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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābḫāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

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Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammaṣ on the Trinity:
A Moment in Abbasid Jewish-Christian Kalām

Najib George Awad[*]

Abstract

This essay studies al-Muqammaṣ's Muslim *Kalām* text, *Twenty Chapters*, and focuses on his criticism of the Christian *Kalām* on the Trinity. It first analyzes al-Muqammaṣ's assessment of the Christian *Kalām* on the Trinity within the framework of his logico-philosophical discourse on God as 'the One'. It then tries to investigate which Christian *mutakallim*s' Arabic works, among the ones we have extant today, could al-Muqammaṣ have read and had in mind when he argued against the doctrine of the Trinity in his *Twenty Chapters*. I conclude with some remarks on the dynamics of interaction between *mutakallim*s in the Abbasid era, that can be extracted from the discoursing strategies of texts like al-Muqammaṣ's *Twenty Chapters*.

I. Introduction: al-Muqammaṣ and His Kalām

One of the Jewish *mutakallim*s of the early Abbasid era whom we know of today is Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammaṣ. The information we have on this Jewish philosopher and theologian come mainly from the pen of Abū Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī (10th century A.D.). In his treatise, *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-Marāqib* (*The Book of Lights and Watchtowers*), al-Qirqisānī relates that al-Muqammaṣ was a philosopher who converted from Judaism to Christianity; it is believed by scholars today that al-Muqammaṣ turned back to Judaism again. It is believed also that al-Muqammaṣ was educated in philosophy and theology under a certain Nānā, who is probably to be identified with the Christian Jacobite *mutakallim*, Nonnus of Nisibis. He also was trained under the uncle of Nonnus and his mentor, Ḥabīb b. Ḥidmah Abū Rāʾiṭa al-Takrītī, as I will propose in the ensuing sections. This education, it seems, drove him to compose *Kalām* works against Christian theology and to translate into Arabic Syriac Christian commentaries on the books of Genesis and Ecclesiastes.[1]

Scholars of Jewish *Kalām* find the value of al-Muqammaṣ and his legacy in the conjecture that, as far as we know today, he is "the first Jewish thinker to write a systematic theological work in Arabic", and probably one of the first active Jewish *mutakallim*s who engaged with Christian and

[1] Abū Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-Marāqib* (*The Book of Lights and Watchtowers*), ed. L. Nemoy, Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, New York 1939-1943, 5 Vols., as cited in the edition and translation by S. Stroumsa, *Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammaṣ: Twenty Chapters*, Brigham Young U.P., Provo 2016, p. XV. See also B. Chiesa - W. Lockwood, *Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī on Jewish Sects and Christianity*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1984, p. 137, and S. Stroumsa, "From the Earliest Known Judaeo-Arabic Commentary on Genesis", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002), pp. 375-95, in part. pp. 375-9.

Muslim interlocutors in *muǧādalāt* (debates) in Iraq and Syria in the 9th century's Abbasid context.[2] On his sobriquet "al-Muqammaṣ", its connotations and background, scholars are not in agreement. Sarah Stroumsa, the critical editor of his writings, suggests that such a sobriquet, deriving from a Christian-Arabic term for Muslims or Arabs, reveals Dāwūd al-Raqqī's Arabic-speaking Jewish (and Christian at one point) identity, thus reflecting "his position at the crossroads of cultures, between the already-Arabicized Jewish community of the ninth century and the Syriac-Christian community he joined".[3]

One of al-Muqammaṣ's extant *Kalām* texts is known as ʿIšrūn Maqāla (*Twenty Chapters*), written in Arabic script rather than in Hebrew script, as is common in Judaeo-Arabic, either due to the background of his education or because he wanted the book to reach the broader readership of the Abbasid intellectual society, whose lingua franca was Arabic.[4] These chapters manifest a content that is heavily loaded with, and deeply influenced by, the Neoplatonic-Aristotelian thought of the Greek-Arabic translation-interpretation-paraphrasing movement of the ninth century.[5] Yet, one cannot miss in these articles the arguments and expositions that al-Muqammaṣ relates on basic Christian theological doctrines, like the Trinity, Christology, and the Incarnation. The *Twenty Chapters* show a Jewish *mutakallim* familiar with some Muslim *Kalām* and the *falsafa* that were available in his era. Even more noticeably, the Chapters demonstrate that he was also acquainted with the Christian *Kalām*, as he explicitly and directly engages in this treatise with the Christian *mutakallims*' claims and logical-philosophical explanations of the Christian doctrine. Sarah Stroumsa eloquently articulates this when she states that such engagement tells us exactly what kind of Aristotelian Christian *Kalām* "influenced and shaped al-Muqammaṣ's thought".[6]

In this essay, I shall examine and analyze Dāwūd al-Muqammaṣ's critical and polemical *Kalām* on the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in his *Twenty Chapters*. I shall first read systematically al-Muqammaṣ's assessment of the Christian *kalām* on the Trinity within the framework of his logico-philosophical discourse on God as 'the One'. I will, then, try to investigate which Christian *mutakallims*' Arabic works from the ones extant today could al-Muqammaṣ have read and had in mind, when he argued against the Trinity in his *Twenty Chapters*. I will, finally, conclude with some remarks on the dynamics of interaction between *mutakallim*s in the ninth century Abbasid context, which one can extract from the discoursing strategies of texts like al-Muqammaṣ's *Kalām*. My claims on al-Muqammaṣ's potential Christian sources will not be conclusively evident. We will never know exactly which Christian texts he had in mind when he wrote his criticisim of the Trinity, because al-Muqammaṣ himself never names his sources in his text. What he does clearly and evidently, nevertheless, is to explicitly invoke claims and ideas on the Trinity he knew that Christian *mutakallim*s held. By this, he invites us to speculate on who could these Christians be. My suggestions here will then be probabilities and not certainties, as a response to an invitation to investigate triggered by al-Muqammaṣ's himself. Probabilities are not against historical investigation,

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[2] Stroumsa, "From the Earliest Known Judaeo-Arabic Commentary on Genesis" (above, n. 1), p. 375.

[3] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, p. XVIII, and Ead., "From the Earliest Known Judaeo-Arabic Commentary on Genesis" (above, n. 1), p. 379. See also on the Arabic-speaking Jewish community in late Antiquity and early Islam H. Ben-Shemmai, "Observations on the Beginnings of Judaeo-Arabic Script", in D.M. Friedenreich - M. Goldstein (eds.), *Beyond Religious Borders: Interaction and Intellectual Exchange in the Medieval Islamic World*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2012, pp. 13-29.

[4] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, p. XXII.

[5] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, p. XXIII.

[6] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, p. XXIV.

since historical-textual research aims only at 'probabilistic truths', as Robert Hoyland and Aziz al-Azmeh remind us.[7] Finally, in studying the *Twenty Chapters*, I rely on the precious critical edition which Sarah Stroumsa produced in her 1989 *Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammaṣ, Twenty Chapters*. This text is now available in a publication from Brigham Young University Press that appeared in 2016. While using Stroumsa's Arabic text, I present my own English translation of the passages quoted.

II. The Trinity in the Twenty Articles

Dāwūd al-Muqammaṣ divides his *Kalām* treatise *ʿIšrūn Maqāla* into four main parts: on knowing and how to perceive the nature of things; on the being, origin and purpose of the world; on the nature and existence of God and, finally, on the ethical value and *telos* of creation. In this *Kalām*, chapters seven to eleven are dedicated to the truth of God. Al-Muqammaṣ there develops four basic inquiries: is God Creator? How many creators originated the world? Who is God? And how is God who He is? When al-Muqammaṣ reflects on God's 'how-ness' (*kayfiyya* or *kayf Allāh*), namely through chapters eight, nine and ten, he touches upon the Christian *Kalām* on the Trinity, with some reflections on Christology and Incarnation. In this section, I will display a systematic reading of al-Muqammaṣ's arguments against the Trinity by offering a constructive anatomy of his views. I will read these views within the broader framework of his *Kalām* on God the One and Creator.

It is important to notice that al-Muqammaṣ does tackle the question of 'how God is God?' after engaging the inquiry on 'who is God?' For him, the 'who' decides the 'how' and shapes its content philosophically. Who God is for al-Muqammaṣ is deduced from the fundamental fact that the maker of the world (*fāʿil al-ʿālam*) is 'one' and not two.[8] From arguing for the oneness of the maker of the world, al-Muqammaṣ moves into elaborating on the 'who-ness' of this One and maker. He does this by claiming that this maker, and only this, is called by the name or noun or word (اسم /*ism*) 'One': *ism al-wāḥid*. 'One' is not just designative of a quantitative knowledge on how many makers were involved in making the world. More substantially, it is a qualitative name that ontologically signify the being, the nature, and the essence of this maker as such: God is one (*Allāh wāḥid*) essentially as 'God the One'.

In order to unpack the connotations of calling God 'the One', al-Muqammaṣ sets out six meanings or senses of the name 'One'.

> Wa iḏ ḏakarnā ism al-wāḥid, fa-naḥnu ḥuzarāʾ al-naqassim ism al-wāḥid wa-naqūlu ḥīnaʾiḏin wa-nuḫbir ʿalā ayy tilka al-wuǧūhi nazʿamu anna Allāha wāḥid. Fa-naqūlu inna al-wāḥid yuqālu ʿalā sittati awǧuh: wāḥid fī l-basāṭa, wa-wāḥid fī l-tarkīb, wa-wāḥid fī l-ǧins, wa-wāḥid fī l-nawʿ, wa-wāḥid fī l-ʿadad, wa-wāḥid annahu lā-maṯīla lahu.

> And since we mentioned the name 'the One', we are careful to divide the noun 'the One'. Therefore, we say and tell in what sense do we claim that God is 'one'. So, we say that 'the One' is said after six aspects: one in simplicity, and one in composition, and one in genus, and one in species, and one in number, and one because it has no equivalent.[9]

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[7]   R. Hoyland, "History, Fiction and Authorship in the First Centuries of Islam", in J. Bray (ed.), *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam*, Routledge, London 2006, pp. 16-46; A. al-Azmeh, *The Arabs and Islam in Late Antiquity: A Critique of Approaches to Arabic Sources*, Gerlach Press, Berlin 2014, p. 33.

[8]   Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, art. 8, pts. 1-32, pp. 139-65.

[9]   Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.33, p. 165.

Al-Muqammaṣ's attention to the multiple meanings of 'the One' is motivated by his concern about disallowing any sense of plurality or manyness that implies any form of division in God Himself. For him, God's oneness depends on adamant emphasis on 'singleness'; on stressing and centralizing the sense of 'contra-manyness'; of defending a minimalist perception of God's Being (perhaps a Muʿtazilite thought form). This is why in the ensuing points of his eighth chapter he casts away the meanings of 'one' that he believes obscures 'singleness' and supports any rate of manyness or diversity in God's identity. He strongly maintains that 'the One' names God's uniqueness in terms of being and action (i.e. God has no peer or equal), and he rejects other senses of 'the One', deeming them irrelevant and inapplicable to naming God.

> Fa-naqūl annahu qad qāla baʿḍ al-ʿulamāʾ al-muwaḥḥida inna Allāh wāḥid bi-l-basāṭa, yaʿnī annahu wāḥid ġayr muḫtalif al-ḏāt bi-waǧhin min al-wuǧūh. Qāla: fa-hāḏā maʿnā wāḥid fī l-basāṭa. Wa-qāla āḫar inna Allāh wāḥid fī l-ḏāt wa-l-fiʿl, ayy innahu lā-naẓīra lahu fī ḏātihi wa-lā miṯāl lahu fī fiʿlihi. Wa-hāḏayn al-waǧhayn ṣaḥīḥayn ǧamiʿan inna Allāh wāḥid fī annahu ġayr muḫtalif al-ḏāt, wa-wāḥid bi-annahu lā naẓīra lahu fī l-ḏāt, wa-wāḥid bi-annahu lā ʿadīla lahu wa-lā miṯāl fī l-fiʿl. Fa-ammā al-wuǧūh al-bāqiya fa-innahā munkasira.

> So we say that some 'monadizer' scholars said that God is one in simplicity, which means that He is one without any differentiation or distinction in any possible way in His being. [He] said this is the meaning of 'one in simplicity'. Another [monadizer] said that God is one in being and action, meaning that God Has no peer in His being and no similar in His action. Both senses are alike accurate [in saying] that God is one in the sense that He has no differentiation in being and He is one in the sense that His being Has no peer and one in the sense that there is neither equal nor similar to Him in action. All the remaining meanings [of 'the One'] are defeated.[10]

It is essential to start analyzing al-Muqammaṣ's refutation of the Trinity from his systematic departure from an argument on the accurate understanding, in his opinion, of 'the One' as God's name, or as God's 'who-ness'. Al-Muqammaṣ's rejection of the Trinity is nothing but a logical consequence of the choices he made to interpret 'the One' and what it names in/as God. What he selected to be for him the accurate sense of 'the One' from the six meanings he discerned drives him to the conclusion that the Christian *Kalām* on God as triune would prove implausible if it is to be scrutinized from a logico-philosophical understanding of the notion of the 'one'.

Al-Muqammaṣ dedicates the remaining of chapter eight to a refutation of the Trinity on the basis of two philosophical points related to the terminology of 'essence' (*ǧawhar*) and 'persons' (*aqānīm*) on the one hand, and to the notion of analogy and its boundaries on the other.[11] Before I expose briefly al-Muqammaṣ's treatment of these two aspects, let me point out that he starts his *Kalām* on the Trinity with a worth-pondering positive attention to an understanding of God's identity (or divine who-ness) he agreed upon with Christian *mutakallim*s. Al-Muqammaṣ relates that the Christians and him believe that God is the creator of the world, the one who caused it (*muḥdiṯ*) from nothing, and that God is one essence (*ǧawhar*), not three gods.[12] Yet, al-Muqammaṣ here pauses and declares that the difference between him and the Christians lies exactly in the point of how they understand this world's Creator to be 'the One'. In other words, al-Muqammaṣ suggests that he

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[10] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.44, p. 175.
[11] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.46-60, pp. 177-187.
[12] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.46, p. 177.

and the Christians concur to a considerable extent about who God is as 'the One'. They part ways, nevertheless, in regard to how God exists and lives as 'the One': a disagreement on the issue of the 'how-ness', not necessarily on that of the 'who-ness'.

Al-Muqammaṣ's first disagreement with the Christians' conception of 'how God is the One' lies in the notions and terminology they use to speak about oneness. According to him, the Christians speak about the Trinity by means of the terms 'essence' (*ǧawhar*) and 'persons' (*aqānīm*). They say:

> Huwa wāḥid fī l-ǧawhar wa-huwa ṯalāṯa fī l-aqānīm, wa-hāḏā l-qawl ʿinda l-manṭiq huwa ṯalāṯat ašḫāṣ yaʿummuhā nawʿun wāḥidun, miṯla Saʿīd wa-Yazīd wa-Ḫalaf, allaḏīna taʿummuhum insāniyya wāḥida.
>
> He [i.e. God] is one in essence and He is three hypostases, and this saying according to logic implies three persons pervaded by one nature, like Said, Yazid and Khalaf, who are pervaded by one humanity.[13]

To this claim, al-Muqammaṣ reacts by asking about the conceptual connection between the essence (*ǧawhar*) and the hypostases (*aqānīm*): the essence can either be the sum of the three hypostases, or it is something other than them. If the Christians say that the essence is the hypostases per se (and the Jacobites say so, according to al-Muqammaṣ),[14] this would imply that God is mathematically one (i.e. singular) and never three. Al-Muqammaṣ, thus, opines that we must speak of one *ǧawhar* and one *uqnūm* (hypostasis), rather than three hypostases (*aqānīm*). Otherwise, the oneness of the essence is abolished. So, either we speak of three *aqānīm* and discard the 'one *ǧawhar*' terminology, or we maintain the 'one *ǧawhar*' terminology and give up the 'three *aqānīm*'.

> Ḥaddiṯūnā ʿan ṯalāṯat aqānīm allatī zaʿamtum annahā ǧawharan wāḥidan: hiya ḏalika l-ǧawhar wa-l-wāḥid faqaṭ lā-šayʾa āḫara ġayra, am hiya huwa wa-šayʾ āḫar ġayruhu? Fa-kāna ǧawābuhum annahā huwa wa-laysa šayʾun āḫara ġayra, fa-alzamnāhum annahā kānat hiya huwa wa-laysa šayʾan aḫara ġayra, aḥḥada amrayn: immā ibṭāl kawnahā ǧawhar wāḥid, in kāna ṯalāṯat aqānīm, aw ibṭāl kawnahā ṯalāṯat aqānim in kānat ǧawhar wāḥid.
>
> Tell us about 'three hypostases', which you claimed that it is 'one essence': is it this essence only and nothing else other than it, or is it it and something else other than it? Their answer was: it is it and not something else other than it. [Now] if it was it and not something else other than it, we imposed on them one of two orders: either revoking its being one essence, if it was three hypostases, or revoking its being three hypostases, if it was one essence.[15]

On the other hand, al-Muqammaṣ relates, some Christians (the Melkites, according to him) tend to give a different answer, suggesting that the 'three hypostases' are not the 'one essence' in itself.[16] To this idea, al-Muqammaṣ responds with a counter-question: if the three are other than the one (not it as it is), what then are the three hypostases? Are they essences (*ǧawāhir*) or accidents/attributes (*aʿrāḍ*), or are they neither? If they are accidents, and if they say they are the essence in itself, they then made God Himself an accident (*ʿaraḍ*). If, on the other hand, they said 'they are essences', they ended up making in God essences that are equal in number to what they call *aqānīm* (hypostases), which means God is not one because God is no longer 'one essence' (*ǧawhar wāḥid*).[17]

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[13] *Ibid.*.
[14] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.47, p. 177.
[15] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.49, pp. 179-81. See also 8.48, p. 179.
[16] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.55, p. 185.
[17] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.55, p. 185.

Finally, some Christians, al-Muqammaṣ states, explain that they understand the name 'the One' to mean 'no one is peer or similar to Him': God is the uncaused Cause (ʿilla ġayr maʿlūla wa-sabab ġayr musabbab). Others say that God is neither 'essence' nor 'accident', for everything else other than Him is either essence or accident; for them, God is called 'the One' to mean this and nothing else. These Christians, al-Muqammaṣ maintains, are not his counterparts because they just echo what he personally says about 'the One'.[18]

With his abolition of the Trinitarian terminology and its notional implications, al-Muqammaṣ interweaves a parallel refutation to the Christians' use of the analogical methodology (qiyās). He pauses in particular at the Christians' use of the analogy of 'three golden coins' to explain the relation between the notions of 'three aqānīm' and 'one ǧawhar'. According to al-Muqammaṣ, this is how the Christians use such analogy to vouch for the plausibility of 'one-in-three' logic.

> Min qibali anna qad naǧid ṯalāṯat danānīr ḏahabun wāḥid lā šayʾa ġayra; taʿnī innahā laysat fiḍḍa wa-lā ḏahab wa-lā nuḥās ġayr al-ḏahab. Wa-hiya ṯālāṯat al-danānīr, wa-huwa wāḥid, wa-tilka l-ṯalāṯa huwa ḏālika l-wāḥid. Wa-kaḏālika naqūlu ṯalāṯat al-danānīr hiya awsiyya wāḥida lā ġayrahā. Naʿnī innahum lā ǧamādiyya lā fardiyya wa-lā ġayra ḏālika siwā l-awsiyya.

> In regard to our finding of the three coins to be one gold and nothing other than it, what we mean is that [the coins] are not silver and [they are] neither gold nor copper other than [their] gold. And, they are three coins and it [i.e. the gold] is one, and these three are this one. We similarly say that these three coins are one awsiyya (transliteration of ousia) and nothing other than [this ousia], meaning [by this] that they are neither inanimate nor individual nor anything else except the awsiyya.[19]

To this, al-Muqammaṣ replies by suggesting that the Christians' explanation of their analogy responds to a question other than the one they were expected to address. No one, he argues, is actually asking the Christians whether or not they speak of three coins that have three different natures other than gold.[20] The question, instead, is whether the coins are only and exclusively the gold, or they are both the gold and something else beside it. If the Christians discern this logical implications of this analogy, al-Muqammaṣ suggests, they will realize that it does not serve well their purpose. For, if they said that the coins are nothing other than their golden nature, they are no more speaking about 'coins': coins are not just their essence (the gold they are made of), but also their inscription (naqš) and their stamp (ḫatm). Without the inscription and stamp, coins are not 'danānīr' (coins), even though they are indeed gold.[21] Hence, coins are not just their essence (ǧawhar). They also are their accidents (aʿrāḍ). But the Christians, like al-Muqammaṣ himself, as the latter already conceded, do not allow the existence of accidents in the one God: accidents are attributes of created or caused things, not of the creating uncaused cause. Their presumed existence in the uncaused cause would negate its definitional oneness. Be that as it may, the analogy of 'three coins-one gold' is inconvenient to explain what the Christians want to say in their belief that God is 'one essence', though He is 'three hypostases'. This analogy will entail that there are in God things other than the essence (i.e. the persons), as

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[18] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.59-60, p. 187.

[19] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.48, p. 179)

[20] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.48, p. 179; 8.50, p. 181: *Inna qad ʿalimnā anna al-ṯalāṯat danānīr, allatī hiya ḏahab laysa siwā l-ḏahab min al-ǧawāhir, lā fiḍḍa wa-lā ḏahab wa-lā nuḥās wa-lā raṣāṣ* ("We understood that the three coins, which are gold and nothing but gold among gems, is neither silver, copper nor lead").

[21] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.50, p. 181.

in the three coins there are things other than the *ousia* of gold (i.e. the inscription and stamp).[22] Al-Muqammaṣ's conclusion is that

> Fa-in bāna min maqāyyisihim allatī ataw bihā anna l-ṯalāṯat aqānīm in kanāt hiya al-ǧawhar al-wāḥid lā ġayra ǧawhar wa-lā ʿaraḍ, fa-qad baṭula immā l-ǧawhar al-wāḥid wa-ṯabata al-ṯalāṯat aqānīm, wa-immā an yakūn qad baṭalat al-ṯalāṯat aqānīm wa-ṯabata l-ǧawhar al-wāḥid. Wa-in kāna ḏālika min qawlihim fāsid, fa-laysa li-qawlihim, in qālū inna al-ṯalāṯat aqānīm hiya ḏālika l-ǧawhar al-wāḥid lā ġayrahu ǧawhar wa-lā ʿaraḍ maʿnā.

> If it appeared from the analogies they brought about that the three hypostases are the one essence per se, neither as an essence other than the *ǧawhar* nor as accident, this entails either that the one *ǧawhar* is abolished and the three hypostases are proved, or the three hypostases are abolished and the one *ǧawhar* is proved. And, if this saying of theirs was an error, then there is no meaning to their words if they said that the three hypostases are this very one essence and neither an essence other than it nor an accident.[23]

Al-Muqammaṣ' refutation of the Trinity in Chapter Eight is not the only reflection on the Trinity one can find in his *Twenty Chapters*. He tackles other aspects from the discourse on the Trinity in Chapter Ten as well. His attention to the Trinity there comes within the framework of his discussion of how does God exist as 'the One' and how God's life manifests His simple oneness. This treatment is to be traced back to his discussion earlier, in Chapter Nine. There, al-Muqammaṣ relates that if God is 'one' in terms of simplicity, there is no state of differentiation or duality within God's being. And indeed, being 'the One', God is the First who has no beginning and the Last who has no *telos*, the uncaused Cause.[24] Al-Muqammaṣ here relates God's being to His attributes, viewing the latter as expressions of God's oneness. If the attributes name God's oneness (in the sense of single-ness), they must then pertain to God's simplicity, and not imply numerical status in the divine essence. So, when we say, for instance, that God is a living Being (*ḥayy*), we do not mean that God and His state of living (*ḥayāt*) are two things (duality) differentiated within God's being: God is a living being, He is not 'living by a life' (*ḥayyun bi-ḥayāt*). The second option implies that 'life' is something independent other than God, a second reality beside God, and that God exists by it.[25] For al-Muqammaṣ, claiming that God lives by means of 'life' entails that God contains a duality within Himself. This means that God is composite, for "whatever lives by means of something other than itself is a composite, *kullu šayʾin yaḥyā bi-ġayrihi fa-huwa murakkab*".[26] Against this, and in order to defend a strict mathematical oneness, al-Muqammaṣ suggests that God does not live by 'life', rather God is His own state of living.

It is in connection to the discussion of Chapter Nine, that al-Muqammaṣ touches upon the doctrine of the Trinity again in Chapter Ten. According to him, the Christians are the ones who believe that God lives by a life; that is God and his state of living are distinct like two things. The Christians do this, he opines, when in their Trinitarian discourse they say that God lives by a life

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[22] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.51, p. 181.

[23] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.52, p. 181.

[24] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.2, p. 19): *bal naqūlu annahu wāḥidun fī l-basāṭa, ayy annahu lā iḫtilāf fī ḏātihi wa-annahu fī ḏātihi lā ṯāniya lahu, wa-tafsīr ḏālika annahu al-awwal allaḏī lā ibtidāʾa lahu, wa-l-āḫir allaḏī lā ġāyat lahu wa-annahu al-ʿilla al-ġayr maʿlūla wa-l-sabab al-ġayr musabbab*.

[25] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.7-8, p. 195.

[26] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.15, p. 203.

called 'Holy Spirit' (*rūḥ al-qudus*), and that God knows by a knowledge called 'the Word' (*al-kalima*) or 'the Son' (*al-Ibn*).

> Fa-in zaʿama anna ḥayātahu ġayrahi, fa-qad yalzamuhu anna Allāh tabāraka lam yazal wa-ġayrahu, wa-ḏālika qawl al-Naṣāra fi iṯbāt al-taṯlīṯ iḏ ǧaʿalū Allāh ḥayyun bi-ḥayāt hiya Rūḥ al-Qudus wa-ʿālimun bi-ʿilmin huwa al-Kalima wa-huwa alladī sammūhu al-Ibn, wa-haḏā huwa al-širk al-ṣarīḥ.

> So, if he claims that [God's] life is other than Him, he is compelled [to say] that God, be blessed, co-eternally exists with another, and this is the Christians' saying to verify the triad-ness, for they made God a living being by means of a life that is the Holy Spirit and [made Him] knower by means of a knowledge that is the Word, who is the one they named the Son, and this is frank polytheism.[27]

Against this, al-Muqammaṣ emphasizes that God is a living (but also knowing) being by means of His very own self or in Himself, and not by means of a life that is other than Himself.[28] After stressing this, he insists again that it is Christianity, in its Trinitarian logic, that disallows us to say that God is a living Being, or a knowing Being, without associating Him with a 'life' and a 'knowledge' other than Himself.[29] To this, al-Muqammaṣ responds in Chapter Nine that if the Christians accept that apophatic language is appropriate to speak analogically about God, and if they concede that saying 'God is living' implies that 'God is not dead', they should then evenly approve the apophatic explanation of 'God is living' to be 'God is not living by means of a life other than Himself' or also that 'God is not knowing by means of a knowledge other than Himself'. This apophatic analogical logic must be accepted by them, and if it was embraced by them, this would prevent them from saying that 'God lives by means of a life called Holy Spirit' or that 'God knows by means of a knowledge called the Word/Son'.[30]

What are the ultimate logical consequences of the previous understanding of God for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity? According to al-Muqammaṣ, the Christians must seriously reconsider the plausibility of speaking about God's 'how-ness' in Trinitarian terms, not just question the expression in triadic way of God's 'who-ness': not only for God's being per se, but also for God's modes of existence, the Trinity is logically and ontologically irrelevant and inappropriate.

In Chapter Ten, al-Muqammaṣ demonstrates how the Trinitarian expression of God's 'how-ness' (*kayfiyya*) is totally implausible. He relates that the Christians claim that God's 'how-ness' lies in the birthing of the Son and the bringing forth of the Spirit

> Wa-qad ḫālafnā fī iṭlāq al-kayfiyya ʿaliyhi al-Naṣārā wa-l-mušābiha min ahl kull al-milal. Fa-ammā al-Naṣārā fa-zaʿamū anna kayfiyyatahu anna al-Ibn wūlida wal-Rūḥ taḫarraǧa, haḏihi ʿindahum.

> And we disagreed with the Christians concerning the application of 'how-ness' to [God] and with the anthropomorphists from all religious sects. The Christians claim that [God's] how-ness lies in the birthing of the Son and the bringing forth of the Spirit; thus it is for them.[31]

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[27] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.11, pp. 200-1.
[28] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.14, p. 203; 9.17, p. 207.
[29] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.21, p. 211: *Wa-ammā al-Naṣrāniyya fa-lā tuǧīzu lanā an yakūn Allāh ḥayyun bi-lā ḥayāt ʿālimun bi-lā ʿilm, aʿnī annahu ḥayyun bi-nafsihi ʿālimun bi-nafsihi lā bi-ġayri ḏālika* ("And it is Christianity who forbids us to say that God to be living without a life and knowing without a knowledge; I mean that He is living by Himself and knowing by Himself and nothing else").
[30] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.25-26, p. 215.
[31] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 10.3, p. 225.

To this, al-Muqammaṣ responds by pointing to the limits of the analogical language and the Christians' consistency in paying attention to it. He says that the Christians claim that the Son is eternally born from the Father, without 'before' and 'after' and without 'beginning' (*bidāya*) or 'end' (*nihāya*): *lam yazal mawlūd min al-Ab* (…) *wa-lā yazāl mawlūd minhu* ("He has eternally born from the Father […] and is eternally born from Him"). At the same time, the Christians refuse to concede any movement or local change related to God's existence (*mutaḥarrik bi-ḥarakat intiqāl*) because, for them, movement and local change designate the existence of bodies (*aǧsām*), and God is not a body. In this, al-Muqammaṣ sees contradiction and inconsistency in using analogy: the action of birthing is also typical of bodies, and it should not be used to speak about God's existence, since 'movement', which is characteristic of bodies, is inapplicable to the non-bodily being of God. Either one applies a bodily feature to God analogically, thus conceding that God (like bodies) is moving and changing as birth-making, or one sticks to God's non-corporeal nature and abstains from the analogy of birthing, just as one already abstained from the analogy of movement.

To this response, according to al-Muqammaṣ, the Christians react by claiming that the Son is begotten or birthed from the Father as the word is birthed in the soul and as the sunlight is birthed from the sun or the fruit is birthed from the tree: *inna al-ibn mawlūd min al-Ab ka-tawallūd al-kalima min al-nafs wa-ka-tawallud nūr al-šams min al-šams wa-ka-tawallud al-ṯamara min al-šaǧara*.[32] To this, al-Muqammaṣ attends from the viewpoint of the relation of the accidents (*aʿrāḍ*) to the essence (*ǧawhar*). In his opinion, the word is related to the soul wherein it is born as an accident is related to an essence. It manifests, that is, an additional thing related to the essence, as something that is different from it. While this applies to 'word' and 'soul' in human situation, al-Muqammaṣ suggests, it does not apply analogically to God. For, when the Christians use this analogy to speak about God, they suggest that the Son to the Father is like an accident to an essence. The Trinity for them, al-Muqammaṣ concludes, consists in three accidents related to God's *ousia*. 'Birthing' here over-projects the relation of accident to essence on God Himself. This is a mistaken implementation of the analogy, concludes al-Muqammaṣ, because assuming a co-existence of accidents and essence in God makes God's oneness and simplicity redundant. Such redundancy is not going to be solved by making the Son an essence (*ǧawhar*) like the Father who gave birth to Him, for this will mean that there are many essences in God; thus we have two originators rather than one. This is absurd (*bāṭil*), al-Muqammaṣ retorts.[33] The Christians' analogical description of God's existence in terms of a Father giving birth to a Son is absurd, no matter from what perspective one approaches it.

> Fa-l-nanẓur hal yaṣluḥ lahum mā bihi qāsū wa-ʿaliyhi banū. naqūl: in zaʿama anna al-Ibn al-mutawallid min al-Ab ǧawhar, kamā anna al-Ab ǧawhar, baṭula fī qiyāsihi bi-mā laysa huwa ǧawhar, aʿnī bi-l-kalima fī l-nafs allatī lam yazʿum aḥad annahā ǧawhar. wa-in qāla inna al-Ibn ʿaraḍ lam yazal huwa aṣluh fī annahu uqnūm wa-inna al-ǧawhar yaʿummuhu, lazimahu iḏā kāna al-Ibn ʿaraḍ ann yakūn al-Ab ʿaraḍ, li-annahu fī qiyās al-ʿaql al-Ibnu miṯlu Abihi.

> So, let us ponder if what they used as analogy and built upon is adequate for them. We say: if he [i.e. the Christian] claims that the Son who is birthed from the Father is 'essence', as the Father is 'essence', his analogy [which he uses to speak] about it by means of what is not an essence will be absurd – I mean [by means of speaking about] the word in the soul, which no one claimed to be an essence. And, if he said that the Son is an accident, which is always the origin of [the Son's] being a hypostasis, and that the

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[32]   Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 10.5, p. 227.
[33]   Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 10.7-10, p. 229.

essence includes it, this compels [the Christian], if the Son is accident, to make the Father an accident [too], for in the analogy of reason, the Son is like His Father.[34]

Be that as it may, al-Muqammaṣ concludes, the Christians are mistaken in speaking analogically about the 'Father-Son' relation in terms of 'birthing-birthed'. If their Trinitarian faith entails to say that the Father and the Son (and for that matter the Spirit) are co-eternal, they should then formulate their claim in a language which does not imply that the Son was not eternally with the Father, as if the Father was not 'Father' at one point of His existence. The 'Birthing-birthed' analogy obscures the fact that 'God is eternally the Father of the Son and He is His Father from eternity to eternity".[35]

III. Which Christian Trinitarian Kalām?

When one reads al-Muqammaṣ's chapters, especially those on the Trinity, and considers his treatment of the claims of Christian *mutakallim*s about it, one cannot but inquire who are these Christians whom al-Muqammaṣ refers to, and which *mutakallim*s' discourses on the Trinity he could be familiar with and implicitly criticizing. There are hints in al-Muqammaṣ's writ that can pave the way for answering this question. In Chapter Eight, he invokes claims on the Trinity which he deems to be expressive of the *Kalām* of the Jacobites (monophysites/*al-Yaʿqūbiyya*) and others of the Melkites (Chalcedonians/*al-Malakiyya*).[36] Al-Muqammaṣ does not mention names of individual *mutakallim*s from these two Christian groups. Yet, given that he lived in the 9th century, and considering what we know of the Christian *Kalām* of the time, one can wonder if the Jacobites and the Melkites meant here are *mutakallim*s like Theodore Abū Qurra (a Melkite) and Nonnus of Nisibis and Ḥabīb b. Ḫidma Abū Rāʾiṭa at-Takrītī (two Jacobites). In the ensuing sections, I am going to explore this possibility by highlighting some common elements from these three *mutakallim*s' discourses on the Trinity, which al-Muqammaṣ could have been familiar with.

III.1. A Melkite Kalām?

I begin with the Melkite *Kalām* because al-Muqammaṣ seems to be less engaged with it in comparison with that of the Jacobites. In the *Twenty Chapters*, he refers to the Melkite Christians by name when he says:

> Fa-in qālū inna al-ṯalaṯ aqānim ġayr al-ǧawhar al-wāḥid al-ʿām lahā, wa-ḏālika qawl al-Malakiyya, yuqālu lahum…
>
> So, if they say that the three hypostases (aqānim) are other than one essence (*ǧawhar*) which pervades them, and this is the kalām of the Melkites, then the reply to them is (…).[37]

Who among the Melkite *mutakallim*s of the 9th century says that the essence is other than the three hypostases? The first candidate is the famous Melkite-Chalcedonian *mutakallim*, *faylasūf* and *nāqil-mufassir* of the early 9th century, Theodore Abū Qurra. He was a Christian *mutakallim* well known to Muslims during the early Abbasid era, and his *Kalām* treatises, written in Arabic,

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[34] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 10.13-14, p. 231.
[35] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 10.18, p. 235: *Allāh lā yazal wālid al-ibn wa-lā yazal wālid lahu.*
[36] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.47, p. 177; 8.55, p. 185.
[37] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.55, p. 185.

were read and seriously discussed as well. Even more significant is that we have historiographical reports of a *muǧādala* (debate) between the person who was probably al-Muqammaṣ's teacher and who converted him to Christianity, Nonnus of Nisibis, and Abū Qurra. The debate occurred at the Armenian royal court. It is quite possible that al-Muqammaṣ heard about it (or about something very similar) from Nonnus, and that he built therefrom a notion of the Melkites' doctrine on the Trinity.

The question remains, nevertheless, if the Melkites really distinguished the essence from the three hypostases in their Trinitarian theology, and if they did, where in their *Kalām* texts of the 9th century one can read this claim. When one reads the Arabic extant *Kalām* treatises authored by Abū Qurra – texts that are extant, and were influential and popular – one finds a totally different approach to the relation between the one essence and the three hypostases. If one reads his Orthodox confession of faith, one never finds there any suggestion that the one essence is other than the three hypostases.[38] On the other hand, in his Arabic *Maymar on the Trinity*,[39] Abū Qurra refuses the existence of any otherness in the Godhead between the hypostases, or between the latter and the essence. He claims that there is no division or any logical sense of 'otherness' between the fire and its heat, so that, even when we say 'the fire burned me' or 'the heat of the fire burned me', we are not talking about two separate things that are connected in any sense of otherness to each other. The fire is its heat, for it does not burn except by its heat. The same logic, Abū Qurra concludes, analogically applies to the Trinity.

> Wa-lā narā anna al-ḥarāra (…) ašadd ittiṣālan bi-l-nār min al-Ibn al-Ab wa-in kāna kullu wāḥid minhumā uqnūman, li-anna al-ṭabī̔a al-ilāhiyya lā taqbalu tarkīban kamā taqbaluhu al-aǧsād. Wa-lā (…) tūǧadu batta al-ġayriyya fī ḏāt uqnūm wāḥidin minhā, bal mawqi̔ al-Ibn min al-Ab huwa ka-mawqi̔ ḥarārat al-nār min al-nār wa-ka-mawqi̔ al-šu̔ā̔ min al-šams wa-l-kalima min al-̔aql (…).

> And we do not opine that the heat (…) is more connected to fire than the Son [is connected] to the Father, even if each one of them was hypostasis, for the divine nature does not accede to composition as bodies accede to it, and (…) otherness never exists within any one hypostasis among them. The position of the Son in relation to the Father, instead, is like the position of the heat of fire in relation to fire and the position of sunray to the sun and of the word in relation to the mind (…).[40]

Abū Qurra proceeds in his *maymar* by insisting that there is no otherness in the divine Godhead because nothing therein is to be deemed 'additional' to any other: the hypostases are not "added as others" to the essence. They together are the one divine Godhead.[41] This is why, Abū Qurra explains, the Church does not say that "the essence" created the world, but that "God 'the Creator' created

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[38] See this *Confession* in Arabic text and French translation in I. Dick, "Deux écrits inédits de Théodore Abuqurra", *Le Muséon* 72 (1959), pp. 53-67. Cf. also A.M. Butts, "Theodoros Abū Qurra" in S.P. Brock - A.M. Butts - G.A. Kiraz - L. Van Rompay (eds.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage With Contributions by seventy-six scholars*, Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute, Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2011, pp. 403-5.

[39] Theodore Abū Qurra, *Maymar yuḥaqqiq annahu lā yalzam al-Naṣārā an yaqūlū Ṯalāṯat Aliha iḏ yaqūlūn al-Ab Ilāh wa-l-Ibn ilāh wa-l-Rūḥ al-Qudus wa-anna al-Ab wa-l-Ibn wa-l-Rūḥ al-Qudus Ilāh wa-law kāna kull wāḥid minhum tāmm ̔alā ḥidatihi* (*Maymar affirming that the Christians are not obliged to say of three gods when they say the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit. And that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are God even if each of them is perfect in Himself*), in *Mayāmir Ṯa̓wudūrus Abī Qurra, usquf Ḥarrān, aqdam ta̓līf ̔Arabī Naṣrānī* (*Treatises of Theodore Abū Qurrah, Bishop of Harran, the Oldest Christian Arabic Text*), ed. C. Bacha, Maṭba̔at al-Fawā̓id, Beirut 1904, pp. 23-47.

[40] Abū Qurra, *Ṯalāṯat Aliha*, p. 39 Bacha.

[41] Abū Qurra, *Ṯalāṯat Aliha*, pp. 40-41 Bacha.

the world'. Also, the Church does not say "the Father, Son and Spirit; they created the world", but "the Father, Son and Spirit, He created the world".[42] The divine essence is not other than the three hypostases, so the divine nature of each one of them includes the other two's automatically: *ṭabīʿat al-Ibn al-ilāhiyya hiya ṭabīʿat al-Ab wa-l-rūḥ* (*The Son's divine nature is the nature of the Father and the Spirit*).[43] Abū Qurra agrees, in fact, with al-Muqammaṣ's emphasis that the divine nature does not concede composition, otherness or addition within it, because the divine essence is absolutely simple.[44]

Reading Abū Qurra's *Maymar on the Trinity* demonstrates that al-Muqammaṣ could not glean from it his conclusion that the Melkites claim that the essence is other than the three hypostases. Is it possible that al-Muqammaṣ had in mind ideas from other *mayāmir*s by Abū Qurra? Well, in his *Maymar* on the *Existence of God and the Right Religion*, Abū Qurra touches briefly upon the Trinity. He speaks there about the Trinitarian doctrine and on God's living and knowing, as well as about that on the Son's 'begetting' and the Spirit's 'proceeding'. He suggests a logical analogy related to human existence and being, deeming it plausible, though imperfect, in relation to the divine Being of God.[45] I did already unpack al-Muqammaṣ's criticism of these two Trinitarian discourses in the previous section: God cannot be said to have a life or to have knowledge other than Himself. This analogy is inappropriate, he argues, to account for the Trinitarian understanding of God.[46] Al-Muqammaṣ is also, as we have seen before, against speaking about God's 'how-ness' in a Trinitarian language like *al-ibn wūlida wa-l-rūḥ taḫruǧu* ("the Son was begotten and the Spirit proceeds").[47]

A probing reading of the elaborations on these two matters in Christian Trinitarian *Kalām*, which al-Muqammaṣ invokes and grapples with in his text, reveals views and a logic that one can find also in Abū Qurra's *Kalām*. So, it might be the case that al-Muqammaṣ read Abū Qurra's *Maymar on the Existence of God and the Right Religion*. He could have found a copy of it in the libraries of either Nonnus of Nisibis, or even Abū Rāʾiṭa, since he probably knew and related to the two antagonists of Abū Qurra. This said, the latter never suggests in this *maymar*, or in any other writing of his, that the divine essence is 'other than' the three hypostases. So, if al-Muqammaṣ is referring to something he read in a Melkite *Kalām* text on the Trinity, such text did not come from the pen of the author who wrote the extant Arabic *Kalām* that we attribute to Theodore Abū Qurra. One can presume here that either al-Muqammaṣ manifests his misunderstanding of the Melkite *Kalām* on the Trinity as we have it – for instance, in Abū Qurra's legacy – or that he is referring to a Melkite Trinitarian text that we do not have today, or again to a Trinitarian doctrine he heard about (personally or in mediation), like one of the claims on the Trinity that some Melkites present when they defend this

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[42] Abū Qurra, *Ṯalāṯat Aliha*, p. 41 Bacha.

[43] Abū Qurra, *Ṯalāṯat Aliha*, p. 43 Bacha.

[44] Abū Qurra, *Ṯalāṯat Aliha*, p. 44 Bacha: *Wa-iʿlam anna al-ṭabīʿa al-ilāhiyya lā taqbal al-tarkīb batta kamā qulnā aw ġayriyya yūǧad lahā aṯar fī uqnūmin wāḥidin minhā, bal hiya mabsūṭa ʿalā ṭaraf al-inbisāṭ wa-maḥḍ ḥaqīqatihi wa-laysa yaqbalu uqnūmun ilāhī an yuḍāfa lahu ayy šayʾin lahu aṯarun minhu* ("And know that the divine nature does not concede composition at all, as we stated, or otherness that has a trace in one of its hypostases. It is, rather, simple according to the truth of absolute simplicity, and no divine hypostasis concedes any additioning of something to it which has no [original] traces within it already").

[45] Theodore Abū Qurra, *Maymar fī wuǧūd al-Ḫāliq wa-l-dīn al-qawīm (Treatise on the Existence of the Creator and the Right Religion)*, ed. I. Dick, Librairie St. Paul, Jounieh - Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Rome 1982, 9.A. 14-19 (pp. 222-3); 9.B.24-35 (pp. 224-7).

[46] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.11-17, pp. 200-7; 9.21-22, p. 211; 25-26, p. 215.

[47] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 10.3-18, pp. 225-35.

doctrine. If the latter is the case, the source of al-Muqammaṣ's knowledge of the Melkite Trinitarian alleged belief that "the essence is other than the three hypostases" remains an open question.[48]

III.2. Jacobite Kalām

The ambiguity in regard of the sources of al-Muqammaṣ's knowledge of the Melkite *Kalām* disappears, and the investigation becomes much easier, in relation to the sources of his knowledge of the Jacobite *Kalām*. It is known that Nonnus of Nisibis was detained in jail during the rule of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil, sometimes around 856 A.D. We know this from a manuscript of a Syriac text that Nonnus wrote while in prison, where he personally testifies to his imprisonment. The relevance of this to our topic is that in the same manuscript we find also an apologetic treatise in Syriac on the Trinity and the Incarnation.[49]

In 1991, Sidney Griffith offered a valuable summary and study of Nonnus's *Kalām* on the Trinity in the treatise mentioned above. Griffith relates that Nonnus wrote this text from the prison, in response to an anonymous inquirer who wanted him to explain "how do Christians show that God

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[48] One of the possible answers could be indirectly suggested by J. Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society and Simple Believers*, Princeton U.P., Princeton - Oxford 2018, who proposes in his recent monograph that an accurate picture of the Christian society in the 8th-9th centuries shows that it consisted predominantly of uneducated, mostly illiterate and evidently 'simple believers', who did not have any sophisticated knowledge of the Christian theology, and who were not versed at all in its pedagogical preciseness. "Perhaps what we have (…) is only a manifestation of the consequences of weak or nonexistent catechesis and poorly trained [believers] (…) rather than reading to find evidence of new/old species dwelling in a doctrinal Jurassic Park populated with creatures from late antiquity heresiographies, it is much easier – though possibly less exciting – to point out that we are dealing with a world of simple believers" (p. 251). To take Tannous's proposal into consideration, one can suggest that al-Muqammaṣ's knowledge of the Chalcedonian-Melkite theological claims might be derived from such 'simple' Chalcedonian-Melkite believers, who are not versed in Melkite *Kalām* enough to convey its claims in any theologically reliable preciseness. But, if this is the case, why is this not seemingly the case with al-Muqammaṣ's account of the Jacobite *Kalām*? The latter seems to be more accurate than his account of the Melkite one. Why would he rely on public simple believers' ideas in the case of Melkite *Kalām* only, and not do the same in relation to the Jacobite one? One can say here that either there were Melkite *mutakallim*s who did say that "the three hypostases (*aqānīm*) are other than one essence (*ǧawhar*)" – but their writings are not extant today – or al-Muqammaṣ was biased toward the Jacobite *Kalām* and followed its authors' in degrading and undermining the Melkite-Chalcedonian theology. While he will attack the latter by means of recalling ideas, allegedly from their *Kalām*, which he derives from the public slogans and "untuned Christian belief" of the simple, public followers of the Melkite Christianity, he will avoid this when presenting the theological doctrines of the Jacobites, to whose belief-system he personally belonged one day and which he studied under its *mutakallim*s, like Nonnus and Abū Rāʾiṭa. In my conversations with Sarah Stroumsa on this matter, she shared with me yet another worth pondering explanation. Stroumsa first ackowledges that Tannous's study is very important. Yet, she also maintains that whoever al-Muqammaṣ's teachers were, it is clear that he did not get his Christian education from the mass of uneducated Christians in the street, or from occasional simple Christian neighbors, but rather during systematic prolonged studies in a centre of learning, in Nisibis and perhaps also elsewhere. Alternatively, Stroumsa thinks of another possibility, even more likely: al-Muqammaṣ had much more knowledge of Christian theology than most non-Christians. But, as the *mutakallim*s often do, he sometimes knowingly distorts the position of his opponent in order to attack it more easily (this is much more blunt in his other polemical work). By the same token, it is possible that the distortion was done already by his Jacobite teachers, and that he took it from them. Therefore, in order to identify his sources we do not need necessarily to find an accurate quotation or fair rendering.

[49] See the extensive study of this work, accompanied by Latin translation, by A. Van Roey, *Nonnus de Nisibis, Traité apologétique. Étude, texte et traduction*, Bibliothèque du Muséon, Louvain 1948, p. 21. Cf. also M.P. Penn, "Nonos of Nisibis", in Brock -Butts -Kiraz -Van Rompay (eds.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (above, n. 38), p. 313.

is one; [and] how do they show that the one God is also three".[50] Nonnus dedicates the rest of his treatise to respond to the first inquiry on God's oneness in the Christian faith. To be more precise, he takes the Christian belief in God's oneness, Griffith states, as "a premise to which he will return as the treatise progresses. The premise is one which all the participants in the Muslim/Christian dialogue can immediately accept", namely that "the notion of many gods is really therefore an impossible one because it could not fulfill the agreed definition of God".[51]

From this brief affirmation of oneness, Griffith proceeds, Nonnus elaborates on how this one God (*ḥad Allōhô*) is three *qnōmê* (hypostases). Nonnus explains this by stating that the three *qnōmê* are equal in *ousia* (Nonnus transliterates the Greek term into Syriac letters without translating it) and they refer to God Himself as 'triple substance' (*thlîthô'îth mqayyam*).[52] At one point, Nonnus states the Trinitarian faith in these terms:

> The fact that [God] is also one in number is established for us. Just as Peter, of and for himself, is one man, and he together with Paul and John and all the rest are one man altogether, first by the *qnōmô*, then by the nature (*kyōnô*), so each one of the holy *qnōmê* is God and Lord, and ousia (...) a perfect Trinity of three perfect ones.[53]

Noticeable here is Nonnus's use of the analogy of three men with three different characters designated by names (Peter, Paul, and John) and one nature (humanity), an analogy attested in numerous Christian *Kalām* discourses from the 9th century and earlier. Noticeable also is Nonnus's use of the Greek term *ousia* in Syriac transliteration to speak about the divine essence and of the Syriac term *kyanê* to speak about the human nature of 'Peter, Paul, and John', but not about God's essence. The same analogy and transliteration strategy are also detected in al-Muqammaṣ's refutation of the Trinity. As I showed earlier, al-Muqammaṣ states that the Christians use the analogy of three hypostases with one nature with the same human nature of *Saʿīd wa-Yazīd wa-Ḥalaf* to explain how God is *ǧawhar wāḥid*, *ṯalāṯat aqānīm* (one essence, three hypostases).[54] The only difference lies in al-Muqammaṣ's use of three Arabic names instead of Nonnus's three Greek names. On the other hand, al-Muqammaṣ seems to be following Nonnus's transliteration of *ousia*, except that while Nonnus transliterates it in Syriac, al-Muqammaṣ transliterates it in Arabic: أوسيّة/*ūsiyya*.[55] Otherwise, nevertheless, one finds no serious reliance on Nonnus's treatise on the Trinity in al-Muqammaṣ's account of the Christian *Kalām* on the Trinity.

In her introduction to the *Twenty Chapters*, Sarah Stroumsa refers to al-Qirqisānī's saying that 'Nāna' was the Christian *mutakallim* who was personally responsible of converting al-Muqammaṣ to Christianity, and accepts as plausible George Vajda's identification of 'Nāna' with Nonnus of Nisibis.[56] Such a relation suggests that al-Muqammaṣ was intimately knowledgeable of the theological mind of his master/convertor. One might imagine finding elements from Nonnus's Trinitarian thought in his apologetic treatise on the Trinity. This is far from being exactly the case, because al-Muqammaṣ

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[50] S. Griffith, "The Apologetic Treatise of Nonnus of Nisibis", *ARAM Periodical* 3 (1991), pp. 115-38, in part. pp. 118-9 (repr. in Id., *The Beginning of Christian Theology in Arabic. Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period*, Ashgate - Variorum, Aldershot, UK/ Burlington, USA 2002, IV, same pagination).

[51] Griffith, "The Apologetic Treatise of Nonnus of Nisibis," p. 121.

[52] Griffith, "The Apologetic Treatise of Nonnus of Nisibis," p. 122.

[53] Griffith, "The Apologetic Treatise of Nonnus of Nisibis", p. 123.

[54] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.46, p. 177.

[55] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.48, p. 179; 8.51, p. 181.

[56] Stroumsa, "Introduction", in *Twenty Chapters*, pp. XV-XVI.

seems to be arguing against the Trinitarian claims in a version that is not found in the treatise on the Trinity and Incarnation that Nonnus wrote from prison. The explanation of this can be either one of these three possibilities, or even all of them simultaneously: 1) al-Muqammaṣ did not want to expose the rational weakness of the theology of the *mutakallim* who once was his own teacher and theological 'hero'. He, rather, uses Nonnus's Trinitarian terms upon confidence in the reliability of his ex-teacher's choices (e.g. in transliterating *ousia*). 2) al-Muqammaṣ does not think that Nonnus's explanation of the Trinity in his prison-treatise is wrong or implausible. He, rather, deems it rationally tenable, and he is not referring to it because it will challenge his own criticism of the Christian *Kalām* on the Trinity. This will not serve well the purpose of arguing against the Trinity. If so, this would imply that al-Muqammaṣ is controverting with selective theological teachings from the *kalām* on the Trinity, and not with the Trinity in all its interpretations. Finally, 3) al-Muqammaṣ could have relied on his recollection of Trinitarian claims he could have heard from Nonnus, when he was orally explaining it to him at the time when they were in touch. He, then, does not mention Nonnus by name, nor he says that he reads it in any Monophysite text because he relies fully on memory.

The first two possibilities stand on the personal relation of al-Muqammaṣ to Nonnus and his rather protective stance towards the Trinitarian *Kalām* of his former teacher. There is in the *Twenty Chapters* a hint at al-Muqammaṣ's readiness to expose any Christian Trinitarian *Kalām* he is familiar with and to frankly refute some aspects in it. In Chapter Nine, point 11, al-Muqammaṣ points to the Christians, relating that they make God know by means of a knowing that is called "the Word/ Son". As I showed earlier, al-Muqammaṣ criticizes this Trinitarian relation between the Father and the Son and its account by means of the analogy of a mind acquiring knowledge through its 'word'.[57] One of the Christians whom al-Muqammaṣ could have in mind as to be saying this could be Nonnus of Nisibis. In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Nonnus explains John 1:1 using the analogy of the 'mind' and the 'word', relating thereby the following:

> Just as our speech is born from the mind and becomes perceptible to hearing through the word, and our listeners remain inseparable and indivisible in the mind (...) [and] just as we know the mind through a word, and we indicate the desires of the mind through a word, in a similar way we recognize the Father and His wishes through the Son. You heard the Word, recognize also the mind of the Word. You saw the Son; recognize also the majesty of the Father testified by the Lord.[58]

In the *Twenty Chapters*, al-Muqammaṣ may well be echoing the teaching of Nonnus as reflected in this commentary: it is a fair guess that al-Muqammaṣ was familiar with Nonnus's commentary on the Gospel of John.[59] More intriguingly still, al-Muqammaṣ's refutation of such analogical understanding of God/Father-Word/Son relation in terms of 'mind-word' demonstrates his determination to reject the doctrine of the Trinity in all its diverse expressions in the Christian *Kalām*, including that of a Christian *mutakallim* like Nonnus of Nisibis. We have in al-Muqammaṣ's *Twenty Chapters* an

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[57] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.11-18, pp. 201-7.

[58] See the translation from Armenian of Nonnus's commentary (that was probably written originally in Arabic) in R.W. Thomson, *Nonnus of Nisibis, Commentary on the Gospel of John: Translation of the Armenian Text with Introduction and Commentary*, SBL Press, Atlanta 2014, I.1.1a, p. 10. See also D.D. Bundy, "The Commentary of Nonnus of Nisibis on the Prologue of John", in S.Kh. Samir (ed.), *Actes du Premier Congrès International d'Études Arabes Chrétiennes*, Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, Roma 1982 (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 218), pp. 123-33.

[59] Thus Bundy, "The Commentary of Nonnus of Nisibis", p. 124. Bundy relies in this on the opinion of the editor of the Armenian version of this commentary: Kh.H. Črakhean, *Commentary on the Gospel of John by Nonnus, Vardapet of Syria*, Treasure of Armenian Literature, Ancient and Modern, Venezia 1920, p. 6.

author who seems to have broken with the Christian faith, and is going to expose the falsehood of its *Kalām* as comprehensively and inclusively as he can: no Christian *mutakallim* is exempted from this.

The other Jacobite *mutakallim* al-Muqammaṣ could have also been familiar with is Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾiṭa al-Takrītī. One can presume such familiarity with this latter's Trinitarian *Kalām* on the basis of the relationship of Abū Rāʾiṭa to the Christian '*melpōnō*' and archdeacon, Nonnus of Nisibis, who was his nephew. It is also believed that Abū Rāʾiṭa was in his turn '*melpōnō*' or '*vardapet*' ('*didaskolos*'), like Nonnus. This could mean that the uncle, like his nephew, was responsible of teaching the Christian faith to the new converts and to be a missionary who proselytized people to Christianity.[60] Be that as it may, it is not unlikely that al-Muqammaṣ either read Abū Rāʾiṭa's *Kalām* personally, or was exposed to it by Nonnus, who used the *Kalām* of his uncle, the *vardapet*/*melpōnō*, to educate the new convert about the Christian faith.

One of the characteristics of the *Kalām* style we find in al-Muqammaṣ's chapters is his use of a 'thesis-antithesis' expression: *in qāla qāʾil* (...) *fa-naqūlu/qulnā* (if a speaker said [...] we then say/we say). This style of *Kalām* was already common in 9th-10th centuries as a style of theological communication that crossed the religious boundaries. One of the Christian *Kalām* texts that features the same 'thesis-antithesis' style is Abū Rāʾiṭa's *Risāla* (*Epistle*) *On the Verification of the Religion of Christianity and the Verification of the Holy Trinity*. Here Abū Rāʾiṭa uses the 'thesis-antithesis' style of argument to defend the Christians' analogical language of the Trinity.[61]

Another arguing strategy one can also find common between Abū Rāʾiṭa's *Verification of the Holy Trinity* and al-Muqammaṣ's *Kalām* against the Trinity in the *Twenty Chapters* is their careful attention to, and appraisal of, the Trinitarian analogical stance on the Christians' reliance on analogy (*qiyās*) to defend the belief in the logical tenability of the Trinity as a valid expression of God's nature (howness) as One Being. He mainly argues that an analogical application of the modes of existence of the human creatures to God's oneness is inaccurate and risky, because it imposes on the essence of the One God, that is simple, predicates that are only applicable to composite, accidental, and contingent beings. It is my conviction that al-Muqammaṣ opts for developing such a criticism because he is implicitly responding to what he knows to be a pro-Trinitarian analogy like the one made by Abū Rāʾiṭa.

In his *Verification of the Holy Trinity*, Abū Rāʾiṭa defends the use of analogy as an appropriate means for grasping the Trinity.[62] He starts his argument by dividing the antagonists of the Trinitarian doctrine into two groups: 1) those who do not know anything of the Jacobite's thought on faith: *lam yaʿrif maḏhaba qawlinā wa-ġaraḍa niḥlatinā*. 2) those who have un-attentive and far from precise knowledge of his own faith: *awḍaḥū bi-l-farq bi-ʿilmin wa-maʿrifatin min-ġayri iktirāṭ wa-lā ḥaraǧ*.[63] Then, Abū Rāʾiṭa proceeds by saying that the Christians use analogy very carefully, without forgetting that no single analogical expression derived either from spiritual or bodiliy entities (*arwāḥ wa-aǧsām*) can sufficiently apply to the reality of the unique reality standing above every analogical perception, God: *inna al-mutalammas lahu qiyāsan yaʿlū alā kull miqyāsin mawǧūdin min al-maʿqūl wa-l-maḥsūs* ("the one for whom we seek analogy is above every existing analogy from the

[60] S. Toenis Keating, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period: the Christian Apologies of Abū Rāʾiṭah*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2006 (History of Christian-Muslim Relations, 4), pp. 35-48. On the title '*vardapet*' see R.W. Thomson, "*Vardapet* in the Early Armenian Church", *Le Muséon* 75 (1962), pp. 367-82; on '*melpōnō*' see R. Payne Smith *et al.* (eds.), *Thesaurus Syriacus. Tomus I*, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim - New York 1981, p. 214.

[61] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *Risāla fī Iṯbāt dīn al-Naṣrāniyya wa-iṯbāt al-Ṯālūṯ al-muqaddas (Epistle on the Verification of the Religion of Christianity and the Verification of the Holy Trinity)*, in Toenis Keating, *Defending 'The People of the Truth' in the Early Islamic Period*, pp. 83-144.

[62] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *Risāla fī Iṯbāt dīn al-Naṣrāniyya*, 16-25, pp. 102-16 Toenis Keating.

[63] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *Risāla fī Iṯbāt dīn al-Naṣrāniyya*, 16, p. 102 Toenis Keating.

intelligible and the perceptible").[64] Thus, Abū Rāʾiṭa concludes, one can still speak analogically about God by using numerous metaphors that connote different meanings and aspects from the realm of the intelligible and perceptible, and apply them simultaneously to the realm of the divine. None of these metaphors would be fully applicable to the transcendent (*al-mutaʿālī*) alone or be exhaustively expressive of the divine Being of God. However, a careful combination of more than one analogy, without forgetting their limitation, can convey some persuasive analogy (*qiyās muqniʿ*) about God. This logic makes Abū Rāʾiṭa state that the analogies of "three lamps shinning forth one light" and "men with different names and one human essence" offer together a persuasive analogy to God's oneness in some of their aspects and to God's Trinity in other aspects.[65]

Such use of analogy, like Abū Rāʾiṭa's, is what al-Muqammaṣ is pointing to in his attack on the doctrine of the Trinity, not only in his *Twenty Chapters*, but also in another book of his he alludes to in Chapter Eight.[66] This is why al-Muqammaṣ endeavors to demonstrate the inaccuracy of explaining the Trinity by applying the analogy of "men with different names and one humanity" and the analogy "the sun and the sunlight".[67] The analogical elaborations on the Trinity of Christian *mutakallim*s like Abū Rāʾiṭa, al-Muqammaṣ affirms, are totally inappropriate to serve the purpose of proving the logical tenability of the Trinity. They are over-stretched and twisted to convey their logical implications within the realm of bodies. What they denote, thus, is an absurd *Kalām* that is contrary to any plausible understanding of the One God.

Finally, it is worth pausing at Abū Rāʾiṭa's claim that the Creator exists as a living Being by means of an eternal life and as a speaking Being by means of an essential state of speaking: *al-ḫāliq al-ṣāniʿ* (...) *bi-wuǧūdihi ḥayyan nāṭiqan bi-ḥayāt azaliyya wa-nuṭqin ǧawhariyy. Nuṭquhu mawlūdun minhu azaliyy munḏu lam yazal wa-ḥayātuhu munbaṭiqa minhu bi-lā zamān* ("the Creator-Maker [...] by His existence as a living and speaking [Being] by means of an eternal living and an essential state of speaking. His state of speaking is begotten eternally from Him since He ever was and is and His life comes forth from His without time").[68]

It is not hard to spot in al-Muqammaṣ's *Twenty Chapters* his argumentative refutation of the claim that God is a living Being because He exists by means of a state of living other than God's essence: *wa-huwa al-ḥayy allaḏī lā yaḥyā bi-ḥayā* ("and He is the living [Being] who does not live by means of a [state of] living").[69] As I showed earlier, al-Muqammaṣ considers the Christians the primary example of frank associationism (*širk ṣarīḥ*),[70] because they use this logic to make God live by means of a state of living called 'Holy Spirit' and know by means of a state of knowing called 'the Word/Son', who are (as al-Muqammaṣ interprets this Trinitarian language) other than God's simple and one essence.[71]

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[64] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *Risāla fī Iṯbāt dīn al-Naṣrāniyya*, 17, p. 104 Toenis Keating.

[65] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *Risāla fī Iṯbāt dīn al-Naṣrāniyya*, 18-20, pp. 104-8 Toenis Keating.

[66] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.27, pp. 158-9: *Ataynā ʿalā naqḍ hāḏa al-maʿnā ʿalā al-Naṣrāniyya fī kitābinā allaḏī afradnāhu ʿalayhim min ṭarīq al-qiyās, wa-naḥnu zāʾidūn fī āḫir kitābinā hāḏā ʿalayhim ḥuǧǧaǧan ayḍan wa-hiya fī l-maqālāt allatī naṣibhā fī hāḏa l-kitāb* ("We have refuted this content against the Christians in the text of ours which we dedicated against them by way a logical argumentation, and we are adding also arguments at the end of this text or ours; and they are in the articles which we constructed in this text").

[67] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 10.5, p. 227; 10.17, p. 233.

[68] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *Risāla fī Iṯbāt dīn al-Naṣrāniyya*, 24, p. 112 Toenis Keating.

[69] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.4, p. 191.

[70] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.11, pp. 200-1.

[71] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.8-14, pp. 195-203.

If Al-Muqammaṣ's possible familiarity with, or derivation from, Abū Rāʾiṭa's *Kalām* is tenable, it seems to exceed his knowledge of the latter's discourse in the *Verification of the Holy Trinity*. One can find also reasons to suspect al-Muqammaṣ's familiarity with the Trinitarian *Kalām* in Abū Rāʾiṭa's *Epistle on the Holy Trinity*.[72] In this text, Abū Rāʾiṭa develops an interesting argument on the various connotations of the notion of 'oneness' and the belief that 'God is One'. He relates that the Muslim *mutakallim*s (*ahl al-tayman*, 'the people of the South' in his words[73]) do claim that they and the Christians alike believe that 'One' is said in three meanings: one in nature (*ǧins*), one in kind (*nawʿ*) and one in number (*ʿadad*).[74] Abū Rāʾiṭa questions this claim by demonstrating that none of these three senses applies to the oneness of God and the Christians do not call God 'one' after any of them.[75] Against this threefold meaning of 'One', Abū Rāʾiṭa proposes a fourth sense of oneness, deeming it the meaning of 'One' that the Christians have in mind when they say 'God is One'. This fourth sense is 'God is One in essence': *wāḥid fī l-ǧawhar*:

Ammā waṣfunā iyyā wāḥidan fī l-ǧawhar fa-li-ʿtilāʾihi ʿan ǧamīʿ ḫalqihi wa-baryatihi, maḥsūsa kānat amm maʿqūla, lam yušbihuhu šayʾun wa-lam yaḫtaliṭ bihi ġayruhu, basīṭ ġayr kaṭīf, rūḥānī ġayr ǧismānī, yaʾti ʿalā kullin bi-qurbi ǧawharihi min ġayri imtizāǧ wa-lā iḫtilāṭ

We describe Him One in essence due to His transcendence above all His creatures and Creation, whether perceptible or intellectually comprehended; none is like Him and no other thing is mixed with Him, simple not dense, spiritual not corporeal, close to everything by the proximity of His essence, without blending or mixing.[76]

For Abū Rāʾiṭa, this not only preserves God's simple and principal oneness from any mixing, composition or finitude; it also permits to say that 'oneness' means God's essence and it does not militate against the Threeness, for this latter does not number the essence, rather the forms of description one can use to describe (*yaṣif*) this one essence.

It is noteworthy that in his Chapter Eight al-Muqammaṣ similarly describes the various meanings of 'one'. Like Abū Rāʾiṭa, he states that 'one' can be said in the senses of chapter, kind and number, before he suggests three additional senses: 'one' in composition (*tarkīb*), 'one' in simplicity (*basāṭa*) and 'one' of a kind or one in individuation (*lā maṯīla lahu*).[77] Intriguingly enough, al-Muqammaṣ concurs, though in more elaborative and detailed manner, with Abū Rāʾiṭa's objection against using 'one' in the senses of nature, kind, and number to speak about God's oneness. He adds a detailed argument on the mistake of deeming God 'one' in the sense of composition or 'one-of-a-kind'. He adamantly affirms that the only accurate sense of 'one' that is applicable to God is 'one in simplicity':

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[72] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *al-Risāla al-ūlā fī l-Ṯālūṭ al-muqaddas (The First Epistle on the Holy Trinity)*, in Toenis Keating, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period* (above, n. 60), pp. 164-215.

[73] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *al-Risāla al-ūlā*, 4, p. 168 Toenis Keating. On the possible meanings of *ahl al-tayman*, Sandra Toenis Keating suggests that they are "likely the Arabs, who saw themselves as bringers of the message of the Qurʾān to the Mediterranean world": *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period* (above, n. 60), pp. 151-3, in part. p. 152. See also B. Holmberg, "*Ahl/Fariq at-Tayman* – ein rätesvolles Epitheton", *Oriens Christianus* 78 (1994), pp. 83-103; S. Griffith, "The Prophet Mohammad, His Scripture, and His Message according to Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac from the First Abbasid Century," in T. Fahd (ed.), *La Vie du Prophète Mohamet: Colloque de Strasburg 1980*, Presses Universitaires de France, Strasbourg 1983, pp. 103-27.

[74] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *al-Risāla al-ūlā*, 7, p. 172 Toenis Keating.

[75] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *al-Risāla al-ūlā*, 8-10, pp. 172-6 Toenis Keating.

[76] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *al-Risāla al-ūlā*, 10, p. 176 Toenis Keating.

[77] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.33, p. 165.

God is One as simple, not composite, not mixed with others, non-corporeal, imperceptible and unintelligible like the created things.[78]

It is interesting here that al-Muqammaṣ concurs with Abū Rāʾiṭa's understanding of 'one'. His 'one in simplicity' echoes Abū Rāʾiṭa's 'one in essence'. The different terminology between them does not imply any substantial difference between the two *mutakallim*s. The connotations that Abū Rāʾiṭa reads in 'one in essence' give an Aristotelian ring, which al-Muqammaṣ also uses (and sometimes avoids) to unpack the meaning of 'one in simplicity'. My guess is that al-Muqammaṣ avoids the term 'essence' (*ǧawhar*) here because he knows that Abū Rāʾiṭa uses it to argue for the plausibility of speaking about the attributes (*ṣifāt*) of this one essence in a triadic perspective. Indeed, immediately after presenting the six-fold sense of 'one', al-Muqammaṣ embarks in a refutation of this triadic logic.[79]

It is noteworthy that al-Muqammaṣ uses a *Kalām* on the 'one' which he knows that Christian *mutakallim*s also use (it is also used by Muslim authors like al-Kindī, for instance). He is not just relying on his previous Christian education to construct an argument. He follows his *Kalām* logic in challenging an Islamic claim on oneness. When it comes to the understanding of oneness, al-Muqammaṣ seems to be at home in relation to a Christian *Kalām* on the 'one' like the one of Abū Rāʾiṭa. When, nevertheless, the Christians use their discourse on the 'one' in the service of their theology of the Trinity, al-Muqammaṣ frankly distances himself from their *Kalām*. This is exactly what he does when it comes to how the Christians use 'one-in-three' to elaborate on the relation between the essence and its attributes. This is, for example, what he does in his refusal to say that God is a living Being by means of a state of living (*ḥayy bi-ḥayāt*) or that God is a knowing Being by means of a state of knowing (*ʿālim bi-ʿilm*).[80] When we read the *First Epistle on the Holy Trinity*, we spot a Christian *Kalām* text, of the kind which al-Muqammaṣ seems to have in mind, and probably relies on, in his discussion. There, Abū Rāʾiṭah states the folllwing:

Fa-l-ʿālim ālimun bi-ʿilm wa-l-ʿilm ʿilm ʿālim, wa-l-ḥakīm hakīmun bi-ḥikmatin wa-l-ḥikma ḥikmatu ḥakīm (…) fa-īn qultum fī-mā waṣaftumūhu bihi min ḥayyin wa-ʿālimin wa ḥākimin annahu innamā ištuqqat lahu ištiqāqan wa-stawǧabahā ka-mā istawǧaba ǧamī ʿmā summiya bihi man akmala fiʿlahu lahā. Hākadā fa-l-yaǧuz, idan ann yuqāla qad kāna Allāh wa-lā ḥayāt lahu wa-lā ʿilm wa-lā ḥikma ḥattā ṣārat al-ḥayāt wa-l-ʿilm wa-l-ḥikma alladī mawǧūda. Wa-hādā muḥālifun min al-kalām ann yakūn Allāh subḥānahu ḥulwan ṭirfat ʿaynin min ḥayāt wa-ʿilm.

For the knower is knowing by means of knowledge and knowledge is the knowing of a knower. And the sage is wise by means of wisdom and wisdom is the wisdom of a sage (…) so, if you said in what you describe [God] as living, knower and wise that these [epithets] were given to Him derivatively and He merited them as someone who fulfilled all his actions merited all what he was named with (…) let it thus be evenly permitted to say that God had no life or knowledge or wisdom till life, knowledge and wisdom come into existence in Him. This is a contravening discourse that makes God, be praised, lack life and knowledge, even for a blink of an eye.[81]

This logic seems to be echoed in al-Muqammaṣ's *Kalām* too. He nonetheless uses Abū Rāʾiṭa's argument to achieve a different goal. Abū Rāʾiṭa uses this logic in the service of his argument that

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[78] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.34-45, pp. 167-75.
[79] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 8.46-60, pp. 177-87.
[80] Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 9.11-17, pp. 199-207.
[81] Abū Rāʾiṭa, *al-Risāla al-ūlā*, 12, p. 178 Toenis Keating.

the three in the one God do not name extra attributes that God would have acquired at one point while lacking of them before. The three name, rather, attributes in God that are His one essence *per se*.[82] What al-Muqammaṣ seems to be doing is to argue that such Christian *mutakallim*s (as we saw primarily in Abū Rāʾiṭa), adopt a meaning of 'one' that is accurate and tenable in itself, but incongruent with what the Trinity means and implies in relation to God. The Christians, that is, are mistaken in their implementation of the notion of 'one'. To use it to ensure foundation to the Trinity is a failed strategy, al-Muqammaṣ opines. Not only they fail to demonstrate the plausibility of speaking about God in a triadic logic; more problematically, this threatens the coherence, and twists the basic meaning, of the notion of 'one'. If this is what al-Muqammaṣ is doing, then he is not developing a totally offensive or polemic position against Christianity as such. He is, rather, opting for a selective, critical and corrective stance in its Trinitarian *Kalām*.

IV. Concluding Remarks: Which Dynamic of Interaction?

In his analysis of the dissemination and reception of Greek philosophy in the intellectual circles of Baghdad during the 9th-10th centuries, Gerhard Endress says:

> Inside [the circles of emerging Islamic institutions] the Arabic manuscript tradition of some of the most important works of Aristotle provides impressive documentary evidence of philosophy reading in a coherent teaching tradition.[83]

According to Endress, there was a context of reading and avid readership that fostered the transmission of philosophy from one generation to the next, thus paving the way to the ability of the members of different learning circles to follow up on the philosophical discussions and knowledge that was developed within other circles of learning.

The questions here is: would it be tenable to apply the same reading habitus to the context of *Kalām* as well? Can a similar context of reading and readership dynamic be detected between the Christian, Muslim and Jewish *mutakallim*s, who were also able to experience an avid learning-via-reading situation due to their ability to read what other religion's *mutakallim*s were writing? Can we speak of a '*Kalām* reading' as Endress speaks of a 'philosophy reading' situation? And if so, can we apply on the *Kalām* Endress's description of a "teaching tradition based on the book" and a "market of books as well as market of ideas",[84] that in this case would not be confined to the circles of Muslim intellectuals, but would also extend to the Christian-Muslim and Christian-Jewish intellectual interactions as well?

The above are inquiries on the ways and means of collecting information that one could extract from the inter-*Kalām* dynamics in the early Abbasid era. In his introduction of the *kalām* of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq against the Trinity, David Thomas touches upon this issue, investigating

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[82] Abū Rāʾiṭah, *al-Risāla al-ūlā*, 15-20 (pp. 180-188 Toenis Keating). Abū Rāʾiṭah expresses this when he relates that the three attributes are perfect of a perfect essence (*kāmila min kāmil*) (15 [p. 182]) and the three are united and distinguished simultaneously (*muttaṣila muftariqa ǧamīʿan maʿan*) (16 [p. 182]), and there is unity in essence and distinction in hypostases (*bi-ittiṣālin fī l-ǧawhar wa-tabāyun fī l-ašḫāṣ ayy al-aqānīm*) (18 [p. 184]).

[83] G. Endress, 'Reading Avicenna in the *Madrasa*: Intellectual Genealogies and Chains of Transmission of Philosophy and the Sciences in the Islamic East", in J.E. Montgomery (ed.), *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy. From Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard N. Frank*, Peeters, Leuven - Paris 2006 (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 152), pp. 371-422, in part. p. 376.

[84] Endress, 'Reading Avicenna in the *Madrasa*" (above, n. 83), p. 378.

the potential information sources of al-Warrāq's knowledge of the Christian doctrines. Thomas points to two kinds of sources. The first is oral, as al-Warrāq could have easily heard the Christians verbalize their own *Kalām* in his face-to-face interlocution with them. Or, he could have heard some Muslims uttering claims and ideas the Christian *mutakallim*s used to repeat before Muslim audiences. The second source, Thomas proceeds, are written materials, such as texts and books on religious questions or information on the Christian sects or theological teachings. Al-Warrāq could have been informed on the contents of these text either via personal reading, if they were in Arabic, or if they were in Syriac or Greek via translations or summaries of their contents provided by Christian associates.[85] Thomas comes to the conclusion that "the evidence of these multiple resources (…) gives a strong indication that Abū ʿĪsā approached his task with great seriousness and after a considerable amount of preparation. Indeed, his application seems to have exceeded the immediate needs of polemic, for he possesses a curiosity about Christian teachings purely for their own sake".[86]

It is my conviction that the same information-collection dynamics is applicable to the *Kalām* of al-Muqammaṣ on the Trinity in his *Twenty Articles*. He could have easily gleaned his knowledge of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity from both hearing this *Kalām* verbalized before him by Christians, whether in *muǧādalāt* settings, in teaching-learning circles, or in casual conversations. Al-Muqammaṣ could also easily be someone who personally read texts of the Christian *Kalām*, be they by Nonnus of Nisibis, or Abū Rāʾiṭa, or of other non-Jacobite *mutakallim*s, like Theodore Abū Qurra, which he could have found in the private books-collections of his Christian Jacobite teachers.

Even more important is David Thomas's appraisal of al-Warrāq's personal interest in the Christian *Kalām*. I believe that someone like al-Muqammaṣ, who was exposed to the Christian *Kalām* first-hand, and who personally embraced it to the extent of religious affiliation, can also represent a *mutakallim* who, like al-Warrāq, had appreciation of the Christian *Kalām* and was interested in it for its own sake, invoking its claims "with great seriousness and after considerable amount of preparation". His critical engagement with the topic of the Trinity exceeds any easily presumed obsession with polemics, and invites us to question seriously the hasty, if not anachronistic, tendency to read the religious *Kalām* literature as a mere manifestation of inter-religious *Sitz im Leben* haunted by religious polemical and antagonistic divisiveness, self-protectionism and pretension to primacy.

There are strong historiographical data on the post-Chalcedonian intra-Christian and inter-confessional dynamics that demonstrate that the dividing confessional and denominational lines between Christian groups were much more loose than we are willing today to imagine. On this, Jack Tannous says in his recent monography:

We have indication that putative sectarian boundaries apparently did not impede [the people] from switching allegiance between different churches (…) people were moving back and forth between different church groups. And this was not just going on in rural areas and far away from the centers of

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[85] D. Thomas (ed. and trans.), *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's 'Against the Trinity'*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge - New York 1992, pp. 57-58. See also S.H. Griffith, "From Patriarch Timothy I to Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq: Philosophy and Christian Apology in Abbasid Times; Reason, Ethics and Public Policy", in M. Tamke (ed.), *Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages. II. Theology in Dialogue with Islam*, Orient-Institut, Beirut - Würzburg 2007, pp. 75-98. I am most grateful to the referee for directing me to this study.

[86] Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam* (above, n. 85), p. 58.

doctrinal power. There was confessional shape-shifting going on under the noses and in the company of the most elite theological elements of society.[87]

The examination of Dawūd b. Marwān al-Muqammaṣ, the Jew who shifted confessionally into Christianity, and then back to Judaism again, invites us to detect tangible traces of the confessional shape-shifting and looseness of divisive sectarian boundaries also in the 9th century Abbasid *Sitz im Leben*; not just on the *ad intra* Christian level, but also on the *ad extra* Christian-Muslim-Jewish as well. Even more significantly, al-Muqammaṣ's *Kalām* invites us to further consider a 'back-and-forth', boundaries-free movement between the various discourses of *Kalām* that were produced by Muslim, Jewish and Christian authors. *Mutakallim*s allowed themselves to frankly read, learn from and even use methods of reasoning, theological hermeneutics and linguistic styles of demonstration from each other's discourses and texts, disregarding whether or not the other *mutakallim*s did belong to their own religious, confessional or sectarian group.

In al-Muqammaṣ's *Twenty Chapters* we find a Jewish *mutakallim* who frankly begs to differ from and to rationally refute what he deems an inaccurate and implausible *Kalām*, regardless to the religious identity of the latter. But, we also have an example of a *mutakallim* who is equally bluntly ready to concur with, even to rely on, any teaching he construes as logical and rationally tenable in any other available *Kalām* discourse he heard of, read, or read about, also regardless to this source's religious background. This invites us to carefully re-read and re-examine the historical nature, purpose and role of Christian, Jewish and Muslim *Kalām* in the early Islamic centuries. Was *Kalām* only pure polemic practice in the service of religious monopolization, protectionism and public prevalence? Or, was it also a practice of inter-learning, inter-connectedness and inter-active knowledge-seeking? Could it be the case that the *mutakallim*s were occupied with finding reliable interpretations of religious truth by means of seriously engaging all the available intellectual attempts at finding it, rather than being obsessed with defending one religion's superiority and intellectual hegemony over the others? Al-Muqammaṣ's *Kalām* invites us to seriously consider this option.

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[87] Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, pp. 96-7. The Christian apologetics was indeed read by Muslims, as documented by S.H. Griffith, "Answering the Call of the Minaret: Christian Apologetics in the World of Islam", in J.J. Van Ginkel - H.L. Murre-van den Berg - T.M. van Lint (eds.), *Redefining Christian Identity. Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, Peeters - Department Oosterse Studies, Leuven 2005 (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 134), Leuven 2005, pp. 91-126. My sincere thanks go the referee for this reference.