

A first translation of Mingana, MS 481 (Karshuni)

by Sasha Trieger

This website: (http://www.dacb.org/stories/egypt/abu_yu'annis.html [Samir's article in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*]) says that it is a fragment of an unpublished commentary on the Creed by Abu al-Majdalus.

"At the article "he was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary," Abu al-Majdalus' Commentary cites several messianic witnesses from among pagan philosophers: the Kitab al-Asrar attributed to Plato (cf. Graf, Vol. 1, p. 486, sec. 3); the Kitab al-'Ulum al-'Ulwiyyah and the Letter to Alexander attributed to Aristotle (cf. Graf, Vol. 1, p. 485, sec. 4); the 'Ilm al-Tanjim attributed to the philosopher Augustus (cf. Graf, Vol. 1, pp. 485, sec. 3, and 486, sec. 4); and a text attributed to a certain Yuniyun or Yuthiyun, depending upon the manuscripts, as yet unidentified."...

"Furthermore, the Mingana Syriac 481 (Western garshuni, A.D. 1689, fols. 221v-25v) appears to contain a fragment of this commentary (d. cols. 586 and 889 of the Mingana catalog, Vol. 1)."

It is supposed to contain the following words, according to an unpublished letter which Roger Pearse found among the papers of Franz Cumont (<http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/mithras/RA008.jpg>): 'folio 225b lines 17-20: "And Zardusht the Mage says, in the Book of the Elements of the World, to his disciples: He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I remain in him."'

Translation

With hope in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we [begin to] write (select?) statements of wise philosophers that they pronounced concerning the coming of our Lord, glory be to Him, many generations before His arrival, from a Book of Secrets famous among them on the science of astronomy. This is about the Incarnation of Christ the Lord, praise be to Him.

The first [statement]: Hermes the wise said in his book entitled Book of the Nine Stones, in which he addresses his son saying: Know, my son Natana, that there must be a descent of the Awesome Cause and the Boundless Fire, rays of the Perfect and Self-Subsisting Cause, who is in no need of anything else. It will walk upon the earth in veils made for It, and thereupon will return to Its elevated state and the footstool of Its throne, without [spatial] motion. O my son Natana, open your eyes and the eyes of your heart and preserve that with which I entrust you in the storehouses of your mind. The Cause of causes will encompass you.

He said also: (222r) Justice (?) will be abolished, and the mighty nation will branch out (?) and demand what does not belong to it in truth. Then the days of the Hidden One will appear. He is the Father who will be upon the earth, and the impure peoples and their sages will conspire untruly against the King of kings.

He said also: Woe, Azur will work miracles in Roman Qaytilun (?). This will be abolished (?) by two wise old men who will be killed therein by its king. These two old men will work many wonders and will remain therein forever, for they are those who annihilate the rule (?) with dreadful wounds. For they are the two [messengers] sent by the Cause and the Fire to appear in the universe.

Hermes the wise said: The eastern star of Sagittarius will move from East to West, and the direction of prayer (will remain there?) for two years and a half. Then it will return to its center and dominion. This is the star called the Star of Annunciation. It will lead the way to the sages coming from the East to [great] the Eternal King who is to appear, to venerate Him (222v), and to present to Him their offerings. Many infants will be killed on His account in the middle of the earth, while the Hidden Fire will enter the land of Egypt. Astrologers will go there. The two peoples will become one, for the [period of] one hundred eighty three revolutions of Saturn, the old man Saturn, which they call Zuhā. [1] For it traverses the heavens every thirty years. The number will be

(determined?) by the revolutions of the sphere[s], o my son, on account of the appearance of that ancient God, who had been expected for five thousand and five hundred years.

He said also: O my son Natana, take images for yourself mighty (?) as the philosophers. O my son, do not sit in the company of the ignorant, and if you do happen to sit with them, do not speak in their company concerning the wisdom that I have disclosed to you. O my son, look forward toward the Light which is born of the Light which proceeds from the True Light, the Wisdom, the Word, and the Life. If you teach this to someone who is ignorant or unworthy, he will take this from you and mock you. (223r) However, if he is noble, do not deprive him of this, for you would be doing injustice to him. If his speech is true, grant him this by way of speech and in secret. If he memorizes this, this will become a prayer, and will testify for him in truth.

He said also: O my son, there must be a solar eclipse, which will last from the sixth hour of the day to the ninth hour, not in the time [appointed] for an eclipse, but on account of the Hidden One. He will be calumniated, and sought after, and killed by His people. His people will pay him evil for His granting (?) them good. The houses and temples of the gods will fall, and the Hidden One will gain power over them and over the entire creation.

He said: O my son, at that time the dead will come to life, and the Hidden One will work wonders, for He will walk upon the earth with power and give good tidings to human beings.

Hermes said also: From that time, which is the entrance of the Hidden Light into Egypt, after fifty revolutions of the old man Saturn (...?). From Hermes to the coming of Christ there will pass one thousand and five hundred years.

Anasolus said: O my son, the great king, pure without blemish, you are great indeed, the master of human beings, whom everyone sees in your glory (?), you have no blemish, the mighty king who has power over all things, both mortal and immortal.

Anasolus said: These powers are three divine names, one from His power and dominion, of the One God, which no one shall see, and a power that no one can meet, nor perceive its nature. All things came into being from these powers.

Archos the wise said: Three names in one divinity, by which all things came into being.

Arposh (?) the wise said: The imperceptible Light is one only, and it is the Thought in every available moment. The Word born of Him is perfect in all respects and makes all things.

Plato said: The Ancient Cause, which is the grace, [is the one] dispensed to all (?). The second^[2] cause is the Intellect that created all things (224r). The third cause is the Soul, which created life, which is the life of every living being.

Aristotle said: He is God the Word. When He, being perfect in every birth, was born and created a mother (?) [for Himself] among the nations, He descended and lived in [the realm of] nature, and by nature He commanded water to loosen (?), and it became wine.

Plato said also: One is the Highest God on high, whose imperceptible Word a maid conceived. This, o my son, is like a sharp ax (?) clothed with fire. He goes through her womb and rules the world, and offers it to His Father as an offering. The name (?) of the maiden is the virgin.

Plato said in the Book of Secrets: The supremely High One will appear upon the earth and raise the dead and show his lordly signs. Thereupon He will return to His awesome throne, and will not come back (?) until the day of the Great Judgment.

Yonion the wise said: He is the Ancient the Mighty, who sits over the heavens, clothed in flame[s] (224v) of fire and light; His kingdom shall have no end. He will appear upon the earth, raise the dead, cure the sick, and show His lordly signs. Thereupon, he will return to His celestial throne, for He is in the highest heavens. At the time of

His appearance upon the earth, the Persians will come to present Him with their offerings, for He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, whose kingdom shall have no end.

Plato said: The Trinity is one God, who alone is supreme. His Word indwelt a virgin maiden, without change (?), overshadowing her without intercourse, and she conceived. This is similar to the fire present in the world, who will catch everything and present [it] as an offering to His Father. He will reside in this house, i.e. the body.

Yanfus the wise said: The Thought, which is like fire, which is divinity and life everlasting (?), and an immutable light which will be seen upon the earth. He will (ascend?) into the sky and command (...?).

He said also: He will descend in purity and shine forth [as] the Lord upon the earth, and (225r) the Persians will come with gifts, and He, praise be to Him, will offer guidance of the Great and Mysterious (?) God. He will appear upon the earth, being higher than the Word and superior to the Intellect, and will never cease.

Augustus the wise said in the Book of Astrology: There must appear a Hebrew youth, who will be called Christ and is eternal in His essence. The Eternal will make a public appearance, having the lordly power in His hand. He will raise the dead and clean the lepers and loosen the mute tongues.

Aristotle said in his book, entitled Celestial Sciences: You shall not see the True God except behind a veil by which His light is concealed from your vision, so that your eyes may not (go blind?) from His sight. But when He appears, one will be able to realize the greatness of His rule. By this you will understand that He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Aristotle said also in his letter to Alexander the king: Be earnest, o king, in the pursuit of the water of life. You shall not find water of life except in a Man (225v) who is to appear in the world, clothed in this world's clothes. If you find Him, you will find the water of life with Him. He will feed you with His food from the eternal Tree of Life. Water of life will be flowing from His hands.

He said in his treatise entitled the Book of Treasures: The treasure of life is the God Adonai, who is to appear in the universe. Those in the graves will hear His voice and will rise.

Yanfus the wise said: Glory (?) to you, o thrice-blessed, who is God the eternal (?), who shall die and abolish death clearly, when He will rise after three days.

Plato the wise said: No, by Him who sent me, verily they do not know what they speak, nor what they do. By this he means the priests of the sons of Israel who deny his words cited above.

Zoroaster the Magian said to his disciples in the Book of the Elements of Science: [\[3\]](#) Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, will remain in me and I in him.

To the Awesome Father, and to the Son who helped and assisted, and to the Holy Spirit who perfected may there be Glory now and ever and unto ages of ages, Amen. [\[4\]](#)

Transliteration

وعلى رجا الثالث المقدس الاب
والابن والروح القدس نكتب اقوال
بقترار (!) من اقوال الحكماء الفلاسفة
الذي (!) قالوه على ظهور سيدنا له

المجد من قبل مجيه باجيال كثيره
 من كتاب الاسرار المعروف عندهم
 في العلوم الفلكيه وذلك على تانس
 السيد المسيح الذي له التسبيح
 اول ذلك قال هرمس الحكيم في
 كتابه المعروف بكتاب التسعة
 احجار يخاطب به ولده قايلًا: اعلم
 يا ابني ناتانا انه لا بد من نزول العله
 الهايله والنار الغير محصوره
 شعاع العلة التامه القايمه
 بذاتها من غير حاجه منها الى غيرها
 ويمشي على الارض (!) بحجابات صنعه لها
 ثم ترجع الى علوها وكرسي عرشها
 وليس بانتقال. يا ابني ناتانا
 افتح عينيك وعيني قلبك وادع
 في خزائن لُبك ما انا مستودعك.
 علة العل (!) تحوط بك وقال ايضًا (!)
 (222و)

العدل يبطل والامة القدره تشعب
 وتطلب ما ليس لها بحق ايضًا (!)
 والمخزون تضهر (!) ايامه. وهو اب
 يكون في الارض (!) وتتوامر الشعوب
 النجسه بالباطل هم وحكاموهم
 على ملك الملوك وقال ايضًا (!) ويل
 عازور يظهر عجائب في قيطيلون
 روميه. يبطل من شيوخين حكيمين
 يقتلان بها من ملكها. واوليك الشيوخين
 يظهران عجائبًا (!) كثيره ويدومان بها
 الى الابد وهما المبطلان لرياسة

بالجرايح الهايله. لانهما مبعوثان(؟)
 من العله. والنار الطاهره (الظاهره؟) في
 المسكونه وقال هرمس الحكيم.
 يسير كوكب قوس الشرقي من
 المشرق الى المغرب. والقبله
 سنتين ونصف. ويرجع الى مركزه
 وملكه. وهو كوكب يسمى كوكب
 البشاره. يسير بين يدي الحكما
 الاتين من المشرق. الى الملك
 الازلي الذي يظهر. ليسجدوا له.
 (222ظ)

ويقدمون قرابينهم اليه. ومن اجله
 تقتل اطفال كثيره. في وسط الارض(!).
 والنار المخزون يدخل الى ارض(!) مصر.
 وحكما النجوم يدخلون اليها. ويختلطان(!)
 الشعبان ويصيران شعبا واحد مايه
 وثلاثه وثمانين تدويره. لكيوان
 الشيخ العتيق كيوان. هو عندهم
 زحل. لانه يقطع الفلك في كل
 ثلاثون(!) سنه. يكون العدد عن دوران
 الفلك. يا ابني لزهور(!) هذا الاله
 العتيق المنتضر(!) خمسه الاف.
 وخمسماية سنه. فقال ايظا(!)
 يا ابني ناتانا. اتخذ لك صورا. والفلاسفه
 عزا. يا ابني لا تجالس الجهال. وان
 جالستهم فلا تتحدث بهذه الحكمه
 التي اوضحتها لك. فيما بينهم.
 يا ابني انظر نحو النور المولود
 من النور المنبثق من النور بحق.

الحكمة. والكلمه والحيوه. ان
 انت علمت هذه لجاهل او غير مستحق
 فانه ياخذها منك. ويستهزي بك.
 (223و)

فان كان كريما. فلا تمنعه امنه
 فانك تضلمه(!). فان يكون كلامه حق(!)
 امنحه بالكلام. والاسرار فان حفص(!)
 ذلك كان دعا. فقد يشهد له الحق
 وقال ايضا يا ابني لا بد ما تنخسف
 الشمس ويكون الخسوف في ستة(!)
 ساعات من النهار الى تسع ساعات.
 وليس في ذلك الوقت. هو وقت
 خسوف. بل من اجل المخزون. انه
 يفتري عليه. ويطلب. ويهلك من
 شعبه. ومن قومه. ويجازيه شعبه
 على رنيعه بهم الخير بالشر وتقع
 بيوت الالهه وهياكلهم ويصح سلطان
 المخزون عليهم وعلى جميع الخلق
 وقال يا ابني الموتى في ذلك
 الوقت يعيشون. والعجايب تظهر من
 المخزون. لانه بقوته يمشي على
 الارض(!) ويباشر المخلوقين. وقال
 ايضا هرمس ان من هذا الحين الذي
 هو دخول النور المخزون الى مصر
 يكون في خمسين دورة الشيخ كيوان
 (223ظ)

العتيق يكون لهذا القول ايضا من
 هرمس الى مجي المسيح الف
 وخمس مائه سنه وقال اناسولس

يا ابني الملك العظيم (!) نقيا بلا دنس.

انت عظيم (!) رب الانام الذي كلشي (!) من بعض (!)

طياك (ضياك؟) تنظره. انت الذي ليس فيك دنس

القوي القادر على كلشي (!) ملك. المايئين

والغير مايئين وقال اناسولس هذه

القوات ثلثة اسما. الهيه واحد من

قوته. وجبروته الوحيد الاله. الذي

لا ينظره احد وقوة لا يستطيع احد

يلقاها. ولا ينظرها بطبعها. ومن هذه

القوات كلشي (!) كان. وقال ارخس الحكيم

ثلثة اسما في لاهوت واحد بها كان كل

شي وقال ارفش الحكيم واحد هو فقط

الظو (!) الغير محسوس. وهو فيكل (!) وقت

الذي يجوز الفكر. والكلمه المولوده

منه كامله فيكلشي (!) وصانعة كل شي.

وقال افلاطون العله القديمة التي

هي النعمة المتحننه على كل علة

ثابته (ثانية؟) العقل. الذي خلق كل شي

(224و)

العله الثلثة النفس الصانعه

الحياه التي هي حياه كل حي

وقال ارسطاطاليس هو الاله الكلمه

لما ان ولد الكامل في كل مولد

الصانع في الامم الوالده نزل. وسكن

بالطبع. وبالطبع امر الما.

يحل تاويلها صار خمرا وقال افلاطون

ايضا (!) واحد هو الاله العلي في العلى.

الذي بكلمته الغير محسوسه

جاريه حبلت بها. وهذا يا ولدي

مثل الفوس (=الفؤوس؟) الحديد المترديه
بالنار. ويسلك في احشائها. ويذكر (يدبر؟)
العالم. ويقربه لاييه قربان.

وان اي اسم الجاربه العزى. قال
افلاطون في كتاب الاسرار ان العلي
الاعلى يظهر في الارض(!). ويقيم الموتى.
ويظهر اياته الربانية. ويرجع الى
عرشه المرهوب. ولا يعود وايدوه
الى يوم الحكم العظيم وقال يونيون
الحكيم هو القديم العظيم الجالس
فوق السموات المتردي بلهيب
(224ظ)

النار والنور. الذي لا يفنا ملكه.
يظهر على الارض(!). ويقيم الموتى.
ويشفي المرط(!). ويظهر الايات الربانية.
ويرجع الى عرشه العلوي. لانه في
السموات العلا. وعند ظهوره في
الارض(!). ياتون اهل فارس. ويقدمون
قرايينهم اليه. لانه ملك الملوك.
ورب الارباب. وملكه لا يفنا وقال
افلاطون الثالث اله واحد. عال
وحده. الذي كلمته لا تغير حلت في
جاربه عزى. ظللته من غير جماع
تحبل. وشبيه النار في العالم
يحظر(!) ولكل يصيد. ولايه يقرب قربان.
وله يلكون (يكون؟) هذا البيت. اعني الجسد.
وقال ينفوس الحكيم الفكر الذي
مثل النار الذي هو لاهوت وحياه
لا تنقطي (تنقطع؟). وظو(!) لا يتغير ينظر في

الارض(!) *** في السما. ويامر في
 السماء و*** الارض(!). وفيه حياه لكل
 من يلتن ***. وقال ايضا(!). وينزل
 ظاهرا ويشرق للرب (الرب؟) على الارض وياتون
 (225و)

اهل فارس. ومعهم العطايا. ويقرس (ويقديس؟)
 له تمجيد تدبير الاله العظيم وعجيب.
 يظهر في الارض(!). وهو ارفع من الكلمه.
 واعلا من العقل. والى الانقطا (الانقطاع؟) لا يزول.
 قال اوغسطس الحكيم في كتاب
 علم التنجيم لا بد ان يظهر شاب
 عبراني. وهو يدعا المسيح في ذاته
 ازلي. الازلي يظهر علانيه. وبيده
 سلطان الربوبيه. فيقيم الموتى.
 ويطهر البرص. ويطلق الالسنه
 الخرس. وقال ارسطوا في كتابه
 المعروف بالعلوم العلوية انكم لا
 تشاهدوا الاله الحقيقي الا بحجابيه
 الذي به يخفى نوره عن ابصاركم.
 ليلا تشخص عيونكم من نظره. فاذا
 ظهر استدلوا على عظمه سلطانه.
 وبهذا تعلموا انه ملك الملوك.

ورب الارباب وقال ايضا(!) ارسطوا في
 رسالته الى الاسكندر الملك جد
 ايها الملك في طلب ما الحياه
 وانك لا تجد ما الحياه. الا في رجل
 (225ظ)

واحد يظهر في العالم. لابس لباس
 العالم. فاذا وجدته ظفرت عنده

بما الحياة. ويغذيك من شجرة الحياة
 الابدية بطعامه. ومن يديه تجري
 ما الحياة الابدية وقال في كتابه
 المسمى كتاب الكنوز. ان كنز
 الحياة ادوني الاله الذي يظهر في
 المسكونه. ويسمع صوته الذين
 في القبور. ويقومون وقال ينفوس
 الحكيم فكرا (فخرا؟) لك ايها المثلث ب
 بالغبطه الذي هو الاله ممتد(؟). وهو
 ميت يفني الموت. اذا قام في ثلاثة
 ايام بيانا وقال افلاطون الحكيم لا
 والذي ارسلني امين الحق ما يدرون
 ما يقولون. ولا يدرون ما يفعلون. وذلك
 يعني بهم على كهنة بني اسرايل
 الذين ينكرون كلامه الذي تقدم وقال
 زرادشت المجوسي في كتاب الاستقصات(؟)
 العلمية لتلاميذه. من اكل من لحمي.
 وشرب من دمي يثبت فيي(!). وانا اثبت
 فيه. كمل
 عه لككم تسلا هلحقك تصعد وحدك هلنهد
 مدهك دهحلل مدهك دهحللح هلحللم
 حللم كحللم

[1] This is the Arabic term for Saturn.

[2] MS: stable. But I suspect the original reading was "second" which is easily misread as "stable" in Arabic letters. This would indicate that the MS was copied (directly or indirectly) from a manuscript in Arabic letters.

[3] So in the text. However "of the World" is a possible reading, if a small emendation is made.

[4] The last sentence (a copyist's addition) is written in Syriac rather than Karshuni.