West Syrian Christology in the sixth century:
The Psalm Commentary of Daniel of Ṣalaḥ

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For all students of early Christology it is clear that scholarship on the subject is divided into a pre-Grillmeier era, and the era that began with his monumental series of volumes entitled *Christ in Christian Tradition*[1]. The great strength of the volumes, and the challenge for their readers, is that they present a wide variety of voices, drawn from many different Christological positions, speaking in the full range of Late Antique languages, and then subject them to detailed analysis. No attempt is made to minimise the differences between these voices, even when they appear to emerge from the same broad schools of thought, but each is treated separately and seriously. As a reader of Syriac sources, this is something for which I am particularly grateful. To take one example, that of the Miaphysites who were opposed to the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), their Christology has far too often in the past been extrapolated only from the Syriac translations of Greek writers such as Severus of Antioch († 538), or has been treated as though it were a harmonious whole, with all adherents of the anti-Chalcedonian position being presumed to hold the same beliefs and theological approaches. Within the volumes of *Christ in Christian Tradition*, however, one can find a wide range of different Miaphysite approaches to the person of Christ, from all the major linguistic traditions, with strong analysis and contextualisation, and this has been transformative for our understanding of the Christological debates that continued for many centuries after Chalcedon declared the controversy concluded.

Inevitably, there remain many other distinctive and interesting Christological voices who wait to be added to future expansions of the great work of Grillmeier and Hainthaler. Among these, I will argue, is that of Daniel of Ṣalaḥ, a previously rather obscure sixth-century Syrian Orthodox writer, who is nevertheless a fascinating source of information for the study of contemporary Christological beliefs. But to understand his Christology it is first necessary to know something about the author and his historical context.

Daniel was a Syriac-speaking Miaphysite theologian and abbot[2], who is best known for his 'Great Commentary on the Psalms' which, despite his frequent protestations that he is being concise, is divided into three volumes and contains more than 1200 manuscript pages, some 225,000 words in Syriac, 380,000 in English translation[3]. This is the earliest commentary on the Psalms known to have been composed in Syriac, and it came to exercise a profound influence on successive generations of Syrian Orthodox exegetes. It was translated in the eleventh century into Armenian[4], and in the eighteenth century into Arabic. The commentary is dated by Daniel himself in his exegesis of Psalm 83 to the year AG 853 (AD 542), soon after the death of Severus of Antioch, and in the very year in which Jacob Baradaeus (Burdʿono) was consecrated bishop as part of a plan, endorsed by the empress Theodora, to save the Miaphysite movement from extinction.

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[1] From volume 2.2 on, these were produced in collaboration with Theresia Hainthaler, who has made particular efforts to introduce evidence and voices from outside the familiar core group of Greek-speaking theologians.

[2] For an overview of Daniel's life and work see *David G.K. Taylor,* Daniel of Ṣalaḥ, in: Sebastian P. Brock, Aaron M. Butts, George A. Kiraz, Lucas Van Rompay (eds.), Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage (Piscataway 2011), 114-115. The key articles on the theology of his commentary are Ludwig Lazarus, 'Ueber einen

Daniel was asked to write the commentary on the Psalms, according to letters prefixed to it, by Abbot John of the monastery of Mor Eusebios of Kaphra d-Barta north-west of Apamea in Syria. Abbot John is listed in the Chronicle of Michael the Syrian († 1199) amongst those condemned by the emperor Justinian for his leadership of the opposition to Chalcedon[5]. It appears to be the same John for whom a copy of the Acts of the second council of Ephesus of 449 was produced in AD 535[6], and in the colophon of that text he is described as ‘a mighty wall of adamant’ protecting his flock against ‘the ravening wolves’. It is worth noting that John was forced to defend his community not only against the Chalcedonians, but also against opponents within the Miaphysite movement. John’s monastery of Mor Eusebios was not the only convent in the village of Kaphra d-Barta, but had a rival in the monastery of Mor Moshe, which was one of the key centres of the followers of Julian of Halicarnassus (fl. 520), often known as the ‘Phantasiasts’ or ‘Aphthartodocetae’, and which had produced one of their principal bishops, named Romanos[7].

Psalmencommentar aus der ersten Hälfte des VI. Jahrhunderts p. Chr.’, WZKM 9 (1895), 85–108, 181–224; *Peter Cowe,* ‘Daniel of Ṣalaḥ as Commentator on the Psalter’, in: Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), Studia Patristica 20 (Leuven 1989), 152–159; *David G.K. Taylor,* The Christology of the Syriac Psalm Commentary (AD 541/2) of Daniel of Ṣalaḥ and the Phantasiast Controversy, in: Maurice F. Wiles and Edward J. Yarnold (eds.), Studia Patristica 35 (Leuven 2001), 508–515; *idem*, The Psalm Commentary of Daniel of Ṣalaḥ and the formation of sixth-century Syrian Orthodox identity, in: Bas ter Haar Romeny (ed.), Religious Origins of Nations? The Christian Communities of the Middle East, [special edition of] Church History and Religious Culture 89 (2009), 65–92; republished as a book with the same title (Leiden 2010).

[3] I have been working on a six-volume edition and annotated translation of this commentary for some years, and hope that the first volumes will be published in due course. For details of the manuscripts and versions see *David G.K. Taylor,* The Manuscript Tradition of Daniel of Ṣalaḥ’s Psalm Commentary, in: René Lavenant, (ed.), Symposium Syriacum VII = OCA 256 (Rome 1998), 61-69.

[4] An Oxford research student, Yervant Kutchukian, is currently studying the Armenian version for his doctorate.

[5] *Jean-Baptiste Chabot,* Chronique de Michel le Syrien: Patriarche Jacobite d’Antioche (1166–1199) (Paris 1899–1910), IX.14.

[6] BL Add 14530; see *William Wright,* Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum, Acquired since the Year 1838, 3 vols. (London 1870-1872), ms. dccccv, vol. II, cols. 1027–1030. By 567, however, John had disappeared from the scene, for one Qustantinos is then listed as abbot of this important monastery.

[7] The Phantasiasts claimed that even before the resurrection Christ was not susceptible to physical corruption or to human passions, and so were adjudged by Severus and his followers to be denying Christ’s full humanity. The

According to Abbot John's letter, Daniel came from Tella d-Mawzelet in Osrhoene (ancient Constantina, modern Viranşehir south-west of Diyarbakir, Turkey)[8], and is now said to be 'far distant' from Apamea. In the tradition he is known as Daniel Ṣalḥoyo, and Michael the Syrian († 1199) appears to refer to the same individual as being the abbot of a monastery in Beyt Ṣaliḥe[9], a site possibly to be located on the banks of the Euphrates, just south of Dura Europos[10]. European scholars have usually stated that he came from the better-known village of Ṣalaḥ in the Ṭur ʿAbdin, though this is denied by Syrian Orthodox scholars.

Michael the Syrian also tells us that a letter Daniel had written to the monks of the monastery of Mor Bassus in opposition to the teachings of Julian of Halicarnassus and the 'Phantasiasts' formed the basis of the official Syrian Orthodox response to the edict of the emperor Justinian, issued in 565, that 'all bishops everywhere' should accept Julian's teachings[11]. This letter was presumably written some years before the edict of Justinian and then recycled.

Daniel was, therefore, a mid-sixth-century theologian and intellectual leader of some importance within the Syrian Miaphysite movement, who was famed for his profound knowledge of the Scriptures but was also capable of handling fierce contemporary controversy. It was not by chance then that he was personally asked by Abbot John to write the commentary on the Psalms. But why was a commentary on the Psalms the work requested of him? Why was a work of biblical exegesis needed in the very years when the Syrian Miaphysites were rebuilding the destroyed hierarchy of their faction, and so were moving steadily towards the creation of an independent church that no longer depended upon imperial patronage? I have argued in an earlier paper that the choice of text was no accident[12].

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split fundamentally weakened the Miaphysite movement, and lasted for many centuries. See *René Draguet,* Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche sur l'incorruptibilité du corps du Christ (Louvain 1924); *Alois Grillmeier and Theresia Hainthaler,* Christ in Christian Tradition 2. From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604), Part 2. The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century (London 1995), 25, 79–111; *Ute Possekel,* Julianism in Syriac Christianity, in: Peter Bruns and Heinz Otto Luthe (eds), Orientalia Christiana: Festschrift für Hubert Kaufhold zum 70. Geburtstag (Wiesbaden 2013), 437-458; *Yonatan Moss,* Incorruptible Bodies: Christology, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity = Christianity in Late Antiquity 1 (Oakland Ca. 2016).

[8] Later manuscripts of his Psalm Commentary describe him as being the bishop of Tella d-Mawzelet but he is not listed amongst those bishops ordained by Jacob Baradaeus, and neither has any reference to his episcopacy yet been found in any other source, so it looks as though this is the product of later confusion, rather than the preservation of authentic biographical data.

[9] So *Michael the Syrian,* Chronicle, IX.34.

[10] So *Ignatios E. Barsaum,* Ktōbô d-Berûlê Bdîrê d-ʻal Mardût Yûlfōnê Sûryōyê Hdîrê (Qamishli 1967; translated from the Arabic of the 2nd ed., 1956, by Philoxenos Y. Dolabani), 332–35; English translation by *Matti Moosa,* The Scattered Pearls: A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences (2nd ed.; Piscataway 2003), 294–296.

[11] *Michael the Syrian,* Chronicle, IX.34.

[12] *David G.K. Taylor,* The Psalm Commentary of Daniel of Ṣalaḥ and the formation of sixth-century Syrian Orthodox identity, in: Bas ter Haar Romeny, (ed.), Religious Origins of Nations? The Christian Communities of the Middle East, [special edition of] Church History and Religious Culture 89 (2009), 65-92; republished as a book with the same title (Leiden 2010).

The recitation of the Psalms was the main feature of monastic and parochial offices of prayer (all 150 chanted every day in the monasteries, and once a week in churches), and their memorization was a central part of Syriac education[13]. They were one of the first things taught to children, and candidates for ordination were required to know all of the Psalms by heart. Thus John of Tella refused to ordain anyone who could not recite all the Psalms and sign his own name, although the latter condition could, if necessary, be waived[14]; and the first recorded synod of the Church of the East, in 410, states: ‘he who is poor in knowledge and cannot recite the whole of the Psalms by heart cannot become even a sub-deacon’[15]. Daniel himself wrote:

> ‘the power of this book of Psalms is comparable with (that of all) the books of the New Testament and the Old, for (the Psalms) speak about everything, about creation, and about the providence of God, and about the revelation in the flesh of Emmanuel, and about the future judgement, and about the kingdom which is prepared for the saints, and about good actions.’[16]

The Psalms were thus regarded as embodying the quintessence of the divine scriptures. In these circumstances it is clear that to influence and even control the interpretation of the Psalms was a matter of the greatest importance, and a sure means of influencing all who recited and heard them—that is, the entire community. For Abbot John, it must have been very desirable to acquire an anti-Chalcedonian and anti-Phantasiast commentary on the Psalms that also promoted the mainstream theology of the emerging Syriac Miaphysite church.

The need for a Miaphysite commentary on the Psalms was also heightened by two further factors. First, it was the second-century Peshiṭta text of the Psalms (translated from the Hebrew Bible rather than the Greek Septuagint) which was used in the liturgy of all the Syriac churches, and yet there was no earlier commentary on this specific text, and the many passages in which it differed from the Greek text. Secondly, the most influential available Syriac commentary at this period was the translation of the Greek Psalm commentary of Theodore of

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[13] Cf. *J.B. (‘Ben’) Segal,* Mesopotamian Communities from Julian to the Rise of Islam, PBA 41 (1955), 109–139.

[14] Ernest W. Brooks, John of Ephesus: Lives of the Eastern Saints II = PO 18.4 (Paris 1924), 316.

[15] Jean-Baptiste Chabot, Synodicon orientale ou recueil de synodes nestoriens (Paris 1902), p. 29 (cf. pp. 127, 549).

[16] Prefatory letter of Daniel to Abbot John in his Psalm Commentary.

Mopsuestia[17], and for obvious reasons this was no longer acceptable to the Miaphysites[18], though signs of Theodore's enduring exegetical influence are still to be found both in the theology of moderate Miaphysites such as Jacob of Serugh, and in early Syrian Orthodox manuscripts of the Psalms[19].

Daniel emphasises the internal thematic coherence of each individual Psalm—in fact he becomes very apologetic if he is unable to identify the common theme running throughout each Psalm—and seeks to bring this out by constructing his commentary in the form of one hundred and fifty self-contained homilies, in each of which he engages with both the historical pragmatic level of interpretation, as well as with a more profound spiritual level. This had obvious pedagogic advantages.

Daniel attributes all of the Psalms to King David himself, a prophet through whose words the divine Logos speaks, and a prophet who in his life and actions foretells and pre-enacts the life and actions of Christ. So not only did David, by means of the Spirit, speak of the divine economy in Christ, of the kingdom of God, and of the trials and tribulations of his followers the saints, but in his own life and person he foreshadowed in many different respects those of the Saviour[20]. Daniel is thus interested to locate each Psalm within David's life—a characteristic of earlier Antiochene exegesis—but since Daniel considered David to have been a prophet, he also argues—in defiance of the Antiochene exegetes, and especially Theodore—that most of the Psalms refer either to Christ, or to his church on earth, or to the coming judgement and kingdom. He is particularly interested in the fact that David is frequently said to have composed his Psalms whilst being persecuted and pursued either by King Saul, or by his son Absalom who usurped him. This he ties in with the suffering of Christ and the Apostles, but also of course with the experience of his own community. So for Daniel the Psalms are not just a Christological handbook, but in many ways the Christological handbook.

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[17] For the surviving Greek and Latin passages of Theodore's commentary cf. *Robert Devreesse,* Le Commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes (I–LXXX) = ST 93 (Vatican City 1939); reprinted, with an English translation, by *Robert C. Hill,* Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on Psalms 1–81 = Writings from the Greco-Roman World 5 (Atlanta 2006); and for the Syriac fragments, excluding citations in East Syrian commentaries, *Lucas van Rompay,* Théodore de Mopsueste: Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes (Psaume 118 et Psaumes 138–148) = CSCO 435, 436 (Leuven 1982).

[18] Mention should also be made of the Syriac translation of the commentary on the Psalms by Athanasius, which also, of course, expounded the Septuagint text. See *Robert W. Thomson,* Athanasiana Syriaca. IV. Expositio in Psalmos = CSCO 386, 387 (Leuven 1977). 'Abdišo' of Nisibis († 1318) attributed a commentary on the Psalms to St. Ephrem (see *Yousef Habbi,* Catalogus Auctorum. 'Abdišo' Sobensis († 1318), [Baghdad 1986], p. 63), and although there are Armenian and Georgian Psalm commentaries with this attribution it is highly unlikely to be of genuine Ephremic origin.

[19] See *David G.K. Taylor,* The Psalm Headings in the West Syrian Tradition, in: Bas ter Haar Romeny (ed.), The Peshitta: Its Use in Literature and Liturgy = Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Leiden 15 (Leiden 2006), 365–378.

[20] See the introduction to the commentary on Ps 18.

In his exegesis Daniel draws upon both Greek and Syrian traditions, with many ideas which find their closest parallels in the fourth-century writings of Ephrem († 373) and Aphrahat (fl. 337-345), and others that reflect the eschatological beliefs of Jacob of Serugh († 521)[21], but there is evidence that he must have known Greek exegetical writings, such as those of Eusebius of Caesarea, and Greek texts both biblical (such as the book of Revelation, excluded from the Syriac New Testament canon)[22] and non-biblical, such as the *Physiologus*[23]. There are also passing references to philosophical theology (albeit in a popular form) which is ultimately of Greek rather than Syriac origin. In this blending of Greek and Syriac ideas he is of course producing a distinctively Syrian Orthodox exegesis and theology. This is evident in his Christological interpretation of the Psalms – although it should be clearly stated that Daniel did not set out to produce a technical theological treatise and so it is not always easy to systematize his thought.

For reasons that are no longer clear, the great Maronite scholar Assemani tried to place Daniel amongst the pro-Chalcedonian fathers[24], but his unmistakeable Miaphysite views are frequently repeated[25]. Occasionally these are conveniently cited in creedal (or slogan) form. For example, in his commentary on Psalm 150.2, the concluding Psalm of the Syriac Psalter and thus of Daniel's commentary, he cites the words of the Psalm and then continues, as though still speaking with the Psalmists voice, with a summary of his creed:

> '*Praise him in his mightiness, praise him in the abundance of his greatness*', praise him in his inhomination (*b-meṯbarnšōnūṯeh*)[26], praise him in his mightiness and in his weakness, and in his littleness and in his contemptibleness, while we acknowledge him (as) one God, one Son the Messiah, from the two of them, from divinity and from humanity, one nature (*kyōnō*), one marvelous henosis (*ḥdōyūṯō*); one nature alone is spoken of, who is incarnate and made man, possessing both great attributes and humble attributes, divine attributes and human attributes, which are not to be divided into two natures or two hypostaseis (*qnōmē*),

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[21] See Michael D. Guinan, 'Where are the dead? Purgatory and immediate retribution in James of Sarug', in Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina (ed.), Symposium Syriacum 1972 = OCA 197 (Rome 1974), 541–549; and *David G.K. Taylor,* The purgatorial river of fire in sixth-century Syriac eschatology, forthcoming.

[22] Commentary on Ps 9.15. See *David G.K. Taylor,* L'Apocalypse de Jean en syriaque: des origines à Diamper, in Jean-Claude Haelewyck (ed.), Le Nouveau testament en syriaque = Études syriaques 14 (Paris 2017), 27-53, especially p. 31.

[23] Commentary on Ps 18.33.

[24] *Joseph S. Assemani,* Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino Vaticana (Rome 1719), vol. I, pp. 487-495.

[25] In addition to the passages cited below, see Daniel's commentaries on Pss 84.9, 87.7.

[26] Transliterations of key Syriac terms are based on the graphic forms of the words, following West Syriac scribal conventions, but are not intended to indicate every detail of either ancient or modern pronunciation.

> but are one in the henosis of the one hypostasis and of the one nature of the God-Logos who became incarnate (*d-ʾeṯbasar*)[27].

Here, in Syriac form, after a use of paradoxical terminology that could have come straight from the pen of Ephrem (who likes to speak of ‘the Great one who became small’, ‘the Creator of all who became a baby’)[28], there is a clear articulation of the standard formulation (from 429) of Cyril of Alexandria († 444), ‘one nature of God the Word incarnate’ (μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη), so beloved of the anti-Chalcedonian party.

The developed version of this Cyrilline formula produced by Severus of Antioch[29] is also to be found in Daniel’s homily on Ps 8:

> [The faithful] should accept his human attributes together with his divine attributes, ... and should regard Emmanuel as undivided, one prosopon (*parṣūpō*), one hypostasis (*qnōmō*), and one nature (*kyōnō*) of the God-Logos, God incarnate.[30]

From these passages it will also be noted that, following the Alexandrian tradition of both Cyril and Severus, Daniel prefers to refer to the second person of the Trinity as either ‘the God-Logos’ (*ʾalōhō melṯō*) or, in the context of his self-revelation on earth, Emmanuel (i.e. ‘God with us’). The names ‘Jesus’ (*yešūʿ*) or ‘Christ’ (*mšīḥō*) are rarely employed, and then usually in quotations from Paul or the Gospels.

The two quotations given above are, however, rather untypical of the commentary. Firstly because Daniel is not writing a systematic work of theology, and so rarely provides formal definitions or creedal formulae. And secondly, because he does not generally seem to be concerned with the partisans of Chalcedon. Indeed, although listing various opponents of the church[31], it is the Arians and Nestorians who are singled out for special mention, and it is their views that Daniel frequently combats in the course of his commentary[32]. The Chalcedonians are rarely named as such, but here there is the obvious difficulty that for the Miaphysites the Dyophysites of Chalcedon are usually just considered to be a resurgent sect of Nestorians, and so are often simply subsumed under the label ‘Nestorians’, just as other authors subsume the Nestorians under the label ‘Paul of Samosata’ or ‘the Jews’ (since the Nestorians are considered the direct heirs of the Jewish teaching that Jesus was a human being and not divine). So a monastic canon attributed to Philoxenus of Mabbug († 523) states: ‘A monk who has become a companion to the new Jews, has crucified God together with the old Jews’[33].

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[27] Commentary on Ps 150.2.

[28] See *Sebastian Brock,* The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem, 2nd ed., Cistercian Studies 124 (Kalamazoo 1992), 24-25. For further examples of his use of paradox see the commentaries on Ps 17 and 93.

[29] See *Joseph Lebon,* La christologie du monophysisme syrien, in: A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds), Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart I (Würzburg 1951), 425-580, especially p. 461, 465; *Roberta C. Chesnut,* Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug and Jacob of Sarug (London 1976), 11.

[30] Introduction to the Commentary on Ps 8.

[31] In his commentary on Ps 83.2-4 Daniel lists pagans, Jews, Paul of Samosata, Artimon, Bardaisan, Mani, Photinus, Sabellius, Valentinus, Marcion, Julian (the Apostate) and Eutyches, as well as the Arians and Nestorians.

[32] For the Arians, see the commentaries on Ps 2.7, 27 (introduction), 43.3, 57 (introduction), 110.1. For the Nestorians, see the commentaries on Ps 18.30-31, 69.10, 78.36-7, 110.1.

As a sample of Daniel’s criticism of the ‘Nestorians’, whose views are caricatured as being a rejection of Christ’s divinity, here is a short passage from the commentary on Psalm 18.32:

> Now, in order that the Holy Spirit might make known that these [words] were spoken in prophecy about God the Word, ... and while putting to the test the impudence of the Nestorians, those who said concerning our Lord and Saviour that he is not God, he cried out through the prophet and said, *because there is no God apart from the Lord, and there is none who is as powerful as our God*. Whenever the heretics chant (this verse), let them know this; there is no other God but this one who was revealed in the flesh, and there is none who is as powerful as him, because he alone is God. And even though he willed it and grew small in his inhomination, his being small does not alienate him from his divinity, and his humanity does not remove him from his [divine]-being (*ʾīṯūṯō*).

Daniel’s chief concern in his commentary, however, appears to be to counter the teachings of Julian of Halicarnassus (fl. 520) and his followers, known to us as the ‘Phantasiasts’ or ‘Aphthartodocetae’[34], and it is this theme which permeates his entire work. Only fragments of Julian’s own writings survive, but from these it would appear that his system was built upon the belief that Adam’s fall not only resulted in human nature becoming subject to suffering and death, but that it became the bearer of corruption, φθορά, which was caused by and gave rise to sin. He primarily seems to have identified this sin as concupiscence, but for him corruption was also strongly linked to suffering and mortality. It was inconceivable to Julian, therefore, that although after the resurrection – as was generally believed – Christ’s body was incorrupt, ἄφθαρτος, yet beforehand it could have been corrupt, φθαρτός, for this would require Christ to have shared in Adam’s sin and even to have been liable to lustful thoughts. Yet Julian was also aware of the importance of defending Christ's full humanity, and so he emphasized his Virgin birth and his voluntary acceptance of suffering, and this allowed him to describe Christ as ἀπαθὴς ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν, impassible in the passions, and ἀθάνατος ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ, immortal in death.

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[33] See *Arthur Vööbus,* Syriac and Arabic Documents Regarding Legislation Relative to Syrian Asceticism = PETSE 11 (Stockholm 1960), p. 54 (canon 7).
[34] See note 7 above.

The impact of these teachings was felt amongst Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians alike[35], although among the Syrian Orthodox it led to a permanent church schism, with a separate Julianist patriarch and episcopal hierarchy, that continued until at least the ninth century. The chief theological response to Julian amongst the Miaphysites was produced by his erstwhile friend Severus of Antioch, and some of Severus' numerous anti-Julianist writings were translated into Syriac as early as 528 by Paul of Kallinikos[36]. There are some other Syriac anti-Julianist texts, mostly florilegia and short discourses dating from the late-sixth or seventh century, but many are translations of Greek originals[37]. Daniel's commentary is thus of great importance as a witness to this controversy both because of its date, early in the controversy, and because it is a native Syriac composition.

Only rarely does Daniel specifically refer to the Phantasiasts, and then often in association with the Manichees. As with Chalcedonians classified as Nestorians, and Nestorians classified as Jews, the association of the Phantasiasts with Manichees has an obvious polemical motivation. One such reference occurs in the commentary on Psalm 22.14 where he calls them *bnay hagōgūṯō* ('children of fantasy', Phantasiasts) and contrasts their belief that the Saviour's body is impassible in his passions (an exact citation of Julian's ἀπαθὴς ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν) with the words of the Psalmist 'I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint' which he attributes to Emmanuel on the cross.

More significantly, the whole commentary, over and over again, emphasises that the salvific purpose of the God-Logos was to restore incorruption and immortality to humanity, which had been subject to corruption and death since Adam. This is not a new theme, for it had already fascinated Athanasius of Alexandria († 373)[38], amongst others[39], but its development and dominance here is striking. Daniel would appear to be responding to the obvious interest of contemporary Christians in the salvific theme of corruption, which was no doubt encouraged by the writings of the Julianists, but by reformulating it in orthodox terms he is able to turn it against them.

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[35] Indeed, in 565 the emperor Justinian issued a short-lived edict that 'all bishops everywhere' should accept Julianism.

[36] See *Robert Hespel*, Sévère d'Antioche. La polémique antijulianiste I = CSCO 244 (Louvain 1964); II.A = CSCO 295 (Louvain 1968); II.B = CSCO 301 (Louvain 1969); III = CSCO 318 (Louvain 1971).

[37] See D*raguet*, Julien d'Halicarnasse, 81-90.

[38] See *Grillmeier and Hainthaler,* Christ in Christian Tradition 2/2, 98.

[39] See *Ysabel de Andia,* Homo vivens. Incorruptibilité et divinisation de l'homme selon Irénée de Lyon (Paris 1986).

His formulation of a soteriology centred on the concept of incorruption or uncorruptedness has several important elements. Like the Patriarch Severus – and to some extent Julian, but not all of his later followers – he acknowledges the existence in Emmanuel of 'blameless passions' (ἀδιάβλητα πάθη, in Syriac *ḥašē lō ʿdīlē*)[40] such as hunger, thirst, tiredness, which are not connected to sin although they are a consequence of the fallen, and thus corrupt, human state. Like them he also acknowledges that this submission to passions was a voluntary act by the Logos, but whereas they seem to regard this voluntary acquiescence as occurring on each separate occasion during the incarnation[41], for Daniel this appears to be a voluntary act that occurred once at the moment of incarnation – an interpretation that is an obvious extension of Daniel's rejection of the common Chalcedonian practice of attributing each of Christ's actions, emotions, or attributes to either the divinity or the humanity in Emmanuel, a practice which Daniel regards as insulting to God[42]. Nor in Daniel's scheme are these passions a mild source of embarrassment that need to be explained away, instead they are integrated into the scheme of salvation. For Daniel, not only did Emmanuel really hunger when fasting[43], and not only was he really afraid of dying[44], thus showing that he was fully human, but Emmanuel permitted passions, needs, and suffering precisely in order to combat them:

> He allowed the blameless passions to course in his natural emotions against his flesh, and whilst he permitted them to have power he did not let them destroy the body totally, but by means of them he opposed the passions so that, as with a shield stopping arrows, he brought passions against his passions.[45]

Again:

> The glory is that he fought with the passions according to the law, and not tyrannically or by main force, but he put on a suffering and mortal body and conquered and subdued the passions.[46]

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[40] This is the main theme of his commentaries on Pss 22 and 69. See also the commentaries on Pss 35.3, 65.9 (where the description *ḥašē nōmūsōyē*, 'lawful passions', is used), 68.1-2.

[41] See *Grillmeier & Hainthaler*, Christ in Christian Tradition 2/2, 106.

[42] Commentary on Ps 69.10.

[43] Commentary on Ps 69.10.

[44] Commentary on Ps 18 (introduction).

[45] Commentary on Ps 35.2-3.

[46] Commentary on Ps 45.3.

The emphasis on it being a 'struggle according to the law' is repeated on several occasions[47], as also is the argument – echoing the kenotic theology well known from Philippians 2.5-8 – that only because the Logos voluntarily accepted mortality did death have any claim on him, and only so could death, Sheol, and corruption be conquered.

Another key feature of Daniel's opposition to Julian is the development of the theme, already found in Severus[48], that the human body is not the vehicle or cause of sin.

> Now he who wilfully sins, being led by lustful passions, and yet by will returns and demonstrates his repentance to the creator and receives forgiveness, he becomes the herald of the creator (declaring) that there is no sin mixed in human nature, but it is the will which gives birth to it, and destroys it.[49]

Even more emphatically, Daniel in his commentary on Psalm 35.2 writes:

> Now the armour which God put on ... was the suffering and mortal body which he joined to himself from the Virgin's womb. Since the warrior had put on Adam so the guilty one was made visible in him, for the God-Logos wished to demonstrate that the body is not the cause of destruction and defeat. So he made him his armour that through him he might gain the victory and seize the crown from Satan and death.

Similar positive views of the body, combined with a respect for the biblical command to 'be fruitful and multiply', lead Daniel elsewhere to defend both marriage and sex for procreation against the charge of sinfulness[50].

It is often incorrectly implied in studies of Miaphysite Christology that their key thinkers had a tendency to downplay the reality of Christ's humanity, even while insisting that he was fully human and fully God in one nature after the incarnation. You will already have seen from what I have repeated of Daniel's views that this is certainly not true of him, but a further piece of corroboration comes from a perhaps unlikely piece of exegesis, which I want to outline now in a little more detail. Psalm 22.7 contains the famous words 'I am a worm, and not a man'.

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[47] See the commentaries on Pss 65.9, 89.23.

[48] See homily 123, in Maurice Brière (ed.), Les Homiliae Cathédrales de Sévère d'Antioche = PO 29.1 (Turnhout 1960), p. 180.

[49] Commentary on Ps 51.5.

[50] Commentary on Ps 51.5.

Daniel begins by clarifying that this is the utterance of the Word of God, and not of the Holy Spirit:

> We do not hear this word from the prophet, for up to this verse the Spirit was speaking through the prophet, but now it is not the Spirit saying this, and not the prophet, but it is the Word of God who says about himself that 'I am a worm and not a man'.

He then adds some words that are at first sight rather perplexing:

> He is not (described as) a worm, however, on account of the fact that (a worm) emerges from the putrefaction of bodies which have been reduced to corruption, due to decay and putrefaction.

Peter Cowe realised some years ago that Daniel was here tacitly rejecting the exegesis of Eusebius of Caesarea who had suggested that the worm was mentioned in this verse as a prefiguring of Christ's death, because of its association with corpses and decay[51].

Instead, Daniel provides two rather original interpretations of the Word's description of himself as 'a worm'. The first of these interpretations draws upon Daniel's knowledge of contemporary medical science, and in particular the processes by which humans are conceived and grow in the womb:

> This is the ordering of every person who enters the world, [that] when he begins to be conceived, first of all he receives at his beginning the likeness of a worm. For when the seed, that which is by nature white, drops within the womb, then it accepts from the womb a mingling [of] blood. But when they are united with one another and become one, in that moment when the soul is breathed into him, in the beginning, he is not established as a composite being with distinct limbs. Rather, he immediately receives a soul, and because of this he assumes the likeness of a white worm that wriggles. And afterwards he begins to be strengthened in vitality, and within the outer and worm-like exterior he is put together and he is constituted within it with limbs for some time. But when forty days have been completed, he then passes beyond the likeness of a worm, in that he is made perfect with the composition of separate limbs, and growth also removes the worm-like exterior, and then he

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[51] *Peter Cowe,* Daniel of Ṣalaḥ as Commentator on the Psalter, in: Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), Studia Patristica 20 (Leuven 1989), p. 159; see *Eusebius of Caesarea,* Commentarii in psalmos 21.5-7: PG 23, 205C.

> changes and will possess a caul (that is, the amniotic membrane) within the womb, and (the caul) continues with him until the day of his birth, and it preserves his breathing within the womb so that he not be harmed, and it exits with him, and then, afterwards, the baby abandons it when he has been born and begins to receive human life. To this humble estate, from which a human comes into being, God showed that he had descended when he became a human being.

Daniel cannot resist telling us everything he knows about the growth of the foetus, even his emphasis on the caul, or amniotic membrane, which seems entirely irrelevant in this context. But you could not ask for a more explicit passage to underline the real humanity of the incarnate Word.

The second interpretation is clearly intended to take us away from the comparison that has just been made to the growth of a foetus as a result of human sexual reproduction, and instead underlines Emmanuel's virgin birth. Perhaps unexpectedly, Daniel does this by relating the life cycle of the phoenix. He tells us that the bird used to live in India and had a life-span of five-hundred years. When she sensed that it was time to die she would fly to Heliopolis in Egypt and show herself to the priest there, so that he could begin to construct an altar of vine wood, while she flew on to mount Lebanon to gather sweet herbs. She would then fly back to Heliopolis, her wings glowing with heat, and settle upon the altar where she would then burst into flames. The next day the priest would examine the ashes, and there he would find a worm wriggling in the ashes, and by the second day the worm would become a fledgling, and by the third day a fully formed white bird. This, Daniel says, was the worm to which our Lord compared himself:

> For just as that worm issues forth without any need of sexual-congress, so also the Word of the Father, that white and sweet-smelling bird, came symbolically to the priests of the People (of Israel), and when they perceived him they prepared an altar for him upon Golgotha, and although he had brought them his sweet-smelling armfuls from the exalted mountains of heaven, they hung him upon the tree.

The puzzling utterance 'I am a worm and not a man' thus becomes, through Daniel's exegesis, an expression of Emmanuel's real humanity, but also of his incarnation through the virgin birth, and of the resurrection and eternal life made possible through the self-offering of the Word of God upon the cross. This is not the kind of material one often finds in handbooks of patristic

Christology, but the pedagogic power of this imagery is remarkable, and its ability to fix itself in the reader's memory is, I would suggest, undeniable. And that of course was Daniel's intention, and the whole purpose of producing a theological commentary on the Psalms.

In many respects the Christological position so far described represents a straightforward development of the arguments of Severus of Antioch, who was himself following in the Alexandrian tradition. In several areas, however, Daniel demonstrates that he is also the heir to native Syriac theological traditions, but this is clearest in his use of clothing imagery[52]. This is employed in two distinct, if related ways. The first is his choice of technical terminology for the incarnation.

Early Syriac texts often talk of Christ 'putting on a body' or 'being clothed in a body', and so, for example the Syriac Peshiṭta version of the Epistle to the Hebrews 5.7 states 'when he was clothed in flesh' (*kaḏ besrō lḇīš [h]wō*), for the Greek ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ, 'in the days of his flesh'; and Hebrews 10.5 states 'you have clothed me in a body' (*pagrō dēn ʾalbeštōn[y]*), translating the Greek σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι, 'a body you have prepared for me'. To our ears this can sound like a very weak, or indeed dangerous, way of describing the incarnation, but for Syriac speakers this was a natural and normal way to describe corporeality. So in Hebrews 13.3 the recipients of the letter are encouraged to show compassion for the afflicted 'since you also are humans clothed in flesh' (*a[y]ḵ [ʾ]nōšō d-ḇesrō lḇīšīn [ʾn]tūn*), rendering the Greek ὡς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὄντες ἐν σώματι, 'since you also are in the body'[53].

In the early sixth century Philoxenus of Mabbug († 523) had argued passionately against the continued use of clothing language in relation to the incarnation, because he worried that to Greek minds it suggested that Christ's humanity was less real than his divinity, and that the union was somewhat artificial, and so he feared that this language would be used against Syriac-speaking Christians in public debate[54]. Daniel, however, unlike Philoxenus, did not have to concern himself with those outside the Syrian Miaphysite fold. His task was to articulate a comprehensive exegesis of the Psalms for those within this community, and thus, given his understanding of the significance of the Psalms, to compose a Syrian Orthodox theology that would make sense of their whole theological world view. Incarnational clothing imagery was an ancient and traditional means of expressing theological truths that was accepted by members of all the different Syriac-speaking churches, regardless of Christological confession, and it was especially common in more popular theological and liturgical texts. Since his intended audience was composed of ordinary monks and priests it was clearly far too useful a tool to be neglected—especially since the Psalms themselves are so full of clothing imagery, whether literal or metaphorical[55]. Daniel, therefore, makes frequent use of clothing imagery, and so ignores Philoxenus' pleading. He does make use of some alternative terminology, modelled on Greek terms, such as *ʾeṯgašam*, 'he was embodied' (compare ἐσαρκώθη), *hwō barnōšō*, 'he became human', and *ʾeṯḥayaḏ la-ḵyōnō [ʾ]nōšōyō*, 'he was joined to / made one with human nature'. And yet time and again he returns to the old language of *lḇeš pagrō*, 'he put on a body'; *lḇeš besrō*, 'he put on flesh'; and, as cited above (from his commentary on Psalm 35.2), *lḇeš ʾōḏōm*, 'he put on Adam'.

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[52] The standard account of the Syriac theological use of clothing imagery is provided by *Sebastian Brock,* Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac tradition, in Margot Schmidt (ed.), Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter = EichB IV (Regensburg 1982), 11-38; reprinted in *Sebastian Brock,* Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature and Theology (Hampshire 1992), XI. See also *Robert Murray,* Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition (Cambridge 1975), pp. 69-76, 310-312; and *Oleh Shchuryk,* 'Lᵉbēš pagrā as the Language of "Incarnation" in the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage', EThL 83 (2007), 419-444.

[53] For humans 'putting on' Christ in the Greek text , see such passages as Rom 13.14; 1 Cor 15.49, 53-54; Eph 4.24; Col 3.10.

[54] See *André de Halleux,* Philoxène de Mabbog. Commentaire du Prologue johannique = CSCO 380 (Leuven 1977), p. 53.

In his commentary on Psalm 22.6 Daniel explicitly rejects the usage *lḇeš barnōšō*, 'he put on a human', because although the phrase *lḇeš [ʾ]nōšūṯō*, 'he put on humanity', or *lḇeš [ʾ]nōšūṯan*, 'he put on our humanity', is found in orthodox fourth-century writers such as Ephrem and Aphrahat, and this exact phrase, *lḇeš barnōšō*, 'he put on a human', occurs in a late fourth or early fifth-century Syriac translation of Basil of Caesarea's *De Spiritu Sancto*[56], by Daniel's time it had become associated with the theology of Theodore of Mopsuestia and so with the Dyophysites of the Church of the East, or 'Nestorians' as he would name them[57].

It might be suggested that this theological language reflects a certain conservatism – even recidivism – in Daniel, but in fact it is a consequence of the major soteriological scheme that dominates his thoughts. Sometimes called 'the theology of clothing' this mytho-poetic scheme, which is found in all the early Syriac writers, has been thoroughly described by Sebastian Brock[58], and so only the bare outlines need be repeated here. Its key elements are that before the fall Adam and Eve were not naked but were clothed in robes of glory, intimations of the immortality which God wanted for them, but these were stripped away when they sinned, and so they found themselves naked and ashamed. The robe of glory was returned by Christ in his incarnation and placed in the waters of the Jordan where the baptised Christian can receive it once more. Daniel describes these robes (which are sometimes also portrayed as wedding garments) in great detail, and they are said to shine with 'the glory of the Sun, and the glory of the full moon in the fifteenth day of its cycle, and the glory of frozen snow'[59].

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[55] For a general introduction to such imagery in the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament cf. *Jung H. Kim,* The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus = JSNT.S 268 (London 2004).

[56] See *David G.K. Taylor,* The Syriac Versions of the De Spiritu Sancto by Basil of Caesarea = CSCO 577 (Leuven 1999), p. xxvi.

[57] See *Alphonse Mingana*, Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed = Woodbrooke Studies 5 (Cambridge 1932), III.5; Syriac p.140, English translation p.36.

[58] *Sebastian Brock,* Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac tradition, in: Margot Schmidt (ed.), Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter = EichB IV; (Regensburg 1982), 11-38; reprinted in *Sebastian Brock,* Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature and Theology (Hampshire 1992), XI.

As a consequence of the Phantasiast controversy, however, this soteriological scheme has been adapted and expanded, for now it is the fact that the robes represent incorruption that is emphasized. Adam's original robe of immortality and incorruption was stripped off and in its place he put on the garments of corruption and mortality which 'sin had woven for him'[60] – a light touch, one might note, which carefully excludes the possibility that sin formed a part of the new clothes, or that sin was an integral part of human nature from its creation[61]. As for the next stage, there are some of Daniel's homilies which still adhere to the traditional pattern and refer to a new glorious robe of incorruption being placed in the midst of the waters of baptism[62]. However, in several key passages the theology of clothing scheme has been adapted, so that now the God-Logos, 'he who is living and immortal by nature, when he came from heaven he put on the garment of skins'[63], that is to say, the robe of corruption made for Adam, and by voluntarily accepting death he transformed it and raised it up at the resurrection without corruption, and made it immortal again. He then raised it to heaven where he wears it still on the chariot-throne borne by cherubs.

In conclusion, the Great Psalm Commentary of Daniel of Ṣalaḥ has proved to be an important new witness to the Phantasiast controversy that raged in the churches of the eastern Empire for several centuries. Its early date would by itself make it a noteworthy addition to our sources, but to that must be added the fact that it represents a rare example of the native Syriac response to the debate and demonstrates the vitality and adaptability of traditional Syriac theology. Daniel makes the most of the dual intellectual inheritance of the Syriac-speaking

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[59] Commentary on Ps 93.1. Compare Mt 17.2, where the garments of the transfigured Christ became as 'white as light' (λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς) in most manuscripts, but codex Bezae (D), the Latin witnesses, and the Old Syriac Curetonian manuscript read 'as white as snow' (χιών / *nix* / *talgō*).

[60] Commentary on Ps 93.1.

[61] In Church of the East writers such as Narsai († ca. 500), much use was made of the Old Testament concept of humans naturally possessing an evil 'inclination' (Hebrew *yēṣer*, Syriac *yaṣrā*) an idea that was also strongly developed in rabbinic texts (and may indeed have been borrowed by earlier Syriac authors, such as Ephrem and Aphrahat, from Jewish contemporaries). Syrian Orthodox writers in the fifth and sixth centuries, however, seem to have rejected the idea that human nature included an inclination towards sin, because it undermined the autonomy of human free will, and it raised serious questions about divine justice. See *David G.K. Taylor,* 'Inclination' *(yaṣrā)* in the Syriac tradition, in: Hector M. Patmore, Ishay Rosen-Zvi, and James K. Aitken (eds), The Origins of the Origins of Evil: The Development of the 'Evil Inclination' (yetser hara) in Jewish and Christian Thought (Cambridge, forthcoming); *Adam H. Becker,* The "Evil Inclination" of the Jews: The Syriac *Yatsra* in Narsai's Metrical Homilies for Lent, JQR 106.2 (2016), 179–207.

[62] See, for example, the commentary on Ps 30.1.

[63] Commentary on Ps 108.9.

Miaphysites, drawing on both Greek and Syriac traditions, and combining them in a form that would have the maximum impact on his targeted audience. The homiletic structure and profound spirituality of Daniel's commentary also gained it a readership and theological influence that can have been achieved by few contemporary polemical tracts or works of pure theology. It is not easy to extract a coherent account of Daniel's Christology from a text such as the Psalm Commentary, but I hope that this initial analysis would have interested Cardinal Grillmeier, and that it might be considered both as a token of thanks from an avid reader of his scholarship, and as a modest contribution to the continuing project of writing a history of Christ in Christian tradition.