

Justifying Christianity in the Islamic Middle Ages

The Apologetic Theology of 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkhā (d. 1318)

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إلى والدي ووالدتي رمزي وإكرام

To my father and mother, Ramzi and Ekram

ABSTRACT

Justifying Christianity in the Islamic Middle Ages: The Apologetic Theology of ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā (d. 1318)

The subject of this thesis is the theology of the late 13th- early 14th century churchman ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā. Better known by modern scholars for his poetry and canon law, he is far less recognised as a religious controversialist who composed works in Arabic as well as Syriac to answer Muslim criticisms. My overall argument contends that ‘Abdīshō‘’s hitherto neglected theological works are critical to our understanding of how anti-Muslim apologetics had by his time become central to his Church’s articulation of a distinct Christian identity in a largely non-Christian environment.

‘Abdīshō‘ wrote his apologetic theology at a time when Christians experienced increasing hardship under the rule of the Mongol Ilkhans, who had officially converted to Islam in 1295. While the gradual hardening of attitudes towards Christians may well have informed ‘Abdīshō‘’s defensive stance, this thesis also demonstrates that his theology is built on a genre of apologetics that emerged as early as the mid-8th century. Our author compiles and systematises earlier debates and authorities from this tradition while updating them for a current authorship. In doing so, he contributes to the formation of a theological canon that would remain authoritative for centuries to come.

My analysis of ‘Abdīshō‘’s oeuvre extends to three doctrinal themes: the Trinity, the Incarnation, and devotional practices (viz. the veneration of the Cross and the striking of the church clapper). I situate his discussion of these topics in a period when Syriac Christian scholarship was marked by a familiarity with Arabo-Islamic theological and philosophical

models. While our author does not engage with these models as closely as his better-known Syriac Christian contemporary Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), he nevertheless appeals to a literary and theological idiom common to both Muslims and Christians in order to convince his coreligionists of their faith's reasonableness against centuries-long polemical attacks.

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Over the course of my D.Phil. a number of events occurred across the Middle East that made the writing of this thesis most surreal. Watching the Arab Spring unfold in Egypt filled so many with hope, only for that hope to turn to despair some two years later. It was equally troubling to see peaceful protests in Syria turn to civil war. Witnessing these tragedies on the news and social media filled me with a sense of disconnectedness from the modern day realities of the people and places I was writing about. This was most strongly felt during ISIS's occupation of Mosul in the summer of 2014, which effectively put an end to a two thousand year Christian presence in the city, followed by the destruction of its ancient

Christian sites. The tragedy of ISIS's persecution of Yazidis at Sinjar, a town 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkhā came to know as bishop, also hit home. I am grateful to a number of friends and colleagues for helping me to keep perspective during these unsettling times. These include Anabel Inge, Dan Bang, Kathryn Kelley, Ali Ghadamsi, Janamarie Truesdell, Grace Egan, Lewis Daly, and many, many others. My only hope is that the people of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt will soon witness the resolutions they desire.

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Salam Rassi

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NOTE ON CONVENTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

All Arabic terms, names, and translated phrases have been rendered according to the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES) system of transliteration. As for Syriac words of a similar nature, a system recommended by the Leiden Peshitta Institute has been adapted. For the sake of simplicity, the difference between hard and soft consonants in Syriac have not been represented (e.g. *ḥdāyūtā* instead of *ḥdhāyūthā*), although exceptions are made for such names as ‘Bar Brīkhā.’ And for the sake of consistency, I have used the same method of transliteration to represent both East and West Syrian writers. Place names conform to their pre-modern usage, thus Āmid instead of Diyarbakır, Mayyāfaraqīn instead of Silvan etc., though well-known cities like Aleppo, Damascus, and Baghdad have been normalised throughout.

Most of the historical figures examined in this thesis would themselves have reckoned time in terms of Seleucid (*anno graecorum*) or Hijrī (*anno hegirae*) dating. To avoid cluttering the text with multiple dating systems, I have chosen to use Common Era (C.E.) in most instances. In a few cases, however, ‘A.G.’ is given for *anno graecorum* and ‘A.H.’ for *anno hegirae*. As for personal names, I have tended to employ Romanised and Anglicised forms of Greek names (e.g. ‘Theodore’ instead of ‘Tē’wādōrōs’ or ‘Nestorius’ instead of ‘Nestōrīs’). Names of Semitic origin have been left in place (e.g. ‘Yahballāhā’ and ‘Īshō’dād’), with the exception of widely used Anglicised forms such as ‘Jacob’ and ‘Ephrem.’

Where both a text and translation have been cited, I have employed a ‘T’ preceded by the initial letter of the primary source language (i.e. ‘AT’ for ‘Arabic text’ and ‘ST’ for

‘Syriac text’). The language of translation has been similarly represented (e.g. ‘ET’ for ‘English translation,’ ‘FT’ for ‘French translation,’ ‘GT’ for ‘German translation,’ ‘LT’ for ‘Latin translation,’ etc.).

Abbreviations used for frequently cited materials are as follows:

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana,</i>
<i>AnIs</i>	<i>Annales Islamologiques</i>
<i>ASP</i>	<i>Arabic Sciences and Philosophy</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>Bukhārī</i>	al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Isma‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm. <i>Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī</i> . Edited by Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Baghā. 7 vols. Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1413/1992.
<i>CEDRAC</i>	Centre de documentation et de recherches arabes chrétiennes
<i>CHRC</i>	<i>Church History and Religious Culture</i>
<i>CMR 1-5</i>	<i>Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History</i> . 5 vols. Edited by (2010-13) David Thomas and Alex Mallet. Leiden: Brill, 2010-13.
<i>CSCO</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>The Encyclopedia of Christianity</i> . Edited by Erwin Fahlbusch, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and David B. Barrett. Brill: Leiden, 1997-2008.
<i>EChR</i>	<i>Eastern Churches Review</i>
<i>EF²</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition</i> . Edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.
<i>EF³</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition</i> . Edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson. Leiden, Brill, 2007-.

- EQ* *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*
- EVO* *Egitto e vicino oriente*
- GAL* Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill, 1943-49.
- GCAL* Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*. 5 vols. Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944-1953.
- GEDSH* *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*. Edited by Sebastian P. Brock, Aaron M. Butts, George A. Kiraz, and Lucas Van Rompay. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011.
- GSL* Anton Baumstark. *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluß Der christlich-palästinensischen Texte*. Bonn: A. Marcus and E. Webers, 1922.
- HTR* *The Harvard Theological Review*
- IC-MR* *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*
- IHIW* *Intellectual History of the Islamic World*
- IJMES* *International Journal for Middle East Studies*
- IJMES* *International Journal of Middle East Studies*
- JA* *Journal Asiatique*
- JAAS* *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*
- JAL* *Journal of Arabic Literature*
- JAOS* *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
- JCSSS* *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies*
- JEChrSt* *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*
- JNES* *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
- JRAS* *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
- JSAI* *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*

- Majmū‘* Wadi Abullif, ed. and tr. *Majmū‘ uṣūl al-dīn wa-masmū‘ maḥṣūl al-yaqīn / umma dei principi della religion*. 2 vols. Cairo: al-Markaz al-Fransīskānī lil-Dirāsāt al-Sharqiyya al-Masḥīyah wa-Maṭba‘at al-Ābā’ al-Fransīsiyyīn.
- ME* *Medieval Encounters*
- MEL* *Middle Eastern Literatures*
- MIDEO* *Institut dominicain d’études orientales du Caire*
- MSR* *Mamluk Studies Review*
- MUSJ* *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph*
- Muslim* Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Muslim. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. 8 vols. Edited by ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī Amīn Qal‘ajī. Cairo: Dār al-Ghad al-‘Arabī, 1987-1990.
- MusWor* *The Muslim World*
- NAWG* *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse*
- OC* *Oriens Christianus*
- OCA* *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*
- OrSyr* *L’Orient Syrien*
- PdlO* *Parole de l’Orient*
- PO* *Patrologia Orientalis*
- POC* *Proche-Orient Chrétien*
- Q* *Qur’ān*
- REI* *Revue des études islamiques*
- RSO* *Rivista degli studi orientali*
- Seize traités* Louis Cheikhō, ed. *Seize traités théologiques d’auteurs arabes chrétiens (ixe-xiiiie siècle)*. Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1904.
- SMMJ* *St. Mark’s Monastery, Jerusalem*
- StP* *Studia Patristica*

- StudIs* *Studia Islamica*
- ThHar* *The Harp*
- VChr* *Vigiliae christianae*
- Vingt traités* Paul Sbath, ed. *Vingt traités philosophiques et apologétiques d'auteurs arabes chrétiens du IXe au XIVe siècle*. Cairo: Imprimerie Syrienne Héliopolis, 1929.
- WS* *Woodbrooke Studies*
- ZA* *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
- ZS* *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete*

INTRODUCTION

Following the siege of Acre by the Mamlūk sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl ibn Qalā'ūn in 1291, the last Crusader stronghold in Palestine finally fell, never to be recovered. The Muslim reconquest of the Crusader-held cities along the Levantine coast would prove calamitous for the Christian population. Their futures now uncertain, many would find refuge on the island of Cyprus, ruled by the French Lusignan dynasty, where earlier waves of refugees had been granted safe haven.¹ The mainly Arabic-speaking, non-Latin Christians who came to the island settled in the coastal city of Famagusta ('Māghūṣa' in Arabic). Among them were members of the Church of the East, Christians of the East Syrian rite known also as 'Nestorian.'² Having initially arrived from their homeland impoverished and dispossessed, they would eventually play a major role in the rise of Famagusta as an important commercial centre in the Lusignan period.³

The numbers of this community—having formerly lived under the western bishoprics of the Church in the East in Tyre, Acre, and Tripoli⁴—were considerably bolstered by the arrival of their co-religionists of the East Syrian rite from the city of Mosul in upper Mesopotamia, who established themselves in Cyprus as a successful merchant community.⁵

¹ Peter W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades 1191-1374* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1991), 101; Chris Schabel, 'Religion,' in *Cyprus: Society and Culture 1191-1374*, ed. Angel Nicolaou-Konnari and Chris Schabel (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 157-218, esp. 164-166.

² The term 'Nestorian' is rejected by today's Assyrian Church of the East, since it has historically been associated with the heresy of Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, following his condemnation at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Although 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkhā explicitly rejects the term 'Nestorian' in one instance, he employs it in three of his Arabic works by way of self-definition (on which see Chapter Two, Section 4.3.1). As such, I have chosen to apply the term to the Church of the East in this thesis—in a non-pejorative, theologically neutral manner—along with other descriptors such as 'East Syrian.'

³ Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus*, 102.

⁴ Jean Maurice Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Novus. Répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Beirut: Steiner, 1993), 71, 138, 140.

⁵ Jean Richard, 'La confrérie des Mosserins d'Acre et les marchands de Mossoul au XIII^e siècle,' *OrSyr* 11 (1966): 451-460, reprinted in *Orient et Occident en Moyen Age: contacts et relations (XIII^e-XV^e s.)* (Variorum:

Among them was a priest named Ṣalībā ibn Yūḥannā l-Mawṣilī. In 1332, Ṣalībā wrote a theological compilation in Arabic known as the *Asfār al-asrār* ('The Books of Mysteries') while residing in Famagusta.⁶ Incorporated into this work are three chapters from a Christian apology against Islam by an older contemporary of Ṣalībā, 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkhā, Metropolitan of Nisibis (d. 1318). Alongside the latter feature other apologetic works in Arabic by Nestorian theologians, namely Elias bar Shennāyā (d. 1046), Makkīkhā (d. 1109), Elias ibn Muqlī (d. 1131), and Īshō'yahb bar Malkōn (d. 1246).⁷ In addition to these theological writings, we also find Ṣalībā's continuation of the historical chapter of the *Kitāb al-majdal fī-l-istibṣār wa-l-jadal* ('Book of the Tower for Observation and Debate'), a late 10th century *summa theologiae*.⁸ Three years later, in 1335, while still in Famagusta, Ṣalībā would complete another theological anthology, this time containing 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkhā's Arabic translations of the Syriac gospels and his Arabic sermon on the Trinity and Incarnation, both in rhyming prose, together with yet another anti-Muslim apology, the so-called *Letter from the People of Cyprus*, composed anonymously on the island some thirty-two years previously.⁹

London, 1976), XI; idem, 'Le Peuplement Latin et syrien en Chypre au XIII^e siècle,' *Byzantinische Forschungen* 7 (1979): 157-173, esp. 166-167.

⁶ Ṣalībā's autograph of this unedited work currently resides in the Mingana Collection (Ms. Mingana Ar. 98). See Alphonse Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, 3 vols (Cambridge, Heffer and Sons, 1933-38), 140-143. For other manuscripts, see *GCAL*, 2:218.

⁷ For a survey of these authors and their works as they appear in al-Mawṣilī's anthology, see Herman G.B. Teule, 'A Theological Treatise by Īšo'yahb bar Malkon in the Theological Compendium *Asfār al-asrār*,' *JESC* 58, no. 3-4 (2006): 235-258, here 240, 242 and 13-18. On the significance of these authors as Christian apologists, see Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, 'Elias of Nisibis,' *CMR* 2 (2010): 727-741; Herman G.B. Teule, 'Elias II, Ibn al-Muqlī,' *CMR* 3 (2011): 418-421; idem, 'Ishoyahb bar Malkon,' *CMR* 4 (2012): 331-337.

⁸ Gustav Westphal (*Untersuchungen über die Quellen und die Glaubwürdigkeit der Patriarchenchroniken des Mārī ibn Sulaiman, 'Amr ibn Matai und Salība ibn Johannān. I. Abschnitt: Bis zum Beginn des nestorianischen Streites* [Kirchhain: Max Schmiersow, 1901]) and later Georg Graf (*GCAL*, 2: 217) considered Ṣalībā's inclusion of the historical chapter of the *Kitāb al-majdal* in his own work to be an act of plagiarism. However, this assertion has since been corrected by subsequent scholars, who now accept Ṣalībā as the continuator of the *Kitāb al-majdal*'s historical chapter. For a summary of the debate and a critique of Graf's synthesis, see Bo Holmberg, 'A Reconsideration of the *Kitāb al-mağdal*,' *PdLO* 18 (1993): 255-273, esp. 260-267.

⁹ The manuscript of Ṣalībā's compilation is now Ms. Paris ar. 204; see Gérard Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes. Manuscrits chrétiens*, 2 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1972), 172-173. The letter itself is a recension of the an earlier apology by the Melkite bishop of Sidon, Paul of Antioch; see David Thomas, 'The Letter from the People of Cyprus,' *CMR* 4 (2012): 769-772

Ṣalībā's compilatory activities suggest that by the first half of the 14th century, a rich corpus of theological, liturgical, biblical, and historiographical literature in the Arabic language had emerged within the Church of the East. Syriac, the liturgical language of the Church of the East, remained an important part of the Nestorian Cypriot community's religious identity.¹⁰ Yet, after centuries of contact with Islam before reaching their adoptive Cyprus, the Nestorian community could boast of several writers who in the opening centuries of the 'Abbāsīd era (750-ca. 950) inaugurated a rich tradition of Christian theology in the Arabic language. This emergent literature was characterised as much by a need to answer Muslim challenges to Christianity as to educate the faithful about the foundations of their faith¹¹—a tradition continued by subsequent authors, not least by those in Ṣalībā's theological anthologies. For even in Cyprus, where members of the Church of the East and other Arabophone Christians lived apart from their erstwhile Muslim neighbours, inter-religious apologetics appear to have retained some function in their articulation of Christianity.¹² This thesis focuses on those very authors whom Ṣalībā saw as representative of this tradition, with a special focus on 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkhā (popularly known as 'Abdīshō' of Nisibis) and the functions, motives, strategies, and audiences of his theological works.

At this point it should be said that little scholarly attention has been given to any of the above-mentioned authors, least of all to 'Abdīshō'. Few have studied him in light of his theology, much of which, as we shall see throughout this thesis, was written with an apologetic intent in mind. Instead, he is largely remembered in the West as a cataloguer, compiler, and poet.¹³ Fewer still have fully appreciated 'Abdīshō's' bilingualism, viewing him as an author who wrote mainly in Syriac while many of his Arabic works remain

¹⁰ As is suggested by surviving Syriac inscriptions in Syriac-rite churches in Famagusta. For examples, see Camille Enlart, *L'art gothique et la Renaissance en Chypre*, 2 vols. (Paris: E. Leroux, 1899), 1:258-259, 356; René Mouterde, 'Deux inscriptions Jacobites,' *MUSJ* 22 (1939): 49-56; Michele Bacci, 'Syrian, Palaiologan, and Gothic Murals in the "Nestorian" Church of Famagusta,' *DeIton* 27 (2006): 207-220.

¹¹ More will be said of this emergence in Chapter One, Section 1.4.

¹² My use of the term 'apologetic' will be explained in Chapter One, Section 1.6.

¹³ See below, Chapter One, Section 1.1.

unstudied and unedited.¹⁴ A further issue relates to the period in which he wrote. With some notable exceptions, many scholars have viewed the opening centuries of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate as the most creative period of Christian-Muslim theological exchange, after which Christian apologetics became stagnant, repetitive, and unimaginative.¹⁵ As a result, they have ascribed a far greater importance to a ‘formative phase’ of apologetic theology while neglecting the tradition’s development and reception by later writers. Conversely, some have argued that ‘Abdīshō’ wrote at the height of a ‘Syriac Renaissance,’ and that it was only after his death in 1318 that a period of decline set in.¹⁶ One scholar in particular has described ‘Abdīshō’ as a ‘universal scholar’ who engaged critically with the intellectual world of Islam.¹⁷

My aim in this thesis is not to determine the precise date of Syriac Christianity’s Dark Age (if indeed there ever was one), nor is it to argue for a period of renaissance. Rather, my purpose is to go beyond narratives of decline and revival by asking: if Syriac Christianity’s most creative period of engagement with Islamic theology ended after the early ‘Abbāsīd period, why, then, did Ṣalībā ibn Yūḥannā see fit to compile the literary apologies of so many later writers? This thesis poses a further question: if ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā can indeed be considered a ‘universal scholar’, what, then, was the precise nature of his intellectual engagement with Islam? At the end of his history of Christian theology in the Muslim world, Sydney Griffith remarks that after having undergone a ‘formative’ phase in the 9th century, during which the ‘main lines of Christian thought in the Arabic-speaking, Islamic milieu were drawn,’ the theological idiom of Christians would become ‘constant but not frozen.’¹⁸ It is in

¹⁴ These works are surveyed in Chapter One, Sections 1.3.

¹⁵ See literature review in Chapter One, Sections 1.4-5.

¹⁶ See Chapter One, Section 1.4.2.

¹⁷ Herman G.B. Teule, ‘Christian Muslim Interaction 1200-1350,’ *CMR* 4 (2012): 1-16, here 15-16.

¹⁸ Sydney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 177, citing the year 950 as the end of Islam’s formative period, *apud* W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), 316.

this spirit that I intend to examine the intellectual output of later medieval writers. In order to test the hypothesis of a constant and unfrozen theological tradition, I will focus my enquiry on the hitherto neglected writings of ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā. My aim in doing so is not to prove that later writers were somehow less unoriginal than previously thought; as will become clear, ‘Abdīshō’ makes no claim to originality in any of his writings. Rather, I wish to show how the strongly controversial tone of his theology is crucial to our understanding of how anti-Muslim apologetics had by the late 13th and early 14th century become central to the articulation of the Church of the East’s religious identity.

Overview of Chapters

My first chapter (‘Approaching the Texts: Literature Review and Methodology’) begins by outlining the Syriac-language works for which ‘Abdīshō’ is chiefly known, followed by an inventory of his extant writings. Having established these preliminaries, I go on to survey his five main theological works, three of which comprise encyclopaedic summaries of church doctrine and, I contend, strongly reflect Muslim concerns about Christianity. After reviewing what little scholarship these texts have occasioned, I elaborate an approach to ‘Abdīshō’'s apologetic oeuvre that takes into account their genre, language, and audience. This means elaborating on what precisely is meant here by ‘apology’ as a literary category. If ‘Abdīshō’'s theology is apologetic in the main, what, then, is the precise definition of apologetics? Moreover, how are such works distinct from polemics, an interdependent category? I argue that such works were intended to inculcate doctrine to a Christian readership while simultaneously equipping them with the means to counter Muslim criticisms. In adopting this approach, ‘Abdīshō’ attempts to negotiate common ground with his interlocutor through various cultural, literary, and theological motifs common to both Muslims and Christians.

Chapter Two (‘The Life and Times of a ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā’) presents a study of our author’s world based on his own testimonies and those of his contemporaries. While we possess few facts about his life, the cultural, political, and intellectual life of the Church of the East during his lifetime is very well documented. ‘Abdīshō‘’s literary activities took place at the height of Mongol rule over a region of Upper Mesopotamia which I refer to here as the Jazīra. The destruction of the Baghdad Caliphate in 1258 and the subsequent establishment of the Ilkhanate inaugurated four decades or so of non-Muslim rule by mainly Buddhist and Shamanist sovereigns over a predominantly Muslim region. In 1295, the Mongol elite in the Near East officially converted to Islam—a development which would have far reaching consequences for the region’s non-Muslim population, and which may have formed the historical backdrop to our author’s anti-Muslim apologetics. I also attempt to situate ‘Abdīshō‘’s literary output within a broader intellectual landscape of a period when Syriac and Arabic Christian scholarship was marked by a familiarity with and indebtedness to Islamic theological and philosophical models. ‘Abdīshō‘’s own involvement in the broader intellectual networks of his day, however, appears limited.

Having established ‘Abdīshō‘ in his time and place, Chapter Three (‘Proving Three to be One’) examines his apology of the Trinity, a key Christian tenet that Muslim polemicists believed was a form of tritheism. This charge was levelled repeatedly in the centuries leading up to ‘Abdīshō‘’s lifetime, prompting Christian apologists to demonstrate that God was a unitary being without denying His triune nature. In line with earlier authors, ‘Abdīshō‘ begins by establishing the existence of the world and its temporal origins from a single, infinite cause, which he infers from the orderliness and composite nature of the physical universe. He then argues that this cause must possess three states of intellection identical to its essence, while affirming the three Trinitarian Persons as essential attributes in a single divine substance. While these strategies might appear little more than a synthesis of earlier

Trinitarian apologies, ‘Abdīshō’ frames them in language that resonates with aspects of the philosophised *kalām* (rational theology) of his day, in particular, by making use of Avicennian expressions of God as a Necessary Being. But rather than simply borrowing from Islamic systems of thought in order to justify the Trinity, our author seeks to demonstrate to Christians that the issues raised by Muslims regarding the Trinity could be resolved internally, that is to say, through recourse to Christian (mainly Patristic) authorities.

A theme closely connected to the issue of God’s unicity is the Incarnation, discussed in Chapter Four (‘Debating Natures and Persons’). Central to ‘Abdīshō’’s defence of this doctrine is the argument that Christ possessed a divine and a human nature, each united in a single person. For Muslim polemicists such a notion was further proof of Christianity’s denial of God’s transcendence, leading ‘Abdīshō’ to make a case for the Incarnation’s rootedness in both scripture and reason. As in his Trinitarian doctrine, our author appeals to a theological and literary vocabulary shared between Arabophone Christians and Muslims. Nevertheless, he exclusively cites Christian authorities, suggesting that it is to the language of Islamic theology rather than its substance that he wishes to appeal. In contrast to his Trinitarian dogma, which appears uniformly directed against external criticisms, aspects of the Church of the East’s Christology were grounded in intra-Christian polemics, since the various Christian confessions under Islamic rule had for centuries been divided over the issue of Christ’s natures. Later in life, however ‘Abdīshō’ would skillfully negotiate this textual tradition to formulate a Christology no longer hostile to other Christian confessions.

The final chapter of this thesis (‘Christian Practices, Islamic Contexts’) examines ‘Abdīshō’’s justification of Christian devotional practice. In particular, I examine his discussion of the veneration of the Cross and the striking of a wooden percussion instrument known as the clapper during the call to prayer.¹⁹ Here, I situate ‘Abdīshō’’s apology within a

¹⁹ My use of the term ‘clapper’ will be fully qualified in Chapter Five, Section 5.1.

contested visual and acoustic environment shared in by Muslims and Christians living in close proximity. In line with earlier apologists, ‘Abdīshō’s explanation of Christian practice is informed by an urgent need to affirm its validity in a socio-cultural environment that was often at odds with it. In particular, Christian writers in the Islamic World contended with repeated accusations that the veneration and public display of the Cross constituted yet another form of idolatry, and that the sound of the clapper in times of prayer was offensive to Muslims and inferior to the call of the *mu’adhdhin*. In addition to providing scriptural testimony for the veneration of the Cross, our author appeals to a common theological rationalism to explain the salvific function of the Crucifixion and the cosmological significance of the Cross’s four points. Similarly, he invokes instances where the call of the clapper features positively in Classical Arabic poetry and *ḥadīth*, thereby invoking a common lettered tradition to legitimate an otherwise marginal practice.

Appended to this thesis is a comparison of the contents of three systematic works by ‘Abdīshō’, followed by a transcription of the Arabic text of five chapters from ‘Abdīshō’s *Uṣūl al-dīn* taken from the unicum Ms. Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 936. My edition focuses on chapters on the Trinity, the Incarnation, and cultic practices (viz. the veneration of the Cross and the striking of the clapper), on which I base much of my analysis in this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

Approaching the Texts: Literature Review and Methodology

1.1. ‘Abdīshō’ as Cataloguer, Canonist, and Poet

As outlined in the introduction, the central focus of this thesis is ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā’s apologetic theology. But before focusing on these works, it is necessary to take into account the writings for which he is most recognised. Best known and most accessible to the modern reader are his works in the Syriac language, chief among them a catalogue (or index) of ecclesiastical authors, a compilation of canon law, and a book of theological poetry—all of which are reasonably well-known to modern scholars and vastly popular within today’s Assyrian and Chaldean Churches. Included among these is a theological *summa* entitled *Ktābā d-margānītā* (‘The Book of the Pearl’). But since this work contains a strong apologetic dimension, it will be dealt with in Section 1.3 alongside ‘Abdīshō’’s other apologetic works.

We begin, then, with the *Mēmra d-’īt bēh menyānā d-kullhōn ktābē ‘edtānāyē* (‘Treatise Containing the Enumeration of all Ecclesiastical Books’), variously referred to in English as *The Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Authors*, *Metrical Catalogue of Syriac Writers*, or simply *Catalogue of Authors*.¹ The work consists of a versified list of Christian writers and their works up to ‘Abdīshō’’s own day and is divided into four principle parts: (i) the scriptures of the Old Testament and apocrypha; (ii) the scriptures of the New Testament; (iii) the writings of the Greek Fathers, that is, those from the Patristic Era translated into Syriac;

¹ William Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London: Adam and Charles Black 1894), 288-299; Sebastian P. Brock, *A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature* (Kottayam: Mōran ’Ethō, 1997) 81; Jeff W. Childers, ‘‘Abdisho’ bar Brikha,’ *GEDSH*, 3-4.

and (iv) the writings of the Syriac—mainly East Syrian—Fathers. Composed in heptasyllabic verse and numbering five hundred and ninety-five strophes, the *Catalogue* was first ‘discovered’ in the West by the Rome-based Maronite scholar Abraham Ecchellensis, who produced its first printed edition in 1653.² It was to have an enormous significance for the development of early-modern Orientalism: as Jeff Childers has recently observed, the *Catalogue* ‘helped clarify for western scholarship the breadth and basic contours of Syriac literature, providing stimulus and some direction of Syriac literary history in the West.’³ The *Catalogue* was declared by William Wright to be ‘Abdīshō’s ‘most useful work decidedly,’⁴ and would later be described by Peter Kawerau as ‘eine literarhistorische Quelle ersten Range.’⁵ It also provided the basis of the third volume of Joseph Assemani’s voluminous reference work of Syriac literature, the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* in 1725,⁶ and was translated into English by the Anglican missionary and orientalist Percy Badger in 1852.⁷ The following century, the Iraqi Chaldean priest and scholar Yūsuf Ḥabbī produced an edition with an annotated Arabic translation.⁸ The *Catalogue* continues to be mined for valuable literary-historical data by Syriacists,⁹ and its popularity within the Assyro-Chaldean Churches is attested by the number of manuscripts that preserve it.¹⁰

In addition to his cataloguing activities, ‘Abdīshō’ is well-remembered as a compiler of canon law, in particular, for his *Kunnāshā psīqāyā d-qānōnē sunhādīqāyē* (‘Concise Collection of Synodal Canons’), often referred to as the *Nomocanon*. As suggested by its

² See Hubert Kaufhold, ‘Abraham Ecchellensis et le Catalogue des livres de ‘Abdīshō’ bar Briḳā,’ in *Orientalisme, science et controverse: Abraham Ecchellensis (1605-1664)*, ed. Bernard Heyberger (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), 119-133.

³ Childers, ‘‘Abdisho’ bar Brikha,’ 3.

⁴ Wright, *A Short History*, 288.

⁵ Peter Kawerau, *Das Christentum des Ostens* (Berlin: W. Kohlhammer, 1972), 83.

⁶ Joseph Simon Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-vaticana*, 3 vols. (Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1719-1728), 3/1: 3-362.

⁷ Percy Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals with the Narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842 to 1844*, 2 vols (London: Joseph Masters, 1852), 2:361-379.

⁸ Yūsuf Ḥabbī (ed. and tr.), *Fihris al-mu’allifin ta’lif li- ‘Abd Yashū’ al-Ṣūbāwī* (Baghdad: al-Majma’ al-‘Ilmī al-‘Irāqī, 1986).

⁹ Childers, ‘‘Abdisho’ bar Brikha,’ 3.

¹⁰ See *GSL*, 325.

title, the *Nomocanon* is a systematic compilation of canon laws created by the historic synods of the Church of the East, namely those between 410 and the reign of the catholicos Timothy I (d. 824), though the pseudo-Apostolic canons are also included, together with Īshō‘yahb bar Malkōn’s commentary on the Nicene Creed and a treatise on hereditary law by the catholicos Elias I.¹¹ The canons are organised thematically in two books: the first on civil law (inheritance, marriage, custody, loans, etc.), and the second on the ecclesiastical hierarchy (priestly ordination, monastic discipline, consecration of bishops, etc.).¹² The *Nomocanon* is by no means the first systematic collection of East Syrian canon law, as it draws heavily on earlier legal compendia.¹³ Despite being a relatively late development in East Syrian canon law, however, ‘Abdīshō‘’s *Nomocanon* would have by far the most impact after being officially declared authoritative during the synod of Timothy II in 1318.¹⁴ Since then, it has been read and copied frequently, remaining an essential source of canon law for the Church of the East today.¹⁵ As to its modern publication history, it was first printed in abridged form by Angelo Mai in 1838 with a Latin translation, and a later edition was produced by Joseph Da Kelaita in 1918.¹⁶ The earliest surviving manuscript of the *Nomocanon* was copied during ‘Abdīshō‘’s own lifetime, in 1291, and is now available as a facsimile edition.¹⁷

In terms of popularity, however, neither the *Catalogue* nor the *Nomocanon* surpass ‘Abdīshō‘’s poetic magnum opus known as *Pardaysā da-’den* (‘The Paradise of Eden’).

¹¹ On the sources of the *Nomocanon*, see Hubert Kaufhold, introduction to *The Nomocanon of Abdisho of Nisibis: A Facsimile Edition of MS 64 from the Collection of the Church of the East in Trissur*, ed. István Perczel (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2005), xv-xlvi, here xxv-xxvii and idem, ‘Sources of Canon Law in the East Churches,’ in *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, ed. Wilfred Hartmann and Kenneth Pennington (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2012), 215-342, here 311.

¹² For the basic structure of the *Nomocanon*, see Kaufhold, introduction, xxviii-xxix and Aprem Mooken, ‘Canon Law of Mar Abdisho,’ *ThHar* 4, no.1-3 (1991): 85-102, here 92-102.

¹³ Namely those by Gabriel of Baṣrā (fl. 9th century) and ‘Abdallah ibn al-Ṭayyib. For ‘Abdīshō‘’s dependence on them, see Kaufhold, introduction, xxv-xxvii and idem, ‘Sources of Canon Law,’ 311.

¹⁴ See Canon XIII of the synod in Assemani, *Biblioteca Orientalis*, 3/1:570.

¹⁵ For this work’s copious mss., see *GSL*, 324. For its continuing significance, see Aprem Mooken, ‘Codification of the Canon Law by Mar Abdisho in 1290 A.D.,’ in *VI. Symposium Syriacum 1992, University of Cambridge 30 August-2 September 1992*, ed. René Lavenant (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1994), 371-380.

¹⁶ For these editions and translations, see Kaufhold, introduction, xxix.

¹⁷ István Perczel (ed.), *The Nomocanon of Abdisho of Nisibis: a Facsimile Edition of MS 64 from the Collection of the Church of the East in Trissur* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2005).

Helen Younansardaroud has counted no less than seventy-one extant manuscripts of both East and West Syrian provenance, attesting to the works popularity across denominational lines.¹⁸ The *Pardaysā* saw partial editions and translations throughout the 19th century,¹⁹ but no complete text was produced until Joseph De Kelaita's 1916 edition, which was reprinted in 1928 and again in 1989.²⁰ The work itself consists of fifty poetic discourses on theological subjects. These, according to 'Abdīshō', were intended to answer the claim by unnamed Arabs (*tayyāyē*) that their language was unrivalled in elegance and sophistication.²¹ 'Abdīshō' also informs us that he was later compelled by his readers in 1315/16 to add a gloss to his *Paradise* due to the work's many lexical rarities, which mostly took the form of Greek loanwords.²² But despite its enduring popularity among Syriac Christians throughout the centuries, the *Paradise* has been judged by some modern scholars as far too imitative of Arabic belles lettres and too embellished in its style to merit serious study.²³

1.2 General Inventory of Works

At the end of his *Catalogue*, 'Abdīshō' enumerates his own writings, which we will now list in order to get a sense of the depth and range of his body of works. Since he does not enumerate his works chronologically and omits others known to have been authored by him, it is necessary to build a more comprehensive list, together with a brief description and date of composition (where possible) of each. Moreover, to get a greater sense of his Arabic-

¹⁸ Helen Younansardaroud, 'A list of the known Manuscripts of the Syriac Maqāmat of 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkā († 1318): "Paradise of Eden",' *JAAS* 20, no. 1 (2006): 28-41.

¹⁹ For these, see Helen Younansardaroud, "'Abdīshō' bar Brīkā's († 1318) Book of Paradise: A Literary Renaissance?" in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman G.B. Teule and Carmen Fotescu Tauwinkl (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 195-205, here 199-201.

²⁰ The edition referred to throughout this thesis is Joseph De Kelaita (ed.), *Pardaysā da- 'den*, 2nd ed. (Mosul: Maṭba'ā d-Ātōrāytā d-'Edtā 'Attiqtā d-Madnhā, 1928). For other editions and translations, see Younansardaroud, "'Abdīshō' bar Brīkā's Book of Paradise,' 200, n. 24.

²¹ De Kelaita, *Pardaysā*, ٣. 'Abdīshō's justification for writing the *Paradise* will be discussed below in Section 1.4.3.

²² De Kelaita, *Pardaysā*, ٤.

²³ See below, Section 1.4.2.

Syriac bilingualism, each work's language will be indicated. Although a similarly comprehensive list has been assembled by Hubert Kaufhold, what follows in the tables below is an updated survey with further annotations and new discoveries. Works appearing in 'Abdīshō's *Catalogue* are indicated with an asterisk, and for the sake of preserving space, lost works and works of questionable authorship are not dealt with here.²⁴

1.2.1. Dated Works

	Title	Lang.	Desc.	Date
1.*	<i>Nomocanon</i> (see above)	Syr.	Collection of eccl. law	Before 1279/80 ²⁵
2.*	<i>The Paradise of Eden</i> (see above)	Syr.	Theological poetry	1290/1; gloss added in 1215/16
3.*	<i>The Book of the Pearl</i> (see below)	Syr.	Systematic theology	1297/8
4.	<i>Catalogue</i> (see above)	Syr.	List of eccl. writers and their works	Uncertain; possibly 1298; ²⁶ updated after 1315/6
5.	<i>Haymānūtā d-nesṭōryānē</i> (see below)	Ar.	Brief <i>confessio fide</i> in Arabic (despite Syriac title)	1300
6.	<i>al-Anājīl al-musajja</i> 'a ²⁷	Ar.	Rhymed Arabic trans. of Syriac Evangelistry	1299/1300 ²⁸

²⁴ For these, see Kaufhold, introduction, xvii-xx.

²⁵ See Chapter Two, Section 2.5.

²⁶ Cf. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, 2:361. According to William Wright (*A Short History*, 289), Badger's date derives from the manuscript he used in his translation of the *Catalogue*.

²⁷ Sami Khoury (ed.), *Anājīl 'Abdīshū' al-Ṣūbāwī († 1318) al-musajja 'ā*, 2 vols. (Jounieh: CEDRAC, 2007).

²⁸ See Samir Khalil Samir, 'Date de composition de l'évangélaire rimé de 'Abdīshū', *MUSJ* 47 (1972): 175-181, in which the date is given as 1 Sha'bān 700 AH (=11 April 1300 C.E.), according to a now lost 16th century ms.

7.*	<i>Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn</i> (see below)	Ar.	Systematic theology/Christian apology	1303/4
8.	<i>Farā'id al- fawā'id fī uṣūl al- dīn wa-l-'aqā'id,</i> (see below)	Ar.	Systematic theology/Christian apology	1313
9.*	<i>Ṭukkās dīnē u- nāmōsē</i> ' <i>edtānāyē</i> ²⁹	Syr.	Collection of church-legal rulings	1315/6

1.2.2. Undated Works

	Title	Lang.	Desc.
10.*	<i>Tafṣīr li-risālat Aristū</i> <i>fī-l-ṣinā'a</i> ³⁰	Ar.	Commentary on an alchemical treatise belonging to the Pseudo-Aristotelian corpus.
11.	<i>Khuṭba tataḍammanu</i> <i>ḥaqāqat i'tiqādīnā fī l- tathlīth wa-l-ḥulūl</i> (see below)	Ar.	Rhymed sermon on the Trinity and Incarnation.

copied from 'Abdīshō's autograph (ibid, 178ff). Further indication of authorship and date is given in an anonymous Syriac note in Ms. SMMJ 159, 106a, in which a monk informs us that he found an autograph of the same work dated 1611 A.G. (1299/1300 C.E.). See *infra* for more on this note concerning the *Uṣūl al-dīn*.

²⁹ Jacques Vosté (tr.), *Ordo Iudiciorum Ecclesiasticorum* (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1940). The Syriac text has been made available by David Malek in a facsimile of Ms. Mosul, Chaldean Patriarchate 66 (on which Vosté's Latin trans. is based), self-published through www.lulu.com as *Order of Ecclesiastical Regulations*. For information about the manuscript, see Addai Scher, 'Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques conservés dans la bibliothèque du Patriarcat chaldéen de Mossoul,' *Revue des bibliothèques* 17 (1907): 227-260, here 244.

³⁰ Listed in twelfth in the *Catalogue as Pushshāq eggartēh d-rabbā Ārestōṭālīs tmīhā ḥāy da-ktab l-Āleksandrōs 'al 'ōmānūtā rabbā* ('Explanation of the Letter of the Admirable Aristotle that he Wrote to Alexander on the Great Craft [i.e. Alchemy]'); see Assemani, *Biblioteca Orientalis*, 3/1:1, 361. The letter forms part of the pseudo-Aristotelian corpus known as the *Sirr al-asrār* ('Secret of Secrets'), known in medieval West as the *Secretus Secretorum*. For manuscripts of 'Abdīshō's unedited commentary, see Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 4 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1967-1971), 102, and a further manuscript indicated by H.E. Stapleton, 'Further Notes on the Arabic Alchemical Manuscripts in the Libraries of India,' *Isis* 26, no. 1 (1936): 127-131. With the kind help of Fr. Željko Paša, I have been able to make use of Ms. Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 252. For information about this manuscript, see Louis Cheikho, 'Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale,' *MUSJ* 8, fasc. 6 (1922): 390-391, here 158-159.

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| <p>12. 'Ōnītā d-Mār(y)
Shem'ōn d-
Shanqlāband d-
pashshsqāh Mār(y)
'Abdīshō' mītrāpōlītā
d-Ṣubbā wa-d-
Armānīyā³¹</p> | Syr. | <p>Commentary on an enigmatic poem by Simon Shanqlāband (fl. early 13th), in response to a request from a priest named Abraham.</p> |
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1.3 'Abdīshō's Apologetic Works

Having surveyed 'Abdīshō's writings, we now turn our focus on his works of apologetic theology. By 'apologetic' I mean those works written with the intention of answering non-Christian—mainly Muslim—criticism about Christian doctrine, whether implicitly or explicitly.³² What follows is an introduction to these works, each with a brief discussion about their authorship, contents, transmission, and literary afterlife. But before doing so, it is necessary to disclose what might be considered a conspicuous omission by some: the *al-Anājīl al-musajja'a* ('The Ryhmed Gospels'). A rhymed Arabic translation of the Gospel readings in the East Syrian breviary (*Hudrā*), this work has been argued by Samir Khalil to be 'une réponse implicite' to the Muslim claim that the Qur'ān is inimical in its poetic beauty.³³ However, for reasons I explain in Section 1.6 below, I have chosen not to classify this work as apologetic. For now, theological works by 'Abdīshō' considered here are:

³¹ Ms. Vat. Syr. 187. For details of this manuscript, see Stephen Evodius Assemani and Simon Joseph Assemani, *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus*, 3 vols. (Typographia Linguarum Orientalium, 1759), 3: 404-405. Cf. Lucas Van Rompay, 'Shem'ōn Shanqlawī,' *GEDSH*, 374. It is possible that work is among those listed fourteenth in 'Abdīshō's *Catalogue* as *shrāy shu'ālē 'assqē* ('Answers to difficult questions').

³² A more detailed definition of the term 'apologetic' will be give below, Section 1.6.

³³ Samir Khalil Samir, 'Une réponse implicite à l'i'ğāz du Coran : l'Évangélique rimé de 'Abdīshū,' *POC* 35 (1985): 225-237.

1.3.1. *Margānītā d-‘al shrārā d-krestyānūtā* (‘The Book of the Pearl on the Truth of Christianity’)

Written in 1297/8,³⁴ *The Book of the Pearl* (hereafter, *Pearl*) is by far the best known of ‘Abdīshō‘’s theological writings. It is a brief work of dogma consisting of five chapters on (i) God; (ii) Creation; (iii) The Christian dispensation (*mdabbrānūtā d-ba-mshīhā*, viz. the coming of Christ and the Incarnation); (iv) The sacraments; and (v) Things which prefigure the world to come (viz. devotional practices).³⁵ It was frequently read and copied in the many centuries after its composition,³⁶ and was first printed in 1837 with a Latin translation overseen by Angelo Mai.³⁷ Its usefulness as an epitome of Nestorian dogma was recognised by Percy Badger, who appended an English translation of it to his summary of the beliefs and practices of the Church of the East in 1852.³⁸ Various chapters of the *Pearl* were also included in a printed chrestomathy of East Syrian works entitled *Ktābōnā d-partūtē* (‘The Little Book of Crumbs’) in 1868,³⁹ and the entire text was edited by Joseph De Kelaita in 1908 and reprinted in 1924 (from which I cite in this thesis).⁴⁰ It continues to be read among present day members of today’s Church of the East, and in 1916 a Neo-Aramaic translation

³⁴ We know from manuscripts copied from autographs and older exemplars that the work was written in the month of Ellūl 1609 AG (= September 1297/8). See, for example, Berlin syr. 83, 42a and Cambridge Add. 3087, 82a. Cf. Eduard Sachau, *Verzeichniss der syrischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, 2 vols. (Berlin: A. Asher, 1899), 1:312 and William Wright and Stanley Arthur Cook, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), 2:1216.

³⁵ For a summary of the *Margānītā*’s contexts, see Kawerau, *Das Christentum des Ostens*, 83-97.

³⁶ See *GSL*, 324, n.2.

³⁷ Angelo Mai, *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*, 10 vols. (Rome: Typis Vaticanis, 1825-1838), 10:317-316.

³⁸ Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, 2:380-422. Although I have consulted Badger’s work, translations from the *Pearl* in this thesis are my own unless stated otherwise.

³⁹ Anon., *Ktābā d-partūtā, hānāw dē(y)n mnāwātā mkannshātā menn ktābē d-‘abbhātā makībānē u-mallpānē surryāyē* (Urmia: Press of the Archbishop of Canterbury Mission, 1898), ١٤٤-١٤٥

⁴⁰ Joseph De Kelaita (ed.), *Ktābā d-mētqrē margānītā d-‘all shrārā d-krestyānūtā da-‘bīd l-mār(y) ‘Abdīshō‘ mītrāpōlītā d-Šubbā wa-d-Armānīyā, ‘amm kunnāshā d-mēmre māwtrānē* (Mosul: Maṭba‘tā Ātōrāyātā d-‘Edtā ‘Attiqtā d-Madnhā, 1924).

of the *Pearl* was made in New York.⁴¹ The *Pearl* would later provide the model for an up-to-date catechism in the 1960s.⁴²

It would appear that a reliable and popular *summa* was the very thing ‘Abdīshō‘ intended his *Pearl* to be, as we learn from his preface:

When the father of our nation [*abbā d-‘amman*] and head of our dogma [*rēshā d-dōgman*] approved of the book *The Paradise of Eden*, which I composed in verse of all kinds, he then commanded me to write another book which would establish the truth of Christianity [*shrārā d-krestyānūtā*] and the truth of its doctrine [*qushshūtāh d-tāwdītā*], to be read and studied by his disciples, to the benefit of every lover of Christ under his sway, as it will be a sign of his diligence and care for all to come. I, as an obedient servant, obeyed his beneficial command, and, in pithy fashion and simple words [*ba-z ‘ūryātā wa-b-mellē pshītātā*] wrote this book, small in size but large in power and significance, and for this reason called it *The Book of the Pearl* on the Truth of Christianity. In it, I have dealt with all the roots and branches of the teaching of the Church and its subdivisions and offshoots in a concise manner [*ba-znā psīqāyā*].⁴³

To my knowledge, the first attempt to discuss the *Pearl*’s theology in any detail was by Peter Kawerau, who in a summary of the work’s contents describes it as ‘der Abschluß der antiochenischen Theologie.’⁴⁴ Yet despite its many modern editions, translations, and enduring popularity within the Church of the East, the *Pearl* has received precious little attention from modern scholars. What is more, the *Pearl*’s apologetic dimension, which may be inferred from its subtitle (‘On the Truth of Christianity’), has only recently been acknowledged by Herman Teule, who brings to light various themes that indirectly address Muslim objections, namely the issue of God’s Triune nature and unity; the credibility of the

⁴¹ Yōhannān Abrāhām, tr., *Ktābā d-margānūtā d-Mār ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā* (New York: Samuel A. Jacobs, 1916).

⁴² See *Ktābā d-sīmātā d-haymānūtā d-‘edtā qaddishtā u-shlīhāyātā qātōlīqī d-madnhā* (Tehran: Scholarly Society of Assyrian Youth, 1964), 87, 139-142.

⁴³ *Pearl*, 3.

⁴⁴ Kawerau, *Das Christentum des Ostens*, 83.

Christian message as preached by the evangelists and Apostles; and the non-corporeal bliss of the Christian afterlife⁴⁵—all of which have yet to be systematically explored. As I demonstrate throughout this thesis, the *Pearl* is typical of Christian *summas* written under Muslim rule which were intended to educate the faithful about the foundational aspects of their faith, while equipping them with the means to counter hypothetical criticism from Muslim and (less often) Jewish quarters. Yet in addition to reflecting Muslim concerns, the *Pearl* also contains polemical themes, since much of its Christology is directed against Jacobite and Melkite Christians,⁴⁶ thereby revealing the interdependence of apologetics and polemics.⁴⁷

1.3.2. *Haymānūtā d-nesṭōryānē* ('A Nestorian Profession of Faith')

A far lesser-known work by 'Abdīshō', the *Haymānūtā d-nesṭōryānē* (hereafter *Profession*) comprises a brief statement of Trinitarian and Christological doctrine, in an unadorned Arabic prose. The date of composition is indicated at the end of the text, given as 1 Rabī' I 698 A.H. (= 7 December 1298 C.E.).⁴⁸ Although the work is in Arabic, it is often included in manuscript anthologies of 'Abdīshō's Syriac works, and perhaps for this reason bears the Syriac title *Haymānūtā d-nesṭōryānē* ('A Nestorian Confession of Faith'), beginning with the incipit *qāla 'Abdīshū' muṭrān Naṣībīn wa-a'māliha*.⁴⁹ Interestingly, one 19th century

⁴⁵ Herman G.B. Teule, 'Abdīshō' of Nisibis, *CMR* 4 (2012): 750-761, here 753-755. For each of these apologetic themes, see Ali Bouamama, *La littérature polémique musulmane contre le christianisme depuis ses origines jusqu'au XIIIe siècle* (Algiers: Entreprise nationale du livre, 1988), 180-194.

⁴⁶ Although initially pejorative in East Syrian circles, 'Jacobite' and 'Melkite' became standard terms of reference after the 7th century Muslim conquests. On their evolution under Muslim rule, see Sidney H. Griffith, 'Melkites and Jacobites and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in third/Ninth-Century Syria,' in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 9-57.

⁴⁷ This interdependence will be discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.3.2.

⁴⁸ On this dating, see edition by Samir Khalil Samir, 'Une Profession de Foi de 'Abdīshū' de Nisibe,' in *Enlogēma: Studies in Honor of Robert Taft S.J.*, ed. Ephrem Carr and Frederick W. Norris (Rome: Pontificia Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1993), 427-451, here 448.

⁴⁹ See Mss. Harvard Syr. 52, 71b; Cambridge Add. 3087, 82b; Mingana Syr. 212, 148b. The latter has the title *Haymānūtā d-nesṭōryānē trīṣāy shubbhā* ('Faith of the Orthodox Nestorians'). Cf. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein,

manuscript contains the whole text in Syriac, though it is unclear whether it was translated by the scribe or copied from an earlier translation.⁵⁰ The text was first edited in an article by Samir Khalil, on which I base my reading.⁵¹

The profession opens with an affirmation of God's Oneness and the substantial unity of His attributes (*ṣifāt*), while the rest of the work discusses the three main Christological positions, Melkite, Jacobite, and Nestorian, followed by a deconstruction of the first two and a vindication of the latter. That the work is limited to the Trinity and Incarnation is far from incidental, since both were major points of contention in Christian-Muslim conversations about God's unity and transcendence. As I show in Chapter Four, Section 4.3.2, the intra-Christian polemic of this work is best understood in the broader context of Christian-Muslim apologetics, whereby various Christian confessions competed to convince Muslims that their doctrines were more acceptable than others. The *Profession*, therefore, represents the intersection between apologetics and polemics, demonstrating how the one is often contingent on the other.

The apologetic context of the *Profession* was first hinted at by Samir Khalil Samir in his edition of the text in 1993, suggesting that 'Abdīshō's exposition of rival Christological positions was influenced by Elias bar Shennāyā's *Kitāb al-majālis* ('Book of Sessions'), an account of a disputation between Bar Shennāyā and the Muslim vizier Abu l-Qāsim al-Maghribī in 1027.⁵² More recently, Alexander Treiger has drawn parallels between the *Profession's* Christology and that of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus*, to which the famous Ḥanbalite jurist and polemicist Ibn Taymiyya vigorously responded.⁵³ While Treiger

Syriac Manuscripts in the Harvard College Library: A Catalogue (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 59; Wright and Cook, *Catalogue*, 2:1215.

⁵⁰ Ms. Paris syr. 315, 72a-75a; see Jean-Baptiste Chabot, 'Les manuscrits syriaques de la Bibliothèque nationale acquis depuis 1874,' *JA* 9, no. 8 (1896): 234-290, here 263.

⁵¹ Samir, 'Une profession de foi de 'Abdišū' de Nisibe.'

⁵² Samir, 'Une profession de foi de 'Abdišū' de Nisibe,' 434.

⁵³ Alexander Treiger, 'The Christology of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus*,' *J ECS* 65, no. 1-2 (2013): 21-48, here 39-41.

does not suggest a direct relationship between the two texts, his recent study has correctly highlighted the *Profession*'s role in religious controversy.

1.3.3. *Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn* ('Foundations of the Faith')

Like the *Pearl*, the *Uṣūl al-dīn* is a systematic work of theology, though this time written mainly in rhymed Arabic prose (*saj*). It is also far more expansive in its treatment of doctrine, comprising no less than eighteen chapters. These are divided into 'dogmatic principles' (*uṣūl 'ilmiyya*) and 'practical principles' (*uṣūl 'amaliyya*), the former treating matters such as the veracity of the Scriptures, the Trinity, and the Incarnation, while the latter addresses devotional practice.⁵⁴ The work first came to light after a hitherto unknown manuscript copied in 1703 was presented in an article by Yusuf Ghanīma, who had discovered it in the library of the Cathedral of the Chaldean Church in Baghdad in 1904.⁵⁵ A further witness, dated 1360, was later indicated by Paul Sbath in a catalogue of privately held manuscripts in Aleppo, which in this case resided in the collection of the Khodari family.⁵⁶ Regrettably, both manuscripts are believed to be lost. Our sole surviving witness is held in the collection of the Bibliothèque Orientale at the University of St. Joseph, Beirut (Ms.

⁵⁴ For an overview of contents, see Bénédicte Landron, *Chrétiens et musulmans en Irak: attitudes nestoriennes vis-à-vis de l'Islam* (Paris: Cariscript, 1994), 137.

⁵⁵ This work does not occur in the catalogue of manuscripts once housed in the Chaldean Monastery in Baghdad. For these, see Buṭrus Ḥaddād and Jāk Ishāq, *al-Makḥḥūṭāt al-suryāniyya wa-al-l-'arabiyya fī khizānat al-rahbāniyya l-kaldāniyya fī Baghdād* (Baghdād: al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1988).

⁵⁶ See Paul Sbath, *Al-Fihris: Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Imprimerie Al-Chark, 1938), 1:53. This collection is not to be confused with Sbath's own personal collection (idem, *Bibliothèque de manuscrits Paul Sbath. prêtre syrien d'Alep* [Cairo: H. Friedrich, 1928]), nos 1-338 and 340-776 of which now reside in the Vatican.

936).⁵⁷ Although a late witness (copied in 1840), its contents conform to the extracts and description of the earlier manuscript described by Ghanīma.⁵⁸

Among his own writings listed in his *Catalogue*, ‘Abdīshō’ indicates a work entitled *Ktābā d-shahmarwārīd* (‘Book of the King-Pearl’), which he says he wrote in Arabic (*d-’arābā ’īt rakkebtēh*).⁵⁹ A note by a monk in an East Syrian manuscript (Ms. SMMJ 159) informs us that he had seen a number of works bearing ‘Abdīshō’'s autograph. Among them was the *Shahmarwārīd*, which according to the note is also known as the *Uṣūl al-dīn* and dated 1614 A.G. (=1302/3 C.E.).⁶⁰ Ms. SMMJ 159 also preserves the sixth chapter of the *Uṣūl al-dīn* on the computation of principal dates in the life of Christ.⁶¹ Interestingly, this chapter also appears in Syriac précis in a number of other manuscripts, due perhaps to its practical use for calculating the dates of feast days in the liturgical calendar.⁶²

‘Abdīshō’ makes clear in his preface to this work that he intended it as both a concise summary of the faith and an apology for Christianity:

Now then, some illustrious, believing notables [*qawm min sādāt al-mu’minīn al-amjadīn*] have pressed me to produce for them a subtle book on the foundations of the faith, containing the doctrines of the Rightly Guided Doctors [*al-a’imma l-rāshidīn*] and Blessed Fathers, in brief

⁵⁷ For a description of this manuscript, see Ignace Abdo-Khalifé and François Baissari, ‘Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque orientale de l’Université Saint Joseph (seconde série),’ *MUSJ* 29, fasc. 4 (1951-52): 103-155, here 104-105.

⁵⁸ Yūsuf Ghanīma (‘Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn li-‘Abdīshū’ mutrān naṣībīn,’ *al-Mashriq* 7 [1904]: 908-1003, here 1001-1003’) provides extracts from the author’s preface, fourth chapter (on Christology), and the entirety of the fifteenth chapter (on the Wednesday and Friday fasts).

⁵⁹ Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 3/1:352.

⁶⁰ Ms. St. Mark’s Monastery Jerusalem (SMMJ) 159, 106a. Cf. Filoksinos Yohanna Dolabani, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in St. Mark’s Monastery* (Damascus: Sidawi Printing House, 1994), 343-344. This note is also translated into English by Kaufhold, introduction, xxi-xxii.

⁶¹ Ms. SSMJ, 93a-97a (glossed with the Syriac title *Ḥushshbānā sharrīrā da-mdabbrānūtēh d-pārōqā*) This chapter appears to be a pastedown of another manuscript.

⁶² Ms. Vat. Syr. 65, 44a-45a; Ms. London Orient. 4069, 122a-123a; Ms. Mosul, Chaldean Patriarchate 76 (foliation unknown); Ms. Vat. Syr. 307 (foliation unknown). Cf. Assemani and Assemani, *Biblioteca apostolica vaticana*, 2:364; George Margoliouth, *Descriptive List of Syriac and Karshuni MSS. in the British Museum acquired since 1873* (London: British Museum 1899), 21; Scher, ‘Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques conservés dans la bibliothèque du Patriarcat chaldéen de Mossoul,’ 246; Stephen Evodius Assemani and A. Assemani, *Codices chaldaici sive syriaci Vaticani Assemaniani*, in Angelo Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vaticanis codicibus edita*, 10 vols. (Rome: In Collegio Urbano apud Burliaem, 1831-1838). 5:1-82, here 22.

summary of the cream of truths [*zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*] and mysteries, that it might be a proof against opposition [*ḥujjat^{an} 'inda 'tirād al-khuṣūm*] and a path towards drawing the curtain of doubt [*ḥajjat^{an} fī imāṭat khimār al-shukūk*] and the veil of ambiguity from its meanings [*niqāb al-shibh 'an wujūh al-mafhūm*].⁶³

As with the *Pearl*, the *Uṣūl al-dīn* has received precious little attention. In her masterful survey of medieval Nestorian writings about Islam, Bénédicte Landron has mentioned aspects of the *Uṣūl al-dīn*'s treatment of the Trinity, Christology, and devotional worship.⁶⁴ However, her study, though extremely useful, constitutes more of an overview than an analysis. More recently, Herman Teule has brought to light some of the work's themes concerning the abrogation of Mosaic Law, the veneration of the Cross, the direction of prayer to the east—all of which were sources of contention among Muslim critics of Christianity, though these remain largely unexplored.⁶⁵

1.3.4. *Khuṭba tataḍammanu ḥaqīqat i 'tiqādinā fī l-tathlīth wa-l-ḥulūl* ('Sermon on the Truth of Our Belief in the Trinity and Indwelling')

Like the *Profession*, the *Khuṭba* comprises a brief discussion of the Trinity and Incarnation, though this time in the form of a sermon in rhymed Arabic, at the end of which 'Abdīshō' exhorts his listeners to prepare for the afterlife. Also like the *Profession*, the *Sermon* does not explicitly make reference to Muslims but is unmistakably apologetic in nature. As already pointed out, the Trinity and Incarnation were both major stumbling blocks to the Muslim understanding of Christian monotheism. It is the reasonableness of each of these concepts that the *Sermon* affirms, thus indicating the centrality of Christian-Muslim apologetics in briefer, homiletic texts intended for public recitation.

⁶³ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 4b.

⁶⁴ Landron, *Attitudes*, ch. 7, 8, and 15.

⁶⁵ Teule, 'Abdisho' of Nisibis,' 759-760.

The sole witness to the text is contained in Ṣalībā ibn Yūḥannā's theological compendium (Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale ar. 204), mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. Although the whole manuscript was completed by Ṣalībā in 1335 while in Famagusta, the section containing the sermon was copied in 1308 in the town of Jazīrat ibn 'Umar (modern day Cizre in south-eastern Turkey). A further manuscript in the collection of the Monastery of St Mark in Jerusalem was indicated by Georg Graf, though it now appears to be lost.⁶⁶ The text of the *Khuṭba* was published twice by Louise Cheikho on the basis of Ṣalībā's manuscript.⁶⁷ As will become evident in Chapters Three and Four, the text's Trinitarian and Christological discourse closely follows that in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* and *Farā'id*.

1.3.5. *Kitāb farā'id al-fawā'id fī uṣūl al-dīn wa-l-'aqā'id* ('Gems of Utility concerning the Principles of Religion and Dogmas')

The *Farā'id al-fawā'id fī uṣūl al-dīn wa-l-'aqā'id* (hereafter *Farā'id*) comprises yet another epitome of ecclesiastical doctrine in Arabic, this time numbering only thirteen sections (*fuṣūl*). The work's schematisation roughly follows that of the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, addressing core matters of dogma such as the veracity of the Gospels, the Trinity, and the Incarnation, followed by issues of orthopraxy such as the veneration of the Cross and the sacraments. However, these topics are treated with far greater brevity and concision, suggesting perhaps that the *Farā'id* was intended as an abridgment of the *Uṣūl al-dīn*.

It would appear that the *Farā'id* enjoyed the most popularity of 'Abdīshō's Arabic works, since a greater number of manuscripts preserve it: Željko Paša has counted six witnesses to the text, the oldest (Ms. Vat. ar. 110) dating to 1320, just two years after

⁶⁶ GCAL 2:216.

⁶⁷ The edition referred to throughout this thesis is by Louis Cheikho in *Seize traités*, 101-103.

‘Abdīshō’'s death.⁶⁸ According to the colophon of Ms. Vat. ar. 110, the *Farā'id* was completed in 1623 A.G. (=1313).⁶⁹ For the purposes of this study, I have consulted Paša's critical edition of the *Farā'id*, which appeared as part of his 2013 doctoral thesis.⁷⁰ An English translation is also included in Paša's edition, though all translations from the *Farā'id* in this thesis are my own.

That the *Farā'id* was written with the intention of defending the Christian faith from criticism is made clear in ‘Abdīshō’'s preface, where he explicitly mentions Muslims and Muslim authorities:

I discovered that the most erudite scholar Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī—may God have mercy on him—said: ‘Condemning doctrines prior to comprehending them is absurd, for it leads to blindness and error.’⁷¹ The impartial person [*al-‘āqil al-munṣif*] neither criticises or praises before study and examination, and the fair-minded judge [*al-qāḍī al-‘ādil*] does not pronounce sentence on one of two litigants until he has heard both arguments and considered the substance [*fahwā*] of the proof [*hujja*] of what has been brought forward and the evidence [*bayyina*] of what has been claimed.

Because those who believe [*alladhīna āmanū*, i.e. Muslims] and those who are Jews [*alladhīna hādū*]⁷² disapprove of Christianity and ascribe idolatry [*shirk*] and unbelief [*kufr*] to the things they [i.e. the Christians] believe—which on the surface [*fī zāhir amrihā*] might appear objectionable, but on closer examination are free from slander and villainy—, it is necessary for us to explain in this book the various Christian doctrines [*aqāwīl*] that they vilify and to establish their necessity [*wujūb*] and soundness [*ṣiḥḥa*].⁷³

⁶⁸ Željko Paša, ‘Kitāb farā'id al-fawā'id fī uṣūl al-dīn wa-l-‘aqā'id: Book of the Pearls of Utility: On the Principles of the Religion and Dogmas’ (PhD diss., Pontifical Oriental Institute, 2013), 77-98.

⁶⁹ Paša, ‘Kitāb farā'id al-fawā'id,’ 87.

⁷⁰ See previous two notes.

⁷¹ See *infra* for more on this quotation.

⁷² See *infra* for this Qur'ānic allusion to Muslims and Jews.

⁷³ *Farā'id*, §§16-24.

The opening quotation comes from the *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* ('Aims of the Philosophers') of the famous Ash'arite theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111),⁷⁴ while the reference to 'those who believe and those who are Jews' alludes to Q 2:62.⁷⁵ The openness with which 'Abdīshō' mentions non-Christian criticisms and authorities would suggest, at first glance, that the *Farā'id* is addressed to Muslims and Jews. However, as will be demonstrated throughout this thesis, the book's main addressees are in fact Christians. Like 'Abdīshō's other systematic theologies, the *Farā'id* was written as a didactic summary of the faith that was simultaneously intended to reassure Christians that their beliefs could be upheld in an often hostile setting.

1.4 Christian-Muslim Relations after the Sectarian Milieu

Turning our attention now to recent trends in the study of Syriac and Christian Arabic apologetics, it is fair to say that most of the authors featured in Ṣalībā ibn Yūḥannā's theological compendia (introduced at the beginning of this thesis) have received scarce attention from modern scholars. Far more focus has instead been placed on Syriac- and Arabic-speaking Christian writers living under much earlier periods of Muslim rule. Where anti-Muslim apologetics are concerned, the names Theodore Abū Qurra (d. first half of 9th century), Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrītī (d. ca. 830), and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (d. after 838) loom large in recent scholarship.⁷⁶ Recent studies on these figures are indebted in great

⁷⁴ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1961), 31: *al-Wuqūfu 'alā fasādi l-madhāhibi qabla l-iḥāṭi bi-l-madhārikihā muḥāl^m bal huwa ramy^m fī l-'imāyati wa-dalāl.*

⁷⁵ 'Those who believe, and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabians—whoever believes in God and the Last Day and performs good deeds—surely their reward is with their Lord, and no fear shall come upon them and neither shall they grieve.' On the identification of *alladhīna āmanū* and *alladhīna ḥādū* as Muslims and Jews respectively, see Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 93-128.

⁷⁶ Studies abound; see Mark Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims: A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2005), 28-112; Sara L. Hussein, 'Early Christian Explanations of the Trinity in Arabic in the Context of Muslim Theology' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2011); Thomas W. Ricks, *Early Arabic Christian*

part to numerous articles by Sydney Griffith, who sees them as instrumental to the emergence of Christian theology in the Arabic language.⁷⁷

Similarly, polemical and apologetic responses to emergent Islam in Syriac have also received considerable attention.⁷⁸ Much of this attention has arguably arisen from attempts by historians to frame the emergence of Islam within the multi-religious environment of the Late Antique Near East.⁷⁹ In this environment—dubbed the ‘sectarian milieu’ by John Wansbrough—a series of religious challenges from Christians and Jews to the early Muslim community contributed to the formation of the latter’s self-identity, communal history, and what might be termed ‘orthodoxy.’⁸⁰ Building on Wansbrough’s conclusions, Sydney Griffith has seen the emergence of literary apologies and polemics by Christians as responsive to the religious challenges of a burgeoning Islam.⁸¹ In this context, one most often encounters the

Contributions to Trinitarian Theology: The Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity in an Islamic Milieu (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013); Wageeh Y.F. Mikhail, ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s *Kitāb al-Burhān*: A Topical and Theological Analysis of Arabic Christian Theology in the Ninth Century’ (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2013); Najib G. Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abu Qurrah’s Theology in Its Islamic Context* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014).

⁷⁷ Sydney H. Griffith, *Theodore Abu Qurrah: The Intellectual Profile of an Arab Christian Writer of the First Abbasid Century* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1992); idem, ‘Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah abū Rā’itah, a Christian *mutakallim* of the First Abbasid Century,’ *OC* 64 (1980): 161-201, reprinted in *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic. Muslim Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate / Variorum, 2002), II; idem, ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s *Kitāb al-burhān*: Christian *kalām* in the First Abbasid Century,’ *LeMus* 96 (1983): 145-181, reprinted in *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic. Muslim Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (Aldershot: Variorum, 2002), III.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Sebastian P. Brock, ‘Syriac Views on Emergent Islam,’ in *Studies in the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. G.H.A. Juynboll (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 9-21; Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1997), 53-253; Michael Penn, ‘Syriac Sources for the Study of Early Christian-Muslim Relations,’ *Islamochristiana* 28 (2003): 59-78, esp. 60-62.

⁷⁹ Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 189-203; Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism. The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), esp. 41-72 and 73-107; Stephen R. Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, rev. ed. (London: Tauris, 1991), 69-71.

⁸⁰ John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, 2nd ed. (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus, 2006), 40-44. See also Carl H. Becker, ‘Christliche Polemik und islamische Dogmenbildung,’ *ZA* 25 (1911): 175-195, tr. as ‘Christian Polemic and the Formation of Islamic Dogma,’ in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert Hoyland (London: Ashgate / Variorum, 2004), XI.

⁸¹ Adopting Wansbrough’s notion of an ‘interconfessional polemic’ imposed on the early Muslim community, Sydney Griffith (*The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 93) argues that ‘the same may be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of both the topics and the modes of expression in Arabic of Jewish and Christian theology, apology, and polemic in the early Islamic period. One may think of the situation of the three Arabic-speaking communities in the early Islamic period as one in which mutually reactive thinking was the intellectual order of the day.’ On Syriac apologetics of the early Islamic period as ‘*au fonds* reactive literature,’ see Gerrit J. Reinink, ‘The Beginnings of Syriac Apologetic Literature in Response to Islam,’ *OC* 88 (1993): 165-187, here 186; cf. Sydney H. Griffith, ‘Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians,’ in

names of Nonnus of Nisibis (d. after 862), Timothy the Great (d. 823), and Theodore bar Kōnī (d. early 9th century).⁸²

While there can be little doubt that such approaches have enriched our general understanding of early Islamic history,⁸³ the emphasis on Late Antiquity as a model for understanding Christian-Muslim relations has arguably left the study of later encounters in a state of neglect. This situation has in my view arisen from the fact that most existing studies of Syriac and Arabic Christian apologetics have been more concerned with the genre's origins than its later development and reception. As such, there has been a tendency among scholars to view the formative phase of anti-Muslim apologetic theology as the most significant and creative. As mentioned previously, debates between Muslims, Christians, and Jews were commonplace in Wansbrough's 'sectarian milieu.' Such debates often took the form of public disputations (*munāẓārāt*) and 'literary salons' (*majālis*), which were held in the presence of caliphs and other Muslim notables throughout the 'Abbāsīd Empire, gradually becoming less frequent after the normalisation of social and political restrictions on non-Muslims under the caliph al-Mutawakkil and subsequent rulers.⁸⁴ As Sydney Griffith and David Bertaina have convincingly shown, these historic debates served as a paradigm for Christian apologies in a number of literary genres, including popular dialogue texts, on the one hand, and the more systematic treatises, on the other.⁸⁵

Proceedings of the Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference (Villanova, Pa.: Augustinian Historical Institute, Villanova University, 1979), 63-86; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 454-476 and 502-504.

⁸² For studies on their apologetic oeuvre, see Herman G.B. Teule, 'Nonnus of Nisibis,' *CMR* 1 (2010): 243-245; Martin Heimgartner and Barbara Roggema, 'Timothy I,' *CMR* 1 (2010): 515-531; Herman G.B. Teule, 'Theodore bar Koni,' *CMS* 1 (2010): 343-346.

⁸³ For a useful *status questionis* and conspectus, see Robert Hoyland, 'Early Islam as Late Antique Religion,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott F. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1053-1077.

⁸⁴ See Sydney H. Griffith, 'The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*: Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Islamic Period,' in *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, ed. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 13-83.

⁸⁵ Griffith, 'The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*'; David Bertaina, *Christian and Muslim Dialogues: The Religious uses of a Literary Form in the Early Islamic Middle East* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2011). See also Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 99-103 on the question of whether early Syriac and Arabic-Christian polemics and apologetics had a 'historical *fundamentum in re* or basis in real life.'

Consequently, Christian theologians in the early-‘Abbāsīd era have been counted among the most original thinkers to have engaged critically with Islam in pre-modern times. David Thomas has regarded the time of ‘Ammār’s activity (ca. 9th century) as Arabic Christianity’s ‘climactic period of intellectual encounter’ with Muslim theological ideas, after which ‘only marginal use’ was made of them.⁸⁶ Thus, according to Thomas, a rich period of ‘doctrinal experimentation’ by Arabophone Christians came to an end—a judgement he makes without reference to any Christian theology produced after the 9th century.⁸⁷ As sure evidence of this decline, some scholars have cited rises in Muslim intolerance following the early-Abbasid period and the end of Islam’s ‘formative’ phase, after which enough doctrinal fixity in Islam had emerged for Muslims to feel less inclined to debate their beliefs with others. This view is exemplified in one study by Mark Beaumont who states that ‘by the end of the ninth century Muslim intellectuals had abandoned debate with Christians on the grounds that everything that can be known about revealed truth was contained in Islam,’ while the demographic decline of Christian communities and ‘systematic oppression’ under Mongol rule would cause ‘the distance between Muslim and Christian intellectuals to grow wider.’⁸⁸ As Beaumont would have it, ‘between the creative period of the eighth and early ninth centuries and the suppression of the post-‘Abbāsīd era, Christian dialogue on Christology with Muslims hardly developed in new directions.’ Like Thomas, Beaumont gives no indication of which post-‘Abbāsīd authors represent this stagnation.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ David Thomas, ‘Christian Borrowings from Islamic Theology in the Classical Period: The Witness to al-Juwaynī and Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī,’ *IHIW* 2 (2014): 125-142, here 129.

⁸⁷ Thomas, ‘Christian Borrowings from Islamic Theology,’ 140. Bafflingly, Thomas bases this judgement on the contents of two anti-Christian polemics by Ash‘arī theologians who flourished some three centuries after ‘Ammār—without a single reference to any other Christian Arabic theologian. For an earlier, similar assessment by Thomas, see idem, ‘The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Abbasid Era,’ in *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 79-98, in which he argues that, however creative and original ‘Ammār’s attempts to vindicate the doctrine of the Trinity, subsequent apologists would fail to convince Muslims of the reasonableness of this doctrine—a failure which, in Muslim eyes, ‘inevitably led to confusion and incoherence’ for centuries to come. Ibid, 95.

⁸⁸ Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Islam*, 113.

⁸⁹ Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Islam*, 114.

A similar assessment is offered by David Bertaina: in the conclusion to his study on Christian-Muslim dialogue texts, he states that the ‘decline of the dialogue form had much to do with the shift in court culture and patronage, the changing demographics of the Middle East, and the hardening attitudes of Muslims against religious minorities’ combined with ‘the construction of [Islamic] theological and legal orthodoxies.’⁹⁰ Later dialogue texts, Bertaina contends, merely ‘copied and recounted’ earlier interreligious encounters that had arisen from active debate.⁹¹ However, as in the above studies by Thomas and Beaumont, Bertaina is silent about which later writers he has in mind, since his study terminates in the 11th century.

Leaving aside the difficult question of when precisely Christians became a minority in the Near East,⁹² it is noteworthy that recent surveys of Christian-Muslim relations have passed over in silence Christian writers who flourished in the later Middle Ages. Mark Beaumont’s aforementioned study purports to be a survey of Christian discussions with Muslims on the Incarnation from the earliest times to the 20th century. But after examining the Christologies of Abū Qurra, Abū Rā’īṭa, and ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, his survey rapidly shifts westwards to European theologians of the 19th century onwards, accounting for this gap by assuring us that little of any originality was produced in the intervening periods—not least by Arabophone Christian writers in the Islamic world.⁹³ Similarly, an edited volume on ‘Abbāsīd apologetics, the title of which advertises a *terminus ad quem* of 1258 (the date of the caliphate’s fall), contains no contributions that deal with authors beyond the 10th century.

⁹⁰ Bertaina, *Christian and Muslim Dialogues*, 246-247.

⁹¹ Bertaina, *Christian and Muslim Dialogues*, 246.

⁹² On this issue, see Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1979). Bulliet places the date of Muslims in Syria becoming a majority around the year 888 (ibid., 109) and around 900 in Egypt (ibid., 74, 92-93). However, this thesis has been severely criticised by Michael Morony (‘The Age of Conversions: A Reassessment,’ in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Jibran Bikhazi [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990], 135-150), Tamer el-Leithy (‘Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo, 1293-1524 A.D.’ [PhD. diss., Princeton University, 2004], 21-22), and Jack Tannous (‘Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak’ [PhD diss. Princeton University, 2010], 482, no. 1143). In some areas at least, Christians remained a majority well into the later Middle Ages, particularly in Egypt, where mass conversions did not take place until the 14th century. El-Leithy, ‘Coptic Culture,’ 25-28.

⁹³ Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Islam*, 114.

Instead, we are informed by the volume's editor, Jørgen Nielsen, that meaningful exchange between Islam and Christianity ceased altogether after the death in 974 of the famous Baghdad Christian peripatetic and theologian Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī.⁹⁴ This narrative of Eastern Christian decline is implicit in more general works on Christian apologetic literature, which give passing acknowledgement to the achievements of early-ʿAbbāsīd Christian apologists but say nothing of later authors from these same communities, though the scholastics of the Latin Middle Ages are given ample focus.⁹⁵

There have been notable exceptions, however. In 1989, Paul Khoury published a multi-volume survey of theological controversy between Arabophone Muslims and Christians from the 8th to 12th century.⁹⁶ Five years later, Bénédicte Landron produced a historical survey of anti-Muslim apologetics and polemics by Nestorian writers which terminates in the early 14th century.⁹⁷ Further steps have been taken to fill the lacunae left by earlier studies in a series of bibliographical articles edited by David Thomas, for which there are extensive volumes for the years 900 to 1500, accounting for Christian writers in both the Islamic and Latin Christian worlds.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, closer, more analytical studies of later Christian authors from the Islamic Middle Ages remain few.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Jørgen S. Nielsen, introduction to *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, ed. Jørgen S. Nielsen and Samir Khalil Samir (Leiden: Brill, 1994), ix-x.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Otto Zöckler, *Geschichte der Apologie des Christentums* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelmann 1907), 186-253, esp. 237-242 and Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (London: Hutchinson, 1971). We encounter this tendency in a more recent collection of studies edited by Mona Siddiqui, *Routledge Reader in Christian-Muslim Relations* (London: Routledge, 2013). After dealing with Christian and Muslim writers of the early-ʿAbbāsīd era (see contributions by David Thomas, Mark Beaumont, and Mark Swanson), the focus of this edited volume swiftly moves onto Thomas Aquinas and ends its survey with modern-day themes of Christian-Muslim dialogue.

⁹⁶ Paul Khoury, *Matériaux pour servir à l'étude de la controverse théologique islamo-chrétienne de langue arabe du VIIIe au XIIIe siècle*, 6 vols. (Würzburg: Oros, 2000).

⁹⁷ Landron, *Attitudes*. See also above Section 1.3.3.

⁹⁸ David Thomas and Alex Mallet (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2009-13).

⁹⁹ Of recent note are Charles Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2013) and Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285)* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), each of whom explore Christian-Muslim polemics and apologetics through to the 12th and 13th centuries.

1.5 Syriac Christianity between ‘Decline’ and ‘Renaissance’

Complicating matters somewhat is the fact that there has been no consensus about the nature and date of Christianity’s alleged intellectual decline under Islam. Focusing on Syriac Christianity, Jean-Baptiste Chabot viewed the turn of the second millennium as the beginning of ‘la décadence et fin de la littérature syriaque,’ due to the increasing reliance of its authors on the Arabic language, the reduction of ecclesiastical sees in Muslim territories, the rising intolerance of Muslim rulers, and the ignorance and corruption of the clergy.¹⁰⁰ For similar reasons, Carl Brockelmann regards Syriac literature’s decline to have begun as early as the advent of Islam—a decline that would culminate in the careers of ‘Abdīshō’ of Nisibis and other later authors.¹⁰¹

Writing some years later, however, Anton Baumstark would see the 10th to early-14th centuries as a ‘renaissance’ for the Syriac churches, engendered by the Byzantine invasions of the emperor John IV Tzimiskes; contact with the Crusaders; and the hope—never to be realised—that the Mongol rulers of Iran would eventually convert to Christianity.¹⁰² In Baumstark’s scheme, the works of ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā and his older, better-known Syrian Orthodox contemporary Gregory Abū l-Faraj bar ‘Ebrōyō (known in the West as Bar Hebraeus, d. 1286) represent the climax of this renaissance, after which we begin to see ‘endgültige Verfall des nationalen Schriftums ein.’¹⁰³ Earlier surveys of Syriac literature maintain a similar stance on ‘Abdīshō’’s legacy: William Wright remarked that after his death ‘there are hardly any names among the Nestorians worthy of a place in the literary history of the Syrian nation’¹⁰⁴—a judgement echoed by Rubens Duval, who adds that ‘les

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Baptiste Chabot, *Littérature syriaque* (Paris: Bloud and Gray, 1934), iii, 144ff.

¹⁰¹ Carl Brockelmann et al., *Geschichte der christlichen Litteraturen des Orients* (Leipzig: C.F. Amelang, 1907), 45-64.

¹⁰² *GSL*, 285-286. For a summary of Baumstark’s argument, see Herman G.B. Teule, ‘The Syriac Renaissance,’ in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman G.B. Teule and Carmen Fotescu Tauwinkl (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 1-31, here 1-3.

¹⁰³ *GSL*, 326.

¹⁰⁴ Wright, *A Short History*, 290.

Mongols traînent derrière eux le meurtre et la dévastation et une longue ère d'obscurantisme va s'appesantir sur l'Asie.'¹⁰⁵

Such narratives of inexorable decline have persisted in more recent accounts of the Syriac Churches' intellectual history, which bring into question Baumstark's renaissance. Peter Kawerau's history of the Syrian Orthodox Church, for example, takes at face value complaints by 12th- and 13th-century Syriac authors about clerical corruption and the poor state of the sciences, presenting these as evidence of 'innerer Verfall.'¹⁰⁶ Jules Leroy maintained a similar scepticism about a renaissance as Baumstark saw it, though he observed some signs of revival in the Syrian Orthodox Church's ecclesiastical art between the 11th and 13th centuries.¹⁰⁷ Otherwise, any indication of a renaissance was for Leroy simply 'un arrêt sur un pente décadente, commencée dès VIII^e s.'¹⁰⁸

Others have dismissed the works of later Syriac writers as products of a literary decadence. Despite recognising the usefulness of 'Abdīshō' bar Brīkhā's *Catalogue*, William Wright was quick to point out 'Abdīshō's perceived failings as a Syriac litterateur, remarking that

[a]s a poet he does not shine according to our ideas, although his countrymen admire his verses greatly. Not only is he obscure in vocabulary and style, but he has adopted and even exaggerated all the worse faults of Arabic writers of rimed prose and scribblers of verse.'¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Rubens Duval, *Anciennes littératures chrétiennes*, vol. 1, *La littérature syriaque* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1900), 411.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Kawerau, *Die jakobitische Kirche im Zeitalter der syrischen Renaissance. Idee und Wirklichkeit* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960), 67-75. On the problematic nature of Kawerau's methodology in this regard, see Dorothea Weltecke, '60 Years after Peter Kawerau: Remarks on the Social and Cultural History of the Syriac-Orthodox Christians from XIth to the XIIIth Century,' *LeMus* 121, no. 1-2 (2008): 311-335.

¹⁰⁷ Jules Leroy, 'La renaissance de l'Église syriaque aux XIIe-XIIIe siècles (suite et fin),' *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 14, no. 55 (1971): 239-255, here 251.

¹⁰⁸ Leroy, 'La renaissance de l'Église syriaque,' 131.

¹⁰⁹ Wright, *A Short History*, 287.

The faults of the above-mentioned Arabic writers no doubt relate to the—until relatively recently—prevalent view in modern scholarship that Arabic poetry and belles lettres had by the end of the Mamlūk and Mongol (or ‘post-classical’) periods become baroque and mannerist, in contrast to the clarity and elegance of earlier periods.¹¹⁰ Such views are exemplified in Carl Brockelmann’s influential *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*;¹¹¹ thus it comes as no surprise that he elsewhere accuses ‘Abdīshō’s *Paradise of Eden* of ‘bearing only too clearly the mark of decay’ (‘tragen nur zu deutlich den Stempel des Verfalls’), on account of what he saw as its excessive ornateness and borrowing from Arabic models.¹¹² Similar assessments have been made of an East Syrian contemporary of ‘Abdīshō’, Gabriel Qamṣā (d. 1300), Metropolitan of Mosul, whose prolixity and mannerist style has, as Lucas Van Rompay notes, ‘failed to charm modern scholars,’ perhaps accounting for the lack of interest in editing—much less studying—his poetic oeuvre.¹¹³

Herman Teule has recently revisited the much contested issue of the Syriac Renaissance, this time in light of the receptivity of many of its authors to the scientific, cultural, and religious world of Islam. Whereas Baumstark believed this putative age of revival to have occurred in spite of Islam, Teule has considered the period in light of its authors familiarity with Arabo-Islamic models of philosophy, theology, grammar, poetry,

¹¹⁰ On the problematic and value-laden nature of such terms as ‘baroque’ and ‘post-classical’ in the characterisation of Mamlūk literature in past scholarship, see Thomas Bauer, ‘Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches,’ *MSR* 9, no. 2 (2005): 105-132, esp. 105-107; idem, ‘In Search of “Post-Classical Literature”: A Review Article,’ *MSA* 11, no. 2 (2007): 137-167, here 139. Bauer’s caustic critique in the latter article arises in response to the publication of Roger Allen and D.S. Richards (ed.), *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. the contribution by Salma Khadra Jayyusi (23-59).

¹¹¹ *GAL*, 2:8.

¹¹² Brockelmann, *Geschichte der christlichen Litteraturen*, 63.

¹¹³ Luke Van Rompay, ‘Gabriel Qamṣā,’ *GEDSH*, 170, citing Jean Maurice Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne: contribution à l’étude de l’histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l’Iraq*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965), 1:132-133, who here describes Qamṣā’s lengthy liturgical poem (‘ōnīā) on the founding of the monastery of Bēt Qōqē by Sabrīshō’ as ‘désespérément vague et très prolixie,’ and Anton Baumstark (*GSL*, 284) who simply refers to it as ‘eine monströse ‘Onithā.’

historiography, and mysticism.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Teule has drawn attention to the increasing importance of the Arabic language and its use among representatives of the period such as Bar Shennāyā, most of whose works were written in Arabic rather than Syriac.¹¹⁵ Similar approaches have been adopted by other recent scholars, not least Hidemi Takahashi, who has published several studies examining the philosophical and scientific indebtedness of Bar Hebraeus to Muslim intellectuals.¹¹⁶ Lucas Van Rompay has discussed Syriac literature from the 11th to 14th centuries in terms of a ‘consolidation of the Classical Syriac tradition,’ whereby ‘works of an encyclopaedic nature summarise and complement earlier works, taking into account contemporary developments and allowing for borrowings from neighbouring cultures.’¹¹⁷ Van Rompay goes on to state that the Syriac literary tradition ‘was remoulded into the shape in which it would be further transmitted in the centuries to follow,’ and that texts by writers such as Bar Hebraeus and ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā would ‘enjoy great popularity and were frequently copied.’¹¹⁸ Similarly, Heleen Murre-van den Berg has pointed out that the ‘overwhelming majority’ of Syriac manuscripts that were copied between 1500 and 1800 contain texts from the 12th to early 14th century.¹¹⁹ All this would suggest that writers from ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā’s lifetime would have as great an impact—if not greater—as those of earlier periods, despite modern scholarship’s tendency to privilege writers from the first millennium.

¹¹⁴ Herman G.B. Teule, ‘The Interaction of Syriac Christianity and the Muslim World in the Period of the Syriac Renaissance,’ in *Syriac Churches Encountering Islam: Past Experiences and Future Perspectives*, ed. Dietmar W. Winkler (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 110-128; Teule, ‘The Syriac Renaissance,’ 23ff.

¹¹⁵ Teule, ‘The Interaction,’ 11-12.

¹¹⁶ Bar Hebraeus’s intellectual activities will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, Section 2.5.

¹¹⁷ Lucas Van Rompay, ‘Past and Present Perceptions of Syriac Literary Tradition,’ *Hugoye* 3, no. 1 (2000): 71-103, here 96.

¹¹⁸ Van Rompay, ‘Past and Present Perceptions,’ 96.

¹¹⁹ Heleen Murre-van den Berg, ‘Classical Syriac, Neo-Aramaic, and Arabic in the Church of the East and the Chaldean Church between 1500 and 1800,’ in *Aramaic in its Historical and Linguistic Setting*, ed. Holger Gzella and Margaretha L. Folmer (Wiesbaden: Verlag, 2008), 334-351, here 337. However, Murre-van den Berg also points out that the transmission of Arabic manuscripts within the Church of the East in later centuries is far more limited. This is perhaps due to the fact that the Arabic language was viewed by the largely Neo-Aramaic-speaking Church of the East in early modern times as a vehicle for Catholic propaganda, since Western missionaries were active in the translation of Latin works into Arabic, ‘making it possible for Latin Christian traditions to find their way into the Chaldean Church.’ *Ibid.*, 340-341.

1.6 Genre, Language, and Audience

As we observed in Section 1.3 of this chapter, ‘Abdīshō’ wrote five works which can be considered apologetic, three of which comprise systematic summaries of church doctrine. It is necessary, then, to elaborate on what precisely I mean by ‘apologetic.’ Broadly speaking, I follow Horst Pöhlmann and Paul Avis in defining apologetics as the method of justification of a religion against external attacks from hostile parties, often by resorting to reason as well as scripture and attempting to build bridges between other worldviews and central doctrines and themes.¹²⁰ As such, I hold apologetics to be distinct from polemics: if the former can broadly be defined as the art of defence, the latter is the art of attack. However, as we have noted briefly in Section 1.3.2, ‘Abdīshō’'s *Pearl* and *Profession* exhibit polemical themes alongside apologetic ones, thus making it necessary for us to problematise the distinction between the two categories. As Aryeh Kasher points out, the line between polemical and apologetic methods of argumentation is superficial since the two are often interwoven: for example, in his *Contra Apionem*, the famous Romano-Jewish writer Josephus (d. ca. 100) seeks not only to defend Jewish culture from Hellenistic attacks but also to establish it as superior to all others.¹²¹ As we shall see in this thesis, although ‘Abdīshō’ nowhere explicitly states that Christianity is superior to Islam, he nevertheless believes his faith to be the only true one—despite all attempts to build bridges with his interlocutor.

Something should also be said of the language of ‘Abdīshō’'s apologetics. Of five works that form the basis of the present study, only one of them is written in Syriac. Moreover, of the twelve titles surveyed in ‘Abdīshō’'s overall body of works, half were

¹²⁰ Horst Pöhlmann, ‘Apologetics,’ *EC* 1 (1997): 102-104; Paul Avis, ‘Apologetics,’ in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 31-32.

¹²¹ Aryeh Kasher, ‘Polemic and Apologetic Methods of Writing in *Contra Apionem*,’ in *Josephus’ Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context with a Latin Concordance to the Portion Missing in Greek*, ed. Louis H. Feldman and John R. Levison (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 143-186, here 143-144.

written in Arabic. The preponderance of Arabic in his works conforms to the role of the Arabic language during the ‘Syriac Renaissance’ discussed in the previous section. However, one gets a very different impression after reading ‘Abdīshō’s preface to his *Paradise of Eden*, in which he castigates Arab writers of *adab* (belle lettres) who cite the famous *Maqāmāt* of Muḥammad al-Qāsim ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1122) as proof of their language’s superiority to Syriac:

Some Arabs [*nāshīn man hākēl ’ārābāyē*] who are poets in the elegance of diction and grammarians in the art of composition, castigated in their stupidity and foolishness the Syriac tongue as being impoverished, unpolished, and dull. At the present time, they ascribe and attribute the beauty and abundance of subtleties to their [own] language, and at all times and before all men they bring forward as proof the book which they call *Maqāmāt*. They look down on the poets and orators of every [other] language, while the compilation of fifty stories—interwoven with all sorts of fictions, which men of intelligence will upon examination realise are [nothing other than] a colourful bird and plastered sepulchres—they praise, glorify, and exalt and in them they take pride and boast. Therefore, it has befallen to me, a most despised Syrian and the weakest of the Christians [*’allīlā d-suryāyē wa-mḥīlā da-mshīḥāyē*], to show my indignation against the folly of their arrogance and to pull down the height of their criticism. I shall gain a victory for our language, which is the oldest of all, and scatter its detractors with catapults of justice.¹²²

The above statement, therefore, is surprising in light of the many Arabic works that ‘Abdīshō’ himself composed. Some scholars have suggested that non-Muslim Mongol rule in the Near East enabled Christian minorities to voice attacks against the predominantly Arabo-Islamic culture of their surroundings.¹²³ However, this argument seems rather unconvincing in light of the fact that Syriac writers in much earlier periods of Islamic history had

¹²² De Kelaita, *Pardaysā*, ٣٠-٣١. I base my translation on Frederick V. Winnet, ‘Paradise of Eden’ (PhD diss, University of Toronto, 1929), 13 and Naoya Katsumata, ‘The Style of the *Maqāma*: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac,’ *MEL* 5, no. 5 (2002): 117-137, here 122.

¹²³ Katsumata, ‘The Style of the *Maqāma*,’ 122; Younansardaroud, ‘‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkā’s Book of Paradise,’ 202-203. More will be said about the nature of Mongol rule in Near East and its implications for non-Muslims in the following chapter.

complained about the boasting of Arab poets and rhetoricians in strikingly similar terms.¹²⁴ Despite ‘Abdīshō’'s stated aim of challenging the status of the famous *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, the *Paradise of Eden* bears little resemblance to the work; the former is a book of rhymed prose, while the latter is a collection of theological poems which follow traditional Syriac metrical schemes, along with artifices invented by ‘Abdīshō’ himself.¹²⁵ The *Paradise*, therefore, is not a product of imitation but an attempt to affirm Syriac literature’s cultural autonomy from Classical Arabic models, which ‘Abdīshō’ viewed as culturally hegemonic.

This does not mean that our author did not recognise the usefulness of the Arabic language in communicating religious ideas or its importance as a widely-spoken language among Christians. Samir Khalil has seen ‘Abdīshō’'s rhymed Arabic translation of the Gospel readings from the East Syrian breviary as an implicit response to the Muslim argument that the Qur’ān is inimitable in its linguistic beauty.¹²⁶ However, I would point out that the use of rhymed Arabic prose (*saj’*), common to both *maqāmāt* and the Qur’ān, also reflects the tastes of literate circles in ‘Abdīshō’'s time and is, therefore, not necessarily an apologetic strategy.¹²⁷ As Sydney Griffith has recently pointed out, it was not uncommon for the language of some of the earliest Bible translations to have a ‘Qur’ānic cast,’ given the high status of the Qur’ān—and refined Arabic prose more generally—in Islamic societies.¹²⁸ Furthermore, in his preface to the *Rhymed Gospels*, ‘Abdīshō’ explains that he had found

¹²⁴ See, for example, John W. Watt (ed. and tr.), *The Fifth Book of the Rhetoric of Antony of Tagrit* (CSCO 480-1; Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 2 (ST), 2 (ET); Jean Pierre Martin, *De la métrique chez les syriens* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1879), 8 (Jacob bar Shakkō). The same topos occurs in a Syriac treatise on the computation of feast days spuriously attributed to George Bishop of the Arabs (d. 724); see George A. Kiraz, *The Syriac Reckoning of the Year: A Mathematical and Algorithmic Analysis on a Syriac Homily* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr. Kiraz for sharing an unpublished draft of this text with me.

¹²⁵ Katsumata, ‘The Style of the *Maqāma*,’ 129.

¹²⁶ Samir, ‘Une réponse implicite.’ Here, Samir cites in support of this thesis an apology for the Gospels composed in 1245 by the Copto-Arabic author al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl, in which he dismisses the literary beauty of the Qur’ān as mere ‘linguistic artifice’ (*ṣinā’a laḥẓiyya*). Ibid., 10.

¹²⁷ For the popularity of *maqāmāt* and other forms of *adab* in medieval Arabic literary circles, see R. Drory, ‘*Maqāma*,’ in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: Routledge, 2009), 507-508; Muhsin Musawi, ‘Pre-modern Belletristic Prose,’ in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, ed. Roger Allen and Donald Sydney Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 99-133.

¹²⁸ Sydney H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the “People of the Book” in the Language of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 242.

earlier Arabic translations of the *Ḥudrā*'s Gospel readings to be either too embellished or too literal at the expense of the text's meaning; driven by a pastoral desire, he sought to produce a translation that conformed to current literary tastes while maintaining faithfulness to the original Syriac.¹²⁹ Considered in light of such conventions, it is no surprise that the *Uṣūl al-dīn* and the *Khuṭba* are also replete with rhymed prose. It is also a stylistic feature of an earlier, vast compendium of Nestorian dogma, the *Kitāb al-majdal* of 'Amr ibn Mattā (fl. early 11th century).¹³⁰

One way in which we might conceptualise 'Abdīshō's engagement with Arabic literary forms is to frame his intellectual activity as 'Islamicate'—a term applied by Marshall Hodgson to describe that which does 'not refer to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims.'¹³¹ Having thrived for centuries in an Islamicate environment by 'Abdīshō's time, the Church of East can be considered part of this dynamic and by no means monolithic social and cultural complex. As part of the same paradigm, Hodgson has also spoken of a 'lettered tradition ... naturally shared in by both Muslims and non-Muslims.'¹³² This shared lettered tradition also provides the context for many of 'Abdīshō's works, even though he appears to disavow it in his *Paradise of Eden*. His use of *adab* prose, therefore, demonstrates what Kasher has observed in Josephus: that '[f]rom the literary viewpoint, this phenomenon is typical of those who

¹²⁹ Khoury, *Anājīl 'Abdīshū*, 1:88-90.

¹³⁰ See Bo Holmberg, 'Language and Thought in *Kitāb al-Majdal*, *bāb 2, faṣl 1, al-dhurwa*,' in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 159-175. Due to the complicated manuscript history of the text, there has been confusion among scholars over the original author of the *Kitāb al-majdal*. However, a thorough examination of the text's transmission by Bo Holmberg ('A Reconsideration of the *Kitāb al-mağdal*,' 165-167) has revealed the author to be 'Amr ibn Mattā, whose floruit he places in the late 10th / early 11th century.

¹³¹ Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilisation*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 1:59.

¹³² Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 1:58.

lived and received their education in two cultures, but belonged to or identified with one of them, without detaching themselves from the other.’¹³³

A further example of a shared lettered tradition comes from ‘Abdīshō’s use of dialectic reasoning typical in Muslim works of *kalām* (or rational theology). While there has been much debate about the emergence of Islamic *kalām*, with some postulating Late Antique Christian origins,¹³⁴ by ‘Abdīshō’s lifetime dialectical methods of argumentation (*jadāl*) had attained a high level of sophistication in the Islamicate world and were by no means the preserve of Muslim theologians.¹³⁵ Sydney Griffith has characterised Arabic Christian writers such as Theodore Abū Qurra, Abū Rā’īṭa, and ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī as early Christian *mutakallimūn*,¹³⁶ though more recently Sarah Husseini has expressed reservation about the label, arguing that it is questionable that such authors were engaging in the same enterprise as Muslim *kalām* scholars.¹³⁷ At any rate, we find instances of an unmistakably *kalām* style of argumentation throughout ‘Abdīshō’s *Uṣūl al-dīn*, in which he questions his imaginary opponent with such formulae as: ‘If he says ..., we say ...’ (*fa-in qāla l-qā’il ..., qulnā*) or ‘To he who says ..., the response to him would be ...’ (*li-l-qā’il an yaqūlu... fa-yakūnu jawābuhu anna ...*).¹³⁸ And as we shall see in later chapters of this thesis, ‘Abdīshō’ employs a division between rational (‘*aqlī*) and revealed (*naqlī*) proof that is furthermore characteristic

¹³³ Kasher, ‘Polemic and Apologetic Methods of Writing,’ 145.

¹³⁴ For a summary of the debate, which is not of central concern here, see Mun’im A. Sirry, ‘Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Closer Look at Major Themes of the Theological Encounter,’ *IC-MR* 16, no. 4 (2005): 361-374, here 362-363; Alexander Treiger, ‘The Origins of Kalām,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, forthcoming).

¹³⁵ Larry Benjamin Miller, ‘Islamic Disputation Theory: A Study of the Development of Dialectic in Islam from the Tenth through Fourteenth Centuries’ (PhD diss. Princeton University, 1985); Mehmet Kadri Karabela, ‘The Development of Dialectic and Argumentation Theory in Post-Classical Islamic Intellectual History’ (PhD diss., McGill University, 2010).

¹³⁶ Griffith, ‘Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah abū Rā’īṭah, a Christian *mutakallim*,’ idem, ‘‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s Kitāb al-burhān.’

¹³⁷ Husseini, *Early Christian Explanations*, 66-71, 398-410. Here, Husseini cogently demonstrates that while the early Muslim *mutakallimūn* sought to test the veracity of their own doctrines through rational discourse, early Christian Arabic theologians were chiefly concerned with defending their doctrines against external objections.

¹³⁸ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 38b, 43a.

of *kalām* works, as one scholar has recently noted in Bar Hebraeus's theological oeuvre.¹³⁹ Further reflections of a shared lettered tradition in 'Abdīshō's theology will be examined in this thesis.

Another feature worth highlighting in 'Abdīshō's theological works is their systematic and compilatory nature.¹⁴⁰ An earlier example of this in the East Syrian tradition comes from 'Amr ibn Mattā's vast *Kitāb al-majdal*, which attempts to epitomise all branches of ecclesiastical knowledge, including church history.¹⁴¹ A connected genre is the theological encyclopaedia or anthology, which we have already encountered in the form of Ṣalībā ibn Yūḥannā's *Asfār al-asrār*. Also worthy of mention is the voluminous *Majmū' uṣūl al-dīn* of the Copto-Arabic writer al-Mu'taman ibn al-'Assāl (d. between 1270 and 1286).¹⁴² While 'Abdīshō' is nowhere near as expansive in his coverage of topics, his intention is nevertheless to provide useful summations of church dogma, as we have already observed in the prefaces to his *Pearl* and *Uṣūl al-dīn*. As such, these works were not intended as 'original' compositions. This need not mean, however, that their unoriginality should put us off examining them in any detail. In his study of Mamlūk encyclopaedism, Elias Muhanna has shown that Mamlūk literary anthologies—long overlooked in modern scholarship due to their unoriginality—were in fact rich sites of intellectual activity and didacticism that provide insights into the reception of older compositions and the formation of literary canons, and therefore deserve to be seen as more than mere repositories of earlier texts.¹⁴³ Where church

¹³⁹ Hidemi Takahashi, 'The Reception of Ibn Sīnā in Syriac: The Case of Gregory Barhebraeus,' in *Before and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group*, ed. David C. Reisman (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 249-281, here 174.

¹⁴⁰ The compilatory nature of scholarship during the 'Syriac Renaissance' has also been noted by Van Rompay, 'Past and Present Perceptions,' 95-98 and Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, 94-96.

¹⁴¹ For a summary of contents, see Mark N. Swanson, 'Kitāb al-majdal,' *CMR* 2 (2010): 627-632, here 630.

¹⁴² Al-Mu'taman ibn al-'Assāl, *Majmū' uṣūl al-dīn wa-masmū' maḥṣūl al-yaqīn / summa dei principi della religion*, ed. and tr. Wadi Abullif, 2 vols. (Cairo: al-Markaz al-Fransīskānī lil-Dirāsāt al-Sharqiyya al-Masiḥiyyah wa-Maṭba'at al-Ābā' al-Fransīsiyyīn, 1998).

¹⁴³ Elias Muhanna, 'Encyclopaedism in the Mamluk Period: The Composition of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī's (d. 1333) *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*' (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012), 10-32. See also idem, 'Why was the Fourteenth Century a Century of Arabic Encyclopaedism?' in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 343-356.

doctrine is concerned, ‘Abdīshō’'s epitome works preserve vast amounts of earlier materials, as we will see throughout this thesis. Although it is important to identify these sources (much of which he rarely names), it is equally important to understand how ‘Abdīshō’ mediates and systematises his Church’s literary heritage in a way that would contribute to the formation of an authoritative theological canon. This thesis, therefore, makes no attempt to establish ‘Abdīshō’'s ‘originality’—a value-laden concept that emerged during the 19th century Romantic Movement but has little bearing on the authorial practices of the medieval Islamicate world.¹⁴⁴ Rather, my aim is to understand ‘Abdīshō’'s project on its own terms by examining his method of epitomisation, taking into account the materials he excludes as well as those he includes.

‘Abdīshō’ has most often been compared to his contemporary Bar Hebraeus, the intellectual achievements of whom some have judged far superior.¹⁴⁵ As Hidemi Takahashi points out, the activities of both authors were equally compilatory and synthetical in nature, except in one crucial regard: whereas ‘Abdīshō’ ‘slavishly copied’ earlier authors, Bar Hebraeus would take a particular work as a framework and incorporate others into it ‘in such a way that a new, ordered whole emerged.’¹⁴⁶ While it is true that ‘Abdīshō’ exhibits a degree of conservatism in his selection of sources (as will become evident further on), Takahashi makes this assessment in the absence of any detailed examination of ‘Abdīshō’'s theology, which is the principal task of this thesis.

¹⁴⁴ An earlier study of Mamlūk encyclopaedism identifies a ‘Romantic criterion of artistic originality’ in modern scholarship that has long dismissed the genre as representative of decline; Dagmar A. Riedel, ‘Searching for the Islamic Episteme: The Status of Historical Information in Medieval Middle-Eastern Anthological Writing’ (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2004), iii. On the emergence of romantic originality and the concept of authorial genius in Western literary history, see Robert McFarlane, *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2007), 18-49.

¹⁴⁵ See *GSL*, 321, Wright, *A Short History*, 285; Brockelmann, *Geschichte der christlichen Litteraturen*, 63, cited by Herman G.B. Teule, ‘Gregory Bar ‘Ebrōyō and ‘Abdisho’ Bar Brikhā: Similar but Different,’ in *Orientalia Christiana: Festschrift für Hubert Kaufhold zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Peter Bruns and Heinz Otto Luthé (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 242-253, here 242.

¹⁴⁶ Hidemi Takahashi, *Barhebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2005), 95-96.

Centuries before ‘Abdīshō’s lifetime, the genre of the Syriac and Christian Arabic *summa* had developed along strongly apologetic lines, as exemplified by a mid-8th century Melkite treatise entitled *Jāmi’ wujūh al-imān* (‘Summary of the Aspects of Faith’), the *Scholion* by Theodore bar Kōnī (fl. 792), ‘Amr ibn Mattā’s *Kitāb al-majdal*, and the *Uṣūl al-dīn* of the Nestorian Catholicos Elias ibn al-Muqlī (d. 1131).¹⁴⁷ Mark Swanson has shown that despite the Muslim interlocutors of such treatises, their principal readership was in fact Christian; in the case of Theodore Abū Qurra, for example, Swanson observes that ‘he writes for a Christian audience—but always seems to imagine Muslims reading over their shoulders or listening in the background.’¹⁴⁸ In other words, the catechetical enterprise of churches under Muslim rule was closely bound to interfaith apologetics. As we will see in this thesis, there is no evidence to suggest that ‘Abdīshō’ directly addresses Muslim readers, though they most certainly reflect the concerns of hypothetical Muslim critics, which he sought to highlight to his Christian audience. Mohamed Talbi has argued that it was this intellectual enterprise that ensured the continued vitality of Christian communities in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, in contrast to the decline and eventual disappearance of Christianity in North Africa, where there is no evidence of a continuous tradition of an apologetic and systematic theology among the region’s Christians.¹⁴⁹ While there were doubtless other reasons for Christianity’s collapse in North Africa, Talbi nevertheless highlights the important role that such works had in sustaining a distinctly Christian identity in an Islamicate setting—a theme that Thomas

¹⁴⁷ For the apologetic nature of these works, see Sydney H. Griffith, ‘The First Christian *Summa Theologiae* in Arabic: Christian *Kalām* in Ninth-Century Palestine,’ in *Lingua restituta Orientalis: Festgabe für Julius Assfalg*, ed. Manfred Görg and Regine Schulz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1990), 16-31, reprinted in *Doctrine and Debate in the East Christian World, 300-1500*, ed. Avril Cameron and Robert Hoyland (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), XIV; idem, ‘Theodore bar Kōnī’s Scholion: A Nestorian Summa contra Gentiles from the First Abbasid Century,’ in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period. Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, 1980*, ed. Nina G. Garsoïan et al. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 53-72; Swanson, ‘*Kitāb al-majdal*,’ Teule, ‘Elias II.’

¹⁴⁸ Mark N. Swanson, ‘Apologetics, Catechesis, and the Question of Audience in ‘On the Triune Nature of God’ (Sinai Arabic 154) and Three Treatises of Theodore Abū Qurrah,’ in *Christian and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages*, ed. Martin Tamcke (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2007), 113-134, here 123.

¹⁴⁹ Mohamed Talbi, ‘Le Christianisme maghrébin de la conquête musulmane à sa disparition: une tentative d’explication,’ in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 313-351, esp. 330-331.

Burman would later address in his study of Mozarabic polemics and apologetics in the 11th and 12th centuries.¹⁵⁰ Apologetics were certainly recognised by ‘Abdīshō’ as an important component of his Church’s literary identity, for he includes in his *Catalogue* the Christian-Muslim disputations of the Monk of Bēt Hālē (ca. late 7th century), Timothy I (782/3), and Elias of Nisibis (1027); the so-called *Apology of al-Kindī* (ca. 9th century); and what appears to be a lost refutation (*shrāyā*) of the Qur’ān by one Abū Nūḥ.¹⁵¹

Sydney Griffith has observed a structure of early ‘Abbāsīd Christian apologies that is instructive here, namely that such works were divided into ‘primary topics’ and ‘secondary topics.’ The former relate to issues of God’s absolute unity and transcendence such as the Trinity and Incarnation; having established these, the apologist then turns to ‘secondary topics,’ which typically involve matters of devotional worship like the veneration of the Cross, Baptism, and the Sacraments.¹⁵² That this scheme was observed by writers in the 13th century is evident from a treatise by the Copto-Arabic writer al-As‘ad ibn al-‘Assāl (d. 1253-1259). Here, he divides Christian dogma into two principal parts (*aqṣām*): the first is faith (*imān*), which encompasses prophecy and theories of God’s oneness and attributes, and must be established through verification (*taṣdīq*) because they are unknowable by the senses. The second are devotional practices (*a‘māl ‘ibādīyya*) such as fasting and prayer which are obligatory on Christians if they are to be brought closer to God.¹⁵³ This scheme is very much present in ‘Abdīshō’'s *Pearl*, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, and *Farā'id*, in which core matters of faith are treated first while those of practice appear towards the end (as outlined above). As such, I have dedicated two chapters to ‘principal topics’ discussed by ‘Abdīshō’, namely the Trinity

¹⁵⁰ Thomas E. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c.1050-1200* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 94-124.

¹⁵¹ Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 3/1:162 (Timothy I), 205 (the Monk of Bēt Hālē), 212 (Abū Nūḥ), 213 (*The Apology of al-Kindī*), 266 (Bar Shennāyā). With the exception of Abū Nūḥ, the legacies of these authors are discussed in further detail throughout the remainder of this thesis.

¹⁵² Sydney H. Griffith, ‘Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām: Theodore Abū Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion,’ in *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir and Jørgen S. Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1-43, here 3-4.

¹⁵³ Al-As‘ad ibn al-‘Assāl, *Maqāla fī aqṣām al-dīn*, in *Seize traité*, 110-113.

and the Incarnation, each of which raised concerns among Muslims about Christianity's commitment to monotheism (*tawḥīd*). The final chapter addresses two issues of cultic practice: the veneration of the Cross, which provoked Muslim accusations of idolatry, and the sounding of the clapper during the call to prayer, the use of which often laid bare religious tensions between Muslims and Christians living in close proximity.

Before closing this chapter, it is necessary to say something about the types of polemical texts directed against Christianity. Many of the strategies we encounter in the common *Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* ('Response to the Christians') genre were first articulated by 'Abbāsīd-era writers between the 9th and 10th centuries. Prominent are al-Nāshī' al-Akbar (d. 993); the founder of the Māturīdite school Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944); the Ash'arite theologian Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013); and the Mu'tazilite theologian 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī (d. 1025).¹⁵⁴ Also important in this regard are the Christian converts to Islam 'Alī Rabban Ṭabarī (780) and al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ayyūb (d. before 990); Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq (d. after 864); the famous litterateur Abū 'Uthmān al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869); and the Aristotelian philosopher Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī (d. 870).¹⁵⁵ Just as Christian apologists like 'Abdīshō' built on the works of earlier writers, so were Muslim polemicists of the 13th century reliant on earlier refutations of Christianity. A case in point is one by the famous Ḥanbalite jurist Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymiyya (d. 1322). As Jon Hoover has pointed out, Ibn Taymiyya did not intend his work as an original criticism of Christianity, but rather as a 'battery of arguments for disputation against Christians'—many of which had already been in circulation, as evinced by his reliance on earlier Muslim polemicists like Ibn Ayyūb.¹⁵⁶ As such, anti-Christian refutations were intended mainly for intra-Muslim theological exposition

¹⁵⁴ The anti-Christian tracts of these authors have been collected, analysed, and translated in a single volume by David Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

¹⁵⁵ For the significance of these authors, see Seppo Rissanen, *Theological Encounter of Oriental Christians with Islam during Early Abbasid Rule* (Åbo: Åbo Akademis Förlag, 1993); David Thomas, 'Alī ibn Rabban Al-Ṭabarī: a Convert's Assessment of his former Faith,' in *Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages*, ed. Martin Tamcke (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2007), 137-155;

¹⁵⁶ Jon Hoover, 'Ibn Taymiyya.' *CMR* 4 (2012): 824-878, here 850.

as opposed to inter-religious dialogue in any live sense. But this does not mean that Muslim theologians did not take note of the things that Christians wrote. Ibn Taymiyya's refutation was provoked by the anonymous *Letter from the People of Cyprus*, in addition to which he quotes from the *Annals* of Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq (d. 940), the apologies of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, and (indirectly) the *Kitāb al-majālis* ('Book of Sessions') of Elias bar Shennāyā.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, the Mālikī judge and Ash'arite theologian Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 1285) makes explicit references in his refutation to an apology by a 12th century Mozarabic priest from Toledo named Aghushtīn.¹⁵⁸ Thus, as Hava Lazarus-Yafeh has pointed out, Muslim polemicists in the later Middle Ages did not attack Christianity from a position of ignorance; rather, they possessed detailed and reliable information about Christianity's doctrines, its internal divisions, and its devotional practices.¹⁵⁹ In order to illustrate how 'Abdīshō' wrote his apologetic theology in an environment in which Muslims were well-informed about Christian beliefs, I will begin Chapters Three, Four, and Five by surveying some salient criticisms by Islamic—and to a lesser extent Jewish—scholars.

¹⁵⁷ See generally Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 100. On Ibn Taymiyya's use of Ibn Bīṭrīq's chronicle in his *Jawāb* to show how the Christians had constructed a false religious narrative, see Hoover, 'Ibn Taymiyya,' 838. The *Jawāb*'s response to Ibn 'Adī has been addressed by Emilio Platti, 'Towards an Interpretation of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's Terminology in his Theological Treatises,' *MIDEO* 29 (2012): 61-71, here 62-63. In a recent study of Ibn Taymiyya's oeuvre, Laurent Basanese (*Ibn Taymiyya. Réponse raisonnable aux chrétiens?* [Damascus: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2012], 51-54) has demonstrated that several passages of the *Letter*, on which Ibn Taymiyya bases his response, are derived from the first 'session' (*majlis*) of Elias bar Shennāyā's *Kitāb al-majālis*.

¹⁵⁸ Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics*, 52, 137.

¹⁵⁹ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, 'Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics against Christianity,' *HTR* 89, no. 1 (1996): 61-84, here 67-68.

CHAPTER TWO

The Life and Times of ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā: a Biographical Survey

2.1 Introduction

Despite his immense importance to the history of Syriac literature, noted in the last chapter, little information exists about the life of ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā. This scarcity of biographical data stands in contrast to ‘Abdīshō‘’s older and better known Syriac Christian contemporary, Bar Hebraeus.¹ What follows is a survey of the scant information we do possess about ‘Abdīshō‘, followed by an attempt to expand on them by examining his social, cultural, and intellectual milieu. But before proceeding, it is worth outlining the few received facts that have come down to us about ‘Abdīshō‘’s life. While nothing is known for certain about his early years, he first appears as Bishop of Shiggār (modern day Sinjar in north-eastern Iraq) and Bēt ‘Arbāyē (located between the cities of Mosul and Nisibis) in 1279/80, and again in 1285/6, according to the notes and colophons of certain manuscripts, which we will examine in due course; however, we do not know when he was appointed to this episcopate. Between 1285 and 1290/1, he was promoted to the Metropolitan See of Nisibis and Armenia under the Catholicos-Patriarch Yahballāhā III, and in February 1318 was present at the election of Yahballāhā’s successor, Timothy II, where his legal compendium, the *Concise Collection of*

¹ Biographical information about Bar Hebraeus is found in relatively generous detail, deriving chiefly from the continuation of his *Ecclesiastical History* and a verse biography by his disciple Gabriel bar John of Bartellī (later known as Dioscuros of Gāzartō d-Qardū upon his consecration as bishop). Further supplements are found in autobiographical notes in manuscripts from Bar Hebraeus’s own hand; see Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, 1-57, 119-147.

Synodal Canon, was declared an authoritative source of ecclesiastical law. ‘Abdīshō’ would die later that same year, in November 1318.²

How might we furnish these facts, scattered and fragmentary as they are, with further insights? Very rarely given to writing self-referentially, little information is supplied by ‘Abdīshō’'s own pen. More frustratingly, no extant literary source from his lifetime sheds any light on his life. The East Syrian biographical tradition is principally concerned with the lives of the catholicoi of the Church of the East, which makes the task of writing a biographical overview of a metropolitan all the more difficult.³ Biographical notices concerning metropolitans and bishops do feature in other ecclesiastical histories, most notably that of Bar Hebraeus and his continuator, who incorporate narratives about the Church of the East into their history of the Syrian Orthodox Church.⁴ But once again, no information about ‘Abdīshō’ is found here.⁵ Neither does he occur in the biography of his contemporary and superior, the catholicos Yahballāhā III (r. 1281-1317).⁶

Given these limitations, I propose that in order to glimpse beyond the margins of ‘Abdīshō’'s theological works we must first examine the times in which he lived. In order to do so, I proceed by (i) consulting his own testimony, particularly his prefaces, from which

² For a summary of these facts, see Jacques Dauvillier, ‘Ebedjésus,’ in *Dictionnaire de droit canonique*, ed. R. Naz (Paris: Letouzé et Ané, 1953), 92-134, here 92-93; Kaufhold, introduction, xviii-xix; Teule, ‘‘Abdīshō’’, 750.

³ Henri Gismondi (ed.), *Akhbār faṭārikat kursī al mashriq: min kitāb al-majdal li-‘Amr ibn Mattā*, 2 vols. (Rome: F. de Luigi, 1896), 1:99 (Mārī ibn Sulaymān’s continuation).

⁴ As Witold Witakowsky (‘The Ecclesiastical Chronicle of Gregory Bar ‘Ebroyo,’ *JCSSS* 6 [2006]: 61-81, here 74-75) has suggested, Bar Hebraeus’s inclusion of the history of the East Syrian catholicoi in his *Ecclesiastical History* reflects his position as Maphrian of the East (i.e. the former Sassanian territories, east of the Euphrates), where the Jacobite community had developed a degree of communal autonomy from their fellow church members in the ‘West’—that is, those directly under the authority of Antioch—and a sense of shared history with their East Syrian neighbours in Mesopotamia.

⁵ For the history’s section on the hierarchs of the ‘East,’ see the second volume of Abū l-Faraj Gregory Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, ed. and tr. Jean Baptiste Abbeloos and Thomas Joseph Lamy, 3 vols. (Leuven: Peeters, 1872-1877).

⁶ The most cited edition and translation of this anonymous biography are by Paul Bedjan (ed.), *Histoire de Mar Jab-Alaha* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1895) and E.A. Wallis Budge (tr.), *The Monks of Kûblāi Khân, Emperor of China* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1928). For the purposes of this study, however, I have chosen to use a more critical edition and annotated translation by Pier Giorgio Borbone (ed.), *Tashī ‘tā d-Mār(y) Yahballāhā wa-d-Rabban Ṣawmā* (n.p.: Lulu Press, 2009) and idem (tr.), *Un ambassadeur du Khan Argun en Occident: histoire de Mar Yahballaha III et de Rabban Sauma (1281-1317)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2008).

few though limited glimpses can be gleaned; (ii) discussing church life under Mongol Ilkhanid rule (1258-1336) in a region of upper Mesopotamia I generally refer to here as the Jazīra;⁷ and, lastly, (iii) taking into account the intellectual landscape in which he wrote, and identifying the most notable scholarly circles of his day. In doing so, I ask whether it is possible to situate ‘Abdīshō‘’s copious apologetic writings—the main focus of this thesis—within a specific intellectual, social, and cultural setting. While such an approach may uncover only a few new facts about our author’s life, it will nevertheless provide insights into the world that gave shape to his legacy.

2.2 Early Years: Monasticism, Canon Law, and the Path to Success

‘Abdīshō‘’s date of birth is unknown to us, although Albert Abouna speculates that it must have been the middle of the 13th century.⁸ Neither do we know for certain the place of his birth. According to Joseph De Kelaita’s introduction to ‘Abdīshō‘’s *Paradise of Eden*, he was born in the region of Gāzartā (known in Arabic as Jazīrat ibn ‘Umar, in modern-day Cisre, south-eastern Turkey).⁹ No evidence is cited for this regionalisation despite appearing again in a brief article by P.K. Varguese.¹⁰ Both authors add that ‘Abdīshō‘ entered the Monastery

⁷ Here, I use Carole Hillenbrand’s definition: ‘The area of the Jazīra was traditionally subdivided into three territories: 1. Diyār Bakr to the north, with the major cities in Mayyāfāriqīn and Āmid; 2. Diyār Muḍar to the west, with its principle towns of principal towns of al-Raqqā, Ḥarrān, Edessa and Sarūj; 3. Diyār Rabī‘a, the eastern and largest province of the Jazīra. Its major cities included Balad, Mosul, Mardīn and Niṣībīn.’ Carole Hillenbrand, ‘The History of the Jazīra, 1100-1250: A Short Introduction,’ in *The Art of Syria and the Jazīra, 1100-1250*, ed. Julian Raby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 9-19, here 9.

⁸ Albert Abouna, *Adab al-lugha l-aramiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1970), 446.

⁹ *Paradise*, 4.

¹⁰ P.K. Varguese, ‘Mar Oudisho Metropolitan of Suwa (Died in 1318) and his Literary Words,’ *TheHar* 8, no. 9 (1995-6): 355-363, here 355: ‘Mar Oudisho was the son of *Brikha* born in island of *Beth Zautha* [sic] near the Tigris (Diklath). For a long time he was a friar at the monastery of Mar Akha and Mar Yokhannan near to [sic] the island.’ Here, it would appear that some confusion has arisen over toponyms, for Gāzartā, in the region of Bēt Zabdai (known in Arabic as Bazabda), takes its name from the town of Jazīrat Ibn ‘Umar (lit. ‘the island or peninsula of ‘Umar), owing to its location on the Tigris in Upper Mesopotamia. Like De Kelaita before him, Varguese cites no evidence for this ascription.

of Mār John and Mār Aḥḥā in Gāzartā, near the purported place of his birth.¹¹ Once again, no evidence is provided to place ‘Abdīshō’'s early activities here. In fact, the association of ‘Abdīshō’ with Gāzartā and the Monastery of Mār John and Mār Aḥḥā is quite likely a case of mistaken identity. In the first edition of ‘Abdīshō’'s *Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Authors*, the 17th century Maronite scholar Abraham Ecchelensis erroneously identified ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā as ‘Abdīshō’ of Gāzartā, the second patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church who succeeded the assassinated John Sulāqā in 1561,¹² and who hailed from the region of Gāzartā and lived as a monk at the Monastery of Mār John and Mār Aḥḥā, as he himself informs us in an autobiographical note in Ms. Vat. arab. 150.¹³ Aside from their synonymity, the conflation between the two ‘Abdīshō’'s may have arisen from the fact that both authors excelled as poets and wrote professions of faith.¹⁴ In any case, this error was maintained in subsequent works of 17th century scholarship¹⁵ until corrected by Joseph Assemani in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis* in 1737.¹⁶

It is not inconceivable that ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā was native to the region of Gāzartā, or indeed the broader Upper Mesopotamian region, nor was it unknown for the Church of the East to consecrate bishops and metropolitans native to their sees,¹⁷ which in ‘Abdīshō’'s case would have fallen somewhere within the ecclesiastical province of Nisibis. However, another, much firmer indication of a possible place of birth comes from a colophon in a manuscript described by Addai Scher, where a certain ‘Abdīshō’ bar Zubayriyya (or Zubayrāyē), is said

¹¹ Abouna, *Adab*, 4; Varghese, ‘Mar Oudisho,’ 355. Kaufhold (introduction, xvii) appears to uphold this claim.

¹² Abraham Eccellensis, *Tractatus Continens Catalogum Chaldeorum Ecclesiasticorum quam Profanorum* (Rome: Typographia Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1653), 5-17.

¹³ The note reads: *ennā ‘Abdīshō’ bar Ḥannā d-bēt Mārōn men mdī[n]tā d-Gāzartā d-‘al gē[n]b dēqlat nahrā, qadmāyat ṯhīdāyā d-men ‘umrā d-Mār Aḥḥā u-Mār Yuḥannān*. Cf. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 1:538.

¹⁴ For works belonging to ‘Abdīshō’ of Gāzartā, see Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 1:536ff; Abouna, *Adab*, 469-472; Herman G.B. Teule, ‘‘Abdisho’ of Gazarta,’ in *GEDSH*, 4.

¹⁵ See Kaufhold, ‘Abraham Ecchellensis,’ 125, n. 37 and 38.

¹⁶ Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 1:538.

¹⁷ For example, Īshō’yahb bar Malkōn was born in the vicinity of Mardin, of which he was bishop before ascending to the Metropolitan See of Nisibis and Armenia in 1190; see Jean Maurice Fiey, *Nisibe, metropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours* (Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1977), 105.

to have donated a collection of books to the Monastery of Mār Awgin on Mt. Izlā.¹⁸ Since the place name Zubayriyya does not appear in any known topographical work in relation to Nisibis and its environs, Jean Maurice Fiey has suggested that it could alternatively read ‘Zubaydiyya,’ a village located in the region of Āmid (modern day Diyarbakır).¹⁹ Indeed, such a reading is feasible if one considers the ease with which a scribe might confuse the letters *rēsh* and *dālet*.

A further possibility is supplied by Mārī ibn Sulaymān’s continuation of the *Kitāb al-majdal*’s patriarchal history, where we learn that the catholicos Barṣawmā (r. 1134-1136) hailed from a village named Zaydiyya in the district of Nisibis (*fī a‘māl Nuṣaybīn*).²⁰ To complicate matters further, the colophon described by Scher states that the manuscript was completed in the time of the catholicos Yahballāhā, without indication of which in the line of like-named catholicoi, thereby providing us with an alternative attribution to an earlier ‘Abdīshō’ who served as Metropolitan of Nisibis under Yahballāhā II (r. 1190-1222).²¹ One piece of evidence in favour of an attribution to our author, however, is the fact that two works entitled *Mnārat qudshē* (‘Candelabrum of the Sanctuaries’) and *Ktābā d-’ūtūqōn* (‘The Ethicon’) appear in the list of books donated to Mār Awgin according to the colophon in Scher’s manuscript—most likely references to Bar Hebraeus’s famous *summa theologiae* and moral philosophy.²² It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that the metropolitan of Nisibis

¹⁸ See description by Addai Scher, ‘Notice des mss. syriaques et arabes conservés dans la bibliothèque de l’évêché chaldéen de Mardin,’ *Revue des bibliothèques* 18 (1908): 64–95, here 67, n° 9. Cf. David Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 48. The current whereabouts of this manuscript are unknown to me.

¹⁹ Fiey, *Nisibe*, 104 *apud* Claude Cahen, ‘Le Diyar Bakr au temps des premiers Urtukids,’ *JA* 227 (1935): 219-276, here 222 and 225. William Hurst (*The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 48

²⁰ Gismondi, *Akhhār*, 1:153. Cf. Fiey, *Nisibe*, 104-5.

²¹ Fiey, *Nisibe*, 104.

²² On these works, see Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, 147-156. Sections of Bar Hebraeus’s *Candelabrum* will be studied in subsequent chapters of this thesis in relation to ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā’s own theology. I am not aware of other works in Syriac bearing this title.

in question was indeed ‘Abdīshō’ of Nisibis, though we must suspend judgment on whether the place of his birth was Zubayriyya, Zubaydiyya, or Zaydiyya.

It is also likely that ‘Abdīshō’ was a monk before his first episcopate. Since the monastic reforms of Babai the Great (d. 627), it had been common practice to select bishops from the monastic ranks;²³ however, whether this involved the Monastery of Mār John and Mār Aḥḥā in the case of our author remains a moot point. Nevertheless, prefaces in two of ‘Abdīshō’'s major legal works throw light on both his monastic beginnings and early career as a writer. In stating his purpose for writing the *Nomocanon*, he addresses potential critics who might think him presumptuous for writing a synthesis of canon law ‘before reaching the rank of bishop’ (*rabbūt kahnūtā*).²⁴ Moreover, he compares himself to the catholicos Elias I Abū Ḥalīm (r. 1028–1049) who wrote a treatise on inheritance law ‘while still beneath an abbot’ (*rēsh dayrā*).²⁵ Later in life, ‘Abdīshō’ gives a more explicit indication of his monastic past in his preface to the *Order of Ecclesiastical Judgements*:

Because I wrote the *Concise Collection of Synodal Canons* [i.e. the *Nomocanon*] at a time of monasticism [*b-zabnā d-’īḥīdāyūtā*],²⁶ I did not possess the authority to introduce anything of my own opinion. But now, by the grace of Christ, that I have been made worthy to serve the see of the metropolitan province of the Eparchy of Nisibis, a city in Mesopotamia, I have begun to write this book, while trusting in the aid of He who says, ‘Wherever you remember my name I will come to you and bless you’ [Ex 20:24].²⁷

²³ These reforms addressed, among other things, the issue of episcopal bishops, which had been authorised some two centuries earlier at the Synods of 484 and 486. See Jean Baptiste Chabot (ed. and tr.), *Synodicon orientale, ou, Recueil de synodes nestoriens* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902), 61ff (ST), 308ff (FT). Cf. Wilhelm Baum and Diet W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2000), 37–41.

²⁴ Perczel, *Nomocanon*, 5–6.

²⁵ Perczel, *Nomocanon*, 6.

²⁶ The Latin translation by Vosté (*Ordo iudiciorum*, 24) reads: *quem feci dum monachus eram*—thus indicating to Dauvillier (‘Ebedjésus,’ 91) that ‘Abdīshō’ had been a monk in an earlier life.

²⁷ ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā, *Ṭukkās dīnē ‘edtānāyē*, Ms. Mosul, Chaldean Patriarchate 66, 2a.

He further informs us in the preface to his *Nomocanon* that he had been instructed by ‘those pure men who are good beyond all recompense and hold fast the rudder of government of the Church’ to make use of his talents and produce a compendium of canon law.²⁸ While it is possible to interpret this passage as a customary show of humility common to Syriac preface writing,²⁹ might we also speculate that the hierarchy saw in this monk a promising talent? Given that a firm knowledge of canon law was so key to ecclesiastical governance, it is not unreasonable to assume that the composition of his *Nomocanon* paved the way for his consecration as bishop. However, in the absence of further biographical data, this too must remain speculation.

Aside from giving us a rare glimpse into his early life, the above evidence provides some suggestion that the *Nomocanon* was among ‘Abdīshō’'s first original compositions—a work that few scholars have attempted to date.³⁰ Although we cannot be precise about the date of composition, it must have been before 1279/80, the year in which we first encounter ‘Abdīshō’ as Bishop of Shiggār and Bēt ‘Arbāyē, as indicated by a note in Ms. SMMJ 159 by a scribe who had seen an evangelistary produced by our author’s own hand at the Monastery of Mār Michael of Tar‘īl near Mosul ‘while he was still [a simple] bishop.’³¹ ‘Abdīshō’ next emerges as bishop in a colophon from another gospel manuscript, Ms. Borg. syr 169, in which the scribe informs us that he had copied it from an exemplar made by our author in

²⁸ Perczel, *Nomocanon*,

²⁹ For similar literary topoi in Syriac prefaces, see Eva Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1988), 190-180.

³⁰ Assemani (*Bibliotheca Orientalis* 3/1:332-351) is silent about the date of the *Nomocanon*, while Hubert Kaufhold (‘La Littérature Pseudo-Canonique Syriaque, in *Les apocryphes syriaques*,’ ed. Muriel Debié and Alan Desreumaux [Paris: Geuthner, 2005], 147-167, here 161) has stated—without providing evidence—that the work was composed around 1280. Aprim Mooken (‘Codification of Canon Law,’ 371-180) mentions that ‘Abdīshō’ wrote his *Nomocanon* in 1290. Again, there appears to be no clear foundation for this assertion. Mooken may have derived his dating from Joseph De Kelaita’s printed edition of the *Nomocanon*, which bears in its title the date ‘1290 A.D.,’ though De Kelaita himself nowhere proposes that the work was composed in that year. See his introduction to *The Nomocanon, or the Collection of Synodical Canons, of Mar Abdisho bar Brikha, Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia; 1290 A.D.* (Urmia: n.p., 1918). I would like to thank David Malick for sending me a PDF of this edition, many copies of which did not survive the vicissitudes of the First World War.

³¹ Kaufhold, introduction, xxii. On this monastery, see Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, 2:660-671.

1285/6 ‘while he was [still] Bishop of Shiggār of Bēt ‘Arbāyē.’³² Thus we may conclude that in addition to excelling at canon law before his elevation to the Metropolitan See of Nisibis, ‘Abdīshō’ also worked as a copyist. Among more original works composed by ‘Abdīshō’ during this time is his commentary on Pseudo-Aristotle’s *Letter to Alexander [the Great] on Alchemy*. Although we do not know when precisely he composed it, the author refers to himself in his preface as ‘the feeble ‘Abdīshō’, Bishop of Shiggār’ (*anā l-ḏa ‘īf ‘Abdīshū’ usquf Sinjār*).³³

2.3. The Metropolitan See of Nisibis and Armenia

We cannot be sure about when precisely ‘Abdīshō’ was elevated to the See of Nisibis and Armenia. Our only indication comes from his preface to the *Paradise of Eden*, in which he states that he first composed the work as Metropolitan in 1290/1, before adding a gloss to it some sixteen years later.³⁴ Since he is last encountered as Bishop of Shiggār and Bēt ‘Arbayē in 1285/6, his promotion must have occurred between then and 1290/1. His elevation to this see was no small matter, for according to the Canon 21 of the Synod of Isaac (410), the Metropolitan of Nisibis ranked third in the entire East Syrian hierarchy, after the Metropolitan of Elam (or Jundishapūr) and the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.³⁵ This was to remain the case well into the Middle Ages and throughout ‘Abdīshō’'s own lifetime.³⁶ By Ishō‘yahb bar Malkōn’s time (ca. 1246), the Metropolitan See of Greater Armenia, with its

³² Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 1:139; Addai Scher, ‘Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques du Musée Borgia aujourd’hui à la Bibliothèque Vaticane,’ *JA* 10, no. 13 (1909): 249-287, here 284.

³³ ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā, *Tafsīr risālat Aristū fī l-ṣinā’a*, Ms. Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 252, 2b.

³⁴ *Paradise*, ܥܘܪܥܐ

³⁵ Perczel, *Nomocanon*, 379; Bar Brīkhā, *Ṭukkās*, 32b-33a (Vosté, *Ordo Iudiciorum*, 56); Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 32 (ST), 270 (FT).

³⁶ On Nisibis’s continued prominence, see Butrus Haddad (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar akhbār al-bī‘īyya* (Baghdad: Maṭba‘at al-Dīyāwān, 2000), 124 (an ecc. chron. From the early 11th ce.); Abū l-Faraj ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Fiqh al-naṣrāniyya*, ed. Wilhelm Hoenerbach and Otto Spies (CSCO 161; Leuven: Durbecq, 1956), 89; Gismondi, *Akhbār al-faṭārika*, 126 (Ṣalībā ibn Yuḥannā’s continuation).

seat in Akhlat (on the north-western coast of Lake Van), was annexed by Nisibis,³⁷ an addition that would remain in place under ‘Abdīshō’'s tenure. We can also be certain that ‘Abdīshō’ received his appointment from the catholicos Yahballāhā III who, according to his biographer, ordained no less than seventy-five bishops and metropolitans in his lifetime.³⁸

But what precisely were the geographical boundaries of the ecclesiastical province of Nisibis and Armenia in ‘Abdīshō’'s lifetime? In his *Order of Ecclesiastical Judgements*, ‘Abdīshō’ redacts Canon 21 of the Synod of Mār Isaac to list thirteen suffragan dioceses of Nisibis: Arzōn, Qūbē, Bēt Raḥīmai, Balad, Shiggār, Qardū, Tamānōn, Bēt Zabdai, Akhlat, Ḥarrān, Āmid, Adhōrmā, and Rēsh ‘Aynā.³⁹ ‘Abdīshō’'s list is misleading, however, as he includes dioceses that had once belonged to Nisibis but which at one time or another ceased to exist, leading Jean Maurice Fiey to describe them as ‘débris pitoyables de temps plus glorieux.’⁴⁰ David Wilmshurst has gone further by claiming that ‘Abdīshō’ redaction of the canon was a ‘shameless act of forgery’ intended to make his province appear larger than it actually was.⁴¹ It seems far likelier to me, however, that although ‘Abdīshō’'s list does not conform to the See of Nisibis’s actual geographical limits, it is to some degree reflective of the reality of his day. While temporary gains were made under Mongol rule, particularly in China and Central Asia, many of the Church’s ancient interior provinces in the southern, central, and eastern part of its Mesopotamian heartland had either receded or disappeared altogether since the 9th century, forcing the Christian presence in the region further north.⁴²

Whatever the reasons for ‘Abdīshō’'s recension of Canon 21, the sees that remained

³⁷ We first encounter the addition of ‘Armenia’ in a letter by Īshō’yahb bar Malkōn to the deacon Sa’īd; see Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 3/1: 297. Cf. Fiey, *Nisibe*, 106.

³⁸ Borbone, *Tash’ūtā*, 84 (idem, *Histoire*, 170_).

³⁹ Bar Brīkhā, *Ṭukkās*, 32b-33a (Vosté, *Ordo Iudiciorum*, 56).

⁴⁰ Fiey, *Nisibe*, 110.

⁴¹ David Wilmshurst, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (London: East and West Publishing, 2011), 273.

⁴² Jacques Dauvillier, ‘Les provinces chaldéennes ‘de l’extérieur’ au moyen âge,’ in *Mélanges offerts au R. P. Ferdinand Cavallera, doyen de la faculté de théologie de Toulouse à l’occasion de la quarantième année de son professorat à l’Institut Catholique* (Toulouse: Bibliothèque de l’Institut Catholique, 1948), 261-316, here 302; Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, 17.

functioning in the latter half of the 13th century were Arzōn (on the East Bank of the Garzansu, a tributary of the Tigris), Balad (today’s Eski-Mosul, on the right bank of the Tigris), Shiggār, Gāzartā, Akhlat, and Āmid.⁴³



Figure 1: Nisibis and its Environs

2.4 Church Life under Mongol Rule

The 13th century saw the ascendancy of Mongol military and political power in West Asia, which began with waves of military incursions towards the end of Chinggis Khan’s life. The earliest Syriac Christian witness to the Mongol invasion of the Jazīra comes from the *Chronicle to 1234*, which details the devastation wrought by uncoordinated and sporadic raids, presumably by the Mongol generals Jebe and Sübedei as they pushed westwards after invading Azerbaijan in the late 1220s, with further raids by Chormughun who pursued

⁴³ Fiey, *Nisibe*, 104-110.

remnants of the defeated army of the Khwārazmshah Jalāl al-Dīn as far as Āmid in 1230.⁴⁴ Here, the anonymous chronicler reports massacres of men, woman, and children—Christian and Muslim alike—in the cities of Edessa, Ḥarrān, Surūj, Āmid, Mardin, Nisibis, Mayyāfāraqīn, and Mosul.⁴⁵ So great was the violence that the East Syrian hymnographer George Wardā composed a liturgical poem commemorating the destruction of Keramlais, in which he likens the Mongol onslaught to ‘a lightening bolt from a land far away and was for all flesh oppressive and painful.’⁴⁶ Direct Mongol suzerainty over the region, however, would begin in earnest following the sack of Baghdad in 1258 and the abolition of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate by Hülegü, the grandson of Chinggis Khan. Dispatched from Mongolia by his brother, the Great Khan Möngke (r. 1251-1259), Hülegü’s conquest of Iran, Iraq, the Caucuses, and much of Anatolia would inaugurate a seventy-year period of Mongol rule in the region by the Ilkhanid dynasty, a branch of the Toluid line of the Chinggisid family that ruled across Central Asia and China. The Mongols’ western Asian acquisitions, therefore, formed part of what Thomas Allsen has described as one of the ‘largest contiguous land-based empires in history.’⁴⁷

In the wake of Hülegü’s campaigns, a patchwork of vassal states would emerge in the Jazīra. In fact, by the time the Mongols arrived, the region was already contested by the famous atabeg of Mosul Badr al-Dīn Lu’lu’ (d. 1259); the Artuqids (a Turkoman dynasty based in Mardin) the Seljuqs of Rūm (i.e Anatolia); and a branch of the Ayyūbid dynasty

⁴⁴ The specifics of these raids are not given in the *History to 1234 A.D.*; however, their date coincides with these particular invasions. For a summary account of the pre-Toluid Mongol invasion of the Jazīra, see Douglas Patton, *Badr al-Dīn Lu’lu’: Atabeg of Mosul, 1211-1259* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 51-52.

⁴⁵ Jean-Baptiste Chabot (ed. and tr.), *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad A.C. 1234*, 4 vols. (CSCO 36-37, 56, 154; Paris E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1965-1974), 2:236-237 (ST), 4:703-704 (LT).

⁴⁶ Cited in David Bundy, ‘George Warda as a Historian and Theologian of the 13th Century,’ in *Philosophie = Philosophie; Tolérance*, ed. Aristide Théodoridès et al. (Brussels: Société Belge d’Études Orientales, 1992), 191-200, here 192; idem, ‘Interpreter of the Acts of Gods and Humans: George Warda, Historian and Theologian of the 13th Century,’ *TheHar* 6, no. 1 (1993): 7-20, here 12.

⁴⁷ Thomas T. Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism: The Policies of the Grand Qan Möngke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands, 1251-1259* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 7.

based in Ḥiṣn Kayf. Those of them who submitted peacefully to Hülegü’s northward advance from Baghdad were well-rewarded: Lu’lu’'s diplomacy with Hülegü, for example, would spare the inhabitants of Mosul the fate of many nearby settlements, while the Artuqids of Mardin and the Ayyūbids of Ḥiṣn Kayf would survive as client dynasties long after the Mongol invasions.⁴⁸ Furthermore, throughout the 13th and early 14th century the Jazīra would become a frontier zone between two warring states: the Ilkhanate and the Cairo-based Mamlūk Sultanate (1252-1517), with the Euphrates forming an effective boundary.⁴⁹ The long and bitter conflict between the two powers would have ideological as well as military consequences for the Jazīra region. Since the Mongol defeat at ‘Ayn Jalūt in 1260, the Ilkhans saw the Mamlūks’ stubborn refusal to submit as a direct challenge to its imperial ideology, while according to the Mamlūks, the Mongols were transgressors in the Islamic world, as evinced by their military alliances with the Armenians and Georgians and their execution of the last ‘Abbāsīd Caliph.⁵⁰ Even after the Ilkhanate’s official conversion to Islam in 1295 (of which more will be said presently), the writers in the Mamlūk sultanate would continue to see the Mongols as religiously suspect. This attitude was most vocally expressed by the famous Ḥanbalī jurist Taqī al-Dīn ibn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, who famously

⁴⁸ Patton, *Badr al-Dīn Lu’lu’*, 79-83; Ludger Ilisch, ‘Geschichte der Artuqidherrschaft von Mardin zwischen Mamluken und Mongolen 1260-1410 AD’ (PhD diss. University of Münster, 1984); On the Ayyūbids of Ḥiṣn Kayf, see Edmund C. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 194-196.

⁴⁹ See Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 106-137; idem, ‘Northern Syria between the Mongols and Mamluks: Political Boundary, Military Frontier, and Ethnic Affinities,’ in *Frontiers in Question Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*, ed. Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 128-152.

⁵⁰ See Reuven Amitai-Preiss, ‘Mongol Imperial Ideology and the Ilkhanid War against the Mamluks,’ in *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (Brill: Leiden, 1999), 57-71; Anne Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 27ff. For the role played by the Armenians and Georgians in the Mongol invasions of Syria, see Angus D. Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks: War and Diplomacy during the Reigns of Het’um II (1289-1307)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

issued a *fatwā* on whether the city of Mardin—under Ilkhanid suzerainty but governed by the Muslim Artuqids—constituted a part of the Islamic world.⁵¹

The relationship between the Ilkhanate and its Christian subjects was from the very beginning a complex one. During Hülegü’s sack of Baghdad in 1258, the city’s entire Christian city was spared as their Muslim neighbours were put to the sword.⁵² This event has prompted historians to debate the Ilkhans’ good disposition towards their Christian subjects. In 1969, Spuler argued that during their reign, ‘the Nestorians of Northern Mesopotamia could naturally expect special benefits, since a large proportion of the newcomers from Central Asia were coreligionists.’⁵³ Such co-religionists included members of the Mongol aristocracy in Iran, whose forbears converted to Christianity in previous centuries due to the Church of the East’s missionary enterprise along the Silk Road,⁵⁴ though most of the early Ilkhans were themselves shamanists.⁵⁵ This, along with the Ilkhans’ hostility towards the Mamlūks, led Jean Maurice Fiey to argue that Ilkhanid rule ushered in a golden age for the Christians of Iraq, many of whom ‘opted’ for the Mongol cause against their Muslim neighbours. This special relationship, according to Fiey, would abruptly come to an end

⁵¹ In other words, the *fatwā* asked: given that the Mamlūk sultanate was at war with a non-Muslim enemy, which side of the civilizational fence did Mardin fall? The wider issue was whether Muslims living in Mardin were obligated to perform *hijra* (emigration) in order to practice their faith unimpeded by non-Muslim authorities. Ibn Taymiyya ruled that Mardin was of *murakkab* (composite) status, that is, its inhabitants were free to practice Islam albeit under the political authority of a state that served the infidel Mongols; see Yahya Michot, *Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule: Ibn Taymiyya on Fleeing from Sin; Kinds of Emigration; the Status of Mardin: the Domain of Peace/War, Domain Composite; the Conditions for Challenging Power* (Oxford: Interface Publications, 2006), 63-92. On other *fatwās* by Ibn Taymiyya in the context of the Ilkhanid-Mamlūk War, see Denise Aigle, ‘The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyah’s Three “Anti-Mongol” Fatwas,’ *MSR* 11, no. 2 (2007): 89-120.

⁵² For Bar Hebraeus’s account of the destruction, see Paul Bedjan (ed.), *Gregorii Barhebraeae Chronicon Syriacum* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1890), 505 (E.A. Wallis Budge [tr.], *The Chronography of Gregory Abū’l Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932], 1:430-431).

⁵³ Bertold Spuler, *The Muslim World: A Historical Survey*, vol. 1, *The Mongol Period*, tr. F.R.C. Bagley (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 25.

⁵⁴ See Erica C.D. Hunter, ‘Conversion of the Kerait to Christianity in A.D. 1007,’ *Zentralasiatische Studien* 22 (1989-91), 142-163; idem, ‘The Church of the East in Central Asia,’ *BJRL* 78, no. 3 (1996): 129-149.

⁵⁵ With the exception of Aḥmad Tegüder, who was the first Ilkhan to convert to Islam prior to the Ilkhanate’s official conversion in 1295. Following George Lane (*Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth Century Iran: A Persian Renaissance* [London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003], viii-ix), I define the ‘early Ilkhans’ here as those who reigned before Ghāzān’s rise to power, namely Hülegü (r. 1254-1265), Abaqa (r. 1265-1281), Aḥmad Tegüder (r. 1281-1284); Arghun (r. 1284-1291); Gaikhatu (r. 1291-1295), and Baidu (r. 1295).

following the Ilkhan Ghāzān’s conversion to Islam in 1295.⁵⁶ René Grousset expressed similar views, even going so far as asserting that the Church played a decisive role in the Mongols’ policy against the Mamlūks and fostered hopes that the Ilkhans might one day convert to Christianity.⁵⁷

More recent scholars, though, have argued that the Mongols’ favourable treatment towards Christians has been overstated. Peter Jackson has pointed out that the sparing of the Christian population of Baghdad was probably due to the intercession of Hülegü’s Christian wife Dokūz Khaṭūn, since no such compassion was shown to Christians during Hülegü’s conquest of the Jazīra and his invasion of Syria, the latter of which was headed by the Christian general Kitbughā.⁵⁸ Jackson has also shown that it was common for the early Ilkhans to exaggerate their pro-Christian leanings during diplomatic exchanges with the Papacy and the monarchs of Latin Europe in the hope of securing a military alliance against a common Mamlūk foe.⁵⁹ Similarly, David Bundy has challenged Fiey’s thesis that the Christians ‘opted’ for the Mongol cause. In doing so, Bundy distinguishes between Armenian and Syriac attitudes towards their overlords: the Armenian sources reflect the territorial ambitions of the Kingdom of Cilicia, which benefited from a strategic alliance with the

⁵⁶ Jean Maurice Fiey, *Chrétiens syriaques sous les Mongols (Il-Khanat de Perse, XIIIe-XIVe siècles)* (CSCO 362; Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1975), 33-44.

⁵⁷ René Grousset, *Histoire de croisades et du royaume franc de Jérusalem*, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1936), 3:562. Wilmshurst makes a similar though briefer assertion to this effect in idem, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, 16-17.

⁵⁸ Peter Jackson, ‘The Mongols and the Faith of the Conquered,’ in *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Outside World*, eds. Reven Amitai and Michal Biran (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 249-290, here 273. See also a first-hand account by the Muslim historian Quṭb al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī (d. 1326), who had witnessed the Mongol invasion of Ba‘albak as a child. Here, he mentions that Kitbughā ‘tended towards Christianity, but did not show an inclination towards the Christians, due to his adherence to the laws of the Yasa (*āsā*) of Chinggis Khan.’ Translated in Reuven Amitai, ‘An Arabic Biographical Account of Kitbughā, the Mongol General Defeated at ‘Ayn Jalūt,’ *JSAI* 33 (2007): 219-234, here 226.

⁵⁹ Peter Jackson, ‘Hulegu Khan and the Christians: The Making of a Myth,’ in *Experience of Crusading: Defining the Crusader Kingdom*, vol. 2, *Defining the Crusader Kingdom*, ed. Peter Edbury and Jonathan Philips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196-213; idem, *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410* (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2005), 165ff.

Mongols against the Mamlūks.⁶⁰ Syriac Christians, by contrast, had lived for centuries as a political—if not numerical—minority in Mesopotamia, and were aware of their dependence on a few individuals at the Mongol court. Thus, their position within the Ilkhanid body politic was at best fluid, nor did they expect to achieve a ‘restoration’ of Christianity in the region.⁶¹

It is in *this* light that we should see the Church of the East’s relationship with the Ilkhanid state in ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā’s lifetime. While it would be an exaggeration to characterise the Mongols’ religious policy as one of ‘tolerance’ in the modern sense, it was certainly the case that the *yasa* (the customary law of the Steppe formulated by Chinggis Khan) demanded that all conquered faiths be treated equitably in return for service and obedience to the empire. As Bar Hebraeus remarked:

With the Mongols there is neither slave nor free man; neither believer nor heathen; neither Christian nor Jew; instead, they regard all men as belonging to the same stock. Any who approaches them and offers them something of the world’s riches [*medem d-mamōn ‘almā*], they accept and entrust to him whatever office he seeks, whether great or small, and whether he knows how to administer it or not. All they demand [in return] is strenuous service [*teshmeshtā tkībtā*] and loyalty.⁶²

In particular, the early Ilkhans showed a special reverence for the clergy of all faiths by exempting Muslim clerics, Christian priests, and Buddhist *toyins* from tax.⁶³ Moreover, Ilkhans such as Hülegü, Abaqa, and Arghun valued members of the religious classes for their supposed magical, astrological, and alchemical abilities. We learn of one such case from Bar

⁶⁰ David Bundy, ‘The Syriac and Armenian Christian Responses to the Islamification of the Mongols,’ in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays*, ed. John Victor Tolan (New York: Garland Publications, 1996), 33-55, here 37-42.

⁶¹ Bundy, ‘The Syriac and Armenian Christian Responses,’ 42-48.

⁶² Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, 575. My translation is adapted from Budge, *Chronography*, 1:490.

⁶³ Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, 489 (Budge, *Chronography*, 418); ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aṭā Malik Juwaynī, *Genghis Khan: History of the World Conqueror*, tr. J.A. Boyle (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 599. Cf. Jackson, *The Mongols and the Faith of the Conquered*, 265.

Hebraeus, who reports that the inhabitants of Jazīrat ibn ‘Umar were spared massacre after the city’s East Syrian bishop Ḥnānīshō’ professed knowledge of alchemy—a skill said to be highly prized by Hülegü. After the incumbent ruler of Jazīrat ibn ‘Umar fell out with the Mongol authorities in 1263 for courting the Mamlūks, Ḥnānīshō’ was appointed governor in his place. However, political intrigue would later ensnare the bishop, who was executed after falling foul of the same forces that promoted him.⁶⁴ Another example of a failed attempt by Christians to garner favour with the Mongols is an incident that occurred in 1274 at the Monastery of Mār Michael of Tar‘īl near Mosul, where a monk was ‘discovered in fornication with a Muslim woman’ and converted to Islam. The affair prompted the monks of the monastery to petition a certain Mongol captain of the local soldiery named Tarpashi to have the apostate seized and punished. However, opposition from the local Muslim population was such that the Tarpashi’s troops were forced to back down.⁶⁵ Thus, special favour could not be naturally expected by the Christians of the Jazīra; rather, it was hard won.

However, it was at court that members of the Church of the East hierarchy forged more official client-patron networks with the Mongol ruling elite. Our richest source of information in this respect comes from the anonymous Syriac biography of Yahballāhā III. Here, we learn that the catholicos began life as a monk named Mark from Koshang, a city in northern China ruled by the Önggüds, Turkic vassals of the Mongol Empire who were members of the Church of the East.⁶⁶ After taking up a life of monasticism, he and his abbot, a Uighur from Khan Baligh (modern Beijing) named Rabban Šāwmā, decided to travel westwards on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, with the encouragement and blessings of Kublai, the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire.⁶⁷ Written in the style of a hagiography, the author of the *Biography*

⁶⁴ Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, 520 (Budge, *Chronography*, 444).

⁶⁵ Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, 527 (Budge, *Chronography*, 450-451).

⁶⁶ Bornone, *Tash ‘itā*, 8-10 (idem, *Histoire*, 65-68).

⁶⁷ Borbone, *Tash ‘itā*, 11ff (idem, *Histoire*, 70ff).

describes at length the exemplary holiness of its protagonists, placing particular emphasis on their asceticism and eagerness to visit the holy land.⁶⁸ However, as Pier Giorgio Borbone has shown, the true purpose of the two monks’ long voyage west was most likely as official envoys of Kublai.⁶⁹ Upon reaching Baghdad, Mark and Rabban Šāwmā were dissuaded from continuing onwards to Palestine due to the ongoing conflict between the Mongols and Mamlūks along the Euphrates. Instead, we hear of their visits to the many East Syrian monasteries and shrines located throughout the Jazīra, including Mār Michael of Tar‘īl near Mosul and Mār Awgen on Mt. Izlā outside Nisibis.⁷⁰ Šalībā ibn Yuḥannā’s continuation of the *Kitāb al-majdal*’s adds that the two monks also visited the Monastery of Mār Sabrīshō‘ at Bēt Qōqē near Arbil, where an anchorite (*ḥabīs*) named Rabban Sullāqā prophesised Mark’s eventual election as Catholicos-Patriarch of the Church of the East.⁷¹

On their return to Baghdad from the Jazīra in 1280, Mark was consecrated Metropolitan of Kathay and Öng by the catholicos Denḥā II, while Rabban Šāwmā was made Visitor-General (*sā‘ōrā gāwānāyā*).⁷² As prophesised, Yahballāhā would be elected successor to the Throne of Seleucia Ctesiphon upon Denḥā’s death the following year—an election attended by no less than eight metropolitans and twenty-four bishops.⁷³ The political motivation for Yahballāhā’s elevation is made plain by his biographer: hailing as he did from Central Asia,

⁶⁸ The hagiographic elements of the *Biography* were first brought to light by Borbone, *Histoire*, 25-26 and further examined by Heleen Murre-van den Berg, ‘The Church of the East in Mesopotamia in the Mongol Period,’ in *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia*, ed. Roman Malek (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006), 377-394, here 380-381, where she states: ‘Holy places and persons play a major role in the book and one might even characterise the book as first and foremost a hagiography of both protagonists.’

⁶⁹ Pier Giorgio Borbone, ‘A 13th Century Journey from China to Europe: The “Story of Mar Yahballaha and Rabban Sauma,”’ *EVO*, 31 (2008): 221-242, esp. 238. Here, Borbone argues that the two monks’ granting of a *paiza*—a *laissez passez* issued to dignitaries of the empire—by Kublai Khan suggests that their journey from China to Mesopotamia was as much political as it was religious. Moreover, their warm reception by Ilkhanid and Church officials would not likely have occurred had they not been sent on official business by the Great Khan.

⁷⁰ Borbone, *Tash‘ūtā*, 16 (idem, *Histoire*, 76).

⁷¹ Gismondī, *Akhbār faṭārika* 2:123.

⁷² Borbone, *Tash‘ūtā*, 17 (idem, *Histoire*, 78-79). Šalībā ibn Yuḥannā’s continuation of the *Patriarchal History* (Gismondī, *Akhbār faṭārika* 2:123), however, states that Mark was made Metropolitan of Tangut.

⁷³ Borbone, *Tash‘ūtā*, 19-21 (idem, *Histoire*, 80-83).

he was familiar with the ‘manners, customs, mode of government, and language’ of the Mongol rulers of Iran.⁷⁴

It was during Yahballāhā’s long reign that the Church of the East rendered another service to the Mongol Empire: Rabban Šāwmā’s diplomatic mission to the crusading powers of Europe on behalf of Ilkhan Arghun in 1287-88 in the hope of securing a military alliance against the Mamlūks. The account was initially composed in Persian by the Visitor-General and later translated into Syriac and incorporated into the biography of Yahballāhā.⁷⁵ Rabban Šāwmā was one of many figures present at the Mongol Embassy, and his role was arguably subordinate to that of other ambassadors—mainly Venetians and Genoese resident at the Ilkhanid court.⁷⁶ Thus, the focus of Rabban Šāwmā’s participation in the embassy is portrayed as being more religious than political by Yahballāhā’s biographer, who goes into great detail about the shrines and churches visited on his travels through Constantinople, Genoa, Tuscany, Bordeaux, and Paris.⁷⁷ During an audience with the cardinals of Rome, Rabban Šāwmā was asked to prove his orthodoxy by producing a *confessio fide*, at which they expressed satisfaction. Upon further doctrinal questioning, however, the visitor-general is said to have politely demurred, stating that the true purpose of his long journey was to visit the city’s holy sites and receive the Pope’s blessings.⁷⁸

Despite Rabban Šāwmā’s prestige abroad, Yahballāhā struggled to maintain good relations with the body politic at home. The beginning of his patriarchate was marred by political controversy under the Ilkhan Aḥmad Tegüder (r. 1282-1284) after two bishops who

⁷⁴ Borbone, *Tash ʿitā*, 19 (idem, *Histoire*, 80).

⁷⁵ As the biographer himself informs us; Borbone, *Tash ʿitā*, 25 (idem, *Histoire*, 88-89).

⁷⁶ See Pier Giorgio Borbone, ‘Some Annotations on David Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318.–1913*,’ *Hugoye* 6, no. 1 (2003): 157-158, here 158 *contra* Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*, 16-17. Cf. Jean Richard, ‘La mission en Europe de Rabban Çauma et l’union des Églises,’ in *Il Medio Oriente e l’Occidente nell’arte del XIII secolo* (Bologne: CLUEB), 162-167.

⁷⁷ Borbone, *Tash ʿitā*, 25ff (idem, *Histoire*, 88ff). Cf. idem, ‘A 13th Century Journey from China to Europe,’ 127-237.

⁷⁸ Borbone, *Tash ʿitā*, 29-30 (idem, *Histoire*, 95-97). See also notes in Chapter Four, Section 4.3.1 of this thesis for an examination of Rabban Šāwmā’s profession of faith in relation to ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā’s Christology.

resented Yahballāhā’s election implicated him in the murder of the *ṣāhib al-diwān* Shams al-Dīn Juwaynī, resulting in the catholicos’s imprisonment. Although released shortly afterwards, the incident may have prompted Yahballāhā to pursue ever closer relations with the Mongol *ordu* (royal camp) in order to secure his Church’s interests. Thus, Rabban Ṣawmā commissioned the construction of the Monastery of Mār Mārī and Mār George in Maragha, the Ilkhanid capital in Iranian Azerbaijan, which came complete with a special quarter (*qellāytā*) in which to receive the Ilkhan on official visits.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Rabban Ṣawmā was placed in charge of the tent-church of the travelling *ordu*. By the reign of Gaikhatu, the open-air lifestyle of the Ilkhanid court had aged the prelate considerably, having worked tirelessly to secure endowments for churches and monasteries across the empire. In 1294, the year of Rabban Ṣawmā’s death, Yahballāhā began work on the Church of John the Baptist, two miles north of Maragha.⁸⁰ Whether ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā, as one of the Church’s highest ranking figures, was ever present at the Mongol court is unclear. Perhaps the closest indication comes from the Armenian historian and Metropolitan of Siounik Stepannos Orbelian (d. 1305), who states that the Ilkhan Arghun urged him to bless a tent-church sent by the Pope to the *ordu* at Ala Dagh, where he found the ‘Patriarch of the Nestorians’ with twelve of his bishops.⁸¹ Unfortunately, we cannot know for certain whether these bishops included ‘Abdīshō‘.

In the following year, civil war broke out between the Ilkhan Baidu and his cousin Ghāzān, who converted to Islam in a bid to secure support from the general Nawrūz and other Muslim members of the Mongol elite. Ghāzān’s adoption of Islam marked the official

⁷⁹ Borbone, *Tash ṭtā*, 42 (idem, *Histoire*, 113).

⁸⁰ Borbone, *Tash ṭtā*, 42-43 (idem, *Histoire*, 113-115).

⁸¹ Stepannos Orbelian, *Histoire de la Siounie*, tr. Marie Félicité Brosset (Saint Petersburg: Imprimerie de Académie Imperiale des sciences, 1864), 265-266. David Taylor (‘Your Saliva is the Living Wine: Drink, Desire, and Devotion in the Syriac Wine Songs of Khāmīs bar Qardāhē,’ in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman G.B. Teule and Carmen Fotescu Tauwinkl [Leuven: Peeters, 2010], 31-51, here 47-48) believes that this event likely corresponds to Rabban Ṣawmā return from his embassy to Europe in 1288, when Arghun summoned the Visitor-General to the *ordu* in order to publically present the Pope’s gifts to Yahballāhā at Ala Dagh, where it is possible that the East Syrian priest Khāmīs bar Qardāhē composed one of his wine poems,

conversion of the Ilkhanate; this process, however, was not instantaneous and abrupt but rather the culmination of the Mongol elite’s decades-long interaction with the predominantly Muslim populations of Central Asia and Iran.⁸² Nevertheless, the year 1295 would prove a traumatic one for the empire’s Christians as non-Muslims became frequent targets for Nawrūz’s forces in the disorder that accompanied Ghāzān seizure of power. ‘In the month of Dhū l-Ḥijjā,’ the Persian historian and vizier Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 1318) reports, ‘by imperial command ... the destruction of temples, Christian churches, and Jewish Synagogues was begun, and temples in which idols were housed,⁸³ clappers (*nawāqīs*), and crosses were entirely eliminated from the region of Azerbaijan.’⁸⁴ Similarly, Yahballāhā’s biographer informs us that the order came from Nawrūz that, ‘churches shall be uprooted and the altars overturned, and the celebrations of the Eucharist shall cease, and the hymns of praise, and the [sounding of the] church clapper (*nāqōshā*) shall be abolished.’⁸⁵ Yahballāhā, by now said to have been old and infirm, was seized from his patriarchal palace in Maragha, hung upside down, beaten, and later ransomed for 5,000 dinars.⁸⁶ Churches in the city such as Mār Shallītā were completely levelled, and had it not been for the intervention of the Armenian King He’tum II, who happened to be passing through the city that month, the church that Rabban Ṣāwmā built would also have been destroyed.⁸⁷ As for events outside Maragha, the continuator of Bar Hebraeus’s *Chronicle* reports that the Christians of Baghdad were forced

⁸² See Bundy, ‘The Syriac and Armenian Christian Responses,’ 34. For a more detailed study of the Islamification of the Mongol elite as a gradual, assimilative process, see Judith Pfeiffer, ‘Reflections on a ‘Double Rapprochement’: Conversion of the Mongol Elite during the Early Ilkhanate,’ in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 369-389.

⁸³ The temples mentioned here refer to the Buddhist houses of worship that had flourished in parts of Iran during the reign of the early Ilkhans, particularly Arghun who showed a special reverence to the faith. During Ghāzān’s rise to power, Buddhist *toyins* and *bakhshis* were offered the choice of either converting to Islam or returning to Kashmir, India, and Tibet. See Ronald E. Emmerick and Prods Oktor Skærvø, ‘Buddhism’, *EIr* 4 (1990): 492-505, here 498; Jackson, ‘The Mongols and the Faith of the Conquered,’ 274-275.

⁸⁴ Wheeler M. Thackston (tr.), *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami' u't-tawarikh = Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, M.A.: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilisations, 1999), 3:627.

⁸⁵ Borbone, *Tash'ūtā*, 44 (idem, *Histoire*, 117).

⁸⁶ Borbone, *Tash'ūtā*, 44-45 (idem, *Histoire*, 117-118).

⁸⁷ Borbone, *Tash'ūtā*, 45 (idem, *Histoire*, 118-119).

to wear the *zunnār*—a girdle fastened around the waste in times of prayer—as a mark of public humiliation and pay the *jizya*, a poll tax on non-Muslims obligated by Islamic law.⁸⁸ Furthermore, heavy bribes were extracted by Nawrūz’s men from the Christians of Mosul, though their buildings were spared destruction,⁸⁹ while a monk at the monastery of Mār Awgen mentions in a contemporary colophon in Ms. Mardin, Scher 8 that the ‘demon-possessed Nawrūz’ tortured the Catholicos Yahballāhā and attacked churches and monasteries in the region over a period of six months.⁹⁰

However, the violence committed during Ghāzān’s coup was temporary and the attacks on non-Muslims mainly opportunistic. Following Ghāzān’s consolidation of power, relations between the Ilkhanid state and its Christian subjects were normalised, especially after the execution of Nawrūz, his erstwhile ally and kingmaker, in 1297. It was after this time that Yahballāhā was permitted to complete the construction of his beloved Monastery of St John the Baptist in Maragha, where Ghāzān sojourned in 1303.⁹¹ It also appears that Christian elites in the Jazīra continued to hold official positions, as we hear of a Christian governor of Mosul named Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Īsā governing the city until falling out of favour with Ghāzān in 1302,⁹² while a high-ranking official in the administration of Āmid is reported to have visited Yahballāhā at his monastery in Maragha in 1304.⁹³ Nevertheless, occurrences of violence against Christians were not unknown during Ghāzān’s reign, though these tended to be

⁸⁸ Bedjan, *Chronicon*, 595-596 (Budge, *Chronography*, 506-507). On the *zunnār* and *jizya*, see Arthur S. Stanley, ‘Zunnār,’ *EF*² 11 (2002): 571-572 and Claude Cahen, ‘Djizya,’ *EF*² 2 (1965): 559-562. Other social and religious restrictions on non-Muslims stipulated by various interpretations of Islamic law will be discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.

⁸⁹ Bedjan, *Chronicon*, 597 (Budge, *Chronography*, 508).

⁹⁰ Scher, ‘Manuscripts syriaques et arabes de Mardin,’ 66-67, n° 8.

⁹¹ Borbone, *Tash ūtā*, 60-61 (idem, *Histoire*, 138-139).

⁹² Theresa Fitzherbert (‘Religious Diversity under Ilkhanid Rule c. 1300 as Reflected In The Freer Bal‘amī,’ in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff [Brill: Leiden, 2006], 390-406) has identified this Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Īsā as the patron whom the Shī‘ī historian ibn Ṭīqṭaqā dedicated his *Kitāb al-fakhrī* in 1297, and by whom a luxury manuscript of the *Ta’rīkh Bal‘amī* was commissioned in 1302. Although Rashīd al-Dīn draws attention to Fakhr al-Dīn’s Christianity in an account of his demise, it seems unlikely that his execution by Ghāzān was religiously motivated. *Ibid.*, 404-405.

⁹³ Borbone, *Tash ūtā*, 62 (idem, *Histoire*, 140). The official is unnamed.

localised and sporadic cases, such as in 1297 when the Jacobite bishop of Āmid was imprisoned and beaten and the Church of the Mother of God sacked and burnt to the ground during an uprising against the Artuqid ruler Manṣūr Najm al-Dīn Ghāzī.⁹⁴

It was not until the reign of Öljeitü (r. 1304-1316) that official attitudes towards the Christian subjects of the Ilkhanate would harden. Due to the influence of his Christian mother, Öljeitü was baptised Nicholas (possibly in honour of Pope Nicholas IV), embraced Buddhism in his youth, and later converted to Islam along with his brother Ghāzān, though to what extent these religious oscillations affected his relationship with the empire’s Christians is unclear.⁹⁵ In any case, the biography of Yahballāhā describes a cooling between the Church and the court at the beginning of Öljeitü’s rein, explaining that the Ilkhan received Yahballāhā with polite courtesy but without the honour and affection of his predecessors.⁹⁶ Church-state relations would take a definite turn for the worse in 1310 following the rebellion of a Christian people at the citadel of Arbil known in Syriac as the *qāyāchīyē*, whom Pier Giorgio Borbone has convincingly identified as the Mākrin, a Turko-Mongol tribe garrisoned at the citadel by Hülegü during his invasion of Mesopotamia, and who had remained there as permanent inhabitants.⁹⁷ Previous tensions between the *qāyāchīyē* and the city’s Muslim inhabitants, particularly the Kurds, had flared up in 1289 and 1297 but were resolved between the Ilkhanid authorities and the Church.⁹⁸ But by the following decade, local Muslim resentment towards the *qāyāchīyē* grew to such a level that Öljeitü’s ministers sought to

⁹⁴ Bedjan, *Chronicon* 598-599 (Budge, *Chronography*, 1:509). Here the Artuqid ruler is referred to by his epithet *al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ*.

⁹⁵ Although Öljeitü adopted a harder line against his Christian subjects, his policy towards the Mamlūks and the empire’s Armenian allies remained unchanged; see Jackson, *The Mongols and the West*, 110-111; Stewart, *The Armenian kingdom and the Mamluks*, 181-183.

⁹⁶ Borbone, *Tash ṭtā*, 63 (idem, *Histoire*, 141).

⁹⁷ Pier Giorgio Borbone, ‘Hülegü’s Rock-Climbers: A Short-Lived Turkic Word in 13th-14th Century Syriac Historical Writing,’ in *Studies in Turkic Philology Festschrift in Honour of the 80th Birthday of Professor Geng Shimin*, ed. Zhang Dingjing and Abdurishid Yakup (Beijing: Minzu University Press, 2009), 285-291, here 293-294.

⁹⁸ Bedjan, *Chronicon*, 570-571 (Budge, *Chronography*, 485-486); Borbone, *Tash ṭtā*, 52-56 (idem, *Histoire*, 127-133).

permanently expel them from the citadel. Their refusal to leave, however, led to protracted negotiations between the court and a group of ecclesiastical representatives led by Joseph, Metropolitan of Arbil, whom Heleen Murre van den Berg has postulated as the author of Yahballāhā’s biography.⁹⁹ These negotiations would prove futile, however, and after a long and bitter siege by Ilkhanid forces, the citadel’s Christian defenders were starved into defeat and massacred in their entirety, with further reprisals against the city’s Christian population surrounding the citadel.¹⁰⁰

The tragedy at Arbil is said have greatly disheartened Yahballāhā, who could no longer rely on his role at court to secure the wellbeing of his community. Retiring to his cell at his monastery in Maragha, the catholicos resolved never to return to the *ordu*, exclaiming, ‘I am weary of service to the Mongols!’¹⁰¹ The Church’s embattled position and diminished status must have been painfully evident to ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā by the time of Yahballāhā’s death in 1317, particularly during his participation in the election of Yahballāhā’s successor, Timothy II (formerly Joseph, Metropolitan in Arbil), in February the following year. Whereas thirty-one metropolitans and bishops were present at the election of Yahballāhā in 1281, no more than eleven, including ‘Abdīshō‘, were present at Timothy’s in 1318.¹⁰² Thus, given that much of ‘Abdīshō‘’s literary and ecclesiastical activity took place over the last quarter of the 13th century and the turn of the the 14th, we can be sure that he had witnessed great tumult and upheaval in his lifetime. We should also note that ‘Abdīshō‘’s anti-Muslim apologies were all composed in the latter half of the 1290s and the opening decades of the 1300s (as

⁹⁹ Murre-van den Berg, ‘The Church of the East,’ 391-394, though she points out, ‘the identification is possible and perhaps even likely, but not proven.’ Ibid, 393). For supporting evidence, see Pier Giorgio Borbone, ‘L’autore della “Storia di Mar Yahballaha e di Rabban Sauma”,’ in *Loquentes linguas Studi linguistici e orientali in onore di Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti*, ed. Alessandro Mengozzi et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 104-108.

¹⁰⁰ The whole affair is detailed at length in Borbone, *Tash ‘itā*, 65-83 (idem, *Histoire*, 143-169).

¹⁰¹ Borbone, *Tash ‘itā*, 84 (idem, *Histoire*, 169).

¹⁰² Joseph Luigi Assemani, *History of the Chaldean and Nestorian Patriarchs, or, De catholicis seu patriarchis Chaldaeorum et Nestorianorum; and, A Dissertation on Church Unity and Communion, or, Dissertatio de unione, et communione ecclesiastica* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2004), 201.

outlined in the previous chapter), at a time when Christians in the Ilkhanate were facing increasing hostility. However, nowhere in these works does our author provide any mention of such contemporary events.

2.5 The Intellectual Climate

From the 8th to 10th century, Christians in the ‘Abbāsīd Empire played a key role in the transmission of the Greek sciences into Arabic, often through the medium of Syriac translations.¹⁰³ The role of Syriac Christians in this transmission was memorialised centuries later by the Muslim writers Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 1248) and Ibn Abī Uṣaybī‘a (d. 1270) in their biographical dictionaries of scholars and physicians.¹⁰⁴ But despite the memory of such achievements, a rather different situation had emerged by ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā’s day. As we shall see in this section, Christians in the 13th century no longer enjoyed the same level of prestige as imparters of Hellenistic knowledge, though they were no less active in several walks of intellectual life. What follows is a sketch of some salient developments in the intellectual history of the Islamicate world during the centuries leading up to ‘Abdīshō‘’s career. By providing this survey, I attempt to situate ‘Abdīshō‘’s own literary activities and those of his Syriac and Arabic Christian contemporaries within a broader intellectual-historical context.

¹⁰³ The issue has been one of some debate. Dimitri Gutas (*Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ‘Abbāsīd Society [2nd-4th/8th-12th Centuries]* [London: Routledge, 1998], 20-22) asserts that the role of Syriac Christians in Graeco-Arabic translations was secondary to that of ‘Abbāsīd patronage—the real driving force behind the Baghdad Translation Movement. However, Gutas’s cursory treatment of Syriac intermediaries greatly understates the Syriac Christian contribution to the Translation Movement, which is neither convincing nor satisfactory. For a timely corrective, see Tannous, ‘Syria between Byzantium and Islam,’ 52ff. Here, Tannous convincingly shows that the ‘Abbāsīd translation enterprise was the culmination of a Syriac Christian tradition of scholarship that stretches back to Late Antiquity. Indeed, most of the Graeco-Arabic translators in Baghdad were Syriac Christians—a fact well-remembered in later Arabic sources (see *infra*).

¹⁰⁴ On their copious entries for Syriac Christians in the ‘Abbāsīd Translation Movement, see Gérard Troupeau, ‘Le rôle des syriaques dans la transmission et l’exploitation du patrimoine philosophique et scientifique Grec,’ *Arabica* 38 (1991): 1-10.

In addition to being translators of Graeco-Arabic texts, many Jacobite and Nestorians figured prominently among Baghdad’s circle of Aristotelians, who included the famous Muslim philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950). Perhaps the most important name among al-Fārābī’s Christian pupils was Abū Zakariyyā’ Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (d. 974), whose theological works would have a profound impact on a generation of later Arabic Christian scholars as well as being a highly esteemed philosopher among Christian and Muslims alike.¹⁰⁵ A circle of students from all faiths gathered around Ibn ‘Adī, the Christian members of which included Abū ‘Alī Naẓīf ibn Yumn (d. 990), Abū ‘Alī ‘Isā ibn Ishāq ibn Zur‘a (d. 1008), and Abū l-Faraj ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. 1043),¹⁰⁶ whose theological works would also have a significant influence on later thinkers (as we will see in later chapters of this thesis).

The first real challenge to Baghdad as a centre of philosophy came with the career of Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), known in the West as Avicenna. A native of Bukhara in modern-day Uzbekistan, Avicenna resented Baghdad’s status as an uncontested seat of learning, regarding the current curriculum of Neo-Platonised Aristotelianism, inherited from the Alexandrian commentators of Late Antiquity, as dated and inadequate to the needs of current philosophers. In private correspondence, he often expressed this frustration by attacking the ‘simple minded Christians of Baghdad.’¹⁰⁷ As Dimitri Gutas has observed, Avicenna’s viewed contemporary philosophical practice as being too rigid in its Aristotelian classification of the sciences and over-reliant on the commentary tradition of the Late Antique Neo-Platonists—a tendency he perceived in the activities of the Baghdad

¹⁰⁵ Ibn ‘Adī’s influence will be discussed in Chapter Three, Section 2.4.2.

¹⁰⁶ For a survey of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s works and those of the Christian members of his circle, see Gerhard Endress, ‘Die Bagdader Aristoteliker,’ in *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt. Bd. 1: 1. 8.–10. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ulrich Rudolph (Basel: Schwabe, 2012), 290-362, here 301-324, 325-333, 346-352. See more generally John W. Watt, ‘The Strategy of the Baghdad Philosophers: the Aristotelian Tradition as a Common Motif in Christian and Islamic Thought,’ in *Redefining Christian Identity. Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, ed. Jan J. Van Ginkel et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 151-165.

¹⁰⁷ See his letter to Kiyā in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (ed.), *Aristū ‘inda al-‘arab: dirāsa wa-nuṣūṣ ghayr manshūra* (Kuwait: Wakālāt al-Maṭbū‘āt, 1978), 120; translated in Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna’s Philosophical Works*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 54.

philosophers of his day, many of whom happened to be Christian.¹⁰⁸ Chief among those whom Avicenna decried was Ibn al-Ṭayyib, whose medical writings he severely criticised.¹⁰⁹ The scholarly rivalry between the two was such that Ibn al-Ṭayyib reportedly attempted to block Avicenna’s access to his books by demanding an exorbitant price for them!¹¹⁰

In any case, it was Avicenna who was to have the more lasting impact on the history of philosophy. His radical reinterpretation of the Aristotelian curriculum had considerable implications on the philosophy of the rational soul, the modalities of existence and essence, the classification of sciences, and the use of philosophy in Islamic theology.¹¹¹ The latter legacy—the entry of philosophy into theology—has become a subject of much debate in modern scholarship. Until relatively recently, Western scholars saw the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (‘The Incoherence of the Philosophers’) of the Ash‘arite theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) as the death knell of philosophy in the Islamicate world, inaugurating a long period of intellectual stagnation.¹¹² Al-Ghazālī’s three main contentions in this work were that the philosophers (i.e. Avicenna and more generally the peripatetics) denied that the world had a beginning in time; claimed that God could only know things in a universal rather than a particular way; and maintained the impossibility of bodily resurrection on the Day of Judgement.¹¹³ However, recent scholars have shown that al-Ghazālī’s critique actually facilitated the entry of philosophy into Islamic *kalām*, as he himself was a keen advocate of

¹⁰⁸ Gutas, *Avicenna*, 384.

¹⁰⁹ Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn Sīnā, *Ibn Sina risāleleri*, ed. Hilmi Ziya Ülken, 3 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1956), 1:57-65. Avicenna’s refutation of Porphyry and its implications on Christian doctrine of the Incarnation will be addressed in Chapter Four, Section 4.4.3 of this thesis.

¹¹⁰ The incident is related in the memoir of Avicenna’s student Ibn Zayla; see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 59ff.

¹¹¹ See Robert Wisnovsky, ‘Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 93-136, esp. 127-133.

¹¹² For articulations of this traditional view, see Solomon Monk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe* (Paris: Alophe Franke, 1859); Ernest Renan, *Averroes et l’averroïsme: un essai historique* (Paris: Auguste Durand, 1852), 22–24, 133–36; Ignàc Goldziher, ‘Die islamische und die jüdische Philosophie des Mittelalters,’ in *Allgemeine geschichte der philosophie*, ed. Wilhelm Max Wundt (Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1909), 321.

¹¹³ See Michael E. Marmura, ‘al-Ghazālī,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 137-154, here 143-145.

the use of logic in theology, while aspects of his ontology and epistemology can be said to have Avicennian foundations.¹¹⁴ Following al-Ghazālī’s death there emerged what Jean Michot called a ‘pandémie Avicennienne’ which marked out learned culture in the Islamicate world throughout the 12th century.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Gerhard Endress has shown that by the first half of the 13th century, Avicenna’s works had proliferated into the curricula of *madrasas* throughout the eastern Islamicate world.¹¹⁶ This process was initiated during Avicenna’s own lifetime, accelerated by al-Ghazālī, and consolidated by the later Ash‘arite thinker Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), whose synthesis of *kalām* and philosophy produced what Ayman Shihadeh has referred to as an ‘Islamic Philosophy ... that was not seen to conflict with religious orthodoxy.’¹¹⁷

It was not long before these developments permeated Christian intellectual circles in the medieval Islamicate world. During the first half of the 13th century, the so-called ‘Syriac Renaissance’ produced a number of figures from the Syrian Orthodox community who were conversant—and in many cases reliant on—the legacies of Muslim thinkers such as Avicenna and al-Rāzī. Notable in this regard was Jacob bar Shakkō (d. 1241), a Jacobite monk who studied in Mosul under the Muslim philosopher and jurist Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Yūnus.¹¹⁸ Julius Ruska and Hidemi Takahashi have highlighted the indebtedness to al-Rāzī’s minerology and

¹¹⁴ On al-Ghazālī’s creative ‘camouflaging’ of aspects of Avicennian thought in his mystical system, see Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: al-Ghazālī’s Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation* (London: Routledge, 2012), 103. On al-Ghazālī’s role in naturalising elements of philosophy in *kalām* more generally, see Frank Griffel, *al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

¹¹⁵ Jean Michot, ‘La pandémie avicennienne au VI^e/XII^e siècle: Présentation, editio princeps et traduction de l’introduction du livre de l’advenue du monde (kitāb ḥudūth al-‘ālam) d’Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī,’ *Arabica* 40, no. 3 (1993): 287-344.

¹¹⁶ Gerhard Endress, ‘Reading Avicenna in the Madrasa: Intellectual Genealogies in the Chains of Transmission of Philosophy and the Sciences in the Islamic East,’ in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One: Essays in Honour of Richard M. Frank*, ed. James E. Montgomery (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 372-422.

¹¹⁷ Ayman Shihadeh, ‘From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology,’ *ASP* 15 (2005): 141–179, here 178.

¹¹⁸ . On Bar Shakkō’s education, see Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, 3:409-12.

meteorology of Bar Shakkō’s encyclopaedic *Ktābā d-sīmātā* (‘The Book of Treasures’).¹¹⁹ The Patriarch of Antioch John bar Ma’danī (d. 1263), a younger contemporary of Bar Shakkō, was also known for his familiarity with Arabo-Islamic literary forms and philosophical systems, having composed a Syriac poem modelled on Avicenna’s famous *Ode to the Soul*.¹²⁰ Mention should also be made of the ‘Copto-Arabic Renaissance’ that burgeoned from the second half of the 12th to the early 14th century in Cairo and Damascus (where there existed a sizeable Coptic diaspora). Prominent in this regard were the ‘Assāl brothers—al-As‘ad (d. between 1253 and 1259), al-Ṣafī (d. after 1265), and al-Mu‘taman (d. between 1270 and 1286)—and Abū l-Khayr ibn al-Ṭayyib (fl. 1260s), all of whom composed extensive theological treatises in Arabic which critically engaged with various Islamic theological, legal, and philosophical currents.¹²¹

As to the intellectual climate of Baghdad in the same period, the city had already undergone a decline in fortunes long before its destruction by the Mongols, as noted by the Andalusian traveller Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217) while passing through Iraq in 1184.¹²² However, the Mongol conquests would usher in a new system of patronage that would set in place new opportunities for men of learning. As mentioned in the previous section, the Ilkhans held a special reverence for the religious classes, which included members of the Muslim ‘*ulamā*’. Thus, it was not unusual for the Mongols to spare the lives of such men during a siege, pressgang them into imperial service, and later patronise them. The great Shī‘ī polymath Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) is a notable example. After being taken captive during the fall

¹¹⁹ Julis Ruska, ‘Studien zu Severus bar Šakkū’s Buch der Dialoge,’ *ZA* 12 (1897): 8-41, 145-161, here 145; Hidemi Takahashi, ‘Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Qazwīnī, and Jacob bar Shakko,’ *ThHar* 19 (2006): 365-379.

¹²⁰ See Afrām Barṣawm, *al-Lu‘lu‘ al-manthūr fī ta’rīkh al-‘ulūm wa-l-ādāb al-suryāniyya* (Glane/Losser: Bar Hebraeus Verlag, 1987), 409-410, n° 233 and Herman G.B. Teule, ‘Yuḥanon bar Ma’dani, *GEDSH*, 444. Bar Ma’danī’s poem on the soul is appended to De Kellaita’s edition of ‘Abdīshō’s *Paradise*, ܡܳܝܳܢܳܝܳܬܳܐ.

¹²¹ Adel Sidarus, ‘Le renaissance copte arabe du moyen âge,’ in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman G.B. Teule et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 311-340.

¹²² Cited by Michael Cooperson, ‘Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative,’ *Muqarnas* 13, no. 1 (1996): 99-113, here 99.

of the last Isma‘īlī stronghold at Alamut in 1254, he took his place as astronomer and advisor to Hülegü and would later set up a famous observatory and library at the Ilkhanid capital of Maragha.¹²³ Around al-Ṭūsī grew an illustrious circle of philosophers, theologians, and scientists such as Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 1265), Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī (d. 1311), Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn al-Fuwaṭī (d. 1323), and Jamāl al-Dīn ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 1325).¹²⁴ Their activities were accompanied by a rich period of cultural cross-fertilisation between Iran and China under the aegis of Mongol rule.¹²⁵ The networks of these scholars were certainly not restricted to Muslims: another prominent thinker of the age was the Jewish Baghdad-based philosopher ‘Izz al-Dawlā ibn Kammūna (d. 1284), who maintained a lively correspondence with Ibn al-Fuwaṭī and others.¹²⁶ Tabriz, the Mongol capital between 1265 and 1311, would also flourish as an important centre for learning. It is here that the Byzantine scholar and bishop Gregory Chioniadēs (d. 1320) translated al-Ṭūsī’s influential astronomical work, the *Zīj ilkhānī*, into Greek.¹²⁷

The most eminent name among Syriac Christians who participated in this milieu is without a doubt Bar Hebraeus. His story mirrors that of al-Ṭūsī in that he was also co-opted into Mongol service. In 1260, while serving as Metropolitan of Aleppo, Bar Hebraeus pleaded with the invading Mongol forces to spare the inhabitants of Ba‘albak, only to be thrown into prison for his troubles.¹²⁸ From there he was transported east to the Mongol court where he served as one of Hülegü’s physicians, and was later appointed Maphrian (exarch of

¹²³ See Lane, *Early Mongol Rule*, 213ff; George Saliba, ‘Horoscopes and Planetary Theory: Ilkhanid Patronage of Astronomers,’ in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 357-368.

¹²⁴ On the lives of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī and others in the Maragha Circle, see Devin Deveese, ‘Cultural Transmission and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: Notes from the Biographical Dictionary of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī,’ in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 11-29.

¹²⁵ Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 83ff.

¹²⁶ Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma‘ al-ādāb fī mu‘jam al-alqāb*, 6 vols. (Tehran: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-al-Irshād al-Islāmī, 1416/1995-96), 1:190-191, n° 199. For Ibn Kammūna’s works, see Sabine Schmidtke and Reza Pourjavady, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ‘Izz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) and his Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

¹²⁷ David Pingree, ‘Gregory Chioniadēs and Palaeologan Astronomy,’ *DOP* 18 (1964): 134-160.

¹²⁸ Bar Hebraeus provides testimony of this himself; see Bedjan, *Chronicon*, 510 (Budge, *Chronography*, 436).

the eastern provinces of the Jacobite Church) in 1265, due to his erudition, knowledge of languages, and closeness to the Mongol ruling elite.¹²⁹ Despite the brutality he had witnessed in Syria, Bar Hebraeus flourished in the intellectual climate of Maragha. He states in the preface to his *Chronography* that he made ready use of the famous library at the city’s famous observatory.¹³⁰ It is therefore likely though not entirely certain that he knew al-Ṭūsī personally. We know of Bar Hebraeus’s interaction with other members of the Maragha circle such as the astronomer Ibn Abī l-Shukr al-Maghribī (d. 1283), one of al-Ṭūsī’s collaborators, from whom the maphrian requested a summary of Ptolemy’s *Almagest*.¹³¹ Bar Hebraeus engagement with the latest works of astronomy is further evinced from a surviving *ex libris* from one of al-Ṭūsī’s works on the subject, once housed in the library at Maragha.¹³² We also know of his friendly disposition towards non-Christian intellectuals from a report that he composed his *Ta’rīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal* (‘Abridged History of Kingdoms’) after his Muslim friends urged him to write an Arabic version of his Syriac *Chronography*.¹³³

Bar Hebraeus’s intellectual ties to his co-religionists under Mongol rule were no less strong. He maintained a learned correspondence with other educated ecclesiastical figures such as the East Syrian priest and wine poet Khāmīs bar Qardāḥē, on the subject of Aristotle’s ten categories of being.¹³⁴ Khāmīs also composed a lengthy praise poem to Bar Hebraeus, lauding the maphrian’s leadership, intellect, and piety.¹³⁵ Indeed, Bar Hebraeus is known to have cultivated excellent relations with other members of the East Syrian hierarchy.

¹²⁹ Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, 22-27.

¹³⁰ Bedjan, 4 (Budge, *Chronography*, 1-2).

¹³¹ Hidemi Takahashi, ‘Barhebraeus: Gregory Abū al-Faraj,’ in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers*, ed. Thomas Hockey et al. (New York: Springer, 2007), 94-95.

¹³² For an image of the *ex libris*, see Aydın Sayılı, ‘Khwaja Naṣīr-i Ṭūsī wa raṣadkhana-i Maragha,’ *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* (1956): 403-412; Hidemi Takahashi, ‘Bar ‘Ebroyo, Grigorios,’ *GEDSH*, 54-56, here 55, fig. 14.

¹³³ As related by the continuator of Bar Hebraeus’s *Ecclesiastical History*; see Abbeloos and Lamy, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, 3:469. Cf. Denise Aigle, L’oeuvre historiographique de Barhebraeus: son apport à l’histoire de la période mongole,’ *PdIO* 33 (2008): 25-61, here 29.

¹³⁴ Abū l-Faraj Gregory Bar Hebraeus, *Mushḥātā*, 2nd edn. (Lossier, 1983), 157-159.

¹³⁵ For the Syriac text and Russian translation, see Anton Pritula, ‘Khāmīs bar Kardākhē, vostochnosirijskij poet kontsa XIII v.,’ *Simbol* 61 (2012): 314-317.

His *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* speaks highly of Yahballāhā III, who is said to have looked upon the Syrian Orthodox with kindness.¹³⁶ When Bar Hebraeus passed away in Maragha in 1286, the catholicos ordered the closure of all the city’s shops and decreed a day of mourning. More East Syrians, Greeks, and Armenians are said to have attended the maphrian’s funeral than members of his own community.¹³⁷

The range and depth of Bar Hebraeus’s theological and philosophical enterprise is truly impressive. Arguably, his most significant achievement was to create a new synthesis based on the latest advancements by Muslim intellectuals and to make them accessible to a Syriac-speaking audience. His philosophical compendium entitled *Hewāt hekmtā* (‘The Cream of Wisdom’) is modelled closely on Avicenna’s *Kitāb al-shifā’* (‘Book of Healing’),¹³⁸ and the structure of his theological encyclopaedia, the *Mnārat qudshē* (‘Candelabrum of the Sanctuaries’), follows that of works by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and other *kalām* scholars.¹³⁹ He also undertook a translation of Avicenna’s *Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* (‘Pointers and Admonishments’), bearing the title *Ktābā d-remzē wa-m’irānwātā* in Syriac.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, Bar Hebraeus’s practical philosophy owes much to al-Ṭūsī’s *Akhlāq-i nāṣiri*,¹⁴¹ and his *Ethicon*, a spiritual work, draws as much from al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (‘Vivification

¹³⁶ Abbeloos and Lamy, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, 3:451-453.

¹³⁷ Bar ‘Ebrōyō, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, 3:473-476.

¹³⁸ Hidemi Takahashi, ‘The Reception of Ibn Sīnā in Syriac,’ 253.

¹³⁹ Paul-Hubert Poirier, ‘Bar Hebraeus sur le libre arbitre,’ *OC* 70 (1986): 23–26, esp. 33; Herbert Koffler, *Die Lehre des Barhebraeus von der Auferstehung der Leiber* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1932), 28; Hidemi Takahashi, ‘Reception of Islamic Theology among Syriac Christians in the Thirteenth Century: The Use of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in Barhebraeus’ Candelabrum of the Sanctuary,’ *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 2, no. 1-2 (2014): 170-192, esp. 172-173. Bar Hebraeus also notes the importance of Fakhr al-Dīn in his Arabic chronicle; see Abū l-Faraj Gregory Bar Hebraeus, *Ta’rīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, ed. Anṭūn Ṣāliḥānī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1992), 254.

¹⁴⁰ Regrettably, the translation remains unedited; see Herman G.B. Teule, ‘The Transmission of Islamic Culture to the World of Syriac Christianity: Barhebraeus’ Translation of Avicenna’s *Kitāb al-iṣārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*,’ in *Redifining Christian Identity. Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, ed. Jan J. Van Ginkel et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 167-184.

¹⁴¹ Mauro Zonta, *Fonti greche e orientali del’ Economia di Bar-Hebraeus nell’ opera “La crema della scienza”* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1992).

of the Religious Sciences’) as it does Christian authorities.¹⁴² As for the exact sciences, his work on astronomy entitled *Sullāqā hawnānāyā* (‘The Ascent of the Mind’) falls under the influence of al-Ṭūsī’s *Tadhkira fī ‘ilm al-hay’a*, among other writers.¹⁴³

It is unsurprising therefore that Bar Hebraeus readily expresses admiration for the achievements of Muslims thinkers, despite the central role played by Syriac intellectuals during the Translation Movement in Baghdad in previous centuries. Reflecting on recent developments by Muslims in all branches of the sciences, Bar Hebraeus states the following in his *Chronography*:

There arose among them [i.e. the Muslims, *tayyāyē*] philosophers, mathematicians, and physicians who surpassed the ancients in the subtlety of their intellect. Placing them not on another foundation but on Greek principles, they perfected the buildings of the sciences, which were great on account of their clear diction and their most studious investigations, so that we from whom they received knowledge through the translators—all of whom were Syriac Christians [*suryāyē*]—are now forced to ask them for it.¹⁴⁴

What can we say of ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā’s interaction with the thinkers of his day? Firstly, we have no proof that ‘Abdīshō‘ was active among the scholarly circles of Maragha and Tabriz, despite living under Ilkhanid rule. From what evidence we have, we may deduce that his literary activity was based solely in the Jazīra region and within the confines of his ecclesiastical province of Nisibis. We first encounter him at the Monastery of Mār Michael of Tar‘īl outside Mosul in 1279/89 according to a note in Ms. SMMJ 159 (mentioned in Section 2.2). A modern manuscript containing his Arabic profession of faith, copied from an

¹⁴² Herman G.B. Teule, ‘Barhebraeus’ Ethicon, al-Ghazālī and b. Sīnā,’ *Islamochristiana* 18 (1992): 73-86. On Bar Hebraeus’s ‘Christianisation’ of aspects of al-Ghazālī’s thought, see also Lev Weitz, ‘Al-Ghazālī, Bar Hebraeus, and the “Good Wife”,’ *JAOS* 134, no. 2 (2014): 203-223.

¹⁴³ Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, 97, n. 364.

¹⁴⁴ Bedjan, 98 (Budge, *Chronography*, 92). My translation is adapted from Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, 101.

autographed exemplar, informs us that ‘Abdīshō’ had completed the work in ‘the beginning of Rabī‘ al-awwal of the year 689 (=March 1290) at his episcopal cell (*qillāya*) in Nisibis.’¹⁴⁵ We also find ‘Abdīshō’ at the northern extremities of the See of Nisibis according to a colophon in Ms. Berlin 83 (Sachau 312) informing us that he completed his *Pearl* in ‘the city of Akhlaṭ at the church of the blessed Nestorians’ in 1297/8.¹⁴⁶ The same work would later be copied there in 1300 according to the colophon of another manuscript.¹⁴⁷ We also learn from a now lost autograph of ‘Abdīshō’ that he wrote his Arabic *Rhymed Gospel* as a bequest to the ‘illustrious *shahhārē* of the Church of St. George in Gāzartā of Bēt Zabdai.’¹⁴⁸ We finally encounter ‘Abdīshō’ in Ms. SMMJ 159, in which he is said to have completed his *Order of Ecclesiastical Judgements* in 1315/16 at his episcopal cell in Nisibis (*ba-qlītā da-Nṣībīn mdī[n]tā*).¹⁴⁹

Moreover, from what little evidence we have at our disposal, there is no indication that ‘Abdīshō’ interacted with scholars beyond his immediate ecclesiastical circles. A commentary he wrote on an enigmatic mystical poem by the East Syrian monk Simon Shaqlabandī (fl. first half of the 13th century) is addressed to a priest (*qashīshā*) named Abraham, about whom we know nothing else.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, his *Paradise of Eden* and *Pearl* were composed at the request of the catholicos Yahballāhā III, as we learn from his prefaces to these works.¹⁵¹ It would also seem that ‘Abdīshō’ did not intend his commentary on *Aristotle’s Letter to Alexander on Alchemy* for readership beyond Syriac Christian circles, despite the importance of Aristotle’s pseudo-epistolary romance in the Arabo- and Perso-

¹⁴⁵ Ms. Mingana Syr. 212, 148a. Cf. Mingana, *Catalogue*, 1:146.

¹⁴⁶ Ms. Berlin syr. 83 (Sachau 312), 41b-42a. Cf. Sachau, *Verzeichniss*, 1:312.

¹⁴⁷ Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale syr 315, 50a. Cf. Jean Baptiste Chabot, ‘Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques de la Bibliothèque Nationale acquis depuis 1874,’ *JA* 8, no. 9 (1896), 234-290, here 263.

¹⁴⁸ Ms. Mingana Chr. Ar. 120b. Cf. Mingana, *Catalogue*, 3:6. In the East Syrian tradition, the *shahhārē* are priests whose role it is to intone nocturns; see Jesse Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 561.

¹⁴⁹ Kaufhold, introduction, xxi.

¹⁵⁰ Ms. Vat. Syr. 187, 2b.

¹⁵¹ De Kelaita, *Pardaysā*, ٣٠. For the *Pearl*, see previous chapter, Section 1.3.1.

Islamic world, particularly in the genres of wisdom literature and mirrors for princes.¹⁵² Although later manuscripts of this work are preserved in Garshūnī (Arabic in Syriac letters),¹⁵³ ‘Abdīshō’ informs us in his preface that he originally composed it in this fashion (*ra’aytu an ... uḏḏi’ahā bi-l-khaṭṭ al-suryānī*).¹⁵⁴ Moreover, while we know that the aforementioned East Syrian bishop of Gāzartā, Ḥnānīshō’, served the Ilkhan Hülegü as an alchemist, there is no evidence that ‘Abdīshō’ placed his knowledge of ‘the Craft’ in service to the Mongols or any other patron.

In contrast to Bar Hebraeus, we possess little evidence of any direct engagement by ‘Abdīshō’ with Muslim scholars. Of the information contained in biographical dictionaries by Muslims about non-Muslims of this and subsequent periods, none pertains to our author.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, he nowhere explicitly expresses admiration for the achievements of Muslim scholars. We have already noted ‘Abdīshō’ rhetorical attack on Arabic *adab* in his *Paradise of Eden* and his frustration towards unnamed Arabic literateurs who denigrate the Syriac language. In a similar vein, in his preface to the *Order of Ecclesiastical Judgements*, he polemicises against ‘outsiders’ (*barrāyē*, presumably Muslims) who claim that the Christians were without an authentic law code of their own.¹⁵⁶ As Lev Weitz has cogently demonstrated, ‘Abdīshō’'s borrowing from Islamic jurisprudence is extremely minimal, unlike Bar Hebraeus who relied heavily on Islamic models in the composition of his *Nomocanon*,

¹⁵² See Mario Grignaschi, ‘Le roman épistolaire classique conservé dans la version arabe de Sālim Abu-l-‘Alā’,’ *LeMus* 80 (1967): 211-264; Faustina Doufikar-Aarts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus: A Survey of the Alexander Tradition through Seven Centuries: From Pseudo-Callisthenes to Šūrī* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 102-130. It is also worth noting that a Persian letter of Alexander’s questions to Aristotle on wisdom is preserved in a literary anthology known as the *Safīna-ye Tabrīz*, composed in the Ilkhanid capital of Tabriz between 1321 and 1323. See idem, ‘Aristotle and Alexander: The Never-Ending Question(s),’ in *The Treasury of Tabriz: The Il-Khanid Compendium*, ed. A.A. Seyyed-Gohrab and S. McGlinn (Amsterdam: Rozenberg, 2007), 245-255.

¹⁵³ See previous Chapter, Section 1.2.2 for extant manuscripts.

¹⁵⁴ *Tafsīr*, 2b.

¹⁵⁵ See above n. 143 for ibn al-Fuwaṭī’s *Majma’ al-ādāb*. For biographical compendia containing data about Ilkhanid era intellectuals, see Šalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Šafādī (d. 1363), *Kitāb al-wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, eds. Otfried Weintritt et al. (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1931) and idem, *A’yan al-aṣr wa-a’wān al-naṣr*, ed. ‘Alī Abū Zayd, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr li-l-Ṭibā‘a wa-l-Naṣr wa-l-Tawzī‘ 1998).

¹⁵⁶ *Ṭukkās*, 2a-2b (Vosté, *Ordo iudiciorum*, 24).

particularly in the realm of family law.¹⁵⁷ In a similar manner to his *Paradise*, therefore, ‘Abdīshō’ wrote his *Order of Ecclesiastical Judgements* as an expression of literary independence from Arabic models.

2.6. Conclusions

Having surveyed the available evidence, what can be said about ‘Abdīshō’ bar Brīkhā life that has not been said before? Regrettably, we are no closer to discovering his place of birth, though it seems likely that it was somewhere in the region of the Jazīra. He also remains largely absent from the available narrative sources and does not occur in any of the biographical compendia of the period. This leaves us in the dark about any direct engagement he might have had with other actors—political and intellectual—of his day. Unlike his older contemporary Bar Hebraeus, he seems to have had no involvement in the highly cosmopolitan environment of Maragha and Tabriz; rather, his movements and literary activities appear far more parochial, confined as they were within the geographical bounds of his ecclesiastical see.

His anti-Muslim apologies, composed between 1297/8 to 1313, appeared at a time when the political fortunes of the Church of the East were in steady decline. Thus, the official conversion of Ghāzān to Christianity and the hardening of Muslim attitudes towards the Ilkhanate’s Christian subjects may provide us with some socio-historical context for his anti-

¹⁵⁷ Lev Weitz, ‘Syriac Christians in the Medieval Islamic World: Law, Family, and Society’ (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2013), 284-409, 410-436. Building on earlier studies, namely Carlo Alfonso Nallino, ‘Il diritto musulmano nel Nomocanone siriano cristiano di Barhebreo,’ *RSO* 9 (1921–23): 512–580, Weitz demonstrates Bar Hebraeus’s profound reliance on the legal works of al-Ghazālī. One factor behind ‘Abdīshō’’s lack of borrowing from Islamic legal traditions, according to Weitz, was that East Syrian writers ‘had been relatively actively engaged in producing legal texts and developing their communal legal tradition’ long before the 13th century, while the Jacobite Church had not. As such, ‘West Syrian canonical legislation was not sufficient for the kind of comprehensiveness that Bar Hebraeus typically sought to achieve in his works, and so the textual resources of Islamic law constituted a rich alternative.’ Weitz, ‘Syriac Christians in the Medieval Islamic World,’ 434-435.

Muslim apologies. Although it is possible that ‘Abdīshō’ was reacting—to some degree at least—to the circumstances in which his community found itself, the remaining chapters of this thesis will demonstrate that ‘Abdīshō’'s apologetic theology was part of a continuous tradition that had begun since Christianity’s earliest encounters with Islam.

From the foregoing we have also seen that ‘Abdīshō’ shows little willingness to openly show indebtedness or admiration to the achievements of Muslim intellectuals, past and current. As we will see further on in this thesis, our author does in fact engage with various Arabo-Islamic literary and theological models in his apologetic theology. However, ‘Abdīshō’'s engagement is of a more moderate and cautious kind than of Bar Hebraeus, perhaps owing to the former’s lack of contact with the broader scholarly networks of the period.

CHAPTER THREE

Proving Three to be One: ‘Abdīshō’'s Contribution to Trinitarian Thought

3.1 Context and Aims of ‘Abdīshō’'s Trinitarian Thought

Our main sources for ‘Abdīshō’'s Trinitarian thought are his *Pearl*, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, and the *Farā'id*, and to a lesser extent elsewhere in shorter, non-systematic works, namely his *Khuṭba* and *Profession*. As discussed in Chapter One, the Trinity in medieval works by Syriac and Arabic Christian writers constitutes what Sydney Griffith has termed a ‘primary topic,’ among others that were chiefly concerned with affirming ‘the unity of the one creator God, and the Trinity of persons, or *hypostases*, in the one God.’¹ Concerns about Muslim attacks on the integrity of the Trinity’s monotheism gave rise to a markedly apologetic agenda in systematic theologies written by Arabic-speaking Christian thinkers. The earliest of these sought to convince a Christian readership that their belief in God’s triune nature could not be impugned by Muslims who would accuse them of espousing a form of tritheism and thus idolatry (*shirk*).²

The anti-Trinitarian agenda in the opening centuries of Islamic history is arguably set in the Qur’ān by such verses as 5:73 (‘Certainly they disbelieve who say: God is the third of three (*thālith thalātha*), for there is no god except one God’) and 4:171 (‘So believe in God and his messengers and do not say “Three” ... For God is one God, far removed is He in his glory to have a son’), which often enabled Muslim writers to level claims of tritheism against

¹ Sydney H. Griffith, ‘Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām’, 3.

² The earliest surviving apologetic exposition of the Trinity in Arabic is entitled *Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid* (usually translated by modern scholars as ‘On the Triune Nature of God’), dated between 755 and 788.

their Christian neighbours.³ This, in turn, prompted a generation of Arabic-speaking Christian theologians in early ‘Abbāsīd Iraq—most notably the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurra (d. first half of second/ninth century), the Jacobite Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rā’iṭā al-Takrītī and the Nestorian ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī—to respond to such accusations by adapting the teachings of the Greek and Syriac Church Fathers to a new set of cultural and religious circumstances.⁴ The discourse of these early-Arabic Christian writers emerged in reaction to—if not in tandem with—the Islamic discipline of *kalām*, particularly in relation to the discussion about the Godhead’s relationship with the Word and Spirit as being one of divine attributes.⁵ Such approaches would lay the foundation for further developments in Trinitarian theology by later ‘Abbāsīd writers, most notably Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (d. 973), ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. ca. 1043), and Elias bar Shennāyā (d. 1046), to whom ‘Abdīshō‘ demonstrates a considerable degree of indebtedness,⁶ although his sources are rarely named.

The apologetic agenda of ‘Abdīshō‘’s discussions of the Trinity is made explicit throughout his works. He concludes his *Pearl* by declaring, ‘Let the heathen (*ḥanpā*), then, and Jews who rail against the truth of the Catholic Church, on account of its belief in the Trinity, be confounded and put to shame.’⁷ ‘Abdīshō‘’s preamble to the *Uṣūl al-dīn*’s chapter on the Trinity contains a far lengthier rebuke to unnamed critics of the doctrine:

I am greatly astonished by a certain group of religious scholars [*ahl al-adyān wa-l-madhāhib*], who differ from Christianity in principles and ritual worship [*al-uṣūl wa-l-furū‘*] [...], at how they slander them [i.e. the Christians] for their belief in the Creator’s threeness [*tathlīth*]—which with it preserves the doctrine of true monotheism [*tawḥīd*]—and declare that the

³ David Thomas, ‘Trinity,’ *EQ* (2006): 5:369-372, here 369. Specific anti-Trinitarian attitudes of medieval Muslim theologians will be discussed in Section 2.2, below.

⁴ For a detailed analysis and contextualisation of the Trinitarian theology of all three of these writers, see Hussein, *Early Christian Explanations of the Trinity*.

⁵ Hussein, *Early Christian Explanations of the Trinity*, 342-353.

⁶ This has been noted in passing by Teule, ‘‘Abdīshō‘ of Nisibis,’ 760, but is yet to be systematically explored.

⁷ *Pearl*, 10.

Christians profess three separate gods [*thalāth āliha mutafarraqa*] and three different lords [*thalāthat arbāb mukhtalifa*], or believe in more than one cause [for creation] [*akthar min ʿilla wāḥida*], or say that there are multiple essences [*kathīrat al-dhawāt*] [in God]—without consideration, examination, and accuracy of speculation and enquiry, and without reflecting on whether the argument is correct or not, and without being informed of its meaning and soundness.⁸

Following this statement, ʿAbdīshōʿ gives what would appear to be a paraphrase of the famous Muslim theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s statement from the *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* that, ‘condemning doctrines before comprehending them is absurd, and finding fault with their proponents without expertise in their intentions is a sin and error.’⁹ The end of the *Farāʿid*’s chapter on the Trinity also makes references to unnamed adversaries of the doctrine, concluding, ‘To this end, O community of man (*maʿshar al-nās*), do the Christians speak of the Trinity in accordance with [God’s] oneness (*tawḥīd*), rather than the polytheism (*shirk*) and unbelief (*kufr*) that the slanderers (*mushanniʿūn*) accuse them of.’¹⁰

In this chapter, I examine the apologetic strategies that ʿAbdīshōʿ employs in order to vindicate the doctrine of the Trinity in relation to the above statements. Focus will be given to two issues which feature prominently throughout his writings on the topic: i) God as a unitary and incorporeal creator; and ii) the discussion of God’s attributes and their relation to the Trinitarian hypostases and the divine names (referred to hereafter as the ‘attribute apology’).¹¹ As will become clear, these very same themes emerge frequently in earlier works of medieval Christian apologetic literature. ʿAbdīshōʿ’ s own treatment of them, therefore, does not mark him out as a particularly ‘original’ thinker. In what follows, I argue that it is

⁸ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 35b.

⁹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 35b-36a; cf. This quotation of al-Ghazālī has been discussed in Chapter One, Section 1.3.5. Unlike the preface of the *Farāʿid*, where al-Ghazālī is cited by name, ʿAbdīshōʿ simply refers to his source as *baʿḍ min al-ʿulamāʿ*, ‘one of the sages.’

¹⁰ *Farāʿid*, 306.

¹¹ I borrow the term ‘attribute apology’ from Hussein, *Early Christian Explanations of the Trinity*, 225.

necessary to consider his Trinitarian thought as part of a broader strategy of systematic theology that had become well-established by the 13th and early 14th centuries. In line with earlier writers of the Church of the East and other Christian confessions, ‘Abdīshō’s aim is to inculcate the basic tenets of the Trinity to a Christian audience by systematising centuries of doctrine in such epitome texts as the *Pearl*, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, and *Farā’id*, the ideas of which are also transmitted in his *Khuṭba*, a shorter, homiletic work, and the *Profession*, a brief credal statement. Yet underlying ‘Abdīshō’s didacticism is a markedly apologetic agenda. Muslim and, to a lesser extent, Jewish objections to the Trinity are never far from his mind, as was the case for earlier Christian Arabic and Syriac authors writing in an Islamicate milieu. Even the Trinitarian theology of the *Pearl*—written in Syriac and thus far less likely to be read by Muslims, if at all—bears the mark of an embattled doctrine, as has already been hinted at by the above reference to non-Christian objections.

A further feature of ‘Abdīshō’s Trinitarian thought is its strong philosophical underpinning. In line with some of the first known Christian theologians to write in Arabic, ‘Abdīshō’ appeals to Aristotelian forms of expression, namely the distinction between substance and accidents, to demonstrate the immutability of God and the consubstantiality of the hypostases. The Neoplatonised Aristotelianism inherited from the 10th century Baghdad peripatetics also looms large in this respect. Prominent among the Christian members of this circle were Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (d. 974), his pupil, the Jacobite Abū ‘Alī ibn Zur‘a (d. 1008), and Ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. 1043). As we shall see in this chapter, these figures’ apologetic strategies and their philosophical aspects lie at the centre of ‘Abdīshō’s Trinitarian thought.¹²

¹² Herman Teule (‘Reflections on Identity. The Suryoye of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: Bar Salibi, Bar Shakko, and Barhebraeus,’ *CHRC* 89, no. 1-3 [2009]:179-189, here 182, n. 12) has argued that the legacy of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī and other earlier Arabic Christian writers had become ‘entirely forgotten in the later tradition of the Suryoye.’ While it could be said that earlier Christian writers like Ibn ‘Adī were not often explicitly acknowledged during the so-called ‘Syriac Renaissance,’ their legacy can nevertheless be detected, at least in the writings of ‘Abdīshō’, as will be shown in this chapter.

The scholastic dimension of ‘Abdīshō’s Trinitarian dogma is further characterised by his use of and familiarity with the technical language of Muslim *kalām* and *falsafa* in the exposition of his Church’s teaching on the relationship between God and creation—a subject in which Syriac and Christian Arabic discussions about the Trinity were invariably framed. As outlined in the previous chapter, philosophical reasoning had become increasingly pervasive among Muslim theologians by the 13th century, due in great part to the legacy of the Ash‘arī al-Rāzī and his critical revision of Avicennism. As Robert Wisnovsky has shown, post-Avicennian *mutakallimūn*, Sunnī and Shī‘ī alike, became ‘entirely comfortable with appropriating and naturalizing Avicenna’s analysis of God as necessary of existence in itself.’¹³ Christian intellectuals in the Islamicate world were also prepared to use such formulations in their theories of God, as is evident from Bar Hebraeus’s proof of a Necessary Being (‘*ālṣāy ’ūtūtā*) and the contingency of the created universe—a discussion which eventually leads to his exposition of the Trinity.¹⁴

But while ‘Abdīshō’s theology certainly contains traces of post-Avicennian thought, his borrowings from non-Christian theological models are limited. As I argue in this chapter, ‘Abdīshō’s attempts to construct a reasonable case for the Trinity are tempered by a need to communicate a doctrine that was, in the final analysis, only acceptable to Christians. David Thomas has recently argued that for medieval Christian writers living under Islam to borrow too heavily from Muslim theological systems would be to ‘deny that theirs had integrity and completeness.’¹⁵ ‘Abdīshō’s engagement with non-Christian models, then, is cautious and selective. However, I make an important divergence from Thomas’s thesis: to conceive of

¹³ Robert Wisnovsky, ‘One Aspect of the Avicennian Turn in Sunnī Theology,’ *ASP* 14 (2004): 65–100, esp. 90–100. For the trend which ‘ushered in a sophisticated philosophical theology in which the metaphysics of God as a Necessary Existent who produces a contingent world was incorporated into a theology of divine nature’ among later Shī‘ī scholars, see Sajjad Rizvi, ‘The Developed *Kalām* Tradition: Part II: Shī‘ī Theology,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2008), 90–96, esp. 93.

¹⁴ Bar Hebraeus’s Trinitarian theology will be treated in more detail below.

¹⁵ Thomas, ‘Christian Borrowings from Islamic Theology,’ 141.

Christian engagement with Muslim *kalām* as a case of ‘borrowing’ is, I believe, highly misleading. While it is true that medieval Christian and Muslim theologians were often at ‘cross purposes,’ the intention of Christian Arabic and Syriac apologists was never to justify dogma by ‘borrowing’ from outside theological systems; rather, it was to negotiate common ground with Muslim critics by making of use of a theological idiom that conformed (or attempted to conform) to a shared sense of reason, while imparting to a Christian audience key points of dogma, much of which predated the advent of Islam.

It is in this spirit—as much catechetical as it is apologetic—that ‘Abdīshō’ expounds his Trinitarian theology. Where sources are cited by name, they are usually of Christian provenance and patristic in origin. Moreover, Muslim critics of the Trinity are never named, and it is difficult to get a sense of how contemporaneous the criticisms to which he reacts are. As will be shown, it is likelier that the attacks to which ‘Abdīshō’ responded were what had become over the centuries leading up to his career polemical topoi, which will be outlined in the following section.

3.2 Some Salient Objections to the Trinity

Before delving into ‘Abdīshō’'s writings, it is necessary to explore some of the anti-Trinitarian arguments that he responds to. Although space does not permit us to account for them all, it is worth considering some of the most salient criticisms he had in mind. The polemical themes addressed in this chapter are (i) the claim that Trinity multiplies God’s essence; (ii) the failure of the attribute apology to affirm God’s uniqueness; (iii) the opaque nature of Trinitarian terminology, which complicates rather than affirms God’s oneness; and (iv) the absence of any revealed authority for the Trinity.

The Christian convert to Islam Naṣr ibn Yaḥyā al-Mutaṭabbib (d. ca 1163 or 1193) affirms the charge of tritheism by stating that the three hypostases imply the existence of separate essences (*dhawāt*), resulting in three coequal Gods (*thalātha āliha mutasāwiyya*), each representing Knowledge (*‘ilm*), Ability (*qudra*), and Wisdom (*ḥikma*).¹⁶ Alternatively, these hypostases would be differentiated in superiority (*mutafāḍilīn*), resulting in hypostases that know (*ya‘lamu*) some things and not others, or those that have power over (*yaqdurū ‘alā*) some things and not others—resulting in one or more of the hypostases becoming deficient (*nāqiṣ*).¹⁷ The Christians’ claim that the hypostases are in fact attributes (*ṣifāt*) and properties (*khawāṣṣ*) of a single essence is also rejected by al-Mutaṭabbib, on the basis that since the Father generated the Son, the latter cannot share in the divine attribute of eternity.¹⁸ Moreover, al-Mutaṭabbib questions the logic of limiting the attributes and properties to three, since an infinite being cannot be limited in any way. Why, then, he asks, can the divine essence not possess a fourth?¹⁹

The *al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilahiyyat ‘Isā bi-ṣarīḥ al-injīl* (‘A Fitting Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus from the Evidence of the Gospel’), attributed to al-Ghazālī,²⁰ follows a similar line of logic, and provoked a response from one older contemporary of ‘Abdīshō’, the Copto-Arabic author Abū l-Khayr ibn al-Ṭayyib.²¹ In this refutation of Christianity, the author reasons that the Christian designation of the hypostases as attributes of Intellect, Intellector, and Intelligent (*al-‘aql wa-al-‘āqil wa-l-ma‘qūl*) is not in itself controversial, for

¹⁶ Naṣr ibn Yaḥyā al-Mutaṭabbib, *al-Naṣīḥa al-imāniyya fī faḍīḥat milla l-naṣrāniyya*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd Allah al-Sharqāwī (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣaḥwa, 1406/1986), 63

¹⁷ Al-Mutaṭabbib, *al-Naṣīḥa*, 63

¹⁸ Al-Mutaṭabbib, *al-Naṣīḥa*, 63.

¹⁹ Al-Mutaṭabbib, *al-Naṣīḥa*, 65.

²⁰ For a summary of the debate surrounding al-Ghazālī’s authorship, see Maha el-Kaisy Friemuth, ‘*al-Radd al-jamīl*: al-Ghazālī’s or Pseudo-Ghazālī’s?’ in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 275-295.

²¹ Abū l-Khayr ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Maqāla fī l-radd ‘alā l-muslimīn alladhīna yattahimūna l-naṣārā bi-l-i‘tiqād bi-thalātha āliha*, in *Vingt traités*, 172-178.

it merely indicates God's ability to perceive His own essence.²² What he takes issue with are the terms (*muṣṭalahāt*) applied to the Trinity, which fail to convey God's absolute sublimity. Presenting the Sonship in the Trinity as one of God's attributes, for example, is problematic because it would imply humanity's participation in the act of creating. Such attributes, therefore, must be restricted to God *qua* God (*min ḥaythu huwa Llāh*), without recourse to hypostases.²³ After affirming the oft-repeated charge that the Trinity must logically amount to tritheism, the author concludes with the Qur'ānic admonition, 'They are unbelievers who say, "God is the Third of Three."' ²⁴

Neither did the Christians' attribute apology escape the notice of the famous Jewish thinker Maimonides (d. 1204), whose influential *Dalālat al-ḥa'irīn* ('Guide for the Perplexed') would eventually become known to a medieval Christian Arabic readership.²⁵ Maimonides regarded the notion of God's essential attributes (*ṣifāt dhātiyya*) to be fundamentally at odds with God's incorporeality, warning his readers against those who believe that 'God is One, and that He has many attributes, declare the unity with their lips, and assume plurality in their thoughts' (*wāḥid bi-l-laḥẓihī wa-a'taqadahu kathīrīn bi-fikratihī*).²⁶ In doing so, he singles out the Christians, 'who say that He is one and three and that the three are one.'²⁷

²² [Pseudo-]Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat 'Īsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Injīl* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1939), 44. The attributes of Intellect, Intellector, and Intelligible in the act of divine self-perception will be dealt with in greater detail below, in Section 2.3.2.

²³ [Pseudo-]Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 46

²⁴ [Pseudo-]Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 52.

²⁵ The Christian reception of Maimonides has been far better understood in its medieval Latin European context, though its Arabic Christian reception – particularly in its Copto-Arabic environment – has only been recently brought to light by Gregor Schwarb, 'The Reception of Maimonides in Christian-Arabic Literature,' in *Maimonides and his World. Proceedings of the Twelfth Conference of the Society for Judeo-Arabic Studies*, ed. Yosef Tobi (Haifa: A. Stern, 2014), 109-175.

²⁶ Mūsā ibn Maymūn al-Qurṭubī al-Andalusī, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, ed. Hüseyin Atay (Ankara: Maṭba'at Jāmi'at Anqara, 1974), 199. My translation is from M. Friedländer, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 2nd ed. (Skokie, I.L.: Varda Books, 2002), 67.

²⁷ Ibn Maymūn, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 199.

A later Jewish thinker and near-contemporary of ‘Abdīshō‘, the Baghdad-based philosopher ‘Izz al-Dawlā Ibn Kammūna (d. 1284), placed the Trinity under close scrutiny in his *Tanqīh al-abḥāth li-milal al-thalāth* (‘Investigation of the Three Religions’)—a work which provoked a response from a Jacobite Christian in Mardin named Ibn al-Maḥrūma (active in 1299; died before 1355), in the form of marginal notes (*ḥawāshī*).²⁸ In this critical appraisal of the three major faiths, Ibn Kammūna questions why Christians designate one of the hypostases an essence (*dhāt*) and define the remaining two as attributes (*ṣifāt*) emanating from it. He rejects this distinction between essence and attribute, stating that God’s knowledge (*‘ilm*) and power (*qudra*) must surely be the same as His life (*ḥayāt*).²⁹ Ibn Kammūna also addresses the Christians’ explanation of the three hypostases as being alike to God’s incorporeal intellect (*‘aql mujarrad*), which is both an intellector (*‘āqil*) and an intelligible (*ma‘qūl*) of Itself, a theory first articulated by Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, whom he mentions by name.³⁰ In refutation of this, Ibn Kammūna asserts that even if this conception of God could be applied to the Trinity, it would contradict the Apostle’s Creed, which states that the essence of the Son is different from the Father (*dhāt ghayr dhāt al-Ab*), or that it was the Son who descended and rose as opposed to the Father.³¹

The Ash‘arite theologian and Mālikī judge Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 1285) would similarly find Christianity’s Trinitarian terminology wholly objectionable. In his recent monograph on al-Qarāfī’s *al-Ajwiba l-fākhira ‘an al-as’ila l-fājira* (‘Fitting Responses to Shameful Answers’), Diego Cucarella has shown that much of the Cairene jurist’s criticism

²⁸ Habib Bacha, ed., *Ḥawāshī Ibn al-Maḥrūma ‘alā Kitāb tanqīh al-abḥāth li-al-milal al-thalāth li-Ibn Kammūna* (Beirut: CEDRAC, 1984).

²⁹ Sa‘d ibn Maṣṣūr ‘Izz al-Dawlā ibn al-Kammūna, *Tanqīh al-abḥāth li-l-milal al-thalāth*, ed. Moshe Perleman (Berkeley: University of California Press), 54.

³⁰ Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s development of this theory will be discussed below, in Section 2.3.2.

³¹ Ibn Kammūna, *Tanqīh*, 56.

of the Trinity arose from the Christians' definition of God as a substance (*jawhar*).³² As we shall see further in this chapter, medieval Christian Arabic apologists often employed the Aristotelian distinction between accident and substance to demonstrate how God fell under the latter category, since He is self-subsistent and contingent on no other being than Himself, and thus must be a substance not an accident. Aware of this argument, al-Qarāfi retorts with an Ash'arite understanding of the term *jawhar* as an 'atom,' that is, a single unit of created reality which occupies a physical space but does not admit division (*mutaḥayyaz li-dhātihi lladhī lā yaqbalu l-qisma*); an accident ('*araḍ*'), meanwhile, is that which requires (*muftaqir*) a substance in which to subsist (*yaqūmu bihi*) but which owes its existence to God rather than the substance.³³ According to al-Qarāfi, what the Christians mean by their definition of substance and accident is the distinction between contingent (*mumkin*) and necessary (*wājib*), which their term *jawhar* does not adequately convey.³⁴

A briefer refutation of Christianity entitled *Adillat al-waḥdaniyya fī radd al-naṣrāniyya* ('Proofs of Divine Unity in Refutation of Christianity')—attributed to al-Qarāfi but more likely composed by an earlier 13th century Egyptian author³⁵—challenges its Christian interlocutor's scriptural proofs for the validity of the Trinity. Not naming his source, the author examines the claim that God's words in Gen 1:26—'Let us make mankind in our

³² Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfi* (d. 684/1285) (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 136-137.

³³ Aḥmad ibn Idrīs Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfi, *al-Ajwiba l-fākhira 'an al-as'ila l-fājira fī radd al-milla l-kāfira*, ed. Bakr Zakī 'Iwaḍ (n.p.: Maktabat Wahba, 1987/1408) 153. For a similar distinction between *jawhar* and '*araḍ*' in a Classical Ash'arite refutation of Christianity, see Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār (Alexandria: Munsha'at al-Ma'ārif, 1969), 570; idem, *Kitāb al-irshād ilā qawāṭi' al-adilla fī uṣūl al-i'tiqād* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjlū al-Miṣrīyah, 1987), 46-47. Cf. Richard Frank, 'Bodies and Atoms: the Ash'arite Analysis,' in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, ed. Michael E. Marmura (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 39-53. On the later development of the concept of *jawhar* by the Ash'arite *mutakallimūn*, see Richard M. Frank, *al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), 48-55; Shlomo Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 4-18.

³⁴ Al-Qarāfi, *Ajwiba*, 154. Cf. Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics*, 137.

³⁵ The author of the *Adilla* dedicates his refutation to the Ayyūbid sultan al-Mālik al-Kāmil (d. 1238). The fact that al-Qarāfi was born in 1228 makes his authorship of the work highly doubtful. See Maha El Kaisy-Friemuth, 'Al-Qarāfi,' *CMR* 4 (2012): 582-587, here 583-582.

image’—are proof of His triune nature, since the use of the first person plural points out to God’s resemblance (*tashbīh*) to Creation and a plurality (*jam‘*) of His persons, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.³⁶ In response, the author asserts that God’s use of the first person in Gen 1:26 is in fact the Royal We (*nūn al-‘azma*), just as a king might refer to himself in the first person plural when addressing his subjects.³⁷ Moreover, the author continues, God’s statement about likeness is not predicated on an exoteric resemblance to Creation (*lā yuḥmalu ‘alā zāhira fī tashbīh*), according to the ancient Hebrews (*‘ibrāniyyīn*). Rather, what God meant by the expression ‘our likeness’ is that humankind was created ‘according to our attribute’ (*‘alā ṣifatinā*), that is, the seven essential attributes (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) of God most commonly affirmed by the Ash‘arites: Living (*ḥayy^{an}*), Knowing (*‘ālim^{an}*), Willing (*murīd^{an}*), Able (*qādir^{an}*), Hearing (*samī‘^{an}*), Seeing (*baṣīr^{an}*), and Speaking (*mutakallim^{an}*).³⁸ If God were to share a true likeness to mankind, He would be subject to corporeal attributes such as smell (*rā‘iḥa*), taste (*ta‘m*), and movement (*ḥaraka*)—all of which is absurd for a transcendent and unitary being.³⁹

In addition to Muslim representations of the Trinity, invocations of the doctrine could be found on coins struck by the Ilkhan Abaqa (r. 1265-1281), which bore the Trinitarian

³⁶ [Pseudo-]Aḥmad ibn Idrīs Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī, *Adillat al-wahdāniyya fī radd ‘alā l-naṣārā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Sa‘īd Damashqiyya (Riyadh: n.p., 1407/1987), 27. Given the Egyptian provenance of the *Adilla*, it is possible—though not entirely certain—that the author’s knowledge of this exegetical tradition derives from ‘Abdallāh Abū l-Faraj ibn al-Ṭayyib’s influential Bible commentary, the *Firdaws al-naṣrāniyya* (‘The Paradise of Christianity’). Despite being a work of Nestorian exegesis, by the 13th century Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *Firdaws* had become widely circulated in Copto-Arabic and Ethiopic circles, in the form of a Miaphysite recension, as attested by the catalogue contained in the *Miṣbah al-zulma* of Shams al-Ri‘āsa Abū l-Barakāt ibn Kibr (d. 1324). Wilhelm Riedel, ‘Der Katalog der christlichen Schriften in arabischer Sprache von Abū l-Barakāt,’ *NAWG* 5 (1902): 636-706, here 653. For mss. of the recension containing Genesis, see *GAL*, 2:167-169; Samir Khalil Samir, ‘Nécessité de la science: texte de ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ṭayyib,’ *PdIO* 3, n. 2 (1972): 241-259, here 243-244.

³⁷ [Pseudo-]al-Qarāfī, *Adilla*, 71.

³⁸ [Pseudo-]al-Qarāfī, *Adilla*, 71-72. On these seven attributes, see Nader El-Bizry, ‘God: Essence and Attributes,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 128.

³⁹ [Pseudo-]al-Qarāfī, *Adilla*, 72.

formula in Arabic (*bi-sm al-ab wa-l-ibn wa-rūh al-qudus*).⁴⁰ Such perceived Christian sympathies later moved the famous Damascene Ḥanbalī scholar and jurist Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymiyya to pronounce a *fatwā* against the Mongols, even despite their official conversion to Islam in 1295. Here, Ibn Taymiyya claims that they believed Chinggis Khan to be ‘Son of God (*ibn Allāh*), conceived from a beam of the sun, similar to what the Christians believe about Christ.’⁴¹ What is referred to here—and no doubt exaggerated for polemical effect—is a common Trinitarian analogy that likens the relationship of the Father to the Sonship and the Word to the warmth radiated by the sun. Rooted in biblical imagery, variations of this analogy were frequently employed by the Church Fathers, and later the Christian authors of the ‘Abbāsīd period and beyond.⁴²

Ibn Taymiyya’s better known—and perhaps more relevant—criticisms of Christian doctrine are contained in his *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala l-dīn al-masīḥ* (‘The Correct Response to those who have Changed the Religion of Christ’). The crux of the *Jawāb*’s argument against the Trinity is that the doctrine defies reason, even by the parameters of logic set by the Christians themselves. He takes under examination, for example, Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s response to Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq’s refutation of the Trinity, in which the former affirms three distinct hypostases as attributes shared in a single substance (*jawhar*), by employing the syllogism of ‘Zayd [existing as] the doctor, the accountant, and the scribe.’⁴³ This statement

⁴⁰ See Ömer Diler, *Ilkhanids: Coinage of the Persian Mongols* (Istanbul: Turkuaz Kitapçılık, 2006), 278-279. This was perhaps due to the fact that Abaqa’s wife was the Byzantine princess Maria Despina, illegitimate daughter of the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos.

⁴¹ Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā*, 5 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadītha, 1385-1386/1965-1966), 4:339, quoted and translated by Judith Pfeiffer, ‘Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization: Politics and the Negotiation of Religious Boundaries in the Ilkhanate,’ in *Politics, Patronage, and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th Century Tabriz*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 129-169, here 158-159.

⁴² See Landron, *Attitudes*, 169ff; Michał Sadowski, ‘The Trinitarian Analogies in the Christian Arab Apologetical Texts of the Middle and Near East During the Abbasid Period (750–1050) and their Doctrinal Significance’ (PhD diss., Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, 2012) 107-109.

⁴³ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, ed. ‘Alī ibn Ḥasan ibn Nāṣir, 7 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-‘Āṣima, 1419/1999), 3:231-232, quoted in Platti, ‘Towards an Interpretation,’ 62-63. See also extracts translated by Thomas F. Michel, *A Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya’s al-Jawab al-sahih* (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1984), here 271.

is unequivocally dismissed by Ibn Taymiyya, who asserts that an attribute cannot ‘be equal to what is described in the substance’ (*mutasāwiyya li-l-mawṣūf al-jawhar*), since each attribute describes something that the other does not—thus obligating the Christians to confess three substances and three Gods.⁴⁴

Ibn Taymiyya also takes issue with his Christian interlocutor’s inability to establish scriptural proof for the existence of hypostases in God’s indivisible essence. He takes, for example, the claim of the anonymous author of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus* that Matt 28:19 (‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’) is proof of the three hypostases.⁴⁵ In reply, Ibn Taymiyya asserts that this interpretation is attested nowhere by the Prophets, who are not known to have employed the term ‘Son’ for any of God’s attributes (*ṣifāt*), either literally or metaphorically (*lā ḥaqīqat^{an} wa-lā majāz^{an}*); how, then, can ‘Son’ in this context be interpreted as the hypostasis of knowledge (*‘ilm*) and God’s Word (*kalām*) when such a reading is neither evident in the Old Testament nor the Gospels?⁴⁶ Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya draws attention to what he regards as the inability of Christians to agree on ways of defining the term ‘hypostasis’ and their failure in identifying *which* of the attributes constitute the three hypostases, varying as they do in number. He takes as examples such variations as ‘Existence (*al-wujūd*), Knowledge (*al-‘ilm*), Life (*al-ḥayāt*); and Wisdom (*al-ḥikma*), the Word (*al-kalām*); and Power (*al-qudra*)—all of which he encounters in different attribute apologies, but none of which Christian authors seem to agree on.⁴⁷ That Trinitarian terminology lacks uniformity and coherence is further underlined by what Ibn Taymiyya mistakenly takes to be

⁴⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:323; Michel, *A Muslim Theologian*, 171.

⁴⁵ Rifaat Ebied and David Thomas (ed. and tr.), *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī’s Response* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 95.

⁴⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:258. This passage is also translated in Basanese, *Réponse raisonnable*, §45.

⁴⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:260; Basanese, *Réponse raisonnable*, §46.

the Greek (*rūmiyya*) origin of the word *uqnūm*,⁴⁸ which the Christians translate variously as ‘foundation’ (*aṣl*), ‘person’ (*shakhṣ*), ‘attribute’ (*ṣifa*), and ‘property’ (*khāṣṣa*)⁴⁹—concluding with the witticism, ‘Well spoke the virtuous one who said, “If ever you ask a Christian, his son, and the son of his son what it is they believe, each one’s belief will differ from the other!”’⁵⁰ As in other critiques of the Trinity surveyed above, Ibn Taymiyya also affirms the absurdity of limiting the number of the hypostases to only three (*takhṣīṣ al-ṣifāt bi-thālatha*), since both the Bible and the Qur’ān attest to more than three divine attributes.⁵¹

3.3 Proofs for God’s Existence and Unity

Having examined some relevant criticisms of the Trinity, we now turn to ‘Abdīshō’s attempts to overcome these polemical challenges. All three of his major dogmatic works—the *Pearl*, the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, and the *Farā’id*—provide philosophical principles for the existence of God as (i) the Prime Mover and First Cause for creation; (ii) an incorporeal entity; and (iii) a unified being. Thus, before launching into a discussion of the Trinity *per se*, ‘Abdīshō first establishes the simple premise that Christians believe in a unitary, incorporeal God who is the single cause for creation. The first argument he makes to this effect is a teleological one—more specifically, an empirical argument from the composition and orderliness of the created universe.

⁴⁸ The term *uqnūm* is actually derived from the Syriac *qnōmā*, as will be discussed in Section 2.4.2 of this chapter.

⁴⁹ On the fluidity of this term’s definition, see Landron, *Attitudes*, 170ff; Bo Holmberg, ‘Person’ in the Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Arabic Apologetics and its Background in the Syriac Church Fathers,’ in *Studia Patristica Vol. XXV. Papers presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1991*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 300-307.

⁵⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:260-261; Basanese, *Réponse raisonnable*, §46. A similar statement is made by Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiz, *Mukhtār fī al-radd ‘alā al-Naṣārā*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abbās al-Sharqāwī (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣaḥwa, 1984), 95. On this jibe, see also Nancy N. Roberts, ‘Reopening the Muslim-Christian Dialogue of the 13th Century of the 13th-14th Century: Critical Reflections on Ibn Taymiyya’s Response to Christianity,’ *MusWor* 86 (1996): 342-366, here 346; reprinted in *Doctrine and Debate in the Eastern Christian World, 300-500*, ed. Avril Cameron and Robert Hoyland (Farnham: Ashgate, 2001), VIII, though she makes no attempt to identify its source.

⁵¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:261; Basanese, *Réponse raisonnable*, §51.

The second is a proof of God's self-knowledge, which determines the divine essence to be an incorporeal being, possessing three emanatory states: Intellect, Intellector, and Intelligible—a triad that leads to an exposition of the three hypostases. As will be argued in this section, the purpose of these proofs in 'Abdīshō's apologetic scheme is to present a line of reasoning that could not be said by hypothetical critics to undermine the notion of divine transcendence in the doctrine of the Trinity. Unlike some other Christian apologists examined below, 'Abdīshō's Trinitarian apology bears only an indirect indebtedness to the intellectual currents of his day. Nevertheless, he draws on the language and argumentative framework of *kalām* and Islamic philosophy to affirm much earlier opinions regarding the existence of God and His triune nature.

3.3.1 Teleological Arguments

The *Pearl*, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, and *Farā'id* all make some form of teleological argument which can be summarised as follows: if the created order exhibits complexity and arrangement, then created beings must possess a creative agent. Since composition and arrangement entail a process of composition and transformation, the agent of this process must itself be unitary and unchangeable in essence; and since there cannot be an eternal regress of contingent beings, the cosmos must have been temporally originated *ex nihilo* at a finite point in time. As we shall see presently, such teleological and cosmological inferences of God's existence and unity were common to both Christian and Islamic theological systems, particularly in *kalām* circles.⁵²

⁵² See William Lane Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1979) and Herbert A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 239-240. My classification derives from Immanuel Kant's division of proofs of God's existence into physico-theological (or teleological), cosmological, and ontological; see *Critique of Pure Reason*, A591/B619. However, as Herbert Davidson (*Proofs*, 212) has pointed out, the

We begin with the *Pearl*'s argument for the world's composition by a First Cause. Early in the work's chapter on the Trinity 'Abdīshō' makes the following statement:

That the world is created and temporally originated [*da- 'bīdā [h]w 'almā*] and had a temporal beginning [*u-da-b-zabnā shqal shurrāyā*] is proved thus: this world is composed [*mrakkbā*]—as a whole and in all its parts,—arranged [*młahḥmā*], and framed [*mṭakksā*]. Thus, everything that is compounded, arranged, and framed possesses a composer, arranger, and framer [*'ūt lēh mrakkbānā wa-młahḥmānā wa-mṭakksānā*].⁵³

According to this scheme, therefore, an effective agent is required for this temporal origination to occur. Unnamed 'ancient philosophers' (*pīlāsōpē qadmāyē*) are said by 'Abdīshō' to have agreed that every movement emanates from a mover (*kull zaw 'ā men mzi 'ānā*), and that this mover must possess the ability to overcome things that are mutually destructive and contradictory in nature. As such, our author concludes, this first cause must be almighty (*mṣē ḥayl kull*) and the cause of all creation (*'ellat kull*).⁵⁴

It then falls on 'Abdīshō' to establish the unity and incorporeality of this First Cause. He addresses the issue by syllogistically considering the existence of two or more creators alike in nature (*da-kyānā nehwōn shwēyn*). This is dismissed on the grounds that it is impossible to conceive of 'two blacknesses alike in every respect' (*tartēyn 'ūkāmātā da-b-kull meddem shawyān u-lā prīshān*).⁵⁵ Secondly, he considers the possibility of two creative forces of unlike nature (*prīshīn men ḥdādā ba-kyānā*). As before, this statement is rejected, this time on the grounds that two different agents cannot participate in a harmonious order of

former categories of proof—physico-theological and cosmological—are empirically adduced from natural phenomena in the created order, and hence constitute teleological proofs. As will be discussed below, ontological proofs—that is, inferences of God's existence that are independent from the physical order—do not appear in 'Abdīshō' Trinitarian dogma.

⁵³ *Pearl*, ʔ-⤵

⁵⁴ *Pearl*, ʔ

⁵⁵ *Pearl*, ʔ

creation, since they would be mutually oppositional and destructive (*saqqubblāyē kēyt u-baṭlānē da-ḥdādē ʿennōn*). Referred to here is the doctrine of mutual interference, which posits that if more than one creator existed, rivalry would beset them—a concept traceable to the anonymous ancient Greek author of the Hermetic Corpus,⁵⁶ which gradually made its way into the thought of Syriac and Christian Arabic writers by way of the Church fathers.⁵⁷ Within the context of his *Pearl*, ʿAbdīshōʿ applies the argument of mutual interference to an interpretation of Deut 6:4 (‘The Lord God is One God’).⁵⁸

The *Uṣūl al-dīn*’s teleological proof of God’s existence follows a similar method of argumentation. Here, ʿAbdīshōʿ begins by discussing two modes of speculation (*naẓar*) which lead to knowledge of God’s existence, even though He is simple (*baṣīṭ*, i.e. incorporeal) and cannot be comprehended through the senses (*min al-ḥawāss*).⁵⁹ The first is by contemplating God’s effects (*maḥʿūlāt*).⁶⁰ In a similar vein to the *Pearl*, he affirms the basic notion that

all the commentators and their authorities [*jumlat aṣḥāb al-sharāʿih wa-ʿulamāʾihā*] and the masters of philosophy and its sages [*arbāb al-falāsifa wa-ḥukamāʾihā*] have agreed that influence must absolutely emanate from an influencer [*al-taʿthīr lā maḥālatā ṣādir^{um} ʿan al-muʿaththir*], shape from a shaper [*al-taṣwīr min al-mūṣawwir*], composition from a composer [*al-tarkīb min al-murakkib*], and arrangement from an arranger [*al-tartīb min al-murattib*]; that

⁵⁶ Walter Scott (ed. and tr.), *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings which contain Religious and Philosophic Teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 1:217.

⁵⁷ Harry Austryn Wolfson (*The Philosophy of the Kalām* [Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1976, 49-50) and Herbert Davidson (*Proofs*, 166) each trace the argument of mutual interference to John of Damascus as well as the Hermetic Corpus. For Syriac and Arabic Christian examples of the argument of mutual interference, see Job of Edessa, *Encyclopædia of Philosophical and Natural Sciences as taught in Baghdad about A.D. 817; or, Book of treasures*, ed. and tr. Alphonse Mingana (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons), 15-16; ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān wa-Kitāb al-masāʾil wa-l-ajwiba*, ed. Michel Hayek (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1977), 100-102 (*al-Masāʾil wa-l-ajwiba*); Yahyā ibn ʿAdī, *Maqāla fī tawḥīd*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir (Jounieh: al-Maktabah al-Būlisīyah, 1980), §§ 30-43; Yahyā ibn Jarīr, *Kitāb al-murshid*, Ms. Oxford, Pococke 253, 5b; al-Muʿtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl, *Fī dhāt al-bāriʾ taʿālā qabla l-itihād*, in *Majmūʿ*, ch. 3, §31.

⁵⁸ *Pearl*, α

⁵⁹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 36a.

⁶⁰ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 36a.

the world is composed and arranged [*al-‘ālam murakkab^{um} murattab^{um}*]; and that everything that is composed, arranged, generated [*muḥdath*], and acted upon [*maf‘ūl*] possesses an agent [*lahu fā‘il^{um}*]. The world, then, is originated [*muḥdath*] and effected, it possesses an agent, the agent possesses influences, and the mover movements [*al-muḥarrik li-l-ḥarakāt*].⁶¹

This argument for the world’s temporal origination is buttressed by a rejection of three alternatives: a backwards ascension in motion (*irtiqā’ fi l-ḥarakāt*); *ad infinitum* motion (*al-ḥarakāt ilā ghayr nihāya*); and an infinite regress of contingent beings (*silsilāt al-mumkināt ilā ghayr ghāya*).⁶² In other words, for the world to have had a beginning in time, an infinite series of causal entities could not exist or be traversed. The basic structure of this argument derives from Aristotle’s conception of a First Mover.⁶³ It was later modified by the Late Antique Neoplatonist John Philoponus (d. ca 570), who formulated a series arguments against the eternity of the world based on the impossibility of traversing an infinite number,⁶⁴ and whose writings enjoyed an early reception in the Syriac churches.⁶⁵ Thus, in ‘Abdīshō’s *Uṣūl al-dīn*, the implication of the argument against infinity—along with those he makes

⁶¹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 36b

⁶² *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 36b.

⁶³ See ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān*, 22-23 for similar arguments for a First Mover based on quotations from works by Aristotle’s *De Coelo* and *De Generatione et Corruptione*, which he mentions by name.

⁶⁴ See Christian Wildberg (tr.), *Philoponus: Against Aristotle on the Eternity of the World* (London: Duckworth, 1987); cf. Davidson, *Proofs*, 86-116. For a useful summary of Philoponus’s arguments against eternalism in the context of late Neo-Platonism, see also Richard Sorabji, ‘Infinity and the Creation,’ in *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science*, ed. Richard Sorabji, 2nd ed. (Institute of Classical Studies: London, 2010), 207-220.

⁶⁵ A 6th century hagiography portrays a disputation between a Northern Mesopotamian hermit named ‘Abdīshō’ and the Sassanian *marzbān* Qardagh (who is later converted to Christianity and martyred). The issue under debate was whether the heavens and luminary bodies are eternal, animate, and ensouled. ‘Abdīshō’, however, convinces his opponent that the luminaries are in fact generated, inanimate, and endowed with the ability of motion and impetus by God—an argument rooted in John Philoponus’s attempt to bring Aristotelianism in line with Biblical cosmology. See Joel Thomas Walker, ‘Against the Eternity of the Stars: Disputation and Christian Philosophy in Late Sassanian Persia,’ in *Convegno internazionale La Persia e Bisanzio: Roma, 14-18 ottobre 2002* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 2004), 509-537, esp. 523-527. See also a fragment of the 8th book of Philoponus’s *Contra Aristotelem* preserved in a 7th century West Syrian manuscript together with writings of the Church Fathers in Ms. BL Add. 17214, 72b-73a. Christian Wildberg, ‘Prologomena to the Study of Philoponus’ *contra Aristotelem*,’ in *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science*, ed. Richard Sorabji (London: Duckworth, 1987), 197-209, here 199. For Christian Arabic uses of Philoponus, see Bernhard Lewin, ‘La notion de *muḥdat* dans la kalām et dans la philosophie. Un petit traité inédit du philosophe chrétien Ibn Suwār,’ *Orientalia Suecana* 3 (1954): 84-93 and al-Mu’taman ibn al-‘Assāl, *Fī ḥadath al-‘ālam*, in *Majmū’*, ch. 4, §§1-43 (summary of Philoponus’s argument for temporal origination).

from the composition of the world—is that the First Cause must be an unchangeable (*lā yataghayyar*) and static (*thābit*) Necessary of Existence (*mawjūd darūrī l-wujūd*).⁶⁶ Furthermore, in line with the *Pearl*'s denial of mutual interference, the *Uṣūl al-dīn* affirms the argument that if the first cause were multiple in number, then existence would descend into mutual destruction and contradiction (*talāshā ta'ānuḏ^{an} wa-taḏāḏud^{an}*).⁶⁷ 'When there is multiplicity (*kathra*),' our author concludes, 'there is chaos (*mirā*'), and thus order (*niẓām*) cannot be established.'⁶⁸

The above arguments for the temporal origination of the world re-emerge in a section of the *Farā'id* directly preceding its section on the Trinity. Here, the world's finitude is argued from the composition from the heavens. The heavens, reasons 'Abdīshō', must be limited (*mutanāhiyya*) because they are determined (*muqaddara*) by the movements of the planets, which are divided into constellations, sublunary spheres, and elements. If everything determined by movement is divided into finite parts (*maqsum^{un} ilā ajzā' mutanāhiyya*), the heavens must therefore be finite (*mutanāh*) and temporally originated (*muḥdath*).⁶⁹ Furthermore, 'Abdīshō' affirms the oneness of the originator (*muḥdith*) with the Qur'ānic pronouncement that God 'possesses no equal' (*lā sharīka lahu*, Q 6:163),⁷⁰ and dismisses as absurd the notion of there being two creators alike in substance and will, since creation requires the ability to overcome multiplicity: if two co-consentaneous wills existed, one would be unable to overcome the other (*lā yumkin aḥaduhum an yaqhara l-ākhar*).⁷¹ As in the *Pearl* and the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 'Abdīshō' rejects this notion on the basis that if two creators of

⁶⁶ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 36b.

⁶⁷ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 36b-37a.

⁶⁸ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 37a.

⁶⁹ *Farā'id*, §§242-248.

⁷⁰ *Farā'id*, §265.

⁷¹ *Farā'id*, §§271-275.

unequal power and will existed, chaos and discord would ensue and on that account, creation would not be possible (*lā yaṣihḥu ‘anhu l-khalq*).⁷²

Another way in which ‘Abdīshō’s *Farā’id* posits the existence of a Creator is by advancing macro- and microcosmic theories of the physical order, which were rooted in Hellenistic and Patristic thought, and had a long reception history in the Church of the East.⁷³ Such theories held that certain patterns exhibited at all levels of the cosmos must necessarily be reflected in man. Where the existence of a creative entity is concerned, the argument runs as follows:

Two matters [*amrayni*] that resemble one another, when one is judged [*hukima*] according to the other with a certain judgement [*bi-ḥukmⁱⁿ mā*], insofar as one resembles the other [*mushābih^{um} li-l-ākhar*], then the one must definitely be judged according to the other according to such a judgement. Thus, two things may be said of the world: [that it is a] macrocosm [*al-‘ālam al-akbar*], which is the entirety of the heavens and earth, and the human being, who is the microcosm [*al-‘ālam al-aṣghar*], according to what the ancients [*qudumā*] explained. The microcosm that is man exhibits [*zāhir^{um}*] in [all] its affairs [the fact] that it possesses an agent [*fā’il*] and creator [*khāliq*]. Thus, its likeness⁷⁴ is obligated in the macrocosm—and so it [i.e. the world] has a maker [*ṣāni’*] and a creator.⁷⁵

As noted in the beginning of this section, cosmological arguments for God as First Cause were upheld by Muslim theologians. The *mutakallimūn* of the Ash‘arite and Mu‘tazilite traditions each adduced a number of arguments in support of the claim that the existence of a

⁷² *Farā’id*, §271.

⁷³ For macrocosmic and microcosmic theories in Plato, Aristotle, and the Church Fathers, see George Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms in the History Of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press), 7-36. For these theories in the 6th century East Syrian author Michael Bādōqā and his influence on the 13th liturgical poet George Wardā, see also Gerrit J. Reinink, ‘Man as Microcosm. A Syriac Didactic Poem and its Prose Background,’ in *Calliope’s Classroom: Studies in Didactic Poetry from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Annette Harder *et al.* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 123-152; idem, ‘George Warda and Michael Badoqa,’ in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman G.B. Teule and Carmen Fotescu Tauwinkl (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 63-74.

⁷⁴ Reading *mathalu* for *mithāl*.

⁷⁵ *Farā’id*, §§257-263.

Creator can be inferred from the fact that the physical world exhibits finitude and composition.⁷⁶ Moreover, important figures in the history of *kalām* such as al-Juwaynī (d. 1085) and his disciple al-Ghazālī affirmed the createdness of the world *ex nihilo* based on arguments resembling those of John Philoponus, whose proofs against eternalism had entered into Islamic theological and philosophical circles as early as the 9th century.⁷⁷ As for the doctrine of mutual interference, this became known as *tamānu* among Islamic theologians, many of whom found support for the notion in such Qur'ānic verses as Q 21:22⁷⁸ and Q 23:91,⁷⁹ though the efficacy of this proof in establishing a single creative cause was disputed by some.⁸⁰ And as we will see below, in Section 2.3.2, micro- and macrocosmic theories of man were also well-known to Muslim theologians and philosophers.

From the early 12th century onwards, however, Muslim theologians were compelled to take seriously the proposition that the world had not been created *ex nihilo*. The most influential exponent of this theory was Avicenna, who held God to be a non-voluntary First Cause from whom existence is eternally generated. Building on Aristotle's theory of a cause's simultaneity with its effect (*Metaphysics*, V, 2, 1014^a, 20f), Avicenna asserted that God and the world must necessarily and eternally co-exist in time.⁸¹ Against this doctrine of the world's pre-eternality, al-Ghazālī famously advanced arguments in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*

⁷⁶ For comprehensive surveys of these authors and their natural theological doctrines of God, see Davidson, *Proofs*, 213-236; Binyamin Abrahamov, introduction to *al-Ḳāsim b. Ibrāhīm on the Proof of God's Existence = Kitāb al-dalīl al-kabīr*, ed. and tr. Binyamin Abrahamov (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 1-60;

⁷⁷ Joel L. Kraemer, 'A Lost Passage from Philoponus' *Contra Aristotelem* in Arabic Translation,' *JAOS* 85, no. 3 (1965): 318-327; Davidson, *Proofs*, 86-116; Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, 19ff; Robert Wisnovsky, 'Yaḥyā al-Naḥwī,' *EI*² 9 (2001): 252.

⁷⁸ 'If gods other than God had been in them (the heavens and earth), then surely they would have been ruined (*la-fasadatā*).

⁷⁹ 'God has not taken any son, nor has there ever been with Him any deity. [If there had been], then each deity would have taken what it created, and some of them would have sought to overcome others (*la-'alā ba'ḍuhum 'alā ba'ḍihim*).

⁸⁰ On these, see Davidson, *Proofs*, 167-170.

⁸¹ Michael E. Marmura, 'The Metaphysics of Efficient Causality,' in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, ed. Michael E. Marmura (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1984), 172-187, esp. 181-187; idem, 'Avicenna on Causal Priority,' in *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1981), 63-83, here 66-67.

for the world's temporal origination, in support of the Qur'ānic belief that the world was voluntarily decreed into existence by God at a single point in time—arguments that principally involved cosmological and teleological proofs inferred from the finite and composite nature of creation.⁸² Later Islamic theologians were also to take up the challenge of eternalism, as is evident from a letter by Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī (d. 1194), for whom the question struck at the very heart of Islam's foundations.⁸³ Rejections of Ibn Sīnā's eternalism would also become a common feature in systematic works of dogma. For example, the *Kitāb al-arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī produces several arguments against the claim of the 'philosophers' that the procession of effect from its cause is eternal.⁸⁴ Even staunch defenders of Avicenna such as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī were obliged to affirm the temporal origination of the world in his *Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, a highly influential epitome of Imāmī theology.⁸⁵ Nor were Christian writers immune to the challenge of eternalism: we find responses to the 'philosophers' in a treatise by the Melkite Paul of Antioch (fl. early 13th century) and later, the *Candelabrum of the Sanctuaries* of Bar Hebraeus.⁸⁶

Although 'Abdīshō' unequivocally affirms the world's temporal origination (as has been shown above), he makes no allusion to those who might argue otherwise. Also conspicuously absent from his doctrine of God are non-teleological proofs for the existence

⁸² Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers / Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, ed. Michael E. Marmura, 2nd ed. (Provo, U.T.: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), ch. 1. Cf. Lenn E. Goodman, 'Ghazali's Argument from Creation (1),' *IJMES* 2, no. 1 (1971): 67-85; idem, 'Ghazali's Argument from Creation (2),' *IJMES* 2, no. 1 (1971): 168-188, esp. 172-174; Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, 42-49; Davidson, *Proofs*, 129-130.

⁸³ Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī, *Risālat ḥudūth al-'ālam*, in Jean Michot, 'La pandémie avicennienne au VI^e/XII^e siècle: Présentation, editio princeps et traduction de l'introduction du livre de l'advenue du monde (kitāb ḥudūth al-'ālam) d'Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī,' *Arabica* 40, no. 3 (1993): 287-344, here 328 : *al-mas'ala min ummahāt uṣūl al-dīn*.

⁸⁴ Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad Hijāzī al-Saqqā, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Taḍmūn 1986), 1:23ff.

⁸⁵ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-'aqā'id*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥassan Sulaymān (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma'rifa l-Jāmiyya, 1996), 71.

⁸⁶ François Graffin (ed. and tr.), *Le Candélabre du sanctuaire de Grégoire Abou'lfaradj dit Barhebraeus. Troisième base: de la Théologie (PO 27, fasc. 3; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1957), 466-468 (ST), 467-469 (FT); Būlus al-Antākī, 'Risāla 'aqliyya li-Būlus al-rāhib fī wujūd al-Bāri' ta'ālā wa-kamālātihi wa-aqānīmīhi,* in *Seize traités*, 35-49, here 37-39.

of a creator. Once again, the legacy of Avicenna is important to consider here. For Avicenna, the surest and most accurate proof of God's existence lay not in physico-theological speculation but in the modalities of necessity and contingency, existence and non-existence. His argument runs as follows: that which is contingent on something other than itself for its existence is a possible being (*mumkin*), since it does not deserve to exist on its own merit but requires something else to bring it into existence. The possible being is thus situated within in equilibrium between existence and non-existence, requiring a 'tipping of the scales' (*takhṣīṣ*, *tarjīḥ*) for its coming into being. Since this process cannot be effected by a possible being, which would result in an infinite regress of contingencies, the cause of existence must be a Necessary Being by virtue of Itself (*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi*)—a being Avicenna calls God.⁸⁷ While al-Ghazālī accepted the general premise of this theory, its problem for him lay in the fact Avicenna denied that this preponderance was decreed by God at a specific point in time.⁸⁸ As such, al-Ghazālī modulated Avicenna's argument from contingency by postulating the existence of a preponderator (*murajjih*) whose will determined the bringing about of the world from non-existence to existence.⁸⁹ This concept would become highly influential among later generations of Muslim theologians,⁹⁰ and was picked up on by Bar Hebraeus,

⁸⁷ Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing / al-Shifā': al-ilāhiyyāt*, ed and tr. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, U.T.: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), bk. 1, ch. 6; idem, *Kitāb al-najāt fī al-ḥikmat al-manṭiqiyya wa-al-ṭabī'iyya wa-al-ilāhiyya*, ed. Mājid Fakhri (Beirut: Dār al-Ifāq al-Jadīda, 1982), 288-291; idem, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt li-Abī 'Alī ibn Sīnā ma'a sharḥ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūṣī*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā, 3 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1947-8), 3:7-27. Cf. Michael E. Marmura, 'Avicenna's Proof from Contingency for God's Existence in the Metaphysics of *al-Shifā'*,' *Mediaeval Studies* 42 (1980): 337-352.

⁸⁸ Avicenna held that if the world's origination at a single point in time would imply God's inaction (*ta'aṭṭul*) prior to creation. Since God does nothing in vain, Avicenna reasons, the emanation of His benevolence (*jūd*)—which, influenced by Proclus, he defines as 'existence'—must occur at all times as an inevitable consequence of God's being; see *al-shifā': al-ilāhiyyāt*, bk. 6, ch. 5, §41. See also Section 2.4.1 for more on this issue.

⁸⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, ch. 1, §6, 41. Cf. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām*, 444-452; Griffel, *al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 170. The argument from preponderance is similar to that of particularisation (*takhṣīṣ*), which, due to the influence of al-Juwaynī, became a characteristic feature of Ash'arite occasionalism; see Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām*, 434-444; Davidson, *Proofs*, 154ff.

⁹⁰ See Daniel Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte humain en théologie musulmane* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1982), 149-151; Wilferd Madelung, 'The Late Mu'tazila and Determinism: The Philosophers Trap,' in *Yād-nāma in memoria di Alessandro Bausani*, vol. 1, *Islamistica*, eds. B. Scarcia Amoretti and L. Rostagno (Rome: Bardi, 1991), 245-257, reprinted in *Studies in the Medieval Muslim Thought and Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (London: Ashgate/Variorum, 2013), II.

who neatly lays out its principles in an argument for the world's contingency containing strong overtones of Avicenna's ontology:

All that exists, if its nature is not in itself susceptible to non-being, is a Necessary Being (*'ālṣāy 'ūtā*)—that is to say, the Creator of Universe. [Otherwise,] if it is subject [to non-being], then [its] being and non-being must be in equilibrium. Thus, everything that exists requires a preponderator [*mnat 'ānā*] for its existence. If this preponderator were a possible being [*metmaṣyānā*], then it would [itself] require a preponderator, resulting in an infinite chain, which is absurd. On that account, the preponderator must be a powerful Necessary Being—who is the Creator of the Universe and God.⁹¹

It should be noted that the above passage features as the first proof of God's existence in Bar Hebraeus's *Candelabrum*; only later does he elaborate on more teleological and cosmological reflections (as we shall see below). This tendency is reflected among post-Avicennian Muslim thinkers, many of whom incorporated a plurality of proofs for God's existence—teleological, cosmological, and ontological—into their systematic works, though there would inevitably be disagreement about the efficacy of each: for example Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī would view the Avicenna's method as a more noble and reliable (*ashraf wa-awthaq*) proof than the teleological arguments of the natural philosophers (*al-ḥukumā' al-ṭabī'iyūn*).⁹² As we have seen in this section, 'Abdīshō's arguments for the existence of a First Cause are based entirely on empirical observations from the physical order, and thus reflect little of the advances made by theologians in the Islamicate world during the two centuries or so leading up to his lifetime. One possibility for this theological conservatism may arise from the fact

⁹¹ Graffin, *Le Candélabre: troisième base*, 466 (ST), 467 (FT).

⁹² See Ṭūsī's gloss to Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, 3:54–55, n. 1. On other Muslim collections of proofs of God's existence in the works of post-Avicennan Muslim theologians, see Shihādeh, 'Existence of God,' 211–214. For a Christian Arabic theologians who employ teleological and cosmological arguments alongside Avicenna's argument from contingency, see Daniel ibn al-Khaṭṭāb al-Mardīnī, *Maqāla fī wujūd al-Khāliq wa-kamālātihi*, in *Vingt traités*, 148–151 (an edition of the first five *fuṣūl* of an otherwise unedited work by a later Jacobite theologian and commentator of Bar Hebraeus); Ibn al-'Assāl, *Fī ḥadath al-'ālam*, §36–79.

that ‘Abdīshō’, in contrast to Bar Hebraeus, was not connected to any of the scholarly circles discussed in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, his inferences of the existence and unity of God from nature were widely accepted and uncontroversial modes of speculation by ‘Abdīshō’s time, enabling him to situate his own theology in a ‘common ground’ that few non-Christian theologians would reject *tout court*.

3.3.2. The Argument from Divine Intellection

In addition to teleological arguments, ‘Abdīshō’ supplies proof of God’s unity and incorporeity from the ability of pure matter to perceive itself. The skeletal structure of this argument is traceable to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Lambda 9 and *De Anima* III, in which all abstract matter is defined as intellect. As such, the Prime Mover can be said to be an intellect that is capable of contemplating Its own essence; and since Its own essence is incorporeal, the object of its intellection must necessarily be itself.⁹³ This theory of self-reflexivity was developed in the 9th and 10th centuries by the Baghdad peripatetics. The Aristotelianising tendencies of the school are evident from its discourse on divine intellection, which held that the divine essence is identical to what it intellects, without any implication of multiplicity. Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī would express this interrelation as the First Cause existing as actual intellect (‘*aql bi-l-fi’l*’), able to perceive its own essence through intellection by virtue of Its freeness from immateriality, in contradistinction to material beings which themselves are objects of intellection. This First Cause is thus Intellect, Intellector, and Intellected—‘all this being one essence’ (*dhāt wāḥid*).⁹⁴

⁹³ See Ian M. Crystal, *Self-Intellection and its Epistemological Origins in Greek Thought* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 115-152.

⁹⁴ Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Al-Fārābī on the Perfect State. Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī’s Mabādi’ āra’ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, ed. and tr. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), §6.

The philosopher Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, a pupil of al-Fārābī, is the first known Christian Arabic author to employ this triad as a Trinitarian expression of God’s oneness—an explanation that would attract the attention of Ibn Kammūna and Ibn Taymiyya some three centuries later (as noted above). On the issue of divine oneness, Ibn ‘Adī makes a direct appeal to Aristotle and his commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias by arguing that if God is the cause (*sabab*) of His own intellect, He must generate the Intellector (*āqil*) and Intelligible (*ma’qūl*) in Himself—each one conforming to the hypostases of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively.⁹⁵ In other words, if it is possible for God to legitimately exist in more than one state of intellection while remaining a single essence, then it cannot be said that He is subject to multiplicity and accidents. As Emilio Platti has observed, Ibn ‘Adī’s writings on Trinitarian doctrine were never systematically laid out, surviving mostly in brief responses to particular Muslim criticisms and questions from his students.⁹⁶ Yet this particular explanation of the hypostases was to have a lasting impact on Christian Arabic expositions of the Trinity beyond confessional boundaries, especially in the field of Christian-Muslim apologetics. The theory of divine self-intellection is briefly laid out in a letter by Elias bar Shennāyā to the Marwānid vizier Abū l-Qāsim al-Maghribī,⁹⁷ and the Melkite ‘Abdallāh Ibn al-Faḍl al-Anṭākī (d. 1000) employs it in his brief treatises on the Trinity,⁹⁸ as does the later writer Muḥyī al-

⁹⁵ Augustin Périer (ed. and tr.), ‘Petits traités apologétiques de Yaḥyā ben ‘Adī’ (PhD diss, University of Paris, 1920), 18-23.

Emilio Platti, ‘Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī and his Refutation of al-Warrāq’s Treatise on the Trinity in Relation to his other Works,’ in *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir and Jørgen S. Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 172-191, here 190. See also Augustin Périer (ed. and tr.), *Pétits traités apologétiques de Yaḥyā ben ‘Adī* (Ph.D. diss., University of Paris, 1920), 172-192, here 173.

⁹⁶ Platti, ‘Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī and his Refutation of al-Warrāq,’ 190. See also Périer, ‘Pétits traités,’ 173.

⁹⁷ Though unpublished, the letter’s arguments are detailed by Landron, *Attitudes*, 174. See also Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, ‘Elias of Nisibis,’ *CMR* 2 (2011): 277-741. The argument for God’s self-intellection, however, is absent from Elias’s better known *Kitāb al-majālis* (‘Book of Sessions’).

⁹⁸ Sam Noble and Alexander Treiger (eds. and trs.), ‘Christian Arabic Theology in Byzantine Antioch: ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl and his Discourse on the Trinity,’ *LeMus* 124 no. 3-4 (2011): 371-417, 398 (AT), 410 (ET); Gérard Troupeau (ed. and tr.), ‘Le traité sur l’Unité et la Trinité ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Tayyib,’ *PdIO* 2 (1971): 86-89, here 82 (FT) and 83 (AT), reprinted in *Études sur le christianisme arabe au Moyen Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), VI, referring to the three states as *‘ilm*, *‘ālim*, and *ma’lūm*.

Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (fl. 11th or 12th century).⁹⁹ Longer, encyclopaedic expositions of Christian dogma would also contain this argument such as the late 10th / early 11th century *Kitāb al-majdal* of ‘Amr ibn Mattā and the *Kitāb al-murshid* of the Jacobite Yaḥyā ibn Jarīr (d. 1104).¹⁰⁰ Abū l-Khayr ibn al-Ṭayyib’s refutation of the Pseudo-Ghazālī also employs the argument, as does a brief treatise on the Trinity by another Copto-Arab author, al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl.¹⁰¹ Al-Ṣafī’s half-brother, al-Mu’taman, would later incorporate sections of Ibn ‘Adī’s response to Abū ‘Īsā l-Warrāq’s refutation of the Trinity in his theological anthology, the *Kitāb Majmū uṣūl al-dīn*, which includes, among other things, the demonstration of God’s unity from self-intellection.¹⁰²

Before delving into ‘Abdīshō’s discussion of the matter, let us turn briefly to Avicenna’s conception of divine self-reflexivity, which might help us understand ‘Abdīshō’s own use of the theory. For Avicenna, God’s ability to perceive His own essence was proof of his immateriality and uniqueness. He makes this argument in several places throughout his works,¹⁰³ but we will take as an example his *al-Risālā al-‘arshiyya fī tawḥīd Allāh wa-ṣifātihi* (‘The Throne Epistle of God’s Unity and Attributes’). He begins with the Aristotelian premise that knowledge is defined as the occurrence (*ḥuṣūl*) of an idea ‘free from the veil of corporeity’ (*mujarradat^{an} ‘an ghawāsh al-jusmāniyya*).¹⁰⁴ Since God is incorporeal, and His essence is never absent from himself (*lā taghību ‘anhu dhātuhu*), it follows that He must

⁹⁹ M. Allard and Gérard Troupeau (ed. and tr.), *Epître sur l’unité et la trinité; traité sur l’intellect; fragment sur l’âme* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1962), 54-58 (FT), 59-61 (AT).

¹⁰⁰ ‘Amr ibn Mattā, *Kitāb al-majdal fī l-istibṣār wa-jadal*, Ms. Paris arab. 190, 64b-65a; Ibn Jarīr, *Kitāb al-murshid*, 10a-10b.

¹⁰¹ Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Maqāla fī l-Radd ‘alā l-muslimīn*, 176-177; Samir Khalil Samir (ed. and tr.), *al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl: chapitres brefs sur le Trinité et l’Incarnation* (PO 42, fasc. 3; Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), ch. 5, §8. Cf. Platti, ‘Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī and his Refutation of al-Warrāq,’ 190.

¹⁰² Al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl, *Fī l-ṣifāt al-ilāhiyya*, in *Majmū‘*, ch. 18, §§3-4 (quoting Aristotle’s *De Anima* and Alexander of Aphrodisias).

¹⁰³ See, for example, Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, 2:115-20, 3:53, 281-285; idem, *Najāt*, 278-279; Badawī, *Arisṭū ‘inda al-‘Arab*, 105 (Avicenna’s commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima*).

¹⁰⁴ Abū al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī ibn Sīnā, *Majmū‘ al-Shaykh al-Ra’īs* (Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-Uthmāniyya, 745/1935), *risāla* no. 4, 8; Arthur J. Arberry, tr., *Avicenna on Theology* (London: John Murray, 1951) 33.

know by virtue of Himself (*‘ālim bi-dhātihi*) rather than through any intermediary.¹⁰⁵ Avicenna characterises these modes of reflexivity in God as Knowledge, Knowing, and Knowable (*‘ilm wa-‘ālim wa-ma‘lūm*).¹⁰⁶ Thus, His being knowledge, knowing, and knowable are ‘one thing’ (*shay’ wāhid*).¹⁰⁷

‘Abdīshō’ expounds his theory of divine self-knowledge in similar terms. In the *Pearl* he sets out the Aristotelian premise that anything devoid of matter is defined as ‘intellect’ according to unspecified ‘ancients’ (*qaddmāyē*).¹⁰⁸ He then elaborates on this basic premise by stating that intellect (*hawnā*) is external to matter (*mbarryā d-men hōlē*) and its concomitants (*u-naqqīpwātāh*). Because its essence is always revealed (*glītā ‘āmīnā’īt*) to itself, this intellect must be knowing (*hākem*) and must know by virtue of itself (*yāda ‘yātēh*).¹⁰⁹ This argument is expounded in much the same way in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, though in far greater detail. Having offered proofs of God’s existence from His effects (outlined in the previous section), ‘Abdīshō’ offers a second path to knowledge of God’s unicity: ‘by enquiring whether a relatum (*munāsaba*) [exists] between Him and His essence that necessitates an insight into Him?’ (*an nanḏura hal baynahu wa-bayna dhātihi munāsabat^{un} yūjibu l-niḏr fīhī*). His response is as follows:

It has already been established that the Divine Essence [*al-dhāt al-ilāhiyya*], in addition to existing, is abstract and simple [*mujarradat^{un} wa-basīṭat^{un}*]. Every immaterial thing in the language of the ancients [*bi-lughat al-awā’īl*] is called ‘intellect’ [*aql*], because of its knowledge by virtue of itself [*li-‘ilmīhi bi-dhātihi*] and the intellect it possesses. Since every abstract thing is self-intellecting [*‘aql dhātahu*], insofar as its essence is revealed to itself [*min haythu annā dhātahu munkashifa li-dhātihi*], it is never far removed from its immateriality [*lā*

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Sīnā, *Majmū’*, no. 4, 8; Arberry, 33.

¹⁰⁶ Avicenna acknowledges that these three modes can be known by other terms, most likely ‘*aql*, ‘*āqil*, *ma ‘qūl*, which he more commonly employs in other works. See above n. 103.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Sīnā, *Majmū’*, no. 4, 8; Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology*, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 1028b8-32.

¹⁰⁹ *Pearl*, 33

tughību ‘*anhā abad^{am} li-tajarrudihi*]. Since its essence has an object of intellect [*ma‘qūl*], it is necessary that there exist in the essence of the Almighty Creator three modes [*aḥwāl*] and that they be the Intellect [*‘aql*] from Himself; the Intellector (‘*āqil*) from Himself; and the Intelligible [*ma‘qūl*] from Himself. It is not possible for there to exist in Him in this relatum [*munāsaba*] more than these three; neither is there a fourth nor is it possible to limit them [*inḥiṣārūhā*] to less than three, due to the concomitance [*luzūm*] of one’s existence on the other.¹¹⁰

Although ‘*Abdīshō*’ does not indicate a source, it should be said that the above passage is a closely-worded reproduction of a discussion of divine unity by the Baghdad peripatetic Ibn Zur‘a, a Christian member of Yaḥyā ibn ‘*Adī*’s circle.¹¹¹ While it is uncertain whether ‘*Abdīshō*’ accessed this work directly or through an intermediary source, the occurrence of Ibn Zur‘a’s argument in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* attests to the enduring importance of the pre-Avicennian Christian peripatetic school in our author’s apologetic scheme.¹¹²

As to ‘*Abdīshō*’s remaining works, proof of God’s unity from His self-reflexivity are surprisingly absent in the *Farā’id* but emerges in the *Khuṭba*. Once again the argument runs: God is pure intellect due to His externality from matter and its concomitants (*li-tajarrudihi ‘an al-hayūlā wa-lawāzimihā*); thus He must possess states of Intellect, Intellector, and

¹¹⁰ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 37a-37b.

¹¹¹ Compare Abū ‘*Alī* ‘*Īsā* ibn Iṣḥāq ibn Zur‘a, *Fī ma‘ānin sa‘alahu ‘anhā ba‘du ikhwānihi*, in *Vingt traités*, 7-19, here 8-9: ‘[...] *wa-huwa an nanzura hal baynahu wa-bayna dhātihi munāsibat^{am} yujibu l-nizr fihī? Wa-wajadnā l-amr qad taqarrara ma‘a taqrīrihi ‘alā annahu mawjūd^{am} ḥakīm^{am} fa-ma‘nāhu annahu yastaḥiqqu ism al-‘aql li-‘ilmihī bi-sā’ir al-mawjūdāt wa-‘aqlihī lahā, wa-li’anna dhātahu min al-dhawāt al-mawjūda mā takūnu ma‘qūlat^{am}, fa-ṣāra ‘aql^{am} qad ‘aqala dhātahu wa-ṣāra ma‘qūl^{am} li-dhātihi, fa-lazīma li-dhālika an tūjada li-dhātihi thalāthat aḥwāl...*’ with *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 37a-37b: *wa-ammā l-wajh al-thānī min al-nazar fī amrihī ta‘ālā, wa-huwa an nanzura hal baynahu wa-bayna dhātihi munāsabat^{am} tūjibu al-nazar fihī? Fa-yajrī ḥākīdhā: innā l-dhāt al-ilāhiyya ta‘ālā qad taqarrara, ma‘a annahā mawjūdāt^{am}, annahā basīṭat^{am} wa-mujarradat^{am}, wa-kullu mujarrad^{am} summīyā bi-lughat al-awā’il ‘aql^{am}, li-‘ilmihī bi-dhātihi wa-‘aqlihī lahā. Li-annā kulla mujarrad^{am} ‘āqil^{am} dhātahu, min ḥaythu anna dhātahu munkashifat^{am} l-dhātihi lā tughību ‘anhā abad^{am} li-tajarrudihi, fa-innā dhātahu ma‘qūla lahu, wajaba an yūjada li-l-Bārī’ ta‘ālā thalāthat aḥwāl...?’*

¹¹² Of the three manuscripts employed in Paul Sbath’s edition, the oldest dates to the 13th century (Ms. Aleppo, Fondation Georges et Mathilde Salem Ar. 237 / Sbath 1039), other than which little is known; see Sbath, *al-Fihris*, 1:12; Francisco del Río Sánchez, *Manuscripts de la Fondation Georges et Mathilde Salem (Alep, Syrie)* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2008), ix. A further two 14th century manuscripts of Egyptian provenance (Mss. Paris ar. 172 and 173) are listed by Troupeau, *Manuscripts*, 1:146-150.

Intelligible.¹¹³ However, in all of his theological works examined here, ‘Abdīshō’s engagement with the issue of God’s knowledge is somewhat limited in its scope. Avicenna’s discussion of a Necessary Being opened up many questions for later thinkers—most notable of these involved the range of God’s knowledge. Against Aristotle who postulated the existence of a Prime Mover who can know only Himself, Avicenna held that since God is pure intellect, he must be able to know things other than Himself. However, while this knowledge includes universals (*kulliyāt*), it must necessarily exclude particulars (*juz’iyyāt*). And since the latter is bound by matter, knowledge of them would presuppose sensory faculties and changeability that cannot apply to a transcendent being.¹¹⁴ This thesis provoked a powerful reaction from al-Ghazālī, who affirmed that God’s omniscience necessarily entails knowledge of both universals and particulars—a position taken up by subsequent Islamic theologians such as al-Rāzī and al-‘Allāmā al-Ḥillī (d. 1325).¹¹⁵ This question is also addressed by Bar Hebraeus, whose discussion of God’s ability to perceive Himself leads him to an affirmation of God’s knowledge of both universals (*kullānāyē*) and particulars (*mnātāyē*).¹¹⁶ The same can be said of al-Mu’taman ibn al-‘Assāl, who explicitly refers to Avicenna’s denial of God’s knowledge of particulars.¹¹⁷

For ‘Abdīshō the discussion of divine self-knowledge serves an entirely different and somewhat narrower purpose: to introduce the reader to a discussion about God’s hypostases (of which more will be said below). Once establishing God’s ability to intellect Himself in the *Pearl*, he concludes that He must exist as a triadic emanation of Intellect (*hawnā*), Wise

¹¹³ *Khutba*, 121.

¹¹⁴ For succinct summaries of this argument, see Michael E. Marmura, ‘Some Aspects of Avicenna’s Theory of God’s Knowledge of Particulars,’ *JAOS* 82, no. 3 (1962): 299-312, Kevin Lim, ‘God’s Knowledge of Particulars: Avicenna, Maimonides, and Gersonides,’ *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 5 (2009): 75–98, here 76-83.

¹¹⁵ On the views of these two thinkers on the subject of God’s knowledge, see Binyamin Abrahamov, ‘Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on God’s Knowledge of the Particulars,’ *Oriens* 33 (1992): 133-155 and Sabine Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-‘Allāmā al-Ḥillī (726/1325)* (Berlin: Schwarz, 1991), 192-193.

¹¹⁶ Graffin, *Le Candélabre: troisième base*, 520 (ST), 521 (FT), 522, 524 (ST), 523, 525 (FT).

¹¹⁷ Ibn al-‘Assāl, *Fī dhāt al-bāri*, §§ 73-94.

(*hakkīm*), and Living (*hayyā*), which are then defined as ‘properties’ (*dīlāyātā*) and ‘hypostases’ (*qnōmē*).¹¹⁸ These, in turn, are revealed to be the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, since the second is generated (*’etbrī*) by the first, while the third proceeds (*nāpōqā*) from the first, their unity being comparable to the ‘the sun being one in its sphericity, radiance, and heat.’¹¹⁹ The *Uṣūl al-dīn* employs a similar logic, arguing that the Father generates the son on account of the Intelligible generated from the Intellect (*li-tawallud minhā*), while the Spirit proceeds from (*khārij ’an*) the Father just as the Intelligible proceeds from the Intellect.¹²⁰ The apologetic function of this explanation is highly significant, since in order to defend Christianity from the charge of idolatry while affirming three hypostases in the Godhead, it was necessary to demonstrate that the three states were identical in essence but differentiated in function—or in this case, that the Sonship of the Trinity differed from the Father in terms of procession and generation, despite their consubstantiality. ‘Abdīshō’ develops these arguments in far greater detail in his discussion of the Trinitarian hypostases as attributes, to which we now turn.

3.4 The Attribute Apology

Having addressed two ways in which ‘Abdīshō’ argues for God as a united and incorporeal First Cause, we can now examine his attribute apology. There are admittedly differences in the ways in which this apology is expressed between his Syriac and Arabic works. What might be translated as ‘attribute’ in English, for example, does not appear in the *Pearl*; the closest term that we find approaching it is ‘property’ (*dīlāyātā*), which we have already encountered. The meanings ‘attribute’ and ‘property’ in Arabic, on the other hand are

¹¹⁸ This section of the *Pearl* is revisited and analysed in closer detail below.

¹¹⁹ *Pearl*, ٧-٨, with quotations from Heb 1:3 and 1 Cor 1:24.

¹²⁰ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 36a.

somewhat separate in definition though semantically related. As we shall see in this section, ‘Abdīshō’s terminological distinctions are far more developed in his Arabic writings, due mainly to the central role of the attribute apology in Christian-Muslim apologetics. Yet the aims of his Syriac and Arabic writings remain the same: to reassure his Christian readers that the Trinity they espouse does not constitute a form of tritheism.

Christian theologians living under Muslim rule since early Islamic times were faced with the task of expressing a Trinitarian doctrine that could safeguard the concept of three consubstantial hypostases from Muslim accusations of idolatry. One way of doing this was formulating ways of explaining how God’s attributes related to His essence—an issue that also confronted Muslim *mutakallimūn* at a very early stage.¹²¹ For Christians in the opening centuries of the ‘Abbāsīd era, one way of representing this relationship was by classifying the hypostases as ‘attributes’ (*ṣifāt*) and ‘properties’ (*khawāṣṣ*) of a single substance (*jawhar*), though corresponding terms can also be traced back to the Church Fathers.¹²² As we shall see in this section, ‘Abdīshō’s discussion of the divine attributes departs little from earlier strategies, and is limited in its engagement with non-Christian views on the subject, despite the fact that much of his Trinitarian theology was written to counter external criticisms. Nevertheless, in line with earlier Christian apologists, ‘Abdīshō’ frames his attribute apology in the language and literary forms—if not the ideas—of the philosophical *kalām* of his day, in order to make a case for the reasonableness of the Trinity and its intrinsic monotheism.

¹²¹ See Richard M. Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes: The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Mu‘tazila in the Classical Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), 8-38.

¹²² Harry Wolfson (‘The Muslim Attributes and the Christian Trinity,’ *HTR* 49, no. 1 [1956]: 1-18, here 7) traces Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s use of the term ‘attribute’ to Arabic translations of John of Damascus. See also Rachid Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes: 750-1050* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), 219, n. 197.

3.4.1. Attributes of Essence and Action

As mentioned in Section 3.2, Ibn Taymiyya accuses Christians of complicating the issue of God's attributes by failing to agree on which precisely they were. Indeed, the names of the attributes associated by medieval Arabic Christian writers with the divine essence were pluriform, ranging as they did from such attributes as Benevolence, Wisdom, and Power in some writers,¹²³ to Eternal, Living, and Word in others.¹²⁴ However, 'Abdīshō's representation of the divine attributes is consistent throughout his works, differing only between Syriac and Arabic. Although the *Pearl* speaks only of 'properties,' consubstantiality is nevertheless implied, since we are told that the Intellect, Wise, and Living are 'substantial properties in One' (*dīlāyāyā 'ōsiyātā b-ḥad*).¹²⁵ However, it is in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* and the *Farā'id* that a firmer distinction between various kinds of properties and attributes are made. One way in which 'Abdīshō achieves this is by dividing the divine attributes into attributes of essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*), which are shared in by none other than God and are limited to three, and attributes of action (*ṣifāt al-fi'l*), which are transitive (*tata'addā*, from the grammatical term *fi'l muta'addin*) and possess a relation to another essence (*iḍāfa ilā dhāt ukhrā*) and the essence from which the action emanates (*al-fi'l ṣādir 'anhā*).¹²⁶

Similar strategies were first formulated during earlier conversations with Muslims, a pertinent example of which comes from the author of the so-called *Apology of al-Kindī* (ca. 9th century), who distinguishes between a 'natural, essential attribute that He is always described by' (*ṣifa ṭibā'iyya dhātiyya lam yazal mawṣūf^{an} bihā*), such as Knowing and Wise,

¹²³ See, for example, Périer, 'Petits traités,' 119; Abū 'Alī ibn Ishāq Ibn Zur'a, 'Maqāla fī al-tathlīth,' in *Vingt traités*, 6-19, here 13; Troupeau, 'Le traité sur l'Unité et la Trinité,' 86-89; Ibn Jarīr, *Kitāb al-murshid*, 8a-8b.

¹²⁴ See, for example, the representation of these attributes in the first 'session' (*majlis*) of his disputation with the vizier Abū l-Qāsim al-Maghribī in Samir Khalil Samir (ed. and tr.), 'Entretien d'Elie de Nisibe avec les vizier Ibn 'Alī al-Maghribī, sur l'unité et la Trinité,' in *Islamochristiana* 5 (1979): 31-117, here §§93-139 and Elias ibn al-Muqlī, *Elie II (†1131) Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Gianmaria Gianazza, 2 vols (CEDRAC: Beirut, 2005), 1:185-187.

¹²⁵ *Pearl*, 33

¹²⁶ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 42b-43a; *Farā'id*, §§301-306.

on the one hand, and an ‘attribute of His action that is acquired (*ṣifa iktasabahā wa-hiya ṣifat fi’lihi*), such as Merciful and Compassionate, on the other.¹²⁷ Later writers would maintain this distinction in an attempt to explain the seemingly paradoxical notion that the three hypostases in the Trinity are attributes when both Muslims and Christians agree that God must possess more than these. As ‘Abdīshō’ would later do, Yaḥyā Ibn Jarīr (d. 1104) identifies ‘essential attributes’ (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) that form part of God’s immanence, such as Eternality, Wisdom, and Life, which are restricted to three (*maḥṣura fi thalāth*), and transitive attributes (*ṣifāt al-ta’addī*), which are predicated on a substance (*jawhar*) other than that enacting (*fā’il*) the action, and are multiple in number (*‘addūhā ‘adaḍ^{an} kathīr^{an}*).¹²⁸ The Coptic bishop Paul al-Būshī (d. ca. 1250) speaks at length about attributes of action (*ṣifāt fi’liyya*) that are relative (*muḍāfa*) to that being acted upon, and natural attributes (*ṣifāt ṭibā’iyya*) that pertain only to God.¹²⁹ Bar Hebraeus makes a similar distinction between essential attributes (*shummāhē ’ōsāyāyē*) and relative attributes (*shummāhē [’]hyānāyē*), the former including Wisdom and Life, which are negative (*‘apōpā’īqāyē*) since they cannot pertain to anything other than God, while the latter encompass such attributes as Able (*māṣē*) and Benevolent (*tābā*), which are in relation (*da-b-peḥmā*) to things that have been brought into existence.¹³⁰ Among the essential attributes in ‘Abdīshō’'s scheme, we have already encountered the Intellect, Intellector, and Intelligible, classified as such because only a truly incorporeal being may manifest these three emanatory states.¹³¹ Other classes of attributes in ‘Abdīshō’'s apology will now be addressed.

¹²⁷ George Tartar (ed.), ‘Ḥiwār islāmī-masīhī fī ‘ahd al-khalīfat al-Ma’ mūn (813-834): Risālat al-Hāshimī warisālat al-Kindī,’ (PhD diss., University of Social Sciences, Strasbourg, 1988), 49.

¹²⁸ Ibn Jarīr, *Kitāb al-murshid*, 7b-8a.

¹²⁹ Būlus al-Būshī, *Maqāla fī l-tathlīth wa-tajassud wa-ṣiḥḥat al-masīhiyya*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir (Beirut: CEDRAC, 1983), §29ff.

¹³⁰ Graffin, *Le Candélabre: troisième base*, 566 (ST), 567 (FT).

¹³¹ ‘Abdīshō’ explicitly equates these three with attributes in *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 42b; *Khuṭba*, 101.

Our author begins his attribute apology by asserting that God's benevolence (*jūd*) cannot be identical to the attribute of pre-existence (*qidam*), wisdom (*ḥikma*), and life (*ḥayāt*), because the former—benevolence—is 'the overflow all that is necessary, without compulsion, need [for compensation], or deficiency' (*ifādat kull mā yanbaghī min ghayr qahr wa-dā'iyyat ihtiyāj wa-faqr*).¹³² We may detect here an echo of Avicenna's Neoplatonic conception of God's benevolence as 'the overflow of what must be without compensation' (*al-jūd huwa ifādat mā yanbaghī bi-lā 'iwaḍ*)¹³³—in other words, God's benevolence is entirely free of external factors, motivations, or anything lacking in His essence, and it is through His benevolence that beings other than Himself attain their perfection.¹³⁴ Thus, in 'Abdīshō's scheme, God's being (*kawn*) benevolent must be different from his three essential attributes, since His benevolence is transitive (*muta'addā*), predicated as it is on an object of benevolence; whereas His being pre-existent, wise, and living is predicated on no other being than Himself, since He alone is eternal, a Necessary Being, and the source of His own wisdom and life.¹³⁵ Benevolence, therefore, is one of multiple (*mutakaththara*) attributes of action, which describe God as Creator (*al-Khāliq*), Enricher (*al-Rāziq*), Commander (*al-Āmir*), and Able (*al-Qādir*)—all of which emanate from His essence but are predicates of a contingent being. Thus 'Abdīshō' concludes later in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* that 'there is no Creator but for the created (*makhlūq*), no Commander but for the commanded (*ma'mūr*), and no Able but for the enabled (*maqḍūr*), et cetera.'¹³⁶

Having affirmed this distinction, 'Abdīshō' rejects the accusation of his non-Christian interlocutor that the doctrine of the Trinity implies multiplicity (*kathra*) in God's essence.

¹³² *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 39b.

¹³³ Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, 3:115-127. Cf. idem, *Shifā': Ilāhiyyāt*, bk. 6, ch. 5, §41.

¹³⁴ Rahim Acar, *Talking about God and Talking about Creation* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 142. For the tradition of Neoplatonica Arabica that underlies Avicenna's definition of God's generosity, see Peter Adamson, 'From the Necessary Existent to God,' in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 170-189, here 187-188.

¹³⁵ See *infra* for a more detailed discussion of these three essential attributes.

¹³⁶ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 42a. The *Farā'id*, §305 adds to this list 'the Forgiving' (*al-Ghaffār*).

Rather, he asserts, ‘Christians ascribe (*ya ʿīṭna*) unity to the essence and threeness (*tathlīth*) to the attributes.’¹³⁷ As has been mentioned, the threeness here solely pertains to the essential attributes, namely the Eternal, Wisdom, and Living in God—attributes which throughout ‘Abdīshō’s works of Arabic theology examined so far are ascribed to the hypostases of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹³⁸ To these we may add the brief opening statement of his *Profession*, which summarises the relationship between the Trinitarian hypostases and the unified essence as follows:

God—glorious and exalted—exists [*mawjūd*] and is a Necessary Being [*wājib al-wujūd*], the One [*al-Wāḥid*], the Real [*al-Ḥaqq*], and the Unique [*al-Fard*] who is untouched by multiplicity [*takhīr*] in any way, Pre-Existing [*qadīm*] in essence [*bi-l-dhāt*], Wise [*Ḥakīm*], and Living [*ḥayy*]. The Christians express the Pre-Existing in essence as the Father, because He is the reason [*sabab*], cause [*illa*], and agent [*fāʿil*] of all creation, and is anterior to it [*aqdam minhā*] in nature [*tabʿ*] and essence. They express the Wise through the Son, because wisdom is generated [*mutawallada*] from the essence of the Wise atemporally [*bi-lā zaman*], without separation [*mufāraqa*] and cessation [*muzāyala*]. And they express the Living as the Spirit, because He is Self-Subsistent [*qayyūm*] and the true [*ḥaqīqī*] Holy Spirit. This is the meaning [*maʿnā*] of their statement that God is three hypostases [*aqānīm*], one substance [*jawhar*], and one God. Thus He possesses unity [*waḥdāniyya*] in [*min qibal*] essence and threeness [*tathlīth*] in attributes.¹³⁹

Further on in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, ‘Abdīshō’ restates the premise that God possesses the attribute of pre-existence because He alone is a Necessary Being who created the universe *ex nihilo* (*min al-ʿadam*),¹⁴⁰ and that the attribution of life to Him is on account of His being the source of all life, including His own.¹⁴¹ However, it is the attribute of wisdom in God’s essence that

¹³⁷ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 39a-39b.

¹³⁸ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 42a; *Khuṭba*, 101; *Farāʿid*, §§317-329.

¹³⁹ *Profession*, §§1-10.

¹⁴⁰ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 39a-40b; *Farāʿid*, §312.

¹⁴¹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 41a; *Farāʿid*, §316.

receives more attention, at least in the *Pearl* and the *Uṣūl al-dīn*. The teleology we encountered in Section 2.3.1 is revisited in our author's discussion of divine wisdom. In the *Pearl* he guides his reader to look upon man 'as microcosm (*'almā z 'ūrā*) and epitome for the whole order of creation' as a certain witness to God's Wisdom.¹⁴² He takes this point further by stating:

That the world is arranged is revealed by the wondrous order [*tukkāsā tmīhā*] of the heavens, the planets, the elements, with all their productive powers, generating plants, trees, and the limbs of beasts and men [*haddāmē d-ḥayyiwātā wa-d-barnāshā*], the wondrous order of which surpasses the wisdom and knowledge of all created beings.¹⁴³

The argument is replicated in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, wherein 'Abdīshō' speaks of the teleological direction of God's Wisdom as follows:

It would be absurd for Him to be the giver of wisdom [*wāhib al-ḥikma*] and the creator of the wise and not be wise, to be the source [*mabda'*] of knowledge and innovator [*mubdi'*] of the learned and not be knowing. Thus He is Wise; how could he not be when [there exists] among his creations marvels of wisdom [*gharā'ib al-ḥikma*] that astounded the intellects of the learned and stupefied the minds of the contemplative, so that the ancient philosophers were moved to compose books on the wisdom of the creation of the heavens and earth [...], spoke of the benefits of limbs [*manāfi' al-a'dā'*] which if slightly impaired would be detrimental to four-legged creatures, birds, and humans, and marvelled at His providence [*ft' ināyatihī*] and guidance [*hidāyatihī*]?¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *Pearl*, 3

¹⁴³ *Pearl*, 3

¹⁴⁴ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 41a.

Once again, it is possible to argue here that ‘Abdīshō’ is negotiating theological common ground with hypothetical critics of the Trinity. As we observed earlier in this chapter, such things as micro- and macrocosmic theories of creation were rooted in Hellenistic and Patristic thought but were by no means the preserve of Christianity. Indeed, God’s wisdom in Syriac and Christian Arabic Trinitarian thought relates as much to God’s names as it does His attributes, and so it was not uncommon for Christian authors writing in Arabic to give their attribute apologies a Qur’ānic timbre so as to resonate with the divine names in Islam.¹⁴⁵ Ahmed El Shamsy has recently discussed the centrality of empiricist teleology in al-Ghazālī explanation of the divine names in the Qur’ān, whose inferences of divine wisdom from the physical world can be traced to Hellenistic precedents. To this effect, he frequently directs his reader to contemplate the earth as a ‘macrocosm’ of the human being, thus providing an indication of God’s order and purpose.¹⁴⁶

‘Abdīshō’'s discussion of the ‘usefulness of limbs’ further indicates a common source of teleology between Christianity and Islam which tends to speak of the physical world in terms of provision to living beings.¹⁴⁷ El Shamsy has also convincingly demonstrated Ghazālī’s indebtedness to the *De usu partium* (‘On the Usefulness of Limbs’) of Galen of Pergamum (d. 200 A.D.), which was widely known through an Arabic translation of Theodoret of Cyrillus’s (d. 457 A.D.) *De Providentia*¹⁴⁸—a work of which ‘Abdīshō’ was

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, Paul of Antioch and the author of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus*, who, having argued that the Trinitarian Word (equal to the Son) is attested in the Qur’ān, state that ‘these are attributes (*ṣifāt*) of the substance (*jawhar*) which are just like names (*asmā*’), and each one of the attributes is different from the other, and He is one God, one Creator.’ Khoury, *Paul d’Antioche*, §§31-32; Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, §§31-32.

¹⁴⁶ Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ ma’ānī asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, ed. Fadlou Shihadi (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1982), 152, cited by Ahmed El Shamsy, ‘Al-Ghazālī’s Teleology and the Galenic Tradition,’ in *Al-Ghazālī’s Rationalism and Its Influence: Papers on the Occasion of the 900th Anniversary of His Death in 1111*, ed. Frank Griffel (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). I am extremely grateful to Professor Al Shamsy for providing me with a draft of this chapter ahead of its publication.

¹⁴⁷ Shihadeh, *Existence of God*, 204.

¹⁴⁸ This work is thought to have been translated by the Christian Jibrīl Nūḥ al-Anbarī (fl. 850), although this version has been mistakenly attributed to Abū ‘Uthmān al-Jāhīz, perhaps due to the latter’s naturalist interests.

undoubtedly aware.¹⁴⁹ Avicenna and his commentator al-Ṭūsī would also accept as valid such providential signs of God’s wisdom, but as has been mentioned above, both authors considered metaphysical speculation as a surer and more accurate proof of God’s existence. In his presentation of teleological arguments for the existence of God, al-Rāzī also refers to the ‘benefit of limbs’ (*manāfi‘ al-a‘dā’*) to living beings and the wisdom (*iḥkām*) and precision (*itqān*) of the created order.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, the Twelver Shī‘ī theologian al-Ḥillī (d. 1325) refers to God’s well-wrought and perfect creations as proof of the reality of His attribute of knowing.¹⁵¹ As for Christian Arabic writers, a lengthy letter by Elias bar Shennāyā (d. 1046) discusses God’s existence and unicity in light of the marvels of the cosmos, as witnessed from the movement of the planets, the changing of the seasons, and the advantages to created beings—a discussion that eventually leads him to an affirmation of the world’s temporal creation and God’s triune nature.¹⁵² As ‘Abdīshō‘ would later do, Ibn Jarīr (d. 1104) mentions by name Galen and the *De Usu Partium* in relation to God’s attribute of Wisdom.¹⁵³ Among ‘Abdīshō‘’s Christian contemporaries, al-Mu‘taman ibn al-‘Assāl, on the authority of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, also mentions Galen and his *De Usu Partium* by name, this time in relation to God’s knowledge of particulars as evidenced by the traces (*āthār*) of His Wisdom in created beings.¹⁵⁴ Bar Hebraeus also cites God’s ‘marvellous works’ (*tmīhīn ‘bādāw[hy]*), as exemplified by the limbs of animals and humans, as proof of His uncontested knowledge.¹⁵⁵

El Shamsy, ‘Al Ghazālī’s Teleology.’ See also James E. Montgomery, *Al-Jāhīz: in Praise of Books* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2013), 277-318.

¹⁴⁹ For Theodoret’s work in ‘Abdīshō‘’s *Catalogue*, where it is listed as *da-mparnsānūtā*, see Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 3/1:40.

¹⁵⁰ Fakhr al-dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliyya min al-‘ilm al-ilāhiyy*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī Saqqā, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabiyy, 1987), 1:233, cited in Shihadeh, *The Existence of God*, 202.

¹⁵¹ See Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī*, 189-190.

¹⁵² Elias bar Shennāyā, *Risāla fī ḥudūth al-‘ālam wa-wahdāniyyat al-Khāliq wa-tathlīth al-aqānīm*, in *Vingt traités*, 75-103.

¹⁵³ Ibn Jarīr, *Kitāb al-murshid*, 7b.

¹⁵⁴ Ibn al-‘Assāl, *Fī dhāt al-bāri*, §38.

¹⁵⁵ Graffin, *Le Candélabre: troisième base*, 508 (ST), 509 (FT).

3.4.2 Attributes as Properties and Hypostases

After discussing divine attributes in his works, ‘Abdīshō’ elaborates a definition of the term ‘hypostasis.’ Nowhere in his systematic theology does he presume its meaning to be obvious. The Arabic term *uqnūm*, pl. *aqānīm*, is a loanword derived from the Syriac *qnōmā*, in turn a translation of the Greek *prosōpon*, person (synonymous with the Greek *hupostasis*).¹⁵⁶ Over a number of centuries leading up to ‘Abdīshō’'s lifetime, Arabic Christian apologists would gradually eschew the use of *ashkhāṣ* (‘persons’ or ‘individuals’) in Trinitarian discourse, due to anxieties about Muslim polemicists seizing on this definition as a sure sign of Christianity’s idolatry. Instead, such definitions of *uqnūm* as ‘attribute’ and ‘property’ became increasingly more common.¹⁵⁷ It is generally this principle that underlies ‘Abdīshō’'s explanation of the term. In line with earlier Christian apologists, our author aims at a definition that adequately conveys the hypostases’ consubstantiality, which, in Syriac and Christian Arabic apologies in the centuries leading to up to the 13th, often involved an Aristotelian classification of existent beings that affirmed God as a substance¹⁵⁸—a

¹⁵⁶ The term ‘*qnōmā*’ in its Christological context—for which it has a different meaning—will be discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁵⁷ On the gradual avoidance of the term *shakhṣ*, see Landron, *Attitudes*, 182-184, Holmberg, ‘‘Person’ in the Trinitarian Doctrine,’ 303-305, Sydney H. Griffith, ‘The Concept of *al-uqnūm* in ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s Apology for the Doctrine of the Trinity,’ in *Actes du premier congrès international d’études arabes chrétiennes (Goslar, septembre 1980)*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1982) 169-191. A notable exception, however, comes from the Trinitarian discourse of Ibn al-Faḍl (Noble and Trieger, *Byzantine Theology in Antioch*, 398-399 [AT] 409 [ET]), in which he affirms the three hypostases as individuals (*ashkhāṣ*), a position expressed by the Nestorian writer Israel of Kashkar (d. 872) from whom Ibn al-Faḍl borrows. *Ibid.*, 380; cf. Bo Holmberg, ‘The Trinitarian Terminology of Israel of Kashkar (d. 872),’ *ARAM* 3, no. 1-2 (1991): 53-82, here 62-63.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, Joseph Amar (ed. and tr.), *Dionysius Bar Ṣalīb. A Response to the Arabs* (CSCO 614-15; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 20 (ST), 19-20 (ET); Paul Houry (ed. and tr.), *Paul d’Antioche, évêque melkite de Sidon, XIIe s.* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1922), ch. 3, §§55-58; Graffin, *Le Candélabre: troisième base*, 564 (ST), 565; Ebied and Thomas, *Christian-Muslim Polemic*, §§55-58; al-Mu’taman ibn al-‘Assāl, *al-Aqānīm al-thalāth*, in *Majmū’*, ch. 19, §§60-120. Earlier examples include al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān*, 51-52; idem, *al-Masā’il wa-l-ajwiba*, 162-164; Périer, ‘Petits traités,’ 22, 44; Gérard Troupeau, ed. and tr., ‘Le traité sur les hypostases et la substance de ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṭayyib,’ in *Mélanges dédiés à F.M. Pereija* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 640-644, reprinted in *Études sur le christianisme arabe au Moyen Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), VIII; Samir, ‘Entretien d’Élie de Nisibe,’ 88-91; Ibn al-Muqlī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 1:188-191.

classification which Muslim polemicists like al-Qarāfi had become well aware of, as we noted in Section 2.2.

The *Pearl* launches its discussion of the hypostases by making the following distinction:

Everything that exists is either an accident [*gedshā*] or a substance [*'ōsīyā*]. But the Self-Existent [*yātē d- 'ītyā*] can in no way be susceptible [*lā mḡabblānāytā*] to accidents. Therefore these must be [con]substantial properties [*dīlāyātā 'ōsīyāyāyā*], and are on this account called 'hypostases' [*qnōmē*], and not accidental forces [*ḡaylē gedshāyē*], for they do not cause change [*shuḡlāpē*] or multiplicity [*saggīyūt menyānā*] in the [divine] essence [*'ītyā*].¹⁵⁹

The *Uṣūl al-dīn* expounds a similar and more elaborate distinction, this time with explicit reference to its scholastic foundations:

Aristotle has demonstrated in the *Book of Categories* [*Kitāb qāṭāghūriyyās*] that everything that exists is either a substance [*jawhar*] or an accident [*'arad*], and each one is either particular [*khāṣṣ*] or general [*'āmm*].¹⁶⁰ These three attributes cannot be accidents in God's Essence [*dhāt*], because He is not susceptible [*laysa qābil^{am}*] to accidents and changeability [*taghayyur*]. Nor are the three general substances [*jawāhir 'āmmiyya*], since we have already established His true Oneness. They are therefore [con]substantial properties [*khawāṣṣ jawhariyya*] of God's essence, because the Christians call the essence 'substance' since the substance is, according to them, an expression of that which exists by virtue of itself [*al-mawjūd al-qā'im bi-nafsihi*]. They refer to the immanent attributes [*al-ṣifāt allatī lā tata'addā*]¹⁶¹ as properties. And they designate as hypostases [*aqānīm*] the entirety of what is understood [*mafḡūm*] of the essence

¹⁵⁹ *Pearl*, ٧

¹⁶⁰ 'Abdīshō' appears to be referring to Aristotle's four-part classification of existents in *Categories*, ch. 5 2a11-4a22, which are a) 'primary substance;' b) 'universal individual' (or 'secondary substance'); c) 'particular accident;' and d) 'general accident.'

¹⁶¹ I.e. essential attributes, as outlined in the previous section.

with attributes. Thus, when the terms [*musammayāt*] are sound, there can be no doubt concerning them.¹⁶²

Similarly, having established that God is a unitary being who created the world, ‘Abdīshō‘ goes on to assert in his *Farā’id*:

It remains that He is subsistent by virtue of Himself [*qā’im bi-nafsihi*]. All that is subsistent by virtue of itself is called, in the language of the ancients, ‘substance’ [*jawhar*]. The Creator of the World, therefore, is a substance because he is subsistent by virtue of Himself and this single substance possesses three essential attributes [*thalāth ṣifāt dhātiyya*] [...] Since everything that exists is either an accident [‘*araḍ*] or substance [*jawhar*], these three attributes [*ṣifāt*] of God—may He be exalted—are not accidental to the essence [*a’rāḍ^m li-l-dhātihi*]. Neither are they multiple and separable [*mutafarraqa*] substances nor different or identical essences. Rather, they are [con]substantial properties and thus are designated ‘hypostases’ [*aqānīman*]. Because the reality [*ḥaqīqa*] of the hypostasis takes [*akhdh*] an essential attribute with what is described [*mawṣūf*] of the subsistent by virtue of Himself, it is possible for us to say that the Creator—may He be exalted—is one substance and three hypostases.¹⁶³

This standard definition of God as substance, therefore, runs more or less consistently throughout ‘Abdīshō‘’s theological works. The definition of substance as that which subsists by virtue of itself presented something of a stumbling block in Christian-Muslim discussions about divine unity. This was particularly the case among Ash‘arite theologians, who understood *jawhar* as an atom of created reality rather than something subsistent in itself (as noted in Section 2.2). God’s being a substance was similarly problematic for Muslim

¹⁶² *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 41a-41b. The last sentence (*idhā l-musammiyyāt saḥīḥat^m, lā rayba fihā*) calls to mind an expression employed by the author of the *Radd al-jamīl* and echoed by Abū l-Khayr ibn al-Ṭayyib in his refutation that runs: *fa-idhā saḥḥat al-ma‘ānī fa-lā mushāḥata mā yaṣṭaliḥu l-muṣṭalahūn*; see Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Maqāla fī radd ‘alā l-muslimīn*, 178. Cf. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1972), 467.

¹⁶³ *Farā’id*, §§288-290, 332-337. The *Khuṭba*, 121 simply tells us that the three attributes through ‘expressed as hypostases’ (*mu‘abbara bi-l-aqānīm*).

Avicennians. In line with Aristotle, Avicenna held a substance (*jawhar*) to be that which is not in a subject (*fī mawḍūʿ*), as opposed to an accident. However, he further argued that God cannot be a substance since substantiality, like accidentality, is a category that can only apply to contingent beings.¹⁶⁴ The contentiousness of the definition is also reflected among Christian apologists prior to ‘Abdīshō’, most notably Elias bar Shennāyā. During his dialogue with the Muslim vizier Abū l-Qāsim al-Maghribī in 1027, Bar Shennāyā invokes the Aristotelian distinction between various kinds of existents in order to demonstrate how God is subsistent by virtue of Himself (*qāʿim bi-naḥsihi*) and therefore a *jawhar*.¹⁶⁵ Elsewhere, however, Bar Shennāyā applies the same definition to the term *kiyān* (a loanword in Arabic from the Syriac *kyānā* meaning ‘nature’), explaining—polemically it would seem—that Muslims use the term *jawhar* since no other word in the Arabic language signifies *qāʿim bi-naḥsihi*, obliging Syriac Christians (*al-suryān*) to use *kiyān* in its place.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, subsequent generations of Christian apologists would continue to favour the term *jawhar*, perhaps due to the fact that the consubstantiality of the three hypostases was a matter of Nicene dogma, leading Christians to insist on the term ‘substance’ in spite of Muslim censor.¹⁶⁷ A pertinent example of this insistence from ‘Abdīshō’'s lifetime comes from Bar Hebraeus’s *Candelabrum*. Here, the maphrian points out that by substance (*ʿōsīya*) Muslims mean something that possesses a body and occupies a space; however, he affirms—on the authority of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite—that the correct understanding of the word is

¹⁶⁴ On this definition of *jawhar*, see Muhammad Legenhausen, ‘Ibn Sina’s Argument Against God’s Being a Substance,’ in *Substance and Attribute: Western and Islamic Traditions in Dialogue*, ed. Christian Kanzian and Muhammad Legenhausen (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2007), 117-143, esp. 120. For a representative definition of *jawhar* by an Avicennian Muslim thinker in ‘Abdīshō’'s time, see al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd*, 87.

¹⁶⁵ Samir, ‘Entretien d’Élie de Nisibe,’ §§47-52.

¹⁶⁶ Samir Khalil Samir, ‘Un traité nouveau d’Élie de Nisibe sur le sens des mots *kiyān* et *ilāh*,’ in *PdIO* 14 (1987): 109-153, here §§32-39.

¹⁶⁷ I owe my thoughts on this matter to Sam Noble; see also his ‘The Doctrine of God’s Unity according to ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl al-Anṭākī,’ *PdIO* 37 (2012): 291-301, here 301. It is also worth noting that, in the East Syrian context, a commentary on the Syriac Nicene Creed attributed to Elias of Nisibis renders the Syriac *ʿōsīyā* as *jawhar*. *Tafsīr al-amāna l-kabīra*, Ms. Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 562, 2b-3a.

‘that which is not in a subject (*b-hāw d-sīm*) and subsists by virtue of itself (*qā’ēm l-yātēh*),’ and so is rightfully applied to God by Christians.¹⁶⁸

Returning now to ‘Abdīshō’'s discussion of hypostases, we encounter in his *Uṣūl al-dīn* an objection from his interlocutor: if Christians mean by hypostases the Intellect, Intellector, and Intelligible, on the one hand, and Eternal, Wise and Living, on the other, then why call them the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? So far in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* (and the *Farā'id*, for that matter), references to scripture and Christian authors have been absent, in favour of rational arguments for the Trinity. It is here, however, that scriptural and patristic authority is explicitly invoked:

These [names for the hypostases] come from the Lord of revelation [*rabb al-sharī'a*], wherein there are two benefits: the first is that He intended these names [*asmā'*] as a symbol [*ramz*] for such concepts [*ma'ānī*], so that¹⁶⁹ they are not trampled upon [*lā tudhālu 'alayhā*] by the ignorant [*juhḥāl*] and those who must be guarded from the divine sciences [*al-'ulūm al-ilāhiyya*]. Instead, the ignorant learn them through a triad [*tathlīth*] of aforementioned symbols rather than literally [*lā min qibal ḥaqīqat al-ma'nā*], since revealing the Divine Mysteries to everyone is forbidden. Concerning this our Lord inspired by His word the following: ‘Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces’ [Mt 7:6]. [Also,] the blessed Theologian [i.e. Gregory Nazianzen] wrote an exceptional treatise on how not all men at all times may speak of divine matters [*al-umūr al-ilāhiyya*].

Secondly the Holy Dionysius mentioned that when divine matters are expressed through rare terminology [*bi-l-'ibārāt al-gharā'ib*], those seeking [their] meanings [*ḥaqā'iq*] are motivated to examine them and their causes, and inquire in a way that verifies [*yaṣiḥḥu*] the expressions through those metaphors [*isti'ārāt*]. On that account, the seekers' knowledge becomes certain and reliable, and [so] there is no doubt concerning them due to the intensity of their

¹⁶⁸ Joseph Khoury (ed. and tr.), *Le candélabre du sanctuaire de Gregoire Abou'Faradj dit Barhebraeus: Quatrieme Base: de l'Incarnation* (PO 31, fasc. 1; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1964), 122 (ST), 123 (FT).

¹⁶⁹ Reading *ḥattā fo fa-*.

examination. For these reasons, the Lord of revelation refrained from explicitly expressing those concepts, which were [instead only] alluded to [*dhukirat ilā kināyā ‘anhā*].¹⁷⁰

The above passage is almost word-for-word reproduction from the treatise by Ibn Zur‘a’s treatise on divine self-intellection mentioned in Section 2.3.2.¹⁷¹ As John Watt has pointed out, Ibn Zur‘a ‘drew on Dionysius to answer why the Scriptures spoke of ‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit if the reality embedded in the these expressions was the Mind, Intelligizing and Thought’¹⁷² of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Λ 9.¹⁷³ In a similar vein, it is possible that ‘Abdīshō‘ wished to buttress his justification of the Trinity in scriptural and patristic proofs in order to illustrate the compatibility of rational exposition with revelation. This may at first appear at odds with the intellectual common ground he usually seeks with non-Muslims in his apologetic works; nonetheless, it was equally important for apologists like ‘Abdīshō‘ to demonstrate to his Christian readers that the challenges posed to the doctrine of the Trinity could be resolved by ‘internal’ authorities. As Andreas Juckel has argued, the Greek and Syriac Church Fathers provided authors of the so-called Syriac Renaissance a frame of reference that was culturally autonomous from the intellectual world of Islam.¹⁷⁴ David

¹⁷⁰ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 43b.

¹⁷¹ Ibn Zur‘a, *Fī ma‘ānin*, in *Vingt traités*, 10-11: ‘*Innamā fa‘alū hādhā li-yarmuzū bihi ilā tilkā l-ma‘ānin ḥattā lā dudhāla wa-yaqifa ‘alayhā l-juhḥāl, wa-man yanbaghī an tuṣāna l-‘ilm al-sharīfa l-ilāhiyya ‘anhum, wa-an yakūna wuqūfuhu ‘alayhā min jihat al-tamthīl al-marmūz ilayhi, lā min qibal al-ma‘nā l-ḥaqīqī. Fa-innā l-mufāwaḍa fī l-umūr al-ilāhiyya wa-kashfihā li-kulli aḥadⁱⁿ manhiyyⁱⁿ ‘anhu. Ammā awwalⁱⁿ fa-inna sayyidanā l-masīḥ innamā nahā bi-qawlihi: “lā taṭruḥū l-quḍs li-l-kilāb wa-lā talqū jawāhirakum quddāma l-khanāzīr, li-allā tatawaṭṭa‘uhā bi-aḥlāfihā wa-ta‘ūdu fa-tu‘qirakum.” ‘An hādhā l-ma‘nā l-tāhir l-Thāwulūghus waḍa‘a maqālatⁱⁿ mufridatⁱⁿ fī annahu laysa fī kulli zamānⁱⁿ wa-lā li-kulli aḥadⁱⁿ yanbaghī an nufāwaḍa fī l-umūr al-ilāhiyya. fa-li-hādhāhi l-‘illā ramazū ilā qawlihim ‘adalū ‘an al-taṣrīḥi bihi ilā l-kināyā ‘anhu. Wa-li-‘illa ukhrā qad dhakarāhā l-tāhir l-fādīl Diyūnūsīs wa-hiya anna l-umūr l-ilāhiyya idhā ‘abbara ‘anhā bi-l-‘ibārāt al-qarība [sic] minhā, da‘ā l-dhālika l-nāzīrīn al-bāḥithīn ‘an al-ḥaqq ilā l-baḥth ‘anhā wa-‘an asbābihā wa-muṭālaba bi-l-wajhⁱⁿ alladhī taṣīḥū l-‘ibāra ‘anhā bi-tilkā isti‘ārāt, fa-yaṣīru li-dhālika ‘ilm l-bāḥithīn ‘anhā yaqīnⁱⁿ wa-yabqā lā rayba fīhi li-shiddat baḥthihim wa-taftīshihim.*

¹⁷² I.e. what has been referred to in this study as Intellect, Intellector, and Intelligible.

¹⁷³ John W. Watt, ‘From Sergius to Mattā: Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius in the Syriac Tradition,’ in *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: the Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*, ed. Josef Lössl and John W. Watt (Farnham: Ashgate, 1988), 239-257, here 256.

¹⁷⁴ Andreas Juckel, ‘La réception des Pères grecs pendant la «Renaissance» syriaque: renaissance – inculturation – identité,’ in *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque*, ed. Andrea Schmidt and Dominique Gonnet (Paris:

Taylor has also shown that although Bar Hebraeus may have at times followed the structure and reasoning of such Muslim thinkers as al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī, it was more often the Church Fathers to whom he openly acknowledged indebtedness, as we have already seen in the case of his use of Pseudo-Dionysius.¹⁷⁵ An earlier example from the 13th century is an apology by Paul of Antioch in which he explicitly sets out to refute claims that the Christians are idolators (*mushrikīn*) who cannot demonstrate otherwise by citing authorities of their own (*lā ḥujjata lanā nubarhinu bihā ‘an nufūsinā*); in response to this challenge, he adduces a number of arguments from Gregory Nazienzen, whom he refers to as *al-mutakallim fī l-lāhūt* (presumably a calque of *theologos*).¹⁷⁶

Whereas ‘Abdīshō’s Arabic works make minimal use scriptural evidence for the Trinity (aside from the above instance), the *Pearl’s* discussion of God’s triune nature concludes with a clearer, albeit brief appeal to revelation. Here, our author cites three passages in support of a biblically attested Trinitarian doctrine. The first is Gen 1.26: ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.’ This verse was often read by earlier East Syrian exegetes as an allusion to the Trinity, on the basis of God’s use of the first person plural, indicating both a unicity of substance and a plurality of hypostases.¹⁷⁷ Our author, however, opts for a different interpretation, basing the occurrence of the letter *nūn* three times

Geuthner, 2007), 89-125, here 108-113. For the frequency of citations from the Greek fathers in the third ‘base’ of Bar Hebraeus’s, see *ibid.*, 117-120.

¹⁷⁵ David G.K. Taylor, ‘L’importance des Pères de l’Eglise dans l’oeuvre spéculative de Barhebraeus,’ *PdIO* 33 (2008): 63-83, here 78-83.

¹⁷⁶ Al-Anṭākī, ‘Risāla ‘aqliyya,’ 35.

¹⁷⁷ Addai Scher (ed.), *Theodorus bar Kōnī: Liber scholiorum*, 2 vols. (CSCO 55; Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1910-12), 1:114 (Seert recension); Robert Hespel and René Draguet (tr.), *Théodore bar Kōnī: Livres des scolies (recension de Séert)*, 2 vols. (CSCO 187; Leuven: Peeters, 1981), 1:127-128; Robert Hespel (ed.), *Théodore bar Kōnī (recension d’Urmiah)* (CSCO 193; Leuven: Peeters, 1983), 1; Jacques Vosté and Ceslas van den Eynde, *Commentaire d’Išo‘dad de Merv sur l’Ancien Testament. I. Génèse* (CSCO 126, 156; Leuven: L. Durbecq, 1950), 45-49 (ST), 47-59 (FT); Lucas van Rompay (ed. and tr.), *Le Commentaire dur Génèse-Exode 9,32 du Manuscrit (olim) Diyarbakir 22* (CSCO 483-4; Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 20-21 (ST), 27-29 FT); Abū l-Faraj ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Commentaire sur la Génèse*, ed. and tr. J.C.J. Sanders (CSCO 274-5; Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1967), 18 (AT); 17-18 (FT).

in the verse as a signification of the Trinity.¹⁷⁸ ‘Abdīshō’'s source for this allegorical reading is unclear to me; it is likely that it could derive from a non-exegetical source or even his own interpretation (considering that he is known to have composed a now lost commentary of the Old and New Testament),¹⁷⁹ though this can only be speculation. As for his other proof texts, ‘Abdīshō’ supplies Is 6:3 (‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty’), asserting—this time in line with known exegetical traditions—that the threefold occurrence of ‘holy’ in the Trisagion hymn indicates three hypostases, while the occurrence of ‘Lord’ in the verse attests to the one divine substance.¹⁸⁰ Finally, our author invokes Ps. 33.6 (‘By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth’), explaining that the ‘word of the Lord’ is as an allusion to the Son and the ‘breath of His mouth’ the Spirit—an interpretation that does not occur in standard works of East Syrian exegesis but appears in the *Awṣar rāzē* (‘Storehouse of Mysteries’), Bar Hebraeus’s influential Bible commentary, which, on the authority of Symmachus, connects the verse to the Sonship in the Trinity.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, the psalm is supplied (without gloss) in the disputation of Timothy I and the *Apology of al-Kindī* as proof for the Trinity’s attestation in scripture.¹⁸² It is perhaps owing to Ps. 33.6’s appearance in such disputational texts that ‘Abdīshō’ saw fit to include the verse in his own apology.

¹⁷⁸ Pearl, Δ

¹⁷⁹ Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 3/1:325.

¹⁸⁰ Scher, *Liber scholiorum (Seert)*, 1:261; Hespel and Draguet, *Scholies (Séert)*, 230; Hespel, *Scholies (Urmiah)*, 71; Īshō’ dād of Merv, *Commentaire d’Īšo’ dad de Merv sur l’Ancien Testament. IV. Isaïe et les Douze*, ed. and tr. (CSCO 303-4; Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1969), 10-13 (ST), 11-12 (FT).

¹⁸¹ Gregory John Bar Hebraeus, *Ktābā d-awṣar rāzē: pushshāqā d-kullāh ṣūrat ktāb hānāw dēn l-’atiqtā kēt u-da-ḥdatā* (Glane/Losser: Dayrā d-Mār Aprēm d-Hōlandā, 2003), 177, col. a.

¹⁸² Martin Heimgartner (ed. and tr.), *Timotheos I., ostsyrischer Patriarch: Disputation mit dem Kalifen al-Mahdī* (CSCO 631-2; Leuven: Peeters, 2011), §16,50; Tartar, ‘Hiwār islāmiyy-masīhiyy,’ 54. The proof text, however, does not appear in the corresponding section of the Arabic recension of Timothy’s disputation; see Hans Putman (ed. and tr.), *L’église et l’islam sous Timothée I (780-823): étude sur l’église nestorienne au temps des premiers Abbāsides: avec nouvelle édition et traduction du Dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdī* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1975), §§38-71.

3.5 Conclusions

In the foregoing we have discussed the various ways in which ‘Abdīshō‘ sets out a coherent exposition of a central Christian tenet. Key to his apologetic scheme has been an affirmation of the Trinity’s intrinsic monotheism at almost every turn. On the surface, this strategy—in which catechesis and apologia are inextricably intertwined—offers little more than a synthesis of works by earlier apologists. Yet we must also bear in mind that the theological attacks launched by mainly non-Muslims were themselves far from original, having persisted for centuries until ‘Abdīshō‘’s time.¹⁸³ This led him and others to present the fundamentals of the Trinity in terms that had long become naturalised within Syriac and Arabic Christian circles by the 13th century, most notably the distinction between essential and transitive attributes, the argument for God’s triune nature from self-intellection, and the Aristotelian conception of God’s substantiality. In this respect, ‘Abdīshō‘ differs little from the other Christian apologists of his age who deemed these methods as vital for maintaining Nicene orthodoxy. Moreover, like other apologists of the 13th century, ‘Abdīshō‘ adduces arguments from the Church Fathers in order to demonstrate to his co-religionists that it was possible to vindicate Christian doctrine without entirely resorting to non-Christian theological models. This does not mean that he transmits his Church’s Trinitarian doctrine in a passive way: one can detect an Avicennian footprint in his thought, particularly in the language he employs to describe God as a Necessary and Benevolent Being, though admittedly, he does not exploit Avicenna’s famous metaphysical argument for God’s existence, favouring instead teleological proofs. A reason for this may be his non-association with the broader intellectual circles of his day. As such, his Trinitarian exposition cannot be as easily contemporised as Bar Hebraeus’s, but is nevertheless reflective of the philosophised *kalām* of the day.

¹⁸³ In addition to Section 3.2 of this chapter, we have also discussed this aspect of Muslim polemics in Chapter One, Section 1.6.

‘Abdīshō’s approaches to Trinitarian dogma in his Syriac and Arabic works are strikingly similar: both are intended to reassure an internal readership that the issues surrounding the dogma could be resolved on Christianity’s own terms as well as through a theological and philosophical idiom shared with non-Christians. In the following chapter we will see that this picture becomes rather more complicated in ‘Abdīshō’s treatment of Christology, where we begin to see greater divergences in his method of exposition.

CHAPTER FOUR

Debating Natures and Persons: ‘Abdīshō’'s Contribution to Christology

4.1. Background to ‘Abdīshō’'s Christology

Closely connected to themes of God’s unity is the issue of Christology, that is, matters relating to the Incarnation of God as Christ, and the function and operation of the latter’s divine and human natures. Our main sources for ‘Abdīshō’'s Christological thought are his *Pearl*, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, *Farā'id*, and *Profession*, though we also encounter Christological themes in his *Paradise of Eden* and *Khuṭba*. Considered by Muslims to be a prophet and holy man, the figure of Jesus occupied a significant place in Islamic thought by the 13th century.¹ However, rejections of Christ’s divinity in the Qur’ān—exemplified by such verses as Q. 5:116 (‘Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to people, “Take me and my mother as gods alongside God”?’)—led Muslim theologians to argue that Christians professed a form of idolatry (*shirk*).² By ‘Abdīshō’'s lifetime, the persistence of these accusations was met with a centuries-old effort by Christian apologists to argue for the reasonableness of the Incarnation, its intrinsic monotheism, and its logical necessity.³

¹ For a complete inventory of verses mentioning Jesus in the Qur’ān, see Neal Robinson, ‘Jesus,’ *EQ* (2003): 7-20, here 7. The typological framework for Jesus’s prophethood in the Qur’ān is discussed by Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 10-11. For collections of sayings in medieval Sūfī texts, particularly by Ghazzālī, Abū Nu‘aym Iṣbahānī, and Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), see *ibid.*, 38-43 and 144-207.

² Beaumont, *Christology*, 1-11; *idem*, ‘The Christologies of Abū Qurra, Abū Rā’īta and ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī and Muslim Response,’ in *The Routledge Reader in Muslim-Christian Relations*, ed. Mona Siddiqui (London: Routledge, 2013), 49-64, here 58-62. For further affirmations of Christ’s humanity and prophethood by medieval Muslim authors, see Khoury, *Matériaux*, V.B.3:177ff.

³ For brief and incomplete overviews of apologies from Abū Qurra to ‘Abdīshō’, see Landron, *Attitudes*; Harald Suermann, ‘The Rational Defence of Christianity within the Context of Islamic Monotheism,’ in *The Myriad Christ: Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology*, ed. T. Merrigan and J. Haers (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 273-286. For more detailed surveys to the 12th century, see Beaumont, *Christology*, 28-171 and Khoury, *Matériaux*, VII.A.2.3.2:289-335.

As is the case in his Trinitarian thought, the basic structure of ‘Abdīshō’s Christology derives from doctrines first developed in Late Antiquity. By the advent of Islam in the 7th century, the Church of the East had developed a distinct identity based on its Christology, which owed much of its formation to the great Antiochene exegete Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428), the Great Interpreter (*mpashqānā rabbā*) of the East Syrian tradition. Central to Theodore’s scheme was that there were two natures (*physeis*) in the Incarnate Christ’s single person (*prosōpon*), and that the divine nature had united with the Assumed Man (*lephtheis anthropos*) from Mary, in a process of indwelling (*enoikesis*) and conjunction (*synapheia*).⁴ Inspired by Theodore’s teachings, Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, upheld the title ‘Mother of Christ’ (*Christokos*) for the Virgin, in opposition to that of ‘Mother of God’ (*Theotokos*) insisted upon by Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, who is credited with a ‘Word-Flesh’ Christology whereby the two pre-incarnate natures became a single nature.⁵ The dispute reached a head at the Council of Ephesus in 431, resulting in the deposition and exile of Nestorius to the Great Oasis in Egypt. Theodore of Mopsuestia’s teachings, however, would find their way into the Syriac-speaking Persian Church of the Sassanian Empire in the 5th century, along with those of Nestorius in the 6th. As a consequence, the Persian Church came to profess two natures (*kyānē*) in Christ’s single person (*paršopā*).⁶ By the early 7th century, it also espoused the doctrine that there subsisted in Christ’s Person two *qnōmē* (sing.

⁴ Alfred Norris, *Manhood and Christ: A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London: A&C Black, 1993), 301-309; Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, tr. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox, 1964), 457-463; Frederick G. Mcleod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (London: Routledge, 2009), 34ff.

⁵ For a general overview of the controversy at Ephesus and its attendant doctrines, see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 301-309; Mcleod, *Theodore*, 310ff.

⁶ On the complex and pluriform transmission of the writings of Theodore and Nestorius—counted among the ‘Greek Fathers’ (*malpānē yāwnāyē*) of the Church of the East—into the East Syrian milieu of Iraq, see André Halleux, ‘La christologie de Martyrios-Sahdona dans l’évolution,’ *OCP* 23 (1957): 5-32; D.S. Wallis-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch: A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 117-150; Adam Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: the School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 113-125; Louise Abramowski, ‘Martyrios-Sahdona and Dissent in the Church of the East,’ in *Controverses des Chrétiens dans l’Iran Sassanide*, ed. Christelle Jullien (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 13-27; Gerrit Reinink, ‘Tradition and the Formation of the ‘Nestorian’ Identity in Sixth- to Seventh Century Iraq,’ *CHRC* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 217-250.

qnōmā), that is, the individual manifestations of the two natures: God the Word for the divine and Christ the Man for the human.⁷ By making such distinctions between the natures and *qnōmē*, the Church of the East sought to safeguard its Christology against Theopaschitism (the belief that God's divinity suffered with Christ's humanity)—an error of which it accused its Chalcedonian Melkite and Miaphysite Jacobite rivals.⁸

In the previous chapter, we observed a uniformity of style and approach in 'Abdīshō's Trinitarian dogma. By comparison, his Christological strategies are more varied. A section of this chapter is devoted to the Syriac *Pearl's* treatment of intra-Christian differences, which adopts what I refer to as a 'church historical approach' to Christology. As I will show, Christology occupied a central space in Syriac and Arabic Christian articulations of what Thomas Sizgorich has termed a 'primordial past,' which shaped a religious community's identity as well as an understanding of past events that served contemporary purposes.⁹ In the case of *Pearl*, doctrines concerning the divine and human natures of Christ are embedded in formative narratives of the pain and trauma of Ephesus. A further aspect of this primordial past involves the issue of the Church of the East's apostolic foundations, through which our

⁷ For definitions, see Geevarghese Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, 1982), 87-89; Sebastian P. Brock, 'The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials,' in *Aksum, Thyateira: A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira and Great Britain*, ed. George Dion Dragas (London: Thyateira House, 1985), 39-142, here 131, reprinted in *Studies in Syriac Literature: History, Literature and Theology* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992), XII; idem, 'The Church of the East in the Sassanian Empire up to the Sixth Century and its Absence from the Councils of the Roman Empire,' in *Syriac Dialogue: First Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition* (Vienna: Pro Oriente, 1994), 69-87, here 82.

I have intentionally left the term *qnōmā* untranslated due to its contentious and often misunderstood sense in non-East Syrian theologians, among whom the word has historically been read as 'hypostasis' or 'person,' resulting in the erroneous belief that the Nestorians profess two persons in Christ. (For a more detailed discussion of this misunderstanding, as addressed by 'Abdīshō', see Section 4.2.1). Among East Syrian writers, however, the Syriac *qnōmā* (lit. 'self') signified the properties and operations of each of the divine and human natures of the incarnated Christ—and should not be confused with the persons or hypostases of God's Trinity. The avoidance of the translation of *qnōmā* as 'person' or 'hypostases' was first proposed in modern scholarship by Geevarghese Chediath (*The Christology of Mar Babai*, 89), and later upheld by Sebastian Brock ('The Christology of the Church of the East,' 131 and 'The Church of the East in the Sassanian Empire,' 82).

⁸ Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai*, 71ff; Brock, 'The Christology of the Church of the East,' 131-132.

⁹ Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 8ff. Sizgorich adapts the term from Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 255-310.

author—in line with earlier East Syrian writers—argues that his community’s Christology was handed down by the Apostles and later vindicated by Nestorius at Ephesus.

Other sections of ‘Abdīshō’s *Pearl* have a more anti-Muslim apologetic intent, as does the bulk of his Arabic Christology. But even his attacks against other Christians—particularly in his Arabic Christology—hint at the presence of a Muslim interlocutor. Although the three main Christological positions first began to emerge in the 5th century, the Arab conquests of the 7th ushered in an age of Christological disputes that became increasingly linked to anti-Muslim apologetics. For to defend the reasonableness of the Incarnation to Muslim critics, apologists deemed it necessary to draw attention to the errors of their Christian adversaries, thus laying bare inter-confessional rivalries and attempts to gain Muslim approval, often in the form of official investiture and patronage.¹⁰ Although ‘Abdīshō’s Christology inherits these strategies, his later works refrain from attacking rival confessions, despite remaining faithful to the East Syrian Christological tradition. In one work our author even disavows the age-old rivalry between them, dismissing this tendency as mere ‘partisanship’ (*‘aṣabiyya*), thereby reflecting some of the ecumenical¹¹ tendencies of Christian writers of the period, most notably Bar Hebraeus.¹²

As to more direct responses to Muslim—and to a lesser extent Jewish—criticisms of the Incarnation, ‘Abdīshō’ follows a ‘reason-revelation’ scheme whereby he advances Biblical proof-texts alongside more scholastic arguments. In doing so, he attempts to educate

¹⁰ For the struggle of Christian factions under ‘Abbāsīd rule to be seen as the ‘true representatives’ of Christianity under Islam, see Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs from the Earliest Time to the Present* 9th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1968), 354-355, cited in Beaumont, *Christology*, 102. See also Michael G. Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 344ff.

¹¹ I hold the term ‘ecumenical’ to be distinct from ‘ecumenism,’ which refers more generally to a movement that took root in Europe in the first half of the 20th century; see Sebastian S.P. Brock, ‘Ecumenical Dialogue,’ *GEDSH*, 134-135.

¹² Wolfgang Hage, ‘Ecumenical Aspects of Barhebraeus’ Christology,’ *The Harp* 4, no. 1-3 (1991): 103-109; Herman G.B. Teule, ‘It Is Not Right to Call Ourselves Orthodox and the Others Heretics: Ecumenical Attitudes in the Jacobite Church in the Time of the Crusades,’ in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context - Contacts - Confrontations: Acta of the Congress Held at Hernen Castle in May 1993, II*, ed. K.N. Cigaar and Herman G.B. Teule (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 13-27. For East Syrian ecumenical attitudes towards the Latin Church, see *idem*, ‘Saint Louis and the East Syrians: the Dream of a Terrestrial Empire,’ in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context - Contacts - Confrontations: Acta of the congress Held at Hernen Castle in May 1993, III*, eds. K.N. Cigaar and Herman G.B. Teule (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 202-222.

a Christian readership about the fundamentals of the Incarnation while convincing hypothetical critics of the soundness of the doctrine. In addition to Biblical testimonies, our author in one instance provides Qur'ānic passages as proof-texts for Jesus's divinity, thus following in the footsteps of earlier Christian apologists who attempted to find a Christological framework within the scripture of an opposing faith.¹³ As for the scholastic dimension of his Christology, he inherits the philosophical language of earlier apologists, namely, the Christian Aristotelians of Baghdad and those associated with them, whose legacies, as we have observed in the previous chapter, are very much alive in 'Abdīshō's writings. Direct indebtedness to Islamic systems of philosophy and rational theology, on the other hand, are once again limited. Rather, 'Abdīshō develops and fine tunes a rich corpus of Christology in order to meet the current needs of an internal audience. While this synthesis might present little in the way of 'original' thought, a close reading once again reveals the intrinsically apologetic function of his theology and its importance to the Church's catechetical activities.

4.2. Some Notable Muslim and Jewish Objections to the Incarnation

As in the previous chapter, it is first necessary to first identify some salient criticisms that Christian apologists frequently faced in the two centuries or so leading up to 'Abdīshō's lifetime. Where the Incarnation is concerned, the main points of contention that had arisen by the late 13th century were as follows. Firstly, that Christ's divinity is nowhere attested by revelation, while any claim to the contrary was the result of wilful misinterpretation.

¹³ Syriac and Arabic Christian encounters with the Qur'ān and Qur'ānic themes occurred as early as the early 8th century, most notably in the form of the *Legend of Sergius-Bahīrā*, a Syriac—and later Christian Arabic—narrative in which a Nestorian monk reveals to the young Muḥammad various Qur'ānic passages that are reinterpreted to conform to Christian doctrines and practices, such as the Trinity, Incarnation, and prayer to the east. See Barbara Roggema, 'A Christian Reading of the Qur'ān: The Legend of Sergius-Bahīrā and its use of Qur'ān and *sīrā*,' in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 57-73. Subsequent Christian encounters are addressed in Section 4.4.3.

Secondly was the association of the Incarnation with Islamic heresies, namely *ḥulūliyya* (incarnationism¹⁴) and *tashbīh* (anthropomorphism), which were considered *odia theologica* among Muslim theologians,¹⁴ thus suggesting that anti-Christian polemics were intended more for internal theological exposition than inter-religious dialogue. And thirdly, that the very notion of incarnation defied the rules of the physical and metaphysical world, and thus constituted an ontological fallacy. But before proceeding, it is necessary to point out that it was common for Muslim polemicists to outline the three main Christological positions—Jacobite, Melkite, and Nestorian—before refuting each of them. Due to limitations of space, however, I have chosen to limit my discussion to their critique of Nestorian Christology, especially since it is these that ‘Abdīshō’ is most keen to address.

The anonymous author of the *Radd al-jamīl* (ca. 12th century) begins his attack on the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation with a critique of Christian salvation history. Here, he reports that all Christians agree that humankind was punished for Adam’s disobedience (*bi-sabab ‘iṣyān abīhim Ādam*), which necessitated the sending of the prophets and, ultimately, God’s generous offering (*fidā’ karīm*) of Himself in order to redeem them. In order to achieve this goal, He incarnated Himself by uniting with Jesus’s humanity (*ittahada bi-nāsūt ‘Īsā*)—a claim the author rejects as demeaning to God’s transcendent majesty.¹⁵ The author then goes on to discuss the three classical Christological positions: the Jacobites profess a uniting of mingling (*imtizāj*), and mixture (*ikhtilāf*) in the manner of body and soul, resulting in a third

¹⁴ Carl W. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Islam* (New York: SUNY Press, 1985), 122; Daniel Gimaret, *Dieu à l’image de l’homme: les anthropomorphismes de la sunna et leur interprétation par les théologiens* (Paris: Cerf, 1997).

¹⁵ [Pseudo-]al-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl*, 40. Gabriel Said Reynolds (‘The Ends of the *al-Radd al-jamīl* and its Portrayal of Christian Sects,’ *Islamochristiana* 25 [1999]: 45-65, here 55) believes that the *al-Radd al-jamīl*’s discussion of Christian salvation history is proof of the author’s former Christian faith, since the topic is ‘exceedingly rare’ in earlier anti-Christian polemics, though he cites Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) and al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153) as exceptions. While the topic might be rare, the *al-Radd al-jamīl* is by no means the first Muslim refutation of Christianity to address it; it is found, for example, in a work by the Zaydī imām al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 860), *Kitāb al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā*, ed. Imām Ḥanafī ‘Abdallah (Cairo: Dār al-Afāq al-‘Arabiyya, 1420/2000), 37-39, as well as the polemics of subsequent writers, namely, al-Qarāfī and Ibn Taymiyya, on whom more below. Furthermore, the related Christian doctrine of divine deception was equally known to these writers and others, as will be addressed in Ch. 5 of this thesis.

Being possessing all the qualities of God and Man;¹⁶ the Melkites claim that the union resulted in two separate and distinct realities, i.e. natures (*ḥaqīqatayni mutamayyizatayni*), each retaining their divine and human properties in a single *qunūm* (from the Syr. *qnōmā*; also rendered *uqnūm* in Arabic) that united with the universal human (*al-insān al-kullī*);¹⁷ and the Nestorians adhere to a uniting of volition (*mashī'a*).¹⁸ In refutation of the Nestorians, the author asserts that, if by a 'uniting of volition' they mean that Christ's volition was subject to God, he would, then, be no different from the prophets and saints. But if the Christians mean that Christ's volition was *identical* to God's, then they would be contradicting verses from the Gospels, namely, when Christ prayed to God before the Crucifixion in Mk 14:36 or when he called out to God in Mk 16:34.¹⁹

Another way in which the author of the *al-Radd al-jamīl* attacks the Christians' belief in Christ's divinity is by comparing it to the Muslim heresy of *ḥulūliyya*. In particular, he likens Christians to Ṣūfīs who were condemned for ecstatic utterances (*shatḥiyyāt*) of their unification with God, citing as examples Mansūr al-Ḥallāj (executed 922), who declared himself 'the Real' (*anā l-Ḥāqq*), and Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 846 or 875), who pronounced such statements as 'How great is my affair' (*mā a 'zam sha 'nī*).²⁰ It is noteworthy that the same argument is employed several times by al-Ghazālī throughout his authentic works, which repeatedly warn against the excesses of ecstatic Ṣūfīs who claim *ḥulūl* upon reaching a

¹⁶ [Pseudo-]al-Ghazālī, *al-Radd*, 26. For the analogy of the body's uniting with the soul in Jacobite thought, cf. Joseph Lebon, *Le monophysisme sévérien: étude historique, littéraire et théologique sur la résistance monophysite au concile de Chalcédoine jusqu'à la constitution de l'église jacobite* (Louvain: Excudebat Josephus van Linthout, 1909), 189.

¹⁷ [Pseudo-]al-Ghazālī, *al-Radd*, 32. This notion of a hypostatic union of the divine nature with all of humanity (i.e. the Universal Man), rather than a particular human, is a classical Chalcedonian formulation. It occurs in a Christological exposition by the Melkite 'Abdallah b. Faḍl al-Anṭākī (d. after 1052), and can be traced to the teachings of Maximus the Confessor (d. 662). See Noble and Treiger, 'Christian Arabic Theology,' 412, no. 26.

¹⁸ [Pseudo-]al-Ghazālī, *al-Radd*, 36. Gabriel Said Reynolds ('The Ends of the *al-Radd al-jamīl*') believes this union of volition to be a reference to monotheletism—the belief that there existed a single will in the Christ—and thus is a 'false interpretation of Nestorian Christology.' However, Reynolds does not seem to be aware that a uniting of volition is commonly discussed in medieval Arabic Christian Christological texts of Nestorian provenance, which speak of the mutual operation of the divine and human wills in Christ's person, as opposed to the prophets and saints whose will and volition were subordinate to God's. See below Section 4.3.2 for more on this issue.

¹⁹ [Pseudo-]al-Ghazālī, *al-Radd*, 37.

²⁰ [Pseudo-]al-Ghazālī, *al-Radd*, 38.

state of self-annihilation (*fanā'*), such that they are unable to distinguish the vision of the divine from their own human essence.²¹ In a further three passages al-Ghazālī explicitly compares the excesses of al-Ḥallāj and Bisṭāmī to the Christian doctrine of Incarnation, though this time by invoking what Alexander Treiger refers to as ‘mirror Christology.’²² According to this scheme, the gnostic receives genuine visions of the divine which appear as light reflected onto a polished mirror (*mir'āt majlūwa*), but is misinterpreted by them as *actual* union with God, much as the Christians believe about Christ.²³

The Ash'arite thinker Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) also affirms the impossibility of God's union and indwelling in created beings in his best-known dogmatic and philosophical works.²⁴ Only in his *al-Kitāb al-arba'in*, however, does he explicitly refer to the Christian doctrine. He begins by attacking a theory of *ḥulūl* that he ascribes to all Christians.²⁵ Here, al-Rāzī's critique is predicated on an atomistic conception of created reality, whereby indwelling is understood as the inherence of an accident (*'araḍ*) in a physical substrate

²¹ See, for example, Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 5 vols. (Cairo: al-Maktaba Tawfīqiyya, n.d.), 2:441, 3:556, 4:424; idem, *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badāwī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmīyah li-l-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1383/1964), 109-110; idem, *Mizān al-'amal*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1964), 207, cited and translated by Alexander Treiger, 'Al-Ghazālī's "Mirror Christology" and Its Possible East Syriac Sources,' *MusWor* 101 (2011): 698-713, here 700-701. See also Muhammad Abul Quasem, 'al-Ghazālī's evaluation of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī and his Disapproval of the Mystical Concepts of Union and Fusion,' *Asian Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (1993): 143-164.

²² Treiger, 'Al-Ghazālī's "Mirror Christology".'

²³ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 2:411, 3:556; idem, *al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ ma'ānī asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, ed. Fadlou Shehadi (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971), 116, quoted and translated in Treiger, 'al-Ghazālī's "Mirror Christology",' 702-703. Treiger demonstrates that al-Ghazālī's 'mirror Christology' has precedence in the writings of the 8th century East Syrian mystic John of Dalyāthā, who taught that the vision of God is reflected through the soul, like light in a polished mirror, and was accessible not only to Christ but also to all humans. *Ibid.*, 704-713.

²⁴ On these, see Muammer Iskenderoglu, 'Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī,' *CMR* 4 (2012): 61-65, here 62. It should be pointed out that the bulk of al-Rāzī's critique of Christianity is focused on the Incarnation, as opposed to the Trinity. As such, I have omitted him from my survey of Muslim polemicists in Chapter Three, Section 3.2.

²⁵ Although first developed by Theodore of Mopsuestia, the term is also found in non-East Syrian Christian Arabic writers. This is hardly surprising since the term appears in Jn 1:14 ('The Word became flesh and made Its dwelling among us') and is employed by John Chrysostom (d. 407), an important Church Father in all three Christological traditions. See Melvin Edward Lawrenz, 'The Christology of John Chrysostom' (PhD. diss., Marquette University, 1987), 199. The term is also employed by Theodore Abū Qurra (Constantin Bacha [ed.], *Mayāmīr Thāwdūrūs Abī Qurra usquf Ḥawrān: aqdam ta'lif 'arabī naṣrānī* [Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Fawā'id, 1904], 73) and the Copt Severus ibn al-Muqaffa' (Paul Chébli [ed. and tr.], *Réfutation d'Eutychius par Sévère Evêque d'Aschmounain (Le Livre des Conciles)* [PO 3, fasc. 2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1983], 189 and Murqus Girgis [ed.], *Kitāb al-durr al-thamīn fī ṭdāḥ al-dīn* [Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Jadīda, 1925], 115). The later Copto-Arab author Abū l-Barakāt ibn al-Kibr (d. 1324), however, rejects the term as heterodox. Louis Villecourt (ed. and tr.), *Livre de la lampe des ténèbres et de l'exposition (lumineuse) du service (de l'Église)* (PO 20, fasc. 4; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1929), 647.

(*maḥall*).²⁶ Accordingly, he reasons, if God were to inhere in something by necessity (*ma‘a wujūb an yaḥulla*), then either the temporal generation (*ḥudūth*) of a state (*ḥāl*) or the pre-existence (*qidam*) of a physical substrate (*maḥall*) would be implied.²⁷ Both are rejected on the grounds that a state is contingent (*muftaqir*) on a physical substrate in which to exist, in turn rendering the divine essence contingent on something other than Itself.²⁸ He then turns to the doctrine of uniting (*ittiḥād*), arguing that ‘if two definitive entities (*thābitayni*) unite, then they are two [in number], not one. If they cease to exist (‘*adamā*), then the result (*ḥāsil*) is something other than them (i.e. a *tertium quid*). If one remains and the other ceases to exist, then union is impossible, because the existent would not be the same as the non-existent (‘*ayn al-ma‘dūm*).’²⁹

Arguments against the Incarnation also occur in a disputation text attributed to al-Rāzī, in which the famous theologian debates with an unnamed Christian in Khwārazm. In reply to the claim that Christ is God, al-Rāzī makes the simple metaphysical distinction between God, a Necessary Being by virtue of Himself (*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi*), and Jesus, an individual man (*al-shakhṣ al-bashariyy*) subjected to a range of human experiences, such as living and dying, eating and drinking, childhood and adulthood, etc. Consequently, that which is temporally generated (*muḥdath*) cannot be pre-existing (*qadīm*), that which is subsistent (*muḥtāj*) cannot be self-subsistent (*ghani*), and that which is contingent (*mumkin*) cannot be

²⁶ Cf. al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, 281; Louis Massignon and Georges Anawati, ‘Ḥulūl.’ *EL* 3 (1966): 570-571; Shlomo Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, 25.

²⁶ al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, 281.

²⁷ al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-arba‘īn*, 1:114.

²⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-arba‘īn*, 1:114-115. Cf. idem, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-muta‘akkkhirīn min al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-ḥukamā’ wa-l-mutakallimīn*, ed. Ṭāhā ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf Sa‘d (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1404/1984), 225, in which a similar argument appears: ‘God does not unite (*lā ittaḥada*) with anything other than Him because, if two existents (*mawjūdayni*) remain at the time of union, then they are two, not one. And if they become two non-existents (*ma‘dūmayni*), then they have not united; rather, they have become non-existent and generated a *tertium quid* (*ḥadatha thālith*). If one becomes non-existent but the other remains, then they have not united, for the non-existent cannot unite with the existent.’ In his commentary on the *Muḥaṣṣal*, al-Ṭūsī points out that the doctrine of divine union and indwelling is professed by Christians and some Ṣūfīs (*ba‘ḍu ahl al-taṣawwuf*). Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-muḥaṣṣal: bi-inzīmām-i rasā’il va-favā’id-i kalāmī*, ed. ‘Abd Allah Nūrānī (Tehran: Silsilah-i Dānish-i Īrānī, 1359/1980), 260.

²⁹ Al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-arba‘īn*, 114-115. The Avicennan roots of this argument and its implications on Christian apologetics are explored in Section 4.4.3 of this chapter.

necessary (*wājib*).³⁰ Moreover, since God is neither body nor accident, his inherence in a created entity would be impossible. For if he were a body, His inherence in another would entail a plurality of His parts (*ikhṭilāf ajzā' ihi*); and if he were an accident, He would require a physical substrate (*maḥall*) in which to subsist. Al-Rāzī dismisses both propositions as absurd and sheer unbelief (*maḥḍ al-kufr*), since a unitary and transcendent being cannot logically fall under either of these categories.³¹

At this point in the disputation, it becomes clear that al-Rāzī's purpose is not solely to attack Christianity; by drawing attention to the Christian doctrine of Incarnation, al-Rāzī also polemicalises against various Islamic sects he deems equally objectionable. Thus his Christian opponent posits that some Muslims believe it possible for God to possess a body, citing as examples 'anthropomorphists' (*tawā'if mujassima mushabbiha*) who are inspired by instances in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* in which God occupies a throne and descends to earth every night.³² To these he adds Muslim groups which teach *ḥulūlī* doctrines, such as unnamed Shī'īs (*rafāwīḍ*) who believe that God indwelt Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn,³³ together with al-Ḥallāj and al-Bisṭāmī, who made ecstatic pronouncements of their

³⁰ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Munāẓara fī radd 'alā l-naṣārā*, ed. 'Abd al-Majīd al-Najjār (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986), 22-21.

³¹ al-Rāzī, *Munāẓara*, 24.

³² al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 31-36. Cf., for instance, Q. 2:255: 'His Throne (*kursiyuhu*) extends over the heavens and the earth;' 9:129: 'He is Lord of the Throne (*rabb al-'arsh al-'azīm*);' and 40:15: '[He is God], Owner of High Ranks and Degrees, the Owner of the Throne (*dhū l-'arsh*). See Cl. Huart and J. Sadan, 'Kursī,' *EL* 5 (1986): 509 and Jamal Elias, 'Throne,' *EQ* 5 (2006): 276-278. As for instances of God participating in the acts of ascent and descent, al-Rāzī's Christian opponent makes reference to Q. 17:19 ('And pray during the night an additional prayer for you; soon your Lord will raise you to a station of praise') and the prophetic *ḥadīth* (*Bukhārī* 3:1094): 'Our Lord ... comes every night down on the nearest Heaven to us when the last third of the night remains, saying: "Is there anyone to invoke Me, so that I may respond to invocation?"' Though the names of the anthropomorphist interpreters of these passages are not mentioned, it is likely that the *Munāẓara*'s Christian has in mind the Karrāmiyya, a sect which flourished in eastern and central Iran from the 9th century until the Mongol invasions, and which often occur in Muslim heresiographies (including one such work by al-Rāzī himself) as archetypical proponents of anthropomorphism. See Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal wa-l-niḥal*, ed. Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1413/1992), 99-105; 'Abd al-Qāhir ibn al-Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, ed. Philip K. Hitti (Cairo: Maṭba'at Hilāl, 1924), 131-132; Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Rāzī, *I'tiqādāt firaq al-muslimīn wa-l-mushrikīn*, ed. 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1402/1982), 28. Furthermore, al-Rāzī polemicalises against the Karrāmiyya in his *Muḥaṣṣal*, 228-231. See more generally Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme*, 76-89 (on the Throne of God), 90-102 (on God's descent).

³³ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓara*, 33. In his *I'tiqādāt*, 73, al-Rāzī simply states that the first Muslims to espouse the doctrine of *ḥulūl* were the Shī'īs, who claimed it regarding their imāms (*awwal man aẓhara ḥādḥahi l-maqāla fī*

divine union. Al-Rāzī simply responds that the anthropomorphists are little more than intellectual charlatans (*idda 'ū mashyakha min ghayr 'ilm*). As for *ḥulūlī* Šūfīs, he accuses them of deceiving Muslims by behaving in an ascetic manner (*'alā ṭarīq al-ṣiddīqīn*) while secretly desiring the favour of earthly rulers (*fī l-bāṭin ḥarīṣ^{um} 'alā ṣuḥbat mulūk wa-salāṭīn*).³⁴

Although written from a Jewish polemical perspective, Ibn Kammūna's (d. 1285) arguments against the Incarnation follow the pattern of earlier Muslim refutations of Christianity.³⁵ In conformity with such works, he outlines the Christological creeds of the three main sects: the Jacobites believe that the union (*ittiḥād*) of the Word with Jesus took place through the mingling (*imtizāj*) and mixture (*ikhtilāt*) of the two natures, resulting in a single nature (*jawhar wāḥid*); the Nestorians maintain that the Word 'made Christ's humanity a temple and clad Itself in his humanity' (*ja'alathu ḥaykal^{an} wa-iddara'athu iddirā^{an}*), resulting in two natures and two *uqnūm*;³⁶ and the Melkites believe the union to have taken place in the Universal Man (*al-insān al-kullī*), resulting in an incarnate Christ who was two in nature and one in *uqnūm*.³⁷ Ibn Kammūna rejects the notion that the divine and human natures could possibly unite, regardless of the fashion by which Christians claim this union to have occurred. To that effect, he makes a distinction between the categories of existent (*mawjūd*) and non-existent (*ma'dūm*): if two existents were to unite, the resulting quantity is two, not one, while the uniting of two non-existents would naturally result in a *tertium quid*;

l-islām al-raḥāwīd, fa-innahum idda 'ū l-ḥulūl fī l-ḥaqq a'immatihim). However, al-Baghdādī (*Farq*, 159) attests to a group named the Sharī'iyya, whose doctrine of *ḥulūl* most closely resembles that mentioned in al-Rāzī's *Munāzara*.

³⁴ Al-Rāzī, *Munāzara*, 46. To this end, al-Rāzī quotes the prophetic *ḥadīth* (*Muslim* 2:101-102): 'Whoever deceives us is not one of us' (*man ghashshanā fa-laysa minnā*).

³⁵ As Sydney Griffith (*The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 73-74) has observed this more generally in Ibn Kammūna and earlier Jewish critics of Christianity.

³⁶ Alluded to here is a typically East Syrian Christological formula, whereby temple and clothing metaphors are frequently employed to describe the manner in which the Incarnation occurred. See Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai*, 91-92 and Sebastian P. Brock, 'Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in the Syriac Tradition,' in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter, internationales Kolloquium, Eichstätt*, ed. Margot Schmidt (Regensburg: Pustet, 1982), 11-40.

³⁷ Ibn Kammūna, *Tanqīh*, 52-53.

and if an existent and a non-existent unite, only the former remains, thus no union has occurred.³⁸ Moreover, how, Ibn Kammūna asks, can the knowing essence (*al-dhāt al-‘ālima*) unite with a body that does not contain that essence? This would result in one of two errors: either that God’s knowledge possesses two carriers (*mawṣūfān*);³⁹ or God was not knowing at the time of the Incarnation and so needed a particulariser (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*) to endow Him with knowledge.⁴⁰ Ibn Kammūna dismisses both statements as precluding Christ from divinity.

In response to the Nestorians in particular, Ibn Kammūna argues that if the divine nature were pre-existent (*qadīm*) and the human nature temporally created (*muḥdath*), then the object of worship (*ma‘būd*) would be as much created as it is pre-existing, insofar as Christians claim Christ to be the sum of both. Since monotheistic worship must be reserved for the pre-existent (*yajib an tatamaḥḥada l-‘ibāda li-l-qadīm*), Christ’s humanity must be excluded, thus contradicting what the Christians themselves say about Christ’s divinity.⁴¹ Ibn Kammūna also takes issue with the claim that the Incarnation was motivated by God’s desire to save mankind, since it implies that He was incapable (*lam yastaṭi‘*) of doing so until He descended to earth.⁴² As for humankind’s redemption from sin, Ibn Kammūna points out that Satan continued to misguide humankind after Christ’s advent, as attested by the slaying and humiliation of the Apostles.⁴³

Similarly, the author of the *Adillat al-waḥdāniyya* (ca. first half of the 13th century) attacks the Incarnation’s broader salvation narrative, charging Christians with maintaining that an almighty and transcendent deity failed to save humankind (*ya‘juzu ‘alā khalāṣihim*) until he descended from Heaven and incarnated Himself in a created body.⁴⁴ Al-Qarāfī also

³⁸ Ibn Kammūna, *Tanqīh*, 54-55. Cf. al-Rāzī’s rejection of union, discussed above.

³⁹ To this end Ibn Kammūna employs the syllogism: ‘Zayd cannot be in Baghdad if his knowing is in Kurasān.’

⁴⁰ Ibn Kammūna, *Tanqīh*, 55.

⁴¹ Ibn Kammūna, *Tanqīh*, 56-57.

⁴² Cf. the Pseudo-Ghazālī’s rejection of salvation history (discussed above).

⁴³ Ibn Kammūna, *Tanqīh*, 57. Cf. this criticism by Muslim authors in no. 24 above.

⁴⁴ [Pseudo-]Al-Qarāfī, *Adilla*, 100.

accuses Christians of degrading God's omnipotence in his *al-Ajwiba al-fākhira*. Here, he asserts that God, owing to His eternal majesty, guides humankind by sending prophets; what, then, could have motivated Him to descend into the depths of human existence? Such a descent would entail impregnating Mary, subsisting in her womb while plunged in placenta (*labatha bi-l-arḥām munghasam^{an} fī mashīma*), until given birth to, raised as a human child and, finally, crucified as an adult—all of which indicates that the Christians worship a wretched God (*ilāh miskīn*).⁴⁵

Further on in the same work, Al-Qarāfi directs his polemic against his interlocutor's New Testament proofs, most notably Jn 20:17 ('I am ascending to my Father and your Father; my God and your God'), a verse that had become a major point of contention in Christological discussions between Muslims and Christians by the 13th century.⁴⁶ He accuses Christians of wilfully neglecting the clauses 'your Father' and 'your God' in Jn 20:17. For al-Qarāfi, the passage is clear proof that Jesus did not share in God's divinity; rather, he possessed a god whom he worshiped and who guided him (*lahu ilāha ya 'budahu wa-rabba yudabbirahu*).⁴⁷ According to al-Qarāfi, Christ's use of 'my Father' is simply a metaphor (*majāz*), for in Jn 1:13, the Jews are referred to as 'Children of God,' who he interprets as those whom God favoured, as opposed to literal sons of God. He supplies further support for this reading from Mt 12:46-50, in which Christ declares all who follow the will of his Father to be his mothers and brothers. And yet, al-Qarāfi concludes, Christians fail to grasp the simple meaning of this metaphor and instead insist that Christ possessed a divine nature.⁴⁸

Opposition to the Incarnation is no less forceful in the polemical works of the Damascene scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d 1328). In his *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, he addresses the claim

⁴⁵ Al-Qarāfi, *Ajwiba*, 293.

⁴⁶ See Mark Beaumont, 'Muslim Readings of John's Gospel in the 'Abbasid Period, *IC-MR* 19, no. 2 (2011): 179-197, with focus on al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm, Abū Muḥammad ibn Ḥazm, and the author of the *al-Radd al-jamīl*.

⁴⁷ Al-Qarāfi, *Ajwiba*, 289-290.

⁴⁸ Al-Qarāfi, *Ajwiba*, 291.

in the *Letter from the People of Cyprus* that God never spoke to humankind except from behind a veil (*illā min warā' hijāb*), according to what it says in Qur'ān;⁴⁹ and since subtle substances (*laṭā'if*) can only be manifested through solid forms (*kathā'if*), it was necessary for Him to appear as Jesus in order to address humankind.⁵⁰ In reply, Ibn Taymiyya reasserts his opposition to the Trinitarian theology of Yahyā ibn 'Adī (discussed in the previous chapter) by stating that, if Christians mean to say that the Word is a divine attribute, then this would be false, since an attribute does not subsist in anything other than what it describes (*lā taqūmu bi-ghayr mawṣūfihā*).⁵¹

As for his critique of divine indwelling, he turns his scrutiny to the *Letter's* statement that God appeared (*ḡahara*) in Christ because humankind is the most exalted of His creations.⁵² In reply, Ibn Taymiyya argues that this manifestation was in fact an intellectual representation (*mithāl 'ilmī*) of Jesus's faith and remembrance of God, as opposed to the indwelling of God's essence in Christ's humanity.⁵³ In support of this supposition, Ibn Taymiyya alludes to Q. 30:28 ('He presents to you an example [*mathal^{am}*] of yourselves') and advances *ḡadiths* in which Muḡammad reports God's words: 'When I love him (i.e. My servant) I am his hearing by which he hears, his seeing by which he sees' and 'In Me he hears, in Me he sees, in Me he touches, in Me he walks.'⁵⁴ In line with earlier polemicists, Ibn Taymiyya's discredits the Incarnation by comparing them to Islamic heresies, as occurs in his comparison of indwelling to the errors of Ṣūfīs who proclaim union with the divine.⁵⁵ Later in *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḡīḡ*, he likens the doctrine to that of Unity of Essence (*waḡdat al-wujūd*), taught by the celebrated Ṣūfī thinker Muḡyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240). According

⁴⁹ Q. 42:51: 'It is not for any human that God speak to him except by revelation (*waḡy^{am}*) or from behind a veil (*hijāb*).

⁵⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:308 (Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response*, 285-286). Cf. Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche*, §36; Ebied and Thomas, *Christian-Muslim Polemic*, xi. §36.

⁵¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:309-310 (Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response*, 286).

⁵² Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:332 (Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response*, 288). Cf. Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche*, §36; Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, xi. §36.

⁵³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:337-338 (Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response*, 288).

⁵⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:334-335 (Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response*, 289).

⁵⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 3:337 (Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response*, 291).

to the Damascene scholar, Ibn ‘Arabī espoused a pantheistic conception of God, and cites him as having declared: ‘Transcendent Truth is the creation that resembles it’ (*al-ḥaqq al-munazzah huwa l-khalq al-mushabbah*),⁵⁶ ‘the Truth has a face in everything that is worshiped’ (*li-l-Ḥaqq fī kull ma ‘būd wajh^{an}*), and ‘there is no worship of anything other than God in anything that is worshiped’ (*mā ‘abd ghayr Allāh fī kull ma ‘būd*).⁵⁷ For Christians, reasons Ibn Taymiyya, such statements would apply to the created humanity of Christ, in whom they believe God united and dwelled. These arguments also emerge in his *fatwā* on the issue of Jesus as Word of God in the Qur’ān, which polemicises against Christians who cite such instances in defence of the Incarnation (specific examples of which will be addressed in Section 4.4.2). In this *fatwā*, Ibn Taymiyya also accuses both Christians and Ṣūfīs for failing to adequately distinguish between God and the created world.⁵⁸

4.3. The Intra-Christian Context

Having surveyed some key aspects of polemics against the Incarnation, we now turn our attention to ‘Abdīshō’s exposition of the doctrine. The first part of this section addresses ‘Abdīshō’s articulation of Christology in opposition to those of other Christian confessions. Here, our author gives a narrative account of how and why the ancient divisions between Christians arose—a strategy I refer to as a ‘church historical approach.’ Embedded in this narrative is a refutation of each of the rival Christologies, that is, the ‘Word-Flesh’

⁵⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 4:300; Michel, *A Muslim Theologian’s Response*, 317.

⁵⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 4:300-305 (Michel, *A Muslim Theologian’s response*, 317-319). The latter two quotations are from Ibn ‘Arabī’s explanation of Q. 71:22: ‘They have plotted an almighty plot’ (*makarū makr^{an} kubbar^{an}*). It should be noted that the pantheism of which Ibn Taymiyya accuses Ibn ‘Arabī was not in fact taught by the latter. Ibn ‘Arabī’s conceived of being (*wujūd*) as there existing no Real Being except God, while if things other than God appear to exist, it is because He has granted them being—a notion akin to Avicenna’s argument that all being is contingent save for the Necessary Being. See discussion in William C. Chittick, ‘Taṣawwuf. 1. Ibn al-‘Arabī and after in the Arabic and Persian lands and beyond,’ *ET* 10 (2000): 317-324; idem, ‘Waḥdat al-wujūd,’ *ET* 11 (2002): 37-39. The views of Ibn ‘Arabī and his interpreters on divine union (*ittiḥād*) will be examined in Section 4.2.3.

⁵⁸ Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymiyya, *Taḥqīq al-qawl fī mas’alat ‘Īsā kalimat Allāh wa-l-Qur’ān kalām Allāh* (Ṭantā, Egypt: Dār al-Ṣaḥāba li-l-Turāth, 1312/1992). For a summary of the *fatwā*’s contents, see Hoover, ‘Ibn Taymiyya,’ 852-853.

Miaphysitism of the Jacobites and the hypostatic union of the Diophysite Melkites. In refuting these doctrines, ‘Abdīshō’ simultaneously addresses themes of ecclesial identity and self-definition, of which Christology formed a crucial part. While this particular section of the *Pearl* reflects more intra-religious than inter-religious concerns, an examination of its contents will give us a wider appreciation of how ‘Abdīshō’'s Christological terminology would later develop in response to external challenges.

The second part of this section addresses ‘Abdīshō’'s approach to intra-Christian polemics in his later writings composed in Arabic. Beginning with a close reading of his *Profession*, I show that this work bears the imprint of an apology directed against Islam. Although the work at first appears solely concerned with rival Christian confessions, it is nevertheless indebted to apologies intended to convince hypothetical Muslim critics that the Christology of the Church of the East was more logically coherent than others. In two later Arabic works by ‘Abdīshō’, however, we encounter a more conciliatory tone towards other Christians. I show here that by creatively adapting a Christological idiom that had long been defined in opposition to other Christians, our author constructs an explanation of the Incarnation that is strikingly tolerant of other expressions.

4.3.1. The *Pearl*'s Church-Historical Approach

The *Pearl* is by no means the first work of East Syrian Christian provenance to weave dogma with historical narrative. We encounter the strategy in Elias bar Shennāyā's *al-Burhān ‘alā ṣaḥīḥ al-īmān* (‘The Demonstration of the Correct Faith’), a much neglected work in which he contests the narratives of the ecumenical councils in the histories of the Melkite Sa‘īd ibn Baṭrīq and the Copt Severus ibn al-Muqaffa’,⁵⁹ followed by a deconstruction of the Melkite

⁵⁹ See Louis Cheikho (ed.), *Eutychiei Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales* (CSCO 50-51; Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1962), 155ff and Chébli, *Réfutation d’Eutychieus par Sévère*, 167ff.

and Miaphysite positions.⁶⁰ A further example comes from ‘Amr ibn Mattā’s *Kitāb al-majdal*, a vast theological *summa* that features a history of the Church councils and the Nestorian controversy.⁶¹ To my knowledge, however, ‘Abdīshō’s *Pearl* represents the first attempt to incorporate such a narrative within a far briefer catechism in the Syriac language.

Before touching on the Christological councils, ‘Abdīshō’ begins by speaking of the tranquillity and unity of faith established by the apostles in the first four centuries after Christ’s death.⁶² This cohesion, he continues, would be disrupted by the appearance of the first significant heresy, resulting in the convocation of the Council of Nicaea in 325 by the ‘holy emperor’ (*malkā qaddīshā*) Constantine.⁶³ Yet, no heresy is mentioned by name; instead, ‘Abdīshō’ directs his reader to the ecclesiastical history of Eusebius of Caesarea, from which ‘the number of blasphemies (*kpōryē*), impieties (*rushsh‘ē*) and villainies (*shuhhātē*) that existed in this period is known.’⁶⁴ Thus, the emergence of these heretical divisions on the eve of Nicaea was the work of Satan, and the factionalisation of the Christian *oikoumene* is likened to the Biblical Fall.⁶⁵ At this point, our author ends his brief historical notice of Nicaea by reporting that once the leaders of these heresies had been removed, Christendom was once again ‘one flock and one Church (*re’yānā ḥadd u-‘ēdtā ḥdā*), from where the sun rises to where it sets.’⁶⁶

⁶⁰ The Arabic text of this treatise—preserved in Ms. Vat. ar. 180, 180a-220a—remains unedited, though is available in translation by L. Horst, *Des Metropolitens Elias von Nisibis Buch vom Beweis der Wahrheit des Glaubens* (Colmar: Eugen Barth, 1886). A critical edition and French translation is forthcoming from Samir Khalil and Laurent Basanese. I am grateful to Fr. Basanese for giving me access to the manuscript.

⁶¹ Ibn Mattā, *Kitāb al-majdal*, 472bff. The section forms the sixth part (*faṣl*) of the fifth chapter (*bāb*), and is not to be confused with the fifth section of the same chapter, which comprises the patriarchal history, the only part of the entire *Kitāb al-majdal* to be edited (Gismondi, *Akhhār*).

⁶² Here, he tells us that ‘they the Apostles taught the inhabitants of the world blessedness (*tāybūtā*), holiness (*qaddīshūtā*), serenity (*nīhūtā*), and humility (*makkīhūtā*), and the world was filled with knowledge of the Lord, just as water covers the sea.’ *Pearl*, ٤٠.

⁶³ *Pearl*, ٤٠-٤١.

⁶⁴ *Pearl*, ٤١.

⁶⁵ *Pearl*, ٤١: ‘The Evil One grew bitter and jealous. And just as he did with Adam, so too did he do with us’ (*ḥāsem bīshā u-metmarrmarr a[y]k ‘amm Ādām āp ‘amman sā‘ar*).

⁶⁶ *Pearl*, ٤١

The lack of detail in ‘Abdīshō’s historical sketch of Nicaea is noteworthy. When mentioning heresies he undoubtedly refers to the Arian controversy over the Trinity. Yet he passes such early Christian heresies in silence and instead assures his readers that all they need to know is contained in Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History*, a work that had enjoyed an early reception and wide readership by ‘Abdīshō’s time.⁶⁷ It is likely that this passing reference to Eusebius serves an important doctrinal function: although he deems Nicaea historically relevant, details about its main actors do not bear mention because ‘there is no disagreement (*layt pullāg*) between Christians [today] over the confession of the Trinity,’ insofar as they all accept the Nicene Creed and the co-substantiality of God’s triune persons. Instead, it is over the Incarnated Word (*meṭṭul meltā d-metbarnāshūtā*) that differences begin to emerge.⁶⁸ The assertion that a period of ecumenical calm preceded Christianity’s historical divisions is a common theme in Syriac and Christian Arabic historical works.⁶⁹ Moreover, that Christians were united in the Trinity but divided in Christology is a point frequently acknowledged in 13th century expositions of Christological dogma,⁷⁰ including those by Muslim and Jewish authors.⁷¹

Having set the tenor of his narrative, ‘Abdīshō’ reports that a council at Ephesus was convoked to discuss ‘the manner (*znāh*) of the Union (*ḥdāyūtā*) and the terms (*shmāhē*) describing it,’ after Cyril of Alexandria had claimed that the Virgin was ‘Mother of God’ (*yāldat Allāhā*) and condemned any who distinguished (*mparresh*) between Christ’s

⁶⁷ Our earliest manuscript of the Syriac version of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* comes in the form of a St. Petersburg codex dated 462, indicating a very early reception indeed. See William Wright and Adelbert Merx (eds.), *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius in Syriac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898), i. The lasting impact of Eusebius on the genre of ecclesiastical histories in Syriac literature is discussed by Muriel Debié, ‘L’héritage de la chronique d’Eusèbe dans l’historiographie syriaque,’ *JCSSS* 6 (2006): 18-28.

⁶⁸ Pearl, ٣٢

⁶⁹ Both Ibn al-Muqaffa’ and Bar Shennāyā, for example, agree that tranquillity reigned throughout the oikumene until the appearance of the first Christological controversy, Macedonianism, which would be declared heretical at the First Council of Constantinople in 381. Chébli, *Réfutation d’Eutychius par Sévère*, 163-164; Bar Shennāyā, *Burhān*, 147a. Elsewhere, Bar Shennāyā mentions that there are no longer Christians who profess heterodox Trinitarian beliefs. *Ibid.*, 134a.

⁷⁰ al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl (Samir, *Brefs chapitres*, VIII:§1-4); Būlus al-Anṭakī, ‘al-Farq bayn al-naṣarā, in *Seize traités*, 15-21, here 15; and Bar Hebraeus (François Nau [ed. and tr.], *Les hérésies christologiques d’après Grégoire Bar Hébraeus* [PO 13, fasc. 2; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907], 264).

⁷¹ See, for example, Ibn Kammūna, *Tanqīh*, 51; al-Qarāfi, *Ajwiba*, 306; Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb*, 2:182.

humanity and divinity.⁷² In response, Nestorius argued that Cyril's teachings were without prophetic and apostolic foundation, since the expression 'Mother of Man' would resemble the doctrines of the heresiarchs Paul of Samosata and Photinus of Galatia, who posited that Christ was a 'mere man' (*barnāshā shhīmā*). Meanwhile, the appellation 'Mother of God' would result in the error of Simon Magus and Paul Menander, who taught that God did not assume (*nsab*) humanity from Mary, but that this humanity was merely phantasmal (*bashragrāgyātā hwāt*).⁷³ This heresiological distinction is almost identical to that employed by Nestorius in his *Book of Heraclides* (translated from Greek into Syriac in the 6th century) and Babai the Great's (d. 628) *Ktāba da-ḥdāyūtā* ('The Book of Union'), each of whom regarded the term 'Mother of Christ' as an essential middle ground between two Christological extremes.⁷⁴

Thus, 'Abdīshō' polemicises against Cyril—and by extension, the Miaphysite churches of his day—for failing to adequately distinguish between the Godhead and humanity in Christ, while asserting that it is the Church of the East that has faithfully preserved them:

We, however, call the Virgin 'Mother of Christ,' the term established by the Prophets and Apostles, and which explains [*mbaddeq*] the union generally. Cyril, who in the anathemas that he wrote, anathematises all who distinguish between the divinity and humanity of Christ, [also] anathematises the Holy Scriptures. For the Apostles and Prophets distinguished between the natures [*kyānē*] of the Person [*paršōpā*], and from them the holy Fathers taught that Christ was Perfect God [*'Alāhā mshalmānā*] and Perfect Man [*barnāshā mshalmānā*], the likeness of God

⁷² Pearl, ١٢

⁷³ Pearl, ١٢٢

⁷⁴ Paul Bedjan (ed.), *Le livre d'Héraclide de Damas* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1910), 152 (=G.R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson [tr.], *The Bazaar of Heracleides* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924], 98-99), though instead of Simon Magus and Menander, Nestorius associates the expression 'Mother of God' with the followers of Mani, whom he accuses of maintaining the fictitiousness of Christ's humanity, as does Babai the Great. Arthur Vaschalde (ed. and tr.), *Babai Magni Liber de unione* (CSCO 79-80; Leuven: L. Durbecq, 1953), 99-100 (ST), 69-70 (LT). 'Abdīshō's substitution, however, does little to change the comparison, since Simon Magus was often regarded as the father of gnostic, in particular phantasiast, heresies. See Nau, *Hérésies christologiques*, 252; Alberto Ferreiro, *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval and Early Modern Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 35-54.

[*dmūtā d-ʿAllāhā*] and the likeness of the servant [*dmūtā d-ʿabdā*], the Son of David and the Son of the Most High, flesh and Word.⁷⁵

Once introducing the Church of the East’s teaching on this vital distinction, he begins his account of Ephesus by mentioning the schisms, killings, and banishments (*palgwātā u-qeṭlē u-ʿeksōryās*) in the aftermath of Ephesus, with a passing reference to yet another historical work: a now lost ‘ecclesiastical history’ (*ʿeqlesasṭiqē*) by Irenaeus of Tyre.⁷⁶ Turning his narrative focus to the Council of Chalcedon (451), our author states that the emperor Marcian (r. 450–457)—whom he describes as ‘illustrious’ (*naṣṣīḥā*) and ‘Christ-loving’ (*rāḥēm lamshīḥā*)—convoked a council to enforce the acceptance of Christ’s two natures. Yet, in opposition to what would eventually become orthodoxy for the Church of the East, the council declared that the union between the divine and human natures occurred in Christ’s single *qnōmā*, as opposed to his Person.⁷⁷ ‘Abdīshō’ explains that this was due to a linguistic misunderstanding, since in Greek the terms for person (*parṣōpā*) and *qnōmā* are identical—both being *hupostasis*—and so the Chalcedonians ‘declare but one *qnōmā* in Christ.’⁷⁸ By ‘Abdīshō’’s time, this view had become well established as the Church of the East often regarded the Diophysite Christology of Chalcedon as closer to its own, and was thus far less

⁷⁵ Pearl, ܡܕ. Allusion to Phil 2:7; cf. Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai*, 97-101.

⁷⁶ Pearl, ܡܕ-ܡܕ. As far as I am aware, there appears to be no extant Syriac version of an ‘ecclesiastical history’ attributed to Irenaeus of Tyre, a high-ranking Byzantine statesman and partisan of Nestorius during the controversy. Following the Council, Irenaeus was exiled to Petra where he wrote his *Tragoedia*, a first-hand account of the trials of Nestorius at Ephesus, which has come down to us in a Latin abridgement by Rusticus of Rome (fl. 6th century). See Fergus Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408-450)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 168-190. ‘Abdīshō’ states in his *Catalogue* that Irenaeus ‘composed five ecclesiastical histories (*sām ḥammesh qlēsastīqī*) concerning the persecution of Mār Nestorius and all that happened in that time,’ Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 3/1:38-39. However, I have found no further indication of the reception of Irenaeus’s work in the Syriac tradition, other than François Nau’s suggestion that it was one of the sources for Barḥaddbshabbā’s account of Nestorius’s episcopate (*La seconde partie de l’Histoire de Barḥadbešabba ʿArbaia* [PO 9, fasc. 5; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1913], 500). It is possible that Irenaeus’ work was known to Syriac authors in five books, hence ‘Abdīshō’’s mention of ‘five ecclesiastical histories,’ though this must necessarily remain speculation. ‘Abdīshō’ also attributes a work entitled *Tragoedia* to Nestorius (Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 3/1:36), in addition to the better-known *Bazaar of Heracleides*, which may be accounted for by an attribution of such a work in the ecclesiastical history of Evagrius; see Friedrich Loofs, *Nestorius and his Place in the History of Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 5.

⁷⁷ Pearl, ܡܕ.

⁷⁸ Pearl, ܡܕ.

hostile to it than the Miaphysitism of Cyril and his followers.⁷⁹ However, ‘Abdīshō’ provides no further discussion of the difference between person and *qnōmā*.⁸⁰ Instead, he draws his account of Chalcedon to a close by stating that all who failed to accept the Chalcedonian formula were condemned by imperial decree.⁸¹

The *Pearl*’s potted history of the ecumenical councils ends here. Having outlined the doctrines of Cyril and Nestorius, ‘Abdīshō’ turns his attention to the emergence of the Jacobite and Melkite churches as distinct ecclesial entities:

From that time onwards Christianity became divided into three confessions [*tāwdyātā*]. The first profess one nature [*kyānā*] and one *qnōmā* in Christ, to which the Copts [*’āgepbṭāyē meṣrāyē*] and Kushites [*kushshāyē*] adhere, according to the tradition of Cyril, their patriarch. They are called ‘Jacobites,’ after Jacob, a Syrian theologian [(’)*nāsh mallpānā suryāyā*], who zealously spread the confession of Cyril among the Syrians and Armenians.

The second [confession] claims two natures and one *qnōmā* [in Christ]. They are called ‘Melkites,’ because it was forcibly [*ba-qṭirā*] imposed by the king [i.e. Byzantine emperor]. Of those who adhere to this this are the Romans called ‘Franks’ [*rōhmāyē d-metqrēyn parangāyē*], the Constantinopolitans who are Greeks [*yāwnāyē*], and all the northern nations [*’ammē kullhōn garbāyē*], such as the Russians [*rushshāyē*], the Alans [*’ālānāyē*], the Circassians [*sharkas*], the

⁷⁹ The catholicos Īshō’yahb II (r. 628-446), for example, held that despite the good intentions of the council, the ‘feeble phraseology’ of its Christology led to the doctrine of Christ’s single *qnōmā*. Louis Sako, (ed. and tr.), *Lettre christologique du Patriarche Syro-Oriental Īṣō’yahb II de Gḏālā (628-646)* (Paris: n.p., 1983), 42-49, cited by Brock, ‘The Christology of the Church of the East,’ 129. Similarly, the bishop Shāhdūst of Ṭirhān (fl. 9th century) reserves judgement as to whether the Melkites ought to be considered heretics, though he draws attention to the confusion arising from their understanding of the terms *qnōmā*, stating: ‘*qnōmā* has been set down here in place of person (*parṣōpā*) and it possible that your error is that you have read *qnōmā* as *’ipōstāsīs* and that you call the person *prosōpōn*.’ Trans. modified from Luise Abramowski and Alan Goodman (ed. and tr.), *A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts: Cambridge University Library MS Oriental 1319* 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1:10 (ST), 2:9-10 (ET). Elias bar Shennāyā readily acknowledges that the Melkites are closer to his own community than the Jacobites (*innakum aqrab ilaynā min ghayrikum*), since the two agree on Christ’s two natures (*muttafiqūnā fī l-qawl bi-annā l-masīha jawharān*)—a principal he sees as crucial (*wa-huwa aṣl^m kabīr*). *Burhān*, 169b-179a.

⁸⁰ The difference is succinctly explained in the *Zāqōrā mlahḥmā* of John bar Zō’bī (fl. first half of the 13th century), whom the editor of the *Pearl* refers to in a footnote. Although largely unedited, the relevant extract is appended to the De Kelaita edition of the *Pearl*. On the difference between *qnōmā* and person (*parṣōpā*), Bar Zō’bī states that *qnōmā* applies to a single property (*dīlāytā*) of a subject, while person applies to the total sum of properties. The properties of beauty or ugliness of someone, for example, each pertain to the person. The person, in turn, gives the *qnōmā* its unique character (*hāw da-myaqqen la-qnōmā*), distinguishing it from other *qnōmē* of the same species in other persons. If Christ’s person is the sum of four parts—the human and divine natures and their respective *qnōmē*—that were united in his person, then his person must logically be distinct from his *qnōmē*. *Pearl*, ٤٥-٤٦. Cf. definition of *parṣōpā* by Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai*, 89-91.

⁸¹ *Pearl*, ٥٥.

Ossetes [*'āsāyē*],⁸² the Georgians [*gurrġāyē*], and their neighbours. The Franks are set apart from these others, for they say that the Holy Spirit proceeds [*nāpeq*] from the Father and the Son,⁸³ and because they use unleavened bread [*paṭṭīrā*] in the Eucharist.

These two confessions accept [the expression] ‘Mother of God.’ The Jacobites, however, add [the formula] ‘who was crucified for us’ to the liturgical hymn [*qanōnā*] *Holy God!*⁸⁴

A number of features in the above passage are noteworthy. Firstly, details about the ethnic divisions of the Jacobites and Melkites are striking when compared to earlier East Syrian descriptions of the sects.⁸⁵ Where non-Melkite Chalcedonians are concerned, it is possible that ‘Abdīshō’'s knowledge of Christian groups from beyond the Iraqi heartland of the Church of the East arose—directly or indirectly—from ecumenical contacts in the Crusader and Mongol period.⁸⁶ The Franciscan William of Rubruck, for instance, encountered Slavic and Caucasian Christians together with Nestorians in Central Asia during his journey to the

⁸² In his English translation of the *Pearl*, Percy Badger (*The Nestorians and their Rituals*, 2:399) leaves *yasāyē* untranslated. I have opted for the definition ‘Ossetes’ because the term was associated with the Alans, known to medieval Arabic, Persian, and Byzantine writers as the *Ās*; see Vasilii Ivanovich Abaev and Harold Walter Bailey, ‘Alans,’ *EIr* 1 (1985): 801-803. In 1253 the Franciscan traveller William of Rubruck identifies a people known both as Alans and Aas in the Mongol camp of Sartaq, whom he notes are ‘Christians of the Greek rite,’ i.e.; see Byzantine Melkite. Peter Jackson (tr.), *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke 1253-1255* (London: Hackett, 2009), 102.

⁸³ A reference to the *filioque* (Latin for ‘and from the Son’), a formula which by ‘Abdīshō’'s time had become incorporated into the Latin Creed, thus becoming a source of conflict between the Latin and Byzantine Church in the Schism of 1054.

⁸⁴ *Pearl*, ١٣. ‘Abdīshō’ refers here to the Miaphysite addition to the *Trisagion* (‘Thrice Holy’) hymn, which reflects Cyril’s ‘one subject’ Christology, that is to say, that God the Word *became* Flesh—as opposed to having been *united with the Assumed Man*—and as such suffered and died on the Cross. See Sebastian P. Brock, ‘The Thrice-Holy Hymn in the Liturgy,’ *EChR* 7, no. 2 (1985): 24-34.

⁸⁵ For example, Elias bar Shennāyā states that the Jacobites are composed of many Syrians in Anatolia, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Egypt and its environs (*fa-hum khalq^{um} kathir^{um} min al-suryān wa-balad al-rūm wa-l-mashriq wa-ghayrihā wa-jamī’ ahl al-sūdān wa-qibṭ al-miṣr wa-a’ mālihā*), though he provides no ethno-geographical information about the Melkites. Elias ibn al-Muqlī’s depiction of the three main confessions is even sparser, providing only a basic outline of their Christological doctrines. Ibn al-Muqlī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 1:239-245.

⁸⁶ Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London: Routledge, 2003), 89-94. An almost identical list of Chalcedonian groupings is provided in a brief treatise on Christological heresies by ‘Abdīshō’'s older contemporary Bar Hebraeus, in which he mentions the Greeks, the Iberians (*ṭbārāyē*, i.e. Georgians), Alans, Russians, Syrian (i.e. Syriac speaking) Melkites (*malkāyā suryāyē*), Maronites, and Franks, adding, as ‘Abdīshō’ does, that the Franks are distinguished by their claim that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as the Father (Nau, *Les hérésies christologiques*, 264). Arabic- and Syriac-speaking Melkites were of course well-known to the Church of the East, having maintained a centuries-long presence in Mesopotamia and Iran during the ‘Abbāsīd period; see Joseph Nasrallah, *L’Église melchite en Iraq, en Perse et dans l’Asie Centrale* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1976), 40-90.

court of the Great Khan Mönke in 1254.⁸⁷ But more importantly here, the Church of the East maintained close contacts with the Latin West under Yahballāhā III, during whose reign theological exchanges between the two took place.⁸⁸ While keen to secure the cooperation of its Latin allies, the Church of the East was equally careful not to compromise its East Syrian dogma when asked by the Papacy to produce credal statements, whether on matters of Christology or the *filioque*, as is evident from Rabban Šāwmā's audience with cardinals of Rome in 1287 and Yahballāhā's correspondence with Popes Boniface III in 1302 and Benedict XI in 1304.⁸⁹

Of further note is 'Abdīshō's description of Melkites as Christians whose Christological creed was forced upon them by the Byzantine emperor, hence the designation 'Melkite,' from the Syr. *malkā* / Ar. *malik*. Encoded in this seemingly neutral description is a thinly veiled polemic against the group's Christological origins. Although the label had become accepted by Chalcedonian writers by the 13th century,⁹⁰ it was first employed by East Syrian writers in 'Abbāsīd times to explain how the Chalcedonians had received their creed

⁸⁷ Jackson, *The Mission of Friar William*, 102ff; see also above, no. 99.

⁸⁸ See Baum and Winkler, *The Church of the East*, 89ff.

⁸⁹ See Borbone, *Tash'ītā*, 29, in which Rabban Šāwmā's statement is recorded as follows: 'In the last time, one of the hypostases of the majestic Trinity, namely the Son, assumed (*lbesh*) the perfect man, Jesus Christ, from Mary the Holy Virgin; and was united (*'ethayyad*) to Him in Person (*paršōpā'īt*), and through him redeemed the world. In His divinity He is eternally of the Father and in His humanity He was temporally (*zabnānā'īt*) begotten. The union is forever inseparable and indivisible, and is without mingling (*muzzāgā*), and without mixture (*khullāṭā*), and without composition (*rukkābā*). The Son of this Union is Perfect God and Perfect Man, two natures (*kyānīn*), two *qnōmē*, and one Person (*paršōpā*).' The terms *muzzāgā*, *hullāṭā* and *rukkābā* are Christological terms most often polemically employed by East Syrian writers against Jacobites and Melkites, as will be discussed below and in Section 4.3.2. As for the issue of the *filioque*, Rabban Šāwmā rejects the Latin doctrine, insisting that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father. *Ibid.*, 29.

As for Yahballāhā's correspondence with the papacy, these are preserved in the Vatican archives and have been edited and translated by Laura Bottini, 'Due lettere inedite de patriarca Mar Yahballaha III,' *RSO* 66, no. 3-4 (1992): 239-258. Without reference to either natures or *qnōmē*, the Catholicos states: 'In the last of times God the Word—one of the three [Trinitarian] hypostases represented by the light of the sun—became man (*ta'annasa*) and assumed the Perfect Man (*labasa insān^{am} kāmīl^{am}*) from the Blessed Virgin for the salvation of the world. He united with it (i.e. the Man) eternally (*ittahada bihi ittihad^{am} abadiyy^{am}*), [without] subsequent separation (*lā firāq ba'd*).' *Ibid.*, 246. He then goes on to state that Christ was a single person (*shakhṣ wāḥid*), perhaps in response to the oft-repeated charge that the Nestorians maintained two persons in Christ. As for the issue of the Virgin, Yahballāhā does not mention the expression 'Mother of Christ,' but nevertheless conforms to the East Syrian formula by stating that Mary 'gave birth to the Lord Christ who is Perfect Man united (*muttaḥad*) with Perfect God.' *Ibid.*, 246. Cf. Teule, 'Saint Louis and the East Syrians,' 113-117.

⁹⁰ See, for example, al-Anṭākī, 'al-Farq bayna l-naṣārā,' 17: *Wa-ammā l-iḥtijāju l-malikiyyīn alladhī anā l-ḥāqīr aḥaduhum* ...). For other examples, see Alexander Treiger, 'Unpublished Texts from the Arab Orthodox Tradition (1): On the Origin of the Term "Melkite" and On the Destruction of the Maryamiyya Cathedral in Damascus,' *Chronos* 29 (2014): 7-37.

from Byzantine emperors and not the Apostles. The earliest documented articulation of this claim comes from a letter by Timothy I addressed to the monks of Mār Mārōn, in which he states that the apostolic faith of Christians in the ‘East’ (*ba-pnītā hādē d-madnhā*) remained untouched by heresy and political interference, whether from Zoroastrian or Muslim rulers. By contrast, Timothy argues, Christianity in the Byzantine Empire was upheld according to the whim of Christian emperors (*re ‘yānē d-malkē*): those that were heterodox introduced alterations into the faith, while orthodox rulers like Constantine the Great were obliged to preserve orthodoxy by force (*ba-qīrā*).⁹¹ Two centuries later, Elias bar Shennāyā would assert that the Melkites are so called because the emperor Marcian determined their faith, and on that account its adherents are called ‘Melkites’—which is absurd since the Christian faith had initially been established by the Apostles, without the coercion of earthly rulers (*lā siyyamā wa-l-dīn al-naṣrāniyya lam yakun mimman yujbir li-iqāma wa-da ‘wa ilayhi aḥad^{mn} min al-mulūk*).⁹² Moreover, the Jacobite addition of the formula of ‘Who was crucified for us’ to the *Trisagion* (‘Thrice Holy’) hymn had for many centuries been a major source of contention among East Syrian and Melkite writers, who viewed it as a Theopaschite innovation.⁹³ While ‘Abdīshō’ does not explicitly critique such differences, he is nevertheless keen to draw attention to them as important points of departure from his own confession, as indicated in the above quoted passage.

The issue of apostolic precedence re-emerges in the *Pearl*’s discussion of the label ‘Nestorian.’ After explaining the historical emergence of the Jacobite and Melkite confessions, ‘Abdīshō’ has this to say of his own community:

⁹¹ Thomas Darmo (ed.), *‘Egrātā d-Mār Ṭīmātē’ōs qadmāyā qātōlīqā pātaryārki*s (Kerala: Mar Narsai Press, 1982), 324-325.

⁹² Bar Shennāyā, *Burhān*, 169b.

⁹³ See, for example, Darmo, *‘Egrātā d-Mār Ṭīmātē’ōs*, 318-324; Elias, *Burhān*, 161a; and Dionysius bar Ṣalībī’s defence of the formula in Alphonse Mingana (tr.), *Treatise against the Melchites* (WS 1; Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1927), 57ff. See more generally Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai*, 73-74; Griffith, “‘Melkites’ and ‘Jacobites,’” and the Christological Controversies,” 52-53.

The third [group] confesses two natures [*kyānīn*] and two *qnōmē* in Christ, one will [*ṣebyānā*],⁹⁴ one Sonship [*brūtā*], one authority [*shulṭānā*], and are called ‘Nestorians.’ The Easterners [*madnḥāyē*], however, since they never changed their faith, but received and preserved it without change from the Apostles, are unjustly named ‘Nestorians.’ For Nestorius was not their patriarch, nor did they comprehend his language [i.e. presumably Greek]; rather, when they heard that he taught two natures, two *qnōmē*, one Will, one Son of God, and One Christ, and that he professed orthodoxy [*’artādōksā’it māwdē*], they bore witness to him because they believed accordingly. It was Nestorius who submitted to them, not they to him, most of all concerning the matter of the [expression] ‘Mother of Christ.’ When called to condemn him, they said: ‘There is no difference between condemning Nestorius and condemning the Divine Scriptures and the Holy Apostles, from whom we received that which we hold, and for which you censure us.’⁹⁵

According to Alexander Treiger, the above repudiation of the term ‘Nestorian’ is characteristic of the Mongol period, ‘when frequent “ecumenical” contacts with the Latin West made some East-Syriac Christian theologians apprehensive of this label’—an apprehension that prefigures the Church of the East’s modern discomfort with it.⁹⁶ With reference to earlier encounters, Nikolai Seleznyov also argues that the Church’s suppression of the label ‘Nestorian’ was due to ‘ecumenical expedience.’⁹⁷ Indeed, Yahballāhā III never employs ‘Nestorian’ as a term of self-definition in his correspondence with the Papacy, instead referring to his community as the ‘Church of the Lord Christ in the East’ (*bi-l-mashriq*).⁹⁸ He is furthermore said to have disavowed the label in conversation with the

⁹⁴ The issue of whether Christ possessed one or two wills according to Nestorian Christology will be discussed below in Section 4.3.2.

⁹⁵ *Pearl*, ١٣

⁹⁶ Treiger, ‘The Christology of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus*, 45.

⁹⁷ Nikolai Seleznyov, ‘Nestorius of Constantinople: Condemnation, Suppression, Veneration,’ *JECrSt* 62, no 3-4 (2010): 165-190, here 169, 170. Both Seleznyov and Treiger (see previous note) argue against Sebastian Brock’s thesis in his important article ‘The ‘Nestorian’ Church: a Lamentable Misnomer,’ in *The Church of the East: Life and Thought*, ed. by James F. Coakley and Kenneth Parry (Manchester: John Rylands University Library, 1996), 23-35 that the term ‘Nestorian’ is to be avoided in modern scholarship due to its pejorative use among the Church of the East’s Christological rivals, and its repudiation by East Syrian writers like ‘Abdīshō’ (ibid., 34-35).

⁹⁸ Bottini, ‘Due lettere inedite,’ 245 .

Dominican traveller Riccoldo di Monte Croce, who encountered the Catholicos during his stay in Baghdad in 1290.⁹⁹

But to fully understand the context of ‘Abdīshō’s rejection of the label ‘Nestorian,’ we must look to earlier discussions. In a brief Christological exposition, Abū l-Faraj ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. 1043) states that his community’s association with Nestorius is superfluous (‘*alā ghayr wujūb*’), since they are known as ‘Christians of the East’ (*naṣārā l-mashriq*), due to their evangelisation by the Apostles Addai and Mār Thomas, whom they credit with the introduction of Christianity into Iraq and Iran.¹⁰⁰ Ibn al-Ṭayyib adds that their support for Nestorius during his dispute with Cyril led to the imposition of the label ‘Nestorian’ upon them (*ghulibat ‘alayhim*).¹⁰¹ While Elias bar Shennāyā does not explicitly reject the term ‘Nestorian,’ he consistently refers to his community as ‘Easterners’ (*mashāriqa*) in his *Burhān*. He further reasons that, owing to the fact that no heretic had ever appeared among them (*lā zahara minhum mukhālif^{mn}*), the Easterners had no need for the Council of Ephesus and its rulings, unlike the Melkites and Jacobites, whom he describes as ‘invented sects’ (*firaq muḥdatha*). As for Nestorius, Bar Shennāyā claims that the Easterners received news of his sound doctrine (*maqālatihi l-ṣaḥīḥ*), but had neither seen him nor had he ever visited their lands (*lam nushāhidahu wa-lā ṭaraqa diyāranā*).¹⁰² In a similar vein, ʾIshō‘yahb bar Malkōn, in a letter dated 1222, addresses the accusation of a Jacobite interlocutor—the Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius III David (r. 1222-1252)—that the Christology of the Church of the East was invented by Nestorius, and on that account was without ancient, apostolic foundations (*laysat qadīma wa-sillīḥiyya*). In reply, ʾIshō‘yahb argues that despite their association with

⁹⁹ Riccoldo de Monte Croce, *Pérégrination en Terre Sainte et au Proche Orient: Lettres sur la chute de Saint-Jean d’Acre / Riccold de Monte Croce*, tr. René Kappler (Paris: Champion, 1997), 153.

¹⁰⁰ See Gismondi, *Akhbār*, 1-2; Amir Harrak (ed. and tr.), *The Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle* (Atlanta, G.A.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

¹⁰¹ Abū l-Faraj ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Ta’ dīd arā’ al-naṣārā fī l-ittiḥād wa-ḥujajihim*, in *Majmū’*, ch. 8, §129. Although he asserts that East Syrian opposition to the term ‘Nestorian’ emerged in the Mongol period (see above), Alexander Treiger states that a similar sentiment had been expressed some centuries earlier by Ibn al-Ṭayyib, but relegates this crucial point to a footnote (‘The Christology of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus*,’ 46, no. 64).

¹⁰² Bar Shennāyā, *Burhān*, 151b.

Nestorius, the faith of his community dates from the time of Mār Mārī and Mār Addai, who evangelised the East (*alladhīna talammadha l-mashriq*).¹⁰³ As ‘Abdīshō‘ would later do, Īshō‘yahb asserts that Nestorius had never been his Church’s patriarch, although they bore witness that his doctrine was in conformity (*muṭābaqa*) with what the Apostles had taught them.¹⁰⁴

Far from being the product of ecumenical expediency, therefore, ‘Abdīshō‘’s rejection of the label ‘Nestorian’ should be seen in light of a polemical strategy that sought to prove that the Church of the East’s Christology alone lay on apostolic foundations, over against mainly Jacobite and Melkite claims to the contrary. The tendency to downplay Nestorius’s significance for such purposes was common among East Syrian writers throughout the Middle Ages but by no means consistent.¹⁰⁵ As we shall see in the following section, ‘Abdīshō‘ himself employs the label in his Arabic Christology, perhaps owing to the fact that Muslims, who were likelier to read his Arabic works, had for centuries known members of the Church of the East as ‘Nestorians’ and applied the term to them in theologically neutral contexts.¹⁰⁶ Even in polemical works, it was the Church’s Christology rather than its forms of

¹⁰³ Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalia*, 3/1:298-299. In a separate work—a profession of faith preserved in the *Asfār al-asfār* of Ṣalībā ibn Yuḥānnā—Īshō‘yahb refers to his ecclesial community as the ‘Syrian Christians of the East’ (*al-naṣārā l-suryāniyyūn al-mashriq*). *Ibid.*, 3/1:295.

¹⁰⁴ Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalia*, 3/1:299.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Shāhdūst of Ṭīrhān, who, in the same sentence, refers to his community as both ‘Nestorians’ (*nestōryānē*) and ‘Easterners’ (*madnḥāyē*). Goodman and Abramowski, *Nestorian Christological Texts*, 1:48 (ET), 2:31 (ST), cited in Reinink, ‘Tradition and Formation,’ 219. Although Ibn al-Ṭayyib rejects the label ‘Nestorian’ in one work (discussed above), he applies it to his own community in another. Gérard Troupeau (ed. and tr.), ‘Traité sur l’union de ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ṭayyib,’ *PdIO* 8 (1977): 141-151, here 146 (FT), 150 (AT). Also, when asked by al-Maghribī about the view of the ‘Nestorians’ concerning the Union, Elias bar Shennāyā responds without correcting his disputant’s use of the label. (This section of the *majlis* is missing Cheikho’s edition; I refer instead to Ms. Oxford, Huntington 240, 171b and Emmanuel-Karim Delly (tr.), *La Théologie d’Elie Bar-Šénaya: étude et traduction de ses Entretiens* (Rome: Apud Pontificiam Universitatem Urbanianam de Propaganda Fide, 1957), 87. Similarly, Elias Ibn al-Muqlī (*Uṣūl al-dīn*, 1:240) describes his Church’s view of the Incarnation as that of the ‘Nestorians’ (*ra’y al-nasāṭira*).

¹⁰⁶ For example, the Muslim cosmographer Mas‘ūdī (d. 956) consistently refers to Christians of the ‘East’ (*al-mashriq*) as ‘Nestorians,’ but notes that those from al-Ḥīra were known among themselves as *‘ibādī* (‘worshippers’). Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murāj al-dhahab wa-ma‘ādin al-jawhar*, ed Charles Pellat, 7 vols. (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Jāmi‘a al-Lubnāniyya, 1966-1979), §§ 211, 233, 732. By the 12th century, it would appear that members of the Church of the East continued to be known as ‘Nestorian’ in official contexts, as occurs in a diploma of investiture issued in 1138 in Baghdad to the ‘Catholicos of the Nestorians’ (*jāthaliq al-nasṭūr*) ‘Abdīshō‘ III by the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Muqtafi. Lawrence I. Conrad, ‘A Nestorian Diploma of Investiture from the *Taḍkira* of Ibn Ḥamdūn: The Text and its Significance,’ in *Studia Arabica et Islamica*:

self-definition that Muslim theologians were chiefly concerned with refuting, as we saw previously.¹⁰⁷

After outlining the three main confessions and their historical emergence, ‘Abdīshō’ draws up a brief refutation of the Melkite and Jacobite positions on the *communicatio idiomatum*. Citing John bar Penkāyē (d. after 693/94) by name, ‘Abdīshō’ employs a visual illustration from an unnamed work by the 7th century writer:¹⁰⁸ ‘Christ’ (*mshīhā*) is spelt in large purple letters to signify a ‘Union of mingling’ (*hdāyūtā d-muzzāgā*) of the Jacobites, which according to the East Syrian view, inevitably confounds the human and divine natures of Christ—a charge Miaphysite writers repeatedly denied.¹⁰⁹ Thus, ‘Abdīshō’ denounces this mode of union as corruption (*ḥubbālā*) and confusion (*bullbālā*) since the ink used to spell ‘Christ’ is neither red nor black but purple. He then proceeds to write ‘Christ’ in large black letters with a red outline, each colour symbolising the two separate natures in a union of conjunction (*hdāyūtā d-naqqīpūtā*); hence he declares, ‘Behold beauty! Behold light!’¹¹⁰

Through this demonstration ‘Abdīshō’ neatly conveys a classical Antiochene contrast. In response to the Apollinarians’ view of ‘one nature in the Incarnate Christ,’ Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius refuted a ‘mingling’ or ‘mixture’ of natures wherein the humanity and divinity in Christ lost their discernible characteristics and functions. Instead, they employed the term *synapheia* to explain how God’s humanity and divinity were inseparably

Festschrift for Iḥsān ‘Abbās, ed Wadād Qādī (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1981), 83-104, here 93 (AT) and 97 (ET).

¹⁰⁷ For earlier applications of the term by Islamic theologians, see Thomas, *Christian Doctrines*, Ch. 3, § 22 (Bāqillānī), Ch. 5, § 2 (‘Abd al-Jabbār). In ‘Abdīshō’'s lifetime, al-Qarāfī (*al-Ajwiba*, 302) states in his refutation of Christianity that the Nestorians are known also as ‘Christians of the East’ (*naṣārā l-mashriq*), but says nothing of their rejection of the former label.

¹⁰⁸ Although ‘Abdīshō’ explicitly cites the author, it is unclear to me which of John bar Penkāyē’s works he has in mind. Aside from only four out of fifteen sections of his *Ktābā d-rēsh mellē*, Bar Penkāyē’s works remain largely unedited. On these, see *GSL*, 210-211.

¹⁰⁹ Despite the belief that Christ’s humanity and divinity were united in a single nature, medieval Miaphysite theologians were at pains to point out that this union occurred *without* confusion or alteration of the two natures and their distinctive characteristics. See, for example, Lebon, *Le monophysisme sévérien*, 212-234; Ibn Jarīr, *Kitāb al-murshid*, 11a-11b; Khoury, *Candélabre: Quatrième Base*, 21-23 (ST). See also al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl’s marginal notes to Ibn ‘Adī’s response to ‘Īsā ibn al-Warrāq (*al-shukūk min Abī ‘Īsā ibn Warrāq wa-jawāb ‘anhā min Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, in *Majmū’*, ch. 39, §41ff).

¹¹⁰ *Pearl*, ٣٣

bound in Christ's single person, and through which their operational natures and discernible properties were sustained.¹¹¹ As Antiochene thinking gradually found its way into the Church of the East in the 5th to 7th centuries, a Syriac vocabulary was formalised to express this distinction. Babai the Great, for example, polemicised against two kinds of union: 'intermingling' (*muzzāgā*) and 'mixing' (*ḥullṭānā*), terms that were later rendered *imtizāj* or *ikhṭilāṭ* in Arabic.¹¹² In opposition to such modes of uniting, Babai employed 'conjunction' (*naqqīpūtā*, the Syriac for Theodore's *synapheia*), a term which preserved the unique identities of the two natures and safeguarded against any inference of Theopaschitism.¹¹³ Consequently, East Syrian writers in later centuries would continue to understand the Union as a process of conjunction,¹¹⁴ a term Arabic Christian scholars would later translate as *ittiṣāl*.¹¹⁵

The Christology of Chalcedon is refuted in 'Abdīshō's *Pearl* with equal vigour, though this time without visual metaphor. Here, he asserts that if the divine *qnōmā*—a spiritual and uncompounded essence (*rūḥā ʾītyā lā mrakkbā*)—and the human *qnōmā*—a temporal and compounded body (*gushmā zabnānāyā mrakkbā*)—were one, then Christ's discernible attributes would be destroyed, becoming something which is neither God nor man.¹¹⁶ As for the appellation 'Mother of God,' 'Abdīshō' offers the following refutation: if Mary were Mother of God, then Christ would not simply be the Son of God, but also Father, Son, and

¹¹¹ J.F. Bethune-Baker, *Nestorius and his Teaching: A Fresh Examination of the Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), 90-91 *apud* Friedrich Loofs (ed.), *Nestoriana: die Fragmente des Nestorius* (Halle: S. Max Niemeyer, 1905), 331 and Bedjan, *Bazaar d'Heraclide*, 230 (=Driver and Hodgson, *Bazaar of Heracleides*, 157). Cf. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 54-63; André de Halleux, 'Nestorius: History and Doctrine,' in *Syriac Dialogue: First Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition* (Vienna: Pro Oriente, 1994), 209.

¹¹² As we have observed in Section 4.2 regarding Muslim presentations of the various Christian positions on the Incarnation.

¹¹³ For the numerous occasions in which the term *naqqīpūtā* appears in Babai's *Ktābā da-ḥdāyūtā* to describe this mode of the uniting, see Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great*, 92, no. 11.

¹¹⁴ Abramowski and Goodman, *Nestorian Christological Texts*, 1:11, 49 (ST) 2:10, 11, 31 (ET) (Shāhdūst of ʾTīrhān), 1:74 (ST), 2:45 (ST) (Pseudo-Isaac of Nineveh), 1:153 (ST), 2:90 (Creed of the Bishops of Persia to Khosroes), 1:183, 186 (ST), 2:108, 110 (ET) (Pseudo-Nestorius); Bar Zō' bī, *Zāqōrā mlahḥmā*, in *Pearl*, ٤٤.

¹¹⁵ Al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-masā'il*, 196; Ibn Mattā, *Kitāb al-majdal*, 73b; Elias bar Shennāyā, *Kitāb al-majlis*, Oxford, Huntington 240, 171b-172a (Delly, *La théologie d'Elie*, 87).

¹¹⁶ *Pearl*, ٤٤

Holy Spirit; but because Christ was incarnated through the Sonship (*brūtā*) of the Trinity, Christ must only be the Son—thus making Mary the Mother of Christ.¹¹⁷ Finally, ‘Abdīshō‘ responds to the charge that the duality of natures and *qnōmē* implies the existence of two sons and thus a quaternity (*rbī‘ūtā*) of Persons.¹¹⁸ To this he simply states that the Church confesses only one Son after the Incarnation, and so no fourth person has been added to the Trinity.¹¹⁹

Before ending this section, it is worth drawing out a further context to the *Pearl*’s combination of narrative and dogma. As we noted in Chapter One of this thesis, our author states in his preface that Yahballāhā had instructed him to compose a systematic summary of the faith. Although this statement can be read as merely a literary topos (through which the author expresses humility by declaring that his work was written by request),¹²⁰ it is not implausible that the Catholicos demanded such a work be made. For we learn from the acts of the synod of Timothy II, convened in February 1318, and in which ‘Abdīshō‘ himself participated, that the ‘strengthening of ecclesiastical doctrine’ (*quyyām yullpānē ‘ēdtānāyē*) in all schools under the Church’s care was made a priority.¹²¹ Seen in this light, the didactic function of the *Pearl*’s Christology and its use of historical narrative become clearer. It was through such narratives that the Church defended its Christology, on the one hand, and situated itself within a broader commonwealth of churches, on the other. As such, it was important for ‘Abdīshō‘ to preserve through the Church’s official literature a Late Antique inheritance of doctrinal divisions. Given the literary afterlife and popularity of the *Pearl*

¹¹⁷ *Pearl*, ܐܘܢܘܢܐ.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Abramowski and Goodman, *Nestorian Christological Texts*, 1:196 (ST), 2:116-117 (ET) (Pseudo-Nestorius).

¹¹⁹ *Pearl*, ܐܘܢܘܢܐ. Cf.

¹²⁰ Evia Riad (*Studies in the Syriac Preface*, 190-208) identifies this topos in Syriac preface as ‘*ellātā* (lit. ‘causes’).

¹²¹ See Canon II of the acts of this synod in Angelo Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vaticanus codicibus edita*, vol. 10 (Rome: Typis Collegii Urbani, 1838), 10:98-99 (LT), 10:262-263 (ST).

observed in Chapter One, this church-historical approach would prove to be an effective method of Christological exposition in subsequent centuries.

4.3.2. From *‘aṣabiyya* to Ecumenism: ‘Abdīshō’*’s Arabic Christology*

Having examined the way ‘Abdīshō’ expresses Christological differences in his Syriac *Pearl*, we now turn our attention to his Arabic Christology. As we observed in the previous section, the *Pearl*’s discussion of Christology takes place within a church-historical framework, encapsulating such themes as self-definition and competing communal narratives. Now although the ideas expressed in his Arabic works are in keeping with the same tradition, the literary forms underlying them differ in some important regards.

The literary forms in question are rooted in Christian-Muslim discussions concerning the Incarnation, a feature that is impossible to overlook where ‘Abdīshō’*’s Arabic Christology is concerned. As we observed in Section 4.2, Muslim theologians often took note of the traditional doctrinal divisions among Christians, and often enumerated and outlined these positions before refuting them as equally objectionable from an Islamic perspective. This strategy is paralleled by Christian Arabic theologians from the early ‘Abbāsīd period onwards, who outlined the three main positions before championing their own and refuting the remaining two. As Mark Beaumont has pointed out, this method was intended to inculcate key aspects of Christological doctrine to an internal audience while presenting ‘an apology designed to commend the doctrine of the Incarnation to a Muslim interlocutor.’¹²² A central feature of this didacticism is the use of analogy and metaphor to explain the various modes of the union between the human and divine in Christ—a strategy that has received scarce attention from scholars. To better understand ‘Abdīshō’*’s use of this analogical method, it is necessary to provide an overview of its earlier development.**

¹²² Beaumont, ‘‘Ammār al-Baṣrī on the Incarnation,’’ 58.

The earliest iteration of this approach comes from the writings of Babai the Great (d. 628). His opposition to the Christology of the Miaphysites led him to compare their conception of union to various kinds of mixture, such as that of liquids and humids which lose their constituent properties and become a *tertium quid*; or solids like broad bean and wheat, which, due to their ability to be separated, are only superficially united—comparisons which may owe something to Aristotle’s *On Generation and Corruption* and its commentators, as Geevarghese Chediath has suggested.¹²³

A more systematic treatment of these analogies occurs in Theodore bar Kōnī’s *Scholion*, a late 8th century *summa* in question-and-answer form, the tenth *mēmṛā* of which has received attention from Sydney Griffith concerning its anti-Muslim apologetic agenda.¹²⁴ Of greater interest to us for the moment is question no. 54 of the sixth *mēmṛā* of this work. Here, Bar Kōnī provides the following definition of union and its types, each of which he elucidates with a specific analogy:

Uniting is the bonding [*ḥzāqā*] and joining [*’asīrūtā*] of separate things that gather to something [*d-kānshān l-ḥad medem*] and are the result of two or more things. Its types are seven: (i) **natural** [*kyānāyā*] and **qnōmic** [*qnōmāyā*], like the soul and the body that become one in nature and *qnōmā* through uniting, and the elements [*’estoksē*] that constitute and sustain the body of humans and animals; (ii) **voluntary union** [*ḥdāyūtā ṣebyānītā*], like the union of believers coming together in one spirit and one mind (Acts 4:32); (iii) **conjunction** [*naqqīpūtā*], like the man who will leave his father and mother to join his wife and they will become one in flesh (Gen 2:24, cf. Mat 19:6); (iv) **Personal** [*parṣōpāytā*], like the messenger who assumes

¹²³ Chediath, *The Christology of Babai the Great*, 94, no. 8 and 9, comparing Babai’s categories of mixture Aristotle’s notions of *synthesis*, *mixis*, and *krasis* and Alexander of Aphrodisias’s *parathesis*, and *synchysis*. Cf. Norris, *Manhood and Christ*, 68-69. For these categories and others in earlier, Patristic thinkers, see Harry Wolfson, *The Pilosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. 1, *Faith, Trinity, Incarnation* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1956), 372-386.

¹²⁴ Sydney H. Griffith, ‘Chapter Ten of the Scholion: Theodore Bar Kōnī’s Apology for Christianity,’ *OCP* 47 (1981): 158-188; idem, ‘Theodore bar Kōnī’s Scholion’; idem, ‘Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: From Patriarch John (648) to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286),’ in *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), 251-273, here 261-262, reprinted in *Doctrine and Debate in the East Christian World, 300-1500*, ed. Averil Cameron and Robert Holland (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), VI.

(*lbesh*) the person of the king; (v) **Composition** [*rukkābā*], like gold and silver that enter into composition [*metrakkbīn*], existing as a [single] chest [*qēbūtā*]; (vi) **Mixture** [*hulṭānē*], like medicines [*sammānē*] that are mixed; (vii) **Mingling** [*muzzāgā*], like water mixed with wine, or warm things with cold.¹²⁵

As previously noted, the unions of mingling and mixture were most commonly ascribed to the Jacobites, often with the aim of demonstrating how they confused the identities of the human and divine natures. Also mentioned has been the Nestorian preference for union by conjunction (*naqqīpūtā*), which, East Syrian theologians argued, safeguarded the distinct identity of each of the two inseparably bound natures in Christ's person.¹²⁶ As for the union of composition in the above passage, this was most often ascribed to the Chalcedonians. This occurs, for example, in chapters attributed to Nestorius in which the author describes composition as the joining of two things devoid of mutually participative wills, just as wool is woven with flax to create a coat—a mode of union that is contrasted with 'the conjunction (*naqqīpūtā*) of the perfect natures who are known in one Person (*parṣōpā*), [which] participate (*mshāwtpīn*) in the worship, honour, and greatness of the one Person.'¹²⁷

The mutual participation of the two natures is brought to the fore in two further categories of union central to Nestorian Christology: the union of good pleasure and will. Theodore of Mopsuestia taught that both Christ and the saints were indwelt by God's divinity, yet Christ's indwelling differed in a crucial regard: it was one of 'good pleasure (*eudokia*) as His true Son,' whereby 'He has united Himself in every honour.'¹²⁸ The implication here is that Christ's humanity did not receive the Word passively as did the saints

¹²⁵ Scher, *Liber scholiorum* (*Seert*), 2:34-35; Hespel and Draguet, *Scholies* (*Séert*), 2:23-24; Hespel, *Scholies* (*Urmiah*), 126.

¹²⁶ It is thus unsurprising to find that the unions of conjunction and will (nos. ii and iii in the above passage) are explained by Bar Kōnī through scriptural typologies—in contrast to the remaining five—and personal union (no. iv) is dignified with a kingly analogy.

¹²⁷ Abramowski and Goodman, *A Collection of Nestorian Christological Texts*, 181-182 (ST), 108 (ET).

¹²⁸ Mcleod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 38.

and prophets, but through the shared will of two distinct yet inseparably bound natures.¹²⁹ Yet it is important to remember that Nestorian writers did not maintain that Christ possessed a single will. What was meant by a union of will was that the human and divine natures possessed separate wills that functioned in perfect accord with one another without change to the divine and human natures in Christ.¹³⁰

The notion of a privileged and mutual indwelling was raised in Christological discussions between East Syrian apologists and Muslims, most notably in Elias bar Shennāyā's dialogue with the Marwānid vizier al-Maghribī in 1027. When the latter wished to know how Christians reconcile God's transcendence with their belief in divine indwelling, Bar Shennāyā responded that God does not indwell the essence (*dhāt*) or nature (*jawhar*) of created beings, since He cannot be forcefully limited, divided, or arranged (*lā yanḥaṣaru wa-lā yatajazza'u wa-lā yataba' 'adu*) in one place as opposed to another (*fī makān dūna makān*). Rather, He exists in both equally (*bi-l-sawiyya*): both in Himself and those in whom He has chosen to dwell, such as the Prophets (*al-anbiyā' wa-l-muṣṭafīn*).¹³¹ When pressed by al-Maghribī to explain how, then, God's indwelling of Christ differed from the Prophets, Bar Shennāyā explains that the term 'indwelling' has multiple applications, just as 'existence' may be applied to both God and man, insofar as both exist. Similarly, 'indwelling' applies to both Christ and the Prophets. However only in Christ was the Indwelling one of inseparable

¹²⁹ Frederick G. McLeod, *The Roles of Christ's Humanity in Salvation: Insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 180.

¹³⁰ This mutuality is neatly explained by 'Amr ibn Mattā, *Kitāb al-majdal*, 75b: 'The two natures are inseparably bound (*mujtama'ayni ghayr munfaṣalayni*), their two [respective] purposes (*murāduhumā*) being one by agreement of the two wills (*bi-ttīfāq al-irādatayni*).' Further on he elaborates: 'It is said that the volition (*mashī'a*) of God the Word and the volition of the Man in whom He appeared are one volition. What is meant by this is that the volition of the temporally generated being (*muḥdath*) is in agreement (*muwāfaqa*) with the volition of the pre-existent (*qadīm*). On that account, the volition is one, even though the act (*fī l*) of the divinity is not that of the humanity. It does not follow that the agreement of the two volitions is [the same thing as] the agreement of the two actions; nor does it follow that if the volition of the temporally generated being were that of the pre-existent, the two would be one and the same (*bi-'aynihā*). Rather, the two agree in purpose (*yattaḥiqāni l-murād*), and thus they are one volition. This is because a volition is generated for whom union with Him is possible (*li-man ṣaḥḥa l-itihād bihi*) that is in agreement with the volition of the pre-existent. This does not mean that the attribute (*ṣifa*) of the pre-existent is that of the temporally generated being, or that the act of the pre-existent is that of the temporally created being, though the two attributes agree (*ittafaqā*) with one another. Ibid., 80b.

¹³¹ Louis Cheikho (ed.), 'Majālis Iliyya muṭrān Naṣībīn,' *al-Mashriq* 20 (1922): 435-434, here 112-113.

union (*ittihād alladhī lā yalḥaqahu iftirāq*), and is thus a complete indwelling (*ḥulūl al-kamāl*). For only in Christ was God’s indwelling and union one of ‘honour (*waqār*), good pleasure (*riḍāʿ*), and volition (*mashīʿa*).’¹³² This distinction was deemed vital enough for Elias II ibn al-Muqlī (d. 1131) to dedicate a whole chapter to in his *Uṣūl al-dīn*, in which he argues—in words suggesting reliance on Bar Shennāyā—for a complete union (*ittihād al-kamāl*), ‘because the union of the Saviour is a union of indwelling without separation—an indwelling of good pleasure, honour, and volition.’¹³³

Theodore bar Kōnī’s categories of uniting and their corresponding analogies are also placed in the service of anti-Muslim apologetics, as occurs once again in Bar Shennāyā’s disputation with al-Maghribī.¹³⁴ When the Muslim vizier wishes to know what other Christians believe concerning the Union, Elias responds that the Jacobites are obliged to confess a natural union (*ittihād^{an} tabīʿiyy^{an}*), like the body and the soul, or the mingling (*mumāzaja*) and mixture (*ikhtilāt*) of substances, while the Melkites confess a union of composition (*ittihād al-tarkīb*) like the manufacture (*taʿlīf*) of a door or chair. On that account, Bar Shennāyā claims that the Jacobites and Melkites fail to grasp Christ’s complete indwelling.¹³⁵ When asked about the Nestorian position, Bar Shennāyā responds that his community confesses a union of volition (*mashīʿa*), as expressed in the statement ‘all who believed were one in spirit and mind’ (Acts 4:32); conjunction (*ittiṣāl*), invoking the Old Testament typology of a man leaving his parents to become one with his wife; and a personal union (*ittihād wajhī*), like the king and his minister (*nāʿib*) in command (*amr*), prohibition

¹³² Cheikho, ‘Majālis,’ 113.

¹³³ Ibn al-Muqlī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 249. Also, note similarities in wording between Cheikho, ‘Majālis,’ 112-113 (discussed above) and Ibn al-Muqlī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 2:252: *inna ḥulūla l-Bāriʿi fī l-basharīyyi lam yakun ḥulūla jismⁱⁿ wa-lā baʿdahu, li-annahū lā yanḥasiru fī makānⁱⁿ dūna makānⁱⁿ, wa-lā yatajazzaʿu wa-yatabaʿadu wa-yahsulu baʿduhu fī makānⁱⁿ ākhar.*

¹³⁴ Apart from Bar Kōnī, I have been unable to find these specific analogies in any other apologetic and systematic work of East Syrian provenance. See descriptions of the various types of union in Heimgartner, *Disputation mit dem Kalifen Al-Mahdī*, §§ 3.1-3.7; Putman, *L’Église sous Timothée*, §§ 21-37; al-Baṣrī, *Burhān*, 56-79; idem, *al-Masāʿil wa-l-ajwiba*, 178-265; Ibn Mattā, *Kitāb al-majdal*, 75a-75b; Ibn al-Muqlī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 1:239-245.

¹³⁵ Bar Shennāyā, *Majālis*, 171b (Delly, *La théologie d’Elie*, 87).

(*nahy*), and governance (*tadbīr*). It is only these modes of uniting, Bar Shennāyā reasons, that safeguard the distinct operations and identities of the two natures, that is, the transcendence of the divine and the createdness of the human, which, despite their being conjoined, are separate in all but will, flesh, and command.¹³⁶ Having driven this point home to al-Maghribī, the vizier expresses satisfaction with Bar Shennāyā's exposition of Christology, declaring that the monotheism of the Nestorians has been proven.¹³⁷

It is against this background of Theodoran-Antiochene thought and anti-Muslim apologetics that we must approach 'Abdīshō's Arabic Christology. We begin with his earliest known theological work in Arabic, his *Profession*. As we observed in the previous chapter, the text opens with a Trinitarian statement in language intended to affirm God's essential unity (examined in the previous chapter). Immediately afterwards, 'Abdīshō asserts that the Eternal Word is an expression (*ibāra*) of the Wise (*ḥakīm*), that is, the Incarnation occurred through the Sonship, 'one of the three hypostases (*aqānīm*).'¹³⁸ In so doing, he frames his discussion of Christology within the Trinitarian language of Christian Arabic apologetics, which had long striven to reconcile the doctrine of God's threeness with the Islamic conception of *tawḥīd*. Setting out from this premise, he states that the Word indwelled and united with the Assumed Man, and on that account the word 'Christ' encompasses two meanings (*ma'natayni*): Perfect Man and Perfect God in one Perfect Lord.¹³⁹ It then falls upon 'Abdīshō to define the way in which this union occurred. Employing categories that should be familiar to us from Bar Kōnī's *Scholion* and Bar Shennāyā's *Majālis*, our author lists five definitions of union: (i) union by mingling (*imtizāj*) like that of water and wine in diluted wine (*mizāj*), or vinegar and honey in syrup

¹³⁶ To this effect, Bar Shennāyā employs the syllogism: 'just as Zayd and 'Amrū are one in will, a man and a woman are one in flesh, and the king and his minister are one in command.' Bar Shennāyā, *Majālis*, 172a (Delly, *La théologie d'Elie*, 87-88).

¹³⁷ Bar Shennāyā, *Majālis*, 172b (Delly, *La théologie d'Elie*, 88): *Wa-l-ān qad ṣaḥḥa lī tawḥīdukum*.

¹³⁸ *Profession*, §13-14.

¹³⁹ *Profession*, §15-16.

(*sakanjabīn*); (ii) union by contiguity (*mujāwara*), as in the composition (*ta'liḥ*) of iron and wood in a door or a bed (*sarīr*); (iii) union by will (*irāda*) and volition (*mashī'a*), in the sense of Acts 4:32: 'All who believed were one in spirit and mind;' (iv) union by personality (*wajhiyya*), in the way that a king and his minister are one in command (*amr*) and injunction (*nahy*); (v) union by conjunction (*ittiṣāl*), in accordance with Gen. 2:24 and Mat. 19:6: 'A man should leave his father and mother to be joined with his wife, and they will become one flesh'—to which he adds a sixth: (vi) a union of honour (*waqār*) and dignity (*karāma*), in the sense of the union of God's Word (*kalām*) and Scripture (*muṣḥaf*).¹⁴⁰

Each of these modes of uniting is then ascribed to the three classical Christological opinions: the Jacobites maintain a union of mingling and mixture, in which the human and divine natures became one *qunūm* and nature (*jawhar*), while the Melkites endorse a union of contiguity and composition, in which Christ is two in nature but one in *qunūm*. As for his own Christology, 'Abdīshō' explains that

The confession of the Nestorians [*madhhab al-nasṭūriyya*]¹⁴¹ believes that the union occurred in the Christhood [*masha*], Sonship [*bunuwwa*], authority [*sulṭān*], and power [*qudra*—a Union of the will and volition, pleasure, honour and personality, so that the Eternal Word and the Assumed Man from Mary—which are two natures [*jawharān*], eternal [*azalī*] and temporal [*zamānī*], divine and human—became one Son and one Christ, in good pleasure, dignity, volition, will, and personality.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Profession*, §17-23.

¹⁴¹ *Al-mashāriqa* ('the Easterners') appears in Samir Khalil's edition (based on a 19th century witness, Ms. Mingana Syr. 112, 149b); however, the original term employed by the scribe seems to have been crossed out and 'corrected' by a different hand. An earlier witness to the text, MS. Cambridge Syr. Add. 3087 (17th century), has *al-madhhab al-nasṭūrī* in the first instance (85b) and *madhhab al-nasṭūr* in the second (89b). Similarly, another 19th century witness, Ms. Harvard, Houghton Library Syr. 52, gives us *madhhab al-nasṭūriyya* (72b) followed by *madhhab al-nasṭūr* (74a). Evidence from these additional manuscripts, therefore, make it likely though not absolutely certain that 'Nestorian' was the term that 'Abdīshō' originally applied, despite his earlier repudiation of it in his *Pearl* (discussed in Section 4.3.1).

¹⁴² *Profession*, §31-36.

Having established the three main interpretations of the Union, ‘Abdīshō’ briefly deconstructs the Christologies of the Jacobites and Melkites. The Jacobites’ singularity of natures and *qunūms*, he reasons, results in a Christ devoid of humanity, thereby voiding Christ’s Biblically attested human nature (*baṭalat al-dālla fī l-injīl ‘alā wujūdihi*).¹⁴³ Alternatively, the duality of natures is voided (*baṭalat al-ithnayniyya*), resulting in a *tertium quid* that is neither human nor divine (*fa-huwa idhan shay^{um} thālith^{um}, lā ilāh^{um} wa-lā insān^{um}*).¹⁴⁴ The Melkites, who, like the Nestorians, also profess two natures in Christ, face a similar problem posed by the single *qunūm*: if this *qunūm* were divine, then the human nature would be corrupted (*iḍmaḥalla*) and *vice versa*. Here, ‘Abdīshō’ invokes an Aristotelian understanding of *qunūm* as ‘the Primary Substance that indicates the reality of the general substance’ (*al-jawhar al-awwal al-dāll ‘alā ḥaqīqat wujūd al-‘āmm*).¹⁴⁵ In other words, if that which gives fixity to the existence of the natures’ realities is indistinguishable, then the operational functions and identities of Christ’s humanity and divinity cannot be meaningfully defined.¹⁴⁶ On account of these errors, ‘Abdīshō’ unequivocally denounces the Jacobite and Melkite positions as unbelief (*kufṛ*) and error (*ḍalāl*).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ *Profession*, §37-39.

¹⁴⁴ *Profession*, §40-41.

¹⁴⁵ *Profession*, §47-48. ‘Abdīshō’ refers to Aristotle by name (*kamā ḥaqqāqa Aristū*). Although he provides no further explanation, it is clear that our author refers to the discussion of substance in Aristotle’s *Categories*, though most Syro-Arabic translations that I am aware of do not employ the term *qnōmā/qunūm* in this context. See Khalil Georr, *Les Catégories d’Aristote dans leur versions syro-arabes* (Beirut: n.p., 1948), 256ff (Ar. text of Ishāq ibn Hunayn’s trans.) and 321ff (anon. Syr. text based on Mss. Paris syr. 354 [c. 1224] and 248 [1637]); Daniel King, *The Earliest Syriac Translation of Aristotle’s Categories: Text Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 101ff (based on BL Add, 14659, 6th century).

¹⁴⁶ I base my interpretation on the traditional East Syrian understanding of *qnōmā/qunūm*, which typically makes the distinction between that which is common or universal (i.e. nature) and that which is specific (i.e. *qnōmā*). The former—nature—is universal and can be predicated on another existent, while the latter—*qnōmā*—is singular and exists by virtue of itself (i.e. is not communicable), and thus it is the *qnōmā* that gives the nature its concrete reality. See Vaschalde, *Liber Unionis*, 159ff (ST), 129ff (LT); Abramowski and Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts*, 1:179-180, 2:106-108 (ET) ([Ps.] Nestorius); Bar Zō’bī, *Zāqōrā mlahḥmā*, in *Pearl*, ٥٥

The role of Aristotelianism in Late Antique Christology has been mentioned above concerning Babai’s conception of mixing. Its influence on East Syrian Christological thought has also been noted in passing by Daniel King in his valuable introduction to *The Earliest Syriac Translation*, 21, though there have been no systematic studies of this phenomenon’s later development. To better understand ‘Abdīshō’’s definition of *qnōmā*, we may turn once again to *mēmṛā* 6 of Theodore bar Kōnī’s *Scholion*. In response to question no. 7, concerning the difference between Aristotle’s Primary and Secondary substance, Theodore states that ‘Primary Substance (’ōsīyā qadmāytā) is, for example, a *qnōmā* among the *qnōmē* of man, while Secondary (*d-tartēyn*) is

Turning our attention now to the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, a work with a more explicit anti-Muslim agenda, we encounter a remarkable shift in the way ‘Abdīshō’ expresses intra-confessional difference. As in his *Profession*, he begins with a general definition of uniting as either (i) mingling and mixture, like syrup from honey (‘*asal*) and vinegar (*khall*), or medicine (*taryāq*) from its simples (*mufriḏāt*); (ii) contiguity and fabrication, like iron and wood in a door, or plaster and brick (*jiṣṣ wa-qirmīd*) in a house; (iii) conjunction, in accordance with Gen. 2:24 and Mat. 19:6; (iv) personality, like the king and his minister in command, prohibition and governance; (v) and will and volition, as in Acts 4:32.¹⁴⁸ For ‘Abdīshō’, these categories encapsulate ‘the essence of uniting in general’ (*māhiyyat al-ittiḥād ‘alā l-‘umūm*). As for its specific meaning (‘*alā l-khuṣūṣ*), it is on this issue that Christians are divided (*tadhahhaba*).¹⁴⁹ Before going into these divisions, however, it is worth noting that ‘Abdīshō’'s distinction between general and specific definitions of uniting closely follows the phraseology of the *Kitāb al-murshid* of Ibn Jarīr, a Jacobite *summa* composed some two centuries earlier, though it does not contain the same analogies.¹⁵⁰ However, whether this constitutes a direct textual reliance or simply a formulaic method of exposition is unclear to me.

In any case, as in his *Profession*, ‘Abdīshō’ assigns each of these modes of uniting to the three classical Christological positions: the Jacobites profess mingling and mixture, the Melkites contiguity and fabrication; and our author’s own community (whom he once again

the life (*ḥayyūtā*) that is in him/her. It is called [‘Primary’] because of its proximity (*qrībūtēh*) in sight (*ḥzātā*) and touch (*geshtā*). In effect, the *qnōmā* of Peter or Paul is closer in sensation (*rgeshtā*) than the life that is in them. Thus, the Primary [Substance] is more important, because without the Primary the Secondary would not exist.’ Bar Kōnī, *Scholion*, 2:7. Scher, *Liber scholiorum* (*Seert*), 27-8; Hespel and Draguet, *Scholies* (*Séert*), 2:4; Hespel, *Scholies* (*Urmiah*), 125. In Christological terms, the implication would be that without the corresponding *qnōmē* of Christ’s humanity and divinity, neither would exist.

¹⁴⁷ *Profession*, §43, 51.

¹⁴⁸ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 51a-53a.

¹⁴⁹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 52b.

¹⁵⁰ Note similarities between Ibn Jarīr, *Kitāb al-murshid*, 10b-11a (*ḥādhā huwa ma ‘nā l-ittiḥādi ‘alā l-wajhi l-‘umūmi, fa-ammā ‘alā l-khuṣūṣi, huwa maṣīru dhātīhi dhāt^{mn} wāḥid^{mn} ‘an dhātayni ... fa-yurādu bihi mā tadhahhaba ilayhi l-naṣārā fī l-sayyidi l-masīḥi ...*) and *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 51a-53a (*ḥādhā sharḥ^{mn} māhiyyatu l-ittiḥādi ‘alā l-‘umūmi. Wa-ammā ‘alā l-khuṣūṣi, wa-huwa l-ittiḥādu lladhī ilayhi tadhahhaba l-naṣārā ...*).

refers to as ‘Nestorian’) conjunction, personality, will, and volition. However, it is here that a major point of departure from the *Profession* emerges. Instead of refuting each of the two rival confessions, ‘Abdīshō‘ makes an unambiguous call to Christian unity:

For the sake of this book’s preciousness, the majesty of its value, and the nobility of its aims, [and] by way of brevity [*ft quṣārā amrihi*], we have not gone into distinguishing which of these confessions is wrong [*saqīm*] and which is right [*mustaqīm*], so that it [i.e. the book] does not become dependent [*mawqūf^m*] on one confession at the exclusion of another, nor benefit from one argument over another, since all [Christians] agree on its foundations [*uṣūl*] and agree on the soundness [*ṣihḥa*] of what has been discussed in its chapters. However, if a fair-minded knower [*al-‘arīf al-munṣif*] rejects the pursuit of capriciousness [*mutāba‘at al-hawā*] and partisanship [*‘aṣabiyya*],¹⁵¹ and balances words with reason and reflection, he will find that the difference between them is a matter of expressions and terms [*‘ibārāt wa-asāmī*], rather than the truth itself [*nafs al-ḥaqīqa*] and meanings [*ma‘ānin*], since the truth among them is one, despite the differing words and obstinacy [*mu‘ānada*] found within.¹⁵²

‘Abdīshō‘’s rejection of capriciousness (*hawā*) and partisanship (*‘aṣabiyya*) is hardly surprising in light of earlier writers who couched their ecumenism in strikingly similar terms. Ibn Yumn, a scholar in the circle of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (d. 974), asserted that the *‘ulamā*’ of the three main confessions ‘do not differ in the general sense (*ma‘nā*) of the union, even if they differ in expression (*‘ibāra*),’ attributing the cause of these differences to ‘competition and love of power’ (*ṭalb^m li-l-ghulba wa-ḥubb al-ri‘āsa*).¹⁵³ Another Christian author named ‘Alī ibn Dāwūd al-Arfādī (fl. 11th-12th century) wrote that, after witnessing disagreement (*ikhtilāf*) among Christians over the Union, he endeavoured to examine the matter without

¹⁵¹ *‘Aṣabiyya* in Classical Arabic would later take on a socio-historical dimension in the famous *Muqaddima* (‘Prolegomena’) of the *Kitāb al-‘Ibār* of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), for whom the term signified the *esprit de corps* of nomadic groups that enabled them to establish dynastic rule over a sedentary population, in a cyclical process of state formation and decline. Prior to this formulation, *‘aṣabiyya* more commonly carried a negative connotation of disunity and factionalism. See Muhsin Mahdī, *Ibn Khaldūn’s Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 164-182.

¹⁵² *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 53b-54a.

¹⁵³ Samir Khalil Samir, ‘Un traité du Cheikh Abū ‘Alī Nāzif ibn Yumn sur l’accord des chrétiens entre eux malgré leur désaccord dans l’expression,’ *MUSJ* 51 (1990): 329-343, §8.

capriciousness (*hawā*) and partisanship (*‘aṣabiyya*), and ‘found there to be no difference between them.’¹⁵⁴ Similarly, Yahyā Ibn Jarīr (d. 1104) states that he found all Christians to profess a single doctrine (*bi-madhhab wāḥid*), and that their differences were simply a matter of words not meaning (*ikhtilāfuhum lafẓiyy^{um} lā ma‘nawiyy^{um}*).¹⁵⁵ For his part, Ibn al-Ṭayyib refrains from condemning the Christologies of the Jacobites and Melkites in a brief Christological treatise, despite favouring his own Church’s Diophysitism.¹⁵⁶ The eighth chapter of the *Majmū‘ uṣūl al-dīn* of al-Mu’taman ibn al-‘Assāl, an older contemporary of ‘Abdīshō’, integrates the above-mentioned treatises of Ibn Yumn, al-Arfādī, and Ibn Ṭayyib in his *Majmū‘ uṣūl al-dīn*, perhaps hinting at his own ecumenical frame of mind.¹⁵⁷ A better known eschewal of partisanship comes from the *Ktābā d-yawnā* (‘Book of the Dove’) of Bar Hebraeus, who describes his mystical conversion in the following terms:

When I had reached the age of twenty, the then living Patriarch compelled me to receive the dignity of a bishop. Then it was inevitable for me to engage myself in disputations and refutations [*drāshē u-hāpkātā d-mellē*] against the heads of other confessions, interior and exterior. And when I had given my thoughts and meditations to this matter for some time, I became convinced that these quarrels of Christians among themselves are not a matter of facts but of words and labels [*mellē u-kunnāyē*]. For all of them confess Christ, our Lord, to be wholly God and wholly man. This bilateral likeness is called by some nature [*kyānā*], by others *qnōmā*, by others person [*paršōpā*]. And thus I saw all Christian peoples, notwithstanding these differences, possessing one, unvarying equality [*shawūtā lā mshahlaptā*]. And I wholly

¹⁵⁴ Edition and trans. in Gérard Troupeau, ‘Le Livre de l’Unanimité de la Foi de ‘Alī ibn Dāwud al-Arfādī,’ *Melto* 2 (1969): 197-219, §6, reprinted in *Etudes sur le christianisme arabe au Moyen Age* (Farnham: Variorum, 1995), VIII. This passage is discussed by Teule, ‘It is not Right...,’ 14. The same work is preserved in al-Mu’taman’s Ibn al-‘Assāl’s *Majmū‘ uṣūl al-dīn* (ch. 8, § 103ff), who is identified as both ‘Alī ibn Dāwūd and Elias Bishop of Jerusalem, a Nestorian writer, on whom see *GCAL* 2:132-134.

¹⁵⁵ Ibn Jarīr, *Kitāb al-murshid*, 11a.

¹⁵⁶ Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Ta‘dīd arā’ al-naṣārā*, 8: § 255: *lā nuḥtāju ilā l-taṣaffuḥ al-madhāhib wa-lā l-naẓar fī ṣiḥḥat al-ḥujaj wa-saqamihā*.

¹⁵⁷ On these three authors, see *Majmū‘*, ch. 8: § 93-101; 103-125; 127-255.

eradicated the root of hatred from the depth of my heart and I absolutely forsook disputation with anyone concerning doctrine.¹⁵⁸

Given ‘Abdīshō’'s polemical stance against rival Christologies in the *Pearl* and *Profession*, his more irenic attitude in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* is all the more remarkable. This did not mean, however, that he no longer valued his own community’s Christological lore. For elsewhere in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, he utilises the same Antiochene-Theodoran formulae encountered in the *Profession*, declaring that ‘God fashioned the Assumed Man (*al-basharī al-ma’khūdh*) from the Holy Spirit inside the womb of the Pure Virgin, and the Eternal Word came to dwell in it (*hallat f̄hi*), uniting with it in a union of will (*irāda*), personality (*wajhiyya*), power (*qudra*), good pleasure (*riḍā*), and volition (*mashī’a*).’¹⁵⁹ It is possible that by the time ‘Abdīshō’ wrote his *Uṣūl al-dīn* in 1302/3, he, like Bar Hebraeus, had come to see that the age-old rivalries over Christology were simply a matter of words. Yet given the explicit apologetic agenda of the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, it is equally probable that he no longer deemed it necessary to dwell on inter-confessional differences in order to defend the reasonableness of Christianity to Muslims.

A less explicitly relativist approach to intra-Christian differences is taken in ‘Abdīshō’'s *Farā’id*. As in his *Profession* and *Uṣūl al-dīn*, he provides a general definition of uniting through almost identical analogies: (i) mingling and mixing, like wine and water, or honey and vinegar in syrup; (ii) contiguity and fabrication, like wood and iron in the construction of a door or a couch; (iii) conjunction, as in Gen. 2:24 and Mat. 19:6; (iv) will and volition, as occurs in Acts 4:32; (v) personality, like the union of king and minister; and

¹⁵⁸ Paul Bedjan (ed.), *Ethicon, seu Moralia Gregorii Barhebraei* (Paris: Otto Harrassowitz, 1898), 577-578. My trans. is adapted from A.J. Wensink, *Bar Hebraeus’s Book of the Dove, Together with Some Chapters from the Ethicon* (Leiden: Brill, 1919), 60.

¹⁵⁹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 47a-48b.

(vi) dignity (*karāma*) and honour, like the union of God’s Word and Scripture.¹⁶⁰ In a rather unanticipated turn, however, ‘Abdīshō’ adds a seventh:

The union of illumination [*ishrāq*] and effect [*ta’thīr*], as in the union of light and translucent jewels [*al-jawāhir al-ṣāfiyya*]; or like their saying [*ka-qawlihim*] about the translucency [*ṣafā’*] of glass and wine: ‘It was as if it were wine, not a drinking glass, and a drinking glass, not wine’ [*fa-ka-annahu khamr^{um} wa-lā qadaḥ^{um}, wa-ka-annahu qadaḥ^{um} wa-lā khamr^{um}*].¹⁶¹

By ‘Abdīshō’’s time, such analogies involving the illumination of reflective substances had long featured in Syriac ascetical contexts, and are especially characteristic of East Syrian monastic writers between the 7th and 8th centuries. As Sebastian Brock has shown, Dādīshō’ of Qatar, Simon Ṭaybūthēh, and John of Dalyāthā all spoke of the image of the divine being reflected in a ‘mirror’ located deep within the soul.¹⁶² According to John of Dalyāthā, Jesus’s mind (*hawnā*) functioned in this way, making God’s invisible essence accessible to him.¹⁶³ Later East Syrian writers would utilise similar imagery to illustrate how Christ’s two natures subsisted as two distinct yet inseparably bound realities, though this time in systematic theologies as opposed to ascetical tracts. The catholicos Elias II ibn al-Muqlī, for instance, affirms his Church’s anti-Theopaschitism by likening the Union to ‘the conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) of the sun’s light and the translucency of a clear pearl (*ṣafā’ al-lu’lu’ al-naqiyya*); for if it cracks or breaks, the light is undamaged by its breaking.’¹⁶⁴ This precise metaphor—which

¹⁶⁰ *Farā’id*, § 348-354.

¹⁶¹ *Farā’id*, § 355. The saying about glass and wine will be identified and discussed below.

¹⁶² Sebastian P. Brock, ‘The Imagery of the Spiritual Mirror in Syriac Literature,’ *JCSSS* 5 (2005): 3-17, here 10-15, quoting René Draguet (ed. and tr.), *Commentaire du Livre d’Abba Isaie (Logoi I-XV) par Dadisho Qatraya (VIIe s.)* (CSCO 144-5; Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1972), §7:14; Alphonse Mingana (ed. and tr.), *Early Christian Mystics (WS 7)*; Cambridge: Heffer, 1934), 60-6 (ST), 314-315 (ET) and 35 (ST), 298 (ET); D. Miller (tr.), *The Ascetical Homilies of Isaac of Nineveh* (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984), 403, 405, 414-415, 420, 422; Robert Beulay (ed. and tr.), *La collection des lettres de Jean de Dalyatha (PO 39, fasc. 3)*; Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), Letters 14, 15:1, and 28:2.

¹⁶³ Mary Hanbury (ed. and tr.), *The Letters of John of Dalyatha* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2006), §2, 3, 19, discussed in Treiger, ‘al-Ghazālī’s “Mirror Christology”,’ 709-710.

¹⁶⁴ Ibn al-Muqlī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 1:218.

signifies how the agent of change (the divine nature) is unaffected by the subject of change (the human nature)—features in ‘Abdīshō’s *Paradise of Eden*. In an acrostic poem on the Trinity and Incarnation, our author cites unnamed authorities who claim that the ‘splendour of the sphere of the [divine] essence’ was reflected in a mirror (*maḥzītā*) fashioned from man’s nature, rendering it visible.¹⁶⁵ In a gloss to these verses, he unpacks this metaphor by explaining that a polished mirror (*maḥzītā mrīqtā*) is illumined by the light without change entering into the sun; and if the mirror were to break, no damage would be done to the sun. ‘In like manner,’ he concludes, ‘the divinity united with the humanity, with no pain entering into it by the sufferings of the humanity.’¹⁶⁶ The same argument re-emerges in the *Pearl* and *Uṣūl al-dīn*, though this time featuring the metaphor of light shining onto a precious jewel.¹⁶⁷

But to whom precisely does ‘Abdīshō’ refer when he speaks of the transparency of wine and glass (quoted in the above passage)? Although no further indication is given by our author, the expression is traceable to the famous Buwayhid statesman and litterateur Sāhib ibn ‘Abbād (d. 995), who is recorded by the 13th century biographer Ibn Khallikān as having produced the following lines of verse:

1. *Raqqā l-zujāju wa-raqqati l-khamru // wa-tashābahā fa-tashākala l-amru*
2. *Fa-ka-annamā khamr^{um} lā qadaḥu // wa-ka-annamā qadaḥ^{um} wa-lā khamru*

1. [So] fine was the glass and the wine // that the two resembled one another and seemed one.
2. It was as if it were wine and not a drinking glass, // and a drinking glass, not wine.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ De Kelaita, *Pardaysā*, ٤٠: *Ṣemḥā d-’espīr ’ūtūtā // ’mar[w] d-’ettsīr maḥzītā // da-ḥshal men kyān [’]nāshūtā // qdām bābātā da-mhāwnē*.

¹⁶⁶ De Kelaita, *Pardaysā*, ٤٠-٤١. Trans. adapted from Winnet, *Paradise of Eden*, 22.

¹⁶⁷ *Pearl*, ٤٤; *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 54b. We will return to this theme in more detail below, in Section 4.4.3.

¹⁶⁸ Shams al-Dīn ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān wa-anbā’ abnā’ al-zamān* (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1968-1972), 1:§92.

Interestingly, the above imagery features in the thought of some Ṣūfī thinkers of ‘Abdīshō’s time such as Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī (d. 1287), who employed it to convey a sense of unification with the Beloved.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, the ‘polished mirror’ as metaphor for the limpidity of the soul and its receptiveness to the divine Reality features in the works of al-Ghazālī (discussed above) and Jalāl al-dīn al-Rūmī (d. 1273).¹⁷⁰ It is tempting, therefore, to see ‘Abdīshō’s use of such motifs as a means of commending the Christian doctrine of Incarnation to Muslims through an appeal to Ṣūfism. However, while some Muslims believed it possible to receive visions of the divine, most would not have defined this as *actual* unification.¹⁷¹ Al-Ghazālī cites Ibn ‘Abbād’s wine verses several times to demonstrate the delusion of Ṣūfīs like Ḥallāj and Bisṭāmī who claimed unification in moments of spiritual rapture and theophany.¹⁷² Two centuries later, Ibn Taymiyya would cite them in a similar context in his polemic against Ibn ‘Arabī.¹⁷³ As Carl Ernst has noted, other poetic expressions relating to wine from al-Ḥallāj’s own *Diwān* were also criticised by Ibn Taymiyya ‘because they seemed to imply a semi-Christian doctrine of incarnation’ (*ḥulūl*).¹⁷⁴

Yet even Ṣūfīs who espoused some form of unificationism did so with all the caveats that such a phenomenon was in no sense literal. Al-Ghazālī concedes in his *Mishkāṭ al-anwār*

¹⁶⁹ Fakhr al-dīn al-‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, tr. William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson (London: SPCK, 1982), 82.

¹⁷⁰ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (ed. and tr.) *The Mathnawī of Jalāl ud-dīn Rūmī*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Nashr-i Būta, 2002), books 1:384-385 and 2:2909-2910, noted in passing by Brock, *The Imagery of the Spiritual Mirror*, 13, no. 26. See also Serafim Sepälä, *In Speechless Ecstasy: Expression and Interpretation of Mystical Experience in Classical Syriac and Sufi Literature* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2003), esp. 310-317 for some thoughtful parallels between the Syriac mystical and Ṣūfī traditions concerning divine manifestation (though no mention is made of mirror imagery or Christology).

¹⁷¹ On this issue generally, see Nile Green, ‘The Religious and Cultural Roles of Dreams and Visions in Islam,’ *JRAS* 13, no. 3 (2003): 287-313, esp. 294-299.

¹⁷² See al-Ghazālī, *Maqṣad*, 166; idem, *Iḥyā’*, 1:187, 2:411; *Mi’rāj al-sālikīn*, in *Majmū‘at rasā’il al-imām al-Ghazālī*, ed. Ibrāhīm Amīn Muḥammad (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tawfiqīyya, n.d.), 4, 85; idem, *The Niche of Lights*, ed. and tr. David Buchman (Provo, U.T.: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), Part 1, §47, cited in Treiger, ‘al-Ghazālī’s “Mirror Christology”’, 702. See also Quasem, ‘al-Ghazālī’s evaluation of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī,’ 153.

¹⁷³ Taqī al-Dīn ibn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd al-aqṣam ‘alā mā fī Kitāb fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, in *Majmū‘at rasā’il shaykh al-islām Ibn Taymiyya* (Cairo: n.p., 1365/1946), 46, quoted in Ritter, *The Ocean of the Soul*, 425.

¹⁷⁴ Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 27, citing the verses: ‘Your spirit was mixed in my Spirit, just as wine and clear water, and if something touches You, it touches me, for you are I in every state’ and ‘Praise be to Him whose humanity manifested the secret of the splendour of this radiant divinity, and who then appeared openly to his people in the form of one who eats and drinks!’

(‘Niches of Light’) that the state in which the seeker reaches annihilation may be called ‘unification’ only metaphorically (*bi-lisān al-majāz ittiḥād*).¹⁷⁵ Similarly, Ibn ‘Arabī believed that the term *ittiḥād* could be applied as a metaphor to a specific state in which the worshipper ceases to distinguish God’s actions from his own.¹⁷⁶ Unification in the ontological sense, however, was impossible according to Ibn ‘Arabī, because ‘if each essence existed at the time of unification (*fī ḥāl al-ittiḥād*), then they would be two essences.’¹⁷⁷ This understanding of unification was upheld by later Ṣūfī authorities, namely ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 1330), Ibn ‘Arabī’s foremost commentator in ‘Abdīshō’s lifetime.¹⁷⁸ Other influential Ṣūfīs of the age also held the impossibility of union in any real sense, among them a critic of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings, ‘Alā’ al-Dawlā Simnānī (d. 1336), for whom the ecstatic utterances of al-Ḥallāj and Bisṭāmī resembled the Christian error of divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*).¹⁷⁹ As Jamal Elias has observed, Simnānī attempted to ‘remove the possibility of divine indwelling in a created entity by incorporating a system of mirror imagery within his scheme of emanation.’¹⁸⁰ By viewing divine manifestation through a ‘mirror’ (*maẓhar*), the

¹⁷⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, § 48, cited in Sepälä, *In Speechless Ecstasy*, 279.

¹⁷⁶ For this understanding of *ittiḥād*, see Muḥyī l-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, ed. ‘Uthmān Yahyā, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 2:31, 322, 4:71, cited in Angela Jaffray’s commentary to Muḥyī l-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī, *The Universal Tree and the Four Birds*, ed. and tr. Angela Jaffray (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2006), 54-55. See also idem, *Kitāb al-masā’il*, ed. Muḥammad Dāmādī (Tehran: Mu’assasah-i Muṭāla’āt va Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1370/1991), 29-30, quoted in Su’ād Ḥakīm, *al-Mu’jam al-ṣūfī* (Beirut: Dandara li-l-Ṭibā’a wa-l-Nashr, 1401/1981), 1180-1181; Muḥyī l-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Abū l-‘Alā’ ‘Afīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabīyy, n.d.), 89 on the distinction (*farq*) between the gnostic (‘*ārīf*) and the divine during moments of ecstatic realisation.

¹⁷⁷ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Kitāb al-masā’il*, 29.

¹⁷⁸ See ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, *Kitāb sharḥ ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī ‘alā Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam li-Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī* (Cairo: al-Maṭba’a al-Maymaniyya, 1321/1903), 91. See also idem, *Iṣṭilḥāt al-ṣūfīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Alī Shāhīn (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1413/1992), 49 on the definition of *ittiḥād* as ‘the witnessing (*shuhūd*) of the Unique and Absolute Truth (*wujūd al-Ḥaqq al-Wāḥid al-Muṭlaq*), as opposed to ‘something with an existence of its own becoming united with It, for this is absurd’ (*lā min ḥaythu annā lahu wujūd^{am} khāṣ^{am} ittaḥida bihi, fa-huwa muḥāl*).

¹⁷⁹ On Simnānī’s views towards the Christian doctrine of Incarnation and the dangers of ecstatic utterances during mystical intoxication, see Henry Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, tr. Nancy Pearson (New Lebanon, N.Y.: Omega Publications, 1994), 127-130.

¹⁸⁰ Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ‘Alā’ ad-dawla [sic] as-Simnānī* (New York: SUNY Press, 1995), 61.

gnostic is able to recognise a figurative, not definitive (as the Christians would have it), unification with the divine essence.¹⁸¹

Thus, rather than seeing ‘Abdīshō’'s discussion of illumination and transparency as a direct appeal to any Muslim understanding of *ittihād*, it is likelier that our author articulates the mystery of the Incarnation through a common literary lexicon for expressing proximity to the divine, or what Marshall Hodgson terms a ‘lettered tradition ... naturally shared in by both Muslims and non-Muslims.’¹⁸² Although reliant upon this lexicon, however, Muslims and Christians ultimately subscribed to incommensurable notions of divine union: while some members of the former group held to an imagined union between God and creation, the latter maintained that the union of God with Christ was real in every sense. It is remarkable nonetheless that ‘Abdīshō’ applies a Classical Arabic poetic expression to the *Farā'id*'s discussion of illumination, and adds it to a list of Christological analogies that had been in development since the time of Theodore bar Kōnī (fl. late 8th century)—thus attesting to the dynamism of this genre of theological exposition.

‘Abdīshō’ was by no means the first to recognise the potential of Arabic literary topoi in the articulation of Christology. Khāmīs bar Qardāḥē (fl. 1280s) adapted the Arabic genre of wine verse (*khamriyyāt*) to Syriac poetry about the Eucharist and other theological subjects, as David Taylor has shown.¹⁸³ More germane here is an example by the West Syrian Patriarch of Antioch John bar Ma‘danī (d. 1263). The last two stanzas of his poem on the Incarnation call to mind Ibn ‘Abbād’s imagery about the transparency of glass and wine beneath the sun’s rays:

¹⁸¹ Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 62.

¹⁸² Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 1:58.

¹⁸³ Taylor, ‘Your Saliva is the Living Wine,’ 41, citing Shlīmōn Īshō‘ Khōshābā (ed.), *Khāmīs bar Qardāḥē: Mē`mrē u-mushḥātē* (Nohadra, Iraq: Prīsātā da-Nṣībīn, 2002), 203-204. For earlier examples of Syriac poetry featuring Eucharistic wine imagery that predates the Arabic genre of *khamriyyāt*, see Sebastian S.P. Brock, ‘Sobria Ebrietas According to Some Syriac Texts,’ *ARAM* 17 (2005): 185-191.

1. *Denḥē b-kāsā šār [ʿ]rāzē da-ḥdāyūtā // d-ḥad hū gawnā da-trēn gushmīn b-naṣīḥūtā*
2. *Kāsā d-ḥamrā u-ḥamrā d-kāsā d-lā sdīqūtā // Kad wa-nṭīr [h]u shū[w]dā ʿ kyānē d-lā blīlūtā.*

1. Shining through the cup, it depicts mysteries of the Union, // for the two bodies share one brilliant, identical colour:
2. the cup that of the wine, and the wine that of the cup // yet the distinction of their natures is preserved and unconfused.¹⁸⁴

Returning now to the *Farāʿid* and its section on the Union, we find that ‘Abdīshōʿ refrains from attacking rival Christologies, albeit in a less explicit fashion than in his *Uṣūl al-Dīn*. Once enumerating the above outlined modes of union, he states that Christians are divided (*tabarrā*) over the first three categories,¹⁸⁵ that is, (i) mingling and mixture, (ii) contiguity and fabrication, and (iii) conjunction. However, he then goes on to state that the Incarnation is expressed by all Christians through the four remaining categories:¹⁸⁶ (iv) will and volition; (v) personality; (vi) dignity and honour; (vii) illumination and effect. Remarkably, ‘Abdīshōʿ is prepared to cite these latter four categories—so steeped in the East Syrian Christological tradition—as points of accord among the three main confessions. This is perhaps the result of non-Nestorian authorities who were prepared to discuss Christology in like fashion, such as we have seen from Bar Maʿdanī’s use of illumination as an analogy for the Incarnation. We may also add that the uniting of will and volition is discussed in Bar Hebraeus’s *Candelabrum*, where he explains that the union of will (*ḥdāyūtā d-ṣebyānā*) in Christ occurred only metaphorically (*ʿashiltā ba-shmā balḥūd*), since it was conducted through a duality (*trēynāyūt*) of mutual wills. To this end he cites a liturgical hymn (*ʿonītā*) by Narsai,

¹⁸⁴ Yuḥannā Dolabani (ed.), *Mēʿmrē u-mushḥātā d-sīmīn l-Mār Yōḥannān bar Maʿdanī patriyarkā*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Maṭbaʿ tā d-Dayrā d-Mār[y] Marqōs, 1980), 42, translated by Taylor, *Your Saliva is the Living Wine*.

¹⁸⁵ Note that my reading differs considerably from that in Paša’s edition and translation of the *Farāʿid* (§356). Here, he renders *tabarrā* (found in the oldest ms. of the complete text, Paris ar. 206, 35a) *tabarraʿa*, which he translates as ‘they disown’ (presumably as in ‘they disavow’), i.e. ‘they disavow the first three types of union.’ Paša provides no explanation in his critical apparatus for his transcription, which, in my view, radically alters and distorts the nature of ‘Abdīshōʿ’ s argument (see *infra*).

¹⁸⁶ *Farāʿid*, §356.

‘Doctor of the Nestorians,’ stating that it is permissible to speak of the two as one, so long as their distinctions (*purshānayhōn*) are not forgotten, just as it is permissible to say: ‘I love the two with one love: the Son of God and the Son of Man in one Person.’¹⁸⁷

Unlike the *Profession* and the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, ‘Abdīshō’¹⁸⁸’s *Farā’id* is silent about which Christian group professes which Christology: immediately after offering a general definition of uniting through the above analogies, he swiftly turns to a discussion of the Incarnation’s ontological necessity (*fī haqīqat wujūbihi*)—thereby implying that he is more concerned with defending the doctrine *per se* than dwelling on inter-confessional differences.¹⁸⁸ It is here that the *Farā’id*’s anti-Muslim apology begins in earnest, which we shall now address in the following sections of this chapter.

4.4. The Incarnation between Reason and Revelation

Having so far discussed the various ways ‘Abdīshō’ negotiates inter-confessional differences through Christology, we now turn to his defence of the Incarnation against non-Christian attacks. Much of his apology focuses on the the Incarnation as part of God’s economy in the salvation of humankind. In Section 4.2 we noted the claim by Muslim and Jewish polemicists that the doctrine of Incarnation insulted and compromised God’s transcendence as a unitary being. ‘Abdīshō’ implicitly addresses this criticism by arguing that God’s appearance in human form was a necessary act of direct intervention in humankind’s affairs. Such divine condescension was necessary if humans were to participate in his humanity for the sake of their salvation. These arguments are framed within an exegetical retelling of the Biblical

¹⁸⁷ Khoury, *Candélabre: Quatrième Base*, 148-151. Cf. Alphonse Mingana (ed.), *Narsai Doctoris Syri: Homiliae et Carmina* (Mosul: Typis Fratrum Praedicatorum, 1905), 10-11. It is also noteworthy that Bar Hebraeus sought inspiration for his spiritual works from Isaac Nineveh and John of Dalyāthā, two East Syrian writers who from the 12th had been incorporated into West Syrian monastic compilations. See Herman G.B. Teule, ‘Christian Spiritual Sources in Bar Hebraeus’ *Ethicon* and The Book of the Dove,’ *JECrSt* 60, no. 1-4 (2008): 333-354, here 342-343, 343-344.

¹⁸⁸ *Farā’id*, 357.

story of Christ in the form of a parable which places at its centre the necessity of God's guidance of humankind towards divine justice.

I argue in this section that the language of 'Abdīshō's parable resonates with various aspects of Muslim *kalām*, perhaps with the intention of garnering respectability for the doctrine of Incarnation. However, nowhere does our author directly refer to such criticisms or doctrines—in stark contrast to his older contemporary Bar Hebraeus, who, in the fourth 'base' of his *Candelabrum* addresses Muslim challenges head on. Among them is the claim that the Qur'ān's rejection of the Incarnation is vindicated by the miraculous inimitability of its Arabic diction.¹⁸⁹ In response, the maphrian cites by name Muslim scholars such as Abū 'Uthmān al-Jāhiz, al-Ghazālī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī against the Qur'ān as an evidentiary miracle.¹⁹⁰ In what follows I show that 'Abdīshō' does not attempt to tackle Muslim objections by engaging with them specifically. Instead, he creatively repackages the arguments of earlier apologists by appealing to a literary and theological language understood by both Muslims and Christians. Many of these arguments arose from earlier debates with Muslims but would gradually make their way into a rich and ever-expanding canon of systematic theology, mediated by 'Abdīshō' in order to produce a comprehensive apology for the Incarnation.

4.4.1. The Incarnation as Divine Justice

When posing the hypothetical question of why it was necessary for God to incarnate Himself as Christ to save humankind, the answer usually provided by medieval Christian apologists

¹⁸⁹ Khoury, *Candélabre: Quatrième Base*, 110, 112 (ST), 111, 113 (FT).

¹⁹⁰ Khoury, *Candélabre: Quatrième Base*, 118, 120 (ST), 119, 121 (FT). The argument is repeated in Bar Hebraeus's *Ktābā d-zalgē* ('Book of Rays'); see François Nau, 'Deux textes de Bar Hébraeus sur Mahomet et le Qoran,' *JA* 211 (1927): 311-329, here 318-323. For a summary of the argument, see Griffith, 'Disputes with Muslims,' 270-271; see also Barbara Roggema, 'Ibn Kammūna's and Ibn al-'Ibrī's Responses to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Proofs of Muḥammad's Prophethood,' in *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 2 (2014): 193-213.

was that God did so out of benevolence and generosity. As ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī explains, God does nothing vainly (*‘abath^{an} bi-lā ma‘nā*); His incarnation, therefore, must have been motivated by His benevolence (*jūd*), generosity (*karam*), and omnipotence (*jabrūt*).¹⁹¹ Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī provides a similar line of reasoning when stating that God’s unwillingness or inability to unite with Christ’s humanity would imply meanness (*bukhl*) on His part; but because the attribute of meanness is at variance with what is known of His essence, it must have been His benevolence (*jūd*) that necessitated the Union.¹⁹² Throughout the 13th century Christian apologists such as Paul of Antioch, Paul al-Būshī, and Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Assāl continued to see the Incarnation as the ultimate expression of God’s benevolence towards creation.¹⁹³

In accordance with earlier writers, ‘Abdīshō‘ affirms the principle that benevolence was the primary motive for God’s incarnation. He demonstrates this in his *Pearl* and *Uṣūl al-dīn* by employing what Barbara Roggema has identified in Melkite apologies as ‘king parables.’¹⁹⁴ A pertinent example comes from the *Kitāb al-burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra’s (fl. ca. 10th century) in which he provides a parable (*mathal*) of a king who goes incognito among his people in order to improve their affairs. In summary, a royal servant rebels against the king and leads his subjects in revolt. Not wishing to alarm his subjects into obedience, the king decides to conceal his identity (*an yastatira ‘an jamī‘ al-‘abīd*) and disguise himself as a commoner for the sake of those wishing to be saved from the wickedness of his former servant. By means of this deception (*iḥṭiyāl*), the king is able to reform his subjects and

¹⁹¹ Al-Baṣrī, *al-Masā’il wa-l-ajwiba*, 215.

¹⁹² Périer, ‘Petits traités,’ 69-72. Note also that in his edition of the text, Périer erroneously corrects *wujūb al-ta’annus* in the title of Ibn ‘Adī’s treatise to *wujūd al-ta’annus*, which has been refuted by Samir Khalil Samir, ‘The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity,’ in *Christian Arabic Apologetics During the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir and Jørgen S. Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 57-114, here 74, n. 56.

¹⁹³ Khoury, *Paul d’Antioche*, §§61-63 (cf. Ebied and Thomas, §§61-63); al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl, *al-Kalām al-ittihād ayd^{an} fī wujūb al-ta’annus*, in *Majmū‘*, ch. 23, §9; al-Būshī, *Maqāla fī l-tathlūth wa-tajassud*, §§87-93.

¹⁹⁴ Barbara Roggema, ‘*Hikāyāt amthāl wa asmār... : King Parables in Melkite Apologetic Literature*,’ in *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage in Honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I. at the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Rifaat Ebied and Herman Teule (Peeters: Leuven, 2004), 113-131.

expose the injustice of the rebellious servant.¹⁹⁵ A similar parable occurs in a literary Christian-Muslim debate of Melkite provenance that takes place in 1217 between a monk named George and the Ayyūbid governor al-Malik al-Mushammar, son of the famous Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. During one session of the disputation, the latter wishes to know why it was necessary for God to suffer the humiliations of Christ in order to save humankind when he could have done so in a less laborious way.¹⁹⁶ In reply, the monk offers a parable similar to the one in Peter of Bayt Ra's's *Kitāb al-burhān*.¹⁹⁷ Another early 13th century apology by a Melkite named Gerasimus (about whom little else is known) lists an objection by a Muslim who asks why it was necessary for God to incarnate Himself. Gerasimus responds with yet another king parable, similar to those of Peter of Bayt Ra's and George the monk.¹⁹⁸

Aside from the obvious Gospel precedent (Jesus himself used parables), Roggema has convincingly shown that the development of this apologetic strategy was closely tied to the Christian interpretation of such Qur'ānic passages as Q. 42:51: 'God does not speak to humans except from behind a veil'; Q. 24:35: 'God presents examples (*amthāl*) to the people'; Q. 4:172: 'Christ would not disdain to be a servant (*lan yastankifa l-Masīḥ an yakūna 'abd^{an}*'); and Q 3:54: 'God is the best of devisers' (*khayr al-mākirīn*).¹⁹⁹ Thus, king

¹⁹⁵ Paul Cachia (ed.) and Montgomery Watt (tr.), *Eutychius of Alexandria: The Book of the Demonstration (Kitāb al-burhān)*, 2 vols. (Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1961-2), 2:§§238-239. Although attributed by the editors to Eutychius of Alexandria, the work has since been shown to belong to Peter of Bayt Ra's; see Samir Khalil Samir, 'La littérature Melkite sous les premiers Abbasides,' *OCP* 56 (1990): 469-486, here 482-484.

¹⁹⁶ Barbara Roggema ('King Parables,' 129) expresses doubt about whether such a question was ever asked by a Muslim critic of Christianity, and that its occurrence in the *Disputation* was 'merely to facilitate a further explanation of the rightfulness of the defeat of Satan.' While this assumption might be correct from the narrative perspective of the author of the *Disputation*, we have noted in Section 4.2 that medieval Muslim polemicists had indeed asked why Christians believed the elaborateness of God's redemptive mission to be necessary.

¹⁹⁷ Paul Carali (ed.), *Le Christianisme et l'Islam. Controverse attribuée au moine Georges du Couvent de St. Simeon* (Beit Chebab: Imprimerie al-Alam, 1933), 423-426.

¹⁹⁸ Abjar Bahkou (ed. and tr.), *Defending Christian Faith: The Fifth Part of the Christian Apology of Gerasimus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), §§188-192, 214-240. Gerasimus offers additional analogies for why it was that God condescended to man, namely, the horseman who is obliged to dismount in order to keep up with those travelling on foot, and the boatman who must undress and dive into the water in order to teach someone how to swim. Bahkou, *Defending Christian Faith*, §§108-110. See also idem, 'Kitāb al-kāfi fī al-m'anā al-šāfi The Complete Book of the Proper Meaning: The Christian Apology of Gerasimus,' *PdIO* 34 (2009): 309-343, here 329.

¹⁹⁹ Roggema, 'King Parables,' 130.

parables functioned to help a Christian audience understand key aspects of the Incarnation, on the one hand, while justifying the doctrine to hypothetical Muslim critics, on the other.

It is in a similar vein that ‘Abdīshō’ sets out his salvation history. He begins a section of the *Pearl* on ‘the Christian dispensation’ (*‘al mdabbrānūtā krestyānītā*) by stating that God’s justice (*kē’nūtā*) is a universal benefit to humankind (*tābtā [h]y l-gāwā da-bnaynāshā*), which necessitated His sending of the Prophets to entice his servants away from sin and the worship of idols.²⁰⁰ Since the Prophets were to repeatedly fail in their task, God was left no other choice but to directly intercede in their affairs in order to reform them—a point he makes with the following analogy:

Like a king who sends many emissaries [*‘izgādē*] to dispense his affairs and to reform those who would be reconciled to him, if these [emissaries] should be overcome due to [their] weakness and inability to effect [the king’s commands], he goes in person [*ba-qnōmēh*] to that country to reform [them].²⁰¹

However, the question remains: why was it necessary for God to assume human form in order to carry out this redemptive mission? ‘Abdīshō’’s answer is that ‘because God is invisible (*lā methazzyānā*) to man, if He were to appear to created beings, all of Creation would be destroyed by the splendour of His light’ (*zahrā d-nuhrā*).²⁰² In this way our author attempts to provide a response—albeit implicit—to potential critics who might ask why God could not have carried out his redemptive mission in a less elaborate way. It is also this understanding of the Incarnation that underpins ‘Abdīshō’’s interpretation of Jn 1:14: ‘The Word became flesh and made its dwelling among us.’²⁰³

²⁰⁰ *Pearl*, ٧

²⁰¹ *Pearl*, ٧

²⁰² *Pearl*, ٧

²⁰³ *Pearl*, ٧: ‘For this reason He took for Himself (*nsab lēh*) a man for His dwelling (*la-‘murryēh*), and to make him His temple. He united His divinity to the mortal being (*bar kyānā māyōtā*), in an eternal and inseparable

The *Farā'id* offers a similarly brief salvation history, from Creation to the time of the Prophets and, eventually, the Incarnation, though without recourse to parable.²⁰⁴ It is in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* that a far more elaborate version of the parable appears, forming part of a lengthy discourse on the purposefulness of God's action. Recalling the attribute apology of his Trinitarian writings (discussed in Chapter Three), 'Abdīshō' asserts that God does not create out of a desire for compensation, reward, or anything lacking in His essence. Rather, the motivating reason (*al-sabab al-dā'ir*) for His creation was none other than His benevolence (*jūd*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*).²⁰⁵ As such, the Incarnation was part—and indeed the outcome—of a broader salvation history:

It is uncharacteristic of wisdom and benevolence to neglect the improvement [*ṣalāḥ*] of the existent. Thus, His providence [*ināyatuhu*] in creation must be [a matter of] eternal favour [*dā'imat al-alṭāf*] and manifest advantage and assistance [*zāhirat al-aṣlāḥ wa-l-as'āf*].²⁰⁶ Whoever examines the affairs of man [*aḥwāl al-bashar*] [finds that] He aids them against adversities [*addād*] for their benefit [*'alā maṣāliḥihim*] by Divine Decree [*al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar*], and sustains them in a world overflowing with evil, and guides them to resist all evil with that which averts its perilous harm [*bi-mā yadfa'u ḍararahu l-maḥdhūr*], with medicine for ailments and with justice [*'adl*]. In this way, [God's] providence [*ināya*] is enveloped in all the states of wild beasts [*al-'ajam min al-ḥayawānāt*], plants, and minerals. This is what necessitated (*iqṭaḍat*) the sending of the Prophets and Messengers with complete judgments, abundant grace, and cogent proofs, eventually leading to His manifestation [*zuhūr*] of the Eternal Word in the world in human form as support and aid for the righteous, instruction and reprisal for the wicked, and light and guidance for the defiant.²⁰⁷

It is here that 'Abdīshō' begins to elucidate this premise with a king parable. Before touching on this matter, however, it is worth noting that terms like *alṭāf* (sing. *lutf*), *maṣāliḥ* (sing.

union, and participated with it (*shāwṭpēh 'ammēh*) in lordship (*mārūtā*), authority (*shulṭānā*), and majesty (*malkūtā*).

²⁰⁴ *Farā'id*, §§362-374.

²⁰⁵ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 44b-45a.

²⁰⁶ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 45b.

²⁰⁷ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 45a-45b.

maṣlaḥa), *al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar*, and *daf' al-ḍarar* were prominent in the discussions of the Muslim *mutakallimūn*. For the Mu'tazilites, *lutf* ('facilitating grace') is linked to the obligatory nature of God's creation of benefits (*manāfi'*) and advantages (*maṣāliḥ*, *aṣlāḥ*) to guide humankind towards good, through the sending of prophets and other modes of intercession (*shafā'a*).²⁰⁸ Closely related is the Mu'tazilite notion of *daf' al-ḍarar* (lit. 'the prevention of injury'), which held that God must by logical necessity provide humans with the means of avoiding harm, at least in matters of religion.²⁰⁹ In contrast to the Mu'tazilites, who maintained that humans were the authors of their own actions, the Ash'arites held that humans received divine reward not by their own actions but by God's predetermination, often expressed as *al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar*.²¹⁰ The term, however, was understood in a more general, less deterministic sense by the Mu'tazilites as God's omnipotence, insofar as He possesses the ability to exercise power over humankind through guidance.²¹¹

The significance of 'Abdīshō's use of these terms in his discussion will be discussed shortly. For now let us return to the parable of the incognito king as it appears in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, which runs as follows:

²⁰⁸ See George Fadlo Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism: The Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbār* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 106; Robert Brunschvig, 'Mu'tazilisme et Optimum (*al-aṣlah*),' *StudIs*, no. 39 (1974): 5-23; Oliver Leaman, 'Lutf,' *EI*² 5 (1986): 833-834; Binyamin Abrahamov, 'Abd Al-Jabbar's Theory of Divine Assistance,' *JSAI* 16 (1993): 41-58.

²⁰⁹ See J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Mu'tazilī Qāḍī l-Quḍāt Abū l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār bn Aḥmad al-Hamaḍānī* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 91; Margaretha T. Heemskerk, *Suffering in the Mu'tazilite Theology: 'Abd al-Jabbār's Teaching on Pain and Divine Justice* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 121-122.

²¹⁰ For useful overviews of the Classical Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite positions, see L. Gardet, 'al-Qaḍā' wa-l-qadar,' *EI*² 4 (1978): 365-367; Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte humain en théologie*, 241-305; Richard Frank, 'The Autonomy of the Human Agent according to the Teaching of 'Abd al-Ġabbār,' *LeMus* 95, no. 3-4 (1982): 323-355.

²¹¹ For this non-deterministic understanding of *al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar*, see Abū Tālib Yahyā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Nāṭiq bi-l-Ḥaqq, *Ziyādāt sharḥ al-uṣūl* in *Baṣran Mu'tazilite Theology: Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Khallād's Kitāb al-uṣūl and its Reception*, ed. Camilla Adang et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 297-298; anon., *Khulāṣat al-naẓar*, in *An Anonymous Imāmī-Mu'tazilī Treatise (Late 6th/12th or Early 7th/13th Century)*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke and Hasan Ansari (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy and Institute of Islamic Studies, Free University of Berlin, 2006), 103-104.

The likeness of humankind before God is like a village [*qarya*] of a wise king, containing a great many ignorant and sick people. Due to the majesty of his power and greatness, it is not possible for the lord [of the village] to directly [*mubāsharat^{am}*] interfere in the affairs of the villagers. He therefore sends messengers to cultivate them in knowledge and action, and to cure them.

But the messengers failed in this task and the disease of their sickness and ignorance waxed strong, and so there was nothing left but for the king to go to them, even though they were ignorant of [his] benevolence, wisdom, and concern [*‘ināya*]²¹² for them. Since assailing them with his forces [*hujūmuhu ‘alayhim bi-zaḥlihi wa-khaylihi*] would only add to their illness [...], he decided, by subtlety of his deception [*bi-luṭf iḥtiyālihi*],²¹³ to make himself appear common [*istish ‘ār al-khumūl wa-taballud ḥālahu*]. Thus he appeared to them as a man from among them and removed the injury [*yadfa ‘u ḍarr*] of sickness and ignorance from them until their sick become healthy, their stuttering eloquent [*alkanuhum faṣīḥ^{am}*], their unlettered learned, and their perishing living.

He then left them for his palaces [*ilā quṣūr mamlakatihī*] and sent messengers to his subjects to announce to them that it was he who had been their physician and by him that their instruction and reformation was completed, and that they do two things: to firstly give thanks for his favour [*mawqī ‘ni ‘matihī*] and, secondly, follow his upright example [*qawīm ṭarīqatihī*] in the treatment of their ailments and correction of their defects. He conferred power onto his messengers in order to indicate to the villagers that they were sent by him, and so they followed his example in healing and education until most of the villagers attained the utmost health and refinement.²¹⁴

Once concluding his parable, ‘Abdīshō‘ immediately unpacks its themes: the king at the beginning of the narrative is the pre-incarnate God; the villagers are His servants; his messengers who failed to improve their affairs are the Prophets; the incognito king is the incarnate Christ; those messengers sent subsequently are the Apostles.²¹⁵ Concerning the sending of the Prophets and divine justice (*sunnat al-‘adl*), ‘Abdīshō‘ reaffirms the obligatory nature of God’s favour towards humankind despite their repeated disobedience, once again

²¹² Here meant in the sense of human concern, though clearly intended as an analogy for divine providence. See *infra*.

²¹³ The double meaning of *luṭf* as ‘subtlety’ and ‘favour’ will be discussed below.

²¹⁴ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 45b-46b.

²¹⁵ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 46b-47a.

employing variations of the root *l-ṭ-f*.²¹⁶ And as for God's union with Christ's human nature, 'Abdīshō' follows the *Pearl*'s line of argument by explaining that the divine essence is so 'simple, subtle, and luminous (*min al-basāṭā wa-l-lāṭāfa wa-l-nūrāniyya*) that, if He were to appear in it, the heavens and earth would be destroyed (*dumḥilat*) by Its splendour (*min bahā'ihī*), leading Him to manifest His Word in veiled form (*fī hijāb al-ṣūra*).'²¹⁷ Similarly, his *Khuṭba* explains that the divinity took on a human form due to its radiance and as a means of concealing its mysteries (*ittakhadhat al-lāhūt ṣūrat al-nāsūt li-sāṭi' anwārihā, wa-bāb^{an} li-ghāmiḍ asrārihā*).²¹⁸

The parable's motifs are readily recognisable to a Christian audience who needed reminding of why the Incarnation came to be. Moreover, the incognito king was a common literary motif in Classical Arabic genres of storytelling that went beyond denominational boundaries, which perhaps accounts for why some Christian Arabic theologians deemed the parable so rhetorically and stylistically—if not logically—effective.²¹⁹ But more implicit in 'Abdīshō's parable is, I believe, the argument that the existence of human free will necessitated God's action. The interplay between divine providence and free will had long been recognised by Syriac and Arabic Christian exegetes and theologians by the 13th century.²²⁰ 'Abdīshō' himself explicitly affirms it in a section on Creation in the *Pearl*, asserting that one of the ways in which God made humans in His likeness was by endowing

²¹⁶ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 47a: *Li-ra'fatihī, lam yazal yafīdu 'alayhim suyūl jūdihi wa-ni'matihi wa-yaltufu bihim wa-yuṣirrihim rushdahum bi-latīf hikmatihī, wa-hum muṣirrūna 'alā mā yab'adahum 'an janābihi.*

²¹⁷ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 48a.

²¹⁸ *Khuṭba*, 101.

²¹⁹ The famous *Thousand and One Nights*, for example, is replete with tales of kings who disguise themselves as commoners to observe their subjects, most notable among them, the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd; see Hasan M. El-Shamy, *A Motif of the Thousand and One Nights* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 498; David Pinault, *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 82ff on the moralising character of the caliph's adventures and its medieval Islamic context.

²²⁰ Taeke Jansma, 'Ephraem on Exodus ii, 5: Reflections on the Interplay of Human Freewill and Divine Providence,' *OCP* 39:1 (1973): 5-28; Tanius Bou Mansour, 'La liberté chez saint Éphrem I^e Syrien,' *PdIO* 11 (1983): 89-156; 12 (1984-85), 3-89; Sydney H. Griffith, 'Freewill in Christian *kalām*: The Doctrine of Theodore Abū Qurra,' *PdIO* 14 (1987): 79-107; idem, 'Freewill in Christian *kalām*: Moshe bar Kepha against the Teachings of the Muslims,' *LeMus* 100 (1987): 143-159.

them with freewill (*h'ērūt d-ṣebyānā*).²²¹ He further contends that God allowed humankind to fall on account of this freedom of action. For had they not been free agents, He would have wronged them for punishing their transgression; but if they truly possessed freedom of action, He would have punished them justly (*kē'nā'īt ḥayyeb 'enōn*).²²² With this in mind, the subtext to the *Uṣūl al-dīn*'s discussion of divine providence becomes clearer: because humans possess freedom of action, God's Incarnation of Himself as Christ was necessary if they were to be brought to obedience without compulsion.

The value of this argument was recognised by earlier apologists. Gerasimus, for example, tells his Muslim interlocutor that humankind would not have known the value of God's mercy had He robbed them of their free will; His appearance in human form, therefore, ensured that humankind would follow Him out of choice rather than divine grace alone.²²³ Yet what is remarkable about the *Uṣūl al-dīn*'s discussion of God's economy—and absent from those of earlier authors—is its repeated use of terms like *lutf* and *aṣlāḥ*, which call to mind aspects of Mu'tazilite theology that argued that human beings are induced rather than compelled by God's facilitating favour to fulfil the ordinances of the Law. The Mu'tazilites further held that God was logically obligated to provide these inducements, since His wisdom and benevolence prevent Him from acting against humankind's best interest.²²⁴ Thus, the double meaning of *lutf* in 'Abdīshō's parable of the king's deception becomes all the more meaningful, since it carries the sense of both subtlety and favour. As we observed from the passage above, 'Abdīshō' states that the king deceived his subjects 'by subtlety of his

²²¹ Pearl, ٤

²²² Pearl, ٣

²²³ Bahkou, *Defending Christian Faith*, §§145-147; idem, 'Kitāb al-kāfī,' 331.

²²⁴ Al-Nāfiq bi-l-Ḥaqq, *Ziyādāt al-sharḥ*, 132; Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Minhāg fī uṣūl al-dīn*, in Sabine Schmidtke (ed. and tr.), *A Mu'tazilite Creed of az-Zamakhsharī* (Stuttgart: s.i., 1997), 29-31 (ET), 67 (AT); anon. *khulāṣat al-naẓar*, 94-96; Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī, *Kitāb al-fā'iq fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Wilferd Madelung and Martin J. McDermott (Tehran: Mu'assasa-i Pizhūhishī-i Ḥikmat va Falsafa-i Īrān, 1386/2007), 252-256.

deception' (*bi-luṭf iḥtiyālihi*), suggesting perhaps that God's ruse was a necessary act of grace if humankind was to accept divine justice by choice.

While the Syriac and Christian Arabic reception of Mu'tazilism has yet to be studied in detail, we can say with certainty that aspects of the tradition's ethics and theodicy were known to Bar Hebraeus. In the ninth 'base' of his *Candelabrum* the West Syrian prelate names two groups who affirm man's freedom of action: the first are the Mu'tazilite Muslims (*mashlmānē d-metqrēyn mu'tazilāyē*) and the second are the Christians, both of whom uphold the principle of human liberty (*ḥē'rūt ṣebyānā*), insofar as it is guided to good by divine providence (*bīlūtā*) and bad through Satanic incitement (*gurāgā d-sātānāyā*).²²⁵ Moreover, Gregor Schwarb has recently brought to light a refutation of al-Rāzī's argument for predestination in a letter by the Copto-Arabic author Abū l-Khayr ibn al-Ṭayyib (fl. 1260s), who, against predestinationist Christians in his own community, argues that free will is necessary for man to fulfil the Scripture's eschatological promises.²²⁶ By the turn of the 14th century, issues of freewill and the teleological direction of God's actions were very much alive among theologians, especially as Mu'tazilite thought had become increasingly naturalised within Karaite Jewish, Zaydī, and Twelver Shī'ī circles.²²⁷ The most prominent representatives of the latter during 'Abdīshō's time were Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and al-'Allāma

²²⁵ Paul-Hubert Poirier (ed. and tr.), *Le Candélabre du sanctuaire de Grégoire Abou'lfaradj dit Barhebraeus: neuvième base: du libre arbitre* (PO 43, fasc. 2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 14 (ST), 15 (FT).

²²⁶ Gregor Schwarb, 'The 13th Century Copto-Arabic Reception of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: Al-Rashīd Abū l-Khayr Ibn al-Ṭayyib's *Risālat bayān al-aḥzār fī radd 'alā man yaqūlu bi-l-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar*,' *The Intellectual History of the Islamic World 2* (2014): 143-169, here 155. Interestingly, Abū l-Khayr elucidates his conception of freewill 'by means of a parable comparing a human agent to a gardening landscape contractor commissioned to rebuild a recreational park for the king.' *Ibid.*, 160. A much later Copto-Arabic discussion comes from the *Mukhtaṣar al-bayān fī taḥqīq al-īmān* of al-Makīn ibn al-'Amīd, in which he claims the Mu'tazilites as allies in a discourse against predetermination; see Mark N. Swanson, 'Christian Engagement with Islamic *kalām* in Late 14th Century Egypt: The Case of *al-Hāwī* of al-Makīn Jirjīs Ibn al-'Amīd 'the Younger,' *The Intellectual History of the Islamicate World 2* (2014): 214-226.

²²⁷ On this diffusion, see Wilferd Madelung, 'Imamism and Mu'tazilite Theology,' in *Le Shī'isme imāmīte: colloque de Strasbourg (6-9 Mai 1968)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 13-30; Jan Thiele, 'Propagating Mu'tazilism in the VI/XIIth Zaydiyya: The Role of al-Ḥassan al-Raṣṣās,' *Arabica* 57 (2010): 536-558; David Sklare, 'Levi ben Yefet and his *Kitāb al-Ni'ma*: Selected Texts,' in *A Common Rationality: Mu'tazilism in Islam and Judaism*, ed. Camilla Adang et al. (Wurzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2007), 157-218.

al-Ḥillī, successors to the Baṣrī school of Mu‘tazilite thought, each of whom applied theories of *lutf* and *aṣlāḥ* to their writings on prophecy and the imamate.²²⁸

As we have seen, the principle that God is motivated by His benevolence towards creation was well-grounded in Arabic Christian thought by ‘Abdīshō’s time, as was the parable of the king who is moved by his wisdom and benevolence to improve the condition of his subjects. ‘Abdīshō’s framing of the Incarnation as an act of divine justice, therefore, is noteworthy in its attempt to appeal to a theological idiom understood by both Christians and Muslims—despite the irreconcilable differences they held over the implications that such an incarnation would have for God’s transcendence.

4.4.2. The Incarnation between Scriptures

As outlined in Section 4.2 of this chapter, Muslim theologians rejected the divinity of Christ by polemically reinterpreting Biblical passages, most often drawn from the Gospel of John. In response, Syriac and Arabic Christian theologians would affirm the divinity of the Johannine Christ by repurposing their exegetical traditions for use in Christian apologetics. One notable example is Jesus’s statement in Jn 20:17 that ‘I am ascending to my father and your father, my God and your God,’ described by Martin Accad as ‘the ultimate proof text’ for Muslim and Christian theologians alike.²²⁹ In his disputation with al-Mahdī, Timothy is confronted with the caliph’s assertion that the passage contradicts the doctrine of Christ’s divine sonship. In reply the catholicos states that the clauses ‘my God’ and ‘your God’

²²⁸ Al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd*, 135; Henri Laoust, ‘Les fondements de l’imamat dans le Minhāg d’al-Ḥillī,’ in *REI* 46 (1978): 3-55, here 7-8. See also Madelung, ‘Imamism and Mu‘tazilite Theology,’ 27-28; Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī*, 104-109 (on the nature of God’s justice and His obligation to act in man’s best interest), 125-135 (on freewill); Rizvi, ‘II: Later Shī‘ī Theology,’ 93-94.

²²⁹ See Martin Accad, ‘The Gospels in the Muslim and Christian Exegetical Discourse: A Thematic and Chronological Study of Muslim and Christian (Syriac and Arabic) Sources of the Crucial Period in the History of the Development of Arab Christianity’ (PhD. diss, University of Oxford, 2001), 316-376; idem, ‘The Ultimate Proof-Text: The Interpretation of John 20.17 in Muslim-Christian Dialogue (Second/Eighth-Eighth/Fourteenth Centuries),’ in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in ‘Abbasid Iraq*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 199-214.

indicate the Eternal Word, while ‘my Father’ and ‘your Father’ indicates the Word’s clothing (*lbūshēh d-meltā*) in human form.²³⁰ The same proof text is employed by Elias bar Shennāyā in his second *majlis* with al-Maghribī to illustrate how the Prophets and Disciples were equal to Christ in prophethood (*nubuwwa*) because the term ‘indwelling’ (*hulūl*) is applicable to both, but not in sonship (*bunuwwa*), since only in Christ was God’s Indwelling one of union.²³¹

A further strategy employed by Christian apologists was to turn to Qur’ānic authority in defence of the Incarnation. ‘Amr ibn Mattā (fl. late 10th / early 11th century), for example, cites Q 3:55 (‘O Jesus son of Mary, I am causing you to die [*mutawaffika*] and raising you to Myself [*rāfi’uka ilayya*]’) and Q 5:117 (‘when You took me up, You were Observer unto them’) as proof that only Christ’s humanity suffered and died on the Cross without admitting changeability (*taghayyur*) to his divine nature.²³² In his *Majālis*, Elias Bar Shennāyā alludes to instances in the Qur’ān where God is said to sit on a throne and Jesus is referred to as Word of God (*kalimat Allāh*).²³³ Furthermore, in a letter to al-Maghribī, Bar Shennāyā cites Q 3:55 as proof of Christ’s elevation to the highest degree (*ilā ghāyat al-manāzil fī l-makān wa-l-‘azma min al-manzila*).²³⁴ During ‘Abdīshō’s lifetime, the anonymous author of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus* reasoned that the spirit from God directed towards (*alqāhā*)

²³⁰ Heimgartner, *Disputation mit dem Kalifen*, §§3.15-3.20. Cf. Theodore, *Commentarius*, 349, who provides a Diophysite reading of the verse when he states that it indicates the human nature was assumed (‘*etnessab*’) by the Word and underwent conjunction with the divine nature (*hwāt lēh naqqīpūtā lwāt kyānā ‘allāhāyā*). Īshō’ dād of Merv, citing an unknown work by Nestorius, asserts that Christ meant ‘my Father’ and ‘my God’ by nature (*kyānā*), and ‘your Father’ and ‘your God’ by grace (‘your’ indicating the Disciples and the rest of humanity). For Īshō’ dād of Merv, who flourished a century after Timothy’s death, Christ’s statement encapsulates the very definition of Union (*hdāyūtā*), in that the clauses ‘my father’ and ‘my God’ indicate the distinction between the natures and *qnōmē* united in Christ’s single Person (*paršōpā*) by conjunction (*naqqīpūtā*). *The Commentaries...*, ٤١-٤٢ (ST), 284 (ET). For a summary of Theodore and Īshō’ dād’s exegeses of Jn 20:17, see Accad, ‘The Gospels in the Muslim and Christian Exegetical Discourse,’ 324-328 and 357-360.

²³¹ Cheikho, *Majālis*, 113-114 (Delly, *La théologie d’Elie*, 80-81). Cf. above Section 4.3.2 on Bar Shennāyā’s distinction between the indwelling of the prophets and the indwelling of Christ according.

²³² Ibn Mattā, *Kitāb al-majdal*,

²³³ Cheikho, *Majālis*, 114 (Delly, *La théologie d’Elie*, 81).

²³⁴ The letter discusses the distinction between Christ and the Prophets, and contains many of the same arguments as the better-known *Kitāb al-majlis*, though in greater detail. Elias bar Shennāyā, *Fī imtiyāz al-sayyid al-sayyid al-masīh (lahu majd) bi-āyātihi wa-aqwālihi wa-af’ālihi wa-faḍā’ilihi ‘an sā’ir al-anbiyā’ wa-takḥṣīsihi dunahim bi-mā khtaṣṣa Llāh bihi*, in *Majmū’*, ch. 33, §41.

Mary in Q. 4: 171 was testimony that He came to dwell in her human essence (*aḥallahā fī l-dhāt al-bashariyya*).²³⁵ The author also compares instances of God speaking to Moses through a burning bush (cf. Q. 20:12, 28:30, and 79:16) to God addressing humankind through Christ (*khāṭaba l-nās minhu*), and supplies Q 3:55, Q 4:171, and Q 5:117 in support of the view that it was only the human nature, not the divine, that suffered and died on the Cross.²³⁶

Following the examples of earlier apologists, ‘Abdīshō‘ supplies several Johannine passages throughout his discussions of the Incarnation; though only in his *Farā'id* does he provide Qur’ānic proof texts. He begins in his *Uṣūl al-dīn* by arguing that the *qunūm* of the Eternal Son is proven by statements spoken by Christ whilst in human form (*wa-huwa fī ṣūra ādamiyya*), namely Jn 14:9 (‘I and my father are one’) and Jn 8:58 (‘before Abraham came into existence, I have been’).²³⁷ Furthermore, ‘Abdīshō‘ supplies instances from Christ’s deeds (*taṣarrufātihi*) that point to a union between the temporal and divine *qunūms*, though this time without citing specific verses:

Firstly, his birth from a virgin without [the aid of] a husband [*min ghayr ba ‘āl*]; secondly, his freedom from sin [*tanazzuh ‘an al-khaṭī’a*] in both thought, speech, and action; thirdly, his working of signs [*zuhūr āyātihi*] without supplication [*darā’a*] and imploration [*ibtihāl*]; fourthly, his forgiveness of sins without [intermediary] prayer and roagation [*su’āl*]; fifthly, his sending of the thief who was crucified with him to Paradise, the place of perfect souls; sixthly, his raising of the dead without requiring [anything] from those he resurrected [*min ghayr ḥāja ilā man yuqīmahu min al-rijāl*]; and seventhly, his ascension to heaven, the seat of power and majesty.²³⁸

²³⁵ Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemics*, §36.

²³⁶ Ebied and Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemics*, §47.xiv.

²³⁷ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 49b.

²³⁸ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 49b-50a.

It is noteworthy that similar proofs appear in a letter by Elias bar Shennāyā to al-Maghribī. Here, Bar Shennāyā writes in response to the vizier's insistence that Christ was no different from the Prophets. While space does not permit us to discuss the entirety of the letter, three points are worthy of comparison with 'Abdīshō's *Uṣūl al-dīn*. The first is al-Maghribī's assertion that Christ's prophethood and subordinate status to God is proved by the fact that his miracles (*mu'jizāt*) were no greater than Moses's. Elias's responds by pointing out that Moses was unable to perform miracles without offering supplication to God (*dūna su'āl Allāh wa-ḍarā'a ilayhi*), whereas Christ was able to do so on his own accord.²³⁹ The second is al-Maghribī's claim that both Christ and Idrīs (here meant as the Biblical Enoch) were raised to heaven.²⁴⁰ In reply, Bar Shennāyā argues that this statement about Idrīs contradicts the Qur'ān and the Bible, since neither explicitly state that he was raised to heaven, while Christ's ascension is clearly attested in both the Bible and the Qur'ān, in the latter case by Q 3:55. Thirdly, Bar Shennāyā rejects al-Maghribī's claim that both the Prophets and Christ were immaculate (*ma'ṣūmīn*), because the Bible attests to the moral fallibility of the former and the impeccability of the latter.²⁴¹ While it is plausible that 'Abdīshō' was influenced by Bar Shennāyā's reasoning, he makes no attempt to engage directly with Muslim challenges to Biblical proofs for Christ's divinity. Instead, he simply lists instances from the life of Christ that point to this divinity, without further discussion of how these might be interpreted differently.

A somewhat more nuanced approach is taken in the *Farā'id*, this time involving a lengthy interpretation of Jn 10:34 and Jn 10:36. Regarding the former—'Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"?'—'Abdīshō' offers four ways (*wujūh*) of understanding the word 'god:' firstly, as the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūb*) and the Cause of all that exists (*'illat kull mawjūd*); secondly, according to each of His three Trinitarian

²³⁹ Bar Shennāyā, *Fī imtiyāz al-sayyid*, §§22. Cf. Cheikho, *Majālis*, 112.

²⁴⁰ Bar Shennāyā, *Fī imtiyāz al-sayyid*, §§30-32. Cf. Cheikho, *Majālis*, 116-117.

²⁴¹ Bar Shennāyā, *Fī imtiyāz al-sayyid*, §§33-35.

attributes, the Pre-existing (*qadīm*), the Wise (*ḥakīm*), and the Living (*ḥayy*); thirdly, as ‘every exulted human being (*kull mu‘azzamⁱⁿ min al-bashar*) upon whom the Word of God descended,’ in accordance with Ex 7:1 (‘I have made you a God to Pharaoh and Aaron your brother will be your prophet’); and fourthly, Christ who is considered Perfect God by all Christians, despite their differences (*‘alā khtilāfihim*).²⁴² In effect, our author presents a definition of God that accommodates several modes of divinity: God as Creator; God as triune being; the God Who indwells—but does not unite with—His prophets; and the God united with Christ.²⁴³

‘Abdīshō‘ then turns his attention to the latter verse—‘Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy when I say that I am the son of God?’—and provides four ways of understanding the term ‘son:’ firstly, as the Word of God; secondly, by baptism and faith; thirdly, as an honorific bestowed upon a servant by a king, or regarding the honour (*sharaf*) which Jesus enjoyed as Son of God, interpreted from Jn 20:17 (‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, My God and your God’); and fourthly, by sexual intercourse (*jimā‘*) and marriage.²⁴⁴ Thus, by expounding a pluriform meaning of ‘son,’ our author implicitly denies any contradiction in the inference of Christ’s divine sonship from scripture.

Immediately following this fourfold definition of the word ‘son,’ ‘Abdīshō‘ brings forward two Qur’ānic prooftexts in support of Christ’s divinity:

The objector [*mu‘tariḍ*] has cited from the Qur’ān what proves the first part concerning Christ [as the Word of God]:²⁴⁵ ‘What is Jesus son of Mary but a spirit from God and his Word which he cast into Mary?’ [*mā huwa ‘Īsā ibn Maryam illā rūḥ^{un} min Allāh wa-kalimatuhu alqāhā ilā*

²⁴² *Farā‘id*, §§397-404.

²⁴³ The argument that the word ‘god’ can encompass several realities appears in an earlier apology, once again by Elias bar Shennāyā. He argues here that the word ‘lord’ (*rabb*) can be used to describe the Creator, the head of a household, or the master of a slave—just as ‘*ayn*’ might be applied to an eye, a spring, or the essence of a thing; or in the way that *saraṭān* might refer to a crab, the illness, or the zodiac of Cancer. Samir, ‘Un traité nouveau,’ §§42-46.

²⁴⁴ *Farā‘id*, §§405-412.

²⁴⁵ Cf. the first definition of ‘son’ in the above discussion of Jn 10:36.

Maryam, a paraphrase of Q. 4:171]. It has [also] been raised in it [i.e. the Qur'ān] what proves the necessity [*wujūb*] of the third part concerning the humanity of Christ.²⁴⁶ 'O Jesus Son of Mary, verily I am taking you and raising you to Myself' [Q 3:55]—that is to say, to the highest rank and honour [*ilā ghāyat al-'izz wa-l-sharaf*].²⁴⁷ Since this humanity possesses the properties of perfection [*khawāṣṣ al-kamāl*], which cannot pertain to any other human, the Creator must have come to dwell in it and manifested the utmost perfection [*ghāyat al-kamāl*] through it, which does not reside [in another human], on account of His statement 'I am raising you to me,' not simply to heaven but to Himself.²⁴⁸

'Abdīshō's paraphrase of Q. 4:171 suggests that it is not Muslims whom he intends to convince but a Christian audience who require assurance that the Incarnation could be justified according to an opposing faith's scripture. As we noted, earlier apologists had seized on the fact that Jesus is referred to in the Qur'ān as the Word and Spirit of God. This makes it likely that 'Abdīshō's interpretation is not based on a fresh reading of the Q 4:171 but rather reflects the verse's continued popularity as a convenient means of vindicating Christ's divinity. Moreover, it appears from the *Farā'id* that the Qur'ān functions as a proof text for Gospel interpretations of Christ's divinity, as exemplified by 'Abdīshō's citation of Q 3:55 in support of Jn 17:20 as indication that Christ was raised to an honour equal to God. Muslim scholars in our author's lifetime such as Ibn Taymiyya had become aware of such attempts by Christians to invoke Qur'ānic authority for their beliefs (as noted in Section 4.2). As Sydney Griffith has shown, earlier Christian apologists were aware that such Qur'ānic verses had an entirely different context among Muslims; but by taking them out of their 'original hermeneutical frame of reference,' they could demonstrate to their co-religionists that the Qur'ān's text—at least on the face of it—could advance a Christian perspective.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Cf. the third definition of 'son' in the above discussion of Jn 20:17.

²⁴⁷ Cf. also Bar Shennāyā's reading of Q. 3:55 (discussed above).

²⁴⁸ *Farā'id*, §§413-418.

²⁴⁹ Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 169.

4.4.3. The Unifying Function of the Rational Soul

‘Abdīshō’s rational arguments for the Incarnation centre on the distinction between the material and the immaterial in Christ. In emphasising this distinction, he attempts to show how it is possible—and indeed necessary—for Christ the Man to unite with the creative Word through the rational soul, without change being admitted into the divine nature. The argument appears to be Patristic in origin, traceable to the writings of Gregory Nazianzen and other Patristic authorities.²⁵⁰ In the first half of the 13th century, al-Būshī employs it in his defence of the Incarnation, reasoning that the righteousness of life (*birr al-ḥayāt*) was passed from God to Christ on the basis of the body that He united with through the rational soul (*nafs ‘aqliyya*).²⁵¹ Bar Hebraeus provides a more detailed discussion of this principle in his *Candelabrum*. Here, he lists the objections of those who deny the possibility (*metmaṣyānūtā*) of the Incarnation. Among them is that, if the union between the Eternal Word and the human nature were possible, the word would be limited (*‘estayyak*) by the latter’s corporeity and finitude, which is absurd for an incorporeal, infinite being.²⁵² The maphrian counters by explaining the rational soul’s intermediary function during the Incarnation, which is worth quoting in full:

We say: if God—glory be to His grace—were a body or an accident, His limitation [*msayykūtēh*] would be necessary on account of His union [*mḥayydūtēh*] with a limited entity [*msaykā*], like the conjunction [*naqqīpūtā*] of members with one another which comprise the body of an animal, or like the union of species [*‘ādshā*] and matter [*hōlā*] of which a corporeal entity [*gushmā*] is composed. Since He is neither a body nor an accident, He is not necessarily limited by His union with the limited entity. For the rational soul [*nafshā mlīltā*], despite being united to a body that is limited to a physical substrate [*‘athrā*], is not [itself] limited nor is it

²⁵⁰ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 297; Andrew Hofer, *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 114-117.

²⁵¹ Al-Būshī, *Traité de Paul de Būš*, §§155-157.

²⁵² Khoury, *Candélabre: Quatrième Base*, 24 (ST), 25 (FT).

limited to a physical substrate. For if it were limited, it would be divided [*'etpallgat*], and if it were divided, it would be corrupted [*'ethabblat*] and detached from its nature [*kyānēh*].²⁵³

Much the same principle is expounded in 'Abdīshō's *Uṣūl al-dīn*, which forms part of his demonstrative proofs (*dalā'il burhāniyya*) for the Incarnation. He begins from what he refers to as a 'natural philosophical perspective' (*al-naẓar al-falsafī al-ṭabī'ī*): that the rational soul (*al-naḥs al-nāṭiqā*) is eternal and does not perish upon the death of the human form, unlike animal, mineral, plant, and elemental souls. If, then, the rational soul possesses a corresponding relationship (*munāsaba*) with something, the conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) between one corresponding thing with its correspondent (*al-munāsib bi-munāsibihi*) becomes a matter of necessity (*amr wājib*).²⁵⁴ Moreover, 'Abdīshō' reasons that Adam's biblically attested likeness (*mithāl*) to God could not have been in his body, which is susceptible to accidents and division (*qābil li-l-'awāriḍ wa-l-inqisām*).²⁵⁵ Thus, humankind's resemblance (*mushābaha*) to the divine nature must reside in the rational soul, which, like the divine nature, is unlimited (*ghayr maḥṣūra*).²⁵⁶ According to this scheme, the union of Christ's natures necessarily occurs on the pattern of the body's relationship with the soul in humans.

A connected strategy emerges in 'Abdīshō's other works, though this time involving the analogy of light and its effect on reflective substances. As we outlined in Section 4.3.2, the *Farā'id* mentions a mode of union referred to as 'illumination and effect' in order to argue that the source of illumination is unaffected by the substance being acted upon. It is in the *Pearl*, however, that we first encounter the principle in detail. Here, our author gives the following explanation of how it was possible for the divine nature to subsist in Christ's created body:

²⁵³ Khoury, *Candélabre: Quatrième Base*, 28 (ST), 29 (FT).

²⁵⁴ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 51a-51b.

²⁵⁵ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 51b.

²⁵⁶ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 51b.

The divine nature illuminated [*'anhar*] the human nature during its conjunction with it,²⁵⁷ in the way that a precious and clear pearl [*margānītā rīshāyātā wa-dkītā*] is illuminated by the light of the sun shining upon it, [causing] the nature of the illuminated object to become like the nature of the object of illumination, and the sight [*ḥāzyā*] to be affected [*netta 'bad*] by the rays and brightness of the receptor [*mqabblānā*], just as it is by the nature of the effecting agent [*ma 'bdānā*], with no change [*shuḥlāpā*] entering into the effecting agent by the passibility [*metta 'bdānūt*] of that which has been affected.²⁵⁸

Thus we see why 'Abdīshō' deemed Ibn 'Abbād's poetic expression about the opacity of wine and glass, discussed above, so well suited to the mystery of the Incarnation: both it and the analogy of the precious pearl cleverly express how God's divine nature remained unchanged when it entered into union with Christ's humanity. The analogy of the precious jewel finds expression in the Arabic of the *Uṣūl al-dīn* and *Farā'id*, though this time featuring the rational soul as the principal conductor of the two natures' union. Both works state that the Incarnation occurred through the rational faculty (*quwwa nāṭiqā*) in Christ's person. Accordingly, the divine nature illuminated Christ's intellect (*'aql*), which was lit up like a clear-coloured jewel in the light of the sun.²⁵⁹ In the same manner as the *Pearl*, the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, *Farā'id*, and *Khuṭba* state that this union of light and substance led to the receiving nature becoming like the active nature (*ṣāra ṭab' al-qābil huwa ṭab' al-fā'il*), and so the acts emanating from the receiving nature do so also from the active nature (*fa-ṣadara al-fi'l 'an al-dhāt al-qābila ṣudūruhā 'an dhāt al-fā'ila*).²⁶⁰ The *Uṣūl al-dīn* presents the analogy in order to demonstrate how God's actions were worked through the intermediary

²⁵⁷ Reading *naqqīpūtā* for *naqqīpūtēh*.

²⁵⁸ *Pearl*, ۳۳

²⁵⁹ In this instance, the wording differs only slightly. *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 54a-54b: *fa-stinārat ka-mā tastanīru l-jawhara l-shaffāfa bi-daw' al-shams*; *Farā'id*, §378: *fa-stināra fī nafsihi wa-dhātihi ka-mā tastanīru l-jawhara l-ṣāfiyya bi-ishrāq nūr al-shams 'alayhā*.

²⁶⁰ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 54b; *Farā'id*, §379-380; *Khuṭba*, 101.

(*bi-wāsiṭa*) of Christ's rational soul.²⁶¹ The *Farā'id*, on the other hand, states that, due to the conjunction between Christ's body and soul, the union of the two natures were eternalised (*tasarmada*) from the moment of the Incarnation and survived the soul's separation (*mufāraqa*) upon his death.²⁶² Both, however, advance a classical Christological position: that the two natures were inseparably and eternally bound in two natures, each with distinct operational functions.

A further demonstration for the possibility of the Union appears in relation to 'Abdīshō's Trinitarian thought, outlined and discussed in the previous chapter. This entails the conjunction and union of the Intellector [*āqil*], one of God's three essential attributes, with an intelligible [*ma'qūl*]. 'Abdīshō' reasons as follows:

It is not possible for man [*insān*] to be an abstract intellect [*'aql^{an} mujarrad^{an}*], nor can he be an abstract intelligible [*ma'qūl^{an} mujarrad^{an}*]. He can, however, be an abstract intellector [*āqil^{an} mujarrad^{an}*]. On account of the possibility of that, he becomes [*yaṣīru*] conjoined [*muttaṣal^{an}*] with one of the three hypostases [*aqānīm*] [of the Trinity], which is the Intellector [*āqil*] of them and the meaning [*ma'nā*] of the Son. [Thus] the nature [*jawhar*] of the Pre-Existent [*qadīm*] becomes conjoined with man, according to what we have discussed previously.²⁶³

In other words, the Intellector or active intellect—which, in the traditional Christian Arabic Trinitarian scheme, is equal to the Son and the Word—conjoins with the human nature via the rational soul to produce the Incarnate Christ. As far as I am aware, the earliest Christian text in which the theory appears is by the Jacobite Muḥyī l-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (fl. 11th or 12th century), who employs it in his explanation for why Christians exclude the Father and Holy

²⁶¹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 54b.

²⁶² *Farā'id*, §§381-382.

²⁶³ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 57a.

Spirit from the Incarnation.²⁶⁴ The argument appears to be influenced by the Neo-Platonism of the Baghdad peripatetics, which, as we observed in the previous chapter, held that God is identical to what He intellects. Whereas in the Trinitarian context the doctrine is discussed in the context of God's self-knowledge, the theory outlined above pertains to the unity of God's intellect with intelligibles other than Himself—in this case, a human intellect.

The most forceful and influential critic of the theory was Avicenna. Although he regarded divine self-intellection as a valid means of establishing God's essential unity, he rejected outright the possibility that an active intellect could unite with existents external to Him—a view he ascribed to Porphyry of Tyre and his commentators.²⁶⁵ At the heart of Avicenna's denial was a system of noetics that viewed intellection as conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) not union (*ittiḥād*) with the Active Intellect, whereby the human soul grasps forms from the active intellect but does not become identical to it.²⁶⁶ In addition to his distinction between conjunction and union, Avicenna held that one thing cannot become another without undergoing transformation (*istiḥāla*), whereby the existent retains its identity while taking on the qualities of another.²⁶⁷ Alternatively, two things may become something else by experiencing generation (*kawn*) and corruption (*fasād*), which entail either the existence of

²⁶⁴ Allard and Troupeau, *Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī*, 29 (FT), 51 (AR). Here, al-Iṣfahānī adopts the framework of God as Knowledge, Knower, and Knowable, each ascribed to the hypostases of Existence (*wujūd*, i.e. the Father), Knowledge (*ʿilm*, i.e. the Son), and Life (*ḥayāt*, i.e. the Holy Spirit). Nevertheless, the argument runs: '[The Word] was united (*ittiḥāda*) with what It knew (*bi-mā ʿalama*), because there is concomitance (*talāzum*) between knower (*ʿālim*) and knowable (*maʿlūm*), since it would be impossible for the knower not to have a knowable, just as it would be absurd for the knowable not to having knower. Thus, knowledge (*ʿilm*), by its nature (*min shaʿnihi*), must have a connection (*taʿalluq*) to the knowable. This is not the case of existence, nor is it for life. For that reason, the Union (*ittiḥād*) occurred through the hypostasis of the Son at the exclusion of Father and the Holy Spirit.'

²⁶⁵ Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, 267-273. Cf. John Finnegan, 'Avicenna's Refutation of Porphyrius' in *Avicenna Commemoration Volume*, (Calcutta: n.p., 1956), here 197. For an excellent overview of Ibn Sīnā's rejection of the unification argument, see also Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mulla Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 46-59.

²⁶⁶ Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn Sīnā, *Ṭabīʿiyyāt al-shifāʾ: Fī-l-naḥs*, ed. Fazlur Rahman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 239-240; Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, 205. Cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958), 15-16, cited in Kalin, *Knowledge*, 51.

²⁶⁷ Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, 3:272; Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn Sīnā, *The Physics of the Healing: Books I & I*, ed. Jon McGinnis (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2009), 2:§3. Cf. John McGinnis, 'Avicenna's Natural Philosophy,' in *Interpreting Avicenna*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 91-109, here 86-88.

one thing and the non-existence of the other; the non-existence of both, thereby producing a *tertium quid*; or the remainder of both, resulting in two not one. Where noetics are concerned, this precludes intelligibles from taking on the identity of an active intellect.²⁶⁸

What is most relevant to us here is that some Muslim and Jewish theologians by the 13th century had adopted aspects of Avicenna's critique in order to refute Christian doctrines. As we saw in Section 4.2, al-Rāzī and Ibn Kammūna each argued that the divine and human natures in Christ could not have united in any real way, since this would result in some form of generation and corruption. As for the nature of God's knowledge, Avicennians such as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī upheld the argument that the identity between the intellect and the intellector could not apply to other existents.²⁶⁹ Unification theories of the intellector and its intelligibles, however, did develop within the Akbarian Ṣūfī tradition. Under the rubric of Ibn 'Arabī's unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), representatives of the Akbarian school held that it was indeed possible for the divine essence to unite with intellectual forms, particularly in the soul of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), though they would rigorously deny any implication of an ontological union between man and God.²⁷⁰

As in other areas of his apologetics, 'Abdīshō' provides little discussion of non-Christian criticisms of his approach, as opposed to two other post-Avicennian Christian apologists who register specific objections from their interlocutors and suggest how these might be overcome. In response to al-Rāzī's claim that the indwelling implies God's contingency on a physical substrate, al-Ṣafī ibn al-'Assāl (d. between 1253-1275) invokes the principle that the intellect is one with what it intellects.²⁷¹ A further example comes from Bar

²⁶⁸ Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, 3:272; idem, *The Physics of the Healing*, 239-240; idem, *Najāt*, 241.

²⁶⁹ See al-Ṭūsī's commentary in Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, 267-273. See also al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd*, 87 for a general rejection of substantial unification.

²⁷⁰ As we have seen in the case of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (Section 4.3.2). On the role of the Active Intellect in the Akbarian thought of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, see Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man: Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Metaphysical Anthropology* (Brill: Leiden, 2014). Cf. Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 164-169; 813-817 for Ibn 'Arabī's teachings on the intellect.

²⁷¹ Al-Ṣafī, *al-Shukūk al-wārida*, ch. 8:§14. The concept (*ma'qul*) of the form's (*ṣūra*) inherence in matter is conceived (*'uqila*), and its (i.e. the form's) being (*kawn*) is not contingent on (*mufittaqira ilā*) matter (*hayūla*).

Hebraeus's *Candelabrum*, in which he reiterates the objection by an unnamed critic who cites Avicenna's vital distinction between conjunction (*naqqīpūtā*) and union (*hdāyūtā*), and posits that no union can result from generation (*hwāyā*) and corruption (*hubālā*).²⁷² Bar Hebraeus replies by affirming the unifying function of the rational soul, as quoted earlier in this section. While neither the responses of al-Ṣafī nor Bar Hebraeus would likely gain acceptance from Muslim critics, they do at least attempt to highlight Muslim concerns to Christian readers. 'Abdīshō's relatively more moderate engagement with such criticisms may be accounted for by his lack of physical contact with figures from the wider intellectual landscape of his day (established in Chapter Two). Nevertheless, such apologists as al-Ṣafī and Bar Hebraeus were no different from 'Abdīshō in that they were obliged to fall back on the same argument of the rational soul's unifying function—regardless of their willingness to faithfully represent Muslim concerns. Thus, it is no surprise that the theory of the soul's unifying role takes central importance in 'Abdīshō's thought, appearing in all four of his major works of theology, thereby revealing the important didactic function these strategies had in the exposition of Christological doctrine.

4.5 Conclusions

The foregoing discussion has shown that much of 'Abdīshō's Christology was informed by a need to defend key aspects of dogma surrounding the Incarnation; however, these apologetic concerns do not inform his Christology in its entirety. In Section 4.3.1 we observed that a section of the *Pearl* is devoted to the memory of the Nestorian controversy during the church

However, matter is contingent for its existence on the inherence of form in it. The inherence of the qualifying attributes (*ṣifāt thubūtiyya*) in the divine essence is also conceived, and is not contingent [on anything] for it to be brought into existence (*li-ijādihā*), because it is pre-existent (*qadīma*). The intelligible forms (*suwar ma'qulat*) are conceived in the intellect ('*aql*), for the philosophers (*ḥukumā*) have said: "the intelligible and the intellect are one." The intelligible [therefore] is not contingent on the intellect, just as we conceive ('*aqalnā*) of God and the heavenly sphere (*al-falak*).'

²⁷² Khoury, *Candélabre: Quatrième Base*, 20, 22 (ST); 21, 23 (FT).

councils and the impact of these events on the Church of the East's Christology and modes of self-definition vis-à-vis other churches. As such, 'Abdīshō's tone is polemical, directed as it is towards other Christian confessions (namely, the Miaphysite and Chalcedonian churches), and highlights the role of narrative in his expository method. Our author's *Arabic Profession* is similarly directed against rival Christian confessions, though this time through language inherited from earlier authors who sought to convince Muslims that Nestorian Christology was more acceptable than its Jacobite and Melkite counterparts. Thus, the *Profession* reveals just how closely entwined inter-religious apologetics had become with intra-religious polemic. Yet, we have also observed the dynamic nature of 'Abdīshō's Christology and its evolution. From 1302/3, the year he wrote his *Uṣūl al-dīn*, the greater part of his writings on the Incarnation was more concerned with defending the doctrine against external attacks than refuting other Christian confessions.

However, there is little evidence from our author's writings that his apologetics arose as a direct response to contemporary criticisms. A considerable portion of 'Abdīshō's Christological thought is indebted to the apologetics of such earlier figures as Elias bar Shennāyā. Whereas Bar Shennāyā's ideas emerged from live debate with Abū l-Qāsim al-Maghribī, 'Abdīshō places his in systematic and encyclopaedic theologies intended for a Christian readership, thus demonstrating how the inter-religious controversy of earlier centuries shaped the internal articulation of dogma some two centuries later. Yet, compared to some other apologists, our author's representation of his interlocutor's criticisms lacks detail about how aspects of the Incarnation might be challenged. One possibility for this is that 'Abdīshō was not as integrated within the wider scholarly circles of his day as others like Bar Hebraeus.

Nevertheless, we should not overlook the ingenuity with which our author synthesises such established opinions. We have observed from 'Abdīshō's analogical method that the

language and expression of his apologetics were by no means static, as indicated by his appeal to Classical Arabic poetic motifs. The same can be said of his use of certain *kalām* expressions with which he buttresses long standing opinions about the providential nature of the Incarnation, which were certainly relevant to the broader theological discourses of his day. While such explanations of Christology could hope for little acceptance by Muslim polemicists, they at least sought to assure a Christian readership that their beliefs could be reasonably articulated. Furthermore, the *Pearl*'s success as a key work of dogma in later centuries indicates just how effective 'Abdīshō's Christological didacticism would prove to be.

CHAPTER FIVE

Christian Practices, Islamic Contexts: Discourses on the Cross and Clapper

5.1 Introduction

Having touched on two central apologetic themes, we now turn our attention to ‘Abdīshō’'s defence of Christian ritual practice. Of these ‘secondary topics’ (discussed in Chapter One), my focus here is limited to the veneration of the Cross and the call to prayer. As Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell have discussed, religious communities in the medieval Mediterranean world often communicated boundaries and differentiation through various ‘lines of sound and sight,’ thus sharing in what might be termed a ‘visual and acoustic environment.’¹ In the case of Christian communities living in close proximity with Muslims, such differences could be expressed through religious paraphernalia and the sounds emanating from religious buildings.² As such, these distinctions were well known to Muslim observers and critics; and in cases where Christian practice came under intellectual or physical attack,³ apologists like ‘Abdīshō’ were often moved to justify them.⁴

¹ For these terms, see Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 124-125 and 421-422. The term ‘acoustic landscape’ is also employed by Olivia Remie Conzable, ‘Regulating Religious Noise: The Council of Vienne, the Mosque Call and Muslim Pilgrimage in the Late Medieval Mediterranean World,’ *ME* 16 (2010): 64-95, here 65, whose work I discuss below.

² See Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 421-422 for a brief discussion about issues of visibility and audibility in shared religious landscapes across the medieval Mediterranean world, namely, pilgrimage sites, and the sounds of the ‘bell, the *semantron* and the muezzin.’

³ In Chapter Two, Section 2.4 we observed that Muslim attacks on Christian buildings and the imposition of social restrictions, namely the paying of the *jizya* and the wearing of the *zunnār*, had taken place in ‘Abdīshō’'s lifetime, most acutely during the Ilkhan Ghāzān’s turbulent rise to power in 1295.

⁴ See Landron, *Attitudes nestoriennes*, Ch. 15 for discussions between Christians and Muslims about circumcision, ablution (*wuḍū’*), prayer, veneration of the Cross, and the adoration of images, and the wearing of the girdle (*zunnār*) as a mark of chastity and obedience. See also Khoury, *Matériaux*, VII.1.3:59-100, which surveys Christian-Muslim discussions about ablution (*wuḍū’*), prayer, fasting, alms, pilgrimage, the Sacraments (*asrār*), baptism, the Eucharist (*qurbān*), penitence, and the priesthood (*kahanūt*).

As noted previously, ritual practice formed what Sydney Griffith identifies as ‘secondary topics.’ Although treated secondarily in systematic theologies, such issues could often lie at the core of Christian doctrine. Where the veneration of the Cross was concerned, Christian theologians by ‘Abdīshō’s lifetime had developed what Mark Swanson has referred to as a ‘comprehensive body of apologetics.’⁵ From the early ‘Abbāsīd period onwards, Christian theologians contended with a number of principal challenges. First came the Qur’ānic claim that the Jews had neither killed nor crucified Jesus, but that ‘it appeared so to them,’ (*shubbiha lahum*, Q. 4:157), thus prompting Christian apologists to defend the facticity of Christ’s death.⁶ This issue, however, is chiefly dealt with by ‘Abdīshō’ in sections of his works discussing the truthfulness of the Gospels’ testimony,⁷ and so will not be addressed in this chapter. Receiving greater focus here are ‘Abdīshō’s arguments for the soteriology of the Cross against opposition to the claim that humankind’s salvation was worked by Christ’s death. Moreover, this chapter will address how ‘Abdīshō’, in line with earlier apologists, defended the practice of venerating the Cross by rejecting accusations of *shirk*. In doing so we will see how Christological concerns such as God’s transcendence and the function of Christ’s human and divine natures (addressed in the previous chapter) were inextricably linked to the issue of the Cross and its role in religious worship.

As in other areas of doctrine explored in this thesis, ‘Abdīshō’s exposition of the Cross presents little by way of ‘original’ thought; once again we must consider his systematic theology as part of a broader didactic effort. In the centuries leading up to ‘Abdīshō’s lifetime, Christian apologists strove to reassure coreligionists that veneration of the Cross

⁵ Mark N. Swanson, ‘The Cross of Christ in the Earliest Arabic Christian Apologies,’ in *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, ed. Samir Khalil Samir and Jørgen S. Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 155-145, here 144. Elsewhere, Swanson brings together no less than fourteen Melkite, Jacobite, and Nestorian responses to Muslim antagonisms to the Cross from the 8th to 10th century, and a further five of uncertain dates. Idem, ‘Folly to the *ḥunafā*: The Cross of Christ in Arabic Christian-Muslim Controversy in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries A.D.’ (PhD diss., The Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, 1992), 2-49.

⁶ For the Classical Muslim interpretation of Q. 4:157 and its impact on Christian-Muslim discussions, see Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity: the Representation of Jesus in the Qur’ān and the Classical Muslim Commentaries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 106-141, idem, ‘Crucifixion,’ *EQ* 4 (2001): 487-489.

⁷ See Pearl, *mēmra* 3, part 3; *Uṣūl al-dīn*, *bāb* 1; *Farā’id*, *faṣl* 1.

could be supported by both reason and revelation, often by appealing to a theological common ground with Muslims. This is not to say that the theology of the Cross had achieved a final fixity by the 13th and early 14th century. By building on previous arguments in defence of the Cross's role in worship, our author develops, fine-tunes, and contributes to an ever-expanding body of apologetics.

In addition to appealing to a shared sense of reason, it was necessary for apologists to affirm the Church's own sacred traditions that underpinned religious practice, as these too were well-known to Muslim critics. This chapter will discuss 'Abdīshō's use of two traditions: (i) the Apostles and their purported role in instituting the Cross in the performance of Church rites⁸ and (ii) the legend of the Roman emperor Constantine's vision and subsequent discovery of the True Cross by Helena, his mother (two different but closely entwined narratives). The latter can be summarised as follows: prior to a battle with an enemy army, the emperor sees a sign in the sky reading 'In this sign you will conquer,' thus presaging his victory and conversion to Christianity. Shortly thereafter, his believing mother, Helena, travels to Jerusalem to discover the whereabouts of the True Cross. After threatening a Jewish scholar named Judas with torture, its location is revealed to lie beneath a well. Finding three crosses (one of Christ and two of the thieves crucified with him), each is placed by Helena on the body of a dead man; upon the third attempt, the man is revived and the True Cross established.⁹ In common with earlier Syriac and Arabic Christian writers, 'Abdīshō weaves such sacred traditions with arguments designed to vindicate the practice of venerating the Cross, thereby convincing a Christian readership that such practices were wholly

⁸ The tradition that the Apostles instituted the Cross in liturgical and sacramental practice is contained in the Pseudo-Apostolic canons. For these in the East Syrian tradition, see Kaufhold, 'La Littérature Pseudo-Canonique Syriacque,' 158-164.

⁹ For the Syriac version of these narratives, see edition and translation by Han J.W. Drijvers and Jan Willem Drijvers, *The Finding of the True Cross: The Judas Kyriakos Legend in Syriac* (CSCO 565; Leuven: Peeters, 1997). On their sources and historical development, see Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), esp. 95-194. The legend is also preserved in many Christian Arabic versions. For East Syrian examples, see Addai Scher (ed. and tr.), *Histoire nestorienne inédite (Chronique de Séert). Première partie* (PO 4, fasc. 3; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1908), 263-276 and Haddad, *Mukhtaṣar al-akhbār al-bī'iyya*, 33-34.

defensible in light of Muslim criticisms. The strongly controversial tone of his writings on these topics (observed elsewhere in this thesis) is crucial to our understanding of how apologetics had become inextricably linked with the Church of the East's catechetical enterprise by the late 13th and early 14th century.

We do, however, encounter a relatively more novel approach in 'Abdīshō's discourse on the striking of the clapper, a percussion instrument used in the call to prayer.¹⁰ To my knowledge, the call to prayer does not typically feature in Syriac and Christian Arabic apologetics, but occurs more frequently in liturgical works (as will be discussed below, in Section 5.3.1). 'Abdīshō's discussion of the church clapper centres on a tradition originating in a cycle of Old Testament apocrypha and exegetical traditions known as the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* (*M'arrat gazzē*), first composed in Syriac between the 5th and early 7th century.¹¹ In its retelling of the Flood narrative, God commands Noah to construct a clapper (*nāqōshā*) made from boxwood that does not rot (*qaysā d-'eshkār'ā d-lā mballaṭ*), three cubits long and one and a half cubits wide, to be struck three times a day with a mallet (*'arezaptā*): in the morning to gather the builders; at midday to break for lunch; and at daybreak to send them home.¹²

It is unsurprising to find a discussion of the church clapper in 'Abdīshō's apologetic oeuvre. As the preserve of Christians, its function in the Islamicate world could not hope to enjoy the same socio-cultural and religious status as the mosque call (*adhān*). In a recent article on the regulation of the Muslim call to prayer by the Christian rulers of Aragon after

¹⁰ See *infra* for a more precise definition of this term and its usage in pre-modern Syriac and Arabic texts.

¹¹ The work is generally thought to have been composed between the 5th and 6th century (Clemens Leonhard, 'Cave of Treasures,' *GEDSH*, 90-91), though a late 6th- early 7th century composition has been recently postulated by Sergey Minov, 'Syriac Christian Identity in Late Sasanian Mesopotamia: The Cave of Treasures in Context' (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2013), 21-82. Arabic versions of the *Cave of Treasures* will be discussed below.

¹² For this narrative as it occurs in two East and West Syrian recensions (published *en face*), see Su-min Ri (ed.), *Les cavernes des trésors* (CSCO 486-487; Leuven: Peeters, 1987), Ch. XIV, § 11-13. For a trans. of the same work according to an older, East Syrian ms., see E.A. Wallis E.A. Budge (tr.), *The Book of the Cave of Treasures: a History of the Patriarchs and the Kings, their Successors, from the Creation to the Crucifixion of Christ* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1927), 100.

the Council of Vienne in 1309, Olivia Remie Constable has shown that the acoustic environment shared by Christians and Muslims in medieval Spain was often contentious, as ‘concerns expressed by both Muslims and Christians about the religious noise and public rituals of minority communities (whether the mosque call, the ringing of bells, or local pilgrimage) demonstrate inter-religious tensions in the Mediterranean world at the turn of the fourteenth century.’¹³ While the religious acoustic landscape of ‘Abdīshō’s time was no less contentious, it can also be said that Muslims and Christians shared in what might be termed a ‘literary space.’ In addition to expounding his own Church’s teaching concerning the use of the clapper in times of prayer and liturgy, our author makes a direct appeal to elements of *ḥadīth* literature in an attempt to commend the use of the clapper in a socio-cultural environment that could often be hostile to it.

Before proceeding any further, I think it necessary to qualify my rendering of the terms *nāqōshā* and *nāqūs* as ‘clapper’, since its meaning in Syriac and Arabic sources is not altogether obvious. Although often defined as ‘bell’ in modern Arabic,¹⁴ the word *nāqūs* (deriving from the Syriac *nāqōshā*) is more appropriately described in its pre-modern sense as a wooden—and less frequently, brass—sounding board, struck with a mallet by priests and monks in times of prayer and liturgy,¹⁵ synonymous with the Greek *semantron*.¹⁶ Its use is

¹³ Constable, ‘Regulating Religious Noise,’ 64. For further examples of interreligious conflict over contested modes of prayer call in late Islamic and Reconquista Spain, see Ali Asgar Alibhai, ‘The Reverberations of Santiago’s Bells in Reconquista Spain,’ *La Corónica* 36, no. 2 (2008): 145-165 and Michelle E. Garceau, “‘I call the people.’ Church bells in Fourteenth-Century Catalunya,” *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011): 197-214.

¹⁴ For modern meanings, see, for example, Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (Arabic-English)*, 4th ed. (Otto Harassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1994) 1162; Martin Hinds and El-Said Badawi, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic. Arabic-English* (Beirut: Librairie de Liban, 1986), 880.

¹⁵ For basic definitions of *nāqūs*, as well as references to the word’s Syriac etymology, see Georg Graf, *Verzeichnis arabischer kirchlicher Termini* (Leuven: Imprimerie Orientaliste L. Durbecq, 1954), 110 and Frants Buhl, ‘Nākūs,’ *ET* 7 (1993): 943

¹⁶ For its use today in Mt. Athos and other Eastern Orthodox monasteries, see Dimitri Conomos, ‘Semandron,’ in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, ed. John Anthony McGuckin (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 559.

attested as early as Late Antiquity,¹⁷ and persisted among Christian communities living under Islam throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁸ Other forms of *nāqūs* include a type of wooden castanet, 3rd to 6th century examples of which have been preserved in the Egyptian monasteries at Saqqāra, Fayyūm, and elsewhere.¹⁹ The wooden manufacture of the instrument is hinted at in the Syriac lexicon of Ḥasan bar Bahlūl (fl. 10th century), who defines *nāqōshā* as a typos of the Cross (*zqīpā*).²⁰

The clapper would gradually be replaced by the church bell, a Latin Christian invention thought to have been introduced into Eastern Christendom by the Crusaders, though this process has not been well documented.²¹ While bells appear to have enjoyed an earlier adoption by Mozarabic Christians in al-Andalus,²² by the turn of the turn of the 14th century Christian communities in the eastern Mediterranean were still known by their Muslim neighbours to employ clappers. The Arabic lexicographer Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manzūr (d. 1311/12), for example, defines *nāqūs* as the ‘striking board (*miḍrāb*) of the Christians, which they strike in times of prayer,’ further elaborating that it is comprised of a

¹⁷ An early instance in Syriac sources occurs in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* written in the 560s by John of Ephesus: E.W. Brooks (ed. and tr.), *John of Ephesus. Lives of the Eastern Saints* (PO, 17, fasc.1; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1923), 254. I owe this reference to Sebastian Brock.

¹⁸ For early Byzantine Greek sources, particularly hagiographies, which mention *semantra*, see Edmund Venables, ‘Semantron, or Semanterion,’ in *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, ed. William Smith and Samuel Cheetham, 2 vols. (Toronto: Willing and Williamson, 1880), 2:1879.

¹⁹ Ragheb Maftah, Marian Robertson, and Martha Ray, ‘Music, Coptic: Musical Instruments,’ in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. Aziz Suryal Atiya, 8 vols. (New York: Macmillan 1991), 7:1738-1740, here 1739.

²⁰ Rubens Duval (ed.), *Lexicon Syriacum auctore Hassano bar Bahlule e pluribus codicibus edidit et notulis instruxit*, 2 vols. (Paris: e Reipublicæ typographæo, 1901), 2: 1272. The Syriac-Arabic glossary of Ḥshō’ bar Ḥlī simply gives us the definition of ‘that which is found in monasteries’ (*alladhī fī l-diyārāt*). Richard J.H. Gottheil (ed.), *The Syriac-Arabic Glosses of Isho’ bar Ḥlī. Part II taw-nūn, Edited from the Manuscripts of Oxford, London, Paris, Berlin, Leyden and Rome* (Rome: Tipografia della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1908), 92.

²¹ To my knowledge, precious few studies have examined the gradual disappearance of clappers in churches throughout the Middle East due to the increasing popularity of bells. One attempt has been made by Ḥabīb Zayyāt, *al-Diyārāt al-naṣrāniyya fī l-Islām* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1938), 98-99. Here Zayyāt reasons that bells must have been introduced to the region no earlier than the Crusades, though this must necessarily remain speculative in the absence of documentary and material evidence. Zayyāt does, however, provide evidence from late-medieval and early-modern European travel accounts which attest to the persistence of clappers and the rarity of bells among Christian communities in Mount Lebanon and Egypt as late as the 17th century (*ibid.*, 99).

²² As might be suggested by Eulogius of Cordoba (d. 859), who describes Muslim attitudes to the Christian call to prayer in the following way: ‘As soon as they hear the sound of clanging metal in their ears, as if beguiled by a false superstition, they begin to exercise their tongues in all kinds of swearing and foulness.’ Translated by Edward P. Colbert, *The Martyrs of Cordoba (850-859)* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), 256-257, quoted by John H. Arnold and Caroline Goodson, ‘Resounding Community: The History and Meaning of Medieval Church Bells,’ *Viator* 43, no. 1 (2012): 113.

long piece of wood (*khashaba ṭawīla*) and a short wooden mallet (*wabīla qaṣīra*)²³—though his definitions can be conservative and prescriptive, relying as they do on earlier sources.²⁴ Nevertheless, it would appear that the *nāqūs* continued to be known as a wooden percussion instrument in eastern Islamic lands until the introduction of the bell, as is suggested from the secretarial manual of Shihāb al-Dīn Qalqashandī (d. 1418), who reports that, ‘When Christians wish to pray, they strike a clapper, which is a rectangular piece of wood (*khashaba mustaṭīla*) of a certain length, struck with a small piece of wood, and thus they gather.’²⁵

5.2 Some Muslim Representations of Christian Practices

Having outlined some of the main traditions surrounding the veneration of the Cross and the sounding of the clapper, and attempted some basic definitions, we can now examine some of the Muslim attitudes to Christian practice that ‘Abdīshō’ was responding to, whether directly or indirectly. It would be impossible to attempt an exhaustive treatment of these often complex and dynamic representations; to do so would risk presenting a generalised picture of Islamic attitudes to Christian practices. Instead, I wish to identify some salient legislative, literary, and theological manifestations of these attitudes which might have resonated in ‘Abdīshō’'s lifetime. In so doing I aim to show that the practices which ‘Abdīshō’ sought to justify were well known to those who attacked them.

²³ Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 20 vols. (Cairo: al-Ṭab‘a al-Kubrā al-Miṣriyya, 1300-1308/1882-1891), 8: 126.

²⁴ Ibn Manzūr’s definition appears reliant on Abū Manṣūr b. Aḥmad al-Azharī (d. 980), *Tahdhīb al-lughā*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2001), 12: 312.

²⁵ Quoted in Zayyāt, *al-Dīyārāt al-naṣrāniyya*, 90.

5.2.1 The Socio-Legal Context

Christian practices were of interest to Islamic jurists, particularly in relation to the status of ‘protected peoples’ (*ahl al-dhimma*) under Islamic law, mainly defined as Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians.²⁶ The formulation of the *dhimma* took place within the framework of the ‘Pact of ‘Umar,’ so called because of its association with the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634-644).²⁷ Of concern to us here are two of its provisions: that Christians refrain from publically displaying the Cross in plain sight of Muslims, especially during feast days,²⁸ and that the church clapper be struck softly, so as not to offend neighbouring Muslims.²⁹ These stipulations would receive their most systematic and comprehensive treatment in the *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma* (‘Codes of Conduct for the Protected People’) of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), who provides three versions of the Pact of ‘Umar with commentary on each.³⁰ Ibn Qayyim took a somewhat rigorist view of the Pact’s prescribed restrictions on *dhimmīs*: concerning the use of the church clapper, for example, he rules that it should not be sounded at all, let alone softly.³¹ The Pact also featured in the regulatory discourses of the *muḥtasibs*, market overseers whose remit could often include the enforcement of social restrictions on non-Muslims.³² The *ḥisba* manuals of al-Shayzarī (d. 1193) and Ibn Ukhuwwa (d. 1329), for instance, each contain sections prescribing restrictive

²⁶ For a basic definition, see Claude Cahen, ‘Dhimma,’ *EF* 2 (1965): 227-231.

²⁷ For a useful conspectus of the various versions of the text, see Mark R. Cohen, ‘What is the Pact of ‘Umar? A Literary Historical Study,’ *JSAI* 23 (1999): 100-157.

²⁸ Ḥabīb Zayyāt, *Simāt al-naṣārā wa-l-yahūd fī al-Islām* (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘a al-Kāthūlīkiyya, 1950), 18-25; Arent Jan Wensinck and David Thomas, ‘al-Ṣalīb,’ *EI* 2 8 (1995): 980-981.

²⁹ Arthur Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of ‘Umar* (London: Cass, 1970), 100ff; Zayyāt, *al-Diyārāt al-naṣrāniyya*, 88-90, 90-98; Fr. Buhl, ‘Nāqūs.’

³⁰ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma*, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, 2 vols. 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 1994), 2:657-873.

³¹ Ibn Qayyim, *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma*, 2:152. I owe this reference to Tamer El Leithy, ‘Sufis, Copts and the Politics of Piety: Moral Regulation in the Fourteenth-Century Upper Egypt,’ in *The Development of Sufism in Mamluk Egypt*, ed. Richard McGregor and Adam Sabra (Cairo: Institut français d’archeologie orientale, 2006), 75-119, 117, n. 253.

³² Ronald Paul, ‘The Muḥtasib,’ *Arabica* 39 (1992): 59-177, esp. 101-103. For the role of the *muḥtasib* in the later Middle Ages, see Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:358.

measures on *dhimmi*s, including the ban on displaying the Cross in public spaces and the regulation of the Christian call to prayer.³³

The Pact of ‘Umar also provided Muslim writers outside the legal profession with a framework through which to attack the perceived privileges of non-Muslims, particularly where interreligious rivalries in the state bureaucracy were concerned. In his *Radd ‘alā ahl al-dhimma*, al-Ghāzī al-Wāsiṭī, who served in both Ayyūbid and Mamlūk bureaucracies, bitterly complains about Christians who flout the rules of the Pact by openly displaying the Cross and striking their clappers violently.³⁴ Issues of visibility and audibility are brought to the fore in the same work as al-Wāsiṭī recounts the alleged excesses of non-Muslims during the Mongol invasion of Syria in 1259. Here the Christians of Damascus are said to have paraded crosses—among other religious paraphernalia—outside Muslim homes, mosques, and *madrasas*, while playing drums, trumpets, and cymbals (*al-ṭubūl wa-l-buwāqāt wa-l-ṣunūj*), and shouting, ‘Holy Cross!’³⁵ A similar scene occurs in a treatise on Sufism by ‘Abd al-Ghaffār ibn Nūḥ, who describes an incident in the Upper Egyptian town of Qūṣ that took place in 1307. Yet again, Christians are said to have disregarded the Pact of ‘Umar by parading crosses through the *maydān* and rowdily playing musical instruments, moving the town’s *fuqarā’* to instigate the destruction of no less than thirteen churches.³⁶

Muslim hostility to Christian practices could arguably arise from anxieties about identity and differentiation in Islamicate societies. For many Islamic jurists, theologians, and

³³ Abd al-Rahmān b. Naṣr al-Shayzarī, *Nihāyat al-rutba fī ṭalab al-ḥisba*, ed. Albāz al-‘Uraynī (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta’līf wa-al-Tarjama wa-al-Naṣr, 1365/1946), 120-122; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Qurashī ibn Ukhuwwa, *Ma’ālim al-qurba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba*, ed. and tr. Reuben Levy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 13-16 (ET); 38-46 (AT).

³⁴ Ghāzī ibn al-Wāsiṭī, *Kitāb radd ‘alā ahl al-dhimma*, in Richard Gottheil, ‘An Answer to the Dhimmi,’ *JAOS* 41 (1921): 383-457, here 391 (AT), 422-423 (ET). Regarding al-Wāsiṭī’s anti-Christian attitudes, David Thomas (‘Idealism and Intransigence: A Christian-Muslim Encounter in Early Mamluk Times,’ *MSR* 13 [2009]: 86-102, here 92) has noted that by the 13th century, ‘it is likely that the regulations of the Pact of ‘Umar had become so internalized into Muslim consciousness that they formed the framework in which attitudes to matters of society and religion were expressed.’

³⁵ Al-Wāsiṭī, *Radd ‘alā ahl al-dhimma*, 408 (AT), 446 (ET).

³⁶ ‘Abd al-Ghaffār ibn Nūḥ, *Wāḥid fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd*, in Denis Gril, ‘Une émeute anti-chrétienne à Qūṣ au début du VII^e/XIV^e siècle,’ *AnIs* 16 (1980): 241-274, here 246 (AT), 260 (FT). This incident and others like it are analysed by El Leithy, ‘Sufis, Copts and the Politics of Piety,’ 75-119.

exegetes, such attitudes found expression in the interpretation of the Qur'ānic injunction in Q. 2:42: 'Confound not the truth with falsehood' (*lā talbisu l-ḥaqqā bi-l-bāṭili*), together with the Prophetic tradition 'Do not assimilate yourselves' (*lā tashabbahū*).³⁷ These concerns have been studied largely in their early Islamic context, with some arguing that emergent Islamic exegetical, theological, and legal practices sought to preserve the identity of an elite minority of Muslims in the recently conquered Byzantine and Sassanian empires.³⁸ However, Christian practices in later centuries were still considered pervasive enough for jurists like Ibn Taymiyya to address them.³⁹ In a *fatwā* on the Pact of 'Umar, he affirms the restrictions on displaying the Cross and striking the clapper, among other stipulations.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, his *Iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm* ('The Necessity of the Straight Path in Distinction from the People of Hell') issues a series of lengthy admonishments against imitation (*tashabbuh*) of non-Muslim ritual. Notable among them is a discourse on Christian festivals, in which he mentions public celebrations on Maundy Thursdays that involve the hanging of crosses on doors and processions with pieces of copper struck like mini-clappers (*yuzaffūna bi-nuḥās yaḍribūnahu ka'annahū nāqūs saghīr*)—all of which he denounces as vile (*qabīḥ*), particularly in cases where Muslims partake in such festivities.⁴¹ The famous Sūfī thinker Ibn 'Arabī expressed similar anxieties about Christian influences while residing in Malatya, which had been recently conquered by the Rūm Seljukids from the Byzantines and thus remained at this time overwhelmingly non-Muslim. In a letter of political council,

³⁷ Albrecht Noth, 'Abgrenzungsprobleme zwischen Muslimen und Nicht-Muslimen. Die "Bedingungen" 'Umars "*aṣ-ṣurūṭ al-'umariyya*" unter einem anderen Aspekt gelesen,' *JSAI* 9 (1987): 291-315, esp. 308 for the Qur'ānic injunction and *ḥadīth* report; Meir J. Kister, "'Do Not Assimilate Yourselves ...": *La tashabbahu*,' *JSAI* 12 (1989): 321-371;

³⁸ In addition to the previous note, see Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1-7 for a recent *status questionis*.

³⁹ Mark Cohen (*Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008], 28) has compared Ibn Taymiyya's concern about 'Christianising' influences in Islam such as the reverence of Sufi saints and the cult of shrines to the Church Fathers' preoccupation with the 'problem of Judaizing' in early Christianity.

⁴⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 18:651-656.

⁴¹ Taqī al-Dīn ibn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*, Nāṣir ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Aql, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1404/1984), 1:476.

Ibn ‘Arabī exhorts the sultan ‘Izz al-Dīn Kaykā’ūs I (r. 1211-1220) to take a hard line on his Christian subjects by strictly enforcing the ‘conditions that were stipulated (*al-shurūṭ allatī ishtarāṭaha*) by the Prince of the Faithful ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.’⁴²

5.2.2. Encounters in Prose and Poetry

Christian practices and symbols were equally well-represented in the medieval Arabo-Islamic poetic imagination, which will become of particular relevance to us in Section 5.3 of this chapter. Although mostly written in the 10th century, the genre of *diyārāt* (accounts of Christian monasteries by Muslim writers) was well known to cosmographers and literary encyclopaedists of the 13th and 14th centuries.⁴³ Hilary Kilpatrick has described these accounts as a ‘non-polemical approach to Christian customs and institutions.’⁴⁴ Here, monasteries are presented as places where Muslims could find merriment (usually in the form of wine drinking and music), amorous retreat, and healing.⁴⁵ In the *diyārāt* of ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Shābushtī (d. 998) one finds bacchanalian verses (*khamriyyāt*) set to the sound

⁴² The letter is preserved in Ibn ‘Arabī’s magnum opus, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, 4: 547-548, here 547. The suggestion that the letter reflects Ibn ‘Arabī’s anxieties about the preponderance of Christians in the newly conquered territory of Malatya by the Rūm Seljuks is provided by Speros Vryonis (*The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971], 225-226), and followed by Stephen Hirtenstein, who reasons that, ‘Although he mentions *ahl al-dhimma*, it is clear from this passage that Ibn ‘Arabī primarily means Christians, who were by far the most numerous community in Anatolia after centuries of Byzantine rule, and his apparently categorical statement should therefore be interpreted within that context. As he writes himself earlier in the letter, “It is incumbent on me to respond with religious council and divine political advice according to what is suitable to the moment”.’ ‘Ibn ‘Arabī,’ *CMR* 4 (2012): 145-149, here 148.

⁴³ Many of these accounts were preserved in such works as the *Mu‘jam al-buldān* of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī ibn ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229); the *Āthār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-‘ibād* of Zakariyya ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (d. 1283); and the first volume of the *Masālik al-absār fī mamālik al-amṣār* of Ibn Faḍlallāh al-‘Umarī (d. 1337). See Hilary Kilpatrick, ‘Monasteries through Muslim Eyes: the *diyārāt* Books,’ in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule. Church Life and Scholarship in Abbasid Iraq*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 19-37, here 20. According to its modern editor, the *diyārāt* of Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Shābushtī (d. 998) survives in a single 13th century manuscript (*al-Diyārāt*, ed. Kūrīs ‘Awwād 2nd ed. [Baghdad: Maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif, 1386/1966], 5).

⁴⁴ Kilpatrick, ‘Monasteries through Muslim Eyes,’ 19.

⁴⁵ G.E. von Grunbaum, ‘Aspects of Arabic Urban Literature in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,’ *Islamic Studies* 8 (1969): 294-295.

of monks chanting and striking the clapper amidst music, wine drinking sessions, and other revelries.⁴⁶

According to more recent assessments, however, such depictions can be said to contain a strongly polemical subtext. In her doctoral thesis on the *diyārāt* of al-Shābushtī, Elizabeth Campbell has convincingly shown that Muslim revelry in monasteries served to undermine and subvert Christian claims of piety and continence, often by characterising these places as centres of sexual abandon and debauchery.⁴⁷ The mixing of sacred and profane imagery is also typified in the genres of libertinism (*mujūn*) and obscenity (*sukhf*) in Arabic and Persian *ghazal*, in which we often encounter the Christian male—and in fewer cases female—youth as the unrequited object of the Muslim poet’s desire.⁴⁸ Such encounters as these also take place in monasteries and churches, where the youth’s Christianity is invariably stereotyped through such objects as the girdle (*zunnār*), the Cross, and the church clapper, as occurs in the poetry of Abū Nuwās (d. ca. 813-15), Mudrik al-Shaybānī (d. after 912), and Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. 1221).⁴⁹ These amorous encounters have been argued by Lewis Franklin to reflect a broader discourse of political emasculation, whereby such religious trappings as the Cross and clapper bespeak the Christian’s social inferiority and misguided religious adherence.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ A notable example comes from a poem attributed to Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tharwānī, who, during a stay at the Monastery of Ashmūnī outside Baghdad, enjoins his listener to ‘drink at the strike of the clapper ... at daybreak’ (*ishrab ‘alā qar’i l-nāqūsi // ... bi-taḡhlīsi*), and to ‘not drain the drinking cup // until the strike of the clapper, for the night is on the side of the felicitous, not the miserable’ (*lā tukhfī l-ka’sa wa-l-laylu fī ḥaddi na’imīn lā wa-lā bu’si // illā ‘alā qar’i l-nāqūsi*). Al-Shabushṭī, *al-Diyārāt*, 48-49. For similar examples, see Zayyāt, *al-Diyārāt al-naṣrāniyya*, 258-259 and 287-288.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Campbell, ‘A Heaven of Wine: Muslim-Christian Encounters at Monasteries in the Early Islamic Middle East’ (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2009), 150-152.

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Geert Jan van Gelder, ‘Mudrik al-Shaybānī: Bad Taste or Harmless Wit?’ in *Representations of the Divine in Arabic Poetry*, ed. Gert Morg and Ed de Moor (Amsterdam: Radopi, 2001), 49-70, here 51; Zoltan Szombathy, *Mujūn: Libertinism in Medieval Muslim Society and Literature* (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust), 81-82. For further examples, see Zayyāt, *Simāt al-naṣārā*, 47-50; James E. Montgomery, ‘For the Love of a Christian Boy: A Song by Abū Nuwās,’ *JAL* 27, no. 2 (1996): 115-124, Franklin Lewis, ‘Sexual Occidentation: the Politics of Conversion, Christian-Love and Boy-Love in ‘Attār,’ *Iranian Studies* 42, no. 5 (2009): 693-723.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Zayyāt, *Simāt al-naṣārā*, 47; Montgomery, ‘For the Love of a Christian Boy,’ 118-119; Van Gelder, ‘Mudrik al-Shaybānī’s Poem on a Christian Boy,’ 62.

⁵⁰ Lewis, ‘Sexual Occidentation,’ 694. See also Thomas Sizgorich, ‘Muslims and their Daughters: Monasteries as Muslim Christian Boundaries,’ in *Muslims and Others in Sacred Spaces*, ed. Margaret Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 193-216, here 194, arguing that ‘monastic spaces’ were conceived of by Muslim writers of *diyārāt* and related genres as ‘an imagined space inhabited by idealized and abstracted

More explicitly hostile literary encounters could also come in the form of the trope of the clapper drowning out the Muslim call to prayer. The *Kitāb al-aghānī* ('Book of Songs') of Abu l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī (d. 967) relates how Christians in the city of Kūfa would strike the clapper each time the *mu'adhdhin* wished to sound the call to prayer, and sing loudly when the *shaykh* began the Friday sermon.⁵¹ According to two satirical verses by the blind poet al-Ma'arrī (d. 1058), preserved in the geographical dictionary of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 1229), the acoustic environment elsewhere was no less charged: in Latakia, we are told, 'the rancour twixt Aḥmad [i.e. Muḥammad] and Christ peaks; // this one takes to the clapper while the *shaykh* in fury shrieks.'⁵² We have already discussed reactions by Muslim jurists and others to Christian privilege in Islamicate society, with ritual practice and the Pact of 'Umar serving as central points of reference. Similar tropes could also occur in poetry. For instance, in a *qaṣīda* commemorating the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258, a poet laments what he perceives to be the ascendancy of the city's Christian population: 'High stands the Cross atop its *minbars* // and he whom the a girdle (*zunnār*) once confined has become its master.'⁵³

5.2.3. Theological Refutations

As for more systematic polemics against Christianity, those mentioned so far in this thesis have tended to focus more on 'primary topics' (Trinity, Incarnation, etc.) than matters of ritual. A more inclusive coverage, however, is found in the *al-Ajwiba al-fākhira* of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 1285), who pillories a number of Christian practices about which he appears remarkably well informed. Many of his arguments are based on the premise that Christian

Christian figures, figures that were suitable ... for service as metonyms for an essentialized Christianity and essentialized Christian subjects.'

⁵¹ Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects*, 104-105 *apud* Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Būlāq: Dār al-Ṭibā' a al-'Āmira, 1285/1868), 19:59.

⁵² Quoted from trans. by Lawrence Conrad, 'Ibn Buṭlān in *Bilād al-shām*: the Career of a Travelling Christian Physician,' in *The Syrian Christians under Islam*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 131-157, here 151.

⁵³ Quoted from trans. by Joseph de Somogyi, 'A *Qaṣīda* on the Destruction of Baghdād by the Mongols,' *BSOAS* 7, no. 1 (1933): 44 (AT), 45 (ET.).

ritual was innovated by emperors, priests, and church councils, thus leading to the corruption and falsification of Christ's original teachings.⁵⁴ Concerning Constantine's famous vision, he claims that the emperor probably lied about the vision for the good of his subjects (*li-ṣalāḥ ra'iyatihi*). Such historical anecdotes, therefore, are untrustworthy authorities on which to base such practices as venerating the Cross, especially since they are nowhere contained in revealed law (*lā yataqayyadu fī l-shar'iyāt*).⁵⁵ This falsification of Christ's original teachings has led, in al-Qarāfi's view, the Christians to apply a symbol of great shame and ignominy (*ihāna 'aẓīma*) to a man they claim to be God.⁵⁶

The Helena legend is subjected to similar scrutiny by the author of the *Adillat al-wahdāniyya* (ca. first half of the 13th century). He reports that the True Cross is believed by Christians to have been uncovered beneath a rubbish heap (*mazbala*); and yet, he points out in disbelief, they adorn their churches with this very symbol, tattoo it on their skin (*ṭaba 'ūhū 'alā ajsāmihim*), and make its sign with their fingers.⁵⁷ As with Constantine's vision, al-Qarāfi affirms the charge that the feast days commemorating the Discovery of the Cross have no basis in revealed law (*lā aṣla lahum fī shar'ihim*).⁵⁸ The Jew said to have been Helena's informant is accused of having lied about the Cross's whereabouts. After being threatened with torture, he buried three sticks (*thalāth a'wād*) beneath a rubbish heap, later claiming one of them to be the True Cross.⁵⁹ Since it is written in the Gospels that Jesus was crucified alongside two thieves, al-Qarāfi reasons that it would have been easy to dupe the empress. Thus, he concludes, the Christians' rationale for adopting the Cross as their emblem (*shi'ār*)

⁵⁴ This tendency in late 13th- and early 14th century Muslim polemicists has been described by Lazarus-Yafeh, 'Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics,' 71-79. See also Nadia Maria El Sheikh, 'The Conversion of Constantine the Great,' *Türklük Bilgis Araştırmaları* 36 (2011): 69-83, esp. 74-78 for polemical rereadings of the Constantine legend by medieval Arabo-Islamic writers.

⁵⁵ Al-Qarāfi, *Ajwiba*, 411.

⁵⁶ Al-Qarāfi, *Ajwiba*, 411.

⁵⁷ Al-Qarāfi, *Ajwiba*, 338-339.

⁵⁸ Al-Qarāfi, *Ajwiba*, 338.

⁵⁹ [Pseudo-]al-Qarāfi, *Adilla*, 87.

and their celebration of the Feast Day of the Cross is based on little more than an elaborate swindle (*'alā wajh la 'bⁱⁿ*).⁶⁰

In his discussion of how Christians came to use the clapper in their call to prayer, the author of the *Adillat al-waḥdāniyya* betrays further knowledge of sacred tradition. He begins by examining a Christian claim that Noah was ordered by God to ring a bell (*an yaduqqa l-jaras*) in order to gather the animals into the Ark.⁶¹ It is unclear to me where the author derives this information, but it appears to bear some resemblance to the *Cave of Treasures* legend mentioned above, though a bell rather than a wooden clapper (*nāqūs*) is mentioned.⁶² Elements of Christian exegetical lore were certainly known to earlier Muslim writers, namely the historians al-Ya'qūbī (d. 897/8), al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), and al-Mas'ūdī (d. 956), who incorporate strands of the *Cave of Treasures* narrative into their accounts of the Biblical prophets, but make no mention of Noah's use of a clapper or bell.⁶³ It is likely, though by no means certain, that this information was known to the author through a historical work by the Melkite writer Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq (d. 940) which transmits the legend in Arabic,⁶⁴ and whose work was also known to Ibn Taymiyya, as will be discussed shortly. In any case, the author tells us that Noah's role in originating the Christian call to prayer, though well-known and oft-mentioned (*mashhūra wa-madhkūra*), is inconsistent with the fact that most Christians employ a wooden clapper (*nāqūs*) rather than a bell in their call to prayer, which he claims was adopted after the Second Council of Alexandria, some four hundred years after Christ's

⁶⁰ [Pseudo-]al-Qarāfī, *Adilla*, 88.

⁶¹ [Pseudo-]al-Qarāfī, *Adilla*, 29, 78.

⁶² For pre-modern definitions of the word *jaras* as 'bell,' see Edward William Lane, *An Arabic English Lexicon*, 8 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863-1893), 2:143. See also Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, 4:598, who defines *jaras* as that 'which is struck (*alladhī yuḍrab*),' synonymous with the word *jujūl*, 'which is hung on horses' (*yu'allāqu 'alā l-dawābb*).

⁶³ For each of these authors' account of the Flood, see Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī, *Ibn-Wādhīh qui dicitur al-Ja'qūbī Historiae*, ed. Martijn Theodoor Houtsma, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 1:8-14; Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, ed. Michael Jan de Goeje, 13 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1879-1901), 2:40; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, §§66-67. For their reliance on aspects of the *Cave of Treasures*, see Albrecht Götze, 'Die Nachwirkung der Schatzhöhle, Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete,' *ZS* 3 (1925): 53-71, here 60-71.

⁶⁴ See below, Section 5.3.1.

crucifixion.⁶⁵ In a withering turn he suggests that the true reason why Christians strike wood (*ḍarb ‘alā l-khashaba*) is that it is more fitting to their subordinate status (*aqrab ilaykum fī l-nasab*).⁶⁶

Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) also refutes Christian ritual in his *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, in which he attacks several practices believed to have no revelatory basis. In response to the *Letter from the People of Cyprus*'s claim that the New Law (i.e. the abrogated Law of Moses) was received from Christ through the apostles, Ibn Taymiyya cites the Christian celebration of feast days as proof that this cannot be so. In particular, he argues that the Feast of the Cross was instituted only after Helena discovered it centuries after the death of both Christ and the Apostles, mentioning by name a version of the legend transmitted by Sa‘īd ibn Baṭrīq.⁶⁷ As for the veneration of the Cross, Ibn Taymiyya accuses Christians of ‘committing *shirk* by adopting images and the Cross’ (*bi-ttikhādh al-tamāthīl wa-l-ṣalīb*).⁶⁸ Furthermore, he grounds his interpretation of Q. 5:23 (‘certainly they disbelieve who say “God is the third of three”’) in a *ḥadīth* report that, ‘The Hour will not come before the Son of Mary comes down among you as an equitable judge, and he will break the cross and kill the swine.’⁶⁹

In addition to attacking Christianity’s historical foundations and mounting accusations of *shirk*, Ibn Taymiyya builds a case against the belief that the Crucifixion was a form of divine deception—that is, Satan, driven by an insatiable appetite for human souls, was tricked into accepting God’s sacrifice of His son, ignorant that the latter’s death would redeem humankind. We have already discussed how salvation narratives involving divine deception were put to use by Christian apologists in Christological discussions with Muslims concerning the Incarnation of God the Word. Though patristic in origin, these narrative

⁶⁵ I have been unable to find reference to a Second Council of Alexandria at which the call to prayer is defined.

⁶⁶ [Pseudo-Jal-Qarāfi, *Addila*, 78.

⁶⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb*, 3:30-32. The same narrative is discussed in *ibid*, 3:141, 4:210, 225-226. Cf. Cheikho, *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, 129-130.

⁶⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb*, 3:30.

⁶⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb*, 2:31. On this tradition and its sources, see Swanson, ‘Folly to the *ḥunafā*’, 48, 65.

redescriptions of Christ's death featured prominently in Christian-Muslim debates about the salvific power of the Crucifixion.⁷⁰ Ibn Taymiyya makes no less than twelve arguments against the doctrine, the most salient of which rest on the premise that Christianity denies humankind's agency in its own salvation. For if Christ gained victory over death through God's sacrifice, then Adam's descendants prior to Christ's death would have been accountable for the 'sins of the father (*dhunūb abīhim*), including the prophet Abraham whose father was an unbeliever.⁷¹ Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya asks why God chose to save humankind by sacrificing His son when he could have done so directly and from the beginning. This objection leads Ibn Taymiyya to posit that the Christian doctrine of salvation implies that divine justice does not extend to those who came before Christ, including the prophets who were without sin.⁷² Alternatively, the implication is that deception was employed by God due to his inability (*ta'jīz*) to confront Satan directly, a belief that would make Christians guilty of the heresy of dualism (*qawl al-thanawiyya*).⁷³ In this way, Ibn Taymiyya undermines Christianity's special reverence of Christ's death—and hence the Cross—as the instrument of universal salvation.

The famous Ḥanbalite jurist also makes a number of arguments from Christian and Jewish scripture to support Muḥammad's prophethood and (of greater interest to us here) the superiority of Islamic ritual practice. Where the call to prayer is concerned, he focuses his attention on Psalm 149:1-7, which he paraphrases as follows:

⁷⁰ My use of the term 'narrative redescription' is influenced by Mark Swanson, who employs it in his discussion of the doctrine of divine deception in Christians-Muslim debates during the opening three Islamic centuries ('Folly to the *ḥunafā'*, 151-228 and 163-167). For the patristic origins of the doctrine, see Nicholas P. Constan, 'The Last Temptation of Satan: Divine Deception in Greek Patristic Interpretations of the Passion Narrative,' *HTR* 97, no. 2 (2004): 139-163.

⁷¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:107-108.

⁷² Ibn Taymiyya *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:111, 113.

⁷³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:114-116.

Praise the Lord with a new song [*ṣabbiḥū Llāh tasbīḥ^{an} jadīd^{an}*] and let He from God's nation [*min ummatihi*⁷⁴] rejoice in the Creator, for He has given him victory and rewarded the righteous with dignity. Let them praise Him from their beds [*min maḍāji 'him*] and exult God with raised voices [*yukabbirūna Llāh bi-aṣwāt murtafa 'a*], with double-edged swords in their hands [*bi-aydihim suyūf dhāt shifratayni*] that they might inflict vengeance on the Gentiles [*al-umam*] who do not worship Him.⁷⁵

Ibn Taymiyya argues that these verses are ‘in conformity with the characteristics of Muḥammad and his nation (*tanṭabiqu 'alā ṣifāt Muḥammad wa-ummatihi*), since it is they who exult God with raised voices in their *adhān* of the five prayers.’⁷⁶ Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya cites numerous traditions in which the Prophet and his companions pronounced the *takbīr* in times of battle, in addition to Qur'ānic verses interpreted as requirements for the magnification of God in times of pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), ritual slaughter (*dhabḥ*), and religious festivals (Ramaḍān, 'Īd al-Fiṭr, etc.).⁷⁷ Thus, Ibn Taymiyya concludes, it is surely the Muslims who praise God in the manner prescribed in the Psalms, rather than the Christians, who neither glorify God with raised voices nor inflict vengeance on the Gentiles with double-edged swords. Rather, they employ a clapper (*nāqūs*) to glorify God, while reproaching any who take up the sword against unbelievers (*qad tu 'ayyibu man yuqātilu l-kuffār bi-l-sayf*).⁷⁸

5.3 The Cross between Revelation and Reason

In the previous section we explored accusations that the use of the Cross in Christian worship was an innovation based on little more than fanciful legends and historical anecdotes, in addition to oft-repeated charges that its veneration was tantamount to *shirk*. In what follows I

⁷⁴ Reading *min* for *lahu*.

⁷⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:226.

⁷⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:226-227.

⁷⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:227-232. Ibn Taymiyya goes so far as to claim that Christians refer to 'Īd al-Fiṭr as ‘the festival of “God is Great”’ (*'īd Allāhu akbar*). Ibid, 5:232.

⁷⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:235-236.

demonstrate how ‘Abdīshō’ grounds the veneration of the Cross in Biblical proof texts while appealing to a theological rationality common to Christians and Muslims. Secondly, ‘Abdīshō’ draws on a number of arguments by earlier apologists that worship in the direction of the Cross is wholly in accord with the Islamic conception of monotheism. In support of this claim he once again appeals to a shared theological rationality, this time by making teleological inferences from the shape of the Cross, attesting both to the ordered majesty of God’s creation and His essential unity. Yet, in addition to negotiating such common ground, ‘Abdīshō’ is keen to defend the historical foundations of Christian ritual by reminding his Christian readership of the sacred traditions and narratives underpinning the Church’s theology of the Cross. The main sources for ‘Abdīshō’’s theology of the Cross are his *Pearl* and *Uṣūl al-dīn*, though we also find a brief section on it in his *Ṭukkās dīnē*. As for the *Farā’id*, we unfortunately possess little of its section on the Cross due to lacunae in the manuscripts used for the edition.⁷⁹

5.3.1 The Exegesis of the Cross

Among the topics featured in some of the earliest conversations with Muslims about the Cross was the role of Christ’s crucifixion in humankind’s salvation. A notable example comes from a Syriac text known as the *Disputation between an Arab Notable and a Monk from Bēt Ḥalē*, which narrates a dialogue between an unnamed Nestorian monk and a Muslim official at a monastery near Kūfa, thought to have taken place during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd II (720-724).⁸⁰ When the Muslim wishes to know why Christians

⁷⁹ See introduction to Paša’s edition (*Farā’id*, 159).

⁸⁰ On the dating and *im sitz Leben* of the *Disputation*, see Sydney H. Griffith, ‘Disputing with Islam in Syriac: The Case of the Monk of Bēt Ḥalē and a Muslim Emir,’ *Hugoye* 3, no. 1 (2000): 29-54, here 13-26 and Gerrit J. Reinink, ‘The Veneration of Icons, the Cross and the Bones of the Martyrs in an Early East-Syrian Apology against Islam,’ in *Bibel, Byzanz und Christlicher Orient: Festschrift für Stephen Gerö zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 329-342, here 339-342. The identity of the monk is uncertain from the text, but is identified by ‘Abdīshō’ in his *Catalogue* as ‘Abraham, who wrote a disputation

venerate the Cross, the monk responds that, ‘Through it we are freed from error and through it we are delivered from death and Satan.’⁸¹ In support of this supposition, the monk presents his disputant with a soteriological typology from Nm 21:8-9, where Moses’s staff is argued to prefigure the wood of the Cross, since any who were bitten by a snake were saved by gazing upon it.⁸² The same proof-text later occurs in Timothy I’s disputation with al-Mahdī and Dionysius bar Ṣalībī’s (d. 1171) refutation of Islam.⁸³ The *Scholion* of Theodore bar Kōnī, the *Kitāb al-burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra’s, and the *Kitāb al-majdal* of ‘Amr ibn Mattā also discuss this proof text, adding that the staff of Moses caused salvation for the Israelites by inflicting plagues on the Egyptians, parting the Red Sea, striking a stone to create a spring from which to drink, and defeating the Amalekites.⁸⁴ The all-conquering and life giving nature of the Cross is affirmed in the *Apology of al-Kindī* and a brief treatise by Īshō‘yahb bar Malkōn, each of which compare it to the Covenant in Nm 35:10 in which Moses holds it aloft and says: ‘Rise up, Lord, and let your enemies be defeated.’⁸⁵

In his apologetic oeuvre, ‘Abdīshō‘ recognises a similar need to provide scriptural testimonies for the Cross’s salvific power. Unlike the proof texts discussed above, however, these testimonies are drawn largely from the New Testament, thus hinting at an effort to

against the Arabs’ (Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 3/1:205). The *Disputation* remains unedited, and I use here the text from Ms. Diyabakir Syr. 95, 1a-8b (ca. 16th century), which David Taylor has kindly shared with me. For details of this manuscript see Addai Scher, ‘Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés à l’archevêché chaldéen de Diarbekir,’ *JA* 10 (1907): 331-431, here 398.

⁸¹ Anon., *Drāshā da-hwā l-ḥad men tayyāyē ‘am ’ihidāyā ḥad b-‘umrā d- Bēt Hālē*, Ms. Diyabakir 95, 6a.

⁸² Anon., *Drāshā*, 6a. Cf. Ephrem’s commentary on Exodus. See Raymond Tonneau (ed. and trans.), *Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodam Commentarii* (Leuven: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1955), 136 (ST), 116 (LT). For similar representations of the staff of Moses in Ephrem and other early Syriac Fathers, see Cyril Aphrem Karim, ‘Symbols of the Cross in the Writings of the Early Syriac Fathers’ (PhD diss, Pontifical University of St Patrick’s College, 1994), 95-99.

⁸³ Heimgartner, *Disputation mit dem Kalifen Al-Mahdī*, § 9,8; Bar Ṣalībī, *A Response to the Arabs*, 92-93 (ST), 85 (ET). Cf. similar typologies in Karim, ‘Symbols of the Cross,’ 99-102 and Īshō‘dād, *Commentaire... II. Exode-deutéronome*, 103 (ST), 139 (FT); idem, *Commentaries*, 3:ⲉⲗⲁⲛⲁ (ST), 1:228 (ET) (on the parallel verse John 3:14).

⁸⁴ Scher, *Liber scholiorum* (Seert), 2:272; Hespel and Draguet, *Scholies* (Séert), 2:202; Hespel, *Scholies* (Urmiah), 186 (Bar Kōnī states here that ‘these were all analogies of the Cross [hālēyn dēn pellātē hwāy da-zqīpā]); Ms. Paris ar. 190, 139b-140b; Cachia and Watt, *Kitāb al-Burhan*, § 447-448.

⁸⁵ Tartar, ‘Hiwār islāmiyy-masīhiyy,’ 166; Īshō‘yahb bar Malkōn, *Maqāla fī radd ‘alā l-yahūd wa-l-muslimīn alladhīna yattahimūna l-naṣārā bi-‘ibādāt al-aṣnām wa-l-sujūdihim li-l-ṣalb wa-ikrāmihim ṣuwar al-Masīḥ wa-l-sayyida wa-l-qiddīsīn*, in *Vingt traités*, 176-178, here 177.

prove that the Cross's use in Christian worship is founded on the teachings of Christ and the Apostles. Citing Rm 5:10, he states in the *Pearl's* brief section on the Cross that if humankind was reconciled to God by the sacrifice of His son, then crucifixion must be the means through which renewal and redemption (*ḥuddātā u-purraqānā*) were worked.⁸⁶ Far greater use is made of Biblical proof texts in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*. In support of Christ's death as the means by which eternal life and salvation were delivered to humankind, 'Abdīshō' supplies a battery of testimonies from the Gospel of John—a gospel which, as discussed in the previous chapter, featured prominently in Christological discussions with Muslims concerning Christ's humanity and divinity. Where the soteriology of the Cross is concerned, the following Johannine passages are discussed:

1. Jn 17:3, where Jesus declares eternal life to be knowledge 'that You alone are true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.' It should be noted that this verse features in the polemics of al-Ṭabarī, al-Qarāfī and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), while appearing in the Bible commentary of the Ḥanbalite jurist Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Qawī al-Ṭūfī (d. 1316), all three of whom polemically reinterpret it to demonstrate how Christians reject the very monotheism that Christ himself preached.⁸⁷ For 'Abdīshō', however, the promise of eternal life is consonant with—if not contingent on—the belief in God's singularity, as he interprets the verse to mean that 'Christianity is knowledge of God (*ma'rifat al-Ḥaqq*), recognition of the unity of His divinity (*iqrār al-waḥdāniyyat rubūbatihī*), faith in His Messiah, and belief in His message.'⁸⁸
2. Jn 10:10, in which Christ states that he had come 'that they might have life, and have it abundantly,' then followed by Jn 12:24 which contains Christ's allegory of the kernel of wheat dying and reaping fruit. These two passages are said to indicate that 'life' (*ḥayāt*)—said

⁸⁶ *Pearl*, حد

⁸⁷ The interpretations of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Qayyim are Quoted discussed in Accad, 'The Gospels in the Muslim and Christian Exegetical Discourse,' 164-166. For al-Ṭūfī on, see Lejla Demiri (ed. and tr.), *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible: Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī's (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), §320-321, in which he declares that Christ's statement in Jn 17:3 indicates that 'he is neither God Himself, nor a hypostasis of Him' (*inna l-Maṣīḥa laysa huwa huwa wa-lā aqnūman minhu*).

⁸⁸ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 78a.

to mean the ‘happiness of the hereafter’ (*yurīdu l-sa‘āda l-ukhrawiyya*)—is dependent on Christ’s death and resurrection (*mawqūf^{an} ‘alā mawtihi wa-qiyāmatihi*).⁸⁹ The Cross, by implication, is argued to be the means by which this promise was delivered, an interpretation we find in earlier exegetes, namely Theodore of Mopsuestia and Īshō‘dād of Merv.⁹⁰ In order to add weight to this interpretation, ‘Abdīshō‘ cites Paul’s words in 1 Cor 1.18, that the ‘Cross is foolishness to the perishing, but to those who are living it is the power of God.’⁹¹

3. In 7:6, in which Jesus announces that his time had not yet come. ‘Abdīshō‘ presents this verse as intimating that the Crucifixion was ‘by necessity ordained’ (*yurīdu anna mawtī ḍarūriyy^{um} ḥatm^{am}*),⁹² implying that Christ possessed knowledge of his death and sacrificed himself willingly, thereby affirming the unified operation of Christ’s will with the working of God’s economy in humankind’s salvation.

The latter theme—the providential nature of Christ’s death—is expanded in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*’s discourse on the Cross. ‘Abdīshō‘’s use of salvation narrative has already been discussed in the previous chapter concerning his Christology. A similar (and connected) strategy emerges in our author’s explanation of Christ’s death and its redemptive purpose, as we will now see.

‘Abdīshō‘ sets the tenor of his narrative by paraphrasing Paul in Rm. 5:19, in which the apostle declares that humankind’s mortality—resulting from Adam’s fall—was redeemed by ‘the obedience of the one man,’ thus making Christ ‘the cause of life for all of humanity’ (*‘illat al-ḥayāt li-l-bashar bi-asrihim*).⁹³ In order to explain how humankind could once again achieve eternal life, he presents a salvation history similar to that discussed in the previous chapter. Once again we are told that Adam’s descendants persisted in their father’s sin by committing idolatry (*bi-ittikhādhīhim al-aṣnām*), despite God’s repeated sending of prophets,

⁸⁹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 78a.

⁹⁰ Theodore, *Commentarius*, 201-202 (ST), for whom having life ‘abundantly’ intimates ‘eternal life and resurrection’ as a consequence of Christ’s death on the Cross. According to Īshō‘dād, *The Commentaries*, ٢٥٥ (ST), 257 (ET), the dying kernel signifies the ‘suffering on the Cross’ as cause of redemption.

⁹¹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 78b.

⁹² *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 78b. Cf. Theodore,

⁹³ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 79b.

an action described by ‘Abdīshō’ as ‘the Promise and the Threat’ (*al-wa‘d wa-l-wa‘īd*), which humankind failed to heed due to having been overcome by Satan (*li-istilā’ sulṭān al-khaṭī’a*).⁹⁴ Furthermore, he asserts that God’s love for humanity meant that he ‘compassionately aided (*laṭāfa l-Bāri’u ra’fat^{an}*) his servants and creation, since He could think of no greater intercessor for them (*shafī’*) than Him[self].⁹⁵ Now, as we noted in the previous chapter, the term *lutf* and its variants featured prominently in Muslim *kalām* circles as well as being employed in ‘Abdīshō’'s king parable. It should be pointed out that the same applies to the concept of *al-wa‘īd wa-l-wa‘īd*, one of the ‘Five Principles’ (*al-uṣūl al-khamsa*) formulated by the Mu‘tazilite theologian Abū l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d. 849) to convey the idea that God rewards good and punishes evil as a matter of logical necessity (*ḍarūrā*).⁹⁶ The significance of ‘Abdīshō’'s use of the term will be discussed in due course, but for now let us return to the *Uṣūl al-dīn*'s salvation narrative, which informs us that God’s facilitating grace, or *lutf*, came in the form of the Incarnation and Christ’s eventual Crucifixion. Employing East Syrian Christological language observed in the previous chapter, ‘Abdīshō’ lends this interpretation to the following Gospel passages:

He manifested His eternal word [*aḏhara kalimatahu l-azaliyya*] in their world, clothed [*mutadarra^{an}*] in human form, perfected their deficiencies, and granted them salvation by His submission of that flesh to death as a ransom for them, since it [i.e. the flesh] was undeserving [*ghayr mustahiqqⁱⁿ*] of death due to its sinlessness [*li-barā’atihi li-l-khaṭī’a*], just as the glorious Gospel says: ‘God loved the world so much that He gave his only son’ [Jn 3:13].

Thus, if it has been established that nothing in him necessitates death, and the Bible testifies to his death, then his death [must have been] for a great cause and benefit [*li-sabab aḏīm wa-naf‘ jasīm*]. This is what is meant in the Gospel concerning our Lord when it says: ‘This is my

⁹⁴ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 79b.

⁹⁵ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 79b.

⁹⁶ Ulrich Rudolph, ‘al-wa‘d wa-l-wa‘īd,’ *ET* 11 (2002): 6-7.

body given to you as ransom for all people' [paraphrase of Tim 2:3] and 'This is my blood shed as forgiveness for the sins of the many' [Mt 26:28].⁹⁷

Implicit in this redemptive Christology, I believe, is the argument that, far from being accountable for the 'sins of the father,' human beings possessed freedom of action after Adam's fall and so *chose* to turn away from eternal life. Because mankind could not be compelled by the prophets, whose role was simply to convey good to humankind, the Incarnation and Christ's death were necessary for God to carry out His redemptive mission—without forcing humankind to accept divine mercy by divine will alone. It is worth noting here that the concausality of man's moral autonomy and divine reward is an old principle in the Syriac exegetical tradition.⁹⁸ Where anti-Muslim apologetics are concerned, Barbara Roggema has observed that similar salvation narratives to the one discussed above served to support the view that there was little need for God to vanquish Satan directly, since the latter acknowledges the former's omnipotence and superiority; but by deceiving Satan, God could claim that humankind followed Him out of their own free will, while Satan's guilt would be exposed.⁹⁹ Admittedly, 'Abdīshō' does not mention the term *iḥtiyāl* in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*'s section on the Cross (as he does in the same work's Christological chapter). Moreover, the notion that there was anything obligatory about God's actions was far from universally accepted by Muslim theologians. The main source of opposition to the doctrine of *al-wa'd wa-l-wa'ūd* came most notably from Ash'arite circles, in particular, al-Rāzī's critique, to which al-Ṭūsī and al-Ḥillī each responded vigorously.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, 'Abdīshō's

⁹⁷ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 79b.

⁹⁸ Aryeh Kofsky and Serge Ruzer, 'Justice, Free Will, and Divine Mercy in Ephrem's Commentary on Genesis 2-3,' *LeMus* 113, no. 3-4 (2000): 315-332, here 332; James McCallum, 'Salvation in Christ in Later Antiochene Theology, According to Theodore, Nestorius, and Theodoret; a Study of Antiochene Christology in Relation to Soteriology' (PhD diss., Pacific School of Religion, 1966), 145-175.

⁹⁹ Roggema, 'King Parables,' 129-30 with reference to three Melkite apologies, *On the Triune Nature of God*, Peter Bayt Ra's's *Kitāb al-burhān*, and *The Disputation of George the Monk*.

¹⁰⁰ See their responses in al-Ṭūsī's *Talkhīṣ al-muḥaṣṣal*, 368-369 and Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī*, 224-225.

employment of such terms may once again hint at an appeal to a common theological idiom in order to respond to Muslim claims about the arbitrariness and absurd elaborateness of God's purported sacrifice. In Chapter Three and Four we discussed 'Abdīshō's use of ontological and logical necessity to explain the teleological direction of God's actions. In a similar vein, our author seems to imply that Christ's death on the Cross was part of a broader scheme to fulfil the obligatory promise of divine reward, in the form of salvation and eternal life.

Once concluding his salvation history in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 'Abdīshō places the first objection in the mouth of his non-Christian interlocutor: if the Cross did indeed conquer death, why, then, do human beings continue to die? Moreover, at which point does salvation occur (*ayna mawqi' al-khalāṣ*)? He responds that the greatest witness (*al-shāhid al-akbar*) to Christ's victory over death is his resurrection on the third day after the Crucifixion, and that Christ accordingly vouchsafed eternal life after death for mankind. It then falls upon 'Abdīshō to explain how and when this process actually occurs for those living *after* Christ's resurrection. To this end he employs the following analogy:

How can anyone who realises that s/he has a second birth, life unending, and eternal bliss think of death as [mere] death and departure from the abode of pain [*dār al-shaqāwa*] as [mere] passing? Rather, s/he thinks of death as being alike to sleep [*ḍarb^{am} min sunnat al-nawm*], since slumber occurs every night before awakening the following day [*idh kāna haj'at^{am} kull laylatⁱⁿ bi-zā'i yaqzat al-yawm*].¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, 'Abdīshō does not draw out this analogy any further, making his comparison of sleep to death somewhat vague. It is most likely, however, that the reference here is to an eschatological doctrine known as hypnopsychism, or the 'sleep of the soul.' The early Syriac

¹⁰¹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 80b.

fathers Aphrahat (d. ca. 345), Ephrem (d. ca. 373), and Narsai (d. ca. 502) held that the soul, upon its separation from the body in death, enters a state of dormition, during which time it ‘dreams’ of future reward or punishment before reuniting with the body during resurrection.¹⁰² Later writers of the Persian church would subscribe to similar conceptions of mortalism. For instance, Timothy I held that the soul, as it awaits judgement and resurrection, loses its sensations together with the ability to distinguish good from evil, and is thus like an unborn embryo.¹⁰³ The Church would later uphold this principle during a Synod in 786-787, at which Timothy instigated the deposition of the theologians John of Dalyāthā, John of Apamea, and Joseph Ḥazzāyā for alleging that the soul retains sensation and awareness after death.¹⁰⁴ Opposition to this heresy, which its opponents characterised as ‘Messalianism,’ was reaffirmed at a later synod convened by Timothy in 790.¹⁰⁵

Thus, by the twilight of Late Antiquity hypnopsychism had become what Matthew Dal Santo has described ‘an integral element of the received eschatology of the East Syrian Church.’¹⁰⁶ East Syrian theologians would continue to subscribe to it in later centuries, though it does not seem to have gained acceptance among Miaphysite thinkers.¹⁰⁷ For instance, Ibn Jarīr produces several scriptural testimonies for the Resurrection, including Dan 12:2-3 (‘Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life,

¹⁰² Frank Gavin, ‘The Sleep of the Soul in the Early Syriac Church,’ *JAOS* 40 (1920): 103-120, here 103-6; Paul Krüger, ‘Le sommeil des âmes dans l’oeuvre de Narsai,’ *OrSyr* 4 (1959): 471-494, esp. 197-99; Philippe Gignoux, ‘Les doctrines eschatologiques de Narsai,’ *OrSyr* 11 (1966): 321-352, 461-488; 12 (1967): 23-54; Antigone Samellas, *Death in the Eastern Mediterranean (50-600 A.D.)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 56-7.

¹⁰³ See Timothy’s letter to Rabban Bōkhtīshō’, Oscar Braun, ed. and tr., *Timothei Patriarchae I Epistulae* (CSCO 74-5; Paris: J Gabalda, 1914-15), 54 (ST), 32 (LT), cited in Matthew Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints’ Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2012), 309.

¹⁰⁴ For the synod’s anathema (preserved in Arabic), see Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 3/1:100. The condemnation of these authors, however, would be overturned by Timothy’s successor and rival Ishō’ Bar Nūn (r. 823-7), as ‘Abdīshō’ himself notes in his *Ṭukkās dīnē*, 42a-43b (Vosté, 64-65). A disciple of John Ḥazzāyā named Nestorius, Bishop of Bēt Nuhadrā, was also anathematised for rejecting the soul’s posthumous activity, though he would later recant, Antoine Guillaumont, ‘Sources de la doctrine de Joseph Ḥazzāyā,’ *OrSyr* 3 (1958): 3-24, here 16; Otto Braun, ‘Zwei Synoden des Katholikos Timotheus I.,’ *OrChr* 2 (1902): 283-311, here 302.

¹⁰⁵ For the acts of this synod, see Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 599-603 (ST), 603-608.

¹⁰⁶ Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints’ Cult*, 241.

¹⁰⁷ F. Gavin (‘The Sleep of the Soul,’ 108) cites as examples Elias of Anbār (fl. 930) and Emmanuel bar Shahhārē (d. 980). See also Solomon of Baṣra (fl. 1222), *The Book of the Bee*, ed. and tr. Ernest A. Wallis Budge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), ١٣٤-١٣٥ (ST), 132 (ET).

others to shame and everlasting contempt’), but stops short at likening death to sleep and resurrection to awakening.¹⁰⁸ Some two centuries later, Barhebraeus asserted in his *Candelabrum* that the soul does indeed retain its senses after its separation from the body, and can perceive objects in both a universal and particular way (*yād‘ā nafshā l-kullhōn su‘rānē kullānāyē wa-mnātāyē men bātar purrshānā*),¹⁰⁹ a position he affirms in an Arabic abridgement of the *Candelabrum*’s chapter on psychology, in which he argues that soul is conscious and aware (*‘ālima wa-mudrika*) after death.¹¹⁰ The Copto-Arabic writer al-As‘ad ibn al-‘Assāl mentions that ‘some Christians’ (*ba‘ḍ al-naṣārā*, presumably Nestorians) believe the soul to be insentient (*ghayr shā‘ira*) after death—a view he rejects in favour of the soul’s *post mortem* consciousness.¹¹¹

The allusion to hypnopsychism in ‘Abdīshō‘’s *Uṣūl al-dīn* is notable by its absence in similar works of East Christian apologetics that I am aware of. It is possible that ‘Abdīshō‘’s mention of it serves a twofold purpose: to affirm the Church’s official teaching on when and how salvation occurs, on the one hand, while simultaneously negotiating common ground with his Muslim interlocutor, on the other. Indeed, the likening of sleep to death was a recurrent theme in some Islamic exegetical circles, not least regarding the interpretation of the Qur’ānic verse ‘God takes unto Himself the souls (*al-anfus*) at their deaths, and that which has not died [He takes] in its sleep (*fī manāmihā*)’ (Q. 39:42).¹¹² Al-Rāzī interprets this verse to mean that the soul experiences a temporary or partial separation (*inqiṭā‘ nāqīṣ*), only to return to its body upon the sleeper’s awakening, while in death the soul undergoes a

¹⁰⁸ See French trans. in Gabriel Khoury-Sarkis, ‘Le livre de guide de Yahya ibn Jarir,’ *OrSyr* 12 (1967): 302-354, here 341.

¹⁰⁹ Ján Bakoš (ed. and tr.), *Psychologie de Grégoire Aboulfaradj dit Barhebraeus d’après la huitième base de l’ouvrage Le Candélabre des Sanctuaire* (Leiden: Brill, 1948), ۞ (ST), 59 (FT).

¹¹⁰ Abū l- Faraj Bar Hebraeus, *Risāla fī ‘ilm al-nafs* (Jerusalem: Maṭba‘at Dayr Mār Murqus li-l-Suryān fī-l-Quds, 1938), 64-66.

¹¹¹ Al-As‘ad ibn al-‘Assāl, *Maqāla fī nafs*, in *Majmū‘*, ch. 60, §15.

¹¹² See Jane Idleman Smith, ‘Concourse between the Living and the Dead in Islamic Eschatological Literature,’ *History of Religions* 19, no. 3 (1980): 224-236; Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany: State University of New York Press), esp. 49, n. 54; Roberto Tottoli, ‘Sleep,’ *EQ* 5 (2006): 60-63.

perfect separation (*inqiṭā' tām̄m kām̄il*), though nothing is said of its fate during resurrection.¹¹³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya also believed sleep to be a kind of ‘lesser death,’ citing in confirmation of this Q. 39:42,¹¹⁴ and asserts elsewhere that the souls of the living possess the ability to commune with those of the dead while asleep.¹¹⁵ With that said, it is unclear from ‘Abdīshō’s *en passant* reference to ‘soul sleep’ whether he had the Muslim understanding of it in mind. What seems more likely is that his likening of sleep to death provides some explanation to those wishing to know what Christians mean precisely by salvation and eternal life, particularly in a world in which human mortality had continued to prevail after Christ’s death. Our author’s response to this problem appears to be that salvation, and hence eternal life, occurs after a period of metaphorical sleep.

5.3.2 The Cross as *qibla*: Rejecting Idolatry and Affirming Tradition

The adamant denial that the Cross’s adoration constituted a form of idolatry occurs in some of the earliest apologies written against Islam. Unsatisfied with the monk’s Old Testament typology of Moses’s staff (discussed above), the Muslim notable in the *Disputation* insists on knowing why Christians venerate the Cross, since the practice is not attested to in the Gospels. The monk responds that the Church does not receive its commandments from scripture alone; these are also derived from the traditions of the Apostles, who worked great miracles by the sign of the Cross, and for that reason the mysteries of baptism and the Eucharist are consecrated through its sign.¹¹⁶ The monk then argues for the verisimilitude of the Cross to nature and revelation, as indicated by the four quarters of the earth, the four

¹¹³ Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-fakhr al-rāzī al-mushtahir bi-l-Tafsīr al-kabīr wa-l-Mafāṭīḥ al-ghayb*, 32 vols. (n.p.: Dār al-Fikr, 1401/1981), 16:683.

¹¹⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Kitāb al-rūḥ*, ed. Muḥammad Fahmī ‘Adlī Sirjānī and Muḥammad Anīs ‘Iyāda (Cairo: Maktabat Nuṣayr, n.d.), 59-58.

¹¹⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Kitāb al-rūḥ*, 22-25.

¹¹⁶ Anon. *Drāshā*, 6a-6b.

elements, the four rivers of paradise in Gen 2:4-10, and the four Apostles.¹¹⁷ By drawing on his Church's Christology, the monk further argues that it is not the gold, silver, or wood that the Christians worship, but 'our Lord, God the Word, who dwells in the temple (i.e. the human body) [that is] from us and in this sign of victory.'¹¹⁸

These strategies were developed in later works of Syriac and Christian Arabic apologetics and systematic theology. Theodore Bar Kōnī reasons that the Cross is a likeness (*dmūtā*) of Christ in whom God dwelled, and points out that Christians venerate it in the manner in which Jews revere the Ark of the Covenant. He further states that Christ's resurrection was wrought by the Cross and all the Apostle's signs (*'atwān*) were worked through it.¹¹⁹ Drawing on his Church's Christological lore, 'Ammār al-Baṣrī explains that, because Christ's humanity was a veil (*ḥijāb*) worn by God, it is fitting that the object on which he died be venerated, much in the way that one might kiss the hoof of the king's horse and honour the earth beneath him, instead of the king's shoes and robe.¹²⁰ Moreover, al-Baṣrī asks why kissing the Cross should be considered any more controversial than the Muslim custom of kissing the Black Stone in Mecca.¹²¹ His Jacobite contemporary Abū Rā'īṭa also references Muslim practice when describing the Cross as an object to which prayer is orientated, likening it to the *qibla* employed in mosques.¹²² After offering Old Testament typologies of the Cross, 'Amr ibn Mattā in his *Kitāb al-majdal* affirms sacred tradition by

¹¹⁷ Anon., *Drāshā*, 6b. This argument owes much to the influence of Ephrem's natural theology, as demonstrated by Reinink, 'The Veneration of Icons,' 337, no. 31 *apud* Pierre Yousif, 'St. Ephrem on Symbols in Nature: Faith, and the Cross (Hymns on Faith, no. 18),' *EChR* 10 (1978): 52-62 and Karim, 'Symbols of the Cross,' For further examples of the Cross representing the four corners in the poetry of Ephrem, see also Edmund Beck (ed. and tr.), *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnem de Fide* (CSCO 154-5; Leuven: L. Durbecq, 1955), XVII:11, XVII:8, and XVIII:3, cited in Taeke Jansma, 'The Establishment of the Four Quarters of the Universe in the Symbol of the Cross: A Trace of an Ephraemic Conception in the Nestorian Inscription of Hsi-an fu?' *StP* 13 (1975): 204-209.

¹¹⁸ Ms. Diyarbakir 95, 9b.

¹¹⁹ Scher, *Liber scholiorum (Seert)*, 2:269-270; Hespel and Draguet, *Scholies (Séert)*, 2:200-201; Hespel, *Scholies (Urmiah)*, 71. Cf. Griffith, 'Chapter Ten of the *Scholion*,' 173.

¹²⁰ 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān*, 87. Cf. Brock, 'Clothing Metaphors,' 20.

¹²¹ Al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān*, 88.

¹²² Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrītī, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period: the Christian Apologies of Abū Rā'īṭa*, ed. Sandra Toenies Keating (Leiden: Brill, 2006), *risāla* I, §38.

recounting Constantine's vision and Helena's discovery.¹²³ He later states that the Cross is a representation (*mumaththal*) of Christ's victory over death, and thus the object of its veneration is not its gold, silver, or iron.¹²⁴

In a discussion of indications of the Cross in nature, the Melkite bishop Sulaymān al-Ghazzī (fl. 11th century) cites not only the four cardinal directions, but also a microcosmic theory of man as substance (*jawhar*), mass (*jirm*), living (*ḥayy*), and breathing (*mutanaffis*), with the intellect (*ʿaql*) at its centre.¹²⁵ A less scholastic approach is taken in Elias II ibn al-Muqlī's *Uṣūl al-dīn*. In line with earlier apologists he argues that that 'Cross is dignified for its signification, not for its own sake' (*yukarramu li-ma 'nāhi lā li-dhātihi*).¹²⁶ Elsewhere in the same chapter he compares the veneration of the Cross to that of the Black Stone, adding that Christians wear the Cross in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice in the way that Jews pull cords on the sides of their gowns in remembrance of God's commandments.¹²⁷ In addition to rejecting idolatry, Ibn al-Muqlī briefly recounts two legends of the discovery of the Cross: one involving Protonike, the wife of the Roman emperor Claudius,¹²⁸ and another involving the more familiar Helena legend, the latter of which is explained to be the reason for the

¹²³ Ms. Paris ar. 190, 141a-141b.

¹²⁴ Ms. Paris ar. 95, 149b.

¹²⁵ Sulaymān al-Ghazzī, *al-Maqālāt al-lāhūtiyya al-nashriyya*, ed. Néophytos Edelby, 3 vols. (al-Turāth al-ʿArabī al-Masīhī 9; al-Maktaba al-Būlusiyya, 1986), 3:111-112.

¹²⁶ Ibn al-Muqlī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 2:306-307.

¹²⁷ Ibn al-Muqlī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 2:309-310.

¹²⁸ While the story of Protonike's discovery of the Cross shares some affinities with the Helena legend, the former is set in the 1st century and involves a fictional character (the emperor Claudius is not known to have had a wife named Protonike). On a visit to Jerusalem, the empress is said to have been asked by James, the head of the Church there, to relieve the Christians of Jewish persecution. Obliging his request, Protonike ordered the Jews to submit the location of Golgotha and the True Cross. After the location of the tomb was revealed, her daughter fell ill and instantly died. Upon finding three crosses there (one of Christ and two of the thieves), each was placed on the body of Protonike's daughter until she was revived—and thus the True Cross was recognised. This narrative often occurs in recensions separate from the Helena legend, usually as part of the Edessene *Doctrina Addai*, leading Jan Willem Drijvers to speculate that the early Edessene Church sought to bolster the city's importance by formulating its own *inventio crucis*, 'The Protonike Legend, the Doctrina Addai and Bishop Rabbula of Edessa,' *VChr* 51 (1997): 298-315. For Ibn al-Muqlī, however, the Protonike tradition and Helena legend are equally authoritative; he states that once Protonike had established the True Cross, it was hidden again by the Jews, only to be rediscovered four centuries later by Helena. *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 2:304-305. This harmonisation is found in earlier authors such as Dionysius bar Ṣalībī (d. 1171) in his treatise on the Cross, preserved in Ms. Ming. Syr. 215, 2b-8a. I am grateful to Kelli Bryant for this information.

Cross's feast day on the 13th of Aylūl.¹²⁹ ʿIshōʿyahb bar Malkōn's apology of the Cross rehearses many of the aforementioned strategies. These include comparing the kissing of the Cross to the kissing of the king's carpet, done out of respect for the king, not to the carpet itself;¹³⁰ echoing Ibn al-Muqlī's words verbatim about the true object of the Cross's veneration (*yukarramu li-ma'nāhi lā li-dhātih*); and referring to the Cross as *qibla* and comparing it to the Black Stone.¹³¹ In additions to these statements, Bar Malkōn claims that Peter was the first to incorporate the Cross into Christian worship, thus situating the practice in apostolic tradition.¹³²

It is clear, therefore, that a panoply of discourses had emerged by the 13th century to explain, defend, and rationalise the cult of the Cross in the Islamicate world. Central themes of ʿAbdīshō's apology of the Cross in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* are God's providential power over creation and the transcendence of His essence. After establishing Biblical testimonies in support of the Cross (discussed above), he states that the Apostles established its sign 'as a *qibla* of worship, so that worshipers remember the truths of the Church and persist in obedience to what is necessary for universal salvation.'¹³³ By gazing on the Cross (*naẓr ilā l-ṣalīb*), ʿAbdīshō continues, the worshipper is reminded of the necessitating cause (*al-sabab al-mūjib*) of Christ's death, which is God's providence in creation (*ināya bi-khalqih*).¹³⁴ In line with so many earlier apologists, ʿAbdīshō affirms that Christians do not venerate the man-made form (*al-shakl al-maṣnūʿ*) of the Cross; rather, it is Christ's humanity (*nāsūt al-Masīh*) that is venerated on account of its conjunction with the Godhead (*li-ttiṣālihi bi-l-l-*

¹²⁹ Ibn al-Muqlī, 2:304-305.

¹³⁰ Bar Malkōn, *Maqāla fī radd ʿalā l-yahūd wa-l-muslimīn*, 159. Cf. Herman G.B. Teule, 'Išoʿyahb bar Malkon's Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons,' in *Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages*, ed. Martin Tamcke (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2007), 157-170, here 163.

¹³¹ Bar Malkōn, *Maqāla fī radd ʿalā l-yahūd wa-l-muslimīn*, 160-161; Teule, 'Išoʿyahb bar Malkon's Treatise,' 165-164.

¹³² Bar Malkōn, *Maqāla fī radd ʿalā l-yahūd wa-l-muslimīn*, 161; Teule, 'Išoʿyahb bar Malkon's Treatise,' 164, n. 29-30 for the sources of this tradition.

¹³³ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 81a.

¹³⁴ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 81b.

lāhūt), the worship of which is obligatory and necessary (*farḍ^{um} wājib^{um}*).¹³⁵ In order to drive this point home, ‘Abdīshō‘ issues a number of admonitions and condemnations to any failing to venerate the Cross with anything other than *this* in mind.¹³⁶

Another strategy that emerges in ‘Abdīshō‘’s apology of the Cross, which does not appear in any earlier work by another author, is the argument that the true object of the Cross’s veneration can be inferred from the grammatical structure of the word ‘Cross’ itself. This first occurs in the *Pearl*:

We worship Christ’s humanity because of God who is in him [*meṭṭul Allāhā d-bēh*]. Thus, through the Cross we worship God the saviour, for ‘Cross’ [*šlībā*, i.e. ‘the crucified one’] is the name [*shmā*] of Christ, equivalent to ‘killed’ [*qīlā*] and ‘worshipped’ [*sgīdā*]. This appellation does not apply to the wood, silver, or bronze [of the Cross].¹³⁷

A similar statement occurs in the *Order of Ecclesiastical Judgements*, in which ‘Abdīshō‘ expounds the Cross’s liturgical function. Once again, the word ‘Cross’ is said to be ‘the name of Christ, as in “crucified” (*zqīpā*) and “killed” (*qīlā*).’¹³⁸ The argument drawn from the passive form of the root *ṣ-l-b* also finds expression in the Arabic of the *Uṣūl al-dīn*: “‘Cross’ is the name of the Crucified (*al-ṣalīb ismu l-maṣlūb*), just as “*qatīl*” is the name of the

¹³⁵ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 82b. The author refrains from mentioning the source of the accusation that Christians venerate the manufactured form of the Cross; rather, he states that it is ‘believed by a certain group’ (*ka-mā zanna qawm^{um}*).

¹³⁶ See, for instance, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 81b: ‘God forbid any among the Christians from believing that [veneration is to the manufactured form of the Cross]; rather, they [the Christians] denounce as unbelievers (*yukaffirūna*) any who say or believe it’; and 82a: ‘If prostration (*sujūd*), honouring (*tawqīr*), and magnification (*ta’zīm*) of the Cross were not done with this intention (*ma’a hādihā l-ḍamīr*), any doing it would be sinning and any professing it would be committing unbelief (*kufṛ*).’

¹³⁷ *Pearl*, ☩

¹³⁸ Bar Brīkhā, *Ṭukkās dīnē* 59b (Vosté, *Ordo iudiciorum*, 84-85). Here, ‘Abdīshō‘ source seems to be the *Scholion* of Theodore bar Kōnī, as implied by the statement *āmar mārē skōlyōn d-maktbānā*. However, this citation is not found in Scher’s edition of the work, nor does it occur in the Urmia recension edited Robert Hespel. Although Vosté, the *Order*’s Latin translator, cites Scher’s edition as the likely source, he concedes that the ‘Abdīshō‘ attribution is more likely a summary of Bar Kōnī’s discourse on the Cross rather than a direct citation (*ibid.*, 84, no. 6).

murdered (*maqtūl*),¹³⁹ which is Christ who by his Crucifixion provided us true salvation.’¹⁴⁰ After making this statement, ‘Abdīshō’ appeals to Jewish and Muslim practice by asserting—in accordance with earlier apologists—that veneration of the Cross is no more idolatrous than prostration towards the Temple Mount and Ka‘ba, pointing out that any reasonable person (*nāṣif*) would accept that prostration towards these objects is ‘not to stone, clay, and what is man-made (*mā huwā ṣanna‘ahū l-bashar*), but to the Lord of those edifices’ (*li-rabb tilka l-abniya*). This, he reasons, is the true purpose of Christians ‘concerning their use of the Cross as a *qibla* in their worship.’¹⁴¹

In addition to safeguarding the veneration of the Cross from charges of idolatry, ‘Abdīshō’ affirms the sacred traditions underpinning the practice, particularly where its sacramental context is concerned. Towards the end of the *Pearl*’s section on the Cross, he reminds us that the Apostles performed miracles by this sign, and completed the mysteries by it (*[’]rāzē ‘edtānāyē b-hānā nīshā gmar[w]*), such as the laying on hands for the priesthood.¹⁴² These words are elaborated on in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*, in which ‘Abdīshō’ states that many miracles were worked by the Cross, chief among them, the healing of the sick by the Apostles, who would only cure the afflicted after making its sign and pronouncing the name of the Trinity (*ism al-thālūth*).¹⁴³ In addition to healing, ‘Abdīshō’ lists the ordination of the priesthood, baptism, and the Eucharist as being consecrated through the Cross by the Apostles. For reasons that are unclear to me, mention of the Cross’s victory through Constantine and its discovery by Helena is absent from the *Pearl*, though these are related at length in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*. At the end of his narration of the Helena legend, ‘Abdīshō’ drives home its relevance to the religious life of the Church, stating that the celebration of the feast

¹³⁹ Due to the synonymy of *qatīl* with *maqtūl*, I have left the former untranslated.

¹⁴⁰ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 81a. Cf. *Farā‘id*, 376 for an almost identical statement in what little has been preserved of the work’s chapter on the Cross.

¹⁴¹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 82b.

¹⁴² *Pearl*, ۱۰۰. Cf. *ibid.*, ۱۰۱: ‘The sign of the life-giving Cross ... is the completion and seal of all the Mysteries’ (*shummlāyā [h]w d-[’]rāzē kullhōn wa-mshamlyānā*).

¹⁴³ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 83a.

day marking the Cross's discovery is obligatory on all Christians, as decreed by the three hundred and eighteen bishops at the Council of Nicaea who 'established the orthodox faith' (*qarrarū l-amāna l-saḥīḥa*).¹⁴⁴

In Chapter Three of this thesis we discussed 'Abdīshō's use of empirical and teleological demonstrations of God's existence and Trinitarian attributes. Similar arguments are also brought to bear in the *Uṣūl al-dīn*'s exposition of the Cross. The first is what 'Abdīshō' refers to as the 'soundness of multiplication' (*ṣiḥḥat ḥisāb al-ḍarb*) using lines (*khuṭūṭ*), which are crossed over one another horizontally and vertically to produce a result in the form of intersecting dots (*nuqaṭ*). The premise here is that any amount multiplied by a number other than itself produces a quantity of dots greater than itself—except the number 1, which produces a single dot, as 'Abdīshō' himself illustrates in with the following figures (as they appear in Ms. Beirut 936):¹⁴⁵

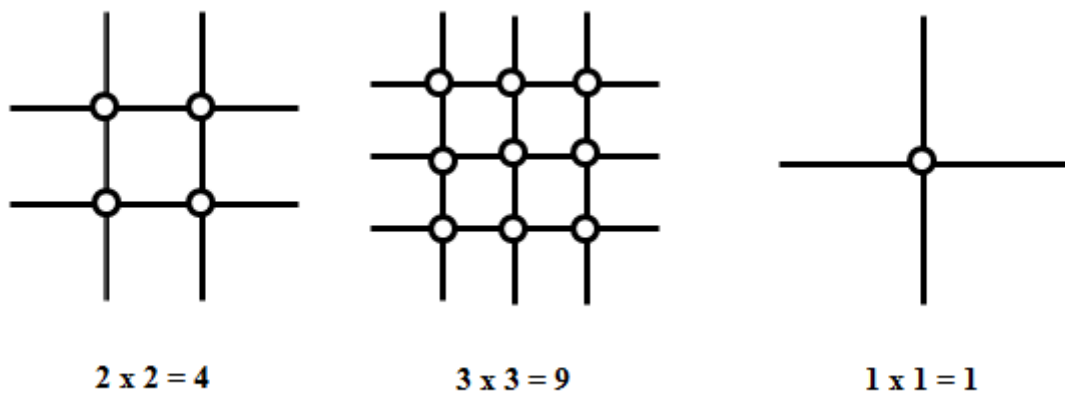


Figure 2

¹⁴⁴ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 85b.

¹⁴⁵ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 86a.

Thus, the result from the third is the form of the Cross (*ṣūrat al-ṣalīb*).¹⁴⁶ To the best of my knowledge, this method does not occur in any earlier or contemporary Christian Arabic or Syriac discussion of the Cross, and it is unclear to me where precisely ‘Abdīshō‘ derives it. However, the notion that the diligent searcher could be led to a better understanding of God through numbers featured prominently in the thought of the Sincere Brethren (*Ikhwān al-ṣafā*), an anonymous fraternity of Neo-Platonists active in 10th century Baghdad, whose learned epistles were known and read throughout the 13th century.¹⁴⁷ According to a Pythagorean metaphysics of numbers, the Sincere Brethren taught that the number one can be expressed in two ways: in the real or literal sense (*bi-l-ḥaqīqa*), in that one is indivisible and cannot be duplicated; and in the metaphorical sense (*bi-l-majāz*), insofar as an object is one in quantity but divisible in nature. Thus the true sense of one ‘is that in which there is nothing else but itself, insofar as it is one’ (*ḥaythu huwa wāḥid*).¹⁴⁸ A further principle of the Sincere Brethren’s Neo-Pythagorean scheme is that the number one, due to its stability and indivisibility, preserves the specific identity of each number it is multiplied with—including itself—and for that reason is referred to as the generator (*muwallid*) of numbers, reflecting a monotheistic conception of divinity.¹⁴⁹ ‘Abdīshō‘’s numerological conception of oneness follows much the same logic, except that in demonstrating this premise he adds that God’s

¹⁴⁶ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 86a.

¹⁴⁷ On their later influence, see Godefroid de Callataÿ, *Ikhwan al-Safa: A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 107-111. A pertinent example comes from a Garshūnī treatise on the mystical interpretation of the Arabic alphabet by Ignatius bar Wahīb (d. 1332), a monk active in Ṭūr ‘Abdīn around the turn of the 14th century. Here, he cites the Sincere Brethren as among the first to uncover the hidden meanings of letters; see *Ta’wīl al-ḥurūf al-‘arabiyya*, Ms. SMMJ 137, 4a-5b. I am grateful to Sam Noble for sharing details of this manuscript with me.

¹⁴⁸ Nader El Bizri (ed. and tr.), *On arithmetic and Geometry: an Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 1-2* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2012), 67 (Epistle 1, II).

¹⁴⁹ El Bizri, *On Arithmetic and Geometry*, 76 (Epistle 1, XI). Cf. Robin Waterfield (tr.), *The Theology of Arithmetic: On the Mystical, Mathematical and Cosmological Symbolism of the First Ten Numbers* (Michigan: Phanes Press, 1988) 35, in which the Late Antique Pythagorean Iamblichus (d. 330 CE) likens the number one to the Monad because it preserves the specific identity of the number it is multiplied with, which he believes to be ‘the disposition of divine, not human, nature.’ Later in the same treatise, he states that the Monad is the ‘artificer’ and ‘modeller,’ since it is the foundation of all numbers, and thus ‘resembles God’ (*ibid.*, 37-38).

absolute unity can be observed in cruciform, which in turn necessitates the Cross's veneration:

The real 'One' [*al-aḥad al-ḥaqq*] is God—may He be exalted—for He possesses unity [*wahdāniyya*] in Him[self], while those other than Him do so only metaphorically [*bi-l-majāz*]. If this is so, then it is necessary for all people to glorify the shape [*shakl*] from which we know the unicity of the Creator, may He be exalted, and that they make it a *qibla* for themselves in their prayers so that none among them neglect to remember Him.¹⁵⁰

In his second teleological demonstration of the Cross, 'Abdīshō' discusses the significance of the number four as reflected in the arrangement of nature. Here he lists the following phenomena from the created order:

The second perspective is the consensus [*ijtimā'*] that God brought forth all created beings *ex nihilo* by His power [*bi-qudratihi*] and designated all existing things four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Likewise, the movement of the celestial sphere produces four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter; four primary temperaments [*amzija mufrada*]: hot, cold, moist, and dry; four composite temperaments [*amzija murakkaba*]: hot-moist, hot-dry, cold-moist, and cold-dry; four stages of maturity [*asnān al-ḥayawān*]: childhood, youth, adulthood, and old-age; four cardinal directions [*nawāḥī l-'ālam*]: east, west, south, and north; in addition to the fourfold phenomena [*rubā' iyyāt*] of the humours [*akhlāt*],¹⁵¹ illnesses [*amrād*, i.e. humoral imbalances],¹⁵² and others such as the four characteristics [*awṣāf*] that are specific to

¹⁵⁰ *Uṣūl al-dīn*,

¹⁵¹ I.e. blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm, as postulated by Hippocratic-Galenic medicine (see *infra*).

¹⁵² I.e. sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic resulting in the imbalance of the aforementioned humours; see Michael W. Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine: Ibn Riḍwān's Treatise "On the Prevention of Bodily Ills in Egypt"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 10; Gotthard Strohmaier, 'Reception and Tradition: Medicine in the Byzantine and Islamic World,' in *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. Mirko D. Grmek (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 141-145; Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 43.

the celestial sphere [*falak*] in that it is round [*istidārat al-shakl*], bright [*istinārat al-lawh*], solid [*jalādat al-jism*], and rapid [*ṣur‘at al-ḥaraka*].¹⁵³

The fourfold nature of this scheme is closely linked to the idea, inherited from Hippocratic-Galenic thought, that the workings of the human body reflect movements of the heavens and thus represent a microcosm of the created order—a principle which had become heavily integrated into the practice of medicine in the pre-modern Islamicate world.¹⁵⁴ Through this scheme, ‘Abdīshō‘ once again infers the image of the Cross, as represented by the following cruciform figure:¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 86b-87a. What is referred to here is the theory of the outer heaven which, according to ancient and medieval astronomers of the Ptolemaic tradition, contained the fixed stars and moved more rapidly than the planetary, lunar, and sub-lunar spheres. See George Saliba, *A History of Arabic Astronomy: Planetary Theories during the Golden Age of Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 74, 91.

¹⁵⁴ Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 43.

¹⁵⁵ Unlike Fig. 1, this illustration does not appear in ‘Abdīshō‘’s own work. Rather, I have adapted it from a more extensive image in Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 43, fig. 2.2, who include in it the months of the year and the zodiac signs, but not the characteristics of the firmament.

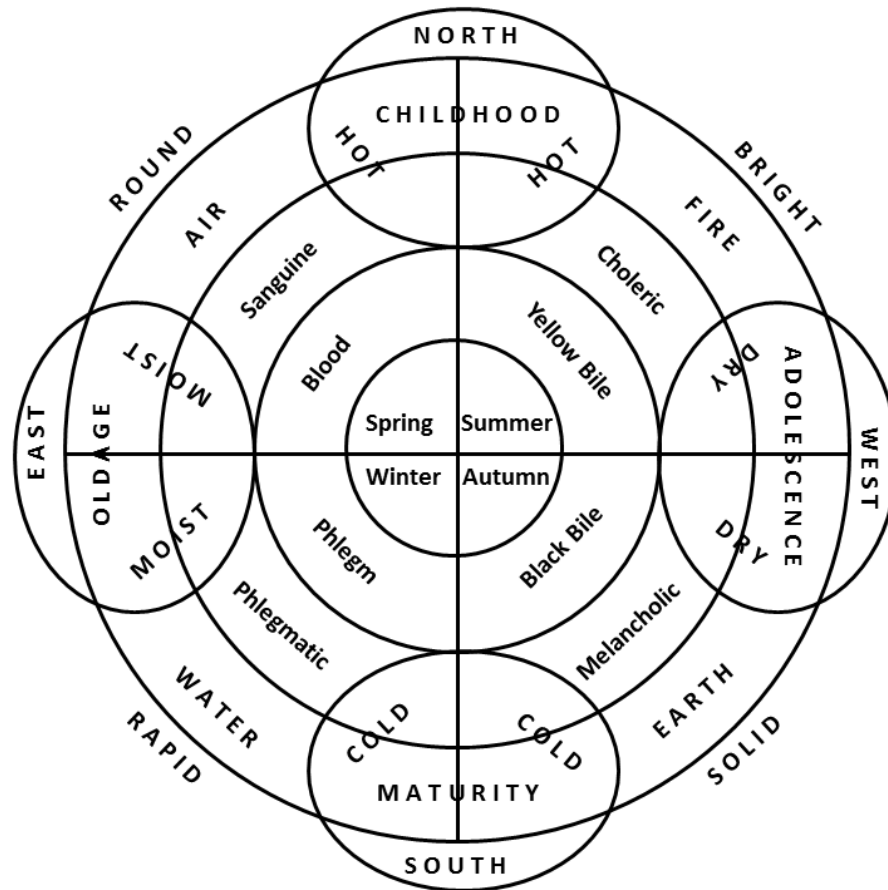


Figure 3

Theories of the Cross's significance in nature were by no means novel by 'Abdīshō's lifetime, as we noted earlier in this chapter. We also observed in Chapter Three that theories of micro- and macrocosm belonged to a philosophical idiom inherited from the Greeks and shared between Muslims and Christians. One example noted earlier was Sulaymān al-Ghazzī's microcosmic presentation of the Cross. Johannes van den Heijer and Paolo de Spisa have compared al-Ghazzī's approach to that in Epistle 26 of the Sincere Brethren, particularly its section on resemblances (*mushābahāt*) between the composition of the body and the four elements.¹⁵⁶ More germane to our discussion is part 5 of the Sincere Brethren's epistle on arithmetic. Building on the same Neo-Pythagorean model discussed above, the author of the

¹⁵⁶ Johannes den Heijer and Paolo La Spisa, 'La migration du savoir entre communautés: le cas de la littérature arabe chrétienne,' *Res Antiquae* 7 (2010): 63-72, here 69-72, citing Muṣṭafā Ghālib (ed.), *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa-khullān al-wafā'* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957), 366-368.

epistle states that the number four conforms to the arrangement of natural things that were created by God, hence the existence fourfold phenomena (*murabba'āt*) such as the elements, directions, temperaments, and humours.¹⁵⁷ In line with earlier Christian writers, 'Abdīshō' goes a step further by asserting that a unified knowledge of created things is encapsulated in the form of the Cross: 'All of these things appeared through the power of God *ex nihilo* (*min al-'adam*), and the shape that generally proves this is the Cross, which is fourfold (*rubā'ī*).'¹⁵⁸

5.4 The Call to Prayer between *nāqūs* and *ādhān*

So far we have seen that, at various points throughout 'Abdīshō's exposition of the Cross, a rational theological vocabulary emerges that is intended to resonate—if not gain acceptance—with both the text's Muslim interlocutor and its Christian audience. It is this very strategy that we encounter in 'Abdīshō's explanation of the Christian call to prayer, which we now turn our attention to. Central to his discussion is a repeated appeal to sacred tradition from the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, namely, its recasting of the Biblical Flood narrative. As we will soon become evident, 'Abdīshō' employs this narrative as a typology for the Church as humankind's refuge from sin. While references to Islamic theology throughout his writings have so far been indirect, his use of one Islamic source in his discourse on the call to prayer is explicit. The source in question is a *ḥadīth* attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muḥammad, the first Shī'ī imam, and the fourth of the 'Rightly Guided' caliphs. In this section I will demonstrate how 'Abdīshō' selectively appropriates aspects what Marshall Hodgson has described a 'lettered tradition ... naturally shared in by both Muslims and non-Muslims'¹⁵⁹ (noted elsewhere in this thesis) in order to convince a Christian audience that the Church's traditional teaching regarding the

¹⁵⁷ El-Bizrī, *On Arithmetic and Geometry*, 71 (Epistle 1, V).

¹⁵⁸ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 87a.

¹⁵⁹ Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 1:58.

call to prayer could be legitimised through the cultural and literary idiom of a wider, non-Christian milieu. As we will now see, our author's apology for the use of the Church clapper in worship occurs only in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* and *Farā'id*. The reason for its absence in the *Pearl* is unclear to me, however, the centrality of Arabic poetry—a connected theme in his discourse—might account for this, as we will later see.

5.4.1. From Liturgy to Apology

An early interpretation of the call to prayer as an admonition to piety is found in a *mē'mrā* attributed to Jacob of Serugh (c. 451-521), entitled 'On the *nāqōshā* and the exhortation (*zuhhārā*) to prayer,' in which he incites its reader to do spiritual battle with Satan (*qrābā d-am Sātānā*) upon hearing the call to prayer, likening it to the horn that signifies earthly battle (*qrābā 'ar'ayānā*).¹⁶⁰ While it is uncertain whether 'Abdīshō' had knowledge of Jacob's *mē'mrā*, his discourse is similarly linked to humankind's struggle against sin. In order to understand the background to his explanation of the clapper, we must first look to its liturgical context, since it is in liturgical commentaries that discussions about the call to prayer more frequently occur. The earliest of these produced under Muslim rule do not appear apologetic in nature. Commentaries on the Eucharist by the West Syrian writers Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) and Moses bar Kepha (d. 903), for example, do not allude to Muslim antagonisms, but rather offer a spiritual interpretation of the clapper, echoing Jacob of Serugh's words by describing it as a trumpet call against evil.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ The homily is unpublished, though I have managed to locate the Syriac text in Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs, MS 259, 191b-192a, thanks to recent digitising efforts by the Hill Manuscript Museum Library, St. John's University. For far earlier textual witnesses, see MSS. Berlin syr. 198 113b (13th ce.) and Charfeh 212 (olim 38), 95 (15th century), see Sachau, *Verzeichnis*, 1:643; Herman G.B. Teule, 'A Fifteenth Century Spiritual Anthology from the Monastery of Mar Hannanyā,' *JECrSt* 49 (1997): 79-102, here 91.

¹⁶¹ Sebastian P. Brock, 'Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron,' *OC* 63 (1979), 20-36; Richard Hugh Connolly and Humphrey William Codrington (ed. and tr.), *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy by George Bishop of the Arab Tribes and Moses Bar Kēphā: Together with the Syrac Anaphora of St James and a Document Entitled The Book of Life* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1913), 17 (ST), 25 (ET). For Moses bar

In later commentaries the figure of Noah is often invoked to explain the clapper's intrinsic meaning. The East Syrian *Ktābā d-abbahātā* ('Book of the Fathers')—a work of ecclesiology and liturgy spuriously attributed to the catholicos Simon bar Šabbā'ī (martyred under the Sassanian king Shapur) but more likely to date to the first half of the 13th century¹⁶²—tells us that Noah struck wood against wood (*nāqēsh [h]wā qaysā 'all qaysā*) in order to announce chastisements to come (*m'ētīthēyn d-mardwātā*) and to call humankind to repentance (*taybūtā*).¹⁶³ 'Abdīshō' himself dedicates a section of his *Order of Ecclesiastical Judgements* to the use of the clapper (*nāqōshā*) in the performance of the ecclesiastical offices, for which he gives the following explanation:

The clapper, or the proclaimer [*kārōzā*] of 'Glory to God in the highest,' incites us to run towards the call of refuge [*bēt gawsā*]. We inherited it from Adam who passed down the clapper in order to make known [his] raising up of service to God in the Cave of Treasures.¹⁶⁴ In it [i.e. the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*], Noah similarly struck [*nqash*] [it] that they might gather [*netkanshōn*] towards the call of refuge [that is] the Ark [*qēbūtā*], so that they would not drown in the flood of sinners [*tāwpānā d-ḥaṭṭāyē*].¹⁶⁵

The *Cave of Treasures* legend of the clapper's origins was also incorporated into later Syriac chronicles such as those of Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Anonymous Chronicle to 1234*,¹⁶⁶ as

Kepha's reliance on earlier sources, see Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 26. An unedited liturgical commentary of the East Syrian Gabriel of Qatar (fl. early seventh century) also offers an explanation of the church clapper; however, I have not yet been able to consult it. For a summary of the contents of a single manuscript which preserves this work, see Sebastian P. Brock, 'Gabriel of Qatar's Commentary on the Liturgy,' *Hugoye* 6, no. 2 (2009), 197-248, esp. 203-204.

¹⁶² See study by Jean Parisot, *Le Livre des Pères ou Ketabha dh'Abhahata (extrait de la Science Catholique, quatrième année, n^{os} 5 et 6. Mai, juin 1890)* (Paris: Delhomme et Brigue, 1890), esp. 37-40 for the dating of the text.

¹⁶³ The Syriac text is unpublished, and I use here Ms. Berlin syr. 102, 183a. A critical edition is forthcoming from Emiliano Fiore, to whom thanks are owed for kindly sharing images of the manuscript with me.

¹⁶⁴ In addition to being the title of the work, the 'Cave of Treasures' is also the name of the cave in which Adam established his place of worship. See Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures*, 69, though no mention is made of a device used as a call to prayer.

¹⁶⁵ Bar Brīkhā, *Ṭukkās dīnē*, 95b (Vosté, *Ordo iudiciorum*, 83-84).

¹⁶⁶ Jean-Baptiste Chabot (ed. and tr.), *Incerti auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum* (CSCO 104, 121; Paris: L. Durbeq, 1927-1989), 8 (ST), 5 (ET). See also extract in Thomas Joseph Lamy, *Dissertatio de*

well as the Arabic Christian Melkite chronicles of Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq and the *Kitāb al-majāll* ('Book of Scrolls').¹⁶⁷ It is no surprise, then, to find reference to the Noah legend in the form of a marginal note in a Copto-Arabic nomocanon attributed to al-Mu'taman ibn al-ʿAssāl (copied in 1355), which reports that the first to begin the practice of striking the clapper was Noah, who did so in order to gather the workers (*ṣunnā*) during the Ark's construction, according to unnamed historians (*mu'arrikhūn*).¹⁶⁸

In Dionysius bar Ṣalībī's liturgical commentary we begin to see a more controversial use of the tradition as he alludes to Muslim rulers who would restrict the call to prayer of their Christian subjects. After citing by name the abovementioned *mē'mrā* by Jacob of Serugh, he declares: 'What will the enemies of the cross (*b'elḏābē da-ṣlībā*) and those who forbid the clapper in their countries say against the word of the Doctors?'¹⁶⁹ Dionysius then cites Noah's use of the clapper in the *Cave of Treasures* tradition, thereby stating a clear preference for the church clapper as opposed to any other means of calling the faithful to prayer—including the *ādhān*, to which he alludes in the following passage:

From where have we learnt that the clapper shall be struck in church? We say that it is written in many histories [*tash'yātā yattīrātā*] thus: When God commanded Noah to build the Ark, [He] also [commanded him] to fashion a clapper. In the morning he struck it to assemble the workers [*'ūwmānē*] of the Ark, then at midday so that they could eat, and then in the evening so

Syrorum fide et disciplina in re Eucharistica (Leuven: Vanlinthout, 1859), 252; Chabot, *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad A.C. 1234*, 41 (ST), 22 (LT).

¹⁶⁷ For the Flood narrative and Noah's use of the clapper in these two works, see Cheikho, *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, 25 and Margaret Dunlop Gibson (ed. and (tr.), *Apocrypha Arabica* (Studia Sinaitica 8; London: C.J. Clay, 1901), 24 (AT), 23 (ET); Carl Bezold (ed.), *Die Schatzhöhle*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1883-88), 2:15-16. Ibn Baṭrīq's reliance on this source has been discussed by Uriel Simonsohn, 'Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq,' *CMS* 2 (2011): 224-233, here 228-229.

¹⁶⁸ Al-Mu'taman ibn al-ʿAssāl, *Majmū' min al-qawānīn al-bī'a*, Ms. London Or. 1331, 44a, cited in Zayyāt, *al-Diyārāt al-naṣrāniyya*, 93-94. For details about this unedited work, see Charles Rieu, *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: Longmans, 1894), 18. Nor is this work to be confused with a better-known nomocanon by al-Mu'taman's brother al-Ṣafī ibn al-ʿAssāl; having consulted MS. London Or. 1331, I can confirm that its contents differ from al-Ṣafī's work. For the corresponding section in the latter, containing canons for liturgical instruments (which do not address the *nāqūs*), see al-Ṣafī ibn al-ʿAssāl, *al-Majmū' al-ṣafawī*, ed. Jirjīs Phīlūthāwus 'Awaḍ, 2 vols. (Cairo: n.p., 1908), 1:19ff.

¹⁶⁹ Jérôme Lambert (ed. and tr.), *Dionysius bar Salibi. Expositio liturgiae* (CSCO 13-14; Leuven: L. Durbecq, 1955), 14-15 (ST), 42 (LT).

that they could retire from work. Furthermore, we say that the clapper is made from wood because it reaches the hearing [*rāhēt l-mashma'tā*] faster than the human voice [*qālā d-barnāshā*] and invites people to prayer.¹⁷⁰

A similar Church-Ark typology plays a central role in 'Abdīshō's *Uṣūl al-dīn*, and to a lesser extent in his *Farā'id*. Both works begin their apologies by stating that the use of the device is rooted in prophetic tradition. Beginning with an explanation of the clapper's origins, the *Uṣūl al-dīn* sets out the premise that the Church is modelled on the Ark of Noah (*al-safīna al-nūhiyya*), and explains that it is necessary to 'make silent its callers' (*yaj'ala mannādīyahā ṣāmit^{an}*), on the authority of ('*an wahyⁱⁿ*) 'The Possessor of All' (*mālik al-mulk*),¹⁷¹ a Qur'ānic stylisation for God.¹⁷² Here he relates an 'ancient tradition' ('*atīqa min al-akhbār*) that the Biblical patriarch was instructed to fashion a clapper (*nāqūs*) from wood, according to 'well-attested proportions and simple design' ('*alā nisbatⁱⁿ ma'lūma, wa-rutbatⁱⁿ mafhūma*),¹⁷³ and to strike it in order to fulfil two objectives. The first was to assemble his workmen during the Ark's construction and to signal the times of meals (*li-tanāwul al-qūt*).¹⁷⁴ Once the Ark was completed and the flood underway, the latter function of the clapper was to bring people to safety from the flood, whilst Noah called out, 'Whosoever enters is saved! Whosoever enters is saved!' (*man jā'a najā, man jā'a najā*).¹⁷⁵ With greater concision, 'Abdīshō' states in the *Farā'id* that, according to an ancient tradition (*sunna qadīma*), Noah struck the clapper after Adam at the completion of the Ark ('*inda kamāl al-safīna*), saying, 'Whosoever enters is saved!'¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Lambert, *Expositio liturgiae* 15 (ST), 42-43 (LT). I adapt my translation from Baby Varguese (tr.), *The Commentary of Dionysius Bar Salibi on the Eucharist* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2011), 14.

¹⁷¹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 124b.

¹⁷² See Alexander D. Knysh, 'Possession and Possessions' *EQ* 5 (2004), 184-187, esp. 184.

¹⁷³ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 124b.

¹⁷⁴ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 125a.

¹⁷⁵ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 125a.

¹⁷⁶ *Farā'id*, § 796-797.

However, in the *Uṣūl al-dīn* ‘Abdīshō‘ goes to greater lengths in relating how this narrative is relevant to issues of repentance, ritual piety, and obedience to the Church:

And just as He saved those entering the Ark from the actual drowning [*al-gharq al-maḥsūs*] while destroying those who persist in transgressing the Law, so too are those entering steadfastly into the houses of worship saved from the metaphorical drowning [*al-gharq al-ma‘qūl*] while He destroys those persisting in the erroneous belief that entry is unprofitable. And just as the clapper on the Ark was a call to meet for [its] construction and the provision of food in the first instance, while warning those unmindful of the destructive flood in the second instance, so does the clapper also incite the faithful, in the first instance, to meet in purity of mind and to perform religious good works, and provides knowledge and the Divine Mysteries which strengthen the pursuit of godly obligation that brings [the hearer] closer to the Divine Presence. In the second instance, it exhorts the people to escape destruction in the deluge of sin and error which destroys the people of the world failing to worship the Revered Lord.¹⁷⁷

It is this interpretation that is given as rationale for the Church’s adoption of the clapper. Like Bar Ṣalībī, ‘Abdīshō‘ is no less compromising in his preference for the church clapper above all other means of calling the faithful to prayer. After outlining the above tradition, he concludes: ‘This is the reason why [we] use the clapper to know the times of prayer, without relying on the cry of a caller (*dūna i ‘timādⁱⁿ ‘alā nadā ‘i mannādⁱⁿ*) or the call of the muezzin (*adhān al-mu‘adhdhin*).’¹⁷⁸ Adopting a more combative tone, the *Farā‘id*’s brief section on the call to prayer is concluded with a reference to critics who accuse Christians of resting their authority on dubious foundations, concluding: ‘The church clapper is not an innovation (*bid‘a*) of the Christians, but an ancient tradition of the prophets and messengers.’¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 125a-125b.

¹⁷⁸ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 126a.

¹⁷⁹ *Farā‘id*, § 798.

5.4.2. For Whom the Clapper Claps: Islamic Literature as Proof Text

In ‘Abdīshō’'s scheme, and arguably in Bar Ṣalībī's, the figure of Noah serves to firmly root the use of the clapper in prophetic tradition, thus arguing that it is worthy of Muslim esteem and not simply a Christian innovation.¹⁸⁰ This now brings us to the second part of the *Uṣūl al-Dīn*'s section on the clapper. In addition to its purported origins, we have observed its portrayal as an admonition to piety, exhorting the faithful to escape the spiritual deluge, just as Noah escaped the worldly deluge. This theme is elaborated upon when ‘Abdīshō’ turns his attention to the meanings ‘encapsulated in the number of its knocks and the scale of its strikes (*‘adad nuqrātihi wa-wazn ḍarbatihī*).’¹⁸¹ Firstly, the sound made by the striking of this instrument is said to glorify God, expressing ‘the Creator’s unity (*waḥdāniyya*), the power of His divinity, the majesty of His exaltedness, and the breadth of His power.’¹⁸² Secondly, ‘Abdīshō’ continues, the clapper incites the hearer ‘to yearn for God’s forgiveness of us (*‘alā al-raghba ilā Llāh fī musāmaḥatinā*).’¹⁸³ It is here that ‘Abdīshō’ rests the authority of this statement on ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, whom our author refers to by name and even applies the salutation *raḍīya Llāhu ‘anhu*, ‘may God be pleased with him.’¹⁸⁴

The scene of ‘Alī’s ‘interpretation’ is set with a transmission line (*isnād*) of the narrators Muḥammad ibn Mūsā ibn al-Sukkarī, Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, and Ibn al-Kawwā’.¹⁸⁵ The latter, a companion of ‘Alī, reports that he was with the caliph (*amīr al-mu‘minīn*) outside the city of al-Ḥīra when they heard the clapper being struck. Ibn al-Kawwā’ proceeded to mock it (*wa-ja‘altu ut‘isahu*), only to be rebuked by ‘Alī for not knowing that the clapper was in fact ‘speaking’ (*yatakallamu*). After Ibn al-Kawwā’ expresses puzzlement, ‘Alī declares to him, ‘By He Who split the seed and created the living

¹⁸⁰ For Noah in the Islamic tradition, see B. Heller, ‘Nūḥ,’ *ET* 8 (1995): 108-109.

¹⁸¹ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 126a.

¹⁸² *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 126a.

¹⁸³ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 126a.

¹⁸⁴ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 126a.

¹⁸⁵ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 126b.

being, every blow that falls upon blow and knock upon knock does naught but report a parable and provide knowledge (*illā wa-hiya taḥkī mathalan wa-tu'dī 'ilm^{an}*).¹⁸⁶ To this Ibn al-Kawwā' asks, 'So what does the clapper say?' 'Alī conveys his response with the following lines of poetry:

1. *Subḥāna Llāhu ḥaq^{an} ḥaqā // Inna l-mawlā fard^{an} yabqā*
2. *Yaḥkum fīnā rafq^{an} rafqā // Law lā ḥilmuka kunnā nashqā*
3. *Innā ba'nā dār^{an} yabqā // Wa-stawṭanā dār^{an} tafnā*
4. *Mā min ḥayyⁱⁿ fīhā yabqā // Illā adnā minhu mawtā*
5. *Innā l-dunyā qad gharratnā // Wa-staghwatnā wa-stahwatnā*
6. *Mā min yawmⁱⁿ yamḍī 'annā // Illā yahdum minnā ruknā*
7. *Tafnā l-dunyā qarn^{an} qarnā // Naql^{an} naql^{an} dafn^{an} dafnā*
8. *Ya-bna l-dunyā mahl^{an} mahlā // Fa-zdid khayr^{an} tazdid ḥubbā*
9. *Yā Mawlānā qad asrafnā // Qad farrāṭnā wa-twānīnā*
10. *Ḥilmuka 'nnā qad ajzānā // Fa-tdāraknā wa-'ifi 'annā*

1. Glorious is God, truly, truly // the Lord alone remains.
2. He judges us, kindly, kindly, // for without your love we would despair.
3. We have forsaken the house unending // and settled in a house of ruin.
4. None among the living remains in it // except in death closest to Him.
5. The world has deceived us // and seduced us and beguiled us.
6. Not a day goes by for us // that does not attack our cornerstone,
7. This world is dead, generation after generation, // moving, moving, burying, burying.
8. O world's son, slowly, slowly // Increase in good works and you will reap love.
9. O Lord, we have exceeded our bounds; // we have transgressed and slackened.

¹⁸⁶ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 126b.

10. Your mercy has rewarded us, // And so we have awoken; have mercy on us!¹⁸⁷

These verses of poetry follow a rare convention in Classical Arabic prosody known as *daqq al-nāqūs*, ‘the knock of the clapper,’ as it was thought to be imitative of its sound and rhythm.¹⁸⁸ It is based on a very regular pattern of eight syllables (two equally short ones per word) in each hemistich, illustrated by the anapaests *fa ‘l^{un} fa ‘l^{un} fa ‘l^{un} fa ‘l^{un} // fa ‘l^{un} fa ‘l^{un} fa ‘l^{un} fa ‘l^{un}*;¹⁸⁹ or in this case, *clap-clap, clap-clap, clap-clap // clap-clap, clap-clap, clap-clap, clap-clap!* Something of a rarity in Arabic poetry, there is some debate over *daqq al-nāqūs*’s precise definition within the traditional scheme of Classical Arabic metrics.¹⁹⁰ In most instances, however, variations of the above poem are cited in medieval works of Arabic prosody to illustrate the metre’s structure.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 126b-127a. My translation closely follows that of similar lines of poetry attributed to ‘Alī in Tahera Qutbuddin (ed. and tr.), *A Treasury of Virtues: Sayings, Sermons and Teachings of ‘Alī with One Hundred Proverbs Attributed to al-Jāhīz* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 152-155, which will be discussed in further detail below.

¹⁸⁸ For a recent and thorough discussion of *daqq al-nāqūs*’s typology and use in Classical Arabic poetry, see Geert Jan van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 2012), 108-123.

¹⁸⁹ I borrow here the metrical scheme’s illustration by Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar Zamakhsharī, *al-Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm fī ‘ilm al-arūd*, ed. Bahīja al-Ḥasanī (Baghdad: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1969), 232-233.

¹⁹⁰ For example, Zamakhsharī (d. 1144) considers this metre a type of *mutadārik*, the sixteenth metre added to the Khalīlian system of metrics (added to al-Khalīl’s original fifteen metres by al-Afkhash), as does ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Ibrahīm Zanjānī (d. 1261). See Zamakhsharī, *al-Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*, 232; ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Ibrahīm Zanjānī, *Mi ‘yār al-nazzār fī ‘ulūm al-ash‘ar*, ed. Muḥammad Rizq al-Khafājī, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1119/1991), 1:84. Yaḥyā ibn ‘Alī al-Tibrīzī (d. 1109) on the other hand defines *daqq al-nāqūs* as a kind of *mutaqārib*, the fifteenth metre in the Khalīlian system, Yaḥyā ibn ‘Alī al-Tibrīzī, *al-Kāfi fī al-‘arūd wa-al-Qawāfi*, ed. Shams al-Dīn Ibrahīm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2003), 97. On *mutadārik* and its types, see more generally Mohammad Ben Cheneb, ‘Mutadārik,’ *EL* 4 (1978): 14. Geert Jan van Gelder (*Sound and Sense*, 113), however, has recently called into question the definition of *daqq al-nāqūs* as a kind of *mutadārik*, or indeed as any kind of metre, arguing that ‘traditional Arabic poetry is metrical, on a quantitative basis, which means that there is a *pattern of longs and shorts* – the word ‘pattern’ if there are only longs and shorts: there is merely a drab uniformity. A prosody based on quantity without distinction between quantities, short and long, is a contradiction in terms. The perfect uniformity, the regularity and the symmetry of LLLLLLLL run counter to the essence of Arabic prosody.’

¹⁹¹ Zamakhsharī (*al-Qiṣṭās al-Mustaqīm*, 232-233) cites only two verses of the poem, without attribution. Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (d. 449/1058) has one Abū Mālik al-Ashaj‘ī as the tradition’s narrator, with ‘Alī reciting a variant of the poem in al-Ḥīra after returning heavy-hearted from the Battle of Ṣiffīn (Abū l-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī, *Risālat al-Ṣāhil wa-al-Shāhij*, ed. ‘Ā’isha ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bint al-Shāṭi’ [Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1975], 24-25). Al-Tibrīzī also provides a poem attributed to ‘Alī though equally varied (al-Tibrīzī, *al-Kāfi fī al-‘Arūd*, 97). Muḥammad ibn ‘Imrān al-Marzūbānī (d. 384/994) attributes a similar poem as Abū al-‘Aṭhīya (d. 130/748) (Muḥammad ibn ‘Imrān al-Marzūbānī, *al-Muwashshah fī Ma‘khūdh al-‘Ulamā’ ‘alā al-Shu‘arā’*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn [Cairo: al-Maṭba‘at al-Salafiyya, 1343/1924], 256).

Of greater relevance to this discussion is the monotonous rhythm of *daqq al-nāqūs*, which perhaps moved the prosodist Yaḥyā ibn ‘Alī al-Tibrīzī (d. 1109) to refer to it as ‘the dripping of the drainpipe’ (*qaṭr al-mīzāb*).¹⁹² Geert Jan van Gelder has recently noted the sense of gloom and foreboding that this metre evokes¹⁹³—a mood that fits well with the moralising character of ‘Abdīshō’s discourse. It is also worth mentioning that the lines of verse attributed to ‘Alī are representative of the ‘*ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt*’ motif of pre-Islamic and Islamo-Arabic poetry associated with the Late Antique Arab Christian city of al-Ḥīra, which remained strong in the literary imagination and cultural memory of medieval writers, as Adam Talib has demonstrated.¹⁹⁴ These themes often reflect on the transience of this world and exhort the listener to contemplate life in the next. In one such narrative, set during a hunting expedition in al-Ḥīra, the Christian Arab poet ‘Adī ibn Zayd (d. 600) offers exhortatory ‘interpretations’ of the wisdom of certain inanimate objects, namely a tree and a gravestone, to the Lakhmid king al-Nu‘mān ibn Mundhir, moving the latter to convert to Christianity and become an ascetic.¹⁹⁵ Another account features the Lakhmid princess Hind bint Nu‘mān, who is said in the *Diyārāt* of al-Shābushtī to have recited poetry to the Umayyad governor Ḥajjāj ibn Yusuf during his visit to al-Ḥīra containing a message about the fleeting nature of this world and its pleasures.¹⁹⁶

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib’s interpretation of the clapper’s wisdom is featured in an earlier source, the *Dustūr al-ma‘ālim wa-l-ḥikam* of Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Salāma al-Quḍā‘ī (d. 1062), although it contains notable divergences from the tradition cited by ‘Abdīshō’. For example, no transmission line is given and the companion to whom the

¹⁹² Al-Tibrīzī, *al-Kāfi fī al-‘arūd*, 97; cf. Zayyāt, *al-Diyārāt al-naṣrāniyya*, 93, Van Gelder, *Sound and Sense*, 114.

¹⁹³ Van Gelder, *Sound and Sense*, 114, making an apt comparison between ‘Alī’s meditation on the church clapper with the famous line from John Donne’s *Meditations upon Emergent Occasions* ‘never send to know for whom the bells tolls; they toll for thee!’

¹⁹⁴ See Adam Talib, ‘Topoi and Topography in the Histories of al-Ḥīra,’ in *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East*, ed. Philip Wood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7-47.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted and discussed by Talib, ‘Topoi and Topography’, 131-132.

¹⁹⁶ Al-Shābushtī, *a-Diyārāt*, 238, 244, discussed by Kilpatrick, ‘Monasteries through Muslim Eyes’, 26.

clapper is interpreted is one al-Ḥārith al-A‘war.¹⁹⁷ ‘Alī is known in such accounts for his renown in the art of Arabic eloquence and ascetic piety, occurring not only in works of medieval prosody but also Arabic wisdom literature, which transmits many of his aphorisms and spiritual teachings.¹⁹⁸ It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that ‘Abdīshō‘ finds such an ideal interpreter of the church clapper in the figure of ‘Alī, given the emphasis placed on repentance and continence in his earlier narrative of the Flood.

And yet the *Uṣūl al-dīn*’s engagement with ‘Alī’s ethical teachings is not without its contentions, as ‘Abdīshō‘ himself points out that some unnamed Muslims accuse Christians of inventing the tradition ‘to improve the image of the clapper (*li-taḥsīn amr al-nāqūs*).’ However, he does not attempt to refute the claim with any evidence, perhaps suggesting that it is not Muslims he seeks to convince but rather Christians who require assurance that their call to prayer is grounded in tradition. I am not aware of any such explicit objections to the above cited tradition’s authenticity, but it should be noted here that it does not occur in the *Nahj al-balāgha* of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 1016), a collection of ‘Alī’s sermons and narrations which remains popular to this day.¹⁹⁹ Nor is it discussed by two of the *Nahj al-balāgha*’s best-known 13th century commentators, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 1258) and Maytham al-Baḥrānī (d. 1300).²⁰⁰ A later version of it occurs in an anonymous 14th century collection of ‘Alī’s sayings, at the end of which a Christian monk converts to Islam after hearing the imam’s words, declaring, ‘I have found in the Torah that after the final prophet [i.e. Muḥammad],

¹⁹⁷ Qutbuddin, *A Treasury of Virtues*, 152-155.

¹⁹⁸ Several studies have addressed the ethical and spiritual dimensions of ‘Alī’s teachings. See, for example, Dimitri Gutas, ‘Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope,’ *JAOS* 101, no. 1 (1981): 49-86, esp. 60; Leonard Lewisohn, ‘‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib’s Ethics of Mercy in the Mirror of the Persian Sufī Tradition,’ in *The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam*, ed. Ali Lakhani (New York: IB Tauris, 2007), 109-146; Tahera Qutbuddin, ‘The Sermons of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib: At the Confluence of the Core Islamic Teachings of the Qur’an and the Oral, Nature-Based Cultural Ethos of Seventh Century Arabia,’ *Anuario de estudios medievales* 42, no. 1 (2012): 201-228.

¹⁹⁹ For a general overview, together with references to its corpus of commentaries, see Moktar Djebli, ‘Nahj al-Balāgha’, *EF* 7 (1993): 904.

²⁰⁰ See ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Hibat Allāh ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*, ed. Ḥasan Tamīm, 5 vols. (Beirut: 1963-1964); Maytham ibn ‘Alī al-Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī, 1981).

what the clapper says would be explained'²⁰¹—thereby reframing 'Alī's sermon as an exhortation to Islamic conversion rather than a general reflection on piety. In a similar vein, the *Manāqib amīr al-mu'minīn* of the Shī'ī traditionist Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kūfī (fl. 10th century) reports one instance in which Muḥammad praises 'Alī's spiritual perfection by warning him against Muslims who might preserve the dirt on which he trod and venerate it in the manner of the Christians, implying that such practices be viewed with suspicion.²⁰² Moreover, a legal treatise by the Egyptian jurist Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1355) invokes a tradition mentioned by al-Ṭabarī that during his caliphate, 'Alī banished the Christian population from Kūfa and forced them to settle in al-Hīra—cited as justification for the strict application of the *dhimma* where the building and repair of churches in Muslim cities are concerned.²⁰³

The question of whether 'Abdīshō' was aware of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's purported antagonisms towards Christians cannot be answered here. However, we may note that the figure of 'Alī as a paragon of ascetic virtue had gained wide currency in parts of the Islamicate world by 'Abdīshō's lifetime. Accounts of 'Alī's words and deeds enjoyed a broad readership among Muslims in the later Middle Ages, and not only among Shī'īs: as Marshall Hodgson has noted, the *Nahj al-balāgha* was treated 'almost as a secondary scripture after the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* even among many Jamā'ī-Sunnīs.'²⁰⁴ 'Alid tendencies also ran strong within Ṣūfī groups, especially those whose masters, *shaykhs* or *pīrs*, traced

²⁰¹ The account is transmitted in Abū Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb al-munjī man 'amila bi-hā min 'ālam al-I'qāb*, ed. Hāshim Mīlānī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Uswa, 1375/1996) 2: 252-253. However, this has been shown to be a misattribution, as according to David Bertaina, 'it can be inferred that the author was a Shī'ī and was active in Yemen in the 14th century' ('An Anonymous Treatise about the Excellences of 'Alī,' *CMR* 4 [2012]: 804-807, here 805. Cf. Etan Kohlberg, 'Abū Moḥammad Ḥasan Deylamī,' *EIr* 8 [1996]: 339-341).

²⁰² The same tradition is related several times in the same work by al-Hāfīz Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kūfī, *Manāqib al-imām amīr al-mu'minīn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Mahmūdī, 3 vols. (Qom: Majma' Ihyā' al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1412/1991), 1:251, 459, 494, 2:215.

²⁰³ Seth Ward, 'Construction and Repair of Churches and Synagogues in Islamic Law. A Treatise by Taqī al-Dīn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Kāfī al-Subkī' (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1984), 184-185. For the tradition itself, see Seth Ward, 'A Fragment from an Unknown Work by al-Ṭabarī on the Tradition "Expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula (and the Lands of Islam),"', *BSOAS* 53, no. 3 (1990): 407-420, esp. 417.

²⁰⁴ On the pan-confessional popularity of the *Nahj al-balāgha*, see Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:38.

their spiritual lineage to ‘Alī, regardless of confessional affiliation.²⁰⁵ In the Ilkhanate Ghāzān showed a special reverence for descendants of ‘Alī by instituting *dār al-siyādas* (lodging houses for descendants of the prophet’s family) across Mesopotamia and Iran. His brother Öljeitü (r. 1304-1316) continued the practice and would eventually embrace Twelver Shi‘ism after having been born a Christian, raised a Buddhist, and converting to Sunni (Ḥanafī, then Shāfi‘ī) Islam.²⁰⁶ Given the cultural and political cachet of ‘Alid loyalism in this period, it is not difficult to understand why ‘Alī might be considered a worthy champion of a Christian practice in a text intended to vindicate its use. The story of the clapper’s use during the Flood is in essence a Christian one, with no corresponding tradition in any Islamic narrative.²⁰⁷ What better way, then, to respond to the clapper’s marginal status in Islamicate society than to invoke the authority of a figure much-revered by Muslims?

5.5 Conclusions

It is clear from the foregoing that ‘Abdīshō’s exposition of Christian ritual is driven by a sense of urgency to affirm its doctrinal foundations in a socio-cultural environment that was often at odds with it. As with his Trinitarian and Christological thought, his apology of the Cross is heavily indebted to earlier writers, who, too, were faced with the ever-present need to respond to Muslim challenges. This indebtedness reflects a continuous tradition of literary apologetics that had been in development since some of the earliest Muslim-Christian encounters. ‘Abdīshō’s principal contribution is to frame such apologies in a vocabulary that

²⁰⁵ For the growth of ‘Alid loyalism within Sūfī *ṭarīqas* in the later middle period, which helped give Sufism its ‘catholic appeal’, see Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2: 204-220, 462-467.

²⁰⁶ The socio-political implications of Ilkhanid patronage of the *dār al-siyādas* has recently been discussed by Judith Pfeiffer, ‘Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization,’ 143-150.

²⁰⁷ Despite certain aspects of the Flood narrative found both in Islamic and Syriac Christian traditions, such as the landing of the Ark in Mt. al-Jūdī in the Qur’an (= Qardū in the Pshittā bible), the story of Noah’s use of the clapper has no equivalent in the Islamic tradition, despite its being known by some Muslim writers. For Noah in the Qur’an, prophetic *ḥadīth*, medieval Qur’anic exegesis, and the *qīṣas al-anbīyā’* genre, see Roberto Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur’ān and Muslim literature*, tr. Michael Robertson (Richmond: Curzon, 2002).

reflected the broader theological discourses of his day. Where the Cross is concerned, this has been most evident in his use of terms resonant with currents of Mu‘tazilite thought. The same can be said of ‘Abdīshō‘’s use of numerological and cosmological argumentation, which served as a common frame of reference for both Muslim and Christian intellectuals.²⁰⁸

Yet, in addition to negotiating commonalities with neighbouring doctrines, it was equally important in ‘Abdīshō‘’s didactic scheme to maintain difference. As a religion with its own historical foundations and narratives, it was necessary to remind Christians of the Church’s own sacred traditions—most of which predated the advent of Islam—and their relevance to ritual worship. In the beginning of this chapter we noted that Christian communities in the Islamicate world could be differentiated by visible and audible signs of religious practice. It would appear from this chapter’s discussion that in order to legitimate this differentiation, it was necessary for ‘Abdīshō‘ to show how these Christian practices and their underpinning narratives, marginalised as they were, could be presented as wholly reasonable in light of repeated attacks. Such concerns clearly manifest in his discussion of the call to prayer with a direct appeal to *ḥadīth* and elements of Arabic poetry. Now, it may well be the case that the integration of ‘Alī’s sermon into the *Uṣūl al-Dīn*’s discourse on the clapper was due to ‘Abdīshō‘’s admiration for his eloquence and spiritual exemplarity, which he saw as consonant with his own Church’s teachings. What is more likely, however, is that his use of the source is intended to negotiate a shared literary space with Muslims in order to present as acceptable the practice of striking the clapper in times of prayer to co-religionists who might be convinced otherwise.

²⁰⁸ In the case of micro- and macrocosmic theories of man and the universe, Johannes van den Heijer and Paulo La Spisa (‘La migration du savoir,’ 63) have described this phenomenon as ‘la migration du savoir entre peuples, langues, régions, mais aussi entre communautés voisines.’

GENERAL CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this thesis, I set out to establish a socio-historical context for ‘Abdīshō’'s apologetic writings. Given that he composed these between 1297/8 and 1313, he may have been motivated to write at a time when his co-religionists were experiencing increasing hardship following the official conversion of the Mongols to Islam. Yet, while this gradual hardening of official attitudes towards Christians was indeed taking place during ‘Abdīshō’'s lifetime, we have also observed that his theology belongs to a broader genre of apologetics that had been in continuous development since at least the middle of the 8th century, its purpose being twofold: to disseminate the fundamentals of Christian orthodoxy within an internal audience while assuring them that their beliefs were justifiable in the face of repeated external criticism.

Given these strategies, it is unlikely that ‘Abdīshō’ entertained any hope that his works would reach Muslims and alter their attitudes. Although some Muslim and Jewish polemicists did read Christian apologies, their perceptions of Christianity remained persistently hostile, leaving little room for actual dialogue between the faiths. Rather, what we find in both Christian apologetics and anti-Christian polemics is a faithfulness to genre whereby the same accusations, counter-accusations, and rebuttals are rehearsed by representatives of each side. It is this state of affairs which led to the emergence of what Mark Swanson has referred to as a ‘comprehensive body of apologetics’ within Syriac and Arabic Christian communities in

the Islamicate world.¹ And it is *this* context that has informed my reading of ‘Abdīshō’'s theology as an updating and recasting of a centuries-old repertoire of apologetic strategies.

This does not mean, however, that ‘Abdīshō’'s mediation of this tradition was static. Much of the arguments in this thesis have been made against previous assessments of the Syriac and Christian Arabic intellectual output of the post-‘Abbāsīd period as staid and repetitive, with the exception perhaps of Bar Hebraeus, to whom ‘Abdīshō’ is so often compared. As we noted in the introduction, Hidemi Takahashi contrasts the achievements of the maphrian with those of ‘Abdīshō’, arguing that the former invigorated the intellectual life of the Syrian Orthodox Church by producing a new synthesis of the old with the new, while the latter slavishly reproduced the works of earlier writers.² It is certainly true that we encounter a considerable degree of theological conservatism in ‘Abdīshō’'s thought. However, since there is no evidence that he moved in the same scholarly circles as Bar Hebraeus, it unreasonable to expect him to have written under the same circumstances and within the same intellectual milieu as his better-known contemporary. Moreover, negative comparisons between the two authors prevent us, I believe, from understanding how they were engaged in much the same project where anti-Muslim apologetics are concerned. Indeed, ‘Abdīshō’ differs little from other Christian apologists examined here in that they all regarded as important a classical heritage of theology that emerged in the centuries before the collapse of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, much of which was rooted in early debates between Muslims and Christians about God’s unicity and transcendence. As such, the likes of Bar Hebraeus and the ‘Assāl brothers were obliged to fall back on the very same conclusions as ‘Abdīshō’ regarding such issues as the definition of God as a substance (*jawhar*, ‘*ōsiya*), the ontological necessity of the Incarnation, and the intermediary function of the rational soul

¹ Swanson, ‘The Cross of Christ,’ 144. Swanson refers specifically to body of apologetics for the Crucifixion and the veneration of the Cross; however, the term might just as suitably apply to the range of Syriac and Christian Muslim apologetics as a whole.

² Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, 95-96.

during the Incarnation. The need to reaffirm such tenets meant that engagement with non-Christian sources could only go so far, since no Muslim theologian could accept such premises as God's triune nature or His ability to incarnate Himself—no matter how well reasoned the apologist's argument. 'Abdīshō's theology and those of others Christian writers were ultimately intended for a Christian readership who required convincing of their faith's rootedness in reason and revelation, and that it could answer external challenges on its own terms and according to its own authorities.

This is not to say that 'Abdīshō' does not engage in any meaningful way with the intellectual world of Islam, but rather that his engagement is cautious and selective. One way in which I have attempted to frame this approach is by borrowing Marshall Hodgson's definition of 'Islamicate,' viz. something which does not pertain to Islam as a faith but is nevertheless situated within a shared cultural, linguistic, and literary frame of reference.³ Seen in this light, we can fully appreciate how 'Abdīshō' seizes on the language and literary conventions of Islamic *kalām* and *falsafa* while maintaining a decidedly Christian stance. Examples of this have been his frequent use of Avicennian expressions for God as a Necessary Being, together with terms resonant with aspects of the Mu'tazilite tradition which address the obligatory nature of God's justice and the providential directions of His mercy. While 'Abdīshō' might not employ the latest metaphysical arguments in his discussion of God's existence and the world's temporal origination (as does Bar Hebraeus), nor goes into detail about the specific concerns of anti-Christian polemicists, he nevertheless appeals to a shared theological rationalism in his use of teleological arguments that few critics of Christianity could find controversial.

³ Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 1:59.

We have also discussed ‘Abdīshō’s participation in what Hodgson has styled a ‘shared lettered tradition.’⁴ As an elite and literate member of his community, our author’s use of such Arabic literary forms as rhymed prose should not surprise us—despite his rhetorical disavowal of the *maqāmāt* genre in his Syriac opus magnum, the *Paradise of Eden*. However, his use of these models in the justification of his Church’s theology is certainly noteworthy. His presentation of the various analogies for God’s uniting with Christ’s human nature has its roots in the Antiochene Christological tradition, but is creatively repackaged in one instance with the use of a Classical Arabic poetic topos, namely a Bacchanalian verse attributed to the great Arabic belle lettrist Ibn ‘Abbād. By doing so, our author does not attempt to concede ground to any Muslim understanding of divine union; rather, he illustrates a uniquely Christian understanding of the concept which, although wholly unacceptable to Muslim orthodoxy, could nevertheless be expressed through the Arabo-Islamic literary conventions of his wider environment. A more explicitly apologetic and inventive use of this lettered tradition appears in ‘Abdīshō’s exposition of the church clapper. Here, we encounter not only a rare convention in Arabic metrics known as *daqq al-nāqūs* but also the figure of ‘Alī ibn Abī ‘Alī Ṭālib. Our author’s appeal to ‘Alī in particular reveals a bold strategy in an otherwise conservative theological oeuvre: by invoking the authority of a much revered Muslim figure, ‘Abdīshō demonstrates to his Christian readers that the striking of the clapper in times of prayer could be legitimated according to Islamic authorities as well as his Church’s own sacred tradition.

Admittedly, my definition of ‘apologetics’—an elusive term—has at times been broad. But what I hope to have illustrated is just how interdependent the categories of apology and polemic are. A case in point has been ‘Abdīshō’s discussion of other Christian confessions. His *Pearl*, which otherwise reflects many Muslim anxieties about Christianity, is adamant in

⁴ Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 1:58.

its rejection of the Melkite and Jacobite positions on Christ's natures. Key themes that emerge here are self-definition, which 'Abdīshō' expresses through what I have referred to as a 'church-historical approach.' In doing so, he explains to an East Syrian readership how their current identity was shaped by events at Ephesus and Chalcedon in the 5th century, while affirming the apostolic roots of both its ecclesiastical organisation and Christology. Here, he inherits a set of arguments and presuppositions from earlier writers who polemicised against the Jacobites and Melkites for being recent, invented sects. Another example of the interface between polemics and apologetics comes from 'Abdīshō's *Profession*. Once again, he inherits the language of earlier East Syrian theologians such as Elias bar Shennāyā who sought to convince Muslims that it was the Nestorians who espoused a Christology that was in greater accord with Islamic orthodoxy than those of rival confessions. This intra-Christian rivalry had long characterised the articulation of Nestorian Christology in Arabic by the 13th century. Later in life, however, 'Abdīshō' would skilfully and creatively mediate this textual tradition in a way that was no longer hostile to other Christians. For in his *Uṣūl al-dīn* and *Farā'id*, his sole purpose appears to be the justification of Christian dogma against mainly Muslim objections—for which, perhaps, he no longer deemed it necessary to attack Christians of other confessions. This evolution in his method of exposition, therefore, points to a hitherto overlooked dynamism and complexity in 'Abdīshō's thought.

A testament to our author's accomplishments as a theologian is the literary afterlife of his works. In Chapter One we briefly noted the impact of his *Nomocanon* on the development of East Syrian canon law, while his *Catalogue* would set the groundwork for Syriac Studies in early modern Europe. But what I hope to have achieved in this thesis is a finer appreciation of dogmatic works like his *Pearl*, which would later serve as an authoritative handbook of Nestorian dogma until the 20th century. In this important catechism we have observed an anti-Muslim undercurrent, which is further reflected in his *Uṣūl al-dīn* and *Farā'id*, two later

summaries of the faith written in Arabic. Analysing their apologetic themes has uncovered the central role that inter-religious controversy played in the internal articulation of a Christian identity in a largely non-Christian environment. That these apologetic themes are also reflected in a brief Arabic sermon by ‘Abdīshō’ is further indication of just how embedded anti-Muslim apologetics were in the Church’s catechetical enterprise. Indeed, our author’s impact could already be felt during his lifetime when a priest named Ṣalībā ibn Yūḥannā al-Mawṣilī copied his *Khuṭba* in 1308. Some decades later, Ṣalībā would incorporate several other works by ‘Abdīshō’ into two theological anthologies he wrote in Cyprus. In these works, ‘Abdīshō’ takes his place alongside such other important East Syrian writers as Elias bar Shennāyā, Elias ibn al-Muqlī, and Īshō’yahb bar Malkōn—all of whom participated in inter-religious apologetics.

It has long been the tendency of historians to study formative phases and turning points. As I stated in the beginning of this thesis, such approaches have arguably left the study of such ‘post-formative’ authors as ‘Abdīshō’ in a state of neglect. However, I would urge scholars to not be discouraged from studying Syriac and Christian Arabic authors who wrote in what might be considered ‘later periods.’ I believe that I have uncovered truly noteworthy features of ‘Abdīshō’’s thought that would otherwise not have come to light. This has been achieved by looking past modern prejudices in order to understand his project on its own terms and according to his own aims and strategies. With that said, this preliminary study offers but a glimpse into his theology, since only a handful of topics have been examined here. Many more apologetic themes in his works have yet to be explored, such as the veracity of the Christian scriptures, the veneration of icons, the abrogation of Mosaic Law, circumcision, baptism, monogamous marriage—to say nothing of the many other authors of the 11th to 14th centuries who have similarly been neglected. It is my sincere hope that the present study has at least laid the groundwork for future enquiries.

APPENDIX A

The *Pearl*, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, and *Farā'id*: A Comparison of Contents

This appendix contains a comparative table of the *Pearl*, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, and *Farā'id*'s contents in English translation. For the *Pearl* and *Farā'id*, I have listed all sections and sub-sections as they occur in their critical editions, while the chapter divisions of the *Uṣūl al-dīn* have been established according to the unicum Ms. Beirut 936.

<i>Pearl</i> (ed. De Kelaita, 1922)	<i>Uṣūl al-dīn</i> (Ms. Beirut 936)	<i>Farā'id</i> (ed. Paša, 2013)
Mē' mrā 1: On God	[On the authenticity of the Christian scriptures]	Faṣl 1: On the Truthfulness of Christianity, the Advent of Christ, and the Gospels
1. That there is a God, and that the world is created, made, and temporal	Bāb 1: On the authenticity of the Gospels and the truth of Christ's coming.	Faṣl 2: What is Held in Common by all Religions
2. That God is one and not many	Bāb 2: Prophecies of Christ's coming.	Faṣl 3: What is Believed by Christians and Transmitted by the Gospels and the Apostles
3. On His Eternality	Bāb 3: Necessity of the abrogation of Mosaic Law.	
4. On the Trinity		
Mē' mrā 2: On Creation (<i>brītā</i>)	[Part 1: theoretical principles]	
1. The Creation of the World	Bāb 4: One Oneness and Threeness	
2. The Fall of Man		
3. The Divine Laws, Ordinances, and of the	Bāb 5: On the Indwelling and the Union	1. God is Unique and Eternal 2. The World is Originated

Prophets	Bāb 6: The principal dates in	3. Adam and the First Fall
4. Prophecies	the life of Christ.	4. Sending of the Prophets
concerning Christ	Bāb 7: Baptism	5. Coming of Christ
Mē' mrā 3: On the Christian	Bāb 8: The Eucharist	6. Christ's revelation of the
Dispensation	Bāb 9: The Cross	Trinity
1. The Coming of Christ and	Bāb 10: Resurrection	Faṣl 4: Three Principles [of
His Union	[Part 2: Principles of praxis]	God and Creation]
2. On the Life and Actions of	Bāb 11: Prayer, Fasting and	1. All that exists is Originated
Christ	Almsgiving	2. The World has an
3. On the Truth of Christianity	Bāb 12: Prostration to the East	Originator
4. On the Different	Bāb 13: Fastening of the Girdle	3. The Originator is One
Confessions	Bāb 14: [Fasting on] Sunday	Faṣl 5: On Oneness and the
5. Refutation of these	Bāb 15: [Fasting on]	Threeness
Confessions	Wednesdays and Thursdays	Faṣl 6: On Indwelling and
6. On the title 'Mother of	Bāb 16: The Church Clapper	Union
God'	Bāb 17: [Veneration of] Images	Faṣl 7: The Necessity of the
Mē' mrā 4: Discourse on the	[Conclusion]	Abrogation of the
Church Sacraments	Bāb 18: The Impossibility of	Mosaic Laws and the
1. Number of Church	the Statement of the Gospels	Impossibility of
Sacraments	and Torah's Falsification and	Abrogating the Law
2. On the Priesthood	Corruption.	of Christ
3. On Baptism		Faṣl 8: On the Resurrection
4. The Oil of Unction		Faṣl 9: On the Cross
5. On the Eucharist On the		Faṣl 10: On Leadership and
Remittance of Sins and		Priesthood
6. On Forgiveness		Faṣl 11: On Baptism and the
7. On Marriage and Chastity		Eucharist

Mē' mrā 5: Discourse on those**things which prefigure the****world to come**

1. On Worship to the East On
Veneration of the Lord's
Cross
2. On Sundays
3. On Fridays
4. On Fasting, Prayer, and
Almsgiving
5. On the [prayer] Girdle
6. On the Resurrection and the
Judgement to Come

Faṣl 12: On Devotional**Practices**

1. Fasting
2. Prayer
 - Prostration
 - Recitation
 - Prayer to the East
3. The [prayer] Girdle
4. The Church Clapper
5. Almsgiving

Faṣl 13: Observance of the**Sunday [Sabbath];****Feastdays; Pilgrimage;****Abstinence during Fasting;****Observance of Fridays and****Wednesdays; Monasticism;****Monogamy; Prohibition of****Divorce**

APPENDIX B

Chapters from the *Uṣūl al-dīn*

This appendix contains extracts from ‘Abdīshō‘ bar Brīkhā’s unedited *Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn*, based on a transcription of the Arabic text of a unique witness: Ms. Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 936, details of which have been discussed in Chapter One, Section 1.3.3. The manuscript is written in a generally clear and legible *naskhī*, but contains missing folios in its introduction and final chapter. The extracts are taken from chapters (*abwāb*) on the Trinity, Incarnation, and devotional practices—in particular, the veneration of the cross and striking of the clapper—on which the arguments made about the *Uṣūl al-dīn* throughout this thesis have been based.

In my transcription of the text, I have generally avoided vocalisation except where indicated in the manuscript. I have also normalised certain features of the text in line with modern orthography, namely, the replacement of *yā*’ as terminal *alif* with *yā*’ *maqṣūra* and *yā*’ with *hamza* ‘*alā kursī al-yā*’ where appropriate. As for the manuscript’s original sentence breaks, I have replaced these with modern punctuation. For the sake of clarity and comprehension, the text has been divided into numbered paragraphs and chapter subheadings. Subheadings that have been inferred by the editor (as opposed to those in the original text) have been placed in <angle brackets>. Recto and verso folios in the manuscript are signified in the text by ١ and ٢ respectively. Additional conventions used in this partial edition of the *Uṣūl al-dīn* are as follows:

- [Square brackets] signify a contextual reading where there are lacunae caused by damage to the manuscript.

- <Angle brackets> signify textual interpolations by the editor, either to facilitate a specific reading, or where it is believed an omission by the scribe has occurred.
- Scribal errors have been corrected in footnotes. The original version found in the manuscript is indicated on the left and the corrected reading on the right. The two versions are separated by a colon, thus: تَبَدَّلَ : تَنَلَّرَ

35ب | في التوحيد والتثليث

<تقديم>

(١) إنيّ قد عجبت، وعظم لديّ التعجّب، من قوم من أهل الأديان والمذاهب المخالفة للنصرانية في الأصول والفروع والمباينة لهم في النقول والشروع كيف يشنّعون عليهم لأجل قولهم بالتثليث في الخالق، الحافظ معه للقول بالتوحيد الصادق، ويندّدون بأنّ النصارى تعبد ثلاثة آلهة متفرّقة وتقرّر ثلاثة أرباب مختلفة أو متفقّة أو تقول كثرة الذوات أو تعتقد أكثر من علّة واحدة للموجودات، من غير تأمّل وبحث وتدقيق نظر وفحص ومن دون إعتبار لصحيح القول وسقيمه ولا إختبار لمعد[اه] ومستقيمه.

(٢) وقد قال بعض العلماء: «إنّ الوقوف على [فساد] اد³⁶ المذاهب قبل الإحاطة بمداركها محال وتخطية منتحلها دون الخبرة بمقاصدها أثم وضلال» وأنا مبينّ بعون الله حقيقة ما إليه تشير النصارى بالتثليث، وإيّاها تقصد، وصدق توحيدها، وفحوى ما تعتقد، وعليه في هذا الباب تعتمد يتّضح المقصود في ثلاث تعاليم.

<التعليم الأول>

(٣) كلّ أمر بسيط فاعل بعيد من أن يدرك بالحواس، فإنّما يتطرق إلى العلم به من أحد وجهين أو منهما معًا. أحدهما أفعاله والمناسبة بينه وبينها؛ والثاني المناسبات بينه وبين ذاته. ولمّا كان الاله عزّ وجلّ من الأمور البسيطة بعيدًا عن أن يدرك بشيء من الحواس، وجب أن يقع العلم [به] على أحد هذين الوجهين أو عليهما لا غير.

<الوجه الأوّل: العلم وجوده تعالى من وجود مفعولاته >

(٤) فأما الوجه الأوّل [من] العلم به وجوده تعالى من وجود مفعولاته، فهو أنّ جملة أصحاب الشرائح وعلمائها وأرباب الفلاسفة وحكمائها قد أجمعوا على أنّ التأثير لا محالة صادر عن المؤثر والتصوير عن مصوّر والتركيب عن مركّب والترتيب عن مرتّب والعالم مركّب مرتّب وكل مركّب مرتّب محدث مفعول له فاعل. فالعالم إذا محدث مفعول له فاعل والفاعل للتأثيرات والمحرك للحركات هو الواحد الفرد الواجب بالذات، لاستحالة الإرتقاء في الحركات والحركات إلى غير النهاية وبطلان الدور وممرّ سلسلة الممكنات إلى غير غاية. وإذا ثبت ذلك ثبت أيضًا أنّ الباري تعالى موجود ضروري الوجود وأنّه واحد لا يتكثّر وثابت لا يتغيّر، إذ لو لم يكن وجوده [واجبًا] لما حصل به لل[...] وجود صار حاصلًا

مترتبًا. ولو لم يكن في ذاته [...] |³⁷ لاستحالة الوجود مع الكثرة وتلاشي تعانداً تضاداً، لأنّه حيث الكثرة ثم المرء والخصام. مع ذلك لا يستتب النظام.

<الوجه الثاني: النظر في أمره تعالى>

(٥) وأمّا الوجه الثاني من النظر في أمره تعالى. وهو ينظر هل بينه وبين ذاته مناسبة توجب النظر فيه؟ فيجري هكذا: إنّ الذات الإلهية تعالى قد تقرّر، مع أنّها موجودة، إنّها بسيطة مجردة. وكلّ مجرد سُمّي بلغة الاوائل «عقلاً» لعلمه بذاته وعقله لها. لأنّ كلّ مجرد عاقل ذاته، من حيث أنّ ذاته منكشفة لذاته، لا تغيب عنها أبداً لتجردها. فإنّ ذاته معقولة له، وجب أن يوجد لذات الباري تعالى ثلاثة أحوال، وهي أن يكون عقلاً [من] ذاته، عاقلاً من ذاته، ومعقولاً من ذاته. ولا يجوز أن يوجد له من هذه مناسبة غير هذه الثلاث ولا رابعة لها ولا يمكن |³⁷ إنحصارها في أقلّ من ثلاث، للزوم بعضها وجود البعض.

(٦) فسُمّي النصارى العقل من هذه الثلاث «أباً» وسمّوا تلك الذات إذ كانت عاقلة ذاتها إبناً، لتولّد منها معنى العاقل من العقل. وعبروا عن المعقول من هذه الثلاث بالروح

كأنّما أمر خارج عن ذي الروح، كما أنّ المعقول أبعد عن معنى العقل من العاقل. وهذا المعنى خاصّ بالباريء تعالى لا يشركه فيه غيره.

(٧) فإنّهُ هو العقل وهو بعينه العاقل وهو هو المعقول بجهات مختلفة والذات واحدة، فصار النظر في أمر الذات الإلهية كاملاً من وجهين، فانقسمت أسماءها وصفاتها من الطريقتين. فلهذا، يا معشر الناس، ذهبت النصارى في التثليث، لا إلى ما يقرفهم به خصومهم من تكثير <الذوات> أو القوى والأعراض في ذات الحقّ تعالى عمّا [...] ¹³⁸ الظالمون علواً كبيراً.

<التعليم الثاني>

<صفات الجود والحكمة والقدرة>

(٨) إنّ الناظرين طرّاً، لما وقفوا على وجوده تعالى من وجود مخلوقاته، وصفوه بـ«الجود» لآخراجه الأمور من العدم إلى الوجود، إذ لم يجدوا سبباً غيره لاختراع العالم إنقاد به ولأجله إلى الإبداع ربّ بني آدم. وحيث نظروا إلى إحكام مصنوعاته واتقانها، وصفوه بـ«الحكمة» إذ كان ذلك من شأنها. وحين تأملوا جمعه بين الأضداد في تكوينها، وصفوه بـ«القدرة» لتمكينها. فحصلوا على ثلاث صفات متى تأملت واستقرت سائر صفاته

تعالى وجدت داخلة تحت واحدة من هذه الثلاث، وهي الجود والحكمة والقدرة والتي هي عنوان [تث] ليث النصارى الموحّدين المجمعول من سيدهم إسناداً¹ |³⁸ وقاعدةً للدين.

(٩) فإن قال المخالف «إنّ التوحيد والثليث ضدّان لا يجتمعان، لأنّ الواحد، من حيث هو واحد، لا يكون ثلاثة والثلاثة، من حيث هي كثرة لا يكون واحداً» قلنا فهذا قولك في الصفات هل هي ذات البارئ تعالى أو غير الذات؟ فإن قال «إنّها ذات البارئ» فقد جعله حالاً لا ذاتاً. وهو محال، إذ الحال إنّما تكون حالاً لشيء، فيكون ذلك الشيء أقدم بالبارئ من البارئ ولا كفرًا أشنع وأفظع من ذلك! وإن قال: «إنّ الصفات ليست ذاته، لأنّه ذاته واحدة والصفات كثيرة وذاته لا يتقدّم عليها شيء أصلاً. فيكون قد أقرّ بالحقّ وفاه بالصدق، ونحن نسأل المشكّك في ذلك.

(١٠) فنقول هذا المعنى الحاصل في عقولنا المنوسم في أذه[اننا] من قولنا: جوّاد هو المعنى الحاصل لنا من قولنا حك[يم] |³⁹ وقادر أم غيره. وما من عاقل يقول أنّ معنى كون الذات جائدة هو معنى كونها حكيمة أو قادرة، لأنّ الصفة الأولى <أعني الجود> توجب لها إفاضة كلّ ما ينبغي من غير قهر وداعية إحتياج وفقر. والثانيّة <أعني الحكمة> توجب

¹ إسناداً : اسّاً

لها أن تكون افعالها على النظام والإتقان والثالثة <أعني القدرة> توجب لها الإستطاعة على المقدور في كلّ شأن وآن.

(١١) وإذا كان الأمر كذلك وكانت الصفات يخالف بعضها بعضًا وهي متعدّدة متكثّرة والذات واحدة لا يدخل عليها كثرة، فوجب ضرورة إلا تكون الصفات هي الذات بل غيرها. فتكون الذات واحدة والصفات كثيرة ينتج من ذلك أنّ الباري واحد وكثير، وهو بعينه قول [ال]نصارى إذ هم يعطون وحدانية للذات والتثليث³⁹ للصفات. فإنّ الذات إذا ألحظت عريّة عن كلّ الصفات، كانت واحدة فردة من سائر الجهات. وإذا أخذت مع كلّ واحدة من الصفات، لم يكن مفهوم الجملة هو بعينه، إذا أخذت بلا صفة أو مع غيرها من الصفات، كما بيّناه فيما مرّ، ولا يكون التوحيد خالصًا صادقًا إلا على هذا النظر.

(١٢) فبطلت شناعة المشنّع على النصارى في كون الباريء واحدًا وكثيرًا. فإنّ الشناعة كانت تلزم لو قيل بالوجه الذي هو واحدًا صار كثيرًا. فأما أن يكون واحدًا من وجه وكثيرًا من وجه، فليس أحدًا من العقلاء يردّ هذا ولا ينكره. ولا يلزم من تكثّر صفاته تعالى تكثّر ذاته، لأنّها لو كانت عادمة لكمالاتها ولوازم بالفعل، ثمّ حصلت لها بالإكتساب

لكانت متأثرة⁴⁰ عنها ومتكثرة لها. فأما وهذه الكمالات واللوازم من ذاتها، فلا يلزم تكثرها باعتبار أخذها معها.

<التعليم الثالث>

<الله أزلي>

(١٣) إنّ البارئ تعالى قد ثبت، مع أنه موجود، أنه واحد، فلا يخلوا الموجود الواحد من أن يكون إما قديماً أزلياً وإما محدثاً زمنياً. ومن المحال أن يكون باريء الأزمان وقاطر الأكوان غير قديم أزلي وإلا فليلزم أن يكون له محدثاً والمحدث والزمان أقدم بالطبع من المحدث. وهو أيضاً محال. والباريء فقد ثبت أنه بسيط مجرد عن الموادّ ليس فيه شيئاً للقوّة والإستعداد صانع لما عداه من الأرواح والأجساد، [لأنّ القديم بالذات هو الذي لا يكون وجوده من غيره [ولا] يحصل وجود لغيره إلاّ به، ولا يكون أكثر من واحد⁴⁰ وهو واجب الوجود. فثبت إذاً أنه قديم أزلي فاعل غير منفعل. وإذا كان هو الفاعل والصانع لما سواه وكلّ مخلوق وهو براه وسواه، فتكون الأزلية صفة خاصّة به لا يشركه فيها موجود لما كان من الممتنع أن يحصل لشيء من دونه وجود.

<الله حكيم>

(١٤) ثم لا يخلوا هذا القديم الأزلي من أن يكون حكيماً وإمّا غير حكيم. ومن البطل أن يكون واهب الحكمة وخالق الحكماء غير حكيم ومبدئ العلم ومبدع العلماء غير عليم. فهو إذاً حكيم. كيف لا وفي مخلوقاته من غرائب الحكمة ما أذهل عقول العالمين وأدهش أذهان المتأملين، حتى دعا ذلك للأقدمين إلى وضع كتب في إحكام خلقة السموات والارضين وجميع ما يصحّ عليه أنه في المكان والنظ[ام] واللازم للأكوان مع تضاد الأركان وتقدير الإمك[ان]،⁴¹ حتى تكلموا في منافع أعضاء الحيوان التي لو انخرقت قليلاً عمّا هي عليه لأودا ذلك بالبهائم والهورم والإنسان، وتحيروا في العناية ثم في الهداية؟ فثبت من ذلك أنه حكيم.

<الله حي>

(١٥) ثم لا ينفك هذا الأزلي الحكيم من أن يكون إمّا حيّاً وإمّا غير حيّ. فهو إذاً حيّ قيوم. كيف لا وهو ينبوع الحياة وواجد الإحياء والجائد بالإدراك على المتصورة من الأشياء. ولا حيّ ذاتي إلا هو وما دونه من الأحياء. فهو حيّ به وله فثبت ايضاً أنه حيّ.

<أسماء التثليث>

<الأقانيم>

(١٦) فتحصّلنا في هذا البحث على ثلاث صفات ذاتية [ل]لله تعالى، فهي أنّه أزي
حكيم حيّ. ثمّت لا قديم إلّا بقدمته ولا حكيم إلّا بحكمته ولا حيّ إلّا بحيواته، كـموجب
القوانين ألحقه في الأسماء المشتقة أنّها راجعة إلى معانٍ في المسمّيات. وقد بيّن أرسطاطليس
في كتاب القاطاغوريّاس^{41ب} أنّ «كلّ موجود إمّا جوهر وإمّا عرض وكلّ منها إمّا خاص
وإمّا عام» وحيث لم تكن هذه الثلاث صفات أعراضاً في ذات الاله تعالى، لأنّه ليس قابلاً
للأعراض ولا للتغيّر، ولا هي ثلاثة جواهر عامّة لما ثبت من حقيقة وحدانيته. فهي إذاً
لذاته تعالى خواصّ جوهرية، لأنّ النصارى يسمّون الذات «جوهراً» إذ كان الجوهر عندهم
عبارةً عن الموجود القائم بنفسه ويسمّون الصفات التي لا تتعدّى «خواصّاً» ويسمّون
الجملة من مفهوم الذات مع الصفات «أقانيماً» فإنّ الأقنوم عندهم هو تناول معنى الصفة
مع مفهوم الذات الموصوفة. وإذا كانت المسمّيات صحيحة، لا ريب فيها.

<الأب والإبن والروح القدس>

(١٧) فالأسماء لا تفسدها لا سيّما وكتاب الشريعة قد نطق بها وأكّدها]. فعبروا

عن الأزلي بـ«الأب» لما كان العلة والسبب] ⁴² والفاعل لجميع المخلوقات والأقدم بالطبع والذات من سائر الموجودات قياساً على ما شاهدوه من كون الأب سبباً وعلّةً وفاعلاً لوجود الإبن. وعبروا عن الحكيم بـ«الإبن» لأنّ الحكمة متولّدة من ذات الحكيم بلا إنفصال ولا زمان ولا مزايده ولا مكان. وعبروا عن الحيّ بـ«الروح القدس» إذ كان الروح عندهم معنى يطلق على كلّ معقول حيّ أحقوه بالقدس، ليطمئنّ عن باقي الأرواح ذات الحيات، سواء من الملائكة والإنس.

(١٨) وسوا عليهم قالوا «العقل والعاقل والمعقول» أو «الأزلي الحكيم الحيّ» أو

«الأب والإبن والروح القدس» لأنّ الأزلي هو العقل وهو الأب؛ والحكيم هو العاقل وهو الإبن؛ [و] الحيّ هو المعقول وهو الروح. ولا مشاحنة في الأسماء [...] السوفسطائين الأسماء آلات مستعملة للمسمّيات ⁴² لتدلّ عليها بالإصطلاحات.

(١٩) فإن قال قائل: «وإذا كان غرضكم في التثليث إشارة إلى ثلاث صفات من

صفات البارئ تعالى، لا إلى ثلاث ذوات، وأنتم تعلمون أنّ الصفات كثيرة، فلم اقتصرتم منها على الثلاث المذكورة؟» قلنا إنّ قد ثبت أنّ ذات البارئ واحدة وصفاتها كثيرة وأنّ

تلك الصفات على قسمين: منها صفات لا تتعدّى وتُسمّى «صفات الذات» وهي تختصّ بالبارئ ولا يشترك فيها سواه من المخلوقين، وهو «العقل والعاقل والمعقول» التي عبّرنا عنها بـ«الأزليّ الحكيم الحيّ» ومنها صفات تتعدّى وتسمّى «صفات الفعل» كـ«الخالق» و«الرازق» و«الآمر» و«القادر» إلى غيرها من الصفات. وسمّيناها «صفات الفعل» لأنّها تستدعى كلّ واحد من [ها] إضافة ذات أخرى إلى الذات التي الفعل صادر عن [ها].⁴³ فلا خالق إلا لمخلوق ولا رازق إلا لمرزوق ولا أمر إلا لمأمور ولا قادر إلا على مقدور.

(٢٠) وأمّا صفات العقل والعاقل والمعقول، فلا تجرّ من ذات البارئ جلّ وعلاّ في تناول معناها ذاتاً أخرى، ولا يوصف بها سواه تعالى. فهذا أحد الأسرار الغامضة التي علّمناها سيّدنا إيشوع المسيح، لأنّ من قبله كان الاعتقاد في الله أنّه جسم ذو جوارح متحيّز قابل للحالات المتضادّة متغيّر. وكلّ من قال بهذا القول أو قاربه في المعنى أو في اللفظ فهو مستمد منه وناقل عنه.

(٢١) وللقائل أن يقول «وإذا كان المقصود بالثالوث إيضاح معنى العقل والعاقل والمعقول، كما بينتم، والأزليّ الحكيم الحيّ، كما [ب]رهنتم، فلم عدلتم عنها إلى إسم الأب والإبن وروح [الق]دس؟» فيكون جوابه أنّه قد قلنا أنّ ذلك صادر عن⁴³ ربّ الشريعة

وفيه فائدتان: أحدهما أنه أراد بذلك الرمز بهذه الأسماء على تلك المعاني فلا تزدال ويقف عليها الجهال ومن ينبغي أن تُصان العلوم الشريفة الإلهية عنه، بل يكون وقوفه عليها من قبل التثليث الرموز المومى، لا من قبل حقيقة المعنى، فإن كشف الأسرار الإلهية لكلّ أحد منهّي عنه. وإلى هذا أومئ سيّدنا بقوله: ﴿لا تمنحوا للكلاب قدسًا ولا تلقوا جواهركم بين يدي الخنازير، لئلا توطأها بأظلافها وتعود فتعقركم﴾¹ والطاهر ثالوغوس وضع مقالة مفردة في أنه ليس كلّ زمان ولا مع كلّ إنسان تجب المفاوضة في الأمور الألهية. والثانية هو ما ذكره القديس ديونيسيوس، وهو أنّ الأمور الإلهية، إذ عبّر عنها بالعبارات الغريبة منها، دعا ذ[لك] |⁴⁴ للناظرين الباحثين عن الحقائق إلى البحث منها وعن أسبابها والمطالبة بالوجه الذي به تصحّ العبارة عنها بتلك الإستعارات. فيصير لذلك علم الباحثين عنها يقينًا وثيقًا، لا ريب فيه لشدة بحثهم وتفتيشهم. فهذه العلل عدل ربّ شريعة النصارى عن التصريح بتلك المعاني التي ذكرت إلى الكناية عنها.

¹ Mt 7:6

44ب في الحلول والإتحاد

<تقديم>

(١) فقد بانَ في باب التثليث أنّ الله تعالى، حيث هو كان الخير الذي لا يشوبه ظنٌّ شرٌّ، والنور الذي يغشاه ظلٌّ ظلام مفارق مستقرّ، وهو معين الجمال ومعدن الكمال، جاد بالوجود على كلّ موجود، لا لفائدة إليه تعود ولا لحياسة كمال هو عند ذاته مفقود، إذ كانت الكمالات والفوائد صادرة عنه وجميع أصناف الخيرات نابعة منه، ولا لغاصبة غلاب قهره وعلى ابداع العالمين جبره، لأنّه لا ضدّ له ولا موجود قبله.

(٢) وإذا كان الأمر كذلك، فقد بانَ السبب الداعي إلى الخلق والأب[بداع] كان جوده ونعمته وفضله ورحمته، إذ كان ج[وَادًا] |⁴⁵ حكيماً رؤوفاً رحيماً. وليس في مقتضى الحكمة والجود إهمال صلاح الموجود. فوجب أن تكون عنايته بخلقه¹ دائمة الألفاف ظاهرة الأصلاح والأسعاف.

(٣) ومن تصفّح مجال² في أحوال البشر، وكيف تساعدهم الأضداد على مصالحهم بالقضاء والقدر، وبقاهم وقوامهم في دنيا طافحة بالشور، وهدايتهم إلى مقاومة كلّ ذي

¹ بخلقه : يخلقه

² مجال : مجار

شرّ بما يدفع ضرره محذور، بالأدوية للأمراض وبالعدل، وتنوّع الأغراض الأضداد والأعراض، كذلك حال العجم من الحيوانات وأنواع المعادن وأصناف النبات أوجد العناية بالكلّ محفوفةً، وحرّم حراستها وسرادق هداياتها بكلّ الموجودات مكنوفةً. وهي التي إقتضت بعث الأنبياء والرسل بالحكم البالغة والنعم السابغة والحجج⁴⁵ب الدامغة، حتى آل ذلك إلى ظهور الكلمة الأزلية في العالم بصورة بشري من بني آدم عضدًا وتأييدًا للصلحين، ورشدًا وتسديدًا للطالحين، ونورًا وهدىً للجامحين.

<مثل الملك الحكيم والقرية الجاهلة>

(٤) وكيف لا تقتضى سبوغ هذه النعمة إبنة أبوها الجود وأمها الحكمة؟ وإذ قد لاح من صوب ذلك ضوء الصواب، فلنضرب عليه مثالاً بمساعدة من العقل والكتاب. فنقول: ما مثل البشريين بين يدي الله تعالى إلا مثل قرية لرجل من الملوك حكيم عليم إحتوت على عدد كثير من قوم صحيحهم جاهل، وعاقلهم سقيم. والصاحب لجلالة قدرته وعظمته لا يمكنه مباشرة أحوال أهل قريته، فهو يرسل لهم رسلاً قد ثقّفهم علمًا وعملاً ويسوّمهم شفاء عليهم⁴⁶ب وتأديب بليدهم وهدى ضليلهم.

(٥) فاغتاض الأمر على المرسلين داء المبتليين وشّرّ جهل الجاهلين، فلم يبق سوا ورود الملك عليهم وهم على شفا غفلة لما وصف بالجود والحكمة وأنّ عنايته بهم ذات حفلة. ولما كان هجومه عليهم بزحله وخيله يزيد المريض سقمًا، ويخيّر الجهول لجهله ذلك لما يروعه من الهيبة والصولة، ويدهشهم من العزّة وسطوة أعوان الدولة، رأى الملك بلطف إحتياله إستشعار الخمول وتبلّد³ حاله. فظهر لهم في هيئة رجل منهم فاماط الضرّ وأعلال الجهل عنهم حتّى إنقلب مريضهم صحيحًا وألكنهم فصيحًا وجاهلهم عالمًا وهالكهم سالمًا.

(٦) |⁴⁶ ففصل عنهم إلى قصور مملكته، ثمّ بعث رسلاً إلى رعيته يشعرهم بأنّه هو كان طبيهم وعلى يديه تمّ ارشادهم وتهذيبهم وذلك لأمرين: أحدهما أن يشكروا مواقع نعمته، وثانيًا ليسلكوا في علاج أمراضهم وتهذيب عيوبهم قويم طريقيته. وخوّل الرسل عزًّا وبسطةً بتأييده كيلا يشكل أهل القرية بأنهم مبعوثين من عنده. فاقتفوا اثره في الشفاء والتأديب حتى بلغ جُلّ من بالقرية إلى غاية الصحّة والتهذيب.

(٧) وإذ قد إنتهينا إلى آخر المثل ونحن عارفون بما فيه من جمل وأصول مدججة وأقفال أبواب مرتجّة، فلا بائس أن نبسطه للمبتدئين ونكشف رموزه للمسترشدين. فنقول: إنّ

³ تبلّد : تنلّر

الملك عزيز القهار هو الله القدير الجبار؛^{47أ} والقرية هي العالم على ما نصّ عليه الإنجيل؛ وأهل قرية أبناء البشر جليل بعد حليل وهم المرضى بأدواء الضلال والجهلاء بحقائق الأمور والترقي إلى الكمال. والبارئ تعالى، للرفقة لعباده، لم يزل يفيض عليهم سيول جوده ونعمته ويلطف بهم ويصّرهم رشدهم بلطيف حكمته وهم مصرّون على ما يبعدهم عن جنبه يغلق في وجوههم كريم أبوابه.

(٨) فبعث لهم الأنبياء المؤيدين والرسل الأطهار المرشدين ليضعوا مراهم الرحمة على جوارح الآثام ويعالجوا بأدوية الرافة كلوم عبادة الأصنام ويهدّبوا بآداب النواميس جهّال الحقّ في الآنام. فكان أول من سنّ سنّة مأخوذة عن الله موسى النبي (عليه أكمل السلام). فمهما أبدى^{47ب} إلى قومه من الخيرات والنعم وخلصّهم من الشرور والنقم، كانوا عليه ممتنعين ولقوله غير طائعين ولسنّة العدل التي بها غير تابعين، هذا مع علمهم بأنّ لهم في استعمال العدل مثل ما عليهم، إذ به إنتظام مصالح جمهورهم والسيره التي تمشّى بها أحوال أمورهم.

(٩) فأما غيره من الانبياء، فما بين مضطهد ومقتول وممتهن ومغلول. فلما عجز الرسل ذا الجبله البشرية وإعياءهم علاجها وردعها عن الأخلاق الشرّية، وقصرت الأنبياء عن النهوض بالدعوة إلى العدل، فضلاً عن شوق إلى محجّة الفضل الذي هو الصحّة

الكاملة على الحقيقة والعلم الشريف بمعرفة ربّ الخليقة، ومعلوم أنّه إذا كان تعذّر عن الأنبياء⁴⁸ جذب الناس إلى سنّة العدل، معما فيها من التسوية بينهم في الفرع والأصل، فيكون التفضّل الذي يأمر بالإحسان إلى المسبيّ والتبريك عن الاعن أشدّ تعذّرًا عليهم.

(١٠) فلم يبقَ لجرحنا دواء ولا لمرضنا شفاء سواء ظهور ملك الحقّ علينا ووروده إلينا. ولما كانت ذاته من البساطة والروحانية واللطافة والنورانية، على صفة <لا> تجوز وصف كلّ واصف وتفوق نعت كلّ ناعث، التي لو كان ظهوره بها من الممكنات ضُمحلت من بهاء الأرض والسماوات، وإقتضت حكمته المقرونة بالجوّد والقدرة ظهور كلمته في حجاب الصورة. فجبل بشرًا من روح القدس في أحشاء البتول الطاهرة الزكية، وحلّت فيه كلمته الأزلية^{48ب} متّحدة به إتحاد الإرادة والوجهية والقدرة والرضاء والمشيمة [...]، ودرجة إلى الكمال على العادة البشرية في تكوينه وصبائه وشبيته وفي سائر أحواله وتصرفاته في عيشته وتربيته.

(١١) ولو كان وُلد وقت البشارة به وتُحض عند ولادته وجرى مجرى الكاملين من الرجال من ساعته، لوجد لناكل عن سنته المنهوجة طريقًا للنكول عنها محجّته، قائلاً أنّ ليس يلزمنا معشر البشر الإقتداء به في الفضائل التي إنتهجها لنا، لأنّه إستقلّ بها حيث كان كونه على خلاف أكواننا ووجوده غير مضاه لوجودنا. فإمّا وقد جرى مجرانا في سائر

الأحوال سوى ملابسة الخطيئة أو لزمه⁴⁹ البلوغ إلى الغاية في الفضائل المرسومة بحسب التساوي في القوة الشرّية المعلومة. وللقوة التي حصلت له بالإتحاد أظهر عجائب القدرة وغرائب الحكمة بين العبّاد بقمع أمراض الأبدان والأذهان وتحويلها صحّة وشفاء وتذهيب الأنفس والعقول وتحويلها شرفاً وسناء.

(١٢) ولم يتعدّر على أهل العالم سلوك منهج التفضّل، إذ كان الفاعل له في آخر الأمر من طبيعة يستاوي بها في سائر أحوالها نوع البشر. ولما قضى وطرا من خلاص الجبلّة ونهج سبيلاً في الشفاء وتعليم لأهل الملّة، عُرج به إلى السماء على غمام النور والتلاميذ ناظرون عليه على الطور. وحين غاب عنهم عادوا إلى أورشليم ومكثوا بها حتّى وافاهم⁴⁹ الفارقليط، حسب وعده، ومنحهم الأيد وعلم اللغات ومعرفة الحقّ من عنده. فانتشروا في الأمصار وتفرّقوا في الأقطار منادين بشرى الخلاص ومجتهدين في هداية العامّ من الناس والخاصّ.

(١٣) وإذ قد إنتهينا في تفسير المثل المضروب إلى آخره، فقد آن لنا أن نبين شرف الإتحاد ووجوبه وشرح ما أثره. ولنكون قد وفينا الكلام حقّ شرطه، ينبغي أن نبحث فيه المباحث الأربعة التي هي هل وما وكيف ولم. فنقول:

البحث الأول

<هل إتحاد موجود؟>

(١٤) أنه إذا سئلنا بحسب المطلب الأول الذي هو مطلب «هل» عن الإتحاد مسألة

هذه حكايتها: هل هذا المعنى الذي يقول به النصارى على اختلاف مذاهبهم؟ وهو

الإتحاد موجود ولوجوده دلائل كثيرة حقيقية كتابية⁴⁹ وبرهانية.

(١٥) أما الكتابية، فقول الإنجيل المقدس: ﴿الكلمة صار لحمًا وحلّ فينا ورأينا مجده

كعجد الوحيد من الأب المملو نعمة وقسطًا﴾ ولحكاية فيه عن سيّدنا إذ يقول: ﴿الحقّ

اليقين أقول لكم إنّ من قد شاهدني فقد شاهد أبي﴾ ﴿وأنا وبي شيء واحد﴾ وقوله:

﴿إنّي موجود قبل وجود إبراهيم﴾ وهو في الصورة آدمية ابن ثلاثين سنة. وكان ذلك صادق

عليه لما فيه من قنوم الإبن الأزليّ. وقد يدلّ أيضًا على ذلك تصرفاته منذ ولادته إلى حين

ارتقاءه إلى السماء، التي تقتصر منها على سبعة⁴ أشياء يستدلّ منها على وجود إتحاد

القنوم الأزليّ للقنوم الزمنيّ التي:

(١٦) أولها ولادته من بكر عذراء من غير بعال؛ وثانيها تنزّهه عن الخطيئة بالفكر

والقول والفعل؛ وثالثها⁵⁰ ظهور آياته على طور من غير ضراعة وإبتهاال؛ ورابعها غفرانه

⁴ سبعة : ستّة

للخطايا من غير صلواة ولا سؤال؛ وخامسها⁵ إرساله اللص المصلوب معه للفردوس مقام أرواح ذوى الكمال؛ وسادسها إنبعائه من بيت الأموات حيًّا من غير حاجة إلى من يقيمه من الرجال؛ وسابعها صعوده عياناً إلى السماء مقرّ العزّة والجلال.

(١٧) وأمّا صحّة هذه الأخبار ووجودها، فمن صحّة الإنجيل الخبر بها، كما صدر

في باب الأوّل. هذا ما يستدلّ به على وجود الإتحاد من الدليل الكتابية.

(١٨) وأمّا بيان ذلك من الدلائل البرهانية، فهو لأنّ إتّصال الذات الإنسانية بالذات

الإلهية خير عظيم في حقّ الإنسان، ولأنّ البارئ لا يهمل فعل شيء من الخيارات التي تحت

الإمكان والإلكان،⁵¹ إمّا لغير قادر عليه وإمّا لضدّ به لديه. ومحال نسب البارئ تعالى

إلى أحدي هاتين رذيلتين، أعني الغجز والبخل، وقد بان من قدرته وجوده ما أعجز حصرة

العقل. فإذا وجود هذا الأمر وهو الإتحاد واجب.

(١٩) فإن قال قائل: «وما الدليل على أن ذلك من الخيرات الممكنة ولا يكون من

المتنعة؟» قلنا: إنّ النظر الفلسفي الطبيعي والكتابي الشرعي قد يدلّان معاً أنّ الإتحاد من

الخيرات الممكنة.

⁵ خامسها : رابعها

(٢٠) أمّا النظر الفلسفي الطبيعي، قد يدلّ على ذلك من طريق أنّ النفس الناطقة

من الإنسان هي أمر إلهي باق لا تفسد بفساد الأبدان، كباقي النفوس الأسطقسية،⁶

مثل النباتية والحيوانية والمعدنية التي تضمحل عند الموت وفراق هذه نفس للصورة البدنية.

⁵¹ب | وإذا كانت مناسبة له، فاتّصال المناسب بمناسبه وإتحاده معه وإقترانه به أمر واجب

سهل قريب المأخذ في انطباعه عند اصطناعه، لا يجوز الحكم بامتناعه.

(٢١) أمّا النظر الشرعي، قد يدلّ عليه بما ورد في صدر التوراة إشارة إليه أنّ أبانا آدم

المساوي لنا في كيانه وطبيعته كان مخلوقًا على مثال البارئ وصورته ومن البين الظاهر أنّ

ذلك ليس ببدنه القابل للعوارض والإنقسام، لأنّ الله تعالى تنزّه عن مشاكلة الأجسام. فقد

بقي أنّ المشابهة في المثال والصورة أمّا هي في حال النفس الغير محصورة وأنّ ذلك ليس من

قِبَل النفس النباتية ولا الحيوانية، فإذا هي من قِبَل النفس الناطقة الروحانيّة.

(٢٢) ⁵² | فيتساوى في مناسبة الذات الإنسانية للذات الإلهية قول الفلاسفة وأهل

البيعة. وإتّصال الشبيه بشبهه أمرٌ ممكن بل واجب، لأنّ الممكن إذا فرض له زمان غير

محدود، خرج إلى الوجود. وهذا القول كاف على ما نظنّ في الإبانة عن الإتحاد أنّه موجود

واجب الوجود.

⁶ الأسطقسية : الاسطقسية

البحث الثاني

<ما هو الإتحاد؟>

(٢٣) وأمّا البحث الثاني بحسب المطلب الثاني، وهو مطلب «ما» أيّ «ما هو

الإتحاد؟» فنقول في جوابه: إنّ الإتحاد هو مصير ذوات أكثر من واحدة ذاتاً واحدة، إمّا

(٢٤) بالإمتزاج والإختلاط كمصير السكنجيين عن العسل والخلّ شيئاً واحداً ليس

بعسل ولا خلّ، وكمصير الترياق عن كثرة مفرداته المتعدّة شيئاً ليس هو تلك البسائط

المفردة؛

(٢٥) وإمّا بالمجاورة⁵²ب وتأليف، كمصير الباب من الخشب والحديد والبيت من

الحصّ والقرميد شيئاً واحداً؛

(٢٦) وإمّا بالإتّصال، كمصير الرجل وزوجته جسداً واحداً، كما قال الكتاب: «إنّ

الواجب على الرجل أن يترك اباه وامه ويتصل بزوجته، وبصيرا معاً لحمًا واحداً»؛

(٢٧) وإمّا بالوجهية، كمصير الملك والنائب عنه واحداً بالأمر والنهي ورأي وتدبير؛

(٢٨) وإمّا بالإرادة والمشية، كمصير إثنين أو أكثر من ذلك واحدًا بالإرادة والمشية

مع اختلافهم في ذاتية والشخصية، كما قال الكتاب: «إنّه كان لجميع القوم الذين آمنوا نفسًا واحدًا»

(٢٩) هذا شرح ماهية الإتحاد على العموم. وأمّا على الخصوص وهو الإتحاد الذي

إليه تذهب النصارى، فهو <في> مصير ذات |^{53أ} الإبن الأزلي إلى القديم الذي هو أحد الثلاث أقانيم وذات الشخص الإنساني المجسّم المأخوذ من العذراء مريم ذاتًا واحدة المعظّم. وإذ قد أيتنا على الكلام في معنى الإتحاد وحده، فقد وجب علينا أن نذكر مذاهب النصارى فيه. فإنّ ذلك ممّا يليق لهذا الموضوع، فنقول إنّ النصارى على كثرتهم منقسمون في ذلك إلى ثلث فرق:

(٣٠) فطائفة تذهب إلى أنّ الإتحاد كان بالقنوم والجوهر، إتحاد الإمتزاج والإختلاط

بحيث صار الله الكلمة والبشري المأخوذ من مريم جوهرًا واحدًا لا يتكثّر. وهؤلاء القوم هم مدعوون باليعقوبية.

(٣١) وفرقة تذهب إلى أنّ إتحاد إنما كان بالقنوم لا بالجوهر، إتحاد المجاورة بحيث

حصلت الكلمة الأزلية والشخص الإنساني |^{53ب} شخصًا واحدًا قنومًا واحدًا طبيعتين ومشيتين. وأهل هذه الفرقة هم الملقّبون بالملكية.

(٣٢) وفرقة تذهب إلى أن الإِتِّحاد وقع بالمشيئة والبنوة والسلطان والقدرة، إِتِّحاد الإرادة والمشيئة والوجهية، بحيث صار الكلمة الازلية والبشري المأخوذ من مريم القديسة التقية جوهرين أزلي وزمني وقنومين إلهي وآدمي إبنًا واحدًا مسيحًا واحدًا ذا سلطان واحد وفرصوف فرد. والقائلون بذلك هم المسمّون بالنسطورية.

(٣٣) ولنفاضة هذا الكتاب وجلالة قدره وشرف مقاصده في قصارى أمره، لم نتعرّض فيه إلى الفرق بين السقيم من هذه المذاهب والمستقيم، لئلا يكون موقفًا مذهب دون مذهب، وينتفع به من مطلب دون مطلب،⁵⁴ إذ كان الجميع متفقين في اصوله موافقين على صحّة ما ورد في فصوله، على أنّ العارف المنصف إذا رفض متابعة الهوى والعصبية ووزن الكلام بميزان العقل وروية، وجد الخلف بينهم في العبارات والأسامي، لا في نفس الحقيقة والمعاني، لأنّ الحقيقة عندهم واحدة، وإن اختلفت الألفاظ ووجد فيها معاندة.

البحث الثالث

<كيف كان الإِتِّحاد؟>

(٣٤) فأما البحث الثالث بحسب المطلب الثالث وهو مطلب «كيف»، أعني كيف كان الإِتِّحاد؟ فنقول فيه إنّه قد سبق لنا البيان أنّ الإِتِّحاد الإله بالإنسان كان من جهة

القوة الناطقة لشرفها، لا من جهة الجسم الكثيف، وذلك بأنّ أنارت ذات البارئ تعالى عقل المسبح. فاستنارت كما تستنير⁵⁴ب الجوهرة الشفّافة بضوء الشمس وصار طبع القابل هو طبع الفاعل. فصدر الفعل عن الذات القابلة صدوره عن الذات الفاعلة، فظهرت أفعال الإله من ذات الإنسان بواسطة النفس الناطقة.

(٣٥) على أنّ الإِتِّحاد عند النصارى من معجزات الكبار ومن أغمض المعاني والأسرار، وقد أجمع علماءهم على أنّ عقول البشر تقصر عن إدراك كيقيته والسنتهم تعجّز عن وصف كنهه وحقيقته، ولكن قربوا إلى الأفهام فقالوا هو كإِتِّحاد الصورة في المرأة؛ والنور في المشكاة؛ والمعنى بالألفاظ؛ والضوء بالأحاطة؛ والنار في الحديدية الحمية؛ والشعاع باللؤلؤ النقية؛ والنفس بالجسد؛ واللحن بالعدد.

(٣٦) وكما أنّ هذه القوابل بحسب استعدادها تتّصل بتلك الفواعل، ولا يضّرّ الأعلى⁵⁵ على دخول تغير ونقص على الأدنى، كذلك صار اتّصال الاهوت بحسب استعداد الناسوت ولم يؤثّر فيها شيء من مؤثرات في البدن لعلوها عن الإنفعال وملابسة الدرر.

(٣٧) ولأنّ اللاهوت متّحد بالنفس الناطقة والنفس الناطقة متّحدة بالبدن الانساني، قيل أنّ الاهوت متّحد بالبدن حال فيه، وهذا هو سرّ التأنّس. وكيف ينكر هذا الحلول من

يعترف بحلول الربّ في عوسجة طور سينا؛ وفي عمود الغمام على سرادق موسى؛ وفي أشخاص الانبياء والمرسلين؛ وفي البيوت المتخذة للعبادة من اللبن والطين.

(٣٨) وإذا جاز الاعتقاد في الحلول والإتحاد أن يكون أظهر وأخفى وأضعف وأقوى، بحسب تفاوت⁷ الإستعدادات ومقتضى الطباع وإختلاف الإرادات، وجب أن يعلو في الإزدياد إلى غاية الكمال وينتهي^{55ب} في الإنحطاط إلى نهاية النقص بضدّ تلك الحال. والإختصاص هذا الناسوت بخواصّ كمال لم يختصّ بها غيره من الآنام. وجب أن يكون الحال فيه والإتحاد به في أوج الثمام.

(٣٩) والمسيح إسم يشتمل المعنيين، إذ كانت ذاته متقومة ذاتين. فندرج في طيه سائر الصفات الإنسانية والربانية وتصدق عليه جميع الأسماء العلية والدنية، كإسم المدينة الواقع على أهلها وعلى عمارتها وشكلها. فإذا قيل أنّ المدينة خرجت بأسرها لإستقبال سلطانها، كانت الإشارة إلى فاعليها وسكانها. وإذا قيل أنّ المدينة ضيقة وخمة، فذلك من قبل وضعها وبنائها. وكذلك نجد في الإنجيل المقدّس ما يدلّ على أنّ المسيح إنسان تأله وإله تأنس. فهو بما قيل فيه أنّه كلمة من الله^{56أ} غير مصنوع وبما سواه إبناً لداود وإبراهيم

⁷ تفاوت : تفاوت

بشر غير مزروع؛ لاهوته للعقل مظهورة وناسوته بالعين منظورة؛ ليست من جوهر الأم لاهوته ولا من جوهر الأب ناسوته. وهذا أقصى ما قيل من الصواب في⁸ هذا الباب.

البحث الرابع

<لِمَا الإِتِّحَادُ صَارَ موجود؟>

(٤٠) وأمّا البحث الرابع بحسب المطلب الرابع، وهو مطلب «لِمَا» أيّ لِمَا صار الإِتِّحَادُ موجود وأيّ الأسباب أوجب وجوده؟ فنقول فيه إنّه قد دخل الكلام فيه في ضمن ما مرّ من المثل المضروب وتفسيره. ونزيد ذلك إيضاحًا، فنقول إنّ أسباب ذلك قسمان: منها ذاتية لبارئنا ومنها عرضية فينا.

(٤١) أمّا الذاتية البارئ، فهي البلوغ بنا إلى أقصى غاية في النعمة وهي أن يصلنا بذاته. وقد بيّنا إمكان ذلك ولو منعنا هذه النعمة للزمة⁵⁶ب أحدى الشناعتين:

(٤٢) إمّا العجز، وقد نفينا عنه لاسيما وقد بيّنا مشابحة الذات الإنسانية للذات الإلهية وأنّ صلة شبيهه بشبيهه ممكنة غير مستصعبة، حتّى في الصناعة على قوى البشرية المحدودة. فكم بالحرى على الإلهية التي هي غير محدودة؟

⁸ في : من

(٤٣) وإمّا البخل، وقد بينّا أنّه جاد علينا بالوجود ونحن له غير مستحقّين. فكيف

يمنعنا النعمة التي لا تزراه وترقّعنا وتعلّي في حقيقة ربّتنا وهو الجوّاد الحق والخير المحض؟
ولذلك ما وجب أن يوجد هذا الأمر له بالذات.

(٤٤) وأمّا بطريق العرض لنا، فلعظم تمردنا وشدة إنعكافنا على رذائل والضلال

وقصور الرسل وعجزهم عن هدياتنا وإرشادنا وإيصالنا إلى الكمال، كما سبق في صدر
الباب من المقال.

(٣٨) فإن |^{٥٧} قال قائل: «إذا كنتم قصدتم بالأب ولابن والروح القدس الثلاثة

الأقانيم، العقل والعاقل والمعقول ثلث صفات لذات الأول القديم، وأنّ الثلاثة واحدٌ (كما
وضع في باب التثليث)، فلمَ قلتم إنّ الإتحاد وقع مع صفة الابن حسب هذا تناقض؟»

قلنا: إنّ الإنسان لا يمكن أن يكون عقلاً مجرّداً ولا يكون معقولاً مجرّداً. وقد يمكن أن
يكون عقلاً مجرّداً، فيصير لامكان ذلك متّصلاً بأحد الأقانيم الثلاثة الذي هو العاقل من

بينها وهو معنا الابن ويكون الجوهر القديم متّصلاً بالإنسان على ما قدمناه من البيان.

(٣٩) ولنقتصر على هذا القدر في هذا الباب إذ كان كافينا فيما نحونا من هذا

المعنى عند ذوي اللباب، امين.

١٧٨ | في الصليب

<شواهد كتابية للخلاص الكلي والحياة الأبدية بموت المسيح>

(١) النصرانية حيازة الحياة الأبدية والحياة الأبدية، كما قال السيّد المخلص، هي معرفة الحقّ والإقرار بوحدانية ربوبيته والإيمان بمسيحه والتصديق ببشارته لقوله: ﴿إنّ هذه هي حياة الأبد أن يعرفوك أنّك إله الحقّ وحدك ومن أرسلت إيشوع المسيح﴾¹ وما رسالة إيشوع المسيح إلّا للبشرى بالخلاص الكلي الجاري على يده والنداء بالقيامة والحياة الخالدة حسب وعده؟

(٢) والخلاص الكلي موقوف على موت المسيح وقيامته لقوله: ﴿إنّ أتيت لتكون لهم الحياة ويصيرون إلى ما هو أفضل﴾ يريد «السعادة |^{٧٨}ب الأخروية»

(٣) وقد ضرب مثلاً عند إغتمام التلاميذ بسبب تألمه وموته فقال: ﴿إنّ حبة الحنطة إن لم تسقط على الأرض وتمت فوحدها تبقى فإن ماتت فتعود ثمّرتها عن زرع كثير أركى﴾

(٤) وقال أيضاً: ﴿إني لم آتي إلّا لها من ساعة﴾ يريد أنّ «موتي ضروري حتمًا»

¹ Jn 17.3

(٥) وقال أيضًا لسان الروح الرسول الممؤيد فولوس السليح: ﴿إِنَّ كَلِمَةَ الصَّلِيبِ

عند المهالكين سخف وسخرية. فأما لنا نحن الأحياء فهي عز من قدرة الله

العلية² ﴿

(٦) وقال أيضًا ﴿إِنَّهُ كَمَا كَانَتْ مَعْصِيَّةَ آدَمَ سَبَبًا لِمَوْتِ النَّاسِ كُلِّهِمْ، كَذَلِكَ صَارَتْ

طاعة المسيح علة الحياة البشر بأسرهم³ بناءً على كلام الله في التوراة إذ قال لآدم:

«إِنَّكَ إِنْ أَكَلْتَ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ الَّتِي نَهَيْتُكَ عَنْهَا¹⁷⁹ مِتَّ مَوْتًا»

<سبب موت المسيح>

(٧) فحين خالف ربه وعصى، إستحق الموت بعد خروجه من جنّة المأوى، ثم ذريته

لما اصروا على المعصية وعدلوا عن عبادة ربهم الواجبة عليهم، وأشركوا به وجحدوا نعمة

لديهم بأنّخاذهم الأصنام والأوثان آلهة من دونه، وإطراحهم الأوامر والنواهي بالجملة،

ومضيههم مع شهوات قلوبهم النجسة الفشلة، فقويت بذلك شوكة الخطيئة وصارت لهم

كالمركب والمطيئة، فادت بهم إلى الموت الحال بأبيهم لخطيئته الشديدة الفظاعة، ولم يزل هذا

² Cor 1:18

³ Rm 5:19

دأبهم وديديهم في الخروج عن الطاعة، قد إستحسنوا ما زين لهم الشيطان من إجترار الآثام وإستعذبوا نهل كوؤس الحمام.

(٨) هذا معما أنّ الله لم يهمل لصلاحهم ولم يغفل⁷⁹ عن تنبيههم وأسباب فلاحهم، لاصداره إليهم الأنبياء والمرسلين بالآيات والمعجزات مؤيدين، فحؤفوا وحذروا وأنذروا وبصروا. فلم يغن الوعد والوعيد فيهم لاستيلاء سلطان الخطيئة عليهم التي صار جرحهم فيهم ناصورًا وفاعلها على فعلها مقصورًا. فلطف البارئ رافة بعباده وجبله يديه إذ لم ير لهم شفيغًا أعظم منه إليهم.⁴

(٩) فأظهر كلمته الأزلية في عالمهم متدرعًا صورة بشري من جنس آدمهم، فكمل نواقصهم وأجرى على يديه خلاصهم بتسليمه ذلك البشري للموت فدية⁵ عنهم، وهو غير مستحق الموت لبراءته عن الخطيئة التي خدمة منهم، كما قال في الإنجيل المجيد: ﴿إِنَّ هَكَذَا أَحَبَّ اللهُ الْعَالَمَ إِلَى حَدِّ اعْطَا ابْنَهُ الْوَحِيدَ﴾

(١٠) وإذ قد⁸⁰ ثبت أنّه لا شيء عنده مما يوجب الموت، وقد شهد الكتاب بموته، فثبت إذًا أنّ موته لسبب عظيم ونفع جسيم، وهو ما ورد به الإنجيل عن سيدنا إذ

⁴ اليهم : اليه

فدية : فدية⁵

يقول: ﴿هذا جسدي المبذول عوضًا عن العالمين﴾⁶ و﴿هذا دمي المسفوك فدية عن خطايا الأكثرين﴾⁷ وهو الحمل المقتول والقربان المقبول الذي رضي به الرب عن العبّاد، ومنحهم عنه حسن الهداية والإرشاد وسبوغ الرحمة وشمول النعمة ومعرفة الحقائق ومكارم الخلائق.

(١١) فإن قال قائل: إذا كان المسيح قد مات لخلاص البشر من الموت، ولذلك سُمّي مُخَلِّصًا، فلما صار الناس بعد موته يموتون وأين موقع الخلاص؟ قلنا: إنّ الشاهد الأكبر على بطلان الموت قيامة السيّد المسيح، فإنه إنبعث في يوم الثالث⁸⁰ حيًّا من الأموات وكفل بقيامة الكلّ والحياة الأبدية بعد الممات، فممنّ يحقّق أنّ له بعد موته نشأة ثانية وحيوة غير فانية وسعادة مسرّمة وحظوة مخلّدة بلذّة إلهية وبهجة أبدية فكيف يرى أنّ الموت موتًا ومفارقة دار الشقاوة فوتًا، لكنّ يعتقد ذلك ضربًا من السنّة والنوم إذ كان هجعة كلّ ليلة بازاء يقظة اليوم.

6 Tim 2:3

7 Mt 26:28

<السجود والصلوات نحو الصليب>

(١٢) وإن ثبت أنّ السبب في حصول هذه الخيرات للجنس البشري كان موت المسيح، على ما اتّضح من كلام الإنجيل ورسائل فولوس السليح، فوجب على كلّ نصراني مقتف آثار الحواريين في إتباع حقائق النصرانية. وكان من المؤمنين الا يلقي ذلك عن خاطره طوال عمره ويردد فيه طرف فكره ويجدّد فيه^{81أ} رياضة ذكره.

(١٣) ولما كان الغالب على الإنسان ألم الغفلة والنسيان، وكان الخلاص بموت مسيح الربّ، وكان موت المسيح بالصلب، لطف الحواريون (السلام لذكرهم) بتأييد روح القدس لهم، فجعلوا آية الصليب قبلة العبادة ليتذكّر العابدون بها حقائق البيعة ويثابر المجاهدون على الطاعة لما صحّ عندهم من الخلاص الكلّي والخيرات المزمّعة.

(١٤) وكلّ صاحب نظر صحيح منهم إذا نظّر إلى الصليب لمح عليه المسيح مصلوبًا. ففحص عن سبب موته فوجده خلاص الكلّ مطلوبًا. ثمّ فحص عن السبب الموجب للمسيح الإقتدار على الخلاص، فوجده إتحاده بالكلمة الأزلية وما حصل له من شرف البنوة والإختصاص.^{81ب} فخاض حينئذٍ في بحر البحث عن السبب الموجب للإتحاد وظهور الإبن الأزلي في العالم بصورة العباد، فوجب ذلك رافة الله بهم ورحمته وجوده ونعمته. فخر ساجدًا لربّ هذه النعم وصاحب هذه الحكم ذي العناية بخلقه وواهب الهدايا

إلى حقّه. ولعظم موقع الأمر عنده، يكثر سجوده ويطيل تهجّده مؤدّيًا، بعض ما يجب من الحمد والشكر للإله بجملة هذا الأمر العظيم القدر الجليل الحظر.

(١٥) فبان أن سجود النصارى نحو آية الصليب ليس كما ظنّ قوم أنّه للشكل المصنوع من خشب أو فضة أو من ذهب (معاذ الله من ذلك أن يكون أحد من النصارى اعتقده أو يعتقدّه؛ لكن يكفّرون قائله ومعتقده!). إنّما عندهم السجود^{82أ} لربّ الصليب الذي أظهر به هذا السرّ العجيب، كما يعبدون ناسوت المسيح لا لذاته، ولكن لاتصاله باللاهوت الذي عبادته فرض واجب على سائر مخلوقاته.

(١٦) والصليب إسم المصلوب، كما أنّ القليل إسم المقتول وهو المسيح الذي بصلبه أفادنا الخلاص الحقيقي والدين الصحيح. فالسجود إذاً نحو الصليب ليس للشكل كما أشرنا إليه، ولكن للقدرة الإلهية الفاعلة للغرائب بالمصلوب عليه. فإذا لم يكن مع السجود والتوقير والتعظيم للصليب هذا الضمير، كان ذلك خطأً من فاعله وكفراً من قائله، ولذلك إذا كان هذا الشكل مصوّراً على الأواني والأمتعة على سبيل التزييق، لا يرون النصارى تعظيمه إن^{82ب} يتحاشون دوسه إذا وقع على الطريق، والذي جعل قبلة للعباد يشرفونه ويعظّمونه ويقبّلونه ويكرّمونه. وقد يعلم كلّ منصف أنّ السجود نحو البيت عند اليهود والمسلمين ليس لحجر أو مدر وما هو صنّعه البشر، ولكن لربّ تلك الأبنية لاعتقادهم بأنّ

الله أودعها سرًّا لم يكن في غيرها من الأمكنة. كذلك غرض النصارى في إتخاذهم الصليب قبلةً في عبادتهم.

(١٧) هو الأسباب التي أوردناها عن أئمتهم وساداتهم. وإن قصر الرعاع عن إدراك معانيها في إجتهداتهم، فإنّ الدين قد جمع بين الخاصّ والعامّ والمأمون والإمام: إلى الخواصّ والأئمة الإحاطة بمدارك الدين، وإلى التابعين الأمة^{٨٣} القبول لظواهر الأمور بالتصديق والتقليد.

(١٨) ولآية الصليب معجزات كثيرة عند النصارى. نقتصر في هذا الباب على المشهورة منها. وذلك أن الاجتماع وقع على أن السليحين الأظهار لم يفعلوا الجرائح والآيات إلّا بعد رسم هذا الشكل بأيديهم على أصحاب العاهات، وذكر إسم الثالوث كما تواترت به الشهادات، كذلك والمنح التي منّحوا الأتباع من مواهب الكهنوت، وحلول الروح، وتقديس العماد الذي هو باب الملكوت، وتقديس السرّ المحيي الذي هو القربان. فإنّ هذه بأسرها كانت برسم هذه الآية للعيان، وبها قهروا الشيطان وهدموا بيوت الأوثان، وكذلك علّموا لمن بعدهم إلى الآن.

(١٩) وهذا⁸³ خبر صحيح لا يُمتري فيه أحد من المؤمنين بالمسيح، على اختلاف

مذاهبهم وتنافي لغاتهم ومطالبهم. والبرهان على ما كان للسليحين من التأييد والمعونة قد قام ما ورد في الباب الأول. فهناك استوفينا فيه الكلام.

<قصة نصر الصليب>

(٢٠) أمّا قصة الصليب المجيد مع قيصر الروم قسطنطين الملك السعيد، فهي أنه رأى مصوراً في السماء الأثرية مكتوباً تحته بالكواكب النورية: «إتّك بهذه الآيّة تحوز النصر أيّها الملك وتحظى بالظفر» وكان قبل عليه جيش عظيم من البربر فأمر بتصوير هذه الآيّة على البنود والأعلام معولاً على معونة صاحبها في الحرب والخصام.

<قصة وجدان الصليب>

(٢١) فلما هزم كثرتهم بقلّة عدده، وقد علم أنّ المسيح⁸⁴ نصّره وقوّاه بأمر من عنده، دخل في الإيمان به وأرسل أمّه إلى أورشليم في طلبه يستنبط من اليهود خبر الخشبة التي صلب عليها المخلص. وكانت جُعلت في قعر بئر معطّلة وأُخفي موضعها بمزبلة. فتوعّدت السعيدة بالعذاب الأليم أحبار اليهود أن أسروا هذا الأمر بالكتمان والكنود.

وكانوا جميعهم بذلك غير عارفين، خلا شيخ كبير أُخبر به من جدوده السالفين. ففرط منه في مجمع الشيوخ للإيتمار «إنّ عندي من هذه القصة أثر آثار»

(٢٢) فبادروا بتسليمه إلى الملكة قائلين: «إنّ الشيخ بالمطلوب من العالمين». فبعد الوعد الوعيد أخلص نيّته هذا السعيد وصحب الملكة والجموع⁸⁴ إلى المكان، وقال: «حدّثني ناقل زكي صادق المقال أنّ المطلوب في بئر تحت هذه الدمنة» قصد في جعله هناك الإستتار وأخفى الدمنة، فبرز الأمر بنبشها وتحويلها حتى ظهر رأس البئر وعليه صخرة فاشتلت بسرعة، ففاح نشر طيب ذكي عطر أنفاس الجماعة برائحة لم يشمّ مثلها قطّ.

(٢٣) فنزل إيهودا هذا إلى اصعاد خشبة الصليب فوجد ثلاثة صلبان ومساميرها. فنادهم في أسفل القلب: «إنّ عندي ثلث خشاب!» قالوا: «إصعدها معاً ففيها المطلوب». فلما صعد بها سجدت الملكة لله شكراً لآظهاره إيّاها على ما تحوز به أجراً وذكرًا، غير أنّها حارت في الفرق بين صليب⁸⁵ المخلّص وصلبي اللصين. قال لها إيهودا: «سينكشف الغطاء فيما ترين، فإنّي موقن بأنّ المسيح الذي أمنت به من القدرة ما يزيل ولو باحياء ميت هذه الحيرة»

(٢٤) قال ذلك وإذا بجنّازة مجتازة. وأمرت الملكة باحضارها والميت. ووضع كلّ صليب منها عليه والكلّ يقول: «ليث!» فوضع الأوّل ولم يغني شيئاً، والثاني والميت ليس حيّاً. فلما رفعوا الثالث ليضعوه وهو بعدها على الميت، وإذا به وقد عادت إليه الروح عود الساكن إلى البيت، وقام حيّاً ساجداً للمسيح الذي بعثه من بين الأموات تحقيقاً لصليبه ودينه الصحيح. فخرت الملكة عليه مقبلة له ومكرّمة ومشرفة ومعظمة وغشته بالذهب |⁸⁵ الخالص المرصع بالجواهر الثمين.


(٢٥) وأمرت ببناء هياكل عظيمة وأبنية مشيّدة على جميع الأماكن التي جرت بها التدابير المخلّصية وأسراره المفيدة. ثمّ عادت مستصحبة معها للصليب ومساميره. وقد أزمعت أن تصلح لجاماً لدابة الملك ليرشد ويسعد في صغير أمره وكثيره. ولهذا المعجز الظاهر بالصليب، مع المعجزات التي رمزنا عليها من قريب، أجمع الآباء الذين قرروا الأمانة الصحيحة، وهم الثلثماية والثمنية عشر ذوي الشهرة الواضحة، على أن يعمل النصارى جميعهم في اليوم الذي وجد فيه الصليب عيداً مشهوراً ليستمرّ الإعتراف به ولم يزل عندهم مذكوراً. هذا هو الأمر الذي |⁸⁶ أوجب على النصارى تعظيم الصليب وجعله قبلة لهم في السجود.


شواهد عقلية وطبيعية للصليب


(٢٤) وإن كان بعض العلماء أوجب ذلك على جميع الناس كافةً من وجهين.

أحدهما هو البرهان على صحّة حساب الضرب، وهو قول القائل أنّ اثنين في اثنين أربعة

وثلاثة في ثلاثة تسعة يجري على هذا القياس أنه إذا تقاطع خطان على خطين فإن

تقاطعهما يكون على أربع نقط مثل هذا الشكل:  وإذا تقاطعت ثلاثة خطوط على

ثلاثة خطوط فإن تقاطعها يكون على تسع نقط على هذه الصورة:  كذلك وإذا قيل

أحد في أحد هو أحد لتقاطع خطين على نقطة واحدة مثل هذا الشكل:  وهو صورة

الصليب. |⁸⁶ ولا سبيل إلى عرفان معنى أحد في أحد هو واحد إلا على هذه الصورة.

والأحد الحقّ هو الله تعالى والوحدانية له بالذات ولغيره بالمجاز. وإذا كان الأمر كذلك،

فواجب تعظيم شكل عرفنا منه وحدانية البارئ تعالى على سائر الناس وأن يجعله قبلة لهم

في صلواتهم كيما لا يسهو أحدهم عن ذكر الله.

(٢٥) والوجه الثاني هو أنّ الإجماع وقع على أنّ الله أخرج جميع المخلوقات من العدم

بقدرته، وجعل لجميع الكائنات أركاناً أربعة هي الأرض والماء والنار والهواء؛ وكذلك

حركات الفلك تفعل أزماناً أربعة هي الربيع والصيف والخريف والشتاء؛ والأمزجة المفردة

أربعة وهي الحار البارد |⁸⁷ والرطب واليابس؛ والمركبة أربعة وهي الحار الرطب والحار اليابس

والبارد الرطب والبارد اليابس؛ وأسنان الحيوان أربعة وهي الصباء والشبيبة والكهولة والشيخوخة؛ ونواحي العالم أربع هي المشرق والمغرب والجنوب والشمال؛ إلى سائر الرباعيّات من الأخلاط والأمراض وغير ذلك؛ وما اختصّ الفلك بأربعة أوصاف وهي إستدارة الشكل وإستنارة اللون وجلادة الجسم وسرعة الحركة.

(٢٦) وكلّ ذلك ظهر بقدرة الله من العدم. والشكل الدالّ على ذلك بطريق الإجمال هو الصليب أيّ الرباعيّ. فيجب على كلّ أحد أن يجعله نُصَبَ عينه. وإذا تأمّل تفصيل هذه الجملة، وكيف مع تضاددها⁸⁷ احتوت على نظام مصالح العالم وفوائده، خرّ ساجدًا لقدرة الخلاق الذي أوجد هذا كلّ من العدم وقهر تضادده بالقوام وقصره على البقاء والدوام. وفيما ذكرنا كفاية في هذا المعنى لمن أحبّ الوقوف على حقايق الأمور.

123ب | في الناقوس

<تقديم>

(١) إنّ المخلوق الجسيم، من حيث هو كذلك، لم يكن عالمًا بالحوادث قبل حدوثها إذا كان قريبًا منه، ولا يشعر بما حال وقوعها إذا كان بعيدًا عنه إلا بمودّ يؤدي ذلك إليه ومناد يعرض الأخبار الوقائع عليه. ولأنّ أوقات إجتماع المؤمنين ببيوت العبادات في أحيائهم الصلوات لاقامة وظائف الطاعات، كالسنن المفترضات، كانت على المذكورين ما إحتيج إلى مودّ مناد يكون مشعرًا للناس بحضور الوقت والجماعة للصلوة والقدّاس. وهذا النداء ينبغي أن يتضمّن معانٍ كثيرة في اصوات قصيرة.

<سبب إتخاذ الناقوس>

(٢) فإنّ 124ب | ازدحام المعاني يدّعو¹ الناس إلى إعتبار تلك الأسرار وقصر الأصوات يمنع من اشغال الأوقات بما هو دون الفرض والواجبات. ولمّا كانت البيعة في مذهب النصرانية مضاهية في قصوى الغرض للسفينة النوحية، وجب أن يجعل مناديتها صامتًا على

¹ يدّهو : يدعوا

ما كان في الفلّك عن وحي من مالك الملك. وذلك أنّ نوحًا حين أُوعز إليه بأنّخاذ السفينة للنجاة من الغرق بالماء مع الأشرار.

(٣) ألهم في ضمن ذلك على ما ورد في العتيقة من الأخبار أن يتخذ من الخشب ناقوسًا على نسبة معلومة ورتبة مفهومة، ليكون² أوّلًا مشعرًا للفعلة³ لها بأوقات الاجتماع، إمّا للمساعدة على تحريك^{125أ} اجزائها بمقتضى الصناعة والاضعاع، وأمّا لتناول القوت للقوة على القيام بمصالح السفينة التي هي تابوت. وآخرًا ضرب به بأمر الله ليجتمع الناس والوحوش والبهائم التي أمر بدخولها للسفينة فارةً من الغرق ونوازل النقائم، قائلاً: «من جاء نجا! من جاء نجا!» وهو لسان حال الناقوس.

(٤) فكما أنّ والجي السفينة تميّزوا عن الأثمة وخلصوا من غرق الماء، كذلك الداخلون الى البيعة يتميّزون عن ابناء الدنيا الظلماء الخائضين في بحار الخطايا والفحشاء ويتخلّصون من الغرق بسخط إله السماء. وكما خلس من دخل السفينة من الغرق المحسوس وهلك من اصبر على المعاصي بإخراقة الناموس، كذلك^{125ب} ينجو⁴ من يلج بيوت العبادة في الغرق المعقول ويهلك المقيم على عقيدة الانقطاع بأنّ لا فائدة في دخول.

² ليكون : ليكن

³ للفعلة : للفعلة

⁴ ينجو: ينجوا

وكما أنّ الناقوس في السفينة كان حاثاً على الإجتماع للمصالح وتناول القوت في البداية، ومنبّهًا للغافلين عن الطوفان المهلك على دخول السفينة في النهاية، كذلك الناقوس أيضاً يحثّ المؤمنين في بداية أمره على إجتماع بخلوص النيّة للقيام بالمصالح الدينية وتناول العلم والأسرار المارانية المقوى على أداء الفرائض الإلهية والمقرب إلى الحضرة القدسية، ويحضّ الناس أيضاً في نهاية أمره على الفرار⁵ من الهلاك بطوفان الخطايا والذنوب المهلك لأهل الدنيا المتشاغلين عن عبادة الرب المرهوب.

(٥) |¹²⁶ هذا هو السبب في إتخاذ الناقوس للتعريف بأوقات الصلوات دون الإعتماد

على نداء مناد وأذان مؤذّن ظاهر الكلمات.

<معاني اصواته>

(٦) وأما ما يتضمّن من المعاني المودعة عدد نقراته ووزن ضرباته، فإنّه يشعر أولاً

بوحداية الباري تعالى وعزّة ربوبته وجلال عظمته وسعة قدرته. ثمّ يدعونا إلى قبح الأفعال

وتغلغلنا في مشابكة هذا العالم المختوم عليه بالزوال. ثمّ يحثّنا على الرغبة إلى الله في مسامحتنا

والصفح عنّا وحسن إعانتنا، حسب ما فسّره علي بن ابي طالب (رضي الله عنه!) ولا يجوز

لذي عقل وتأمل دفعه ولا إبطال شيء منه.

(٧) وذلك حدّث محمد بن موسى السكّري عن أحمد بن عبد الرحمن، قال: ¹²⁶ب

حدّثني أبي عن ابن الكوّاء، قال: فكنّث مع أمير المؤمنين عليّ بن أبي طالب (كرّم الله وجهه) وكان في نفر من أصحابه بظاهر الحيرة، إذ سمعنا صوت الناقوس يضرب.

(٨) فجعلتُ أتعسه، فقال عليّ: مه يا ابن الكوّاء، لأنّك لا تدري ما يقول الناقوس.

فقلتُ: يا امير المؤمنين، الناقوس يتكلّم؟ فقال: والذي فلق الحبّة وبرأ النسمة، ما من ضربة

تقع على ضربة، ولا نقرة على نقرة، إلّا وهي تحكي مثلاً وتؤدي علمًا. قلتُ فما يقول

الناقوس؟ قال: يقول:

سبحان الله حقًّا حقًّا	✽	إنّ المولى فرد يبقى
يحكم فينا رفقًا رفقًا	✽	لو لا حلمه كنا نشقى
إنّنا بعنا دارًا تبقى	✽	واستوطننا دارًا يفنى
ما من حيّ فيها يبقى	✽	إلّا أدنى منه موتا
إنّ الدنيا قد غرّتنا	✽	واستغوتنا ^{127a} واستهوتنا
ما من يوم يمضي عنّا	✽	إلّا يهدم منّا ركنًا
تفنى الدنيا قرنًا قرنًا	✽	نقلًا نقلًا دفنًا دفنًا
يا بنّ الدنيا مهلاً مهلاً	✽	فازدد خيراً تزدد حبّاً
يا مولانا قد اسرفنا	✽	قد فرطنا وتوانينا
حلمك عنّا قد اجزانا	✽	فتداركنا واعف عنّا

(٩) وكم من مسلم يقف على هذا التفسير فينكره، قائلاً بأن ذلك منسوب إلى علي، إذ لم يكن صادرًا عنه، وإنما نسبته النصارى إليه لتحسين أمر الناقوس عند المسلمين وإزالة القباحة عمّا عليه كانوا مصطلحين؟ وأنا منبّه من كان <علي> هذه السجية.

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