Apology (extract)

Gerasimos (medieval, date uncertain)

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[The following item appears in Beirut, Saint-Joseph University manuscript 548, pp.243-271. It is an extract from book 4 of the 5-book apology of Gerasimus, abbot of the monastery of St. Simeon the Wonderworker near Antioch, and contains a collection of sayings by pagans predicting the teaching of Christ.] In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God. We begin with the help of God- may He be exalted- to write the words of the excellent father Gerasimos, abbot of the monastery of Simeon Stylites. He compiled a book and named it al-Kafi fi al-Ma'na al-Shafi and gathered within it testimonies from the Old and New [Testaments], from all the religions, from the books of the sages and the [illegible] and the book of the Muslims which confirm the true religion. Here we copy them. The Old and New [Testaments] we have with us, but the testimonies of the Muslims and [illegible], are not with us and here we copy them with God's help.

We say: the testimonies to the unity of God's substance which is exalted above every substance. The wise Sybille said: One is God, may He be exalted. His greatness is not varied. He alone sees all, though He is not seen by any mortal body. Plato: All these are a part of time that was and will be. However, it is not proper for us to attribute these to the eternal substance because we say that it was and it also will be. Rather, what is appropriate for it in true and precise language is that it is only a verbal expression, as 'was' and 'will be' must be predicated upon being in time. Also among what he wrote to Dionysius about God the Father: Because the existence of all of this and its maker is difficult to grasp, if He exists speech about Him is forbidden to all people because He is not like all the other things.

From the fourth book of Cyrus about the One God and that He does not have a name: There is no name for Him and human knowledge does not grasp Him. [illegible] said: because He has no need for anything, not for a part nor substance nor words, nor deeds. Rather, He is the cause of all these things. From the words of Hermes Trismegistos about God: Here is what I recounted about the One God alone. Nothing at all of Him is reached. We say that He is unattainable. Antisianus: He is not known from the image of his likeness[1] and is not seen with the eye. He resembles nothing. Therefore no one can grasp Him from the image of His likeness. Xenophon: It is evident that the One who shakes all though He is unmoved is a great and powerful god. Any thing is subordinate with regard to form. One who wishes to know the lacking as manifest is in need of faith.

Socrates: O excellent one, we do not need to think about what the many say about us. Rather, we need to heed the righteous and the hypocrites. He is one and the truth itself. Also Plato: That which the treatise on definition arranges is the god of the beginning. What is below it is the gods. Tatawus Allakrus: The beginning of all is one and He is not part of being, because if He was under being He is not a beginning. On the hypostasis of the Son the Word. Plato: The eternally emanating essence of the Father which does not change or cease has a personal will and power. From it the eternal word took substance and upon its taking substance it alone governed all and graced the giver with the same governance. Also from him: I swear by the chief of all the gods under existence and the [illegible] their being. After Him are the chief and His son the Lord. He is the one whom you will know if you rightly philosophize.

Aristotle: God's nature is not overcome and its being has no beginning. From it the word took substance, the God who is powerful over all. From his fourth philosophical book: He came out before all ages from God the cause, complete since he is begotten in himself because his coming out did not only become a movement of that in the begetting[2]. Arfaqus: I swear to you O sky, the perfect work of God is wisdom. I swear to you by the word of the Father who by it established the world. Hermes: The word of the creator is like an eternal begetting, moving in itself without increasing or decreasing. It does not change and does not decay. He alone resembles and is equal to himself, standing upright, steadfast and watchful. He is one after the god the knowledge of whom is prior. Numithius: God the creator should be thought of as a father, the first god.

The man given to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in the time of Moses: When Pharoah, whose name was Batsunius, king of Egypt, became enraged with Moses at the release of the People he immediately went to the city of Munif, to the famous temple. When he made a sacrifice he asked the Thibia, saying thus: 'Inform me who the first among you is, the great god of Israel.' So he gave an oracle thus: 'In the great heavens there is a fire that surpasses description, eternally moving and immortal. The earth, the sea, and the depths are shaken by it and the demons are drowned by it. This is a god, the ruler of all, a father to a son, threefold not one. As for us, we are after[3] the angels. Go silently.' Plutarch: Do not conceive of something prior to the cause of all, may it be exalted. From everything which is from every other thing is something else like it because it necessitates a change in it.

Babunius:[4] From one intellect and the word which is from it aroseand was differentiated all of this. Bukididus: The nature of God's begetting is always power and it has no first. From Him himself the word took substance from the one with three hypostases. Porphyry: The substance of God goes out to three hypostases: the lofty and righteous god, the one who is after him and second to him, the creator, and the third is the soul of the world. Hermes: In himself he has not ceased to be in his own intellect. His light and his spirit enclose all. Also by him: There is no god besides him, and no angel and no demon and no other substance because he is the lord and father of all and his is god, source, life, power, light, intellect, and spirit. All is with him and under him. Another oracle given to Tudi, king of Egypt, in the

temple of Africa: First is a god, then after him is a word and a spirit is with them. These agree in nature and their progress is towards the one.

Anthimus: God, the word, and the spirit are together. They do not cease to be one thing, one substance, and one majesty. The sermon of Darius the Wise: The three divine names are from the power of the one whose lordship is singular, whom no one has seen. He is the cause of all that has being and the cause of all that has a body. Hermes: I swear to you O sky by the father, the creator of wisdom, the divider of reason and intelligence. I swear to you by the word which created, perfected, caused confusion, and steadied. I swore to you by the spirit which divided the water and formed all that is in it. When they passed to the house prepared in the city of Muriqus, someone said to them 'who is a man like?' Philo said, 'Know that this house is for a god one and threefold and for his word unbound and unperceived.

What follows this afterwards in the testimonies which pertain to the incarnation of the word: Philo also: What do you claim? Philo claimed[5] one god with three names. One of them is the First Cause. The second is Power. The third is Wisdom pouring out upon all. The second is the word which creates all and the third is the life-giving soul. The statement on the birth of our lord Christ. Amilius the philosopher: One who aspires to becoming a philosopher must possess continence and distance himself from all evils and his action must be upright. When you philosophize thus then you will know the name and the one letter and you will behold the son of God who is free of passion and will become manifest. The words of Sybille the Wise: The maiden will come and with her the heavenly word. [illegible] The king Manidus gave an oracle and said, 'The word of God the pre-eternal Father will come in the body.' The king said, 'from which womb or from which seed will this appear?' He said to him, 'from the womb of a pure young maiden of short stature, with a light, shining complexion.' The king said to him, 'So without seed or sexual relations?' He said, 'By the wisdom foretold with the father. Then this body will be crucified and at that time doubts will come and minds will weaken.' His disciple said to him, 'Who sowed the seed about whom much will be said and discussed?' He said, 'The hidden will of God shall appear, my son.'

He pronounced another oracle that the word which was born perfect, who is the son and creator and maker came down and was born by a woman and roused the blind. Dimilitus pronounced an oracle and said, 'The word was with God and was God and made all with his hand. When he came down and was clothed in a robe of flesh man looked upon him and he revealed the substance of the majesty of the divine nature and he was as he was before his coming down. Severus: In the fifth age the youth will come from the south whose mother was not touched by man. The king will resist him and the children will be killed in the land of Judah for his sake. Philon: The son of God will come in the flesh, resembling the mortals of the earth.

[illegible] Hermes pronounced an oracle: Hermes, when Pharaoh asked him at the time of his worshipping the star known as Saturn to give him an oracle and to tell him who is

greater than it. He said, 'Pardon me,' and he did not pardon him. Then he said, 'Greater and more magnificent is the one who treads upon the heavens. His robe is eternal light and his rays do not change or diminish. He is not disturbed and is not penetrated. Before him are two blazing fires and he is the pre-eternal God and the eternal father. The divine nature is his and from him and in him. He has no father before him. He has a son from him and in him who is from no one but him. Pharaoh set this down on stone tablets and erected them in the temple which is in the city of Murikus. Time passed, and each one said 'this house is mine.' Their grandees gathered and accepted Philon. He pronounced an oracle and said, 'know that this house belongs to one threefold god and his unbounded and imperceptible word. I see a virgin girl with child and it is like a light coming from her. The one born will frequent this house. Then he will be offered as a sacrifice.

Aristotle said: The uncreated is created and the created is uncreated. The father is a father and the son is a son and the one is three. One incorporealbecame incarnate a land which gave birth to the maker of heaven. Apollo: Do all that leads towards the good and the beautiful. I will confirm three times the one, king of exaltedness, God whose wisdom and word do not decay. He will be born with them from a virgin girl and they will pass through the world like a bow blazing with fire. He will catch all and will offer it as a gift to the father. On statements about the holy passions of Christ Solon: In the end, he will come to the earth which is variegated in multiplicity and become flesh, free of sin. Within him will be the power of the unconquered divine nature to heal incurable ailments. For the sake of this he will be born in an unbelieving people in the flesh and will be persecuted by them and hung on a piece of wood.

Giun: At a certain time there will come to this drowning world a certain person free from sin and he will be born in the body without passion afflicting the divine nature. He will heal the corruption of incurable passions and the unbelieving people will be jealous of him. He will be crucified as one condemned to death and by this pleased all with his meekness. From the stories of the people of the city of Athens: The wise men of the city of Athens upon seeing the darkness which fell during the passions of our Lord Christ asked Dionysius the Areopagite, who was still a pagan, 'O teacher, what do you say about this darkness, because we have determined the correct paths of the sun and moon but we cannot determine the cause [of this].' He said to them, 'The Son of God was slandered by a people.' Sagharklis on the response of the houses of idols: The god who made the long heaven and earth is one, while mortals are many and wandering in the heart. We have set up idols of stone and brass and images from works of gold and ivory. We offer to them wondrous sacrifices and feasts and think that in this way we perform proper worship.

Porphyry of Tyre said: Now you are surprised if a plague afflicts a city of this size for years, [but] it is because Asclepios and the rest of the gods have no presence and Jesus is honored for no one is granted a deceitful benefit from the gods. From one of the stories of the Romans: In the fifty-fifth year of the rule of Augustus, he went to the temple and performed a sacrifice. He asked who will rule the Romans after him but he was not given a response by the pythia.

He made another sacrifice and asked, 'why do you not speak?' and this was said to him: 'A Hebrew child will take precedence over me as he is a gracious and powerful god. He will spur me on to leave this place and everything attached to it. From an oracle of Apollo al-Daqnuni: When the maidservants of the temple of Apollo asked him 'Why do you no longer give inspiration and knowledge like you used to?' he responded to them with this response: 'O ones more wretched than the other maidservants of my temples, it was not necessary to ask me this last question which inquires about the wondrous god and the breath of his divine nature which envelopes all creation which hangs from it like a bunch of grapes-- all creation, which is the stars and fire, the rivers and the lower frost, wind and light. [The divine nature] expelled me from Athens, from the temple which is here, and I did not desire this. The works of my three-legged stand which I retain today are emboldened to lose me. Apollo has perished and is extinguished, since the human and heavenly man is angered at me and the one who has suffered is a god and his divine nature itself did not suffer.

The end of what I can explain of the statements of the sages about the truth of the religion of Christ, which is the religion of the Christians, praise be to God forever.

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[1] Reading for [2] This sentence is rather unclear in the Arabic, either due to a copyist's error or a clumsy translation from the Greek. [3] Tentativly reading as [4] possibly to be corrected to Yunius? [5] This seems to be the sense here.

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Fathers – Additional Texts (tertullian.org/fathers). SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Footnotes are left out, and Greek or Latin words, square brackets and any transcription error are as the source prints them. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.

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