلام والصليب والموت وما أشبه ذلك.

266. But, not only have we never changed these things, but we are proud of and honor them, as we are proud of and honor the things which are sublime and great in our religion. Because we believe, just as well, that Jesus is God without beginning and without end, equal in nature to the Father; in the same way, we believe that he is truly man and equal to us through the human nature.

٢٦٦ - ولكن، لا فقط لم نغير هذه الأمور، بل نفتخر بها ونكرّمها، كما نفتخر ونكرّم الأمور التي هي سامية في ديانتنا وعظيمة. لأننا كما نعتقد في يسوع أنّه إله، ليس له بداية ولا نهاية، وهو مساو للآب بالطبيعة؛ هكذا نعتقد به أنّه إنسان حقيقةً، وهو مساو لنا بالطبيعة البشريّة.

267. We have not, therefore, changed or falsified one solitary line in the book of God.

٢٦٧ - فلم نغيّر أو نحرف، أيها الملك، سطرًا واحدًا من كتاب الله.

b) If the name of Muhammad was found in our books, we would have awaited him more than we awaited the Jewish Messiah.

ب - لو كان اسم محمد في كتبنا لكاننا ننتظرناه بأكثر مما انتظرنا المسيح اليهودي.

268. If the name of Muhammad was found in our books, we would have awaited with impatience his coming, as we desired to receive the ones of whom the prophets had written.

٢٦٨ - فلو كان موجودًا اسم محمد في كتبنا، لكاننا ننتظر إلى مجيئه بالإشتياق، كما اشتقنا إلى استقبال الذين كتب عنهم الأنبياء.

269. Then, what relationship do we have with the Jews more so than we have with the Ishmaelites? Why would we have received Christ who was of the Jewish race and would have refused Muhammad, who originally descended from the offspring of the Ishmaelites, because our natural relationship with the Ishmaelites as well as the Jews is one.

٢٦٩ - ثمّ آية قرابة لنا مع اليهود، أكثر ممّا لنا مع الإسمعيّيين؟ ولماذا كنّا نقبل المسيح، الذي هو من جنس اليهود، ونرفض محمدًا الذي ظهر من ذريّة الإسمعيّيين؟ لأنّ واحدة هي قرابتنا بالطبيعة، ثمّ مع الإسمعيّيين، وثمّ مع اليهود.

270. And the truth obliges me to say that, before the appearance of Christ, the Jews possessed respect from every nation and from God as well, but after the appearance of the Word of God in the flesh from amongst them, they have become rejected and despised by God and by mankind, because they closed their

eyes so as not to see and not to enjoy the light which came to the world to shine upon mankind; thus, the Jews have become horrible and detested by all.

٢٧٠ - والحقّ يضطرّني أن أقول إنّ، قبل ظهور المسيح، كان اليهود ذوي اعتبار عند جميع الأمم، وعند الله ايضاً. وبعد ظهور كلمة الله في الجسد منهم، صاروا مردولين ومحقورين عند الله والناس، لأنّهم غمّضوا عيونهم لنلا يُبصروا ويتمتّعوا بالنور الذي أتى إلى العالم لينير البشر. فاضحى إذا اليهود مبغوضين ومكروهين من كلّ احدٍ.

271. The Ishmaelites, on the contrary, are honored and respected by God and by mankind for they have abandoned worshipping idols and Satan, and they adore and honor God alone. Therefore, they merit that all love them and honor them.

٢٧١ - وأمّا الإسمعيليّون، بالعكس. فإنّهم مكرمّون ومعتبرون عند الله والناس، لتركهم عبادة الأوثان والشيطان، وسجودهم وتكريمهم لله وحده. فلذلك يستحقّون أنّ الجميع يحبّونهم ويكرّمونهم.

Conclusion

الخاتمة

272. So, if one found in the books a prophesy in their favor, not only would we not change it and falsify it, but we would have regarded it with a great joy, as we await the one who will come in the end, as we have said above, for we do not correct the commandments of God, but to the contrary, we observe them.”

٢٧٢ - فلو وُجد في الكتب نبوة ما بحقّهم، ليس فقط لم نكنْ نغيّرُها ونحرّفها، بل كنّا ننتظر إليها بفرح عظيم، كما ننتظر إلى ذلك الذي سيأتي في المنتهى، كما قلنا عنه اعلاه. لأنّنا لسنا منقّحين وصايا الله، بل بالأحرى حافظينها.

Conclusion

الخاتمة

273. Then our King said to me smiling: “Let us abandon the discussion and we will speak of these things at a later time, when an opportunity befalls us in order that we may engage it further.”

٢٧٣ - فماكنا قال لي متبسّماً: نترك الآن المحاورّة، ونتكلّم عن هذه الأمور في وقتٍ آخر، حينما يصير لنا فرصة لنعكف عليها.

274. And we praised God, who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, who gives wisdom and comprehension to kings in order that they administer their kingdoms with justice and mercy. Then we prayed for the King and for his nation, beseeching God to strengthen it and protect it in the world always, and to establish his throne with justice and equity forever. Amen.

٢٧٤ - ونحن مجدّنا الله، الذي هو ملك الملوك ورب الأرباب، وهو يعطي الحكمة والفهم للملوك، لكي يدبّروا ممالكهم بالعدالة والرحمة. وثمّ دعونا للملك ولدولته، طالبين من الله أن يؤيّدّها ويحفظها في العالم دائماً، وأن يثبّت سدّة عرشه بالعدل والبرّ إلى الأبد. امين.

275. And thus, we parted from him.

٢٧٥ - وهكذا خرجنا من عنده.

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