

The Principles of Religion by Rabban Daniel Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb

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The Principles of Religion by Rabban Daniel Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb

A 13th-Century Synopsis of Syriac Orthodox Belief

Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary

By

Simon Luke Robinson Burke



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Abbreviations

... Words omitted as not relevant to the aims of this book.

[...] Words omitted due to obscurity.

add. add(s)

p. page

pp. pages

f. folio

fol. folios

om. omit(s)

r recto of folio

v verso of folio

Preface

The subject of this volume is *The Principles of Religion*, a book composed by a Syriac Orthodox monk, Rabban Daniel b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb, in the Arabic language between 1274–89/90 C.E., possibly in Mardin, Turkey. It has enjoyed some limited circulation over the centuries, having been found in fourteen manuscripts written by scribes in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Israel, Egypt, and Lebanon from 1289/90 to 1935 C.E. In it, Daniel gives a summary exposition of and apologetic for Syriac Orthodox doctrine using both philosophical and Scriptural resources. The book systematically addresses the topics of God and His attributes, the Holy Trinity, and the incarnation, ending with responses to various objections to Jacobite belief and practice. It is an example of intellectual activity and literary production among Jacobites during the Syriac renaissance that witnesses to how Syriac Orthodox doctrine and literature were adapted and presented in Arabic in the 13th century.

This volume's purpose is to present and explain the contents of *The Principles of Religion* as well as its literary and historical context. The introduction provides an outline of the vexed questions surrounding the book's origin with a solution thereto. Having established the author's identity, an overview of his life and historical context proceeds along with a determination of the extent of his literary output. A discussion of the title, purpose, form, and sources of *The Principles of Religion* with accompanying synopsis then follows. After clarifying the circumstances of *The Principles of Religion's* production and its subject, I turn to establish the book's readings. First, I provide descriptions of manuscripts of the work available to me, the relationships between manuscripts, and a sampling of orthographic and syntactic features where these depart from the norms of contemporaneous Classical Arabic. The critical edition and translation follow. The commentary provided focuses primarily on clarifying the movement of discourse, passages that may present difficulties of interpretation for the reader, what sources are being used, and the cultural and intellectual milieu that prompt the author to take his arguments in the directions that he does.