

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268216125>

# Paul's Letter to the Muslims: English Translation from Arabic and French source documents.

Article · June 2003

DOI: 10.13140/2.1.3877.0886

---

CITATIONS

0

READS

1,413

1 author:



Dr. Nafisa Abdelsadek  
University of Birmingham

5 PUBLICATIONS 3 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

## *Paul's Letter to the Muslims*

Translation from French & Arabic by Dr. Nafisa Abdelsadek

1. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, the God of one substance, trinity of natures.

From the humble monk Paul of Antioch, Bishop of Sidon, letter to one of his Muslim friends in Sidon.

2. God gives us as well as you the benefit of reflection and makes it lead you as well as us to search to see light in the actions which lead to the Garden and deliver from the Fire.

3. Now then, when I have informed you, oh tender friend and dearest brother –may God prolong your existence in the most perfect happiness, may He protect you from evil and take you in friendship! - of my journey in some Byzantine territories and in Constantinople, in the country of the Maldavians, in some Frankish provinces and in Rome and thanks to the rank of which I have been judged worthy, that is the Bishopric?, I was able to meet the important people among the inhabitants of these regions and their leaders and to confer with their elites and their doctors, you will ask me to explain openly that which the people I have seen and talked to think of Mohammad, blessed of God. I answer then your request, on account of the extreme attachment and great affection I have for you:

4. These people say: When we heard it said that a man had appeared among the Arabs, by the name of Mohammad, who was said to be the Messenger of God and he brought a book which he said had descended to him from God on high, we felt that somehow this book would end up reaching us.

5. I said: Since you have heard talk of this Messenger and that you have made efforts to have among you the Book which he brought, for what reason have you not followed it? Especially as in the Book it says, “Whoever desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the ranks of the lost<sup>1</sup>.” – They: For various reasons. – Me: Which ones?
6. – They: One is that the Book is in Arabic and not in our language, according to what is said there, “We have sent down the Qur’an in Arabic in order that you may learn wisdom”<sup>2</sup>; and also: “It is He who has raised among the Gentiles a prophet from among themselves, who brought them his signs, to purify them and instruct them in the Book and Wisdom; although they had been before in manifest error”<sup>3</sup>; and also: “That you may warn a people to whom no “warner” has come before you; in order that they may be rightly guided”<sup>4</sup>; and also: “Thus we have sent by inspiration to you an Arabic Qur’an that you may warn the Mother of cities and all around her, and warn them of the Day of Assembly, of which there is no doubt”<sup>5</sup>; and also: “In order that you may warn a people whose fathers were not warned, and who, therefore, remain oblivious”<sup>6</sup>; and also “And admonish your relatives and the ones nearest you”<sup>7</sup>.”
7. Having seen that, we knew that he would not be sent to us, but towards the Arabs who were in Ignorance, of whom he said that there had not come to them a “warner” before him; and that there was not an obligation for us to follow him, for messengers had been sent to us before him, who addressed us in our own languages, warned us and gave to us the Torah and the New Testament in our

---

<sup>1</sup> Qur’an 3/85 (B99/79).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Qur’an 12/2 (B79/2); 20/113 (B57/112); 42/7 (B85/5).

<sup>3</sup> Qur’an 62/2 (B96/2).

<sup>4</sup> Qur’an 32/3 (B71/2).

<sup>5</sup> Qur’an 42/7 (B85/5).

<sup>6</sup> Qur’an 36/6 (B62/5).

<sup>7</sup> Qur’an 26/214 (B58/214).

languages. Being clear from the Book itself, that Mohammad had only been sent to those Arabs who were in Ignorance, when it said: “Whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the ranks of the lost”, it means by that, according to the demand of justice, his people to whom he is come in their language, and not to the others to whom he is not come, according to what is said there.

8. Then we have found, in the Book also, great praise of the Lord Christ and his Mother, and that God made of them a sign for the peoples, that when he said: “And she who guarded her chastity; We breathed into her from Our spirit, and we made her and her son a sign for all peoples”<sup>8</sup>; and also: “ The angels said: Oh, Mary, God has chosen you and purified you, chosen you above the women of all nations<sup>9</sup>.”
9. That with the witnesses for the Lord Christ: that he performed miracles, that he was conceived not from the action of a man, but by the announcement of the Angel of God to his Mother and that God made of them a sign for the nations, that he had spoken since being in the cradle<sup>10</sup>, brought the dead back to life, cured the blind, brought lepers back to the world, made with clay the shape of a fish and breathed on it, and with the permission of God<sup>11</sup>, finally that it is the Spirit of God and his Word<sup>12</sup>. That which conforms to our way of seeing concerning it and our belief.
10. We have found there also that God raised Christ towards Him, and placed those who followed him above those who were unbelievers, until the day of the Resurrection when it said: “When God said: Oh. Jesus, son of Mary, I will take

---

<sup>8</sup> Qur’an 21/9 (B67/91) cf. 66/12 (B111/12).

<sup>9</sup> Qur’an 3/42 (B99/37).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. 3/45-47 (B99/40-42); 19/16-33 (B60/16-34).

<sup>11</sup> Qur’an 3/49 (B99/43); 5/110 (B116/110).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 4/171 (B102/169).

you and raise you to myself, I will separate you from those who blaspheme and I will put those who follow you above those who reject faith, until the Day of Resurrection”<sup>13</sup>; and also: “We sent after them Jesus, the son of Mary and bestowed on him the Gospel and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy<sup>14</sup>.”

11. Then we found that which conferred great praises on our gospel, giving preference to our monasteries and churches over the mosques, and giving witness that the name of God is often invoked there as when it says: “Had not God checked one set of people by means of another, surely monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques would have been pulled down, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure<sup>15</sup>.”
12. These texts and others make it a duty upon us to hold to our religion, not to abandon our way, nor to reject that which we have, nor to follow any other than the Lord Christ, Word of God and his Apostles which He sent to us to warn us.
13. These, moreover have been the objects of great praise in the Book and commended highly with these words: “We sent aforetime Our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong) that men may stand forth in justice<sup>16</sup> .” This means His messengers the Apostles, because if it had meant Abraham, Moses, David and Mohammad it would have said, “with their Scriptures” and not “the Book”, which is the Gospel. Moreover the Book also said: “Then there came running from the farthest part of the city, a man, saying: Oh, my people! Obey the messengers: Obey those who ask no reward of you (for themselves) and who are themselves guided<sup>17</sup>.” This

---

<sup>13</sup> Qur’an 3/55 (B99/48) cf. 4/158 (B102/156).

<sup>14</sup> Qur’an 57/27 (B101/27); cf. 5/46 (B116/50).

<sup>15</sup> Qur’an 22/40 (B109/41).

<sup>16</sup> Qur’an 57/25 (B101/25).

<sup>17</sup> Qur’an 36/20-21 (B62/19-20).

means the Apostles because it didn't say "the Messenger". Then it gives this testimony that they are the helpers of God when it says: "As said Jesus, son of Mary to the disciples, "Who will be my helpers to (the work of) God?" Said the disciples, "We are God's helpers!" Then a portion of the children of Israel believed and a portion disbelieved. But We gave power to those who believed against their enemies and they became the ones that prevailed<sup>18</sup>."

14. As for the great praise which it confers on our Gospel and our Scriptures which are in our hands, it said: "We have sent down to you the Book, declaring truthful that which is in hand, to know the Torah and the Gospel"<sup>19</sup>; and also: "If you were in doubt as to what We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before you<sup>20</sup>." It confirmed by this, that which we already have, certainly; and it has repudiated the accusation of substitution and alteration from our Gospel and our Scriptures by the fact that it declares them veracious.
15. I said: And if someone came to say that it is possible that the substitution had taken place after this declaration? They said: It is not possible for anyone to say that because our Scriptures already date from around six hundred years before, in the form that they came into the hands of the people, who read them in their diverse languages and despite the distance from their countries; how would it have been possible for anyone to have altered anything or make any substitutions?
16. As for the Gospel, the Book witnesses that it is good guidance for the pious people, when it says: "Alef Lam Mim<sup>21</sup> That is the Book: in it is guidance, sure, without doubt, to those who fear God<sup>22</sup>." Alef Lam Mim are a part, and it is

---

<sup>18</sup> Qur'an 61/14 (B100/14); cf.3/52 (B99/45).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. 3/3 (B99/2); 5/48 (B116/52); 35/31 (B88/28).- Lesson C gives here the text 5/46 (B116/50); but the context shows that it concerns the Qur'an declaring the former scriptures to be truthful..

<sup>20</sup> Qur'an 10/94 (B

<sup>21</sup> Letters quoted at the beginning of Sura 2.

<sup>22</sup> Qur'an 2/2 (B93/1).

Christ. And “that Book” is the Gospel because it said: “Then if they reject you, so were rejected messengers before you, who came with clear signs, and the Scriptures and the Book of Enlightenment”<sup>23</sup>, which is the Gospel which the Messengers brought before it with the signs; moreover it is indeed “that Book”, because “that” cannot be the “this.”

17. Then we found something even more conclusive than the preceding, which is where it says: “I believe in whatever Book God has sent down. And I am commanded to judge justly between you. God is our Lord and your Lord. We are responsible for our deeds, and you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. God will bring us together. And to Him is our final goal<sup>24</sup>.” As regards to the ones other than the People of the Book, it says concerning them, “Say, oh infidels: I do not worship that which you worship, and you do not worship that which I worship. I will not worship that which you worship and you will not worship that which I worship. To your religion and to me mine<sup>25</sup>.”
18. And also when it speaks of those to whom it is come: “Do not discuss with the People of the Book except in the best way, unless with those of them who do wrong. And say: We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you. Our God and your God is one and it is to him we submit<sup>26</sup>.” He didn’t say that you should submit.
19. On the other hand “those who do wrong” no doubt that it is the Jews, who prostrated themselves before the head of a calf, were unfaithful to God, killed his prophets and his messengers, adoring idols, sacrificing to the demons not only dumb animals, but also their sons and their daughters, despite God witnessing

---

<sup>23</sup> Qur’an 3/184 (B99/181); cf. 31/21 (B84/19); 22/8 (B109/8).

<sup>24</sup> Qur’an 42/15 (B85/14).

<sup>25</sup> Qur’an 109/1-6 (B45/1-6).

<sup>26</sup> Qur’an 29/46 (B83/45).

against them, from the mouth of the Prophet David in Psalm one hundred and five when he said: “They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons. And shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the Idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with the blood. Thus they became unclean in their practices<sup>27</sup>.”

20. But we, the Christians, have done nothing of that which the Jews have done. It is why it is written in the Book: “You will find certainly that the worst enemies of the Believers are the Jews and the associators and certainly you will find that the best friends of the Believers are those who say: We are Christians, because among them are priests and monks. And they are not arrogant<sup>28</sup>.” It mentioned the priests and the monks for fear that it may be said: that was said about others and not you.” It showed also by that the honesty of our actions and the goodness of our intentions, yes indeed.

21. And it has denied for us the name associators by saying: “The Jews and the associators are the worst enemies of the believers, and the Christians are their best friends.” As for the rest, it is explained saying: “Those who are Believers (i.e. Muslims), those who have embraced Judaism, the Christians, Sabians, Magians and pagans, God will judge between them on the Day of Judgement <sup>29</sup>.” (on that over which they are in disagreement).

22. Not only has it denied us the name of associators, but it has also made clear that there is no favor to others over us, by saying: “Among the Believers, those who have embraced Judaism, the Christians, the Sabians and those who believe in God and the Last Day and have done righteous deeds, will have their reward with their

---

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 106 (105)/37-39.

<sup>28</sup> Qur’an 5/82 (B116/85).

<sup>29</sup> Qur’an 22/17 (B109/17); cf. 2/62 (B93/59); 5/69 (B 116/73).

Lord, without fear or sorrow<sup>30</sup>.” It has by these words established equality between all men, the Muslims and the others. Moreover it has clearly shown that by saying: “Oh, mankind, we have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. The most worthy of honor among you in the eyes of God is the most righteous<sup>31</sup>.”

23. Then it has commended our offerings, and threatened us, that if we were to abandon that which we have and to disbelieve that which descended to us, that God would make us endure a torment that He wouldn't make any other creature in the universe endure, as when it said: “As the Disciples said: Oh Jesus, son of Mary can your Lord send down to us a table set with food? Jesus said: Fear God if you have faith. They said: We only want to eat from it and satisfy our hearts and to know that you have told us the truth and that we may be witnesses to it. Jesus, son of Mary said: Oh God, our Lord send us from heaven a table set with food, as a commemoration for us, for the first and last among us, and a sign from you. And give us sustenance as you are the best Sustainer. God said: Indeed I will send it down to you, but if any of you after that resists faith I will punish him with a torment that I have never inflicted upon anyone among all the people<sup>32</sup>.” The set table is the host, that which we have for communion at every liturgy.

24. And then, for that which has been said before, and because it wouldn't be suitable for us, in the eyes of sensible people, to abandon the Spirit of God and His Word, which is witnessed in this book that it has accomplished great things, and of which it said: “There is no-one from the People of the Book who doesn't believe in Him before his death and on the Day of Judgement He will be a witness against

---

<sup>30</sup> Qur'an 2/62 (B93/59).

<sup>31</sup> Qur'an 49/13 (B114/13).

<sup>32</sup> Qur'an 5/112 (B116/112-115).

them”<sup>33</sup>, and then to follow that which has not been sent to us, that He himself expresses His doubts on the subject of that which He has brought, when He says in this Book: “Certain it is that either we or you are on right guidance or in manifest error”<sup>34</sup>, and then that it received the order, in the opening chapter of the Book, to ask to be guided towards “the right path, the way of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, who are not objects of your rage, nor lost”<sup>35</sup>: those upon whom He has bestowed grace, is us the Christians; those who are objects of wrath are the Jews, those who are lost, they are the idolaters; and the way, that is the path, that is to say the religion;- finally because we know that God is righteous and it would not be of His justice that He demand reckoning on Resurrection Day of whatever nation, claiming that it had been sent an apostle which He had not sent to them and which knew nothing of the Book in their language, nor of Himself, nor of a herald who came on His behalf;- it is because of all that that we have not followed this Messenger, nor abandoned that which is in our hands.

25. –I said: The Muslims disapprove of us in that we say Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
– They said: If they knew that by these words we only mean to make a clearer assertion that God on high is something living and speaking they would not disapprove of us for that.
26. Because we others, the assembly of Christians, having seen things come to pass, we knew that something other than themselves, caused them to happen, since it is not possible for them to happen themselves, because of their composition of opposite elements. We said, then, that He is matter, but not after the manner of created things, since He is the creator of everything, and thus denying the possibility of His non-existence.

---

<sup>33</sup> Qur’an 4/159 (B102/157).

<sup>34</sup> Qur’an 34/24 (B87/23).

<sup>35</sup> Qur’an 1/6-7 (B46/6-7).

27. Then we have seen that things are divided into living and non-living things, and have qualified Him as belonging to the most worthy of these two divisions, and have said that He is living, to deny for Him the possibility of death.
28. Finally we have seen that the living are divided into the speaking and dumb and have qualified Him as belonging to the most worthy of these two divisions, and have said that He is reasonable, to deny for Him the possibility of ignorance.
29. These three names signify the one God, who has not ceased nor will cease to be a living speaking being. And then for us the essence is the Father, the Son the spoken Word, and the Life the Holy Spirit. Now it is said in the Book: “God! There is no God but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting<sup>36</sup>.”
30. Furthermore it is not we others, the Christians, who have given him these names ourselves, but it is God on high who thus named His divinity, when He said by the mouth of the prophet Moses addressing the Children of Israel: “Is not He your father who has bought you? He has made you and established you.”<sup>37</sup>; and also by the mouth of the prophet Moses: “The Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters”<sup>38</sup>; and when he said by the mouth of the prophet David: “And do not take your Holy Spirit from me”<sup>39</sup>; and also by the mouth of the prophet David: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts.”<sup>40</sup>; and when He said by the mouth of Job the righteous: “The Spirit of God has made me and the breath of the Almighty gives me life”<sup>41</sup>; and when he spoke by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God stands forever”<sup>42</sup>; and when the Lord Christ in

---

<sup>36</sup> Qur’an 2/255 (B93/265).

<sup>37</sup> Deuteronomy 32/6.

<sup>38</sup> Genesis 1/2.

<sup>39</sup> Psalm 51 (50)/11.

<sup>40</sup> Psalm 33 (32)/6.

<sup>41</sup> Job 33/4.

<sup>42</sup> Isaiah 40/7-8.

the Holy Gospel, said to his disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you<sup>43</sup>.”

31. Then it also says in this Book: “It is He who gives life and death and when He decides upon something, it is enough for Him to say: Be! And it is”<sup>44</sup>; and also: “Our word has already been passed to our servants sent by us”<sup>45</sup>; and also: “When God says: Oh Jesus, son of Mary remember my favor to you and your mother, when I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit”<sup>46</sup>; and also: “God spoke directly to Moses”<sup>47</sup>; and also: “Mary, daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity, We breathed Our spirit into her body and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of his Revelations and was one of the devout”<sup>48</sup>.” Finally all the Muslims say that this Book is the Word of God; it is none other than the Word of a speaking being.
32. There are substantial attributes having the value of names, of which each is different from the other, since God is unique, neither sharing nor dividing. Moreover, it says at the beginning of the Book: “In the name of God, the Benefactor, the Merciful,” it is confined to three attributes to the exclusion of the others. – attributes which, for us are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that which means a living speaking being. Besides, it is said in this Book: “In the name of God ...Moreover it is said in this Book: “Say: Call upon God, or call upon Mercy, but whatever name you call Him by, to Him belong the most beautiful names”<sup>49</sup>.”

---

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 28/19-20.

<sup>44</sup> Qur’an 40/68 (B80/70).

<sup>45</sup> Qur’an 37/171 (B52/171).

<sup>46</sup> Qur’an 5/110 (B116/109).

<sup>47</sup> Qur’an 4/164 (B102/162).

<sup>48</sup> Qur’an 66/12 (B111/12).

<sup>49</sup> Qur’an 17/110 (B74/110).

33. As for our assertion that Christ is the Son of God, begot of Him, without it having come to pass, centuries before, by that we mean that he has not ceased to be Son, that is to say the spoken Word, and that the Father has not ceased to be Father, that is to say Speaking; he who, when the end of time arrives- that the time of infidelity and of impiety be known -, God will send His Word, that is to say His spoken Word, without it being separated from the Father, its creator, nor distanced from Him, exactly as the light is sent from the sun to the earth without it being separated from its generating disc and as the word of man is addressed to who may hear it, without it being separated from the intellect of its creator.
34. And he embodied, perfect man, of the Spirit of Holiness and the Holy Lady Mary the Virgin. He had been born of her according to human nature, not according to divine nature, since divine nature cannot be affected by accident. \_And she gave birth to him without her virginity being affected by corruption, as she conceived without having relations with a man; but He preserved her virginity, as he preserved the bush which the prophet Moses saw, which burned without being consumed<sup>50</sup>.
35. That removes from us the accusations according to which, if we say Christ Son of God, we mean a carnal filiation, or that the Father is before the Son, or that He has a child from a partner, accusations which have been made against us, although, however, it denied that of us in this Book when it said: “Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth, how can He have a son, when He has no consort<sup>51</sup>!”  
“No! I swear it by this city, and you are an inhabitant of this city, and I swear it by the begetter and that which he begot<sup>52</sup>!”

---

<sup>50</sup> Exodus 3/2-3.

<sup>51</sup> Qur'an 6/101(B91/101).

<sup>52</sup> Qur'an 90/1-3 (B40/1-3).

36. As for the incarnation of the Word of God as perfect man, the reason for it is that the Creator on high has not addressed any of the prophets except from behind a veil, according to what is said in the Book: “It is not fitting for a human that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil<sup>53</sup>.” Then if the subtle things only appear in the dense ones would the word of God on high, which created the subtle things, otherwise appear in a dense thing? Not at all. And it is thus that He appeared in Jesus, son of Mary, since man is that which God has created most worthy. That is why God addressed creatures who had seen Him as He addressed the prophet Moses from the bramble.
37. Thus He performed by His divinity that which is impossible for man, and He showed powerlessness by His humanity, the two processes being the unique Lord Christ; as they say: Zayd is permanent, immortal, never liable to disappear, by his spirit, and: Zayd does not remain, is mortal and liable to disappear, by his body, the two assertions applying to the sole Zayd.
38. According to this analogy we say that Christ was crucified, this meaning that he was crucified as to his humanity, but that he was not crucified as to his divinity. Then it is said in the Book: “They didn’t kill him or crucify him; only a likeness of that was shown to them<sup>54</sup>.”
39. Moreover we see the blacksmith take a piece of iron, heat it in the fire until it becomes fire, hammer it, cut it up: splitting and cutting affect the nature of iron, but the fire is open, rather it performs that which is in its nature, which is to burn and to light up; and the piece is one, reuniting within it the two natures.
40. It is thus that the two natures of the Lord Christ unified in his single person. There is a passage in the book which agrees with our assertion: it names Christ “Spirit of

---

<sup>53</sup> Qur’an 42/51 (B85/50).

<sup>54</sup> Qur’an 4/157 (B102/156)

God and his Word”, and it names him also “Jesus Son of Mary”, when it says: “Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger of God, and His word which he bestowed on Mary and a spirit proceeding from Him”<sup>55</sup>; and in another part of the Book it says: “It is a statement of truth about which they vainly dispute<sup>56</sup>.” It has declared him unique by this word.

41. As for the aforementioned words which God spoke by the mouth of the prophet Moses speaking to the Children of Israel: “Is not this the father who has created you, made you from nothing and established you?”, and as for that which He spoke by the mouth of the prophet David: “Do not take your Holy Spirit from me”, and also: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts”<sup>57</sup>, that does not at all mean three creators, but a single Creator, the Father, his Spirit, that is to say his Life and his Word, that is to say his spoken Word.
42. Thus it is said: The dressmaker stitched the dress, and: The hand of the dressmaker stitched the dress; or: The carpenter made the chair, and: The hand of the carpenter made the chair; and other such things. The dressmaker and his hand does not make two dressmakers, nor the carpenter and his hand two carpenters; but the dressmaker and his hand is all one, and the carpenter and his hand is all one. It is thus when we say: God and His Word and His Spirit are a single God. This is what we mean when we say Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.
43. In that way, we knew when saying that, it does not necessarily follow that we worship three gods; as if by saying: the intellect of man, the spoken word of man, and the spirit of man, it does not necessarily follow that we affirm the existence of three men; nor three fires if we say: the flame of the fire, the light of the fire, and

---

<sup>55</sup> Qur’an 4/171 (B102/169).

<sup>56</sup> Qur’an 19/34 (B60/35).

<sup>57</sup> See footnotes 39 & 40 - 30.

the heat of the fire; nor three suns if we say: the disc of the sun, the light of the sun, and the heat of the sun.

44. And if such is our way of seeing on the subject of God- blessed be His names and highly praised His gifts! – we do not deserve blame nor do we commit any faults by not abandoning that which we have received nor refusing that which has been transmitted to us, to follow something else; especially as we have such clear evidence and obvious proof, drawn from the Book which this Messenger brought.
45. I say: If we take out an argument from that which is in their Book, the Muslims will say: If you get an argument from one part of our book, you must by necessity accept it entirely. – They say: The question does not present itself in that form. Indeed, if, for example, someone has a account ledger with a debt entered of a hundred dinars upon meeting another, and if it should be mentioned in the booklet that the debtor has repaid the hundred dinars, and if the creditor came to show the ledger and reclaim from the debtor the hundred dinars, is it permitted, the debtor arguing of the debt entered in the ledger that he is cleared of it, for the creditor to say to him: As you admit this last clause, admit also the hundred dinars and return them to me? Not at all, but the debtor will consider himself free of (the debt) of the hundred dinars written in the ledger, stressing that which is also written in the ledger, that is to say that he is acquitted.
46. In the same way whatever is said about us and any argument that they take from this Book against us, we reject it by the Book also, by the arguments that we find therein in our favor.
47. That is why we say that our strongest arguments are those that we find in the Book brought by this Messenger, and which testifies in our favor that God has placed us “above the unbelievers, until the Day of Resurrection”, for having followed the

Lord Christ, “Spirit of God and His Word”; that we are “the closest friends of the believers”; and that God “put in our hearts sweet temper and mercy”; in addition to the great praise which it conferred on our Gospel and our Scriptures, on our monasteries and our churches; finally that no-one has favor over us; all claims and others that it doesn’t make of us except for our merit and the honesty of our actions.

48. How then would we be permitted or would it have been proper of us to abandon that which is in our hands and that which we have, as well as the set table which God made descend upon us and of which He made “ a commemoration for the first and last among us and a sign come from Him”; then as well He threatens us, if we were to become unfaithful, to make us endure “a torment that He would not make any other person in the universe endure”; and that for following one who is not come among us but among others, according to that which the Book says clearly and which demands the argument of reason, which is like the touchstone and the foundation.

49. - I say: The Muslims say: If your belief about the Creator on high is that He is unique, what has brought you to name Him three natures, and in naming the one Father, the other Son, and the other Spirit, thus making your listeners believe that you believe that God is three persons compounded<sup>58</sup>, or three gods, or three parts, and that He has a son – would make those who don’t know your belief suppose that you mean by that a son by the mode of copulation and reproduction -, and thus opening up the way against yourselves to an accusation of which you are innocent?

---

<sup>58</sup> See intro. Chapt. IV, footnote 31.

50. – They said: But they too, their belief about the Creator, exalted be His mightiness! – being that He is incorporeal, that He has neither limbs nor organs, and that He is not confined to any place, what is it that induced them to say that He has two eyes with which He sees<sup>59</sup>, two hands that He spreads<sup>60</sup>, a leg that He uncovers<sup>61</sup>, a face which turns in all directions<sup>62</sup>, and one side<sup>63</sup>, and comes under the shade of the clouds<sup>64</sup>, thus making their listeners believe that God on high is body, equipped with organs and limbs and that He moves from one place to another in the shade of the clouds, which would make those who hear them talk, and who don't know their belief, suppose that they ascribe a body to God on high – to such a point that some of them believed that and have adopted it as doctrine<sup>65</sup>, so that he who doesn't make sure of their belief, accuses them of that of which they are innocent?

51. – I say: The Muslims answer: The reason why we say that God has two eyes, two hands, one face, one leg and one side, and that he takes shade under the clouds, is because the Qur'an has used those expressions. But what one understands by that is something other than the apparent sense of the terms and that whosoever takes it literally and believes that God has two eyes, two hands, a face, a side and a leg – which are members and organs – and that He moves Himself from one place to another and other things which imply anthropomorphism and assimilation, we curse that person and declare him an infidel. Then if we declare infidel whosoever believes that, or things of the same kind, our adversary is not entitled to charge us of it, seeing that we do not believe it.

---

<sup>59</sup> Cf. 11/37 (B77/39).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. 5/64 (B116/69).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. 68/42 (B51/42), where, moreover, it does not concern the leg of God.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. 2/115 (B93/109).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. 39/56 (B82/57), where *djanb* signifies with regard to.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. 2/210 (B93/206).

<sup>65</sup> See intro. Chapt. 1, footnote 23.

52. – They say: Likewise, the reason that we say that God is three natures, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is because the Gospel has used these expressions. But what is understood by the natures is something other than composite persons, divisions, parts, or any other thing which implies association or multiplicity; and by the Father and the Son, something other than a paternity and a filiation produced of marriage, reproduction, carnal union or copulation.
53. Whosoever believes that the three natures are three gods either separated or united, or three assembled bodies, or three separated parts, or three composite persons, or accidents, or forces, or any other thing which implicates association, sharing and assimilation; and that who understands by the terms Father and Son that it is a paternity and filiation produced of marriage or of reproduction, or of copulation, or of carnal union, or begot by a spouse or of some body or of some angel or of some created being, we curse that person and declare him an anathema and an infidel. Then, if we declare infidel whosoever believes that, or another thing of the same kind implicating association and assimilation, our adversary is not entitled to charge us of it, seeing that we do not believe it.
54. If, then, they ascribe to us association and assimilation for our assertion that God on high is one substance and three natures, Father, Son and Holy Ghost because the apparent sense of these terms implies multiplicity and assimilation, then we charge them with anthropomorphism and assimilation for their assertion that God has two eyes, two hands, one face, one leg and one side, and that he is seated on the throne<sup>66</sup> after he isn't there, and other things of which the apparent sense implies anthropomorphism and assimilation.

---

<sup>66</sup> Cf. 2/55 (B93/256).

55. – I say: They disapprove of our assertion that God on high is substance. – They say: We hear said of them that they are people of ability, of culture and of knowledge. Such is the picture painted of them and who has read something of the philosophers and of logic would not be able to disapprove of that.
56. For nothing exists which is not substance or accident: although in fact should we consider, we find it either existing by itself; and not having need of another to exist, and it is substance; or having need of another in order to exist and not having existence by itself, and it is accident. Beyond these two divisions, it is not possible to find a third. The most noble of the two is the one existing by itself, which doesn't need another to exist, and it is substance.
57. The Creator – hallowed be his names! – being the most noble of existing things, since He is the cause of all the others, it is necessary that He be that which is the most noble, and that which is the most noble is substance; it is why we have said that He is substance, but not after the manner of created substances, as we say that He is matter, but not after the manner of created matter. Otherwise, it would necessarily follow that His existence be by another and that he would need another to exist, - which is an abominable thing to say of the Creator on high.
58. – I say: They say to us: If we refrain from calling Him substance, it is because substance is that which is capable of accident and occupies a space; that is why we do not say that He is, He on high, substance. – They say: That which is capable of accident and occupies a space, is the dense substance; but the subtle substance is not at all capable of accident, nor occupies space, such as the substance of the spirit, the substance of the intellect, the substance of the light, and all other such subtle substances. Then, if the created subtle substances are not capable of accident nor occupy space, the Creator of subtle and dense substances, and He

who composed the subtle and the dense, would He be capable of accident and would He occupy a space? Not at all.

59. Then they said: we are astonished by how these people, with their culture and the ability which they have acquired, did not know that the laws were of two sorts, a law of justice and a law of grace. In fact, it is necessary that the Creator on high, being a righteous and magnificent bestower, shows His justice with regard to His creatures: thus He sent the prophet Moses to the Children of Israel, to set up the law of justice, and He commanded them to put into practice its regulations, until it was imprinted in their souls.
60. On the other hand, as only the most perfect of the perfects could possibly institute the perfection, which is the law of grace, it is necessary that it be He – hallowed be His names, and highly praised His kindnesses! – who institutes it, because there is nothing more perfect than Him.
61. Because He is a magnificent bestower it is necessary that He makes a gift of that which is most worthy among the existing things. Now among the existing things there is nothing better than His Word, that is to say His spoken Word. That is why it is necessary for Him to make a gift of His word, so that He is the most magnificent of bestowers, having given that which is the best among existing things.
62. That being admitted, it is necessary that He assumes a sensitive essence by which He can show His power and His munificence. Now, as there is nothing more noble than man among the things created by Him, he assumed human character from the Holy Lady Mary, the one chosen above all the other women in the world.
63. After this perfection there remains nothing to institute. Indeed, all that preceded it demands it, and all that which comes after it, is not needed, because there is

nothing which comes after perfection and which can be learned, it will be on this side or it will be borrowed. There is persuasion in this argument. And peace be upon whosoever follows the right path.

64. This is what I have been able to learn from the people who I have seen and the people with whom I have conferred, and the arguments by which they justify themselves. If that which they have put forward proves to be true, to God be given praise and gratitude, as agreement will thus be made between the different points of view and bring an end to the disputes between His servants, Christians and Muslims – may God protect them all! If, on the other hand, it is otherwise, that the honored brother and the friend worthy of the greatest praises – God protect him always and extend the limits of his life! - shows it to me so that I inform them of it and see what they think of it; because they have asked that of me and made me as an envoy. Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds!

**Qur'anic references checked against The Holy Qur'an – with English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary, Mus-haf Al-Madinah An-Nabawiyah, King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, 1410H.**

Notes

35-“Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth, how can he have a son, when he has no consort<sup>67</sup>!” “No! I swear by this city, and you are an inhabitant of this city, (/Fr.versn-without connections/ties in this city) and the begetter and that which he begot<sup>68</sup>!

11/1-22/40-They are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right- (for no cause except) that they say: “Our Lord is Allah” Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. Allah will certainly aid those who aid His (cause)- for verily Allah is full of strength, exalted in might (able enforce HIS will)

13/1-57/25-We sent aforetime Our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong) that men may stand forth in justice; and we sent down iron, in which is great might as well as many benefits for mankind that Allah may test who it is that will help unseen Him and his messengers. For Allah is full of strength, exalted in might.

13/2-36/20-Then there came running from the farthest part of the city, a man, saying, “Oh, my people! Obey the messengers: Obey those who ask no reward of you (for themselves) and who are themselves guided.

---

<sup>67</sup> Qur'an 6/101(B91/101).

<sup>68</sup> Qur'an 90/1-3 (B40/1-3).

13/3-61/14- O ye who believe! Be ye helpers of Allah: As said Jesus, son of Mary to the disciples, “Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?” Said the disciples, “We are Allah’s helpers!” Then a portion of the children of Israel believed and a portion disbelieved. But We gave power to those who believed against their enemies and they became the ones that prevailed.

***14/1-cf***

14/2-10/94-If thou wert in doubt as to what we have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee. The truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord: so be in no wise of those in doubt (الامم ترين من ت كوزن ف لا).

16/1-2/2-This is the Book: in it is guidance, sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah.

16/2-3/184-Then if they reject thee, so were rejected messengers before thee, who came with clear signs, and the Scriptures and the Book of Enlightenment. (الامذير ال ك تب و الزبر و جاءوب ال ب يننت).