Refutation of the Muslims who accuse the Christians of Believing in Three Gods

Abu al-Khayr ibn al-Tayyib (11th century)

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Refutation of the Muslims who accuse the Christians of Believing in Three Gods — Composed by the excellent father and scholar, the priest Abū al-Khayr ibn al- ayyib

[Translated by Sam Noble] Some of the Muslims say, ”Christ said to the apostles, ’Go forth and make apostles of all the nations and baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,’[1] so here it is said openly that you believe in three gods!” We respond to them: There is no doubt that the sciences of the Christian Law are the fruits of three things—the glorious Gospel, the letters of the Apostle Paul, and the stories of the pure apostles and disciples. These three books testify in all the corners of existence that God is one god, and that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are attributes of His one essence. All the writings of their scholars in the four corners of the inhabited world testify to this. If not for fear of it taking too long, I would recount their beliefs in detail, but I will be brief here and summarize their statements as will become clear, and I will say:

The Christians say that the Creator, may he be exalted, is one substance endowed with the attributes of perfection and that He is endowed with three eternal essential attributes which the Lawgiver has commanded, and they are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. They indicate by ”the Father” the name of the substance which they call the Creator, who possesses pure intellect. By ”the Son” they indicate the aforementioned substance which possesses an intellect that intelligizes itself. By ”the Holy Spirit” they indicate the aforementioned substance which possesses an intellect that is intelligible in itself. Here they indicate the substance that is subsistent in itself and is free of [...] The Christian Law only permitted Him, may He be exalted, to be described in this way in order to speak to the peoples in a way they understand. The scholar and imam Abū āmid al-Ghazālī gave this opinion about them in his book known as al-Radd al-Jamīl: ”The Christians believe that the essence of the Creator, may He be exalted, is objectively one and that it has aspects. If it is regarded with relation to an attribute whose existence does not depend on an attribute prior

to it, such as existence, then they call this the hypostasis of the Father. If it is regarded in relation to an attribute whose existence depends on the existence of a prior attribute, such as knowledge, since the essence's having attributes depends on its having the attribute of existence, then they call it the hypostasis of the Son and the Word. If it is regarded with relation to its essence being intelligible to itself, then they call this the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, because the essence of the Creator is intelligible to Himself. This usage of terminology means that the divine essence is objectively one and is characterized by each of these hypostases.

Some of them say that the essence qua essence without regard to attribute is an expression for the intellect and they call this the hypostasis of the Father. If it is regarded from the perspective of it intelligizing itself, then this perspective expresses for them the intelligizer, which they call the hypostasis of the Son or the Word. If it is regarded with relation to it being itself, then this perspective is for them an expression of the intelligible, which they call the Holy Spirit. According to this usage of terminology, 'the intellect' only expresses the essence of God and the Father is synonymous with it. 'The intelligizer' expresses of His essence with regard to its intelligizing itself, and the Son or the Word is synonymous with it. 'The intelligible' expresses the God whose essence is intelligible to Himself, and the Holy Spirit is synonymous with it." Then he says, with reference to the above, "If these meanings are true, then the terms are indisputable, as are the technical terms that those who set them down agree upon."

The shaykh Abū āmid al-Ghazālī, may God be pleased with him, recounted the belief of the Christians about Christ with regard to His being the human taken from Mary in his previously mentioned book. He said, "They believe that the Creator, may He be exalted, created the human nature of Jesus, peace be upon him, then He appeared united in him. They mean by this the union that He became in him by this in the way the soul is attached to the body." By making these two statements openly, he, may God have mercy on him, made clear the truth of their belief to those who attempt to gain knowledge of the sciences of wisdom. [2] [3] [4]

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[8]" <113> " [9]".

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[1] Matthew 28:19 [2] 1580 715 1315 [3] :
[4] Reidel p. 661 [5] 19:28 [6] 1111 [7]
: [8] 3 115 [9] " "
" " 21-26 [10] : [11] :
[12][12] :

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