IV. DIALOGI I PROCESY INTEGRACYJNE

Studia Oecumenica 12
Opole 2012

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Rzym – Włocławek

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE ARAB CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE[1]

1. Introduction

The object of the religious cognition is God Himself and the divine reality, His being, His will, and His actions. All this constitutes a specific reality, which we should describe as transcendent. The term "transcendence" renders the atmosphere of otherness. The divine transcendence constitutes the divine mystery; since God is transcendent, He becomes – for human cognitive faculties – a mysterious reality. This mystery implies that God is inaccessible for human cognition, and incomprehensible[2].

2. The Comprehensibility of the Divine Being

Christian Arabic theological literature abounds in analogies, and through this fact it proves to be the true heir of both the Greek and Syriac Church Fathers[3].

[1] The following text is a part of an unpublished doctoral dissertation defended at the University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome in 2012, entitled: *The Trinitarian Analogies In The Christian Arab Apologetical Texts Of The Middle And Near East During The Abbasid Period (750–1050) And Their Doctrinal Significance*.

[2] Cf. P. KHOURY, *Matériaux pour servir à l'étude de la controverse théologique islamo – chrétienne de langue arabe du VIII^e au XII^e siècle*, Würzburg 1989, vol. I, 27.

[3] Cf. B. HOLMBERG, *The Concept of Analogy in Christian Arabic Thought*, in: R. TYÖRINOJA, A. INKERI LEHTINEN, D. FØLESSDAL, *Knowledge and the Sciences in Medieval Philosophy. Proceedings of the Eight International Congress of Medieval Philosophy (S.I.E.P.M)*, Helsingfors 1990, vol. 3, 400.

The scope of this work, as we will later see, is to point out the analogies used by the Arab theologians in the description of the Trinity; however, here we will show the richness of this method of theological approach also in other fields of Christian theology, such as Christology. Now, before beginning our presentation of the analogical expressions, it would be appropriate to investigate the teaching of the Arab writers concerning the approach to the knowledge of God.

Chronologically, the oldest known Christian text in Arabic (MS Sinai Arab 154), *On the Triune Nature of God*[4], simply says concerning our knowledge of God "that we understand nothing about the power of God, nor His majesty by speech nor by figures, nor by word"[5]. This apophatic message, on one hand, is concluded by the positive statement, that a human being can approach God "by faith and piety and the fear of God and purity of spirit"[6]. With such a general message, we will move on towards more elaborate theological discourses, which with greater precision and competence deal with this matter. Perhaps, the best comment to this remark is found in *The Book of the Proof*, usually ascribed to the Melkite patriarch Pseudo-Eutychius of Alexandria[7]. At the beginning of this work he states that the knowledge of God (*maʿarifat Allāhi*, معرفة الله) was implanted in man's nature (*fī ṭabīʿat al-īnsāni maʿghrūzah*, في طبيعة الانسان مغروزة), but it has been weakened and reduced due to the Satan's influence over us[8].

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[4] The text is also known under its Arabic title: *Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid* and dates back between 755 and 771. Cf. KH. SAMIR, *The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity*, in: J.S. NIELSEN, KH. SAMIR (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologies During the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, Leiden 1994, 61–4; M.N. SWANSON, *Some considerations for Dating of Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid (Sinai Ar. 154) and Al-ǧāmiᶜ wuǧūh al-īmān (London, British Library or. 4950)*, in: "Parole de l'Orient" 18 (1993), 117–8.

[5] "ولاكن ينبغي ان نعلم انا لا ندرك شيء من امر الله ولا عظمته بكلام ولا بامثال ولا بقول." ANONYMOUS AUTHOR, *Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid*, in: M. DUNLOP GIBSON, *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles from an Eighth or Ninth Century Ms. in the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai: with a Treatise on the Triune Nature of God, with translation from the same codex*, (Studia Sinaitica, 7), London 1899, 4.

[6] Arabic text reads: "ولاكن ينبغى ان نعلم انا لا ندرك شى من امر الله ولا عظمته بكلام ولا بامثال ولا بقول ولاكن بايمان وتقوى وخشية الله و زكاة الروح." ANONYMOUS, *Fī tathlīth*, 76–7 (Arabic text). This quotation is important for the following reasons: 1) It applies a term *āmthāl* (sing. *mathal*; Ar. pl: امثال, sing. مثل), which in later texts will also render the idea of *parable*, *figure*, *likeness*, *metaphor*; 2) It quotes a Qur'ānic term *taqwā* (تقوى), meaning: *pious fear of God* (cf. Q 9:110(111)); and 3) It also uses also the word *zakāh* (زكاة), which is an Islamic term for: *purity*, *justness*, *honesty*, but most of all *alms-giving* and *charity* (Q 2:177).

[7] According to a marginal note of the oldest manuscript of *The Book of the Proof* (MS Sinai – ar. 75, early 10th century) one finds a note: *the deacon Peter, son of Anasthasius, of Bayt Raʾs'* but another two manuscripts speak about *bishop Peter* (MS Vatican ar. 491 and 645). Cf. KH. SAMIR, *La littérature melkite sous les premiers abbassides*, "Orientalia Christiana Periodica" 56 (1990), 483–4; G. FEDALTO, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, Padova 1988, vol. II, 100.5.3; cf. M. N. SWANSON, "Peter of Bayt Ra's," in: D. THOMAS, B. ROGGEMA (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Biographical History*, Leiden – Boston 2009, vol. 1, 902–4.

[8] Cf. EUTYCHIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, P. CACHIA (ed.), CSCO 192/Ar.20, 1.

Solid teaching about the knowledge of God is also found in the works of a Melkite bishop Theodore Abū Qurra (d. after 816 AD). His treatise *Maymar ʻalā sabīl maʻrifat Allāh wa-taḥqīq al-Ibn al-azalī*[9] (*Treatise on the Way of Knowing God and the Confirmation of the Eternal Son*) begins with a discussion on the various methods concerning the knowledge of God by the human mind. This author lists four types of knowledge: through being seen (*ʻayyān*[an], عياناً); through effects, or vestiges (*athar*, اثر); through resemblance (*shibh*, شبه); and through dissimilarity (*khilāf*, خلاف)[10]. From our perspective, the most important are two manners: through effects and similarity.

The human mind, through the analysis of the physical reality, may prove the existence of a power, which causes that the things do not follow our predictions (like ground that does not collapse under own weight). Abū Qurra calls this power "God". God also is regarded as the cause that can change things from one state to another (for example humanity, which – once created by God – transmits the life through generation)[11]. Likewise, this way of gathering knowledge about God is mentioned by Yaḥyā ibn ʻAdī (b. 893–d. 974), who in *Maqālat fī-l-tawhīd* (*Treatise on the Unity*) speaks about the divine substance that remains hidden, covered (*idh kān jawharihu khafī*[an], إذ كان جوهره خفياً) for human beings, but whose effects are manifested in the creatures (*wa athārihu fī khalāʻiqihi waḍḥat*[an], وآثاره في خلائقه واضحةً)[12].

The second important observation made by the bishop of Ḥarrān concerns the knowledge of God through resemblance. This way of approach is a consequence of the previous one, i.e. the statement that God exists. Abū Qurra asks whether we can find anything that resembles God in any way? The author presents two possibilities: 1) There is nothing that resembles Him (*lā yashbihahu shayy' fī shayy'*, لا يشبهه شيء في شيء). In this case, resemblance should be excluded as an inappropriate method for knowing God. 2) However, this presupposition ought to be rejected, because God is commonly described with the

[9] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *On the Method of the Knowledge of God*, in J. C. LAMOREUX, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, Provo 2005, 157. Arabic version: *Maymar ʻalā sabīl maʻrifat Allāh wa-taḥqīq al-Ibn al-azalī in Maymar ʻalā sabīl maʻrifat Allāh wa-taḥqīq al-Ibn al-azalī*, in: Q. BACHA (ed.), *Mayāmir Thawudurus Abi Qurrah, Usquf Harran*, Beirut 1904), 75-82. See also J.C. LAMOREUX, *Theodore Abū Qurra*, in: D. THOMAS, B. ROGGEMA (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations*, 457.

[10] In his other work, written in Greek, Abū Qurra lists five types of knowledge. To the text quoted above we need to add: through the image (ἐξ ἰνδάλματος). Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Opusculum 3*, in: R. GLEI, A.T. KHOURY, *Schriften zum Islam. Johannes Damaskenos und Theodor Abū Qurra*, Würzburg 1995, 132–4. For the English translation see: THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Greek Fragments*, in: J.C. LAMOREUX, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 231.

[11] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar ʻalā sabīl*, 76–8. English translation: THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *On the Method*, 158–9.

[12] Cf. YAḤYĀ IBN ʻADĪ, *Maqālat fi-l-tawhīd*, in: KH. SAMIR, *Le Traité de l'Unité de Yaḥyā ibn ʻAdī (893–974)*, Jūniyah-Roma 1980, 246–7.

terms derived from the created beings. Here, Theodore lists terms (attributes) such as: living (*ḥayy*, حي), hearing (*samī'*, سميع), seeing (*baṣīr*, بصير), wise (*ḥakīm*, حكيم), powerful (*qawīy*, قوي), just (*'adl*, عدل), and generous (*jawād*, جواد)[13]. Thus, the attributes we use to describe God are something we find in ourselves (*wa hadha kulluhu qad narāhu fīnā*, وهذا كله قد نراه فينا). Next, God is known in two ways: 1) Either through self-description (*min ṣifatihi nafsihi lanā*, من صفته نفسه لنا); or 2) Through the guidance we receive when our minds reflect on His creation (*min anna ihtadaīna ilaīhi bikhalā'iqihi allatī tadabbarathā'uqūlinā*, من انَّا اهتدينا اليه بخالائقه التي تدبرتها عقولنا)[14]. On the basis of this distinction, in the first case, the divine self-descriptions could be incomprehensible for human mind, therefore – as concludes Abū Qurra – the second option seems more logical, for it says that God reveals Himself in a way that people can understand, a way that Theodore calls "hints, vestiges" (*athar*, أثر)[15]. Furthermore, our Melkite author analyzes the very nature of this resemblance. To explain it, he uses a mirror analogy. Resemblance, he says, is like an image of a person reflected in a mirror. Person (*wajh*, وجه) is a solid body (*jurum thābit*, جرم ثابت), while a figure or individual (*shakhṣ*, شخص) in the mirror is a transient specter (*khayāl zā'il*, خيال زائل)[16]. According to Theodore, the example of the mirror and an image dimly reflected in it is the best analogy to express the level of resemblance between the creatures and their Creator. We resemble God through our virtues, but this likeness is weak because of our defects, as the analogy of the mirror illustrates: the true face and its delusive image[17]. The human mind cannot be deprived of the images, but it must depend on resemblance and not forget that God is transcendent (*kāna Allāh ghā'ib*^{an}, كان الله غائبًا)[18]. Therefore, the au-

[13] These expressions are also found among the ninety-nine most beautiful names of God. Hence it informs us not only that the Arab Christians knew them, but also testifies to the influence of Muslim theology on the Christian though.

[14] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar 'alā sabīl*, 78.

[15] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar fī wujūd al-Khāliq wa-l-dīn al-qawīm*, in: I. DICK, *Théodore Abuqurra. Traite de l' Existence du Créateur et de la vraie religion*, Jounieh 1982, 198.

[16] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar 'alā sabīl*, 79. In the same context, the analogy of the mirror was used by the author in his treatise on salvation. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar yuḥaqqiqu anna li-llāh ibnan huwa 'idlahu fī-l-jawhar wa lam yazul ma'ahu*, in: Q. BACHA (ed.), *Mayamir Thawudurus Abi Qurrah, Usquf Harran*, Beiruth 1904, 92.

[17] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar fī wujūd*, 220.

[18] غائب (*ghā'ib*), a term that originated from Islamic tradition is derived from the noun غيب (*ghayb*), which means: *whatever is absent*, *hidden*. It is found in the Qur'ān (2:3. 33; 3:44. 179; 6:59; 7:188; 11:31. 123; 12:102; 27:65; 34:48; 39:46; 50:33; 52:42 etc.). Thus the expression غائب means: *anything that is absent*, or *hidden from the eyes*; *invisible*, *unseen*, a *mystery*, or *secret*. In the Shia tradition the term *ghaybah* renders the concept of the Hidden Imam. The Hidden Imam is the twelfth imam, a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, who did not die but went into a spiritual form of existence (occultation), and will return at the end of the time as a divine Mahdi. Cf. E. W. LANE, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, London 1877, Book I, Part 6, 2313 (italics in the origi-

thor of *The Book of the Proof* encourages the readers to seek the knowledge of God (*mu'arifa Allāhi*, معرفة الله) in order to serve Him and worship Him according to that knowledge[19]. Man can gather knowledge about God but only to limited extent. We know God only through His names (*āsmā'*, اسماء) that point to His works and activity, and through some created things that resemble Him[20] but do not transmit information about His substance[21].

3. The Incomprehensibility of the Divine Being

Besides the affirmative theology represented by what resembles God, Theodore – following Orthodox theology – teaches also about the need for negative theology, which is inseparably connected with theologically correct method of cognition. The leading issue of this fragment is the understanding of how, through the negations, we may come to know God. Abū Qurra teaches that the affirmative method of resemblance cannot be applied uncritically. He notes some limits, which have to be set in this process. These limits help us to acquire knowledge, and keep us from falling into error. The need for limitations is derived from the differences found between the creatures and God; the former are continually changing from one state to another (*wa annahā lā tazālu tantaqilu fī taghyīr al-ḥālāt*, وانها لا تزال تنتقل في تغيير الحالات), while the latter does not change[22]. God placed in our nature higher desires (*shahwah*, شهوة), which cannot be fulfilled from below. These desires establish the basis for comparison (analogy) and differentiation between human and divine reality. They incite us to see Him and to resemble Him[23]. Theodore also says that our knowledge of God cannot be based only on analogy, but should take into consideration the differences found between the creation and God; therefore, the attributes we ascribe to Him differ from those found in human beings[24]. The Creator is beyond the limits of all creatures, and He is neither limited nor characterized by physical qualities[25]. Our knowledge does not reach God due to the disproportion existing between the Creator and His work; we are unable to know either

nal); *Hidden Imam*, in: J.L. ESPOSITO (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, Oxford 2003, 111–2.

[19] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 9–10, 8–9

[20] Cf. AL-MASIH AL-KINDĪ, *Risālat 'Abdallāh abn Ismā'il al-Hāshimi ilā 'Abd al-Masīḥ ibn Isḥāq al-Kindi yad'ūhu bihā ilā l-Islām wa-risālat al-Kindī ilā l-Hāshimī yaruddu bihā 'alayhi wa-yad'ūhu ilā l-Naṣrāiyya*, in: L. BOTTINI (transl.), *Al-Kindī. Apologia del Cristianesimo*, Milano 1998, 87.

[21] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 12–13, 11–3.

[22] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar 'alā sabīl*, 80; idem., *Maymar fī wujūd*, 190–1.

[23] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar fī wujūd*, 236–8.

[24] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar 'alā sabīl*, 79–80; idem., *Maymar yuḥaqqiqu anna li-llāh ibnan*, 95–6; idem., *Maymar fī wujūd*, 222–3.

[25] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 6, 6.

His nature (*ṭabī'atihi*, طبيعته), which – as the author of the *Book of the Proof* notes – is His substance (*allatī hiya jawharihi*, التي هي جوهره), nor can reach the description of it (*wa lā yablugh ṣifatahā makhlūq*, و لا يبلغ صفتها مخلوق). God is not a body to be perceived by the senses; He is not to be seen by anything created[26]. We need to keep in mind that God is completely unlike (*'alā khilāf hadhā kulluhu*, على خلاف هذا كله) what we state about Him[27]; God is what is not known, because He transcends everything that is known (*annahu* [*Allāh*] *mā lā ya'rif liīrtifā'hi 'an kulli mā ya'rif*, انّه ما لا يعرف لارتفاعه عن كلّ ما يعرف).[28] The negative way is an indispensable manner of approach to the divine reality, and as a method it will always be applied with affirmative statements[29]. Our author is fully aware that human mind is unable to grasp the very essence of God from His effects and actions (*min āthārihi wa afa'alihi*, من آثاره وأفعاله)[30]. For Abū Rā'iṭa (b. late 8th c. – d. 830 AD), God is above every analogy (*fa-ān kān Allāhu tabāraka 'an kullu qiyās*, فان كان الله تبارك عن كل قياس)[31]. The simplicity of the divine Being and His inaccessibility for the human senses was taught by the Jacobite philosopher and translator, Ibn Zura' (b. 943 – d.1007). The divine essence, he maintains, is absolutely inaccessible in its quiddity, and all that we can establish about this existence is that it exists[32]. Another Nestorian, Elias of Nisibis (d. 1047) spoke, in his series of sessions about the specificity of the divine Being and described Him as an incorporeal substance that does not occupy the space or receive the accidents. Moreover, he underlines God's otherness in comparison with the creatures due to His immortal and eternal characteristics[33], and he underpins it by statements about the divine essence and substance, which are undivided and equal in all places (*dhatuhu wa jawharuhu fī kull mukāni bi-l-sawīyah*, ذاتهُ و جوهرهُ في كلّ مكان بالسويَّة)[34].

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[26] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 8, n. 11, 7–11.

[27] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar 'alā sabīl*, 80.

[28] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 14, n. 16, 13–4, 16–7. More precisely: "ويتبيّن له أنّ أسماء ارتفاع الله كلّها ليس تدل على أنّ الله كذا وكذا ولاكن على أنّه ليس كذا ولا كذا، تبريئا له من كلّ ما يلزم الخلائق." EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 14, 14.

[29] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar 'alā sabīl*, 80.

[30] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar fī wujūd*, 197.

[31] Cf. ḤABĪB ABŪ RĀ'IṬA, *Al-risāla al-ūlā fī l-Thālūth al-muqaddas*, in: S. TOENIES KEATING, *Defending the "People of Truth" in the Islamic Period. The Apologies of Abū Rā'iṭa*, Leiden 2006, 184–5.

[32] فأما ذاته فلا تُعرّف بشيء البتة ولا تعلم ماهيتها البتة ولا يعلم من امرها اكثرمن أنها موجودة فقط || وما يلزمها من" حيث هي موجودة" IBN ZUR'A, *Risāla fī ma'āni sa'alahu 'anhā ba'd ikhwānihi*, in P. SBATH (ed.), *Vingt traités philosophiques et apologétiques d'auteurs arabes chrétiens du IXe au XIVe siècle*,al-Qāhirah-al-Matba'at 1929, 17.

[33] فاذا كان دليلُكم على انّ الله جوهر كونَهُ قائماً بنفسهِ اذ لم يجدوا في المشاهد قائماً بنفسهِ الاَّ جوهراً لزمكم القول بانَّ الله" تعالى جسمٌ" ELIAS OF NISIBIS, *Al-majlis al-awwal fī al-tawḥīd wa al-tathlīth*, in: L. CHEIKHO (ed.), *Al-majālis al-latī jarat baynhu wa bayn al-wazīr Abī-l-Qasam al-Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī al-Maghribī*, "Al-Mashriq" 20 (1922), 38.

4. Analogy: Its Term and Method

At the beginning of this study on the use of analogy as a method of approach of the divine reality, we need to ask a fundamental question: What did the analogy represent for the Arab Christian writers? What did they mean when speaking about analogy as a method?

Some, like for instance Pseudo-Eutychius of Alexandria (b. 877 – d. 940), conceived analogy as a proper method of cognition of the divine world. Though no created similitude is adequate for demonstrating the likeness of God, nevertheless Pseudo-Eutychius of Alexandria maintains that it is God who created these similitudes for His people so that they might comprehend the unseen reality by what they see and know the invisible world by the means of visible one[35]. We find more reserved opinions in the works of the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurra and Jacobite Abū Rā'iṭa.

Answers to our questions are also to be found in the works of Abū Qurra. In *On the Creator* (*Maymar fī wujūd*), this author states that God's likeness (*shibh,* شبه) – reflected in the creatures – is based on a resemblance found in human nature. Though God is transcendent and unlike our nature (*al-irtifā' 'anhā* [*ṭabiyy'anā*] *'alā al-khilāf*, الارتفاع عنها على الخلاف), our minds can grasp Him through His attributes (*ma'a ṣifātihi*, مع صفاته), in which He is worshipped[36]. Abū Qurra's uses an analogy to present his understanding of analogy. Since our knowledge of God is attained only through the knowledge of His attributes, this process is compared to the knowledge of the attributes of the human face. In order to understand this choice we need to refer to another of his works, *On the Method* (*Maymar yuḥaqqiqu anna li-llāh ibnan huwa 'idlahu fī-l-jawhar wa lam yazul ma'ahu*). In this short treatise on the method of knowledge of God, Abū Qurra applies an analogy founded on the verse of St. Paul: "Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known" (1 Cor 13:12). Thus, our knowledge of God is compared to a reflection that appears in a mirror[37]. Regarding this issue Theodore gives two examples of analogies. The first one speaks about our face seen in a mirror; we recognize it as own face through our likeness reflected in it. Seeing the face in a mirror, we also note something unseen along with all the attributes of the face. Thus, in terms of the attributes the real face and its reflection resemble one another. To explain what this "unseen" value implies, the author presents the sec-

[34] Cf. ELIAS OF NISIBIS, *2nd session*, in: L. CHEIKHO (ed.), *Al-majālis al-latī jarat baynhu wa bayn al-wazīr Abī-l-Qasam al-Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī al-Maghribī*, "Al-Mashriq" 20 (1922), 112.

[35] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 112.

[36] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar fī wujūd*, 219.

[37] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar yuḥaqqiqu anna li-llāh ibnan*, 79.

ond analogy, that speaks about two men who look at someone's face reflected in a mirror. One of these men knows the person whose face is reflected in the mirror; he recognizes the face and identifies it with the person he knows. The other man, who does not know the person, looks at the mirror and only identifies the face with its owner. Thus, in the terms of these attributes, the two faces do not resemble one another. In this second analogy, Abū Qurra points to a reality that is behind a superficial resemblance, i.e. the nature of being. Therefore, we cannot say that the cognition of those two men was the same, for the former knew the person, and the latter only recognized the face. The image of a person, which appears in a mirror, is imperfect because it does not exist (*liannahu ghayr mawjūd*, لأنه غير موجود)[38], nor does it see, hear, and so on. Therefore, the man's real face transcends and is unlike its resemblance (*yartafa'u 'an al-shibh....bi-l-khilāf*, يرتفع عن الشبه...بالخلاف) in the mirror. Since all the attributes found in a person are reflected by a mirror in this manner, we may say that all God's attributes are, in some way, found in the creation[39]. From this we know that analogy is not exclusively an affirmative method of cognition, but is intrinsically united also with the apophatic affirmations. Abū Qurra calls this apophatic characteristic "a limit of resemblance" (*ḥadd al-tashbīh*, حدّ التشبيه)[40], an expression he also renders by the word *bi-l-khilāf* (unlike, with dissimilarity)[41].

Another kind of explanation of the analogy is found in Abū Rā'iṭa's *On the proof* (*Risāla fī ithbāt dīn al-naṣraniyya wa-ithbāt al-Thālūth al-muqaddas*). The first difference in comparison with Abū Qurra's text is the term used. The Jacobite author uses the word: *analogy*, *al-qiyās* (القياس), which is derived from a verb *qāsa*/*qīsa* (قاس\قيس): *to measure*, *to compare*, *to correlate*. According to Abū Rā'iṭa, the range of the application of analogy covers every attribute asserted of spirits and corporeal beings (*'an kullu ṣifah mawṣūfah al-arwāḥ wa al-ajsām jamī'an*, عن كل صفة موصوفة الارواح والاجسام جميعاً)[42]. The aim of analogy is to give the simplest approach to the compared things that represent the distant realities. This is a difficult task because it usually concerns all kinds of relations found in the described realities. Thus, an analogy – to be suitable to present the simplest approach and to provide possibly most coherent description – must be derived from a variety of things (*ashayā' shattā*, اشيا شتّا). The choice of the examples does not depend only on the will of their author, but first of all requires the approval of the enquirer. Therefore, the analogy must use the images that are

[38] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar 'alā sabīl*, 79.

[39] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar fī wujūd*, 221.

[40] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar 'alā sabīl*, 79.

[41] Found in the analogies of the mirror and of Adam's virtues. Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *Maymar fī wujūd*, 220.

[42] Cf. ḤABĪB ABŪ RĀ'IṬA, *Risāla fī ithbāt dīn al-naṣraniyya wa-ithbāt al-Thālūth al-muqaddas*, in: S. TOENIES KEATING, *Defending*, 105.

widely known and easily accessible for human mind. Abū Rā'iṭa notes a problem in connection with this method's accuracy. He is aware that a thing chosen to demonstrate a reality is often unable (*lil'ajz*, للعجز) to render a complete description. This inappropriateness of analogy is one of its internal features, because the divine reality, to which the analogy is applied, is above every analogy (*'alā kullu qiyās*, على كل قياس) found among intelligible and perceptible things[43]. Furthermore, speaking about the Incarnation, Abū Rā'iṭa again says explicitly: "in as much as it is permissible to offer an analogy for what has no analogy and no likeness, let me say this […]"[44]. In his *On the Holy Trinity* (*Al-risāla al-ūlā fī l-Thālūth al-muqaddas*) we read that analogy is founded on a partial resemblance, and we are encouraged to not to take into consideration the points of dissimilarity that every analogy contains[45]. The application of analogy is limited, for only what is necessary may be derived from an analogy, and what is not needed is left aside[46]. This insufficient character of analogy is raised in this text by Abū Rā'iṭa's unnamed interlocutor. The question concerns the composite character of analogies referred to the simplicity of the divine Being. In reply, the Jacobite theologian confirms that the analogies he uses are not complete; they are rather only given to reflect – to some extent – the relations found in the divine Being. The same claim is made by Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī according to whom it is not necessary that, when we apply a pattern (*mithāl*, مثال) to a thing in any respect, the object serving for the comparison is – in all respects – like the one to which it is compared[47]. Analogy bears some resemblance (*ashbah*, اشبه), but predominantly we see its difference (*al-ikhtilāf*, الاختلاف). What, in particular, gives rise to the difficulties in the use of analogies in theological discourse is its matter. God, who is three hypostases and one substance, is beyond every comparison and likeness (*'an kullu tashbīh wa mathal*, عن كل تشبيه و مثل)[48]. H. Rachid claims that Abū Rā'iṭa uses the analogy not to illustrate a truth already proved but rather as a less precise method to avoid a logically inconvenient situation[49].

The use of analogy by the Arab Christians was linked with the exposition and defense of two main Christian dogmas: the Incarnation and the Trinity. We need to keep in mind that – contrary to the convictions that John of Damascus (b. 645– d. 750) left us – Islam was not merely a new Christian heresy that was

[43] Cf. Ḥabīb Abū Rā'iṭa, *Risāla fī ithbāt*, 104, 114.

[44] Cf. Ḥabīb Abū Rā'iṭa, *Risāla fī ithbāt*, 126.

[45] Cf. Ḥabīb Abū Rā'iṭa, *Al-risāla al-ūlā fī l-Thālūth al-muqaddas*, in: S. Toenies Keating, *Defending*, 186.

[46] Cf. Ḥabīb Abū Rā'iṭa, *Al-risāla al-ūlā*, 186.

[47] Cf. Yaḥyā Ibn 'Adī, *Jawāb 'an masā'il sa'anhā 'anhā sā'il fī-l-aqānīm al-thalathah al-ilāh al-wāḥid*, in: A. Périer, *Petits traités apologétiques de Yahyâ ben 'Adî*, Paris 1920, 39–40.

[48] Cf. Ḥabīb Abū Rā'iṭa, *Al-risāla al-ūlā* 194, 198.

[49] Cf. R. Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes (750-1050)*, Paris 1985, 117.

diffused in the 7th century throughout the Middle and Near East, northern Africa and the southern Spain[50]. The Qur'ān presents a different vision on the basic elements of the Christian faith. The two most important issues that occupied the minds of the Christian Arab theologians and writers were: the denial of Christ's divinity and – consequently – the rejection of the Trinity. These two beliefs are justified by the Qur'ān.

4.1. Analogy and the Trinity

The Muslim creed found in Sūra 112 is the counterpart of the Christian affirmation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God[51]. The Qur'ān blames Christians for worshipping the "three" (*thalāthah*, ثلاثة) together with God. This accusation

[50] John's account of Islam is found at the end of the second part of his monumental work *De haeresibus* in the Chapter 101, where he deals explicitly with Islam. The inclusion of this religion —that of the Ἰσμαηλῖται (Ishmaelites) as he says – among the heresies may reveal John's knowledge about it. Perhaps for him, it was nothing more than another Christian heresy. He goes on to describe it as a spiritual darkness, an error leading men astray (λαοπλάνος σκεία), the forerunner of the Antichrist (πρόδρομος οὖσα τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου), and he mentions Muḥammad as the founder who, supposedly inspired by an Arian monk, devised his own heresy (ὁμοίως δῆθεν Ἀρειανῷ προσομιλήσας μοναχῷ, ἰδίαν συνεστήσατο αἵρεσιν). John's teaching on the Antichrist has been expounded in *Expositio fidei*, where he states that everyone who denies the incarnation of the Son of God who is simultaneously perfect God and perfect Man, is the Antichrist (Πᾶς μὲν οὖν ὁ μὴ ὁμολογῶν τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι, καὶ εἶναι Θεὸν τέλειον, καὶ γενέσθαι ἄνθρωπον τέλειον, μετὰ τοῦ εἶναι Θεὸν, Ἀντίχριστός ἐστιν). However, it is important and noteworthy that John (unlike the others, for example, as Peter, bishop of Maiuma) did not attribute this epithet to Muḥammad himself, but to his movement. As the pioneer researcher, John quotes three different names of the Muslims and explains their origin. Thus, there are: Ishmaelites (Ἰσμαηλῖται), a name derived from the religion of Abraham and Ishmael (Q 2:135: "قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَٰهِمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ ٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ") which they imitate (Q 2:133: "قَالُوا۟ نَعْبُدُ إِلَٰهَكَ وَ إِلَٰهَ ءَابَآئِكَ إِبْرَٰهِمَ وَ إِسْمَٰعِيلَ وَ إِسْحَٰقَ إِلَٰهًا وَ حِدًا وَ نَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ"); Hagarenes, the name derived from Hagar (Ἄγαρ), mother of Ishmael; Saracenes (Σαρακηνοὶ), which with all probability comes from Gen. 16:8, where Hagar is called "Sarai's slave-girl". However, the terms Ἰσμαηλῖται and Σαρακηνοὶ are found in Epiphanius' *Panarion*, where he speaks about circumcision and makes a reference to those who practiced it (Ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ Σαρακηνοὶ, οἳ Ἰσμαηλῖται, περιτομὴν ἔχοθσι, καὶ Σαμαρεῖται, καὶ Ἰοθδαῖοι, καὶ Ἰδουμαῖοι, καὶ Ὁμηρῖται). There are some doubts concerning John's classification of Islam, but one cannot deny his insight in the fundamentals of Islamic doctrine. He mentions the Islamic doctrine on the oneness of God that is a reflection of the Sūra 112, their refutation of Christ's filiation, the accusation for the veneration of the cross (idolatry), or the Muslims' teaching on marriage (PG 91, 765, 768-769). Nevertheless, one cannot say about John's good knowledge of the Qur'ān. Cf. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *De haeresibus*, 101, in: PG 94, 763A-780D; idem., *Expositio fidei*, 26, in: PG 94, 1216A-C; D. J. SAHAS, *John of Damascus on Islam. The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites,"* Leiden 1972, 51–68; J. MEYENDORF, *Byzantine Views of Islam*, "Dumbarton Oak Papers" 18 (1964), 115–132; THEOPHANES, *Chronographia*, C. DE BOOR (ed.), Lipsiae 1883, 642; M. A. COOK, *The Origins of Kalām*, "Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies" 43 (1980), 41.

[51] Q 112:1-4 "قُلْ هُوَ اللهُ أَحَدٌ; اللهَ الصَّمَدُ; لَمْ يَلِدْ وَ لَمْ يُولَدْ; وَ لَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ." English translation: "Say, 'He is God the One, God the eternal. He begot no one nor was He begotten. No one is comparable to Him."

is found firstly in the Sūra 4:171[52]; next, we note the denial of a dualist concept of religion (Q 16:51). Regarding the Qur'ānic rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity, we may note that its text warns against any associates ascribed to God who – as Sūra 112 teaches – is numerically one Being.

The Christian Arabs needed to justify their belief and clearly establish that their concept of the Trinity did not reduce at all God's absolute unity. They attempted to show that their vision of the divine unity is even richer; this vision concerned the divine otherness, source of the internal dialogue[53]. Therefore, since the very beginning of the Christian theology in Arabic – which was thus accessible to the Muslims – we note the abundance of the analogies being used in Trinitarian discourse. With respect to the content of this work, the Trinitarian analogies will be more fully described in the following chapter.

Regarding the number of the analogies used in the exposition of the dogma of the Trinity, we may note its importance for strengthening the faith and knowledge of the Christian communities and for the apologetic struggle against the accusations raised by Islam. In this study, we take into consideration the works of nine Christian Arab authors who lived between the 8th and the 11th centuries, and forty-one Trinitarian analogies found in their writings. A more detailed description of the Trinitarian analogies in Arabic will be given in Chapters Two and Four.

4.2. Analogy and the Incarnation

Before speaking about this usage, we need to characterize briefly the context of the exposition. The Christian dialogue with Muslims about Christ has always been affected by the Qur'ān's teaching about Jesus, which both affirms and denies the belief Christians profess about Christ. Islam's holy book acknowledges that Christ was born of the virgin Mary (Q 19:19–21), but it denies that Jesus was God or the Son of God (Q 5:17.72.116; 9:30); it recognizes Him as the servant of God (Q 4:172; 19:30; 43:59), a prophet (Q 19:30), an envoy (Q 3:49.53; 4:171; 5:75; 61:6), and a healer (Q 3:49; 5:110). Together with Adam, he is believed to be the Word (Q 3:59; 19:34) and the Spirit of God (Q 4:171).

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[52] يَٰٓأَهۡلَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ لَا تَغۡلُواْ فِي دِينِكُمۡ وَلَا تَقُولُواْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ إِلَّا ٱلۡحَقَّۚ إِنَّمَا ٱلۡمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ٱبۡنُ مَرۡيَمَ رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُۥٓ أَلۡقَىٰهَآ إِلَىٰ مَرۡيَمَ وَرُوحٞ مِّنۡهُۖ فَـَٔامِنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِۦۖ وَلَا تَقُولُواْ ثَلَٰثَةٌۚ ٱنتَهُواْ خَيۡرٗا لَّكُمۡۚ إِنَّمَا ٱللَّهُ إِلَٰهٞ وَٰحِدٞۖ سُبۡحَانَهُۥٓ أَن يَكُونَ لَهُۥ وَلَدٞۘ لَّهُۥ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِٱللَّهِ وَكِيلٗا.” Q 4:171. English translation: “People of the Book, do not go to excess in your religion, and do not say anything about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than a messenger of God, His word, directed to Mary, a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not speak of a 'Trinity'– stop [this], that is better for you– God is only one God, He is far above having a son, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him and He is the best one to trust.”

[53] Cf. KH. SAMIR, *L'unicité absolue de Dieu. Regards sur la pensée chrétienne arabe*, “Lumière et Vie” 163 (1983), 46.

From our perspective, the key passages of the Qur'ān are those that refute the Christian belief about the Son of God and His Incarnation. Since the existence of the divine Persons is the leitmotif of this thesis, here we focus our attention on the Incarnation and its presentation to the Muslim adversaries. The aforementioned Sūra 4:171 speaks explicitly about the errors contained –according to Islam – in Christian worship, i.e. the recognition of Jesus as the Son of God. In addition, Sūra 9:30 shows the limits of divine tolerance: "The Christians call Christ the Son of God. […] God's curse be on them: how they are deluded, away from the Truth!" The truth, for the Muslims, is that God does not have with any man the kind of relationship, suggested by the Christians, because God does not bind Himself to the world He made by being connected with Jesus as if they were related[54]. Muḥammad himself says that if God had a son, he would be the first to worship Him (Q 43:81)[55].

The arrival of the Muslims and the presence of their beliefs directly challenged the Churches to give an account of Christ in the light of how Islam conceived Him. From the middle of the 8th century onward, we note the presence of the Christian apologetic writings that deal with the central doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. These works, like those about the Trinity, were not exclusively addressed to those who regarded them as false, but also to nominal Christians who were converting to Islam[56].

The Muslims' denial of the belief in the Incarnation met with its broad presentation by the Christian Arab theologians. Pseudo-Eutychius of Alexandria speaks about the divine creative Word (*kalimat al-khāliq*, كلمة الخالق), through which God created everything (*al-ladhi bihu khalaqa kullu shayy'*, الذي به خلق كل شيء) and that is also a part of His substance. This Word, eternal and immovable hypostasis (*qiwām al-qā'im al-dā'im al-thābit*, قوام القائم الدائم الثابت) became incarnate from Mary the Virgin (*fāyaṭhadu min Maryam al-'adhrā'*, فايتد من مريم العذراء)[57]. Psuedo-Eutychius of Alexandria expressed Christ's human nature in an interesting manner, saying that: "He was a perfect man in his body, his animal soul and his rational, logical spirit, which is the image and likeness of God in man"[58].

[54] Cf. I. M. BEAUMONT, *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims: a critical analysis of Christian presentations of Christ for Muslims from the ninth and twentieth centuries*, Oxford 2005, 1, 8.

[55] An interesting interpretation of Jesus' sonship was presented by M.M. Ayoub, who proposes to discern two Qur'ānic terms: *walad* (offspring) and *ittakhadha* (took to himself). According to him the Qur'ān nowhere accuses Christians of calling Jesus the *walad*, but the Book speaks about *ittakhadha*, which does not suggest physical generation but the relationship of adoption. For more information, see: M. M. AYOUB, "Jesus the Son of God: A Study of the Terms *Ibn* and *Walad* in the Qur'ān and Tafsīr Tradition," in Y. YAZBECK HADDAD, W. Z. HADDAD, *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, Gainesville 1995, 65–81.

[56] Cf. I. M. BEAUMONT, *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims*, 10–1.

[57] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 107, n. 108, 68.

[58] EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 109, 68–9.

The presence of analogy as the method for presenting the Incarnation is noted as early as in the middle of the 8th century. The renowned Arabic text *On the Triune Nature of God* (*Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid*) is the very first-known document which deals not only with the Trinitarian analogies, but also cites those from the field of Christology.

The anonymous author of *On the Triune Nature of God* introduces his belief with use of some elements found in the Nicaean creed, – e.g. "God of God, Light of His Light, His Word and His Spirit" – and also the Chalcedonian formula "perfect Man in soul and body without sin"[59]. The only analogy in this text is a unique analogy that speaks about God who was veiled in a Man without sin (*falidhlika aḥtajiba Allāhu bi-anisān min ghayr khaṭiyat*, فلذلك احتجب الله بانسان من غير خطية)[60]. Christ who is Word and Spirit of God veiled Himself in flesh; He who is not from us (*kalimathu wa ruḥihu fāḥtajaba bi-l-jasad alladhī laysa minnā*, كلمته وروحه فاحتجب بالجسد الدي ليس منا)[61]. This text – apparently of Melkite origin – does not use any other descriptions in order to approach the dogma of the Incarnation. In the course of time, Christian authors noted that the exposition of the Incarnation cannot be merely reduced to metaphors, but should, on the contrary, be introduced with the explanation of the mode of the union. Another Melkite author, Theodore Abū Qurra in his *De unione*, uses the analogy of a river that receives two streams. The hypostasis of the eternal Son receives both the name and the definition (τὸ ὄνομα ἤ τὸν ὅρον) of "God" and the name and the definition of "man". However, God does not receives the name or definition of "man," nor man does receive the name or definition of "God," while the hypostasis of the eternal Son fully receives both natures: the divine and the human[62]. In fact, the choice of the analogies was determined by the Christology taught by a specific Christian denomination. Therefore, Pseudo-Eutychius of Alexandria, as Melkite, refutes analogies such as: water and wine, vinegar and honey, butter and honey, gold and silver, copper and lead, because these examples lead to erroneous conclusions, i.e. transformation and corruption (*iḥtiyāl wa fasād*, احتيال و فساد) of the two natures in Christ[63]. To describe how the two natures in Christ are united, the author of *The Book of the Proof* (*Kitāb al-Burhān*) uses the same analogy that we have already encountered in the *On the Triune Nature of God*. This may confirm the attribution both the texts to the Melkite tradition. However, *The Book of the Proof* contains more analogies. The author highlights the continuity of the divine substance of the Father and the in-

[59] Cf. ANONYMOUS, *Fī tathlīth*, 85; H. DENZINGER, *Enchiridion Symbolorum. Definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, Bologna 1996, 125 and 301, respectively.

[60] Cf. ANONYMOUS, *Fī tathlīth*, 85.

[61] Cf. ANONYMOUS, *Fī tathlīth*, 100.

[62] Cf. THEODORE ABŪ QURRA, *De unione et incarnatione*, in: PG 97, 1604B.

[63] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 114, 71.

carnated Son, by speaking about the sunbeams generated from the Sun's disc: the beams are not separated from the Sun's disc and they are never disconnected from their source[64]. Another analogy applied to the discourse is that of man's word generated by his intellect and then written on a sheet of paper[65]. The word, though written on paper, is not separated from the intellect that generated it. The intellect is known through this word because the intellect is in it, moreover, the word remains also in intellect because the intellect has generated it. Thus, the word as such is contained in itself and it is also on the paper with which it is united. The intellect represents Christ's divine nature, and the paper His humanity[66].

The union of the natures in Christ does not transform them; therefore, the example of human soul and body suits the requirements of the Christology presented by Pseudo-Eutychius of Alexandria. These two elements joined together constitute one man; yet the soul is not changed nor transformed from its substance into body, nor body transformed from its state and activity into soul[67]. Like this analogy, the author of *The Book of the Proof* uses the example of a piece of red-hot iron. Fire enters into iron with its tenuity and two distinct substances are united into a single burning mass; none of these two elements is transformed or changed into the other. This feature is common for a mixture of two different elements, one of which is spiritual and immaterial and the other material and solid[68]. Among these examples we find also an analogy with Biblical roots: the bush and the fire (Ex. 3:2–6), where creative fire does not consume the created bush[69], and the metaphor of a simple, immaterial light diffused in the air, the light created by God in the very beginning of the creation. This light after three days became embodied in a material body, i.e. the Sun[70].

An interesting analogy is used by Abū Rā'iṭa, a Jacobite theologian. When dealing with the Incarnation, he speaks about the Sun's light and illumination, which are incarnated in the seeing eye (*al-mutajasadah bi-l-'ayn*, المتجسدة بالعين). Abū Rā'iṭa emphasizes the unity found between the solar disc and its light, which contains the brightness and heat. However, when we speak about the seeing eye, we note in it only the solar brightness and never the solar disc nor its heat. Like Pseudo-Eutychius of Alexandria, Abū Rā'iṭa also notes that the com-

[64] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 112, 70.

[65] The same analogy is used by Timothy I in his discourse with a caliph al-Maḥdī. Cf. TIMOTHY, *Al-muḥāwarah al-dīniyya allatī jarat bayna l-khalīfat al-Maḥdī wa-Ṭimāthāwus al-jāthlīq*, in: R. CASPAR, *Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le Catholicos Timothée I et le Calife Al-Mahd`î (IIe/IIIe siècle) «Mohammed a suivi la voie des prophètes»*, "Islamochristiana" 3 (1977), 131.

[66] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 112, 70.

[67] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 115, 71–2.

[68] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 115, n. 122, 71, 75–6.

[69] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 124, 77–8.

[70] Cf. EUTYCHIUS, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, n. 143, 87–8.

position of fire with material bodies such as wood, candles, gold or silver, makes an appropriate analogy of the Incarnation[71].

Alongside analogies for the dogmas of the Incarnation and of the Trinity, we find some that are used to explain other mysteries of the Christian faith[72].

The Patriarch Timothy I (780–823) during his discussion with the caliph al-Maḥdi makes an attempt to explain the mystery of Jesus' asexual conception. In reply, he quotes the analogy from the Scriptures (*al-mathāl min al-kitāb*, المثال من الكتاب). The example is taken from Gen. 2:21–25, which relates Eve's generation from Adam's rib even "without his breath" (*lam yanshaqq*, لم ينشقّ). In a similar manner, this mystery is rendered by the analogy of the Sun that generates its rays. The Patriarch also speaks about the life after death and compares it to the child's necessity of leaving the maternal womb[73].

5. Conclusion

As a method of approaching the divine reality in theology the analogies were based on the Old and the New Testament. By drawing out metaphors, the biblical authors, as well as Christ Himself, described in an intelligible way the incomprehensible reality of God and the nature of His kingdom. Moreover, this method helped Christian theologians and the Church Fathers to demonstrate the basic Christian dogmas, i.e. the Trinity and the Incarnation. From their works, these metaphors were passed on to the Arab Christian theologians, who made use of them in the exposition and defence of the aforementioned dogma. The use of the Trinitarian analogies by Arabic-speaking authors was determined not only by particular principles but also by their explanations of the nature of analogy as such.

Poznanie Boga w arabsko-chrześcijańskim dyskursie teologicznym

Streszczenie

Problem poznania Boga, właściwej metody i języka teologicznego zajmowały ważne miejsce w arabskiej literaturze chrześcijańskiej okresu Abbasydów.

[71] Cf. ḤABĪB ABŪ RĀ'IṬA, *Al-risālah al-thāniya fī-l-tajassud*, in: S. TOENIES KEATING, *Defending*, 228–230.

[72] The contexts the analogies are drawn are listed in: B. HOLMBERG, *The Concept of Analogy*, 402.

[73] Cf. TIMOTHY, *Al-muḥāwarah*, 126, 149.

Z jednej strony ta transcendentna rzeczywistość jest niepoznawalna i niedająca się wyrazić słowami, z drugiej natomiast, jest ona uchwytna dla człowieka poprzez wiarę, pobożność i bojaźń. Autorzy arabscy upatrują szansę na poznanie Boga zarówno w orzeczeniach apofatycznych, jak i katafatycznych, korzystając przy tym ze spuścizny, jaką wypracowała teologia grecka. Pozytywne orzeczenia o poznaniu Boga znajdują swój wyraz w stosowanych analogiach, czyli obrazach zaczerpniętych z natury. Negatywny wymiar tego poznania jest zazwyczaj wyrażony w świadomości o niedoskonałości poznania jako takiego, oraz dystansu, jaki dzieli Stwórcę od stworzenia. Analogie wiodły prym w przybliżeniu problematyki dogmatu o Wcieleniu i o Bogu Trójjedynym, pełniąc funkcję edukacyjną dla chrześcijan oraz będąc argumentem w polemice z muzułmańskimi adwersarzami. Oprócz tego, analogie odegrały ważną rolę jako nośniki powstającej wówczas terminologii teologicznej po arabsku.