

ART. XI. — *Abu'l-'Alā al-Ma'arrī's Correspondence on Vegetarianism.* By D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

It has already been mentioned¹ that, according to Şafadi, a correspondence on Vegetarianism between Abu'l-'Alā and a certain Hibat Allah Ibn Mūsā, due to a line in the former's *Luzūmiyyāt*, was excerpted by Yāqūt. The first volume of Yāqūt's precious *Dictionary of Littérateurs* is in the Bodleian Library,² soon, I hope, to be published with such other volumes of it as can be found. Yāqūt, whose acquaintance with literary history was unique, tells us that a passage in the *Falak al-Ma'ānī* of Ibn al-Habbāriyyah³ had roused in him the desire to get at this correspondence, which he reproduces in an abridged form. Abu'l-'Alā's correspondent was a man of some importance, whose grave was still shown in Maḳrīzī's time in Cairo,⁴ where he held the post of Chief Missionary. The fact that Abu'l-'Alā addresses him with the titles *ra'īs* and *ajall* shows that he held this or some similar post at the time of the

¹ *Letters of Abu'l-'Alā*, ed. D. S. M., p. xxxix.

² Bodl. Or. 753.

³ Ibn al-Habbāriyyah appears to have been much interested in Abu'l-'Alā. Şafadi (Comm. on *Lāmiyyat al-'Ajam*, Cairo, 1305, ii, 189-191) gives a long quotation from a Risālah written by him to Al-Ustādh al-Ḳhaṭīrī Abu Maṣṣūr, in which an allusion is made (p. 190, med.) to Abu'l-'Alā's *kufr* and *ilhād*. Şafadi was acquainted with the published collection of Abu'l-'Alā's *Letters*: he quotes them, ii, 102 and i, 112. In ii, 198, there is an epigram containing an allusion to the *غفران*, of which Mr. Nicholson has given such an interesting account in this Journal:

قد زرت قبر ابى العلاء المرتضى * لسا اتيت معرفة النعمان
وسالت من غفر الخطايا انه * يهدى اليه رسالة الغفران

The author was 'Alā al-dīn al-Wadā'ī: he visited Abu'l-'Alā's grave in 679.

⁴ *Khīṭāṭ*, i, 460.

correspondence. This must be fixed for 438 A.H., since Abu'l-'Alā (who was born in 363) says that he began vegetarianism at the age of 30, and had continued it for forty-five years. The "Crown of Princes," to whom Hibat Allah offers to write to obtain an increase of the poet's salary, appears to have been Ṣadaḳah Ibn Yūsuf al-Fallāhī, who bore the title *Fakhr al-Mulḳ* (here given him by Abu'l-'Alā), and, according to Ibn al-Athir,¹ died in 440. Suyuṭī² says he was Vizier to the Fatimide Al-Mustansir from 436 to 439. When Abu'l-'Alā says that "after what has passed" he could not appear before this person in the light of a place-hunter, he refers to Letter xxiii of the published collection, in which he refused Ṣadaḳah's³ offer to help him at the court of a former governor of Ḥaleb.

The amount of information which these letters convey seems to be very considerable, at least for the history of the "leading ideas of Islam." The "Chief Missionary" at the Academy of Cairo was by profession pledged to Shi'ism; it was his business to instruct and admit converts. Yet if orthodoxy was a qualification for the post, Hibat Allah seems to have possessed it in a very slight degree. He thinks it "bad form" to quote either the Koran or the Tradition on such a question as Vegetarianism; he only does so as a rejoinder to Abu'l-'Alā, otherwise he would have kept clear of this line of reasoning. He found that mankind were of two classes—one of them so stupidly fanatical that they would accept *any* statement; what the other class were like he does not say. But he tells us that he had defended Abu'l-'Alā at debates in which the latter's orthodoxy was questioned, and yet appears quite prepared

¹ ix, 377.

² *Husn al-Muhādḳarah*, ii, 153.

³ I cannot find the title *tāj al-umarā* given him elsewhere. However, his successor in the office of Vizier had similar titles to those which Abu'l-'Alā lavishes on him: الناصر للدين غياث المسلمين الوزير الاجل المكين سيد علاجي (Suyuṭī, l.c.). The *nisbah* is wrongly written in Ibn Iyās. Cf. Wüstenfeld in *Abh. Gött. Akad.*, xxvii, No. 8, p. 5.

to hear the other assert the human origin of all professedly sacred codes. To him the poet of Ma'arraḥ is known, not as a freethinker, but as the great scholar of the age. He supposes that his conduct will be the result of profound speculation, and tests him in an easy matter in order to be able to approach him on difficult ones.

And what sort of figure does Abu'l-'Alā cut in this correspondence? One that justifies the statement of the Prophet that "poets say what they do not do."¹ The poet had offered his services to those "whose religion and understanding were ailing": some one who acknowledges to that condition asks his aid, and the poet does his utmost to explain away his offer, to make learned quotations serve instead of arguments, and to substitute special and personal motives for reasons based on universal laws. He does not appear capable of distinguishing between *may* and *must*, important though that distinction be. He also, under the pretence of being horrified, cites with evident gusto some of the most blasphemous lines preserved in Arabic.

Ibn al-Habbāriyyah supposed the correspondence had had fatal results for Abu'l-'Alā. It is pleasing to know that the correspondents parted friends. Hibat Allah probably had too great experience of mankind to be greatly disappointed when he found the poet's promise could not be kept. In the sources at present open to me I can find no further mention of Hibat Allah besides the notice in Maḳrīzi. What the purport of the title "the aided in religion" (given him by both Abu'l-'Alā and Maḳrīzi) may be is not clear.

If it were true, as Von Kremer and others supposed, that Abu'l-'Alā was imitating the practice of the Jainas in his ascetic régime, we might expect some reference in these letters to the Indian doctrine, which, however, is not to be found. Moreover, it is noticeable that he tells us his asceticism began in his 30th year—not after his return from Baghdad, as had seemed probable. Syria does not seem a likely place for Jaina doctrines to have been reached,

¹ Sura xxvi, 225.

and yet before the journey to Baghdad Abu'l-'Alā would seem not to have gone outside its limits.

We learn incidentally the source of Dhahabi's account of the poet's income, and the way in which it was disposed. If his journey to Baghdad was really undertaken with the object of securing it, this object was realized.

The Bodleian copy of Yāqūt is very modern, and contains many errors.¹ Of these only the most obvious have been corrected. Yāqūt's abridgment was not very skilfully made, since the correspondents not infrequently quote passages of each other's letters which do not appear in the compendium. Probably, however, little of importance has been omitted. In the translation the *compliments* have been abridged.

¹ The *angular* brackets < > signify additions by the editor, the *square* brackets [] signify *omittenda*.

مكاتبة في ترك اكل اللحوم

قرأتُ في كتاب فلك المعاني ان كثيراً من الجهال يعدّ الموت ظلماً من البارئ عز وجل ويستقبّحه بما فيه من النعمة والحكمة والراحة والمصلحة وقد قال ابو العلاء احمد بن عبد الله بن سليمان المغربي مع تحذلقه ودعواه الطويلة العريضة وشهرة نفسه بالحكمة ومظاهرته

وَلَمْ يَيْتَ عَنْ قَسِيلِ الْفُؤُسِ تَعَمُّدًا * وَبَعَثَتْ أَنْتَ لِقَتْلِهَا مَلَائِينَ
وَزَعَمْتَ أَنَّ لَنَا مَعَادًا ثَانِيًا * مَا كَانَ أَعْمَاهَا عَنِ الْخَالِيَيْنِ

وهذا كلام مجنون معتوه يعتقد انّ القتل كالموت والموت كالقتل فليت هذا الجاهل لما حُرّم الشرع وبَرَدَه والحقّ وحلاوته والهدى ونوره واليقين وراحته لَمَّا¹ يَدْعُ ما هو برئ منه بعيد عنه ولم يقل

غَدَوْتَ مَرِيضَ الْعَقْلِ وَالرَّأْيِ فَالْقِنَى * لِتَحْبِرَ أَنْبَاءَ الْعُقُولِ الصَّحَائِحِ

حتى سلط الله عليه ابا نصر بن ابي عمران داعي الدعاة بمصر فقال له انا ذلك المريض رأياً وعقلاً وقد اتيتك مستشفياً فاشفني وجرت بينهما مكاتبات كثيرة امرني اخرها احضاره² حلب ووعده على الاسلام خيراً من بيت المال فلما علم ابو العلاء انه يحمل للقتل او الاسلام سمّ نفسه ومات وليته لما ادعى العقل خرس ولم يقل مثل هذه الترهات التي يُخَلِّد اليها من لا حاجة لله تعالى فيه * قال المؤلف لما وقعت على هذه القصة اشتهيت ان اقف على صورة ما دار بينهما على وجهه حتى ظفرت بمجلّد لطيف وفيه عدّة

¹ لم would be better.

² Read باحضاره .

رسائل من ابي نصرهبة الله بن موسى بن ابي عمران الى المعري في هذا المعنى انقطع الخطاب بينهما على المساكته ولم يذكر فيها ما يدل على ما ذهب اليه ابن الهبارية من سم المعري نفسه ونقلها على الوجه يطول فلخصت منها الغرض دون تفصيح المعري وتشدقه *

1

كتب ابن (ابى) عمران اليه

الشيخ احسن الله توفيقه الناطق بلسان الفضل والادب الذى ترك من عداه صامتا مشهوراً له بهذه الفضيلة من كل من هو فوق البسيطة غير ان الادب الذى هو جالينوس طبه وعنده مفاتيح غيبه ليس مما يفيد كمبر فائدة في معاشه او معاده سوى الذكر السائر به الركبان مما هو اذا تسامح المذكور به علم انه له بمكانة الجمال والزينة ما دام حياً فاذا رمت به يد المنون من ظهر الارض الى بطنها فلا بحسن ذكره ينتفع ولا بقبحه يستنصر وان كانت الصورة هذه كان مستحيلاً منه ايده الله مع وفور عقله ان جعل موادها كلها منصبه الى احكام اللغة العربية والتفقد فيها واستيفاء اقسام الفاظها ومعانيها ووقر عمره على ما لا نسيخه له منها وترك نفسه المتوقدة نار دكاؤها خلوا من النظر في شأن معاده وان يمتاز من عمله ما لا ينفع فيمكث اذا ذهب الزبد جفاً من غيره فاذا هو حرسه الله بمقتضى هذا الحكم مرتو من عذب مشرب هذا العلم وانما ليس ينوح¹ به لضرب من ضروب السياسة والدليل على كونه ناظرًا لمعاده سلوكه سبيل العيش والتزهد وعدوله عن الملاء من المأكل والمشروب

¹ Read .

والملبوس وتعقّفه عن ان يجعل جوفه للحميوان مدفناً ، او ان يذوق من درّها لبناً “ او يستطعم من استلذّت عليه¹ في حرثه وانشائه وهذه طريقة من يعتقد انه اذا آلمها جوزى بألمها وهذا غاية في الزهد ولما رأيت ذلك وسمعت داعية البيت الذي يعزى اليه وهو

عَدَوْتُ مَرِيضَ الدِّينِ وَالْعَقْلِ فَالْقَنِي * لِتَعْلَمَ أَنْبَاءُ الْأُمُورِ الصَّحَاحِ

فشددت اليه راحلة العليل في دينه وعقله الى الصحيح الذي ينبئني انباء الامور الصحاح وانا اول ملئت لدعوته معترف بحيرته وهو حقيق ان لا يوطئني العشواء² فيسلك بي في المحامل ، ولا يعتمد فيما يورده تلبيس الحق بالباطل “ واول سوالي عن امر خفيف فان استنشقت نسيم الصبا سقت السؤال الى المهمّ اسأله عن العلة في تحريمه على نفسه اللحم واللبن وكلما يصدر الى الجود من منافع الحميوان فاقول اليس النبات موضوع³ للحميوان بمشار منه وبوجوده وجوده وبقوة في الحميوان حساسة مما استولى على الانتفاع بالنبات ولو لم يكن الحميوان لكان موضوع النبات باطلاً لا معنى له وعلى هذه القضية⁴ فان القوّة الانسانية مستولية على الحميوان استيلاء الحميوان على النبات لرحمانها عليه بالنطق والعقل فهي مستخرجة له على انواع من التسخير ولولا ذلك لكان موضوع الحميوان باطلاً فتجاني الشيخ وقفه الله عن الانتفاع بما هو موضوع له ومخلوق لاجله ابطالاً لتركيب الخلقه ثم امتناعه من اكل الحميوان ليس يخلوا القصد به من احد امريين اما انه تاخذة رافة بها فلا يرى [رأى] تناولها بالمكروه وما

¹ Perhaps عَلَّثَهُ .

² According to *Lisan al-Arab*, xix, 289, this should be العشوة .

³ Should be موضوعاً .

⁴ MS. القصة .

ينبغي له ان يكون أرفق بها من خالقها فاذا ادعى ان تحليلها
 وتحريمها انما كان من بعض البشر يعني به اصحاب الشرائع وان الله
 لم يبح اراقة دم حيوان واكله كان السدليل على بطلان قوله وقوع
 المشاهدة لجنس السباع وجوارح الطير التي خلقها الله سبحانه على
 صيغة لا تصلح الا لتتسح اللحوم وفسخها وتمزيق الحيوانات واكلها وانا
 كان هذا الشكل قائم العين في الفطرة كان جنس البشر وسيع العذر في
 اكل اللحوم وكان من احلّ لهم ذلك محققا والثاني انه يرى سفك
 دماء الحيوان خارجاً عن اوضاع الحكمة وذلك اعتراف منه على
 خالقه الذي اوجده واذا انعم الشيخ وساق التي حجة اعتمدها رجوت
 كشف المرض الذي وقع اعترافي به *

٢

الجواب من ابي العلاء المعري اليه

قال العبد الضعيف العاجز احمد بن عبد الله بن سليمان اول ما
 بدأ به اني اعدت سيدنا الرئيس الاجل المؤيد في الدين اطال الله
 بقاءه ممن ورث حكمة الانبياء، واعدت نفسي الخاطئة من الاغبياء،
 وهو بكتابه التي متواضع ومن انا حتى يكتب مثله الي (مثلي)
 مثله في ذلك مثل الثريا كتب¹ الي الثرى وقد علم الله ان سمعي
 ثقيل، وبصرى عن الابصار ثقيل، "فُضِي عَليّ وانا ابن اربع" لا افرق
 بين النازل والربع²، ثم تواليت مَحْنِي، فاشبهه شخصي العود
 المَحْنِي، "ومسيت في اخر عمري بالاقعاد، وعداني عن النهضة

¹ تكب Read .

² المربع Read .

عاد “ واما ما ذكره سيدنا الرئيس الاجل المؤيد في الدين فالعبد الضعيف العاجز يذكر له مما عاياه طرفا فاقول ان الله جلست عظمته حكم على بالازهاد ، فطفقت من العدم في جهاد “ واما قول العبد الضعيف العاجز

غَدَوْتُ مَرِيضَ الْعَقْلِ وَالِدَيْنِ فَالْقَنِي

فانما خاطب به من (هو في) غمرة الجهل¹ ، لا من هو للرياسة علم واصل “ وقد علم ان الحيوان كله حساس يقع به الالم وقد سمع العبد الضعيف من اختلاف القدماء واول ما يبداً به لو ان قابلاً من البشر قال اذا بنينا القضية النمو² المركبة من المسند والمسند اليه ولها واسطتان احدهما نافية والاخرى استثنائية فقلنا الله لا يفعل الا الخير فهذه القضية كاذبة ام صادقة فان قيل انها صادقة فقد راينا الشرور غالباً) فعلمنا ان ذلك (ا) مرخفى ولم يزل من ينسب الى الدين يرغب في هجران اللحوم لانها لم يوصل اليها الا بايلام حيوان ، يفر منه في كل اوان “ وان الضائنة تكون في محل القوم وهي حامل فاذا وضعت وبلغ ولدها شهرا او نحوه اعتبطوه فاكلوه ورجعوا في اللبن وباتت امه ثاغية ، لو تقدر سعت له باغية “ وقد تردد في كلام العرب ما يلحق الوحشية من الوجد والناقاة اذا فقدت الفصيل فقال قائلهم

فَمَا وَجَدْتُ كَوْجِدِي³ أُمَّ سَقَبٍ * أَصَلَّتْهُ فَرَجَعَتْ الْحَيْنِيَا

وللسائل ان يقول ان كان النخير لا يريد ربنا سواه فالشر لا يخلوا من احد امرين اما ان يكون قد علم به او لان كان عالما به فلا يخلوا

¹ MS. الجهمال .

² Probably corrupt.

³ MS. لوجدى .

من احد امريين اما ان يكون مريداً له او لا فان كان مريداً له فكأته
 الفاعل كما ان القائل يقول قطع الامير السارق وان لم يباشر ذلك
 بنفسه وان كان غير مريد فقد جاز عليه ما لا يجوز على امير مثله في
 الارض انه اذا فعل في ولايته شئاً لا يرضاه انكره وامر بزواله وهذه عقدة
 قد اجتهد المتكلمون في انحلالها¹ فاعوزهم وقد ذكرت الانبياء ان
 البارئ جلّت عظمته رؤوف رحيم ولو رأف ببني آدم وجب ان
 يرأف بغيرهم من اصناف الحيوان الذي يجد الامم بادنني شئى وقد
 علم ان الوحش الراتعة يبكر اليها الفارس فيطعن العير او الانسان² *
 وهزوما اسدين اليهم ذيباً³ ولأى حال استوجب من يفعل بها هذا
 الرقة وهى لم تشرب من الماء بذنوب ، ولم تجز ما يكتب من
 الذنوب “ وقد رايت الجيوشين المنتسب كل واحد منهما الى
 الشرع⁴ المنفرد ، يلتقيان وكلاهما في مدد “ ويقتل بينهما آلاف
 عدداً “ فهذا محسوب من آى الوجهين فليس عند النظر بمبين
 فلما بلغ العبد الضعيف العاجز اختلاف الاقوال وبلغ ثلاثين عاماً
 سأل ربه انعاماً “ ورزقه صوم الدهر ، فلم يفطر في السنة ولا الشهر “
 الا في العيدين ، وصير على توالى الجديدين “ وظن اقتناعه بالنبات
 يثبت له جميل العافية وقد علم سيدنا الرئيس الاجل المؤيد في
 الدين ولا ريب انه قد نظر في الكتب المتقدمة وما حكى عن
 جالينوس وغيره ، من اعتقاد يدل على الخيرة “ واذ قيل ان البارئ
 رؤوف رحيم فلم سلط الاسد على افتراس نسمة انسية ، ليست

¹ احلالها would be better.

² Read الاتان .

³ These words are corrupt.

⁴ MS. الشروع .

بالمفسدة ولا القسمة “ وكم مات بلدغ الحيات جماعة مشهورة وسلط على الطير الراضية بلقظ الحبة البازي والصقروان القطة لتدع فراخها ظماء وتبتكر لترد ماء تحمله اليها في حوصلتها فيصادفها دونهن اجدل فياكلها فيهلك فراخها عطشا وذكر اشياء من هذا الباب ثم قال واعوذ بالله واتبرأ من قول الكافر

أَلَمَّتْ بِالتَّحِيَّةِ أُمُّ بَكْرٍ * فَحَيُّوا أُمَّ بَكْرٍ بِالسَّلَامِ
وَكَايِنَ بِالتَّطَوِّيِّ طَوِيَّ بَدْرٍ * وَمِنَ الْأَحْسَابِ وَالْقَوْمِ الْكِرَامِ
وَكَايِنَ بِالتَّطَوِّيِّ طَوِيَّ بَدْرٍ * وَمِنَ الشَّيْزَى يُكَلَّلُ بِالسَّتَامِ
أَلَا (يَا) أُمَّ بَكْرٍ لَا تُكِرِّي * عَلَيَّ الْكَأْسَ بَعْدَ أَخِي هَشَامِ
وَبَعْدَ أَخِي أَبِيهِ وَكَانَ قَرَمًا * وَمِنَ الْأَقْرَامِ شَرَابِ الْمُدَامِ
أَلَا مِنْ مُبْلِغِ الرَّحْمَنِ (عَتَى) * (بِ)أَتَى تَارَكَ شَهْرَ الصِّيَامِ
إِنَا مَا الرَّأْسُ زَائِلَ مَنَكِيهِ * فَقَدْ شَبِعَ الْأَنْبِيسُ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ
أَبُوْعِدْنَا أَتْنُ كِبْشَةَ أَنْ سَأَحِي * وَكَيْفَ (بِ)أَخِيَا أَضْدَاءَ وَهَامِ
أَيَنْزِلُ أَنْ يَرُدَّ أَلْمُوتُ عَيْنِي * وَيُحْيِينِي إِذَا بَلَيْتُ عِظَامِي

ولعن الله الفائل ويقال انه الوليد بن يزيد بن عبد الملك

ادننا¹ منى خليلي عنه لا دون الأزار
فَلَقَدْ أَيَقَنْتُ أَنِّي شَمِيرٌ مَبْعُوثٌ لِنَارِ
سَأَرُوضُ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَرْكَبُوا دِينَ الْحِمَارِ
وَأَرْكَأ² مَنْ يَطْلُبُ الْجَنَّةَ يَسْعَى فِي خَسَارِ

¹ Read ادنها .

² Read وَأَرْي .

وويل لابن رعيان ان كان قال

هِيَ الْأُولَى وَقَدْ نَعَمُوا¹ بِأُخْرَى * وَتَسْوِيفُ الظَّنُونِ مِنَ السَّوَابِ
فَيَأْنُ يَكُ بَعْدُ² مَا قَالُوهُ حَقًّا * فَإِنَّ الْمُبْتَلِيكَ هُوَ الْمَعَاذُ

ومما حثنى على ترك اكل الحيوان ان الذى لى فى السنة نيف وعشرون دينارا فاذا اخذ خادمى بعض ما يجب ، بقى لى ما لا يعجب “ فاقترت على فول وبلسن ، وما لا يعذب على اللسن “
فاما الان فاذا صار الى من يخدمنى كثير عندى وعنده هيين ، فما حظى الا اليسير المتعين “ ولست ازيد فى رزقى زيادة ، ولا اوتر لسقمى عيادة “ والسلام

٣

الجواب من ابن ابى عمران

حوشى الشيخ ادام الله سلامته من ان يكون ممن قطف فى مرض³ دينه وعقله بعلته واجاب دعوة الداعى منه بالبيت الشائع عنه لين(ا)ل شفاه علته (جواباً) يزيده الى غلته غلّة اذاً يكون كما قال المتنبي

أَظْمَيْتَنِي⁴ أَدْنِيَا فَلَمَّا جِئْتُهَا مُسْتَسْقِيًا مَطَرَتْ عَلَيَّ مَصَائِبًا

كان سوالى له حرسه الله فى شىء يختص بنفسه فى هجرة ما يشد الجسم من اللحم الذى ينبت اللحم فاجاب بما اقول فى جوابه

¹ Perhaps زعموا .

² Read بعض .

Read عرض .

⁴ Mutanabbi, ed. Dieterici, p. 173.

اهذه انباء (الخ) وهل زاد السقيم بدوائه هذا الاسقيما¹ والاعمى
 الاصم في دينه وعقله بما قال الاعمى وصمما على ان جميع ما
 ذكره ينحوه² عن سوالي الاول ومغزل عنه ولا مناسبة بينها وبينه
 واما السقول بان اللحوم لا يصل اليها الا بايلام الحيوان فقد سبق
 الجواب لا يكونن الشيخ اراف بها من خالقها فليس يخلوا من كونه
 عادلا او جائرا فان كان عادلا فانه سبحانه يقبض ارواح الأكل والماكول
 جميعا وذلك مسلم له وان كان جائرا لم ينبغ ان نرجح³ على
 خالقنا بعدلنا وجوره واما قوله وللسائل ان يقول ان كان الخببر هو
 الذى لا يريد ربنا سواه فالشر لا يخلوا من احد امرين اما ان يكون
 قد علم به او لا الى آخرة فاقول قيل ان انسانا ضاع له مصحف
 فقيل له اقرأ وَالشَّمْسُ⁴ وَصَحَاها فانك تجده فقال وهذه السورة
 ايضا فيه فاقول ايضا ان هذا ايضا من ذلك وجميعه ظلمات فاين
 النور وانما قصدنا ان نعرف اُنْبَاءَ الْأُمُورِ الصَّحَائِحِ كما قاله واما قوله
 لما رأى اختلاف الاقوال ' وايقن بنفاد وزوال " سأل ربه ان يزرقه
 صوم الدهر واقتنع بالنبات فما صح لي ان الرب الذى سألته هو
 الذى يريد الخير وحده او الذى يريد الشر وحده او الذى يريدهما
 جميعا والصوم فرع على اصل من شرع يأتى به رسول والرسول
 يتعلق بمرسل وقصتنا في المرسل مشتبهة يبعث رسولا يريد ان يطاع
 ام لا يطاع فان كان يريد ان يطاع فهو مغلوب على ارادته لان من
 لا يطيعه اكثر وان كان يريد ان لا يطاع فارساله اياه محال وطلبة حجة
 على الضعفا ليعذبهم فان كان موضوع صومه على هذا فلم يعمل

¹ Read سقيما.

² Read بنحوه.

³ MS. يرجح.

⁴ Sura xci, 1.

شيئا وان كان على غيره مما هو اجلى واوضح فهو الذى اطلبه واما حكاية قول بعض الملحدين واستعاضته بالله ان يكون من المعترضين فى قوله تعالى وَإِنَّهُ¹ أَهْلَكَ عَادًا الْأُولَىٰ وَثَمُودًا فَمَا أَبْقَى الآيات ان كان البارئ سبحانه خلقهم وهو يعلم انهم يجرمون ، وللتوبة والانابة يجرمون ،“ فكان الاولى به وهو الرؤوف الرحيم ان لا يخلقهم ليلا يعذبهم وان كان لا يعلم * فهو كما مثلنا² ولا يدري ما يكون منه وقول الشيخ بعده معاذ الله ان نقول ذلك بل نسلم ونتلوا الآية من³ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ فَبِهِوْ أَلْمُهْتَدِي وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُرْشِدًا فليس الملحدا اذا قال ان السكر حلو والنخل حامض لا يقبل منه لكونه ملحداً وقوله يقتضى جوابا فان كان عند الشيخ جواب فهو الذى يبغى والا فما التسليم فى هذا الموضع الا التسليم للملحد لا شئ غيره واما انشاده

أَلَمَّتْ بِالتَّحِيَّةِ أُمَّ عَمْرٍو

وما بعده من الاشعار وذمه من قال ولعنه من الذى اتهمه بشئ من ذلك حاشاه وما الذى اوجب الانكار بكفريات شعرهم واما ختمه الرسالة بقوله ان الذى حثه على ترك اكل الحيوان ان الذى لي فى السنة نيف وعشرون دينارا يصير الى خادمه معظمها ويبقى له ايسرها ويحمل مؤونة القدر الذى يطعمه لو كان ثقيلاً لوجب تحمله فكيف وهو الخفيف محمله وقد⁴ كاتب مولاي تاج الامراء حرس الله عزه ان يتقدم بازاحة العلة فيما هو بلغة مشله من الذ الطعام ، ومراعاته به على الادرار والدوام ، ليتكشف عنه غاشية هذه

¹ Sura liii, 52.

² Transpose these words after منه .

³ Sura xviii, 16.

⁴ Read فقد .

الضرورة، ويجرى امره في معيشته على احسن ما يكون من الصورة“
ثم ان قام من الشيخ نشطة لجواب اعفانى فيه عن قصد الاسجاع ولنزوم
ما لا يلزم فان ملتمسى فيه المعانى لا الالفاظ *

٤

الجواب من ابى العلاء

سيدنا الرئيس الاجل المؤيد في الدين عصمة المؤمن هدى الله
الامم بهدايته وسلك بهم طريق الخير على يده قد بدأ المعترف
بجهله المقتر بحيرته والداعى الى الله سبحانه ان رزقه¹ ما قل من
رحمته في اول ما خاطبه به ان² ذكر اعتقاده في سيدنا الرئيس
الاجل المؤيد في الدين ضوأ الله الظلم بصيرته وانهب شكوك
الافتدة برأيه وحكمته وما نفسه عليه من الذلة والحقرية عنده وانه
يخسبها ساكتة في بعض السوام وعجب ان مثله يطلب الرشد ممن
لا رشد عنده فيكون كالقمر الذي هو دائب في خدمة ربه ليلاً ونهاراً
يطلب الحقيقة من اقمربغلاة يرد الماء على الصائد ويصيب قلبه
بسهم وقد ذكر اتيد الله الحق بحياته بيتا من ابيات على الحاء ذكر
وليه ليعلم غيره ما هو عليه من الاجتهاد في التدين وما حيلته في
الآية المنزلة التي هي قوله من³ يهدي الله فهو المهتدي واولها

عَدَوْتَ مَرِيضَ الْعَقْلِ وَالِدَيْنِ فَالْفَنَى * لَتَعْلَمَ أَنْبَاءُ الْأُمُورِ الصَّحَابِ
فَلَا تَأْكُلْنَ مَا أَخْرَجَ الْأَمَاءُ ظَالِمًا * وَلَا تَبْغِ قُوتًا مِنْ غَرِيضِ الدَّبَابِ

¹ يبرزقه .

² ان .

³ Sura xviii, 16.

ولا يقدر احد يدفع ان الحيوان البحري لا يخرج من الماء الا هو كاره
 واذا سئل المعقول عن ذلك لم يقبح ترك اكله وان كان حلالاً لأن
 المتدينين لم يزالوا يتركون ما هو لهم حلال مطلق

وَأَبْيَضُ أُمَاتٍ¹ أَرَادَتْ صَرِيحَهُ * لِأَطْفَالِهَا دُونَ الْعَوَانِي الصَّرَائِحِ

وامراد بالابيض اللبن ومشهور ان الام اذا ذبح ولدها وجدت عليه
 وجدا عظيما وسهرت لذلك ليالى وقد اخذ لحمه وتوفر على
 اصحاب امه ما كان يرضع من لبنها فات ذنب لمن تخرج عن
 ذبح السليل ولم يرغب في استعمال اللبن ولا يزرع انه محرّم وانما
 تركه اجتهاداً في التعبد ورحمة للمذبوح رغبة ان يجازي عن ذلك
 بغفران خالق السموات والارض واذا قيل ان الله سبحانه يساوى
 بين عباده في الاتسام فاي شىء اسلفته الذبائح من الخطا حتى
 يمنع حظها من الرأفة والرفق

فَلَا تَفْجَعَنَّ الطَّيْرَ وَهِيَ غَوَافِلٌ * بِمَا وَضَعْتَ فَالظُّلْمُ شَرُّ الْقَبَائِحِ

وقد نهى النبى صلعم عن صيد الليل وذلك احد القولين في قوله عم
 اقروا الطير في وكناتها وفي الكتاب العزيز يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا
 تَقْتُلُوا الطَّيْرَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهُ مِنْكُمْ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا
 قَتَلَ مِنْ النَّعَمِ الى غيرها من الآى في المعنى فاذا سمع من له
 ادنى حس هذا القول فلا لوم عليه اذا طلب التقرب الى رب
 السموات والارضيين بان يجعل صيد الحمل كصيد الحرم وان كان
 ذلك ليس بمحظور

وَدَعَّ ضَرْبَ الْحَلِّ الْإِدِّي بَكَرَتْ لَهُ * كَوَاسِبُ مِنْ أَزْهَارِ نَبْتِ قَوَائِحِ

¹ MS. امارات.

² Sura v, 96.

لما كانت التحل بحارب الشارب¹ عن العسل بما تقدر عليه وتجتهد ان ترده من (ذلك) فلا غرو ان اعرض عن استعماله رغبة في ان تجعل التحل كغيرها مما يكره ذبح الاكيل واخذ ما كان يعيش به لتشربه النساء كي تبدن وغيرها من بنى آدم وقد وصفت الشعرا ذلك فقال ابو ذئب يصف مشتار العسل

إِذَا لَسَعَتْهُ الْحَلَّلُ لَمْ يَرْجُ لَسَعَهَا * وَخَالَفَهَا فِي بَيْتِ لُوبِ عَوَاسِلِ
وروي عن علي عم حكاية معناها انه كان له دقيق شعير في وعاء يختم عليه فاذا كان صائما (لم) يختم على شيء من ذلك الدقيق وقد كان عليه السلام يصل الى غلته كثيرة ولكنه كان يتصدق بها ويقتنع اشد اقتناع وروي عن بعض اهل العلم انه قال في بعض خطبه ان غلته تبلغ في السنة خمسين الف دينار * * * وهذا يدل على ان الانبياء والمجتهدين من الأئمة يقصرون نفوسهم ويؤثرون بما يفضل منهم اهل الحاجة وقد عدل سيدنا الرئيس الى الايمان بان من ترك اكل اللحم ذميم ولو أخذ بهذا المذهب لوجب على الانسان ان لا يصلى صلاة الا ما افترض عليه لان ما زاد على ذلك اداة الى كلفة والله تبارك وتعالى لا يريد ذلك ولو جب الذي له مال² كثير اذا اخرج عن الذهب ربع العشر لا يحسن به ان يزيد على ذلك وقد حث الناس على النفقات في غير موضع من الكتاب الاشرف والعبء الضعيف العاجز قد افتقر الى مثل ذلك ولو مثل بحضرتة السامية لعلم انه لم يبق فيه بقية لان يسأل ولا ان يجيب لان اعضاءه متخاذلة وقد عجز عن القيام في الصلاة فانما يصلى قاعداً والله المستعان وكيف له ان يكون يصل الى ان يدب

¹ الشارب.

² ما MS.

على عكاز ثم استشهد على عجزه باشعار العرب وانى لا عجز اذا
اضطجعت عن القعود فرما استعننت بانسان فاذا هم باعانتى
وبسط يديه لنهضتى ضربت عظامى لانهن عاريات من كسوة كانت
عليهن واما استشهادة بيت ابى الطيب فمن استرشد بمثل العبد
الضعيف العاجز مَثَلُهُ مثل من طلب فى القتادة ثمر النخلة وانما
حمل سائله على ذلك حسن الظن الذى هو دليل على كرم
الطبع وشرف النفس وطهارة المولد وخالص الخيم واما ما ذكره
من المكاتبه فى توسيع الرزق على فيدل على افضال ورثه عن اب
فاب وجدّ فى اثر جد حتى يصل النسب الى التراب فالعبد
الضعيف العاجز ما له رغبة فى التوسع ومعاودة الاطعمة وتركها صار
له طبعاً ثانياً وانه¹ ما اكل شيئاً من حيوان خمسين واربعين سنة والشيخ
لا يترك اخلاقه حتى يتوارى فى ثرى رمسه وقد علم ان السيد
الاجل تاج الامراء فخر الملك عمدة الامامة وعدة الدولة ومجدها
ذا الفخرين نصيف اولاد سام وحام ويافث وود العبد الضعيف
العاجز لو ان قلعة حلب وجميع جبال الشام جعلها الله ذهباً
لينفقه تاج الامراء نصير الدولة النبوية على امامها السلام وكذلك
على الائمة الطاهرين من آباءه من غير ان يصير الى العبد الضعيف
من ذلك قيراط وهو يستحى من حضرة تاج الامراء ان ينظر اليه
بعين من رغب فى العاجلة بعد ما ذهب وهو رضى ان يلقي الله
جلت قدرته وهو لا يطالب الا بما فعل من اجتناب اللحم فان
وصل الى هذه الرتبة فقد سعد ثم اعتذر عن السجع باخبار اوردها

¹ .وله MS.

واحتجاجات ذكرها وسيدنا الرئيس الاجل [الاجل] المويّد في الدين
لا زالت حجته باهرة ودولته عالية كما قال ثعلبة بن صعير
وَلَزَبْتُ قَوْمَ ظَالِمِينَ دَوَى شَدَى * تَعْلَى صُدُورُهُمْ بِهَيْئِ هَاتِرِ
لا كارتهم¹ عَلَى مَا سَاءَهُمْ * وَخَسَأَتْ بَاطِلُهُمْ بِحَقِّ ظَاهِرِ
ولو ناظر ارسطاليس لجاز ان يفحمه او افلاطون لنبذ حججه خلفه
والله يجعل بحياته الشريعة وينصر بحججه الملة وحسبي الله
ونعم الوكيل *

٥

الجواب من (ابن) ابي عمران

ما فاتحت الشيخ احسن الله توفيقه بالقول الامفاحة متناكر عليه
فيه موثر لان يخفى من اين جاء السؤال فيكون الجواب عنه باستدلال
ورفض حشمة وحذف تكلف للخطاب بسيدنا والرئيس وما يجري
هذا المجري ان كان حكم ما يتجاري فيه موجبا ان لا يتخلله شيء
من زخارف الدنيا ولاتنى اعتقد ان سيدى بالحقيقة من يستقل
دون يده يداي جدا² منه للدنيا او تمتاز³ نفسى من نفسه استفادة
من معالم الاخرى فما (ادري) كيف انكشفت الحال حتى صار
الشيخ ادام الله تاييده يخاطبني بسيدنا والرئيس ولست مفضلا عليه
في دنيا ولا دين بل شاد راحلتى اليه لاستفادة ان وردت مورد ماء
او صادفت نهرا او علامتها قابلتها بالشكر لنعمته والاسجال على نفسى
باستانديته وبعد فانى اعلمه ادام الله سلامته انى شققت جيب
الارض من اقصى ديارى الى مصر وشاهدت الناس بين رجلين اما

¹ Perhaps قد كنت طارقهم .

² MS. حدا .

³ MS. تمتاز .

متاحل لشريعة صبا اليها ولهج بها الى الحدّ الذي ان قيل له من اخبار شرعه ان فيلا طار او جملا باض لما قابله الا بالقبول والتصديق وكان يكفر من يري غير رأيه فيه ويسفهه ويلغيه والعقل عند من هذه سبيله في مهوأة وفي مضیعة فليس يكان ينبعث ان هذه الشريعة التي هو متاحلها لم يطوق طوقها ولم يسور سوارها الا بعد لموع نور العقل منه فكيف يصح توليه¹ اولا وعزله اخرأ فلما رمت بي المرامي الى الشام وسمعت ان الشيخ وقفه الله يفضل في الادب والعلم قد اتفقت عليه الاقاول ، ووضح به البرهان والدليل “ ورايت الناس في ما يتعلق بدينه مختلفين ، وفي امره مبتلين “ فكل يذهب فيه مذهبا وحضرت مجلسا جليلا اجرى فيه ذكره فقال الحاضرون فيه غثا وسمينا فحفظته في الغيب ، وقلت ان المعلوم من صلابته في زهده يحميه من الظئمة والريب ، وقام في نفسى ان عنده من حقائق دين الله سراً ، قد اسبل عليه من البقية سراً ، وامراً يميزه عن قوم يكفر بعضهم بعضا ولما سمعت البيت عَدَوْتُ مَرِيضَ الْعَقْلِ تَوَثَّقْتُ مِنْ خَلْدِي فيما حَدَّثْتُ عَقُودَهُ ، وتأكّدت عهده ، وقلت ان لسانا يستطيع بمثل هذه الدعوى نطقا ، ويفتق² من هذا الفخر العظيم رتقا³ ، لسان صامت عنده كل ناطق ، من ذروة من جبل العلم شاهق “ فقصدته قصد موسى للطور اقتبس منه نارا ، واحاول ان ارفع بالفخر منارا “ لمعرفة ما يخلف عن معرفته المتخلفون ، واختلف في حقيقته المتخلفون “ فادليت دلوي بالمسئلة الخفيفة التي سئلْتُ

¹ توليته Read .

² MS. يفتق .

³ MS. ريقا .

عنها ترقيا من دوني¹ الى فوق وتدرجا من صغري (الى) كبير فكان جوابه انه يصغر عن ان يكون للاسترشاد محلاً فقلت هذه زيادة في فضله وما يجوز صدر² مثله عن مثله ثم انتهي الى الاحالة على كون الناس ممن تقدم او تاخر في وادي الحميرة تائبين ' وفي اذياته متعثرين " من قائل يقول ان الخير والشر من الله ومحجيب يحجبه هل (كان) ما كان يستعيز منه رسول الله صلعم من وعث السفر وكل مستعان منه خيراً او شراً فان كان خيراً فالاستعاذة منه باطلة وان كان شراً والله مريده فالاستعاذة منه كذلك فضول وزيادة في المعنى وسوال من يسأل هل كان سمّ الحسن وقتل الحسين عليهما السلام خيراً او شراً فان كان خيراً فاللعنة على القاتل من اى جهة وان كان شراً والله مريده زال اللوم عن القاتل وقائل يقول ان الخير من الله والشر من غيره ومحجيب يحجيب بالجواب الذي يقطع به الاسباب وغير ذلك مما اطال به الخطاب من اشعار الملحدة واقوالهم فكان جوابى ادام الله سلامته اني من هؤلاء الذين³ تبريت اليك ' وتطايحت عليك " وان كلامهم قل ان علته عليل " وهو على مسامح القبول منى ثقيل " فافتح لى الى ما عندك بابا ' وافتح لى من لدنك جنابا " فلم يفعل ثم خاطبته على امتناعه من اكل اللحوم فاحتج بكونه متخرجاً من قصدها اعنى البهائم بالمضرة والايلام متعقفا عنها لهذه الجهة فقطعت لسان حجته بعد تناهيا وقلت اذا كان الله تعالى سلط بعضها لتاكل بعضها وهو اعرف بوجوه الحكمة وارف بالخليقة فلا يكن ارف بها من ربها ولا اعدل فيها من

¹ Read دون .

² Should be صدور .

³ Add perhaps ذكرتهم .

خالقها ثم عدله¹ الى قصور يد الاستطاعة دون ذلك ان كان القدر الذى هو له فى السنة منصرفا الى من يتولى خدمته اكثره وخالصا له اقله فقطعت الحججة فى هذا الباب ايضا وعيّنت له على جهة كريمة من الذين لا يتبعون ما انفقوا منا ولا ادى يقوم بقدر كفايته من اطيب ما ياكلون، وازكى ما فى البيوت يذخرون“ فتأجفت نفسه وقاها الله السوء عن هذا الباب ايضا وكتب فى الجواب الثانى بانه لا يؤثر ذلك ولا يرغب فيه ولا يخرق عاداته المستمرة فى الترك وابتداء يقول انى طلبت الرشد ممن لا يرشد² عنده وان البيت الذى قاله مما تعلقتم به وجعلته حججة الى استقراء طريقته ومذهبه انما اراد الاعلام باجتهاده فى التدين وما حيلته فى الآية المنزلة من يهدي الله فهو المهتدي ومن يضل فكن مجده له وليا مرشدا فجمع بين المتضادين فى كلمة واحدة انه ان كانت الآية حقا كان الاجتهاد باطلا وقال ان لله سبحانه اسراراً لا يقف عليها الا الاولياء فانحن على ذلك السر ندور وعلى باب من هو عنده نظوف فان قلنا انه حرسه الله من اصحابه بدعوى صحته فى دينه وعقله ومريض الناس على موجب قوله قال لا رشد عندى فنظمه فى هذا المعنى يناقض نشره ونشره يخالف نظمه فكيف الحميلة ثم قال ان البيت المقول غدوت مريض العقل والدين فالقنى * لتعلم انباء العقول الصحاح يوتى معناه البيت الثانى

فلا تاكلن ما اخرج الماء ظالما * ولا تبغ قوتا من عريض الذبائح
فكان مرض الدين والعقل من جهة اكل اللحم وشرب اللبن
وتناول العسل فمن ترك هذه المطاعم كان صحيحا دينه وعقله وهو

¹ عدل .

² رشد .

يعلم ان مصححة الاديان والعقول لا تقوم بذلك ولا يجوز ان يكون هذا البيت الشانى ناسخا لحكم الاول فيكون محصول دعواه في فقر الناس الى ان يصح دينهم وعقلهم هو ان يقول لهم لا تاكلوا اللحم واللبن واما قوله ان الحيوان البحري كاره ان يخرج الى البتروانه ليس يفتح في العقول ترك اكله وان كان حلالا لان المتدينين لم يزالوا يتركون ما لهم طلق فما من حيوان بحري ولا بري هو اجل من هذا الانسان المحي العاقل وهو كاره للموت فيموت وكاره لان ياكله شىء والدود تاكله في قبره فان كان ذلك صادرا (ا) عن موضع حكمة كان ما ذكره من الحيوان البري والبحري جاريا في مضمار هذا مثلا بمثل وان كان معدولا به عن وجه الحكمة كان محالا ان يكون صانعي سفيا وكون وانا مصنوعه حكيما واما قوله ان النبي صلعم صلى الى ان تقرحت قدماه فليل له فيه فقال افلا احب ان اكون عبدا شكورا فما هذا مما نحن عليه في شىء والانسان له ان يصلى ما شاء من الصلوات في الاوقات التي تجوز فيها الصلوة على ان لا يزيد في الفرائض ولا ينقص منها وهذا الكلام شرعى وكانت النصبه للتكلم على العقليات واما قوله انه عم حرم صيد الحرم وان لغيره ان يحرم صيد الحبل تقربا الى الله سبحانه فليس لاحد ان يحلل او يحرم غيره واما قوله ان عليا عم لما قدم الحميص سأل هل اكل النبي صلعم منه فلما قالوا لا رفعه ولم ياكله فهذه الحجية عليه لاله فان الناس مجمعون على ان النبي صلعم لم يفارق اكل اللحم وهو يهجرة دهره وذلك بالصد سواء ولو انه حرسه الله لم يستظهر على بالشريعة ولم يتجاوز نسبة العقل لصنته عن هذا الجواب الذي عسى ان يستغل ستره ويعز علي ذلك واما ما شكاه من ضعفه وتصور حركته وانه لم يبق فيه بقية لان يسال ولا ان يجيب فما هو حرسه

الله على علته من الضعف والقوة الا من محاسن الزمان ، ومن سارت بذكر فضله الركبان “ الا انه على عدوان الدهر عليهم¹ عدا على نفسه بحرمانها ملاً دنياها فان وثقت نفسه بملاذ يعتاض عنها مما هو خير وابقى منها فما خسرت صفقته وقام مصداق قوله بالبيت المقدم ذكره وان كان يوسم بميسم الشح بمنع المنتجعين ورق السائلين وان كان شق على نفسه من غير بصيرة كما يدعيه الان خوفاً مع الخائضين² ، وتحيرا مع امثالنا من المتحيرين “ فقد اضاعها وجنى عليها وادعى في البيت المقدم ذكره ما لا برهان له والغرض في السؤال والجواب الفائدة وانا عدمت فقد خفف الله عنه ان يتكلف جوابا واما الاسجاع ومسالتى التجلى عنها فما كانت الاسجاع ع بالمعاني ان نضل بتتبعها ولاننى اذا تتبعته فضله بصنعاته في الادب والشعر وجدت في ارضه مراغماً كثيراً وسعة ومن اين لى ان اظهر على مكنون جواهر علوم دينه كظهوري على مصنعات ادبه وشعره وقبل وبعد فانا اغدز عن سر له ادام الله حراسته آديته³ وزمان منه بالقراءة والاجابة شغلته لاننى من حيث ما نفعته ضرته والله تعالى يعلم انسى ما قصدت به غير الاستفادة من علمه والاعتراف من بحره والسلام

¹ عليه Read .

² Sura lxxiv, 46.

³ آديته MS.

TRANSLATION.

I read in the work called the *Firmament of Ideas*¹ that many ignorant persons regard death as an injustice done by the Creator, and think it a shame, notwithstanding the kindness and wisdom which it displays, and the comfort and benefit which it brings. And, indeed, Abu'l-'Alā Aḥmad Ibn Abdallah Ibn Sulaymān Al-Maghribī,² the author who is so vain of his attainments, who makes professions so long and broad, who extols and vaunts his wisdom so much, says—

“Thou³ didst forbid murder, and dost Thyself send two angels to take the soul: Thou declarest that we shall return again. Could not it have dispensed with both states?”

Now this is the talk of a raving maniac who supposes death and murder to be identical. When this idiot forfeited the pleasure of religion, and the sweetness of the truth, and the light of scripture, and the comfort of the verity, he would have done better not to pretend to powers of which he was utterly destitute, in the verse—

“Are⁴ thy understanding and thy counsel ailing? Come to me that thou mayest learn the utterances of sound wits!”

For God put him in the power of Abu Naṣr Ibn Abī

¹ An account of Ibn al-Habbāriyyah, the author of this work, is given by Ibn Khallikan, ii, 19–21 (Cairo, 1299). He died about 504 A.H., and is likely to have been born about the time of Abu'l-'Alā's death. The narrative quoted by Yāqūt teems with inaccuracies.

² Probably the author's mistake for Al-Ma'arri.

³ Often quoted as an example of Abu'l-'Alā's impiety.

⁴ *Luzūmiyyāt*, Cairo, 1891, i, 232. In both this and the Bombay edition the first word is wrongly vocalized عَدَوْتُ.

'Imrān,¹ Chief Missionary² in Egypt, who said to him, "I am the person of ailing understanding and counsel, and have come to thee for medicine, so heal me." A long correspondence went on between them, and at last Abu Naṣr ordered the poet to be brought to Ḥaleb,³ where he was promised a large sum from the treasury⁴ if he accepted Islam.⁵ Abu'l-'Alā, knowing that the alternatives before him were Islam or death, took poison, and died of it.⁶ He had better, then, have been quiet instead of boasting of his understanding and uttering absurdities of the sort, such as could only suit the case of one who cared not for God. When I read this story, I was anxious to know exactly what passed between them, and at last I got hold of a thin volume, containing a number of letters from Abu Naṣr Hibat Allah Ibn Abī 'Imrān to Al-Ma'arrī on the subject. Their correspondence, however, ended in both parties acquiescing, and there was no suggestion of Abu'l-'Alā having poisoned himself, as Ibn al-Habbāriyyah says. To transcribe the letters in full would take too long, so I have extracted the main points, omitting the verbiage in which Al-Ma'arrī indulges.

¹ He is called by Maḳrīzī (i, 460) Hibat Allah Ibn Mūsā al-A'jami, i.e. of the tribe Al-A'jam.

² The office of *داعى الدعوة* is thus defined by Ḳalkashandī, ii, 236 (Arch. A. Seld. 18):—"He came next after the chief Ḳāḍī in rank, and wore the same attire. The religious doctrines (*مذاهب*) of the people of the Prophet's house were studied with him in a house called the Academy (*دارالعلم*), and he gave the oath to those who wished to join their sect."

The passage is translated by Wüstenfeld, l.c., xxv, 1, p. 185. It is also to be found in Maḳrīzī, i, 391, whose account of the conduct of the mission is of extraordinary interest. See De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, i, lxxiii sqq. Of this "Academy" an interesting history is given by Maḳrīzī (*Ḳhitat*, i, 458-460); it was founded by Ḥākim in 395, and closed by Al-Afdal Ibn Amir al-Juyūsh in the sixth century. From Maḳrīzī's account it appears to have been a hotbed of heresy, with which the character which Hibat Allah gives of himself corresponds.

³ Since Hibat Allah was in Cairo, he could not well do this. Ibn al-Habbāriyyah was thinking of an apocryphal story of Abu'l-'Alā being summoned by the Vizier of Ḥaleb, and killing fifty men by his imprecations.

⁴ This is an allusion to another story of Abu'l-'Alā being offered the contents of the treasury of Ma'arraḥ.

⁵ In this correspondence Abu'l-'Alā appears as a model of orthodoxy.

⁶ As a matter of fact he lived eleven years longer.

I. *Letter of Ibn Abi 'Imrān.*

That you, dear sir, God guide you well, have a tongue so excellently learned that it reduces all besides to silence, is generally acknowledged by all who are on the surface of this earth; only that learning, to which you are what Galen was to medicine, and the keys of whose mysteries you control, seems to furnish no great boon for either your present or your future life, unless it be winged fame—fame which, so long as a man lives, he may hear ringing, and of which he may be conscious as an ornament and personal charm, whereas when fate has once driven him from the outside of the earth to the inside, neither can fair fame help him nor ill fame hurt him. This being so, it is extraordinary that you, God help you, with your powerful intellect, should devote the whole of it to studying the rules of the Arabic language, and collecting its words and their meanings, thus lavishing your life on what cannot profit you, while leaving your brilliantly talented mind destitute of reflections on your future; choosing the labour that profiteth not, to be left, when the froth is gone, dry, with nothing else. Hence it follows with certainty that you, God guard you, must have drunk deep of this sweet draught, but must, for reasons of policy, have concealed it. And the proof that you have reflected on the future life is to be found in your ascetic practice, your abstention from all luxurious food, drink, and clothing, your refusing to suffer your body to be the grave of animals, to taste their milk, or to turn into food any of the creatures whose generation and breeding give pleasure to the sources of them. Your practice implies the belief that pain inflicted on them will be avenged, and represents the extreme of asceticism. Observing this, and hearing the invitation conveyed in a verse ascribed to you—

“Are thy faith and thy understanding ailing? Come to me that thou mayest learn the true account of the matter,”

I hastened towards you, as one whose faith and understanding are both unsound, unto one who, being sound himself, can tell me "the truth of the matter." I then am the first to answer your summons, and to acknowledge my own bewilderment. And you must not take me into dark places, nor obscure tracks, nor try in what you say to obscure the truth with error. My first question will be about a simple matter, and if your treatment of it be successful I will go on to something serious. What is your ground for abstaining from meat, milk, and all other animal products, as though they were unlawful? Are not, I ask you, plants set by nature where the animals will come upon them, so that by their existence, their goodness, and by a sensitive force which the animals possess the latter have power to utilize the plants? Were it not for the animals, the plants would be a meaningless and purposeless creation. On the same principle the human force controls the animals just as the animals control the plants, owing to the superiority which man possesses in the reason and the power of speech. Hence man utilizes the animals for a variety of purposes, and were it not for that, the creation of the animals would be purposeless. Hence your refusing to use what is created for you, and ordained on your account, destroys the harmony of Nature.

Your purpose in abstaining from meat must be either compassion for the animals, which makes you disapprove of doing them violence, in which case you have no right to be kinder to them than their Creator; but if you hold that certain men (and not God) are responsible for the notions lawful and unlawful, these persons being the law-givers, whereas God has given no permission for the shedding of the blood of animals and for eating their flesh, your doctrine is disproved by the fact that we see before us various beasts and birds of prey, created by God in forms which are only compatible with carnivorous habits, involving the tearing of animals and devouring of them. This fact being well established in creation, mankind may well be excused for eating meat, and those who allow it to be eaten

are evidently in the right. Or, secondly, you may regard the shedding of the blood of animals as an unwise ordinance, in which case your objection will fall on your Creator who called you into existence.

If, then, you would be so kind as to produce a ground which I can regard as satisfactory, I shall hope for a cure of the malady which I have acknowledged.

II. *Answer from Abu'l-'Alā of Ma'arrāh.*

Says God's weak and humble slave Aḥmad, son of Abdallah, son of Sulaymān. I will commence by observing that I regard the most noble prince (my correspondent), whom God has guided in religion, and whose life may He prolong, as one of those who have inherited wisdom from the Prophets, while I regard my erring self as one of the unlearned. *You* to condescend to write to me! Who am I that one like you should write to one like me! The Pleiades might as well come down to the Earth. God knows that I am hard of hearing and of sight, this fate having befallen me when I was four years old, so that I cannot distinguish between the house and its inhabitant. Then to this was added a whole train of disasters, so that my figure got to resemble a curved branch, and finally I have in my latter years become crippled, and unable to rise. As for your questions, I will say a little about the problems which vex you. God Almighty condemned me personally to privation, and hence I commenced the holy war of poverty. The verse that you quote—

“Are thy understanding and thy faith ailing? Come to me,” etc.,

was only addressed to those who are in the slough of ignorance, not to one who is the beacon and source of knowledge. The animals are, as you know, sensitive, and feel pain, and I have heard something of the discussion of the ancients, and the first point with which they start is

this—Supposing any human being were to say: If we were to frame a proposition made up of a subject, predicate, and two intermediate terms, one negative and the other exceptional, viz. “God does nothing but good,” this proposition must be either false or true. If it be true, still we see that evil prevails, and we know that this is a mystery. Hence professedly religious persons have at all times been anxious to abstain from meat, because it cannot be obtained without causing pain to animals, which at all times shun pain. Think of the ewe, domesticated, and with young; when she has born the lamb, and it has lived a month or thereabout, they kill it and eat it, and want her milk. And the ewe spends the night bleating, and would run in quest of it if she could. A commonplace among the Arabs is the suffering of the wild beasts, and the pining of the wild cow for her calf. One of them says—

“Ne'er was sorrow like mine felt by a camel-calf's mother, though when she loses him she whines oft and oft.”

Now an opponent may urge: If God wills nothing but good, then of evil one of two things must be true. Either God must know of it or not. If He knows of it, then one of two things must be true. Either He wills it or not. If He wills it then He is practically the doer of it, just as one might say, “The governor cut off the robber's hand,” even though he did not do it with his own hands. But if God did not will it, then He has suffered what such a Governor should not suffer upon earth. If there be done in his province what he dislikes, he reproveth the doer and commands that the practice stop. This is a knot which the metaphysicians have tried hard to solve, and found insoluble. Then the Prophets tell us that Almighty God is merciful and loving. If, then, He be loving towards mankind, assuredly He will be tender to other classes of living beings which are sensitive to the least pain. And He must know that the animals as they pasture are oftentimes attacked by the horseman, who transfixes the male ass or

the female How, then, can one who treats them thus deserve compassion, they who drink not out of buckets nor transgress any written code? Ofttimes, too, have I seen a couple of armies, each of them professing a distinct cult, meeting in battle, and thousands falling on each side. For which theory does this make? Even study does not make it clear.

I therefore, having heard of these different opinions, and having reached my 30th year, begged God of His mercy to grant me a perpetual fast, which I never break¹ during month or year save at the two Feasts; for the rest I let the days and nights roll by and break it not. I believed, too, that restricting myself to a vegetable diet would secure my health; and doubtless you have looked into the ancient works and the sayings ascribed to Galen and others, which show that the authors believed in the soundness of this régime. And if it be said that the Creator is loving and merciful, then why does He suffer the lion to despatch a human being who is neither mischievous nor cruel? How many multitudes have perished of serpents' bites! Why has He given the hawk and the falcon control over birds that are satisfied with pecking grain? Often does the sand-grouse start off of a morning, leaving its chicks athirst, to find water to bring them in its crop; when ere she can reach them she meets with a kite, that devours her, so that the chicks perish of thirst. (He goes on in this style for some time, and then says) I pray God I may be saved from the utterance of the unbeliever—²

“Umm Bakr has come greeting, and bid her welcome.
 And how many a noble pedigree and generous
 frame lies in the Well, the Well of Badr! How
 many a bowl once crowned with camel's hump

¹ This is surely not to be taken literally. The phrase 'a perpetual fast' used by Ibn al-Athir in the story of Ḥallāj (viii, 92) would seem, however, to have some technical sense.

² These verses are given by Ibn Hishām (ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 530) as said by Shaddād Ibn al-Aswad after Badr. The texts are very different. See also Mr. Nicholson's note, p. 93 *supra*.

lies in the Well, the Well of Badr! Mother of Bakr, bring me no more cups since Hishām's brother is dead! No more since his father's brother, who was a hero of heroes, a drinker of wine. Tell God Almighty from me, please, that I give up the fasting month. What, when the head has parted from its shoulders, and the companion has had his fill of food, does Ibn Kabshah¹ promise that he shall live? And how is he going to give life to ghosts and spectres? Is there truly a revelation to the effect that death will give back my frame, and restore me after my bones are dust?"

God's curse, too, be on him who says (said to be Al-Walid Ibn Yazid Ibn Abd al-Malik)—

"Bring it² near me, my friend."

"I am quite sure that I shall not be raised up for Hell. I shall teach my people till they embrace the religion of the Ass.³ For I find that he who seeks Paradise is playing a losing game."

A plague, too, on Ibn Ru'yan, if it be he who said—

"'Tis the first; they do indeed promise a second, but deferred hope makes the heart sick. And if part of what they say be true, then He who afflicts us also makes us well."

Another ground that induced me to abstain from animal food is the fact that my income is a little over twenty dinars a year, and when my servant takes out of that as much as he wants, no magnificent sum is left. So I restrict myself to beans and lentils, and such food as I would rather not mention. So now, if my attendant gets what I think

¹ A name given by the Pagans of Mecca to the Prophet.

² Probably the wine. The verses are also given in Aghani, vi, 123, with many differences.

³ The text of the Aghani, which is obscene, may have been altered intentionally.

much and he thinks little, my portion is a small fixed charge. And I have no intention of increasing my rations, or getting fresh visits from ailments. Farewell.

III. *Answer from Ibn Abi 'Imrān.*

God preserve you from being of the number of those whose religious and intellectual honour is stained by illness, and from having answered one who appealed to you, in virtue of your verse, in order to obtain relief from sickness, with an answer that only makes his thirst worse! Truly you would in that case be an illustration of Mutanabbi's line—

“The world stirred my thirst, but when I came to her to slake it, she rained troubles on me.”

I asked you a personal question about your reason for abstaining from the meat which strengthens the body and produces flesh; and you give me an answer of which I can only say, “Are these the utterances of sound wits?” This medicine of yours only makes the sick man yet worse, and your words only increase the blindness and deafness of him who is religiously and intellectually suffering from those ailments. Moreover, all you say is off the point of my first question, and has nothing to do with it. With regard to your assertion that meat cannot be procured without infliction of pain on animals, that has already been answered. You need not be kinder to them than their Creator. Either He is just or unjust: if He is just, then He takes the lives of eater and eaten alike, and His right is unquestioned therein; if He be unjust, then we need not outdo our Creator and be just where He is unjust. When you say “Now an opponent may urge, etc.,” this reminds me of a story how a man lost his Koran, and some told him to read “By the sun and its noon,” since that would enable him to find it; but the man observed that this Sura was in his lost Koran too. Similarly I may say that

this difficulty of yours is one of the whole number, all is dark, and where is the light? My purpose was to learn "the utterances of sound wits," as you express it. When you observe, "Seeing the diversity of opinions, and conscious of decline, I besought God to grant me a perpetual fast, and that I might be satisfied with vegetables," I am not clear whether the God of whom you besought this is the one who wishes good only, or the one who wishes evil only, or the one who wishes both together. And Fasting is an ordinance based on a code brought by an Apostle, and an Apostle is connected with a Sender. And about this Sender we are in doubt. Does He send His Apostle meaning him to be obeyed or not to be obeyed? If He wills the former, then His will is overruled; for more disobey than obey. If He means him to be disobeyed, then His sending the Apostle is an absurdity, a mere search after an excuse for torturing poor men. If, therefore, your fasting be based on this, it is useless; but if it have some more valid and clearer ground, I should like to know it. When you repeat the words of certain heretics, and ask God to protect you from finding fault with His word, "Now He destroyed the old Ad and Thamud, and spared not," etc., if God created them knowing that they would sin, without hope of repentance, surely the "Merciful and Loving" had better not have created them to torture them; but if He does not know, nor can tell what a man will do, then He is like ourselves. When you go on to say, "God forbid that we should say this, rather let us assent and repeat the text, 'Whom God guides, he is in the right way; whom He misleads, for him thou shalt find no guiding friend,'" well, if a heretic observes that sugar is sweet he is not to be disbelieved because he is a heretic, and the argument of our heretic requires an answer. If you have an answer, that is what we request; if not, your assent in such a case is assent to the heretic, nothing else. When you repeat the verses, "Umm 'Amr has come greeting," etc., and rebuke and curse their author, who ever suspected you of holding these sentiments? God

forbid! And why need you reproduce such blasphemous verses?

As for your last remark, that all you have in the year is twenty dinars and odd, of which the larger half goes to your servant and the smaller remains to you, and that you must put up with the provision of the fortune that feeds you, which it would be necessary to bear if it were heavy, and still more when it is light, I have written to my lord Taj al-Umara, requesting him to offer to remove this cause by presenting you with what to him is a trifling amount of the richest food, and to see that this is regularly given you, that the veil of this necessity may be removed, and that your mode of living may be thoroughly comfortable. If you are energetic enough to reply, I beg that you will excuse me from *recherché* rhymes and forced figures, as what I want is not sound but sense.

IV. *Abu'l-'Alā's Answer.*

(After compliments) I, who confess my ignorance and acknowledge my bewilderment, and pray God that He may grant me a little of His mercy. [I can only say] what I said when I first addressed you, when I mentioned my confidence in your ability and my own feebleness and wretchedness compared therewith, and how I reckon myself a dumb brute and wonder that one like you should seek guidance from who has it not—it is as though the moon that travails night and day in the service of its Lord should seek guidance from a horned beast in a desert, that goes down to the water to meet the huntsman who sends an arrow into its heart.

You quote one of my verses in Ḥ—a verse written to tell others how keenly I strive to be religious, and what is my expedient with regard to the text “whom God guides he is in the right way.” The first of them runs—

“Are thy understanding and thy faith ailing? Come then to me that thou mayest learn the true account of the matter.

Eat not wrongfully what the water produces, nor eat the meat of beasts newly slain.”

Now no one can deny that the creatures that live in the sea come out of the water against their will. And if the reason be consulted about it, it will find no fault with the refusal to eat fish; for religious men have at all times abstained from things which in themselves are lawful for them.

“Nor the white of mothers who meant the cream thereof for their babes and not for proud high-born maids.”

The ‘white’ means the milk. Now it is well known that when the calf is killed the cow pines for it, and keeps awake whole nights on its account. Its flesh is eaten, and the milk that it should have sucked is lavished on its mother’s owners. What harm, then, can there be in abstaining from killing the calf, and declining to use the milk? Such a man need not suppose it to be unlawful; he only abstains out of religious fervour and mercy towards the victim, and in the hope that he may be compensated for his abstinence by the Creator’s forgiveness. And if it be said that the Almighty distributes His gifts equally between His servants, then what sins have the victims committed that they should be excluded from His mercy?

“Neither fall upon the birds when they are busy with their eggs, for robbery is the worst of crimes.”

The Prophet forbade hunting at night. And this is one of two interpretations of his dictum “leave the birds in their nests.” In the Koran, too, is the text “O ye that believe, slay not the quarry while ye are on pilgrimage; and if any of you kill any on purpose, then he is to pay in cattle the value of what he killed,” etc. Anyone with the

smallest amount of sense who hears this tradition cannot be blamed if he tries to win the favour of the Lord of heaven and earth by treating lawful quarry like unlawful quarry, though the former be not forbidden.

“And leave alone the honey for which the busy bees went out so early to gather it from the fragrant flowers.”

Since the bees fight their hardest to keep the gatherer off their honey, there is no harm in a man abstaining from it, and desiring to place the bee in the same category as other creatures that dislike being killed to be eaten and having their means of living taken to feed and fatten women and other human beings. The poets have described that to which I refer; Abu Dhi'b thus speaks of the honey-gatherer—

“When the bees sting him little recks he of their sting,
but fights on for the house of the honey-bees.”

A story to the following effect is told of 'Ali. He had a sack of barley-flour, ordinarily sealed up; only when he fasted he would have none of it sealed. And although he had great quantities of corn, he used to give the whole of it away in alms, and content himself with a minimum. A certain ascetic also said in a sermon that he gathered in 50,000 dinars' worth of corn in the year (but gave it all away). Hence we learn that the Prophets and the original authorities stint themselves, in order to bestow of their superfluity on the needy.

You have even suggested that a vegetarian is to be blamed. If this principle were to be applied, a man ought not to pray except the appointed prayers, for any additional prayers lead to unnecessary trouble, which God (forsooth) does not approve. Also when a wealthy man has set apart the fortieth of his gold for alms, he ought not to give any more; whereas there are many places in the Koran in which expenditure is commended.

This is a sufficient answer for your feeble, humble servant.

Were I to appear before your exalted presence, you would know that there is nothing left of me to ask or answer. For my limbs refuse to act in concert; I cannot stand up to pray, but have to pray sitting, God help me. Gladly would I reach the stage of being able to crawl about with a staff. (Some verses are here quoted in illustration of his feebleness.) When I lie down I cannot sit up, and have to get assistance. When my helper stretches out his hand to raise me, my bones, which are bare of flesh, rattle.

As for the verse of Mutanabbi which you quote, one who seeks guidance from so feeble a creature as I am can only be compared to one who seeks dates from thistles. You can only have been brought to do it by that confidence which is the mark of a noble nature, of a lofty soul, of high breeding, and of a stainless character.

Your suggestion, too, that you would write to get my salary increased also is proof of generosity inherited from countless ancestors, beginning with the Earth. I have no desire for any increase; no desire to return to delicacies, abstinence from which has become a second nature to me. For forty-five years I have tasted no meat, and an old man does not quit his habits till he is covered by the grave-dust. The most excellent "Crown of Princes, Pride of the Kingdom, Mainstay of the sovereignty, Arms and Glory of the dynasty, doubly glorious," is, as I know, the equal of all the children of Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and gladly would I see the castle of Ḥaleb and all the mountains of Syria turned into gold, that they might be bestowed in charity by the Crown of Princes and Mainstay of the Prophetic dynasty, on whose head be peace, as also on his righteous ancestors, without a penny thereof coming to me. And, indeed, I should be ashamed if the Crown of Princes were to regard me as one who is hankering after this world, after what has passed. And I shall be glad if when I appear before God Almighty I am charged with nothing more than abstinence from meat. If I reach this condition I shall be right blest. (He then excuses himself for rhyming with the aid of various anecdotes and arguments.) And may your

cause always be the winning one, and your power be ever in the ascendant. Even as Tha'labah, son of Šu'air, says—

“Many an evildoer and a man of mischief, whose breasts boiled with fallacious fictions, did I to their vexation, and silence their error with victorious truth.”

And were you to argue with Aristotle, you would nonplus him, or with Plato, he would throw his arguments away. God glorify His Code by your life, and help His religion by your evidences. God is sufficient, etc.

V. *Answer from Ibn Abi 'Imrān.*

In addressing you at the first I endeavoured to conceal my personality, preferring that the source of the question should not be known, so that your answer might be one of argument, without respect of persons, and without the awkwardness of having to introduce the “my lord” and “your excellency,” etc., since the matter on which we are engaged required that the vanities of this world should not be mixed therewith, and because I truly believed you to be one who, owing to your contempt of the world, had a reach so much wider than mine that I could not hope to *buy* any piece of religious knowledge from you; and I know not how the fact was divulged, so that you should address me as “lord” and “excellency.” I am your superior neither materially nor morally; I merely direct my steed towards you to gain something. If I find a well of water, or come to a river or the sign thereof, I shall meet it with gratitude for your kindness, and do not pretend to dispute your claim to teach.

I would have you know that I traversed the earth from the furthest part of my country to Egypt, and everywhere found people divided into two classes. There are the fanatical believers who are so enchanted with their religion, that if their religious records contained the statement that an

elephant flew or a camel laid an egg they would believe it implicitly. They would regard one who thought otherwise as a heretic and a fool, who might be neglected. With such persons as these the reason is at a discount. It is difficult to awake such a man to the fact that the light of reason must have sparkled from the religion which he professes ere its collar could have been placed on the neck or its bracelet on the wrist. How, then, can it be right to give the reason control at the first and to proceed to dethrone it?

When my fortune brought me to Syria, and I heard of your eminence as a scholar and savant, I found that on that matter opinions were agreed and the evidence established irrefragably. But I found that men were divided about your religious position, and distraught about it, each speaker taking a view of his own. I attended a seance at which the subject was discussed, and all sorts of things were said about you. I defended you in your absence, saying that your well-known and confirmed asceticism cleared you of all suspicion. I was convinced that you must have some esoteric religious knowledge, which you kept concealed from the rest of mankind. There must be something which distinguishes you from people who charge each other with heresy. And so when I heard the verse "Are thy understanding and thy counsel ailing," etc., my conviction was so much the more strengthened. I thought that a tongue that could utter such a claim and give vent to such a boast must be a tongue meet to silence every speaker, though he were to stand on the highest pinnacle of the mount of knowledge. So I approached you as Moses approached the mountain, hoping to get a light, and endeavouring to raise a lighthouse of glory; to learn what others were too backward to know, or about which men differed. So I dropped in my bucket in the form of my question about a trifle, thus ascending from my own low level to one higher, and rising from my own littleness to one who was great. You answered that you were too humble a person to serve as a source of direction. This,

I thought, was an extra virtue on your part, and what might be expected of such a man. Finally, your answer resolved itself into the assertion that mankind were all at some stage or other of a wandering in the valley of bewilderment, stumbling over its edges. One says that good and evil are from God, and he is answered with the question whether the dangers of travel from which the Prophet used to ask deliverance, and all similar things from which deliverance is sought, are good or evil. If they are good, why should they be prayed against? If evil, but intended by God, then the prayer is as useless as before—nay, more so. And the similar question whether the poisoning of Hasan and the murder of Husain were good or bad; if they were good, then why should their author be cursed? If they were bad, but intended by God, then the slayer is not to blame. Another says that good is of God, and evil of another, and is answered in a manner that silences him. With this answer you combined other matter, including some blasphemous verses. My answer was that I disclaimed all connection with those whom you mentioned, and threw myself on you, that the discussions of these people had never slaked the thirst, and that in my ears they found no assent. I asked you, therefore, to open the gate for me to your own opinions, and to give me access to your private thoughts. This you did not do. Then I asked you why you abstain from meat, and you replied that you dislike hurting animals and causing them pain. I rebutted your plea, after you had dilated on it, by observing that if God empowers one animal to eat another, though He knows best what is wise and is most merciful to His creatures, you need not be more just and merciful to them than their Lord and Creator. You then changed your ground, and alleged your inability to procure animal food, because of the whole sum which came to you in the year the greater part went to your attendant, and only a little remained for yourself. This, too, I rebutted by pointing to a liberal source, one of those who never taunt those whom they benefit with their favours or insult them,

who would provide you with an ample supply of the daintiest food and the most luxurious stores. This, too, you declined, declaring in your second letter that you disliked it, and would not have it, and could not abandon the vegetarianism which you had so long maintained. You went on to say that I had been seeking counsel from one who had none to give, and that the verse of which I had taken hold and alleged as my ground for enquiring into your practice and principles, was only intended to exhibit your religious zeal and your expedient for dealing with the text "He whom God guides finds His way ; He whom God misleads thou shalt not find for him a guiding friend." Therein you combined two contradictory statements in one proposition. If the verse is true, then study is useless.

Next you say that God has secrets that only the saints understand. It is just that secret about which we are hovering, and round the door of him who knows it that we are making circuit. And when we, arguing from your verse, suppose that you do possess it, seeing that you profess that your own religion and intellect are sound, whereas those of other men are ailing, you declare that you have no counsel to give! Assuredly in this matter your prose contradicts your verse and your verse your prose. So what is to be done?

Then you say that the sense of the verse "Are thy understanding and thy faith," etc., is given by the following line, "Then eat not," etc. Clearly, then, the sickness of faith and understanding must be due to eating meat and drinking milk and consuming honey, so that soundness of both is to be acquired by abandoning these practices. You must know that soundness of faith and understanding is not produced thereby. Hence the second verse cannot annul the first, so as to make the substance of your assertion that men require to be rendered sound in understanding and faith an exhortation to them not to eat meat or drink milk!

Next you observe that the creatures of the sea dislike being brought on dry land, and that the reason cannot find fault with abstention from their flesh, though it be lawful

for food, for religious men at all times abandon the use of certain things that are lawful for them. Now there is no animal on sea or land that is more honourable than man, the living, the intelligent. He dislikes death, yet he dies. He dislikes being eaten, yet the worms eat him in his grave. If this proceed from some wise principle, then what you say about the sea-animals and the land-animals belongs to precisely the same field; but if it be a case of deflexion from wisdom, it is absurd that my Maker should be a fool and I, His creature, be wise. When you quote the tradition that the Prophet prayed till his feet blistered, and being asked about it said "Ought I not to be a grateful servant?" this has nothing to do with the present issue. A man may say as many prayers as he likes in the times at which prayer is lawful, only to the appointed prayers he must not add nor may he diminish them. Now this matter belongs to the Code, whereas our theme was discussion of matters connected with the reason. When you say that the Prophet regarded game within the sacred territory as unlawful, so that others may treat lawful game as unlawful, in order to win God's favour thereby, I reply that God only may make things lawful or unlawful.

When you say that 'Ali, when the pressed dates were brought, asked whether the Prophet had eaten thereof, and being told that he had not, refused to eat, this is an argument against you, not for you. For it is agreed that the Prophet never became a vegetarian, whereas you are one all your life. This, therefore, is a plain contrast to the Prophet's practice. And had you not quoted the Law against me, and not exceeded the scope of the reason, I should have spared you this rejoinder, which may trouble your mind, for which I should be sorry.

When you complain of your weakness and difficulty of moving, and say you have no strength left to ask or answer questions, whether weak or strong you are still one of the glories of the age, and one whose praises travellers carry with them everywhere. However much fate may have wronged you, you have wronged yourself by depriving

yourself of the pleasures of the world. And if you hope for pleasures which will compensate for them, pleasures of a better and more lasting sort, then you will have made no bad bargain, and the verse of yours which has been discussed will have been justified, though you may incur the reproach of stinginess in rejecting requests for aid and refusing those who ask you. If, on the other hand, you are torturing yourself without any clear reason, as you now assert, being one of the many who "idly dispute" and founder in bewilderment, then you have wasted your life and wronged yourself. You will also in the verse that has been quoted have made an assertion which you cannot verify.

The purpose of my questions and answers was my own benefit. Since that is not to be had, God has relieved you of the trouble of answering me. As for the rhymes and my request that we might be relieved of them, it is because rhymes are not ideas worth going out of our way to follow, and because were I to study the excellence of your works in *belles lettres* and poetry I should find therein an ample field. Would that I could get at the hidden treasures of your religious lore as I can at your compositions in prose and verse! But before and after I ask pardon for troubling your mind, and wasting your time in reading my letters and answering them. For inasmuch as I have done you no good I have done you harm. God knows that I had no intention save to benefit by your wisdom and fill my bucket from your sea.