Friday Veneration among Syriac Christians: The Witness of the *Story of the Holy Friday*[*]

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Abstract

This article contains the original unpublished Syriac text of the Story of the Holy Friday*, an anonymous hagiographic composition that promotes an idiosyncratic form of Friday veneration, which demands that Christians refrain from work on that day completely. The text of the* Story*, published on the basis of manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, syr. 234, is accompanied with an English translation and discussion of its unusual message, possibly related to the early period of Muslim-Christian relations in the Near East.*

The weekly veneration of Friday, alongside that of Wednesday, is a well-established Christian practice that goes back to the earliest centuries of Church history.[1] The most conspicuous aspect of this veneration was the custom of fasting on these days.[2] Although absent from the canonical body of the New Testament writings, references to these fasts appear already in the second century. One of the earliest Christian sources that mentions this practice is the *Didache*, where the twelve apostles admonish their followers, among other things, not to fast on Monday and Thursday together with the Jewish "hypocrites", but to do it "on Wednesday and Friday" (τετράδα καὶ παρασκευήν).[3] Later on, one finds the same days mentioned as time of fasting by Tertullian (*De ieiun*. 2) and Clement of Alexandria (*Strom*. 7.12.75.2).

It was, perhaps, due to the influence of the *Didache* that the stationary fast on Friday and Wednesday received the approval of apostolic authority. This authority was acknowledged and reaffirmed during the third and fourth centuries when this regulation was included and further elaborated in such canonical collections associated with apostles as the *Apostolic Canons* and *Apostolic Constitutions*. Canon 69 of the former collection prescribes for Christians, who fail to observe these fasts without a sufficient reason, such serious punishment as deposition for members of the clergy and excommunication for the laity.[4]

In what concerns the theological rationale behind this practice, the primary purpose of these fasts was to commemorate the betrayal of Jesus by Judas on Wednesday and his

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[1] See G. Schreiber, *Die Wochentage im Erlebnis der Ostkirche und des christlichen Abendlandes*. Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 11 (Köln, 1959), pp. 168-206.

[2] In addition to Schreiber's monograph, see R. Arbesmann, "Fasttage", in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. T. Klauser (Stuttgart, 1969), Vol. 7, pp. 500-524; T. Michels, "Montag, Mittwoch und Freitag als Fasttagesystem in kirchlicher und monastischer Überlieferung", *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 3 (1923), pp. 102-108.

[3] *Didache* 8.1; edited by B.D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*. Loeb Classical Library 25. 2 vols. (London, 2003), Vol. 1, pp. 428-429.

[4] Included into the *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.47; edited by M. Metzger, *Les Constitutions apostoliques*. Sources Chrétiennes 320, 329, 336. 3 vols. (Paris, 1985-1987), Vol. 3, p. 300.

Passion on Friday. Thus, according to the *Apostolic Constitutions* (5.14.20), Jesus himself instructed his followers to fast on the fourth and sixth days of the week, the former – "on account of the betrayal" and the latter – "on account of the passion" (διὰ τὸ πάθος).[5] This brief statement is elaborated further in 7.23.2, where the reason given for fasting on Friday is that "on this day the Lord endured the suffering on the cross, under Pontius Pilate".[6]

There is however, very little information on how exactly the fasting on Friday and Wednesday was carried out during Late Antiquity. The fifth-century historian Philostorgius relates, for example, that it "is not limited just to abstinence from meat, but that the canons prescribe that no food is to be touched until evening".[7] It is also difficult to ascertain how widespread this practice was through the different social strata of Christian society. Clergy, responsible for compiling the canonical collections referred to above would be an obvious group to endorse and promulgate it. Naturally, monks with their enthusiasm for asceticism would also champion it, as one can judge from references to these fasts in works like the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.[8] As for other groups of Christians, it is only on rare occasions that we get information about their attitudes toward these fasts, as in the case of the historian Socrates praising the emperor Theodosius II (r. 408-450) for fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, apparently in imitation of the monastic habit.[9]

Historically dependent on the ecclesiastical tradition of the See of Antioch, Syriac-speaking Christians adopted this basic form of Friday veneration at a relatively early stage. Prayer and fasting on Friday are prescribed in several canonical writings that were translated into Syriac from Greek. As for the former, one of the canons ascribed to the apostle Addai, included into the third chapter of the Syriac *Didascalia* (ca 4th c.), instructs that at the ninth hour of Friday there should be held a "service" commemorating "the suffering of our Saviour".[10]

Fasting on Friday is prescribed by the rules included in the *Didascalia* (Ch. 21),[11] and in the *Canons of the Apostles* (§28).[12] One comes across the instruction to fast "from food and as well as from wine" on Wednesday and Friday in a West Syriac collection of monastic rules.[13] As in the Greek sources, Syriac canonical collections include penalties for those who fail to observe this custom. Thus, Canon 65 of another Syriac canonical collection attributed to the apostles threatens members of the clergy with deposition and lay persons with

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[5] Metzger, *Les Constitutions apostoliques*, Vol. 2, p. 258.

[6] Metzger, *Les Constitutions apostoliques*, Vol. 3, p. 50.

[7] *Hist. eccl*. 10.12; edited by J. Bidez and F. Winkelmann, *Philostorgius. Kirchengeschichte, mit dem Leben des Lucian von Antiochien und den Fragmenten eines arianischen Historiographen*. Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 21. 3rd rev. ed. (Berlin, 1981), p. 131; translated by P. R. Amidon, *Philostorgius. Church History*. SBL Writings from the Greco-Roman World 23 (Leiden, 2007), p. 140.

[8] Anonymous Collection, # 255; edited and translated by J. Wortley, *The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers: A Select Edition and Complete English Translation* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 174-175. Cf. also the story #5 of Joseph of Panephysis in the Alphabetic Collection; PG 65, col. 229.

[9] *Hist*. 7.22.3; edited by G. C. Hansen, *Sokrates. Kirchengeschichte*. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte NF 1 (Berlin, 1995), p. 368.

[10] Edited and translated by A. Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*. CSCO 401-402, 407-408, Syr. 175-176, 179-180. 4 vols. (Louvain, 1979), Vol. 1, p. 42 [Syr.], Vol. 3, p. 37 [trans.]. This practice is mentioned also in the letter to Catholicos Mar Isḥaq by Marutha of Maipherqat (5th c.); edited and translated by A. Vööbus, *The Canons Ascribed to Mārūtā of Maipherqaṭ and Related Sources*. CSCO 439-440, Syr. 191-192. 2 vols. (Louvain, 1982), Vol. 1, p. 38 [Syr.], Vol. 2, p. 34 [trans.].

[11] Vööbus, *Didascalia*, Vol. 2, pp. 207-208 [Syr.], Vol. 4, pp. 191-192 [trans.].

[12] Edited and translated by A. Vööbus, *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*. CSCO 367-368, 375-376, Syr. 161-164. 4 vols. (Louvain, 1975-1976), Vol. 1, p. 54 [Syr.], Vol. 3, p. 69 [trans.].

[13] Edited and translated by A. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents Regarding Legislation Relative to Syrian Asceticism*. Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile 11 (Stockholm, 1960), p. 73.

suspension for breaking this rule.[14] The twenty-fifth canon of the synod of Dionysios, the West Syrian patriarch of Antioch (13th c.), likewise prescribes suspension for those who would eat on Friday.[15]

Unfortunately, our evidence for the extent to which these prescriptive texts succeeded in inculcating the importance of Friday veneration among different groups of Syriac-speaking Christians is extremely scarce. The onomastic habits of the Christians of Northern Mesopotamia during the sixth century provide a rare glimpse into the prestige of this day, as testifies the personal name *Bar'eruḇaṯ*, i.e. "Son of Friday," found in the Syriac *Life of Mār Awgen*.[16] This form is modelled, most likely, after the pattern of more popular personal names, such as *Barḥadbešabbā*, i.e. "Son of Sunday," and might be given to a person who was born on Friday.

From a somewhat later period, we have a testimony to what appears to be a popular development of Friday veneration that ascribed a universal significance to fasting on this day. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, the East Syrian exegete Īšō'dād of Merv (9th c.) transmits an opinion of some unidentified "divinely inspired teachers" that even carnivorous beasts and birds of prey abstain from food on Friday, out of respect for Jesus's Passion.[17]

Whereas prayer and fasting were the most common and wide-spread customs related to the veneration of Friday among Syriac-speaking Christians during Late Antiquity and later, at a certain point a further development took place, which required from the believers also to cease from work on this day. In what follows, I am going to present and discuss the *Story of the Holy Friday*, an unpublished and unstudied composition, attested so far only in Syriac, that contains a highly developed argument in favour of this unusual practice.[18]

1. *Text and Translation*

The Syriac text of the *Story* is preserved in a single manuscript witness,[19] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, syr. 234.[20] Comprising 463 folios, it is a large-scale anthology of

[14] Vööbus, *Synodicon*, Vol. 1, pp. 68-69 [Syr.], Vol. 3, p. 81 [trans.].

[15] Vööbus, *Synodicon*, Vol. 2, p. 64 [Syr.], Vol. 4, p. 68 [trans.]. Cf. also Canon 18 of the synod of John of Marde (12th c.); Vööbus, *Synodicon*, Vol. 2, p. 242 [Syr.], Vol. 4, p. 256 [trans.]. Several of these canons are quoted in the *Ethicon* of Barhebraeus (13th c.); edited and translated by H .G. B. Teule, *Gregory Barhebraeus. Ethicon (Mēmrā I)*. CSCO 534-535, Syr. 218-219. 2 vols. (Leuven, 1993), Vol. 1, pp. 94-96 [Syr.], Vol. 2, pp. 81-83 [trans.].

[16] Edited by P. Bedjan, *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*. 7 vols. (Paris and Leipzig, 1890-1897), Vol. 3, p. 426, n. 6.

[17] Edited and translated by M. D. Gibson, *The Commentaries of Isho'dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c. 850 A.D.), in Syriac and English*. Horae Semiticae 5-7. 5 vols. (Cambridge, 1911, 1916), Vol. 1, p. 101 [trans.], Vol. 2, pp. 169-170 [Syr.].

[18] The only modern scholar who has paid attention to the *Story* was François Nau, who provided its summary in F. Nau, "Hagiographie syriaque. Saint Alexis. – Jean et Paul. – Danel de Galaš. – Hannina. – Euphémie. – Sahda (1). – Récits de Mélèce sur le vendredi, sur Marc et Gaspar, et sur un homme riche qui perdit tous ses enfants. – Légendes de Pierre le publicain, d'une veuve et d'une vierge de Jérusalem, de Jean, moine d'Antioche", *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 5 [15] (1910), pp. 53-72, 173-197, at pp. 192-194.

[19] In his *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Robert Payne Smith quotes the phrase ܒܫ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܥܡ ܟܢܫܬܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ, practically identical with ܒܫ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܥܡ ܟܢܫܬܐ ܟܠܗܝܬܐ ܟܬܒ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ in our text (§9), while referring to "Pat. Vit. 224v" as his source; R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*. 2 vols. (Oxford, 1879-1901), Vol. 1, col. 1223, entry ܥܡ. Apparently, this source, described by Payne Smith as "Patrum Vitae e cod. MS. Quatr." (Ibid., p. v), should be identified as ms. Paris, BnF syr. 234. It seems that this reference belonged originally to the French Orientalist Étienne Marc Quatremère (1782-1857), whose lexicographical notes were incorporated into Payne Smith's dictionary. In favour of such identification speaks the fact that the location of the phrase in the quoted manuscript, i.e. f. 224v, is identical with that of BnF syr. 234. I thank David Taylor for his help with solving this puzzle.

hagiographical works, written in a non-vocalised Serto script. According to information provided by a colophon on f. 344v, the manuscript was completed on September 5th of the year 1192 "in the apostolic see of Antioch in Syria", by Constantine, son of Jacob, the priest "in the church of the glorious martyr St George".

The Crusader principality of Antioch, where the manuscript was produced, was a home to the two major groups of Syriac-speaking Christians, Melkites and West Syrians, and was an important centre of Syriac manuscript production during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[21] Although the colophon does not contain explicit references to the confessional affiliation of its scribe, it does provide information that allows us to identify him with certainty as a member of the West Syrian community, since it connects him to the church of St George, where Constantine served as a priest. This church is mentioned by Michael the Syrian as one of the three West Syrian cultic buildings in Antioch that survived the large earthquake of 1170.[22] In support of the West Syrian origins of BnF syr. 234 is also the fact that it includes works produced by West Syrian authors, such as Simeon of Beth Arsham and John of Ephesus, as well as the *Life* of Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria, a staunch supporter of the Miaphysite Christology.

The hagiographic collection of BnF syr. 234 is comprised of a diverse assortment of works, some of which were written originally in Syriac, while others were translated from Greek. Our composition appears on ff. 221v-229r, preceded by the *Story of Euphrosyne of Alexandria* (ff. 213v-221v), and followed by the *Story of a bishop who denied Christ* (ff. 229r-230v).

In what concerns scribal conventions, as observed in the text of the *Story*, one can single out the following peculiarities:

(a) Abbreviations are used occasionally for such words as [ܐܡ]ܗܠܟ (§2), [ܐܡ]ܐܒܐ (§§5,7,10,15), [ܟ]ܢܝܠܟ (§17), [ܟ]ܐ (§§17,20), [ܟ]ܐܦܣܩ (§18);

(b) There are several cases when enclitic forms of personal pronouns are merged with participles, as in ܚܢܢ (§12); ܐܡܢ (§14); ܟܠܝ (§14);

(c) While the scribe does not provide vocalisation for the text, he makes heavy use of diacritical signs, mostly single and double dots, to mark different forms. In addition to the standard double dot sign *seyame* for marking plural nouns and feminine forms of perfective verbs, an upper dot is used to mark active participles, as in ܐܡܪ (§2); imperfect of Aphel, as in ܢܥܒ (§7), ܢܐܡܪ (§7); Pa'el stem in perfect, as in ܦܓܠܗ (§2); female ending of the verbal

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[20] See H. Zotenberg, *Manuscrits orientaux. Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques et sabéens (mandaïtes) de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris, 1874), pp. 182-185. For an updated and more detailed description, see http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc1025670 (last accessed 30 June 2018). An excellent digital reproduction of the manuscript is freely available at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10537152q (last accessed 30 June 2018)

[21] On these two communities in Crusader Antioch, see C. Cahen, *La Syrie du Nord à l'époque des croisades et la principauté franque d'Antioche*. Institut français de Damas, Bibliothèque orientale 1 (Paris, 1940); D. Weltecke, "The Syriac Orthodox in the Principality of Antioch during the Crusader Period", in *East and West in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean I: Antioch from the Byzantine Reconquest until the End of the Crusader Principality*. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 147, edited by K. Ciggaar and D. M. Metcalf (Leuven, 2006), pp. 95-124. On their manuscript production, see F. Briquel-Chatonnet, "Les manuscrits syriaques d'Antioche", in *Antioche de Syrie: histoire, images et traces de la ville antique*. Topoi, Supplément 5, edited by. B. Cabouret, P.-L. Gatier and C. Saliou (Lyon, 2004), pp. 543-553; S. P. Brock, "Syriac Manuscripts Copied on the Black Mountain, near Antioch", in *Lingua restituta orientalis. Festgabe für Julius Assfalg*. Ägypten und Altes Testament 20, edited by R. Schulz and M. Görg (Wiesbaden, 1990), pp. 59-67.

[22] *Chron*. 19.6; edited and translated by J. B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)*. 4 vols. (Paris, 1899-1910), Vol. 3, p. 339 [trans.], Vol. 4, p. 696 [Syr.].

perfective singular forms, as in ܐܝܬܝ (§1). The lower dot is used to mark perfective verbal forms, as in ܐܬܐ (§1).[23]

It should be pointed out that the scribe of BnF syr. 234 was not particularly skilled or careful, at least as far as the text of the *Story* allows us to judge. The most common manifestation of his inexperience or carelessness is that he would very often start writing the last word in a line without estimating correctly the space required for it, so that he would have to leave it unfinished. There is also a considerable number of straightforward scribal errors.[24] Sometimes the scribe himself notices his mistakes and marks them accordingly. There are, however, enough occasions when he fails to do so.

There are several cases of hypercorrection in feminine forms of perfect verbs, when the scribe adds an unnecessary *yud*, apparently, by analogy with 2nd fem. sg. and 3rd fem. pl. forms, as in ܐܬܝܬ for ܐܬܬ (§12) or ܫܡܝܢ for ܫܡܢ (§12). He is also not always consistent in the use of 3rd fem pl. perfect, using interchangeably forms with different endings, as in ܩܛܠ vs ܩܛܠܢ (§9).

~ *Syriac text*

ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܡܠܬܐ ܕܡܫܬܥܐ ܗܘܐ ܠܟ ܡܫܬܥܐ ܕܟܬܒ.

1 ܫܬܝܪ ܒܟ ܒܪܝܫ ܡܝܬ ܚܝܠܐ ܡܢ ܠܒ. ܡܫܬܥܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ ܠܡܐ ܡܝܬ ܕܐܦܝ ܠ ܐܢ ܚܕ ܚܫܒ ܚܝ ܡ. ܗܘܐ ܕܟܝ ܡܝܬ ܐܟܐ ܡܝܬ

ܡܫܬܐ ܠܡܥܒܕ ܡܫܬܐ ,ܡܥܠܐ ܥܒܕ ܒܝܬ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ. ܡܠܟܐ ܟܬܒ ܟܬܒܐ ܡܝܪܝ ܡܫܬܐ ܒܫܒܝܠ ܟܠ ܡܫܬ
ܡܫܬܐ ܟܬܒܐ. ܠܡܥܒܕ ܡܫܬܐ. ܟܬܒ ܐܓܪ ܠܟ ܡܠܟ. ܦܩܕ ܥܒܕܐ ܠܐ ܡܠܟ ܦܩ ܠܟ ܡܠܟ 4
ܡܫܬܐ ܟ ܡܢ ܡܫܒܐ ܥܒܕ ܡܢ ܡܫܬ. ܥܒܕܐ ܡܫܠܐ ܥܒܕܐ ܡܢ ܡܢ. ܟܬܒ
ܡ. ܡܢ ܟܬܒ ܐܢ ܡܠ ܟܦ ܡܒܪ ܒܫܒܝܠ ܡܢ ܠܟܢ ܡܫܒܐ ܥܒܕ. ܡܒܪܐ ܡܢ ܟܬܒ
ܡܢ ܬܒܪ ܟܬ ܥܒܕܐ ܡܠ ܒܬ |f. 223r| ܒܪ ܦܩܕܐ ܒܢ ܡܢ ܡܠ ܒܫ ܡܢ ܐܒ ܡܢ
ܐܒܪ.
ܟܒ ܡܢ ܒܢܐ ܟܠ ܣܒܫ. ܫܡܥܢܐ ܡܫܒܐ ܡܠ ܟܬܒܐ ܡܒܠ ܠܟ ܡܢ ܫܢ 5
ܟܬܒ ܡܢ ܡܠ ܒܢ ܡܢ ܫܟܒ ܡ[26]ܫܬܐ ܫܠܚ. ܟܬܒ ܫ ܟܬ ܟ ܫܒ. ܡܫܬ
ܡܫܬܒ ܒܠܒܒܢ ܐܒ ܟ. ܟܬ ܡܠ ܠܡ ܡ. ܡ ܡܫܬܒ ܡ ܟ ܡܫ ܡܫܬ ܟ ܒ
ܡܒܢ ܒ ܡܫܒ ܡܒ ܟ ܐ ܟ ܐܒ ܦܩܕ ܠ ܒ. ܫ ܒ ܒ ܡ ܡܫܬ ܟ ܒ
ܡ[ܠ]ܒܢ ܟ ܒ ܡ ܒ ܡ ܡ ܡ

9 هوم رسعهر |f. 224v| ركحوهزا رحموح وهتحل ,ه. لحهر ردم رل هزحح حر لحوة لح ير سحح
ردم حتهطزا وهتح ,هم لحقه .وهتحل هلحه حتم هنحهه .حمهتحح هنرا ريمح حتح حل لحم رهسهه
ردم حمه .ردم هح رلحه ريمح هنل لسهه وهه .ريمحح حمشهزاه رسححم لهر رهنحهح وهحه .ردم لحر
حمحمم هنهر حمه .ردم للمر رل ردمزا رلحلهه حل حمه .حزح ردملم .وحلح لحمده سوهلهم .ولقزا حتم
حمل رهنه حر هلهمزه .لهحلح رلحا ردم لح ،حمشهزا رهنزا رلحهه .هل رلحه هنله حتم هنهه حتم لحح
وهنحل لسهه ردم حمه .حمشح هلهم رلحه لحه حر ،ح لسهه هنل لحنهه .حتم هنله هنهله حل
رهحوهزا رهنهه رلحهه رحملح ريمحه لم هنهه .ولقزا ريمحح لحهتحزا .هل لحهده رلحه هنريهزه رلححزا
رلحهر لحزا رهم رلحه لح حل وهزا حر لحم هنهه .ولقزا حتم حاهه ريمحح هنهتهم لح ,ه .حمشهر رلحا لحم
حمه ,لح رلحه ردم رلحح .لسهول هنحهده هنحه .ردنزا لحح حللحهه حر لحمله حهم لحلحهه .رلهحلح
رلححزه رلههمه وهلهه لحهلح رلحلا .ردمح لح ,ه هنم .حتم رلحلح رلحهل لححا حللحه ,هتح لهههم
ولهه .رلحل لح لحمله لححه رلحا ير رلحهه رلحنه رلهلهزا هل لهه لسهه لح ه٥ .رلهحهزا رلههر
حتم هنم ولقه لحه .حتم رلحه حمشهزاه رلحهل حلحه .رلهلالتل ريمه .ريمحح ززهه .رلحهه رلحنه
لحه وهلهح <حلقلر>[30] رلحهلح .ريمهر لح لحمحم لحل هنهه |f. 225r| رلحهحه .رلحه لح لحلزا رلحا
ريمح لح لحل ل ردمه لحزا رلححهه ير ريمحزا.[31] هل لححهر لح لحنه .رلحه لح لحل لحل ردمه لحلح
هنهه رلحلح ,ه .ردمه هنهجه ردم رلهلهرل لححمه .لهحل هنل لسهه لحزا ردحح لح رلحمه .لحه حلهحه
لح ردم .ل لحمه ,لح رلحتحه .[32]هل لحمهه لسهه لهحل هحلح .وهتح لح لهحهج ردم ردح .رلحه لح لحل ل
حاهج رلححهه لحهج لحزا .هل لحمه ير ه٥ .ل لحلحهر رلح هنه لهه رلهلهزا لححمه ,هتح لهه لح هحلح
لححمزا ولهلزا وهلهزا رلحلح .ردمح لح لحل لحل ردمه لحلح هنهه رلحلهه رلححزا رلححلح رلحلح
.رلحلهحلح

10 رلحهحه رلهلحتهه رلهتحزا .هلحح لح ردمه لحلهحزا هل هنهه رلحلا لسهه لح هلحح هنهه رلحه ير ,ه
,هنر رلحح رلهلهجه للح ردمه رلحا .هل لحمهه هلحح ردمه لحزا لحح لهزا رلححح .رلهللح هنهه
.لححح هل لحمهل لحلح هنهه لحلهه رلحه لحه .رلحلالهر لحهللح رلحه .رلحلهه رلهللح
لححهه رلهلهه لحح لحه .رلحه هر هلهه رلحه رلهلهه هنهه لحلهه رلحلح رلحلح لحلح رلححه
رلهلهه ردلهل .ردمه لحهر رلحر رلحلهلهر رل لح لحهلهر رلهلهه رلهلهه رلحلح رلحلح لحلح
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11 حاح .لححلهلر حلحه لهلا لحهه .ركحلحه ردحح رل لحهل |f. 226r| رلهلح رلحر ردم ردح رلحهرا لح ه٥
رلح لح .رلح هلحهرا لح لا لحححه .ردم رلحلرا رلححح رلر رلحلح لحرلهلر .رل لحلا رلححح لحلح هنهل
رلححح رلحل لح رلححل رلحلهه رلحلر لححه رلر لح ه٥ .رلحلحه لححح رلحر رلحه رلا رلحلحل رلح
رلحلر .ردحح ردلهل لححا لح رلحححه لحلح رلحلح لح لححه .رلحلر ردم رلحه رلحح رلححح رلححح
رلحلهلحه رلحلهل .رلحلحلحه رلحلحل لحلح لح لححلهر رلحلر لحلح رلحلح رلحلح رلحلح رلحلح
.رلحلح

[30] Marked as a mistake by the scribe.

[31] One would expect the pronominal object to be in feminine, i.e. ها.

[32] One would expect the verb to be in feminine and the pronominal object in masculine, i.e. ها هنهه.

[33] One would expect the pronominal object to be in feminine, i.e. ها.

[34] Marked as a mistake by the scribe.

12 ܘܫܡܫܘ ܬܠܡܝܕܘܗܝ ܒܗ ܒܡܘܠܟܝܢ. ܘܟܕ ܫܠܡܘ ܠܫܡܫܐ. ܐܬܥܫܝܘ ܠܣܝܩ̈ܘܪܐ ܒܗ ܒܠܠܝܐ. ܘܠܐ ܦܣܩܘ ܐܝܟ ܥܝܕܗܘܢ ܕܠܐ
ܨܠܘ. ܐܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܒܫܡܝܐ ܢܩܫ ܢܩܘܫܐ ܘܐܬܟܠܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܐܬܬܢܝܚܘܢ ܗܘܘ ܟܠܗ ܣܝܩ̈ܘܪܐ. ܘܒܬܪ ܫܘܒܐ[35] ܫܘܒܚ
ܬܢܐ ܘܐܡܪܘܗ[36] ܠܗ. ܒܗ ܐܘܟܝܬ. ܫܘܫܠ ܡܪܝ ܕܡܟܬܐ ܕܐܬܡܛܬܐ ܥܩܘܒܬܐ[37] ܫܪܬܐ. ܕܫܐܠܬ ܡܢ ܪܘܚܐ ܘܡܟܠܬ
ܦܪܡ ܣܝܩ̈ܘܪܐ ܘܐܡܪܬ ܠܗܘܢ. ܐܘ ܒܢ̈ܝܐ ܒܪܝܟܐ ܠܐܝܡܬܝ ܠܐ ܫܒܩܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܡܢ ܬܫܡܫܬܗܘܢ. ܘܠܡܘܢܐ ܕܫܥܗ
ܕܡܪܝ ܠܐ ܢܛܪܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ. ܐܠܐ ܥܡܠܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ. ܘܠܐ ܒܫܘܬܦ ܐܢܬܘܢ. ܡܛܠ ܡܚܠ[38] ܦܓܪܐ ܒܥܡܠܐ ܕܐܬܬܐ
ܠܠܒܗܘܢ ܡܢ ܡܦܠܐ ܕܒܪܐ. ܘܗܘܘ ܠܐܬܬܐ ܕܫܠܡܬܐ ܘܦܘܪܣܬܐ ܕܪܒܘܬܐ |f. 226v| ܒܟܠܗ ܟܠܢܐ.
ܕܐܬܟܬܒܘܢ ܐܝܟ ܠܐ ܢܒܛܠ ܠܡܒܥܐ ܗܕܐ. ܗܝ ܕܝܢ ܐܢܬܬܐ ܠܓܒܪܐ ܗܘܬ ܕܡܬܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܬܐ ܕܢܘܪܐ.
ܘܡܬܢܒܪܐ ܗܘܬ ܐܝܟ ܢܗܪܐ. ܘܫܪܝܬ ܠܗ ܟܠ ܚܕ ܚܕ ܡܢ ܣܝܩ̈ܘܪܐ. ܘܪܫܡܐ ܗܘܬ ܒܗ ܢܘܪܐ. ܘܡܟܠܐ ܗܦܟܬ
ܒܗܘܢ ܐܝܟ ܙܩܦ ܒܢܝܐ ܘܐܡܪܬ ܠܗܘܢ ܐܬܡܠܐ ܕܫܡ ܐܢܬܘܢ. ܠܗܬ ܕܝܢ ܠܐ ܦܪܚܬ. ܘܡܚܕܐ ܕܢܦܩܘ ܘܠܐ
ܐܬܥܫܝܘ ܡܢ ܩܠܝܠ ܕܫܡ ܗܘܝ ܕܫܠܬܐ ܙܒܢܬܐ.
13 ܘܡܢ ܒܬܪ ܫܢܝܐ ܗܘ ܘܡܬܬܒܠܐ ܗܘܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ ܕܐܬܡܪܘ. ܘܕܡܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܠܩܝܡܐ ܡܫܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܢ ܡܢ ܢܘܪܐ.
ܘܬܘܕܝܬܗܘܢ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܘܡܫܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܘܡܢܗܘܢ ܢܨܒܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܘܡܫܠܡܝܢ. ܕܕܟܐ ܕܝܢ ܘܟܦܐ ܕܐܬܒܪܝܟܘܗܘܢ ܠܐ ܨܠܘ
ܘܐܦܠܐ ܚܕܐ ܫܥܬܐ ܡܢܗܘܢ. ܐܝܟ ܗܘܐ ܕܝܢ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܒܗ ܠܒܢܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܠܥܩܒܐ ܕܟܐܢܘܬܗܘܢ. ܘܐܚܪܢܐ ܕܝܢ
ܗܘܘ ܟܠ ܬܦܐ. ܘܬܦܐ ܠܗ ܨܘܪ ܗܘܝ. ܗܢܘܢ ܕܝܢ ܣܝܩ̈ܘܪܐ ܢܨܒܝܢ ܗܘܘ. ܘܟܕ ܚܙܐ ܕܐܦܝܐ ܩܠܝܠ ܕܒܪܝܫ ܡܬܬܪܡܪ
ܗܘܐ. ܘܢܦܩ ܘܐܬܐ ܠܡܥܪܐ. ܐܦ ܗܘ ܢܘܚ ܚܒܪܐ ܗܘܐ. ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܣܒܐ. ܐܘ ܢܘܚ ܐܚܘܢܐ ܦܩܕ ܐܝܟ ܕܢܒܥܐ ܡܢ
ܩܠܝܠ. ܦܩܕ ܠܝ ܕܢܚܘܬ ܕܠܐ ܢܬܬܘܢ ܐܚܝ̈ܢܘܗܝ ܘܢܬܒܥܘܢ ܘܢܬܟܠܘܢ ܕܐܚܐ ܕܠܬܗܘܢ ܡܢܝ. ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܢܘܚ.
ܡܛܪܘܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܬܬܪܪܐ ܥܠ ܡܦܩܢܘܬܐ ܕܢܦܫܐ ܐܝܟ ܟܠܢܫ ܠܐ ܡܢ ܝ̈ܝ. ܫܦܝܪܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܡܟܐܬܐ
ܕܒܢܝܗܘܢ ܐܬܦܠܓܘ. ܡܛܠ ܕܒܥܪܪܐ ܗܘܢ ܥܒܕ ܗܘܐ ܠܡܬܪܘܬܐ ܗܕܐ. ܟܠ ܕܠܐ ܙܪܙ ܗܘܐ ܒܢܝܢܗܘܢ ܕܒܝܢܬܐ
ܕܒܪܘܟܬܐ ܠܐ ܢܗܒܪܘܢ ܡܢܡ ܕܒܥܝ. ܕܫܠܐ ܙܟܐ ܐܘ ܫܒܝܒ ܠܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܒܝܢܬܐ |f. 227r| ܕܒܪܘܟܬܐ
ܢܒܪܫܘܢ ܕܢܒܥܘܢ ܡܢܡ܀
14 ܘܫܒܐ ܐܡܪ. ܘܢܘܚ ܕܐܬܬܡܝ ܫܒܐ ܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܫܘܠܛܢܐ. ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܢܘܚ. ܠܐ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܟܘܢ ܥܡܐ. ܡܛܠ
ܕܠܝܬ ܠܟܘܢ ܫܒܪܐ ܕܫܢܐ ܕܚܠܬܝܢ. ܘܫܠܝܛܐ ܒܬܪ ܐܬܬܝܟܘܢ. ܘܡܢܐ ܕܡܬܚܡܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܐܬܦܣܩܘ[39] ܠܗ ܫܒܪܐ
ܕܠܟܘܢ. ܘܒܚܘܒܐ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܠܟܘܢ ܠܟܠܗ ܟܠܢܝܢ. ܘܡܢܘ ܠܐ ܡܬܕܠܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ. ܫܒܐ ܕܝܢ ܥܙܝ ܕܢܥܐܠܗ ܟܠ
ܐܪܥܗܘܢ ܕܒܢܝܫܠܝܚܐ. ܡܛܠ ܕܢܚܠ ܗܘܐ ܘܢܝܫ ܠܡܥܡܝܐ. ܒܟܐ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܢܘܚ. ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܐܚܝ. ܘܐܬܘܢ ܡܢܐ
ܢܬܠܡ ܐܢܬܘܢ. ܒܟܐ ܢܘܚ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ. ܚܝ ܡܪܝ ܠܝ ܡܥܡܝܐ ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܗܝ ܕܠܟܠܢܝ ܠܐ ܚܙܪܐ. ܫܒܐ
ܐܡܪ. ܘܐܢ ܗܘܐ ܐܢܐ ܒܢܝܫܠܝܚܐ ܚܙܝ ܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܕܢܡܪ ܠܝ ܡܥܡܝܐ ܡܠܟܘܬܗ. ܢܘܚ ܐܡܪ. ܚܙܝ ܐܢܐ ܒܟܝ.
ܘܠܐ ܐܢܐ ܒܠܚܘܕ ܐܠܐ ܘܐܦ ܡܥܡܝܐ ܕܢܬܬܠ ܫܢܐ ܘܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܫܬܪܝܐ. ܘܟܕ ܐܬܦܣܩܘ ܫܒܐ. ܬܪܝ ܒܟܐ
ܢܘܚ ܟܠ ܡܬܒܢܝܘܬܗ ܕܡܥܡܝܐ ܒܪܘܟܐ ܠܦܘܠܚܢܗ. ܘܟܕ ܫܠܡ ܥܡܕ ܫܒܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܢܘܚ. ܐܒܐ ܡܛܠ ܡܪܝ
ܐܬܒܪܝܢܝ ܒܫܠܡ ܚܒܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܡܘܒܐ. ܘܡܚܝܢܐ ܕܐܬܠܝܡ ܡܚܡܪ ܐܝܬ ܠܒܢܝ ܒܝܬܐ ܕܠܝ. ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܢܘܚ. ܠܝܬ ܟܠܝ
ܕܝܠܟ ܕܒܫܘܢܬܐ. ܡܒܪܟܝܢ ܠܟܘܢ ܕܝܢ ܒܚܘܒܐ ܐܚܝܕ، ܥܘܠܠܐ ܟܠ ܗܕܐ. ܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܫܒܐ ܠܐ ܥܒܕܗ ܫܒܐ
ܕܐܠܗܐ. ܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܐܢܫܝܢ ܡܚܡܪ ܠܝ ܐܠܐ ܐܢ ܐܢܬ. ܕܚܙܝ ܐܢܬ ܒܝ. ܕܢܡܪ ܠܝ ܡܥܡܝܐ ܡܠܟܘܬܗ.
15 ܘܟܕ ܩܠܝܠ ܡܬܠܠܝܢ ܗܘܘ. ܗܐ ܩܠܝܠ ܣܝܩ̈ܘܪܐ ܡܠܘ ܠܬܪܥܐ ܒܢܝܐ ܕܪܘܬܐ. ܗܢܘܢ ܕܛܠܝܚܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܠܗܘܢ
ܫܒܪܬܐ. ܒܟܐ ܢܘܚ ܘܐܡܪ |f. 227v| ܠܫܒܐ. ܒܟܠ ܐܝܬ ܘܟܠܗ ܠܒܢܝܐ ܗܘ ܕܗܘܐ ܠܣܝܩ̈ܘܪܐ ܐܬܦܢܝܘܗܝ
ܒܢܘܪܐ. ܒܗ ܠܐ ܥܒܕ ܐܝܬ ܡܢܗ ܡܕܡ ܫܘܝ. ܘܡܫܪܐ ܟܠ ܗܘܐ ܘܐܡܪ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܢܘܚ ܚܒܪ. ܘܫܠܡ ܕܝܢ ܚܕ ܡܢ
ܚܒ̈ܪܐ ܕܐܬܬܘ[ܗ] ܗܘܐ ܪܘܚܐ. ܒܗ ܚܙܐ ܕܡܬܬܪܐ ܒܫܘܪܐ ܡܚܠܐ. ܪܘܚܐ ܡܠܐ ܘܢܫܒ ܚܕ ܡܢ ܡܫܘ̈ܬܐ
ܕܒܫܘܪܐ ܡܢ ܢܘܪܐ. ܘܫܡ ܒܦܘܡܗ. ܘܫܪܐ ܡܢ ܓܘܡܪܬܐ ܕܒܣܩ ܗܘ̈ܝ ܒܗ ܒܒܫܘܪܐ. ܘܡܫܪܐ ܗܘܬ ܒܗ ܢܘܪܐ
ܒܦܘܡܗ ܘܦܘܡ ܘܒܪܥܡ. ܘܡܢ ܐܘܠܨܢܐ ܕܢܦܫܗ ܪܘܚܐ ܥܒܪܐ ܢܦܫܗ ܒܒܐܪܐ ܕܫܒܐ ܘܐܬܬܚܝܡ. ܘܪܘܚܐ ܫܒܐ ܠܗܬ
ܢܘܚ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ. ܚܙܝ ܕܫܦܬ ܢܘܪܐ ܒܬܠܬܐ ܘܗܘܐ ܡܫܡܪܐ ܠܗܘܢ. ܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܢܘܚ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ. ܠܐ ܬܬܕܡܪ ܠܟܠܝܢ
ܕܐܬܬܝܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܠܛܐ ܢܘܟܐ ܡܬܪܘܬܐ.
16 ܘܫܡ ܢܘܚ ܘܟܠ ܒܗ ܡܢܗ ܠܘܬ ܒܝܬܐ ܕܐܬܡܢ ܒܢܝܫ ܗܘܐ. ܫܩܝܠܐ ܒܬܪ ܐܬܬܘ ܟܠ ܦܠܐ ܕܬܠܠܬܐ ܕܫܘܢܝ
ܕܡܬܪܡܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܟܠ ܩܠܝܠ ܕܨܠܘ. ܘܟܕ ܚܙܘ ܠܢܘܚ ܫܟܒܗ ܠܗ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܘܐܡܪܘ. ܐܒܘܢ ܝ ܠܐ ܟܠܝ. ܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܒܟܐ
ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ. ܠܘ ܡܢܝ ܬܒܥܘܢ ܫܘܒܚܐ. ܐܠܐ ܡܢ ܡܪܝܐ ܘܫܟܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ. ܒܗ ܠܡܘܢܐ ܕܫܥܗ ܢܛܪܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܡܢ
ܦܘܠܚܢܐ ܘܡܢ ܫܠܡܐ. ܒܗ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܘܐܡܪܘ. ܟܠ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܢܥܒܕ. ܘܟܕ ܒܢܝܫܝܢ ܗܘܘ. ܘܡܚܠ ܐܬܬܘܬܗ ܕܫܒܐ.
ܡܬܢܝܐ ܘܡܫܡܗܘܢ ܐܟܠܝܢ ܕܒܪܝܫ ܒܒܬܘܠܗ ܒܗ ܢܩܠ ܒܗ ܟܐܪܐ ܘܐܚܘܡ ܐܬܝ. ܘܕܫܠܐ ܗܢܘܢ ܕܥܒܕܘ ܕܫܠܬܐ

[35] A mistake, corrected by the scribe by adding the right form next to it.
[36] One would expect the verb to be in feminine, i.e. ܐܡܪܬ or ܐܡܪܝ.
[37] One would expect the noun to be in the construct state, i.e. ܥܩܘܒܬ.
[38] One would expect the verb to be in plural, i.e. ܡܚܠܘ.
[39] One would expect the verb to be in singular, i.e. ܐܬܦܣܩ.

ܐܦ ܥܠ ܦܘܪܩܢܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܢܗܘܐ ܒܗ ܒܪ ܐܢܫ ܕܐܬܒܥ ܒܗ ܒܪ ܐܢܫ ܘܢ

splendid crown for the head of a kingdom, – thus also the Godhead, full of mercy, created (him) from water, and spirit, and earth, and placed in him the image of its glory. And through the intelligence that surpasses human understanding it adorned (and) fashioned him. And it renewed and fashioned from the four opposite natures a beautiful image that turns upward and downward and to the four corners (of the world). And as a crown, when it has been forged, but if it is not placed upon the head of a kingdom, it is not called "the crown of a king", – likewise and those elements, from which human being is made.

2. "Because they came into being through God and received purity and holiness, and he (i.e. man) was revealed in glory and was distinguished with the knowledge (of) the day of Friday, I pledge myself for them", said the Son to the Father. "And because Adam has stretched his hand to the fruit and fell, I myself stretch my hands to the nails and raise him up. Because for his sake I embraced the breasts with milk; for his sake I became a fugitive in Egypt; for his sake I was baptised in water; for his sake I received spittle from enemies; for his sake I was sold; for his sake I was mocked; for his sake the wicked reviled me; on his account I was beaten and imprisoned; on his account I received spittle in my face; on his account I was insulted; on his account they gave me to drink the gall and vinegar; on his account I was crucified on a cross; on his account my hands and feet were nailed; and on his account I gave my soul on Friday and became a pledge for him", says the Lord. "Have mercy upon them, my father, have mercy upon them!" – The Lord of the heaven and earth said these (things), when he was hanged on the cross on Golgotha. "And because of these (things) that I have said, the Christians should honour the day of their redemption by fast and prayer, and by suspension of all work, and by ceasing from all these (activities) that are profitable. And (these) assist and preserve the soul and body,[47] and its Lord, who sees it, is pleased".

3. So then, let us say what is right for the Christians to do on this day of Friday, and what they should not do. This is, then, what the Christians ought not to do: not yoking to the ploughs; not ploughing; and not the season of the threshing floor; moreover, also not harrowing; and not reaping; and not harvesting; and not olive picking. And no one should make bread on the day of Friday, except for a banquet of the saints, or for the repose of the dead, or for the poor, for it is right to do these; and anything that is given as first-fruits to the holy altar, and to those who are confined in a prison. And it is not lawful for anyone to eat meat on the day of Friday, and also to engage in one of the crafts on the day of Friday. I am saying that to men and women, to old and young, to the great and the small. And one, who dares to do work on the day of Friday, should be suspended from church and from receiving Holy Communion for three days. And then they should offer (a prayer of) repentance on his behalf, and he might enter the church.

4. That (alone) would suffice for what you (pl.) have asked me. However, because the prophet says, "They ask for signs, and people look for novelties",[48] I myself, on account of what you have asked, am going to show you what profit there is in keeping this day of Friday, and what chastisement one receives, who out of the love for work dares and does not keep this day. It was not me however, who saw these (things), but the man (called) Meletius narrated to me what I am now presenting to you, saying:

5. I was then on a journey to Antioch in the days of Pentecost, and I saw a crowd gathered inside a church, more numerous than on the day of Sunday. And in the whole cities[49] no person was found, who would work on the day of Friday, and who would engage in his craft, neither a little bit nor greatly. And after the service ended, the people gathered in the church

[47] The syntax of this clause is problematical.

[48] The exact source of this sentence is unclear. It appears to be a composite quotation, inspired by such biblical verses as Is 7:11, Mt 16:1-4, Mk 8:11-12, Lk 11:29, 1Cor 1:22 and Acts 17:21.

[49] One would expect "the whole city". But, perhaps, the plural form refers to Antioch together with its neighbouring village-cum-suburb Daphne.

and no one would leave it. And Meletius ordered me that I should say a beneficial and spiritual word to those people, for the benefit of the listeners. I then said to him, "And what is this feast? Is it of a saint or of the dedication of the church?" He then said to me, "It is the feast of this day, on which the sins of the world were annulled". And after the people left the church, I answered and said to him, "Well, my father, and on account of what do they cease today from work?" And he said to me, "It is Friday today, the day of redemption, the day of consolation, the day of rejoicing for those who were imprisoned in Sheol without hope". And I answered and said to him, "Well, my father, and how we should keep this day in purity? For behold, the holy apostles have commanded much about observing the holy days. And is not this day observed perfectly among us?"

6. He then said to me, "The negligence of an artisan causes destruction of the sound stones, when he neglects one of the sound stones of a building and does not set it straight within the house, so that it would be held by other (stones). Do not you realise, then, that when it has fallen out, it will throw down with it the many fine (stones) built above it, and cause a ruin. And it is erected with difficulty, and yet it happens that it buries these, who are found there, under it. And see, my brother, how came to nought these that were constructed well. And, doubtless, also that builder deserves death. And, likewise, a bishop or priest, who does not tend and lead his flock well, when the heavenly shepherd appears and demands from them the herd that he entrusted to them, – because they do not bandage the sick, and do not guard their flocks well, and they have no diligence and care for those who are weak and have no strength, – those who themselves ought to be an example to others. However, instead of that the shepherds of nowadays are paralysed by wickedness. And in order to be held in honour they behave favourably towards the people, and they hold in silence the word of God and are not afraid. And because of that, my brothers, we should not transgress and trample upon the word of God that was placed in the priest's mouth! And if we transgress it, woe to us, my brothers, on that day when the Lord of shepherds is going to demand from our hands an account of his flock".

7. And he wept and his tears flowed. And little by little his countenance was changing into a fiery image. And I (myself) was groaning. However, there were none else with us in the sacristy, but only the two of us. And after he wept for a long time, he answered and said to me, "My brother, beseech our Lord that he would lead us out from this banquet and make us recline in the spiritual banquet of his, in which he is going to make the needy and poor recline on the day of his glorious revelation. And because you have asked me what this day of Friday is, listen and I will tell you. Open this chest, in which readings for the whole order of service are kept, and take the small quire, in which a memorandum on the keeping of Friday is written". And I have brought it forth, and he said to me, "Take and read this letter". And I have read (it), and there was the following (story):

8. There was a certain man, not Christian, from the city of Antioch. And he had five slaves. And one of them was named John, and he was keeping the holy day of Friday in purity and undefiled, as he would not do any work at all, by pretending to be sick on every day when Friday would dawn. And he would not taste anything until the dawn of Saturday. But the evil one would inflict merciless chastisement upon John. And because of that he would say to him, while beating him, "You are not sick, but you are doing this in (your) craftiness". And he would scourge him, (saying) "Behold! Your fellows are working on the day of Friday, and you are idle. But you are setting a bad example for your fellows, and they reproach me because of you". The just slave, however, would receive the blows and reproaches without end while rejoicing. For he did not want even to talk on the day of Friday. And he (i.e. the master) wanted to kill him many times, but because of the stratagem of his wife he was restrained. For his wife would constantly entreat (him), because she was aware that he (i.e. the slave) was just, on account of what had happened to her.

9. For on one of the days, when her husband was not there, she was washing and rubbing her daughters on the day of Friday, by the side of a well that was in their house. And she left them and entered her house. And her daughters rose to play with each other, and at that very moment both of them fell together into the well. And John was lying down near the well. And when he saw that they fell down, he groaned and said in his heart, "God help!" And confident of this (i.e. God's help) he did not wail. And when their mother went out, she sought them and called them, and there was no one to answer her. And the gate of their courtyard was of a considerable height. And she ran to and fro, while calling them, but they were not (there). And she came near John at the well, while weeping, (and) asked about them. And when John saw that his mistress is weeping bitterly, he answered and said to her, "Your daughters fell down into the well. And I have hope in God that the holy day of Friday has saved them from drowning". She then looked into the well and saw them sitting above the water as if upon the dry ground. And she also heard their voice as they were talking to each other. And she answered and said to John, "I beseech you, my lord, rise and bring up my daughters! Because by your prayers they are alive. And no one should know about this, lest my husband hear and kill me, and your righteousness would be revealed". John, then, ordered her to bring a rope and a big basket. And he made a sign of the cross over them, and tied the rope to the basket. And he let (it) down into the well, and called the girls. And both of them got into the basket, and he drew them out. And when they ascended, they (i.e. John and the mother) saw that they did not get wet from the water. And their mother was asking them, saying, "How did you fall down, and who was carrying you above the water?" Then, they said to her, "A certain black man drew us over the well, and we fell into it. Then, this slave of ours John descended to us and gave us to a certain woman of beautiful appearance, and she was carrying us above the water". And when she heard this from her daughters, she approached John and said to him, "By your life, my lord, tell me which of the goddesses saved my daughters from drowning, so that I might also worship her". He, then, said to her, "Our Lord Jesus Christ saved them, and the holy Friday". And the woman put this secret in her heart, and she did not reveal (it) to anyone, until they became Christians.

10. She then felt sorry for John in her heart, as she saw him being beaten by her husband. And she entreated (him) many times on his behalf, until her husband became very angry with her and said to her, "Is it not that you beseech on his behalf and for him because of (his) good looks? Now, because of you I will kill him!" And when she heard these (words) from him, she did not say anything else to him, but entreated John to do the will of her husband and to work a little bit (just) a single day. And as she was entreating him very much to desist from his will, she would say, "It is not a sin for you!" He, however, was not persuaded, but would say to her, "It is a joy for me". Then, on one of the days some men came to the pagan, to help him with the harvest, and that day was Friday. And while his fellow slaves would slaughter meat and cook (it) for those, who were harvesting, John was prostrated with his face down on the dung-heap, weeping. And his master was with the harvesters. And when his master came from the field, he saw John on the dung-heap as if he was sick, and he became furious. And he got down from his horse, and drew out his sword, and lifted (it) up to strike him. And he (i.e. John) was constrained on his back. And he (i.e. the master) called John two times to go to his fellows, but he did not want to. And he raised (his hand) again to strike him. And a woman of beautiful appearance appeared to him, and she was dressed in black garments, and they were sprinkled with the bespattered[50] blood. And she stretched her hand and took the sword from him. And she struck the pagan with it and he fell backwards. And she answered and said to him, "O evil and godless pagan, if not for the intercession of the holy John, who

[50] The adjective ܫܦܝܪ, "comely, beautiful" of the manuscript does not make much sense in this context. I would suggest emending it to ܡܠܝܠ, passive participle of the verb ܚܠ, "to sprinkle".

was beseeching on your behalf, you and your sons would have departed from this world, and your house would have become your grave. Therefore, behold! I am going to pour fire upon your harvesters, who are harvesting together with your impiety because of the avarice of their belly and insulting the holy day of Friday. However, I will not burn the grain at all, on account of the holy John, who laboured on it and sowed it. For it is because of him that your possessions increased, and through him everything that there is in your house was blessed. And through this man your house and your offspring have been preserved. And let everything that you have, and that has not been burnt up, be for support for orphans and widows". And when she said these (words), she departed from him.

11. And the liar was lying down as if dead for a long time. And after a while he woke up, (and) approached his slave John, and said to him, "Have mercy upon me, O servant of the living God! And forgive me everything that I have offended you with. And pray for me to your God, whom I am going to worship from now and forever". John, then, stretched out his hand and signed his master with the (sign) of the cross in the name of the living God, and his mind regained peace at once. And he stood up on his feet and saw his sword, broken into three pieces. And his right hand was dry like (a piece of) wood. And he answered and said to John, "I adjure you by God, in whom you believe, that you pray also for my hand to be healed! For behold, it has dried up". John, then, stretched out his hand and signed the hand of his master, and it was restored like the other. And when his master saw that, and how very quickly he has been healed by the word of John, he fell upon the ground and bowed down to him, and said, "My father and my master, forgive me! Let us go to the harvesters, to see what happened to them; whether it is true that they have perished, as I think (they have), my master".

12. And the two of them went out, walking. And when they reached the field, they found the harvesters burnt up. And not a single person among them remained, who was not burnt, except some twenty souls, orphans and widows, who did not follow the harvesters. And these women answered and said to him, "When you, our master, sent us forth, we saw a likeness of a woman of beautiful appearance, who descended from above and stood up in front of the harvesters. And she said to them, 'O wicked ones, until when are you going to not turn away from your evils and to not keep the day of the suffering of Our Lord, but to treat (it) with contempt and not be ashamed? Therefore, receive the punishment that is about to come upon you from a burning fire, and become a dreadful and fearful sign of terror in the whole world, so that no one would dare to do this like you!' And the woman bore the likeness of a broom of fire, and it was burning like a torch.[51] And she approached each of the harvesters, one after another, and cast fire upon him. And thus she set fire to them in a twinkling of the eye, and they all burnt up, as you see. Us, however, she did not approach. And we sought to flee, but were not able because of the great fear from what we have seen".

13. And that pagan approached and observed those who had burnt up, and they resembled charred pieces of wood that come out from fire. And some of their limbs remained, whereas some were burnt up and consumed. However, the grain and sheaves in their hands did not burn up, not even a single ear from them. For there were some among them, who held ears (of wheat) in their hands, and others who were lying upon the sheaves. And the sheaves did not burn up, but the harvesters did. And when the liar saw what happened, he was amazed. And he uttered a lamentation for himself. And John was also weeping. And the pagan said to him, "O John, what would be your order regarding what to do with these? It would be better for us to flee, lest their parents and wives come and avenge their blood upon us". John says to him, "A chastisement is sent out from God upon evil-doers, so that no one would be able to complain about it. It is enough for them that they have escaped the death of their sons. For, in

[51] Or "naphtha".

truth, they themselves would deserve this chastisement, for not instructing their sons to do no evil on the day of Friday. O my beloved ones, great fear is upon the believers who would dare to do any work on the day of Friday!"

14. And the pagan said, "And for us, who are pagans, is it a sin?" John said to him, "I am not saying that you are at peace, because you have no hope of the life to come. For you are deceived, and when you die, your hope is lost. And Gehenna is prepared for you for eternity, and you will not be lifted up from it". The pagan then started to ask him about the mystery of Christians, because he feared (God) and loved Christ. He answered and said to John, "My brother, tell me about you (pl.), what do you inherit?" John answered and said to him, "As for us, Christ gives us the kingdom of heaven, which does not ever pass away". The pagan said, "And if I will become Christian, would you pledge to me that Christ will give me his kingdom?" John said, "I will pledge for you. And not only me alone, but Christ as well, that you will inherit the life and the kingdom that does not end". And after the pagan entreated him, John expounded the dispensation of Christ up until his ascension. And when the pagan heard that, he said to John, "Father, for the sake of Our Lord, baptise me in this water that is here. And as soon as we come, you will baptise my household". John says to him, "I do not have the rank of priesthood, for it is priests, who have authority to do this, who would baptise you?" The pagan says, "No, (by) the living name of God! No one else is going to baptise me but you, who pledges for me that Christ will give me his kingdom".

15. And while they were saying these (words), behold, those harvesters arrived at the outer gate of the courtyard, who were carrying provisions for them. John answered and said to the pagan, "Go and burn in fire everything that had been prepared for the harvesters, while not leaving anything from it at all". And he entered at once and did as John told him. But one of the slaves, who was Roman, moved when he saw the cooked meat being thrown away. He ran avariciously, and took a piece of meat from the fire, and put (it) into his mouth. And one of the burning coals got stuck to the meat, and his face and his head were at once set on fire. And from the affliction of his soul he ran (and) threw himself into the well of water, and drowned. And the pagan ran to John and said to him, "Look, the lads are on fire! And behold, it is burning them up!" John then said to him, "Do not be frightened! The chastisement knows those who are evil-doers".

16. And John stood up and entered, together with his master, to the people who were gathered there. For many came to the sound of wailing of those who were lamenting these, who burnt up. And when they saw John, they all bowed down to him and said, "Our father, pray for us!" He then answered and said to them, "Do not request forgiveness from me, but from the Lord, and you will live, – as far as you are preserving the day of His passion from work and from sins". And they all answered and said, "We will fulfil everything that you say to us". And when they were gathered, the pagan's wife stood up, recounting before them what happened to her daughters when they fell into the well and he brought them up. And great fear seized those who heard (it). Then they[52] brought up from the well the one, who had drowned in it. And they brought him, and those who burnt up, to the city and laid them at the door of the church. And there was a great weeping there. And that pagan came and told them, before everyone, what happened to him through John. John, however, did not enter with them to the city.

17. And Meletius, the patriarch of the city of Antioch, ordered them to go and to bring the man of God, Mār John. And he said to them, "Why are you looking for me, a sinful man?" They then said to him, "Our father, pious patriarch Mār Meletius sent after you". And immediately he stood up and went with them, while weeping. And when the pious (man) of God Meletius saw him, he stood up from his throne and embraced him, while weeping. And

[52] In the manuscript "he".

he said to him, “Come in peace, new Job, brought to us from among the dead! Come in peace, good servant, who secretly and openly served two masters!” John, then, answered and said to him, “Forgive me, my lord! Do not pile up upon my head the burden of vain glory”. Meletius answered and said to him, “My father, I want to reveal now before everyone things that the Lord has hidden”. And when John heard that, he stood speechless. And he answered and said to Meletius, “Forgive me, father! For I am going back to where I came from, because my sins and faults have increased beyond measure”. And when he went out, he went straight to the dung-heap, where he used to recline. And the holy Meletius ordered, and they carried the holy (man) on their hands, and they brought him back to him. John then answered and said to him, “Forgive me, my father! I am not worthy of this (honour) from the one, whom the angels overshadow”.[53]

18. And Meletius said, “Our father, give a command as to what we shall do with these, who died without keeping commandments. And what shall we do with them on account of the glory of God? And whether it is right that they should be brought to the grave? Because we shall do everything that you will command us”. And John said, “It is not up to me, but up to him whom his Lord entrusted his flock”. Meletius then answered and said to him, “My lord John, bishop who was hiding from his city for twenty seven years already (and) who was ordained in Alexandria, rise (and) pray for us, and forgive us!” And when John heard these (words), he stood up in his place, and he raised (his) hand towards Meletius and said to him, “My father, you have exposed me before everyone. Therefore, I will expose you as well. For, behold, that treasure of five hundred pounds of gold in the treasury that was granted to you, – order that it will be for the needy and poor, those, in whom Christ rejoices, and not for the embellishment of walls”. And when Meletius heard that, he was struck dumb. And he answered and said to him, “I will fulfil everything that you will order me! Now, order me what should I do with these”. And John said, “My father, the whole flock is entrusted into your hands”. Meletius said, “While you are with us, you order everything”. And John said, “Let those, who burnt up in the field, be brought to the grave. As for that one, who threw himself into the water, I order that he should not be brought to the grave, but let him be covered only by the dust of the earth”. And when they buried them as John said, they returned and came to the church, and together with them pagans and Jews.

19. And Meletius ordered him to preach to the people, and he stood up (and) preached (with) words full of sorrow. And two hundred souls were instructed on that day, and received baptism, and became Christians. John then baptised them with a great confidence. And when that pagan, the master of John, and his whole household were baptised, the pagan received the name Theodor. And Theodor led his slaves and handed them over to John, and said to him, “My lord, take them and set them free, as you wish”. And John took the slaves of his master and freed them.

20. So, let us be protected from the Evil One and his forces by his (i.e. John’s) prayers and through his supplications, and those of all saints, his companions. And let us offer praise to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to whom is glory for all his mercies forever. Amen.

Completed is the story about the day of Friday.

[53] The reference to the angels overshadowing the bishop most likely reflects the belief in the presence of angels during church services, especially during the Eucharist. This belief finds a material expression in the design of *flabella* (or ripidions), i.e. liturgical fans held by deacons over the altar (and over a bishop) during services, that were often decorated with the images of angelic beings. On their use and symbolism in the West Syriac tradition, see B. Snelders and M. Immerzeel, “The Thirteenth Century Flabellum from Deir al-Surian in the Musée Royal de Mariemont (Morlanwelz, Belgium)”, *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004), pp. 113-139.

2. *Structure and language*

The *Story* has a complex narrative structure. It can be divided into three main parts, in accordance with three distinctive narrative layers that succeed each other: (1) the introductory part, related by the anonymous narrator; (2) the dialogue between the narrator and cleric Meletius in Antioch; (3) the anonymous written source, supplied by Meletius.

The first part (§§1-4) serves as an introduction, in which the primary narrator, speaking in the first person, exhorts his audience to venerate Friday properly. An elaborate reflection on the creation of Adam, which took place on Friday, in §1, is followed by an extended recital recounting various aspects of Jesus' life and his execution on Friday, in their relation to his salvific mission to the fallen Adam (§2). Presented as Jesus' direct speech, this list might be derived from a liturgical text, possibly related to the cycle of Good Friday. In §3, a detailed description is offered of what the proper veneration of Friday involves, with the main focus on enumerating all kinds of work that Christians are prohibited from performing on this day. In §4, the narrator proposes to recount a story, supposed to demonstrate that there is "profit" for the correct keeping of Friday and "chastisement" for failing to do so. He refers to a certain Meletius as his source.

The second part (§§5-7), describes the meeting between the narrator and Meletius. When the former arrives from an unknown destination to the city of Antioch during the days of Pentecost, he comes across a great crowd of people celebrating an unknown feast in a church. He also notices that no one in the city performed any work on this day. After the end of the service, the narrator meets Meletius, a cleric of unspecified rank, who, presumably, was leading it. To his inquiry about the reason for such a celebration, Meletius answers that it was held in honour of the day of Friday. The narrator wonders whether the customary veneration of this day by Christians, performed in accordance with the apostolic precepts, is not enough (§5). In response to that, Meletius delivers a speech, aimed at bishops and priests, in which he exhorts them to exercise faithfully their pastoral duties. Meletius rebukes the "shepherds of nowadays", who disregard the word of God in order to find favour with their congregations, and threatens them with divine punishment at the time of the Second Coming (§6). He then tells the narrator to open the chest in the sacristy, where the conversation is apparently held, and to take from there "the small quire, in which a memorandum on the keeping of Friday is written". This text is meant to provide an answer to the narrator's inquiry (§7).

The third and longest part (§§8-20) presents the story contained in the "memorandum", which recounts two miracles, salvific and punishing, performed by the personified figure of Friday. The main protagonist of this part is a certain John, a Christian slave of an unnamed pagan from Antioch. While working for his master, he is said to keep "the holy day of Friday in purity and undefiled" by abstaining from every kind of work on this day. In order to do so, John pretends to be sick every Friday. Angry at such behaviour, his master would accuse him of deceit, beat him, and threaten to kill him. Only the intervention of the master's wife, aware of John's righteousness, stops him from realising the threat (§8). What led the woman to think so, was a miracle that happened one Friday, when her two little daughters, left unattended for a while, fell into a well. It was only through the intervention of John that the girls were rescued. The miraculous aspect of their rescue consisted in the intervention of the personified Friday, who appeared as a beautiful female figure and kept the girls above the water in the well (§9). Grateful, the woman would intervene on John's behalf with her husband, while keeping the miracle in secret. Another miracle also occurs on Friday, when a group of hired workers arrived at the estate to help the landowner with the harvest. While the harvesters were busy with their work, the house slaves were cooking food for them, with the

exception of John, who again pretended to be sick. When his master discovered John's absence from work, he became angry and, after failing to make his slave return to his tasks, he attacked John, intending to kill him with the sword. It was the intervention of Friday, who again appeared as a woman dressed in black garments, that saved John from imminent death. She struck the master down with his own sword and spared him only because of John's prayers for him. Instead, Friday went to punish the harvesters for working on this day (§10). When the master regained consciousness, he asked John for forgiveness. John absolved the master and healed his right hand that had withered after he was struck by Friday (§11). When John and his master went to the field, they discovered the harvesters dead, burnt up by Friday. However, she spared the women and children who were there, and did not burn the grain and sheaves (§§12-13). After they had lamented over the dead, the master asks John whether pagans are held accountable for disrespecting Friday. After John's reply that they are doomed for Gehenna anyway, the master expresses his desire to get baptised and become Christian. John welcomes his decision, but refuses to baptise him, arguing that he is not a priest (§14). Then, when a group of servants arrives with the provisions for the harvesters, the master orders it to be burnt. One of the slaves, not able to restrain his greed, snatches a piece of meat from the fire, but is punished at once – afflicted by a piece of burning coal stuck to the meat, he throws himself into a well and drowns (§15). After John admonishes the people to honour Friday, they bring the bodies of the dead harvesters and of the greedy slave into the city, i.e. Antioch, and lay them in front of the church. (§16) Meletius, the patriarch of the city, orders them to bring John, who complies. During their warm meeting, Meletius tells John that he wants to reveal his secret. After that, John leaves the city, but is brought back on Meletius' order (§17). Meletius then asks John how to dispose of the bodies of the sinners. When the latter refuses to answer, arguing that only a member of clergy is qualified to do so, Meletius publicly pronounces him to be the bishop of Alexandria, who has been in hiding for twenty-seven years. Angry, John also exposes Meletius, accusing him of the misuse of the money donated for charity. Amazed, the patriarch promises to amend, and repeats his question about the dead bodies. John orders that the burnt harvesters should be properly buried, while the slave should merely be covered with dust[54] (§18). Then, John preaches to the people. It is reported that two hundred people were baptised on that day, including John's former master, who assumed the name Theodor. Theodor handed over to John the rest of his slaves, and he freed them (§19). In the concluding sentences, the narrator praises God and seeks protection from Satan in the prayers of John and other saints (§20).

The question of the original language of the *Story* poses certain difficulties. On the one hand, given the fact that the narrative is set in the city of Antioch and its surroundings, and that its two principal characters, i.e. John and Meletius, are bishops of Alexandria and Antioch respectively, one might expect that the work was originally composed in Greek, and that it was translated into Syriac later on. However, besides such general considerations, there seems to be no substantial evidence, textual or contextual, to support this hypothesis.

First of all, it should be pointed out that there is no evidence for the existence of a Greek version of our account. No Greek-speaking writer from Late Antiquity or the Middle Ages seems to be aware of, or alludes to, this narrative. In addition to that, the Syriac language of the *Story* does not exhibit unambiguous syntactical or other peculiarities that could be explained on the presumption that it was translated from Greek. A number of Greek loan-words that it features are well attested in the corpus of Syriac texts and can hardly be

[54] Possibly, because he had committed suicide.

taken as evidence of a Greek original.[55]

At the same time, several arguments can be brought in favour of Syriac as the original language of the *Story*. Thus, the narrative contains several instances of intra-Syriac puns on the noun *ʿruḇṯā*, "Friday". One such case, that appears in §1, involves etymologising word-play, where the verb *ʾeṯʿreḇ*, "to be mingled" is used to describe the creation of Adam on the day of Friday. A similar instance of word-play is found in §2, where the verb *ʿreḇ*, "to pledge" is put into Jesus's mouth to describe his salvific mission towards the fallen Adam, which likewise culminates in his crucifixion on Friday.

In addition to this, the narrative style of the *Story* exhibits a predilection for using pairs of synonyms, such as ܡܫܬܒܚܐ ܡܫܒܚ (§2), ܡܥܩܐ ܡܚܩܐ (§§7,18), ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܒܡܚܐ (§8), ܡܣܐ ܡܣܐ (§9), ܡܫܬܡܝܐ ܡܫܠܡ (§12), ܫܒܚ ܘܫܒܚ (§17). Related to this is a frequent use of the verbal pair ܐܡܪ ܘܐܡܪ, "answered and said", to introduce responses of protagonists in the dialogues. This paratactic pair appears 19 times in the text of the *Story*. Such conspicuous propensity for parallelism and parataxis seems to be more characteristic of the style of Syriac prose writing, than that of Greek. It should, however, be stressed that these linguistic features alone can by no means be considered definite proof that Syriac was the original language of our work, since they are occasionally found in Syriac translations from Greek.

3. *Message and context*

To understand the message that the *Story* strives to convey, one needs to pay attention to its literary genre. Since it presents the audience with a pious narrative of an anecdotal nature, our composition can be related to the genre of "edifying stories", known also as "spiritually beneficial tales" (from Greek διηγήσεις ψυχωφελεῖς).[56] These usually brief narratives were produced and circulated originally in the monastic circles of Egypt and Palestine. Their main purpose was to propagate values and set standards of conduct ―first for those who chose to pursue the monastic way of life, but later on for the secular laity as well. The edifying stories are distinct from the genre of apophthegmata, the sayings of the Desert Fathers that conveyed their teaching, in that they demonstrated how this theory should be applied in the course of everyday life. By providing "real-life" examples of the enactment of Christian virtues, these stories taught spiritual lessons while aiming at moral improvement. The earliest specimens of this genre appear during the late fourth century. Such stories circulated as separate units, as in our case, and could be incorporated into other longer works or aggregated into collections.[57]

It may be noted that the *Story* is not a typical representative of the genre, since it has

[55] They include: ܐܝܩܘܢ, εἰκών (§1); ܐܠܠ, μᾶλλον (§1); ܣܛܘܟܝܐ, στοιχεῖον (§1); ܟܪܣܛܝܢܐ, χριστιάνος (§2); ܦܢܛܩܘܣܛܐ, πεντηκοστή (§5); ܕܡܘܣ, δόμος (§6); ܦܘܪܓܝܣ, πυργίσκος (§7); ܦܝܛܩܝܘܢ, πιττάκιον (§7); ܦܘܪ, πόρος (§8); ܦܪܘܣܘܦܘܢ, πρόσωπον (§15); ܦܛܪܝܪܟܐ, πατριάρχης (§17); ܐܦܣܩܘܦܐ, ἐπισκοπός (§18); ܠܝܛܪܐ, λίτρα (§18); ܦܝܣܝܣ, πεῖσις (§19).

[56] On this genre, see J. Wortley, "The Genre of the Spiritually Beneficial Tale", *Scripta & e-Scripta* 8-9 (2010), pp. 71-91; *Idem*, "Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell in Byzantine 'Beneficial Tales'", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001), pp. 53-69; A. Binggeli, "Collections of Edifying Stories", in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. Vol. 2: Genres and Contexts*, (ed.) S. Efthymiadis (Farnham, 2014), pp. 143-159. For attempts to catalogize this diverse material, attested in Greek, see F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*. Subsidia Hagiographica 8a. 3rd edition (Brussels, 1957), Vol. 3, pp. 175-182, 191-214; J. Wortley, "The Repertoire of Byzantine 'Spiritually Beneficial Tales'", *Scripta & e-Scripta* 8-9 (2010), pp. 93-306. For a seminal discussion of this genre in the larger context of late antique hagiography, see C. Rapp, "Storytelling as Spiritual Communication in Early Greek Hagiography: The Use of *Diegesis*", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998), pp. 431-448.

[57] Most specimens of this genre in Syriac are represented by stories that circulated as single textual units. For an overview of this rich material, for the most part unpublished, see F. Ruani, "Preliminary Notes on Edifying Stories in Syriac Hagiographical Collections", *Studia Patristica* 91 (2017), pp. 257-266.

some features that make it conspicuous within this category. To begin with, it is considerably longer and more compositionally elaborate than most of the edifying stories. Another peculiarity that sets it apart is the extended introductory part (§§1-4), which provides a theological rationale for the promoted practice, as well as information on its practicalities. These distinguishing characteristics could be regarded as hallmarks of a relatively late origin of our composition. The *Story* seems to represents a later stage in the development of the genre of edifying stories, when they start to be used to serve a greater variety of agendas, beyond properly monastic concerns, and, thus, become more sophisticated structurally.

The main purpose of our composition is to advertise the custom of veneration of Friday. This objective is made explicit in the introductory part. To convey this message, the storyteller presents a narrative in which he brings together several themes and images. While some of these are attested in the previous tradition of Christian veneration of Friday, others appear to be unique and new developments. The most remarkable aspect of the *Story* is that its author strives to promote a very peculiar form of this custom, which goes far beyond what was traditional Christian practice in this regard, in that he demands from believers not only to fast and pray on this day, but also to abstain completely from any kind of work.

In order to achieve his goal, the storyteller weaves together an intricate plot, at the core of which stands the narrative about the conflict between the pagan landowner and his Christian slave John, found in the third part. This subordinate story is a typical example of what Michael Satlow has aptly called "texts of terror", in his analysis of rabbinic rhetorical strategies from Late Antiquity.[58] By presenting Friday as a potent agent that has the power to reward those who honour it and to punish those who fail to do so, it seeks to mobilise the audience through instilling the fear of divine punishment.

One puzzling aspect of the *Story* is that, in order to convey his message of supererogatory Friday veneration, the author chooses to link it to the figure of Meletius of Antioch.[59] The immediate reasons for this choice are obscure. The patriarch of Antioch Meletius of our composition should be, almost certainly, identified with the most famous Antiochene patriarch bearing this name, who was active during the second half of the fourth century (d. 381).[60]

There is little doubt that the portrayal of Meletius in the *Story* is completely fictional and has little, if anything at all, to do with the historical figure of the fourth-century bishop of Antioch. No composition dealing with the veneration of Friday can be found among the surviving genuine and spurious works of this preacher and theologian.[61] Moreover, we

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[58] M. L. Satlow, ""Texts of Terror": Rabbinic Texts, Speech Acts, and the Control of Mores", *AJS Review* 21:2 (1996), pp. 273-297.

[59] Although it is not completely clear whether Meletius of the second part, i.e. the cleric whom the narrator meets in Antioch, and Meletius of the third part, i.e. the patriarch of Antioch, are the same person, this identification seems very likely.

[60] See on him, Th.R. Karmann, *Meletius von Antiochien: Studien zur Geschichte des trinitätstheologischen Streits in den Jahren 360–364 n. Chr.* Regensburger Studien zur Theologie 68 (Frankfurt am Main, 2009); B. E. Daley, "The Enigma of Meletius of Antioch", in *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.*, (eds.) R. J. Rombs and A. Y. Hwang (Washington, D.C., 2010), pp. 128-150; Ch. C. Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places: Late Antique Antioch and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy* (Berkeley, 2014), pp. 79-91.

[61] For a list of what little survives under his name, see M. Gerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum. Vol. 2: Ab Athansio ad Chrysostomum*. Corpus Christianorum (Turnhout, 1974), pp. 254-256. Unfortunately, since none of the nine homilies for the Easter cycle (Palm Sunday and the Holy Week), transmitted under the name of Meletius in Georgian in the Mravaltavi homiliaries, has been published so far, it is difficult to assess their possible relevance for our work. However, nothing in a preliminary description of these homilies by Michel van Esbroeck seems to point in that direction; see M. van Esbroeck, *Les plus anciens homéliaires géorgiens: étude descriptive et historique*. Publications de l'Institut orientaliste de Louvain 10 (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1975), pp. 308-312.

possess no evidence whatsoever that during Meletius' life-time there was any attempt in Antiochene ecclesiastical circles, or anywhere else for that matter, to introduce the peculiar kind of Friday veneration described in our composition.

The figure of Meletius did achieve a certain level of prominence among Syriac-speaking Christians during Late Antiquity. Apparently, he was considered to be a saint on account of his adherence to the Nicene cause during the Arian crisis. There is a Syriac translation of the *Funeral Oration on Meletius* by Gregory of Nyssa, made before the seventh century.[62] The sixth-century East Syrian historiographer Barḥadbešabbā 'Arbāyā extols the bishop as a staunch defender of Nicene orthodoxy against Arianism in his *Ecclesiastical History* (chs. 8, 16).[63] A still unpublished text of apparently Christological content, ascribed to "the holy Meletius, patriarch of the city of Antioch", is preserved in ms. Deir al-Surian, Syr. 28 (West Syriac, 6th/7th c.), ff. 18r-19r.[64] There are also several quotations from Meletius' works included into Syriac patristic florilegia, such as those of mss. British Library, Add. 12155 and Add. 14532 (West Syriac, ca 8th c.).[65] We know that Meletius was liturgically commemorated on September 23, together with the martyr Babylas, according to the testimony of the West Syriac menologion from the late seventh century.[66]

It should be added that Meletius is mentioned also in two other edifying stories preserved in Syriac, the *Story of the Christian merchant Mark and the pagan Gaspar*, and the *Story of a rich man and his poor neighbour*, which appear in ms. BnF syr. 234, together with our composition.[67] In both these accounts, their narrators refer to Meletius as their source.[68] Whereas these two narratives are clearly related to each other, their relevance for understanding the figure and function of Meletius in the *Story* is not immediately apparent, especially given the fact that neither of them portrays him as a bishop.

The puzzling choice of Meletius of Antioch as one of the main protagonists in the *Story* is exacerbated by the perplexing figure of the holy man John, an undercover bishop of Alexandria in (self-assumed?) exile. It is difficult to explain satisfactorily the narrative purpose of the conflict that takes place between the two high-ranking protagonists, in which John gains the upper hand over Meletius. This abstruse narrative meander, which has no immediate bearing upon advancement of the main message of the *Story*, i.e. the promotion of Friday veneration, had to be meaningful and transparent to its intended audience. One might wonder if this sub-plot reflects in a veiled form some conflict or rivalry between the two ecclesiastical centres, that is Alexandria and Antioch, which took place during the time of the *Story*'s composition.

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[62] Still unpublished, the Syriac text can be found in mss. BL Add. 12163 (7th c.) and BL Add. 12165 (11th c.); see W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum, Acquired since the Year 1838*. 3 vols. (London, 1870-1872), Vol. 2, pp. 445, 850. See also M. F. G. Parmentier, "Syriac Translations of Gregory of Nyssa", *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 20 (1989), pp. 143-193, at pp. 187-188. On this work, see *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 99, (eds.) L. F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero (Leiden, 2010), p. 493.

[63] Edited and translated by F. Nau, *La première partie de l'Histoire de Barhadbešabba 'Arbaïa*. Patrologia Orientalis 23.2 (Paris, 1932), pp. 216-223, 306-309.

[64] See S. P. Brock and L. van Rompay, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts and Fragments in the Library of Deir al-Surian, Wadi al-Natrun (Egypt)*. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 227 (Leuven, 2014), p. 185.

[65] See Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts*, Vol. 2, pp. 925, 957.

[66] Edited and translated by F. Nau, *Martyrologes et ménologes orientaux, I–XIII. Un martyrologie et douze ménologes syriaques édités et traduits*. Patrologia Orientalis 10.1 (Paris, 1912), p. 34.

[67] Neither of these is yet published. For the former, see BnF syr. 234, ff. 280v-288r; BnF syr. 235, ff. 265r-275v; for the latter, BnF syr. 234, ff. 288r-291r. Like our composition, both these stories are summarized in Nau, "Hagiographie syriaque", pp. 191-196.

[68] Cf. statements ܕܚܒܠܢ ܩܕܡܝܐ ܕܟܪ ܟܘܡ ܕܟܬܒ (BnF syr. 234, f. 280v), and ܩܕܡܝܐ ܕܟܪ ܠ ܫܡܥܢ ܠܟܡ (f. 288r) in the former, and ܡܢ ܩܕܡܝܐ ܒ ܟܬܒ ,ܡܐ (f. 290v) in the latter.

The question of the time of composition of our work is complicated and cannot be answered with an absolute degree of certainty. The *terminus ante quem* is provided by the dating of the Syriac manuscript where it appears – BnF syr. 234, which was produced in the year 1192. It can hardly be doubted, however, that the text of the *Story*, as it appears in this textual witness, is not an autograph, but was copied by the anthology's compiler from some other, earlier manuscript. As to the *terminus post quem*, the situation is less certain, with the mention of the fourth-century bishop Meletius of Antioch being the most obvious anchor point.

A more secure approach to the dating and contextualising of the *Story* should be focused on the peculiar form of Friday veneration promoted by its author, namely the abstaining from work on this day. The only witness to this practice before the twelfth century that I have been able to discover so far comes from the writings of Jacob of Edessa (ca. 633-708), the famous West Syrian bishop and scholar.[69] It appears in the letter containing a series of questions and answers on canonical matters exchanged between Jacob and John the Stylite from the village of Litarba near Aleppo. In responsum #17, John asks the bishop about his opinion on "the observance of the day of Friday". Jacob answers by referring to the tradition, handed down by the apostles, regarding veneration of Wednesday and Friday, which requires "that the service and the morning prayers shall be performed on them and the reading of the sacred books before the people and the fast until the evening". Immediately after that, however, the bishop dismisses as non-apostolic the following practice that appears to be a recent innovation, introduced by some unidentified members of the clergy,—"But the observance (of ceasing) from work and labour of hands was spread by the clerics. On account of the observance of those that were commanded, and not of those that are not commanded, the observance (of ceasing) from work of hands is superfluous".[70] A shorter version of this responsum is preserved also in the *Nomocanon* of Gregory Barhebraeus (13th c.). Jacob is quoted there as confirming apostolic authority only for such forms of the veneration of Friday and Wednesday as fasting and liturgical reading of Scripture, and not for the prohibition of work.[71]

Jacob's answer demonstrates that at the time of its promulgation there existed within the West Syrian clergy a group which sought to augment the traditional repertoire of Friday veneration with the novel custom of abstaining from work. It is unclear when exactly this particular exchange of letters between Jacob and John the Stylite took place.[72] Given the humble and self-deprecatory tone of the introductory paragraph of Jacob's letter,[73] it seems likely that it was written after the tumultuous end of his tenure as bishop of Edessa. Jacob

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[69] See on him, A. Salvesen, "Jacob of Edessa's Life and Work: A Biographical Sketch", in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*. Monographs of the Peshiṭta Institute Leiden 18, (ed.) R. B. ter Haar Romeny (Leiden, 2008), pp. 1-10; R. G. Hoyland, "Jacob and Early Islamic Edessa", in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture*, pp. 11-24.

[70] ܠܐ ܐܫܠܡܬ ܠܝ ܗܕܐ ܡܠܦܢܘܬܐ ܫܠܝܚܝܬܐ. ܐܠܐ ܡܢ ܩܠܝܪܐ ܕܩܫܝܫܐ ܘܫܠܝ. ܠܗܠܝܢ ܕܐܦܠܐ ܗܘ ܡܨܛܠܝܢ ܟܠ ܐܢܫ. ܩܠܝܠܐ ܠܒܪ ܗܕܐ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܐܫܠܡܘܗ ܠܝ. ܡܛܠ ܢܛܘܪܬܐ ܘܡܛܠ ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܢܬܥܒܕ ܒܗܘܢ ܬܫܡܫܬܐ ܘܨܠܘܬܐ ܡܢ ܨܦܪܐ. ܘܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܩܕܡ ܥܡܐ. ܘܨܘܡܐ ܥܕܡܐ ܠܪܡܫܐ. ܢܛܘܪܬܐ ܕܝܢ ܕܡܢ ܥܒܕܐ ܘܦܘܠܚܢܐ ܕܐܝ̈ܕܝܐ. ܩܠܝܪܘ ܐܬܦܪܣܘܗ̇. ܡܛܠ ܢܛܘܪܬܐ ܕܗܠܝܢ ܕܦܩܝܕܢ ܗܘ̈ܝ. ܘܐܢܫܝ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܦܩܝܕܢ ܠܐ ܗܘ̈ܝ ܝܬܝܪܬܐ ܗܝ ܢܛܘܪܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܥܒܕܐ ܕܐܝ̈ܕܝܐ.; Vööbus, *Synodicon*, Vol. 1, p. 241 [Syr.], Vol. 2, p. 222 [trans. (modified)].

[71] ܡܛܠ ܢܛܘܪܬܐ ܕܥܪܘܒܬܐ ܕܐܪܒܥܐ ܡܢ ܥܒܕܐ ܘܦܘܠܚܢܐ ܕܐܝ̈ܕܝܐ: ܠܐ ܩܕܡ ܐܫܬܠܡܢܢ ܡܢ ܫ̈ܠܝܚܐ ܩܕ̈ܝܫܐ: ܐܠܐ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܡܢ ܥܡܐ ܘܬܫܡܫܬܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܟܬ̈ܒܐ ܩܕ̈ܝܫܐ. ܗܟܢܐ ܘܐܪܒܥܒܫܒܐ ܒܥܒܕܐ; P. Bedjan, *Nomocanon Gregorii Barhebræi* (Paris and Leipzig, 1898), p. 60. For a French translation, see F. Nau, *Les canons et les résolutions canoniques de Rabboula, Jean de Tella, Cyriaque d'Amid, Jacques d'Édesse, Georges des Arabes, Cyriaque d'Antioche, Jean III, Théodose d'Antioche et des Perses*. Ancienne littérature canonique syriaque 2 (Paris, 1906), p. 73.

[72] It is one of almost two dozen letters sent to John by Jacob. For a list and discussion, see J. J. van Ginkel, "Greetings to a Virtuous Man: The Correspondence of Jacob of Edessa", in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture*, pp. 67-81. Unfortunately, it is impossible to date most of these letters.

[73] Vööbus, *Synodicon*, Vol. 1, pp. 233-234 [Syr.], Vol. 2, pp. 215-216 [trans.].

was consecrated to the see around the year 684 and, after four years, retired to the convent of Mār Jacob of Kaišum, as a result of the prolonged conflict over enforcement of ecclesiastical law with his fellow clergymen, including Patriarch Julian II Romāyā, appointed in 686.[74] Since no other Syriac-speaking author or source before the time of Jacob addresses the issue of the prohibition of work on Friday, it seems reasonable to suggest that this pious practice was a recent development, which came into existence not long before the last decade of the seventh or the first decade of the eighth century. This date, then, would provide a more probable *terminus post quem* for the *Story*.

Our composition, thus, could be regarded as a propaganda piece composed and disseminated by the anonymous opponents of Jacob, who were seeking to popularise this un-canonical practice in the West Syrian community. The hypothesis of a West Syrian origin of the *Story* does help us to explain some obscure details of this composition, such, for instance, as the figure of the greedy "Roman" slave in §15. The fact that this is the only ethnic label that appears in our composition requires explanation, since its usage had to be rooted somehow in the collective imagination of the author's intended audience, and was supposed to trigger a particular reader response. What might be the narrative function of labelling as "Roman" this negative protagonist, whose primary role is to exemplify the vice of greediness? I believe that an answer to this question can be found if we try to understand it as a caricature of the Romans, rooted in the historical experience of the West Syrian community.

The accusation of greediness was levelled against Romans and their empire by many subjugated peoples, from Africa to Britain.[75] It is noteworthy that similar anti-Roman rhetoric is attested in the works of some West Syrian authors, where its beginnings can be traced back to the persecution of Syrian Miaphysites by the pro-Chalcedonian imperial administration during the sixth century. A good example of such anti-Roman sentiment is provided by the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, composed in the eighth century. While describing the persecution launched by the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch Paul I (518-521) against the Miaphysites of Syria, Palestine and Arabia, the chronicler bemoans how the armed forces of "the barbarian Romans" (*rhumāyē barbarāyē*) would "greedily and barbarically" (*ya'nāiṯ w-barbarāiṯ*) pillage property of the arrested followers of Severus and of their sympathisers.[76] Thus, in addition to its immediate narrative function, the character of the greedy slave in the *Story* might have evoked in its audience the memory of these traumatic events.

While certainly plausible, the contextualisation of the *Story*'s origins within the West Syrian tradition remains speculative, since we do not know how much popularity this form of Friday veneration had gained among the West Syrians, and whether its rebuttal by Jacob had an immediate effect. For example, one may wonder whether the inclusion of the *Story* into the manuscript BnF syr. 234 should be explained by its appeal to the merely antiquarian interests of its scribe or sponsor, or it shows that abstaining from work on Friday was still considered a legitimate practice among some West Syrians in twelfth-century Antioch.

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[74] On Jacob's activity as a canonist, see H. G. B. Teule, "Jacob of Edessa and Canon Law", in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture*, pp. 83-100; K. D. Jenner, "The Canons of Jacob of Edessa in the Perspective of the Christian Identity of His Day", in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture*, pp. 101-111; R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 13 (Princeton, 1997), pp. 601-610.

[75] Cf. Jugurtha's words *Romanos injustos, profunda avaritia* in Sallust, *Jug*. 81.1, or those of Calgacus in Tacitus, *Agric*. 30. See also A. Erskine, "Money-Loving Romans", *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 9 (1996), pp. 1-11, and the articles of W. V. Harris, E. S. Gruen, and J. Rich in *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources*. Interpreting Ancient History, (ed.) C. B. Champion (Malden, 2004), pp. 16-94.

[76] Edited by J. B. Chabot, *Incerti auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*. CSCO 91, 104, Syr. III.1-2 [43, 53]. 2 vols. (Paris, 1927, 1933), Vol. 2, pp. 21-22; translated by A. Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn, Parts III and IV: A.D. 488–775*. Mediaeval Sources in Translation 36 (Toronto, 1999), p. 53.

The latter scenario is supported by evidence from the works of Nikon of the Black Mountain (ca. 1025–1100), a Greek-speaking Melkite monk and ecclesiastical writer who was active in the monasteries of the Black Mountain to the west of Antioch.[77] In the *Taktikon*, one of his two major compositions which deals, among other things, with various canonical issues, Nikon addresses the issue of abstention from work on Friday on two occasions: in Logos 14.87-89 and Logos 39.4.[78] In the former passage, after reasserting the canonical prohibition against rest on Saturday aimed against "Judaising" Christians, he mentions some unspecified "others" (ἕτεροι) who "rest on the day of Friday" (ἀργοῦσιν τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς παρασκευῆς) "from the works that we were instructed to do by the Lord" (ἀπὸ ἔργων τῶν ὑποδειχθέντων ἡμῖν παρὰ κυρίου πρὸς ἐργασίαν). To demonstrate erroneousness of their position, Nikon quotes an unidentified "divine scripture" (θείᾳ γραφῇ) that explicitly prohibits this practice. In the second passage, he quotes this source at greater length, introducing it as "Of Saint Basil—that one should not rest on the day of Friday" (Τοῦ ἁγίου Βασιλείου. Ὅτι οὐ χρὴ ἀργεῖν ἐν ἡμέρα τῆς παρασκευῆς). It is noteworthy that according to this source, abstention from work on Friday is closely linked to oneiric divinatory practices, the exact nature of which is not clear from the text.

Nikon's polemical efforts demonstrate that the practice of resting on Friday gained some currency among the Melkite communities of the Antiochene patriarchate during the eleventh century, if not earlier. One particularly intriguing aspect of his evidence is the quote from the unknown work attributed to Basil of Caesarea. So far, I have not been able to identify source of this passage in the dossier of published works of Basil, genuine or spurious. Reading the Pseudo-Basilian excerpt one wonders what was the exact relationship between rest on Friday and divinatory practices, condemned by its author as "Satanic dreams" (ὀνειράτων σατανικῶν). Another open question in connection with Nikon's testimony is whether the custom of Friday rest was adopted by the Melkites under the influence of their West Syrian neighbours. Only further research into the liturgical and canonical developments within the two Christian communities during the early medieval period can enable scholars to answer these questions with any certainty.

4. Conclusion

All this said, the *Story* leaves us with more questions than answers. The principal problem that it poses to scholars is whether one should regard the novel form of Friday veneration, promoted in this composition, as a result of purely internal development within the religious tradition of Syriac Christianity, or understand it as a response to some external factors. In what concerns the latter, the fact that this form of Friday veneration is securely attested only at a time after the Arab conquest of the Near East may not be accidental. Reading the *Story* as an early medieval text and analysing it through a comparative prism, one cannot help but bring into discussion the prominent role of Friday in the Muslim religious tradition.

Authorised by the Qur'ān (cf. Sūrat al-Jumu'a 62:9-11), the importance of Friday as the weekly day of obligatory congregational prayer is attested during the earliest formative

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[77] On his life and writings, see J. Nasrallah, "Un auteur antiochien du XI^{e} siècle: Nicon de la Montagne Noire (vers 1025–début du XII^{e} s.)", *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 19 (1969), pp. 150-161; Θ. Γιάγκου, *Νίκων ο Μαυροριείτης: Βίος – Συγγραφικό έργο – Κανονική διδασκαλία* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1991); Ch. Hannick, *Das Taktikon des Nikon vom Schwarzen Berge: griechischer Text und kirchenslavische Übersetzung des 14. Jahrhunderts*. Monumenta linguae Slavicae dialecti veteris 62. 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2014), Vol. 1, pp. xxv-lxxii.

[78] For the Greek text, see Hannick, *Das Taktikon*, Vol. 1, pp. 430-432, Vol. 2, p. 940. I am most grateful to Joe Glynias for drawing my attention to this evidence.

period of the new religion.[79] In light of the prominence of Friday as the day of communal worship in Islam, one might consider a possibility that the *Story* engages in some sort of a dialogue with this tradition. It can hardly, though, be a case of a direct influence of the Muslim tradition upon the Syriac Christian author, since there is no prohibition or restriction of work on that day in Islam. As an alternative, one can mention the hypothesis of Carl Kaiser, who has suggested, in connection with the aforementioned responsum of Jacob of Edessa, that this novel practice might reflect a desire among some late seventh-century West Syrian Christians to secure the favour of their Muslim masters.[80]

Another possible way of contextualising the idiosyncratic version of Friday veneration in the *Story* is to understand it as an attempt to counterbalance the importance, with which this day was invested in the Muslim tradition, by ascribing to it a special prominence based on different principles. The prohibition of work on this day becomes, thus an exercise in drawing boundaries, that aims at making a greater difference between the two traditions of Friday veneration, the Christian and the Muslim. By demanding from their Christian audience a complete refraining from all kinds of work, the people behind the *Story* might be hoping to prevent them from participating in the activities that their Muslim neighbours would engage in on that day, including those related to the Friday market.[81] The impact of the Muslim Friday upon the Christian population of the cities of Bilād al-Šām was probably exacerbated by the fact that in many of these urban centres the Muslim Arabs would gather for communal prayer within the functioning churches or build the Friday mosques adjacent to the main Christian shrines, creating thus a shared sacred area.[82] The situation is made even more complicated by evidence from the early centuries of Islam, that some Muslims, apparently, did practice fasting on Friday.[83]

The phenomenon of blurred confessional boundaries during the first centuries after the Arab conquest of the Near East, and, related to this, processes of reciprocal boundary-making, are in need of further investigation, which cannot be undertaken in the framework of this article. The treatment of Friday in the *Story* can, however, be compared to other Christian strategies for coming to terms with the prestigious status ascribed to this day by Muslim tradition. One example of the conscious engagement with the Muslim notion of Friday among Syriac Christians is found in the so-called *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, an apologetic work composed in Syriac during the ninth century. Explaining the rise of Islam, the Christian author of the *Legend* presents the Christian monk Baḥīrā as the teacher of Muḥammad, who

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[79] On Friday worship in Islam and its various aspects, see P. D. Gaffney, "Friday Prayer", in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, (ed.) J.D. McAuliffe, 6 vols. (Leiden, 2003), Vol. 2, pp. 271-272; Sh. D. Goitein "The Origin and Nature of the Muslim Friday Worship", *The Muslim World* 49 (1959), pp. 183-195 (reprinted in: Sh. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*. Brill Classics in Islam 5 (Leiden, 2010), pp. 111-125); *Idem*, "Beholding God on Friday", *Islamic Culture* 34:3 (1960), pp. 163-168; N. Calder, "Friday Prayer and the Juristic Theory of Government: Sarakhsī, Shīrāzī, Māwardī", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49:1 (1986), pp. 35-47.

[80] C. Kayser, *Die Canones Jacob's von Edessa übersetzt und erläutert* (Leipzig, 1886), p. 181.

[81] Cf. §2 of the *Story*, where all 'profitable' activities, and not just those related to agriculture and crafts, are prohibited on Friday.

[82] See S. Bashear, "Qibla Musharriqa and Early Muslim Prayer in Churches", *The Muslim World* 81:3-4 (1991), pp. 267-282; M. Guidetti, "The Contiguity between Churches and Mosques in Early Islamic Bilād al-Shām", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 76:2 (2013), pp. 229-258; *Idem*, *In the Shadow of the Church: The Building of Mosques in Early Medieval Syria*. Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World, 8 (Leiden, 2017).

[83] See I. Goldziher, "Usages juifs d'après la littérature religieuse des musulmans", *Revue des études juives* 28 (1894), pp. 75-94, at 83-84; G. Vajda, "Jeûne musulman et jeûne juif", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 12-13 (1937-1938), pp. 367-385, at 379.

instructed him, among other things, to establish Friday as the day of "a great congregation … and a fixed prayer".[84]

However one might conceive of the relationship between our composition and the Muslim tradition of Friday worship, the *Story* should also be analysed in the larger context of different approaches towards Friday that developed throughout Christendom during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. It is a task for future studies to situate the *Story* in relation to various trajectories of Christian Friday veneration, attested in such works as the *Legend of the Twelve Fridays*, a popular composition attested in Greek, Slavonic, Latin and several vernaculars,[85] or the corpus of hagiographical works associated with the cult of St Parasceve, a female martyr popular both in the Byzantine East and Latin West.[86] A comprehensive analysis of this rich material might reveal some common patterns as well as regional differences in the evolution of Christian attitudes and practices related to Friday.[87]

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[84] Edited and translated by B.H. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam*. History of Christian-Muslim Relations 9 (Leiden, 2009), p. 283. The reason for the choice of Friday, provided in the *Legend*, is that on this day Baḥīrā sent to the Arabs the book of the Qur'ān on the horn of a cow (allusion to Sūrat al-Baqarah).

[85] For the Greek text, see С. В. Иванов and М.Л. Кисилиер, "Два ранее не издававшихся греческих текста 'Сказания о 12-ти пятницах' и славянская традиция", *Byzantinoslavica* 72:1-2 (2014), pp. 310-339. On Latin and vernacular versions, see S.V. Ivanov, "The Legend of Twelve Golden Fridays in the Western Manuscripts. Part I: Latin", in *Colloquia Classica et Indo-Germanica V: Studies in Classical Philology and Indo-European Languages*. Acta linguistica Petropolitana 7.1 (St Petersburg, 2011), pp. 561-572; *Idem*, "The Legend of the Twelve Golden Fridays in the Western Manuscripts. Part I: Latin. Addenda et Corrigenda. Part II: Vernacular – II.1 French, II.2 Italian", in *Colloquia Classica et Indo-Germanica VI*. Acta linguistica Petropolitana 10.1 (St Petersburg, 2014), pp. 347-367; *Idem*, "The Legend of the Twelve Golden Fridays in the Western Manuscripts. Part II: Vernacular – II.3 Dutch, Low German, High German", in *Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology XVIII: Proceedings of the 18th Conference in Memory of Professor Joseph M. Tronsky, June 23-25, 2014* (St Petersburg, 2014), pp. 319-331. On Slavonic versions, see С. В. Иванов, "'Сказание о 12 пятницах' в рукописях ИРЛИ РАН (Пушкинского Дома)", in *Труды Объединенного научного совета по гуманитарным проблемам и историко-культурному наследию 2011* (С.-Петербург, 2012), pp. 34-70; J. Vugrinec, "*Legenda o dvanaest petaka* iz *Tkonskog zbornika*", *Čakavska rič* 38:1-2 (2010), pp. 227-272.

[86] See F. Halkin, "La passion de sainte Parascève par Jean d'Eubée", in *Polychronion: Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*. Forschungen zur griechischen Diplomatik und Geschichte 1, (ed.) P. Wirth (Heidelberg, 1966), pp. 226-237; J. L. Scharpé, *Parasceve–Venera–Petka–Vineri: Passionum graece, latine, slavice, romanice manipulus* (Academisch proefschrift; Rijksuniversiteit Gent, 1971).

[87] For a recent attempt to trace the development of several of these traditions, see a somewhat discursive article by B. Lourié, "Friday Veneration in the Sixth- and Seventh-Century Christianity and the Christian Legends on Conversion of Naǧrān", in *The Coming of the Comforter: When, Where, and to Whom? Studies on the Rise of Islam and Various Other Topics in Memory of John Wansbrough*. Orientalia Judaica Christiana 3, (eds.) C. A. Segovia and B. Lourié (Piscataway, 2012), pp. 131-230. Among earlier contributions, one should mention А.Н. Веселовскій, "Опыты по исторіи развитія христіанской легенды. II. Берта, Анастасія и Пятница. 4. Сказаніе о 12-ти пятницахъ", *Журналъ Министерства народнаго просвѣщенія* 185:6 (1876), pp. 326-367; *Idem*, "Опыты по исторіи развитія христіанской легенды. II. Берта, Анастасія и Пятница (Опытъ миѳологическаго анализа). 6. Freiheit – Елевѳерій", *Журналъ Министерства народнаго просвѣщенія* 191:5 (1877), pp. 76-125.