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I. Gerasimus. Kitab al-kafi fi al-mana al-safi — Critique et interprétation.

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KITĀB AL-KĀFĪ FĪ AL-MA'NĀ AL-ŠĀFĪ
THE COMPLETE BOOK OF THE PROPER MEANING
THE CHRISTIAN APOLOGY OF GERASIMUS

BY
Abjar BAHKOU, Ph.D.
Baylor University, Wac, Texas

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A. AUTHOR AND DATE

The text that I have translated and presented in this article has not been examined by many scholars. Joseph Nasrallah¹, Yūsuf Šammās², Louis Cheikho³, and Georg Graf⁴, state that Gerasimus, the head of the monastery of Saint Simon the Miraculous, or the Stylite, wrote a book entitled, *kitāb al-kāfi fī al-ma'nā al-šāfi* (*The complete book of the proper meaning*).

In regards to Gerasimus, Georg Graf believes that he lived in the 13th century⁵, while Cheikho places him in the 12th or 13th century⁶. Joseph Nasrallah believes that Gerasimus lived at the end of the 13th century⁷. René Khawam found a scribe by the name of Gerasimus in the list of the scribes of Saint Saba's Monastery in Palestine. Based on this finding, he concludes that Gerasimus (if he is the writer of this book) received his theological training at the monastery that followed the school and teachings of John of Damascus⁸.

The book mentions that Gerasimus was the superior of Saint Simon the Stylite Monastery. It is not clear which one is intended here⁹. Khawam believes that it is not Saint Simon in Aleppo, but it is Saint Simon Church in Antioch, which was established after the Arab invasion. The disciples of Saint Simon took his corpse and built a monastery there¹⁰.

In regard to the period of the apology, and according to the attempt made by Samir Khalil Samir in which he divides the Christian Arabic apologies into four phases¹¹, it could be said that Gerasimus's apology belongs to the fourth

1) Joseph NASRALLAH, *HMLM* (Peeters, Louvain, 1981), p. 118.

2) Yūsef ŠAMMĀS, *Ḥulāṣat tārīḥ al-kanīṣah al-malakiyyah*, Al-Maṭba'a al-Būlusiyah, Beirut, 2002, p. 292.

3) Louis CHEIKHO, *Kitāb al-maḥṭūṭāt al-'arabiyyah li-katabāt al-naṣrāniyyah*, Dar Al-Machriq, Beirut, 1924, p. 81. (cité : CHEIKHO, *maḥṭūṭāt*).

4) Georg GRAF, *GCAL*, vol. III, coll. ST, 133 (Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 1947), pp. 82-84.

5) *Ibidem*, pp. 82-84.

6) CHEIKHO, *Maḥṭūṭāt*, p. 81.

7) Joseph NASRALLAH, *HMLM* (Peeters, Louvain, 1981), p. 118.

8) GÉRASSIME, *Dialogues œcuméniques de guérison*, translated by René Khawam (*L'esprit des Péninsules*, Paris, 1996), p. 11.

9) For more information about the history of Saint Simon Monastery see, Joseph NASRALLAH, "Le Couvent de Saint-Siméon l'Alépin: Témoignages Littéraires et Jalones sur son Histoire", in *ParOr* 1 (1970), pp. 327-356.

10) Cf. GÉRASSIME, *Dialogues œcuméniques de guérison*, translated by René Khawam (*L'esprit des Péninsules*, Paris, 1996), p. 15.

11) Cf. Samir Khalil SAMIR, "The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity (c. 750)", in

phase, which is a spiritual humanistic approach. The climax of this phase is reached between the 11th and 13th centuries. The apology presents the Christian faith in a clear logical manner in which the Greek Aristotelian philosophy is sometimes explicitly used. He perfectly combined the biblical-homiletical traditions and the logical-philosophical approach.

B. MANUSCRIPTS

I was able to acquire all the manuscripts except Saint Sepulcher in Jerusalem ar. 101 (17th-18th century).

Beirut, *Bibliothèque Orientale, University of Saint Joseph, Ar. 548*, ff. 243-271.

Beirut, *Bibliothèque Orientale, University of Saint Joseph, Ar. 552*, ff. 98-169.

Vatican, *Biblioteca Apostolica, Sbath 49*, ff. 153-252.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Marshall Or. 69*, ff. 2-113.

The Maronite Archdiocese of Aleppo, *Man. N. 1190*.

The Melkite Archdiocese of Homs, No Number. Personal copy from Prof. John Lamoreaux, in Dallas, Texas.

Examining them I noticed the following observations.

1. Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale, Ar. 548, ff. 243-271. Ar. 552, ff. 98-169

This manuscript is not the complete book. It is divided between two manuscripts. The first one is Manuscript 548 (28 folios). It is the fourth part, the testimonies (*Šawāhid*) and prophecies (*Nubuwwāt*) about the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament, the Qur'ān, the book of Sabaeans, and the Greek philosophers. The scribe did not write the biblical prophecies and testimonies because, as he stated in folio 122-123 :

أما كتب العتيقة والحديثة فهي موجودة عندنا. وأما شواهد المسلمين والوثنيين
ليست عندنا وها نحن نكتبها بعون الله.

Regarding the books of the Old and New [Testament], we have them already, but the Muslim and Pagan's testimonies we don't have.

The second Manuscript 552 (71 folios) is not the complete book of Gerasimus. The Book is divided in five parts. The manuscripts presents only the fifth part which is responses to the six objections made against Christianity. The scribe is very careful to the point that he, sometimes, compromises the whole purpose of the book in copying offensive words against Muslims and Arabs. These are the changes he made:

- Folio 243-244, when he copied “*Kufr al-‘Arab* (the Arab abomination)” he used the Syriac word, “*Rūš ‘o رُوشُو*”
- Second manuscript, folio 101:

١٤ وَأَنْتُمْ ذُمَّةٌ مُهَانُونَ، تُؤَدُّونَ الْخَرَاجَ لِأَعْدَائِكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ الْمُسْتَوْلِينَ عَلَيْكُمْ.
١٥ إِنَّكُمْ تَحْتُ وَأَوْلِيكَ فَوْقُ.

14 You are humiliated Dhimmi, you tribute taxes to your Muslim enemies who are ascendant upon you. 15 You are down and they are up.

He changes the sentence, “your Muslim enemies” (*a‘dā’ikum al-Muslimīn*) to “Your enemies” (*a‘dā’ikum*). Also, he avoids copying the rest of the verse “you are down and they are up”.

- In the same folio he changes the phrase “regarding the ascendance of the nation of Muhammad upon them”, (*ammā isti‘lā’ ummat Muḥammad*) to “regarding the ascendance of the nations upon them” (*ammā isti‘lā’ al-‘umamī*). Also, he changes “the form of the sword of Islam” (*sūratu saīfī al-islām*) to “the form of the Nations ruling over them” (*sūratu sulṭat al-‘umam*).
- In the fifth part, the response to the first objection, he did not copy the whole paragraph (vv. 27-33) which states:

٢٧ فَأَمَّا الْحَوَابُ عَنْ تَعَاْفَلِ اللَّهِ عَنْهُمْ وَهَلَاكِهِمْ فِي الضَّلَالَةِ فَهُوَ هَكَذَا: ٢٨ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
(عَزَّ وَجَلَّ!) لَمْ يَتَعَاْفَلَ عَنْهُمْ (كَمَا تُظَنُّونَ) ٢٩ فَكَيْفَ ذَلِكَ وَهُوَ خَالِفُهُمْ سُبْحَانَهُ،
الْحَيَّرُ وَالرَّؤُوفُ، أَبُو الْكُلِّ، وَإِلَهُ كُلِّ عِزٍّ وَرَحْمَةٍ، الْقَاضِي الْعَدْلُ، الَّذِي لَا يَشَاءُ
خِلَاصَ قَوْمٍ دُونَ قَوْمٍ، بَلِ الْكُلِّ بِالسُّوَيَّةِ. ٣٠ لَمْ يَتَخَلَّ عَنْهُمْ، لَكِنَّهُ كَرَّرَ فِيهِمْ مَعَ
نَفْسِهِ الْقِدْيَسَةَ عِنْدَمَا فَارَقَتْ جَسَدَهُ الْمُكْرَمَ عَلَى الصَّبِيبِ، وَانْحَدَرَ إِلَى أَقَاصِي
الْجَحِيمِ. ٣١ لِأَنَّهُ هُنَاكَ أَيْضًا أَظْهَرَ قُوَّةَ لَاهُوتِهِ، وَصَنَعَ خِلَاصًا لِنَفْسِ الْقِدْيَسِينَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِهِ مِنَ الرَّاقِدِينَ مِنْذُ الدُّهُورِ الْمَاضِيَةِ، كَمَا فَعَلَ فَوْقَ الْأَرْضِ مَعَ الْأَحْيَاءِ
الْبَاقِينَ. ٣٢ فَمَنْ آمَنَ إِذَا بَكَرَازَتِهِ هُنَاكَ خُلِّصَ مِنْ دَيْنُونَةِ الْكُفْرِ، ٣٣ وَصَارَ كَمَا

قَالَ الرَّسُولُ: "كُلُّ يُحْنِي لَهُ الرُّكْبَةَ (أَعْنِي السَّمَائِيْنَ وَالْأَرْضِيَّيْنَ) وَالَّذِينَ تَحْتَ
الرِّئْيِ"¹².

27 The answer concerning God's overlooking [the nations] and their perishing in error is this; **28** God (the Precious and the Honorable) did not overlook them, as you assume. **29** How would He do that while He is their Creator (praise be to Him!) the Generous, the Compassionate, the Father of all, the God of all might and mercy, the Just Judge, the One Who desires to save all nations equally? **30** He did not neglect them, but preached to them, through His Holy Soul, when it was separated from His Holy Body on the Cross, and ascended into the farther depths of Hell. **31** There He revealed the power of His Divinity, and He wrought salvation to the souls of the saints who believed in Him, and had fallen asleep in the past centuries. He did the same on earth to the remaining living. **32** Thus, whoever believed in His preaching was saved from the judgment of unbelief. **33** This fulfills what the apostle said: "Every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those in earth, and of those under the earth"¹³.

This statement is very offensive to Muslims and their understanding of Christ. The crucifixion of Jesus, according to the Qur'an, did not happen, "They killed him not, nor crucified him, but it was made to appear to them"¹⁴.

2. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Sbath. 49 (1718 A.D.) ff. 153-252

No particular observation was found in this manuscript.

3. Oxford University Library, Bodleian Library, Marshall Or. 69 (1656), ff. 2-113

No particular observation was found in this manuscript. There is no mention of the copyist, however, it is well written and very clear.

4. The Melkite Archdiocese of Homs (1701 AD)

No Number. I acquired a copy from Professor John Lamoreaux, associate professor of Religious Studies at the Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.

12) Philippians 2:10

13) Philippians 2:10.

14) Sūrah 4:157.

According to Chiekho¹⁵, this manuscript was in the collection of Rev. Qusṭanṭīn Bāšā, then Dr. Sim‘ān in Ḥomṣ. It was written by Yūssuf bin Abdullāh, known as “*šidyāq*” in the village of Kfar Ḥildā in al-Batrūn. He was living in Ḥomṣ at that time¹⁶.

These three manuscripts are similar in their page numbering. Part of the argument about baptism is mixed with the fourth part. Part of the fifth part (the final paragraphs of the sixth objection and the conclusion of the book) are also mixed with the fourth part.

5. *The Maronite Archdiocese of Aleppo, Man. N. 1190 (1700 A.D.)*

I would like to thank His Eminence Ġriġurūs Yūḥannā Ibrāhīm, the Syrian Orthodox Bishop of Aleppo, for his efforts to contact the Maronite Archdiocese in Aleppo to make a copy of this manuscript.

The page numbering is different from the other three. Folio 70-186 is the fourth part; folio 75-86 is the last part of the sixth objection in the fifth part; folio 78-133 is the Treaty on Baptism and Holy Communion; folio 133-186 is the last paragraph of the fourth part.

There is no book conclusion as in the other three manuscripts. The manuscript is dated according to the Hijri calendar as it is indicated in folio 69 :

تم الجزء الثالث بتأييد الله وعونه بيد الفقير الى الله تعالى يوحنا الكاتب سنة
١٠٠٥ هجرية.

The third part is completed in the year one thousand and five of Hijrah

The scribe, as mentioned in folio 229, is :

يوحنا الراهب بدير ابراهيم، الدمشقي اصلاً والأرثوذكسي مذهباً.

Monk Yūḥannā, by origin from Damascus, by denomination Orthodox.

At the left margin of folio 63 the scribe writes a small note stating that he was able to see three other copies,

اعلم اننا راينا ثلاث نسخ على منوال هذه النسخة فلم نرى لهم شيء زايد عن هذه
النسخة الا هكذا موجودين. لكن الذي رايناه موجود كتبناه بعد الفحص الكثير.

15) CHEIKHO, *Maḥtūṭāt*, p. 81.

16) CHEIKHO, *Maḥtūṭāt*, p. 81.

Know that we examined three copies that are in accordance to this one. We did not find any additions to this copy. After a lot of scrutiny, we wrote what we read.

Concluding our observations on this manuscript we can say that the scribe has acquired the other manuscripts already mentioned, or he had another manuscripts that are not known to us. However, from comparing the three complete manuscript (Vatican, *Biblioteca Apostolica, Sbath 49*, ff. 153-252. Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Marshall Or. 69*, ff. 2-113. The Melkite Archdiocese of Homs) I did not see many differences. Thus, we conclude that the scribe did not see another manuscript.

C. ANALYSIS AND STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

As are most of the Arabic apologetical treatises, Gerasimus's main purpose is twofold. First, it is intended to provide Christians with a sort of handbook, or ready responses, to be given to questions posed by Muslims about their religion. A second objective is to encourage wavering Christians and to sustain their faith in the face of Muslim missionary efforts. Gerasimus is defending the credibility of Christian claims concerning the Trinity, incarnation, and certain practices for Christians themselves, since the Muslim argument sows doubt within the Christian community¹⁷.

The book is divided into five parts. The first parts examine how to discern the true religion, the second part is how to discern the true Disciple, the third part looks at the contrasts between the Christian faith and other religions, and how the Christian religion is the true one. The fourth part is testimonies concerning the life and ministry of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament, Book of Sabaeans, the Greek philosophers, and the Qur'an. In the fifth part, the author responds to six objections made against Christians and their religion. Since the whole book is long and it requires further study to edit it, this article focused on examining, translating and editing only the fifth part.

In this part Gerasimus uses two levels of debate (*Munāzarat*) in the apologetical writings. The first level is a scholarly polemic that took place between intellectuals of Muslim and Christian communities. It intends to lay out the issues in complex theological and philosophical categories. The

17) Sidney GRIFFITH, "Comparative religions in the apologetics of the first Christian Arabic Theologians", in *Proceedings of the Patristic Mediaeval and Renaissance Conference 4* (1979), pp. 63-64.

second level is a popular polemic that extended to a wider range of participants, and was aimed at expressing teachings in a more simplistic form¹⁸. This is indicative of the extent to which discussions on religion had spread; not just scholars, but also common folk were pressed into defending their beliefs and urged to consider conversion to Islam.

Gerasimus uses the structure of formal debates; first, he describes the questioner proof (*al-burhān*) then lays out the evidences, or cause for the proof (*al-'illat*) and then argues the general validity of it (*tard al-'illah*). It is in this third step that he puts forth his most important arguments¹⁹.

Unlike in the first three parts of the book, he avoids the use of analogy, because he is aware that there were many among the Muslim theologians and jurists who did not accept analogy or consensus as legitimate evidence. The respondent was consequently required to find a common foundation, or principle, on which to base his argument that would be acceptable to his opponent. Many, especially the *Mu'tazilat*, found a solution in rationalism. Christians were quick to pick up this approach and respondents used a combination of reason and commonly accepted scriptural arguments to make their points²⁰.

The way he presents the objection is to lay out the series of questions in such a way as to pursue as many of the possible objections of the questioner as possible. In nearly every objection, he assumes that his Christian reader will participate in the position of the respondent and almost never the questioner. This gives his Christian reader the tool necessary to try to gain control over the potential debate and show the validity of the Christian view.

As a form of apologetic primarily intended to instruct other Christians, it leads the reader to see the strength of Christian teaching in the face of difficult convincing questions. It also assists Christian intellectuals in adopting the developing debate structure and using it to their own advantage when they are called upon to defend their faith. The writer presents six objections

18) Georg GRAF, "Christliche Polemik gegen den Islam", in *Gelbe*, Hefte 2 (1926), p. 827. Sidney GRIFFITH, *The Church in the shadow of the Mosque, Christians and Muslims in the world of Islam* (Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2008), pp. 75-105. In this chapter the author examines many examples of the genres and the strategies of the discourse between Christians and Muslims.

19) Sandra KEATING, *Defending the "people of the truth" in the early Islamic period, The Christian apologies of Abū Rā'īṭah* (Brill, Leiden / Boston, 2006), pp. 29-30.

20) *Ibidem*, 30.

made against Christians in which he responds.

1. *First objection: Christianity not the true religion*

The form of the objection is:

- The Christian religion is not the most widely spread one; there are more non-believers than there are believers (vv. 2-7).
- If the Christian religion is the right one, the pagans were also right, because the world did not know Christ for five thousand years, and, except the children of Israel, no one worshipped God before Christ (vv. 6-9).
- It is not true that the Christian churches are honored; they are humiliated and under the feet of their Muslim enemies (vv. 10-17).

Gerasimus's response to the objection can be divided into three sections; a) The spread of Christianity, b) The differences between the pagan message and the Christian message, c) The reasons for Muslim ascendance over Christians.

a. *The spread of Christianity*

To complete the answer to the objection it is necessary to return to the third part of the book where Gerásimus examined in details the spread of Christianity and responded to the criticism that Christianity is not the most widely spread religion. In his argument he states that "we already answered this before, and there is no need to mention more than we did" (5:18). In the third part he argues that the three signs of the true disciple and the true religion are evident in the Christian disciple:

١٣٩ وَأَمَّا الْأَوْلَىٰ مِنْهَا وَهِيَ الْكَرَازَةُ الْعَامَّةُ ١٤٠ فَمِنَ الْأُمُورِ نَفْسَهَا الظَّاهِرَةُ
 (الَّتِي لَا تَحْتَاجُ إِلَىٰ بُرْهَانٍ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ هَذَا) وَهُوَ [أَنَّ] إِسْمَ الْمَسِيحِ رَبَّنَا مَعْبُودٌ
 وَمَسْجُودٌ لَهُ إِلَىٰ وَقْتِنَا هَذَا، مِنْ أَقَاصِي الْمَشَارِقِ إِلَى الْمَغَارِبِ، وَمِنْ طَرْفِ الْقِبْلَةِ
 إِلَى طَرْفِ الشَّمَالِ، لَمْ يَبْقَ مَوْضِعٌ فِي الْوَسْطِ إِلَّا وَذُكِرَ الْمَسِيحُ فِيهِ بِالْعِبَادَةِ
 وَالْكَرَامَةِ الْوَافِرَةِ. ١٤١ قَمَّتْ مِنْ هَهُنَا نُبُوءَةُ دَاوُدَ، حَيْثُ تَقَدَّمَ فِي زُبُورِهِ قَائِلًا
 وَمُنَادِيًا عَنْهُمْ: "هَكَذَا فِي كُلِّ الْأَرْضِ خَرَجَ مَنْطِقَهُمْ، وَفِي أَقْطَارِ الْمَسْكُونَةِ إِنْبَتْ
 كَلَامُهُمْ". ١٤٢ لِأَنَّ بِنَائِدِ مُرْسِلِهِمْ وَبِكُونِهِ مَعَهُمْ (كَمَا وَعَدَهُمْ) لَمْ يَفْتَهُمْ وَلَا
 مَوْضِعٌ مِنْ أَرْبَعِ أَقْطَارِ الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا وَنَادَوْا فِيهَا مُكْمَلِينَ غَرَضَ مُعَلِّمِهِمْ وَوَصِيَّتَهُ لَهُمْ.

١٤٣ فَاِنْ قَالَ مُعْطَلُ الْإِيمَانِ: "لَيْسَ الْأَمْرُ كَذَلِكَ! لِأَنَّ نَرَى فِي وَقْتِنَا هَذَا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ نِصْفِ الْعَالَمِ لَا يَعْرِفُ الْمَسِيحَ، أَوْ يَعْرِفُوهُ وَلَا يَعْبُدُوهُ!" ١٤٤ أَجَبْنَا عَلَى صِفَةِ الْمُعَانَدَةِ أَوْلَى، ثُمَّ عَلَى صِفَةِ الْمُسَامَحَةِ. ١٤٥ فَأَمَّا عَلَى سَبِيلِ الْمُعَانَدَةِ فَإِنَّا لَا نَسَلِّمُ إِلَيْهِ هَذِهِ الْقَضِيَّةَ لَكِنَّا نَكْذِبُهَا، لِأَنَّ الْأَمْرَ بِالضِّدِّ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِالْمَسِيحِ فِي الدُّنْيَا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ غَيْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ. ١٤٦ وَأَمَّا عَلَى سَبِيلِ الْمُسَامَحَةِ فَإِنَّا نَقُولُ هَكَذَا: ١٤٧ إِنْ كَانَتْ الْكِرَازَةُ صَارَتْ وَتَكَامَلَتْ فِي سَائِرِ أَقْطَارِ الْأَرْضِ (كَمَا ذَكَرْنَا) فَتَصَلَّبَتْ قُلُوبُ قَوْمٍ مِنْ سَامِعِيهَا وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا، أَوْ إِنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا فِي ذَلِكَ الْوَقْتِ، ثُمَّ بَعْدَ هَذَا عَادُوا إِلَى كُفْرِهِمْ (كَالْكَلْبِ إِلَى قِيَّةِ) لَمَّا غَلَبَتْهُمْ حَاضِرَاتُ هَذَا الْعَالَمِ، فَلَيْسَ مَلَامَةٌ تَجُوعُ، مِنْ هَذَا الْوَجْهِ، عَلَى الرَّسُولِ وَلَا عَلَى مُرْسِلِهِ. ١٤٨ لِأَنَّ مِنَ الْمَعْلُومِ الْبَيِّنِ أَنَّ الدَّعْوَةَ لَيْسَتْ قَسْرِيَّةً، وَلَا كَانَ الْإِنْقِيَادُ إِلَى هَذِهِ الْأَمَانَةِ اقْتِدَارِيًّا وَاعْتِصَابِيًّا، لَكِنِ اخْتِيَارِيًّا. ١٤٩ وَلَوْلَا كَانَ كَذَلِكَ لَقَدْ كَانَ هَذَا الدِّينُ يَعْتَلُّ مِنْ هَذَا السَّبَبِ، وَ[كَانَتْ] تَقْوَى حُجَّةٌ مُعْطَلَةٌ عَلَيْهِ بِظُهُورِ عَيْبِهِ.

139 Regarding the first one which is general preaching, **140** it is an obvious matter (that has no need of proof more than this) that the name of Christ our Lord is worshipped and bowed down before in our current time. **141** From the farther of the east to the west, from the end of the kiblah²¹ to the end of the north, there is no place that the name of Christ is not mentioned with abundant worship and honor. **142** This has fulfilled the prophecy of David, who said, proclaiming in his Psalm about them, "their line²² has gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world"²³. **143** With the support of the One who sent them, and because He is with them (as He promised), no place in the four corners of the earth has escaped their call. With this they fulfilled the purpose and command of their Master.

144 But the impeder of the faith claims, "The matter is not like this! For we see in our current time more than half of the world does not know Christ and does not worship him". **145** We respond to him first, with a stubborn temper, then with a forgiving temper. **146** With stubbornness we don't surrender this matter to him, but we disprove it, because it is on the contrary. Believers in Christ in the world are more than non-believers.

21) *Qiblah*, the south, that is the direction of the *ka'ba*. It is the direction Muslims face in their prayer.

22) He uses the Arabic word "mantiq" which means "logic".

23) Psalm 19:4.

147 By way of forgiveness, we say, if preaching is done and completed in all the countries of the earth (as we mentioned) but the hearts of some listeners are hardened and do not believe, or, they believed in time, then went back to their infidelity (as the dog to its vomit) when they were overcome by the pleadings of this world, from this respect, no blame is due to the disciple or to the one who sent him. 148 It is well known and proven that the calling is not coercive, and submission to this faith is not by power, or extortion, but by choice. 149 If it is not so, this religion would have become, for such reason, ill and the arguments of its impeters would have been strengthened by revealing its defect.

150 And, because we don't want to enlarge speech and prolong the interpretation in this answer by convincing his claimer, we say; 151 if the disciple of that king (who, in this meaning, already mentioned in our parable) executed his master's command, calling all who are under the king's authority, 152 but some of the invited delayed for different reasons, either out of laziness or laxity, or because they preferred the food they have in their hands (which they are used to taking) more than the royal ones that are majestic and honorable or, because of crudeness of their nature and blindness of their sight, 153 or, because of the craving of their bellies and the lowliness of their souls did not reach to where the banquets are erected to gather the inviters, but were satisfied with the best food they found (like children in their minds are) and were full of it by passing off the royal food, 154 They did not believe the people who were invited because of the invitation's greatness and the majesty and honor of its owner, and what is similar to this. 155 Therefore, the excuses of the delayers (we already mentioned) are due to whom, the king or his disciple? Also if the Sower had not compassion on the seed, but threw it even on the rocks, on the road, in the thorns, and on uncultivated land, and no seed grew but the first one (that is the one who fell on the good soil)²⁴ what blame is due to the Sower? (3:139-155).

He then answers the reason miracles are not performed as they were in the beginning of Christianity.

١٧١ فَاَنْ قَالَ قَائِلٌ: "فَلِمَ لَا تَرَى مِثْلَ هَذِهِ الْأَعَاجِيبِ الْآنَ فِي الْمُعْتَمِدِينَ مِنْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ؟" ١٧٢ أَحْبَبْنَا إِنْمَا صَارَ مِثْلُ هَذَا وَتَمَّ فِي وَقْتِهِ عِنْدَمَا كَانَتْ الضَّرُورَةُ دَاعِيَةً إِلَيْهِ، ١٧٣ وَلَوْلَا أَنَّ بِالْحَقِيقَةِ صَارَ مَا كَانَتْ الْبِشَارَةُ قَدْ انْتَشَرَتْ فِي سَائِرِ الْمَسْكُونَةِ، ١٧٤ لِأَنَّ النَّارَ فِي بَدْءِ وَقَيْدِهَا، وَهِيَ بَعْدُ شَرَارَةٌ، تَحْتَاجُ مَعُونَةَ

24) Cf. Matthew 13:1-9.

تَلَحَّفَهَا مِنْ خَارِجٍ (وَهِيَ هُبُوبٌ رِيحٌ يَسِيرٌ فِيهَا إِلَى أَنْ تَتَقَوَّى) فَإِذَا مَا قَوِيَ لَهَيْئَهَا
وَاضْطْرَامَهَا تَسْتَعْنِي عَنْ ذَلِكَ. ١٧٥ كَذَلِكَ وَالنَّصْبَةُ الْحَدِيدَةُ إِنَّمَا تَحْتَاجُ إِلَى
الْحَفْرِ عَلَيْهَا وَالسَّقْيِ إِلَى أَنْ تُعْرَقَ وَتَتَقَوَّى.

172 If the sayer says, "why don't we see miracles like these in our time by baptized believers?" **173** we answer him that this happened and was completed in its time when the necessity was called to it. If in reality this would not have happened, the Good News would not have spread throughout all population. **174** Because fire needs in the beginning of its burning, while it is still a spark, help from outside, that is a blow that can walk through it until it is strengthened, then its blazes and flames are empowered and it has no need for any help. **175** Likewise, the new plant needs digging and watering until it is rooted and strengthened (3:172-175).

b. Differences between pagan and Christian messages

In this section of the response Gerasimus argues that pagans don't have a unified message.

٢١ لَيْسَتْ صِفَةُ الْحُنَفَاءِ فِي ذَلِكَ الْوَقْتِ كَانَتْ تُشْبِهُ صِفَةَ النَّصَارَى الْآنَ، لِأَنَّهُ إِنْ
كَانَ الْإِتِّفَاقُ صَارَ عِنْدَهُمْ فِي الضَّلَالَةِ وَاحِدًا، لَكِنَّ ضَلَالَتَهُمْ لَيْسَتْ عَلَى مَنْهَجٍ
وَاحِدٍ [وَلَا] عَلَى صِفَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ، ٢٢ بَلِ الْإِخْتِلَافُ فِيهَا كَثِيرًا كَانَ وَمُخْتَلِفًا، لَيْسَ
فِي أَمْرِ مَعْبُودَاتِهِمْ فَقَطُّ، بَلْ وَفِي نَوَامِيسِهِمْ وَوَعُودِ مُجَازَاتِهِمْ، ٢٣ حَتَّى أَنَّهُ وَلَا
التَّلْمِيزُ كَانَ يَتَّفِقُ مَعَ تَلْمِيزِ مِثْلِهِ، أَوْ مَعَ مُعَلِّمِهِ فِي وَاحِدٍ مِنْهَا، وَلَا الْمُعَلِّمُ مَعَ
تَلْمِيزِهِ أَوْ مَعَ مُعَلِّمِ مِثْلِهِ.

21 The character of pagans at that time is not similar to Christians now. If it were so, the agreement [of pagans] in the error would have been one; but, their fallacy is not according to one method and not according to one character. **22** The differences are many and diverse, not only in the matter of their idols, but also in their laws and promises of rewards. **23** It is to the point that a student doesn't agree with another student like him, or with his master, in one of the characters, and not even a teacher with his student or with another teacher.

Here he uses the same apologetical argument of the church fathers against pagans. Cyril of Alexandria, for example, in his defense *Against Julian the Apostate* defended his Christian message against his pagan counterpart's critics in a similar way:

Readers, now you have heard and understood what drive all this is! Opposing their opinions one to another, vociferating this or that, mixed up anyhow, without nuances, self-reflection, just at their pleasure; how can this avoid the impression that they are just guessing at the truth rather than knowing it? Indeed, some prefer just one universe, others a plurality; some of them believe that this universe is subject to creation, but others are opposed totally to this and opine on the contrary that the universe is imperishable and was not created; some say it is governed by a divine providence, others do without providence and allot the harmonious movements of the elements to automatic mechanisms and accidents; some say that the universe has a soul, others deny that it has a soul or a spirit. In short you could imagine that their theories on each detail are just tossed together, like mixed drinks! [...] So which one do we give our approval to, when we seek the truth, when we seek to start along on the irreproachable way from which every error is banished? Which of the thinkers quoted can we declare innocent of the wrong of telling a lie? Which do we reward as not having stumbled in some detail? Or rather how can we grant a right to teach others, to those who have traveled so far from the truth that they disagree not only with each other but even with themselves?²⁵

Gerasimus then argues that Christians are not like pagans. Despite the fact that there are differences between Christians regarding the mystery of the Divine Economy, they all agree on the foundations of religion. They are the children of one Baptism, are following the preaching of one Gospel, are under one Hope, and are walking in one right royal way (Cf. vv. 24-26).

Gerasimus concludes in a bold declaration stating that Christ died for all humans and whoever believes in Him shall be saved. He states, using the verse from Philippians 2:10, “every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those in earth and of those under the earth” (vv. 27-33).

c. Reasons for Muslims ascendance over Christians

This objection originated in the context of escalating numbers of Christians converting to Islam. It is not the purpose of this study to examine such social and religious phenomenon. Therefore, I will briefly draw a picture of the context to examine the motives of the objection.

The Abbasid period saw an unprecedented number of Christians accepting the new religion. Based on the estimate of the Umayyad governor

25) http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/cyril_against_julian_02_book2.htm

‘Ubayd Allāh bin Ziyād, around the year 675 only about three percent of the population in Iraq had converted to Islam. However, beginning with the reign of the caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd (786-809), the rate of conversions increased dramatically. By the mid-ninth century, the Muslim population of Iraq is thought to have reached nearly forty percent²⁶. This is also true for the other countries in the region. Such social and religious phenomenon alarmed the different groups of Christians as a new interpretation of Islam began to flourish in various Christian groups. Apologetical concerns not only defended Christian beliefs but also endeavored to stem the tide of conversions away from the well-established and ancient Christian church. Christians (clergy and scholars) were prompted to make their case in favor of Christianity in such a way as to defend its intelligibility and legitimacy in the face of Islamic criticism, as well as to calm fears and encourage confidence within the Christian population.

The Eastern Christians saw the coming of Islam as a judgment of God; its purpose was to bring judgment on the people who had erred. This view can be found in the writings of the Eastern Christian denominations but with different interpretations. The Monophysite and the Nestorians, who rejected the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) and were persecuted because of their rejection, saw Islam as a judgment of God against their Melkite enemies who accepted the council of Chalcedon. This is illustrated by the Coptic editor of the Egyptian *History of the Patriarchs*, Severus of Asmounein, who wrote, “The Lord abandoned the army of the Romans as a punishment for their corrupt faith, and because of the anathemas uttered against them by the ancient fathers, on account of the Council of Chalcedon”²⁷. The Melkite, on the other hand, saw Islam as a judgment of God against human transgressions. Between the year 634 and 640, Maximus the Confessor, who was a Melkite, wrote a letter to Peter the Illustrious. In it he explained that Arabs succeeded in their conquests because of Christian sin.

*For we have not conducted ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ... we have all acted like wild beast towards one another, ignorant of the grace of God's love for humans, and the mystery of the suffering of the God who became flesh for our sake*²⁸.

26) Cf. Richard BULLIET, *Conversion to Islam in the medieval period: an essay in quantitative history* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge/ Massachusetts, 1979), pp. 81-82.

27) Quoted by Hugh GODDARD, *A history of Christian-Muslim relations* (New Amsterdam Book, Chicago, 2000), p. 37.

28) PG, vol. 91, col. 540.

Another source of the Melkite view of Islam is the writing of Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who, in his sermons, preached that Christians were experiencing these tribulations because of their own wickedness, and like Maximus, he thought that repentance would turn the Muslim advances²⁹. Biblical analogy is called into play. For example the analogy of the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed Jerusalem, was used. His action was interpreted by some of the Old Testament prophets such as Jeremiah, as bringing God's judgment on a decadent Israelite community.

Gerasimus builds his defense upon such theological interpretations of Islam. As a Melkite, he adapted his forefathers' interpretations; he reads the coming of Islam as a judgment from God because of Christian sin. God has brought it to give an awareness of the illness of sin. Yet, He will never abandon us but will provide the right medicine to heal us.

٣٤ وَأَمَّا سَبَبُ اسْتِعْلَاءِ أُمَّةِ مُحَمَّدٍ (أَعْيَبِي الْمُسْلِمِينَ) عَلَى أَوْلَادِ الْمَعْمُودِيَّةِ الْمُقَدَّسَةِ وَضَبْمِهِمْ إِيَّاهُمْ فَهُوَ لِأَجْلِ أَنَّهُمْ حَادُوا عَنْ حِفْظِ الْوَصَايَا الْإِلَهِيَّةِ الْمُحْيِيَّةِ (الَّتِي بِهَا قَوَامُ صِحَّةِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ) وَجَنَحُوا إِلَى الْخَطِيئَةِ الْمُمْرِضَةِ الْمُهْلِكَةِ لِلْأَنْفُسِ.

34 Regarding the ascendance of the nation of Muhammad (I mean Muslims) upon the children of the Holy Baptism and their oppressiveness upon them; It is because [Christians] strayed from keeping the divine and life giving commandments (that have in them the health of their souls) and inclined to sin (that ill their souls and perishes it).

He then moves biblical imagery presenting the form of the sword of Islam as a sort of discipline for Christians.

٣٩ وَمَعَ هَذَا فَأَصْنَافُ [هُوَ] الْأَدَبُ (أَعْيَبِي، آذَابُ الرَّبِّ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمُخْتَلِفَةٌ مِثْلَ الْحَرَادِ وَالْقَمَلِ وَالْحَيَّاتِ وَالْفَأْرِ وَالْوُحُوشِ الْكَاسِرَةِ وَمَا يُشَاكِلُ ذَلِكَ). ٤٠ وَمَا صُورَةُ سَيْفِ الْإِسْلَامِ وَسُلْطَتِهِمْ عَلَى أَوْلَادِ الْمَعْمُودِيَّةِ إِلَّا كَوَاحِدَةٍ مِنْ مَا ذَكَرْنَا. ٤١ لِأَنَّ بِمِثْلِ هَذَا كَانَ فِي الْقَدِيمِ يُؤَدَّبُ شَعْبُهُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِذَا مَا كَانَ يَرَاهُمْ حَائِدِينَ عَنْ فَرَائِضِ نَامُوسِهِ.

39 Nonetheless, there are many kinds of discipline (I mean the disciplines of the Lord are many and different, such as locusts, lice, snakes, rates, savage beasts, and what is similar to this). 40 The form of the sword of Islam and their authority upon the children of baptism is but one of these

29) Cf. "Epistola Synodica", PG, vol. 87, col. 3197.

disciplines we mentioned, 41 because, in a similar way, in the past, [the Lord] disciplined the children of Israel when they deviated from His commandments and laws.

He continues to build his treatise on biblical imagery from the prophets of the Old Testament stating that God has no need for our worship when we anger Him; our supplications are vileness if we deviate from His commandments and anger Him with our deeds (Cf. 42-43). This statement resonates with many prophetic warnings against the people of Israel in the Old Testament, such as Amos 5:20-23; Isaiah 1:1-20.

Gerasimus concludes the response to the objection stating that his purpose in this treatise is to prove the honor of the religion of Christians (the children of baptism) and its truthfulness in itself, not through the people's own conduct (5:48). And, that a Christian's hope is not in this world but in the world to come (Cf. 5:50-54).

2. Second objection: The mystery of the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ

The form of the objection is:

- You Christians dare to say that "God is a Son!" Then you say, "He is three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit". In saying this, you are worshipping three gods (vv. 55-56).
- You Christians also dare to say, "Christ (your God) was truly crucified, dead and buried!" You depict him as a created man, and then you make him God and worship him! (vv. 57-58).

This objection is at the heart of the Muslims' attacks against Christians. The Qur'an rejects the concept of Christ as the son of God and the Trinity cursing those who believe in such ideas:

The Jews call 'Uzair a son of God and the Christians say Christ is the son of God. That is a saying from their mouths. (In this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God's curse be on them, how they are deluded away from the truth!³⁰

That they said (in boast): "We killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the apostle of God". But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture follow, for of a surety

30) Sūrah 9:30.

they killed him not³¹.

O People of the book! Commit no excesses in your religion, nor say of God aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was no more than an apostle of God, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him, so believe in God and His apostles; Say not "Trinity", desist, it will be better for you, for God is One God, glory be to Him, far Exalted is He above having a Son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth, and enough is God as a Disposer of affairs³².

The commentators of the Qur'ān and Muslim theologians also attacked the idea of Jesus as the Son of God and the Trinity. It is not the objective of this article to examine this subject; therefore, an example will clarify it³³. Fahr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, a noted theologian and philosopher, wrote in his commentary of Sūrah 9:30,

There is no meaning to associate (širk) except if a person takes another object of worship beside God. If we were to ponder well this point, we would surely see that the rejection of faith of idol-worshiper beside God does not say that this idol is the creator or god of the universe. Rather he regards it as an object which would bring him nearer to God. Christians, on the other hand, profess divine incarnation (ḥulūl) and union (ittiḥād) and this is the worst kind of rejection of faith³⁴.

Al-Rāzī continues to argue in a scholastic way against the possibility of God engendering or in any way having offspring. God exists in Himself and the existence of all else is contingent on Him. Moreover, God alone is eternal and all else is created in time.

It therefore follows that everything other than God is created in time and hence preceded by nonbeing into being. From this it follows that everything other than God is His slave and possession. It is therefore impossible that anything other than He be his offspring. This being which is ascribed to God as His offspring must be eternal; if he is eternal then it

31) Sūrah 4:157.

32) Sūrah 4:171.

33) For more detail about Muslim polemics against Christianity see David THOMAS (Ed. Trans.), *Early Muslim polemics against Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002). David THOMAS, "Christian theologians and new questions", in Emmanouela GRYPEOU, Mark SWANSON, David THOMAS (eds.), *The encounter of eastern Christianity with early Islam* (L.J. Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2006), pp. 258-276.

34) Fakhr al-Dīn AL-RĀZĪ, *al-Taḥṣīr al-Kabīr*. 1st ed., 30 vols. (Al-Maṭba'a al-Bahiyah al-Miṣriyyah, Cairo, 1938), vol. 16, pp. 33-34.

*matters not which of the two we regard as father and which as son. If, on the other hand, the child is temporal, then he was created by him who is eternal, and is therefore his slave, and thus cannot be his child*³⁵.

The response to the objection can be divided into three parts: a) the eternal birth of Christ and the Holy Trinity; b) the passion of Christ and the reason Christians honor it; and c) the ground for God's condescendence.

a. The eternal birth of Christ and the Holy Trinity

Gerasimus is trying to respond to two objections made against Christianity. The first one is to examine the concept of God as one substance (*ġawhar*). In Muslim minds substance is an independent entity that occupies a certain place; therefore, to say "God is one substance", makes Him an independent body. The second is their objection against the Trinity. For Muslims this concept is understood as saying that "God is three gods" and associates God with others gods³⁶ which is considered the unforgivable blasphemy. To say that "the three persons of the Trinity are personal attributes of God (*hawāš muṣaḥḥaṣah*)" complicates the matter more because God has more than three attributes³⁷.

Gerasimus, like many other Christian Arab theologians, endeavors to answer these questions and to clarify these concepts to his Muslim audience. As he did in the first objection, Gerasimus again reminds his readers that he has already examined this subject in the first part of his book. Saying, "God is three persons" does not mean, "three gods" but, "God Almighty, His Word, and His Spirit are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Cf.5:59-60; 1:94-166).

After this review and reminder of what has been examined in the first part, Gerasimus starts by stating that the analogy of our minds cannot contain the idea of the eternal birth of Christ, thus, "it must be honored by silence!" When we try to explain such an idea we resort to human language and analogies (v. 61). "How did the mind imagine it? Or how do our tongues serve it? There is no strength to understand it or talk about its form more than saying, 'He was a Father, a Son was begotten from Him, either like the ray from the sun, or like a word from the mind, or what is similar to this' "

35) *Ibidem*, vol. 4, pp. 25-27.

36) The term used by Muslims is *širk*. It means to associate God with other gods.

37) For more information about this see Paul KHOURY, *Al-mafāhīm 'inda al-muslimīn, al-tawḥīd wa al-taṭlīt*, al-Maktaba al-Būlusiyya, Jounieh, 2007, pp. 9-58.

(vv. 63-64). This idea echoes how church fathers describe the eternal birth of Christ. Gerasimus, in this matter, borrows extensively from the theological discourses of Gregory of Nazianzus on the Son and His eternal birth³⁸.

Gerasimus then affirms that Christians don't worship three gods. He says that when we speak about the Trinity we don't talk about three separate persons but God with one substance and three personal attributes (*hawāṣ muṣahḥaṣah*) (v.79). He continues to clarify the idea of God as "one substance and three hypostasis" (*ḡawhar wāḥid wa talāṭat aqānīm*), stating that Christians don't intend to present three separate persons as in the separation of our human personalities.

٧٦ لِأَنَّا إِن كُنَّا مُجْتَمِعِينَ كَأَفْتِنَا تَحْتَ نَوْعٍ وَاحِدٍ فَمْتَفِقُونَ أَجْمَعًا فِي جَوْهَرٍ
وَاحِدٍ وَصُورَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ تَعْمُنَا، ٧٧ لَكِنَّا مُخْتَلِفُونَ فِي أَكْثَرِ الْأَشْيَاءِ (أَعْنِي فِي الزَّمَانِ
وَالْمَكَانِ وَالْمَشِيئَةِ الْعَزْمِيَّةِ وَعَبِيرَ ذَلِكَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَاضِ الْمَفَارِقَةِ وَعَبِيرَ الْمَفَارِقَةِ،
الْمُجْتَمِعَةِ فِي كُلِّ مَنَّا وَلَا يُمْكِنُ وَلَا يَجُوزُ اجْتِمَاعُهَا الْبَتَّةُ فِي غَيْرِهِ). ٧٨ حَتَّى أَنْ
لَيْسَ الْاِخْتِلَافُ مَوْجُودًا عَلَى هَذِهِ الصِّفَةِ فِي بَعْضِنَا الْبَعْضُ فَقَطُّ، لَكِنَّ الشَّخْصَ
نَفْسَهُ مَنَّا مُسْتَحِيلٌ وَمُتَعَيِّرٌ وَمُتَقَلِّبٌ مِنْ حَالٍ إِلَى حَالٍ فِي كُلِّ وَقْتٍ.

76 For we are all gathered under one kind, and we are all agreed in one substance and one form that prevails over all of us, 77 but, we are different in many things (I mean time, place, determined will, and other symptoms that separate and unite us, that are common in each one of us, and cannot, or should not, ever be present in other persons). 78 It is to the point that these differences are not present in form only between us but even the person himself is in all times, transformed, changed, and fluctuated, from state to state.

He then compares this to God and the persons of the Holy Trinity:

٧٩ وَأَمَّا بَارِي الْكُلِّ فَإِنَّ كَانَتْ الْأَقَانِيمُ فِيهِ ثَلَاثَةً، فَلَااخْتِلَافُ إِنَّمَا هُوَ فِي
الْخَوَاصِ الْمُسَخَّصَةِ الْوُجُوهِ فَقَطُّ، وَهُوَ أَنْ لِكُلِّ قُنُومٍ مِنْهُ خَاصَّةٌ تَخْصُهُ بِهَا، تُمَيِّزُ
الْوَجْهَ مِنْ غَيْرِهِ، لَكِنَّ الْاِتِّفَاقَ فِيهَا كَثِيرٌ، ٨٠ لِأَنَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ ذُو جَوْهَرٍ وَاحِدٍ
وَطَبِيعَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَكَرَامَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَأَزَلِيَّةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ، وَمَا يُشَاكِلُ ذَلِكَ مِمَّا يَقَعُ فِيهِ

38) GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, "Theological discourse 29", N. 8. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.titlepage.html> "How was He begotten? I repeat the question in indignation. The Begetting of God must be honored by silence".

الاختلاف عندنا نحن الهيولانيين وبيننا، ٨١ لأن كل واحد من الثلاثة كليتُهُ في كليتَي الاثنين الآخرين، وهو مع هذا إله كامل، والثلاثة إله واحد، ٨٢ وكل واحد من الثلاثة هو بعينه الإثنين الآخران، ما خلا الخواص (المقدم ذكرها) التي بها وحدها لا غير يميز العقل الواحد من الآخرين.

79 Regarding the Creator of all, although the persons in Him are three, the differences are only in the aspects of personal attributes, that is, every person has special features that distinguish and differentiate Him from the other, and is similar to what differentiates us as humans, but the agreements in them are many, 80 because He is One God with one substance, one nature, one honor, one eternity. 81 The totality of every one of the Three is in the totality of the other two, yet He is fully God. 82 The Three are One God, and every one of the Three is Himself the other two, except in the attributes (mentioned already) that through it only, not by any other, distinguishes the mind of the one from the other.

He ends his interpretation on the Trinity with the classical illustrations used by Abū Rā'iṭah, and Theodore Abū Qurrah. The examples of three lamps lightened in one home, and three persons singing one Psalm (Cf. vv. 83-85).

b. The passion of Christ and the reason Christians honor it

Gerasimus' answer to this objection is a combination of biblical and patristic liturgical teachings. He first declares:

٨٦ وَأَمَّا الْحَوَابُ عَنْ آلامِ سَيِّدِنَا وَمُخْلِصِنَا، فَلَيْسَ إِنَّا لَا نَأْتِفُ مِنْهَا فَقَطْ، لَكِنَّا نَحَقِّقُهَا عَلَيْهِ وَنَعْتَرِفُ بِأَنَّ بِهَا صَارَ خَلَاصُنَا، ٨٧ فَتُعْلِنُهَا وَنُشْرَفُهَا وَنُشْهِرُهَا، لَيْسَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَقَطْ، لَكِنِ بِالْفِعْلِ أَيْضًا، ٨٨ حَتَّىٰ إِنَّا نَصَوِّرُهَا فِي الْبَيْعَةِ الْمُقَدَّسَةِ، وَعَلَى الطَّرِيقِ، وَفِي أَكْثَرِ الْمَوَاضِعِ (أَعْنِي صَلْبَهُ وَآلامَهُ) لِفَلَا نَنْسَىٰ افْتِخَارُنَا بِهَا، ٨٩ وَقَصْدُنَا فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا أَنْ نُنَادِيَ بِفَضْلِ سَيِّدِنَا عَلَيْنَا وَتَنَازُلِهِ مَعَنَا فِي بَابِ خَلَاصِنَا إِلَىٰ حَدِّ هَذَا مِقْدَارُهُ.

86 In regards to the answer about the passion of our Lord and Savior, we, not only do not despise it, but we affirm it in Him and confess that through it our salvation was wrought. 87 We, therefore, proclaim it, honor it, and declare it, not only by words, but by deeds. 88 We even design it in the Holy Church, on the roads, and in most places (I mean His crucifixion and passion) that we may not forget our gladness in it. 89 Our pur-

pose in this is to announce, in the section of our salvation, the favor of our Lord upon us and His condescendence to such a level.

This idea is similar to many eastern liturgical hymns that are chanted in services on Good Friday. He then compares the passion of Christ to a servant who fell into the harshness of captivity. His master redeemed him by enduring the hardship that the servant had to endure. He put on the servant's filthy garment, the chains of captivity and suffered on his behalf. The servant, after his liberation, clothed himself with the filthy garment and the chains of captivity and walked around proclaiming the favor and goodness of his master (Cf. vv. 90-94).

Gerasimus then moves to the Bible referring to 1 Corinthians 1:18-21, 25; 1 Corinthians 2:1-6, and Galatians 4:16, stating that the passion of Christ is foolishness for the world but for us it is the power of God (Cf. vv. 96-103).

Gerasimus then answers the question as to why the Bible and the church's books used humble terms to describe Christ. God was depicted in the Bible as a created man because Christ is fully God and fully man. He is fully divine, equal to His Father and fully human, equal to his mother and mankind. Therefore, sometimes the Bible talks about Jesus as man, and other times as God (Cf. vv. 104-107).

c. Reasons for God's condescendence

God condescended to the point of becoming equal to us to enable us to become equal to Him (v.108). To explain this point Gerasimus uses three illustrations: 1) The pedestrian and horseman. It would be impossible for a pedestrian to reach a horseman if the latter would not dismount his horse and walk with the pedestrian. 2) To teach swimming. Nobody can teach another to swim if he is in the boat. The instructor needs to take off his cloths and dive in the water in order to teach somebody to swim (Cf. vv. 109-110). 3) Sign language. A mute and deaf person cannot understand a speaker if the latter hides his speech and doesn't become equal to the mute and deaf person using his hands and fingers to communicate (Cf. v. 114).

The idea of divinization of man that echoes throughout the writings of the Eastern Fathers is clear in these last two points. Gerasimus follows the traditional template in the eastern theology that divides the history of salvation in three progressive stages: 1) God created man in His likeness and image; 2) man fell; and 3) God restored man by the incarnation of His Son. Al-

so, the Christological formula of the council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) that, "Christ is one person in two natures", is clear. Gerasimus presents the theology of the incarnation as God's identification with humankind. With the incarnation began a process that extends throughout Jesus' life whereby He embraces all aspects of human experience except sin. Becoming human means the involvement of more than the human body but the human mind and will as well. Salvation requires that humans be somehow united with the divine, since, as Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, "What has not been assumed cannot be restored; it is what is united with God that is saved"³⁹. Gerasimus is using the balancing formula of Chalcedon, "one nature in two persons", to affirm both the distinctness and unity of the divine nature with the human one⁴⁰.

He concludes this point by stating that "the union of the Word of God with the human body and His suffering does not harm the Divine Nature" (Cf. v.115). He refers back to two illustrations used in the first part, the illustration of the sun and the man (Cf. vv. 116-131).

3. Third objection: God allowed Adam to fall, and did not repel Satan

The form of the objection is, since God foreknew that Adam would fall, why did He create him? In addition, why did He not repel the deception of Satan? And when, after the fall, calamities came upon Adam, why did He not save him, but left him until transgressions increased in him? (Cf. vv. 132-134).

This objection originated in the Islamic tradition with its main focus the doctrine of free will and predestination. The dogma of God's predetermination of fate is not detailed in the Qur'an, but it characterizes Islamic theology and tradition. In about 702 A.D. orthodox Muslim, anathematized, as the worst heresy, the idea of free will or man's independence from God. The Qadarīs, or the upholders of free will, were branded as dualists for setting man up as a co-creator with God by asserting that man initiated his own action and determined his own destiny⁴¹. Al-Buḥārī quotes a tradition, in which

39) <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.titlepage.html> GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, "Theological discourse 29", N. 8.

40) Cf. Walter LOWE, "Christ and salvation", in Peter HODGSON, Robert KING (eds.), *Christian Theology, an introduction to its traditions and tasks* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1994), pp. 226-229.

41) Cf. Seal MORRIS, *Muslim Theology: a study of origins with reference to the Church Fathers* (Luzac & Co. Ltd., London, 1964), pp. 23-26.

Adam demonstrates to Moses that his fall was preordained,

The Prophet said, "Adam and Moses argued with each other. Moses said to Adam. 'O Adam! You are our father who disappointed us and turned us out of Paradise.' Then Adam said to him, 'O Moses! Allah favored you with His talk (talked to you directly) and He wrote (the Torah) for you with His Own Hand. Do you blame me for action which Allah had written in my fate forty years before my creation?' So Adam confuted Moses, Adam confuted Moses", the Prophet added, repeating the statement three times⁴².

Gerasimus gives three reasons for God giving humans the gift of free will.

- 1) When God created Adam, in His likeness and image, the purpose was to appoint Adam ruler over creation. One of the characteristics of man's image is free will, through which Adam was enabled to choose to obey God, or misuse the gift God bestowed on him, and not to obey. Therefore, if God, who foreknew that Adam would fall, did not create him for this reason, then the choices of Adam would overcome the purpose and goodness of God (Cf. vv. 135-142). It is as if we say, "If God foreknew that iron would be used for killing, why then did He create it? The same could be said about wine for drunkenness, or, about the member of procreation for adultery, or, about the tongue for lying and cursing" (vv. 143-144).
- 2) The reason God allowed Adam to fall is that if He forced Adam to obey Him, He would have robbed from Adam the gift of "enabling power" with which God had honored him. But the gifts of God are never taken back (Cf. vv. 145-147).
- 3) God allowed man to fall, that man may appreciate the grace and mercy of God. When God saves man through such Divine Economy, man will appreciate the goodness of God and will recognize the harm of disobedience and the reward of obedience (Cf. vv. 148-152).

He concludes his response with a parable to illustrate his point. A good physician owns a store that contains all kinds of medicines. He had a student who was like a son to him. Out of his love him he appointed him owner of the store and all that was in it. However, he warned him not to use a certain

42) AL-BUKHARI, *Ṣaḥīḥ*..., vol. 8, book 77, N° 611. The English translation is available on the Internet site of the University of Southern California:
http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/bukhari/077_sbt.html (visited on February 27, 2009).

cream that he had put in a clay pot because it was made for cold temperament and elders, and if any young man used the cream it would burn his mood and scorch his humor. The friends of the student envied him and convinced him that the cream was not harmful and if anyone used it they would never die. The student believed his friends and used the cream. Immediately his body burned and the cream flowed in his veins like poison. The master took the student out of the store. The symptoms of illness worsened and the student approached death. At that time the mercy of his master moved him, and he made a healing medicine for his student (Cf. vv. 159-175).

After telling the parable, Gerasimus asks his readers, "If the master had hidden the clay pot from his student, the student would have said, 'my master deceived me, and, if the master healed him immediately, the student would not have appreciated the benefit of obedience and the harm of disobedience (Cf. vv. 176-179). He then interprets the parable;

١٨٠ فَالطَّبِيبُ إِذَا هُوَ اللهُ تَعَالَى، ١٨١ وَالْحَانُوتُ فَهِيَ (الْحَنَّةُ وَمَا فِيهَا مِنْ بَاقِي
الْحَوَائِجِ وَكُلِّ نَمَارِهَا). ١٨٢ وَالْمَعْجُونُ الَّذِي مَنَعَهُ عَنْهُ (الَّذِي لَا يُوَافِقُ الشَّبَابَ
بَلْ الْكُهُولَ) فَهِيَ (عَوْدُ مَعْرِفَةِ الْخَيْرِ وَالشَّرِّ) (الَّذِي لَمْ يَكُنْ بَعْدُ يُوَافِقُ الْمُتَبَدِّلِينَ فِي
مَعْرِفَةِ اللهِ). ١٨٣ وَالتَّلْمِيذُ فَهُوَ الْإِنْسَانُ الْأَوَّلُ، ١٨٤ وَحَسَادُهُ فَهُمْ الشَّيَاطِينُ،
١٨٥ وَالْأَمْرَاضُ وَالْأَوْجَاعُ وَالبَلَايَا فَجَمِيعُ ذَلِكَ [هُوَ] مَرَضُ الطَّبِيعَةِ فِي الْخَطِيئَةِ
بَعْدَ الْمُعْصِيَةِ وَالسَّقَطَةِ. ١٨٦ وَخُرُوجُ الْمَخْدُوعِ مِنَ الْحَانُوتِ فَهُوَ خُرُوجُ آدَمَ
مِنَ الْحَنَّةِ، ١٨٧ وَالدَّوَاءُ الْمُسْفِي الْمُحْيِي هُوَ الْمُعْمُودِيَّةُ الْمُقَدَّسَةُ وَالْقُرْبَانُ
الْمُقَدَّسُ.

180 The physician is God Almighty. **181** The store is paradise. **182** The cream that was forbidden from him, that is not appropriate for the youngster but for elders, is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (that is not befitted for beginners in the knowledge of God). **183** The student is the first man, **184** his enviers are devils. **185** The sickness, pain, and tribulations, all are the illness of the nature in sin after disobedience and the fall. **186** The exit of the deceived from the store is the exit of Adam from paradise. **187** The healing medicine is the Holy Baptism and the Holy Offering.

4. Fourth objection: God's condescendence and His shed blood on the Cross.

The form of the objection:

- If the Creator is Almighty and can do anything, why did He not complete the salvation of Adam and his descendants in one word, for He can say to anything, “Be” and it becomes immediately? Therefore, why was such incomprehensible condescendence needed? (Cf. vv. 188-189).
- In addition to this, it is said about Him that, “He bought us by His Blood”. It is well known that buying and selling is not completed if the seller was not paid the price of the merchandise. Therefore, if we say, the purchase is man, the seller is Satan, the buyer is Christ, and the price is His Blood, could it be that Satan was paid the Blood of Christ and possessed it (God forbid!)? (Cf. vv. 190-192).

This objection has its foundation in the Islamic scriptures that reject the idea of atonement and redemption and teaches that God is Almighty and Omnipotent. Therefore there is no necessity for him to condescend and die on a Cross. “To Him is due the primal origin of heaven and earth. When he decrees a matter, He says to it ‘be’ and it is”⁴³. “Allah creates what He wills, and when He has decreed a plan, He but says to it ‘Be’ and it is”⁴⁴.

Gerasimus responds to the objection in four points:

- 1) God’s will was to save us through justice and fairness, not by power (Cf. vv. 193-195).
- 2) God’s will was to encounter the like with its likeness; this means to save us through the same way Satan deceived Adam. Adam transgressed, not by force, but voluntarily, through the deceitfulness of Satan; thus, it would have contradicted God’s justice to take man back to Him by force. Therefore, the saving economy which consists of the deceiver of the First Adam would be deceived through the Body of the Second Adam; otherwise, Satan would have objected that God extorted from him, forcefully, the one who, voluntarily, had become his own. Such economy and wisdom necessitated God’s condescendence. And so, as Satan clothed himself with the body of a snake to hide his nature and deceive the First Man, likewise, God clothed Himself with a human body to hide His Truth from the deceiver. He took on our deceived nature and concealed in it His divin-

43) Sūrat 2:116.

44) Sūrat 3:47.

ity. In this way, Satan coveted to wrestle with Him, as he did with the one before Him, and, consequently, when Satan was defeated our Savior won the right to have us back (Cf. vv. 196-207).

- 3) God wanted, through His union with our nature, to teach us how to wrestle with Satan (vv. 208-209).
- 4) Through this saving economy God fulfilled the work of his four effective attributes (*al-ḥawāṣ al-fi'liyyat*): mercy, might, justice, and wisdom (vv. 213-214).

Gerasimus concludes his response with the parable of the incognito king. This parable will be examined in the next point (Cf. vv. 214-261).

5. *Fifth objection: Jesus changed the duties and practices of the Law*

The form of the objection:

- Why did God ordain duties that He would later change or abolish? Why did He change the practices of the Law? If there are no benefits in the Law, why did He order the children of Israel to keep it? And why was He Himself circumcised, and why did He eat the Passover? (Cf. vv. 263-265).
- If the Law is necessary, after God perfected it with the gift of baptism and the Lord's Sacrifice, why then does He not impose it upon us? In addition, why did He stop many other Jewish practices such as the Sabbath, and the eating of unclean food? (Cf. vv. 266-267).

The background of this objection is in the Jewish teachings against Christians. Since the beginning of Christianity, Jews have criticized Christians for believing in the Old Testament and not practicing the ordinances of the Law. A good example of these kinds of polemics between Jews and Christians is in the apology of Justin the Martyr and his dialogue with the Jewish philosopher Trypho⁴⁵. We also find among the Christian Arab apologists teachers like Abū Qurrah who defended the Christian faith by presenting treatises that expose the relation between the Law of Moses in the Old Testament and the Law of Christ in the New Testament⁴⁶. It is evident from this objection that these kinds of attacks were still flourishing in Gerasimus's

45) <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.titlepage.html>, JUSTINE THE MARTYR, *Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew*.

46) John LAMOREAUX (trans.), *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, coll. "The Library of the Christian East" 1, Brigham Young University Press, 2005, pp. 27-39.

time, and that he used in his response the treatises of the apologists before him.

The response to the objection:

- 1) God did not abolish the Law, but, as He said in His Holy Gospel, revealed its symbols and foreshadows. He completed the law, confirmed it, and brought it to perfection⁴⁷ (Cf. vv. 268-270). Gerasimus examined in this point many symbols and practices of the Law in the Old Testament that were completed in the New Testament (vv. 274-288). He then presents four illustrations to explain his point: 1) The Law of Moses is like a tree that bears temporary fruit and the Law of Christ is like a tree that bears fruit all the time (Cf. vv. 289-290). 2) The Law of Moses is like a farmer who prepares his land and then cuts down the weeds on the surface leaving the roots. The Law of Christ is like the farmer that uproots the weeds (Cf. vv. 292-297). 3) The Law of Moses is like the moon and the Law of Christ is like the sun. When the sun rises, it does not eliminate the moon but hides it. Likewise, the Law of Christ did not eliminate the Law of Moses but cover it (Cf. vv. 304-306). 4) The Law of Moses is like mother's milk; it is beneficial and appropriate for the newborn. The Law of Christ is like food for the strong and mature who no longer need milk (Cf. v. 307).
- 2) The purpose of God ordaining two laws is to gradually arrive at the knowledge of His full divinity (Cf. vv. 308-311). He uses four illustrations: 1) the four seasons of the year. We cannot jump from winter to summer without going through spring (v. 312). 2) Parents who tolerate certain behaviors in their children when they are little but don't tolerate them when the children grow up (v. 317). 3) Soldiers who are trained for war with wooden swords but when they enter true battle they use real iron swords (Cf. vv. 270- 271). 4) The physician who gradually treats the symptoms of illness (Cf. vv. 318-319). He then explains how such progress developed.

٣٣٥ فَأَوَّلُ مَا نَاوَلَهَا وَدَفَعَ إِلَيْهَا مِنَ الْأَدْوِيَةِ بِالنَّمُوسِ الطَّبِيعِيِّ [هُوَ] الرُّؤْيَةُ
وَالْتَمْيِيزُ (الَّذِي بِهِ تُفَرِّزُ الْخَيْرَ مِنَ الشَّرِّ، وَمَا يُوَافِقُهَا مِمَّا لَا يُوَافِقُهَا). ٣٣٦ ثُمَّ بَعْدَ
هَذَا أَعْطَانَا النَّمُوسَ الْمَسْطُورَ مَعَ مَا بَيْنَ هَذَيْنِ أَيْضًا مِنْ أَصْنَافِ أَدْوِيَةِ الْبَارِي
لِجِنْسِ الْبَشَرِيَّةِ وَاخْتِلَافِهَا. ٣٣٧ فَلَمَّا لَمْ يَقَوْ وَلَا وَاحِدٌ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأَدْوِيَةِ عَلَى

47) Cf. Matthew 5:17-18. New King James Version, Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002.

كَمَالِ بِرِّهَا، وَتَزَايَدَ فِيهَا الْمَرَضُ إِلَى حَدٍّ أَنْ أَشْرَفَتْ عَلَى الْعَطَبِ الْكُلِّيِّ، ٣٣٨ حَانَ الْوَقْتُ وَلَزِمَ حَيْثُ تَنَاوَلَهَا الدَّوَاءُ الْأَعْظَمُ، الْمُنَاسِبَ لِعَظَمَةِ عِلَّتِهَا، وَهُوَ الْمَتْنَاهِيَةُ صَنَعْتُهُ لِسَبَبِ تَنَاهِي مَرَضِهَا. ٣٣٩ وَلَمَّا كَانَ لَا يُمَكِّنُ أَنْ يُنَاوِلَهَا إِيَّاهُ أَحَدٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ غَيْرِهِ دَعَتْهُ الضَّرُورَةُ إِلَى أَنْ يَتَّحِدَ بِجِسْمِ هَيْولَانِيٍّ مِنْ طَبِيعَةِ أَجْسَادِنَا أَوْلَا لِيَمَانِلَنَا بِهِ، وَيَسْتَقِيمَ لَهُ أَنْ يُكْمَلَ بِالْعَمَلِ بِهِ جَمِيعَ مَا يُعَلِّمُنَا. ٣٤٠ كَذَلِكَ وَيَسْتَقِيمُ لَنَا نَحْنُ أَيْضًا التَّشْبُهُ بِهِ فِي عَمَلِهِ مِمَّا نَعَابِنُهُ فِيهِ مِنَ الْمُسَاوَاةِ بِنَا.

335 *The first medicine He gave her and handed over to her was the Natural Law that is discernment and revelation (which can distinguish between good and evil, and what is appropriate and not appropriate for us).* **336** *Then, He gave us the Written Law; in it was explained the different kinds of medicine that the Creator made for the human race.* **337** *When none of these medicines was able to complete her recovery, and illness increased to the point of total destruction, 338 the time arrived and necessitated for her to take the great medicine that is appropriate for her grave illness, and that's making is extremely [well done] because of her extreme illness.* **339** *When nobody could give it to her except Himself, necessity demanded for Him to be united with an earthly body that was taken from the nature of our bodies, first, to be like us, and that would be appropriate for Him to complete, through [the human body] what He teaches us.* **340** *Moreover, by being equal to us, we will be able to emulate Him in His work and in what we see in Him.*

He wraps up his response with a parable. A village and its lands are uncultivated and its inhabitants are lazy to the point that they are satisfied with wild plants and their fruits. One from them decided to cultivate the portion of land assigned to him. When the owner found out about this he blessed the servant and offered him grain seed to plant. The villager farmed the land and offered the owner of the village its harvest. The servant and his group become the owner's employees. After a few years, the owner appointed one of them to be the head of the group and he gave them branches of vines to plant in the land because the vine would last longer than the grain. After a few years he came with branches of an olive tree and asked them to plant them. He told them that when the olive tree grew the vines beneath them would wither. The olive tree would remain for them and their children forever. The farmers believed him and did what he asked them to do (Cf. vv. 357-374).

He then answers the second question, why did Jesus Christ practice the Law of Moses? The Lord Jesus was circumcised because the gift of baptism was not yet given. He celebrated the Passover because the Lamb of God was

not yet sacrificed. Finally, He completed the duties of the Law to affirm that He is the One Who ordained it, and then He, Himself, presented the Law of Truth, because He is the “Cornerstone” that contains both Testaments”⁴⁸ (Cf. vv. 387-393).

6. Sixth objection: Signs of True Disciple not demonstrated in Moses; God’s specific calling to the children of Israel unfair

The form of the objection:

- Moses did not demonstrate the three signs of the True Disciple (which are general preaching, performance of miracles, and speaking in widespread languages.) Does that mean Moses was a false disciple? (Cf. vv. 394-396).
- If God is fair and good to all, why then did He send a prophet and the Law to the children of Israel and neglect all other nations? (Cf. vv. 397-404).

The response to the objection:

- 1) Moses himself recognized that he is not the ultimate and True Disciple. He said, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear”⁴⁹ (Cf. vv. 405-407).
- 2) God did not send prophets only to the children of Israel, but their patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) knew Him and sought Him before everybody else (vv. 415-417).
- 3) If God assigned the children of Israel with His Law, His prophets, and His miracles, He bestowed upon the Greeks similar gifts of wisdom and knowledge, and also to the rest of the nations what they needed (cf. vv. 418-420).
- 4) God was certain of the calling and the salvation of the rest of the nations. He promised Abraham that he would become the father of countless nations⁵⁰ (v. 421). However, the calling and the salvation of the rest of the nations was delayed to complete the mystery of the Divine Economy (vv. 422-455).

48) Cf. Ephesians 2:11-22; Psalm 118 (117):23; Matthew 12:10; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17.

49) Deuteronomy 18:15, Acts 3:22.

50) Cf. Genesis 12:2-3.

- 5) The coming of Christ is what gave importance to Moses. After the coming of Christ the four corners of the earth recognized Moses (vv. 463-467).

He concludes his response with the parable of the incognito king (Cf. vv. 468-531). We will analyze the parable in the next point.

Gerasimus ends the fifth part with a liturgical benediction that is common in the supplications of the Eastern Churches, “We offer glory, thanksgiving, honor, and power to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now, always, forever and ever. Amen” (v. 531).

CONCLUSION

Gerasimus concludes the book recognizing that the treaty was assembled and put together, in humble terms, from the sayings of the church fathers (the stars of the apostolic church). He then appeals to the reader not to ascribe the humble style and the mistakes to the church fathers because “the pearls are found in the shells, and the gold is found in the soil” (conclusion, 5). Here he compares his writing to “shells” and “soil” and the sayings of the fathers to the “pearls” and “gold”. He then compares the one who reads this book and ascribes the mistakes and the humble expressions to the teachers of the church, not to the writer, to the person who soaks up the juice from the sugarcane and spits it out (conclusion, 6-7). Finally, as he started his book with praise and thanksgiving, he concludes the book with the same manner,

فَلَيْسِدْنَا وَمُخْلِصِنَا يَسُوعُ الْمَسِيحُ الْمَجْدَ وَالشُّكْرَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ الْأَدْنَى مِنَّا وَيُقَدِّمُهُ
إِلَيْهِ (مِثْلَ الْفَلْسِينِ مِنَ الْأَرْمَلَةِ) إِذَا مَا كَانَتْ عَلَى النِّيَّةِ الصَّالِحَةِ الصَّادِقَةِ، وَيَحْسَبُ
الطَّاقَةَ لَا يَأْتَفَ مِنْهُ فَلَهُ الْكِرَامَةُ وَالْوَقَارُ مَعَ أَبِيهِ وَرُوحِ قُدْسِهِ مِنَ الْآنَ وَإِلَى كُلِّ
أَوَانٍ وَإِلَى دَهْرِ الدَّاهِرِينَ. آمِينَ.

To our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be glory and thanksgiving; the One Who accepts the minimum from us and offers it to Him (like the two coins from the widow) if it is with good and sincere intention, and according to the ability, without despising it. To Him be honor and dignity, with His Father and His Holy Spirit, now always and forever. Amen.

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