

Conceiving God as One In Al-Kindi and Yahya Ibn Adi

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Abstract:

This article deals with the debate between Al-Kindi and Yahya Ibn Adi around the issue of God as One. By exposing and analyzing their arguments regarding the God's Unity. The debate on God's unity has risen an important question within the philosopher's world in which they poured their efforts attempting to figure out this mystery, especially when philosophy became a special discipline among Muslims and Christians.

Key Words: God's Unity, Al-Kindi, Yahya Ibn Adi, Theology, Religion, Philosophy.

Introduction:

During the period of the Abbasid rule, the debate between Muslims and Christians on God's unity and Trinity reached its peak when the translation movement and transmission of the Greek philosophy to Arabic has flourished. Basically, as a result of the Muslim and Christian clerics' urgent need to defend principles of their own belief, This resulted in an in-depth education and learning of logic and philosophy. Many different beliefs and doctrines emerged in the Abbasid period, which created, from one hand, a kind of internal conflict among Muslims, whereas, believers attempted to defend and set differences for their own ideologies. On the other hand, there was an internal conflict among Christians in Baghdad due to emergence of Christian groups which have their own doctrines that defected from the church. Such controversies that appeared

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between these Muslim and Christian groups has stirred philosophy and logic that prevailed the period.

This research highlights the deeper philosophical and ideological controversy between Muslim philosophers and Christian counterparts in the issue of the belief in the Oneness of God, as well as the debate on defining the Christians doctrine of Trinity. Muslim philosophers –on one hand- saw that actual meaning of oneness shall be explained with science and logic to reach real faith and recognition¹. On the other hand, Christians, however, found themselves in a position that obligated them to reply to Muslims who questioned Christian faith in monotheism and doubted their believe in one God. Christians responded by stating that Christianity is impeccable against polytheism². They also had to justify their belief in the doctrine of Trinity and attempted to prove that it did not disagree with monotheism.

This research paper also aims to throw the lights on medieval Muslim and Christian philosophers' debate in regards with God's unity, as well as the debate on the Doctrine of Trinity by presenting some of the most important arguments which were presented by two outstanding figures of the ninth and the tenth centuries; Al-Kindi, as the representative of this debate on behalf of Islam. And Yahya ibn Adi, as the representative on behalf of Christianity.

The two Philosophers have put tremendous efforts and knowledge in order to; first, justify fundamental issues pertaining to their beliefs, by using logical analogies and philosophical arguments which were written in form of treatises and letters.

¹ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, P.319

² Father Samir Khalil, *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, treatise on Oneness* , P.107

Second, provide the seekers of knowledge of the coming generations with the essential tools to seek the truth of their beliefs, as manifested in the words of Al-Kindi, who said: ‘whatever source it has [emanated], even if it should emanate from races distant from us and nations different from us. For nothing is more fitting for the seeker of truth than [the pursuit] of truth itself.’¹

According to Majid Fakhri, Al-Kindi followed Plato’s lead by using mathematics as a preliminary to the study of the higher branches of philosophy, ‘including physics and metaphysics, or as he usually calls it ‘ first philosophy’². Despite his reliance on Aristotle’s doctrines. Al-Kindi considered the study of philosophy – in particularmeta- physics, as the higher branch of science as it deals with the notion of the True One.³

In his metaphysical letter ‘on first philosophy’, the third and the fourth chapters dealt with the proofs of God’s absolute unity in which Al-Kindi presented a logical explanation of the nature of both unity and multiplicity, in which he argued that the ‘True One is, a unique being, absolutely and essentially one.’⁴ What are Al-Kindi’s key proofs to this, what are the features that he tried to attribute to God and what are the features he tried to deny, is one of the concerns of the research paper.

However, the two main intentions of the paper are, first, to provide a well analysis of some of Al-Kindi’s arguments on God’s unity against the dogma of

¹ Majid, Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism*, P.23, cited in Al-Kindi, *Rasa’il Falsafiyah*, I, p. 97.

² Majid, Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism*, P.24

³ Majid, Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism*, P. 25

⁴ Ivry, L. Alfred, *Al-Kindi’s Metaphysics: A Translation of Ya’qub ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi’s Treatise “On First Philosophy” (fi al-fasafah al-ula)*, (*Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science*.) p.11.

Trinity, as they were discovered only through Yahya's (philosophical and theological) treatise, the Defence of the Christians Dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of refutation of Christians. The analysis and the conclusion of the main arguments that each of the philosophers have made in this treatise, is an attempt to raise an important question, in which the importance of this research lies. In order to get a better understanding of how each of the Philosophers has conceived God. Why was it important for them to provoke this issue and to whom did they return to assist them in developing their arguments? Another aim of this research paper is to provide a translation of Yahya ibn Adi's Treatise 'the Defense of the Christians Dogma of Trinity against Al-Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians".'

The Arabic treatise was published and translated into French for the first time by Augustine Périer. And, since it was never translated into English, I will attempt to provide an English translation of the treatise.

Al-Kindi, his life, works and influence

Abu Yusuf Yaqoub Ibn Ishaq Ibn Muhammad Ibn Al-Asha'ath Al-Kindi (801-873) was born in Basra. He moved to Baghdad –the capital of Abbasid Empire at the time- and was educated at the 'Bait Al Hikma' there. He was a Muslim philosopher and one of the very first Arab philosophers, he was called 'the philosopher of Arabs' – According to Peter Adamson in his book on AlKindi, this name was given to him since he descended from a noble family and as he was the first who dug deep in philosophy and logic. He was raised during the Abbasid period when civilization and development reached the climax. He was patronized by the Abbasid Caliphs al-Ma'mun and al- Mu'tasim where he wrote most of his books, and was appointed as a tutor to al- Mu'tasim's son, Ahmad.¹

¹ Peter, Adamson, Alkindi, Great Medieval Thinkers.P.4

Some attribute al-Kindi's downfall to scholarly rivalries at the 'House of Wisdom', especially mathematics scientists Muhammad and Ahmad Ibn Musa due to jealousy as recounted by Ibn Asibah¹; others refer to al-Mutawakkil's often violent persecution of unorthodox Muslims (as well as of non-Muslims); at one point al-Kindi was beaten and his library confiscated and, in some narratives, burnt down. That did not stop al-Kindi; because he was well-known for bravery and liberated concepts. He was a standout Arab Muslim philosopher who has seen heyday of translation movement for Greek philosophical and scientific texts to Arabic, which was generously financed by Abbasid Caliphs. Works of many great Greek scientists such as Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus have been translated as part of the biggest translation movement seen by Islamic World during the Abbasid period.

The Greek-Arabic translation movement left evident impact on al-Kindi's writings and arguments, as his source of influence was Plotinus, like Arab philosophers in Baghdad who were clearly influenced by Aristotle. One of al-Kindi's well-known letters that we have today is 'The First Philosophy' that discusses important themes such as the existence and the divine features to prove the oneness of the creator. Al-Kindi was famously known for directing logic and philosophy to religion and attempting to make them match, where he used philosophy and logic to understand religion² and reach belief through logic and common sense. 'Fihrisit' of Ibn al-Nadim states that al-Kindi wrote almost 300 books, letters and treatises³, but most of which have been lost. One of his letters that gone missing is 'Rissala fi Iftiraq Al-Melal Fil Tawheed'. We do not exactly know when al-Kindi wrote this as the references are scarce, but

¹ Peter, Adamson, Alkindi, Great Medieval Thinkers. P.5

² Majid, Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism, P.3.

³ Ibn AlNadeem, 'Fihrisit', Pp.257-261

we have part of it through the treatise of the philosopher Yahya ibn Adi, which explains that al-Kindi was mistaken in his response to Christians. Accordingly, we present some of al-Kindi's theories in oneness that have been mentioned in his book 'The First Philosophy', and then we will focus on what he wrote in response to Christians and their belief in trinity.

Al-Kindi on God's Absolute Unity

In order to understand how al-Kindi conceived God's absolute unity, we need to go through some of his arguments in which he developed to define the meaning of 'unity' and 'multiplicity'. As Alfred Ivry states, the nature of everything in our experience is indicated to require elements of both unity and multiplicity.¹ The assumption of either existing alone in something leading to ridiculous conclusions, which al-Kindi works out in detail for both. The necessary composition in everything, of unity and multiplicity is seen as obliging a cause which cannot be similar to it in any way and must be an absolute unity.²

Absolute unity is shown as not found in anything-possessing multiplicity, this argument is manifested in the coming example of these two terms about the human body. When we say, 'this is a body', or, 'this being belongs to humans'. In the first case, the word 'body' is a whole consisting of parts (the organs), and these parts form the whole (body).

In this particular sense of the term, 'whole' implies multiplicity, so there is not real unity in the whole. The part is a thing, many of which form a whole, so

¹ Ivry, L. Alfred, *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics: A Translation of Ya'qub ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi's Treatise "On First*

Philosophy" (fi al-fasafah al-ula), (Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science.) P. 10

²Ivry, L. Alfred, *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics: A Translation of Ya'qub ibn Ishaq Al-*

Kindi's Treatise "On First Philosophy" (fi al-fasafah al-ula), (Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science.) P. 11

there is not a real unity. In the second phrase, the 'human being' means multiplicity, since the human being is not only a one, but there are many individuals in the humankind. Here, we understand the fact that the multiplicity means unity. Thus, there is not a real unity in that. For Al-Kindi, he argues that the oneness in things or predicates is accidental¹, and so, the oneness in it is derived from another necessary existed cause. Al-Kindi's conclusion of the arguments is that there is not a thing in which there is real and absolute unity, which means that there is not an idea or a predicate that could be labeled as absolute oneness. For he argues, unity in everything we see is accidental. This, according to him, refers to the fact that God is the source of oneness, which Al-Kindi described as the 'True One'. From this point, he states that everything described as 'one' is really 'one' and 'multiple' in the same time, except in the case of the creator who is the one with absolute oneness that he has does not imply multiplicity in it. Al-Kindi expresses here a Platonic principle concerns to the 'true one', as he considered that the 'true one', unlike all of his creatures, is essentially one, the only being that has not been affected by any kind of multiplicity.²

Drawing against the Aristotelian three senses of one, Al-Kindi put a new argument in which he confute this Aristotelian sense in which number one can be used to describe the 'one'. Peter Adamson intervenes by saying that 'we should not be surprised at this conclusion, since we have already seen that any "term," that is, anything we can say, implies both unity and multiplicity'³

Against that, he said that relationship between God and his creations is similar to the relationship between number 1 and the numbers. Al-Kindi did not

¹Peter, Adamson, Alkindi, Great Medieval Thinkers. pp. 50,51.

² Peter, Adamson, Alkindi, Great Medieval Thinkers, p. 49.

³ Peter, Adamson, Alkindi, Great Medieval Thinkers. Pp. 52.

recognize number (1) as part of numbers of measurement units, and he proved that through logical analogy where he conclude 'Just as God is utterly one while His creatures are subject to multiplicity, so the mathematical 1 is simple, while the numbers are all composed. And as just mentioned, 1 is the principle and source of the numbers, since these are composed from "units," that is, by adding 1 to itself repeatedly. The mathematical 1 is external to the numbers and is their cause, just as God is external to created things and is their cause'.¹

Through this short summary of Al-Kindi's arguments of the 'Unity and Multiplicity' and

'The possibility of 1 viewed as the element of numbers, We perceive that Al-Kindi have striped God of any features that could be applied to Him.

Yahya ibn Adi

Abū Zakarīyā' Yaḥyá ibn 'Adī ibn Hameed el-Takriti (893–974) was a Jacobite Christian. Yahya ibn Adi was born in Tikrit and raised in a family that encouraged him to study philosophy, theology and logic. Tikrit was so important at the time that it was regarded the intellectual capital of the Syriac church² and the origin to many Arab scientists and philosophers. Yahya was educated by famous philosophers of his time; Abu Bishr Matta³ and Abu Nasr Muhammad el-Farabi⁴, the authorities of Arab and Aristotle philosophy in his

¹ Peter, Adamson, Alkindi, Great Medieval Thinkers, P . 52.

² Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, treatise on Oneness, , p25, cited in FLEY, margin 2, p.306.

³ Abu Bishr Matta Bin Yunus al-Nastouri (870-940), Baghdad, copied and explained Aristotle.

⁴ Abu Nasr Muhammad el-Farabi (874-950), born in Farab, Turkestan. Taught by Abu Bishr Matta in Baghdad, known as the second tutor as he mastered philosophy and logic, reviewed and explained Aristotle's texts.

time and today. With Abu Bishr dead in 940 and el-Farabi departure to Syria for education, Yahya headed philosophers in the Arab and Islamic world as well as Aristotle school in the Arab world¹, and students descended from everywhere as his name was associated with prominent Arab intellectuals then.

Yahya wrote many philosophical and theological treatises and books, some have been lost and some survived. He was not the first to talk about Tawheed in the Arab world, as the first was Arab philosopher Abu Yusuf al-Kindi who wrote 'The First Philosophy', where oneness and metaphysics have been discussed. He also wrote another treatise about oneness that was mentioned in Ibn el-Nadim "Fihrisit" titled 'Iftiraq Al-Melal fe Al-Tawheed'². Father Samir Khalil mentioned that, most probably, Yahya writings were in the "Defense of the trinity dogma against Abu Yusuf Yaqoub al-Kindi's" is a missed part from the treatise that was written on "Rissala fi Iftiraq Al-Melal". He also said that Yahya ibn Adi did not know about al-Kindi's letter to Christians when he wrote his treatise on oneness in 940/328. Once he knew about it twenty two years later, he immediately responded with his letter "Defence of the trinity dogma against Al-Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians".

Through studying Yahya ibn Adi's texts, we find that he was greatly influenced by Aristotle's principles and teachings. The orientalist Perrier said that 'it is possible to counter every sentence in the treatise with another one taken from Aristotle's 'Metaphysics' or 'Al-Samaa' Al-tabia'I'³. He might be somehow

¹ Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, Treatise on Oneness, p30

² Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, Treatise on Oneness, p110, cited in "FIHRISIT" Ibn el-Nadim, p363/5-6

³ Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, Treatise on Oneness, p121, cited in Perrier, Le texte est encombre de divisions et de subdivisions, p123.

right, as Yahya ibn Adi did not copy Aristotle on purpose but he was directly influenced by Aristotle's translators and interpreters more than Aristotle himself. As we mentioned earlier, Yahya was educated by two Aristotelian philosophers; el-Farabi and Abu Bishr ibn Matta.

Yahya ibn Adi and Trinity

We previously mentioned that Yahya ibn Adi has written his treatise on oneness in a time when he did not know about al-Kindi's treatise. Yahya's treatise on oneness is pure philosophical with theological purpose, where he presents his philosophical theory quietly and meanings of oneness in details¹. While his letter in response to al-Kindi in the "Defense of the Trinity" is a theological treatise that stands on philosophical basis, takes defensive form where Yahya sometimes opted for offensive style to defend Christianity and trinity².

Since Yahya wrote his treatise 22 years before he writes his response to Al-Kindi, it was worth mentioning that Yahya did not mention trinity in his treatise on oneness, but presented in the fourth and last part of the treatise a simple philosophical account on trinity, a Christian principle that implies Greece origins.

¹ Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, Treatise on Oneness, p121

² Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, Treatise on Oneness, p121

Origins of Yahya's Trinity:

By referring to Father Samir Khalil's book on Yahya ibn Adi, he explains Trinity and how Yahya philosophically justified truth of his belief in trinity as a principle that does not disagree with Christians' belief in oneness. Father Samir Khalil thinks that origins of trinity goes back 'Theology' book, for which translation is attributed to physician and translator Abu Othman al-Dimashqi¹, and written by the Neo-Platonist philosopher Proclus².

Proclus has proven that Trinitarian of divinity consists of goodness, power and Knowledge, which –according to Father Samir Khalil- resembles trinity of Yahya, by which he tried to explain the meaning of trinity to Muslim readership through simplified philosophical account. Goodness is the Father, the wise is the Son and the capable one is the Holy Spirit.

This comparison is not meant to prove that Yahya has taken this theory directly from Proclus, but to explain that it was found before Yahya knew about Proclus philosophy. It is possible that this theory found its way into philosophy through Greek-Arabic translation movement, until ending up with our philosopher Yahya ibn Adi.

An Analysis of Al Kindi's And Ibn Adi's Positions

As restated in Yahya's treatise in the defense of the doctrine of trinity, Al Kindi in his refutation to the Christians dogma of trinity began his discussion with the argument that 'all the Christian sects believe that three eternal Persons

¹ Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, treatise on Oneness, , p127, cited in IbnAbiUseiba P.205

² Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, treatise on Oneness, , p127

“Aqanim” are one substance “Jawhar”.¹. According to Harry Wolfson in his ‘the Philosophy of the Kalam’, this statement calls attention to the fact that the Christians were divided into groups. One group that were known to Muslims as orthodox Christians whom accepted the dogma of trinity such as the Jacobites, the Nestorians and the Melkites². The other group is the Macedonians, the Sabellians and the Arians³, whom were known to Muslims as the unorthodox Christians who refused the dogma of trinity. The two Christians sects, the Nestorians and the Jacobites accepted the general concept of Trinitarianism, but they had points of disagreements of the nature of Christ and the meaning of One and substance⁴.

In order to confute the Christians dogma of trinity. Al Kindi points out the falsity of Christians by indicating the first argument that: ‘there obviously exists a kind of composition in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that is , in the three Persons that they proclaim’⁵. Al kindi here raises the problem of the composition in the meaning of one or the one substance, and according to them, he says that: ‘each person exists in its property.

Therefore, the notion of substance exists in each of these Persons and constitutes their identity. Each of them has an inseparable property that differentiates them from each other. It follows from all this that each person is composed of both the substance that contains all of them and of property that makes them

¹Yahya’s treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi’s treatise of “refutation of Christians”. P.1

² Harry Austryn Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kalam, P.321

³ Harry Austryn Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kalam, P.321

⁴ Geris Saed Khoury, An Exposition on Christology, P.53.

⁵Yahya’s treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi’s treatise of “refutation of Christians”. P.1

particular. Yet, everything that is composed is caused; and everything is caused is eternal, so the Father is not eternal, nor are the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we have here eternal things that are not eternal¹

According to AlKindi, each of the Persons/Hypostases is sharing the same meaning of substance and exists in the same one substance, but they differs in term of properties, because each one of the Persons, each Person has its different property “Simah”/”Khassa”. Then he continues to say that each of the properties is eternal in the Persons, which makes it composed. The concept of composition implies the causality principle, because - according to Al-Kindi - everything is composed is the result of being caused. Moreover, everything is a result of being caused cannot be eternal for the fact that causality negates the possibility of being eternal. The conclusion of his argument is that Christians contradict themselves when they confessed that the eternal existence of the different properties of each Person is not eternal and that is, according to him, ‘a doctrine that is a repugnant impossibility’²

Yahya in his defense accepted the first part of AlKindi’s argument that the Persons are composed of parts and share the same one substance. To quote: ‘This affirmation that “substance exists in each of these Persons and constitutes their identity is true and is in conformity with Christians’ doctrine’³. However, he does not support Al Kindi’s argument that the three Persons cannot be eternal because it is caused by the effect of the composition of the substance and the

¹ Yahya’s treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi’s treatise of “refuta-tion of Christians”. Pp.1,2.

² Yahya’s treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi’s treatise of “refutation of Christians”. P.2

³Yahya’s treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi’s treatise of “refutation of Christians”. P.2

inseparable properties. Yahya's response to this was: 'If by the term "composed" you understand that which results from composition, in this case we will certainly have something that is caused, produced, not eternal and your affirmation is true for all similar cases.¹ From this side, he argues that, the three Persons still can be eternal even if it is composed of parts, because this kind of composition never happened to be existed separately. For him, referring to Wolfson, the noneternal is only that which is composed of parts which have previously existed separately².

The other objection that he made through his defense is that; nor does he or the Christians agree with Al-Kindi's claims that the existence of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is a result of (the substance and the properties) being composed. For they only believe that this three Persons are eternal attributes "Sifat" which were given to a unique substance.³ 'Christians will not agree with you that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are produced by the composition of substance and properties. since they only say that substance has each of these three attributes and these attributes are eternal for it and not produced in it after not having existed'⁴.

The second argument that Al-Kindi put forward is- I quote-: 'if these three Persons are eternal genre, since genre is a genre of species and a species is a

¹ Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians", pp. 3, 4.

² Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, p.322

³ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, p.323, cited the French version of the fence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians") , P.6.

⁴ Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians", pp. 3, 4.

species of individuals, the three genres have therefore always been species of individuals. Furthermore, the genre is in nature of individuals with accidents. Thus, that which is eternal is composed. Yet, everything that is composed is caused and nothing that is caused is eternal. Therefore, it is understood here that that which eternal is not eternal, a conclusion that is ridiculously absurd.¹ Al-Kindi here refers to the book of 'Isagoge'² by Prophyry to present his argument by using a logical proposition to demonstrate the fact that the three Persons cannot be a genre, species or individuals of a species. For he argues, if it is any of these, it would imply the meaning that the three Persons are eternally composed of parts. Moreover, as he previously concluded, this is an ugly contradiction.

Yahya in the refutation of this argument, he denied Al-Kindi's claims that the Christians consider the three Persons as genre or as species or 'as what Al-Kindi calls accidents in the general sense of the term.'³ However, Yahya saw the necessity to justify Al-Kindi's claim of the three Persons as being particular accidents by applying to them the term 'properties'. Against that, he states that Christians do not believe that the three Persons are particular accidents when they apply to it the term properties, for they only believe that each of the three Persons is being considered as a substance by itself⁴.

¹ Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians", p. 6

² Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians",p. 6.

³ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, p.324.

⁴ Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians",p.7

In the last argument, Al-Kindi argues, that: 'Christians say: Three make one and one makes three. This is manifestly false. In fact, what we call on 'One' and the same 'Huwa Huwa =Wahid' is used only in three ways: ,as it is mentioned in the Book of Topics ' Tobiqa', Which is the fifth Book of Aristotle's Organon. First, what we call one and the same may be the case of a numerical unity since that unity is called one.

Second. What we call one and the same, may be the case of species unity as when we say that Khalid and Zeid are one because they are part of the same species (i.e., that of man). Third, what we call one and the same, may be even the case of genre unity as we may say that man and donkey are one because they are part of the same genre (i.e. living things)¹. As Wolfson states, Al-Kindi here is drawing upon the Aristotelian concept that the term 'One and the Same' is used in number, species and genre². In order to confute this three senses in which he claim the Christians apply to the three Persons, he asserts that the senses of the 'One and the Same' in species and genre implies composition. Thus, drawing upon his previous argument that the composition implies the fact of being not-eternal, and as he previously concludes everything is a result of being composed cannot be eternal.

As to the third sense of what he called the one in number, Al-Kindi put a different argument that the one is a part of three, and the three is a multiple of one³. This according to him implies the meaning of composition. Therefore, if Christians say that three make one and one makes three in terms of the relation of numerical unity, as three is a number composed of three units and one is part

¹ Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians",p.8

² Harry Austryn Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kalam, p.325

³Harry Austryn Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kalam, p.325

of three, it is then necessary that what is 'one' should be only a part of its own essence and that, (three times the unit) what is 'one' is a multiple its own essence'¹

To confute this argument, first, Yahya rejected the arguments in Al-Kindi's claims that the Christians apply the three senses to the 'one', which were mentioned previously by al-Kindi.' Christians do not say that one makes three, nor do they say that three make one according to one of the three ways that you have listed. The subdivision of plurality that you have established is not complete'²

Second, referring to Wolfson analysis of this debate between Al-Kindi and Yahya, he have listed other meanings of the 'one' and its opposite, the 'many', by referring to the Aristotelian concept on the complete formulation of the Law of Contradiction³. Yahya presented six meanings that can be applied to the term 'one' which were manifested as the following:

1. One by relation, *wahid bil nesbah*⁴, between 'the spring and the rivers that flow from it, that the relation between the breath that is in the heart and the breath that is in the arteries is one and the same relation.'⁵. As well as the

¹Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians", pp.8,9.

²Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians", p, 9.

³Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, p.327

⁴Father Samir Khalil, *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage*, treatise on Oneness, , p195.

⁵Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians",p,9.

one by 'the relation between two and four, that between twenty and forty is one relation.'¹

2. One as Muttasil² 'numerical unity which admits three subdivisions. This is because we can say that a thing is one in number be it in the continuous way, since we say that "a body is one, a surface is one, a line is one" etc.'³
3. One as Ghair Munqasim⁴ 'the way of that which does not admit subdivision like the point, the unity, the present time, the beginning of movement.'⁵
4. One by the sense of what 'we call one [in the case of two synonymous terms), in things of which the definition indicates the nature, is identical, as, for example, when we say "chamoul" and "khamr" (wine)... "himar" and "'ir" (donkey), "Jamal" and "'ba'ir" (camel).⁶

Yahya emphasized on the fact that 'Christians say only that God is one in this last sense of unity in number, meaning by this that the term which indicates his nature is one. They say that God is three because He is good, wise, and powerful and because He possesses (in Him) the notion of the good,

¹Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians", p,9.

² Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, treatise on Oneness, , p198.

³Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians", pp, 9,10.

⁴ Father Samir Khalil, Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage, treatise on Oneness, , p127,

⁵Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians". P,10.

⁶ Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians". P,10.

the notion of the wise and the notion of the powerful and each of these three notions is distinct of the two other parallel notions. The term that indicates the nature of God contains these three notions and we can say that He is Goodness, wisdom and power.’¹

5. One in sense of the ‘one in subject’² ‘what is important is that you have not mentioned it. In fact, the notion of ‘one’ and that of ‘plurality’ can be subdivided in a different way, because ‘one’ can be one in the subject and multiple in the definitions. In other words, we can apply to it multiple definitions of which the number corresponds to the notions it contains and which define these notions. For instance, it is true to say that Zeid is only one subject which contains the definition of living thing, the definition of reasonable, and the definition of mortal. This is the way Christians say that the Creator is one.’³
6. One in the meaning of the ‘One’ can also be one in the definition and multiple in the subject. Hence, the definition of ‘man’ taken as man is one, but the subjects whom we apply this definition to are multiple, such as Zeid, Abdallah, Khalid, each of whom is a subject to which we can attribute the fact of being ‘man’⁴

¹Yahya’s treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi’s treatise of “refutation of Christians”. P,12.

²Harry Austryn Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kalam, P.329.

³Yahya’s treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi’s treatise of “refutation of Christians”. P,13.

⁴Yahya’s treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi’s treatise of “refutation of Christians”. P,13.

Yahya's treatise, the Defence of the Christians dogma of Trinity against Al Kindi's treatise of "refutation of Christians"

TRANSLATION

In the name of God, The Most Gracious and the Most Merciful; Lord, help us with your Graciousness and Mercy.

Yahya Ben Adi demonstrates the error/ mistake that Abou Yousuf Yacoub ben Ishaq alkindi in his treaty of "Refutation of Christians", published¹ in the month of Ramadan in the year 3502.

Abou Yousuf Yacoub ben Ishaq alkindi said: In order to refute Christians and reduce their dogma of trinity to nothing based on the principles of logic and philosophy while confining ourselves to a simple summary of their doctrine, suffice it to make it clear to them, and to those other sects that believe in God's unity³ and accept the idea of Trinity⁴ in accordance with Christians beliefs⁵, that there obviously exists a kind of because it is good, wise and powerful. Christians call the goodness 'the Father', the wisdom 'the Son' and the power 'the Holy Spirit'. Each of these notions is distinct from the others. He adds that "It follows from all this that each person is composed of both the substance that contains all of them and of property that makes them particular". Our response to this is as follows: if by the expression "is composed", you understand that the concern is a notion in which all the Persons are identical, and another notion that proper to each person such that there is no person without these two notions, your way of thinking is then like that of Christians.

However, they will not allow you to draw, from the expression "is composed" understood in this way, the conclusion that you have come up with as imposed on our reason. For them, such a conclusion is erroneous and if you persist in defending it and refuse to admit the error, they will draw against you the conclusions that you have drawn against them. In fact, they will say to you: O

philosopher, you say that the creator is God, is one, is substance, and when I say substance, I mean that it is not in a subject. Yet, if we cannot confirm that He is in a subject, it would be necessary to recognize that He is in a subject, for one of the two contradictory propositions is necessarily true. Whatever the proposition of the two opinions that you admit, to be in a subject or not to be in a subject, it is different from the other notion that He is God and that He is one. On the other hand, all these notions are eternal, for the Creator has composition in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that is , in the three Persons that they proclaim⁶ and confess.

In fact, all the Christian sects believe that three eternal Persons are one substance⁷. By Persons they mean individualities⁸, and by one substance, they mean that each person exists in its property. Therefore, the notion of substance exists in each of

these Persons and constitutes their identity. Each of them has an inseparable property that differentiates them from each other⁹.

It follows from all this that each person is composed of both the substance that contains all of them and of property that makes them particular. Yet, everything that is composed is caused; and everything is caused is eternal, so the Father is not eternal, nor are the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we have here eternal things that are not eternal¹⁰, a doctrine that is a repugnant impossibility.

Yahya: – This affirmation that “substance exists in each of these Persons and constitutes their identity” is true and is in conformity with Christians’ doctrine. The other affirmation that “each of them has an inseparable property that differentiates them from each other” is understood by Christians in a way that is different from that of Alkindi. For Christians, the three Persons are properties of a unique substance; they are attributes that we give to unique substance not

become God after not having been God; he has not become one after not having been one and he has not become outside a subject after having been otherwise.

Given that all these three notions have always been rightly applied to him, it is necessary, according to your reasoning, for him to be composed of these same notions. However, in your view, anything or anyone that is composed is caused; no caused is eternal; therefore, that which you worship is not eternal while you confirm he is eternal. Here we have something that is a repugnant impossibility, reasoning and a demonstration that are identical and similar to yours. You have then to choose between two things: (1) you may want to persist in defending our doctrine, in which case you should use a language that is similar to that which will render you ridiculous (as we have said). (2) To avoid this ridiculous situation, you should admit the falsity of what you call a demonstration.

If by the term “composed” you understand that which results from composition, in this case we will certainly have something that is caused, produced, not eternal and your affirmation is true for all similar cases. Christians will not agree with you that the “Father”, the “Son” and the “Holy Spirit” are produced by the composition of substance and properties, since they only say that substance has each of these three attributes and these attributes are eternal for it and not produced in it after not having existed.

Yet, we have demonstrated that you are obliged to use a similar reasoning when you say that the Creator is God, is none and that he is not in a subject. If this is the case, the falsity of your argumentation and the nullity of your evidence appear clearly. We have established it with the help and the guidance of God.

Alkindi. The falsity of Christians’ allegations appear when we examine them according to the rules of logic and with the help of the peremptory and decisive notions to anyone having read the book entitled *Isagogic* (1), that is, the introduction book. We would therefore say: if these three Persons are eternal

Persons, since genre is a genre of species and a species is a species of individuals, the three genres have therefore always been species of individuals. Furthermore, the genre is in nature of individuals with accidents. Thus, that which is eternal is composed. Yet, everything that is composed is caused and nothing that is caused is eternal. Therefore, it is understood here that that which eternal is not eternal, a conclusion that is ridiculously absurd. Yahya: Christians do not say that the “Father”, the “Son” and the “Holy Spirit» are genres. Therefore, the conclusions you are trying to draw against them do not affect them.

Alkindi. –And if the three Persons are all eternal species, since a species is something particular in the genre and something general with regard to individuals, whether the genre is in the nature of individuals with differences, or whether the species is in the nature of individuals with accidents, it is necessary for there to be number and composition in Trinity and it is necessary for eternal things should not be eternal, as was indicated in the first chapter. Yet, such a thing is impossible.

Yahya. Christians do not say that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are species to expose themselves to the conclusion that [our opponent] wants to draw against them. However, should they say it, the conclusions put forward would not affect them either. In fact, his major premise _ that “nothing that is caused has ever existed”_ is false, for something that is produced is not always produced by a cause which brings it into existence after a time where it did not exist. As we know, there four types of cause, namely material cause, formal cause, efficient cause and final (ultimate) cause.

The actual (proper) material cause, where the “proper or actuality” is the fact of receiving forms and shapes which did not previously exist. The beings thus resulting from the substance and the shapes it takes on are produced after having

not existed. The other subdivision [of the material cause] is a non-material subject which subsequently accepts only the form which constitutes it. Similarly, what we call efficient cause is of two types: the first one produces the forms that have thus existed after having not existed; the other one is the cause of the existence of the thing, and not of its production. Beings that are caused according to this second way exist at the same time as their cause which is not prior to them. It is in relation to this type that Christians say that the Father is the Cause of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and that the last two persons (i.e. the Son and the Holy Spirit) are caused by the first person (the Father). What precedes should lead you to call into question what is blindingly obvious, or lead you to think that it is impossible that the cause and the caused (thing) exist at the same time; and that by stating that the father is the cause of the son and the holy spirit without it being prior to them, we are stating a false opinion. In fact, if we examine the causes and the caused things, we find many causes that do not precede their effects and they are not prior to them in time. This is the case with the rise of the Sun on the Horizon which is the cause of air light. These two things exist at the same time. Such is also the case with the shock of two hard bodies that produces a sound; the shock and the sound are simultaneous; This is also the case with carrying a lamp and going into a dark room; the room instantly becomes lit up and illuminated. Other examples similar can be given to this effect. Therefore, if the major premise/proposition of this syllogism is false, then the conclusion that says that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not eternal cannot be true either. This very fact discredits the reproach of absurdity that our opponent held against Christians.

Alkindi – If the three Persons are eternal differences, since differences differentiate species comprised under the same genre and that differences and genres found in the nature of species are also found in the nature of the

individual with accidents, it should necessarily be admit , as in the first chapter, that there are more than three eternal things. Yet, this is impossible.

Yahya._ this objection, for its part, rests on a proposition, of which the falsity has already been demonstrated and on which he built his two previous objections. Given that we have already demonstrated the falsity of this proposition in our refutation of these two objections, there is no need to repeat our reasoning.

Alkindi._ If the three Persons are universal accidents which have always existed, since universal accidents embrace species and since species are comprised under genres, the conclusions drawn in the preceding article are rigorously true here also; in other words, there more three eternal Persons that are not eternal Persons. Yet, this is impossible.

Yahya._ Christians do not say that the three Persons are universal accidents, so they cannot be affected by the conclusions drawn by Alkindi against them.

Alkindi._ If the three Persons are particular accidents that have always existed (i.e. properties), since properties belong solely to species and since species are composed of genres and differences, the conclusions of the preceding are rigorous here too. There are more than three eternal Persons that are not eternal. This very idea is a repugnant impossibility.

Yahya._ Christians do not say that the three Persons are particular accidents, for, even if the word property is applied to the three Persons in a general way, this does not mean that they [the three Persons] are accidents; instead, each of the three Persons is substance.

Alkindi._ If some of the three Persons are genres and others are differences or some are genres and others are species and if they can be distinguished by the association of any two of the five terms mentioned in the Introduction Book,

and since Christians pretend that they have always existed, it should be admitted that these three Persons have plurality and composition and that they are eternal without being eternal. As we have previously made it clear, this is impossible.

Yahya._ This conclusions does not affect Christians insofar as their doctrine is not as you are presenting it.

Alkindi._ If the three Persons are really individualities that have always existed, since individuals are comprised under a species and bear accidents and since a species is composed of a genre and of difference, there should consequently be more than three eternal things, with eternal things being non eternal. Yet, this is impossible.

Yahya._ Christians do not say that the three Persons are individualities in Alkindi's sense. They only say that there are three Persons, meaning by this that the notion of each of them is different from the notion of the other. They are not composed of accidents, as our opponent believes. Therefore, the consequences that our opponent has in mind cannot affect Christians.

Alkindi._ This is one of the reasons which discredit this Christians' doctrine or claim that there are three eternal things. Although the futility of such a dogma is due to various reasons, to demonstrate such futility, I had recourse only to the 'Introduction Treaty', because (1) it is the book on which young Persons exert and by which they start their studies and (2) anyone can have access to with little intelligence as they may be and (3) it is easy to understand. Therefore, it is based on this book that we have levelled many our criticisms against Christians' doctrine and these criticisms are applicable to all their positions. What we have said might probably increase their doubt or might contribute to them waking up.

Yahya._ Your previous detestable and odious argumentation shows that it is rather your state that is worth comparing to that of sleepy Persons, for your

words arise from incoherent and inconsistent daydreams and fantasies. May God forgive both of us!

Alkindi._ Christians say: Three make one and one makes three. This is manifestly false. In fact, what we call on ‘One’ and the same ‘Huwa Huwa =Wahid’ is used only in three ways: ,as it is mentioned in the Book of Topics ‘Tobiqa’, Which is the fifth Book of Aristotle’s Organon. First, what we call one and the same, may be the case of a numerical unity since that unity is called one. Second. What we call one and the same, may be the case of species unity as when we say that Khalid and Zeid are one because they are part of the same species (i.e., that of man). Third, what we call one and the same, may be even the case of genre unity as we may say that man and donkey are one because they are part of the same genre (i.e. living things).

Therefore, if Christians say that three make one and one makes three in terms of the relation of numerical unity, as three is a number composed of three units and one is part of three, it is then necessary that what is ‘one’ should be only a part of its own essence and that, (three times the unit) what is ‘one’ is a multiple of its own essence. However, it has previously been stated that it is only one part of its own essence.

This is a claim that is a ‘scandalous’ and ‘shameful’ impossibility and manifestly ridiculous. If, when they say three make one], they mean that three refers to three individualities and that one indicates a species that is common to them, since , as we have previously stated, a species is composed of genre and difference, and since genre and difference can be said to talk about more than one species, and since a species is said to talk about a number of individuals , there should therefore necessarily be composition in the three Persons and the substance that contains them and there should be three eternal, as has already been made clear above. However, such a consequence is impossible. If by three,

they mean species and by one, they mean a genre, it is necessary to admit here again, as previously, composition and plurality and admit that the Persons are eternal without being eternal, which is a repugnant absurdity.

Yahya._ Christians do not say that one makes three, nor do they say that three make one according to one of the three ways that you have listed. The subdivision of plurality that you have established is not complete, for you have not talked about one by relation. Thus, we say that the relation between the spring and the rivers that flow from it, that the relation between the breath that is in the heart and the breath that is in the arteries is one and the same relation. We also say that the relation between two and four, that between twenty and forty is one relation.

You have not talked either about a sort of numerical unity which admits three subdivisions. This is because we can say that a thing is one in number be it in the continuous way, since we say that “ a body is one, a surface is one, a line is one” etc or in the way of that which does not admit subdivision like the point, the unity, the present time, the beginning of movement. We also call on e [in the case of two synonymous terms), in things of which the definition indicates the nature, is identical, as, for example, when we say “chamoul” and “khamr” (wine)... “himar” and “ir” (donkey), “Jamal” and “ba’ir” (camel). Christians say only that God is one in this last sense of unity in number, meaning by this that the term which indicates his nature is one. They say that God is three because He is good, wise, and powerful and because He possesses (in Him) the notion of the good, the notion of the wise and the notion of the powerful and each of these three notions is distinct of the two other parallel notions. The term that indicates the nature of God contains these three notions and we can say that He is Goodness, wisdom and power.

You have also said failed to talk about another subdivision of ‘one’ and of ‘plurality’, either inadvertently if you do not know it, or deliberately if you know it. In any case, what is important is that you have not mentioned it. In fact, the notion of ‘one’ and that of ‘plurality’ can be subdivided in a different way, because ‘one’ can be one in the subject and multiple in the definitions. In other words, we can apply to it multiple definitions of which the number corresponds to the notions it contains and which define these notions. For instance, it is true to say that Zeid is only one subject which contains the definition of living thing, the definition of reasonable, and the definition of mortal. This is the way Christians say that the Creator is one.

‘One’ can also be one in the definition and multiple in the subject. Hence, the definition of ‘man’ taken as man is one, but the subjects whom we apply this definition to are multiple, such as Zeid, Abdellah, Khalid, each of whom is a subject to which we can attribute the fact of being ‘man’. Therefore, since Christians do not say that ‘one’ is ‘three’ in the three ways that you believe to be the only possible ways) when in fact we have shown that you have ignored many other ways that makes it possible to say that, as do Christians, that the same thing can be one and multiple), it is now a truth that the work you have done is useless. Your reasoning is false and is not worth the trouble. Your cunning and lack of intelligence have been updated. May God forgive you for it and not hold it against you. I don’t know how, you, philosopher, didn’t take into consideration that if you limit yourself to one of the three ways that you have listed, and when you say that the Creator is one, you are affected by the same consequences that you have drawn against Christians.

In addition, do not you think that by denying the possibility of affirming the unity of the Creator (in one of the three ways which, in your view, are the only ones that we can be said about unity), you are giving evidence that your statement is erroneous. How come that you consider that this way of expressing oneself is false when used by Christians and legitimate when used by you to the extent that it becomes alternatively true and false at your whims? It is true when you want and false when you prefer it to be so. Don't you think that this is proof enough of your blindness and bias? O philosopher, answer our questions! Isn't it true that if one can be said only in one of the three ways listed by you, when you affirm the unity of the Creator, you are then obliged to admit that He is one in a genre, one in a species or numerically one? Whatever the type of unity that you adopt, the way in which you have stated it shows that it is false and you should admit that this proposition "God is one" is false, whereas in your view, it is the proposition "God is not one" that is false. Thus, according to you, the two contradictory propositions are equally false. This is a repugnant impossibility.

Moreover, allow us to tell you: Isn't it necessary that every being is one and multiple? You claim that He cannot be one, but in your hypothesis, the Creator is not one. This conclusion is therefore rigorous or that it is more than one, if He exists, or that He does not exist if he is not more than one. This is one of the most repugnant impossibilities.

Alkindi._What proceeds are enough for the objectives we have set for ourselves.

Yahya._ If you want to say that you have set for yourself the task to demonstrate the falsity of Christians' doctrine, be sure that you have not succeeded in that. However, we have said enough to bring to the fore and unveil the cunning aspect of your language, your errors and your sophisms. Praise be to God, Good, Wise and powerful, Lord of Justice and Giver of intelligence, who assisted us to defend the truth and helped us with His Grace and Mercy to refute errors.

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