Elías de Nishbis
Commentary on the Creed
(Tafsir al-amnah al-kubrah)

Edition, translation, introduction and comments
by
Bshara Ebed
Elias of Nisibis
Commentary on the Creed
(*Tafsīr al-amānah al-kabīrah*)
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Elias of Nisibis
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(*Tafsīr al-amānah al-kabīrah*)

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Bishara Ebeid

CNERU – CEDRAC
2018
إلى جَنَى،
ابْنَتِي بِالْمَعْمُودِيَّة

To Jana,
my daughter in Baptism
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## Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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Transliteration of the Arabic Script

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The tāʾ marbūṭah will be rendered “t” when it occurs in the status constructus and otherwise “h” (status absolutus) to differentiate between it and the vowel “a” at the end of a word.

The hamzah will be transcribed only when it forms part of the word (both middle and end) and not when it is the first letter.

Yāʾ al-nisbah is transliterated into iyy as it should be except when it occurs at the end of the word. In this case, it is rendered as ī.
### Transliteration of Syriac (Estrangelo) Script

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Preface

My interest in the *Commentary on the Creed* began while writing my doctoral dissertation,¹ which studied and analyzed the Trinitarian and Christological thought of Elias of Nisibis.² During that research, I discovered that the *Commentary* had not yet been completely edited and that some scholars had doubts regarding its attribution to Elias of Nisibis. Therefore I produced an edition of the entirety of the work for the dissertation, following one manuscript,³ demonstrating the authenticity of its attribution to Elias of Nisibis and then examining it as one of his works.⁴

After having published the dissertation, I decided to produce a critical edition of the *Commentary* with an English translation and commentary on its content. This idea was adopted by the Editorial Committee, and with its support, this project was realized.

The *Commentary on the Creed* is a catechetical and apologetic work written during the 11th century. The main aim of its author is to explain to the members of his Church, the Nestorian Church, the Creed of Nicaea, the basis of the Christian faith. Through his interpretation of the sections of the Creed, Elias teaches the doctrine of his Church of the East, especially expounding Trinitarian dogma as an answer to the Muslims’ accusations and Christological dogma as polemic against the Jacobite doctrine.

Although this *Commentary* was written centuries ago, it is very important to our day. First of all, it is a precious source for those who study the doctrine of the Church of the East, its development and its particularities. Second, it completes the mosaic we have regarding the thought of Elias of Nisibis. Having an apologetic character, the *Commentary* gives us an example of how to treat certain doctrines in dialogue with Islam and of how to inculturate the language of the Muslims, and some of their doctrines and sources, so that, after making the necessary modifications, they could be used as instruments to explain the Christian faith.

This study is divided into three major parts. The first part, entitled “Elias of Nisibis and his Commentary on the Creed”, is divided into four chapters: chapter one presents Elias’ life, his works and the particularities of the historical context in which he lived; chapter two describes the examined manuscripts and presents

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¹ Cfr. Eid, *La cristologia*.
an explanation of the methods followed in order to produce the critical edition and to translate it into English and deals with the question of the attribution of the Commentary to Elias; chapter three offers an analysis of the text of the Syriac Creed, its Arabic translation, and the biblical citations made by the author, while chapter four offers an analysis of the Trinitarian, Christological and other doctrines treated in the work. The second part of the research is the critical edition of the Commentary, its English translation, and some comments on the text and its content. There follows part three, which contains a lexicon of the critical edition and an index of its terms. Finally, there is a list of bibliographical references used in this research.

I would like to thank my friend Lisa Batarseh and fr. Thomas J. Carroll, S.J. who carefully read this work, corrected the English and offered their precious suggestions to improve it and to make it better and more comprehensible.
PART I

ELIAS OF NISIBIS AND HIS
COMMENTARY ON THE CREED
Chapter 1
Life and Works of Elias of Nisibis

This chapter deals with the life of our author, Elias of Nisibis, and its historical context. A presentation of the most important information we possess on his life will be offered, as well as a brief analysis of the historical context and a presentation of the three major Christian confessions of the East. The chapter ends with a list of the works attributed to him.

A. The Life of Elias of Nisibis¹

Elias was born on the 11th of February, 975 A.D., in a Mesopotamian village called Šenā (al-Sinn).² For that reason, he is known as “Elias bar Šenāyā” (in Syriac), or “Elias Ibn Sīnā” (in Arabic), which means Elias, the son of Šenā (Sīnā).³ We do not have many primary biographical sources about Elias,⁴ but what we know is that, at a young age, he became a monk at the monastery of St. Michael,⁵ near the city of Mosul.⁶ He was ordained a priest in the year 994, which was followed by his election as archpriest (archimandrite) for the monastery of St. Simon, located in the area of his native village of Šenā.⁷ According to E. Delly, between the years 996-1000, Elias stayed at the monastery of St. Michael, where he studied and showed interest in theology and other sciences.⁸ Because of these talents, in the year 1002, the Catholicos, John V, Ibn īsā, ordained Elias as Bishop of Beṯ Nūḥāḏrā in Adiabene.⁹

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¹ The most recent and complete study on the Life of Elias of Nisibis is: RIGHI, “II. Elia di Nisibi”.
² Cf. RIGHI, “II. Elia di Nisibi”, 95. According to the Synodicon orientale, Šenā is a village on the right side of the Tigris, a bit above the mouth of the great Zab: cf. Synodicon orientale, 683.
³ Cf. RIGHI, “II. Elia di Nisibi”, 95.
⁴ You can see the primary sources available in: MONFERRER SALA, “Elias of Nisibis”, 727.
⁵ One of the most ancient monasteries in the area of Mosul. According to tradition, it was established in the middle of the 4th century. For more detail, see: RASSĀM, Tāräḥ dayr mār Mīḥāʿil; FIEY, Assyrie chrétienne, vol. 2, 660-671.
⁶ On the history of the city of Mosul, see: FIEY, Mossoul chrétienne.
⁸ Cf. E. K. DELLY, “Ellie Bar Sénaya”, 573. Here is clearly seen the famous tradition in the Nestorian Church, i.e., the function of monasteries as schools of theology and other sciences. On this tradition, see: A. H. BECKER, Fear of God, 22-40.
⁹ Cf. RIGHI, “II. Elia di Nisibi”, 97. On the Nestorian (East Syrian) ecclesiastical province of Adiabene, see: FIEY, Assyrie chrétienne, vol. 1, 37-223; on the dioceses of Beṯ Nūḥāḏrā, see: FIEY, Assyrie chrétienne, vol. 2; see page 343, where the name of Elias appears in the list of the Bishops of the dioceses, as the 10th bishop.
We also know that as Bishop of Beṯ Nūḥaḏrā he was opposed to the election of the Catholicos, Išo'yāb IV, with whom he was later reconciled. On the 26th of December 1008, he was enthroned as Metropolitan of the city of Nisibis (the present-day Nusaybin, Turkey) and because of this, he is also known as Elias of Nisibis (Īliyyā al-Naṣībī, Īliyyā al-Naṣībīnī, or Īliyyā muṭrān Naṣībīn). As Metropolitan of Nisibis, Elias met the Muslim vizier, Abū al-Qāsim al-Maġribī (d. 1027), with whom he took part, from the 15th to the 29th of July 1027, in a series of sessions (mağālis) about theological doctrines and other topics. After these sessions, he wrote a work entitled The Sessions (Al-mağālis), in which he records the discussions with the vizier. Scholars do not agree on the date of his death. According to G. Graf, Elias died after the year 1049, while E. Delly, J. M. Fiey and S. Kh. Samir maintain that the Metropolitan died on Friday the 18th of July of the year 1046. As D. Righi notes, the latter opinion is probably more accurate.

Elias is considered to be the most important and significant Nestorian writer of the 11th century. He was known not only to Christian thinkers, theologians and philosophers, but also to Muslim mutakallimūn and scholars. This was because of his knowledge of medicine, mathematics, philosophy, Arabic and Syriac philology, ethics, Christian theology and Islamic kalām. He wrote mainly in Arabic, but also in Syriac, on different theological topics. His works include apologies against Muslims and other Christian confessions and texts on ethics and morals, Church history, and Canon law, as well as a Syriac grammar, a Syriac-Arabic lexicon, and spiritual treatises.

B. Elias of Nisibis and his Historical Context

During the 10th and 11th centuries, the Islamic world was divided into three caliphates: 1) the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt, 2) the Abbasid caliphate in Mesopotamia and Syria and 3) the Umayyad caliphate in Spain. It was a very difficult time for the Christians in the Fatimid and the Abbasid caliphates, as they were persecuted.
by the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-amr Allāh (d. 1021) in Egypt\textsuperscript{19} and discriminated against in the Abbasid caliphate, especially after the victory of the Byzantine Empire in the wars against the Abbasids at the end of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{20} In fact, the Emperors Nikephoros II Phokas († 969), John I Tzimiskes († 976) and Basil II († 1025) re-conquered the cities of Antioch, Edessa and Aleppo from the Muslims.\textsuperscript{21} Sometimes after a Byzantine victory, Christians in the Abbasid caliphate faced acts of discrimination. Sometimes churches were destroyed, and at other times the “Conditions (or Pact) of ‘Umar” (al-Šurūṭ al-umariyyah)\textsuperscript{22} were applied.\textsuperscript{23} This means that the area where our Metropolitan lived and worked, between the borders of Byzantium and the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad, was always under attack and suffered from a polemical atmosphere.\textsuperscript{24}

Within this polemical atmosphere, as J. M. Fiey affirms, and although there were tensions between Christians and Muslims, dialogue and discussions between Christian theologians and Muslim mutakallimūn continued.\textsuperscript{25} As a proof one might note that our Elias of Nisibis, as mentioned above, participated in such scientific and interreligious dialogues. He dialogued, in fact, with the vizier, Abū al-Qāsim al-Maʿgrībī, of the banū Maġrib, who, along with the banū Būyīdī, controlled the Abbasid rulers.\textsuperscript{26} The banū Maġrib, in addition, controlled all of the main political functions in the area of Nisibis and Mayyāfāriqīn.\textsuperscript{27}

The situation among the Christian confessions was characterized by tension and polemical relations.\textsuperscript{28} We have numerous apologetic and polemical works

\textsuperscript{19} For details on this caliph and caliphate, and the persecution against the Christians, see: Elli, Storia, vol. 2, 86-106. See also: La Spisa, “I. L’Epoca di Elia di Nisibi”, 63-68.
\textsuperscript{20} Cfr. Fiey, Chrétiens syriaques, 175-176.
\textsuperscript{21} On these periods of war, see: Ostorogorsky, Storia dell’impero bizantino, 249-271.
\textsuperscript{22} It is a treaty between Christians and Muslims attributed to the Caliph ‘Umar bin al-Ḫaṭṭāb. The authenticity of this document and its attribution to this caliph are in discussion among scholars. However, it quickly received canonical status in Islamic law and jurisprudence. Its content is characterized by strong discrimination against Christians, their liturgical and religious life, and, in general, their status in Islamic society. For more details, see: Levy-Rubin, “The Pact of ‘Umar”; Tritton, The Caliphs; Samir, “Le comunità cristiane”, 81-83.
\textsuperscript{23} Cfr. Fiey, Chrétiens syriaques, 193-194.
\textsuperscript{25} Cfr. Fiey, Chrétiens syriaques, 184-185.
\textsuperscript{26} On how these two families controlled the political situation of the Abbasid court, see: La Spisa, “I. L’Epoca di Elia di Nisibi”, 51-52,61.
\textsuperscript{28} It is important to mention that there were always attacks between the Syrian Jacobites and the Nestorians (Fiey, Chrétiens syriaques, 132-184); on the other hand, the Chalcedonian Byzantines considered the Syrian Jacobites and the Nestorians as enemies and heretics. They destroyed their churches and treated them badly when the Chalcedonian Byzantines re-conquered areas such as Nisibis and Antioch from the Abbasids in October 972 (Fiey, Chrétiens syriaques, 162).
written by one confession against another. For example: the On the Councils and the Epistle to the Armenians composed by the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurrah against Miaphysites and the Nestorians, or the Answer to Melkites on Union composed by the Jacobite (Miaphysite) Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrīṭi against the Melkites. Our author wrote such works, in which he considered the Jacobites and Melkites as heretics. This element is reflected clearly in our Metropolitan’s Commentary on the Creed. (see vv. 68-69, 114).

C. The Three Christian Confessions of the East

To understand this last section of information, we should explain the differences between the three main Christian confessions in the East and the terms we used for them in our work. Christians in classical times were divided into three main groups because of Christological issues. The historical events which gave rise to these divisions stemmed from the antagonism between the Christian school of Alexandria and that of Antioch, which included the dispute between Cyril of Alexandria († 444) and Nestorius († 451), and consequently, the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), and the post-Chalcedonian Christological discussion. The main questions concerned the person of Christ and the union between divinity and humanity in Him, and the relation between the result of the union, i.e., Christ, and the divine Word of God. To answer these questions, theologians and thinkers used philosophy and metaphysical terminology such as “nature” (φύσις/kyānā), “person” (πρόσωπον/parṣōpā), “hypostasis” (ὑπόστασις/qnōmā). However, the different ways of understanding such terms, the different uses of the terms, and the differences between the original Greek and, mainly, their Syriac translation were the principal reasons for the misunderstanding between the theological

29 On this topic, see: Griffith, “‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’”, especially pages 9-18.
30 On the two schools, their exegetical methods and theological doctrines, see: Sellers, Two Ancient Christologies.
31 On this topic, see the following studies: De Halleux, “Nestorius. Histoire et Doctrine”; Soré, “The Person and Teachings of Nestorius”; McGuicking, St. Cyril of Alexandria; Wessel, Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy.
32 Regarding these Councils and their context, see the following studies: Scipioni, Nestorio e il Concilio di Efeso; M. R. Pecorara Maggi, Il Processo a Calcedonia; Ducay (ed.), Il Concilio di Calcedonia; Price & Whitby (eds.), Chalcedon in Context.
34 Regarding the Christological discussion, consult the works of A. Grillmeier and his collaborators, and especially: Grillmeier & Hahnthaler, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol. II/II and II/III.
Christian schools and currents, which misunderstanding led to discord between them regarding how they defined Christ, the Lord.

1. Melkites

The Melkites were those who accepted Chalcedon and the following Ecumenical Councils. Their Christological doctrine began with the Chalcedonian formula: Christ is two natures, one hypostasis and one person. They also accepted the title *Theotokos* for Mary.\(^{35}\) During the sixth century, in answering the questions of their adversaries, they identified Christ as the eternal Word of God, teaching that the union took place in the divine hypostasis of the Word and Son of God.\(^{36}\)

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35 The definition of Chalcedon: “So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer, as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single hypostasis; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God’s Word and Logos, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning”. TANNER (ed.), *Decrees*, vol. I, *86.

36 See the 4\(^{th}\) and 5\(^{th}\) anathemas of the fifth Ecumenical Council: the 4\(^{th}\) anathema: “If anyone declares that it was only in respect of grace, or of principle of action, or of dignity or in respect of equality of honour, or in respect of authority or of some relation, or of some affection or power that there was a unity made between the Word of God and the man; or if anyone alleges that it is in respect of good will, as if God the Word was pleased with the man, because he was well and properly disposed to God, as Theodore claims in his madness; or if anyone says that this union is only a sort of synonymity, as the Nestorians allege, who call the Word of God Jesus and Christ, and even designate the human separately by the names “Christ” and “Son”, discussing quite obviously two different persons, and only pretending to speak of one person and one Christ when the reference is to his title, honour, dignity or adoration; finally, if anyone does not accept the teaching of the holy fathers, that the union occurred of the Word of God with human flesh, which is possessed by a rational and intellectual soul, and that this union is by synthesis or by person, and that therefore there is only one person, namely the Lord, Jesus Christ, one member of the Holy Trinity: let him be anathema...”. TANNER (ed.), *Decrees*, vol. I, *114-115;*

the 5\(^{th}\) anathema: “If anyone understands by the single subsistence of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it covers the meaning of many substances, and by this argument tries to introduce into the mystery of Christ two substances or two persons, and having brought in two persons, then talks of one person only in respect of dignity, honour or adoration, as both Theodore and Nestorius have written in their madness; if anyone falsely represents the holy synod of Chalcedon, making out that it accepted this heretical view by its terminology of “one
This was the fruit of the so-called neo-Chalcedonian movement and its doctrine of the *enhypostatōn*, that is, the humanity of Christ has as a hypostasis the one of the eternal Logos and therefore the human nature of Christ is enhypostatized in the hypostasis of the Logos.\(^{37}\) Consequently, they developed the orthodox *theopaschitē* formula, “One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh” (*Uno ex Trinitate carne passo*).\(^{38}\) During the seventh century, as a reaction to monothelitism and monoenergetism, their doctrinal understanding culminated with the teaching that Christ has two wills and two energies, divine and human.\(^{39}\)

Historically, they were called “Chalcedonians” because they accepted the Council of Chalcedon and its doctrine. Their Syriac enemies and opponents, *i.e.*, the Jacobites, named them “Melkites”, a term deriving from the Syriac *malkā/mlek*, which means “king” or “emperor”, and so the term *malkāyā*, that literally means “royal”, became an appellation for the Chalcedonians.\(^{40}\) With this term, Jacobites meant to accuse Chalcedonians of following the faith of the emperor, *i.e.*, the Christological doctrine of Chalcedon accepted by the emperor Marcian (450-457), rather than the orthodox faith of the Apostles, which according to their opinion was affirmed by Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Ephesus (431).

After the Arabic and Muslim conquest of the Middle East and the adoption of Arabic by the Christians of the East, all of the confessions, *i.e.*, the Syriac-Jacobites, Copts and Nestorians, called the Chalcedonians “Melkites” (*Malakiyyah*), since the Arabic term *malik*, as in Syriac, means “king” or “emperor”.\(^{41}\) Incidentally, the Melkites accepted this term, seeing it as a term of honor, and used it to refer to themselves.\(^{42}\)

2. Jacobites-Miaphysites

The Jacobites-miaphysites did not accept the faith and the doctrine of Chalcedon and considered it heretical. They accepted the first three Ecumenical

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37 Regarding this doctrine, see: GLEED, *The Development of the Term ἐνυπόστατος*.
38 On neo-Chalcedonism, see the recent study considered as a synthesis of the Christology of the 6th century: DELL’OSSO, *Cristo e Logos*.
39 Regarding this, see: HOVORUN, *Will, Action, and Freedom*.
40 Cfr. COSTAZ, *Dictionnaire syriaque*, 86.
42 On the term “melkite”, its origin and its use by the Jacobites and other non-Chalcedonians, see: GRIFFITH, “‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’”, 12-16.
1. Life and Works of Elias of Nisibis

Councils, *i.e.*, Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431). They were mainly Egyptians (Copts and Greeks), followers of Cyril of Alexandria († 444) and Dioscorus of Alexandria († 454) (today the Coptic Orthodox Church); some of the Greeks and Syrians of the zone of Antioch, followers of Severus of Antioch († 538) (today the Syrian Orthodox Church); Armenians (today the Armenian Apostolic Church); Ethiopians (today the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church) and Eritrean (today the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church) and others. Their Christological doctrine is based on the formula, “one nature of God, the Word incarnate” (μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη). As such, they underlined the one nature of the Word of God and could not accept any duality or expressions that might sound dualistic. This was, in fact, the reason why their adversaries called them “monophysites” (monos = one; physis = nature). They did not refer to themselves as monophysites, but instead adopted the term “Jacobites”, also given to them by their enemies. This last denomination comes from the name of the Bishop of Edessa, Jacob Baradaeus († 578), the organizer of the separated hierarchy of the Syrian Monophysite Church. They considered it to be an honorable title. It was accepted not only by the Syrian Monophysites, but also by other followers of this Christological current, such as the Copts. It is notable that scholars today prefer to refer to them as miaphysites (mia = one; physis = nature) in order to distinguish them from the true and extreme monophysites, since their doctrine is considered only as verbal monophysitism, in fact, the term “mia” refers to the formula “one nature (μία φύσις) of two natures (ἐκ δύο φύσεων)”.

3. Nestorians-Dyophysites

The Church of the East (known today as the Assyrian Church), *i.e.*, the Christians of the Sassanid Empire, comprising of Syrians and Persians, maintained the traditional Antiochene Christology until the year 612. Christ, according to this doctrine, is one person (parşōpā) and two natures (kyānē). In the year 612,

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43 See more: Luce, Monophysitism, Past and Present.
46 See, for example, the opinion of the Coptic Bishop Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa († after 987) who says: “Why, then, the believers who did not accept [Chalcedon] are called ‘Jacobites’? … and this name remains till today attributed to them. This is, in fact, the reason of calling the believers ‘Jacobites’”. Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa, Réfutation, 207-210.
47 On this, see the proposal of S. Brock and the non-offensive terminology: Brock, “Il dibattito cristologico”. In addition, see the opposite opinion expressed in: Luisier, “Il miafisismo”.
48 Regarding the history of this Christianity and its theology, see: Baum & Winkler, The Church of the East. See also: Soro, The Church of the East.
the Church of the East held a synod known as “the assembly of the bishops” and adopted a new Christology: Christ is known to be one person (parṣōpā) two natures (kyānē) and two hypostases (qnōmē). They themselves considered this doctrine to be “Nestorianism” and proclaimed themselves to be Nestorians. This doctrine, however, does not teach that there are two sons or Christs, i.e., two separated individuals (persons). Still, their enemies accused them of teaching this heretical doctrine.

This Church accepts only the first two Ecumenical Councils. It was organized as a separated hierarchy, outside of the Christian West, Byzantium. The bishop of the capital city, Seleucia-Ctesiphon, had the title of “Catholics” (ḏāṯuliq) and because of that it was also called the Church of the Catholicate (al-bī’ah al-ḏāṯulijiyah). These terms were not considered always offensive. One might find them in some of this Church’s documents or in some of its theologians and thinkers, as is demonstrated in the current work under study, i.e., the Commentary on the Creed by Elias of Nisibis (see v. 115). We also know that scholars today prefer to call these Christians dyophysites (from the Greek dyo: two and physis: nature). It seems that scholars use this term, instead of Nestorian, because they avoid offending the Church of the East by accusing it of Nestorianism. But the Church of the East cannot simply be called dyophysite – which is also the doctrine of the Chalcedonians – because since 612 they also have proclaimed two hypostases (qnōmē) in Christ. As mentioned above, they never taught true “Nestorianism”, i.e., a divided Christology. However, calling them Nestorian means that they have a particular Christology: Christ is two natures (kyānē), two hypostases (qnōmē) and one person (parṣōpā).

Finally, it should be noted that, as the classical texts of these Churches used such terminology as “Melkites”, “Jacobites” and “Nestorians”, and as these terms were adopted by the Churches themselves, the use of the same terminology, as our author does (for Jacobites, see vv. 68-69, and 114; for Melkites, v. 135; and for Nestorians, v. 115), can be considered respectful.

49 On the Christology of the Church of the East, see the following studies: Brock, “The Christology of the Church of the East”; Brock, “The Christology of the Church of East”; Patros, “La cristologia della Chiesa d’Oriente”.

50 For the text of the assembly, see: Synodicon orientale, 562-580. The bishops affirm that they are Nestorians and that they follow the Christological doctrine of what they consider the doctrine of Nestorius is. Cf. Synodicon orientale, 574:

51 Cfr. Baum & Winkler, The Church of the East, 4-5, 22-23, 34, 39.

52 Regarding this, see: Brock, “The Church of the East”.

53 On this, see: Soro, The Church of the East, 156-164.

54 On this, see the proposal of S. Brock and the non-offensive terminology: Brock, “il dibattito cristologico”. In addition, see the opposite opinion expressed in: Luisier, “Il miafisismo”.
D. The works of Elias of Nisibis

Elias is considered to be the most significant Christian author of the 10th and 11th centuries. As above mentioned, he wrote in various fields and about various topics, both in Syriac and in Arabic. The importance of Elias’ thought, as S. Kh. Samir noted, is to be found in his success in inculturating his philosophical and theological doctrine within the Islamic world by adopting Islamic language and terminology. By doing so, he was better understood, especially by his Muslim opponents in dialogue.

Today, we can confirm that Elias wrote at least twenty-four works. Unfortunately, some of them are only partially edited, others are edited without a critical edition, and still others are completely unedited. This leads one to question the authenticity of some of the works attributed to him. Since, however, we do not have critical editions for these works, we cannot come to a final decision regarding their authenticity, as in the case of the work currently under discussion, i.e., the Commentary on the Creed.

In our study, we will present an overview of the works of Elias that are known, according to the lists offered by G. Graf, S. Kh. Samir and J. P. Monferrer Sala. We will also mention the works which are partially edited or fully edited though lacking a critical edition, as well as those which remain completely unedited. The English titles provided are those proposed by J. P. Monferrer Sala. Added to his list are other works and their English titles which he did not include. For bibliographical information about some studies on the works and thought of the Metropolitan of Nisibis, consult the list of J. P. Monferrer Sala and the bibliography at the end of this study.

1. ܚܡܣܬ ܫ العراقي و水利工程 sql

1. Hamsat šukūk wa-ağwibatuhā

English title: The Answer to Ibn Buṭlān

Unedited

57 For the list of Graf, see: Graf, GCAL II, 178-189, was completed and elaborated by that of Samir, cfr. Samir, “Bibliographie”, 259-284. Recently, Davide Righi compared the two lists and assembled a new list with a description of the works most probably authentic and their contents, cfr. Righi, “II. Elia di Nisibi: Vita e Opere”, 98-139. Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala also describes the works and their contents in his list, as well as the manuscripts that include them and their extant editions and studies. However, his list contains only the works related to Muslims and Islam. Monferrer Sala, “Elias of Nisibis”, 728-741.
58 See the bibliography of this volume.
2. Kitāb Al-azminah (Maktbānutā d-zabnē)

English title: Chronography

3. Kitāb Al-burhān ʿalā šaḥīḥ al-īmān

English title: The Demonstration of the Correctness of the Faith
Unedited
German translation in: Buch vom Beweis der Wahrheit des Glaubens, Louis Horst (trad.) (Colmar: Eugen Barth, 1886).

4. Kitāb Dafʿ al-hamm

English title: The Book on How to Throw Out the Inquietudes
Fully edited

5. Kitāb Al-mağālis

English title: The Sessions (Seven Sessions)
Fully edited in:
• Louis Cheikho, Trois traités anciens de polémique et de théologie chrétienne (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1923), 26-73.
1. Life and Works of Elias of Nisibis


6. Kitāb Fī al-mawārīṭ
English title: The Book on the Successions
Unedited

7. Kitāb Al-turğumān fi təlîm luğat al-suryān
English title: Arabic-Syriac Dictionary

8. Maqālah fī al-awzān wa-l-makārīl
English title: Treatise on the Weights and the Sizes
Unedited

9. Maqālah fī ma-cnā kalimatay kiyān wa-Ilāh
English title: Treatise on the Meaning of the Two Terms, Kiyān and Ilāh

10. Maqālah fī na-īm al-āḫirah
English title: Treatise on the Bliss of the Afterlife

11. Risālah ilā al-wazīr al-kāmil Abī al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī
English title: Letter to the Vizier, the Most Excellent Abī al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī
Unedited.

12. Risālah fī al-Ḥāliq
English title: Treatise on the Creator
13. Risālah fī ḥudūt al-ċālam wa-waḥdāniyyat al-Ḫāliq wa-taṭlīṭ al-aqānīm

English title: Epistle on the Temporality of the World, and the Oneness of the Creator and the Threeness of the Hypostases


14. Risālah fī faḍīlat al-ʿafāf

English title: Epistle on the Merit of Chastity


15. Risālah fī waḥdāniyyat al-Ḫāliq wa-taṭlīṭ aqānīmih

English title: Epistle on the Oneness of the Creator and Threeness of His Hypostases

Fully edited in:
- “Risālah fī waḥdāniyyat al-Ḫāliq wa taṭlīṭ aqānīmih”, in: Louis Cheikh, Trois traités anciens de polémique et de théologie chrétienne (Beyrouth: Imprimerie catholique, 1923), 88-93.


16. Kitāb Tafsīr al-amānah al-kabīrah

English title: Commentary on the Creed


17. Tasbīḥ Mār Īliyyā

English title: The Chant of Mar Elias

Chapter 2
The Commentary on the Creed
Authorship and Manuscript Transmission

This chapter deals with the examination of the authenticity of the Commentary on the Creed and its attribution to Elias of Nisibis. The chapter includes a presentation of the manuscripts taken into examination and a description of them and considers some related details, such as the method followed in the critical edition and the translation. There follows an examination of the authenticity, which will start with a presentation of the opinions of the different scholars continues with a discussion of their hypotheses and arguments, and concludes with the opinion of this author and his argumentation. Consequentially, a tree diagram of the manuscripts will be offered, which diagram reveals the relationship between the manuscripts. Finally, a comment on the Commentary on the Creed as a literary genre will be presented.

A. Description of the Manuscripts and Methodological Remarks and Notes

1. Description of the Manuscripts

J. P. Monferrer Sala, who took into consideration the details furnished by G. Graf, has shown that the Commentary exists in five manuscripts: Vat. ar. 143; BO 562; Neofiti 52; BL Or. 4431, and Mardin 94. Following is a short description of the first four manuscripts examined. The fifth one that should be in the Chaldean Archbishopric seems to be lost.

   a) Vaticano arabo 143 (Vat. ar. 143)
   Date: 12th-13th century
   Language: Arabic with sentences in Syriac
   Full reference: Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticano arabo 143
   Abbreviation in the edition: A

Contents: fol. 1v-126v: Kitāb Al-mağālis (The Sessions);
fol. 127r-148v: Tafsīr al-amānah (Commentary on the Creed).

Colophon [149r]:

وذلك برَّسُم خزانة الريس الأجل المُؤَوِّف الشماس العظيم الدُّين النقي الورع ميخائيل
بن موشي بن دهوكي نفعه الله يُهِ وَأَلِهَ مَهَ الاحتراء بِمَا وَالْكَشَا مُه سَرُه
وَمَكُونَهُ بِشَفَاعة البتول الراِكِبَة وَمِن قِرَبِ الحَيَاة الَّهِيَة وَفِي الدُّنْيَا.

Information in the colophon: This document includes the name of the owner of the manuscript: the deacon Michael (Mīhāʿīl), son of Moses (Mūṣī), son of Ḥawwāš al-Dahūkī, i.e., of Dahok, a city in northern Mosul.

b) Beirut, Bibliothèque orientale 562 (BO 562)

Date: 1564 A.D.
Language: Arabic with sentences in Syriac
Abbreviation in the edition: B
Contents: fol. 2v-13v: Tafsīr al-amānah (Commentary on the Creed);
fol. 14rv: blank;
fol. 15r-69v: Farāʾīd al-fawāʾīd fi ʿuṣūl ad-dīn wa-l-aqāʾīd (The book of the pearls of useful matters concerning the fundamental doctrines of religion).3

Colophon for the first work:

فرأيد الفوايد في اصول الدين والقواعد تصنيف الخاطئ خادم كرسي [unreadable][15r]
المطرينة بنصبيبي المحروسة وارمينية واعمالها عقى الله عنه وعن من قرأ فيه وفهم معنيه
وعلم جميع المومنين أمن

Colophon for the second work:

هذا الكتاب [unreadable][69r] نهار السبت آخر ايلول المبارك ♦ سنة الف وثمانية
وخمسه وسيعين للاسكندر اليوناني المقدوني ♦ والحمد لله وحده ♦ تم وكم كتاب
فرأيد الفوايد في اصول الدين والعقائد فرح الله من قرأ فيه وتحقق معانيه ودعا بالعفو
والغفرة [unreadable] ولجميع المومنين أمن

3 This work, as will see in point B of this chapter, is written by ‘Abdisho’ of Nisibis († 1318), and the English title we use here is given in: Teule, “‘Abdisho’ of Nisibis”, 756.
2. The Commentary on the Creed. Authorship and Manuscript Transmission

Information in the colophons: Fol. 15r includes information regarding the second work of the manuscript, Farāʾid al-fawāʾid fī uṣūl ad-dīn wa-l-qawāʾid, attributed to the bishop of Nisibis and Armenia, without mentioning his name. On folio 69r, we have the date when this manuscript was copied on Saturday end of September 1875 A.G. (that is Saturday, Septembre 30th 1564 A.D.). The place where this manuscript was copied appears on folio 69v, the city of al-Ḡazīrah, the name of the copyist, the priest, ʿAṭāyah, son of the priest Faraḡ, who lived at the time of Catholicos mār Elias and the Metropolitan of al-Ḡazīrah, mār Joseph (Yūsuf). In addition, it informs us that the copy was made at the request of its owner, Īšūʾyāb, Metropolitan of Nisibis and Mardin.

c) Neofiti 52

Date: 1676 A.D.

Language: Eastern garshuni with sentences in Syriac

Full reference: Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Neofiti 52

Abbreviation in the edition: C

Contents: fol. 1v-10v: Some prayers;
fol. 11v-71v: Kitāb Al-mağālis (The Sessions);
fol. 71v-84v: Tafsīr al-amānah (Commentary on the Creed);
fol. 84v-87r: Another prayer;
fol. 87v-167v: Some apocryphal accounts.

Colophon:
Information in the colophon: Fol. 83v includes: 1) the date of the manuscript, 23 of March 1987 A.G. (1676 A.D.); 2) and the name of the copyist, deacon ‘Abd al-Karīm, son of the priest ʿĪsā of Mosul (al-Mawṣilī). At the beginning of fol. 84r, we have the same information written in the Syriac language, and not garshuni (Arabic). Then, we have more information regarding the authors of the two works of the manuscript, The Sessions and Commentary, which are attributed to Elias of Nisibis. We also have the information regarding the priest who made this copy, Sīfr, son of the priest Michael (Mīḥāīl) of Mosul.

d) London, British Library, Oriental 4431 (BL Or. 4431)

Date: Saturday 11th January 1704

Language: Arabic with sentences in Syriac

Current location: London, British Library

Abbreviation in the edition: D

Contents: fol. 2v-122r: Kitāb Al-mağālis (The Sessions);
fol. 123v-145r: Tafsīr al-amānah (Commentary on the Creed).

Colophon:

[121v] كمل هذا الكتاب الشريف على يد الخاطئ الحكيم البيس المسكين شمس هرمز
ولد فراشوز الحداد وقد وقع الفراغ منه يوم السبت من شهر كانون الآخر احد عشر يوم
به سنة ألف وسبعماية واربع سنين من ولادة سيدنا ومخلصنا مسيح

4 It was written as tağassad, then it was cancelled, and wilādah was written under it.
Information in the colophon: This document includes the date, Saturday January 11th 1704 and the name of the copyist, deacon Hirmiz, son of Qiryāqūz, the blacksmith.

2. Methodological Remarks and Notes

As mentioned earlier, E. Delly had already published a partial edition of this work. His edition was not critical, and he followed only one manuscript, Vat. ar. 143, although in some places, where his base manuscript was not clear, he used Neofiti 52. For this author’s critical edition, however, four of the five manuscripts were consulted and examined and were taken into consideration for both the critical edition and the examination of the authenticity of the work. No information was available regarding where to find the Mardin 94 or even a digital copy of it.

Vat. ar. 143 was chosen as the base manuscript for this study because it is the earliest manuscript of the four (12th-13th centuries) and contains the whole Commentary. That this manuscript is the basic one of the edition does not mean that the edition is an exact copy of Vat. ar. 143. The purpose of a critical edition is to produce a text which is as similar as possible, given the limits of current scholarship, to the original text written by, Elias of Nisibis. In the case of this critical edition of the Commentary the differences between the manuscripts taken into examination were found to be minimal, even though this author did not agree with the base manuscript in some cases and preferred to follow another one, considering it more correct or more suitable. It is clear, however, that reproduction of the original text of an author must remain an approximation, when, as in our case, the author’s autograph is not preserved.

This author’s critical edition is produced according to the method and rules of Fr. S. Kh. Samir, S.J. – which are published in the acta of the first International Congress of Arab-Christian Studies, held in Goslar in 1980 – and those of Fr. Wafik Nasry, S.J., published in his The Caliph and the Bishop. A summary of these rules is the following:

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5 The date, however, does not fall on Saturday neither in the Julian nor in the Gregorian calendar!
1. Orthography: If the word was not written according to the current spelling in all manuscripts, it was adjusted in the critical edition, and in the apparatus there is mention of the different spellings of the manuscripts. In other cases, when the current spelling is found only in some of the manuscripts, that current spelling was adopted in the critical text and the other spellings were mentioned in the critical apparatus. One of the most notable orthographical old spellings, one might note, is the use of the hamzah (⟨⟩). Sometimes the copyists wrote this letter, but mostly they did not. In this critical edition, the hamzah was always written, mentioning, in the critical apparatus, the different spellings with or without the hamzah. Finally, a note regarding the final “t” (⟨⟩/⟨⟩): although the copyists of the manuscripts did not always put the two dots, they have always been written in this critical edition, without, however, mentioning in the critical apparatus which manuscripts have omitted the dots.

2. Grammatical errors and vocalization: The purpose of the editor of this critical edition is to offer a grammatically correct Arabic text; therefore, all grammatical errors were corrected in the critical edition, the critical apparatus detailing the wrong forms and the errors in the different manuscripts. Regarding the vocalization, it was decided to vocalize the critical text entirely and not to take into consideration, in the critical apparatus, the variant vocalizations one might find in some manuscripts. In a case where the wrong vocalization induces a wrong spelling, such as when the accusative (⟨⟩) was written in the place of the nominative (⟨⟩), the errors were mentioned in the critical apparatus.

3. It was noted that some manuscripts add words that other manuscripts do not. After comparison with the base manuscript and examination of their context, when these additions were judged to be an elaboration of the copyists, that were mentioned in the critical apparatus after the sign plus (+). Otherwise, these words were considered as a part of the critical text and, in the critical apparatus, there is mention of their omission in the particular manuscripts, followed by the sign minus (−).

4. Garshuni alphabet: One of the four manuscripts taken into consideration, Neofiti 52, is written in garshuni, i.e., using Syriac letters to produce the Arabic text. The problem with garshuni is that the Syriac alphabet has not an equivalent for all the Arabic letters. For example, in Neofiti 52, both Arabic letters t and ṭ are written by the Syriac letter t (⟨⟩). For the letters d and ḏ, the copyist used the Syriac d (⟨⟩) sometimes putting a dot above the letter to distinguish between d – without dot – and ḏ – with dot. And the Arabic ḍ was sometimes was transliterated into Syriac by ṣ (⟨⟩), other times by ṭ (⟨⟩).
which corresponds also to the Arabic т (ط) and prevState: invisible д (ظ). In addition, one should read the final т (تا) where the copyist use the Syriac ह (ܗ). The copyist sometimes adds two dots (ە) to distinguish the final т from the ह. Since in this study just one manuscript is written in garshuni, it was not problematic to leave it as the final manuscript to follow. In the critical apparatus, there is mention of all the differences between this manuscript and each of the other manuscripts, without however, entering into detail regarding the confusing letters mentioned above. In fact, there was no case in which it was difficult to decide which Arabic letter the copyist meant to transliterate by the Syriac.

5. Division into verses: The editor of the critical edition divided the text into verses, an organization which is not evident in the manuscripts. Such division helps scholars, such as the editor himself, who may refer to a sentence by mentioning its number.

The English translation aims to be faithful to the Arabic text, so it is as literal a translation as possible. Where a literal translation could not give the sense of the original Arabic, an appropriate English version is included in the main text, while the literal translation is given in a footnote. In addition, further comments are provided in the footnotes of the translation, as well as such supplementary information as references to biblical quotations, clarifications on some terms and concepts, etc., so as to leave the critical edition itself without excessive notes or details. The translation, finally, is divided also into verses following the order and numeration of the Arabic text as closely as possible.

**B. The Authenticity of the *Commentary on the Creed* and its Attribution**

The question regarding the attribution of the *Commentary of the Creed* to Elias of Nisibis calls for a discussion of the opinions of the scholars who doubt this attribution and attribute it to another author, especially of the opinion of G. Graf and those who follow him. The errors which G. Graf made in his hypothesis will be demonstrated. A presentation of this author’s argument in support of the opinion that the *Commentary* may be attributed to Elias of Nisibis will follow.
1. Status quaestionis

The first scholar who attributed the Commentary to Elias of Nisibis was Assemani. G. Graf, however, rejected such attribution. According to E. Delly, Graf affirmed, based on the colophon of BO 562, that the Commentary was written by İṣūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn, the Metropolitan of Nisibis during the second half of the 13th century. L. Cheikho, as S. Kh. Samir noted, at the begging he followed the opinion of Assemani, however, after he attributed the Commentary to İṣūʾyāb. E. Delly, who made a partial edition of the work, again attributed the Commentary to Elias of Nisibis. S. Kh. Samir and J. P. Sala accepted the opinion of E. Delly and mentioned the Commentary as one of Elias’ works in their lists of his works. D. Righi did not take a position in his list of Elias’ works, but presented the opinions of the other scholars in regards to attribution. The last scholar who argued about the attribution was P. Masri. According to him, the discussion on the authenticity of the work has its origin in the colophons of the manuscripts. Later manuscripts, BO 562, and Mardin 94, attribute the work to İṣūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn, while in the oldest manuscript, Vat. ar. 143, it is placed after The Sessions (Al-mağālis) of Elias of Nisibis, without mentioning the name of its author. P. Masri did not take a clear position regarding the attribution, however it seems that he is convinced that the work is by Elias. In fact, he demonstrated that another Nestorian commentary by an anonymous author and written in the 12th century knew of our Commentary and used it as a source, either for the Arabic text of the Creed or for the content of the Commentary itself. This means that for P. Masri the author of our Commentary could not have been the 13th century İṣūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn.

It seems that scholars did not read the manuscripts carefully. For this reason, we believe that, in order to resolve this problem, it is necessary first to analyze the colophons and their placement within the manuscripts that include them. In this way, careful analysis will convincingly demonstrate that the attribution of the Commentary to İṣūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn was an error based on Graf’s misreading of the colophon in BO 562. More careful analysis will then support the attribution of the work to Elias of Nisibis.

2. The Commentary on the Creed Authorship and Manuscript Transmission

2. The Colophons and the Attribution to Īšū‘yāb Ibn Malkūn

This study analyzed four manuscripts of the known five which contain the text of the Commentary. As may be seen below, the Commentary is attributed to Elias of Nisibis in only one of them, i.e., in Neofti 52. The oldest manuscript, Vat. ar. 143, which dates from the 12th – 13th century, does not furnish the name of the author of the work, nor does the latest manuscript examined, BL Or. 4431, copied in the 18th century. In these three manuscripts, the Commentary follows The Sessions of Elias of Nisibis, and this was one of the reasons that led some scholars to attribute it to the same author.

G. Graf, however, as mentioned above, attributed the work to another Nestorian author, who, according to J. M. Fiey,19 was the 15th metropolitan of Nisibis, Īšū‘yāb Ibn Malkūn († early 13th c.).20 E. Delly, trying to explain the reason for this attribution, maintains that G. Graf based his opinion on BO 562 copied in 1564 A.D. This manuscript contains two works: the first is our Commentary, and the second is The Book of the Pearls of Useful Matters Concerning the Fundamental Doctrines of Religion (Farā‘id al-fawā‘id fi uṣūl ad-dīn wa-l-qawā‘id), which is a work of another Metropolitan of Nisibis, ʿAbdīšūr bar Brīšāh († 1318).21 The same manuscript, however, does not mention the name of ʿAbdīšūr. The copyist attributes the work to a certain metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia (fol. 15r). At the time of ʿAbdīšūr, in fact, the bishops of Nisibis had the title “Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia”.22

If the hypothesis of E. Delly is correct, i.e., that G. Graf based his attribution on the BO 562, the reason behind G. Graf’s attribution is his incorrect reading of the information written on fol. 69v. In this folio we read that the manuscript was copied when the Catholicos was mār Elias and the bishop of al-Ğazīrah was mār Yūsuf. The manuscript was copied bi-rasm,23 by the order, request of its owner, Īšū‘yāb, Metropolitan of Nisibis and Mardin. It seems that G. Graf read the words ṣāḥibih wa-mālikih and understood them as an indication of authorship, not of the manuscript’s owner and possessor. This was the first error in Graf’s reading which led him to attribute the work to the famous Metropolitan of Nisibis, Īšū‘yāb Ibn Malkūn.

20 On him, see: Brock, “Isho‘yab bar Malkon”.
21 On him, his works and other details, see: Teule, “Abdisho of Nisibis”.
23 Graf notes that the word bi-rasm means “by the order of”; cfr. Graf, Verzeichnis arabischer kirchlicher termini, 52-53.
G. Graf, unfortunately, made another error in his reading. He did not notice the title given to Īšūʾyāb on fol. 69v: “Metropolitan of Nisibis and Mardin”. At the time of Īšūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn, bishops of Nisibis still had the title “of Nisibis and Armenia”.

G. Graf probably thought that the copyist was alluding, by this title, to the first episcopal throne of Īšūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn. He was, in fact, the bishop of Mardin, under the name Joseph. G. Graf probably noted that, on fol. 15r, the title given to the author of the manuscript’s second work was “Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia”. Consequently, he arrived at the conclusion that the work should be attributed to Īšūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn.

There is, however, some irrationality in this reading and hypothesis. G. Graf noted that the two works in the manuscript are by different authors and that the second work is by ʿAbdišūʾ bar Brīḥa. Although he maintained that the copyist incorrectly attributed the second work to Īšūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn. This final piece of information affirms E. Delly’s hypothesis that G. Graf based his opinion on the manuscript’s colophon itself, in which Īšūʾyāb was mentioned as the owner of the manuscript, and that G. Graf understood it as the copyist’s attribution of both works to the same author. But how could Īšūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn, who died at the beginning of the 13th century, give in the 16th century the order to copy this work along with the work of another Metropolitan of Nisibis, one who died at the beginning of the 14th century?

Clearly, G. Graf did not examine well all of the details that the copyist furnishes in the colophon, e.g., that, when the manuscript was copied (1564 A.D.), the Catholicos of the Church of the East was mār Elias and the Metropolitan of al-Ḡazīrah was mār Yūsuf. As a consequence, first Graf determined that the author of the Commentary was Īšūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn, confusing the manuscript’s owner with the author; second, he maintained that the copyist incorrectly attributed the second work to Īšūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn; third, he concluded that, since Īšūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn was first bishop of Mardin and then Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia, this explains the two titles mentioned in the manuscripts; and, finally, he attributed the second work to ʿAbdišūʾ. One cannot explain how G. Graf could have asserted that Īšūʾyāb Ibn Malkūn could have given the order to copy the manuscript two hundred years after his death. Could it be that there was another Īšūʾyāb who was Metropolitan of Nisibis during the 16th century and that G. Graf did not know of him?

Resolution of this problem required an examination of all the details of the colophon. First, it was necessary to check the list of the Catholicos of the Church of the East during the 16th century. This was a complicated period for the Church

24 Cfr. FEY, Nisibe, 105-107.
of the East. In the year 1552 a schism occurred within the Church. Its hierarchy was split into two main factions, and one of them entered into communion with Rome. In the hierarchy of the other faction, which did not enter in communion with Rome, we find that during the years 1558-1591 the Catholicos was Elias VII.

The second thing necessary was to examine the list of the metropolitans of Nisibis during this century. We found that, at the beginning of the second half of the 16th century, in Nisibis there was an active metropolitan called Īšū-yāb († c. 1575). We know that his origins were in Mosul and that he was in communion with the hierarchy of the Church of the East which did not enter into communion with Rome, i.e., that of Elias VII. In communion with Elias VII was Joseph (Yūsuf), the bishop of Gāzartā (al-Ğazīrah) († c. 1618), who is also mentioned in the colophon in question. Moreover, it is important to note that, during this period, the title of the bishop of Nisibis was “Metropolitan of Nisibis, Mardin, Amid and Armenia”, which confirms this author’s hypothesis, since the title given to Īšū-yāb in the colophon is “Metropolitan of Nisibis and Mardin”.

In conclusion, one can affirm with certainty that Graf’s reading of the colophon of BO 562 was incorrect. The name Īšū-yāb was that of the manuscript’s owner, who was the metropolitan of Nisibis and Mardin, in communion with the Catholicos Elias VII and Joseph the bishop of Gāzartā and who gave the permission and ordered that this manuscript be copied. The interest of the copyist, then, in mentioning all these names and all this information, is to affirm that the manuscript belonged to the branch of the Church of the East (the line of Elias VII), which remained faithful to the Creed and doctrine of the pre-schism Church of the East. This, in fact, explains why this manuscript does not contain, as do the other manuscripts, The Sessions of Elias of Nisibis, an apologetic work against Muslims. It also explains why we have another work instead, The Book of the Pearls of Useful Matters Concerning the Fundamental Doctrines of Religion. Both works, in fact, contain material on the main principles of the doctrine of the Church of the East. The desire of the owner, who chose these two works, and the will of the copyist, who gave such information and details, was to demonstrate that the hierarchy of Elias VII was faithfully following the doctrine of the pre-schism Church of the East.

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26 On this schism, see: WILMSHURST, The Ecclesiastical Organization, 348-360; BELTRAMI, La Chiesa Caldea; FIEY, Pour un Oriens Christianus novus.


29 Cfr. WILMSHURST, The Ecclesiastical Organization, 103-104, 351.

Finally, this analysis demonstrates that the owner of BO 562 was Īšūʿyāb, the Metropolitan of Nisibis, Mardin, Amid and Armenia, during the second half of the 16th century. It is not possible to identify this Īšūʿyāb with Īšūʿyāb Ibn Malkūn. The manuscript contains two works: The Book of the Pearls, which is attributed to a certain Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia; and the Commentary, which has no attribution. This latter fact, in our opinion, seems to be very logical, since, as has been said, in two of the manuscripts we examined, the Commentary is mentioned without any attribution. If the mentioned Īšūʿyāb, cannot be the author, as has been demonstrated, there is no reason to attribute this work to any one Īšūʿyāb and especially not to Ibn Malkūn. In fact, Vat. ar. 143, which was copied between the 12th and 13th centuries, i.e., contemporary with Īšūʿyāb Ibn Malkūn († early 13th c.), does not attribute the Commentary to him, something that one might expect. Who, then, is the author of the Commentary?

3. Elias of Nisibis, the Author of the Commentary

It is clear that the colophon of BO 562 is not helpful. The same one might say regarding Mardin 94, which attribute the Commentary to Īšūʿyāb. Not having, however, an access to this manuscript one might not understand clearly its relationship with BO 562. However, if we examine the other three manuscripts, we notice the following helpful details: 1) in all of them, the Commentary follows The Sessions of Elias; 2) in one, the Commentary is attributed to Elias, and the other two have no attribution. Can one, then, maintain that the Commentary is by Elias of Nisibis? To prove this hypothesis, this study compared the Commentary with other works of Elias. The following points offer a synthesis of this comparison and its results.

a) Similarities with Other Works of Elias of Nisibis

P. Masri had noted a similarity between the Creed’s text (sections 1-6) of Elias’ First Session with the Emir al-Mağribī and the one of the Commentary. In addition, this study found similarity between the Creed’s text (sections 3-5) in Elias’ The Demonstration of the Correctness of the Faith (Kitāb Al-burhān ʿalā šaḥīḥ al-īmān) and the one in the Commentary.

2. The Commentary on the Creed Authorship and Manuscript Transmission

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<td>نؤمن بالواحد الله الأب.</td>
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<td>Section 2</td>
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<td>Section 6</td>
<td>إله حق من إله حق، ابن جوهر أبيه وكتابه.</td>
<td>إله حق من إله حق، ابن جوهر أبيه وكتابه.</td>
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As will be demonstrated below, Elias does not follow an official Arabic translation of the so-called Nicaean Creed. Rather, he translates it directly, probably ad memoriam, from the liturgical Syriac version of the Creed used by his Church. This is, in fact, the reason behind the inexact similarities between the citations above.

However, there are some similarities between the Commentary’s text and the other texts which indicate either a theological elaboration by the author or his preferences in translation. The first example is the use in both the Commentary and the First Session of “the One” (al-Wāḥid) with the determinative article “al”: it is used as an adjective describing the Father at the beginning of section 1 and the Son at the beginning of section 3. Such use will be analyzed further, but for now one might note that, in light of the Muslims accusation of thritheism, Elias underlines the oneness of God, affirming that the Father is “the One” and the Son is also “the One”.

The second example is the Syriac expression for the Creed’s ὁμούσιος, “the Son of His Father’s nature” (bar kyānā d-ʻAbaw). It is translated in both the Commentary and the First Session in the same way: ibn ģawhar Abīh, the Son of His Father’s substance. Elias, then, translates the Syriac nature (kyānā) with the Arabic

33 Elias of Nisibis, Al-mağlis al-awwal, 111.
34 Vat. ar. 180, fol. 166r.
35 See here pages 41-46.
36 See here page 43.
substance (ğawhar). Additionally, in the Commentary he adds the term kiyān as a synonym of ğawhar.

Finally, between the Commentary and The Demonstration there is a notable similarity. In both citations, Elias uses two forms of the same Arabic root ṣ-n-ṣ to translate an affirmation that the Word is not created. In the Commentary, he uses the negation of the passive form lam yuṣna (He is not made), while in The Demonstration, he uses the negation of the nominative phrase laysa bi-maṣnū (He is not made).

There is also a similarity between the interpretation given by Elias of the Creed’s section 3 in the First session and his doctrine regarding Christ in the Commentary.

There is another similarity in interpretation between the Commentary and the The Demonstration. In his interpretation of sections 3-5, Elias gives the same explanation in both works.

Again, though this is not a matter of exact wording, one sees the same thought and the same technical terms: by saying “Lord” (al-Rabb) he means the Word (al-Kalimah) who is eternal (azali); and by saying “Christ”, he means both the eternal Word (al-Kalimah al-azali) and the human being taken from Mary (al-bašarī al-maḥūd min Maryam). This last expression occurs in Elias’ works to indicate the humanity of Christ, as will be confirmed in the next point.

There is another similarity in interpretation between the Commentary and the The Demonstration. In his interpretation of sections 3-5, Elias gives the same explanation in both works.

37 ELIAS OF NISIBIS, Al-mağlis al-awwal, 113.
38 Here we follow the edition of Sako (cfr. SĀKŌ (ed.), Īliyyā al-naṣībīnī, 27-28).
39 Vat. ar. 180, fol. 166r-v.
It is clear not only that both texts employ similar terms, but that they present the same doctrine. The Fathers of Nicaea affirmed that the Son is “not made” because they meant the Word (al-Kalimah) who is the eternal (al-Azalī) and Creator (al-Ḥāliq) and not the created being from Mary.

b) Similarities in Doctrine, Thought and Technical Terms

As mentioned above, this author has analyzed the Trinitarian and Christological doctrine of Elias in a study already published, under the title *La Tunica di al-Masīḥ. La Cristologia delle grandi confessioni cristiane dell’Oriente nel X e XI secolo*, and to which this study will refer when discussing the similarities found here. First is the technical expression Elias uses for the humanity in Christ, “the human being taken from Mary” (al-bašāri al-maḥūḏ min Maryam).

This expression occurs also in the Commentary (vv. 116 and 195). Elias uses this expression to underscore that the humanity in Christ is one individual, i.e., one human being, without using a specific philosophical term for this concept, as his tradition does with the use of the term hypostasis (qnōmā). When he mentions the Word (al-Kalimah), he means the one of the Trinity.

Therefore, Christ is, for Elias, as noted above, the Word and a human being. In this way, Elias, in the Commentary and in other works, was able to affirm the official doctrine of his Church since 612 A.D., that is, that Christ is of two singular natures, two hypostases (qnōmē), divine and human. Elias, however, gives another meaning to the term hypostasis (uqnūm/qiwām). To him it is identified with property (ḥāṣṣah) as is also clear in the Commentary: ḥawāṣṣuh allatī hiya qiwām ḡawharih (He [the Word] is one of His [i.e., God’s] properties, which is [a] hypostasis of His substance), (v. 92). For this reason, he does not understand “hypostasis” as a singular nature, and therefore he uses the expressions “Word” and “human being” to express the doctrine regarding the two natures-hypostases. For Elias, the two hypostases simply mean two different groups of natural properties, something that is also clear in the Commentary (vv. 131-163, 171-175 and 184-186).

According to his Trinitarian doctrine, the Father is identified with the divine substance; He is the cause of the other two hypostases, i.e., properties. In addition, even if He is identified with the substance, He is also one hypostasis (one property). According to such thought, Elias limits the hypostases (aqānīm)
in God to being properties. He, in fact, uses the Islamic doctrine regarding the divine attributes and applies it in his Trinitarian thought, which is also essential to the understanding of his doctrine in the Commentary.

In his Commentary, as well as in other works, such as in his Epistle on the Temporality of the World, and the Oneness of the Creator and the Threeness of the Hypostases (Risālah fi ḥudūṯ al-ʿālam wa-waḥdāniyyat al-Ḥāliq wa-taṭlīṯ al-aqānim), Elias uses the same triad for his Trinitarian explanation: “God, Reason and Life” and “God is rational and alive” (v. 67); the rationality (muṭq), of God the Father is His Word (vv. 19-21, 32-34 and 99) and His Spirit is His Life (ḥayāt) (vv. 67 and 210-212). This means that they are eternal properties, natural and substantial (vv. 30 and 35). To explain his Trinitarian doctrine, Elias usually uses natural analogies. Some of these analogies are used in the Commentary, such as the one of the Sun (vv. 7, 37-39, 45, 83-84, 210-213) and the one of the human word (vv. 37-38, 45, 92). By using these analogies, Elias wants to explain that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-eternal and that the Father is the cause of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As for Christology in the Commentary and in his other theological works, Elias does not use the technical Christological of his tradition term person, πρόσωπον (parṣōpā), for the one subject of the divine Economy, i.e., the divine providence of the salvation of men. To him the titles, “Christ”, “Son” and “Lord” indicate both realities: human and divine (v. 116). The doctrine of the “common name” is for him enough to explain the unity and the distinction in Christ, without the use of the term πρόσωπον.

In his Commentary, Elias uses traditional Antiochene Christological terms: Christ’s humanity is called Temple (haykal) (v. 79) and the union is expressed as inhabitation (ḥulūl) (vv. 163 and 168). The same terms can be found in his other works as in his second session with the vizier al-Maḡribī. To Elias, the union between the natures in Christ is according to will, honor and pleasure. In the Commentary he declares that the two natures are united by will (mašīʿah) (v. 168) and that humanity received a special honor because of the union with the Word (v. 185). The same doctrine occurs in other works of Elias, especially the second session with the vizier al-Maḡribī, and his Demonstration of the Correctness of the Faith. Islamic language and
doctrines are also used, directly and indirectly, in his Commentary (for example vv. 126 and 176), as well as in his first and second sessions with vizier al-Maḏrī.\footnote{51}{Cfr. Elias of Nisibis, Al-maḏlis al-awwal, Samir (ed.), 111-115; Elias of Nisibis, Al-maḏlis al-ṯānī, Šākū (ed.), 31-36. See also: Ebeid, La Tunica di al-Masīḥ, 467-476, 503-519.}

This analysis of the Commentary will mention yet other similarities, giving more details and references. This detailed study and presentation confirms with certainty the authenticity of the Commentary and its attribution to Elias, the Nestorian Metropolitan of Nisibis.

\section*{C. The Tree Diagram of the Manuscripts}

Study of the manuscripts and production of the critical edition allows noting the relation between the manuscripts. First of all, three manuscripts, \textit{A}, \textit{C} and \textit{D}, have the same structure: \textit{The Sessions}, followed by \textit{Commentary on the Creed}. Manuscript \textit{C} additionally contains some prayers and apocryphal narrations, but they follow these two works.

Two of these three manuscripts, \textit{A} and \textit{D}, attribute \textit{The Sessions} to Elias of Nisibis, but they leave the reader uncertain regarding the author of the \textit{Commentary on the Creed}. \textit{C}, however, attributes both works to Elias of Nisibis. In \textit{B}, we find that the \textit{Commentary on the Creed} is followed by \textit{The Book of the Pearls of Useful Matters Concerning the Fundamental Doctrines of Religion} attributed to a certain Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia. Taking into consideration what was mentioned above regarding this \textit{B}, when discussing the authenticity of the \textit{Commentary} and its attribution to Elias of Nisibis, it is clear that the copyist of \textit{B} copied two distinct works, each by a Metropolitan of Nisibis, from two distinct manuscripts.

There is no essential difference between the four manuscripts. In two places \textit{C} adds a whole sentence (see v. 31 and 86), however these additions are a repetition of the previous sentences, which could be explained as an error made by the copyist of \textit{C}. With the help of a detailed and careful analysis of the differences and the similarities of the manuscripts one might find that, in general, \textit{A} and \textit{B} are in concordance; there is just one essential difference between them: two additions that \textit{B} has and which are common with \textit{D} (see footnotes 191 and 293 of the critical edition). That \textit{A} and \textit{B} are usually in agreement helps us to note that \textit{C} and \textit{D} are also in agreement. In fact, in addition to the orthographical errors in common between these last two manuscripts, one might note an addition that both of them have (see footnote 237 of the critical edition). Here we present a table which shows some important examples of the relations between the four manuscripts.

Taking into consideration all that has just been mentioned, this author tried to build a tree of relation between the manuscripts:

Original Work

Copy of the autograph

A (12-13th c.)

Copy of A

C (1676) D (1704)

B (1563)

Works of 'Abdīshō̄c
Even if the same orthographical errors are in more than one manuscript, one cannot always conclude that the reason is their following a common source. In fact, different copyists can make the same orthographical error. Even so, the existence of the same orthographical errors and other similarities can be an indication of a relation between the manuscripts in question. Consideration of what has been studied leads to some final remarks:

A and B probably share the same source manuscript from which they copied the Commentary. B in addition has another source, probably a collection of works attributed to Ābdīshō. While copying the manuscript, A omitted some phrases which B has. One copy of A was made in which the copyist tried to correct some orthographical errors found in A and B (in consequence their source). The copyist of A, however, made some other orthographical errors that we find in C and D. For this reason, it is probable that both C and D were copied from this copy of A. What leads this author to hypothesize the existence of a copy of A and not a direct relation between A and C is the attribution of the Commentary to Elias, made by C and not found in either A or D. The grammatical errors common between A and B and D could be also justified through this diagram. An error would have been made by the common source of A and B, repeated in the copy of A, and repeated again in D. In this case the copyist of C corrected the error, and therefore such an error does not exist in C. To explain, in addition, the omissions in A and C, one can maintain a contamination between D and the common source of A and B. This means that the copyist of D had an access to this common source. The reason, finally, that has led this author to maintain that A and B share a common source which is a copy from the original and not the original itself is this contamination. D follows C and its orthographical corrections, and it follows also the order of this manuscript, i.e., The Sessions is followed by the Commentary on the Creed. Therefore, D probably did not have access to B but did have access to the source of B, the same source used to produce A. This can explain why the omission in A and C is found in B and D.

This diagram helped this author also to decide which of manuscripts he should choose as basic and to discern how to deal with its differences from the other manuscripts. Since A is the earliest of the manuscripts it was preferred as the basic manuscript to be followed for the edition. The two omissions in A were added to the critical edition since they exist in B, the second manuscript in chronological order. These two additions, in fact, are very important to the text: the first (footnote 191 of the critical edition) is an essential phrase that makes the meaning clear and the syntax complete; the second case (footnote 293 of the critical edition) is the word “interpretation” (ta‘wil), a word that comes always after the translation of the Syriac section of the Creed into Arabic and by which the author was introducing his explanation and interpretation of the section in examination. When C and D correct the orthographical errors of A (and, as a consequence, of B), and since this
author desires to give a corrected Arabic text, these manuscripts were followed. Finally, in those cases in which an error was found in all the manuscripts this author preferred also to correct it, giving in a note the error as it found in the manuscripts.

D. Commentary on the Creed as Literary Genre

The Commentary on the Creed, as representative of a literary genre, belongs to the patristic tradition of the fourth century. Commentaries were written regarding the local creeds of the churches, to be used during the educational period of the catechumenate. The most important commentary from that period is considered to be included in the catechetical homilies of Cyril of Jerusalem († 386)\(^\text{52}\). In fact, in homilies 6-18, he makes comments on and explains the creed of the Church of Jerusalem to the catechumens. A commentary on and an interpretation of the Creed were also given in the catechetical homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia († 428)\(^\text{53}\), Ambrose of Milan († 397)\(^\text{54}\), and other Church Fathers.\(^\text{55}\) It is to be noted that the Church of the East, in some of its official synods, published certain forms of commentaries on the Creed which were used as professions of faith\(^\text{56}\) and which appear to have been sources for Elias’ Commentary.

First of all, the main scope of such commentaries was catechetical: to explain the tenets of the Christian faith to those who wanted to become baptized Christians. The Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople was also the official basic document to which the Christian authors were referring during the Christological controversy. Finally, in diverses writings of the Fathers one can find a mention and/or an interpretation of that Creed.

In the Arab-Christian heritage, the commentary on the Creed expands its audience. The Arab-Christian authors use their commentary to explain to the members of their churches 1) the Christian faith, in defense against the accusations of Muslims (and Jews) and 2) the proper Christological dogma, in answer to the other Christian confessions. It is clear, then, that the genre of the commentary changed from being mainly catechetical and baptismal, entering instead into the

\(^{52}\) Cfr. PG 33, col. 331-1128.


\(^{54}\) Cfr. FALLER, Sancti Ambrosii.


\(^{56}\) See for example the Synod of 576 (cfr. Synodicon orientale, 112-115; EBEID, “The Christology of the Church of the East”, 373-377) and the one of 585 (cfr. Synodicon orientale, 133-136; EBEID, “The Christology of the Church of the East”, 377-382).
literary genre of Christian apologetic.\textsuperscript{57} The first commentary in the Arab-Christian heritage known of today was written by the Coptic bishop Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffā\textsuperscript{c} during the 10\textsuperscript{th} century,\textsuperscript{58} Tafsīr al-amānah followed by that of Elias of Nisibis, which also was followed by others, such as Abū al-Mağd bin Yūnus (10\textsuperscript{th} century?) who composed the Commentaty on the Orthodox Creed (Tafsīr al-amānah al-Urτūduksiyyah) and the anonymous of the Church of the East (12\textsuperscript{th} century) who composed the Explanation of the Creed (Čarḥ al-amānah).\textsuperscript{59}

Finally, one might better understand the function of the commentaries on the Creed in the Arab-Christian heritage as apologetic literature if he takes into consideration the Islamic accusations against Christians: that Christians had invented the Trinitarian doctrine, which was not the real message of Christ, only at Nicaea and in the composition of the Creed under the influence of Constantine the Great.\textsuperscript{60} Through their Commentaries, Christian authors try to explain to Muslims that this Creed does not teach tritheism and that the Trinity is not contradictory to monotheism. Moreover, Christian readers could find in such works catechetical and apologetic material. The same can be affirmed regarding the Christological part of the Creed. The commentaries on the Creed have also two main goals. The first is to explain to Muslims the Christian faith regarding Christ and its relation to the Trinitarian dogma. The second is to give readers among the faithful polemical material to be able to defend their Christology against any of their opponents from the other Christian confessions.

\textsuperscript{57} Cfr. Masri (ed.), Commentaire du Credo, 37.
\textsuperscript{58} Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffā\textsuperscript{c}, Histoire des Conciles (second Livre), 465-600.
\textsuperscript{59} Cfr. Masri (ed.), Commentaire du Credo, 37-51. We believe there are more than two commentaries and that the research in this field is only at the early stages.
\textsuperscript{60} Cfr. Reynolds, A Muslim Theologian, 163-175. In the same pages the reader can find another accusation against Christians: falsification of Christian doctrine and the invention of the Trinitarian dogma by the Apostle Paul.
Chapter 3
Creed’s Text and Biblical Quotations in the Commentary on the Creed

The Commentary is a true manual of theology. It does not contain simple comments on the Creed’s text, but it is to be considered a catechetical, apologetic and polemic work. This chapter of this study will analyze the content of the Commentary, beginning with the Creed’s text, the Syriac version and the Arabic translation, transmitted by Elias. Then, we will treat the biblical quotations and their nature.

A. Syriac Text of the Creed

In his commentary, Elias cites a Syriac Creed, calling it the Nicene Creed of the 318 Fathers. The system of the Commentary is to cite a Creed’s section in Syriac, to give an Arabic translation of it, and then to give an interpretation of this section. The Church of the East accepted the Council of Nicaea and adopted the Creed of this Council in the year 410 A.D. at the synod of mār Isaac, held at the capital of the Sasanian Empire, Seleucia-Ctesiphon.¹ Today we know at least three versions of the Nicene Creed in the early Syriac tradition: 1) the one of mār Marutha, the bishop of the Roman city of Maipherkat, who was behind the convocation of the Synod of 410 and the acceptance of the doctrine of Nicaea;² 2) the one found in the Synodicon orientale; and 3) the one according to the Western version of the Synodicon. According to A. de Halleux, the version of the Creed found in the Western-Syriac edition preserves the oldest version of the text.³

Elias of Nisibis, however, does not cite the Creed according to its Nicene version, but instead cites the one known as Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which was probably accepted by his Church at the Synod of mār Ābā in 544 A.D.⁴ It is clear, then, that he follows the liturgical text which is in use to the present day by his Church. We know, moreover, that Elias contributed to the canon law of his Church,⁵ which makes us wonder whether he knew of other versions of the Nicene Creed besides the liturgical text. An answer to this question can be found through

¹ Cfr. Baum & Winkler, The Church of the East, 14-17.
³ Cfr. de Halleux, “Le symbole”.
⁴ Cfr. Baum & Winkler, The Church of the East, 35.
a comparison of the texts already mentioned, *i.e.*, that of Elias, that of the *Synodicon orientale*, that of Marutha, and the Western version of the *Synodicon*, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The text cited by Elias</th>
<th>The text of the <em>Synodicon orientale</em></th>
<th>The text according to the Western version</th>
<th>The text of Marutha</th>
<th>Liturgical text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 *Synodicon orientale*, 22.  
7 De Halleux, “Le symbole”, 162-164.  
9 *Proprium missarum*, 151-152.
### 3. Creed’s text and Biblical Quotations in the Commentary on the Creed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ܕܐܝܬܝܠܕ ܘܠܡܐ ܐܬܥܒܕ ܗܘ ܒܪ ܕܐܝܬܘܗܝ ܐܝܬܘܬܐ ܕܐܒܐ ܘܠܡܐ ܐܬܥܒܕ ܗܘ ܕ@$ܒܐܝܠܗ$ ܟܝܢܐ ܕ@$ܐܒܘܗܝ$</td>
<td>The words of God are pure, the words of the Lord are sure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ܕܘܗܝ ܚܡܕܡ ܕܒܐܝܕܗ ܟܠܡܕܡ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܘܒܐܪܥܐ ܘܒܗ ܐܬܬܩܢܘ ܠܡܡܐ ܕܠܥܠܐ ܒܪܝܬܐ</td>
<td>The words of the Father are pure, the words of the Lord are sure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>ܕܘܗܝ ܚܡܕܡ ܕܒܐܝܕܗ ܟܠܡܕܡ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܘܒܐܪܥܐ ܘܒܗ ܐܬܬܩܢܘ ܠܡܡܐ ܕܠܥܠܐ ܒܪܝܬܐ</td>
<td>The words of the Father are pure, the words of the Lord are sure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ܕܘܗܝ ܚܡܕܡ ܕܒܐܝܕܗ ܟܠܡܕܡ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܘܒܐܪܥܐ ܘܒܗ ܐܬܬܩܢܘ ܠܡܡܐ ܕܠܥܠܐ ܒܪܝܬܐ</td>
<td>The words of the Father are pure, the words of the Lord are sure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ܕܘܗܝ ܚܡܕܡ ܕܒܐܝܕܗ ܟܠܡܕܡ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܘܒܐܪܥܐ ܘܒܗ ܐܬܬܩܢܘ ܠܡܡܐ ܕܠܥܠܐ ܒܪܝܬܐ</td>
<td>The words of the Father are pure, the words of the Lord are sure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>ܕܘܗܝ ܚܡܕܡ ܕܒܐܝܕܗ ܟܠܡܕܡ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܐܬܓܕܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܕܝܫܐ ܐ ܒܪܢܫܐ ܐܬܓܫܡ ܐܬܒܪܢܫ ܘܠܒܫ ܦܓܪܐ ܘܗܘܐ ܒܪܢܫܐ ܒܘܗ ܐܬܬܩܢܘ ܡܢ ܛܠܬܢ $ܗ$ ܟܠܡܕܡ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܘܒܐܪܥܐ</td>
<td>The words of the Father are pure, the words of the Lord are sure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>ܕܘܗܝ ܚܡܕܡ ܕܒܐܝܕܗ ܟܠܡܕܡ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܐܬܓܕܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܕܝܫܐ ܐ ܒܪܢܫܐ ܐܬܓܫܡ ܐܬܒܪܢܫ ܘܠܒشا ܦܓܪܐ ܘܗܘܐ ܒܪܢܫܐ ܒܘܗ ܐܬܬܩܢܘ ܡ܎ܢ ܛܠܬܢ $ܗ$ ܟܠܡܕܡ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܘܒܐܪܥܐ</td>
<td>The words of the Father are pure, the words of the Lord are sure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From this comparison, the reader can easily note that Elias faithfully follows the liturgical Syriac text of the Creed, with some variations caused by the transmission of the manuscripts. In section 12 of the liturgical text, for example, one finds the addition “and dead” (w-mīṯ), omitted in Elias’ text. This author is of the opinion that the expression “and dead” originally did not exist in the Nestorian liturgical Creed, since it is omitted in all of the other versions, as is apparent above. Also, in section 17, one finds different terms with the same root š-l-ḥ to express the adjective “apostolic”: in Elias uses mšalaḥṯā, while the liturgical text uses šliḥūṯā.

Other very important details differ among the three versions of the Nicene Creed. The expressions used for the Son of God in sections 5 and 6, for instance, are interesting. In section 5, we see that the three versions of the Nicene Creed give

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10 The text continues with the following sections:


11 Since this text follows the Chaldean Mass book, there is the addition, “and the Son”, ܐܒܐ.
information which is missing from the liturgical text, as well as from that of Elias. Two sources include the expression that the “Son is from the essence/substance of (His) Father” (men ʿūṯūṯā d-ʾAbā/d-ʾAbaw) (Synodicon orientale and Western version), a third that He is “Son, of the nature of the Father” (bar kyānēh d-ʾAbā) (Marutha’s text). In section 6, the expression regarding the relation between the Son and the Father, i.e., the Nicene ὁμοούσιος, exists in all texts and versions. There is an agreement between Elias, the liturgical text and the Western version of the Synodicon regarding the translation of the Greek ὁμοούσιος; it is translated by the expression, “the Son, of the nature of His Father” (bar kyānā d-ʾAbaw). The text of Marutha does not mention the pronoun His, so he translates ὁμοούσιος as “the Son, of the nature of the Father” (bar kyānā d-ʾAbā). In the Synodicon orientale, however, we have another expression for the same technical term: “the Son, of the essence/substance of the Father” (bar ʿūṯūṯā d-ʾAbā).

Consideration of how Elias translates this 6th section into Arabic reveals that he inserts into the expression, “Son, of the nature of His Father” (Ibn ğawhar Abīh), the expression, “and His essence/substance” (wa-kiyānih). This indicates that Elias, even though he follows the liturgical text, takes into consideration the Nicene text of the Synodicon orientale. The same is true regarding section 7, where Elias has inserted in the Arabic text a synonym for the verb “to be made and perfected” (utqina). This synonym, i.e. the verb “to be made well” (uḥkima), comes probably from the Synodicon orientale, which uses the verb “to be established” (hwā) instead of “to be made” (etatqan).

This analysis regarding the Syriac text of the Creed used by Elias in his Commentary can conclude with the certainty that he follows a liturgical text of the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople. In addition, he takes into consideration the Nicene version of the Creed found in the collection of the acts of the synods of his Church, known as the Synodicon orientale. In fact, the fact that the same Elias of Nisibis contributed to this collection supports this argument.

### B. Arabic Text of the Creed

As was mentioned above, Elias first cites a Syriac section of the Creed, then gives an Arabic translation of it. One might ask the following question: does Elias himself translate the Syriac text into Arabic, or does he follow a pre-existing translation? That he first mentions the Syriac text seems to give it more authority. One might also maintain that there was no official Arabic translation of

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12 See his contribution to the Synodicon orientale in: Synodicon orientale, 621.
the Creed during his time and that for this reason he made his own translation. In support of this position, one may note that Elias sometimes makes insertions into the Arabic text, either to make it more comprehensible or to give an emphasis, something seen also in his biblical citations. The following comparison will help the reader understand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1
نُؤْمِنُ بٱلْوَاحِدِ ﭐللهِ ﭐلْبِ �⭐لَّذِي فِ قَبضَتِهِ كُلُّ شَيءٍ |
The one who is at the beginning of all things, and who holds all things. |
| 2
صَانِعُ مَا يُرَى وَمَا لا يُرَى |
Creator of what is seen and what is not seen. |
| 3
وِبِآللَّهِ ﭐإِبْنِ ﭐرَّبِ اِيشُوعَ ﭐمَسِيحِ، اِبْنِ ﭐللهِ |
And to Allah the son of God, the son of man, Jesus, the son of Mary. |
| 4
اللَّهُ ﭐكُرَّ الكُلّ |
God is the only creator of all things. |
| 5
وَبِٱلْوَاحِدِ ﭐلرَّبِّ اِيشُوعَ ﭐمَسِيحِ، اِبْنِ ﭐللهِ |
The one before whom is the son of God, the son of man, Jesus. |
| 6
اللَّهُ ﭐكُرَّ الكُلّ |
God is the only creator of all things. |
| 7
وَبِٱلْوَاحِدِ ﭐلرَّبِّ اِيشُوعَ ﭐمَسِيحِ، اِبْنِ ﭐللهِ |
The one before whom is the son of God, the son of man, Jesus. |
| 8
وَحُبِلَ بِهِ وَوُلِدَ مِنْ مَرْيَمَ ﭐبَتُولِ |
And he was made like us and was born from the Virgin Mary. |
| 9
وَتَجَسَّمَ مِنْ رُوحِ ﭐلْقُدُسِ، وَصَارَ إِنْسَانًا |
And he took on the human form from the Holy Spirit, and became a human. |
| 10
وَحُبِلَ بِهِ وَوُلِدَ مِنْ مَرْيَمَ ﭐبَتُولِ |
And he was made like us and was born from the Virgin Mary. |
| 11
وُدُفِنَ وَقَامَ بَعْدَ ثثَلٰثَةِ أَيَّامٍ، كَمَ هُوَ مَكْتُوبٌ |
And he was buried and stood after three days, as it is written. |
Elias is faithful in his translation from Syriac. However, one finds in five sections slight variations which deserve attention. In sections 6, 7, 14 and 17 he simply inserts some words to clarify the meaning of the Arabic translation. In sections 6 and 7, for example, he inserts a synonym: in section 6, “the Son is of the substance and the nature of the Father” (Ibn ğawhar Abīh wa-kiyānih), and in section 7, “the world, through the Son, was formed and established” (utqinat al-awiālim wa-uḥkimat). These two synonyms probably come, as noted above, from the Synodicon orientale’s version of the Creed. In section 14, he specifies that, when the Lord will come again, He will descend from the heavens, in this case adding the verb “to descend” (al-nuzūl) before “the coming” (al-mağī). In section 17, he inserts the expression and we believed to relate this belief to the context of the interpretation of the section. Finally, in section 18, he adds the pronoun ours to “the sins.”

In his translation of sections 1, 3 and 15, Elias underscores the oneness of God: “We believe in the One, God the Father, in whose possession are all things.” “And in the One, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God”. “And we believed in the One, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth”.

Throughout this elaborate translation, Elias defends his faith in the One God who is at the same time Trinitarian. In fact, Muslims accuse Christians of believing in three gods, not in one God, in this way regarding the Trinity as tritheism. This topic will later be considered with a detailed analysis. The intention here is to point out the fact that, when Elias modifies or elaborates in his Arabic translation of the Syriac text of the Creed, he does so for theological reasons. This demonstrates several facts: 1) there was not yet an official Arabic text of the Creed, 2) the Syriac text had to be translated into Arabic and interpreted, and 3) the translation required some modification and elaboration, so that 4) it could be understood, and 5) it could function, with the interpretation, as a manual for Nestorian Christians for catechetical, apologetic and polemic purposes.

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13 See here pages 51, 53-54.
P. Masri demonstrated in a convincing way that the Nestorian Church did not use an official Arabic text of the Creed. According to him, Nestorians used a Syriac text, mostly the liturgical version, even though one might find non-essential variations among the various versions. This explains, in fact, the differences between the Arabic versions of the Creed cited by Nestorians or attributed to them by others. This study has commented on the Syriac text that Elias followed. His Arabic translation became a base for later translations of the Creed. This can be demonstrated through the presentation of three distinct texts of the Nestorian Creed: the one of Elias (11th century), one quoted by the Coptic bishop Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa (10th century) and one translated and commented on by an anonymous Nestorian author (12th century).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elias of Nisibis</th>
<th>Ibn al-Muqaffa (10th century)</th>
<th>Anonymous Nestorian author of the 12th century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>إِنْؤمنُ بِاللهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْأَبِ</td>
<td>اؤمن بالله الواحد الأب</td>
<td>انؤمن بالله الواحد الأب</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>الَّذِي فِ قَبْضَتِهِ كُلُّ شَءٍ</td>
<td>ممالك الكل</td>
<td>ممالك الكل</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>خالِقٌ</td>
<td>خالِق كل شيء</td>
<td>خالق كل شيء</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مَا يُرِي وَمَا لا يُرِي</td>
<td>كل ما يرى وما لا يرى</td>
<td>كل ما يرى وما لا يرى</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>وَبِالْوَاحِدِ الَّذِي يُوَفِّي العَوَالِمِ</td>
<td>وبالواحد الرب يسوع المسيح ابن الله</td>
<td>وبالواحد الرب يسوع المسيح ابن الله</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>العَالِمِ</td>
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<td>العالم</td>
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<tr>
<td>المولد من الأب قبل كل العوالم</td>
<td>ولد من الأب قبل كل العوالم</td>
<td>ولد من الأب قبل كل العوالم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>وَلَمْ يُخْلِقَ</td>
<td>وليس يخلق</td>
<td>ليس يخلق</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>إِلَّهُ حقَّ بِنِ عِجْلٍ يُحْكَمُ</td>
<td>إله حق بن جوهر يحكم</td>
<td>إله حق بن جوهر يحكم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أَبِهِ وَكُنْانِهْ</td>
<td>أبيه وكونانه</td>
<td>أبيه وكونانه</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>الَّذِي يَبْدُو أَنْقَدْتُ العَوَالِمْ</td>
<td>الذي يبدع أنقذت العوالم</td>
<td>الذي يبدع أنقذت العوالم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>وَأَحْكَمَتْ، وَخَلَقَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ</td>
<td>وخلق كل شيء</td>
<td>وخلق كل شيء</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that the Arabic text quoted by Ibn al-Muqaffa follows a different Syriac text. This translation and its relation to the Nestorian versions of the Creed have already been discussed. This divergence, in fact, is a proof in support of the opinion of P. Masri, who already referred to these three creeds, that is, at that period there was not an official Arabic text of the Creed used by the Nestorian Church. In addition, even if the similarities between the text quoted by Ibn al-Muqaffa and the one of the 11th century are notable, it does not mean that

the later follows the earlier or that both had as basis a common Arabic Nestorian translation of the Creed.

However, what is of interest in this comparison is the position of Elias’ text. Similarities between his text and the one quoted by Ibn al-Muqaffa are fewer than those between Elias’ text and the text of the 11th century. The similarities among the three texts might have been caused by their having used the same mechanism of translation, and not by their being based on the same Arabic source. In fact, it is clear that the similarities are those of terms and not of syntax.

However, the anonymous Nestorian of the 11th century follows 70% of the Arabic text of the Creed translated by Elias. The similarities in this case are not only in the terms; rather, the same technical expressions appear and, in some cases, the same sections of the Creed make use of the same syntax. This provides the evidence that Elias’ text was known and used by the anonymous Nestorian author as a base and a reference. As has already been said regarding the authenticity of the Commentary and its attribution to Elias, it is clear that the anonymous Nestorian author’s having followed both the text of the Creed prepared by Elias and his Commentary supports our hypothesis that Elias’ work does not belong to the author of the 13th century, Īšūyāb Ibn Malkūn, but to Elias of Nisibis, who was also an important theological figure in his Church.

C. Biblical Quotations

For apologetic reasons, Elias quotes verses from the Bible. Sometimes his quotations are direct, i.e., he cites a whole biblical verse or a part of it. At other times he quotes the Scriptures indirectly by describing an event recorded in them or by mentioning them as he is making some elaboration. In only one case does Elias quote a part of a verse from the book of Isaiah first in Syriac and then give the Arabic translation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syriac and Arabic verses of the Commentary</th>
<th>The Peshitta version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. 122 Isaiah 38:17</td>
<td>(We follow the Syriac text of Biblia Sacra: Juxta versionem simplicem)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Syriac</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>أَنْتَ أَحْبَبتَ، يَا رَبُّ، أَلاَّ تَبْلَ نَفْسَِ فِلْفَاسِدِ</td>
<td>اَنْتَ أَخْبِبَتُ، يَا زِيزٌ، أَلَّا تَبْلَ نَفْسِي فِ إِفْسَادِ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 Masri (ed.), Commentaire du Credo, 57.
This quotation suggests that Elias used the Syriac text of the Bible, the Peshitta, then giving his own translation of the text in Arabic, even though an Arabic translation of some books of the Bible existed during his time, as S. Griffith recently demonstrated. It seems that Elias did not use a preexisting Arabic translation. Defense this opinion calls for comparison of the verses he quotes in Arabic with the Syriac text of the Peshitta, and in a third column, with an Arabic translation of the verses that Elias quotes from the Gospels. This translation of the Gospel is from the 13th century Mardin 90, which is a copy of an earlier translation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The citations according to Elias’ text</th>
<th>The Peshitta text</th>
<th>The Arabic translation of Mardin 90</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. 61 Romans 6:9.</td>
<td>إن الموت لا يعود ولا يسلط عليه أيده.</td>
<td>مات لوحده لا يسلط عليه يديه.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 86 John 1:1.</td>
<td>في البدء كان الكلمة، والكلمة كان في الله، والله هو الكلمة.</td>
<td>في البدء كانت الكلمة والكلمة لم تزل عند الله والله هو الكلمة [fol. 164v].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 138 John 10:30.</td>
<td>إذا أنا وأبي واحده.</td>
<td>إذا أنا وأبي واحده. [fol. 188v].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 149 Psalm 110 (109):3.</td>
<td>منذ قديم وذ لك أنها أصبي بالمائلا.</td>
<td>منذ قديم وذ لك أنها أصبي بالمائلا.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 The full reference to this manuscript is: Mardin, Chaldean Cathedral 90. It is available online at: https://www.vhmml.org/ (Last access, 30/04/2018).
This table illustrates well Elias’ use of the Bible. When the Arabic text he produced is compared with the Syriac one of the Peshitta, it becomes evident that, in some cases, he follows the Syriac text, providing an exact translation, as in verses 149, 180, 183 and 194. It is also notable that the quotation of verse 194 is the same as that of Mardin 90, while the quotation of verse 180 is differentiated by his having chosen the Arabic translation for the verb ṣeṭīheḇ lī: Elias chose wuhiba lī, while the manuscript chose wṭītu. In both cases, the meaning is the same, “I was given”; however, Elias chose to use a verb from a common Semitic root, which is the easier choice when one translates directly from Syriac.

There is almost perfect agreement between the Arabic text of Elias and the Syriac text of the Peshitta in verses 50, 61, 86 and 179. However, Elias adds some words to the citations. To help the reader, the words Elias inserted in the verses are underlined. The insertions certainly do not change the meaning of the quotations. They have three main functions: a) to provide a synonym for a word in order to clarify the meaning, as in verses 50, 86 and 179; b) to clarify the subject, as in verse 61; or c) for emphasis, as does the word abadan in verse 61. As for inserting synonyms, in two verses Elias uses an Arabic term which comes from a common Semitic root and then uses another term to clarify its meaning. In verse 50, to translate the Syriac “to consent, to be inclined towards” (eṣṭḇī) he uses the verb “to prefer and to select” (iṣṭafā) – which could have a common Semitic root with the Syriac verb used in the Peshitta – before this use, however, he gives a synonym
“to choose” (iḥtāra). Consequently, Elias gives not just a translation to the verb but also an interpretation, in this case, to consent in someone means to prefer and love him as a selected one. The same can be said regarding verse 179, where Elias follows the Syriac text and uses the verb of the common root, s-m-c, which means, “to listen”, and then gives the precise meaning of this verb with the synonym tāra; so, the verb does not mean simply, “to listen”, but also, “to obey”. The translator of the manuscript chose, in this case, to use “to obey” and not “to listen”.

In verse 85 one sees an important phenomenon: between Elias’ text and that of the Peshitta there is a major difference, one which has theological weight. According to Elias, “by the Word of God” (bi-kalimat Allāh) the heavens and earth were made, while according to the Peshitta, the heavens and earth were made by the “Word of the Lord” (b-melteh d-māryā). We notice, finally, in verse 138 that the manuscript’s text and that of the Peshitta agree, while the Arabic translation of Elias is missing one word, the pronoun, “we” (in the Peshitta: ḫnan; in the manuscript: naḥnu).

The elements just highlighted in this comparison shall help to identify the nature of the biblical text of Elias. The biblical quotations can be divided into two groups: 1) those that come directly from the Bible, as in verses 61, 180 and 122, where Elias follows the Syriac text, giving it a precise translation (except in one case, verse 180, where he had to insert the subject into the verse so that it would be clear of whom the verse is talking); 2) those that come from Trinitarian and Christological Testimony. The similarities of these quotations with the Syriac text of the Peshitta call for another hypothesis: the Testimony the author uses is written not in Arabic, but in Syriac, and he translates from the Syriac directly into Arabic. Based on this consideration alone, one can understand why, in most of the cases, Elias feels the need to make an insertion in order to clarify the meaning of a text which he is translating into Arabic.

However, if one assumes that Elias quotes from an existing Arabic collection of Testimony, which is a possibility, this author maintains that, in such a case, he might quote by memory, and that is why he makes insertions and/or small changes.

This option is acceptable even though we consider it weak in comparison to the first one. In addition, the group of indirect quotations supports the hypothesis already proposed. In these quotations, Elias does not use a Testimony, nor does he quote directly from the Bible; he simply gives an indirect reference to a biblical event or to a biblical verse, and he sometimes gives an elaboration of a biblical teaching, presenting it as summary in his own words. These indirect quotations

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22 On the Testimony in the Arabic language, see: Griffith, The Bible in Arabic, 143-146; see also: Bertaina, “The Development”, 151-173, especially 151-155.
show that the author has a Syriac text in mind. He first elaborates it and then expresses it in Arabic in a special way and in his own words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Arabic Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22.</td>
<td>«إنَّ الرُّوحَ نَزَّلَ عَلَى الْمُسْيَحِ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ حَيْثُ نَزَّلَ إِلَىَّ الأَرْدَنِ لِلْصِّبْغَةِ»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; 24:7.</td>
<td>«إِنِّي سَأُصْلَبُ وَأُقْتَلُ وَأَقُومُ بَعدَ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَامٍ»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Daniel 7:9-14.</td>
<td>«أَنَّهُ أُرِيَ فِ ﭐلرُّؤْيَا ﭐلرَّبَّ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ!) جَالِسًا عَلَ كُرْسِيِّهِ، وَمَلائِكَةُ ﭐلسّمءِوَاقِفةٌ قُدَّامَهُ، وَأَنَّهُ أُوتيَِ ﭐللهُ بِإِنسَانٍ، يَعنِي نَاسُوتَ ﭐلْمَسِيحِ، وَأَعطَاهُ ﭐلسُّلْطَانَ وَﭐلْمُلْكَ ﰱوَﭐلْعَظَمَةِ، وَأَمَرَ أَنْ تَعْبُدَهُ جَمِيعُ ﭐلشُّعُوبِ وَﭐلأُْمَمِ وَﭐلأَْلْسُنِ»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>237</td>
<td>1 Corinthians 15:40-43.</td>
<td>«أَنَّ جَسَدًا يَكُونُ أَنوَرَ مِن جَسَدٍ فِ ﭐلْمَلَكُوتِ، كَمَ يَكُونُ كَوْكَبٌ أَنوَرَ مِن كَوْكَبٍ فِ ﭐلْمَجدِ»</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In verse 49, Elias describes the Baptism of Christ, in accordance with the biblical account of the Gospels. In verse 142 he refers to the prophecy that Christ made regarding his death and resurrection, but he mentions it in a way different from that which we find in the Gospels and in the Syriac Peshitta. Verse 181 is a clear elaboration of Daniel’s prophecy, while verse 237 is an elaboration and synthesis of some Pauline verses combined together in order to support his doctrine.

It is notable that all quotations from the Bible or from a Testimony, whether direct or indirect, have the same function: to support the author in expressing his apologetic doctrine. They are the biblical proof of and background for his teaching.

Concluding this section, it is reasonable to assert that Elias does not use an existing Arabic translation. Rather, he translated from Syriac into Arabic, either directly or by memory. He did this because, even though some of the Bible, as separate books, had already been translated into Arabic during his time, this resource still was not often used by Christian authors. This fact, as was noted above, supports the hypothesis of the attribution of this work to Elias of Nisibis, as he lived in the years after the beginning of the movement of translation into Arabic, which, as S. Griffth maintains, took place in Baghdad in the 9th century.

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Chapter 4
Trinitarian, Christological and Other Doctrines of the *Commentary on the Creed*

In this chapter we will analyze the Trinitarian and Christological doctrine of Elias, his use of his tradition, the particularity evident in his thought and which makes him distinct from other authors of his Church, and his development of the metaphysical and theological system of his tradition. Then we will present and analyze other doctrines one might find in the *Commentary*, such as in the areas of Soteriology and Eschatology, and there will be mentioned also some Islamic doctrines Elias used in his *Commentary*. A discussion on the probable sources on which Elias based his work will conclude the chapter.

A. Trinitarian Dogma

Trinitarian doctrine has a very important place in Arab-Christian theology because Arab-Christians were accused, generally by Muslims, of being tritheists.\(^1\) The Arab-Christian apologetic theology is to be considered as a return to the apologetic tradition of the first centuries, applying to it some modifications caused by the new Islamic milieu.\(^2\)

Elias wrote many apologetic works in defense of the Trinitarian doctrine addressed both to Muslims and to Jews. His thought is based on convincing his opponents 1) that belief in the Trinity is not *tritheism* and 2) that Christians also believe in one God. To achieve this, Elias uses a philosophical argumentation based on triads, natural philosophy based on natural analogies, biblical proofs and the Islamic doctrine of the divine attributes.\(^3\)

\(^1\) See, for example, Quran 4,171. In addition, see: Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow*, 6-11.


1. Trinitarian Dogma and the Cappadocian Formulation

Traditionally, Christians had explained Trinitarian dogma using such philosophical concepts as substance, nature, hypostasis and person. The use of ancient philosophy also generated Trinitarian heresies, which were answered by orthodoxy through the first two Ecumenical Councils, Nicaea (325 A.D.) and Constantinople I (381 A.D.) and through the Cappadocian Trinitarian doctrine, accepted by the three major Christian churches of the East, the Melkite (Chalcedonian), the Miaphysite (Jacobite) and that of the East (Nestorian). Elias of Nisibis belongs to the Nestorian Church; that means that he would have followed the Trinitarian doctrine officially accepted by his Church. In fact, the text of the Creed he follows is the one called the Symbol of Nicaea-Constantinople. His commentary shows that he understood that Creed and that he used the Cappadocian metaphysical and theological system to explain the Trinitarian dogma.

The Cappadocian doctrine is based on the distinction between the general and the particular: the general, which is abstract and common, is called “substance” (ὑσία) or “nature” (φύσις) and the particular, which is the concrete and the singular, is called “hypostasis” (ὑπόστασις) and “person” (πρόσωπον). The common characteristics of the hypostases of the same nature are the natural properties that manifest the substance and nature to which they belong, while each hypostasis has its own characteristics, “idioms” (ίδιωμα). Through these idioms, each hypostasis is distinguished from the other hypostases of the same nature. So the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three divine hypostases, belonging to the one and unique divine substance and nature. This nature, with the idiom of the paternity, is the hypostasis of the Father. Adding to the same divine nature the idiom of filiation yields the hypostasis of the Son. And joining to the same divine nature the idiom of procession yields the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit. The Cappadocians, just as did the faith of Nicaea-Constantinople, considered the Father to be the cause and source of the Trinity.

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4 On orthodoxy and heresy during the first centuries, see: STUDER, Dio Salvatore nei Padri della Chiesa, 1-233; WILLIAMS, Arius. Heresy and Tradition; LORNERGAN, The Way to Nicea; SIMONETTI, Studi sulla Cristologia; SIMONETTI, Studi di Cristologia postnicena; SIMONETTI, Studi sull’Arianesimo; DUNZL, A Brief History; BEHR, The Way to Nicea.

5 Regarding their doctrine, see: HILDEBRAND, The Trinitarian Theology; KARIATLIS, “St Basil’s Contribution”; STUDER, Dio Salvatore nei Padri della Chiesa, 198-218; DUNZL, A Brief History, 106-113.


7 Cfr. BAUM & WINKLER, The Church of the East, 14-21.
4. Trinitarian, Christological and Other Doctrines of the Commentary of the Creed

It will be clear from this analysis, as has been shown elsewhere, that this Cappadocian metaphysical system had to be modified by the Arab-Christian authors, especially the Nestorians, in their apologetic works addressed to Muslims. In defense of Trinitarian doctrine, the Arab Christian writers used a language held in common with Muslims and spoke from a philosophical background inhabited in common, all so that the Arab Christians might make themselves understood by their Muslim interlocutors. Besides natural philosophy and its analogies and the rational triads, many of the Arab Christian writers used the categories of the divine attributes which were an integral part of the Islamic discussion of their time. Following is a brief explanation of the divine attributes in Islamic thought. This will help to facilitate a better understanding of their use by Elias in his Commentary.

2. Attributes of God in Islamic Thought

In the Islamic tradition, the discussion regarding the divine attributes is related directly to the questions of the created character of the Quran and of the use of anthropomorphism in describing God. The question that Muslims had to resolve, after their disputes with Christian theologians on the Trinity, was the following: If the hypostases in God were attributes, why did the Quran refuse them? How can we explain the existence of the divine attributes in the Quran? Were they eternal? If so, is Islam a polytheism or associationism (širk)? If not, does it mean that God existed without His attributes?

We can divide the Muslim mutakallimūn into two principal groups: the Sunnah and the Muʿtazilah. The controversy began when the Muʿtazilah rejected the idea of the divine attributes as being eternal and uncreated. The Sunnah affirmed the eternity of the divine attributes, and they used the following expressions to explain their doctrine: “God is alive by a Life” and “God is wise by a Wisdom”. For them, the attributes are not simply adjectives or nouns with which God is described, but they are real things that exist eternally in God and through which God is described. This means that, for the Sunnah, if God is wise, He has a wisdom that exists within Him eternally, by which wisdom He is wise. The Muʿtazilah considered such teaching as a danger to monotheism, because they understood it as polytheism.

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9 Regarding this topic, see: Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kalam, 112-232; Watt, The Formative, 242-249; Frank, Beings and their Attributes; Nader, Le système philosophique; Giret, Les noms divins.
According to the *Mu'tazilah*’s system, in fact, to say that the attributes exist in God eternally, that they are something other than God himself and that God can be described by them meant that these attributes shared in the “eternity” and “un-createdness” of God’s essence, and that the *Mu'tazilah* judged to be polytheism. They did not refuse to describe God with the same attributes, but they considered them as nouns, separated from God and having come into existence before creation, so that they are not eternal or uncreated, but rather are created from eternity, before time and creation. They distinguished between “eternal” and “uncreated” (qadīm/ġayr maḥlūq), which category can include only God, and “created from eternity” (maḥlūq abādi), which category includes only His attributes. As a result, they were able to affirm that “God is wise by Himself”; “God is wise by a wisdom that is He Himself”; “God is wise by a wisdom that is His essence”, etc.

Muslim *mutakallimūn* divided the divine attributes into four groups: attributes of essence; essential attributes; attributes of qualification; and attributes of action. Other questions related to this topic emerged between the different schools of thought; among the two major groups were authors who disagreed, but discussion of these differences and disagreements is beyond the scope of this study. What is important here is to have a general idea of the question of the attributes, as Elias used them in his *Commentary*, applying it to the Trinitarian doctrine.

3. Elias’ Trinitarian Doctrine

Prior to analysis of Elias’ Trinitarian doctrine, a table of the technical terms he uses in his *Commentary* will make clear from the beginning which terms he uses and how he expresses them in Arabic. In addition, it should be noted that this author follows in his analysis, as possible, the order of the trinitarian doctrine in the Commentary.

| Nature: kiyān | Property: ḥāṣṣīyyah, ḥāṣṣah |
| Substant: ġawhar | Attribute: ṣifah |
| Essence: dāt | Meaning: maṛnā |
| Hypostasis: qiwām |

10 For the use of the attributes of God by Elias in his other works, see: Ebeid, *La Tunica di al-Masīḥ*, 457-476.
11 For major information on this topic, see: Ebeid, *La Tunica di al-Masīḥ*, 477-482.
a) One God and Three Hypostases

Christians believe in one God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The oneness in God is of His substance, while the Trinity indicates His three attributes (v. 213). From the beginning of this analysis, the reader has been reminded that the three hypostases of God are, for Elias, three attributes (ṣifāt), which means three properties (ḥawāṣṣ) and three meanings (ma’āni). To the Metropolitan of Nisibis, the word “Father” indicates the source of the Trinity (vv. 4-6), which is the faith of Nicea-Constantinople and the doctrine of the Cappadocians. He calls the “Father”, the source of the substances of the Creator. From this source, the Word (Kalimah) is generated and the Spirit (Rūḥ) proceeds. To explain his thought, he uses a natural analogy, that of the sun. God the Father is similar to the sun’s disk from which light is generated and heat flows (vv. 7, 37, 39, 211-213). This last affirmation indicates the inter-trinitarian relation.

Elias dedicates a large section (vv. 14-45) to explaining the relationship between God the Father and the Son. His interest is to avoid any material relationship between them, i.e., the Son is not a result of sexual relations, as the Quran alludes. For this reason, in our opinion, he refers to the Son as “Word” more than he does as “Son”. He uses the doctrine of the divine attributes and says that the Word of God is but one (v. 18) and that He is in God as the instinct of speech (nuṭq) is in the human nature, i.e., in the rational being, which is also one (v. 19). We know that one of the essential attributes of God in Islamic thought is the rationality of God, which is related to His being wise. God, for the Sunnah, is wise by means of “a Wisdom”. Elias affirms (v. 21) that the words “word” (kalimah), “speech” (reason) (nuṭq) and “wisdom” (ḥikmah) are, in this case, synonymous.

We first need to explain the importance of the word nuṭq in Arabic. It may be translated as the instinct of speech, reason, or speech itself, and also as rationality. In Greek, the word λόγος conveys all of these meanings. In Arabic, however, kalimah, as the translation of λόγος in John (1:1), does not convey all of these meanings, yet it is a synonym of nuṭq. So, we can now understand how the Arab-Christian authors, including Elias, used the concept of rationality (nuṭq) in the Trinitarian doctrine, linking it to the question of the divine attributes.

God, then, has one Word, as the human being has one instinct of speech (rationality). As a result, as the human being is rational from the time of his creation,
God is also rational, i.e., He has His Reason (nuṭq) from eternity, and His Reason is His Word (v. 23). God has never lacked rationality, i.e., His Speech (Reason), which is His Wisdom and His Word (vv. 33-34). And, since what is from the human substance is human, and since what is from the substance of water is water, and since what is from the substance of fire is fire (v. 25), then what is from the substance of God is, without doubt, God (v. 24). As a consequence, Elias was able to affirm that the Word of God is God.

b) Distinction and Unity in God’s Hypostases

By this he means to affirm that the Word of God is an essential divine attribute of God, i.e., a property of the substance of God. To explain his thought, Elias again uses natural analogies (vv. 26-31) related to what he had said earlier about water and fire: the substance of water is coldness and moisture; the substance of fire is light and heat. Water, having coldness, is described as being cold, i.e., as having the property of coldness, and water, having moisture, is described as being moist, i.e., as having the property of moisture. Fire, having light, is described as being light-giving, i.e., as having the property of lighting, and fire, having heat, is described as being heat-giving, i.e., as having the property of heating. Additionally, since these two properties indicate the same substance, they are substantial, essential and not accidental. To Elias, water is not really water without its two properties of coldness and moisture, and fire is not fire without its two properties of lighting and heating.

These natural analogies may be applied to the Trinitarian doctrine (vv. 32-35, 67, 204-213). The Word is eternal in the essence of God and exists in His substance. The Word is the Father’s instinct of speech, His rationality, i.e., His reason, and His wisdom. God, then, eternally has the property of rationality and is described as being rational from eternity. Rationality is not an addition to God, but it is essential and substantial.

Elias does not apply his system in a detailed way to the Holy Spirit: the Spirit flows from the Father as the heat flows from the sun’s disk. He has the characteristic of being the life-giving Spirit, and, because of that, God is described as Living. This means that the property of living and life-giving is also essential and substantial in God. In fact, in order to express this Elias says that the Holy Spirit is adjoined to the Most Holy (v. 206); therefore, the “being Holy” is an attribute of the substance of God, and for that reason God is described and called as the Most Holy.

It is now evident how Elias uses the Sunnah thought regarding the divine attributes and applies it to his Trinitarian explanation. To him, properties, also called attributes, are essential and substantial. That means that they are substantives by which substance and essence are described. Without them, essence and substance
are imperfect. It is clear that, in Elias’ thought, property, attribute and the noun from which they derive are synonyms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Property-attribute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>coldness, moisture</td>
<td>cold, moist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>light, heat</td>
<td>lighting, burning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God (divine)</td>
<td>Word, Reason, Wisdom, Life</td>
<td>rational, living</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case, Elias is able to affirm the following: “God is Rational and Living”, and “God has Reason (Word, Wisdom) and Life”. To him, both sentences are equal.\(^\text{16}\)

From the table and these expressions, one also sees the triad that Elias uses: “God-Word/Reason/Wisdom-Life”\(^\text{17}\) (see also vv. 33, 67).

Even though this doctrine is considered to be perfect for dialogue with Muslims, it presents risks as an expression of the official Trinitarian doctrine of the Christians themselves. First of all, Elias identifies property, \(i.e.,\) the Cappadocian idiom, with hypostasis. So the three hypostases are simply three properties, three attributes of God.\(^\text{18}\) Second, the Father, as source of the Trinity, is identified with the divine substance, and, at the same time, He is considered to be one of the three properties-attributes, without further explanation.\(^\text{19}\) The evident problem in Elias’ thought is the confusion between two groups of properties.

On one side are the natural: creator, holy, lord, eternal, spiritual, and others, all of which describe the substance of God and may be common to all divine hypostases. On the other side are the hypostatic properties, which describe each hypostasis and give it its own distinction. In fact, in Islamic thought, there is no distinction between substance and hypostasis. For Muslims, this group of attributes of God are substantial, that is, they describe the substance of God. Regarding the other groups of attributes, especially those pertaining to the acts of God, they were used by Elias, but not in his \textit{Commentary}.\(^\text{20}\) As a result, it is with some risk that


\(^{18}\) He is not the only author to do this; for other authors, see: \textit{Griffith}, “The Concept of al-Uqnūm”; \textit{Swanson}, “Are Hypostases Attributes?”; See also \textit{Ebeid}, “The Trinitarian doctrine of Ibn at-Ṭayyib”, 93-131. According to this argument, however, Elias has his own approach, which makes him different from the others.

\(^{19}\) For explanation and a more clear opinion, see: \textit{Ebeid}, \textit{La Tunica di al-Masih}, 479-482.

Elias applies the Islamic doctrine of the attributes of God in his explanation of the Trinitarian doctrine.

In addition, the Word is generated from the Father as our word is generated from the human substance and as the ray is generated from the sun. Because of this being generated the Word is called Son (v. 37). Thus, Elias removes any risk of implying any material or sexual meaning with regard to the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. Being generated from God the Father, as noted earlier, means that the Son is also God. To explain further this point in his interpretation of the Creed’s affirmation of “True God from True God”, Elias underscores that the Son is from the substance and the nature of God (v. 82), as was previously mentioned in the comments regarding his translation of the 6th section of the Creed.

Elias again uses the analogy of the sun to illustrate his doctrine (vv. 83-84). Just as the world is illuminated through the sun’s rays, so is the world created by God’s Word. To prove that everything was created through God’s Word, he cites these biblical verses: Psalm 33 (32):6 and John 1:1 (vv. 85-86). He also underlines that God does not create by movement or labor or other things that characterize the act of creating, but He creates by His Word. In this way, Elias alludes to the order of creation in the Bible: God created by saying “Be” and everything was, which is a doctrine held in common with Islam (vv. 96-99). Elias again uses the analogy of the sun (vv. 88-92) to demonstrate that the Word is an essential property of God. If one asks, “What illuminates the world?”, the answer should be, “The sun”. And if someone asks, “Who is the Lord’s Word?”, the answer should be, “The Lord”.

Here, we see that he tries to demonstrate that the Father and the Son share the natural property of creating and lordship. But, as we have already explained, for Elias, the Father is identified with divine substance, so these properties are of the Son, the Word and Lord, while being essential and substantial divine properties. Also, the Father, as substance, is described as Lord and Creator. It is appropriate to observe that Elias’ use of the analogy can function only when based on this interpretation: that the sun illuminates because of its ray, i.e., the property of lighting. For that reason, the answer to the question “What illuminates the world?” is “The sun”.

Based on this explanation, Elias makes another important affirmation (vv. 92): the Word, one of God’s properties, is one of His hypostases. To Elias, hypostasis (qiwām) is synonymous with property. He uses another analogy to clarify his doctrine, that of the human word. As the human word comes from the source of his substance, and is therefore not separated from him, so is the Word of God. The Word comes from the source of His substance and therefore is not

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21 In regards to this, see below page 75.
separated from Him. This, in fact, supports what has been mentioned above. To Elias, hypostasis is nothing other than property. It does not have the metaphysical function of singular nature.

c) Final Remarks

To avoid any misunderstanding regarding Elias’ thought, one must make three distinctions in his doctrine.

1. Distinguishing between the noun and the property: the properties explain the inter-Trinitarian relationship, while the nouns are identified with the hypostases, and here he follows the Cappadocian thought.

2. Distinguishing between the natural and the hypostatic properties: as a consequence, the Father as hypostasis is the source of the Trinity but is not identified with the divine nature without the other two hypostases.

3. Distinguishing between hypostasis and hypostatic property, which are identified in his thought: in his metaphysical system, in fact, includes no approach to what makes the abstract nature concrete, i.e., the metaphysical function of hypostasis; for that reason and, this author might observe, because the abstract does not exist in the Nestorian metaphysical system, Elias identifies the Father with the divine substance.

At this point it would be appropriate to consider how he explains Christology with this system.

B. Christological Doctrine

This study has already presented the Nestorian Christology after the year 612 A.D., which underscores the one person of Christ (parşōpā) and the duality of His natures-substances (kyānē) and hypostases (qnōmē). To Elias, however, the term “hypostasis” has particular metaphysical meaning: it is identified with the term “property” (ḥāṣṣah) and is explained through the doctrine of the divine attributes and the triads. In another publication, this author has demonstrated that Elias does not use the term “person” (parşōpā) with regard to Christology as the term for the

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22 See also how Elias, in other works, tries to modify his system to avoid such risks, and this author’s proposal to understand his system and to resolve the problems it generated. Cf. Eid, *La Tunica di al-Masîh*, 477-482.

23 See, for example: Scipioni, *Ricerche sulla cristologia*, 45.

24 See here pages 9-10.
oneness of the subject of the Economy. In fact, as in his other works, also here in his Commentary the names “Christ” and “Son” are the two main Christological titles applied to the one subject of the Economy, indicating His oneness (v. 116).

Before starting the analysis of the Christology in the Commentary, it should be noted that this author follows, in his analysis, as closely as possible, the order of the Christological doctrine as it appears in the Commentary.

1. One Christ and Two Natures

Elias usually teaches that Christ is one subject and two natures and two hypostases, following his church’s doctrine after 612, the Commentary of Elias however, does not mention the duality of hypostases (qûnûmê). Instead, it empasizes that Christ has two substances, divine and human, which, according to Elias, is a doctrine held in common with the Melkites (v. 135). One may note that in the Commentary the duality of substances is expressed in two ways: either by using the dual form of the Arabic term for substance (gawharân) (v. 135), or by following the traditional Syriac and Semitic way, i.e., by using the substantives: divinity (lāhût) and humanity (nāsūt) (vv. 44, 68, 70, 72, 73, 134 and 136-137).

To express the doctrine of the two hypostases, i.e., of the two singular and concrete natures in Christ, without using the term hypostasis (uqnûm/qiwâm) Elias affirms, on the one hand, that the divinity in Christ is the Word (vv. 73, 105, 116, and 131), which is one of the Trinity and is distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, with regard to Christ’s humanity, Elias uses some terms that may be interpreted as speaking of a singular human nature and substance, i.e., not of a general and abstract human nature. In verse 79 he describes Christ’s humanity as being “the created (al-mahlûq) from the essence of the Blessed, Virgin, Pure Saint Mary”. In the same verse, he uses the traditional Antiochene term for Christ’s humanity, Temple (haykal) and in verse 195, in regard to that humanity, he uses the expression, “humanity of Christ taken from Mary and from the substance of Adam”.

Elias always uses the expression, “the human being/humanity taken from the Virgin”. It is fair to assert that, by such use, the author intends to say that

27 See for example his Kitāb Al-burhān alā ṣaḥīḥ al-īmān (The Demonstration of the Correctness of the Faith) in: Vat. ar. 180, fol 140r, 180v-181r, 184r. See also: Ebeid, La Tunica di al-Masîh, 520-522, 537-539, 544-550, 554-567.
the humanity in Christ is a single nature and substance.\textsuperscript{29} What makes us certain of this is what we read in verses 163 and 167, where the author applies the term “body” (ḡism) to the humanity of Christ. According to this author’s interpretation, by applying the term “body” to Christ’s humanity, Elias wishes to say that the humanity is a singular human nature and individual person, \emph{i.e.}, not all human beings.\textsuperscript{30} Following the Nestorian metaphysical way of thinking, to Elias, an abstract reality does not exist. Divinity exists in Christ because it is of the divine Word; humanity also exists because it is a concrete substance, \emph{i.e.}, a singular human nature. For this reason, he calls it “the created being” or “the created humanity”, meaning one human body, one man. In this case, he remains faithful to the content of the official Christology of his Church: Christ is the union between one of the Trinity, the Word, and one human being, Jesus.\textsuperscript{31}

Why does Elias not use the term hypostasis (uqnūm/qiwām) with regard to Christology in his \textit{Commentary}? Even in his other works, when Elias refers to the two substances in Christ as two hypostases, he does not mean by the term hypostasis a singular nature, but a property. Affirming, then, that there are two hypostases in Christ means that there are two different substances in Him, and each is manifested by its own property, uqnūm. This is a way to underline the distinction between the two natures.\textsuperscript{32} In his \textit{Commentary} he does not directly say that the two substances in Christ also have two different hypostases, \emph{i.e.}, two properties. Instead, he underlines the distinction between the two substances and the importance of the distinction between their properties.

It is clear when he asserts that it is obviously correct to attribute what belongs to humanity to humanity and what belongs to divinity to divinity (vv. 136-137).\textsuperscript{33} In verses 131-134, Elias emphasizes that Mary gave birth to the humanity and not to the One generated eternally from the Father, the Word. The distinction between the natures is also applied to the actions and sayings of Christ. Some of His actions and sayings belong to His divinity, such as in John 10:30, “I and my Father are one” (vv. 130-140). Other actions and sayings are attributed to His humanity, such as the words regarding His crucifixion and death, “I will be crucified and killed and will rise after three days”, found in Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22 and 24 (vv. 142-143).

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Cfr.} Eid, \textit{La Tunica di al-Masīḥ}, 504-505, 547-550.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{30} On the use of the term body as singular nature, see the following: \textit{Eid}, “The Christology of the Church of the East”, 365-366, 388-389; \textit{Eid}, \textit{La Tunica di al-Masīḥ}, 544-550; see also this author’s article regarding the Christology of Ḥabīb, which should be published in the acts of the XII Symposium Syriacum.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Cfr.} Sor, \textit{The Church of the East}, 281. See also: Patros, “La cristologia”, 38.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Cfr.} Eid, \textit{La Tunica di al-Masīḥ}, 554-567, 567-570.

\textsuperscript{33} This subject is very important and the argument is used by our author against the doctrine of the Jacobites. For that reason, it is the topic of verses 131-163, 171-175 and 184-186.
The prophecy of David in Psalm 110 (109):3, “From eternity I generated you, O lad” is applied to the birth of the humanity of Christ. To Elias, it cannot be interpreted in any other way. To him, in fact, the word “lad” (ṣabī) means a created and temporal being, i.e., one generated in time (ḥadīth) and not eternal and uncreated (qadīm); otherwise, the temporal is called eternal and the eternal is called temporal, and this is a contradiction (vv. 149-154). Crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension and sitting on the right side of the Father are actions attributed to Christ’s humanity, since they are characteristic of created and composed bodies (vv. 156-168 and 171-175). Elias uses the same system in the interpretation of another prophesy of David, in Psalm 110 (109):1.

According to Elias, the psalm’s expression, “The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right [side]”, should not be interpreted as indicating that God has a right or left side. This expression is said in the prophesy concerning the humanity of Christ, its ascension to heaven and its sitting on the right side of the Father, being united to the eternal Word (v. 182). In this way, Elias continues to affirm the content of the official doctrine of his Church, which is that in Christ the two natures are distinct through their natural properties.  

As mentioned above, Elias omits the term “person” (parṣōpā) with regard to the oneness of the Subject of the Economy. Even though we find such omission in the tradition of the Church of the East,35 the reason for Elias’ omission is different. In another of his works The Demonstration of the Correctness of the Faith (Kitāb Al-burhān ʿalā ṣaḥīḥ al-īmān), he declares that the Arabic term šaḥṣ does not have the same meaning as its Syriac counterpart, parṣōpā. Šaḥṣ signifies an individual and is applied only to created and material things and not to the spiritual. Therefore, Elias rejects the use of such a term with regard to the Trinity, since there is the risk that it would be understood as tritheism.36 With regard to Christology, he uses it only for the humanity, since, for him, it is a singular human nature, an individual. Consequently, it cannot be used for the Subject of the Economy, because the natures are two: the individual man and the Word of God.37

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35 Cfr. Abramowski, “Martyrius-Sahdona”, 18; Ebeid, “The Christology of the Church of the East”, 395-400; Ebeid, La Tunica di al-Masīḥ, 568-570. See also the conclusions of this author’s article regarding the Christology of Habīb, which should be published in the acts of the XII Symposium Syriacum.
36 Cfr. Kitāb Al-burhān ʿalā ṣaḥīḥ al-īmān (The Demonstration of the Correctness of the Faith) in: Vat. ar. 180, fol. 188v «وأما الثلاثة اقانيم فقد قلنا انها خواص لا أشخاص» (Regarding the three hypostases we say that for us they are properties and not persons); fol. 180v «وكلمة الله فهي قنوم والناسوت» (The Word of God is a hypostasis and the humanity taken from Mary is a hypostasis and it is a person of the human substance).
doctrine, Elias remains faithful to the official doctrine of his Church as it was expressed in the assembly of 612 A.D., which did not apply the term parsōpā in its Trinitarian doctrine. However, he avoids such use with regard to Christology for the reason just mentioned.

Moreover, the titles “Christ” and “Son” indicate the oneness of the Subject of the Economy. They are names for the two united realities, divinity and humanity (v. 116). With such interpretation, Elias refers to the doctrine of the common name, first used by Nestorius and then by other Syrian authors within the Church of the East, such as Ḥabīb (late 5th century), Babai the Great († 628), ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī († mid. 9th century) and others. To explain this doctrine, he uses an analogy: the titles “human being” (al-insān) and “the son of man” (ibn al-bašar) indicate both the soul and the body together (v. 117). The same analogy is used to explain the Communicatio Idiomatum: some actions are realized by the body without the soul, but they are applied to the human being as a totality; other actions are those of the soul and not of the body; however, they are applied to the one person composed of soul and body (vv. 118-120). This explanation corresponds to the Nestorian particular Communicatio Idiomatum; however, Elias goes further.

Because of the union between the body and soul, some actions which belong to the body can be applied to the soul. He gives as an example the biblical verse of Isaiah 38:17. According to Elias’ interpretation, when the prophet says, “You desired, O Lord, that my soul not decay into decomposition according to it”, it does not mean that the soul is subject to corruption. The prophet, according to our author, means the body and not the soul. However, because of the union between them, Elias was able to correlate the corruption to the soul (vv. 121-125). Applying this analogy to Christology results in the notion that some actions which belong to the humanity may also be attributed to the divinity because of the union, and vice versa.

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40 See this author’s article regarding the Christology of Ḥabīb, which should be published in the acts of the XII Symposium Syriacum.
42 Cfr. 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, Apologie et Controverses, 179-181.
44 By particular Communicatio Idiomatum we mean that the properties and activities of the two natures of Christ have a communion through Christ, so one might attribute the human properties to Christ and say “Christ died”, or to attribute the divine properties to Christ and say “Christ made miracles”, in this case it is not the Word, as in the normal Communicatio Idiomatum is the center of the communion, but Christ who is distinct from the Word. For more details about such particular Communicatio Idiomatum, see: Scipioni, Ricerche, 129; this particular Communicatio Idiomatum was, in fact, the reason that Theodore and Nestorius and the Nestorian authors did not accept the title Theotokos (Mother of God) for Mary.
versa. Unfortunately, Elias does not make such an application in the Commentary. Rather, he further develops by such thought the Nestorian understanding of Communicatio Idiomatum expressed, for example, by the synod of 585 A.D. Such comprehension should be taken into consideration in the dialogue with the Church of the East.

2. Distinction Between the Natures in Christ

In Elias’ interpretation of section four of the Creed, “The Only-begotten, the Firstborn (Primogenitus) of all creation”, he declares that the title “the Only-begotten” is related to the divine nature in Christ and not to the human nature, while the title “the Primogenitus/the Firstborn” belongs to the human and not to the divine nature. However, the Fathers of Nicaea, having combined both titles together, wanted to indicate the oneness of the Lord Christ and the duality of His natures (vv. 44-46). The interesting point in his explanation of this section is the interpretation he gives to the title “Firstborn”. According to Elias, the Fathers gave this title to the humanity of the Lord for three reasons. These are the three cases according to which Christ was “Firstborn” according to His humanity:

1. He is the Firstborn of those who are generated of water and spirit. In His baptism, in fact, Christ entered the water of the Jordan river and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, to which the Gospels testify in Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22 (vv. 47-56).

2. He is the Firstborn of those who are raised from death and are alive forever. In fact, after His resurrection, Christ could never again be subject to death, as the apostle Paul attested in Romans 6:9 (vv. 57-61).

3. He is the Firstborn of those who entered the Kingdom of Heaven. After His ascension, the Lord entered the Kingdom and sat on the throne of His glory. Before Him, no one entered the Kingdom. After the Day of Resurrection, He himself will raise towards Him those who believed in Him, i.e., His followers, to enjoy with Him the glory of the Kingdom (vv. 62-66).

The basis of Elias’ interpretation is here the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia, which had been developed by other Nestorian authors such as Narsai. Theodore, in fact, applied the title “Firstborn” to Christ’s humanity. The central point in Theodore’s doctrine is the typology between Adam and the New-Adam, Christ’s humanity. In the Antiochene and Syriac traditions, the humanity of Christ

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46 If Elias had developed his thought further, he might have accepted the Marian title Theotokos, at least under some conditions. See remarks on this in: Ebeid, La Tunica di al-Masih, 656-658.
is proposed as the type of the humanity of each Christian, and for that reason Christ is the “Firstborn” of the members of His body, the Church.\textsuperscript{47} This was also the reason why in this tradition, at times, the name Christ indicates his humanity. Such interpretation was the reason for the accusation that Christ, according to their belief, was just an ordinary man “\textit{ὡς ἄνθρωπος}”, \textit{(barnāšā šhīma)}.\textsuperscript{48} In our opinion, the reason of their interpretation is to be found in the meaning of the word “Christ”: the anointed one. According to this tradition, the incarnation was understood as the anointment; Christ was anointed by His divinity, and consequently Christhood means “anointment”.\textsuperscript{49} We also find this phenomenon and doctrine in Elias’ \textit{Commentary} (vv. 69 and 101). As for his tradition, and despite this doctrine on the anointment, for Elias Christ cannot be understood as the humanity without the divinity. He is the union of both substances.\textsuperscript{50}

The fact that the Word was really united to humanity does not mean that He left, or was separated from, the Father (vv. 108 and 170). To explain this topic, Elias uses two analogies which other authors of his tradition also used, that of the human word\textsuperscript{51} and that of the sun\textsuperscript{52}, which were first mentioned in a Trinitarian context, but, as Elias himself declares, could also be used in a Christological context (vv. 37 and 40). The words generated by our substance are not separated from it when they are pronounced or when they are written on paper (v. 38).

The same thing can be said concerning the sun’s ray; it is generated from the sun’s disk and is not separated from it even though the ray is extended from the sky to earth (v. 39). This same analogy is repeated two more times in his \textit{Commentary} and is used for the same reason (vv. 108-110 and 168-170). In verses 108-110, however, apart from the likeness of the ray, Elias also points to the likeness of the heat: the Word did not separate from the Father when He descended from heaven to earth, just as the sun’s heat is not separated from the sun when it flows through to its pores. This doctrine, in fact, is one result of his understanding of the hypostasis as a natural and essential property. The Word, being a divine property, is immutable, and for this reason He cannot undergo change or mutation.

\textsuperscript{47} Cfr. \textit{McLeod, The Roles of Christ’s Humanity}, 51-52, 109, 122, 134; see in particular the citation of Theodore in page 51.

\textsuperscript{48} See for example the teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia in: \textit{McLeod, The Roles of Christ’s Humanity}, 177-186. Regarding the accusation against the Church of the East, see: \textit{Ebeid}, “The Christology of the Church of the East”, 366-367, 380, 386-388, 396-399.

\textsuperscript{49} Cfr. \textit{McLeod, Theodore of Mopsuestia}, 32; see also the texts of Theodore in pages 141 and 169.

\textsuperscript{50} See also in: \textit{Ebeid, La Tunica di al-Masīḥ}, 505-506, 544-550, 551-554.

\textsuperscript{51} For example, see its use by the Catholicos Timothy I in: \textit{Sākō} (ed.), \textit{Al-ǧāṭṭīq Timūtāwus al-Kabīr}, 28-29.

\textsuperscript{52} For example, see its use in: \textit{‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, Apologie et Controverses}, 192.
It is clear that the distinction between the two natures is essential in Elias’ thought. Elias considers this doctrine to be held in common with the Melkites. They affirm the two natures in Christ and the distinction between them. Elias considers the Melkites to be brothers in baptism,\(^53\) and the difference between his Church and them he considers not as significant as the difference separating his Church from the Jacobites, who are the enemies of the truth and the real opponents both of him and of his Church.\(^54\) In two places in his Commentary, Elias makes direct attacks against the Jacobites and their followers, calling them in verse 68 “enemies of truth” (ʾaḏāʾ al-ḥaqq) and in verse 127 “opponents” (muḥālifūn).

To Elias, the problem of the Jacobites’ doctrine is the oneness of the nature that they teach. He understands this oneness as a negation of the humanity in Christ, and this is a serious doctrinal problem: theopaschism, i.e., attributing the passions, suffering and all other human characteristics to the divine nature (vv. 68-70). His polemic against such doctrine is related to his understanding of the Communicatio Idiomatum, presented above (vv. 114-127). Even though suffering and passions are attributed to “Christ” and “Son”, this does not mean that they can be attributed to the divinity, since these titles and names indicate both realities, divine and human.

The Jacobites, according to him, did not understand this point. Here Elias criticizes the identification of the titles and names “Word” and “Christ”, an identification made by Jacobites and which is also the basis of their doctrine and of their comprehension of the Communicatio Idiomatum.\(^55\) He is again following his tradition, presenting it in a very archaic and simple way, i.e., highlighting the distinction between the natural name, the hypostatic name, and the personal name, etc.\(^56\)

3. Union Between the Natures in Christ

Elias also follows his tradition when he speaks of and explains the “how” of the union between the two natures-hypostases in Christ.\(^57\) It is known that the Church of the East teach a union which is personal, i.e., in parṣōpā. The natures-hypostases are united according to will, honor and pleasure. The traditional images used to

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\(^{55}\) See the references above about Jacobites and their doctrine, pages 8–9.

\(^{56}\) Cfr. Scipioni, Ricerche, 93–97; see also the work attributed to Michael the Interpreter in: Guidi & Nallino, Il libro delle definizioni, 40.

describe the union are three: that of an indwelling in a temple, i.e., inhabitation; that of conjunction, i.e., the union between man and woman (συνάφεια); and that of putting on a garment.\(^{58}\)

In the Commentary, Elias uses some of these images and concepts. He describes the humanity as the Temple (haykal) of divinity (v. 79), which is the basis of the doctrine of the indwelling of the divinity in humanity. In fact, Elias affirms in verse 163 that the body of Christ was resurrected by the power of the indwelt (ḥāllah) divinity in this body; in verse 168, he says that the Word, i.e., a divine hypostasis, indwelt (ḥāllah) the humanity according to will (bi-l-mašīḥah). In addition, he uses another image to discuss the relation between the humanity and divinity in Christ, related to the one of the putting on a garment or being hidden in garment,\(^{59}\) calling Christ’s body a veil for the divinity. Elias furnishes an analogy to explain his doctrine: as the king talks to his subject through a veil, so the Word talked to us through His body-veil (vv. 125-126).

The basis of this analogy is Hebrews 10:20, where Christ’s body is called a veil. Calling Christ’s body a veil was widely used by Arab Christians of all confessions.\(^{60}\) Although this image is also found in the writings of the Greek and Syriac Fathers, its use by those writers was different from that of the Arab Christian apologists.

In the patristic tradition, and in some Christian Arab authors, it was used to highlight that the divinity was hidden in humanity in order to mislead and cheat Satan.\(^{61}\) B. Roggema notes that, in the writings of Arab Christian authors, the analogy, as we find it in Elias’ Commentary, was their response to Q 42:51, in which it is affirmed that God can speak with human beings either by revelation or from behind a veil (ḥiğāb). According to the same scholar, Christian Arabs, in their apologies directed to Muslims, used this image to say, in different ways, that the Incarnation is somehow the veil mentioned in Quran.\(^{62}\) Elias elaborates on this response and formulates it using, as other authors did,\(^{63}\) the parable of king, that, according to this author, is based on the evangelical parables in which God the Father is mentioned in the likeness of a king.\(^{64}\)

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58 See for example: McLeod, *The Roles of Christ’s Humanity*, 170-175, 176-188; see how such images were used also in: *Synodicon orientale* in: Ebeit, “The Christology of the Church of the East”; see also: Ebeit, *La Tunica di al-Masih*, 507-513, 520-521.
59 Regarding this image in Syriac tradition, see: Brock, “Clothing metaphors”; Ebeit, “Ο συμβολισμός του ἐνδύματος” στην Συριακή Θεολογική παράδοση”, in: Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς 95 (2012), 277-305.
64 Regarding the parables of the Kingdom see: Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*. 
4. Christology and Salvation

The main goal of the Incarnation, according to Elias, is the salvation of men, which is the Economy and providence of God (vv. 101-102). The consequences of the Incarnation, i.e., the union of divinity with humanity, are also mentioned in his Commentary. In the Antiochene and Eastern Syriac traditions, the doctrine regarding the deification of human nature in Christ, as a result and effect which the union brought about on humanity, did not produce a wide echo as in other Christian confessions.\(^6^5\) Instead, according to this tradition, because of the union with divinity, humanity received the honor and glory of divinity; however, this does not mean that there is confusion between the natures or that humanity lost its limits and or its characteristics of being created.\(^6^6\) Elias follows his tradition,\(^6^7\) but he explains it through Islamic doctrine and vocabulary, as will be seen in the next point.\(^6^8\) Notable are the effects on Christ’s humanity and the honor that His humanity received as a result of the union with His divinity:

1. The humanity, being united with the Word, received the honor to sit on the right side of the Father and, along with the Word, to be God’s caliph and vicar (vv. 176-186).

2. On the Day of Resurrection, humanity, because of the union with the Word, will have an essential role. First of all, the Father delegated to Christ the fulfillment of the “Day of Judgment”. Since God cannot be seen, the righteous will instead see His Son, the Lord, and will be consoled. It is clear that Elias means that it is the Lord’s humanity that will be seen by the righteous. What makes us certain of this is Elias’ affirmation that the devil and his angels will see Christ’s humanity which will “condemn them and cause them to suffer, and they [Satan and his angels] will find that our Lord has taken the revenge of His father, Adam, on them, because they had tempted him [Adam] so that he would come out of paradise”, (vv. 190-201). It is clear that this last point is related to the doctrine of the contemplation of God. The next point will be a return to this doctrine according to the East Syriac tradition.

Finally, even though Elias does not mention the technical term person (parșōpā) as the one subject of the Economy, his doctrine concerning the honor and effects received by Christ’s humanity as a result of the personal union of that

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\(^6^5\) Cfr. McLeod, The Roles of Christ’s Humanity, 67-68, 72-74 and 261-266. See also Ebeid, “Christology and deification”.


\(^6^7\) Cfr. Ebeid, La Tunica di al-Masih, 507-513.

\(^6^8\) See here pages 70-75.
humanity with the Word cannot be understood unless one understands that, for him, the Lord and Christ are the one subject of union. Furthermore, because of the distinction between the natures and the particular *communicatio idiomatum*, we can distinguish the role of the humanity in all of this: Christ the Lord, as one person-subject, according to His humanity, sits at the right side of the Father and, being the Son of God, receives the honor of being vicar and caliph of His Father. Having said that, Christ and the Son, as one subject, *i.e.*, humanity and divinity together, are the “vicar” and “caliph”. The Father, in addition, delegated to this one person-subject, Christ the Lord and God’s Son, the fulfillment of the “Day of Judgment”. According to His humanity, He will be seen by the righteous and by Satan and his followers. The righteous will enjoy contemplating His humanity, while Satan and his followers will experience as a grievous punishment the contemplation of that humanity. Elias gives an interpretation of and further develops the doctrine of the assembly of 612 A.D. regarding the second coming of Christ as the one person of the two natures, divine and human.69

C. Other Doctrines and Topics

The Creed also has sections on Ecclesiology, Baptism, and Eschatology. Our interest here is to briefly show how Elias comments on such doctrines. Subsequently, we will discuss other topics we find in his *Commentary*: Islamic doctrines, linguistic references and philosophical opinions.

1. Ecclesiology

To Elias, the One Holy, Apostolic and Catholic Church is the unique faith of the believers; to him, Church means faith and creed. This faith is transmitted from the Apostles, to the believers who are called the “group of the holy believers”, (ِ(^g^a)mā(-r at al-mu^m^inīn al-muqaddasīn) (vv. 216-217). For Elias, the concept of “Church” has its original Greek and biblical meaning, *i.e.*, the group of believers.70 This group of believers is holy, and therefore the Church is called “Holy”. Their faith is that of the Apostles, and for this reason the Church is called “Apostolic”. The faith is one, and so the Church is one, and that is the way Church and faith are identified. This faith is called the “synthesis of truth” (*ulfat al-ḥaqq*) (v. 218), *i.e.*, the doctrine that the believers should follow. By the phrase “synthesis of truth”, it seems clear, Elias refers to the text of the Creed itself. That is why he affirms that the one who

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does not follow this Creed (amānah) is rejected by the Church and excommunicated (v. 241). This Elias’ opinion is, in fact, an elaborated presentation of the first canon of the Council of Constantinople I.\footnote{Cfr. Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta, 31: “The Faith of the Three Hundred and Eighteen Fathers gathered at Nice in Bithynia is not to be abrogated, but shall remain firm. And every heresy is to be anathematized, and in particular that of the Eunomians or Anomoeans, and that of the Arians or Eudoxians, and that of the Semi-Arians or Pneumatomachi, and that of the Sabellians, and that of the Marcellians, and that of the Photinians, and that of the Apollinarians”.}

2. Baptism

Elias calls Baptism a \textit{sīr} of the Church, \textit{i.e.}, a sacrament. He uses this Arabic word to translate the Syriac \textit{razā}, which corresponds to the Greek \textit{μυστήριον}.\footnote{Cfr. Dalmais, “Raza et Sacrement”.} Baptism is the believer’s birth into the Church. Elias affirms that each believer is born from the Church’s watery womb, which alludes to the immersion of the baptismal candidate into the water. This action is considered to be the new birth of the person being baptized. Through Baptism, the person becomes a “son of God” by adoption\footnote{Elias follows the Antiochene doctrine of Baptism according to which each Christian, in his Baptism, becomes a “son of God”. According to such doctrine, each Christian, in his Baptism, begins to be a member of the body of Christ himself, \textit{i.e.}, of the humanity of the Son. This means that he receives the grace to be “God’s Son” by adoption (cfr. McLeod, The Roles of Christ’s Humanity, 80-82).} and receives the validation of the inheritance of the Kingdom and the certainty to enter into it after the final resurrection (v. 222).\footnote{This is related to what he said regarding Christ as the Firstborn of those who entered the Kingdom of Heaven. See above for more details pages 64-65.} In other words, for Elias Baptism is the mystery-sacrament that proves the “status of sonship” that leads the believer-son to the knowledge of truth (v. 230).

3. Eschatology

We have already seen how Elias views Christology in relation to human salvation.\footnote{See here pages 68-69.} The role of Christ’s humanity on the Day of Resurrection is essential in Elias’ thought. He affirms that God’s substance is invisible and that, on the Day of Judgment, the righteous will see not Christ’s divinity but His humanity, which is united to divinity, forming one Christ and one Son. They will see, then, the Son and vicar of the Father, who is responsible for judging mankind on the Day of Resurrection, but they will see Him according to His humanity and not His divinity.
Satan, his angels and his followers will also see Christ’s humanity, and they will understand that this humanity has taken revenge for the first Adam and that they have lost their power over human beings. This contemplation is their punishment (vv. 193-197).

According to Elias’ thought, only the living are judged. In this case, Elias interprets what the synod of mār Ezekiel in 576 A.D. had already claimed regarding this topic. The dead, in his opinion, will first be resurrected from their tombs, and then they will be judged, together with those who are alive on the “Day of Resurrection” (yawm al-qiyyāmah). For this reason, he interprets the expression, “He will judge the dead and the living” as meaning that the sinners are the “dead” and that the pious are the “living” (vv. 198-200).

In his Commentary, Elias emphasizes that the contemplation is of Christ’s humanity, while his divinity remains invisible. In his first session with the vizier al-Maḡribi, Elias affirms that even the humanity of Christ cannot see the divinity, alluding, in this case, to the impossibility of adding a fourth hypostasis that could share in the divine Trinitarian nature. This is also a clear polemic against some East-Syrian mystics, who were accused and condemned by the Church of the East, when its Catholicos was Timothy I, because they were proclaiming the vision of God’s essence and union with it. Elias himself, in fact, refers in the same first session to this condemnation. He says that during the time of the Catholicos Timothy I, a synod was held which condemned a heresy the followers of which believed that Christ’s humanity could see His divinity.

Resurrection is that of the body, and this is one section of the Creed (vv. 226 and 231). Christ is, in fact, the first example of the resurrection of the body and the entrance into the Kingdom (v. 226). We saw that Elias calls Christ the Firstborn of those who are raised from death and are alive forever and the Firstborn of those who entered the Kingdom of Heaven (vv. 57-66). This is the proof that our resurrection will also be a resurrection of the body and that we will live eternally with Christ in the Kingdom (vv. 226-227 and 232).

As life in the Kingdom is eternal and the Joy of believers in the Kingdom is eternal, life in hell is also eternal and the suffering of sinners in hell is eternal (vv. 232-233). In addition, there are for Elias different degrees in the Kingdom and in hell. The righteous will not all have the same degree of grace and joy; the degree will depend on their efforts and their good works on earth. The same is true for the

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76 Cfr. Synodicon orientale, 114.
77 ELIAS OF NISIBIS, Al-maḡlis al-awwal (Ed. SAMIR), 115.
78 Cfr. BERTI, “Le débat sur la vision de Dieu”. See also: BERTI, “Grazia, visione e natura divina”.
79 ELIAS OF NISIBIS, Al-maḡlis al-awwal (Ed. SAMIR), 115.
wicked; their degree of punishment will be in relation to their sins (vv. 234-236). That is why, at the end of his Commentary, Elias asks God, who gave him this faith, *i.e.*, the Creed, to help him to complete his faith with good works so that he can enjoy the Kingdom (v. 239), since “faith without works is like a tree without fruit” (v. 240). The background of Elias’ final prayer is biblical. He indirectly refers to what one reads, for example, in James 2:14-26 and Luke 6:43-46. However, regarding his doctrine on the degrees of joy-grace and punishment, he gives an elaboration of 1 Corinthians 15:40-43 and presents it in his own words so that it can be a proof in support of his opinion.

4. Islamic Language and Doctrines

It has already been seen that Elias, after making the necessary modifications, applies the Islamic doctrine on the divine attributes to his Trinitarian explanation. This study has also commented on his other uses of Islamic doctrines and references to Quranic verses, which he modified and then used. In addition, the reader’s attention has been drawn to the fact that Elias’ Commentary also has an apologetic character intended to engage Muslims, and therefore he uses their language and their doctrines, so that they might understand him better. The main goal, then, of such uses can be divided into two points: first, Christians give their answers to some Islamic doctrines, with which they disagree, using the same expressions; second, using a common language makes Christian doctrine more understandable to Muslims. Regarding this point, it will be useful to present some examples of Islamic expressions and doctrines, excepting those regarding the divine attributes, used by Elias to achieve these two main goals.

Elias uses two Islamic expressions with regard to the “Day of Resurrection”: Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-barʿ*) (v. 64) and Day of Judgment (*yawm al-dīn*) (v. 191). Both are Quranic expressions; the first is mentioned in Q 30:54, while the second is mentioned in several Quranic verses, such as Q 1:4; 51:12; 56:56 and 82:15,17. He also uses two expressions, the two “beautiful names of God”\(^80\): the Powerful (al-ʿAzīz) and the Almighty (al-ʿAffār) (v. 69). These two names also appear in Q 50:23, in the same order as that used in the Commentary. These first examples show how the author used Quranic expressions in his doctrine.

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\(^{80}\) On the beautiful names of God, see: GIMARET, *Les noms divins en Islam*.
Following is a table with adjectives commonly used in the Islamic tradition to describe God and His almightiness, which Elias also uses to describe God:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Who it describes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lahu al-ḥamd</td>
<td>To Him belongs the praise!</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Lord (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>God (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
<td>God (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>The Creator (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>210</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galla ṯanār-uh</td>
<td>May His glory be praised!</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>God (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>The Lord (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galla wa-azza</td>
<td>May He be praised and Almighty!</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>God (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>The Lord (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>God (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>145</td>
<td>God (Word)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʿAzza wa-ḍalla</td>
<td>May He be Almighty and praised!</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>God (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>146</td>
<td>God (Word)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
<td>The Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>God (Word)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>181</td>
<td>The Lord (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>191</td>
<td>God (Father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ġalla wa-ṭālā</td>
<td>May He be Almighty and praised!</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Divinity of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ġalla wa-ḥalā</td>
<td>May He be praised and exalted!</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>God (Father, substance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabāraka wa-ṭālā</td>
<td>May He be blessed and exalted!</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>The Father</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is notable that these expressions in the *Commentary* are mostly used as adjectives to describe the words “God” and “Lord”. In almost all the cases, Elias means by these two words the “Father”. In only one case does he mean the “Word”. In addition, he twice applies such expressions directly to the word “Father”: once to the “divinity of Christ” and once to the “Holy Spirit”. In one instance, he applies one expression to the “Creator”, again intending the “Father”. Elias’ method is clear.
For him, God the Father is identified with the divine substance. He is its source and the cause for the hypostases. It is to be noted, however, that Elias never applies adjectives or attributes to the Son and the Holy Spirit which in Islamic tradition are used in reference to prophets. In fact, we know that the expression “peace be upon him!” (السلام عليه) is used when referring to prophets and holy persons. Even Christ, in the Islamic tradition, is described by this expression. Elias uses it twice in his Commentary: once he applies it to John the Baptist (v. 48), while in the other case he uses it in the plural to describe the Fathers of Nicaea (v. 202). In this way, by not using such an expression to describe Christ, he declares that Christ is not a simple prophet.

Elias uses a common terminology to describe the uncreated reality and the created one. He uses terms such as *qadīm* and *ḥadīṯ*, and words that derive from them, to express the eternity (*qadīm*) of Christ’s divinity, i.e., the Word (vv. 150, 153 and 154) and the temporal and createdness (*ḥadīṯ*) for Christ’s humanity (vv. 148, 150, 153 and 154). Such terms were extremely important in the discussion between the Islamic schools of thought with regard to the Quran, and whether the Quran could be considered as eternal (*qadīm*) or created and temporal (*ḥadīṯ*). This discussion began with the rejection of the eternity of the Quran by the *muʿtazilites*. Many Christian Arab authors, such as Theodore Abū Qurrah († c. 820), Abū Rāʿīṭah al-Takrītī (†835), ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī († mid. 9th century), Eutychius of Alexandria († 940), Sāwīrus Ibīn al-Muqaffāʾ († c. 987) and Elias of Nisibis, use these Islamic technical terms when discussing the divinity and humanity of Christ to affirm that He is *qadīm* according to His divinity and is *ḥadīṯ* according to His humanity. In addition, in their polemics against the uncreated character of Quran, Christians affirmed that the Son, not the Quran, is the true Word of God and that therefore He can be called *qadīm*.

Elias uses the analogy of the veil and applies it to Christ’s humanity, indirectly using a quranic verse and elaborating on it with the legend of the king (v. 126). If God can speak with human beings from behind a veil in Q 42:51, then Christ’s humanity is the veil that the Quran is talking about. Elias bases his analogy on the Bible, precisely on Hebrews 10:20, and on his Syriac tradition, which used the image of dressing in a robe for the union between divinity and humanity in Christ. Divinity put on humanity, and through this garment–humanity, God revealed himself; through this veil–humanity, in fact, God spoke with His creatures.

83 See the references we gave previously on page 67, footnotes 60 and 64.
Another important use of quranic doctrine and giving it a Christian dimension is that regarding the concept of “Caliph”, which has already been mentioned. In the Quran, Adam was created to be God’s Caliph, i.e., vicar of God on earth (cfr. Q 2:30). Prophets and humans also had this function, however, with different meanings (cfr. Q 38:26, 10:14, 27:26). Elias declares that the only Caliph is the New Adam, the humanity of Christ united to God the Word (vv. 176 and 178). Consequently, being Caliph and God’s vicar, the Father delegated to Christ the fulfillment of the “Day of Judgment” and gave Him the honor of sitting at His right side.

Finally, in two cases, Elias uses a doctrine held in common with Muslims, formulating it by using common language and descriptions and making it function as proof of his own faith. In the first case, verse 23, he alludes to the creation of man and the breathing into him of the spirit of God (cfr. Genesis 2:7; Q 15:28-31, 38:71-75). Elias uses this common doctrine to prove that rationality is in man from the moment of his creation, since it is found in his spirit. In the second case, verse 181, we have an elaboration of Daniel’s vision of the “Son of Man” (cfr. Daniel 7:9-14). The way Elias formulates his presentation of this vision-prophecy is very similar to the quranic recounting of the creation of man and of the order God gave to the angels to worship Him (Q 2:30-34, 7:11, 15:28-31, 38:71-75). The goal of Elias is to affirm his doctrine regarding the humanity of Christ now sitting at the right side of the Father and the honor it received, such that it is worshiped by creatures.

5. Linguistic References

As mentioned earlier, Elias had an interest in language and in linguistic matters. In fact, he wrote an Arabic-Syriac lexicon. This interest is evident in his Commentary. In verses 106-107, he says that the word kalimah in Arabic is feminine because it ends with the final letter hā’. However, when it indicates the divine Word, it must be considered masculine. In verse 177, he gives the meaning of the Arabic verb istahlafa, that is, to make someone a Caliph and vicar: “Someone sat at the right [side] of someone [else]”. This definition is similar to those we may find in Arabic dictionaries and lexicons. Finally, verse 228 offers a grammatical explanation of the use of a conjunction, idāfah, confirming its importance to the meaning of that section of the Creed and its interpretation.

84 Cfr. KADI, “Caliph”.

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6. Philosophical Doctrines

In the Commentary one can also find echoes of philosophical doctrines. It is known that Elias had contacts with some of the philosophers of his time, and he also wrote on philosophical topics, including in his Treatise on the Creator (Risālah fī al-Ḫāliq) and his anthology of wise and philosophical sayings, The Book on How to Throw Out the Inquietudes (Kitāb Daf al-hamm).

In verse 97 of his Commentary, Elias rejects the philosophical doctrine regarding Creation through movement, labor, pursuit of effort, contact, etc. In verse 23, he mentions a philosophical opinion regarding rationality in human beings, noting that it is found in the spirit of human being from the time of its creation. For this reason, this author concludes that Elias says in verse 199 that the dead are not rational because death, according to a philosophical definition which he gives in verse 144, is the separation of the soul (spirit) from the body. Finally, Elias also refers to the famous and widely defended doctrine regarding the difference between the spiritual, on the one hand, and the material and embodied beings, on the other. The spiritual are light, so they cannot carry anything (v. 119) and movements and actions are of bodies and not of spirits (v. 171).

D. Elias’ Sources

It has been shown throughout this analysis that Elias, follows in his Commentary, the doctrine of his Church and its tradition: both the official doctrine and the writings of individual authors. One of the sources he uses for the Commentary, as has been shown through a detailed study, is the Syriac Peshitta text of the Bible; he cites from this both directly and indirectly, giving an Arabic translation of the verses under examination. In his Trinitarian and Christological doctrines he follows his tradition: the official synods of the Church of the East, Theodore of Mopsuestia, the doctor of this Church, and some other important authors, such as Narsai, Nestorius, Timothy I and ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī. He also knows the doctrines of the Jacobites and the Melkites, the other two main Christian confessions in the East, having had access to their works and sources. It has also been shown how Elias uses the Islamic doctrines and sources, especially the Quran and works of some of the mutakallimūn of his time. It has been shown, as well, that he uses such linguistic sources as lexicons and grammars, as well as philosophical works.
In previous study this author has shown that, throughout his theological works, Elias rarely mentions his sources directly. This is also clear in his *Commentary*. However, other than the clear and direct references to the Bible and the liturgical text of the Creed, he quotes a passage of a prayer and gives its precise details. In verse 201, to affirm his interpretation of the Creed’s expression, “will judge the dead and the living”, which was previously analyzed, i.e., that the dead are the sinners and living are the righteous (vv. 198-200), he quotes a passage of a hymn which was recited on Friday nights by his Church:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elias’ text</th>
<th>The hymn’s text[^87]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>إنَّ الْأَشْرَارَ أَحْيَاءٌ.</td>
<td>The pious who glorified Him during the night, they are alive after their death, and the wicked who suppressed His greatest glory, they are dead even if they are alive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>اللَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَجْدَهُ</td>
<td>and the wicked who suppressed His great glory, even if they are alive they are dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لَّذِينَ سَبَّحُوهُ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>آنَاءَ لَّذِينَ أَحْيَاءُ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>إِنَّ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


[^87]: For the Syriac text, see: *Ktaba da-Qdam wad-Batar*, 83; while The English translation is that of this author.
PART II

THE COMMENTARY ON THE CREED

كتاب
تفسير الأمانة الكبيرة

Critical Edition
and English Translation

Based on the following manuscripts:

A: Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticano arabo 143 (Vat. ar. 143)
B: Beirut, Bibliothèque orientale 562 (BO 562)
C: Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Neofiti 52 (Neofiti 52)
D: London, British Library, Oriental 4431 (BL Or. 4431)

A is followed as basic manuscript since it is the oldest and earliest one.
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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1 In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful, and in Him I seek help!

2 THE COMMENTARY ON THE CREED

3 Which the Three Hundred and Eighteen Fathers, Who were Chosen by Constantine, the Byzantine Emperor, May God have Mercy on Him, have Agreed on its Composition

Section: ܡܗܝܡܢܝܢ ܒܚܕ ܐܠܗܐ ܐܒܐ ܐܚܝܕ ܟܠܡܐ

Translation: We believe in the One, God the Father, in whose possession are all things.

Interpretation: By their saying “God the Father”, they mean the source of the substance of the Creator, from whom His Word is generated and His Spirit proceeds.

And an analogy to that, I mean, the source of the substance of the Creator,

1 The given title of the work is “Book of the Commentary of the Great Creed”. However, following the English title given in: SALA MONFERRER, “Elias of Nisibis”, 740-741, we prefer the form, “Commentary on the Creed”.
2 This is the number of the Fathers who were gathered at Nicaea when the emperor Costantine the Great convoked the first Ecumenical Council in 325.
3 The Arabic term for “Byzantine” is ܪܘܡ. This term could also be translated as “Roman”. However, we prefer to translate it as “Byzantine” to make a distinction between the Roman Empire and its capital city, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire and its capital city, the “New Rome”, Constantinople. In addition, for the term emperor, Elias uses qaṣar, which is literary translated as Caesar.
4 See the comment about the use of the formula “the One” in Elias’ translation of the Syriac Creed and its purpose, here page 43.
مثال عينٍ ألباسٍ التي تَتْوَّلُدُ منها الإِنْذَارُةُ، [C 72r]
وَتَفِيضُ [منها] الإِبْرَازُ
فَبَدَأَ هَمْوَالَاءَ الْأَبَا بِذَكْرِ آبٍ
لَأَنَّهُ عَيْنٌ جَوَّهِرُ الفَقْيِمِ الكَرِيمِ،
وَمِنْهُ تَتَوَلَّدُ اللَّغْوِمُ
[وَمَنْهُ] تَفِيضُ الرُّوحُ
كَمَا قَلْنَا.
[ب 3r]
وَأَعْتَرَفُوا بِأَنَّ الخَلَائِقَ كُلَّها فِي يَدٍ [A 128r]
وَحَورَتِهِ وَقَبْضَتِهِ. [ر 128r]

[د 124r]
حَدِثَكِمَا حَدِيثٌ، ۳۰۰۰ مُعَلَّمٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاعِ، مَهْلِكُ حَدِيثٍ مُّفَهَّمٍ.

الْتَّفْسِيرُ: صَانِعٌ مَا يُرَى وَمَا لاَ يُرَى.
الْتَّأْوِيلُ: أَيْ، [إِنَّ] الخَلَائِقَ كُلَّها بِمَشِيئَتِهِ، تَكُونُت،
وُبَأَمِّهِ ۲۲ أَسْتَبَثُتُ.

[د 124v]
حَدِثَكِمَا حَدِيثٌ، مَعَ مَعَجُوبَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ
الْتَّفْسِيرُ: وَبَالوَاحِدَ، أَلْبَابٌ إِيْشَٰعُ۳۰، المُسِيِّحُ، إِنَّ۳۱ الَّهُ.

۱۸ C : حَدِيثٍ
۱۹ D : لا
۲۰ D : +
۲۱ ABCD: بِمَشِيئَتهُ (حَدِيثُهُ)
is an analogy of the source of the sun,\(^5\) from which light is generated and heat flows.

8 Those Fathers began [by] mentioning the Father because He is the source of His eternal and honorable substance and [because] from Him the Word is generated and from Him the Spirit flows, as we said.

9 And they confessed that all of creation is in His hand, [in] His ownership and [in] His possession.

10 Then they said:

11 لين نج نودلمأ متحر إيلين دمتحز عباد دكليهن

12 Translation: The Maker of what is visible and what is invisible.

13 Interpretation: That is, all of creation came into existence by His will, and was established by His order.

14 Then they said:

15 وبحد مريه يشوعميشمە درھ دلاهأ

16 Translation: And in the One\(^6\), the Lord\(^7\) Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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5 It seems that, here, the author is playing with the words for a theological purpose. The Arabic term َقَيْن means source, but when it is added to the sun, it means the sun’s disk. Since the author wants to underline the fact that the sun’s disk is the source of its light and its heat, he chose the term َقَيْن and not َقَرَش (disk), as he does in verse 39, because he wants to use it as an analogy to explain that the source and cause in the Trinity is God, the Father. Regarding this, see the comment on the analogies, which Elias uses, here pages 56-57.

6 See our comment about the use of the formula, “the One” in Elias’ translation of the Syriac Creed and its purpose, here page 43.

7 Elias uses the title َرَاب (Lord) in two different ways: 1) as a natural property of the divine substance “lordness”, so he applies the term “Lord” to all the three divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; 2) as a messianic title for Christ, the union of the divinity and humanity. He uses the term َسَيْد (Lord), however, exclusively for Christ. In the English translation, then, when the Arabic title is َرَاب we indicate through a footnote which divine person Elias intends, while when the Arabic title is َسَيْد we translate it into Lord without any annotation.
أَلَّا أَوْيِلَ: قُوْلُهُمُ «أَلَّا وَاحِدَ»، يَعْنُوْنَ كَلِمَةً ﭐلَّهِ أَلَّا وَاحِدَةً، لَا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ.

إِذْ لَيْسَ لَهُ (جَلَّ تَائَاوُهُ) [A 128v] إِلاَّ كَلِمَةً وَاحِدَةً، لَا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ.

وَالكَلِمَةُ مِنْ آَلِرَّبِ (لَهُ ﭐلْحَمْدُ)!

بِمَثَلِ عَرِيْرَةٍ أَنْطُقَ في جَوْهَرٍ أَلَّا وَاحِدٍ، مِنْهَا. [D 125v]

وَكُلُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ وَاحِدٍ، لَا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ.

وَسَوَاءَ عَلَى كُلٍّ فَلَتْ «الكَلِمَةَ»، اوٌّ «الحِكْمَةَ» اوٌّ «أَنْطُقَ».

وَقَوْلُهُمُ (جَلَّ تَائَاوُهُ)!

وَقَوْلُهُمُ «آَلِرَّبِ إِيِّشُوعَ»، هوَ كَلِمَةٌ ﭐلَّهِ، وَأَنَّهَا أَذِلِيْةٌ فِيهِ.

أَعْنِي مِنَّا كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ غَرِيزَةَ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.

كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَا لَهُ غَرِيزَةٌ أَنْطُقٍ، كَمَا أَنَّا خُلِقْتُمُ فِيهِ، مِنْذُ كُلٍّ وَاحِدٍ، عِنِيَّةُ رَجُوهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ خُلِقَتْ لَهُ وَتَمَسَّحَتْ فِيهِ.
**Interpretation:** By their saying “the One”, they mean the Word of God, since He (may His glory be praised!) has but one Word, not more than that.

And the Word is from the Lord⁸ (to Him belongs the praise!) to the degree of the instinct of speech (being rational)⁹ within the substance of each one of us.

And each one of us has one instinct of speech (being rational), not more than that.

And whether you say “word” or “wisdom” or “speech (reason)”, the meaning is one in God (may His glory be praised!), as well as in us, in proportion to our substance.

And their saying [that] “the Lord Jesus” is the Word of God, and that He [the Word], I mean the Lord (may He be blessed and exalted!), is eternal in Him [God], just as the instinct of speech (being rational) of each one of us is inherent to his spirit, since it was created for him and was breathed into him.¹⁰

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⁸ Sometimes the author means by the term Rabb (Lord) God the Father, and not Christ or the Son. This is because, in the Islamic milieu of his time as in the Old Testament tradition, this term indicates the One God, since neither Judaism nor Islam believes in the Trinity. We think that this was the reason that made Elias of Nisibis follow such use, even though in other cases, such as in verses 22-23, he gives the term Rabb the messianic dimension used in Christian tradition. In addition, in verse 206, he applies the term Lord to the Holy Spirit. We think that “lordship” for Elias, taking into consideration what he himself says in verses 90-91, is a common attribute of all three persons of the Trinity, that is, a natural characteristic. For this, his basis should be Psalm 110 (109):1 (See verse 183). For this reason, we need always to distinguish between its use as a messianic title or as a natural and common attribute for the Divine Persons.

⁹ Nutq in Arabic is one of the translations of the Greek term λόγος. It means, in fact, word, speech, reason, logic, etc. (cfr. H.G. Liddell – R. Scott (eds.), Greek-English Lexicon, 1057-1059). In our case, the author is using the word nutq as “instinct” to express the rationality in the being: that is, the one who has reason is rational. At the same time, the one who has the instinct of speech can talk, i.e., he has in himself the word (λόγος). As a consequence, we can understand how, for Elias, nutq is synonymous with “word”, and so in the Trinity it is the Reason of God, i.e., His nutq, which is the Word of the Father. For more details, see the comment on Elias’ Trinitarian doctrine, here pages 54-59.

¹⁰ This doctrine is based on the account of man’s creation found in the Bible and in the Quran, cfr. Genesis 2:7; Q 15:28-31; Q 38:71-75. See also our comment on Elias’ use of Islamic doctrine, here pages 72-75.
Elias of Nisibis

24 If it is so, this is the case;
for it is the case that God is
not a creature.

25 In the same way, man is not a creature of God,
and man is not a creature of water,
and man is not a creature of fire.

26 And what is not the essence of God is not.

27 For what is not the essence of God is water,
for what is not the essence of God is fire.

28 And water is the essence of that which is cold,
and fire is the essence of that which is hot.

29 As for water that is cold and water that is hot,
and fire that is cold and fire that is hot,
and water that is cold and fire that is hot,
and water that is cold and fire that is hot.

30 And water that is cold and fire that is hot.

31 And the characteristic of water and the characteristic of fire
are not the same.
And if it is as such,
then what is of the substance of God is inevitably God,
just as what is of the substance of man is [inevitably] man,
and what is of the substance of water is [inevitably] water,
and what is of the substance of fire is inevitably fire.

Because the substance of water has coldness and moisture,
whatever you intend [to mention] of the substance of water, *i.e.*, its coldness or its moisture, indicates the water and denotes it.

As such, the substance of fire has light and heat.
Therefore, whatever you intend to mention of the substance of fire, I mean its heat and its light, inevitably indicates fire and denotes it,

because the properties of coldness and of moisture in water and the properties of burning and of lighting in fire are substantial and not accidental.
فلو أن [C 73r] إِنَّ قَلِيَّةَ أُزْلَيْنِ، في ذِاثٍ [A 130r] أَلِمَائِيٍّ (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [B 4r]
وَلَمْ كَانَ إِذَا أَلِمَاءٌ كَامِلًا، وَلَا أَلِمَاءٌ كَامِلًا.

فَقَالَ هَذَا الْقِيَاسُ،
نَقُولُ إِنَّ الْكَلِمَةَ أُزْلَيْنِ، فِي ذِاثٍ [A 130v] أَلِمَائِيٍّ (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [D 126v]
أَلِمَائِيٍّ (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [C : اَلَّمَائِيّ]
أَلِمَائِيٍّ (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [D : اَلِمَاء]
لَمْ كَانَ إِذًا ﭐ لْمَاءُ كَامِلاً، وَلا ﭐ لْنَارُ كَامِلَةٍ
فَعَلَى هٰذَا ﭐ لْقِيَاسِ،
أَلِمَائِيٍّ (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [C : اَلَّمَائِيّ]
أَلِمَائِيٍّ (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [D : اَلِمَاء]
فَإِذَا كَانَتْ كَلِمَتُهُ مِنْهُ ذَاتِيَّةً جَوْهَرِيَّةً
فَهِيَ ﭐ بْنُهُ، لا مَحَالَةً، أَلِمَائِيٍّ (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [C : اَلَّمَائِيّ]
أَلِمَائِيٍّ (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [D : اَلِمَاء]
كَمَا ضَرَبْنَا ﭐ لْقِيَاسَ فِي خَاصِّيَّتَيِ
۲۷ وَ۲۸ جَلَّ وَعَزَّ! (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [C : ١٧۸ وَ۲۸]{۲۷ وَ۲۸} جَلَّ وَعَزَّ! (۲۷ وَ۲۸)
۲۷ وَ۲۸ جَلَّ وَعَزَّ! (۲۷ وَ۲۸) [D : ١٧۸ وَ۲۸]{۲۷ وَ۲۸} جَلَّ وَعَزَّ! (۲۷ وَ۲۸)
وُسْمَيْنَا الْكَلِمَةَ ﭐ بَنْى لِلٰهِ
وَسَمَّيْنَا ﭐ لْكَلِمَةَ
۲۷ وَ۲۸ لِتَوَلُّدِهَا مِنْهُ، كَمَا تَتَوَلَّدُ كَلِمَتُنَا مِنْ جَوْهَرِنَا،
۲۷ وَ۲۸ وَكَتَوَلُّدِ ﭐ لْشُعَاعِ مِنَ
31 So, if one of the two properties of either of them was separated from the origin of its substance, either the one of water or the one of fire, then either the water would not be perfect or the fire would not be perfect.

32 Based on this analogy, we say that the Word is eternal in the essence of God (praise is to be to Him!), and exists in His substance, and is not separate from Him, because God has never lacked rationality.

34 And no one who believes in God can imagine that He, at any one time, lacked His Reason (Speech), which is His Wisdom.

35 And if His Word is of Him essentially and substantially, then He [the Word] is inevitably His Son,

36 as we demonstrated by the analogy regarding the two properties of water and fire.

37 And we named the Word “Son of God” (may He be praised and Almighty!), due to His [the Word] being generated from Him [the Father], as our word is generated from our substance, and as the ray is generated from the sun.

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11 See page 89, footnote 9; and see also the comment on the rationality of God according to Elias, here pages 55-56.
جَوْهَرَنَا يُوَلِّدُ ﭐلْكَلاَمَ، وَيُؤَلِّفُهُ بِٱلْحُرُوفِ،
وَيُودِعُها١٣١٠ آَلْعِرْطَاس.
وَيَنْفِدُّ١٣١١ يَهِى إِلَى أَلْبَعَد١٣١٢ لَمْ تُؤْلِفَ مَعْنَاهُ فَارَق١٣١٣ جَوْهَرَنَا١٣١٤.
وَكَذَٰلِكْ شَعَاعُ الشَّمْسِ،
مَتَوَلِّدٌ مِنْ قُرْصِ الشَّمْسِ،
وَيُوْدِعُهَا١٣١٥ بِهِ إِلَى أَلْبَعَد١٣١٦ وَيُنْفِدُّ١٣١١٧ هَذَا أَلْتَأْوِيْل١٣١٨ لَمْ تُؤْلِفَ لَمْ يَؤْلِفْ مِنْ بَعْد١٣١٩.
وَهَذَا كَانَ مُوْسَعُهُ قَدْمَتَهُ١٣٢٠.
[۱۳۱ر۱۳۱۱۱۷۱۱۲ ۱۳۱۱۴ ۱۳۱۱۱۱ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۱۲ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰ ۱۳۱۱۹ ۱۳۱۲۱ ۱۳۱۱۸ ۱۳۱۲۰]
Our substance generates the words and composes them with letters
and puts them down on paper
and sends them far away [from ourself],
without meaning by this that they [i.e., the words] were separated
from our substance.

In the same way, the ray of the sun
is generated from the sun’s disk
and is extended from the sky to the earth
without being separated from the origin that is the sun’s source (disk).

Indeed, I presented this interpretation for what comes later,¹²
and this was its place, so I presented it [here].¹³

Then they said:

Translation: The Only-begotten, the Firstborn (Primogenitus) of all creation.

Interpretation: In this one saying, those Fathers have combined
the divinity of our Lord Christ (to His mention be adoration!) and
His humanity.

Because, by their saying the “Only-begotten” they indicate the Word,
mentioned before this chapter,¹⁴
whose status of being¹⁵ is from the source of the substance of divinity

---

¹² He refers to the Incarnation, i.e., verses 108-110.
¹³ He means that this analogy is used not only for the Trinitarian dogma, but also for the Christological one. Regarding his use of the analogies, see here pages 56-58 and 65-66.
¹⁴ See verses 6-8, 14-23, 33-35 and 34-40.
¹⁵ Literally, “its position is of”; here, we think that Elias wants to explain the relationship among the hypostases of the Trinity. The Son is of the Father; He is generated of the Father, which means that He “comes” or gets His “being Son” from the Father as existential cause and source of the Trinity. See more in the commentary on Elias’ Trinitarian doctrine, here pages 54-59.
وَتَوَلُّدُهَا مِنْهُ كَتَوَلُّدِ ﭐلْكَلِمَةِ مِنَ ﭐلنَّفْسِ، وَﭐلشُّعَاعِ مِنَ ﭐلشَّمْسِ،
وَهِيَ كَلِمَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ.
»
بِكْرُ كُلِّ ﭐلْخَلاَئِقِ
وَقَوْلُهُمُ 
وَأَوْمَأُواُ بِهِ إِلَى نَاسُوتِهِ
كَمَا يَقُولُ ﭐلِْنْجِيلُ ﭐلطَّاهِرُ:
بِهِ إِلَى ﭐلْمَسِيحِ مِنَ ﭐلسَّمَاءِ
حَيْثُ نَزَلَ إِلَى ﭐلأُْرْدُنِّ لِلصِّبْغَةِ
وَﭐلرَّبُّ (جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهُ!) هَتَفَ
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐلْمَسِيحَ هُوَ ﭐبْنِي
وَلَوْ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ قَوْلُ ﭐلْمَلاَكِ
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐبْنِي
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐلْبِ وَحْدَهُ
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐلْبِ وَحْدَهُ
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐلْبِ وَحْدَهُ
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐلْبِ وَحْدَهُ
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐلْبِ وَحْدَهُ
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐلْبِ وَحْدَهُ
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐلْبِ وَحْدَهُ
لا قَوْلٌ ﭐلْبِ وَحْدَهُ
and whose generation [of divinity] is like the generation of the word from the soul and the ray from the sun, and He is one Word.

46 And by their saying the “Firstborn (Primogenitus) of all creation” they indicate His humanity.

47 And by this primogeniture they indicated His humanity, owing to three characteristics:

48 The first one of them is that our Lord is the Firstborn (Primogenitus) among those born of water and Spirit, in His baptism from John the baptist (peace be upon him!).

49 As the pure Gospel says\(^\text{16}\):

“The Spirit descended from heaven upon the Christ when\(^\text{17}\) He went down into the Jordan for baptism”.

50 And the Lord\(^\text{18}\) (may His glory be praised!) exclaimed from heaven and said:

“This is my Son and my beloved [one] whom I chose and elected”.\(^\text{19}\)

51 It is not possible that the one who said this is other than the Father Himself.

52 And it is not possible for an angel to say “Christ is my son”.

53 If it was a saying of an angel, and not a saying of the Lord\(^\text{20}\) (may He be praised and Almighty!),

---

17 In Arabic, Elias uses ḥayṯu with temporal connotation. This is rare in Arabic, however, it is correct. That explains the English translation.
18 He means God the Father.
20 He means God the Father.
Elias of Nisibis

لكن قال إذا:

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُقْوَلُ إِنَّ هذَا الْمَسِيحَ
الذِّي يَضْطَغَعُ في الأَرْدُنَ هُوَ أَبْنَهُ."

فَهُذَا وَأَضْحَ يَنْ قَلَ "جَلَّ وَعَزَّ" قَالَهُ.

إِنَّ ﭐلثْلٰهَ يَقُولُ إِنَّ هٰذَا ﭐلْمَسِيحَ
"ثُمَّ إِنَّ رُوحَ الْقُدُسِ رَفْرَفَ [D 128v] عليه على هيئةً
الْحَمَامَةِ.

فَقَدْ بَنَّ اللَّهُ أَلَانَ.

أَنَّهُ يَكُرُ من وُلْدَ من أَلْمَاء وَأَلْرَوْحٍ قِبْلَ سَائِرِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ.

وَالْحَضْرَهُ الْثُّانِيَةَ.

أَنَّهُ يَكُرُ من قَامِ من بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ [C 74v]
قِيَامَةً لَا مَوْتٍ بَعْدَهَا.

٥٤٧:٣٥

وَأَنَّ كَانَ [قَدَ] أَحْيَى لَاعْزَرٍ٥٨ وَعِيرَة٥٩د،
قَالُوهُمٌ "جَمِيعًا عَادُوا إِلَى الْمَوْتِ الطَّيِّبِيِّ،
فَهُمْ فِي الْتَرَابِ إِلَى يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.
وَكَذٰلِكَ مَنْ أَحْيَاهُ إِلَى لِفَأْجَاءَٰهُ الفَيْضُ١٠،
وَأَحْيَاهُ إِلَى يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.
"عَادُوا إِلَى الْقَبْرِ إِلَى ثِلْثَة٥٠.
وَصَعِدَ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ يَمُوتَ أَبَدًا مَوْتًا ثَانِيًا،
لَنْ "رُسُلُ اللَّهِ صَّادِقُ١٠١ كَمَا قَالَ فَوْلُوسٍ.
كَمَا قَالَ قَوْلُوْسٌ "وَإِنْ كَانَ جَمِيعًا عَادُوا إِلَى مَوْتِهِمْ
أَيَّامٍ،
وَسَيِّدُنَا قَامَ مِنَ الْقَبْرِ إِلَى ثِلْثَة٥٠.
وَصَعِدَ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ يَمُوتَ أَبَدًا مَوْتًا ثَانِيًا،
لَنْ "رُسُلُ اللَّهِ صَّادِقُ١٠١ كَمَا قَالَ فَوْلُوسٍ.
"عَادُوا إِلَى الْقَبْرِ إِلَى ثِلْثَة٥٠.
وَصَعِدَ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ يَمُوتَ أَبَدًا مَوْتًا ثَانِيًا،
لَنْ "رُسُلُ اللَّهِ صَّادِقُ١٠١ كَمَا قَالَ فَوْلُوسٍ.
then he [the angel] should have said:
“God says that this Christ
who is being baptized in the Jordan is His Son”.

54 It is clear and evident that God (may He be praised and Almighty!) said it [i.e., that Christ is His Son].

55 In addition, the Holy Spirit hovered over Him in the shape of a dove.

56 So it is evident for you now
that He [Christ] is the Firstborn (Primogenitus) of water and the Spirit,
before the rest of the people.

57 The second characteristic
is that He is the Firstborn (Primogenitus) of those who are raised from death,
a resurrection after which there is no death.

58 Because even if our Lord revived Lazarus and others,
all of them returned [after being raised by the Lord] to natural death,
and they are in dust until the day of resurrection.

59 In the same way, those who were revived by Elijah and Elisha and the disciples
also returned to their death,

60 while our Lord rose from the tomb after²¹ three days
and ascended to heaven.

61 And He will never die a second death,
as Paul, the truthful apostle, said:

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²¹ Elias uses the preposition ilā which is, in our case here, a strange use in Arabic language.
Elias of Nisibis

إنَّ الْمُوتَ لَا يُعاوِدُ سَيِّدَنَا،
وَلَا يَتَسَلَّطُ عَلَيْهِ أَبْدًا». [B 5v]

وَأَلْحَصْلَةٌ ۱۰۰ السَّلَّةُ، [A 133r

۱۰۹ أيُّعَاوِدُ سَيِّدَنَا،
۱۰۹ إنَّ لمَوْتَ لاَ مَلْكُوتَ أَسْمَاءَ.
۱۰۹ فَمَا دَخَلْتُهَا بَعْدُ، إِلَى هٰذَا المُوقَتُ.
۱۰۹ مَلَكٌ مُّقَرَّبٌ، وَلَا نَبِيٌّ مُرْسَلٌ،
۱۰۹ فَضْلاً عَنْ غَيْرِهِمَا.
۱۰۹ وَإِذَّنَا دَخَلَهَا سَيِّدَنَا وَحْدَهُ،
۱۰۹ وَهُوَ جَالِسٌ فِيهَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّ مَجْدِهِ وَكَرَامَتِهِ.
۱۰۹ فَإِذَا كانَ يَوْمٌ أَلْبَعُث،
۱۰۹ أَصْعَدَ إِلَى هُنَاكَ مَنْ قَدْ رَضَيْتُهُ عَنْهُ،
۱۰۹ فِي مَلَكُوتِهِ وَأَهْلَهُ لِمُجَاوَرَتِهِ وَالْتَّنَعُّمِ
۱۰۹ فَلِهٰذِهِ السَّلَّةِ خِصَالٌ قَالُوا
۱۰۹ بِناَسُوتِهِ بِكْرُ الخَلْائِقِ
۱۰۹ إِنَّهُ بلاَهُتِهِ،
۱۰۹ وَحِيدٌ وَقَالُوا إِنَّهُ لَهُوَارًا مُّنَّانًا،
۱۰۹ فَفَسَّرْنَاهُ وَذَكَرْنَاهُ عَلَى مَا تَقَدَّمْنَا
۱۰۹ وَرُوحٌ وَاحِدٌ إِلَّا كَلِمَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ.
۱۱۰ جَمَعْنَا فِي هٰذَا السَّلَّةِ سَيِّدِيَّةَ وَناَسُوتَهُ
۱۱۰ رَدَّاً عَلَى مَنْ كَفَرَ بِإِحْدَيْهِمَا

۱۰۹ لَهُوَارًا [A 133v

۱۱۰ بِيَمَٰ: [In Arabic script and not garshuni]
۱۱۱ [In Arabic script and not garshuni]
۱۱۲ [In Arabic script and not garshuni]
“Death will not come back to our Lord and will never have authority over Him”\textsuperscript{22}

The third characteristic is that He is the Firstborn (Primogenitus) of those who entered the Kingdom of Heaven.

Until this time, neither a favorite angel nor a prophet who was sent had entered it.

Rather, our Lord alone entered it, and in it, He is seated on the throne of His glory and honor.

And when the day of resurrection comes, He will raise [up] there [to the Kingdom of Heaven] the one with whom God is pleased, and He will qualify him to live close to Him [our Lord] and to enjoy comfort in His Kingdom.

So, it is because of these three characteristics that they said that He is the “Firstborn (Primogenitus) of creatures” according to His humanity.

They said that He is the “Only-begotten” according to His divinity, as we previously\textsuperscript{23} mentioned and explained that the Living and Rational God\textsuperscript{24} has but one Word and one Spirit.

And in this one saying they combined the divinity of our Lord and His humanity, in response to those who disbelieved in either one of them,

\textsuperscript{22} Romans 6:9. See the comment on the biblical quotations, here pages 46–50.
\textsuperscript{23} Elias refers to what he mentioned in verses 19-23 and 32-35.
\textsuperscript{24} Here, we can see the basis of the triad he uses for the Trinitarian dogma: God-Life-Reason, which is developed according to the Islamic doctrine of the divine attributes, God is Living and Rational. See more details here pages 53-54.
كتاب عقوبة والمن يجري و من أعداء الحق ومعاندهم
الذين ينطون ناسوت سيدينا و مسيحيته
إقدامًا على الله العزيز 120 الجبار
إذ ادخلنوا [D 130r] الآلام الذي وصلت إلى [B 6r] جسم سيدينا
من الجوع والعطش
والصفاة [A 134r] الجسمية
والموت وألذين
على لاهوتكم
جلت وتعلت 120 عاما 121 يقوله 122 هاؤلوهآ آلهوتكم 123
وتتفصيل هذا القول المحرل 121 يأتي 124 من بعده
على 121 النسق من قول هاؤلوهآ الآباء.
فليعلم من قرأ هذا الكتاب 121
أنهم جمعوا 122 لاهوتية سيدينا وناسوتهم
في هذا القول 124.
ثم فصلوا بعد ذلك.
إذ أوردوا معنى الكلمة على حيدة
ومعنى الناسوت على حيدة.
such as the Jacobites and those who follow their way, who are of the opponents and enemies of truth. Those who deny the humanity of our Lord and His Christhood (anointment)²⁵ are attacking God, the Powerful, the Almighty, since they introduced the passions that are linked to the body of our Lord, such as hunger, thirst, corporeal attributes, death and burial, to His divinity, (may be praised and exalted above what those offenders say!). The detailing of this summarized saying will come later, according to the saying of those Fathers. Let him who reads this book know that they [the Fathers] combined the divinity of our Lord and His humanity in this saying.

After that, they set [it] forth in detail, furnishing the meaning of the Word and the meaning of the humanity separately,

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²⁵ In this verse we have a neologism. The term masīḥiyyah literally should mean Christhood; however, this author’s opinion is that with this term, Elias is indicating Christ’s humanity only. So masīḥiyyah is the humanity that was anointed by the Divinity in the Incarnation; in this way, masīḥiyyah indicates that Christ is the Anointed One. Its use here is related to the development of the Christological doctrine of the Church of the East. See also the same use of the term in verse 101; regarding this use, see here pages 64-65.
قالوا: «لا من ذات الطوبى البُنْوَى الطاهرة مَارَت مَرَّتٍ، أَعْنِي الْهَيْكَلَ.»

وَقُولُهُمْ: إنَّهُ بِهِ خَالِقٌ، يَعْنُونَ لا مَخْلُوقٍ مِنْ ذاتِ الطُّوبَى الطَّاهِرَةِ مَارَت مَرَّتٍ، أَعْنِي الْهَيْكَلَ.

法定: الَّذِي وُلِدَ مِنْ أَبِيهِ قَبْلَ كُلِّ الْعَوَالِمِ، وَلَمْ يُصْنَعَ أَلْتَّفْسِيرُ:

التأويل: قَدْ نَسَبَ هَاؤُلاَءِ لِبَاءُ هٰذَا لِقَوْلَ إِلَى الْكَلِمَةِ خَاصَّةً تَفْضِيلًا مِنْ تِلْكَ الْجُمْلَةِ الَّتِي قَدَّمْتُ ذَكْرَهَا، وَبَيْنَاهَا أَنَّ هَذَا الْمُسِيَّحَ هوَ كَلِمَةُ اللهِ الْمُتَوَلِّدةُ مِنْهُ. كَمَا قَلَّنا فِي صَدْرِ كِتَابِنَا، كَتَوَلُّدِ الْكَلِمَةِ مِنَ الْنَّفْسِ، وَالشُّعَاعِ مِنَ الشُّمْسِ، إِذْ لَمْ نَجِدْ قِيَاسًا أَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَذَيْنِ.

法定: إنَّهُ بِهِ خَالِقٌ، يَعْنُونَ لا مَخْلُوقٍ مِنْ ذاتِ الطُّوبَى الطَّاهِرَةِ مَارَت مَرَّتٍ، أَعْنِي الْهَيْكَلَ.

法定: الَّذِي وُلِدَ مِنْ أَبِيهِ قَبْلَ كُلِّ الْعَوَالِمِ، وَلَمْ يُصْنَعَ أَلْتَّفْسِيرُ:

التأويل: قَدْ نَسَبَ هَاؤُلاَءِ لِبَاءُ هٰذَا لِقَوْلَ إِلَى الْكَلِمَةِ خَاصَّةً تَفْضِيلًا مِنْ تِلْكَ الْجُمْلَةِ الَّتِي قَدَّمْتُ ذَكْرَهَا، وَبَيْنَاهَا أَنَّ هَذَا الْمُسِيَّحَ هوَ كَلِمَةُ اللهِ الْمُتَوَلِّدةُ مِنْهُ. كَمَا قَلَّنا فِي صَدْرِ كِتَابِنَا، كَتَوَلُّدِ الْكَلِمَةِ مِنَ الْنَّفْسِ، وَالشُّعَاعِ مِنَ الشُّمْسِ، إِذْ لَمْ نَجِدْ قِيَاسًا أَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَذَيْنِ.

法定: إنَّهُ بِهِ خَالِقٌ، يَعْنُونَ لا مَخْلُوقٍ مِنْ ذاتِ الطُّوبَى الطَّاهِرَةِ مَارَت مَرَّتٍ، أَعْنِي الْهَيْكَلَ.

法定: الَّذِي وُلِدَ مِنْ أَبِيهِ قَبْلَ كُلِّ الْعَوَالِمِ، وَلَمْ يُصْنَعَ أَلْتَّفْسِيرُ:

التأويل: قَدْ نَسَبَ هَاؤُلاَءِ لِبَاءُ هٰذَا لِقَوْلَ إِلَى الْكَلِمَةِ خَاصَّةً تَفْضِيلًا مِنْ تِلْكَ الْجُمْلَةِ الَّتِي قَدَّمْتُ ذَكْرَهَا، وَبَيْنَاهَا أَنَّ هَذَا الْمُسِيَّحَ هوَ كَلِمَةُ اللهِ الْمُتَوَلِّدةُ مِنْهُ. كَمَا قَلَّنا فِي صَدْرِ كِتَابِنَا، كَتَوَلُّدِ الْكَلِمَةِ مِنَ الْنَّفْسِ، وَالشُّعَاعِ مِنَ الشُّمْسِ، إِذْ لَمْ نَجِدْ قِيَاسًا أَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَذَيْنِ.

法定: إنَّهُ بِهِ خَالِقٌ، يَعْنُونَ لا مَخْلُوقٍ مِنْ ذاتِ الطُّوبَى الطَّاهِرَةِ مَارَت مَرَّتٍ، أَعْنِي الْهَيْكَلَ.

法定: الَّذِي وُلِدَ مِنْ أَبِيهِ قَبْلَ كُلِّ الْعَوَالِمِ، وَلَمْ يُصْنَعَ أَلْتَّفْسِيرُ:

التأويل: قَدْ نَسَبَ هَاؤُلاَءِ لِبَاءُ هٰذَا لِقَوْلَ إِلَى الْكَلِمَةِ خَاصَّةً تَفْضِيلًا مِنْ تِلْكَ الْجُمْلَةِ الَّتِي قَدَّمْتُ ذَكْرَهَا، وَبَيْنَاهَا أَنَّ هَذَا الْمُسِيَّحَ هوَ كَلِمَةُ اللهِ الْمُتَوَلِّدةُ مِنْهُ. كَمَا قَلَّنا فِي صَدْرِ كِتَابِنَا، كَتَوَلُّدِ الْكَلِمَةِ مِنَ الْنَّفْسِ، وَالشُّعَاعِ مِنَ الشُّمْسِ، إِذْ لَمْ نَجِدْ قِيَاسًا أَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَذَيْنِ.

法定: إنَّهُ بِهِ خَالِقٌ، يَعْنُونَ لا مَخْلُوقٍ مِنْ ذاتِ الطُّوبَى الطَّاهِرَةِ مَارَت مَرَّتٍ، أَعْنِي الْهَيْكَلَ.

法定: الَّذِي وُلِدَ مِنْ أَبِيهِ قَبْلَ كُلِّ الْعَوَالِمِ، وَلَمْ يُصْنَعَ أَلْتَّفْسِيرُ:

التأويل: قَدْ نَسَبَ هَاؤُلاَءِ لِبَاءُ هٰذَا لِقَوْلَ إِلَى الْكَلِمَةِ خَاصَّةً تَفْضِيلًا مِنْ تِلْكَ الْجُمْلَةِ الَّتِي قَدَّمْتُ ذَكْرَهَا، وَبَيْنَاهَا أَنَّ هَذَا الْمُسِيَّحَ هوَ كَلِمَةُ اللهِ الْمُتَوَلِّدةُ مِنْهُ. كَمَا قَلَّنا فِي صَدْرِ كِتَابِنَا، كَتَوَلُّدِ الْكَلِمَةِ مِنَ الْنَّفْسِ، وَالشُّعَاعِ مِنَ الشُّمْسِ، إِذْ لَمْ نَجِدْ قِيَاسًا أَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَذَيْنِ.

法定: إنَّهُ بِهِ خَالِقٌ، يَعْنُونَ لا مَخْلُوقٍ مِنْ ذاتِ الطُّوبَى الطَّاهِرَةِ مَارَت مَرَّتٍ، أَعْنِي الْهَيْكَلَ.
And said:

\[ \text{ܘܠܡܐ ܐܬܥܒܕ ܐ} \text{ܕܡܢ ܐܒܘܗܝ ܐܬܝܠܕ ܩܕܡ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܥܠܡ} \]

Translation: Who is generated of His Father before all worlds, and was not made.

Interpretation: The Fathers attributed this saying particularly to the Word, in preference to that sentence that I mentioned previously.

And they demonstrated that this Christ is the Word of God, the One generated of Him \([i.e., \text{the Father}]\), just as we said at the beginning of our book,\(^{26}\) as the generation of the word is of the soul and the ray of the sun, since we did not find a closer analogy than these two.

By their saying “not created” and “not made” they mean the Creator, not the created \([\text{man}]\)\(^{27}\) from the essence of the Blessed Virgin, Pure Saint Mary – I mean the Temple.

And they affirmed that by saying:

\[ \text{ܕܐܒܘܗܝ ܐܠܗܐ ܫܪܝܪܐ ܕܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܫܪܝܪܐ ܒܪ ܟܝܢܐ} \]

\(^{26}\) See verses 6-8, 14-23, 33-35, 34-40 and 46.

\(^{27}\) It seems that the term \text{maḥlūq} here does not mean just the created being. By using this term, Elias is trying to affirm that the humanity in Christ is an individual \((\text{single human being})\), \(i.e., \text{one hypostasis (uqnūm)}\), which is his Church’s official Christological doctrine after 612 A.D. It is very interesting to note that he expresses this doctrine, \(i.e., \text{of Christ’s humanity as individual and single man, without using the technical term “hypostasis” (uqnūm)}\). See the comment, here pages 60-64; See also how this element was one of the proofs for the authenticity of the attribution of this work to Elias of Nisibis, here page 29.
Elias of Nisibis

The interpreter: It is true from the true, the beginning of glory and existence.

The explanation: What they say, "it is the true word of God, the son of God's father and existence."

[82] As such, the word of God is what is from the father.

[83] 140 For the word is what was in the beginning, and he who was in the beginning is the word of God.

[84] For as it is said, the word is in the existence, and he is the existence, and the existence is the word of God.

[85] 141 It is said, the word is what was in the beginning, and he who was in the beginning is the word of God, and he was in the beginning, and the word of God was what he was.

[86] 142 As it is said, the word is what was in the beginning, and he who was in the beginning is the word of God, and he was in the beginning, and the word of God was what he was.

[87] And as it is said, the word is what was in the beginning, and he who was in the beginning is the word of God, and he was in the beginning, and the word of God was what he was.

[88] And as it is said, the word is what was in the beginning, and he who was in the beginning is the word of God, and he was in the beginning, and the word of God was what he was.
Translation: True God from True God, the Son of the substance and the essence of His Father.

Interpretation: [By] their saying “True God” they mean the Word who is of the Father, in the same way [as] the ray is of the sun.

Just as the world is illuminated through the ray, God created every thing through the Word.

As the saying of the Prophet David:
“Through the Word of God, the heavens were created”28.

And as the saying of John, the blessed Evangelist, as he says:
“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was in God and with God, and God is the Word”.29

From here, these Fathers said “True God from True God”, as in the case that someone would say:
“What is this fire through which the world is illuminated?”, it would be said to him: “[the] sun!”.

In the same way, if it was said:
“What is the Word of the Lord30?”, it is said: “The Lord!”.

He [the Word] is one of His [i.e., God’s] properties, which is [a] hypostasis of His substance31,

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29 John 1:1. See the comment on the biblical quotations, here pages 46-50.
30 He means God the Father.
31 In this verse, we have the key-word of Elias’ metaphysical doctrine and system; we mean his identification of hypostasis (qiwām) with properties (ḥāṣṣah). What is interesting is that he uses the technical term qiwām and not ṭaqnūm. See also the comment, here pages 55 and 59-62.
مثل كلمة الإنسان
التي هي من أصل جوهره، ولا تفارق قط.

د mô [D 132r] قالوا على هذا الساق:
تصديقًا لما이나 دأود وقولٍ ۱۴۸ يحيى ۱۴۹ الإنجيلي:
«۱۴۹۳۵۸۵۶۴۵۶۸۲» حلحصم.

التفسير: الذي يَبِيه أَقْتِبَ ۱۰ العوالم، وَأَحِكمَتَ ۱۰۱، وَخَلَقَ كُل شئ.

أَّنْ تَوَلُّو: إن هاؤلاء الآباء الأطهار
علموا أن كلمة الله (جل ثناؤه!) دُوَّاً.

۱۰۱ كُون ۱۰۱ جَمِيع الخلقُ.

لَآنَ الله (له الحمد) لم يخلق هذا العالم [A 136v]
بِحَرَكَةٍ وَلَا تَعَبٍ وَلَا مُزَاوَلَةٍ
وَلَا مُمَاسَّةٍ وَلَا مِن مَادَّةً.

۱۰۲ وَإِنَّمَا [C 7۶v] خَلْقَهُ كَلِمَتِهِ،۱۰۱۰ وَإِنَّمَا [D 132v]
إِذْ قَالَ لِهُ «۹۱!» فَكَانَ.

فَكَلِمَتِهِ آَلِيِّي هَيْ غَرِيزَةٌ نُطْقِهِ،
التي أَقْتِبَ ۱۰۱ بين الكلام والأنون،
بِهَا خَلَقَت ۱۰۵ الخُلُقُ كُلُها،
لا مِحَالَة.

۱۰۵ خَلُقع (حلحصم) ۱۰۵ D ۱۰۴ الفقة ۱۰۴ C ۱۰۳ حِلْحَصُم ۱۰۲ والقول ۱۰۱ D كون (حَصِ) ۱۰۰ أَلْتَّفْسِيرُ ۱۰۰ A ۹۹ BCD ۹۹ ABCD ۹۸ A ۹۷ وَإِنَّمَا C ۹۷ D ۹۶ أَلْتَأْوِيلُ ۹۶ A ۹۵ أَلْتَّأْوِيلُ ۹۵ C ۹۴ A ۹۳ D، ۹۳ والقول ۹۲ C، ۹۱ D ۹۰ BCD ۹۰ AB ۸۹ AB ۸۸ A ۸۷ بَيْنَ فُلُهَ وَالنُّونِ، ۸۷ D، ۸۶ C، ۸۵ D، ۸۴ C، ۸۳ D، ۸۲ D، ۸۱ C. ۸۰ بَيْنَ كُوِّنَتْ ۸۰ A ۷۹ D، ۷۸ C، ۷۷ D، ۷۶ C، ۷۵ D، ۷۴ C، ۷۳ D، ۷۲ C، ۷۱ D، ۷۰ C، ۶۹ D، ۶۸ C، ۶۷ D، ۶۶ C، ۶۵ D، ۶۴ C، ۶۳ D، ۶۲ C، ۶۱ D، ۶۰ C، ۵۹ D، ۵۸ C، ۵۷ D، ۵۶ C، ۵۵ D، ۵۴ C، ۵۳ D، ۵۲ C، ۵۱ D، ۵۰ C، ۴۹ D، ۴۸ C، ۴۷ D، ۴۶ C، ۴۵ D، ۴۴ C، ۴۳ D، ۴۲ C، ۴۱ D، ۴۰ C، ۳۹ D، ۳۸ C، ۳۷ D، ۳۶ C، ۳۵ D، ۳۴ C، ۳۳ D، ۳۲ C، ۳۱ D، ۳۰ C، ۲۹ D، ۲۸ C، ۲۷ D، ۲۶ C، ۲۵ D، ۲۴ C، ۲۳ D، ۲۲ C، ۲۱ D، ۲۰ C، ۱۹ D، ۱۸ C، ۱۷ D، ۱۶ C، ۱۵ D، ۱۴ C، ۱۳ D، ۱۲ C، ۱۱ D، ۱۰ C، ۹ D، ۸ C، ۷ D، ۶ C، ۵ D، ۴ C، ۳ D، ۲ C، ۱ D، 0 C.
just as the word of the human being,
which is from the origin of his substance, is never separated from Him.

Then they said, according to this order,
attesting to the prophecy of David and the saying of John:

Translation: Through whom the worlds were perfected and made well,
and everything was created.

Interpretation: Those pure Fathers
     taught that through the Word of God (may His glory be praised!) all creatures were brought into existence32;
because God (praise to be to Him!) did not create this world by movement or labor or [through] pursuit [of effort] or [through] contact nor from matter;
Rather, He created it [the world] through His Word, since He said to it “Be!” and it was33.
So through His Word, who is the instinct of His speech (His rationality), who joined the Kāf and the Nūn34, all creatures inevitably were created.
Indeed, the prophet David had testified to this.

32 Elias uses the passive form of the verb kawwana (k.w.n.) which means, “to make” or “to create”. This author thinks that by this verb Elias means “to bring into existence”.
33 This is, in fact, a doctrine common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, cfr. Genesis 1:1-25; Q 40:68.
34 The imperative form of the verb “to be” in Arabic is kun, which is the combination of the two letters k and n (with the unwritten short vocal u). This is, then, the sense of Elias’ statement: the Word as the instinct of God’s rationality is revealed by the fact that God creates by pronouncing the word-order kun, “to be”, composed by the two letters k and n. In addition he sees in this word kun the Word of God by which He created everything, which is a common doctrine among Islam, Christinity and Judaism, as it is said above in footnote 33. See also the comment, here page 58.
وقرأوا من أمر الكلمة، وأخذوا في ذكر المسيحية الحادثة، فقالوا في أمر المدبر، أعني التدبير في أمر سيدنا:

"سمح مخلص السماej".

التفسير: الذي من أجلنا، تحن بني الأبشر، ومن أجل خلاصنا، نزل من السماea.

أولئك: يعنون 11 بالهابط من السماea [A 137r]
الكلمة الذي أنزله الله تعالى إلى الأرض لخلاص العالم.
وكلمة الله (عز وجل) تذكر 123 من أجل الجوهر الآلهوتي، لأنها ينسب إلى التذكر دون الأناث.
And they [the Fathers] concluded [the sayings] regarding the Word, and began to mention the originated Christhood (anointment).35

So they said regarding what was planned, I mean the [Divine] Economy concerning our Lord:

Translation: Who, for us men37 and for our salvation,
came down from heaven.

Interpretation: They mean by the “descended from heaven” the Word, whom God (may He be exalted!) sent down39 to earth for the salvation of the world.

The Word of God (may He be Almighty and praised!) is considered masculine because of the divine substance, since it is ascribed to the masculine and not the feminine.

35 Regarding referring to Christ’s humanity as Christhood (anointment), see page 103, verse 69 and footnote 25.
36 By “what was planned”, he refers to the divine providence of salvation, realized through the incarnation of the Word, i.e., the Economy of Christ. Such Economy, i.e., the plan of salvation, according to this text, was always in the divine providence. This term, in addition, might be translated, applying another vocalization, Economos, i.e., the one who realizes the Economy. According to this possibility the essential meaning does not change.
37 Elias uses the expression “sons of men” to mean human beings. This expression comes from the Syriac word “bnaynāšā”, i.e., we have here a syriacism.
38 In verse 110 of the Arabic translation of the Creed, Elias uses the verb nazala to say that the Word descended from heaven. In the interpretation of this verse, however, he uses the substantive hābiṭ from another verb, habaṭa. This indicates that he probably did not possess an existing Arabic translation of the Creed’s text, but was translating directly from the Syriac. See also verses 105 and 108, footnotes 39 and 42. In addition, see the comment on the Arabic text of the Creed used by Elias, here pages 41-47.
39 In relation to what have been already said in the above footnote, here again, Elias uses another form of the verb nazala, precisely, anzala, to express the descent of the Word to earth. In this verse however, Elias, using the passive form anzala affirms that the Father sent the Word down to earth.
40 According to the Arabic grammar, as Elias explains in the following verse 107, the nouns that end with the letter hā (he certainly means the final tā·marbūtah), are considered feminine according to gender. Kalimah, then, which means “word”, should be considered feminine. When it means, however, “the eternal Word of God”, it must be considered as masculine.
وَفَلَوْتُ بِعَلَى سَبِيلِ اللَّغةِ،
بِسَبَبِ خَرَفِ الْهَجَاءِ الَّذِي حَنُنَّهُ يَدَهُ.
وَلَيْسَ نَقُولُ إِنَّ الكلِّمَةَ لَمْ تَهْبِطُ إِلَى الأَرْضِ،
إِنْقُطَعَ [A 137v] عَنِ الْأَلْبِ.
إِذْ لَا يُقُولُ أُحَدٌ
إِنَّ الشَّعَاعَ، لَمْ تَقَالُۚ مِنَ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى الأَرْضِ،
إِنْقُطَعَ عَنْ فُرُضَ الشَّمْسِ،
أَوْ إِنَّ حَرَارَتَهُ، لَمْ تَقَامُ مِنَهُۚ إِلَى مَسَامَتِهِ،
إِنْقُطَعَتْ عَنْهُ [D 133v] إِنْقَطَعَ عَنْ قُرْصِ الشَّمْسِ،
إِلَى مَسَامَتِهِ، أَوْ إِنَّ حَرَارَتَهُ، لَمْ تَقَامُ مِنْهُ.
إِنْقَطَعَتْ عَنْهُ، فِي شَيْءِ مَوْجُودٍ مَّوْجُودًا،
فِي أَلْلَهِ (لَهُ الحَمْدُ) أَوْجَدُ،
ثُمَّ قَالُوا.
إِنَّ الشَّعَاعَ: وَتَجَسَّمَ مِنْ رُوحِ الْقُدُسِ، وَصَارَ إِنْسَانًا.
أَلْتَّفْسِيرُ [B 8r] عَبَّرَتِ الْيَعْقُوبِيَّةُ،
أَلْتَأْوِيلُ [A 138r] الْفِذْغَامِ،
وَاِحْتَجُوْاۚ إِنْ أُحْتَجُوْاۚ فِي ضَلاَلَتِهِمْ لِأَنْهُمْ لَمْ يُمَيِّزُوهُ حَقَّ تَمْيِيزِهِ ۚ.
It [the word] is linguistically considered feminine because of the letter ح with which the noun ends\textsuperscript{41}.

We do not say that the Word, when He descended\textsuperscript{42} [from heaven] to earth,

was separated from the Father.

Because no one says that the [sun’s] ray,

when it flows from the sun towards the earth,

is separated from the sun’s disk, or that its heat [the sun’s heat],

when it flows from it [the sun’s disk] towards its pores\textsuperscript{43}, is separated from it.

And if it is present as such in the created thing,

then it is that much more present in the Creator (praise to be to Him!).

Then they said:

Translation: And He became embodied through the Holy Spirit and became man.

Interpretation: With this doctrine\textsuperscript{44}, the Jacobites expressed and advanced [it] as an argument in their ignorance, because they did not distinguish it [the doctrine] truly.

\textsuperscript{41} On this grammatical rule, see page 111, footnote 40. From this statement and the one in verse 106, one might note Elias’ interest in and knowledge of Arabic grammar. In the introduction, it has been already mentioned Elias’ linguistic interest in both the Syriac and the Arabic languages and that he wrote on this topic, see here pages 4, 13 and 75.

\textsuperscript{42} In this verse, the author uses the verb habata and not nazala.

\textsuperscript{43} The author uses the word masāmah, which is a neologism; it is probably a syriacism. In fact, the words “sōmā” and “sōmaṭā” are the Syriac forms of the Greek σῶμα, “body, bodies”. Cfr. COSTAZ, Dictionnaire syriaque, 224.

\textsuperscript{44} The Arabic term used by Elias is fitgām, which is a syriacism. In fact it is an arabization of the Syriac fitgāmā, that means “word”, “saying”, “phrase”, etc., Cfr. COSTAZ, Dictionnaire syriaque, 295.
فَأَمَّا الْبَيْعَةُ الْجَالِثِيَّةُ
الْمَعْرُوفَةُ بِالْبَسْطُوْرِيَّةِ،
فَإِنَّها مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقَدْسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَهُوَ أَنْ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
وَإِنَّ أَسْمَ أَلْمَسْحِّرٍ وَأَلْأَلْقٍ
فَإِنَّهَا مَيَّزَتْهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ،
رُوحِ الْحَقِّ.
But the Catholicate Church,
known as Nestorian,\(^{45}\)
distinguished it by the Holy Spirit,
the Spirit of truth;
and it is that the name “Christ” and [the name] “Son”
apply to both the Eternal Word and the man taken from Mary\(^{46}\), together,
just as the name “man” and “son of man”
apply to the soul and the body together.
But then, if we say that someone carried a thousand raṭl\(^{47}\),
it is known that he carried it by his body without his spirit\(^{48}\);
because the spirit does not carry anything,
on account of its lightness and the lightness of its spiritual [consistency];
rather, the body carries.
Still, the one man [who is both body and spirit] was the subject of it
[this action]\(^{49}\).
Among [the actions], which are of the body but attributed to the spirit,
is [manifested through] the saying of the prophet Isaiah regarding
king Hezekiah,
when he was healed of his illness\(^{50}\):

\(^{45}\) On this nomination, see here pages 9-10.
\(^{46}\) The expression “the man taken from Mary” is used by Elias to indicate an individual human being, i.e., a singular human nature (human hypostasis), without using any technical metaphysical term. So, the Eternal Word is a hypostasis, and the man taken from Mary is a hypostasis. For more details, see the comment, here pages 60-61, this expression is another proof of the authenticity and attribution of this work to Elias, see here pages 28-29.
\(^{47}\) Raṭl is a unit of weight used in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries.
\(^{48}\) In this verse, he uses the term rūḥ and not nafs to indicate the human soul, as he does in verses 45 and 78. Also taking into consideration the interchange he makes between these two terms, as in verses 122, 124 and 125, it is clear that for Elias they are synonyms in the anthropological field, i.e., he does not follow the trichotomic division of the human being into body, soul and spirit.
\(^{49}\) He wants to say that, even if the action is performed by the body, it is attributed to the “man” as a totality: a union between the soul (spirit) and the body.
\(^{50}\) On this account, see Isaiah 38:17ss.
اليسا بني نيسبي

تفسيره: "أنت أحببت، يا محب، آلام تفسير في الفساد.

أي حيث رفعه في الصغر عني.

وأنت تعلم [B 8v] أن النفس لا تبلى ولا تفسد، بل الجسم يبلى ويفسد في القبر.

وارنحو، كما يقول آشيا النبي، [A 139r]

تعود إلى هذا الجسم.

وكلمنا منه.

كما يكلم الملك ربيته من وراء حجاب يتوحه من مخاطبتهم.

فتدبر (حاملك الله).

هذا المعنى حسنًا من قول هؤلاء الأنبياء، "إله يجسد من روح القدس وصار [D 135r] إنسانًا.

حتى لا تعتبر كما عثر المخالفون.

ثم قالوا على هذا النسق ولهذا المعنى:

"هذا مفسر: وحبد يه، وولد من مريم البنت.

ألفيسير: هدا.
“ܒܚܒܠܡܐ ܛ ܒܢܦܫܝ ܕܠܡܐ ܛܒܠܡܐ”
Its translation: “You desired, O Lord, that my soul may not decay into decomposition”;
that is, as you lifted the harm away from me.
And you know that the soul does not decay or decompose, but the body is what decays and decomposes in the tomb.
And the spirit, as the prophet Isaiah says, is related to this body.
And He, the Word, spoke to us through it [the body], just as the king speaks with his subjects from behind a veil for the purpose of addressing them.
So consider well (May God protect you!) this meaning of those Fathers’ saying, that is, “He became embodied by the Holy Spirit and became a man”, so you stumble not as our opponents had stumbled.

And then they said, according to this order and this meaning:
Translation: and He was conceived and was born of the Virgin Mary.

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51 Isaiah 38:17. See the comment on the Peshitta text quoted here by Elias and its particularity, here pages 46-47.
52 He is probably referring to Isaiah 10:18.
53 Cfr. Q 42:51; see also the comment on this analogy and its use by other authors of Elias’ tradition, here pages 67 and 74.
54 This author’s opinion is that Elias means here by opponents the Jacobites.
التأويل: إنما يُوَلَ مَارْتَّ "مرَّمَ" [A 139v]
لَمْ يَتَّلِيَ بِمِثْلِ الْكَلِمَةِ وَلَا وَلَدَتْهُ.
لَكِنَّ الْكَلِمَةَ الَّتِي هِيَ مُوَلَوَّةٌ مِنَ الْأَبَ الْأَزْلِي،
أَلَّا يُوَلَّكَلِمٌ الْأَزْلِيَّ.
على ما وَضَعْتُنا في عَدَدٍ مَّواضِعٍ مِنْ كِلَامِنَا هَذَا،
وَلَا يُوَلَّ مَارَتْ مَرَّمً وَلَا غَيْرُهَا "حوَّلَ" [B 9r] حديثًا [D 135v]
وَإِنَّمَا هَذَا كَلِمَةً
مَحْمُولٌ عَلَى نَاسُوتِ سَيِّدِنَا المَسِيحِ
الَّتِي حَبِلَ بِهَا بِقُوَّةٍ [B 9r] رُوحِ الْقُدُس.
وَلِسَيِّدِنَا جَوْهَرَانِ،
أَحْدَهُمَا نَاسُوتٌ، وَأَخَرُّ لَهُوتٌ،
كَمَا قَدْ أَجَمَّعْنَا وَالْمَلِكِيَّةُ عَلَيْهِ.
فَيَنْبَغِي لِلْقَائِلِ مِنَّا،
أَنْ يَنْسُبَ إِلَى لَهُوتِهِ
مَا يَجُوزُ أَنْ يُنْسَبَ إِلَيْهَا,
وَيَنْسُبَ إِلَى نَاسُوتِهِ
مَا يَجُوزُ أَنْ يُنْسَبَ إِلَيْهَا.
وَسَنْرِي ""مِنْ بَيَانٍ ذَلِكَ
مَا يُدِلُّ عَلَى صَحِبَةٍ مَا وَصُنُفَاهُ،
وَهُوَ الْمَسِيحُ سَيِّدُنَا،
كِلَامٌ عَلَى لَهُوتِهِ خَاصَّةً،
وَكِلَامٌ ""عَلَى نَاسُوتِهِ خَاصَّةً.

مَرَّ: 194  D
اِد: 195 A
غيره: 196 D
حديثًا: 197 D

B: [Unreadable]
سنوري: 199ABCD
كلامًا: 200 D
131 Interpretation: Saint Mary, the Virgin, did not conceive the Word and did not generate Him.
132 Because the Word, who\textsuperscript{55} is generated eternally from the Father, is eternal, as we described in many places within this, our discourse.\textsuperscript{56}
133 And He is not temporally born of Saint Mary or of any other.
134 Rather, this saying is regarding the humanity of our Lord Christ, who was conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit.
135 And for our Lord, there are two substances: one is human and the other is divine, just as we and the Melkites have agreed upon.
136 So, it is required of the wise speaker among us to attribute to His divinity what is permissible to be attributed to it, and to attribute to His humanity what is permissible to be attributed to it.
137 And by that explanation, we will show\textsuperscript{57} what points to the veracity of what we had described, that He is the Christ, our Lord, [quoting] specific statements regarding His divinity and specific statements regarding His humanity.

\textsuperscript{55} In the Arabic text, Elias uses the feminine relative pronoun \textit{allatī}, and this is contradictory with what he affirms in verses 106-107 regarding the use of the masculine form when \textit{kalimah} means the “Eternal Word”. The same phenomenon occurs several time in the Commentary, see for example verses 23, 32, 35 and 37.

\textsuperscript{56} See verses 6-8, 14-23, 33-35, 34-40, 46 and 80-92.

\textsuperscript{57} The verb used by Elias is \textit{awrā} in the present form, which means to give an opinion. This author’s opinion, however, is that Elias wanted to use the verb \textit{arā} (\textit{raa}, form 4), to give the meaning to demonstrate, to show, to make someone see something.
Elias of Nisibis

138 فأما على [C 78v; D 136r]
فهو قولته:
إني أنا وأبي واحد.

139 يعني بذلك أن الكلمة والابن واحد في الجوهر.
فهل يجوز أن يحمل هذا القول على ناسوته؟ 
فقال إن جسم المسيح والابن جوهر واحد؟ 
ما أحسب أحدا يقول هذا!
وقوله على [A 140v] ناسوته:
إنني سأصلى وأقبل 
وأقوم بعد ثلاثة أيام.
فهل يجوز أن يحمل هذا القول على الآلهوت؟
فقال إن الجوهر الحي الأزلي
الذي لا بدء له ولا انقضاء، 
ولا تضبط الحواس، ولا [B 9v] تتالله [D 136v]
صلب وقفل؟
وأمام الموت، فهو:
خروج نفس من جسم.
فهل آلهة (جل وعز)
جسم خرجت منه الروح ل jakiحة الموت؟
معاد 20 آلهة!

201 A: بدل: 205 AB: بدؤ
202 D: الجوهر رد
203 C: 
204 D: الآلهوت
201 A: بدل: 205 AB: بدؤ
202 D: الجوهر رد
203 C: 
204 D: الآلهوت
138 Regarding His divinity, it is His saying:
   “I and my Father are one”\textsuperscript{58};
139 He means by this, that the Word and the Father are one in substance.
140 Is it, then, permissible that this saying refers to His humanity, so that it could be said that Christ’s body and the Father are one substance?
141 I do not think anyone says this!
142 And His saying regarding His humanity:
   “I will be crucified and killed and will rise after three days”\textsuperscript{59}.
143 Is it permissible, then, that this saying refers to the divinity, so that it is said that the living and eternal substance, who has neither beginning nor end, and who is not controlled by the senses and is not grasped by the hands, was crucified and killed?
144 Death, then, is “a soul leaving a body”.
145 Is God (may He be praised and Almighty!) a body from whom the spirit\textsuperscript{60} left, so that death overtook Him? God forbid!

\textsuperscript{58} John 10:30. See the comment on the Arabic translation of the Bible, here pages 46–50.
\textsuperscript{60} Here again, it is notable the use of spirit (\textit{rūḥ}) indicating the human soul (\textit{nafs}), mentioned in the verse 144.
وَلَوْ كَانَ جِسْمًا مُؤَلَّفًا
كَانَ لَهُ إِذًا خَالِقًا وَمُؤَلِّفًا،
لِلٰهِ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ!) مِنْ ذٰلِكَ!
فَهُدَا مَعْنًى [A 141r] قُولَ آلِبَاءٍ
«وَحَبِلِّهِ مَرْيَمُ وَوُلُودِهِ»،
لَآتِهِمْ [C 79r] تَسَبَّبَوا إِلَى الْكِلَمَةِ فِي صَدْرِ كَلاَمِهِمْ
وُلُودُهُ مِنْ آَلَ بَٰرٍ أَزْليًا!»،
وَتَسَبَّبَوا إِلَى الْجِسْمِ وُلُودُهُ مِنْ مَرْيَمَ حَدِيثًا!».
وَآلَشَاهِدٌ عَلَى هَذَا.
قُولُ دَاوُودَ [D 137r] أَلْبِيٌّ:
«مِنْذُ قَدِيمٍ، وَلَدَّكَ آَيُّهَا الْصَّبِيَّ».
وَالْصَّبِيِّ ۱۵۰ لا يَتَّهَأ أن يَكُونَ وُلُودُهُ قَدِيمًا،
وَإِنَّما هَذِهِ نُبُوَّةٌ عَلَى سَيِّدَنَا الْمُسِيحَ
الَّذِي وُلَدَهُ مَرْيَمُ حَدِيثًا،
وَأَنْتُ بِالْكِلَمَةِ المُؤَلِّفَةِ مِنْ آَلِهِ قَدِيمًا.
فَإِنْ قَالَ أَحَدٌ إِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَيْسَ عَلَى هَذَا التَّأْوِيل، [A 141v]
فَلْتَلَّم، أَنَّ دَاوُودَ إِذًا أَرَادَ بِهِذَا الْقُولِ مَحَالًا مَتَنَاقِضًا!
لَأَنَّ الصَّبِيَّ الْحَدِيثُ
لا يَجُوز أن يكونُ مؤَلِّفًا فِي الْقَدِيمِ،
لَأَنَّ الْقَدِيمَ لا يَسَمَّى بِالْحَدِيثِ،
وَالْحَدِيثُ ۱۵۶ لا يَسَمَّى بِالْقَدِيمِ، [B 10r]
وَهَذَا أَمْرٌ وَاضِحٌ.
If He was a composed body, 
then He would have a creator and a composer. 
God (may He be praised and Almighty!) forbid!

So, this is the meaning of the Fathers’ saying, 
“And Mary had conceived and generated Him”.

Because, at the start of their argument, 
they ascribed to the Word His generation eternally from the Father, 
and they ascribed to the body His generation temporally from Mary.

And the testimony to this, 
is the saying of David, the prophet:
“From eternity I generated you, o lad”

And the lad is not presented as being eternally generated. 
This prophecy, in fact, is regarding our Lord Christ, 
whom Mary generated temporally, 
and [who] was united with the Word, who is generated from the 
Father eternally.

And if someone said that [the prophecy] is not according to this 
interpretation,
let him know that [if it were as he pretends it to be] David, then, intended 
something imposible and contradictory by this saying!

Because it is not possible for the temporal lad 
to be generated eternally,

since the eternal is not called temporal 
and the temporal is not called eternal, 
and this an obvious matter.

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62 It could also be understood that, having been “born from Mary”, Christ is a temporal being. In 
this case, “Christ” means the humanity, which is created and temporal. See page 103, footnote 
25 and the comment in regard, here pages 64-65.
Elias of Nisibis

155. "And they said to each other, until this day, 'This is the place of the assembly.'" [C 79v]

156. Then they said: 'We have been truly disobedient, and the wszystrians at the hands of the allahots.' [A 142r]

157. Then they said: 'This is also a thing burdened on the allahots.

158. Then they said: 'This is also a thing burdened on the allahots.'

159. "And they said:

160. "This is also a thing burdened on the allahots." [A 142v]

161. Then they said: 'This is also a thing burdened on the allahots.'

162. Then they said: 'This is also a thing burdened on the allahots.'

163. Then they said: 'This is also a thing burdened on the allahots.'

164. "And they said:

165. "This is also a thing burdened on the allahots." [A 142v]

166. Then they said: 'This is also a thing burdened on the allahots.'

167. Then they said: 'This is also a thing burdened on the allahots.'

C : يحيط
D : للبهاء
BCD : يحيط (بهم)
C : ايسافا
D : فنصيس
C : هلبلهس
C : سفسمس

217
218
219
220
221
222
223
224
225

C : C : C : C : C :  
D : D : D : D : C :  
B : B : B : B : C :  

124
Then, in the manner of this meaning [explained above], they said in regard to the humanity:

Translation: And He suffered and was crucified in the days of Pontius Pilate.

Interpretation: This [saying] is also applied to the humanity without the divinity, which is not surrounded by heaven and earth, let alone contained by anything.

And then they said:

Translation: And He was buried and rose after three days, as it is written.

Interpretation: This saying, like the one that preceded it, is applied to the humanity.

And it must be said that the body rose through the power of the divinity dwelling within Him.

And then they said:

Translation: And He ascended to heaven, and He sits at the right [side] of His Father.

Interpretation: The body temporally ascended to heaven,

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63 He means that the body that ascended to heaven is a created and temporal being.
لَوْنُ الكَّلِمَةِ
لَّلَّهِ حَلَّتُ فِي نَاسُوتِ مِنْ سَيِّدِنَا بِٱلْمَشِيَّةِ
لَمْ تَخْلُ لَّهُ مِنْهَا آخَرًا
كَمَا أنَّ الشُّعَاعَ، لَمَّا سَطَعَ
كَمَا قَدَّمْتُ ۲۲۴ ذَكْرَهُ
مِنْ قُرْصِ الشَّمْسِ، لَمْ يَنْفَصِلْ عَنِ الْقُرْصِ
وَالْكَلِمَةِ [C ۸۰ر] كَانَ حَالًا
في نَاسُوتِ سَيِّدِنَا المُسِيحِ فِي الْأَرْضِ، [A ۱۴۳ر]
مِنْ حَيْثُ أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَنْفَصِلْ مِنَ الْآلَبِ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).
وَقُولُهُمْ «جَلَّسَ عَنِّي بَعْضِ الْآلَبِ»
هُوَ أَيْضًا مَحْمُولٌ عَلَى نَاسُوتِ
لَانَّ الْجِلْوسَ وَالْقِيَامَ هَمَا لِلَّيْسَامِ دُونَ الْآرَوَاحِ.
وَقُولُهُمْ «عَنِّي بَعْضِ الْآلَبِ»
لَمْ يَعْنُوا بِذٰلِكَ
أَنَّ لِلرَّبِّ تَعَالَى يَمِينًا وَلا شِمَالًا،
لَهُ مُرَكِّبٌ وَمُؤَلِّفٌ،
تَعَالَى لِلَّهِ عَنِ هٰذَا!

١٦٨
١٦٩
١٧٠
١٧١
١٧٢
١٧٣
١٧٤
١٧٥
٢٢٦  ACD : 

٢٣٦  Byal:مشية
٢٩٩  داسوت: 
٣٠٠  يدل: 
٣٣١  Cبأ:لبس
٣٣٢  Dكلما:
because the Word,
who indwelt the humanity of our Lord according to will,
did not leave heaven,
into which our Lord’s humanity ultimately ascended.

Just as the ray, as I mentioned previously,
when it shines from the sun’s disk,
does not separate from the disk.

And [so] the Word
was indwelling our Lord’s humanity on earth, [however],
He did not separate from the Father [who is in heaven] (may He be Almighty and praised!).

And their saying “He sits at the right [side] of the Father”
is also applied to the humanity,
because [the actions of] sitting and standing both belong to the body and not to the spirit.

And by their saying “at the right [side] of the Father”,
they did not mean that the Lord,
the Almighty, has a right [side] or left [side].

Because [having] right and left [sides]
is [a characteristic] of the composite and created bodies.

And whatever is composite and created
has a composer and a creator –
God is above all of this!

---

64 In the Arabic text, body and spirit are in plural.
65 Again, by “Lord”, in this verse, the author means God the Father.
Elias of Nisibis

"And they said, ‘We will sit at the right of our lord over them’.

For indeed he sat at the right of his lord."

"And Lo! the Lord (Exalted be He) said:

‘Seat thou and the angels at thy right hand!’

And indeed he made the first of the posterity his successor."

"For indeed the Lord (Exalted be He) said in the Gospel:

‘Lo! the Lord (Exalted be He) said in the Gospel:

‘And indeed he made his son his successor, as it is said:}

..."
Rather, they meant by His sitting at the right [side of the Father], God’s [the Father’s] appointment of Him, as caliph (vicar) over His sovereignty.

As it is said:
“Someone sat at the right [side] of someone [else]”, that is, to be over His matters and providence.

And God (may He be Almighty and praised!) made His Son to be His caliph (vicar), as the Gospel says: God had said regarding Christ:
“This is my Son and my beloved; listen to Him and obey Him”.

And Christ said regarding Himself after the resurrection: “I was given all authority in heaven and [upon] earth”.

And Daniel [the prophet] testifies to this where he says:
“Indeed he was shown the Lord in a vision (may He be Almighty and praised!) sitting on His seat, and the angels of heaven standing before Him, and a man – he means Christ’s humanity –

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66 In the Arabic text, the author uses the verb istaḥlafa, meaning to make someone a vicar, here, it was preferred to use the term “caliph”, according to its coranic meaning: Adam was a caliph-vicar of God on earth; the prophets are also called caliphs according to this comprehension, cfr. Q 7:30; 7:69. It is also notable that the Quran uses the same verb, istaḥlafa, to indicate the same meaning; see Q 24:55. So also, in Elias’ thought “caliph” does not mean simply “successor”, but “vicar”. See our comment in regard, here pages 68 and 74-75.

67 Again, Elias proves his knowledge of the Arabic language.

68 In this verse, Elias uses the noun “caliph”, ḥalifah, with the same meaning as in verse 178. According to this author’s opinion, Elias wants to say that the real vicar of God is the new Adam and not the old Adam, as it appears in the Quran. See footnote 66 above and the comment in regard, here pages 74-75.


70 It seems that Elias wanted to use the verb arā (ra♯), form 4) in passive form, but he, as in verse 137, conjugates it wrongly. See the same use in verse 137, footnote 57.

71 Again, by using “Lord” here, the author means the “Father”, as well as in the rest of the same verse, where he mentions God.
يَعْنِي نَاسُوتُ الْمُسِحَّ.
وَأَعُطَاهُ الْسُّلْطَانَ وَالْمُلْكَ وَالْعَظَمَةَ.
وَأَمَّرَ أنْ تَعْبُدَ جَمِيعُ النَّاسِ وَالْأَلْسَنَ.
فَهُذَا مَعْنَى قُولُ آلِبَاءِ:
"إِنَّهُ جَلَّسَ عَلَى يَمِينِ أَبِيهِ.
كَمَا قَالَ [D 140r]
"قَالَ أَلْزُبُ لِرَبِّي: "إِجْلِسْ عَنْ يَمِينِي".
فَلْيَعْلَمُ مِنْ يَمِينِهِ أَنْ هُوَ أَيْمُوُّهُ.
وَإِنَّهُ هُوَ لِنَاسُوتِ الْمُسِحَّ الْمُتَّحِدَةِ بِلاَهُوَتِهِ.
وَإِنَّمَا هِيَ لَهُ حَرَكَاتُ الْمُسِحَّ الْمُتَّحِدَةِ بِلاَهُوَتِهِ.
فَهُذَا أَيْمُوُّهُ عِنْدَ [A 144v]
هَذَا الأمْلَأُ الَّتِي تَّحَدَّتُ بِهَا.
وَلاَ يُنْسَبُ إِلَى كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْ جَوْهَرَيْهِ إِلَّا مَا يَجُوزُ أَنْ يُنْسَبَ إِلَيْهِ عِنْدَ [B 11v].
ثُمَّ قَالُوا: ٥٥٩٠ لَمْ ُّلْجَهَّةُ لِلْحَرَكَاتِ ِ يُعْلَمَ لِلْجَهَّةِ لِكُلِّهَا لِكُلِّهَا لِكُلِّهَا.

العضمة

الخالدة

التحدث

لمضمة

لا تهم

لا تهم
was brought [before] God, 
and He [God] gave Him [the man\textsuperscript{72}] the authority, reign and glory, 
and He ordered all peoples, nations and tongues to worship Him”\textsuperscript{73}

This is the meaning of the Fathers’ saying that 
“He sat at the right [side] of His Father”.

As the prophet David said: 
“The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right [side]”\textsuperscript{74}.

Let him who reads this book know 
that these actions 
of ascent [to heaven] and of coming down [to earth] and of sitting [at 
the right side of His Father] 
are of Christ’s humanity united to His divinity.

Much more, the humanity 
obtained all of this honor 
through the divinity, which is united to it.

And nothing is attributed to either of His two substances 
except what is permitted to be attributed to it upon verification.

Then they said:

\textsuperscript{72} He means Christ’s humanity.
\textsuperscript{73} Cfr. Daniel 7:9-14. It is not a direct quotation, but a summary of Daniel’s prophecy. The way he presents this prophecy is similar to the quranic account of the creation of man, where God orders the angels to worship him, cfr. Q 2:30-34; 7:11; 15:28-31; 38:71-75; see also: ESEID, “L’uomo creato ad immagine e somiglianza di Dio”, 178-180.
\textsuperscript{74} Psalm 110 (109): 1. See the comment on the Arabic translation of the Bible, here pages 46-50.
التفسير: نُمِّ إِنِّهُ [C 81r] مُزِّمِعً بِالنُّزُولِ وَالْمُجِيءِ لِمَدِائِنِ [D 140v] الأَوْمَاتِ وَالْحَيَايِ.

التأويل: يَعُونَ ۵۰۰ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنا الْمُسِيِّحَ يُنْزِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ حَيْثُ صَعِدَ إِلَيْهِ لِمَدِائِنِ الأَوْمَاتِ وَالْحَيَايِ، لِأَنَّ [A 145r] اللَّهُ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).

فَوَّضَ إِلَيْهِ قَضَاءَ يَوْمِ الْذِّيْنِ، كَمَا قَالَ دَاوُودُ ﭐ لَنَبِيُّ فِي ﭐ مُزْمُورٍ ﭐ ثَانِيٍّ: مِنْ قُبُورِهِمْ، ﭐ لَبْنُ، تُقِيمُ ﭐ لْمَوْتَى ﭐ (إِنَّكَ، يَا أَيُّهَا) ﭐ لَأَبَنَ، تَقِيمُ ﭐ لْمَوْتَى ﭐ (إِنَّكَ، يَا أَيُّهَا) ﭐ لَأَبَنَ، تَقِيمُ ﭐ لْمَوْتَى نَحْيَةً مِّنَ الْكُورِ، يُدْخِلُ إِلَى الْكُورِ وَهُوَ مَدَرٌ وَيُخْرِجُ مِّنْهُ، وَيُخْرِجُ مِّنْهُ، وَهُوَ كَالْحَجَرِ.

وَأَلْبَارُ يُقِيمُونَ ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا، كَمَا قَالَ سَيِّدُنَا: ﭐ مَنْ رَأَى، فَقَدْ رَأَى ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا، وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ ﭐ وَالشَّيْطَانُ، ﭐ فَيَزِيدُ فِي عَذَابِهِمْ وَغَيْظِهِمْ لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا لِأَنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَ بَشَرًا. كَمَا قَالَ سَيِّدَنَا: ﭐ مَنْ رَأَيَ، فَقَدْ رَأَيَ ﭐ لْمَسِيحًا.

الآيات: ۶۰۴ D : [Space for one word] ۶۰۶ D : [Space for one word] ۶۰۵ B : يَعِيون ۶۰۷ C : ﭐ لْمَوْتَى ۶۰۸ D : ﭐ لْمَوْتَي
Translation: And He is determined to descend and to come
to judge the dead and the living.

Interpretation: They mean that our Lord Christ
will descend on the day of resurrection from where He had ascended,
to judge the dead and the living.

Because God (may He be Almighty and praised!)
delegated to Him the fulfillment of the day of judgment.

As the prophet David said in the second Psalm:
“You, O son, will raise the dead from their tombs,
as the potter brings his pottery out of the furnace;
it [the pottery] enters the furnace as clay,
and comes out of it as stone”.

And the pious will see our Lord on that day
and will be consoled by seeing Him [the Lord] instead of seeing their
Creator [the Father],
upon whom the eyesight never falls,
since they will see His Son,
just as our Lord said:
“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”.

And [as for] Satan and his angels,
He will augment their suffering and ire,
because [their] seeing the humanity of Christ,
المأثور من مريم، ومن جوهر آدم، يقضي عليهم ويعدبهم، ويجدون [B 12r] سيدنا قد أحد منهم ينذر آدم [C 81v] أيه، لإعاقتهم إياها، حتى يخرج من القدر. وكمٌ بالمخلوق

[الله] خسْرَةٌ [D 141v] وندامة وهلاك
أن يدايته عدوه.
وقولهم إنه "يدياين آلآموات ولأحياء".
يعبون من في الفبر ومكن تلبسه القيامة من الأحياء.
وأيضا آلآموات لا يدايتون، لأنهم لا [A 146r] يعقولون شيئا.
وإذا أرادوا بآلآموات
الخطيئة وأهلالكين،
والأحياء
الأبرار وأصالحين،
كما في السيرة
إلا شيء في ن_SCHEMA_:
إن الأبرار الذين سبحوه آناء الليل، فهم 30، بعد وفائتهم أحياه.
[which is] taken from Mary and from the substance of Adam, condemns them and causes them to suffer.

And they [Satan and his angels] will find that our Lord has taken the revenge of His father, Adam, on them, because they had tempted him [Adam] so that he would come out of paradise.

And it is enough for the creature to feel sorrow, regret and perdition that his enemy [i.e., Satan] is judging him.

[By] Their saying that He “will judge the dead and the living”, they mean those who are in graves and those among the living whom the [day of] resurrection will reach.

And also, the dead will not be judged, because they do not comprehend anything.

Rather, they meant by the “dead” the sinners and the lost and by the “living” the pious and the righteous.

As it is mentioned in the hymn which is said on Friday nights: “The pious who glorified Him during the night, they are alive after their death,

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77 See in an earlier comment how such expressions mean for Elias a single human being, i.e., a human hypostasis, here pages 60-61.
78 His understanding of the “living” and the “dead” is related to sin, final judgment and resurrection. It is clear that we have a particular comprehension of soteriology. For more details see the comment, here pages 68-69 and 70-72.
Elias of Nisibis

وَالآَشْرَارُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَّمُوا مَجْدُهُ أَعْظَمَ، فَهُمْ أَمْوَاتٌ، [D 142r]

وَلَمَّا قَرَّعَ آلِيَّةٍ (عَلَيْهِمْ أَلسَلَّامُ).

مِنْ تَفْصِيلِ مَعْتَنِي أَلْلَهُ وَاِلْلَّاهُوَتِ، أَجِرْوا إِلَى ذِكْرِ رَبِّكُمْ رُوحَ الْقُدُّوسِ، وَقَالُوا ✯ [A 146v]

ؤمنُوا بِٱلْوَاحِدِ، رُوحِ ٱلْقُدُّوسِ، رُوحِ ٱلْحَقَّ أَلْتَأْوِيلُ ✯ [B 12v]

إِلَى ٱلْقُدُّوسِ ✯ [D 142v]

مُحْيِي، رُوحٌ ✯ [D 142v]

ضِمَّافًا ✯ [By another hand]

C : + ܐܒܢ ܕܡ ܗ ܢ ܡܚܝܢܐ [By another hand]
and the wicked who suppressed His greatest glory, they are dead even if they are alive”

And when the Fathers (peace be upon them!) concluded the detailed statement of the meaning of the divinity and the humanity, they set out to mention the Lord, the Holy Spirit:

And they said:

Translation: And we believed in the One, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth.

Interpretation: The Holy Spirit is adjoined to the Most Holy who is indeed the Lord, God.

And they said:

Translation: Who flows from the Father, life-giving Spirit.

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79 Cfr. Ktaba da-Qdam wad-Batar, 83. Regarding the citation of this prayer, see the comment, here pages 76-77.
80 Similar to what have been said in footnote 7, Elias also applies the noun “Lord” (Rabb) to the Holy Spirit; this demonstrates that for him “lordship” is a natural attribute of God, common to the three Divine Persons, pages 87 and 89, footnotes 7 and 8. It should be underlined again that, even given such an understanding of the “lordship”, “Lord” remains a messianic and Christological title.
81 See the comment about the use of the formula “the One” in Elias’ translation of the Syriac Creed and the purpose of that choice, page 43.
82 In this verse, the word “adjoined” shows the relationship between the Father and the Holy Spirit, as it is explained in the following verses. See also, in this regard, the comment, here page 56.
Elias of Nisibis

The following text is a transcription of the Arabic text in the image. It contains the text in Arabic script, with some annotations and translations provided where necessary. The annotations are marked with square brackets and footnotes are provided at the bottom of the page.

The text begins with a reference to Elias of Nisibis, followed by a series of Arabic verses and comments. The text includes references to other manuscripts and translations, as indicated by the annotations.

The annotations provide context and translation for the Arabic text, with some of the key points highlighted.

The page number is 138, and the text continues on the next page.
Interpretation: These Fathers have provided the confirmation of what I said regarding the Holy Spirit (praise to be to Him!), in what I have previously stated in this book,

That He [the Holy Spirit] is of the Father (may He be blessed and exalted!), as the heat flows from the sun’s source (disk).

Similarly, Christ, in His divinity, is from the source of that substance, as the light that shines from the sun’s source (disk).

And these, our Fathers, did not find a closer analogy to the oneness of the Creator and the Trinity of His attributes than [the one of] the substance of the sun, which is one in its source and substance and three in its properties and meanings.

So they made the sun analagous to Him. (May He be praised and exalted!)

And they said:

Translation: And we believed in the One, Holy, Apostolic and Catholic Church.

See, for example, verses 7 and 109.

Literally translated as “to make”. Elias, according to this author’s opinion, means here that they did not find a closer analogy to be used to explain the uniqueness and the Trinitarian character of God.

See in regard to such affirmation the comment on Elias’ Trinitarian doctrine, here pages 54-59.
التأويل: يعْنُون.

ما أَجْمَعَتْ عَلَى جَمَاعَةٍ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْمُقْدُّسِينَ،
من الْإِيَّام الَّذِي أَخْذَوهُ عَنَ الْكَلَّامِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ،
وَهُوَ أَلفٌ ٢٨٨ أَلْحَقَ لَأَهْلِ الْذِّينِ.

ثم قالوا:
«حَسْمَهُ حَسْمٌ، حَسْمٌ، لَعْصْمَهُ عَسْمُهُ».

التفسير: وَنَحْنُ مُعْتَرِفُونَ.[٥٠] [A 147r] يِمْعَمُودِيَّةٌ ٢٩٢ [٥١] [D 1٤٣v]
[٥٢]

لِغُفْرَانَ خَطَايَانَا،
[٥٣]

التأويل: أي بِوَلَادَنَا مِنْهَا،
وَمِن حَشَاهَا، ٣٤٠ أَلْمَاعِي،
صِحَّةً لَنَا نَسْبَةٌ الْبُنُوَّةَ،
وَإِرْثُ مَلكُوتِ السَّمَاءِ،
وَالدُّخُولُ إِلَيْهَا بَعْدَ الْقِيَامَةِ الْكُلِّيَّةِ،
أَلَّتِي هِيَ سِرُّهَا.

[وقالوا:]
«حَسْمَهُ حَسْمٌ، حَسْمٌ، لَعْصْمَهُ عَسْمُهُ».

[التفسير: وَقِيَامَةً أَجْسادَنَا، وَحَيَاةً سَرْمَدِيَّةٍ].
Interpretation: They mean what was agreed upon among the group of holy believers, regarding the faith, which they took from the commissioned apostles. And it is the synthesis of truth for the people of faith.

And they said: And we confess one baptism for the remission of our sins. Interpretation: That is, through our [re-]birth from it [the Church] and from its watery womb [we receive] our validation of the relationship of filiation, the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven and the entrance into it after the universal resurrection, which is its mystery.

And they said: And we believe in the resurrection of our bodies and eternal life.

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86 See, in regard to this verse, his ecclesiological doctrine, here pages 69-70.
87 Sirr is the Arabic term for “Mystery”; This author thinks that with this term Elias is translating the syriac razā, used for mystery and sacraments, which corresponds to the Greek μυστήριον. See also the comment, here page 70.
وَبِقِيَامَةِ أَجْسَادِنَا إِلَى مَقَامٍ نَعِيمٍ،
خَسْبَمَا وَعَدْنَا يَسِيَّدًا، وَأَرَانَا مُتَّأٍثِّا في نَفْسِه.
وَحَيَاةٌ سَرْمَدِيَّةٌ فِي مَلِكُوتِ ٱلْسَّمَاءِ،
في ٱلْعَالَمِ المُرْعَى الَّذِي لَيْسَ لَهُ نَفَاذٌ.
وَغَطَّفُهُمُ ﭐهَاهُنَا، ﭐآلِّقَرَارَ ﭐعَتِبَ ١٤٤رِ[١٤٤].
٢٢٦ 
٢٢٧ هوَ ٢٠٠ أَلِّيْمَانُ، ٢٠٠ أَوْلَى١٣٠.[١٣٠]
وَذَلِكّ ٣٠٠ ﭐأَنَّهُمْ ﭐحَيَّا ُّوُجِبُو ١٣٠ صَحَّةٌ إِيمَانٍ١٣٠٩.
وَتَبَيَّنَوا ذٰلِكّ حَسَبٍ مَا [١٣٠٩] ًٌّلَتَّأْوِيلٍ ًٌّلَتَّأْوِيلٍ.
٢٢٨ 
٢٢٩ أَفَاضَتْهُ عَلَيْهِمْ نِعْمَةٌ رُوحٌ ١٣٠ لِّلْقُدُسِ ١٣٠٩،
عَلَى لِسَانِ ٱلسِّلِّيحِينَ١٣٠٩ إِحْتَاجِوا إِلَى ﭐلِعْتِرَافٍ١٣٠٨،
٢٣٠ إِحْتَاجُوا إِلَى ﭐالْعِترَافٍ١٣٠٨،
٢٣١ ﭐبِٚالَّذِي حَقَّقَ لِهِمْ ٢٠٠ ﭐالْنِسْبَةٍ ١٣٠،
٢٣٢ ﭐالمُوصِلةِ إِلَى مَعْرِفَةٍ أَلِّيْمَانٍ١٣٠٩ ًٌّلَتَّأْوِيلٍ ١٣٠،
٢٣٣ ﭐوَذَلِكّ ٢٠٠ أَنَّهُمْ ﭐحَيَّا ُّوُجِبُو ١٣٠ صَحَّةٌ إِيمَانٍ١٣٠٩.
أَلْمُنْتَقَلِينَ إِلى عَذَابٍ ﭐلأَْبَدِ؛ ٢٣٤
٢٣٤ ﭐإِلَى حَيَاةِ ١٣٤
٢٣٥ ﭐإِلَى حَيَاةِ ١٣٤
226 Interpretation: And [we believe] in the resurrection of our bodies into a state of grace as our Lord promised us and showed us an example of it in Himself.

227 And [we confess] eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven in the world to come, which has no end.

228 And their conjunction here is of the affirmation (the confession), that is [based] firstly on the belief.

229 And that is where they imposed the veracity of their belief, and they made that clear according to what the grace of the Holy Spirit poured forth upon them, on the tongue of the pure apostles.

230 They needed to confess what proved to them the relationship [of sonship] that leads them to the knowledge of truth, that is, [to confess] the mystery of the holy baptism.

231 And [they needed] to affirm the resurrection of bodies, and the certainty of the hope which is prepared for the good believers who will be moved into eternal life; and that the wicked will go to eternal punishment.

It could also be translated as “elevated state”.

By “conjunction”, this author thinks that Elias means the grammatical conjunction; in this way, he explains that the letter wāw, which may be used in Arabic as a conjunction, is serving a coordinating function here. For example, in verse 227, “and in eternal life ...”, according, then, to this author’s opinion, Elias is trying to explain what this “and” is connecting to in verse 228, which is the affirmation of the one baptism and then of the resurrection of bodies and eternal life, which are all based first on belief and faith.

It means “sacrament”. See above, page 141, footnote 87.

See also the comment on baptism, here page 70.
nell الجحيم
لا رؤيا لهذا، كما لا رؤيا لهذا.
وكل واحد من الأخيار
يعطى من النعيم بمقدار عمله وأسبقائه.
وكل واحد من الشـراز يكون عدابة،
وإلى أنصف.
علي قدر أسبقائه من سوء أعماله.
ولا يكون أهل الجنة في درجاتهم.
كم لا يسروا في أعمالهم وأجتهادهم.
كم قال فولوص
إن جسدًا
مـن جسد في الـملكوـت.
كم يجعلون كوكب أثر.
من كوكب
في الرـضـول: [A 148v]
فإن أثر
في الآثام في منزلتهم.
كم لا يسروا أهل العذاب في منزلتهم.
فإن بعض ألسـن أهلون من بعض.
And this eternity in hell
is the same as the eternity in paradise\textsuperscript{92};
there is no end to it [eternity in hell],
just as there is no end to this [eternity in paradise].

And [to] each one of the good [believers]
will be given of the grace in accordance with his acts and
his worthiness,

And the suffering of each one of the wicked
will be continuous,
in accordance with what his evil works warrant.

And the people of paradise will not be equal in their levels, as they were
not equal in their works and their efforts.

As the apostle Paul said:
“A body will be brighter
than [another] body in the Kingdom
as a star is brighter
than [another] star in splendor”\textsuperscript{93},

And the people of suffering will not be equal,
as they were not equal in their sins,
because some evil [acts] are lesser than others.

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Al-na\textsuperscript{ī}m} is translated here as “paradise” and not “grace”; the life of grace is actually the one in
paradise. Note that Elias has a work called \textit{Maqālah fi na\textsuperscript{ī}m al-\textsuperscript{ā}ḫirah} (\textit{Treatise on the Bless of the
Afterlife}) in which he talks about paradise in the same terms. See the reference to this work here
in our introduction, page 13.

\textsuperscript{93} Cfr. 1 Corinthians 15:40-43. See the comment on the Arabic translation of the Bible,
here pages 46-50.
دُعاء خِتاميَّ

﴿لِّلَّهِ ﭐلَّذِي عَلَّمَنَا هٰذَا ﭐلِْيمَانَ، وَنَسْأَلُ أَنْ يُوَفِّقَنَا لِِكْمَالِهِ بِٱلأَْعْمَالِ ﭐلصَّالِحَةِ، مَعَ ﭐلِْيمَانِ ﭐلصَّادِقِ. ﴾(328)

۳۳۴ دايم
۳۲۸ ۳۲۶ نسائِل
۳۲۷ A : [Same script as fol. 147r-v]
۳۲۸ A : [Same script as fol. 147r-v]
۳۲۹ C : مَحَاطٌ
۳۲۰ A : -
۳۲۱ D : فَكِلَمَن
۳۲۲ A : [Unreadable]
۳۲۰ A : [Same script as fol. 147r-v, it is written, however, on the left margin.]
۳۲۷ C : [In Arabic script and not garshuni]
۳۲۷ A : -
۲۴۱ وَإِلَيْهِ ﭐلرَّغْبَةُ دَائِمًا، وَﭐلْحَمْدُ لِلٰهِ إِلَى أَبَدِ ﭐلْبِدِينَ، أَمِينَ
[Final Prayer]

239 And we ask God who taught us this faith
to help us succeed in completing it with good works,
through which we will be worthy to enter the Kingdom
with the true faith94.

240 Because faith without works
is like a tree without fruit95.

241 And all those who do not believe in this Creed
will be put out and rejected by the Holy Church,
according to the word of God, who is forbidden from addition
or subtraction,
and towards Him is always the desire.

242 And praise be to God forever and ever
and throughout eternity. Amen.

---

94 Cfr. James 2:14-26. See also in the comment, here page 72, how this verse is related to Elias’
doctrine on soteriology.
PART III

LEXICON

AND

INDEX OF TERMS
## 1. LEXICON

This lexicon does not include:

الّذي، الّتي، الّذين، أن، أنّ، بأنّ، لأنّ، إنّ، إنّما، أنا، أنتِ، أيّ، أيّما، أيّها، ذاك، ذلك، كذلك، هكذا، نحن، هذا، هذان، هاؤلاء، هذه، هو، هم، هنّ، وهي.

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