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RAMON LULL'S BOOK OF THE GENTILE AND THE THREE SAGES: EMPATHY OR APOLOGY?

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Ramon Lull (d. 1316) has evoked controversy from the Middle Ages to the present. In 1376, the Aragonese Inquisitor-General declared him a heretic, a censure confirmed by papal bull that same year. The translation of the Majorcan lay theologian's Catalan works into Latin raised scholastic hackles. In 1390, Chancellor Gerson banned Lullism at the University of Paris. This prohibition bound the Faculty of Theology despite papal rescission of the 1376 bull in 1416. In the sixteenth century, the same University of Paris hosted a Renaissance revival of Lull, led by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and his followers, which gained notable adherents up through Leibniz. Early modern Europe also saw the renewal of scholastic debates on Lull, with Neo-Thomists disputing whether his views on faith and reason squared with the Angelic Doctor's. The Neo-Thomist revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries revived that issue.¹ With Thomism passé as a norm for judging Christian thought,

¹ For Lull *pro* and *con* through the sixteenth century, the basic survey remains Carreras y Artau and Carreras y Artau, *Historia de la filosofía española*, II, 30–44, 91–99. Dealing primarily with scholastics of the early modern period, but reprising medieval criticisms of Lull, is Madré, *Die theologische Polemik gegen Raimundus Lullus*, with an important discussion of modern neo-scholastic debates at pp. 95–140. For other works on late medieval and early modern reactions to Lull, see Hillgarth, *Ramon Lull and Lullism*, esp. pp. 13–21, 213, 259–60, 269–70, 283–88, 318; Johnston, 'The Reception of the Lullian Art'; Bonner, in his Introduction to Lull, *Selected Works*, ed. and trans. by Bonner, I, 71–78, 101–02; and, following Madré but giving only the pro-Lull side of the story, Bonner, 'El arte lulliano como método del Renacimiento a Leibniz'. For the Lullian revival in France, see Victor, 'The Revival of Lullism at Paris', and Victor, 'Charles de Bouvelles and Nicholas de Pax'; Gayà, 'Algunos temas lullianos'; Hughes, *Lefèvre*, pp. 11–13, 26,

some recent scholars have sought to normalize Lull's theology as an exercise in Anselmian *fides quaerens intellectum*.²

Leaving aside celebrations of Lull's rich bequests to Catalan lexicography and literature,³ promoters of Lull who focus on his inter-religious dialogue, the *Book of the Gentile and the Three Sages*, do so for two reasons. First, in this very early work (1274/76), Lull sketches what became a full-blown system in his later *Art*, his scheme for encompassing and cross-indexing all human knowledge. Second, revisionists hail the mutual respect and cordiality of Lull's Jewish, Christian, and Muslim interlocutors as a refreshing departure from the tradition of inter-religious acrimony. The *Book of the Gentile* thus emerges as a forerunner of Lessing's 'Nathan the Wise', seen as characteristic of Lull despite his hostility towards Judaism and Islam in later works.⁴ This paper addresses the second of these con-

49–51, 64–67. Good surveys of more recent literature are provided by Bonner, 'The Current State of Studies on Ramon Llull's Thought'; and Lohr and Bonner, 'The Philosophy of Ramon Llull'.

² Garcías Palou, 'San Anselmo de Canterbury y el beato Ramon Llull'; Garcías Palou, 'Las "rationes necessariae" del Bto. Ramón Llull', pp. 323–24; Eijo Garay, 'Las "razones necessarias" del Beato Ramón Llull'; de Gandillac, 'Le rêve logique de Raymond Lulle', p. 192; Hillgarth, *Ramon Lull and Lullism*, pp. 6, 21, 24–26, 237–38, 257; Xibertha, 'La doctrina del maestro Ramón Llull', pp. 156, 158, 161–62; Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull*, pp. 4, 5–7, 10–11, 19–20, 82, 108, 118–19, 133, 313; Johnston, *The Evangelical Rhetoric of Ramon Llull*, pp. 23–24, 34–36; Colomer, 'Raimund Lull's Stellung zu den Andersgläubigen', p. 227; Colomer, 'La actitud compleja y ambivalente de Ramon Llull', pp. 78, 90; de Courcelles, *La Parole risquée de Raymond Lulle*, pp. 49–50; Lohr, 'Ramon Llull and Thirteenth-Century Religious Dialogue', pp. 125–27; Lohr, 'Ramon Llull: Philosophische Anströsse', pp. 38, 48–49; Judycka, 'Anselmian Echoes in Ramon Llull's Thought'; Tolan, *Saracens*, pp. 256–74.

³ An entire multivolume dictionary has been dedicated to Lull's Catalan usage: Colom Mateu, *Glossari General lul·lià*. There are also extensive references to Lull's lexicon in the Corominas and others, *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*. Bonner and Ripoll Perelló, *Diccionari de definicions lul·lianes*, is more conceptually oriented and focuses on definitions in Lull's later works. My thanks to José Bunsen Cardenas for the Corominas reference. For recent philological scholarship on Lull, see Martí i Castell, 'Ramon Llull, creador de la llengua literària', with extensive bibliography.

⁴ The fullest treatment and critique of the literature on this point is provided by Friedlein, *Der Dialog bei Ramon Llull*, pp. 88–97, who also gives a thorough review of medieval inter-religious dialogues in Latin and the vernaculars and indicates Lull's parallels with and departures from them, at pp. 2–88. See also Colomer, 'Raimund Lull's Stellung zu den Andersgläubigen'; Colomer, 'La actitud compleja y ambivalente de Ramon Llull'; de Courcelles, *La Parole risquée de Raymond Lulle*; Lohr, 'Ramon Llull and Thirteenth-Century Religious Dialogue'; Lohr, 'Ramon Llull: Philosophische Anströsse'; Udina i Cobo, 'Sentido y límites del "diálogo interreligioso"', p. 757. For this dialogue as forecasting Lull's mature *Art* and as launching his missionary polemics against Judaism and Islam, see most recently Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull*, pp. ix, x, xii, 1, 3, 12, 16–21, 65–67, 256–57, 267–68, 273, 295, 299.

cerns. Does the *Book of the Gentile* advocate a pathbreaking rational ecumenism? Or, does Lull compare the religions of his three sages to the advantage of one of them? In addressing these questions, we will consider two issues: the stylistic strategies he adopts in his use of the dialogue genre and his basic understanding of rational argument itself.

Written in Catalan and translated into Latin in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries,⁵ the *Book of the Gentile* contains a Preface and four Books. The Preface introduces the Gentile. Lull's Gentile is a figure who possesses no philosophical or theological presuppositions whatsoever. All that Lull grants him is the fear of death as personal annihilation. The Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sages with whom he talks in the body of the work offer him conceptual foundations for certitude about life after death. The principles concerning God and ethics which they establish are not ends in themselves but grounds for belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, and the posthumous punishments and rewards consequent to human moral choices.

Before meeting the Gentile, however, the sages encounter a figure whose lines, if brief, are critical to the dialogue's method of argument. She is Lady Intelligence. She tells the sages how to make their case for God's goodness, greatness, eternity, power, wisdom, love, and perfection, and for the cardinal and theological virtues and their correlative vices. These concepts are envisioned as flowers blooming on metaphysical or ethical trees — and, indeed, texts of this work, from an early date, contain pertinent visual aids. Lady Intelligence reinforces understandings of the relationships between sets of similar terms found in Lull's translation, into Catalan

⁵ Lull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner. Bonner also reproduces, adjacent to the pertinent passages, examples of the illustrations typically accompanying its medieval manuscripts. The still-standard edition of the Latin translation is Lull, *Liber de gentili et tribus sapientibus*, ed. by Salzinger. There is a good translation of the Catalan text by Bonner, 'The Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men', in Lull, *Selected Works*, ed. and trans. by Bonner, 1, 95–305. Bonner supplies data on manuscripts, translations, and editions in the introduction to his edition, 1, pp. xxiii–xxxvii and to his translation, 1, pp. xxxi, 75–76, 101–02. On the one hand, some scholars think that the work was first written in Arabic and then translated, by Lull himself, into Catalan although no Arabic text has ever surfaced. See, for example, de Gandillac, 'Le rêve logique de Raymond Lulle', pp. 190–91; Colomer, 'Raimund Lull's Stellung zu den Andersgläubigen', pp. 221–22. On the other hand, Hillgarth, *Ramon Llull and Lullism*, p. 7, and Friedlein, *Der Dialog bei Ramon Llull*, p. 59, state the consensus position. In thinking about Lull's intended audience for this and his other Catalan works, it is worth recalling that, far from being a highly localized language maintained out of nostalgia or desire for a less-centralized polity, Catalan in Lull's day was the most widely spoken Iberian vernacular, the Crown of Aragon's language of public record, in use throughout its overseas empire, and a *lingua franca* of merchants and travellers in the Mediterranean world whatever their religion or homeland.

verse, of the *Logic* of Al-Ghazzali (c. 1275). Lull's definitions do not always correspond with Ghazzali's. Lull's *convenientia*, the norm of theological congruity, is his rendering of Ghazzali's conventional or ambiguous terms, which stand midway between univocity and equivocity. Ghazzali's synonymy, in Lull's hands, becomes *equiparantia*, which, for Lull, proves the equivalence of correlative terms and the identification of antecedents with consequents.⁶ Lull also inverts Ghazzali's teaching in asserting that arguments framed as hypothetical syllogisms, no less than as categorical syllogisms, have the force of scientific demonstrations.⁷

Some of these claims also reflect the vagueness and polyvalence of Lull's Catalan. His *equiparantia* has a semantic range that includes equality, association, parity, brotherhood, and sisterhood. Since they do not contradict each other, Lady Intelligence observes, such terms are co-equal.⁸ Some of them refer to essential qualities, others to accidental ones. In Lull's view, statements about all these kinds of relationships yield demonstrative knowledge, *demonstratio*, even necessary reasons, *rationes demonstratives necessaries*, as Lady Intelligence puts it. Yet, in Lull's lexicon, while conclusions that are necessary, *necessarii* and its cognates, pertain to apodictic theological truths, these terms also describe conditions that are merely possible, unexcogitated or nonverbal signs of a state of affairs, anything that reports or displays something else, what we lack or what others require of us, or whatever we have to do in order to gain an objective.⁹ Lady Intelligence coun-

⁶ Llull, 'La Lògica del Gazzali', ed. by Rubió Balaguer, lines 799–1079, 1224–35, 1444–46 (pp. 343–46, 347–48, 350). Some of these departures from Ghazzali are noted by scholars competent in Arabic, such as Rubió Balaguer, Introduction to Llull, 'La Lògica del Gazzali', ed. by Rubió Balaguer, pp. 321–23; Hillgarth, *Ramon Lull and Lullism*, pp. 7, 15, 19–20; Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull*, pp. 31–44. There is no evidence that Lull knew of the availability of Ghazzali's *Logic* in a thirteenth-century Latin translation. On that topic, see al-Ghazali, 'Lògica Algazelis', ed. by Lohr.

⁷ Llull, 'La Lògica del Gazzali', ed. by Rubió Balaguer, lines 358–63, 432, 505–12, 669–70 (pp. 337, 338, 341). Noted by Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull*, p. 140.

⁸ Llull, 'La Lògica del Gazzali', ed. by Bonner, Prologue, lines 1444–46 (p. 350); Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, Prologue, lines 113–21 (p. 9).

⁹ Llull, 'La Lògica del Gazzali', ed. by Rubió Balaguer, lines 241–46, 669–70 (pp. 335, 341); Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, Prologue, line 180 (p. 12). See also Colom Mateu, *Glossari General Lul·lià*, s.v. 'demonstratio', II, 42–44; s.v. 'necessari', III, 409. Lull's imprecision in the use of these terms is noted by Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull*, pp. 109–20 and Arrous, 'Faith and Reason in Aquinas and Llull', p. 65. Bonner and Ripoll Perelló, *Diccionari de definicions lul·lianes*, s.v. 'demonstratio' and 'necessari/necessitat', pp. 140, 227–28, indicate that Lull tightened up these definitions in his later work. But, noting that Lull's earlier lexical imprecisions still exist in his later work, Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon*

sels argumentation based on these understandings and usages, which Lull's sages invoke throughout the dialogue. Both they and the Gentile treat the conclusions they yield as rational demonstrations. As with some scholastics, who regarded these claims as bizarre when Lull's work was translated into an academic Latin marked by logical rigour and technical precision, some modern scholars have been cool to his reasoning.¹⁰

Lady Intelligence having completed her prefatory remarks, Book 1 follows. It has inspired much appreciation for its ecumenical character. The three sages agree that one of their number — and, significantly, Lull does not specify which one, his point being that it can be any of them — will demonstrate to the Gentile general propositions which their religions share. The unidentified speaker first proves God's existence with a degrees-of-being argument, offered as so obvious that it brooks no objection. He then asserts that God's greatness and goodness are equally evident corollaries of God's existence; this conclusion is also obvious to the human mind, 'manifesta cosa es al human enteniment'.¹¹ Then, using *equiparantia* and *convenientia*, he infers the other divine attributes. Whether some of them possess priority, or greater epistemic weight than others, is a ques-

Llull, pp. 256–57, 267–68, argues that these understandings of terms should be read not as misconstructions of Lull's sources but simply as indices of his originality.

¹⁰ Those flagging scholastic objections include Cordeschi, 'I sillogismi di Lullo', pp. 259–61; Arrous, 'Faith and Reason in Aquinas and Llull', p. 65. Useful surveys of modern assessments of the rational force of Lull's argumentation are provided by Gracia, 'La doctrina Luliana de las razones necesarias', and more recently Lohr, 'Ramon Lull's Theory of Scientific Demonstration', pp. 729, 730, 742–43. Those who think that Lull's reasoning is probative include Carreras y Artau and Carreras y Artau, *Historia de la filosofía española*, II, 129 n. 78; Bonner, 'L'Art de Ramon Llull com a sistems lògica', Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull*, passim; Badia, *Teoria i pràctica de la literatura en Ramon Llull*, pp. 23–35; Lohr, 'Ramon Llull and Thirteenth-Century Religious Dialogue'; Tolán, *Saracens*, pp. 256–74. Some limit the force of Lull's reasoning to equiparant arguments; see Arrous, 'Faith and Reason in Aquinas and Llull', pp. 64–65; Ruiz Simon, *L'Art de Ramon Llull*, pp. 31–45; Judycka, 'Anselmian Echoes in Ramon Lull's Thought', pp. 327–35. Others maintain that his argumentation is designed not to be probative but only probable; see Garcías Palou, 'San Anselmo de Canterbury y el beato Ramon Llull'; Eijo Garay, 'Las "razones necesarias" del Beato Ramon Llull'; Xiberra, 'La doctrina del maestro Ramon Llull'; Sugranyes de Franch, 'Le "Livre du Gentil et des Trois Sages" de Raymond Lulle', pp. 322–24, 333; Cordeschi, 'I sillogismi di Lullo', p. 261–64; Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull*, pp. 109–20; Johnston, *The Evangelical Rhetoric of Ramon Llull*, pp. 34–36; Lohr, 'Ramon Llull: Philosophische Anstöße', pp. 38, 48–49. Didier, *Raymond Lulle*, p. 133, is alone in regarding Lull's arguments as appealing to Jungian archetypes.

¹¹ Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, I, 1 (p. 15). Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull*, p. 88, presents the degrees-of-being argument as persuasive.

tion which Lull does not raise. He does not mention the doctrine of the transcendentals, available in Arabic as well as Latin.¹² In any case, having discussed the respective co-inherence of the virtues and their opposing vices, and their similarities to and differences from the divine virtues, the speaker moves to life after death, the Gentile's basic concern.

Establishing God's justice and wisdom as correlative of his goodness, he concludes that the perdurance of God's punishments and rewards must be eternal, requiring the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.¹³ Only towards the end of Book I does Lull qualify the force of the necessary reasons which he ascribes to these arguments. God must exist, the speaker observes, to guarantee the accuracy of our faith and the correctness of our path to eternal felicity.¹⁴ He ignores the fact that the test of these verities remains *ex post facto*.

The sages treat as generally accepted the arguments and conclusions of their *confre* in Book I. Still, they acknowledge that their respective traditions nuance these themes. So they agree that each in turn will present his own variant, in order of seniority. The Jew speaks first, followed by the Christian and the Muslim. In considering the *Book of the Gentile* as an inter-religious dialogue, it is worth noting that the sages do not interact with each other in Books II-IV. Rather, in each book, the sage holding the floor engages one-on-one with the Gentile. The Gentile poses questions to each speaker. He does so not just to keep the conversation going and not just in aid of clarification. Indeed, how much and how sharply the Gentile questions each sage, and on what topics, and whether Lull grants his sages cogent replies, have much to say to the issue of empathy or apology in this dialogue.

The Gentile's conversation with the Jew, representing the earliest Abrahamitic tradition, focuses on three themes. Only the first is unproblematic: namely, aspects of the doctrine of God which he shares with his colleagues and which he treats to the Gentile's satisfaction. Despite the sevenfold attributes of God elaborated in Book I, the Jewish sage establishes that the deity is one God, giver of the moral law, and creator of the universe *ex nihilo*. Since God is eternal, what he was doing before the Creation is a *question mal posée*. Evil in the universe stems

¹² Cf. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, who traces the Transcendentals from Aristotle and Avicenna through Aquinas. That this doctrine was known in the Latin school tradition before the thirteenth century, via Boethius, is shown by Valente, 'Names That Can Be Said of Everything'. For Arabic sources, see Lohr, 'The Islamic "Beautiful Name of God" and the Lullian Art'.

¹³ Lull, *Libre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, I. 8 (pp. 20-21).

¹⁴ Lull, *Libre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, I. 5 (pp. 37-38).

either from human sin or from God's punishment of it.¹⁵ More fraught is the second topic, eschatology. The Gentile accepts that the blessed enjoy an enduring spiritual good in heaven. But, since sins are finite, why should the damned be punished eternally? And, if they have the same resurrected bodies as the blessed, how can this punishment be physical? Where is hell located? The Jewish sage's reply to these questions is not fully responsive. Evading the nature of the bodies of the damned, he states merely that their physical travails reflect divine justice. Although the subject of physical resurrection has been presented in Book I as a conviction shared by all three faiths, the Jewish sage admits that his co-religionists disagree on physical resurrection, although he personally supports this doctrine. He does not respond to the Gentile's concern at the lack of Jewish unanimity on so important a topic. Likewise, the Jewish sage admits that opinions in his tradition are divided on hell. Some locate it in this world, others underground, others in the air. Some say that hell is not a location at all but a purely spiritual state, the loss of the vision of God and of eternal glory. Others insist on its physicality, its fire and ice and eternal torment. The Jewish sage offers no personal opinion on these latter disagreements, leaving the Gentile both perplexed and unsatisfied.¹⁶

Also left hanging are God's role in the Last Judgement and the doctrine of the Messiah. The Gentile is not convinced that an invisible God can function effectively as the judge of people who cannot see him. The Jewish sage points out that God appeared in visible form to Old Testament worthies, and so he will appear at the Last Judgement. This response does not reassure the Gentile. Invoking the norm of *convenientia*, he observes that it is unfitting for a judge not to be, and not to be seen to be, himself by those he judges.¹⁷ To this the Jewish sage offers no rejoinder. Even more of a stumbling block is the belief that the Messiah is still to come, liberating his people from their diaspora. As the Jewish sage acknowledges, at other times in the past, his people were enslaved or expelled from their homeland as God's punishment for their sins. The causes of the present diaspora, however, remain baffling. But, the Gentile asks, what if the Jews nowadays are also being punished for their sins? What if they have to own up to these sins and repent before the Messiah will release them from bondage? Finally, if he were to become a Jew, would he then have to take these sins, and this bondage, on his own shoulders? The Jewish sage has no reply to these questions.¹⁸

¹⁵ Lull, *Libre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, II. 1-II. 3 (pp. 48-65).

¹⁶ Lull, *Libre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, II. 5, II. 7-II. 8. 5 (pp. 71-73, 78-87).

¹⁷ Lull, *Libre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, II. 6. 6 (pp. 76-77).

¹⁸ Lull, *Libre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, II. 4. 1-II. 4. 5 (pp. 66-70).

Obviously, Lull wants to pose irreconcilable problems with Judaism in Book II. The Gentile's initial curiosity about the next life is met by a Jewish eschatology deemed inadequate and inconclusive. Lull infers that the Jews' lack of consensus results from scientific ignorance, the open-ended structure of the Talmud, or an eclipse of abstract theory itself reflecting their day-to-day preoccupation with material survival in the diaspora. And, is their real goal heaven, or a messianic earthly domain? The current diaspora ends Book II as the major disincarnative to conversion for the Gentile. The non-responsiveness of the Jewish sage on this issue suggests that Lull regards the diaspora as deserved, and that no reasonable person would take on its liabilities voluntarily by conversion.

A notable shift occurs in the interaction of the Gentile with the Christian in Book III, the second of the three interrogations. The Christian sage presents a number of teachings which the Gentile accepts with little comment. These include creation, redemption, and the posthumous glorification of the saints. Pointedly omitted, given the way the topic is treated with the Jewish and Muslim sages, are Christian disagreements on Last Things, including physical resurrection.¹⁹ The Gentile raises only one question here, on the joys of heaven. It is less a request for clarification than an opening for a response designed to elevate Christianity above the other two faiths. While the blessed will see what eye cannot see and hear what ear cannot hear, says the Christian sage, Christ will welcome them into the ineffable love bonding the persons of the Trinity, surpassing any perfection envisioned by Judaism or Islam.²⁰

Indeed, most of Book III treats those hardy perennials of debate with other monotheistic faiths, the Trinity and the incarnation. The Gentile raises some standard questions: If three persons express God's perfection, why not four, or a plurality, or an infinity of persons? If a father precedes a son, how can God the Father and God the Son be equal and co-eternal? How does the Holy Spirit proceed from both Father and Son? The Christian sage provides equally standard, and catechism-level, answers. They swiftly convince the Gentile and also provoke his next question: Why, then, do Jews and Muslims reject so plausible a doctrine? The Christian sage replies that, if they fully understood it, Jews and Muslims would be led by the force of reason to embrace its truth.²¹

The discussion is even more selective on the incarnation. Notwithstanding the Gentile's concerns, Book III omits Christ's teachings, the historicity of his resur-

¹⁹ See Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*.

²⁰ Lull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, III. 7. 5 (pp. 124–26).

²¹ Lull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, III. 2. 3–III. 2. 4, III. 4. 22 (pp. 90–95, 109–15); for the critique of Judaism and Islam, see III. 4. 22 (pp. 114–15).

rection, and much else. Resolving an issue raised and not settled in the conversation between the Gentile and the Jewish sage, the Christian sage notes that it is fitting that Christ should appear visibly at the end of time to conduct the Last Judgement.²² The main topics aired on the incarnation are why Christ, among the Trinitarian persons, was the one incarnated and why he was crucified. Although much controverted by the Jews, neither the Gentile nor the Christian sage puts Mary's virginity on the agenda. The chief point is that, although she was of noble stock, her assent exemplified humility.²³ It was fitting for Christ, already a son to God the Father, to take on human nature as Mary's son. That he did so was also fitting as divine condescension to us, to facilitate our grasp of his message. Only in his human nature did Christ suffer on the Cross, to give us hope of salvation.²⁴ How this soteriology actually works in practice remains unexplained. Still, the Gentile is quite contented with this account of the incarnation and again asks why Jews and Muslims reject it as they do other doctrines reviewed earlier. As with the doctrine of the Trinity, says the Christian sage, their irrationality is to blame; but in this case, Christians are also at fault for not explaining their teaching more clearly.²⁵

This is the only point at which the Christian sage admits any soft spots in his own tradition. Disagreements within the orthodox fold, not to mention the fact of Christian heresies, stand as strategic omissions. To the extent that eschatology figures in Book III, the sage aims to show that Jews and Muslims get it wrong and that they have a less sublime view of heaven than Christians. Both the Gentile and the Christian sage initiate discussion of the heavily edited teachings on the Trinity and incarnation cited. The Gentile, easily persuaded, assails Jewish and Muslim rejection of these doctrines, criticisms which the Christian sage promptly seconds.

There is also a significant shift in the byplay between the Gentile and his Muslim interlocutor, the last of the three sages, in Book IV. As with the Jewish sage, the Muslim sage is often at a loss in defending his beliefs, beliefs which the Gentile seeks actively to refute. Lull's Muslim reprises some issues the three

²² Lull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, III. 14. 1 (pp. 153–54).

²³ Lull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, III. 9. 6 (pp. 137–38).

²⁴ Lull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, III. 8. 1–III. 8. 6, III. 10. 5 (pp. 126–31, 142–43).

²⁵ Lull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, III. 8. 6 (p. 131). For Christian polemics on this topos written in Latin in north-western Europe, c. 1050–1150, see Sapir Abulafia, *Jews and Christians*, pp. 3, 34–47, 77–141, and Sapir Abulafia, 'The Intellectual and Spiritual Quest for Christ', pp. 62–66.

sages enumerated earlier as common teachings, erecting a shared defence against becoming the butt of objections that might be levelled at any of them. A case in point is the doctrine of God. The Muslim states that God's omnipotence and foreknowledge are compatible with human responsibility for sin, a topic covered and not disputed by the Gentile in Books I and II. But here, the Gentile taxes the Muslim with inconsistency, for confusing God's foreknowledge with an omniscience that nullifies human free will or, alternatively, for professing an omnipotent God who cannot accomplish what he wills. And here, the objection remains unanswered. Also, the Muslim simply asserts, rather than proving, that any kind of plurality in God violates the monotheistic principle.²⁶

The chief topics of discussion, indeed, of controversy, in Book IV are Muhammad as prophet and Muslim eschatology. Not waiting to hear about Muhammad, the Gentile introduces this theme. He states that it is not fitting for God to have waited so long to commission his final prophet and for the last to convey his message only to one part of the world. This latter point is disingenuous, given the localization of both the Old and New Testament revelations and the missionary sweep of Islam. But the Muslim sage neither challenges nor responds to this sally. He replies merely that, since we have free will — a point problematized by his treatment of the doctrine of God — we can assent to the true path when it is presented to us, although God allows others to remain in ignorance.²⁷ Continuing his attack, the Gentile asks why, if Muhammad is the last of the true prophets, he disagrees with his predecessors. To this, the Muslim does not reply at all, changing the subject to Muhammad's virtues. The Gentile denies that these virtues account for the widespread appeal of Islam. If esteem in this world proves that one has been sent by God, how much the more does this apply to Christ, his apostles, and his martyrs? The Muslim sage fails to criticize this illogical idea, given that Christ, his apostles, and his martyrs scarcely received worldly honour. Nor does he compare the territorial sway of Islam with that of Christianity.²⁸

Eschatology was a time-tested site of anti-Muslim polemic; but here Lull inserts topics that might also have been assigned to the Jewish or Christian sage. Why do we die, anyway? Do angels, lacking bodies, die? If so, what does the resurrection mean for them? How long will the Last Judgement take? How big will heaven and hell have to be to fit everyone in? Can anyone be prayed out of hell?

²⁶ Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, iv. 1–iv. 2 (pp. 160–62).

²⁷ Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, iv. 3. 2, iv. 8. 1 (pp. 163–64, 177–80).

²⁸ Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, iv. 3. 4 (pp. 165–66).

The Muslim sage states that the Last Judgement will last as long as it takes to cook an egg. Other than that, he dismisses or ignores these questions, except the last one, which occasions a barbed exchange. In contrast with Jews and Christians, he says, Muslims believe that the damned can be prayed out of hell. Muhammad graciously does so, proving that Muslims have greater faith in the power of prayer than Jews and Christians. In Book III, on eschatology, the Christian sage omits the doctrine of Purgatory. Lull appears unaware of other Christian options. His Gentile rejects the Muslim's claim, maintaining simply that the salvation of any of the damned lacks *convenientia* with God's justice.²⁹ More predictably, attention focuses on the sensible attractions of the Muslim heaven, with the Gentile recycling standard objections concerning the revirgination of the partners of the male saints, food supply, sewage disposal, and the like, adding that the Muslim doctrine of paradise is unfair to women. Replying that the Muslim view of resurrection is more compatible with human nature than the teachings of the philosophers and of the other two faiths, that life in heaven confirms status relations deemed natural in this life, and that, in any case, God will provide, the Muslim sage admits that thinkers in his own tradition disagree on physical resurrection and the joys of heaven. The philosophers of Islam get a strong tongue-lashing. They are rejected as heretics by other Muslims, he says, siding with the majority. Islam rightly prohibits the teaching of logic and natural philosophy in public. Authoritative truth is found only in the Koran and its accredited commentators. Closing his book as he concludes his speech, he reflects Lull's inference that these texts, not reasoned argument, have been his own sole sources.³⁰

It is true that, throughout this dialogue, Lull avoids the most scurrilous canards of inter-religious debate, and the rites and morés that distinguish the three faiths. His text stands out for its remarkable stress on their commonalities and the compatibility with reason that unites them. At the end, the sages stop the Gentile from choosing among them and indicating his preferred version of monotheism. They state that religious commitment should be free and that their own reasoning will inform them of the Gentile's choice. Reason, they add, promotes the cogency of a single faith and praxis. Their amity intact, they agree to continue the conversation.³¹

²⁹ Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, iv. 6. 1, iv. 8. 4–iv. 8. 5, iv. 11. 5 (pp. 173–74, 181–82, 191–92); for the Muslim's claim regarding Muhammad's praying the damned out of hell, see iv. 8. 4 (pp. 181–82). For the Christian tradition on praying the damned out of hell and/or purgatory, see Colish, 'The Virtuous Pagan'.

³⁰ Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, iv. 5. 1, iv. 12 (pp. 171–72, 196–97).

³¹ Llull, *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis*, ed. by Bonner, Epilogue, 289–308 (pp. 208–09).

Yet there are elements in this text that problematize and undercut the cordial and ecumenical character of Lull's argument in Book 1. The reasoning which he presents as the foundation of the three sages' doctrine of God is, as we have seen, seriously defective. Indeed, his medieval readers gave him very low marks as a logician. He shows himself lacking a grasp of what even elementary students of that discipline recognized as the differing types and degrees of certitude that derived from different kinds of syllogisms, the difference between identity and various kinds of similarity, and the strict criteria that arguments need to meet if they are to be regarded as proved by necessary reason. Lull's faulty logic compromises its utility as the sovereign method he uses to construct the theistic structure which he presents as the condominium of the three faiths.

But, even if one is convinced by his claim that his logic leads to that desired conclusion, highlighting important points of agreement among his sages, a close reading of the *Book of the Gentile* also presents evidence of its defence of Christianity, suggesting that this is the reasonable faith to which the Gentile will turn, rather than to Judaism or Islam. We can see how Lull structures this agenda into the conversations he gives to the Gentile and his interlocutors. Lull's account of all three religions is highly selective. He accentuates what he sees as negative features of Judaism and Islam, while omitting or under-reporting their strong points. His strategy is just the reverse in his account of Christianity. And, while all three sages subscribe to the theism advanced as rationally attainable to any human mind in Book 1, in the event Lull often portrays the Jewish and Muslim sages as unable to draw coherent rational inferences from these first principles, or as detached from or disdainful of philosophical theology altogether. Moreover, Lull makes the same point in the speeches he assigns to the Gentile. This interlocutor finds the Christian sage's argument quite acceptable, although it is 'Christianity lite', and does not challenge it. At the same time, the Gentile often questions and criticizes the Jewish and Muslim sages, objections which they ignore, elide, or fail to address responsively. These aspects of the work indicate that Lull is not placing the three sages on a level playing field. Rather, he is using the dialogue genre to display the alleged shortcomings of Judaism and Islam and to promote the superiority of Christianity.³² And so, the *Book of the Gentile* gives

³² A strong and persuasive argument for this conclusion based on stylistic analysis is provided by Friedlein, *Der Dialog bei Ramon Llull*, pp. 88–99, 261; followed by Enders, 'Die Philosophie der Religionen bei Lullus und Cusanus', with additional literature on this point, and Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull*. On this dialogue as a defence of Christianity, the religion that the Gentile is deemed to select, Lull cites it that way in his later work, as is discussed by de la Cruz Palma, 'Las culturas en contacto en el *Liber de gentili et tribus sapientibus*'.

a double answer to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper. Stylistic and content analysis of the dialogue indicates a lack of parity among the three faiths and the privileging of Christianity. At the same time, despite Lull's lack of philosophical rigour and the flaws in the logic he uses to support the monotheism shared by his three sages, he does acknowledge their common beliefs, beliefs accessible to human intelligence as such. He does offer a view of interactions among their proponents guided by reason and mutual respect. Does the *Book of the Gentile* profess empathy or apology? Our answer is: Both.

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