

**“THESE STONES SHALL BE
FOR A MEMORIAL”:
A DISCUSSION OF THE ABOLITION
OF CIRCUMCISION
IN THE *KITĀB AL-MAĞDAL***

The question of Christian freedom from Old Testament law became especially controversial since it concerned the practice of circumcision. The obvious practical considerations for excusing Christianized Gentiles from the demands of the Jewish tradition were not the only reason to discuss the custom. When Paul told the church in Rome that circumcision was rather a matter of the heart (Rom 2:29), he undoubtedly referred to the words of the prophets who preached circumcision of “the foreskin of the hearts” (Deut 10:16–17; Jer 4:3–4). Bodily circumcision, including that of Christ Himself, remained a subject of debate during subsequent Christian history, though the problem of fulfilling the stipulations of Old Testament law was generally no longer actually present in historical reality.¹ The present study will provide an interesting example of how a similar discussion of the same subject regained and retained its actuality in the context of Christian-Muslim relations in the medieval Middle East. The example in question is a chapter on the abolition of circumcision in the comprehensive ‘Nestorian’ encyclopedic work of the mid-10th–early 11th century entitled *Kitāb al-Mağdal*.²

(1) A. S. JACOBS, *Christ Circumcised: A Study in Early Christian History and Difference* (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion), Philadelphia, 2012.

(2) M. STEINSCHNEIDER, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache, zwischen Muslimen, Christen und Juden: nebst Anhängen verwandten Inhalts, mit Benutzung handschriftlicher Quellen* (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 6.3), Leipzig, 1877, pp. 83–86. For the problems of attribution and formation of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* see: B. HOLMBERG, “A Reconsideration of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*,” *Parole de l’Orient*, 18 (1993), pp. 255–273. For the

The original table of contents of the work was included in the *Catalogue* of the Arabic-speaking prominent Coptic author Abū 'l-Barakāt ibn Kabar (d. 1324).³ J. S. Assemani reproduced it with a Latin translation in the chapter on 'Amr ibn Mattā (Cap. LVII: *Amrus Matthæi*) in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis*.⁴ Mark N. Swanson gives a brief survey of the contents of the book based on its original list of sections and chapters in his recent article on the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*.⁵ He observes that "the author fully exploits the metaphor of a tower (or castle), naming the work's seven chapters (*abwāb*, major sections, covering a wide range of topics) after features of architecture or landscaping" and that "the extended title, *Kitāb al-majdal li-l-istibṣār wa-l-jadal*, 'The tower, for reflection and discussion', points to another significant feature of the work: both the metaphor of a (defensive) tower and the notion of *jadal*, 'discussion' or 'argument', indicate the *apologetic* utility that the work is intended to have."⁶

The book begins with a series of dense theological investigations: on the existence of God (*al-bayān*, 'the exposition'), His unity, the Incarnation of the Word of God in Christ, the Trinity (the section *al-bunyān*, 'the edifice', is divided in three chapters: *ad-ḡurwā*, 'the summit', *al-asās*, 'the foundation', and *at-tašyīd*, 'the construction'). There follow a number of chapters on the Christian sacraments and symbols: Baptism, the Eucharist, the Gospel's testimonies to Christ's divinity and humanity, and the Cross (*al-arkān*, 'the supports'); virtues and practices (*al-maṣābiḥ*, 'the lamps'); the creation, the typological

list of manuscripts of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*, bibliography and a general introduction see: M. N. SWANSON, "Kitāb al-Majdal," in: *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, eds. D. THOMAS and A. MALLETT, vol. 2 (900–1050), Leiden, Boston, 2010, pp. 627–632.

(3) Abū 'l-Barakāt IBN KABAR, *Miṣbāḥ az-ẓulma fi ḡdāḥ al-ḥidma*, vol. 1, al-Qāhira, 1971, pp. 298–300. Chapter 7 of this encyclopedic work contains the *Catalogue* which was edited and translated into German by W. RIEDEL, "Der Katalog der christlichen Schriften in arabischer Sprache von Abū 'l-Barakāt," *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 5 (1902), SS. 635–706. An English translation of the chapter, based on Riedel's edition, was prepared by Adam McCollum and published in 2009 on the website *tertullian.org*.

(4) J. S. ASSEMANI, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, vol. III:1, Romae, 1725, pp. 582–589.

(5) SWANSON, "Kitāb al-Majdal," p. 630.

(6) *Ibid.*, pp. 629–630.

salvific events and Church history, mainly that of the Church of the East,⁷ the concordance between the Old and the New Testaments in their interpretation by the Church (*al-ʿamad*, ‘the buttresses’); on the prayer towards the East, the observance of the Lord’s day, and penitence (*al-ḡadāwīl*, ‘the watercourses’). The concluding section (*al-ḥadāʾiq*, ‘the gardens’) deals with the Christian attitude towards Old Testament law.

The section *al-ḥadāʾiq* is subdivided into four chapters: (1) *Tark istiʿmal al-ḥitāna wa-l-istiḡnā ʾanhā bi-ṣiḥḥat ad-diyāna* (Abandoning the practice of circumcision and dispensing with it in virtue of rightness of the faith); (2) *Ḥall al-ḥadīṯa li-ʿamal yawm as-sabt wa-mūḡib imsākihi ʾalā mutaqaḍdim al-waqt* (Resolution of the New [Testament] that concerns working on the Sabbath day and the previous obligation to abstain from work [on it]); (3) *Iṭlāq mā ḥuḏira min al-maʾākil wa-wuḡūb ḥallihā li-kull ʾākil* (Permission of the food [formerly] prohibited, and the necessity to allow everyone to eat it); (4) *Tawbīḥ al-yahūd ʾalā mā yabtadi ʾūnahu wa-iḏhār buhtihim fī-mā yadda ʾūnahu* (Reproof of the Jews for what they invent and demonstrating their delusion in what they pretend). The first chapter of the section is the subject of the present publication.

The main argument with which the author starts his treatise is that circumcision long remained unknown to human generations after the creation of man. “When God created Adam and taught him the wisdom of all things,” the author says, “He did not command him [to practice] circumcision, nor did He explain its meaning to him. Instead, many of his descendants enjoyed God’s favor through showing obedience, having the right faith, assurance of reliable knowledge, and devotion... Since ... [Adam] was created in the image of God and according to His likeness, taking anything away from him is shameful and sinful, and one should rather take pride in letting him be in his [original] state. When God commanded Moses to build an altar for the Lord, He commanded him to choose whole stones, unhewn and having no defects...” Abraham, the father of the blessed nations, who introduced circumcision, “received many blessings before he got circumcised.” Some biblical material, including apocryphal traditions, are here used to buttress the argument.

(7) This part of the *Kitāb al-Maḡḍal* was edited by H. Gismondi: *Maris, Amri et Slibae de patriarchis Nestorianorum commentaria, ex codicibus Vaticanis edidit ac latine reddidit Henricus GISMONDI, Romae, 1896–1899.*

While explaining the reason for establishing the practice of circumcision, the author further develops the idea that there was a need to differentiate the chosen people from all the others and that circumcision served as a differentiating mark. "The custom of circumcision was established..., such that [every] newborn should be circumcised on the eighth [day] to have a sign by which they would be known among the peoples... In the same way, a chosen thing is marked, when it is mixed with other things..." The necessity of circumcision is, therefore, dynamic; when living among the Gentiles, it becomes obligatory, but once there are no others around or the other nations enter into the same faith as the chosen people thus constituting a single community with them, then circumcision loses its *raison d'être*: "When the object of preference is moved away alone, there is no longer need for differentiation because it is separated, as they did while dwelling in the desert, when they gave up circumcision of children. Also, when something is chosen as a whole, there is no longer need for a sign [of differentiation], as when faith in Christ became universal and safety embraced the peoples."

It is emphasized that God "did not differentiate between uncircumcised and circumcised people in priority..." during their sojourn in the desert, and that He maintained His support as He did earlier. However, when the chosen people passed across the Jordan and got into contact with other nations, God commanded them to practice circumcision again, but this commandment had a temporary character: "thus the practice of circumcision, or the law of circumcision, was introduced for a limited [time]."

There was no other reason for practicing circumcision than keeping the chosen people segregated from the others in order to prevent their moral and spiritual corruption. "The strongest indication that circumcision [was re-introduced] for the [sole] purpose of [keeping the people] segregated, not for the sake of kinship or [ritual] purity, is the fact that it is prescribed for males, but not for females, and that Abraham was circumcised, but not Sarah: if [the purpose of circumcision] were happiness and grace, pure women would not be deprived of it..." What really matters is faith and following the divine guidance. Our author assembles quotations from Jeremiah, Malachi, and Paul to demonstrate that "neither circumcision is anything to rely on, nor uncircumcision, but faith in God and confession of love. If the circumcised broke the law, his circumcision is made uncircumcision, and if the uncircumcised kept the commandments his

uncircumcision turned out to be circumcision." Thus, what is preferred by God is the *spiritual circumcision* along with "rightness of faith, goodness of reliable knowledge, and integrity of the heart."

The spread of Christianity "to all the ends of the earth" resulted in many nations entering the faith "and thus all of them became chosen, and could dispense with the mark of differentiation, and the difference between circumcision and uncircumcision ceased." The author, however, insistently points out that the apostles "did not forbid the people of circumcision [i. e. the Jews] from practicing it, nor did they make it mandatory for the uncircumcised once they had accepted the [right] faith." If abandoning the practice of circumcision were mandatory this would have been difficult for Christianized Jews, and if circumcision were mandatory this would have been an obstacle for Gentiles attracted to Christianity, so God allowed both ways to be valid. We see, however, once again, that though declaring that "there is neither harm, nor sin, neither benefit, nor honor" in being circumcised, our author still remarks that "the whole creature is more worthy of [being considered as] truthful."

The concluding part of the chapter under discussion is devoted to the practice of circumcision among "the sons of Ishmael." The author shows that Ishmaelite circumcision practices were very inconsistent. Circumcision began before the rise of Islam and was then applied to girls — a custom not in accordance with any of the divine commandments concerning circumcision. Then he mentions the Turks, "the children of Abraham from Qantura," who "rejected circumcision [and] as a result, the law of Islam got modified," and, according to him, circumcision is hardly ever practiced among them.

Summing up what has been said above, we can discern several apologetic strategies in the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*'s discussion of the subject, but also generally in the entire treatise. The Middle Eastern Christians' main opponents who criticized them for ignoring circumcision were Muslims, rather than Jews.⁸ The *Kitāb al-Mağdal* has certain similarities to anti-Islamic polemical works by Middle Eastern Christian authors and in that sense may be considered one of them, though taken as a whole it is an encyclopedic treatise rather than a piece of

(8) See, for example: H. PUTMAN, *L'Église et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780–823). Étude sur l'Église nestorienne au temps des premiers Abbassides avec nouvelle édition et traduction du dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdi*, Beyrouth, 1975, pp. 19–20 (§ 74–83).

polemic. The author's approach is quite delicate. First, he deploys the traditional anti-Jewish arguments and brings into play a vast array of biblical material elegantly arranged for the purpose of his discussion even though by the time he was writing Jewish-Christian polemic of this kind had largely lost its bitterness. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the Christian attitude towards circumcision is one that allows the practice, and that the main reason for the abolition of circumcision in Christianity is the focus on the spiritual value and meaning of circumcision already highlighted by the Old Testament prophets. Therefore, despite the fact that there are many Christian reasons to prefer uncircumcision, there is no principal argument *against* circumcision, and it therefore remains legitimate if those who practice it do not wish to go beyond the outer aspect of the practice and move on to the inner, and from the bodily dimension on to the spiritual. While moderate and irenic in tone, the author develops this implicitly polemical conception and appeals to the well known idea, characteristic of Arabic literature, of going beyond the *zāhir* on to the *bāṭin*, i. e. beyond the outer aspect on to the inner. Finally, he highlights the pre-Islamic origins of circumcision among the Arabs and points out that the ways of practicing it during the spread of Islam were inconsistent. Last, but not least, the very elegant literary form of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*, written in a refined rhymed style, was evidently intended to serve as an additional witness to the cultural attractiveness of Christianity.

The following edition is based on two manuscripts: **P** – MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ar. 190 (13th century),⁹ fol. AR163v/512v/p.1019–AR171v/519v/p.1033 and **C** – MS Cambridge University Library, Add. 3163 (=3293) (14th century)¹⁰, fol. SYR203r/201r–SYR210r/208r. The scribe of **P** often omitted the diacritical points and signs of vocalization. While setting the type, I added the diacritical points. I also indicated the ends of lines in **P** as well as the pagination of both **P** and **C**. The English translation was prepared in consultation with Dmitry A. Morozov to whom I express my deepest gratitude. I am

(9) See the description of the MS in [W. MAC GUCKIN] DE SLANE, baron, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, Paris, 1883–1895, p. 47:2.

(10) E. G. BROWNE, *A hand-list of the Muḥammadan manuscripts, including all those written in the Arabic character, preserved in the library of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1900, p. 195 (# 1007); W. WRIGHT, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, with an Introduction and Appendix by S. A. COOK, 2 vols., Cambridge: University Press, 1901, vol. 2, pp. 965–975.

also grateful to Alexander Treiger (Dalhousie University), Grigory Kessel (Marburg University), and Sergey Minov (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) for reading an earlier draft of this publication and suggesting some improvements.

أَلْبَابُ السَّابِعُ
الحدائق اربع فصول
الفصلُ الأوَّلُ
ترك الختانة والاستغنا عنها بصحة الديانة
على ما هو مسطور

[P f. ١٦٤r/513r/p.1020] اخرج الله ابراهيم من حران ابن خمسة¹¹ وسبعين سنة واطاع الله | ابراهيم مخلصاً وتعبد له بطرائق [C f.202v/v.١٥٥] حسنة ومكث بغرلته اربعة وعشرين | سنة يامرہ الرب وينهاہ واسمہ يعلو وذكره ينتشر والله يوده | ويرعاه ومنزلته في الهدى ترتفع وامره يشتهر بصحة الايمان وجاهه [5] يتسع في الامم بكثرة التعطف والاحسان وقدره يجلب عند الملوك | بما يظهر عليه من الانعام وعناية الله محيطة به تحرسه في تصارييف | المرام واصطفاه الله وناجاه وجعله ابا واسماه نبياً وبارك | فيه وفي ماله واعطاه حظاً سنياً وغير اسمه من ابرم الى ابراهيم | وعلاه الى رتبة مختارة ونقل اسم زوجته الطاهرة من سرى الاول [10] الى سارة وانتزعاها من يد ابيملك¹² حتى اخذها منه غضباً ومن | فرعون مرة اخرى وملا مستقره خصباً ونادى ملاك الرب هاجر | وردها الى رحل سيدها وامرها بالتعميد¹³ لمولاتها وبشرها بما يكون | من ولدها ووعد في اسمعيل بكره بالكثرة والوفا والنما وخوله الله | رغائب الارض واوجب له بركات السما ونصره الله على الملوك [15] الخمسة باليسير من الخول والعبيد وكان عددهم ثلثمئة وثمانية | عشر رجلاً وارتجع سبى سذوم ولوطا وشرد الاعدا الى مهرب | بعيد وترايا الرب له باشخاص ثلاثة وناجاه بمفهوم الخطاب | وعرف الشر في معنى سذوم وما يحله بها من العقاب | وبشره

(11) خمس C

(12) املك C cf. Syr. صملم

(13) بالتعبد C

بايسحق¹⁴ الزكى من سرا¹⁵ واخراج الملوك من صُلبه واره النار [20] فى القيسوم¹⁶ انه يزيده ثقة بربه * ووكد معه الوعد والعهد ان | يملا الارض من نسله وان يثبت اسم ايسحق المطيع لله برضى فعله *

[1 ٦ ٤v/513v/1021] واعطاه¹⁷ الميثاق ان يجعل زرعهُ مثل نُجوم السما كثرة ويكون مثل رمل | البحار ويبقى فى العالم ذكره ووعد ان يورثه ممالك الامم ورد الخلف الرابع | اليها ويملكهم أرض اعاديهم ويخولهم جميع ما عليها كل هذا على اوصافه كان | فى سنى غرلته يشهد النبى وتشهد التوراة صحة المشروح [203r/rmm] فى قصته [5] ولما اراد الله يرزق ابراهيم الولد المبارك ايسحق من سرا العاقر الزكية | على سابق الوعد والميثاق وان يكثر فى العالم نسله ويخرج منهما الملوك | والانبياء والشعب المصطفى للنبوة والكهنة والاحبار والاصفياء | ليجعله قبيلته المختارة من بين الامم المقصاة¹⁸ وعلم ما يكون من امرهم | فى مجاورتهم العُصاة ووفور تناسلهم بمصر اذا حصلوا بها مستعبدين [10] واخرجه اياهم منها بمعجز الايات متفردين امر الله تعالى اسمه | ابراهيم الاب باستعماله الختانة علامة للذكور من ولده لا على طريق | الديانة يكون آية فى اجسامهم لا يساتر بها فى الظلم يمنع من مخالطة | الغربا واتخاذ الأزواج من الامم واختتن ابن تسعة وتسعين سنة | وتلقى الامر بالامثال وختن اسمعيل لثلاثة عشر سنة ومن حواه الرجل¹⁹ [15] من الرجال وختن العبيد كبارا وصغاراً على سنهم²⁰ فى الكثرة والقلة * | وصارت الختانة فى زمانه علامة اهل الايمان بالله ورزق ايسحق من | بعد فختنه فى اليوم الثامن كما امره الرب ان يجعل ختانة العبد والولد | والساكن وكان قول الله لابراهيم اختنوا كل ذكر لثمنية ايام من ولد فى | بيتك واشتريته بمالك ويكون الميثاق بيني وبينكم²¹ فى اعقابكم [20] الى الدهر ان تختنوا لحم

(14) C باسحق cf. Syr. ܡܥܫܩ

(15) C سارة

(16) Sic in both P and C. Probably, a corruption of اور قسديم

(17) C add. الله

(18) Editorial correction of المفضاه in both P and C.

(19) Editorial correction of الرجل in both P and C.

(20) Editorial correction of سنتهم in both P and C.

(21) C وبينك

غرلكم وكل ذكر ليس مختون تهلك نفسه من | شعبه وثبتت سنة الختانة في
 ذكور آل يعقوب يختن المولود في [١٦٥r/514r/1022]²² ثامنه علامة لهم
 في الشعوب يُعرفون بها الاوطان والاسفار | للاحيا منهم والموتى كما يُعلم
 الشى المختار اذا اختلط باشيا شتى | مادام بينها +مختاراً ان²³ يساويه في
 الاختيار وتسقط سمة الخصوص | وتشمل نعمة الايثار واذا ابعد المرتضى
 وحده استغنى عن التمييز [5] بالانفراد كما فعلوا عند سكنى التيه في ترك
 ختانة الاولاد واذا | اختير الشى كله [معص] 203v/vمصطلت الحاجة الى
 العلامة كما عم الايمان بالمسيح وشملت | الشعوب السلامة وصارت ختانة
 الشعب علامة تمنع مخالطة | الغربا وعاشوا بها محصورين لا يجدون
 لسترها منسأ ولو ساووا | المصريين عند المجاورة في الغرلة افسدوا
 باتخاذ النسا وامتزجوا²⁴ باشتباك [10] الوصلة ولم يكن للبشر من اولادهم
 اذا الفوا²⁵ بيوت الامهات وعرفوا | الريف والانزاع وتعودوا الرحض
 والنزهات * يصبرون على سوم²⁶ | التعبد والزنك والفضاضة²⁷ والعسف
 ولا يخرجون من منازل²⁸ الوطن | الى الفقر والشقا والخوف * وكان
 تمييزهم مع الكثرة يعسر لا محالة على | الرسول والرب احكم تدبيراً
 بالامر²⁹ الى ما يؤول ولما خلق الله ادم [15] وعلمه بالحكمة كل شى من
 ساير الاشيا لم يامر به بالختانة ولا عرفه لها | معنى وحظى عند الله كثير
 من ولده باظهار الطاعة وصحة الاقرار | وحسن اليقين واخلاص المشايعة
 مثل هابيل المقبول قربانه | وشيث الموهوب مغني القدس وانوش المشهور
 بالاحماد | وحنوخ المنقول الى الفردوس وهو غير مختون واولاد شيث
 [20] المدعون ابنا الله فى بعض الكتاب ما عرضت لهم ببال ولا فكروا |

(22) Syriac and Arabic quire numbers ܡܡܡܡ and ٢٢٢٢ are written in the bottom margin.

(23) Something seems wrong with the text between +...+. The sense required here seems to be "lest" or "because otherwise." The correct text can only be established by consulting additional mss.

(24) C واشتبكوا

(25) C لقوا

(26) C رسوم

(27) Cf. classical Arabic فظاظة

(28) C مواطن

(29) C abs.

في فعلٍ ولا اجتناب وشهادة الكتب ان الله خلق ادم بشرا سوياً³⁰ [١٦٥v/514v/1023] تنفى الزيادة والنقصان لا للمذكور بدياً واذا كان المخلوق عندهم | بصورة الله وعلى مثاله فالنقص³¹ منه عار واثم والفخر في البقا على | حاله ولما امر الله موسى النبي ان ينشئ مذبحاً للرب رسم له اختيار | حجارة سليمة من القطع والعيب وكذلك امر ايشوع ابن نون [5] ان يكتب ناموس العتيقة على حجارة لم يقربها حديد رمزا على قديم الخليفة | ولم يعن بذلك الحجارة التي لا عمل لها ولا شرع وانما فضل السليم الصحيح | على ما شابه³² القطع ولما جدد الله العالم وامر آل نوح بعمارة الارض | لم يامرهم الرب بالخيانة ولا عرفوا في سنة ولا فرض واشتهر ملكيزدق³³ | الحبر بالبر والفضل [مصه 204r/r] والزهادة وتلاه كثير من الطايعيين عبدوا الله [10] واتبعوا مراده ونشا في اقطار الارض ملوك جيايرة وحكما علما * | ابتدعوا العلوم واخترعوا الصناعات وتكلموا على نجوم السما * ما | عرفوا الخيانة ولا خطرت لهم بذكر حتى امر الله بها ابراهيم على ما تقدم | من الذكر بعد ثلاثة الف وثلثمائة سنة انقضت من سنى العالم على | سياقة كتب الشريعة والتاريخ الثابت المتعالم ولما اراد الله اخراج [15] بنى اسرايل من مصر لم تنفعهم الخيانة التي كانت السبب في الحضر وجعل | نجاتهم من الموت بالدم المنصرم على ابوابهم ليعلموا ان بها حفظهم من | فساد انسابهم صارت علامة في ابدانهم تمنع عن مصاهرة الغربا * | لا يتخذ الاسرائيلي غريبة ولا يجد من شعبه مهربا * ولما اعطى | الله موسى الالواح وعرفه العمل الذي يرضاه لم يثبت³⁴ الخيانة في [20] الايات ولا حكم بها فيما قضاه فارتفعت الخيانة ايام موسى في | التيه عن ساير الشعب وتساوى في الغرلة والخيانة الاحبار في [١٦٦r/515r/1024] خدمة الرب استغنوا بالبعد من الأمم عن علامة تمنع من | الاختلاط وظلوا مدة الانفراد بالغرلة على اتم احوال الاغتباط | لا يتاخر الحقير بالغرلة ولا يتقدم الاثير بالخيانة هما سيان في حد | الطهارة

(30) Syriac and Arabic quire numbers ܚܘܕ and ١٦٥ are written in the bottom margin.

(31) والنقص P

(32) Editorial correction of شأنه in both P and C.

(33) Cf. Syr. مخلص

(34) Editorial correction of تثبت in C; P has no diacritics on the prefix.

يتفاضلان بالبر والتقوى [والطهارة]³⁵ والديانة ولما امر الله [5] موسى النبي بعمل قبة الزمان³⁶ واتخاذ تابوت الشهادة على موجود | البيان وترتيب الاحبار والكهنة ومن يقرب ويقدم ويخدم * | لم يفرق بين الناس³⁷ بالغرلة وبين المختون في التقدم وكانوا في التقدم | متوازنين³⁸ بجمعهم³⁹ وتمييزهم العمل العامل من الفريقين | يحظى والخاسر من الجميع من اهمل ولما امر الله النبي ان يغسل هرون [10] والاحبار من بنيهِ ويمسحهم بعده لخدمة القدس لم يبعد الناس | في التيه وكانت منزلة المختنن والاقلف في خدمة الرب واحدة | لا الغرلة [معصه/204v] ناقصة لهم ولا الختانة فيهم زيادة وكذلك باقى الشعب | كانوا في التدبير بالسوية بلا فاضل ولا مفضول مدة المقام في | البرية الا من فضله العلم وقدمه على اقرانه العقل⁴⁰ من اهل الختانة [15] والغرلة ليس بينهما في الحكم فصل حتى مات ذوو الختانة وبادوا | في البر عن اخرهم ونشا الغرل من ابنايهم واستولوا على جميع مفاخرهم | ولما امات الله الخارجين مع موسى وهرون من مصر كما وعدهم | عند السخط ان يطرح جنثهم في القفر وجعل الاحبار والكهنة | من اولادهم الناشين بالغرلة لم ينقصهم الحكيم رتبة ولا ازال عنهم [20] فضيلة وكان النور يضى بالليل والغمام يظلمهم بالنهار والوحى | ينزل بالامر والنهى واكلهم المن على الادرار * وحالهم في الثياب [1٦٦v/515v/1025] والادوات حال من سلف من ابائهم وفي قبول الذبايح للقرايين مثل اهل | الختان في ابنايهم وامرهم في التاييد يجرى على سابق العادة ما عدموا | تدبير العناية ولا فقدوا اسباب السعادة بل كانوا في صون من | الموت والحادث من الافات والقتل خصوا بالنما والوفور والبركة [5] لارادة الله اكثر النسل حتى صاروا في سنى التيه مثال الخارجين من مصر | وزادوا عليهم الوفا على مشروح عددهم في السفر ولهولا البشر في | البرية حصلت مواهب الرب ولهم كانت وصايا النبي وفيهم ثبتت | محامد الشعب وهم بصروا البركات واللعنات وعرفوا المختار | والفرص

(35) P crossed out; C abs.

(36) Cf. Syr. معصه احصه (Num 4:25).

(37) C in the margin.

(38) P متوازنين

(39) P add. السبب

(40) C الفعل

وصاروا ورّاث الوعد والعهد وبينهم قسمت مساكن الارض [10] ومنهم الاحبار اولاد هرون الذين استأنفوا خدمة الرب واعطوا | الميثاق الجديد الموكد و[دوام]⁴¹ الكهنوت فى العقب وقام فيهم ايشوع الرضى | ودبرهم بالعز والسداد والمنعة وعبرهم الاردن بالاية العجيبة وادخلهم | ارض الخصب والسعة وكانت لهم فى عبور الاردن ووقوف الكهنة | على قعره واخذهم الحجارة من ارضه الشهادة [205r/r16a] بما كان من عبه⁴² معجزا [15] ان افتخروا به لصار لاهل الغرلة فضيلة لوقوف الاردن جريته حتى | تخطوه بالنعمة الجيلة ولبث الوجوه فى ارضه قياما الى عبور الشعب | بانقالهم يسعون فى قراره آمنين لا خطر الخوف على بالهم وبعد عبورهم | الاردن وحاجتهم الى مجاورة الامم امرهم الله باستعمال الختانة | واختننا اجمعون بالامر الحتم وانقضت يومئذ سنة⁴³ [20] الناموس فى الختانة لايام محدودة واختنن الكهول والشباب والصبيان | على الحكاية الموجودة * وظهر الاب فى تجديد العلامة قبل مخالطة الشعوب [167r/516r/1026] واغنى المشروح فى الكتب عن تكلف اعادة المكتوب واكبر الشاهد | على ان الختانة للتمييز دون القربى والطهارة افراد الذكور من | الاناث وختانة ابراهيم دون سرا ولو كانت للحظ والرافة لما حرموا | النسوة والزكيات وقد كان فيهن خيرات وطاهرات نطقن [5] بالنبوات وامهات واخوات وبنات وازواج انبيا وملوك | واحبار وفاضلات اشتهرن بالزهادة وعملن الصلاح وساوين الايرار | ولما صار الطلب بالختان صون النسب لحفظ الذكور سقط عن | الاناث فعله وتساووا فى السعى المشكور ودل ظاهر القول والفعل | على ان الختانة علامة ليس⁴⁴ لفاعلها مزية ولا على تاركها ملامة ولا [10] لها مع الكفر نفع ولا تجنبها مع الايمان ضار ولا فى البقا على خلق الله | السوى خسارة ولا عار والمختنن اذا كفر بالله بطلت الفضيلة فى | ختانتها والاغرل متى امن بالله حظى بالصحيح فى امانته وتحمل الاذى | وتكلف النقيصة من غير ثواب ولا عايذة منع الغنا⁴⁵

(41) P in the margin; C in the text.

(42) C غيره

(43) P adds and deletes الختانة.

(44) C abs.

(45) C العنا (with a sign underneath the ع, indicating that it is to be read as an ع and not as a غ).

بالايمان عنهما | من الاختيارات الفاسدة والمغزى⁴⁶ فى تكليف الديانة
 ارضا الرب [15] والقربة اليه باخلاص الضماير فى طاعته واملا الجد فى
 الزلفة⁴⁷ | لديه والختانة الروحانية النافعة التى يختارها [205v/vm] الرب
 صحة الايمان | وحسن اليقين وسلامة القلب كما يقتضى العقل ويوجب
 الدين | ويوجد فى الكتاب والمقبول من شواهد الحق يغنى عن اطالة
 الاسهاب | قال موسى النبى فى التوراة للشعب اختنوا قلفة قلوبكم وذلوا
 [20] صعوبة رقابكم من اجل الرب الهكم هو اله الالهه ورب الارباب |
 وقال ارميا النبى فى الاصحاح الثالث من كتابه اسرجوا لكم مصباحاً
 [1 ٦٧v/516v/1027] ولا تزرعوا على الحسك واختنوا للرب قلفة قلوبكم
 قال معيراً للشعب | كل الامم قلف بلحومهم وبنو اسرائيل قلف بقلوبهم
 وقال الرب على لسان | مالاخى فى الاصحاح الرابع⁴⁸ والعشرين من كتابه
 احببت يعقوب | وابغضت عيسو كلاهما بالسوية فى الابوة والاموة⁴⁹
 والسن والنسب [5] والختانة وما ذاك والله اعلم واحكم الا حسن⁵⁰ الطريقة
 وفضل الديانة | وقال السليح المويد فولوس وكان من اعيان اليهود وخدام
 القدس لا الختانة | شى يعتمد ولا الغرلة الا الايمان بالله واعتقاد المحبة
 والمختتن اذا | تجاوز الناموس صارت ختانتة غرلة والاغرل اذا حفظ
 اوامر | الناموس عادت غرلته ختانة والله الواحد الذى يزكى الختانة [10]
 بالايمان هو يزكى الغرلة بالايمان وبطل فضل الختانة وانما الختانة |
 ختانة القلب بالروح وحقق تساوى الختانة والغرلة فى الايمان | والتقوى
 والزكاة * حظوة الفريقين عند الله ومساواته فى الاجر | من ارضاه ونقله
 احنوخ الى الفردوس لما تاب حيا بغرلته واليا | النبى الى السما مشهوداً
 بختانه وقبوله قرايين هابيل وحنوخ وملكيزدق [15] وغيرهم بالغرلة
 وقرايين هرون وداود واليا وايوب بالختانة المستعملة | وقسمته البحر
 لموسى وهرون والخارجين من مصر بالختانة والاردن | لنشو التيه
 بالغرلة على اشتهار خبرهم فى الصيانة والكثير الموجود | من النعم عند

(46) Both manuscripts have المغزى. Adding a diacritical dot seems to provide a better reading.

(47) C الزلفى

(48) P first writes السابع, then corrects in the margin.

(49) Sic!

(50) Editorial correction of لحسن in both P and C.

اتقيا اهل الغرلة والختانة اذا اطاعوا [مصددr/206r] الله وارضوه | وتوفروا على شروط الديانة ولم توجد الختانة عادت على الشعب بنفع [20] مشهود بل لحقهم بها رزايا شرحها في الكتاب موجود الختانة الاولى | العلامة في استعبادهم بمصر والداعية الى الصير على الكد والعسف [1٦٨r/517r/1028] والضر المُستمر والممانعة من مخالطة القبائل والحاجزة عن التخلص | بالهرب ولبثوا لاجلها مضطهدين لا يستطيعون كتمان النسب | وصارت في التيه علامة التلف بالموت والحرب والفنا * لما | اقسام الرب الا يدخل الارض سوى ايشوع ابن نون وكالاب ابن يوفنا * [5] الختانة الثالثة في عبر الاردن زالت معها مزية الاختيار وارتفع | المعهود من النور والمشهود من غمام النهار وانقطع عنهم | المن وبليت الاحذية والثياب وساوا الامم⁵¹ في الطلب ومعاناة | الشقا في الاكتساب واكلوا في ارض الميعاد بالخزية من كد | ابدانهم وسترنا انفسهم واوادهم من كدهم وغزل نسوانهم * [10] وصاروا بالختانة محصورين في القسمة والميعاد لا يملكون مخلصاً من | ضر ولا يقتدرون على الابعاد وانتشرت دعوة ايشوع المسيح | لذكره التسييح في ساير اكناف الارض ودخل الشعوب | في الايمان وقبلوا مرسوم⁵² السنن والفرض⁵³ وحصل جميعهم في | الاختيار واستغنى عن علامة الاختصاص وزال فرق الختانة [15] والغرلة وكانت الهداية وطريق الخلاص وصار الفرض معرفة الله | واتباع كتبه ورُسله والنافع في كلتي الحالين⁵⁴ العمل الجالب عوايد | فضله ورُشدنا لما أشار بترك⁵⁵ الدنياوى من احكام الناموس * | واستعمال ما ينتج السلامة في الدين والحال والنفوس ونهى عن الحلف | بالله ومقاومة الاعدا بالشر والقصاص⁵⁶ بالقصاص والقتل واتخاذ [20] النسا بلا عدة وتخليه الأزواج بكتاب البراة وتقريب الذبايح على | الذنوب والامتناع فى السبت [مصددv/206v] عن عمل الخير وامر بالايمان [١٦٨v/517v/1029] والتوبة والتقوى والصدق والصفح والرحمة والتواضع وما يُدل عليه | الانجيل من

(51) لامم P

(52) C abs.

(53) C والفروض

(54) C الحاليتين

(55) Repeated twice in C.

(56) C initially had والقصاص, but then corrected to القضا

مُجانبة الانتقام وإيثار الاحسان لم ينه عن استعمال | الختانة ولا امر بها في حُقوق الايمان ولما ارسل تلاميذه لاقامة دعوة | الهدى وبصرهم نتايج البر وحذرهم اسباب الردى ما ذكر الختانة في [5] وصاياها بما يوجبها او يحجز⁵⁷ عنها دلالة على قلة نفعها وضررها بمن فعلها | او تيرا منها والتلاميذ لما دعوا الأمم لم يمنعوها اهل الختان استعمالها * | ولا اوجبوا على ذوى الغرلة مع اعتقادهم الايمان فعلها وجعلوا العمدة في | الهداية الطهارة من اوصاب العيوب ولباس صيغة المعمودية⁵⁸ للزكاة | من سالف الذنوب وشبهوا الخروج من الما بقيام المسيح من القبر [10] بنفوس مجددة طاهرة تستأنف المرتضى من البر وقالوا ان الختانة | لا تقرب عاصياً ولا تبعد مطيعاً موفياً ولا الغرلة تدنى الى الله كافراً | ولا تجنب تقيا محسناً ولما اجتمعوا مع السبعين والمختارين من | اعيان المومنين بعد نزول الروح عليهم لتقرير فرايض الدين لم ينهوا | عن استعمال الختانة ولا امروا المنقادين بها ولا فضلوا من فعلها ولا [15] ردلوا من تجنبها وكان التابعون من الشعب يستعملونها على سنة ابراهيم | والمشايخون من الشعب⁵⁹ يهملونها اكتفا⁶⁰ بالخلق السليم وجميعهم | فى الايمان واحد ولا فرق بينهم فى الدين المُختتن والاقلف منهم بالسوية | اذا حصلوا فى زمرة المهتدين والسليح المفضل فطروس الصفا لم يحظر | الختانة على منقادى اليهود لصعوبة تركها عليهم واستعظامهم اجتناب [20] المعهود وتمكُن امرها فى نفوسهم وكرهتهم مضادة الناموس وبالختان | تحققوا كمال العتيقة وظهر المسيح بشرابط القدس ولما دعا [169r/518r/1030] فولوس السليح المؤيد الشعوب الى شرع المسيح ودخل الملوك | العظما والفلاسفة [مصهد207r/r] والعلماء فى الدين الصحيح وكان يومن فى يوم ملك | وسائر رعاياه واهل مدينته باسرها ورئيس كبير ومن والاه * | منهم الشيوخ والكهولة والشباب والصبيان والاطفال * لهم [5] امهات واخوات وازواج

(57) C يحجز

(58) Here and below P spells معمودية

(59) An emendation of the text to الشعوب (= other nations) seems to be desirable.

(60) P اكتفا

وينات عواتق وذوات الرجال فسيح⁶¹ | الرسول بامر سماوى فى ترك استعمال الختانة واقام البرهان | بالغنا عنها واوضح الشهادات على الديانة وقال ان الذى امر بالختانة | من قبل هو رسم تركها من بعد والذى اطلق للصفا ان يدعوا بالختان | ارسلنى ان ادعوا بالغرلة وكان من يستجيب من الامم يتكره الختانة لاجل اليهود [10] ويخشى باظهار مساواتهم فيها الدخول تحت وفاق العهود وعرفوا ظهور | المسيح فيهم ووجدوا الدعاة اليه منهم وشاهدوا معمودية يوحنا | لهم وخافوا الحصول فى اليهودية معهم فلما اطلق الداعى المويد للشعوب | المنفاداة ترك الختان تيقنوا امر ايشوع المجدد وامنوا عواقب | الاختتان⁶² واستجابوا الى دعوته ساكنين وقبلوا الايمان مصدقين [15] واستصحبوا الحظ فى الهداية وعملوا لنفوسهم متحققين ولو الزم | الشعوب الختانة لعسر انجذابهم اليها لقبح التبدل باهل المشرق⁶³ | واستصعابهم الاقدام عليها وحاجة الجمهور الى التشاغل بتمحل | الاقوات والكسى وما تضطر اليه الحاجة وكلف الاولاد والنساء⁶⁴ | وكان التدبير علويا وحكم الجميع سماويا وتساوى المومنين فى [20] الاهندا وقبلوا دين المسيح روحانيا وقال السليح المويد فولوس | فى رسالته الى اهل افسوس وانتم معاشر الشعوب كنتم من قبل [1٦٩v/518v/1031] جسديين تدعون اهل الغرلة وكنتم بعدا من ايشوع المسيح ومن موعود | الله لابراهيم ومن شريعة التوراة لا رجا لكم بعد هذه الدنيا والان صرتم | بدم ايشوع المسيح قريبا وقبلتم رجا الخيرات [مصهد207v/v] لانه ابطل العداوة التى | كانت بين الشعب والشعوب وبين الملائكة والناس وحصل اهل الختان [5] والغرلة امة واحدة وازال الشبه الحائلة بينهم وجدد بدل الوصايا | الجسدانية اخرى روحانية وصير الكل واحدا جديدا بالمعمودية | واجرى السلم بين الله والعباد وارضى الرب عنهم بجسده الواحد وابطل | معاداتهم بصلبه ثم اتى فيبشر الشعوب المبعدين وشعب اليهود المقربين | وادركتنا جميعا القربة الى الله الاب بالروح الواحد وصرتم الان ابناء [10]

(61) This seems to be the reading in C. The reading in P has a similar *rasm*, but is uncertain.

(62) Editorial correction of افتتان in both P and C.

(63) الشرف P

(64) النسل P

مورثين بالنعمة التي اسبغها عليكم الرب * والاحتجاج بختانة المسيح |
والحواريين لا يوجب على التابعين استعمالها لانها فعلت في زمن الطفولية
| من غير ان يعدوها فضلا⁶⁵ ولا ملكوا العقول والمنع ولا عرفوا دعوة |
غيرها ولا استتم امر العتيقة ولا ظهرت الحديثة خيرا واقوى | الحجج
لمن ابدأ استعمالها من غير حاجة تدعو⁶⁶ اليها ما فعله المويدي⁶⁷ [15] فولوس
السليح في حمل ططوس عليها لما اراد اخراجه معه والاستعانة | به في
سفره فانه اختتن ليساوى منقادى الشعب على الموصوف | من خبره
واطلاق المفضل شمعون الصفا لمن تنصر من اليهود استعمالها | وختانة
المنقادين اولادهم على اعتقادهم القديم فضلها واقامة بعض | التلاميذ على
وجوب فعلها بالذكر امر الله ابراهيم بها ومعاهدته [20] عليها الى الدهر فان
ختن المولود يوم ثامنه من غير اعتقاد وجوب | الختانة والى حين لباس
العماد⁶⁸ والذخول تحت قوانين الديانة فلا اضرار ولا [170r/519r/1032]
اثم ولا انتفاع ولا شرف والخلة السوية اولى بالحق والزيادة على | الاكتفا
سرف ولم يزل المولود بغرلته كما يراه الله بديا * التقى | بطهارة الاعماد⁶⁹
وعاش خلقا سويا والعمدة فى الجميع معرفة الله | بالمسيح واخلاص
الايمان والمحبة واعتقاد يقين [208r/r] صحيح والاقرار [5] بالرسل
والكتب والعمل لوراثة الملكوت والاعتراف بالنشر | والحشر والجزا عند
القيامة من الموت * وقد وجد من توالد بارض | تهامة من بنى اسمعيل لما
استفحل امرهم بالكثرة واستطالوا بالنسب | الجليل ختنوا البنات من اولادهم
بلا امر ولا اتباع شريعة * ولا | ليتميزوا من مجاوريههم ولا يتزوجوا⁷⁰
ذوى الانساب الوضيعة * فلما [10] ظهر دين الاسلام فيهم ثبتت ختانة
البنات مع البنين من عهد | الولاد الى الاحتلام فريضة عليهم فى قواعد
الدين وصارت الختانة | الثانية للبنات على امر الله لابرهم زيدة او لسابق
عهده ناقضة او | بتمام نقصانه عايده وبطل المحدود من ايامها وتجددت

(65) So in C. P has فضلا, but corrects to فضلها in the margin.

(66) P تدعوا

(67) P الموبد

(68) Here and below C spells عماد.

(69) C العماد

(70) Editorial correction of تزوجوا in both P (without diacritical dots on the prefix) and C.

فسحة في السنين | ودخل فيها من جميع الذين من الشعوب الابعدين
الاقريين * وحصل [15] اولاد ابراهيم من قنطورا بارض الشرق وتوالدوا
في البلاد واشتدوا | وعدلوا عن طريقة الحق ورفضوا الختانة عنهم حتى
تجددت شريعة | الاسلام لم يختنوا ذكرهم ولا انثى ولا تعرضوا لنقيصة
الاتمام ومن | اسلم الان منهم يختتن والباقون على خلقهم في الغرلة ساووا
المجاورين | من الامم واشتبكت بينهم نتايج الوصلة وزالت⁷¹ الحاجة الى
علامة [20] يتميز بها واحد من جماعة⁷² وانتسجت الانساب واختلطت⁷³
وصار الاخيار | اهل الطاعة وضمحل فخر اليهود بالختانة والخصوص
والنسب واشتمل [170v/519v/1033] عليهم الذل وظهرت فيهم اثار
العصب ولم تنفعهم الختانة لما عدلوا عن | تصديق المسيح وحصل فخرهم
للغربا واقترب⁷⁴ العبد بالحر الصريح وصحت | النبوات السابقة على
ايتلاف الامم والشعوب وعاد الامر الى العدل | وادرك⁷⁵ الطهارة من
يتوب *

THE SEVENTH GATE GARDENS, [IN] FOUR SECTIONS

First section

[On] Abandoning [the practice of] circumcision and dispensing with it in virtue of rightness of the faith in accordance with what is written

[P 1020] God brought Abraham out of Harran when he was seventy-five years old.⁷⁶ Abraham obeyed God with devotion and worshiped Him in excellent ways, remaining uncircumcised for twenty-four years, while the Lord was giving him [other] commands and prohibitions. His name was exalted and his memory became widespread, and God favored him and looked after him, while his rank in right-

(71) C والت

(72) C جماعته

(73) C واختلقت

(74) C واقترن

(75) P وادرك

(76) Gen 12:4.

eousness was exalted, and his affair became famous in virtue of the rightness of [his] faith. On account of his compassion and benefaction his fame became widespread among the Gentiles, and his appreciation among the kings was great because of the [divine] benevolence manifestly bestowed upon him. God's care would always surround him, guarding him from the vicissitudes of self-will. God chose him, spoke to him, made him a father, named him a prophet, blessed him and his possessions, gave him a good fate, changed his name from Abram to Abraham, and elevated him to the chosen rank. [God] also changed the name of his pure wife from what was at first Sarai to Sarah, delivered her from the hand of Abimelech,⁷⁷ even to the degree of taking her away from him by force, and, on another occasion, [delivered her] from the Pharaoh.⁷⁸ [God then] filled his dwelling place with fertility, and the Angel of God called upon Hagar and returned her to the saddle of her master,⁷⁹ commanded her to serve her mistress and brought her the good news of the offspring that was to be born of her. [God] promised prosperity, complete success, and [abundant] growth to Ishmael, [Abraham's] firstborn, gave him the desirable things of the earth, and guaranteed him the blessings of heaven. God made [Abraham] victorious over the five kings, even though he only had a small group of servants and slaves, three hundred and eighteen men in number. He brought back the captives of Sodom and Lot, and scattered the enemies far away.⁸⁰ The Lord appeared to him in three persons, and talked to him in understandable speech, and he learned the evil meaning of Sodom and what punishment would befall it. Then [the Lord] brought him the good tidings that the pure Isaac [would be born] of Sarai and that he would beget kings from his loins.⁸¹ He showed him fire in Qaysum [Ur Qasdim],⁸² which would strengthen his trust in his Lord. He confirmed His promise and vow to him that He would fill the earth with his proge-

(77) Gen 20.

(78) Gen 12:10–20.

(79) Gen 16:7–9.

(80) Gen 14.

(81) Gen 18.

(82) E. SPICEHANDLER, "Shāhīn's Influence on Bābāi ben Lotf: The Abraham-Nimrod Legend," in: *Irano-Judaica II*, eds. S. SHAKED and A. NETZER, Jerusalem, 1990, pp. 158–165; S. L. LOWIN, *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives* (Islamic History and Civilization, 65), Leiden, Boston, 2006, pp. 39–40.

ny, and that the name of Isaac who was obedient to God would be strengthened by his God-pleasing deeds. [P 1021] He gave him the covenant that He would make his descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea,⁸³ and that his memory would remain in the world forever. He also promised that He would let him inherit the kingdoms of the Gentiles, that He would bring back the fourth generation after him to rule over their enemies' land, and that He would give [his descendants] all that is upon it. All this happened, as it is described, in the years when he was uncircumcised, and both the prophet [Moses] and the Torah bear witness to the fact that everything explained here concerning his story is correct.

Then God willed to grant Abraham the blessed child Isaac from his infertile and pure [wife] Sarai in accordance with the foregoing promise and vow. He also willed to multiply his progeny in the world and to bring forth from this couple kings, prophets, the chosen people selected for prophecy and priesthood, high priests⁸⁴ and [other] chosen men. God willed to make his [descendants] His chosen tribe, set apart from [all other] nations. Yet He also foreknew that they were to live alongside transgressors. He also foreknew that [his descendants] would greatly multiply in Egypt after they had come to be enslaved there, and that He would lead them as a separate group out of Egypt with miraculous signs. It was only then that God — may His name be exalted! — commanded the forefather Abraham to practice circumcision as a sign for his male descendants, not in such a way that it would be a sign of the faith on their bodies which could not be hidden in times of oppression, [but as a sign which] would prevent them from mixing with strangers and taking wives from the Gentiles. Abraham circumcised himself when he was ninety-nine years old, and fulfilled [God's] command in obedience. He then circumcised Ishmael when he was thirteen years old as well as those men who were in his camp, and he circumcised his slaves, both old and young, whatever their age, whether little or great. In his time, circumcision became a sign of the people of faith in God. When later Abraham was blessed with Isaac, he circumcised him on the eighth day, as the Lord commanded him to circumcise slaves, children, and residents. God's word came to Abraham, saying: "Circumcise every

(83) Gen 22:17.

(84) The term **حبر** in this text seems to refer to (high) priests. It is used below to describe Melchizedek.

male after eight days, him who was born in your house and whom you bought with your money. There will be a covenant between Me and you in your generations forever that you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and every male who is uncircumcised his soul shall perish from his people.”⁸⁵ The custom of circumcision was established among the males of the family of Jacob, such that [every] newborn should be circumcised on [P 1022] the eighth [day] to have a sign by which they would be known among the peoples, both in places of settlement and on a journey, whether they be alive or dead. In the same way, a chosen thing is marked, when it is mixed with other things, as long as it is present among them; since otherwise⁸⁶ [these other things] would [seem] equally worthy of choice, the [chosen thing’s] distinguishing sign would be lost, and everything would be [equally] shown preference. However, when the object of preference is moved away alone, there is no longer need for differentiation because it is separated, as they did while dwelling in the desert, when they gave up circumcision of children. Also, when something is chosen as a whole, there is no longer need for a sign [of differentiation], as when faith in Christ became universal and safety embraced the peoples.

So, circumcision became a sign for the people to prevent their mingling with foreigners. Their way of life was defined by it, as they could not hide it in contacts [?]. If, however, they had been equal to the Egyptians in being uncircumcised while living side-by-side with them, they would have got corrupted by taking [foreign] women, and their [stock] would have become mixed through [blood] ties. Having become used to their mothers’ homes, familiar with the countryside and the desires [?], and accustomed to bathing and recreation, no one among their children would be able to withstand the burden of slavery, hardship, harshness, and oppression, and even less so to leave their homes and to depart to the desert with its desolation and fear. Moreover, [without circumcision] differentiating them [from the Egyptians] would have definitely been very difficult for the prophet [Moses], given their great number, but the Lord is most skillful in arranging the affairs so as to lead them to [His goal].

By contrast, when God created Adam and taught him the wisdom of all things, He did not command him [to practice] circumcision, nor

(85) Gen 17:11–14.

(86) The translation is conjectural.

did He explain its meaning to him. Instead, many of his descendants enjoyed God's favor through showing obedience, having the right faith, assurance of reliable knowledge, and devotion in following [God]. This is the case with Abel, whose sacrifice was accepted, Seth, the gifted singer of the holy, Enos, famous for his praises [to God], Enoch, who was transferred to Paradise while being uncircumcised, and the children of Seth, who were called "sons of God" in a certain book.⁸⁷ [As for circumcision,] nothing [of the sort] ever occurred to them, nor did they think of doing anything [of the sort] or avoiding it. The Scriptures testify that God created Adam as a perfectly-shaped man.⁸⁸ [P 1023] This rules out the possibility of excess or lack [in his bodily constitution] and hence means "no" to what has been mentioned earlier [i.e. circumcision]. Moreover, since, according to the [Jews?], [Adam] was created in the image of God and according to His likeness, taking anything away from him is shameful and sinful, and one should rather take pride in letting him be in his [original] state. [Similarly], when God commanded Moses to build an altar for the Lord, He commanded him to choose whole stones, unhewn and having no defects.⁸⁹ He also commanded Joshua son of Nun to inscribe the Law of the Old [Testament] on stones untouched by iron.⁹⁰ This was a symbol pointing back to the primordial creature.⁹¹ He did not mean by this stones completely unworked on, on which labor has not even begun [?], but simply expressed preference for what is whole and intact over what has been affected by cutting. When God renewed the world and commanded the family of Noah to populate

(87) The "sons of God" were identified with Sethites by many authors without specifying any "book" as a source for the identification. See: A. F. J. KLIJN, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature* (Supplements to NT, 46), Leiden, 1977, p. 61 ff.; J. TUBACH, "Seth and the Sethites in Early Syriac Literature," in: *Eve's Children: The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. G. P. LUTTIKHUIZEN (Themes in Biblical Narrative, Jewish and Christian Traditions, 5), Leiden, Boston, 2003, pp. 187–201.

(88) The expression "perfectly-shaped man" (*bašaran sawīyan*) is Qur'ānic (19:17), where it refers to the angel Gabriel as he appeared to Mary at Annunciation.

(89) Ex 20:25.

(90) Josh 8:31–32.

(91) Or: to the beginning of creation.

the earth,⁹² the Lord did not command them [to practice] circumcision, and they knew nothing of it, either as a [praiseworthy] custom or as a mandatory duty. [Similarly,] Melchizedek the high priest was famous on account of his piety, excellence, and asceticism, and many people of obedience came after him worshiping God and following His will. Then there arose in different regions of the earth giant kings⁹³ and knowledgeable sages who invented the sciences and devised the crafts, teaching about the stars of heaven. They knew nothing of circumcision and never mentioned it. As discussed earlier, it was only when God commanded Abraham [to practice] it, three thousand and three hundred years after the [creation of the] world, according to the books of the Law and the known reliable history, [that circumcision first appeared]. Also, when God willed to bring the children of Israel forth out of Egypt, circumcision, which had been necessary in sedentary life, was no longer useful, but [nevertheless] He delivered them from death through blood let out [and smeared] upon their doors.⁹⁴ This was done so that they might know that it was through [the letting out of blood in circumcision] that God kept them from corrupting their lineage. [Thus, circumcision] became a sign on their bodies preventing them from intermarrying with foreigners, so that no Israelite might take a foreign woman or find a way to leave his people.

When God gave Moses the tablets [of the covenant] and taught him the way of action pleasing to Him, He did not establish circumcision by way of miracles, nor did He deliver a ruling concerning it in His decree. As a result, circumcision disappeared from the entire people in the days of Moses [during the journey] in the desert. Both circumcised and uncircumcised high priests [P 1024] worshiped God equally. Being far away from the Gentiles, they had no need for a sign which would prevent intermingling [with them]. During this period of isolation and despite being uncircumcised, they remained in a state of complete blessedness: the uncircumcised were not left

(92) Gen 9:1.

(93) The Chronicle of Michael the Great witnesses to the tradition which narrates that the "sons of God," after their descent and abandoning the "Angelic way of life," appointed a king named Semiazos, while the Sethites imitated them by appointing another king (Book 1, ch. 3–4). *Chronique de Michel le Syrien Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)*, ed. J. B. CHABOT, 4 vols., Paris, 1899–1910, vol. 4, p. 2 (Syr. text); vol. 1, p. 5 (FT).

(94) Ex 12:7.

behind in misery, and the circumcised were not given preferential treatment, but both were treated equally as far as purity was concerned and if some were more excellent than others this was only in terms of piety, reverence, and faith.

When God commanded the prophet Moses to build the Tabernacle, to make the Ark of the Covenant, as explained [in the Scriptures], and to establish [the hierarchy of] high priests and priests, those who sacrifice, celebrate, and worship,⁹⁵ there was no difference between the uncircumcised and the circumcised in priority. All of them were equals of one another in terms of priority, and were distinguished only by their deeds: in both groups, whoever acts [as prescribed], obtains [God's] favor, and whoever neglects [to act], forfeits [it].

When God commanded the prophet [Moses] to wash Aaron and the high priests among his sons and after that to anoint them for the service of the holy, the people had not yet traveled deep into the desert, and both the circumcised and the uncircumcised had the same rank in the service of the Lord: uncircumcision presented no disadvantage, and circumcision no advantage. Likewise, the rest of the people were treated equally during their sojourn in the desert, with no one considered more excellent than another, except when one was considered excellent on account of his knowledge and given priority over his peers in virtue of his intellect. This was true for both those who were circumcised and those who were uncircumcised: they were treated without distinction.

Eventually, those who were circumcised all died and perished in the desert to the last of them. Their uncircumcised sons grew up and inherited all their dignified offices. Thus, when God made those who had left Egypt with Moses and Aaron to die, for He had promised them in wrath to leave their dead bodies in the desert, He appointed their sons who grew up uncircumcised as high priests and priests. The wise [God] neither diminished them in rank nor took away their dignity. Instead, light was illuminating [their way] at night, a cloud overshadowed them during the day,⁹⁶ through revelation [divine] command and prohibition came down, and manna was given them as food in abundance.⁹⁷ Their situation in regard to clothing [P 1025]

(95) Ex 25 ff.

(96) Ex 13:21–22.

(97) Ex 16:15–18.

and belongings was the same as that of their ancestors, and when they offered sacrifices they were accepted, similarly to [sacrifices of] their circumcised descendants. [Divine] support was offered them as it had been before: there was no loss of the [divine] care, nor did they lose the means towards [eternal] happiness. Instead, they were protected from death, accidents, injuries, and killing. They were allowed to grow and multiply, and blessings were bestowed upon them, for God willed them to have many descendants. As a result, while in the desert, they became as numerous as those leaving Egypt and even exceeded them in number by many thousands, according to the figures given in the Scriptures. These people received the gifts of the Lord in the desert, the commandments of the prophet were addressed to them, and the virtues of the people were firmly established among them. They witnessed the commandments and the curses⁹⁸ and learned [the difference between] choice and obligation. They became heirs of the promise and of the covenant, and habitations of the earth were distributed among them. Among them there were high priests, the sons of Aaron, who resumed the service of the Lord and were given the new and firm covenant as well as [P marg.: everlasting] priesthood in their progeny.

The God-pleasing Joshua [son of Nun] appeared among them and ruled over them with might, prudence, and vigor. He took them across the Jordan by an astonishing miracle and brought them to the land of fertility and abundance. The crossing of the Jordan and the fact that priests stood on the river bottom and took stones from its soil was evidence that their crossing it was a miracle,⁹⁹ and they were proud of it.¹⁰⁰ The fact that the Jordan stood still so that they could cross it through the great grace [of God] and that the [priests] went on standing on the river bottom until people could run safely across it with their belongings with no fear affecting them became [the sign of] the uncircumcised people's dignity.

It was only after they had crossed the Jordan and were in need of living in the neighborhood of the Gentiles that God commanded them to practice circumcision. And so they were all circumcised in compliance with the explicit command, and the practice of the law of

(98) Deut 28.

(99) Josh 4:7.

(100) The Arabic text seems somewhat garbled here, in both manuscripts.

circumcision was introduced at that time for a limited [number of] days. Adult men, youths, and boys were circumcised, according to the well known story. [God] the Father made the sign [of circumcision] to re-appear before their contact with the Gentiles [P 1026]. The explanation provided in the Scriptures makes it unnecessary for us to retell what is written.

The strongest indication that circumcision [was re-introduced] for the [sole] purpose of [keeping the people] segregated, not for the sake of kinship or [ritual] purity, is the fact that it is prescribed for males, but not for females, and that Abraham was circumcised, but not Sarah: if [the purpose of circumcision] were happiness and grace, pure women would not be deprived of it, because there were many good and pure women among them, those who prophesied and were mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives of prophets, kings, and high priests. There were noble women, famous for their asceticism, who practiced virtue and were thus equal to righteous men. Since the goal of circumcision was to keep the males and preserve their stock, practicing it was not necessary for women, even as [both males and females] were equally praised for [their other] endeavors.

The obvious meaning of both the [Scriptural] text and [the nature of] of the action itself indicates that circumcision is merely a sign which neither provides an advantage to the person who keeps it nor imputes blame to the person who neglects it. If one is an infidel, there is no use for [circumcision], and if one has the [right] faith, there is no harm in abandoning it. Moreover, there is surely neither loss nor shame in leaving the creature of God in its original state. When the circumcised has no belief in God, he loses the dignity of his circumcision, and when the uncircumcised has belief in God, he enjoys the fitting [fruits] in virtue of his faith. [The former] has experienced suffering and took on a [bodily] defect with neither reward, nor recompense, while he who is so rich in faith as to dispense with these two [aspects of circumcision, i.e. suffering and bodily defect] is protected from corrupt choices.¹⁰¹

The whole meaning of following a religious [life] is to please the Lord and to draw near Him through purity of conscience in obedience to Him, and to strive zealously for His goodwill. The spiritual and beneficial circumcision, which is preferred by the Lord, is having

(101) The sentence is very difficult in Arabic. This is the best interpretation of it that can be offered.

the rightfaith, assurance of reliable knowledge, and integrity of the heart, as reason demands, religion deems necessary, and Scripture confirms. Universally accepted witnesses of Truth [to be cited presently] allow us to speak no more [ourselves].

The prophet Moses addressed the people in the Torah [as follows]: "Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts, and be no more stiffnecked for the Lord your God, who is God of gods, and Lord of lords."¹⁰² The prophet Jeremiah said in the third section of his book: "Light a lamp¹⁰³ for yourself, [P 1027] and sow not among thorns. Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts for the Lord."¹⁰⁴ And he said, rebuking the people: "All the nations are uncircumcised in their flesh, but the sons of Israel are uncircumcised in their hearts."¹⁰⁵ And the Lord said by the mouth of Malachi in the twenty-fourth section of his book: "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau. They are both equal in their fatherhood and motherhood, in age, generation, and circumcision."¹⁰⁶ The [circumcision meant here] is nothing but the upright way of life and the virtue of religion, though God knows best [the meaning of Scripture] and is all-wise. Paul, the divinely inspired apostle, who had been one of the dignitaries of the Jews and servants of the holy, said: "Neither circumcision is anything to rely on, nor uncircumcision, but faith in God and confession of love. When the circumcised breaks the law, his circumcision is rendered uncircumcision, and when the uncircumcised keeps the commandments of the law his uncircumcision becomes circumcision. The One God who makes circumcision valid by faith, He makes uncircumcision valid by faith."¹⁰⁷

[The following considerations] prove the superiority of [bodily] circumcision to be null and void (for [true] circumcision is the circumcision of the heart by the Spirit) and establishes the equality between circumcision and uncircumcision in faith, piety, and purity. Both groups enjoy an equal favor with God, and He bestows an equal

(102) Deut 10:16–17.

(103) Peshitta: ‏ܠܥܘܠܡܢܐ. The translator obviously read the Hebrew ‏נֵר in Jer 4:3 as "a lamp," not as "a fallow ground." The Arabic مصباح translates the Peshitta reading.

(104) Jer 4:3–4. The author is following a different division of the book into chapters than the one presently accepted.

(105) Jer 9:26.

(106) Mal 1:2–3.

(107) Rom 2:25–26, 3:30; cf. 1 Cor 7:19.

reward upon those of them who please Him. He translated Enoch alive into Paradise when he repented, even as he was uncircumcised, and He took up the prophet Elijah into heaven, as observed [by all], and he was circumcised. He accepted the sacrifices of Abel, Enoch, Melchizedek, and others, though they were uncircumcised, and the sacrifices of Aaron, David, Elijah, and Job, who practiced circumcision. He divided the sea for Moses, Aaron, and those who left Egypt, who were circumcised, and He [divided] the Jordan for those who grew up in the desert, who were uncircumcised. The story of how they were protected [in the desert] is well known. Abundant blessings are bestowed upon pious people, whether they be uncircumcised or circumcised, if they obey God, [do what] pleases Him, and fulfil the conditions of religion.

Circumcision did not only bring manifest benefits for the people, but they also experienced troubles on account of it, as explained in the Scriptures. The first circumcision was a sign of enslavement in Egypt, and it urged them to be patient in the face of hardship, oppression, [P 1028] and continuous harm. It prevented [those who were circumcised] from mingling with [other] tribes. It also prevented them from escaping, and so they remained oppressed on account of it, as they could not hide their origins. In the desert [circumcision] became a sign of perdition from death, war, and destruction, for the Lord had made a vow that no one should enter the [promised] land, except Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh.¹⁰⁸ The third circumcision took place after crossing the Jordan. It indicated that they were no longer privileged as a chosen [people]. [This is why] the celebrated light and the visible cloud¹⁰⁹ which had appeared during the day were taken away, the giving of manna ceased, their footwear and clothing got worn out, and they became like the Gentiles in searching for goods, suffering from hardship, and earning their living. In the promised land, they had to eat [what they earned] with shameful bodily labor. They had to cover themselves and their children with materials they produced and their women wove together. With that circumcision, they became confined to their lot and the [land] promised to them. They could find no deliverer¹¹⁰ [to save them] from harm, nor could they repel it themselves.

(108) Deut 1:35–38.

(109) I. e. the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud.

(110) Or: deliverance.

The preaching of Jesus Christ (may His memory be glorified!) spread to all the ends of the earth, and many peoples embraced the faith and accepted the prescribed customs and obligations. Thus all of them became chosen, and could dispense with the mark of differentiation. The difference between circumcision and uncircumcision ceased. Guidance and the way of salvation were established, and the requisite obligation became [obtaining] knowledge of God and following His Scriptures and His messengers. In both cases [whether one was circumcised or uncircumcised], it is one's works that draw down His gracious rewards and His guidance towards us.

[Christ] commanded to leave behind the worldly [aspects] of the commandments of the Law and to practice what is conducive to integrity of the faith, of the inner state, and of the souls. He forbade swearing by God's [name], repaying enemies with evil, taking vengeance, killing, marrying several women, divorcing a wife by a letter of dismissal, offering sacrifices for the [forgiveness of] sins, and abstaining from doing good on Sabbaths. He commanded to have faith [P 1029] and to repent, to be pious and truthful, to forgive, to be merciful and humble, and to follow the Gospel in forgoing revenge and doing good [to one's enemies] instead. Yet as regards circumcision, He neither forbade the practice nor commanded it as being part of the stipulations of faith. Also, when He sent His disciples to establish the preaching of the right way, made them to see the fruits of piety, and warned them against the causes of perdition, He did not mention circumcision as part of His commandments, either as being mandatory or as being forbidden. This indicates that [circumcision] is neither particularly useful nor particularly harmful to whoever practices it or refrains from it.

Further, when the disciples summoned the nations [to Christianity], they did not forbid the people of circumcision from practicing it, nor did they make it mandatory for the uncircumcised once they had accepted the [right] faith. As the cornerstone of the right way, they put purity from pernicious [spiritual] defects. As a means of purifying oneself from previously committed sins, they advocated putting on the garment of baptism. They compared getting out of the [baptismal] water to Christ's rising from the grave [and raising up] their souls, which are now renewed and pure, and again capable of [acting in] pious ways pleasing [to God]. The [disciples] said that circumcision did not help draw a disobedient person nearer [to God], nor did it alienate [from God] an obedient person who fully observed [what

is prescribed]. Likewise, uncircumcision did not draw an unfaithful person nearer to God, nor did it alienate [from God] someone who is pious and beneficent.

When after the descent of the [Holy] Spirit the seventy [disciples] chosen from among the most prominent believers gathered together in order to determine religious obligations, they neither forbade the practice of the circumcision nor declared it mandatory for those who were guided. They did not give preference to those who practiced it, nor did they hold those who refrained from it in contempt. And so it happened that followers [of Christianity] from among the People [of Israel] continued to practice it, according to the custom of Abraham, while the adherents [of Christianity] from among the [other] nation[s]¹¹¹ refrained from it, preferring instead to keep the created [form of man] intact. All the while, [both groups] were all members of one faith, and there was no difference between them in religion. Both the circumcised and the uncircumcised were equals of one another, once they became part of those who were rightly guided [by God].

The prominent apostle Peter, called “the Rock,” did not forbid circumcision for the faithful coming from the Jews because it was difficult for them to abandon it as they considered abandoning a prescription of the covenant to be a grievous act, were deeply attached to the custom, and were reluctant to act against the law. Thus they accomplished the fullness of the Old Testament by means of circumcision, and [became worthy of] the coming of Christ by observing the conditions of holiness.

Then the divinely inspired [P 1030] apostle Paul called the nations to the law of Christ, and great kings, philosophers, and scholars all embraced the true religion. It sometimes happened that a king, with all his subjects and inhabitants of his city, or a prominent chieftain with all those loyal to him, including old people, adults, youths, children, and infants, along with their mothers, sisters, spouses, and unmarried and married daughters, all came into the faith in one day. By heavenly command, the apostle spoke in favor of abandoning the practice of circumcision and offered a proof that it was no longer necessary. He explained the [Old Testament] testimonies to the [Christian] faith and said: “The same [God] who established circumcision in times of old, has now commanded to abandon it, and the

(111) Following the emendation suggested in n. 59 above.

same [God] who sent the Rock [i.e. Peter] to preach circumcision, has sent me [i. e. Paul] to preach uncircumcision."¹¹²

Some of those who responded to the call from among the Gentiles were apprehensive about circumcision on account of the Jews. They were afraid that if they became equal to [the Jews] in being [circumcised], they would be bound by [the obligations of] the covenant. They also knew that Christ appeared among [the Jews] and that those who preached Him were [Jews] as well. They also witnessed John's baptism given to the [Jews], and so they were afraid that [if they were to accept baptism] they would also enter Judaism. It was only when the divinely inspired preacher [i. e. Paul] permitted the nations guided [to faith] to abandon circumcision that they realized that Jesus came with a new dispensation. It was only then that they felt safe from the consequences of circumcision, and so they were put at ease and responded to His preaching. They accepted the faith with trust, embraced the good lot of following the right way, and worked for [the salvation of] their souls with assurance.

Had [Paul] made circumcision mandatory for the Gentiles, they would have hardly found it attractive, since people of the East dislike change and find it hard to embrace it. Moreover, most people must attend to procuring their bread and clothing and taking care of various necessities and expenses associated with children and women-folk.¹¹³ Thus, the [new] dispensation came from on high and the new regulation for all came from heaven. [Whether circumcised or not,] the faithful were equals of one another, all following the right way and accepting the religion of Christ in a spiritual manner.

The divinely inspired apostle Paul said in his epistle to the Ephesians: "You, the community of Gentiles, were in the past [P 1031] fleshly who were called people of uncircumcision. You were far from Jesus Christ and from God's promise to Abraham and from the law of the Torah, having no hope after this world. But now, by the blood of Jesus Christ, you became nigh and received the hope of good things, for He abolished the enmity between the People [of Israel] and the Gentiles, and between angels and humans, and both the circumcised and the uncircumcised became one community. He abolished the

(112) Cf. Gal 2:7-9.

(113) The author's idea seems to be that if Gentiles had been forced to get circumcised as adults the painful operation would have prevented them (temporarily) from earning their living and supporting their families.

doubts separating them, and instead of the fleshly commandments, gave new, spiritual ones. He made all one and renewed all things through baptism. He established peace between God and [His] servants, and satisfied the Lord for them by His one body. He abolished the enmity between them by His cross; then He came and preached the good news both to the peoples who were far away and to the people of the Jews who were near. The nearness to God the Father has embraced us all by the one Spirit, and you have now become sons and heirs through the grace which the Lord has bestowed upon you.”¹¹⁴

The argument that Christ and the apostles were circumcised does not make it necessary for His followers to practice circumcision, because the former were [circumcised] as children without considering [circumcision] to be a virtue. They did not have the power of reason and were unable to object. Moreover, they did not [at the time] know any other preaching, as the dispensation of the Old Testament had not yet been fulfilled, and the good news of the New [Testament] had not yet been revealed.

The strongest argument of those [Christians] who practiced circumcision, unnecessary though this was, is the fact that the divinely inspired apostle Paul had Titus¹¹⁵ circumcised when he wanted him to accompany him and assist him while traveling. And so he got circumcised to be equal to the faithful from among the People [of Israel], as described [in the Book of Acts]. Likewise, the distinguished [apostle] Simon [Peter], called the Rock, gave permission to those among the Jews who became Christians to practice circumcision. The faithful circumcised their children in accordance with their old belief regarding its value. Some of the disciples, too, insisted that circumcision was necessary and invoked God’s command to Abraham and the everlasting covenant with him regarding the matter.

So if a newborn is circumcised on the eight day, prior to donning the garment of baptism and accepting the obligations of the faith, and without holding the belief that circumcision is mandatory, then there is neither harm and [P 1032] sin nor benefit and honor. However, [keeping] the creature in its integral [form] is truly preferable, while adding to what is already sufficient is a waste. So [it is best for] the newborn to remain uncircumcised as God created him from the very

(114) Eph 2:11–19.

(115) Titus is obviously confused with Timotheus here, see: Acts 16:3.

beginning. Then he will receive the purity of baptism and will live as an integral creature.

The cornerstone of all is to have knowledge of God in Christ, sincere faith and love, and strong and correct belief, to accept the apostles and the Scriptures, to act [righteously] so as to inherit the Kingdom, and to confess resurrection [of the dead], the gathering [of all humanity for the Last Judgment], and the [final] recompense at the time of resurrection.

Then there were those of the sons of Ishmael who were born in the land of Tihama.¹¹⁶ When they swelled tremendously in number, and their genealogies grew long, they began circumcising their daughters with no [divine] command and without following a [divinely given] law. Nor did they do so in order to set themselves apart from their neighbors or to prevent intermarriage with people of base lineage. When the religion of Islam emerged among them, the custom of circumcising daughters along with sons, during the time between their birth and puberty became established as a mandatory commandment and one of the foundations of their religion. This second circumcision, that of daughters, was something added to God's command to Abraham, or [better put] something contradicting the earlier covenant and going back to its complete deficiency, for the time appointed [for the practice] had already passed. Many years went by, until eventually all the [adherents] of this religion, from all the nations, near and far, became [circumcised]. Then the children of Abraham from Qantura [i.e. the Turks]¹¹⁷ appeared in the land of the East, multiplied and grew strong. They strayed away from the true path and rejected circumcision. As a result, the law of Islam got modified, and they no longer circumcise males or females and no longer subject themselves to a defect in [bodily] perfection. Those among them who only now convert to Islam are circumcised, but others remain in their uncircumcised state as they were created. Thus [the Muslims] became identical to their neighbors among the nations, and family ties were established among

(116) A. GROHMANN, "Tihāma," in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 8, Leiden, 1927 (repr. 1993), pp. 763:2–765:2; G. R. SMITH, "Tihāma," in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New edition*, vol. 10, Leiden, 2000, pp. 481:1–482:1.

(117) Gen 25:1–4; 1 Chr 1:32–33. An explanation common in Arabic writers is that Qantūrā was a female servant of Abraham from whom the Turks were descended.

them. There was no longer a need to have a sign by which one would be differentiated from the others, and the lineage [of the Arab Muslims] became intertwined and mixed with that of [other nations]. Superiority [among them] is now achieved through obedience [to God] [rather than having a superior lineage].

The Jewish pride in being circumcised, distinguished, and having a superior lineage has dwindled. They have been [P 1033] humiliated, and [divine] anger with them has become evident.¹¹⁸ Their circumcision did not help them when they refused to believe in Christ, and their pride was given to others. The slave became equal to someone who is completely free, and the earlier prophecies concerning the union of nations and peoples came true. The matter came back full circle to the point of justice, and it is only the person who repents that attains purity.

SUMMARY

The present article provides an interesting example of how Christian discussions of the abolition of circumcision — originally developed as part of the process of Christian emancipation from the Old Testament law — became revitalized in Christian-Muslim polemic in the medieval Middle East. The chapter on the abolition of circumcision from the comprehensive ‘Nestorian’ encyclopedic work of the mid-10th – early 11th century entitled *Kitāb al-Mağdal* (‘The Tower’) is edited and translated in full. The edition of the Arabic text is based on two manuscripts: Paris, BnF Ar. 190 and Cambridge University Library Add. 3163 (= 3293).

(118) The reference is primarily to the destruction of the Temple and their expulsion from the Promised Land.

Saint Petersburg State University of Aerospace Instrumentation
Centre of Research and Education
in Philosophy, Religion, and Culture

SCRINIUM

Journal of Patrology, Critical Hagiography
and Ecclesiastical History

Volume 10

Syrians and the Others:
Cultures of the Christian Orient
in the Middle Ages



Edited by
Basil Lourié and Nikolai N. Seleznyov

Gorgias Press
2014

ISSN 1817-7530 (Print)
ISSN 1817-7565 (Online)

Scrinium. T. 10: Syrians and the Others: Cultures of the Christian Orient in the Middle Ages. Edited by Basil Lourié and Nikolai N. Seleznyov. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2014. x+534 p.

SCRINIUM

*Journal of Patrology, Critical Hagiography
and Ecclesiastical History*

Editor in Chief

Basil Lourié

Advisory Board

Sebastian Brock, Oxford (President);
Pauline Allen, Brisbane—Pretoria; Alessandro Bausi, Naples;
Gilbert Dagron, Paris; Kazuhiko Demura, Tokyo;
Gianfranco Fiaccadori, Mailand; Stephan Gerö, Tübingen;
Robert Godding, Bruxelles (Société des Bollandistes);
Alexander Golitzin, Milwaukee; Getatchew Haile, Avon;
Cornelia B. Horn, Berlin; Hubert Kaufhold, Munich (Oriens Christianus);
Robert Kraft, Philadelphia; Vladimir A. Livshits, St Petersburg;
Igor P. Medvedev, St Petersburg; Bernard Meunier,
Lyon (Institut des Sources Chrétiennes); Bernard Outtier, Paris;
Madeleine Petit, Paris; John C. Reeves, Charlotte;
Gerrit J. Reinink, Groningen; Antonio Rigo, Venice;
James Russel, Harvard; Samir Kh. Samir, Beirut;
Michael Stone, Jerusalem; Satoshi Toda, Sapporo;
James VanderKam, Notre Dame

Secretariat

Tatiana Senina, St. Petersburg;
Elena Bormotova, Montreal

© Authors, 2014

© B. Lourié and N. N. Seleznyov, 2014

© Gorgias Press, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| List of Abbreviations | x |
|-----------------------------|---|

Critical Editions

Yulia FURMAN

| | |
|---|---|
| The Origins of the Temporal World: the First <i>mē'mrā</i> of the <i>Ktābā d-rēš mellē</i> of John Bar Penkāyē | 3 |
|---|---|

Yulia FURMAN

| | |
|---|----|
| Zeus, Artemis, Apollo: John bar Penkāyē on Ancient Myths and Cults | 47 |
|---|----|

Nikolai N. SELEZNYOV

| | |
|---|----|
| The Laments of the Philosophers over Alexander the Great according to <i>The Blessed Compendium</i> of al-Makīn ibn al-'Amīd | 97 |
|---|----|

Nikolai N. SELEZNYOV

| | |
|--|-----|
| "These stones shall be for a memorial": A discussion of the abolition of circumcision in the <i>Kitāb al-Mağdal</i> | 115 |
|--|-----|

Anton PRITULA

| | |
|--|-----|
| The <i>Wardā</i> Hymnological Collection and Šlēmōn of Aḥlāt (13 th century) | 149 |
|--|-----|

Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF

| | |
|--|-----|
| Litanies or Prayers for Travellers | 208 |
|--|-----|

Hagiography

Andrey MOROZ

| | |
|---|-----|
| Folkloric Hagiography and the Popular Cult of Saints: Formation of Beliefs and Plots | 219 |
|---|-----|

Alexander V. PIGIN

| | |
|---|-----|
| Hagiographic Writings in the Old Believer Controversies over 'the Suicidal Death' at the End of the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth Centuries (Peter Prokop'ev's Message to Daniil Vikulin) | 230 |
|---|-----|

| | |
|--|-----|
| Tatiana A. SENINA (nun Kassia) Concerning the Dates of St. Makarios of Pelekete's Life and the Dating of his <i>Vita</i> | 245 |
| Tatiana A. SENINA (nun Kassia) Did St. John, the Abbot of the ton Katharon Monastery, Join the Iconoclasts under Leo V the Armenian? | 251 |
| Yulia M. SHEVARENKOVA Verbal Hagiography of Seraphim of Sarov | 255 |

Patrology

| | |
|--|-----|
| Dmitry BIRIUKOV Hierarchies of Beings in the Patristic Thought: Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and the Palamites | 281 |
| Irina KOLBUTOVA The Book of the Body of Christ: Jewish-Christian Mysticism of Letters and the Name of God as an Origin for the Christian Spiritual Exegesis | 305 |
| Dirk KRAUSMULLER A Chalcedonian Conundrum: the Singularity of the Hypostasis of Christ | 361 |
| Alexey OSTROVSKY and Maia RAPHAVA Notes on Georgian Translations of the Works of Nicetas Stethatos .. | 383 |
| Olena SYRISOVA L'anthropologie apocryphe et le traité <i>Περὶ Ἀρχῶν</i> d'Origène | 402 |

Review Articles

| | |
|---|-----|
| Dmitry BIRIUKOV Providence and fate in the ancient philosophical tradition and in Greek patristics | 415 |
| Basil LOURIE Notes on Mar Pinhas: A "Nestorian" Foundation Legend; the Liturgy Implied; Polemics against Jewish Mysticism; an Early Christian Apology Used; Syrian Monasticism from Athens | 422 |

Olga MITRENINA

The Corpora of Old and Middle Russian Texts
as an Advanced Tool for Exploring an Extinguished Language 455

Aleksandr V. PIGIN

A new book on Old Russian demonology 462

Tatiana A. SENINA (moniale Kassia)

Deux livres sur Cassia de Constantinople 468

Christos A. ZAFIROPOULOS

Ahiqar, his *Tale* and the *Vita Aesopi* 479

Reviews

What Was the Question? The Inter-Byzantine Discussions

about the *Filioque*, Nicephorus Blemmydes,
and Gregory of Cyprus (B. LOURIÉ) 499

Прп. Максим Исповедник, *Богословско-полемические сочинения*
(*Opuscula Theologica et Polemica*), пер. с древнегреч.

Д. А. ЧЕРНОГЛАЗОВА и А. М. ШУФРИНА; научн. ред., предисл.
и комм. Г. И. БЕНЕВИЧА [St Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula*
Theologica et Polemica, Russian tr. by D. A. CHERNOGLAZOV and
A. M. CHOUFRINE; ed., intr. and comm. by G. I. BENEVICH] (G. B.) ... 507

Warren T. WOODFIN, *The Embodied Icon. Liturgical Vestments*

and Sacramental Power in Byzantium (T. SÉNINA) 508

Two Books on Fr Antonii (Anthony) Bulatovich (1870–1919)

and the *Imiaslavie* (Onomatodoxy, Name-Glorifying) (B. LOURIÉ) .. 510

The Monks and Their Reading (O. MITRENINA) 514

A Lonely Church as a Symbol of Faith and Power (B. LOURIÉ) 516

Syriaca et Varia Orientalia (B. LOURIÉ) 523

Das russisch-deutsche Seminar „Simon Lüdwigowitsch Frank:

der deutsche Kontext der russischen Philosophie“ (A. MALINOV) .. 528