

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

The Church of the East at Three Critical Points in its History

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literature
School of Arts and Sciences
Of the Catholic University of America
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

©

Copyright

All Rights Reserved

By

Andrew Thomas Platt

Washington, DC

2017

The Church of the East at Three Critical Points in its History

Andrew Thomas Platt, Ph.D.

Director: Sidney Griffith, S.T., Ph.D.

Abstract

This dissertation seeks to examine changes in the identity of the Church of the East over a span of several centuries particularly in relation to events and experiences undergone by this church body in its own milieu. It aims to do this through the analysis of key texts by or about prominent church figures and secondary texts which establish the context for these men in each of three separate time periods. The figures under investigation are Mar Babai the Great at the turn of the 7th century during the last years of the Sassanid Empire, Catholicos Timothy I in the height of Abbasid Culture at the turn of the 9th Century, and Mar Yaballaha III during the *Pax Mongolica* at the end of the 13th century. This dissertation asserts that these men acted as representatives of their churchmen in their day, and that said representation, judging by the esteem in which they were held, extended to subsequent generations. Because of this, an analysis of their milieu and their responses to it provided in their writings grants insight into their corporate identity in their respective time periods, and what variations exist can be described as identity shifts. In this way, this dissertation establishes that the Church of the East in the Sassanid period was working to establish an identity as the Church of the Persian Empire, in distinction from that of the Romans, and furthermore, due to their lofty connections, they were highly anticipating the acceptance of their faith by the leadership of their empire. By the time of Timothy, a century and a half later, due to the religious inclinations of their new political masters, such aspirations were at least in part abandoned locally, but at the further extents of the

church's reach, a greater degree of freedom was granted its members. This freedom contributed to the state of the Church of the East in the final period, where distant unexpected church members came home at the head of an army to establish a kingdom, and Church of the East leadership understandably interpreted this to mean that they might finally have a Christian king. Such aspirations proved short lived. This dissertation shows that there were a number of Church of the East identity points that shifted over the centuries, but two stand out as prominent: 1. their relationship with their political rulers including the role their ecclesiastical group played in society, and 2. the role of missionary outreach in the life of their church.

This dissertation by Andrew Thomas Platt fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literature approved by Sidney H. Griffith, S.T., Ph.D., as director, and by Shawqi N. Talia, Ph.D., and Monica J. Blanchard, Ph.D., as readers.

Sidney H. Griffith, Ph.D.

Shawqi N. Talia, Ph.D.

Monica J. Blanchard, Ph.D.

*To my wife,
Whose unwavering support made this possible,
My boys,
Who have only known a Dad who is “finishing his dissertation,”
My family,
Who have been great encouragement,
And my mom,
Who is dearly missed and to whom this would have meant a great deal.*

Contents

Chapter

	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
	INTRODUCTION.....	1
ONE	ORTHODOXY.....	8
	Life of Babai.....	9
	Babai's Writings and Contributions to his Church.....	14
	Historical Background.....	31
	Conclusions.....	55
	Chapter 1 Appendix	
	<i>The Book of the Union</i> , Section 5, Chapter 18.....	57
	Translation.....	65
TWO	CHANGING MISSION AT HOME AND ABROAD.....	75
	Timothy's Early Life and Election.....	77
	The Islam Question.....	86
	Timothy's Writings.....	90
	Historical Background.....	104
	The "Interior" and the "Exterior".....	114
	The Mission to the Interior.....	121
	Conclusion.....	131
	Chapter 2 Appendix	
	Rules of Ecclesiastical Judgement and Inheritance.....	133
	Translation.....	136
THREE	THE END OF AN AGE.....	141
	Yaballaha (Given of God).....	143
	The History (The First Half).....	146
	The Colophon.....	150
	The History (Part 2).....	153
	Historical Background.....	158
	The Inner House.....	159
	From Friends of the Caliphs to Pariahs.....	164
	The Outer House.....	179
	The Church of the East in China.....	181
	Central Asian Christianity.....	186
	Mongol Hordes.....	195

CHAPTER

Mongol Religious Policies and Christianity in the Mongol Empire...	202
Mongol Brutality and Its Effect on Christian-Muslim Relations.....	212
Christianity's Decline.....	217
Conclusion.....	221
Chapter 3 Appendices	
A: Excerpts from the History.....	223
Translation.....	234
B: The Colophon of the Gospel of Karmelesh.....	240
Translation.....	243

CONCLUSIONS.....	248
------------------	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	256
-------------------	-----

Acknowledgements

I have had much advice over the years concerning what a dissertation is. Descriptions have ranged from “the culmination of an idea,” to “a hurdle,” to strange metaphors of pillars and darkness, to “the closest a man can come to giving birth, but generally requiring many more than 9 months to bring to light.” There is truth in all of these. If I may be so bold, however, I would add one. I would compare this to a journey, which may be a bit clichéd, but that does not make it any less relevant. The journey of this dissertation has all the hall-marks of an adventure, the adrenaline and perils, the miry drudgery and pinnacle views, the heights and the depths. The journey itself has, despite its agonies, proven of great value in my own development as a person and a scholar and for that I am grateful.

As with any journey, it would not come about without others. I owe a great deal to those who have helped me along the way; my director, Fr. Sidney Griffith, whose expertise has been invaluable and for whom I continue to have great respect despite at times vigorous disagreements; my readers, Dr. Shawqi Talia whose encouragement was a blessing as was his at times unwanted eye for detail, and Dr. Monica Blanchard, who could always recommend a source and whose assistance in sending excerpts and the like enabled my study of this material from a distance. All three of these teachers have done just what their title implies, taught me which I appreciate, though at times it may not have seemed I was learning much. These pages undoubtedly contain errors of research or judgement that might have slipped past all of our eyes, or which they might have grudgingly permitted me to voice. Any such gaffes are, of course, wholly mine and should be treated as such.

Colleagues in the department have also been a blessing and honed aspects of my research, Paul Stevenson and Joshua Hood, my Arabic and Syriac classmates whose discussions informed much in the direction of this study and Nathan Gibson, who beyond sharing and developing ideas has proven a trusted friend and extraordinary encouragement.

Other academics whose support has contributed to or directed this are my undergrad advisor, Dr. George Pickens, whose love of culture and prompting to pursue a Ph.D. gave birth to the idea, Dr. Mark Williams and Professor Isaac Li, both of whom provided much needed encouragement at Jiang Da, and Dr. Joel Walker, who answered an unsolicited email that steered me towards CUA and later provided much advice on research and direction.

I also need to acknowledge my church in Virginia, The Journey. They provided room for a struggling young academic to both work and study in the DC Metro area and gave and continue to give extraordinary support even after my time there has come to an end.

I need to also acknowledge my family. My parents and in-laws have been tireless encouragement and support. Grandpa Joe even gave us a roof once we left the East Coast. But the greatest encouragement has been my wife and sons. Annie has sacrificed again and again to see this happen and I do not know that my appreciation can ever be truly stated, and my boys will finally get to know a father who is not writing a dissertation.

Finally, I want to thank God, who lent me the strength to see this through and the skill to carry it out.

Introduction

“I have told these things to you, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33, NIV)”

There are few confessions in the Christian world for whom this message might more readily apply both as a prophecy and a comfort than the Church of the East (by which is meant the confession that for much of its history was called Nestorian, bringing to mind heresy and dissociation. Fortunately, the last century has more or less exonerated the Church of the East regarding the charge of heresy. As such, the term Nestorian will from hereon be avoided except in quotation¹).

The Church of the East and Church of the West, to use a very imprecise dichotomy, both began on the same footing, somewhere in the vicinity of Jerusalem in Rome’s far-flung province of Judea in the mid-first century. Perhaps the only really noteworthy designator of difference between confessions at that point was that one was under the political auspices of Rome and one was not. But this difference would come to be enormous. The Church of the West in its Roman, Byzantine, and Protestant forms has experienced relatively unimpeded growth. The East’s experience was only really comparable in the first couple of centuries. Since then Eastern Christianity’s experience in all its forms, but particularly the experience of the Church of the East, has been wholly different. While it is true that there were elements of the Western Church, especially the Greek form, whose experiences can frequently compare to those of the Church of

¹ See Brock, Sebastian. "The Nestorian Church: A Lamentable Misnomer." *Bulletin of the John Ryland Library of the University of Manchester* 78/3 (1996): 23-35.

the East, Christianity in the West has through most of history seemed to know little more than a series of gains².

To describe the situation of the Church of the East as different is an extraordinary understatement. Where in the West persecution enigmatically blossomed into imperial acceptance, in the Persian East, Constantine's rapprochement with Christianity became the inspiration for horrific persecution. Where in the West, the Christian polity fell time and again to "Barbaric" invaders, only to see those invaders embrace and in turn expand the Church, the Easterners saw their non-Christian state consumed by practitioners of Islam, an external faith both synonymous with the state and possessing incredible staying power which proved resistant to many attempts at alteration. In fact, the Islamic state and its various heirs eventually sought to absorb, marginalize, or do away with any, including Muslims, who continued to worship in a manner out of keeping with that officially endorsed by the state³. Therefore, while the Western Church was expanding and stretching to straddle the globe, its Eastern brethren were entrenching and fleeing death and persecution, a flight which continues to this day.

Presently the Church of the West has practitioners in virtually every country, dominance of the cultures and even political machinery in more than a few, and a set of experiences that support a relatively rosy view of life and the role of their faith in that life, particularly in relation to the political state. In such light Jesus' words on trouble often seem remote. For the Church of the East, however, which even today is watching what little remains of its traditional homeland

² For changes in that status in the present see Jenkins, Philip. *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia - and How It Died*. (New York: HarperOne, 2008). For discourse on his thesis see the collection of articles in Wijzen, Frans and Robert Schreier. *Global Christianity: Contesting Claims*. (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2007).

³For a brief look at this history see Holtmann, Phillip. "A Primer to the Sunni-Shi Conflict." *Perspective on Terrorism* 8, no. 1 (2014): 142-145.

being overrun by militant Muslims, trouble is quite well-known and optimism at times harder to come by. Though they tenaciously cling to their faith, trouble has been much of their experience.

Several questions come to mind on examination of the difficult history of the Church of the East. In spite of a lack of political dominance, they often thrived and expanded. How? Why? In turn, they generally in the first millennium held some political influence. How? What role did politics play in their church life? The influence that they had was eventually lost. How and why? Why does their descent into demographic insignificance seem to correspond with their loss of political influence? Was this purely political or was there a social and cultural dimension to this correspondence? Ultimately, how did a Church that Jenkins in his *Lost History* describes as “a vast and complex realm that stretched deep into Asia⁴” whose head Timothy I he describes as “arguably the most significant Christian spiritual leader of his day⁵” become relegated to local villages, backwaters, and refugee enclaves in the West?

It is these sorts of questions that lie at the heart of this study. By examining three separate points of Church of the East History, this dissertation hopes to approach an answer for some of these or at least shed a little more light on the issues around which these questions revolve. The manner in which this study hopes to do this is by attempting to assess the identity of the Church of the East and specifically how that identity shifted over time. By identifying what the Church of the East was like in several different periods, comparisons can be made and a picture, albeit vague, can begin to form as to what common features existed between these

⁴ Jenkins, *Lost History*, 5

⁵ *ibid.* 7

periods, and to what extents features of import might have been changed or abandoned, while other characteristics might have come into being.

The approach used in this study needs to be briefly discussed. Collective or organizational identity is a subject of some debate, especially when carried out diachronically. This is not the venue to elaborate on debates in that field⁶. Suffice it to say that when it comes to establishing the identity of an entity situations or case studies are sought at a variety of points to clarify identifying features in each point, establishing what is often called functional equivalence and enabling comparison to be carried out.

This dissertation aims to do this by assessing the Church of the East at 3 separate high points of its history. It must be stated forthwith that this is by no means a comprehensive history of the Church of the East, a task far beyond the scope of this dissertation, and one that has been done, at least concisely, many times. For a more thorough approach to their history, there are a number of sources available⁷.

⁶ For more on collective identity see Weinreich, P. and W. Saunderson. *Analysing Identity: Cross-Cultural, Societal and Clinical Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2003) 1ff; cf. Tan, Sor-hoon. *Challenging Citizenship: Group Membership and Cultural Identity in a Global Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); and particularly the definition in Snow, David. "Collective Identity and Expressive Forms." *CSD Working Papers*. Last Modified 10,01, 2001. <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2zn1t7bj> (accessed October 13, 2015)

3. For the distinction between collective and social identity see Deaux, K. "Social Identification." In *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles*, edited by E. T. Higgins and A. K. Kruglanski. (New York: Guilford, n.d.). For the distinction between organizational or institutional identity and collective identity see Albert, Stuart and David A. Whetten. "Organizational Identity." *Research in Organizational Behavior* 7 (1985): 263-295. For the advantages of Social Agent approaches to identity studies see Whetten, David A. and Alison Mackey. "A Social Actor Conception of Organizational Identity and Its Implications for the Study of Organizational Reputation." *Business and Society* 41, no. 4 (2002): 393-414. For a concise definition see Oelsner, Andrea. "The Institutional Identity of Regional Organizations, or Mercosur's Identity Crisis." *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (2013): 115-127.

⁷ For comprehensive approaches see Baumer, Christoph and Mar Dinkha IV. *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity* (London: IB Tauris, 2006) and Baum, Wilhelm and Dietmar Winkler. *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003). For a somewhat less scholastic approach see Wilmshurst, David. *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (Bishop's Stortford, UK: East & West Publishing Ltd, 2011). For overviews of the Church and their mission activity see the relevant chapters in Moffet, Samuel. *A History of Christianity in Asia*. 2 vols. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005) and Gilman, Ian and Hans Klimkeit. *Christians in Asia Before 1500*. (New York: Routledge, 1999)

These three points were selected specifically because, not only are they each significant, potentially representing turning points in the Church's history, but each is also represented by consistent resource material by or concerning some of this ecclesiastical group's most illustrious and influential members, namely Mar Babai the Great (†628), Catholicos Timothy I (†823), and Mar Yaballaha III (†1317). As with the history of the Church of the East itself, the purpose of this dissertation is not to perform a biographical study of the individuals, though a succinct biography is pertinent to an assessment of the institution they represented at that particular juncture. This means that these men's biographies are useful only inasmuch as they are able to direct attention to the institution itself.

As decision makers within their church, the individuals being researched herein are in many ways more representative than most of the shape of their church in their respective days. Thus, their approach to the variety of situations they faced, particularly concerning their interaction with their contemporary political states can shed significant light on the identity of the Church of the East itself. Each of these men were chosen in their day by their churchmen to head up their church in some capacity. From this it can be surmised that these men had the approval of at least a plural majority of their contemporaries, and thus represented the position of a significant percentage of their Churchmen in their day. Furthermore, the fact that they each came to be called Great or were memorialized in a positive manner demonstrates that they were also esteemed by future generations. This means that their actions, even if they did not directly shape the outlook of the Church of the East, at least were approved of subsequently and therefore are representative of more than one generation of East Syrian churchmen.

Likewise, each of these men wrote or were written about extensively. Babai wrote a number of treatments on the ascetic life, theological manuscripts, and even a few hagiographies.

Timothy wrote several canons and a number of letters, and was written about by almost every subsequent historian of the age. Though Yaballaha did not write in any manner confirmable today, he was memorialized in a history of his life and travels, and referenced numerous times in the chronicles of his friend, Bar-Hebraeus, as well as other histories. In addition to giving insight into their lives, these writings provide significant direct accounts of contemporary church life allowing a reasonably accurate picture of each period.

The chapters of this dissertation coincide with each period, and are laid out roughly as follows: first, a biographical sketch of the focal character from that period, followed by a brief overview of that person's literary output and/or the documentation about him present especially in contemporary sources or pivotal histories of later years. This will be followed by a brief analysis of one or two of that periods works either by the figure himself, or focused on him as a primary character. Additionally, each work is selected for its relevance to major trends in the socio-political situation of the Church of the East at the time. Finally, each chapter will close with an analysis of the socio-political background of the age in relation specifically to the Church of the East and the role of the chapter's central persona therein. This will include a brief analysis of the part this person played in either steering the church or riding the wave of contemporary events. At the close of each chapter will be appended a scan of a modern edition of one of the focal texts with translation provided by this dissertation's author.

Thus, following this introduction, the next chapter will begin with the life and writings of Mar Babai the Great, probing for a motive behind his intense defense of Dyophysite East Syrian Orthodoxy and investigating his stance's political ramifications. Babai's writings and actions contributed significantly to the Church's identity not only as Dyophysite which has already been well established, but also as Persian which this dissertation will show. The third chapter will

focus on the life of Timothy I and his delicate balance of Church and political interests in the Islamic state. As the first Catholicos of note under the Abbasids, Timothy's actions would define the role of the East Syrian Patriarch in that long-lived regime, both in relation to the Abbasid state, but also to its more distant metropolitanates. The definitions Timothy would establish could be said to have framed an epoch of East Syrian Church history. The fourth chapter is somewhat longer, consisting not only of the very tumultuous life and history of Mar Yaballaha III, but also a geographically and chronologically more extensive interim development, as the time spans several centuries and the geographical range almost literally extended from one side of Asia to the other. Paradoxically, Yaballaha III served as both the pinnacle of East Syrian political and ecclesiastical aspirations as well as the last genuinely outward looking patriarch for centuries to come. The final chapter will close with a brief overview of the conclusions of this study.

Orthodoxy

Mar Babai the Great and the Quest for Identity in the Final Years of the Sassanid Empire

If any contentious man, or anyone peaceably disposed should ask, “Had not these great Metropolitans power to put an end to the wickedness which was springing up in their dominions, without the help of Mar Babai?”...

I answer, “Yes, but every Metropolitan is not necessarily a doctor, neither can every doctor know how to decide all questions in dispute, nor can every doctor successfully contend against all the various false religions; one doctor has one quality and another doctor has another. In the holy Mar Babai, however, all these various qualities are found⁸.”

The first of the three periods this study focuses on happens to fall in the final years of the Sassanid Empire, at the eve of the Muslim conquests, a period that roughly coincides with the active years of Mar Babai the Great at the turn of and into the first quarter of the 7th century. It is for this reason that Babai’s life and writings can serve as a guide to the process of self-identification underway in the Church of the East at that time. His life and writings will be the focus of the first part of this chapter. This will be followed by an examination of the background leading up to his life. The next section will cover the importance of the year 612, when the Church of the East defended its doctrine before the Persian Shah. It will close by showing a few ways that the situation of the Church of the East in Babai’s day developed and contributed to that church’s state in later years.

⁸ Budge, Ernest A. W. *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Marga, AD 840*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. (London: Trench, Trubner, & co., 1893) 93

Life of Babai

Before going into a look at the life of Babai, it is important to clarify who is meant by the name, as in the period being discussed, there are a few possible references. The Babai referred to in this study, Mar Babai the Great or sometimes Babai of Izla, is to be distinguished from Babai of Nisibis, aka Babai the Lesser. There is also potential for confusion with the earlier Catholicos Mar Babai I (497-503). While Babai the Great had influence akin to a Catholicos at times, he never held the position⁹. Any subsequent references to Babai, unless otherwise indicated refer only to Mar Babai the Great.

Babai was born c. 551 in the environs of Nisibis in the small village of Beth Ainatha in the Beth Zabdai region of northern Mesopotamia. He came from a Syriac speaking family of faith that had a number of servants and was potentially of Persian background with Babai's earliest education being in Pahlavi books¹⁰. At a young age, he entered the famed School of Nisibis, studying under Abraham of Beth Rabban, head of the school. Though he became a teacher in the school¹¹, sometime around the age of twenty, Babai entered the monastery of Izla, which had recently been founded by Abraham of Kashkar. The Chronicle of Seert tells us the motivation for his career change was instruction from the voice of God¹², but it is not unlikely that the rise of Henana to headship of the school also played a role in this change¹³. In any event, Babai's disdain for Henana arose early in his life.

⁹ Kitchen, Robert A. "Babai the Great." In *The Orthodox Christian World*, edited by Augustine Casiday, 237-243. (New York: Routledge, 2012)

¹⁰ Budge *Book of Governors* 46ff; cf. Scher, Addai. *Histoire Nestorienne (Chronique de Séert)*. Vol. II. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1918) 532ff.

¹¹ Chabot, Jean-Baptiste. *Le Livre de la Chasteté composé par Jésusdenah, évêque de Bacrah*. (Rome: L'école Française de Rome, 1896) 30

¹² Scher, *Séert* 211

¹³ Chediath, Geevarghese. *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great* (Khottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, 1982) 4-5; cf. Becker, Adam. *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the*

Babai's rise to prominence in the East Syrian Monastic Movement paralleled his opposition to Henana as well as to any accommodation of elements antagonistic to "Traditional" Church of the East theological positions, i.e. those following the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Nevertheless, this prominence did not manifest overnight. More than 30 years passed between his exit from the school of Nisibis and his ascent to leading the Monastery at Izla in 604, which is the first point at which a wider acceptance of his writings can be firmly suggested. The maturity of his later works suggests a period of development in his style and theological approach that hardly sprang from nothing, but little is known of his formative years. He was called to leadership from outside the monastery, having left Izla at an indeterminate point earlier on, possibly due to the death of the monastery's head, Abraham¹⁴. We do know that on that departure he founded a monastery and school in his home region of Beth Zabdai which he ran for the interim.

Babai the reformer came into his own on returning to Izla. After assuming control, he instituted many reforms which called his fellow monks to a more ascetic lifestyle, particularly reinstating practices such as solitude that had gone by the wayside in conflict with the Messalians. This is by no means to suggest that Babai was a Messalian, as some of his most vitriolic writings are reserved for those who adopted this heresy. For instance, there are no longer extant disputation against the Messalians as well as extensive treatments against them in

Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) 197-203

¹⁴ Chediath *Christology* 6

the *Gnostic Chapters*¹⁵. Thomas of Marga states that one of the primary motivations for his appointment to headship of Izla was his invective against the Messalians¹⁶.

His most significant reform on returning to Izla was the removal of those “solitaries” living in their cells with wives and children. Thomas of Marga relates the account of his driving out such false solitaries and their families, and burning their residences at the instigation of one Elijah, an Arab monk at the facility¹⁷.

The next quarter of a century saw Babai asked to assume the role of “Visitor of the Monasteries” in the North¹⁸. Due to the vacancy of the Catholicate, which will be discussed in more detail below, the church needed to be more circumspect about its leadership. Babai and Mar Aba, the Arch-deacon of Seleucia-Ctesiphon were granted the title of Visitor by the bishops, and dispatched to oversee monasteries and churches. In many ways, they assumed the administrative duties of the Catholicos without assuming the title. One could suggest for them the title minister plenipotentiary. In any case, for the remainder of Chosroes II’s life, there would be no Catholicos and in turn no new Bishops. Thus, for the whole of that time, Babai served as a de facto co-Catholicos¹⁹.

While Babai’s popularity in the Church of the East waxed and waned and was often challenged, Implied in his appointment as visitor is support for the reforms that he had instituted. Chediath states that the School of Nisibis provided Babai his inspiration for the school that he would later found. Though there is little known about life at Babai’s school, other than that it

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 22; cf. Guillaumont, Antoine. “Perspectives actuelles sur les origines du monachisme.” In *The Frontiers of Human Knowledge: Lectures Held at the Quincentenary Celebrations of Uppsala University, 1977*, by Torgny Torgnysson Segerstedt, 111-123 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1978)

¹⁶ Budge, *Book of Governors*, 90-92

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 50ff

¹⁸ For details see Chediath, *Christology*, 10

¹⁹ Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 38

enrolled children among its members²⁰, it is reasonable to assume that in addition to its being set up as an alternative to Nisibis, it was likewise a place where Babai could develop his approach to the monastic life that he had adapted from that experienced under Abraham of Kashkar, the original Monastic Reformer. This was a monastic life emphasizing solitude and proper community as well as the life of the mind²¹. If Nisibis served as the forum in which a young Babai's theology, devoted to that of Theodore of Mopsuestia, was formed, and his initial time at Izla formed the basis for his approach to the contemplative lifestyle, it was in his home territory of Beth Zabdai that the two were wed. In this familiar footing, Babai set up a testing ground for a new monasticism, accepting the western communal aspects and contemplative air that had marked Abraham's reforms, but moored in the asceticism that was tried and true in Eastern Mesopotamian religious experience, and all firmly rooted in the doctrine of Theodore of Mopsuestia, which was at that moment receiving a boost of popularity in official church circles.

Where Izla launched Babai's career as a public figure, Chosroes' treatment of the office of Catholicos and the actions of Gabriel of Sinjar served to catapult Babai into the fore of Church life in a wholly different way. Apart from the hierarchical prestige indicated by his appointment as visitor, his continued attacks on Messalianism lent to his prestige in the eyes of the heads of the church and his ardent support for the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia was in line with trends in Church policy over the several synods preceding his appointment at Izla. Perhaps most striking to his churchmen, however, was his vocal disapproval of Henanan thought, which the church had fought against for much of Henana's time in Nisibis with renewed vigor on the ascent

²⁰ Chediath, *Christology*, 7

²¹ For more on Babai's ascetical writings, see Chediath, Geevarghese. *Mar Babai the Great: Some Useful Counsels on the Ascetic Life* (Kottayam, India: St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 2001) 20-22

of Sabrisho to the patriarchal throne²². The Church's adoption of his wording for the 612 creed more fully demonstrate this support. As Winkler says, "The significance and influence of the theology of Babai the Great may be measured by the fact that his Christological terminology was adopted by the Church of the East in the presentation of its faith at the disputation, though Babai himself did not participate²³." In a moment, this study will look briefly at that theology and its unique aspects.

Babai lived and served as visitor for an additional quarter of a century beyond the 612 meeting. In that time his influence only grew. Babai outlived Chosroes by a few years, which meant that he outlived the injunction on Catholicoi. Chosroes, suffering invasion from Heraclius of Rome just a few years after being on the verge of conquering Constantinople was toppled from power by a coup in early 628 that ended with his death shortly thereafter²⁴. As part of the negotiations with Heraclius, camped outside the city, the new regime granted the East Syrians the right to appoint a new leader, and Thomas of Marga gives us the following regarding the synod that took place to carry out that process:

Now when a synod had been assembled all the fathers entreated the holy Mar Babai to be the Catholicos, but he would not accept the office at all, for he preferred to end his days in his cell in the monastery to that of becoming the head of the monastery by strife²⁵.

Thomas then goes on to describe how an angel came to Babai after returning to his cell, and sought permission to leave this "vicar of the Catholicus," and take up the responsibility for "him that hath received this office²⁶," the subsequent Catholicos, Ishoyabh II. Shortly thereafter,

²² Reinink, Gerrit. "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth': The School of Nisibis at the Transition of the 6th-7th century." In *Centres of Learning*, edited by J.W. Drijvers, & A.A. McDonald, 77-89 (Leiden: Brill, 1995)

²³ Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 39

²⁴ Howard-Johnston, James. *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) 133ff

²⁵ Budge, *Book of Governors*, 115-116

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Babai passed away content with the knowledge that he had defended orthodoxy in the Church of Persia in one of its more challenging times.

Babai's Writings and Contributions to his Church

Babai was a prolific writer, and a survey of those works would be beyond the scope of this study, especially considering that many of them have been lost to time. But his writings do represent well the self-perceptions of the Church of the East that were beginning to be the norm in his era. On account of this, the focus of this study will be on samples of his writings centered in three separate but significant areas of church life in his day, each being areas in which Babai was at home, the ascetic life, Christology, and church-state relations in Sassanid Persia.

It is not unlikely that Babai's literary career had its beginning even as he was a young teacher at Nisibis, but the beginning was certainly no later than his return to Beth Zabdai. As the abbot of his own school and monastery, it would have been necessary to contrive a rule and curricula, which though undoubtedly focusing on scripture and Theodore's works and based on similar rules elsewhere, would have included interpretations from the headmaster. The monastic character of his life is evident throughout his writings. Chediath lists 5 categories for Babai's writings: Christology, disputation (against various opponents), Asceto-Mystical works, Hagiographical works, and liturgical works²⁷. This is a useful categorization considering the corpus of Babai's works, however hard and fast characterizations can be limiting, and while the overall tenor of a text might fit into one category, it could easily bear characteristics of other categories. For instance, many of his disputations against various opponents are quite Christological in nature.

²⁷ Chediath, *Counsels*, 20ff

It cannot be stated to what extent Beth Zabdai provided the beginnings of Babai's literary career, but it is unlikely that he moved into writing anew upon taking on the headship of Mt. Izla in 604, especially since his mark seems clear in church-wide documents that were coming to the fore at the time and shortly after it, such as the statement given before Chosroes II in 612²⁸. In addition, he wrote a number of pieces against Henana or his partisans, such as *Work refuting the Commentary of Henana on the Nicene Creed*²⁹. While it is plausible that these might have come up after Henana's passing sometime around 610, it is nevertheless reasonable to assume that such contention could have taken place in Henana's lifetime.

Concerning the character of his writings, he writes with a logical but argumentative voice, particularly evident in his most notable piece, the *Book of the Union*, which will be addressed more below³⁰. It is possible to take Babai as being opposed to women and somewhat misogynistic. For instance, in his *Useful Counsels*, he frequently advises his brethren against interaction with women, at one point saying, "The mighty Samson killed a lion, but a woman killed him"³¹. But this attitude might have been more a component of the times than a genuine disdain for women on the author's part. In the same text quoted above he shows admiration for the spirituality of Susanna, and Chediath cites this as demonstration that he is not as antagonistic to the other gender as it might at first appear³². In fact, it could be argued that Babai had a keen sense of his audience. When one is exhorting young men to strive for an ideal in the spiritual life, he will write differently than if he were writing to a group of spiritual women. One of Babai's barely extant hagiographical works, *The Martyrdom of Christina* is written in honor of a

²⁸ Abramowski, Luise and Alan Goodman. *A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts: Cambridge University Library MS. Oriental 1319, vols 1-2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 88ff

²⁹ Chediath, *Christology* 30

³⁰ *Ibid.* 22ff

³¹ Chediath, *Counsels* 64

³² *Ibid.* 9

female martyr of his day, though little enough remains that her name is about all that is known about her³³.

This adaptation for audience is evident throughout Babai's corpus³⁴, though there are some themes that repeatedly arise. For example, though the above quoted *Counsels* is about as far from a theological treatment as is possible, falling more into a sort of analects style writing reminiscent of other monastic counsels of his day, it nevertheless contains several passages of Christological nature, arguably Babai's favorite subject³⁵. This will be further discussed below.

Concerning the ascetic life, Babai's greatest contributions were seeing to the continuance of the establishment of Abraham of Kashkar's reforms throughout the ecclesiastical landscape of the Church of the East, a matter that has been discussed to an extent, as well as the promulgation of the thought of Evagrius of Ponticus throughout the East Syrian Monastic world.

Evagrius of Ponticus was one of the more influential ascetics in the 4th century Roman Empire. He was well-connected and wrote extensively. In the 6th century, however, he was anathematized in Byzantium alongside Origen at the 5th Ecumenical Council (553) for gnostic tendencies. While his works maintained some influence in the Greco-Latin world, many were lost in those languages, but were preserved in Syriac and other eastern languages. While Babai was not the only contributor to this, he was a significant one, likely due to his influence in the monastic community and his church at large. Babai likely translated at least a portion of one of Evagrius' more philosophical works, the *Kephalaia Gnostica*³⁶, as well as composing a

³³ See Brock, Sebastian and Susan Ashbrook Harvey. *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) 67

³⁴ See Walker, Joel. *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) 118; cf. Chediath, *Christology*, 12

³⁵ *Ibid.* 7ff

³⁶ Preserved in Syriac, Arabic and Armenian. For one Syriac edition see Guillaumont, Antoine. "Les Six Centuries des 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Evagre le Pontique." *Patrologia Orientalis* 28.1, no. 134 (1958); for more on the life of

commentary on the work. While the *Kephalaia Gnostica* possesses multiple recensions, some with considerable divergence, the commentary of Babai and text from which he worked are preserved in a Vatican Document, Cod. vatic. syr. n. 178. These have been edited and translated into German by Wilhelm Frankenberg along with a handful of Evagrian selections from the British Museum³⁷.

One of Babai's primary concerns was the allegation that there were Origenist influences present in Evagrius. He described Origen as "the heretic Origen" and was concerned over Origenist hermeneutics particularly as he saw them to be employed by Henana. He feared that "unorthodox parties were disseminating flawed and misrepresentative Syriac translations of Evagrius' works³⁸." Babai writes, "Some have translated his (Evagrius') instruction from Greek into Syriac with the goal of finding in him a sort of kindred spirit, but they are refuted by both solid reasoning and his other writings³⁹." Babai's understanding of Evagrius was widely accepted in his monastic circles and spread throughout the area of Church of the East influence and beyond. One could say that Babai preserved in the East a conversation on Evagrius that was winding down in the Roman world but that would resonate in the East to the time of Bar Hebraeus and beyond. In fact, his influence was such that it possibly instigated a subsequent and greater purge of Origenist thought from Evagrius' Syriac interpretations⁴⁰.

Evagrius, see Konstantinovskiy, Julia. *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009); cf. Kalvemaski, Joel, and Robin Darling Young. *Evagrius and His Legacy* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016); Casiday, Augustine. *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For an English translation from the Syriac see Ramelli, Ilaria. *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostica: A New Translation of the Unreformed Text from the Syriac* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015)

³⁷ Frankenberg, W. *Evagrius Ponticus* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1912)

³⁸ Casiday, *Beyond Heresy*, 62-63

³⁹ Frankenberg, *Evagrius*, 22-23, translation author's own.

⁴⁰ Ramelli, *Evagrius*, xxii

While the influence of Babai's take on Evagrius was significant, his Christological formulations have proven all the more resilient, becoming the norm throughout the Church of the East. His understanding of the "mystical union" is most evident in his monumental work that has come to be known as *The Book of the Union*. The edition of this work was prepared by Arthur Vaschalde with a translation into Latin⁴¹. As the title suggests, the theme of the book is specifically on the union of Divine and Human natures in Christ. Babai herein established and defended the formulation that became the norm for the Church of the East, essentially arguing that Jesus had both divine and human natures in their respective 2 *qnome*⁴² unified in one person Jesus, the Christ. Babai clearly worked hard to hold tight to a Theodoran understanding of the person of Christ, maintaining requisite distance between the divine and human natures while ardently defending the union of those natures in his person. In the last century or so, many have risen to defend these efforts, demonstrating how Babai, among others, did not take this task up in vain, and indeed acquitted his church of following the alleged heresy of "Nestorianism"⁴³.

Babai's motives for pursuing this Christology as vigorously as he did are made clear throughout his work, namely to identify the Church of the East as distinct from any who would say otherwise. This includes those who would claim no membership in the Church of the East, such as the Miaphysites, as well as those within who held, in Babai's eyes, false doctrine, such as Henana. Concerning Henana, he became so thoroughly anathematized by the Church of the East

⁴¹ Vaschalde, Arthur. *Babai Magni Liber de Unione*. Vols. 79-80 (Leuven: CSCO, 1915). Translations herein are the author's own.

⁴² The word Qnoma is a significant word in Syriac, with a range of meanings from "self" to "substance" to "hypostasis." Often in this sort of situation ܩܢܡܐ would be translated "Hypostases," but to preserve the inherent ambiguity of the word, the transliteration is preferred. For a good discussion of this issue see Brock, Sebastian. *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy* (Ashgate: Variorum, 2006) 186ff; cf. Brock, Sebastian. "The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials." In *Doctrinal Diversity: Varieties of Early Christianity*, by Everett Ferguson, 281-298 (New York: Garland, 1999); Taylor, David. "The Syriac Tradition." In *The First Christian Theologians*, by G.R. Evans, 201-224 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

⁴³ See particularly Brock, *Lamentable Misnomer*; cf. Brock, *Fires from Heaven*, 186ff.

that reconstructing his thought is difficult with any precision. What seems clear is that he was not sufficiently antagonistic to Chalcedonian formulae and was perhaps even somewhat open to it⁴⁴.

In *The Book of the Union*, the chapter which hits on the crux of Babai's orthodoxy is the one entitled "On the Crucifixion of Christ," translated in an appendix to this chapter. In this, Babai attempts to clearly demonstrate Church of the East doctrine concerning this event. In opening the chapter, Babai declares this, twice. "As an ordinary man (ܚܡܠܐ ܕܒܪܝܐ) He was crucified and died, though his divinity (ܡܬܝܗܘܬܐ) albeit united with him and dwelling in him, did not suffer⁴⁵." The underlying concern throughout this chapter is the countering of any sort of Theopaschite argument:

While the humanity of the Messiah, our lord, bore all of these humiliations according to its nature, and was even tested in all things human except for sin, his divinity was not tested by them, God forbid! For infinite spirit is unformed and unaffected by growth, which fill the heavens and the earth. Light is not cut off nor does it accept beatings, and it is not within its nature a spirit that approaches the door of strife and corruption. For it (divinity) is invisible, incorruptible in its nature, and no man from the sons of men has seen it or can see it⁴⁶ (cf. John 1:18). It dwells in magnificent light, and man cannot approach it. God is not tested by anything human!⁴⁷

Babai stresses this because in his view, "...if the Word God suffered, He is not God in nature.

Rather he is God in name or glory alone⁴⁸."

⁴⁴ For more on Henanan thought, see Baumstark, Anton. *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur* (Bonn: Verlag, 1922) 127; Vööbus, Arthur. *History of the School of Nisibis*. Vol. 266 (Leuven: CSCO, 1965) 234-317; and Reinink, Gerrit. "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth': the School of Nisibis at the Transition of the 6th-7th century." In *Centres of Learning*, edited by J.W. Drijvers, & A.A. McDonald, 77-89 (Leiden: Brill, 1995) and "Tradition and the Formation of the Nestorian Identity in Sixth to Seventh Century Iraq." *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, 1-3 (2009): 217-250.

⁴⁵ Vaschalde *Babai Magni* 173

⁴⁶ cf. John 1:18

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 178

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 179

If the matter stopped there, the Church of the East might be guilty of the labels it's borne through history, but Babai was just as vigorously incensed by those who might argue the other side, that Jesus' divinity and humanity were ever divided. ““And he was obedient unto death. Death on a cross⁴⁹” Not while his divinity was distant from him, but while united with him in one person, Messiah, Son of God”.⁵⁰

He brings this up again and again to make completely clear what the Church of the East does not believe.

“For even though the manhood of our Lord cried out at the point of suffering while hanging on the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, Why have you forsaken me⁵¹," we do not say this, that he departed from his indwelling in abandonment, or that this worshipful unity was destroyed. God forbid! Rather through it (this unity) he abandoned his man to suffer for the purpose (ܠܡܥܢ) of his divine plan to redeem the debt which is through disobedience, that is the transgression of the law by Adam, father of those who have been born. The man of our Lord was not indebted to death, which was due to sin. By this Adam and all his offspring were held captive, because all had sinned. But as it has been said, "The one who knows no sin, for our sakes, was subject to sin, in order that we might live by his righteousness⁵².”⁵³

Ultimately what Babai sought to demonstrate was that in Christ the Church of the East worshipped “...he who was crucified because the Word God dwells unitedly in him without limitation, giving to his man everything that is his aside from his nature. This is the name of sonship, the authority of lordship, honor, might, exaltation, in one conjunction (ܠܡܥܢܐܝܢ) of one person, the Messiah, son of God⁵⁴.”

⁴⁹ cf. Philippians 2:8

⁵⁰ Vaschalde *Babai Magni* 174

⁵¹ cf. Matthew 27:46

⁵² cf. 2 Corinthians 5:12

⁵³ Vaschalde, *Babai Magni*, 173

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 180

document, Babai's hagiographical piece, *The Life of George*⁵⁸, presents Babai's view on these events memorialized in a tribute to his friend and Co-religionist, George aka, Mihramgushnasp, a convert from Zoroastrianism who led up the Izla party of the delegation to the Shah in 612. While this document upholds the characteristics of hagiography, it is clear that the work's primary purpose is "to interpret the events of the disputation of 612"⁵⁹. The disputation itself will be covered in more detail below.

The creedal statement is a theological document, and declares itself the "Creed" of the church. The theological dimensions of the text are very similar to those already seen in *The Book of the Union*, so it is not necessary to go any further into that theology here. Suffice it to say that scholars to this day acknowledge this as the definitive statement of the Church of the East's Dyophysite faith⁶⁰ and hence as one of the primary texts in most modern Western defenses of the compatibility of Church of the East "Nestorian" theology with the "orthodoxy" of the West.

This "creed" is itself part of a larger body of texts, a collection of Christological documents brought to light in the west through the Anglican missions to Urmia in the latter part of the 19th century⁶¹. The manuscript at Cambridge is a copy from a copy by one "Daniel, son of the Deacon Saul" which in turn is copied from a document written by disciples of Rabban

⁵⁸ For a German translation see Braun, Oscar, *Ausgewählte Akten persischer Märtyrer*. (München: Jos. Kösel, 1915) 221-277; For Syriac see Bedjan, Paul. *Histoire de Mar-Jabalaha de trois autres Patriarches, d'un Prêtre et de deux Laïques Nestoriens* (Paris: Harrasowitz, 1895).416-571.

⁵⁹ For political dimensions see Reinink, Gerrit. "Babai the Great's Life of George and the Propagation of Doctrine in the Late Sasanian Empire." In *Portraits of Spiritual Authority: Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium, and the Christian Orient*, by Jan Willem Drijvers, & John W. Watt, 171-194 (Leiden: Brill, 1999); cf. Kitchen *Babai* 239

⁶⁰ Brock, *Lamentable Misnomer*, 164

⁶¹ Goodman, A.E. "The Jenks Collection of Syriac Manuscripts in the University Library, Cambridge." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1939: 381-600

Cyriacus for “me, Sabrisho... in the year 1645 (1333/4 CE) of the Greeks.”⁶² Referencing Rabban Cyriacus, Baumstark dates the document to the end of the 13th, beginning of the 14th century⁶³, a few generations removed from the last period of this study. The whole document appears to have been, as Abramowski called it, a collection of Christological documents.

The 612 statement is in response to three questions written out by the Shah. The document edited and translated by Abramowski preserves this in full, whereas the recension from *Synodicon Orientale* only has two⁶⁴. For the purposes of this study, the focus is the very beginning of the document (the frame of protocol) rather than its response to these questions:

ܠܚܝܬܝܢ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ
ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ ܕܝܒܠܝܢ

“The creed of the Bishops of the land of Persia, (answering) the questions posed by Chosroes, composed by the Bishops of the Land of the Persians... ⁶⁵”

Abramowski points out in a footnote that this epilogue makes clear the motives of the author of the text, likely Babai, for writing in the manner he does. “In this way they (the Severians or Miaphysites) can be called a heresy whose origin lies in the Roman Empire, and the old Persian distrust of Christians as sympathizers with the enemy is turned here against dissenting Christians⁶⁶.” She also makes clear that this is not a new strategy, having been

⁶² Abramowski and Goodman, *Nestorian Texts*, x

⁶³ Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 321-323

⁶⁴ Abramowski and Goodman, *Nestorian Texts*, xlii

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 150/88, translation author’s own

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

employed in the past by Barsauma. It is worth noting, however, that the political dimensions are clarified herein beyond simply using derogatory ecclesiological slurs.

The author of this text here repeatedly employed the descriptor “Persian” or “of Persia” in reference to themselves. This would have served then as a reminder to all that the originators of this text are citizens of the Persian Empire. By identifying themselves then as patently different from their opponents theologically, they were declaring loud and clear where the citizenship of their opponents originated.

This creed takes pains to make clear what the Church of the East believes, but contrary to many other such documents, makes relatively little effort to disparage those who believe otherwise. The appendix points out the variety of reasons why Church of the East logic is preferable to any opponents, but it avoids the heavily condemnatory, anathematizing language common in these sorts of document. Outside of the ambiguous opponents in the appendix, and the mention of Persia at the outset, there is not a counter-Miaphysite diatribe in this that one would usually expect. This is a political move in itself, as the originators of the dispute were the Queen and her allies, notably the former Church of the East now Miaphysite court physician Gabriel of Sinjar, who would have been present in the room at the time. Any heavy assault on the position of the Miaphysites might have been construed as an assault on royalty itself.

Neither does the creed mention the rather spotted history of the relations shared by the Shahnate and the Church of the East, though this might have been directly relevant to the Persianness of the Church. The creed moves from this declaration of identity with the Persian state and obeisance to the Persian throne directly to the philosophical/theological rhetoric of

persons and substances. The authors essentially pointed out in the intro that they were Persian⁶⁷, in the body that their theology was unique, and in the appendix that others' theology was poor. This straightforward declaration of the faith and the difference between them and the Miaphysites, is distinct from the more convoluted approach in the *Book of the Union* yet Babai's hallmark formulae are clear. This could stem from a desire on the part of Church of the East leadership to not only avoid alienating the queen, but also to clearly stand out from and moderating elements in their midst, such as the heirs of the Henanans. A possible motive of the Shah's for calling this meeting was to find a more moderate Christianity that could be declared the state version of the faith. Were that the case, this statement of faith made it clear that would not easily take place.

The *Life* sheds even more light on this. This document is extant in a number of manuscripts⁶⁸. The Syriac edition available now was prepared by Paul Bedjan⁶⁹. For a good examination of the hagiographical form of the text see Reinink's study⁷⁰. This dissertation will simply touch on a couple of key extracts from the text.

The text details the life of George, born Mihrmagushnasp of noble Persian parentage, and a Christian convert from Zoroastrianism, who served as Babai's Izla delegate at the 612 delegation. The *Life* makes it seem as if he played a sort of spokesman, at least after the delegation, and perhaps at the 612 meeting itself. Chediath suggests that George served in this capacity because Mar Babai and Mar Aba were scared to come before the throne⁷¹. Fear of

⁶⁷ For more on this see Buck, Christopher George, "The Universality of the Church of the East: How Persian was Persian Christianity?", *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 10:1 (1996) 54-95.

⁶⁸ Chediath, *Christology*, 35

⁶⁹ Bedjan, *Histoire*, 416-571

⁷⁰ Reinink, *Life of George*, 171-194

⁷¹ Chediath, *Christology*, 35

opprobrium, even from a Shah, does not seem characteristic of Babai, however, and according to the life itself it was for his connections at court that George was specifically selected to go on the delegation⁷². This means he was simultaneously at home in both “traditional” Church of the East theological discourse as well as in court protocol. By using a Persian to speak to the Persian king, the leadership of the Church of the East was declaring to the Shah, the court, and the world that Christianity was a more than simply one of many religions in the Persian Empire, but was rather truly “Persian” in the most intimate and personal of all contexts. Elite, ethnic Persians now practiced Christianity, and the Shah needed to see this⁷³.

Of course, George became a martyr, and it would reflect very poorly on the East Syrian leadership if they had knowingly sent George to his death, but it has been noted that Chosroes only sparingly utilized the apostasy law, just 3 times to be precise, in a reign that lasted nearly 4 decades⁷⁴. George was the first martyr in Chosroes’ reign, and clearly at this point in imperial history, not the only apostate Zoroastrian in the Eastern Christian world. The East Syrians had made adequately significant inroads by this time among ethnic Persians, in distinction from simply Persian citizens, that there were considerable translation efforts into Persian and especially Sogdian already underway⁷⁵. Though numbers are impossible to attain, it is reasonable to suggest that, while the East Syrian leadership was aware of the possibility of prosecution on this count, it was remote enough a possibility that they did not consider it a danger to put George in front of the Shah.

⁷² Bedjan, *Histoire*, 507

⁷³ See Becker, *Fear of God*, 62-68

⁷⁴ Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, 177

⁷⁵ See particularly Russell, James. "Christianity in Pres-Islamic Persia: Literary Sources." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. January 4, 2012. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/christianity-i>. (accessed October 17, 2014)); cf. Andreas, F. C. and K. Barr. "Bruchstücke einer Pehlevi-Übersetzung der Psalmen." *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1933: 91-152.

In fact, in *The Life of George*, when discussing the events that led up to George's death, Babai does not even mention the law against apostasy. Reinink assumes deliberate avoidance of its mention, which would be notable as that was the charge for which he was killed⁷⁶, going on to suggest that Babai avoided mentioning this in order to posit that George's death followed from his being a defender of Church of the East thought. He quotes Gabriel's denunciation of George to the Shah as follows:

One of the priests, who is with them, has reviled the king. He once was a Magian, was even honoured by Your Majesty and was ministering before Thee. Behold! He abandoned all these things, went away and became a Christian. And it was not enough for him that he was left alive by Thee, but he returned with all presumption to the court of Your Majesty and he is a *fervent advocate of the Nestorians*, and he also exhorts the bishops and others (Italics Reinink's)⁷⁷.

While there is no question that Babai sought to paint a picture of George as martyr for the cause, it might be suggested that this omission is also indicative of a lack of concern for this particular law. This is not the place for a discussion of the difference between the legal positions of rule of law and rule of man⁷⁸, but it is important to note that legal realities in 7th century Persia were not those in their neighbor Rome and certainly had little if any resemblance to what is experienced in the West today. Chosroes II's grandfather, Chosroes I, as will be seen below, had chosen not to press the law against apostasy because it was not prudent given the significance of the Christian population in his day, over a half century earlier. This was largely because as the Shah he determined what was reasonable and prudent, not necessarily the law, and if he chose not to mention a law, it remained unmentioned. If the influence of Christianity was such that in the mid-6th century carrying out the law would have been difficult, would the situation of the

⁷⁶ Reinink, *Life of George*, 190; cf, Christensen, Arthur. *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*. (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1936) 64

⁷⁷ Bedjan, *Histoire*, 522; Quoted in Reinink, *Life of George*, 190

⁷⁸ See Bingham, Thomas. *The Rule of Law* (London: Penguin Books, 2011) 11ff

Church have reverted that much in half a century? By the time of the delegation in 612, 20 years into the reign of Chosroes II, the Christian population had only become more significant, and the law, though still present, “on the books” so to speak, was less significant. Babai’s failure to mention the law, instead of an effort to dramatically emphasize George’s Martyrdom and East Syrian beliefs, could at the same time be nothing more than a tacit admission that the law was generally considered irrelevant.

Given the timbre of the words Babai puts in Gabriel's mouth here, and the position of the individual to whom George was speaking, the greater condemnation might be in this line:

[illegible]

The key phrase here is **ገረዘፍኑ ገረዘፍኑ ገረዘፍኑ ገረዘፍኑ ገረዘፍኑ ገረዘፍኑ**, which Reinink translates as “he returned with all presumption to the court of your majesty.” There is nothing wrong with Reinink’s translation, but two words here need to be examined more fully, “return” and “presumption.” The latter is a good place to start.

While it is often given as a suitable translation of the term *ḥabṣ*, “presumption” would indicate that this is an instance of the guilty party, George or the Church of the East, having presumed, i.e. assumed for themselves a status they did not possess, notably in their relationship with the Shah, for instance presuming that he would not execute their member when he indeed could and would. This fits the idea that the Shah had George executed because the Church of the East might have been flaunting their influence. But there are other translation

options available here as well, for instance, audacity, effrontery, insolence, etc.⁷⁹. The Sassanids had set up a dynasty based on the pomp and majesty of their Achaemenid past. Where a western sense of law might not fit, an Eastern sense of court etiquette and procedure and the special role of law in that light was a whole different story. Esther did not quaver in fear at the prospect of seeing the king for no reason⁸⁰. This is where the word “return” stands out. If these truly are Gabriel’s words, by stating that George had returned to the court, he was declaring that George himself recognized the monk and that likely the king did as well, and that due to this personal history his presence was an effrontery to the king. His return would be an incidence of insolent behavior on the part of either George or the Church or both. No one would have been more aware of the rules of court etiquette than the Shah, and one could easily posit that until Gabriel’s declaring the situation to everyone, the Shah may have chosen not to acknowledge George in his midst, but on such a declaration, his choices likely became limited by protocol. In fact, this feeling of being limited could very well have precipitated the Shah’s later actions, awarding primacy to neither deputation at the meeting.

Whatever motives the Shah had for enforcing his laws, Babai’s motives for writing *The Life of George* were myriad. He sought to show in his opposition to the “champion of heresy,” Gabriel, the Church of the East’s own champion of orthodoxy, George. In this juxtaposition, we have in Babai’s eyes the light and honor of Dyophysite orthodoxy versus the deceit of Miaphysite heresy, and each champion clearly represents these attributes. But Babai also wanted to demonstrate the cultural background of each side for anyone who would see it, that is to say

⁷⁹ Payne Smith, J. *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903) 300.

⁸⁰ Esther 4:10-11. For the Sassanid emphasis on their historical legacy see Shahbazi, A. Shapur. "Sasanian Dynasty." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. July 20, 2005. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sasanian-dynasty>. (accessed October 15, 2014)

he clearly conceived of his brand of orthodoxy as being that of Persia as a whole. Abramowski notes that in this *Life* Babai was not constrained by court protocols and had no qualms pointing out what he thought of his opponents⁸¹, and she felt that the Persian distinction mentioned at the beginning of the creedal statement was simply a political expediency if present at all. If that were the case, why, in an earlier passage in the *Life*, does Babai refer to his theological tradition as, “the tradition of the whole Church in the land of the Persians?”⁸² This document was not written to the Shah, it was written to his church. Babai was not delusional, seeing unity where none existed. Rather he was expressing herein that there was one Church in his country and he was a representative of it, as was the Persian George. They were citizens of the Persian Empire and of the Kingdom of Heaven. This *Life* demonstrates that he perceived of this as an evident truth, and that his Church was taking pains, even unto death, to spread that perception at the highest levels. The Church of the East in Persia did not need to presume to being a multi-ethnic, imperial church. Using George as a spokesman demonstrated that it already was.

Babai was tapping into what would have seemed self-evident to any of his own Churchmen in his day, all the while lending credence to his own Christological formulations. He was saying that “the whole Church in the land of the Persians,” encompassing everything from the contested frontiers with Rome to the far reaches of what is now Afghanistan, worshipped following his tradition. While the theological nuances of this claim might have been lost on some of his co-confessionals, that the Church of the East had greater influence than any other Christian sect in Persia could not be denied. Merv by this point was already a Christian stronghold, as were large sections of Fars, Khuzistan, and of course Mesopotamia⁸³. This meant

⁸¹ Abramowski and Goodman, *Christology*, xlii

⁸² Bedjan, *Histoire*, 482

⁸³ Chabot, J. *Synodicon Orientale ou recueil des synodes nestoriens*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902) 273, 285, 339-367, 423.

more than just land. It also meant peoples. This is not even to mention the presence of Church of the East Christianity in India, Sogdiana, and probably even China and Tibet. The Church of the East could safely envision an *Oecumene* that spanned from the borders of Rome to the borders of Tang and Hind. It may not have had the political clout that imperial Christianity had in Constantinople, but in Babai's day, with former Zoroastrians like George as representative converts, that probably seemed only a matter of time.

Historical Background

This was a watershed period for the Church of the East for a number of different reasons. In this section, a summary of the historical background that led to this situation will be constructed. This summary will focus on the 6th century as leading up to the time of Mar Babai the great, focusing specifically on three elements of that period. First is the relationship of the Church of the East with the Sassanid state, specifically through the office of Patriarch, which came in subsequent time to be called the Catholicate⁸⁴. This was a role that while never held by Babai was certainly of importance to him. The development of this role was greatly affected by the rule of the Catholicos Mar Aba among others and directly related to the way in which the Church of the East interacted with the Sassanid state. Secondly there was the growth of Miaphysite influence in the environs in which the Church of the East had traditionally held sway. This growth was such that it came to affect the relations of the Church of the East with the Sassanid State necessitating the doctrinal and political stances assumed by Babai. Finally, this study will look at the evangelistic activities of the Church of the East in that time, particularly

⁸⁴ See Macomber, William F. "The Authority of the Catholicos Patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon." In *Patriarcati Orientali nel primo millennio. Relazioni del Congresso tenutosi al Pontificio Istituto Orientale nei giorni 27-30 Dicembre 1967*, 179-200. (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1968); cf. Fiey, Jean-Maurice. "Le sceau sassanide d'un catholicos melkite d'Asie centrale." *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 45, no. 1-2 (1995): 6-9.

through the monastic renewal of Mar Abraham of Kashkar, in which attempts were begun to bring Monasticism more in line with “orthodoxy” even before the nuances of doctrine had been settled. As a monk, Babai was greatly affected both by these reforms and the extent to which they remained incomplete.

One cannot begin an assessment of Church of the East History in this time period without mention of the persecutions that spread intermittently from the time of Shapur II (†379) to nearly the end of the 5th century during the reign of the Shah Piroz I (†484)⁸⁵. These strings of persecution, at times intense and at other times severe, left an indelible mark on the identity of the Church of the East. Though there had been periods of relaxed tension between the Church and the Sassanid state from the death of Shapur II on, even a Shah who appeared greatly sympathetic to the Christians could turn against them when conflict arose. The most notable example of this was Yazdgard I (r. 399-420)⁸⁶.

This obviously led Church of the East leadership to seek ways to mitigate its circumstances. Ironically and in contradistinction to the actions of the Church in the Roman Empire during its earlier persecutions, Church of the East leadership found the best way to protect themselves was to increase proximity to the Shah⁸⁷. Though this was not a surefire protection against persecution, it proved successful often enough that throughout the

⁸⁵ For an overview of 3rd-5th century persecutions see Baumer, *Church of the East*, 66-74. For more details on the scope and effects of this persecution see Decret, François. "Les conséquences sur le christianisme en Perse de l'affrontement des empires romain et sassanide: de Shâpûr Ier à Yazdgard Ier." *Recherches Augustiniennes*, no. 14 (1979): 91-152; Neusner, Jacob. "Constantine, Shapur II and the Jewish-Christian Confrontation in Fourth-Century Iran." In *Understanding Seeking Faith: Essays on the Case of Judaism. Vol. 2: Literature, Religion and the Social Study of Judaism*, by Jacob Neusner, 119-142. (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987).

⁸⁶ See van Rompay, Lucas. "Impetuous Martyrs? The situation of the Persian Christians in the last years of Yazdgard I (419-420)." In *Martyrium in Multidisciplinary Perspective: Memorial Louis Reekmans*, by Mathijs Lamberigts, & Peter van Deun, 363-375. (Leuven: University Press, 1995)

⁸⁷ See Walker, Joel. "From Nisibis to Xi'an: The Church of the East in Late Antique Eurasia." In *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, by Scott Johnson, 994-1052. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 1004ff.

persecutions and in the century immediately afterwards the Church's orbit gradually moved closer and closer to that of the Shah. This process was effective and alongside the growing proportion of Christians in the empire led to the near cessation of generalized persecution throughout Persia in the 6th century.

What persecution did take place in the 6th century was limited largely to apostates from Zoroastrianism, the state religion, except occasionally when the perennial wars with the Roman Empire would flare. Even in wartime, however, persecution was considerably more muted and less lethal than it had been in the past. In fact, as mentioned earlier, by the middle of the 6th century, the popularity of the convert from Zoroastrianism turned patriarch Mar Aba I was such that arguably the most powerful Shah of the Sassanid era, Chosroes I (†579), deemed him too important to execute and rather had him exiled for a time to Azerbaijan. As Baumer states, "Presumably at that time Christians constituted the majority in individual provinces of Mesopotamia⁸⁸ ." The significance of Aba's case will be examined more closely in a moment.

Because of the relative end of persecution, the Church of the East experienced a degree of stabilization in relation to the state hitherto unknown. This meant that the 6th century was a time of unprecedented growth for the church, both in numbers as well as institutional structures. Over the course of the 6th century there were conservatively 9 Catholicoi⁸⁹. More than one was wed, a result of canon 3 of the Synod of Aqaa (Acacius, 484) which imposed on all aspirants to clerical office, even the highest clergy, a requirement to marry in order to placate some of the opposition

⁸⁸ Baumer, *Church of the East*, 74.

⁸⁹ A tenth might be designated as there was a schism of sorts lasting from 524-539 with the ascension to the throne of an appointed rather than elected Catholicos. For a listing of the Catholicoi and the various synods they presided over in this time see McCullough, William Stewart. *A Short History of Syriac Christianity to the Rise of Islam. Scholars Press General 4*. (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982) 124-26, 131-34.

from Zoroastrians who considered marriage a necessary component of life.⁹⁰ This arrangement did provide a degree of rapprochement with Zoroastrian sentimentalities but never sat well with many in the Church of the East, being heavily opposed by the monastic establishment which would eventually see to its downfall. This will be discussed more thoroughly alongside the state of monasticism below.

Mar Aba I, mentioned above, serves as a good case study of the ecclesiastical and political realities of the mid-6th century. A convert from Zoroastrianism, he gave up his role as secretary of the governor of Beth Garmai to study at the school of Nisibis and is considered by many to have been among the greatest Catholicos of the East Syrian Church. Apart from strengthening the role of Catholicos and the administrative structuring of the church, translating a myriad of documents into Syriac as well as composing a number of original commentaries, and founding a theological school in the capital city of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, he was also largely responsible for firmly setting the church in line with the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

The story goes that prior to his election to patriarch while on a visit to the Roman Empire, Justinian sought to convince him to condemn Theodore, attempting to bring the Persian church in line with Rome. It is likely that Aba saw the effects such a union might have on the political welfare of his churchmen and slipped out of town before being forced to meet with the Emperor. Within fairly short order after coming into his patriarchal seat, he convened a synod (544) which set as its final canon the privileged place of Theodore of Mopsuestia, thus ensuring enmity between the Church of the East and the Church of Rome (Byzantium). Though it is mere

⁹⁰ Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 32; Baumer, *Church of the East*, 78; cf. Braun, Oscar. *Das Buch der Synhados oder Synodicon Orientale: Die Sammlung der Nestorianischen Konzilien, zusammengestellt im neunten Jahrhundert nach der syrischen Handschrift, Museo Borgiano 82, der Vatikanischen Bibliothek*. (Stuttgart, Wien: Rothsche Verlagshandlung, 1900) 71.

conjecture, the coincidence of this canonical pronouncement and the Roman Emperor's request is evident, ostensibly granting the Church of the East a long lease on positive relations with the Persian court⁹¹.

While the accomplishments of Aba make for interesting reading, there is one accomplishment that is of particular significance to this study, and that was simply remaining alive. Aba was patriarch during the reign of Chosroes I (also Khosrau I or Anushirwan, r. 531-579) who was one of the most powerful and influential Sassanid Shahs. Touraj Daryaee describes him as the “epitome of the Philosopher-King in Sasanian and Near-Eastern History⁹².” He was the son of Khavad (Qabad, r. 488-531), whose troubled though long reign coming on the heels of a number of lesser shahs was marked by movement toward a policy of centralization that Chosroes sought to pursue further⁹³. While Khavad had carried this out with a “complex” religious policy that might best be described as experimental⁹⁴, it was one that was largely indifferent and at times even somewhat accommodating to the Christian population growing in the political heartland of the Sassanid empire, southern Mesopotamia. For the most part Khavad's religious policies were an attempt to find a powerbase, and as orthodox Zoroastrianism had supported a number of various pretenders to the throne, Khavad was inclined to give somewhat more unorthodox schools an opportunity, eventually settling on Mazdakism⁹⁵, leaving his successor, Chosroes, to inherit a number of problems among traditional Zoroastrian Persians.

⁹¹ See especially, Birnie, Michael J. "The Church of the East and Theodore of Mopsuestia: The Commitment to His Writings and its Implications for Dialogue." *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 10, no. 1 (1996): 14-19. See also Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 33.

⁹² Daryaee, Touraj. *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire*. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010) 29

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ See Schindel, Nikolaus. "KAWĀD I." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. May 31, 2013.
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kawad-i-reign> (accessed January 13, 2014)

⁹⁵ See Kreyenbroek, Philip G. "Religions in Iran." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. December 15, 2006.
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iran-ix1-religions-in-iran-pre-islamic#1> (accessed January 13, 2014)

Chosroes found himself with two groups of Zoroastrians both vying for political support, the traditional Avestans and the offshoot Mazdakites. Seeking to stabilize the state under his power, Chosroes opted to treat with the traditionalists initiating a persecution of the Mazdakites comparable in its thoroughness and brutality to that under Shapur II against the Christians⁹⁶.

Because the traditionalist Zoroastrians were the primary component of his powerbase, it would stand to reason that when they began to raise concerns about the ministry of an apostate to Christianity (Mar Aba), those concerns would be addressed. The law remained that apostasy meant death, but while Aba's life was rendered difficult, particularly for the span of a renewed war with Rome (540-545), and he was exiled to Azerbaijan for much of that time, he was not executed. Indeed, after 7 years he was brought home and fully reinstated, dying naturally later⁹⁷. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the influence of the Church of the East had become such that it could have been a political liability to execute their popular leader.

In fact, one might almost say it had become too great, as illustrated by a slightly later episode. In 551, while Chosroes was fighting against the Romans, his son by a Christian concubine, Nushizad, converted to Christianity and attempted to raise the population of Khuzistan, another largely Christian province, in rebellion against his father. After convincing the Shah of his innocence in the matter (and preserving his eyes as well as his life), it was only by the influence of Aba in excommunicating the ringleaders of the rebellion and quelling the remainder of Nushizad's supporters that a significant crisis for the church was averted⁹⁸.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Baumer, *Church of the East*, 88

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 89; cf. Scher, *Séert*, 13.4, vol 2, 176-182

It is evident from Aba's life that the role of Christianity among the empire's various faiths had become significant. Because of this, after Aba's death, Chosroes reasserted his control over the church. One of the platforms of Aba's reign had been to lay out a clear framework for the election of subsequent Catholicoi in order to avoid the same conditions that had fostered schism preceding him. This was perhaps the key agenda item in the synod he called in 544⁹⁹. Chosroes demonstrated the prerogatives of the Shah and ignored these requirements completely. In 552 he appointed his physician, Joseph (552-567), who was universally derided and eventually removed from office¹⁰⁰. Despite this poor reception and Joseph's removal from office, the issue of a Shah (and eventually a Caliph) meddling in patriarchal elections was one that would plague the Church of the East well beyond the end of the Sassanid period, but in Babai's day, it was central to the difficulties faced by the Church of the East.

At this point it is important to trace the Synods that were instrumental in the centralizing of Church of the East power into the hands of the Catholicos. This was the culmination of an ongoing, centuries long project to determine where and with whom power should be concentrated, political as well as doctrinal, in the church east of Rome¹⁰¹. The question was first raised in the time of Papa bar Aggai (c. 315) and shortly thereafter Seleucia-Ctesiphon was recognized as the logical administrative center of the church in Persia due to its centrality in the

⁹⁹ Baumer, *Church of the East*, 78

¹⁰⁰ Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 34

¹⁰¹ For references as to the origins of the Catholicate in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, see Abramowski, Luise. "Der Bischof von Seleukia-Ktesiphon als Katholikos und Patriarch der Kirche des Ostens." In *Syrien im 1-7 Jahrhundert nach Christus. Akten der 1. Tübinger Tagung zum Christlichen Orient (15.-16. Juni 2007)*, by Dimitrij Bumazhnov, & Hans Reinhard Seeliger, 1-55. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); de Vries, Wilhelm. "Antiochien und Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Patriarch und Katholikos?" In *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant. Vol. 3: Orient chrétien (Deuxième partie)*, 429-450. (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964); and Fiey, Jean-Maurice. "Les étapes de la prise de conscience de son identité patriarcale par l'Église syrienne orientale." *L'Orient Syrien*, 1967: 3-22. On the development of the authority of the Catholicos specifically, see Macomber, *Authority of the Catholicos* (1968).

Persian political world¹⁰². This shows that already in the early 4th century, the Church of the East saw itself as representative of Christianity in Persia. But the persecutions of the years between that decision and the end of the 5th century meant that what progress was made in establishing a hierarchy was disjointed and often halted altogether. This very disjointedness meant that many of the questions of hierarchy and hence of socio-political identity settled in the West fairly early on continued to be discussed in the East into and nearly beyond the birth of Islam.

There were four primary synods leading up to the life of Babai that established this centralization. Besides 315 mentioned above, the synod of Isaac (410), the synod of 424, and the synod of 544 are of note. The synod of Isaac was called in a moment of peace, and focused on a variety of issues, but for the purpose of this study two stand out, the centralization of ecclesiastical organization and the harmonization of the faith in Persia with that in the West¹⁰³. 410 carried out what 315 had begun, resting the authority of the church in proximity to the political authorities in the capital, but it also affirmed the universality of the Church. There was no aim in 410 to break with the West.

Persecution resumed, however, towards the end of the reign of Yazdgird I (†421) and into the reign of Bahram V (421-438). During this, Dadisho, the head of the church, sought to resign. He was convinced to remain on only by the agreement of his bishops to convene a synod (424) which centralized his power and much more definitively split with Rome¹⁰⁴. This synod is indicative of the first clear delineation between the Church of the East and those further West, though it did not mark a schism. Baumer states:

¹⁰² See Baumer, *Church of the East*, 67; Labourt, Jérôme. *Le Christianisme dans l'empire Perse*. (Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 1904) 20-24

¹⁰³ See Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 16

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 17ff. Cf. Macomber, *Authority of the Catholicos*, 182.

The synod of 424 was, after that of 410, the most important episcopal conference of the Church of the East... [It] confirmed the autocephaly of the Church of the East and the absolute primacy of its patriarch-catholikos. It is Christ himself who appoints the patriarch, as he once had Peter, as his vicar on Earth. Only he can judge him, not the bishops subordinate to him. This declaration of independence did not imply a schism, since the creed of Nicaea provided a common foundation with the Western patriarchates. However, the patriarch of the Church of the East is on equal footing with the Western patriarchs and is as such fully autonomous in his actions. In this vision the universal Church consists not in a single, global hierarchy but rather in an ecumenical communion of independent Churches¹⁰⁵.

The next synod to truly treat on the matter was under Mar Aba (544) as a result of schism. For whatever reason, perhaps because of the idea that Christ himself carried out the patriarchal appointment, succession was not a matter that had been fleshed out for the highest office in the Church of the East. Aba's synod rectified that by laying a framework involving the role of the interior and exterior sees in the selection of the patriarch. This will be treated more thoroughly in the next chapter as it was a framework that stood for centuries and became a basis for Timothy's reforms. Though there were still occasionally dissenting provinces, the issue of who was in charge of the Church had been resolved.

As mentioned earlier, the year 544 also has the distinction of being when the Church of the East took a decidedly official stance on Dyophysite Christology through the adoption of the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia as a primary hermeneutical guide. Though this decision was not reached solely on account of political considerations, to argue that the politics of other world empires had no impact would be shortsighted¹⁰⁶. There is no way of confirming whether this action was successful in assuaging Persian imperial fears concerning the loyalty of his Christian subjects, but the fact that the outbreak of war between the two empires did not likewise instigate an outbreak of generalized persecution is telling. Unfortunately any political benefits gained in

¹⁰⁵ Baumer, *Church of the East*, 81. Cf. Gilman and Klimkeit, *Church in Asia*, 217; Labourt, *Christianisme*, 119ff.

¹⁰⁶ Birnie, *Church of the East and Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 16ff.

this were likely mitigated at least to an extent by the challenges it would raise in interaction with the growing Miaphysite presence in Mesopotamia¹⁰⁷.

While the history of Christianity in the Roman Empire bears little direct influence on the Church of the East, this is not the case with the Miaphysites. Though Miaphysites had been in Persia well before the beginning of the 6th century, their expansion into Persia was fairly slow and unconcentrated until the 6th century. They had up to then been largely centered within the borders of the Roman Empire with fairly minimal migration to Persia. After all, the persecution they might experience in Rome as “heretics” was significantly less than that their fellow Syriac speaking brethren were bearing up under on the other side of the border.

The Roman Empire, though Christian more or less from the time of Constantine or at least Theophilus, had moved back and forth on their stance towards the Miaphysites, at times embracing the movement, and at times condemning it, but generally seeking a way to merge back into the mother church this group whose territory coincided with many of their richest provinces. It was not until after Chalcedon and subsequent efforts failed to unite the Church, and the Miaphysites began to establish their own hierarchies, that Roman authorities, largely under Justinian, sought harsher means of coercion to bring the flock in line¹⁰⁸.

The ensuing persecution, though rarely lethal and rarely concentrated, led to significant migration beyond the reach of Chalcedonian Imperial (Melkite) authorities, and for much of the

¹⁰⁷ For further information on Miaphysites see Frend, W.H.C. *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2008); For the political background of their spread into Persia, see Wood, Philip. *We Have No King But Christ': Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c. 400–585)*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 209ff; For the role of Jacob Baradeus on their growth in Persia see Heimgartner, Martin. "Jakob Baradai." In *Syrische Kirchenväter*, edited by Wassilios Klein, 191-203. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2004)

¹⁰⁸ Menze, Volker L. *Justinian and the Making of the Syriac Orthodox Church*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 148ff.

Syriac speaking Miaphysite Church, the easiest place to which to flee was the short distance over the border into Persian territory where the extant Miaphysite church found itself greatly bolstered by additional members from Rome. Ironically the same relaxed stance on the part of Sassanid authorities that enabled the Church of the East to grow granted equal opportunity to West Syrians.

In addition to voluntary migration between Rome and Persia, the recurring wars between the two and the Persian policy of removing conquered peoples to interior provinces, coupled with the concentration of Syriac speaking Miaphysite populations on the Roman frontier with Persia, meant every conquest carried a large additional influx of Miaphysites in general and particularly Syriac speaking Miaphysite believers into the Sassanid Empire. While they were centered in areas that had long been Miaphysite, such as Tikrit and the area around the Mar Mattai Monastery near Mosul, this influx enabled the strengthening of Miaphysite presence in Iraq, eventually, though subsequent to the life of Babai, resulting in the establishment of a parallel hierarchy headed by the Maphrian¹⁰⁹.

At the outset of the 6th century, the Church of the East looked on the Miaphysites as little more than a persistent annoyance, mildly in error, that needed to be corrected. An example of this perspective is clear in the debate that took place between representatives of the two groups, the formidable “Persian Debater, Simeon of Beth Arsham (†540) for the Miaphysites, and the Catholicos of the day, the earlier Babai (†503). According to John of Ephesus, the Catholicos was soundly defeated in the debate, though as John was Miaphysite himself, his account is not

¹⁰⁹ See Fiey, Jean-Maurice. *Jalons pour une histoire de l'Église en Iraq*. Vol. 310. (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1970) 133-164, 331-393

necessarily sympathetic to the East Syrians, whose sources are largely silent on it¹¹⁰. Perhaps silence is adequate confirmation. In any case had it been a century later, the Church of the East might have genuinely had to worry about fallout from the defeat. At this point, however, Byzantium was actually somewhat sympathetic to the Miaphysite line, and there had yet to begin the major influx into Persia of Miaphysite believers, so there was little tangible impact on the Church of the East.

The influx of Miaphysites prompted different responses from Church of the East leadership. Babai represents the staunch non-accommodating response. Here it is useful to look to the opposite point of view, that of those in the Church of the East who felt that accommodation of these people might be the best policy. Most notable of these was Henana of Adiabene who while not a supporter of the Miaphysites, seemed sympathetic to the Chalcedonian formula. A number of views have been put forward concerning Henana's motives in adapting his Christology and thus launching his church into schism¹¹¹. Reinink summarizes them well in his article on the formation of "Nestorian" identity, although his article is not very favorable towards Babai's actions. Whatever Henana's motives might have been, it is unlikely that he aimed to weaken his church in the face of antagonism, but rather to strengthen the position of his church vis-à-vis other Christians and the non-Christian community in which they

¹¹⁰ The debate is recounted in Brooks, Ernest Walter, ed. *John of Ephesus. Lives of the Eastern Saints*. Patrologia Orientalis 17.1, 18.4, 19.2. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1923-1925) 138-40, 143-44; for analysis of the debate and Simeon's life see Fiey, *Jalons*, 120-127; cf. Wright, William. *A Short History of Syriac Literature*. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894) 79-81; for a look at the greater concept of debates among Christians of various sects as well as non-Christians, see Walker, *Mar Qardagh*, 174-177.

¹¹¹ See Reinink, "Nestorian Identity," 217-250; Guillaumont, Antoine, "Un colloque entre orthodoxes et théologiens nestoriens de Perse sous Justinien", *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, Paris (1970): 201-207; Morony, Michael G. *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005) 349, 356-7, 381; de Halleux, André, "La christologie de Martyrios-Sahdona dans l'évolution du nestorianisme", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 23 (1957): 5-32; Abramowski, Luise, "Die Christologie Babais des Grossen", Pages 219-244 in *Symposium Syriacum, 1972: célébré dans les jours 26-31 octobre 1972 à l'Institut Pontifical Oriental de Rome*. Edited by Ortiz de Urbina, Ignatius. Orientalia Christiana Analecta 197. (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1974)

existed. This actually puts him closer in spirit to Babai than either man would likely have been comfortable with. This will be more evident shortly.

The last background element to raise relevant to the life of Babai is that of monasticism. Monasticism in one form or other had long been a notable component of Syriac Christianity, particularly the unique Syrian emphasis on solitaries and the B'nai Qyāmā, or Sons of the Covenant¹¹². As connections between East and West strengthened, the Syrian monastic form began to be transformed. This process of transition subsumed many of the uniquely Mesopotamian components of monasticism under models imported from Egypt, for instance the more communal monastery¹¹³. As monasteries were founded throughout Mesopotamia, they became places of spiritual development and to some extent theological innovation, from which eventually the schools likely sprang¹¹⁴. Though monks often came to eschew theological bickering and in particular the pedantry of indigenous Syriac scholasticism, many of the earliest

¹¹² See Griffith, Sidney H. "'Monks, 'Singles', and the 'Sons of the Covenant': Reflections on Syriac Ascetic Terminology'." In *EYAOΓHMA: Studies in Honor of Robert Taft, S.J., Studia Anselmiana 110, Analecta Liturgica 17*, by Ephrem Carr, Stefano Parenti, Abraham-Andreas Thiermeyer, & Elena Velkovska, 141-160. (Roma: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1993); Jullien, Florence. "'Le monachisme chrétien dans l'empire iranien (IVe–XIVe siècles)". In *Chrétiens en terre d'Iran: Implantation et acculturation. Cahiers de Studia Iranica 33, Chrétiens en terre d'Iran 1*, by Rika Gyselen, 143-184. (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études Iraniennes, 2006); and Nedungatt, George. "'The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-Speaking Church'." *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 39, 1973: 191-215, 419-444.

¹¹³ See Becker, *Fear of God*, 172ff. See also Brock, Sebastian. "'Monasticism in Iraq: The Cultural Contribution'." In *The Christian Heritage of Iraq: Collected Papers from the Christianity of Iraq I-V Seminar Days*, by Erica C.D. Hunter, 64-80. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009); Frend, W.H.C. "'Monks and the End of Greco-Roman Paganism in Syria and Egypt'." *Cristianesimo nella storia* 11, 1990: 469-484; Guillaumont, Antoine. "'Perspectives actuelles sur les origines du monachisme'." In *The Frontiers of Human Knowledge: Lectures Held at the Quincentenary Celebrations of Uppsala University, 1977*, by Torgny Torgnysson Segerstedt, 111-123. (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1978); Rahmé, Georges. "'Saint Ephrem et le monachisme'." In *Le monachisme syriaque aux premiers siècles de l'Eglise, Ile – début VIIe siècle. I: Textes français. Patrimoine Syriaque, Actes du Colloque V*, by Georges Rahmé, 117-125. (Antélias, Liban: Centre d'études et de recherches Orientales, 1998); Fauchon, Claire. "'Les formes de vie ascétique et monastique en milieu syriaque, Ve–VIIe siècles'." In *Le monachisme syriaque. Études syriaques* 7, by Florence Jullien, 37-64. (Paris: Geuthner, 2010); Fiey, Jean-Maurice. "A la recherche des anciens monastères du nord de l'Irak." *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 9, 1959: 97-108.

¹¹⁴ Becker, *Fear of God*, 172ff.

theological developments in the Syrian milieu took place among the proto-monastics of upper Mesopotamia, such as Aphrahat and the author of the *Book of Steps*¹¹⁵.

Beyond theological investigation, Syriac asceticism played a significant role in the evangelistic efforts of the church, both as models to laymen and in outright evangelism. Even in the days of the B'nai Qyāmā, the ascetic lifestyle was held up to the Church as a whole as something to be emulated¹¹⁶. In the 5th and 6th century, however, this came under indirect assault by another facet of ecclesial polity of the period, namely Persian cultural accommodation.

The asceticism of the monastics put a very high value on the celibate lifestyle that was at odds with Persian religious and cultural sensibilities, which insisted on the imperative of all being wed, even sanctioning consanguineous marriage which the church found detestable¹¹⁷. As there came to be a growing presence of Persian converts in the church, there was a comparably growing push against ascetics being promoted within the church and held up as ideals for the Christian life. On account of this the role of the ascetic waned as the church passed accommodating measures to its Persian populace. The Synod of Aqāq (or Acacius, 486) in its third canon, promoted marriage among the clergy¹¹⁸. While monks were exempt, the subsequent ruling of the Synod of the Patriarch Babai (497) mandated marriage for all clergy, from the

¹¹⁵ See Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, Eliyahu. *Aphrahat's Demonstrations: A Conversation with the Jews of Mesopotamia*. Vol. 642. (Louvain: Peeters, CSCO, 2012) 11ff; for the Syriac provenance of the *Book of Steps*, see Kitchen, Robert A., and Martien F.G. Parmentier. *The Book of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum*. Cistercian Studies Series 196. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 2004), particularly the translators' introduction. For a fuller look at the theological challenges themselves, see Suermann, Harald. "Le monachisme, la politique et les querelles théologiques du cinquième au septième siècle." In *Le monachisme syriaque aux premiers siècles de l'Eglise, IIe – début VIIe siècle. I: Textes français. Patrimoine Syriaque, Actes du Colloque V*, 259-274. (Antélias, Liban: Centre d'études et de Recherches Orientales, 1998).

¹¹⁶ Griffith, "Monks" 144

¹¹⁷ See Walker, "History" 1004ff.

¹¹⁸ Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 32; cf. Gero, Stephen. *Baršaumā of Nisibis and Persian Christianity in the Fifth Century*. CSCO 426, Subs. 63. (Louvain: Peeters, 1981); Wood, Philip. *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 95ff

lowest deacon up to the Patriarch himself. This meant a truly ascetic monk could no longer even serve as a priest, much less could the office serve as a streamline to higher offices as it traditionally had, though it is impossible to tell to what extent this policy was actually enforced¹¹⁹.

There were many monks who used this as an opportunity to more or less abandon the ideal that had to that point been the norm, and this had become adequately prevalent that by the time of Babai of Izla, it was not uncommon to find a monk and a nun sharing a cell at a monastery. Some of the greatest outcry against Babai was fomented by his ardent refusal to accept such behavior at any monastery over which he was head.

To say that this situation had come about simply due to an attempt to culturally accommodate former Zoroastrians would be vastly oversimplifying, nearly as much as saying that it was simply so Bar Sauma, the influential late 5th century bishop of Nisibis, could have a wife. An underlying social element that likely influenced the decision was the co-opting of the lifestyle of the ascetic wanderer, so glorified in Aphrahat and the *Book of Steps*, by those who came to be known as Messalians. Though the dynamics of Messalianism were different in the Persian milieu than its counterparts in Rome the issues of “holy begging” and the role of the “perfect,” as well as the presence of alternative clerical systems were equally prominent and equally disdained¹²⁰. Thus these are among the elements of the ascetic lifestyle condemned by the Synod of Aqaa in its first 2 canons, immediately prior to permitting marriage for the clergy.

¹¹⁹ Baumer, *Church of the East*, 78; cf. Budge, *Book of Governors*, 129; for the presence of monk/priests in the highest roles of the Syrian Church see Escolan, Philippe. *Monachisme et Église. Le monachisme syrien du IV^e au VII^e siècle: un ministère charismatique*. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1999) 278ff.

¹²⁰ See Caner, Daniel. *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002) 150ff; cf. Staats, Reinhart. "Messalianerforschung und Ostkirchenkunde." In *Makarios-Symposium über das Böse: Vorträge der Finnisch-Deutschen Theologentagung in Goslar 1980. Göttinger Orientforschungen: Reihe 1, Syriaca 24*, by Werner Strothmann, 47-71. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983) 47-71

The first canon anathematizes the men who are “corrupt of mind” and “clothed in the garb of mourning,” and “go about in many places corrupting simple minds¹²¹” and the 2nd canon admonishes these men “if they are truly disciples” to avoid towns and villages and recognized clergy, to avoid forming congregations of their own practicing their own sacraments, and rather “go to monasteries and to places which are far from cultivated land¹²².”

Whether in the Roman or Persian Empire, as the Church became more comfortable with the state, it could no longer permit alternative hierarchies and scriptural interpretations, either from a wandering solitary or an established church body. For both empires this meant holding in check or outlawing dissident religious sects, such as the Miaphysites in the Roman Empire. For the Church of the East, it meant hastening the demise of traditions it had held more or less since its infancy. Thus, with clerical opinion so turned from the traditional forms and emphases of the nascent Syriac monastic endeavor, the demise of the solitary in East Syrian Christianity seemed all but sure. It was hardly surprising that monasticism as an institute dwindled in the early 6th century, and appeared on the verge of irrelevancy.

But a little over a hundred years later, the Shah built three monasteries for his Christian wife, including the controversial Mar Sergius Monastery that will be discussed below¹²³. If the most powerful man in the empire, despite not being a Christian himself, would endow the monastic life, even if it was in the interest of his wife, the tide against monasticism had obviously turned.

¹²¹ Braun, *Synodicon Orientale*, 36f

¹²² *Ibid*, 39.

¹²³ Labourt, *Christianisme*, 228

A number of factors contributed to this. What is perhaps most clear is that the monastic lifestyle, including to an extent the idea of the solitary holy man, still served an important functional role in Syriac society, and this role merely needed to be delineated to be effective. It would be difficult to say where the process of this delineation began. It had probably been underway even before the Synod of Aqaq as Western monastic practices had already begun to infiltrate Persian Christian society, but two events in the sixth century stand out as significant in the process of beginning the renewal of the role of the monastery in East Syrian ecclesiastical practice. First was the Synod of Aba (544), in which it was ruled that Patriarchs were not to be married and that this was no longer requisite for bishops, although bishops were permitted to marry until the 12th century¹²⁴. This freed the spiritually ascetic to once again officially serve in the leadership of the church. The second was the successful marriage of Egyptian and East Syrian monastic practice formulated under the leadership of Abraham of Kashkar, beginning with the renewal of monasticism near what remained of Mar Awgin's Mt. Izla Monastery, and blossoming out from there¹²⁵.

This renewal became very popular and the end of the century saw the rapid spread of East Syrian monasticism throughout the Persian Empire and to its fringes. Although its spread was quick, it was often not in line with "Orthodox" East Syrian thought. This in part necessitated the reforms carried out at the turn of the 7th century by Babai the Great. Such reforms were imperative because by that point the East Syrians were not the only ones with monasteries in Mesopotamia. Miaphysite West Syrian incursion had reached a sort of critical mass, meaning

¹²⁴Baumer, *Church of the East*, 78

¹²⁵ For a detailed look at the rule put forward by Abraham see Chialà, Sabino. "Abraham de Kashkar et ses Règles monastiques." *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, no. 58 (2008): 248-262; For more on Abraham's role in renewing and adapting Monastic life in Iraq in the 6th century see Jullien, Florence. *Le monachisme en Perse: la réforme d'Abraham le Grand, père des moines de l'Orient*. Leuven (2008); For an outline of Abraham's life see Tamcke, Martin. "Abraham of Kashkar: A Biographical Sketch." *The Harp*, no. 19 (2006): 109-116

occasionally a monastery might transfer allegiance from one sect to the other¹²⁶. It was in this milieu that Babai operated.

While this constitutes the relevant 6th century background, it is important to also briefly look with more intensity at the events around the 612 disputation, which were largely a product of the preceding decade. In 604 Babai had become the head of the monastery at Izla, and well known among the Church hierarchy in other places such as Beth Garmai and Seleucia-Ctesiphon. In the same year that Babai took up control of Izla, the traditionalist Catholicos Sabrisho died. With the position of Catholicos empty, the church hierarchy, as was their custom, deliberated and put to the Shah the name of one Gregory of Kashkar, former metropolitan of Nisibis and an avowed enemy of Henana and his partisans. The Shah, Chosroes II, seemed to approve of this appointment, perhaps due to Sabrisho and Gregory's aid in putting down an uprising against his rule that had taken place in Nisibis a few years before¹²⁷. Many Miaphysites who were close to the Shah, however, disapproved.

Whether through sleight of hand, political influence, or both, the Shah's Christian wife, Shirin, who would later become a literary trope in Persian and Islamic literature¹²⁸, with the aid of the court Physician, Gabriel of Sinjar (Shiggar), mentioned earlier as the one responsible for revealing George's presence to the Shah, was able to have her fellow Basrian and friend Gregory of Phrat raised instead. When this was discovered it displeased the Shah and horrified the Church of the East¹²⁹, but apparently what was done was done. Gregory of Phrat served 4 years

¹²⁶ Fiey, *Jalons* 127

¹²⁷ See Guidi, Ignazio. *Chronicum anonymum*. Vols. 1-2. (Paris: CSCO, 1903) 18ff; cf. Baum, Wilhelm, *Shirin: Christian–Queen–Myth of Love. A Woman of Late Antiquity: Historical Reality and Literary Effect*. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004) 40

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Guidi, *Chronicum*, 41

as the most powerful man in the East Syrian Church and died in 608 having greatly enriched himself thereby, to little effect, however, as apparently the Shah was so displeased with Gregory's performance that on his death the state seized all of his property¹³⁰.

The Shah was also displeased enough by the entire situation that on Gregory's death he refused to appoint a new Catholicos, and the protocols of the Church were such in the early 7th century that without the Shah's approval a Catholicos could not be appointed. The physician, Gabriel of Sinjar, probably played a role in influencing this decision. There was little love lost between Gabriel who had once been a member of the Church of the East, and his erstwhile co-religionists. Babai for instance is quite clear, referencing him as a "Champion of Heresy" and a false "Gabriel" and attributing Henana's resilience in Nisibis to the support of Shirin and Gabriel saying that the Physician at court had sided with Henana to thwart their enemies¹³¹.

Gabriel had been born a West Syrian and trained in their schools, but after being excommunicated by the above mentioned Gregory of Kashkar for bigamy¹³², he found forgiveness and embrace in the West Syrian fold, who no doubt found it delightful to have a representative of their church so close to the most powerful man in Persia. This proved to be a shock for the Church of the East which had long enjoyed the political clout associated with having one of their partisans in close proximity to the Shah and his entourage as court physician.

This clout had probably influenced court favor, such as in the building of the Mar Sergius Monastery at Shirin's behest. Originally a gift to the East Syrians, the monastery had been quite

¹³⁰ See Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 38

¹³¹ See Renoux, Charles. "Langue et littérature arméniennes," in M. Albert et al. (eds), *Christianismes orientaux. Introduction à l'étude des langues et des littératures*. (Paris, 1993) 107-166; Not everyone saw Gabriel this way. Bar Hebraeus, being Syrian Orthodox has a much rosier description, seeing him as "orthodox" and a "foe of the Nestorians." See Baum, *Shirin*, 45

¹³² Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 37

a boon. But when Gabriel of Sinjar swapped churches, so eventually did Shirin, and a component of the fallout of this conversion was that Shirin wanted to take her monastic gift with her, among others.

The leadership of the Church of the East was appalled. Until this point, the disputes between East and West Syrians had been apolitical. If the court was going to start “arbitrarily” redesignating monasteries and facilities as West Syrian, it would have meant that everything had changed. Where would it stop? Would they soon be seeing their schools reassigned? Their churches? They had every reason to assume they were already on the Shah’s bad side¹³³, and considering the political power of their opponents, namely Gabriel of Sinjar, whose influence was, as Reinink states, “hardly possible to overrate”¹³⁴, every reason to assume that their church and beliefs were threatened at the highest levels of government. This does not mean that they were overly concerned at the prospect of a renewal of persecution as much as they were worried about losing the privileges that their long history with the Shah had afforded them.

Gabriel’s motives in this period are often debated, though it seems clear that he was both interested in power and antagonistic to the Church of the East. Judging by the clever switch of one Gregory for another in 604, it is clear that Gabriel and his Miaphysite friends wanted to at least rile up their opposition and gain thereby. It is even possible that they were aiming at nothing less than securing the Catholicate, a view expressed by Labourt, performing a hostile takeover of Persian Christianity. Labourt even suggested that Gabriel wished to secure a Miaphysite Catholicos¹³⁵. When under Gabriel’s influence the Shah called for a disputation of East Syrian bishops to come before him and state their beliefs, whether Gabriel was aiming at

¹³³ *Ibid.* 38

¹³⁴ Reinink, *Nestorian Identity*, 186

¹³⁵ Labourt, *Christianisme*, 224.

procuring the Catholicate for the West Syrians or not, the East Syrians had no choice but to assume that he was.

But Reinink makes a valid point in arguing that an outright takeover was an unlikely aim on the part of the Miaphysites. They did not have the numbers in Iraq to recommend so frontal a seizure of power. Reinink suggests that Gabriel's aim was rather "a desire to weaken the position of the East Syrian Church still more by making the schism between the two currents within the East Syrian community [traditionalists and Henanans] official and traditional¹³⁶." As far as Reinink is concerned, in forcing the East Syrians to commit to a more solid Christology, the West Syrians hoped to drive disparate elements in the East Syrian church if not into the arms of the West Syrians at least away from the ardent Dyophysite beliefs of the hardliners on the East Syrian side. While it is fairly clear that Gabriel's plan was to weaken the East Syrians, the truth of why likely lies somewhere between the positions of Reinink and Labourt.

Reinink points out the fragmented nature of the Church of the East in this period, lacking official leadership and being more or less divided into two or three different factions, but in any political body, including the Church, there are parties. While partisanship can be difficult, it does not necessarily mean political or ecclesiastical collapse. That was no more the situation in the 7th century Church of the East than it is in any modern Western democracy.

Were it the case, all that might have been necessary to effectively eliminate the Church of the East as competition would have been to remove its central figure, the Catholicos, from the picture. This was accomplished in 604 and more firmly in 608, but despite the power vacuum created by Gregory of Phrat's death and exacerbated by Chosroes II, the position, at least in spirit

¹³⁶ Reinink, *Nestorian Identity*, 187

was not long left void. At some point around that 608 date, Babai and Aba, Arch-Deacon of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, had, as seen earlier, been selected by a number of bishops as quasi-leaders of the church in the absence of an official Catholicos, Babai serving as “Visitor” to the monasteries in the North, and Aba taking a more southern and urban approach¹³⁷. This likely took place before the 612 disputation as the statement presented to the Shah distinctly shows Babai’s handiwork¹³⁸. This means that by the time Gabriel might have begun to plot the 612 disputation, the East Syrians had already been without formal leadership for some time, but had an established de facto leadership in place.

Additionally, it is true that while Babai and the Dyophysites had solid representation among the bishops, theirs was not the only position held in the Church of the East. It is just as reasonable in that light to propose that Gabriel was aiming for a more moderate, Henanaic, i.e. almost Chalcedonian formula, as opposed to the hardline position Reinink proposes and which they eventually adopted. A more moderate line might have been more politically correct, preserving the disjointed unity of the Church of the East, but such preservation would have had its own perils.

The Shah himself called the delegations of both sides to come together. Although Gabriel’s motives for arranging this were undoubtedly not favorable to the Church of the East, the Shah’s were not likely so malicious. One could easily posit that by bringing both East and West Syrians together, he sought to clarify their distinctions and put them to rest, in essence seeking to unify the church in his realm in much the same way that the Roman Emperors had been attempting since Constantine, especially as he had political designs on expansion into the

¹³⁷ Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 35

¹³⁸ Abramowski, Luise, "Babai der Grosse: Christologische Probleme und ihre Lösungen", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 41 (1975): 289-343

Christian West. As we have already seen, Christians were a significant presence in his country. If they were squabbling, that meant social and economic upheaval. Most rulers seek to avoid such things if possible. Furthermore, if Chosroes had been outright malicious to the Church of the East, why would he have permitted his minister, Yazdin of Karka de Beth Slok, to grant the true cross taken from Jerusalem a mere two years after the delegation to none other than Babai at Izla¹³⁹?

Rather, having spent a considerable portion of his life in Byzantium¹⁴⁰, the Shah might have felt personally qualified to judge both sides of this Christological debate, much like the Roman emperors. If this was his reasoning, motivated in part by the counsel of his physician, then what Gabriel potentially sought was less the simple weakening of the Church of the East, and more likely their forced amalgamation by the shah into one united Church of Persia with himself somewhere near the top. The court physician had assumed the mantle of leadership before. What better way to thumb his nose at those who had judged him in the past? A moderate response on the part of the East Syrian bishops would have played into this well, arguably persuading the Shah that the distinction between East and West as it stood was unnecessary. This would have allowed him peace of mind in appointing a moderate Catholicos who would likely prove conciliatory and tractable to Gabriel's scheming and would have been consistent with Gabriel's ploy in 604 concerning the two Gregory's. Bernard Flusin actually

¹³⁹ For discussion on this see Walker, *Mar Qardagh*, 150; cf. Guidi, *Chronicum*, 25, II, 14-21

¹⁴⁰ Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, 147ff

proposes that Gabriel and Shirin's intention in 604 was for nothing less than a Henanan Catholicos¹⁴¹.

Along a similar line, even if Gabriel was seeking a hardline outcome to weaken the Church of the East, as Reinink suggests, this does not by necessity preclude the possibility that the Shah would appoint someone of a more moderate bent. No matter Gabriel's role in suggesting the meeting, the fact that the Shah called it clearly indicates an attempt on his part as well as confidence in his own ability to identify the differences between these two sects of Christians in his midst. On the surface, a more moderate Catholicos might appear to be a means to appease all sides. In either case, Gabriel's long term goal was likely the acquisition of, if not the Catholicate itself, at least a pawn within it, who might one day be able to bring Gabriel's church closer to the center of Persian power (and in turn bring to Gabriel such power's concomitant wealth).

Whatever Gabriel's motivation for suggesting it, the Shah felt the idea had merit, and in 612 the meeting was set to take place. Though the West Syrian position is no longer extant, the Church of the East left us the creed, examined earlier, and clarified that position further in the *Life of George*. To briefly recap that defense, instead of moving in a remotely moderate direction, they adopted a firmly Dyophysite position, and further laid claim to their history with the Shah's by appropriating the title of Persian, something the West Syrians, as evinced in their name, had no claim to. The results were a mixed bag. On the bright side, the Church of the East did not get a Miaphysite Patriarch. On the down side, they did not get any Catholicos, and lost a

¹⁴¹ See Flusin, Bernard, "Syméon et les philologues ou la mort du stylite", Pages 1-23 in *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance: textes, images, monuments*. Edited by Jolivet-Lévy, Catherine and Kaplan, Michel and Sodini, Jean-Pierre. Byzantina Sorbonensia 11. (Paris: Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1993)

good monk in the process, but while doctrinal issues would still surface, 612 stands to the present as the point when East Syrian orthodoxy was firmly established.

Conclusion

For centuries the Church of the East had chipped away at the foundation of Zoroastrian thought in the empire taking a convert here and there and hoping against hope for their own Constantine, knowing that though it might not be this Shah, it could always be the next. George, and to an extent, the Shah's reaction to George had proved that they were close. But when the fruit of their dreams seemed to be just around the corner, the prize was snatched right out of their hands by an invader no one foresaw.

Their hope did not necessarily waver in the initial years of Islam. To Christians of all stripes, Islam was but a heresy and since a heresy was not of God, it would pass. This is very clear in John of Damascus, a member of the Chalcedonian Church which was, at least initially and for those sections under Islam, much more profoundly affected by the Arab conquest; It is also evident in the response of Church of the East patriarch Henanisho to the Caliph¹⁴². If Islam was simply a heresy, it was no concern. So the Church of the East went about its life, knowing that they were the Church of Persia, and trusting God that soon, if these invaders were more than simply raiders, they would be the Church of the *Dar al-Islam*. That perception took time to change and it is to that change that this study will turn in the coming chapters.

In this chapter, the role of Babai in the history of the Church of the East was examined particularly in light of a chapter from his *Book of the Union*, his *Life of George*, and the 612

¹⁴² On John, see Sahas, Daniel J. *John of Damascus on Islam: The Heresy of the Ishmaelites*. (Leiden: Brill, 1972) 17ff; on Henanisho, see Baumer, *Church of the East*, 144; cf. Landron, B. *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Irak: Attitudes Nestorienne vis-a-vis de l'Islam*. (Paris: Calscript, 2005) 29

Creed he likely wrote. For background, the history of the Church of the East has been traced in accordance to its relations with the Sassanid state. The role of Church hierarchy, the Miaphysites, and Monasticism were explored, and the impact these had on Babai as well as his actions on behalf of his church were examined. His contributions in Christology, the ascetic life, and politics were all touched on. For the purposes of this study, however, the most notable element was the distinct embrace of Persian identification as opposed to more Western forms present in that day.

Whatever the Shah's understanding of their situation, it is clear that the hope of the Church of the East was ultimately for a Christian Shah and Christian polity in Persia that would, of course, be of their own theological persuasion, a Persian Constantine as it were. This hope would remain with the Church of the East for nearly a millennium. Though this was not a new hope, probably having at least to some extent been fostered in Rome's own conversion to the faith of the cross, it was one which in Babai's time could be explored and when threatened by others, was worth defending. In the next chapter this study will look to the manner in which that hope carried through the socio-political events of the following centuries surviving even the collapse of the Shahnate. It will examine how Islam eventually forced a reassessment of that hope and a transference of it from the Abbasid rulers and state to rulers from outside. Timothy's contribution was helping facilitate this reassessment.

57

[illegible]

¹ Lege ကပါသော (?).

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

לנבגו. וכוונתו לנבגו לו כל נבג: וכן
 'L 128 v°. כונתו הוסיף כונתו, *א' הכונתו לו
 וכוונתו. לו לו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו
 וכוונתו כונתו כונתו: כונתו כונתו כונתו
 5 מכוונתו. כונתו כונתו. כונתו כונתו. כונתו
 כונתו כל ענין הכונתו. כונתו לו כונתו.
 כונתו כונתו כונתו לו: כונתו *כל כונתו
 לכוונתו. כונתו לכוונתו כונתו כונתו. כונתו,
 כונתו כונתו כונתו. כונתו כונתו כל. כונתו כונתו
 10 כונתו כונתו. כונתו כונתו כל כונתו כונתו
 כונתו כונתו. כונתו כונתו כל כונתו כונתו.
 כונתו לו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו
 כונתו. כונתו לו כונתו. כונתו כונתו כונתו
 כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו
 15 כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו: כונתו כונתו כונתו
 כונתו כונתו. כונתו לו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו.
 כונתו כונתו כונתו לכוונתו כונתו: כונתו, כונתו
 כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו.
 כונתו לו כונתו כונתו. כונתו כונתו כונתו,
 20 כונתו כונתו: כונתו כונתו כונתו. כונתו
 כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו
 לכוונתו: כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו. כונתו כונתו
 כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו *כונתו
 לו כונתו כונתו. כונתו לו כונתו כונתו כונתו
 כונתו כונתו. כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו: כונתו:
 25 כונתו כונתו: כונתו: כונתו: כונתו: כונתו
 כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו
 כונתו. כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו. כונתו כונתו
 כונתו לו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו לו
 30 כונתו. כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו כונתו לו
 כונתו כונתו:

(Pg 173)

Memra Section 5

(Abstract) Chapter 18: On the crucifixion of the Messiah, and that it was not while his divinity was distant from his humanity, that (divinity) which was united with him from within the womb. This we confess, that as (5) an ordinary man he was crucified and died, though his divinity albeit united with him and dwelling in him, did not suffer. **Chapter 19 (not included):** On the resurrection of our Lord Messiah from death, and the manner in which (his humanity and divinity) were seen to be united up to the point of his ascension.

Chapter 18:

On the crucifixion of the Messiah, (10) and that it was not while his divinity was distant from his humanity, that (divinity) which was united with him from within the womb. This we confess, that as an ordinary man he was crucified and died, though his divinity albeit united with him and dwelling in him, did not suffer.

For although we say that his manhood is united, and that our Lord was (15) crucified, yet this was not his divinity. It was his temple that was broken, and it was raised to immortal life. We do not say this, that he was separated from his united dwelling, he who after three days raised him up and loosened the bonds of Sheol. For his soul was not left in Sheol. His body did not even see decay. (20) For even though the manhood of our Lord cried out at the point of suffering while hanging on the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, Why have you forsaken me¹⁴³," we do not say

¹⁴³ Matthew 27:46

this, that he departed from his indwelling in abandonment, or that this worshipful unity was destroyed.

God forbid! Rather through it (this unity) he abandoned his man to suffer for the purpose¹⁴⁴ of his divine plan to redeem (25) the debt which is through disobedience, that is transgression of the law by Adam, father of those who have been born. The man of our Lord was not indebted to death, which was due to sin. By this Adam and all his offspring were held captive, because all had sinned. But as it has been said, "The one who knows no sin, for our sakes,

(Pg. 174)

was subject to sin, in order that we might live by his righteousness¹⁴⁵," and "The ruler of this world has come, and he has nothing to do with me¹⁴⁶." The ruler of this world has already been judged. For "I will be raised above this land in the victory of (5) the cross and draw all men to me¹⁴⁷." As the blessed Paul said, "In the same way that due to the disobedience of one man, sin was increased, so due to the obedience of one, many will be made just¹⁴⁸." And he was obedient unto death, death on a cross¹⁴⁹, not while (10) his divinity was distant from him, but while united with him in one person, Messiah, Son of God, made plain earlier.

It is from the union that he has the names Son and Messiah, this person of the union. Propriety over the name Messiah belongs to his humanity, and over the name Son to his divinity, as we said (15) earlier. It was this one person, Messiah and Son, that was confessed by Peter

¹⁴⁴ 

¹⁴⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:12

¹⁴⁶ John 14:30

¹⁴⁷ cf. John 12:32

¹⁴⁸ cf. Romans 5:19

¹⁴⁹ Philippians 2:8

when he said, "You are the Messiah, Son of the Living God¹⁵⁰." Because of this, scripture says the Messiah was born, and the Messiah was crucified, and the Messiah (20) died on account of the sinners, and he was buried, and he rose on the third day. Behold, these were all his humanity.

“If he would not spare his son, but on behalf of all of us turned him over...¹⁵¹”, his son who was born of the seed of the house of David. By this Saint Paul knew that he had been born to an exalted birth in his (25) divine nature, not from the seed of the house of David. In the same way one can see Messiah in the flesh as God over all¹⁵². For scripture speaks of a person of the union, at times teaching us about this union by means of his humanity. For One is

(Pg. 175)

the Lord Jesus Messiah, in whose hands is everything¹⁵³. For it was not by his humanity that everything was created, but by the person of the union.

So on one hand, God, and on one hand, the mediator between God and men, the Son of Man, Jesus, Messiah, he who gave himself (5) as a redeemer for all men. Behold, his temple is not his divinity, for it was surrendered to death. Remember "Jesus, the Messiah, who rose from death, he who was of the seed of David according to the Gospel as I have it¹⁵⁴. That was of his humanity. We preach the Messiah crucified¹⁵⁵. For it was not (10) his divinity that was crucified. For the Spirit was there in him and it was in union with him, yet it was in his humanity that he was crucified, in order to overcome sin by his flesh, not by his divinity. “Even though he was crucified in weakness, he rose through the power of God, and humbled himself in

¹⁵⁰ Matthew 16:16

¹⁵¹ Romans 8:32

¹⁵² cf. Romans 9:5

¹⁵³ 1 Corinthians 6:6

¹⁵⁴ 2 Timothy 2:8

¹⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:23

obedience unto death, (15) death on a cross¹⁵⁶. Because of this God greatly exalted him, and gave to him the name that is honored above all names...¹⁵⁷”, and so on. He has now reconciled you by his fleshly body, by his death¹⁵⁸, reconciled by the blood of his very own cross, whether on earth or in heaven.

You believed that through the power of (20) God he was raised from death¹⁵⁹. Many discussions along these lines declare and clarify this, that it was his united humanity that suffered on the cross and accepted death and not his divinity, and how what was crucified and died was human. We say that a man was crucified and died. We do not say that it was a soul that (25) was crucified and died, for the soul is not mortal. Rather, that it was the person united in nature with an ordinary name. We say a man was crucified, and therefore we say that Messiah was crucified, and Messiah died and rose. We do not say that God was crucified and died. We also say that the son of God was (30) surrendered for us, in other words, the person of the union. It is not that his divinity suffered and died, his divinity which raised and perfected

(Pg 176)

his united temple. For we do not simply say that his man was crucified. We are not Paulinists who deny his divinity. Nor do we say that God was crucified. We are not Manichaeans who disbelieve the humanity of the chief of the race, like (5) those who would introduce becoming and change. What we say is that the Messiah was crucified.

While we know that in his humanity he was crucified and died and not in his divinity, it was not while his divinity was distant from him. Rather, while united in him, he (his divinity)

¹⁵⁶ 2 Corinthians 13:4

¹⁵⁷ Philippians 2:9

¹⁵⁸ Colossians 1:22

¹⁵⁹ Romans 4:24

bore all that was within his nature. For God the Word was not distant from his temple of the union, which (10) was formed from the beginning to be filled according to his arrangement. (He was not distant) when it was formed or when it was fashioned. Not when a soul was created within him, nor when he was born. Not when he was toted around in diapers, or placed into a manger. The magi worshipped him as one entity, and gave him gifts demonstrating their wisdom which showed those aspects of (15) his united impassible divinity which in union and simplicity and in one conjunction¹⁶⁰ lent him honor.

When he was cut, undergoing circumcision for the sake of the truth of God, his divinity was not far from him. Nor when he reached the pinnacle of his growth, as is customary to men, (20) and he was advancing in wisdom and progressing and was filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit from the divinity within him, who made him grow and progress in stature, advancing and empowering him over his nature. While in his youth he did not know good and evil, yet he despised (25) evil and chose good. The boy grew strong and was empowered by the spirit. In the same way that the body was joined the passions of the soul within him were controlled over the passage of time.

This control and modesty of speech did not come from outside of him, separating him from (30) tastes and colors and appearances, rather it came from the soul within him which had dwelt with him from within the womb. Even here is the union,

(Pg. 177)

On the one hand natural and hypostatic, on the other hand voluntary and personal. Thus, the divinity of our lord was united with his humanity which is his temple formed from the very

¹⁶⁰ مصفحة

beginning. And he gradually advanced in accordance with his education and age, in all of these (5) divine. In fact, even while the man of our Lord was sleeping according to his nature, his divinity was in union within him. And while he was tired, his divinity was within him. His divinity was not, however, asleep or approaching fatigue, even though it was in union with him. For the gatekeeper of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers¹⁶¹. Rather (10) even as he was suffering according to his corporeal and passible nature, and even while he was suspended from the cross, he was limitlessly filled with the divinity that was inside him. And when they took him down from the tree and wrapped him and put him in the tomb, his divinity was limitlessly unitedly within him. When he surrendered his soul and it was transferred (15) to paradise, He was not separated from his united divinity. Rather when his body rose from the grave from the return of its soul through the power of the divinity within him as had been promised, and when he was raised up departing to heaven according to his nature as he said, "I go and I come and I will not always be (20) with you¹⁶²," his divinity was within him limitlessly.

The heavens and earth are from that divinity filled with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. "I am with you¹⁶³" by his divinity. When he eventually comes in glory, which is inexpressible both in the magnitude of its revelation and the power of heaven, his divinity will be with him, (25) unitedly and infinitely. When he is seated upon the throne judging all, his humanity and divinity will be united in one power and one authority in one dominion over the world. "He subjected everything under his feet¹⁶⁴" in one subjection. Every knee is bowed to him in one worship of one union of one

¹⁶¹ Psalm 121:4

¹⁶² cf. John 14:3; Matthew 26:11

¹⁶³ Matthew 28:20; cf. Isaiah 41:10

¹⁶⁴ Psalm 8:6; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:27; Hebrews 2:8

(Pg. 178)

United person, the son of God. "Every tongue will confess that he is Lord, Jesus Messiah, to the glory of God¹⁶⁵."

While the humanity of the Messiah, our lord, bore all of these humiliations according to its nature, and was even tested in all things human except for sin, his divinity was not tested by them, God forbid! (5) For infinite spirit is unformed and unaffected by growth, which fill the heavens and the earth. Light is not cut off nor does it accept beatings, and it is not within its nature a spirit that approaches the door of strife and (10) corruption. For it (divinity) is invisible, incorruptible in its nature, and no man from the sons of men has seen it or can see it¹⁶⁶. It dwells in magnificent light, and man cannot approach it.

God is not tested by anything human! God forbid! For he has nothing to fear from death; he is (15) immortal! The Word God is not empowered by angels! For his power is in his nature, like the Father and the Holy Spirit. "He looks at the earth and it trembles¹⁶⁷". The Word God does not offer prayer to another greater God nor entreat it for help. He has within his nature everything that belongs to (20) the Father and the Holy Spirit: save only fatherhood and procession. The Word God does not sweat, for he is spirit, and he has no head with openings in bodily form that would bend himself down and surrender his spirit. For he does not have a soul (25) in his nature, nor in composition qnomically¹⁶⁸ with another, as if he were one thing and his soul another, because the body and soul composite are qnoma, one natural qnoma of man.

¹⁶⁵ Philippians 2:11

¹⁶⁶ cf. John 1:18

¹⁶⁷ Psalm 104:32

¹⁶⁸ From the Syriac (ܩܢܡܐ), for more see note 36 above

For God was not crucified on wood nor nailed with nails nor raised up between heaven and earth. For he is

(Pg. 179)

infinite spirit, invisible and intangible. Blood and water do not flow from the Word God. For he is not a body with limbs that are twisted and broken and ruined. He is light and life and spirit and his (5) being is simple, unseen and unbroken, and man cannot approach him. So, if the Word God suffered, he is not God in nature. Rather he is God in name or glory alone.

Now if he made himself a body in nature and it suffered and died as say the heathen sons of (10) Hell, then it is possible that he made his qnoma "become," and thus he is not God in nature. All of these things that his humanity bore according to its nature, they are distant from the divine nature. That nature is immutable. It is immortal. It is incorruptible. It is intangible. (15) It is invisible, infinite spirit. It is in its essence unchangeable. "I am who I am and do not change¹⁶⁹." And you, according to your essence, your changes are imperfect. If he died, for three days he was deprived of his life. Therefore, all of these humiliations we have spoken of regarding this (20) worshipped divine are clear, in that his humanity bore them, and not his divinity which is above all. His divinity perfected and united his rational temple, the head of our lives, unitedly in him at the beginning and forever.

It is fitting that "everything was in his hands¹⁷⁰" and because of him, the Word God, it (everything) exists, as it is said, (25) "through him he made the universe ... All is held in place by the power of his word¹⁷¹." He brings many sons to his glory, to the height of the lives of men,

¹⁶⁹ Malachi 3:6

¹⁷⁰ John 3:35

¹⁷¹ Hebrews 1:2

this the man Jesus whom he perfected in suffering¹⁷². This is the crucified one. This is he whom in death was loosened in separation of his body from his soul. This is he of whom (30) Blessed Paul said that "he came from God to taste death on behalf of all men¹⁷³. This is he who willed the fulfillment of all

(Pg. 180)

labor and by his hand governs everything.

We make peace with his hands by the blood of his cross, whether on Earth or in heaven. For the Word God does not possess the blood of flesh or the one who nourishes flesh from the land of sufferings, (5) O heretics. He is spirit and life and light! He is named above all names and none of his creations are like him. "God, who of them is like you¹⁷⁴?"

Because his creatures do not see him, he took on the appearance of a man of our race, in order to be the apogee of all creation, that in him all will be renewed. He will be the father of (10) a new world, and in him dwells bodily all the fullness of divinity¹⁷⁵. He fills it all with his divine economy. He made his man the temple of his reason, to appear and speak to us. He appeared in the flesh, and is worshipped in the flesh as a unified temple alongside the Father and Holy Spirit. (15) His temple is worshipped with him, because he dwells in his temple unitedly. "In him dwells the fullness of divinity," and we worship and honor the sign of his cross. By it and in him we are saved from sin and from death and from folly. He forgave all our sin. He blotted out by his commandments (20) the bond of our debts, he who was against us, and snatched it from the center and nailed it to the cross and so on and so on... So, we fall before the

¹⁷² cf. Hebrews 2:10

¹⁷³ cf. Hebrews 2:9

¹⁷⁴ Psalm 71:19

¹⁷⁵ Colossians 2:9

cross, because he was crucified on it, and we worship he who was crucified because the Word God dwells unitedly in him without limitation, giving to his man everything that is his aside (25) from his nature. This is the name of sonship, the authority of lordship, honor, might, exaltation, in one conjunction of one person, the Messiah, son of God, in one worship and honor, that is unto him alone not in unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. (30) This is a worship and exaltation exalted forever and ever. Amen.

Changing Mission at Home and Abroad

Timothy I Catholicos and the Church of the East in the Early Abbasid Period

And the old man asked him, “Where do you come from son, and where are you going?”

The boy said, “I am the nephew of George, Bishop of Beth Bagaš, and he’s sent me to go to the school of Abraham in the village of Bašoš.”

The old man took out one coin¹ gave it to him, and urged him saying, “Go now, buy some wheat and eat. Work completely at the study of the scriptures and keep yourself from stupidity, for you will become the Patriarch of all the lands of the East. Behold, our Lord will distinguish you above all others, such that before and after you there shall be none like you. 42 years will you stand as head of every flock of the Messiah. When you have been raised up by the hand of God to all these things, may your heart be moved to honor this holy house, in which it was made known to you that you are neither insignificant nor contemptible before God².”

When a relatively young man who came to be known as Timothy, originally of the Christian village of Hazza not far from modern Erbil, was raised to the position of Catholicos around the year 780, it was a significant event in the Church of the East. His election began two years of schism with many attributing his success to trickery. Why? In brief, during his “campaign” for patriarchal office, some of the electors were less than interested in lending Timothy their vote, but indicated that they might be persuaded by more nefarious means. Not having the wealth at his disposal to fulfill their request himself (or choosing not to) Timothy contrived a ruse whereby he might win their votes. He promised those interested two sacks which he implied were loaded down with gold, but once the votes were cast, he revealed the sacks’ contents to be mere stones, being likened by future commentators to the biblical patriarch Jacob for his cleverness³.

¹ ܟܠܬܐܝܢܐ

² Budge, *Book of Governors*, 195-6, translation author’s own.

³ *Ibid.* 197-210, vol.2 383-395; cf. Gismondi, Henricus. *Maris Amri et Slibae de Patriarchis Nestorianum Commentaria*. . Translated by Henricus Gismondi. (Rome, 1899) 71-75, vol. 2, 63-65; Abbeloos, J.B., and T. Lamy.

The outcome of this affair was that Timothy was raised to the throne and would enjoy one of the longest reigns of any Catholicos, but it cast a pall over the first few years of his tenure in office and has given him a reputation for guile ever since. In spite of or perhaps because of this reputation, Timothy is held in great respect by his churchmen and opponents alike.

Timothy lived at a pivotal moment in the history of the Church of the East and as such had enormous influence over its direction and outlook on the society in which it existed. The world had changed considerably within his lifetime and it is possible to look at many of his life's actions, including those surrounding his election to patriarch, as a response to those changes. This chapter is going to examine, in brief, the Church of the East in Early Abbasid times through the lens of Timothy's life. Though it will touch on a number of his letters, including that of his famed interaction with the Caliph, it's primary textual focus will be the collection of his canons, specifically his motives for writing these as evidenced by his introduction and the direct product of those motives, Canon 12. Through this and an overview of his other writings and a few of those writings about him, an attempt will be made to determine how Timothy fit into his milieu and the influences he bore on his Church, helping direct its path for the next few centuries.

As with the other chapters, this will commence with a focus on Timothy's life and some of his writings. This will be followed, as with Babai, by a background of that life interwoven with a more detailed look at Timothy's approach to church administration and to some extent the effects that administration had on his church. Timothy laid the framework of the approach his

Gregorii Bar Hebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum. 3 vols. (Louvain: Peeters, 1872) especially col. 170-171; for modern accounts of Timothy's election and life see Hurst, Thomas. *The Syriac Letters of Timothy (727-823): A Study in Christian-Muslim Controversy*. PhD Dissertation. (Washington, DC.: Catholic University of America, 1986) 13-16; Putman, Hans. *L'église et l'islam sous Timothee I (780-823): étude sur l'église nestorienne au temps du premiers 'Abbasides avec nouvelle édition et traduction du dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdi*. (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1975) 14-22; Berti, Vittorio. *Vita E Studi Di Timoteo I Patriarca Cristiano Di Baghdad*. (Paris: L'Association pour l'Avancement des Etudes Iraniennes, 2009) 135-194

church employed to its socio-political situation and mission for the next several centuries.

Apprehending that framework is the ultimate aim of this chapter in order to more fully grasp the actions of the Church of the East throughout the Abbasid period and into the time of the Mongols.

Timothy's Early Life and Election

Timothy's hometown, Hazza in the province of Adiabene, was a semi-mountainous Christian stronghold in the Jezira, or what is now northern Iraq. Traditionally, Timothy is said to have been born in 727/8 CE based off the date of death 'Amr Ibn Matta ascribes to the patriarch in his *Kitab al-majdal*⁴. There is little controversy now over his death in 823, but Vittorio Berti has put forward a solid argument, for a much later birthdate, around 740, based on the age Timothy ascribes for himself in his own letters⁵. In addition to Berti's arguments, Timothy himself, in the intro to his canons appended below this chapter, dates the writing of that document at around the year 805 CE and ascribes to himself an age of 65, more or less, confirming Berti's theory⁶. For the purposes of this study, the dates he proposed will be accepted which would have put Timothy in his mid-30's at the time of his election to patriarch in late 779. The matter of his age at election will be visited again shortly.

Here it is important to note that with either dating Timothy was relatively young at the time of the Umayyad/Abbasid transition. In light of this, it can be assumed that Timothy had firsthand experience with the differences between the two regimes and their approach to the

⁴ Gismondi, *Maris Amri et Slibae*, 74; For more on this dating see Bidawid, Raphael. *Les Lettres du Patriarche Nestorien Timothée: Studi e Testi* 187. (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1956) 1

⁵ See Berti, *Timoteo I*, 135-136; cf. Sachau, Eduard. *Syrische Rechtsbücher*. (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1907) 54-58; Labourt, Jerome. *De Timotheo I Nestorianum Patriarcha (728-823) et Christianorum Orientalium condicione sub Chaliphis Abbasidis*. (Paris, 1904) 50-52

⁶ Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher* vol 2, 58

“minorities” who lived in their midst, and the differences were profound. For that reason, it is useful to consider the difference between those approaches. Though the study will touch on years subsequent to Timothy’s life in this chapter for the extent to which it is relevant to an understanding of Timothy’s milieu, the Abbasid policies that became the norm during and subsequent to Timothy’s life bear more direct influence on the Church of the East beyond the time of Timothy. That situation will serve as background for later chapters and be touched on in more detail later.

Timothy’s childhood was as steeped in the Christian worldview of his day as possible. As said above, his home was in the semi-mountainous Christian heartland that now comprises northern Iraq. As a child, his uncle, the Bishop of Beth Bagaš whom he would later replace, sent him to study under Mar Abraham bar Dašandad, who had started a school in the village of Bašoš. It is worth pointing out here that he was not the only noteworthy student of this school. Išu bar Nun, Timothy’s successor, Abu Nuh al-Anbari, who became one of Timothy’s most influential supporters, and Mar Sargis, who eventually took over the school and was one with whom Timothy corresponded regularly were all important figures in the future of the Church of the East.⁷

The school was eventually moved to Mosul, and Fiey suggested that date would have been into the 8th century⁸, however, based off an Arabic copy of the Canons of the school, Berti proposes a mid-7th century date⁹. In addition to the later date of his birth that Berti also posited,

⁷ Budge, *Book of Governors*, 2; cf. Labourt, *Timotheo I*, 5

⁸ Fiey, “des anciens monastères,” 127ff

⁹ Berti, *Timotheo I*, 198ff

this would have made it very likely that Timothy served out at least a good portion of his student years in the Arab city of Mosul rather than in the rural village of Bašoš.

Were this the case, Timothy would potentially have been a student, or nearly have been a student at the time of the Mosul massacre of 751 at the height of the Abbasid revolution. Even granting him another couple decades of age at the time, at the very least he had to have had many acquaintances and companions who had been a witness to it. This was a particularly brutal action on the part of the rising regime and left many in the area, Christian and Muslim alike, with serious questions regarding the rulership of the new Abbasid government. The *Chronicle of Zuqnin* tells us that in 751/2 “the Persians returned to the land with great armies, and they fought and defeated everyone who met them in battle. They committed a great massacre amongst the Arabs of Mosul and ‘Aqūlā. They massacred old along with the young¹⁰.”

A later compiler of the Syriac *Chronicle of 1234*, closes his account of the massacre condemning that “this Yahya (the governor who perpetrated the massacre) committed unspeakable evils in Mawşil¹¹.” Robinson even suggests that the fact that Tabari is silent on the massacre is a deliberate protection of the Abbasid regime. “Given the spread of reports, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that the omission of any mention of the massacre in al-Tabarī’s *Ta’rīkh* was deliberate¹².”

Thus we have an event of such caliber that one of the greatest Arab historians of the Abbasid age chose to ignore it, likely so as not to draw the Caliph’s ire. But this surely would have been the talk of the town in the years following the massacre. If Timothy was a student in

¹⁰ From *Zuqnin Chronicle*, 206/160; quoted in Robinson, Chase Frederick, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia*. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)142

¹¹ *Chronicle of 1234*, I, 338/264; quoted in Robinson, *Empires and Elites*, 142

¹² *Ibid*, 144

Mosul at that time, there is no question that he would have heard of it from people he knew and potentially even people he was close to (or if the older dating of his birth is correct, possibly lived through it). One can easily imagine a young patriarch-to-be, hearing a vivid account of what life was like during the massacre, and pondering, “If this is the way the regime treats fellow Muslims and Arabs...” In any case, it is well within reason to assume in the milieu of Timothy’s upbringing a sense of distrust of the motives of his Abbasid rulers.

Which brings up a related subject, his youth. Thomas of Marga tells us he was “young” (جالس)¹³ at his election as bishop. The term would hardly fit a man who would have been in his 40’s at the time of his consecration as bishop and mid 50’s on reaching the patriarchal seat, all following the traditional dating of Timothy’s birth¹⁴. His youth is a relevant subject because, not only does it play into assessing when he was born, but it plays a role in his election and in the manner of his rule. By accepting the later date of birth that Berti posits, Timothy would have been in his upper 20’s at consecration and mid to high 30’s at election to patriarch, an age range that would suitably be described as young.

Ambition is a trade mark of the young, as is idealism. Timothy was clearly wise, or at least politically savvy, as well as intellectual, all evident from his manner in office. Even semi-polemical sources agree on this¹⁵. His aspiration for higher office, both initially as a bishop and eventually as a patriarch clearly demonstrated his ambition, but his idealism is equally evident. The hallmark of an idealist is reform, the desire to correct the ambient wrongs of society, to remake what has been broken. Timothy stands out as just such an idealist, the reformer,

¹³ Quoted in Berti, *Timotheo I*, 196

¹⁴ Payne-Smith, *Compendious*, col. 2897

¹⁵ See Hurst, *Timothy*, 12, 14, 16, 20, and 214 for his shrewdness with the Caliph; cf. Putman, *Timothee I*, 13ff; Berti, *Idéologie et Politique*, 170ff, 285ff

someone bent on tweaking and molding the system he has been given in order to rectify it inasmuch as possible.

An example from early on in the election process will help to make this picture of Timothy clearer. At the outset of the process, before the shenanigans surrounding false bribes, there had been five candidates for the office. One, Ishoyab of Ninevah, was apparently an older gentleman whom Timothy talked out of running on account of his age, promising him a metropolitane in Adiabene as a consolation prize¹⁶. This might be, and often is, construed as somewhat shady political maneuvering, removing one opponent and securing his votes. That assumes, though, that Timothy's odds were reasonable enough to strong-arm/flatter the older man out of office. A promised office means nothing if the promise cannot be delivered.

The Church of the East was situated in a patriarchal, traditionalist culture. In such a society it is not implausible that an older candidate such as Ishoyab might stand to actually be a favorite for the job. The picture Thomas of Marga paints of Ishoyab, however, is not entirely flattering. While Thomas consistently refers to Ishoyab as a holy man, he also makes it clear that he is a man plagued by anxiety over finances and the people's support among other things, but he also shows a man who frequently sought the counsel of the Catholicos, Timothy, as well as a man fairly caught up in the sectarian rivalry that had plagued the Syrian church world from the 5th century on¹⁷. This is not a picture of a reformer, or of someone who would likely have fared well in the capital of the empire.

Yet it was Timothy who convinced him to step out of the race ostensibly with promises that were only valid if he won. Rather than see the promises as the whole of Ishoyab's motive

¹⁶ Budge, *Book of Governors*, 197, (vol. 2) 383

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 203, (vol. 2)393ff

for stepping down, thus making Timothy guilty in fact of what his polemicists accused him of later, it is reasonable to consider that the very qualities that Timothy exhibited in office were evident to the older bishop prior to the election. It is highly plausible, then, that Timothy was able to convince his elder that the holier fight was against encroaching Jacobites in the heartland of Adiabene and that the political quagmire of Baghdad was a fight for a younger man. Sectarianism was still a major issue in the milieu of the Church of the East in Timothy's day, as will be seen below. While Timothy never prevaricated on his Dyophysite beliefs, he usually exhibited a fairly conciliatory voice in respect to those of other sects, far more so than most of his contemporaries. In fact, Timothy did more to open dialogue between the confessions than almost any other man who wore his robes¹⁸. Though it falls into conjecture, one could posit that the future animosity that arose between Timothy and his erstwhile classmate and successor, Isho bar Nun, arose from differences on the necessity of combatting the spread of Miaphysitism¹⁹.

Whatever Timothy might have said to Ishoyab, by accepting, Ishoyab paved the way for Timothy to step to the fore. He did this despite it calling his own election as bishop into question²⁰.

The election itself, instead of merely exhibiting Timothy's political acumen, further demonstrates this reformist bent. If simply winning was Timothy's goal, then the shrewdness and cunning that were ascribed to him were not as readily apparent as it might at first seem. An outline of his election has already been giving, concerning the ruse that chroniclers are fond of

¹⁸ See Hurst, *Timothy*, 22-24, 182; cf. Fiey, *Jalons*, particularly chapter 6; cf. Hage, Wolfgang. "Der Weg nach Asien: Die ostsyrische Missionskirche." In *Die Kirche des frühen Mittelalters*, edited by Knut Schäferdiek, 360-393. (München : Kaiser Verlag, 1978)

¹⁹ See Fiey, Jean Maurice. *Chrétiens syriaques sous les Abbassides surtout à Bagdad, 749-1258*. Vol. 420. (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1980) 65-67

²⁰ See Budge, *Book of Governors*, 201-202 (vol. 2) 389-393

bringing up²¹. In these accounts, it is as if his revelation of the contents of the sacks is a little forced, for upon Timothy's win, Joseph of Merv, a Metropolitan and influential leader in the church, mentioned above as an eventual apostate, cried foul, whereupon Timothy declared to the world that he had not bribed anyone. He revealed the sacks as full of stones saying dramatically, "The priesthood is not sold for money²²." This launched two years of back and forth excommunications and calling in of favors, stretching as far as the caliph's residence. The end result was Timothy being crowned Patriarch and Joseph of Merv abandoning the faith²³.

Yet all it would have taken to thwart this entire endeavor is one corrupt elector deciding he wanted to actually see the money before casting a vote, an event not at all unlikely and one might even suggest expected in such illicit transactions, especially seeing that the location of this alleged wealth was at Timothy's side during the election²⁴. Had the ruse been revealed earlier, such an event would have immediately cost Timothy the scholastic votes and the election. No one wants to be called corrupt. If Timothy's entire plan for gaining office hinged on no one looking in the bags, he was either very confident in his own charisma, somewhat shortsighted in his schemes, or not really planning to win. Since either of the first two options are absent the wisdom and intellect that he so readily demonstrated in office, it stands to reason that the final option, that he never really intended to win, is the most likely option. In that case, perhaps Timothy was not really wildly grasping for power here as much as setting the stage to assume it later.

²¹ cf. Gismondi, *Amri et Slibae*, 71/63

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See Hurst, *Timothy I*, 13ff for a clear English account.

²⁴ Gismondi, *Amri et Slibae*, 71/63

Examining that possibility, Thomas of Marga noted Timothy's youth for a reason, because it was unusual. This means that the majority of men in Timothy's position as Bishop of a mid-sized diocese had more years under their belts, which means that most candidates for the patriarchal throne would have been much older than Timothy as well, and this in a very patriarchal society. Though Timothy might have felt up to the job, he undoubtedly had to recognize their arguments, and thereby knew his chances were slim. In fact, of all elements of this election that declare the odds against Timothy, the fact that he had to resort to the appearance of bribery to win is the most notable as it means he did not truly have the support of wealthy backers.

Because of the odds, the adage, "Any press is good press," comes to mind. Timothy's plan was not to win but simply to become known. He was a young man and time was on his side. If age stood one well in the elections, which has been here and elsewhere posited in the case of Ishoyab²⁵, it is reasonable to assume that Timothy had a few more elections in his future. He had time in which to expand his support beyond the borders of the rural but significant Adiabene.

This is where the reformist bent in Timothy is most evident. Moffet points out in response to the events around his election that though "it credits the patriarch with personal integrity, the incident also implies that even after a generation under Muslim rule the church was still wealthy and was becoming distressingly vulnerable to the corruption that so often accompanies ecclesiastical influence²⁶."

²⁵ *Ibid.* 64/3; cf. Bidawid, *Lettres*, 3

²⁶ Moffet, *History*, vol.1, 352

Corruption is one of the oldest and most potent foes of the reformer, and one of the easiest to rally opposition to. If Timothy did not plan to win, seeking rather to bring to light corruption in the elections with a big, very showy statement of his innocence that condemned everyone else, he would have gained a lot of press for being tough on corruption and the champion of the common man. Future elections would have still been riddled with corruption (and were) but they would have had to be more surreptitious about it. By outing the practice in such a public manner, Timothy could accomplish a reformers dream, in this instance helping a more honest character get into office, changing the manner of future elections for the better, and giving his name recognition that would fare him well the next time a patriarch was sought. He would have been the young up-and-comer.

He might even have been able to influence convening a synod in the coming years to address several of the issues that this election would have brought to light, which once he became Catholicos in reality is exactly what he did²⁷.

As useful as speculating on what Timothy intended can be, that reform was a significant platform of his campaign is difficult to deny, and in the end whether he intended it or not, he won. No matter what he had envisioned after these elections, though, he almost certainly did not foresee the fragmentation of the church that ensued on his victory. In the end, after two years of hard-feelings and mutual disdain between the two sides of a schism, Timothy eventually came out on top, but his church was forever changed.

²⁷ Abdishu tells us of two synods convened under Timothy, see Mai, A. *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*. Vol. 10. (Rome, 1838) 327-328; cf. Chabot, *Synodicon*, 601-602

The Islam Question

Corruption proved a fairly petty issue in the long run, because the ensuing difficulties after the election brought to the fore the greater question of how exactly was the Church to operate and survive under a Muslim government. At the time of Timothy's rise, the Abbasid Caliphate was young and confident. They had risen up on a religious platform that expected all to flock to the banners of Islam very quickly. That the masses chose otherwise was as vexing to the Muslims as the presence of choice was to the Christians. According to an Early Abbasid Muslim understanding of the Qur'an, these Christians, etc., were supposed to realize the error of their faiths and joyfully flee into Islam. The fact that they did not was only made more troublesome by the fact that the Qur'an explicitly forbade just getting rid of them. As Yohanan Friedmann says, "Because of the stubborn refusal of their believers to see the truth of Islam and embrace it, Judaism and Christianity and other religions continue to exist during the Islamic period and religious diversity is still evident, yet much of its erstwhile legitimacy is lost. Islam superseded its predecessors in the realm of religion and is now the only true faith, clearly exalted above all others. The idea of Muslim superiority is central to the Islamic world-view and figures prominently in numerous chapters of Islamic Law and Tradition²⁸."

Slow as it might have been, however, Christians were converting and this was ultimately a question of far more concern to the Church of the East and to Timothy. Though Timothy faced a variety of different issues in his time in office, Berti argues quite reasonably that this was a major informing factor in Timothy's church policy, especially concerning its expansion. In speaking of the missionaries Timothy commissioned for the provinces of Daylam and Gilan,

²⁸ Friedmann, Yohanan. *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 14

Berti says, “On peut aisément deviner l’importance assignée par Timothée à la pleine incorporation de ces populations dans l’Église de l’Est avant une possible conquête islamique²⁹.”

Joseph of Merv’s conversion brought the importance of this kind of activity to the fore by revealing two concepts related to life under Islam which would plague Timothy and the church he represented up to the present. First, Joseph’s departure from the Church made it clearer than anything else surrounding the election that such conversions, even from the highest echelons of the Church of the East hierarchy, could and would happen, especially in situations in which someone might have a grievance with the religious authorities. It had become clear that if there was a way to slow this process, that should be a priority. Secondly, Mari tells us that Joseph’s final act before abandoning his faith was to bring his contention over Timothy before the Caliph³⁰.

Though the Caliph ruled in Timothy’s favor, perhaps more in seeing the benefits of gaining an experienced administrator as governor of Basra who owed the Caliph his allegiance over simply gaining a compliant Catholicos beridden by adversarial Christian opponents. Whatever the Caliph’s motives, this left a bittersweet taste in Timothy’s mouth³¹. Throughout his letter to Bar Sahde, Timothy talks of his influence at the court, but he also indicates that it frustrates him that the caliph’s interference was necessary. Timothy’s frustration might have been rooted in a knowledge of the way in which the Sasanian Shahs had come to dominate Church politics³². If this was the case, he proved prescient, as that same pattern took force within a generation or two of Timothy’s passing.

²⁹ Berti, *Idéologie et Politique*, 71-110

³⁰ Gismondi, *Amri et Slibae*, 63-64/72

³¹ Bidawid, *Lettres*, 64

³² Moffet, *History*, 231-234

After the controversies of the election settled down, Timothy lived a long life, working a fine balance between the needs of his churchmen throughout the culturally diverse and broad lands of the Church of the East. His death in 823 marked in many ways the end of an era.³³ His 42 year reign was from an Abbasid political standpoint relatively uneventful, coinciding with a significant portion of the “Golden Age of Abbasid Culture³⁴,” and the reigns of to list the more prominent, the Caliphs al-Mahdi (775-785), Harun al-Rashid (786-809) and al-Mamun (813-833)³⁵. Though there were a number of political shifts in that time, the period has its reputation as a golden age precisely because of the social and economic stability present throughout practically the whole of Timothy’s life.

This meant that Timothy lived in a period unlike that of either of the other focal points of this study. Babai’s period was fairly stable politically, but the situation of the Church of the East was quite turbulent. Yaballaha’s period, as will be seen below, was one of political uncertainty and significant persecution. Timothy’s time had its challenges such as the newfound ease with which his churchmen could convert to Islam just discussed, but this timeframe was largely a breath of fresh air. Timothy’s peaceful reign facilitated the ongoing health of the Church of the East by steering its vision in his lifetime away from internal struggles and the problems inherent to any large organization, such as corruption, and towards a unity and identity that would carry it through much more challenging times ahead. He carried out two synods in his lifetime and ruled

³³ Bidawid, *Lettres*, 1

³⁴ This concept will not be investigated here. While there are many definitions of precisely what could be called the “Golden Age” which can often become quite tendentious, the reign of Timothy fits firmly into practically all of them. For more on the period see Kennedy, Hugh. *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty*. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2005); Khan, Arshad. *Islam, Muslims, and America: Understanding the Basis of Their Conflict*. (New York: Algora Publishing, 2003) 14ff.

³⁵ Bosworth, Clifford Edmund. *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual*. *New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys* (2nd ed.). (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004) 6ff.

on a variety of matters that demanded the attention of the Church leader, but all in all one of his greatest contributions to the efforts of his church was the maintenance of peace.

One focal element of Timothy's reforms warrants special note here, namely the Church of the East's concept of mission. This concept was central to the identity of the Church of the East throughout its formation and as it matured under the Sassanids. Though the nuances of the concept changed in the Abbasid period largely through Timothy's efforts, they nevertheless remained recognizable. One of the primary means of mission in the earliest years of the Church of the East was through the monastics, and though the form of monasticism may have changed as seen in the last chapter, the essence of the practice, largely through the efforts of men such as Babai, was maintained.

Shortly after Timothy's death, however, a Christian apologist called the efficacy of this form of mission into question by contriving a debate at the court of the Caliph al-Ma'mun. The unknown author has the Muslim apologist al-Hashimi ask his Christian opponent, 'Abd al-Masih al-Kindi, why the church was weakening and miracles no longer happened. The Christian's response, and thus the response of the churchman who invented him was, "Now the monks are no longer missionaries³⁶."

One of Timothy's greatest innovations was the identification of a need for adaptation in approach of the Church of the East to this foundational Christian concept which would carry on beyond his lifetime. Though he did not start the great Church of the East missions across Asia, he did for a time direct them. Living as he did in a bright period of history for his churchmen, there were nevertheless limitations. Timothy saw that these limitations were rooted in what

³⁶ Quoted in Moffet, *History Vol. 1*, 361

would legitimately become an existential threat posed to his church under Islam. This threat will be examined in further detail below. Timothy's apprehension of the challenges raised by presence at the center of the Islamic polity enabled the formulation of a new direction in mission. This was a direction which rather than attempting in vain simply to halt the decline of his church, sought instead to slow decline and perhaps one day provide the church with the one thing that might stop it, a more potent political power that bowed knee only to *Ishô ' Meshîhâ*. Is it any wonder that several centuries later, as the leaders of the Church of the East stood before the altar crowning their newest leader, an Easterner born in what is now China of the same ethnicity as the temporal rulers of much of the known world, that they bestowed him with the name Yaballaha, Given of God? This will be examined in further detail below.

Timothy's Writings

As with Babai, there are both external sources about Timothy and internal sources by Timothy. Concerning the first, because of his prominence Timothy appears in a number of different authors. This study will limit itself to a few of the earliest or more relevant. Perhaps most significant of those is Thomas of Marga's *Book of Governors*³⁷. Thomas of Marga was a young contemporary of Timothy, writing in the first half of the 9th century, from the Monastery of Beth 'Abhe near Mt. Izla. His *Book of Governors* is a chronicle of the history of the Church of the East centered on the history of his monastery. For the purposes of this study, the details the life of Timothy as well as missionary efforts around the Caspian Sea in Gilan and Daylam which will be touched on in more detail in the latter part of the chapter³⁸.

³⁷ Budge, *Book of Governors*.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 460ff; cf. Bedjan, Paulus. *Liber superiorum, seu Historia Monastica, auctore Thoma, Episcopo Margensi. Liber Fundatorum Monasteriorum in regno Persarum et Arabum. Homiliae Mar-Narsetis in Joseph. Documenta Patrum de quibusdam verae fidei dogmatibus.* (Paris/Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1901); Blum, Georg Günter. *Die Geschichte der Begegnung christlich-orientalischer Mystik mit der Mystik des Islams.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz

Another prominent external source is Gregory Abū al-Faraj Bar Hebraeus, one of the most illustrious Syriac scholars in history. Indeed, the designation of Syriac is unnecessary because his contributions to scholarship qualify him among the greatest scholars in history. As a friend of Mar Yaballaha, his story will be visited in more detail in the next chapter³⁹. In this chapter the focus will be those components of his *Chronicle* of World history in which he details the activity of Timothy⁴⁰.

Beyond such external sources, much of what we know of Timothy's life comes from his own hand. According to 'Abdisho he penned over 200 letters⁴¹, but only 59 of those remain of which perhaps half are edited and a handful translated⁴². These letters were generally pastoral, but nevertheless contained significant sections of theological explication. Yet, his writing was not restricted to letters. Bidawid lists 5 categories into which his works fall: Scientific, Theological, Liturgical, Canonical, and finally the letters⁴³. Many of these have been lost, though they are mentioned in even relatively modern sources holding out hope that they might turn up in an as yet unedited collection.

Because of the breadth of Timothy's work, while touching on a number of these writings, this study will only focus on a couple of pieces which specifically relate to developments within the Church of the East in his lifetime. These are his letter concerning the debate with Caliph al-Mahdi, number 59; and the introduction to his publication of the Canons of his second synod as

Verlag, 2009); Teule Teule, Herman G.B. "Thomas of Margā." In *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. Volume 1 (600–900)*, by David Richard Thomas, & Barbara Hjärdís Roggema, 688–690. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009.

³⁹ For a comprehensive look at his life see Takahashi, Hidemi. *Barhebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005.

⁴⁰ Abbeloos and Lamy, *Bar Hebraei*

⁴¹ Bidawid, *Lettres*, 11

⁴² Ibid 17ff

⁴³ Ibid 6ff

well as Canon number 12 from that collection. These will first be examined in some detail then their place in Timothy's reforms will be assessed in the light of other relevant texts.

Letter 59, in which Timothy detailed his conversation/debate with the Caliph al-Mahdi is perhaps his most well-known work⁴⁴. This dissertation has little to add to critical studies of this text done in the past, but an overview of the text itself is useful for a fuller understanding of Timothy's aims in his own time. The text is framed as a classic dialogue, but Timothy's responses to the Caliph show his considerable political acumen. There are both Syriac and Arabic recensions which might mean that there was an evangelistic dimension to it, but it is more likely apologetic considering Timothy's own perception of the piece, which gives us a unique glimpse into Timothy's perceptions of Islam as a whole.

Some background of the text itself is useful. Within a few years of cementing his patriarchy, Timothy was invited before the Caliph, al-Mahdi, to debate their two religions. He was not the first Christian to have argued his faith before a Muslim Caliph, or even the first Catholicos of the Church of the East. For instance, the Patriarch Henanisho I, in 691, was brought before the Caliph Abd al-Malik and asked what he thought of Islam. His response was, "It is a power that was established by the sword and not a faith confirmed by divine miracles, like Christianity and like the old Law of Moses." Though the Caliph considered cutting out the Patriarch's tongue, he relented, letting the patriarch go on the condition that the church leader would never appear before the royal throne again⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ For an edition and English translation see Mingana, Alphonse. "Timothy's Apology for Christianity." *Woodbridge Studies* 2 (1928): 1-162; Putman also conducted an analysis of the text with a French translation, Putman, *Timothee I*, 169-327. For a German critical edition see *Timotheos I, Ostsyrischer Patriarch: Disputation mit dem Kalifen Al-Mahdi*. (Leuven: Peeters, 2011).

⁴⁵ Quoted Baumer, *Church of the East*, 144; cf. Landron, B. *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Irak: Attitudes Nestoriennes vis-a-vis de l'Islam*. (Paris: Calscript, 2005) 29

It is a measure of Timothy's wisdom that when he came before the ruler a century later, his responses, though not conciliatory, did not rouse the Caliph's ire. These responses are recorded in Letter 59. The letter opens in writing to the Catholicos' friend Sergius, who may be Sergius of Elam, the recipient of a number of his other letters who will be featured below. In his intro, Timothy laments the occasion of the debate itself, saying "On the one hand I feel repugnance to write to your Lordship, and on the other I am anxious to do so. I feel repugnance, on account of the futility of the outcome of the work⁴⁶," yet he continues to transcribe the affair. The challenge inherent in the event is clear in the manner in which it began. Al-Mahdi opened the debate with what to Muslims of his day seemed a surefire if crass argument against Christianity. Moffet's assessment is worth repeating:

As the patriarch later recorded the proceedings, he had scarcely finished the customary complimentary address when the caliph "did something to me which he had never done before; he said to me, 'O Catholicos, [how can] a man like you who possesses all this knowledge and utters such sublime words concerning God, ... [say that God] married a woman from whom He begat a son.'" Thus, as bluntly as when John of Damascus forty years earlier wrote against Islam, the argument began again on the subject of Christology. But Timothy was no polemicist, and times had changed. He coolly agreed that the statement was a blasphemy, "Who would say such a thing?" Nevertheless, he continued, "Christ is the Son of God – not, however, in the carnal way⁴⁷."

The debate continues with the Caliph and Timothy sparring verbally on the possibility or impossibility of the Christian faith in light of what Islam deemed possible. From time to time, Timothy's responses echoed the formulations of Babai a century before. For instance:

And our King said to me: "How was that Eternal One born in time?"—And I answered: "It is not in His eternity that He was born of Mary, O our King, but in His temporalness and humanity." —And our King said to me: "There are, therefore, two distinct beings: if one is eternal and God from God as you said, and the other temporal, the latter is therefore a pure man from Mary."—And I retorted: "Christ is not two beings, O King, nor two Sons, but Son and Christ are

⁴⁶ Mingana, "Timothy's Apology", 153

⁴⁷ Moffett, *History vol. 1*, 349-50; cf. Mingana, "Timothy's Apology", 154

one; there are in Him two natures, one of which belongs to the Word and the other one which is from Mary, clothed itself with the Word-God."—And the King said: "They are, therefore, two, one of whom created and fashioned, and the other uncreated and unfashioned."—And I said to him: "We do not deny the duality of natures, O King, nor their mutual relations, but we profess that both of them constitute one Christ and Son⁴⁸."

It is clear, throughout, that Timothy is fighting a defensive fight, because he never goes on the attack. Such would have been suicide, perhaps literally, though in line with earlier Catholicoi. Yet he defends his faith ably. For instance, when asked about the Muslim belief that Muhammed is the Paraclete attested in the Gospels, Timothy illustrated through a series of syllogisms why this cannot be so⁴⁹, and when, after more than a day of prior questioning, al-Mahdi asked him point blank, "What do you think of Muhammed", the patriarch responded by extolling the virtue of the Muslim prophet for the light he had given the Arab peoples, saying that he had "walked in the way of the prophets," neither slandering the Muslim prophet, nor acknowledging his prophecy. The Caliph proceeded to ask why Timothy would not accept the words of the prophet.

"Which words?" asked the Patriarch. "That God is one and there is no other," said the Caliph. Timothy agreed. "This belief in one God, I have learned from the Torah, from the Prophets and from the Gospel," he said. "I stand by it and shall die in it... I believe in one God in three, and three in one, but not in three different Godheads, however, but in the persons of God's word and the Spirit⁵⁰."

In this manner, the debate carried on. A myriad of topics were covered, including the differences between the various Christian sects⁵¹, and though no one was declared a winner, Timothy secured for himself the respect of the Caliph al-Mahdi, such that he would eventually be

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 154-5

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 107-109; cf. Hurst, *Timothy I*, 124

⁵⁰ Quoted in Moffet, *History*, 351

⁵¹ For the relevant passage see Hurst, *Timothy I*, 22; for more on the debate itself and Timothy's perception of key Islamic concepts see Samir, S.K. "The Prophet Muhammad as Seen by Timothy I and Other Arab Christian Authors." In *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, by David Thomas, 75-106. (Leiden: Brill, 2001)

asked by that same Caliph to translate Aristotle's *Topics*. Timothy carried out this translation with his friend who had helped him secure his bishopric and the patriarchy, Abu-Nuh al-Anbari, an important Abbasid official and a Christian who is alleged to have written a now lost *Refutation of the Quran*. Timothy saw the translation he and Abu-Nuh were doing as of significant importance and it stands as an example of his specific aims concerning his church and its role in Abbasid society which will be examined further below⁵².

The debate stands out as perhaps the highpoint in Christian-Muslim relations and perhaps of Church of the East influence⁵³, but for as much as was said in this debate, what is almost more significant is what was not said. Timothy is lauded as a brilliant debater not for the quality of his arguments which were adequate to remain valid as a faith without offending his hosts, but rather that he did not say all he could have said. He showed tact where many of his co-religionists would not have, a characteristic he frequently exhibited, and this in spite of the fact that his honorable opponent was less gracious.

Timothy was not afraid to stand firm on what he believed, but he worked hard to do it in a non-polemical fashion, at least to his opponents' faces. Many have taken his approach as representative of a somewhat modernistic faith dialogue, a "precious moment of civilized, intelligent religious exchange⁵⁴." This sort of assessment falls short of apprehending the reality of Timothy's situation. There is nothing civilized about having to carefully spin every word to make sure it does not offend someone who could end your life if they wished. This is clear in

⁵² For more on Abu-Nuh see Cabrol, C. *Une famille de secretaries nestoriens, les al-Anbārī, sous les premiers abbassides*. Vols. 1 Parole de L'Orient, 27, in *Actes du II Symposium Syro-Arabicum (Sayyadat al-Bir, Septembre 1998) Etudes Arabes Chretiennes*, by S. Samir, 295-320. (2002); cf. Swanson, M. "Abū Nūḥ al-Anbārī." In *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, by David: Roggema, Barbara Thomas, 397-400. (Leiden: Brill, 2009); For Timothy's attitude concerning the Caliph's commission see Brock, "Christology" 233-246; For more on Timothy at the Caliph's court, see Fiey, *sous les Abbassides*, 38

⁵³ Moffet, *History vol. 1*, 352

⁵⁴ Jenkins, *Lost History*, 17

Timothy's sentiments recorded at the opening of his letter. It is clear in the manner he closes, saying that on the king's departure to his chamber, he himself "left him and returned in peace to my patriarchal residence⁵⁵." What Timothy hoped for in meeting the Caliph is unclear. Perhaps in accordance with his youth he harbored vain aspirations to the closet conversion of the Caliph, but such thought is conjecture. He almost certainly did not anticipate a "precious moment" of enlightened inter-faith dialogue as much as that might be appealing to modern sensibilities. Sidney Griffith summarizes his attitude about the debate well in describing for us the preface of letter 59:

In it Timothy voices some diffidence about the "vain labor" involved in such a composition, and he complains that he is carrying out the task of writing it, "not without difficulty, nor without unwillingness." What may have proved daunting to the patriarch was the knowledge that his best apologetic efforts would carry little conviction for Muslims, nor would they do much to prevent upwardly mobile Christians from converting to Islam, especially from within his own Church of the East⁵⁶.

Whether discouraged or not, however, he still wrote the proceedings down, arguably for the purpose of encouraging those of his churchmen who lived under Islam.

And it was to those churchmen that the next text under study relates, the canons from Timothy's second synod. This study will not examine every Canon, but will focus instead on the introduction to the text and the 12th canon as of particular import in light of that introduction. The 12th Canon reveals the relationship Timothy expects of his churchmen toward the Muslim polity and especially towards its legal system⁵⁷. This is a point where Timothy's role as Shepherd of his flock comes to the fore in that he sought to protect his churchmen from the

⁵⁵ Mingana, "Timothy's Apology," 228

⁵⁶ Griffith, Sidney. *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) 48.

⁵⁷ Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher*, 2:68-29

dangers of external legal arbitration. This study will show that his approach was marked by the same guile present in his early career.

In 804 Timothy called a general synod. The proceedings of this synod are recorded in a text written by Timothy himself and preserved in modern recension with German translation carried out by Eduard Sachau⁵⁸. Apart from the introduction there are 99 separate canons. In addition to the regular ecclesiastical hierarchy issues common to most synods, these include rulings on a number of commonplace elements of daily life, from marriage to what books to read. These were each situations in which a Christian might find other approaches, such as that afforded by Islam, appealing, and one of Timothy's reasons for issuing these canons bears directly on that appeal, as will be seen.

In his introduction to the Canons, he begins by pointing out that rules and guidelines should be superfluous for the Christian. "If Christians are in some mystical fashion presently in the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the Kingdom of Heaven there is not a single controversy or dispute, then where there are neither disputes nor controversies one should not see religious decrees for Christians. Such worldly decrees are superfluous and useless⁵⁹."

He goes on to emphasize this and draw the aim of the reader to the courts through invoking the sermon on the mount:

For who would need a decree or judgment if in being struck on the right cheek, he yielded up his left as well? Who would seek judgment and decrees, if in bestowing upon the oppressor his coat, he likewise granted his cloak? To which court or tribunal should he rush off, he who has impoverished himself giving everything he has to the poor and carries his cross on his shoulder and is dead to the world and all that is in it, according to the commands and decrees of the

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 2:53-117

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 2:55. All translations into English are the author's own.

Heavenly King. For Christians are indeed right now mystically and typically, though not in reality, in the Kingdom of Heaven...⁶⁰

Though a lacuna in the text deprives the reader of the development of his argument, where it picks up he continues in the same vein:

...now one contends with another, now one is in contention with another. For paltry and few are the heavenly. Many and even more are the lawbreakers and earthly. Because of this, people do not go before the saints, but rather before the wicked for judgement and resolution, as if they do not possess, so to speak, laws and commandments suitable for this world and the conduct of mortals. Thus, they transgress both apostolic and divine law, which commands believers that they should not stand before the wicked to be judged but rather the saints. For they are the ones by whom the angels and even the whole world will be judged⁶¹.

For Timothy the issuance of these decrees itself is painful, but the recourse of his flock to outside arbitration is one of the prime motivating factors not only in the transcription of these canons but in their formulation to begin with. He shows this explicitly using a scripture which shows up again in canon 12 and serves as one of his strongest arguments for his point:

This (composition) is for two reasons. First, in order to stay the desire of those who repeatedly roused and exhorted me towards this. Second, to take away any excuse for those who break the divine laws, who, because of a lack of statutes, rulings, and laws are going to the chambers and courts of outsiders, as if there were no judgements or decrees fitting for this world. As the divine book says, "Is there no God in Israel, that they go to inquire of Beelzebub, God of Ekron⁶²." This was in the time of a king who worshipped idols and was found wanting by God through the mouth of the fiery prophet Elijah⁶³.

He then goes on to elaborate on his reasons for not writing these canons down sooner then proceeds to address the challenges inherent in his role as the head of a multi-cultural church:

The greatest challenge of all, though, is distinguishing and separating people one from another, whether by geographical region, country, race, language, custom, or law. Every one of them, by custom and law, is accustomed to and has been raised delighting in what is to them their manner and way of life. They might not

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 2:55-56

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² 2 Kings 1:3

⁶³ *Ibid* 2:56-57

change or distance themselves at all from their customs and upbringing, or they might be strengthened despite extreme peril by accepting the changes that come from what they long for, for custom is second nature, as it has been beautifully stated.

These rules represent to Timothy an approach to the rule of the whole of his church, regarding its entire geographical and cultural span from Egypt to the Sea of China, not through imposing undue difficulty on any given culture, nor allowing those of different background to use their customs and cultural background as a defense for ungodly practices. The church is the arbiter between Christians and woe to the man who might think otherwise. The magnitude of this task, both the demand for divine assistance and the breadth of human diversity is apparent to him. “Man alone, of all that is on the earth, possesses equality with his brethren in his own nature, on account of the works he has received. Mankind is also distinguished in his characteristics and actions, due to the power of knowledge and free-will received from his creator. Who then could bring together that which according to its nature is greatly and wholly diversified besides the one whose origin and formulation is the divine command⁶⁴.”

The introduction then closes with Timothy iterating his trust in God and the prayers of the saints and stating the format of his composition. In this intro, while the ultimate scope of this message, being canons to the whole church, was to every member of that confession no matter where he lived, the clear focus of the message is to those in the interior, in Timothy’s own vicinity, with whom he relates daily and who speak his language.

This is apparent in the 12th canon, where the issue of members of his church going before outsiders is more explicitly addressed. While this could be seen as relating to Church of the East Christians anywhere, it is clear that Timothy is concerned with those of his churchmen around

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 2:60

him who might be persuaded by the current socio-political climate. The text of the canon follows:

Is it right for a Christian man or woman in arbitration of disputes, to seek the judgement of outsiders?

If they are Christians, how can they then go to non-Christian judges?! God speaks to them through the mouth of his prophet Elijah: "Is there no God in Israel that you go to inquire of Beelzebub, the god of Ekron?" If they go to non-Christian judges, how can they be Christians?! Paul speaks to them, "You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of another. You cannot drink the cup of our Lord and the cup of Beliar." Therefore, when people dare to transgress the Apostolic Rule, then they must do penance and almsgiving and stand in sackcloth and ashes⁶⁵.

Surprisingly the least significant aspect of this canon is the exhortation not to seek outside judgement. Uriel Simonsohn, in his book, *A Common Justice*⁶⁶, makes it quite clear that these sorts of ecclesiastical declarations were rather the norm than the exception, well before Islam had ever entered the picture. For instance, he quotes a Canon issued at a Church of the East synod in 576 condemning those who would "defy ecclesiastical judgment by seeking refuge outside the church."

...They then cling to their defiance and their infidelity, seeking refuge among the pagans [*ḥanpē*] and the secular [*‘ālmānāyē*]...⁶⁷

Such official exhortations were motivated by a desire to secure the ecclesiastical community against outside influences⁶⁸, and it had antecedents back to the beginnings of the faith. Paul issues just such an exhortation in 1 Corinthians chapter 6. In 576, however, there was little worry of a churchman in pursuit of external judgement abandoning his faith to receive it.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 2:68-69.

⁶⁶ Simonsohn, Uriel. *A Common Justice*. (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2011) 47ff

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 57; cf. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 376-77

⁶⁸ See Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 52

In issuing this decree, Timothy was making several statements to all levels of his church. On face level, he was prohibiting interaction with Islam at one of those crux points in which his congregants would be most susceptible to apostasy. Under ordinary circumstances a dispute between churchman would find arbitration from the most immediate clerical representative, with appeal going up the hierarchy potentially all the way to the Catholicos. Muslim courts offered an alternative to this. If a priest promised to be unsympathetic in a lawsuit, one might have incentive to seek arbitration elsewhere. Couple the appeal of a more favorable legal ruling with the scorn of one's peers either from one's offense itself or the stigma of seeking external arbitration, and whatever ties might be felt towards one's religious community could pale in comparison to the obvious legal advantages of being a part of the community deciding one's case. Seeing that Muslim law weighs the rights and testimony of a Muslim more highly than of a Christian, it all-the-more enhances one's motivations for both conversion and external arbitration⁶⁹. A fine example of this process in action is the situation with Joseph of Merv around Timothy's election mentioned earlier which robbed the Church of the East of one of its most ranked members.

Beyond the exhortation away from outside arbitration, however, there is a subtler activity in play here. Simonsohn says of this particular passage that it shows a degree of moderation on the part of the East Syrians compared to their West Syrian cousins⁷⁰. This is the same restraint evident in the debate with the Caliph and is a product of the very proximity of the Church of the East to the central authorities, yet this restraint is only on the surface. Timothy is as disturbed by the status of his church as any West Syrian.

⁶⁹ For the disparity between Muslims and Dhimmis in Muslim law see Bhala, Raj. *Understanding Islamic Law (Shari'a)*. (Danvers, MA: Lexisnexis, 2013) 1309ff

⁷⁰ Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 162

Where the Miaphysites might declare those in contravention to their decrees anathema, a Greek concept thereby foreign and irrelevant in Muslim society, the East Syrian canon simply calls them non-Christian, outsiders (*bāryē* ܒܪܝܝܐ)⁷¹ like those they seek judgment from. By seeking the judgement of outsiders, a Christian throws in his lot with the outsiders and is no longer a part of the community. But then it moves to describing the outsiders using scripture, and proceeds to audaciously label them as demons or at least under demonic influence, but in such a manner that any true outsider would have difficulty nailing it down. Herein is evident both the political brilliance and scriptural capability of Timothy. He has already quoted Elijah's rebuke of Ahaziah's messengers (2 Kings 1:3) in his introduction, and here does so again, equating these outsiders with none other than Beelzebub, in Syriac tradition a demonic lord if not Satan himself⁷². Perhaps because of its presence in the introduction, he was worried that the weight of this verse might not be apparent, so he seeks to drive the point home and confirms his intentions in the conflation of two Pauline scriptures; 1 Corinthians 10:21, on partaking from the table and cup of the lord and demons, and 2 Corinthians 6:15, a passage with a similar theme that is the only place in the NT in which the name *Beliar*, Lord of the underworld, is employed⁷³. By merging these two passages, he is able to name his opponents, using Biblical names that would not immediately be familiar to the ruling Arab regime, the outsiders whom he is describing in this canon.

This might appear as simple polemic, but the coup-de-main is in the name *Beliar* itself. It is remarkable because while it only occurs once in the Greek NT, it does not occur at all in the

⁷¹ Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher*, 2:66-67:12.

⁷² McLaughlin, J.L. "Beelzebub." In *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, by D.N. Freedman, A.C. Myers, & A.B. Beck. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000) 160

⁷³ Hastings, James. "Belial, Beliar." *Hastings Dictionary of the New Testament*. 1918.
<http://www.studydrive.org/dic/hdn/view.cgi?n=289> (accessed October 7, 2013)

Peshitta NT. The primary Syriac text of that day here uses the term Sāṭānā (Satan ܫܬܢܐ), a term that would have been recognizable to any Arab, as the Arabic term for a devil is Shayṭān (شيطان). The use of “Beliar” at the very least demonstrates Timothy’s familiarity with the Greek text or perhaps the Harklean text,⁷⁴ but the argument can be taken further. It would make sense to use the Peshitta here. That would be understood and apparent to anyone reading the text, which Timothy himself says is one of his motives for writing it. But using a term that is not as readily understood from an alternative reading of the texts and is not available to the lowest common denominator implies that there is another purpose in that choice, in other words, that Timothy could have used this term deliberately. The reason could be simple, such as style, but a distinct possibility exists that this is an attempt at obfuscation, a purposeful manipulation of the text to cloud the meaning from the very outsiders of whom Timothy was speaking, his Arab rulers. By identifying those outsiders from whom judgement might be sought as the demonic lords *Beliar* and *Beelzebub*, neither of which are names that occur in common Arabic texts, Timothy was making a strong statement to at least the leadership of his flock while avoiding explicit condemnation of his political superiors in any understandable context, a move that ensured their continued support or at least indifference which was necessary for his church to thrive and continue.

These texts give insight into Timothy’s motivations and actions as Catholicos. At this point it is useful to examine further the cultural climate that gave rise to these impulses.

⁷⁴ See Hurst, *Timothy I*, 87ff

Historical Background

As seen earlier, Timothy's life laid at what is often called the Golden Age of the Abbasid Caliphate. This was a period that has often been regarded favorably as one of relative peace and social stability in which the various religions got along well with each other and science and technology grew. While no one would deny the great strides taken in this period in the sciences, etc., *convivencia* was limited, and these limitations had their roots in the previous dynasty which will be briefly examined now.

Islamic rule in the time after the conquest had been relatively light on the various Christian sects, particularly in comparison to their later experience. Uriel Simonsohn writes:

In general, there appears to have been continuity from pre-Islamic times, as Christian communities were able to sustain communal organizations and retain cultural affiliations. Left to their own devices (or given the freedom to regain their authority), ecclesiastical leaders under Islamic rule continued to assert their control over their clergy, churches, monasteries, and schools. These institutions appear to have remained for the most part intact and had been left relatively unaffected by the turbulence of warfare in the first centuries of Islamic rule⁷⁵.

In many ways it served the Umayyads well not to push their faith too hard. Theirs was a regime in which a minority Arab population held dominion over an overwhelmingly non-Arab empire. The tax situation, in a large part inherited from earlier political systems but highly modified along religious lines among the Muslims, favored Arabs⁷⁶. The burden of state funding largely fell then on a combination of what could be attained through expansion coupled with *Jizya*, or head tax on non-Muslims. This taxation was easily carried out by using a system

⁷⁵ Simonsohn, Uriel. "Conversion, Apostasy, and Penance: The Shifting Identities of Muslim Converts in the Early Islamic Period." In *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond: Papers from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar, University of Oxford, 2009-2010*, by Arietta Papconstantinou, Neil McLynn, & Daniel I. Schwartz, 197-216. (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2015)

⁷⁶ For more on taxation in the Umayyad period and its origins see Duri, Abd al-Aziz. *Early Islamic Institutions: Administration and Taxation from the Caliphate to the Umayyads and Abbasids*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011) 107ff

adopted from the Persians, a system we today would describe as a *Millet* System in which a religious community was granted some autonomy under their hierarchical leader who administered them as a country within a country, so to speak, collecting their taxes for the greater state, and representing them before the ruler. Though the Ottomans came to be identified with this idea contributing a number of idiosyncrasies to its form, the term itself is derived from the Arabic *millah*, meaning religion, and the concept antedates the Ottoman Empire by at least a thousand years. The first millets recorded were established for the communities of the Church of the East and the Jews in the Sassanid Period⁷⁷.

This system enabled Christians to maintain their religious life nearly intact, and at least for the Church of the East, represented little in the way of change. For instance, under the Sassanids, the elite, almost invariably Zoroastrian classes paid no taxes, either on property or for conscription or the avoidance thereof. Lower class citizens of the empire might be forced to pay property taxes, but there was no head tax for them. Christians endured both a head tax and property taxes, but were not forced to the same marriage standards as ethnic Persians⁷⁸.

For those who had been under Roman rule, especially those who had been part of the ruling Chalcedonian Church, Islamic rule represented a significant departure from customary policies, at least inasmuch as they were no longer the religious system of the state. This could

⁷⁷ See Wigram, William. *An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church*. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004) 227ff; cf. Moffet, *History* vol. 1, 221-222; for more on the Ottoman form see Karavaltchev, Ventzislav. "How Just was the Ottoman Millet System." *Academia.Edu*. Journal of European Baptist Studies. May 2011. http://www.academia.edu/2362427/how_just_was_the_ottoman_millet_system (accessed October 25, 2013); cf. Stussi, Marcel. *Models of Religious Freedom: Switzerland, The United States, and Syria by Analytical, Methodological, and Eclectic Representation*. (Zurich: Lit Verlage, 2012) 340ff; Bosworth, C.E. "The Concept of Dhimma in Early Islam." In *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, by Benjamin Braude, & Bernard Lewis, 37-51. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982) 37-51

⁷⁸ See Asmussen, Jes P., "Christians in Iran", Pages 924-948 in *The Cambridge History of Iran. Vol. 3(2): The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*. Edited by Yarshater, Ehsan. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

perhaps account for many of the early conversions that we have on record at least among those who had been members of that Imperial Church. For the Chalcedonians or Melkites, who had enjoyed a couple centuries or so of power and influence, there were many who valued continued status over faith⁷⁹.

Concerning the Miaphysite populations of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, they had experienced a fair degree of hardship under the Romans who did not tolerate religious differences to the extent that the Persians had, and even before Islam these groups had begun to coalesce into separate confessions⁸⁰. This does not mean that life was perfect for all Miaphysites under the Muslims. Consider the 40,000 Coptic sailors who were disaffected enough with their Arab rulers that after being pressed into service during the 2nd siege of Constantinople in 718, they actually sailed over to the Chalcedonian side and began fighting against the Arabs in the midst of battle⁸¹.

The Church of the East, with its center of gravity in Iraq, unlike those of the Miaphysite and Chalcedonian confessions, was well removed from the center of Umayyad power in Damascus. It is true that the Chalcedonian center of power also laid beyond Arab control, but unlike the Chalcedonians, the Church of the East had relatively little presence in Umayyad political centers, and in turn very little opportunity to build up any strong influence there. This meant that there was less material incentive for East Syrians to undergo the conversion process,

⁷⁹ Hoyland, Robert G., *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam. Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* 13. (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1997) 22ff.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 18; cf. Wigram, *Introduction*, 27ff

⁸¹ See Mango, Cyril and Roger Scott. *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 546-548; Guiland, Rodolphe. "L'Expedition de Maslama contre Constantinople (717-718)." *Études byzantines*, 1959: 109-133

particularly in an area like Timothy's childhood home, Adiabene⁸². Garrison cities such as Kufa and Basra or administrative centers such as Mosul offset this to a degree⁸³, but for the most part it was not until Abbasid times that suitable incentive arose among the East Syrians to see conversions become more substantial from their numbers.

Whatever the confession, however, Christians who had enjoyed social status no longer had that experience. If an individual desired ongoing political status, it was generally most readily attainable through a fairly lengthy process, detailed in a moment. Because of the reliance on *Dhimmi* taxes, the Umayyads were reluctant to let *Dhimmi* numbers dwindle, simply limiting the population's ability to convert to Islam. On account of this there were policies in place to discourage and even prohibit conversion among non-Arabs⁸⁴.

For most of the Umayyad period, Islamic proselytism could primarily be seen among the Arabs themselves. There had been no shortage of Arab Christians on the eve of the Muslim conquests in cities such as Hira, Najran, much of Yemen, etc., but within a century or so, their numbers had dwindled to insignificance. This was due to a strong push on the part of the Umayyad polity to bring all Arabs into the Islamic fold. This does not necessarily mean that nefarious means of conversion were employed, but it was made clear that an Arab was expected to be Muslim. For those who refused, they might be forced into *dhimmitude*, essentially giving up their Arab identity, or they might leave. For instance, the one-time ruler of the Ghassanids,

⁸² For accounts of what conversions did take place among the East Syrians see Brown, Richard. *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia from the Time of Mohammed till the Fourteenth Century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933) 53ff; see also Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 174ff

⁸³ Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 90ff.

⁸⁴ Simonsohn, Uriel. "Conversion, Apostasy, and Penance: The Shifting Identities of Muslim Converts in the Early Islamic Period." In *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond: Papers from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar, University of Oxford, 2009-2010*, by Arietta Papconstantinou, Neil McLynn, & Daniel I. Schwartz, 197-216. (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2015) 202ff

Jabalah ibn al Aiham, apparently fled to Constantinople himself. Nicephorus I, (Emperor of Byzantium, 802-11) later claimed descent from this man⁸⁵.

For non-Arab conquered peoples, one way that the eager found to become a Muslim was by taking an Arab as a patron. Though this was not the only means, it was an effective means, and was often accomplished through becoming a slave and subsequently being manumitted, thus erasing one's identity and granting adoption into one's patron's clan. While this did technically make a person an Arab, the distinction was still fairly clear. The collective term that designated people who had become Muslim/Arab in this manner was *Mawali*, plural of *Mawla* which is derived from the term *wala'* or contract.

Because the process of becoming *Mawali* was elaborate and uncertain, rights commensurate to the difficulty were expected but generally withheld. The allegedly resulting Arab identity of those who underwent the process was of a de facto lower class than "genuine" Arab identity. This ongoing discrimination by Umayyad elites proved untenable, and these *mawali*, among others, played a key role in ushering in the Abbasid era⁸⁶, which rose to power in part on the platform of Islam being open for everyone, Arab or not, without discrimination⁸⁷.

The Abbasids, ascending to the throne as a result of socio-political/religious dissent, did away with the *Mawali* process altogether. Moffet says of the regime change:

The 'Abbasids, who came to power on a tide of Islamic orthodoxy, gave religion a recognized priority over race. True religion, not Arab birth, was to be the basis of Islamic rule. As a modern Arab historian (Hitti) has pointed out, "the Umayyad

⁸⁵ See Hitti, Philip. *History of the Arabs*. (London: Macmillan, 1964) 404; cf. Brown, *Eclipse*, 34

⁸⁶ Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 200ff; cf. Crone, Patricia. *God's Rule: Government and Islam*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 84ff; Kennedy, Hugh. *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*. (New York: Routledge, 2001) 32; Retso, Jan. *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads*. (Abingdon, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2013) 57

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 202

Empire was Arab, the ‘Abbasid was more international. The ‘Abbasid was an empire of Neo-Moslems in which the Arabs formed only one of the many component races⁸⁸.”

Because of these religious underpinnings, the Abbasids sought to distance themselves from the corruption that they had accused the Umayyads of. In order to appease their own power base closer to the homelands of their supporting Persian partisans and those Arabs who had been settled among them⁸⁹, the new regime shunned the Umayyad capital of Damascus beginning a process that would eventually result in the foundation of the city of Baghdad in 762, just a few miles from the old Persian capital of Ctesiphon. This meant that what had been a distant issue for the East Syrians became core to their existence in a way that none of the other confessions would experience in the same period. Though Adiabene, where the subject of this chapter Timothy grew up, remained a mountainous Christian stronghold on the periphery of the Islamic world and would remain so until well after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate, the church hierarchy itself was located in the old Persian capital. In response to these political shifts, which took place around the time Timothy rose to power, the church hierarchy was moved to the new Abbasid city⁹⁰.

Initially the Church of the East fared well in Abbasid times. They were comfortable with the forms of governance the Abbasids inherited from their Persian forebears. Unlike their Chalcedonian brethren under the Umayyads, the Church in Persia had never experienced genuine government favor, as was evident in the last chapter. Timothy himself points this out in a letter to a colleague. “We never had a Christian king. First it was the Magians for about four hundred

⁸⁸ Moffet, *History* vol. 1, 349.

⁸⁹ Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, 54

⁹⁰ See Le Strange, Guy. *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate: From Contemporary Arabic and Persian Sources*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900) 203ff

years: then the Muslims (mašlmānê)⁹¹.” It is important to recall, however, that this did not mean they were always an underground church, hiding in the catacombs. This was made apparent in the last chapter in which their influence even to the highest levels of the Persian government was clear⁹².

To review, part of this influence was that the Church of the East in Persia, as the persecutions settled, eventually developed a solid working relationship with the Sasanian throne, to the extent that the Shah played an integral role in the process of appointing a Catholicos⁹³. Because the Abbasids drew much of their political inspiration from the Persians, it was natural for the Church of the East to fall into familiar forms with the Abbasids. This had implications not only concerning their church and its members, but also in regards to the role of the Church of the East in Abbasid society as a whole. The Chalcedonians and even to an extent the Miaphysites had very limited recent experience being subjects of non-Christian rulers. The Church of the East was right at home. The shifting of the patriarchal see to the new Abbasid capital was simply recognition on the part of Church hierarchy of this new state of affairs⁹⁴.

The Church of the East did not make this jump lightly and with no consideration of their surroundings. Their influence had been on the rise since the regime change, and even early on, they had reasons for such aspirations. Witness the method in which Timothy ultimately attained to the Catholicate. His ruse, examined above, may have given him the ecclesiastical vote, but his position was not finally secured without the aid of the Caliph’s doctor, ‘Isa Abu Kuraysh, as well as one of the Caliph’s assistants, Timothy’s friend who had also helped him gain his bishopric,

⁹¹ Quoted in Hurst, *Timothy I*, 242

⁹² See above; cf. Fiey, *Jalons*, 98-99, 140ff.

⁹³ See above; cf. Fiey, *Jalons*, 113ff; Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 29ff; Morony, *Christianity in Iraq*, 340ff

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 341

Abu Nuh al-Anbar, both East Syrian Christians⁹⁵. To the leadership of the Church of the East, old patterns were simply reasserting themselves.

But being at the center of power meant that the challenges that up to then had been reserved for others now became central to the experience of the Church of the East, namely concerning the intersection of conversion and upward mobility. Their rise to influence coming as it did at the outset of the long-lived Abbasid Caliphate had enormous ramifications on the long-term health of the Church of the East. Had the Umayyad barriers to entry persisted into the Abbasid age, who knows what the world might look like? But for those who sought power and influence, the *Shahada* had become a simple means thereto. While conversion still might mean abandoning one's family and one's social circles it also entailed an upward mobility that was otherwise unavailable⁹⁶.

This had never been the case under the Sassanians, who had risen to power on a Persian/Zoroastrian ethno-religious platform. Accounts show Ardashir, the founder of the Sasanian line to have been a member of a priestly family in his home city of Anahid and justifying his rise to power on account of this background⁹⁷. Though Christian numbers grew in that empire, there were certain political positions that by their nature were not open to Christians simply on account of their faith or ethnic heritage.

Christians had been satisfied with this, creating their hierarchy apart from the Sassanid political sphere, with direct contact only in the appointment of a Catholicos, but indirect influences were everywhere. This continued into the Abbasid period. In fact, the influential

⁹⁵ See the account in Putman, *Timothee I*, 19

⁹⁶ Simonsohn, "Conversion" 202 - 204

⁹⁷ Boyce, Mary. *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. (London: Routledge, 2001) 101-1092

positions held were very similar. For instance, during the Abbasid Caliphate Christians of the Bukhtishu family held the position of Court physician for several generations off and on⁹⁸. However, under the Sassanids, it was unlikely to the extreme that a Syriac speaking Christian might rise to a position such as governor, and becoming a Zoroastrian, even were it possible, would not be of considerable aid in this respect.

Yet among the Abbasids there was a path to power open to any willing to accept it. While it was true that Christians could and had risen to positions of great influence in both regimes, under the caliphs there were distinct advantages to being a Muslim, with considerably lower barriers of entry⁹⁹. Being Muslim simply afforded more opportunities than remaining Christian, and as time passed, that difference in opportunity became more pronounced.

An excellent example of this principle in action was Joseph of Merv, as seen above, a key player in Timothy's election, who when faced with the loss of what power he had enjoyed among his churchmen, abandoned his faith and was rewarded for his apostasy with the governorship of one of the Abbasid Caliphate's key cities, Basra¹⁰⁰.

Joseph's case in early Abbasid times was not isolated, but it was not yet as commonplace as it would become. The Christian faith was gradually becoming more and more marginalized within an area that many today fail to realize was as much a Christian homeland as Egypt,

⁹⁸ See Browne, Edward Granville. *Islamic Medicine*. (Noida, India: Goodword Publishing, 2002) 23; cf. Richter-Bernburg, Lutz. "BOḲTĪŠŪ." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. December 15, 1989. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/boktis-ancestor-of-a-syro-persian-nestorian-family-of-physicians> (accessed May 3, 2013)

⁹⁹ In this case the same could be said of Christianity in the lands of "Christendom," and there has been much investigation into Jewish converts to Christianity throughout Medieval Europe. See Elukin, Jonathan. "From Jew to Christian? Conversion and Immutability in Medieval Europe," in *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages*, ed. James Muldoon (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 171–89

¹⁰⁰ Gismondi, *Amri et Slibae*, 63-64/72; cf. Putman, *Timothee I*, 18; Braun, *Timothei*, 141; Labourt, *De Timotheo I*, 13

Greece, or Italy¹⁰¹. To a member of the Church of the East in Timothy's day, that marginalization probably seemed distant, if a threat at all. The dating of Christianity's decline and Islam's ascendancy as the majority religion in this period is a tendentious subject. Bulliet argues for a sort of "conversion curve with a gradual slide into Islam" by which that faith attained majority status by 975 CE¹⁰². His model, though widely accepted, has had its critics, particularly regarding its broad application across the whole variety of available Islamic societies largely due to the differing social factors present in diverse areas that cannot be quantitatively represented¹⁰³. At this point a more comprehensive alternative is largely unavailable, though Jenkins posits a model which he terms "punctuated equilibrium" which may suit. He suggests a much more conservative and gradual general-growth of Islam offset by events and social changes that inspired considerably increased growth, arguing for Islam's majority status a century or more later¹⁰⁴.

For the purposes of this study, whatever model, three factors are important. First, that Islam became the majority religion at some point in the Abbasid dynasty. Second, the corollary that at the outset of the Abbasid dynasty Islam was not the majority religion which was likely Christianity. Finally, that as with any major social change, few saw it coming. Few could have

¹⁰¹ See Fiey, *Jalons*, 77ff

¹⁰² Bulliet, Richard W. *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979) 80-91; cf. Morony, Michael G. "The Age of Conversions." In *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, by Michael Gervers, & Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, 135-150. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1990); Kennedy, Hugh. *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In*. (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2007) 376; Levzion, Nehemia. *Conversion to Islam*. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979) 1-23, 206 - 216

¹⁰³ See for instance Harrison, Alwyn. "Behind the Curve: Bulliet and Conversion to Islam in al-Andalus Revisited." *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean*, 2012: 35-51; Radushev, Evgeni. "The Spread of Islam in the Ottoman Balkans: Revisiting Bulliet's Method on Religious Conversion." *Oriental Archive*, 2010: 363-384; Coope, Jessica A. "Religious and Cultural Conversion to Islam in Ninth Century Cordoba." *Journal of World History*, 1993: 47-68; DeWeese, Devin A. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994) 17ff

¹⁰⁴ Jenkins, *Lost History*, 112-113

traced the trends and especially in the height of the Abbasid *convivencia* identified the beginnings of the social attrition that would slowly all but consume the caliphate's Christian population and in turn the Church of the East. The contention of this study is that Timothy was one of those who could. A summary of the reforms he instituted with that in mind follows.

The “Interior” and “Exterior”

Timothy's reforms were simple but revolutionary, requiring cunning and subtlety akin to that demonstrated in his election. One problem, revealed in the intro to the canons, is that the diversity of the Church of the East was extraordinary. Simply put, it was too big. It existed in too many locations; too many cultural situations for one blanket rule to consistently apply. This had been recognized as early as the beginning of the 5th century in the Synod of Isaac in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, 410 CE. The Synod officially recognized five provinces as the interior and the remainder as the exterior. This affected votes for the Catholicos, by exempting exterior metropolitans from participation, though it did not prohibit their votes. This exemption was due to a variety of factors including distance and expense that could hinder their presence at an election¹⁰⁵. The five heartland, “interior” provinces in the center of Mesopotamia were Elam or Beth Lapat, Nisibis, Perath de Mayšan (Basra), Arbela (Adiabene), and Karka de Beth Selokh (Kirkuk). The Metropolitans of these provinces would vote in the elections of Patriarchs. In 410 the Exterior or outer house was limited to Fars (Rew-Ardashir) and Merv, but in the synod of Joseph (554) these were raised to Interior status, though Timothy downgraded them (more below). From 554 on, the outer house consisted of those metropolitanates not yet mentioned that

¹⁰⁵ Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 14-17

though they had sufficient Christian population to justify a metropolitan, due to circumstances or geography there was sufficient reason to call into question the Metropolitan's ability to return to the capital for a vote¹⁰⁶.

By Timothy's day the exterior had grown to represent a considerably larger area geographically and culturally than those provinces of the interior. Because of this, the principles that had necessitated the initial distinction between inner and outer provinces, geography or mitigating circumstances in elections of bishops or the patriarch, were all the more apparent, especially in light of the rise of Islam. But little had been done to bring this ancient distinction up to date with the contemporary status of the Church of the East. In addition, it was becoming clear that the fringe provinces often had more freedom to conduct evangelism in a more traditional manner than did those provinces of the heartland. To add to this, it was becoming clear that were the church to continue to grow at all, the lion's share of that growth would have to take place beyond the borders of the caliphate.

Timothy's response to this was twofold, essentially treating the interior and exterior as two separate entities because they required two different approaches. Concerning the exterior, Timothy's solution for growing churches was to grant them considerably more autonomy, though keeping a connection with the Catholicate.

Part of this agenda was the appointment of more metropolitans. To justify the metropolitans, however, there also had to be more bishops. Preceding Timothy the church was clearly adding new dioceses as the list of bishops grew to include those of such exotic locales as

¹⁰⁶ For more on the structure of the provinces of the Church of the East see Dauvilliers, Jean. "Les Provinces Chaldéennes de l'extérieur au Moyen Age." In *Histoire et Institutions des Eglises Orientales au Moyen Age*, by Jean Dauvilliers, 261-316. (London: Variorum, 1983)

Socotra, China, and Fansur (or Sumatra). Mission efforts followed the trade routes. In fact, the Syriac word for merchant, tagārā (ܬܓܐܪܐ), is often used in literature as a metaphor for a missionary¹⁰⁷. Timothy simply updated the church status by creating Metropolitanates commensurate to the reality of the Church. Gilman and Klimkeit provide a table demonstrating this which is worth reproducing here¹⁰⁸.

<i>Year – AD</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>650</i>	<i>820</i>	<i>1000</i>	<i>14th Cent.</i>
Catholicos-Patriarch	1	1	1	1	1
No. of Metropolitans	6	9	19	20	25
No. of Bishops	38	96	85	75	200
Total	45	106	105	96	226

These figures stand as representative of both the growth that took place in the church throughout the turbulence of regime transition as well as the shift in policy that sustained that growth. As WG Young remarks:

After admitting that there is a great deal of uncertainty with regard to the figures of the bishops (that of 650 may be too high, that of 820 too low), we are left with the impression that, in spite of losses in Arabia and the Persian Gulf, the church did expand considerably its area of operation, and improve its organization, and

¹⁰⁷ See Foltz, Richard. *Religions of the Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*. (New York: St. Martin's, 2000) 62; cf. Lieu, Samuel. *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*. (Tubingen: JCB Mohr, 1992) 98; Murray (2004) 175; for presence along maritime routes see Heuken, Adolf. "Christianity in Pre-Colonial Indonesia." In *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, by J.S. Arifonang, & K. eds. Steenbrink, 3-7. (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 3-7; cf. Bakker, Jan. *Umat Katolik perintis di Indonesia (k.l. 645-1500)*. Vol. I, in *Sejarah Gereja Katolik Indonesia*, by M.P.M. (ed.) Muskens, 19-40. (Jakarta: KWI Indonesia, 1972) 19-40

¹⁰⁸ Gilman and Klimkeit, *History of Christianity*, 137

carried out much real missionary work. The expansion is less marked than in the Sassanid period, but geographically it is just as impressive¹⁰⁹.

Increasing the number of metropolitans was not Timothy's only measure. He also adjusted the powers of these missionary metropolitans by granting them the ability to create their own bishoprics. When asked in a letter by two of his metropolitan appointees, Qardag of Gilan and Yaballaha of Daylam, to appoint bishops for the lands they were in from among the monks who had come with them, Timothy replied:

Inasmuch as the ordination of a Bishop doth not absolutely require [the presence of] three persons, and ye in your country are free from this [regulation], ye have permission [to do so] by the power of the word of our Lord, in which every thing standeth and is directed. Appoint as Bishops whomsoever ye and the pious Kardagh shall choose, and in the place of the third [person who should be present], let the Book of the Gospels be laid on the [episcopal] throne on the right hand; thus by the hand of God perform the ordination of the first Bishop, and let others be appointed by means of [this] third [person]. May the Divine Spirit direct and govern His sanctifications by your means even as He did with the blessed Apostles¹¹⁰.

Regarding this letter, Berti reflects that “la réponse de Timothée manifeste toute sa surprenante capacité d’adaptation pastorale et aussi, en quelque sorte, les limites de l’organisation de cette Église¹¹¹.” This was an exceptional move because in granting this Timothy was in many ways cutting the exterior loose, addressing the limits that Berti mentions. With the earlier requirements and the lack of bishops, a metropolitan would have needed to solicit the help of a neighboring province or the Patriarch, stunting the rate at which a province could grow. This new allowance enabled a province considerably more leeway¹¹².

It might appear that by strengthening the exterior, Timothy imperiled the power of the interior, and thus the power of the patriarchy. This could not be farther from the truth. Timothy

¹⁰⁹ Young, W.G. *Patriarch, Shah, and Caliph*. (Rawalpindi, India: Christian Study Center, 1974) 49

¹¹⁰ Budge, *Book of Governors*, 267/490-491

¹¹¹ Berti, *Idéologie et Politique*, 97

¹¹² Dauvilliers, *Les Provinces Chaldéennes*, 272

was solidly committed to maintaining and even strengthening the power of the Catholicos¹¹³. In fact, it could be said that by building up the church of the exterior, he was strengthening the Catholicate by weakening any potential rivals within his church.

Consider his response to the metropolitan of Rewardashir, who had been a problem for numerous catholicoi for centuries. This metropolitanate lay in Fars, the cultural homeland of the Persian ethnic group, and though they claimed a long heritage of Christianity, they were not one of the original provinces of the interior. Yet in the synod of Joseph (554) they had been raised to such and had been given jurisdiction over India¹¹⁴. Their differences with the Catholicos are relayed by Bar Hebraeus, "It is said that in the time of Timothy, the bishops of this region of Fars wore white, like secular priests, ate meat and married, and they refused to submit to the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, saying, "We are the disciples of the apostle Thomas, and have nothing to do with the See of Mari¹¹⁵." There had been a number of previous Catholicoi who had attempted to reign in the recalcitrant people of Fars, but to little avail. In fact, a Catholicos of comparable significance to Timothy, Ishoyab II (628-643), who reigned during the Arab conquest, had apparently stripped Fars of this jurisdiction in his day,¹¹⁶ but the task had yet to be accomplished by the time of Timothy.

This presented the perfect opportunity for the patriarch to accomplish what could be called the dual facets of his goal in Missions abroad, strengthening new metropolitan provinces while weakening those of the interior that would hinder communication between Baghdad and the far exterior. He not only finalized what his predecessor had set out to do over a century

¹¹³ See Putman, *Timothee I*, 52-60; cf. Gilman and Klimkeit, *History of Christianity*, 136

¹¹⁴ Dauvilliers, *Les Provinces Chaldéennes*, 269

¹¹⁵ Abbeloos and Lamy, *Bar Hebraei*, col. 170-171; cf. Berti, *Idéologie et Politique*, 85

¹¹⁶ It is possible that it was Ishoyab the III slightly later, (650-660). See Moffet, *History vol. 1*, 269; cf. Mingana, Alphonse. "The Early Spread of Christianity in India." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 10 (1926) 64

before, granting India its own Metropolitan and removing it forever from the administration of Rewardashir, but he also downgraded both the Metropolitane of Rewardashir and of Merv, possibly due to lingering tension over its erstwhile Bishop's actions, shifting both provinces from interior to exterior¹¹⁷.

While this may have simply been adjustment to new logistical realities under the Abbasid regime, the excommunications and defection of elite leadership in each region speaks otherwise. Besides Joseph of Merv's departure from the church, Timothy simply excommunicated the troublesome Metropolitan of Rewardashir, Babai, and appointed a new one. Yet apart from these disciplinary actions and structural adjustments, beyond admonishment to come into line with collective ecclesiastic practice, Timothy granted Fars the same autonomy he gave to regions such as India and China. According to Bar Hebraeus:

Timothy reconciled with them (Fars) and reunited them to himself and ordained for them a metropolitan by the name of Simon, instructing him not to eat meat, be wed, or wear white unless it was wool. He also permitted him, when ordaining bishops, to confirm them himself, without coming before the Catholicos for confirmation, like the bishops of other eparchies. Such is the custom to this day¹¹⁸.

In one move, though fraught with numerable tensions and challenges, Timothy aggrandized the role of the Catholicos, confirming that Baghdad declared both hierarchy and doctrine, while simultaneously releasing all of the provinces, including Fars to a more local and ostensibly indigenous control. This stood as Timothy's aim all along. It was imperative in his eyes that these churches at the ends of the earth should simultaneously be granted freedom to address whatever issues might arise in their unique

¹¹⁷ Dauvilliers, *Les Provinces Chaldéennes*, 262; Berti writes extensively on the politics of this incident. See Berti, *Idéologie et Politique*, 78-86

¹¹⁸ Abbeloos and Lamy, *Bar Hebraei*, col 172

purviews while still remaining connected to the source, the church in Baghdad. This was on the one hand to maintain doctrinal accountability, as in the case of Fars, ensuring that everyone was more or less on the same page, while at the same time providing a sense of continuity between the churches of the interior and exterior.

Some have seen this concentration in the Catholicate as indicative of a staunch inflexibility on the part of the East Syrian Church. Dauvilliers, for instance, remarks in his article on the Church in the exterior that this inflexibility was the eventual source of decline on the part of the Eastern Church. He accuses them of failing to allow for an indigenous clergy, tying them too closely to Baghdad, and then states that they failed to allow for a multi-cultural liturgy, requiring all hymns and offices to be conducted in Syriac¹¹⁹.

But Letter number 41, written by Timothy to the Maronite monks of Lebanon¹²⁰, reveals a very different picture. The multi-cultural element was precisely what Timothy was hoping to support in his various endeavors. He exulted in that very multi-cultural aspect of his church as a selling point to outsiders. In letter 41, attempting to persuade the Maronites to join with him, he stated:

Behold, in all the lands of Babel, Persia, and Assyria, and in all of the Eastern lands, and in India and even in China, in Tibet and likewise among the Turks, and in every polity beneath this patriarchal throne... that one who was crucified on our behalf is indeed proclaimed in different and varied lands, races, and languages¹²¹.

¹¹⁹ Dauvilliers, *Les Provinces Chaldéennes*, 271, citing William of Rubruck whose judgement in such matters was questionable. More on this in subsequent chapters.

¹²⁰ Braun *Timothei*, cf. Bidawid, *Lettres*, 91ff for Latin Translation

¹²¹ In Labourt, *De Timotheo I*, 45; Translation author's own.

While the Church of the East may not have met modern standards of multi-cultural accommodation, it was not nearly so far removed from the Byzantine model of translation and indigenization that Dauvilliers applauds and a far cry further along than its brethren in other areas at the time. Figures such as Jing-Jing, the translator of many of the Dun Huang Documents into Chinese, and even the eventual Marcos/Yaballaha, the subject of the next chapter stand out as grand representatives of the multi-culturalism of the Church of the East. This is not to mention the caches at Dun Huang and Turfan and so on and a number of other silent relics scattered across the plains, deserts, and mountains of Central Asia; all of these give testimony to the indigenization efforts of the Church of the East. That there is not a plethora more names to add to that list speaks rather to the ravages of time in inhospitable lands than to any lack of effort or conviction.

The Mission to the Interior

Timothy's activity in Fars and elsewhere shows clearly his concern for what one could call the orthodox health of the most far-flung congregations under his command. He recognized the challenges of distance, and saw that they would only grow with time, and sought to give the churches of the exterior a free hand to address their needs as they arose in the manner that they saw fit, all the while maintaining a connection with them through the seat of the Catholicos. This was important because not only were these churches distant from Baghdad geographically, but they were also distant from it politically. Even those realms which in theory still laid under the thumb of the Caliphs such as Gilan and Daylam or Fars or even Merv, stood well removed from the politics of the palace.

But what about the interior, the heartland of the Church of the East? By creating a structure that would enable the exterior churches to rule themselves, was Timothy abandoning

the efficacy of the interior not only for Christian life but for mission and outreach? The Church of the East had always had a strong sense of mission that could interact intimately with its church life. Under the Sassanids, they had braved censure and persecution to spread their faith even to their rulers, yet as seen, they had never enjoyed even the illusion of existing in a Christian state. There may have been those who thought moving the seat of the caliphate to Iraq would enable further opportunity to convert the nascent Islamic world to Christ, but if Timothy harbored such hopes, they were shattered in audience with al-Mahdi. Fortunately, his approach to the interior was as clever and multi-faceted as that to the exterior, and those facets are well represented by the texts examined at the beginning of this chapter.

First and foremost, Timothy wanted his flock to be exemplary members of society in the Arab world, perhaps seeking to win others over by their excellence, but certainly being above reproach and bolstering each other through their own example. In support of this, he endeavored to strengthen the education system for which his church already had a reputation, particularly the monastic schools of which he was an alumnus. He recognized that education was a key to church vitality as without a solid basis in Christian thought, there was considerably less incentive for those of intellect to remain in the faith. Secondly, he knew that not all of his flock was cut out to be among the intellectuals; therefore he sought to separate the remainder off, inasmuch as possible, from the influence of their Muslim neighbors. In a sense he wanted his church to be in the world of Islam but not of it.

Perhaps the clearest example of this is his meeting with the Caliph discussed in the first text. It is not clear the circumstances that brought this meeting about, though one could speculate that Timothy might have played a significant role in making it happen. In describing

the occasion he implies that visiting the caliph was customary for him¹²², and a number of occasions when he was before the Caliph can be mentioned. Yet in this occurrence, he was dissatisfied with the results, as has already been made clear. In light of this dissatisfaction, it can be posited that Timothy sought an audience hoping for great results to show his flock and especially its more capable members his goals for evangelism in their society. Like the general who opts to stand at the front and fight rather than plan from the back, Timothy led by example. And the results did not impress.

Two further points can be raised in relation to the occurrences related in this text. First, Timothy had access to the court. This episode merely proved what had been clear enough in earlier instances. In a letter addressed to the bishop Barsahdê, he states, “If you have been wronged by that one, then bring your grievance to the patriarch of the whole (church)...I am in the capitol and it is easy for me to do as I wish¹²³.” Timothy’s connections in the Caliph’s court were multiple and secure and he was not afraid to use them. At one point the same Caliph with whom Timothy debated, al-Mahdi, initiated a persecution against Christians near the frontier with Byzantium. When word of this reached the Patriarch, he was able to gain an audience with the Caliph and not only put a halt to these persecutions but also acquire state money for the rebuilding and restitution of lost and damaged property, and this despite the fact that many of these churches belonged to Chalcedonians¹²⁴.

Secondly, the connections he had that facilitated this debate and his ability in the debate itself were all products of the educational system in which he himself had been raised. The early

¹²² Mingana, “Timothy’s Apology,” 154

¹²³ Quoted in Hurst, *Timothy I*, 20.

¹²⁴ See Budge, *Book of Governors*, 447-448; cf. Baum and Winkler, *Concise History*, 60; Khanbagi, A. *The Fire, The Star, and the Cross: Minority Religions in Medieval and Early Modern Iran*. (London: Tauris, 2006) 32ff

Abbasid period was marked by an intense involvement in the life of the mind, in many ways pursued, as Dmitri Gutas has shown, as an imperial benchmark, demonstrating the eagerness of the ‘Abbasid dynasty to be seen as not only a true succession to the imperial and intellectual ambitions of both the Romans and Persians, but also as a genuine victory over the intellectual achievements of Christianity and the Pagan world¹²⁵. A clear example of this is the words of the famed ‘Abbasid literatus, Abu Uthman al-Jahiz (781-c. 868) who was a young contemporary of Timothy, “the Christians and the Rūm [Romans, Byzantines] have neither science, nor expository literature, nor vision, and their names should be erased from the registers of the philosophers and the sages¹²⁶.”

Timothy and the rest of the Church in the Muslim world stood as stark evidence otherwise. They have often been decried for a lack of innovation in theology and philosophy serving merely as transmitters of the science and thought of antiquity¹²⁷. This can even be found in the writings of those who are ostensibly writing in the interest of the Christians¹²⁸.

This is, however, expecting more of the Christians than would have been socially acceptable for them. It has already been demonstrated that Abbasid society itself limited those who were of a faith different than Islam. If this was true in economics and government, why would it have been any different in the academy? It is only in recent times that the names of many of the great Abbasid Christian thinkers and translators, such as Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq and

¹²⁵ Gutas (1998) 187-8

¹²⁶ From his *al-Radd ‘ala al naṣāra*, in Harun, A.M. *al-Radd ‘ala al Nasara*. Vol. 3, in *Rasa’il al-Gahiz*, by A.M. Harun, 303-351. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1979); For additional information on this Abbasid Muslim point of view see Cheikh, N. *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) 103-109; cf. (1998) 83-94; Walker, A. *The Emperor and the World: Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 38

¹²⁷ Gutas, Dmitri. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ‘Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)*. (London: Routledge, 1998) 22

¹²⁸ See for instance Hurst, *Timothy I*, 11

Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī have begun to be recognized more broadly in the West. That these Christians were at least professional companions of Muslims and vice versa is undeniable. Take for instance the great al-Farabi, a student of the Christian Yūḥannā b. Ḥaylān, and teacher of the Christian Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī¹²⁹.

While no one would argue that all Muslim science originated among these Christians, by taking into account the social and eventual economic strain upon them, it is unfair to argue a paltriness in their contribution to the academy. Consider attrition, wherein the brightest Christians might suddenly become their most ardent foes, such as in the case of ‘Ali b. Rabban al-Tabari, (not to be confused with the more famous historian of the same designation) who had been brought up an educated Christian but who wrote a particularly scathing refutation of Christianity on his conversion to Islam. Apart from noting that a Christian did not have the option to write similarly scathing refutations of Islam, it is an understatement that the loss of Christians such as this Tabari did not bode well for the church¹³⁰.

Likewise, in most societies, including our own, there is an inherent risk in the process of innovation that is not always met with approval. On this situation in the present David Horrobin writes, “Examples of total suppression of an innovation... are by definition nonexistent. How can one know about them if they’ve been suppressed? ... Editors must be conscious that despite public protestations to the contrary, many scientist-reviewers are against innovation unless it is their innovation. Innovation from others may be a threat because it diminishes the importance of the scientist’s own work¹³¹.” This is detailing the situation in the sciences in the modern Western

¹²⁹ Gutas, Dmitri. "Farabi." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. December 15, 1999.
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farabi-i> (accessed October 14, 2013)

¹³⁰ Thomas, David. *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 32ff

¹³¹ See Horrobin, David. "The Philosophical Basis of Peer Review and the Suppression of Innovation." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, no. 263 (1990): 1438-1441

World, where academic freedom is at least relatively consistent and assured. Philosophical and scientific innovation are the trait of survivors, and by the 'Abbasid period, the Church was already entering survival mode. What is innovative, however, is the manner in which they continued to make themselves relevant while remaining distinct, in the world but not of it.

The Baghdad translation movement is one component of that distinction and beyond reiterating that the Church of the East and Christians in general played a significant role in the movement, it does not need further explication at this point¹³². In addition to the translation movement there was the East Syrian presence in the medical field¹³³. Beyond the previously mentioned Bokhtisho family, it is worthwhile to point out the origin of their skills, the famed school of Gundishapur, which also proved to be the origin of Arabic medicine¹³⁴.

Furthermore, the mere presence of Christians in these influential circles is not the most significant point, but rather the manner in which they conducted their lives. An episode from the life of Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq will serve to illustrate how a Christian might choose to pursue his faith in tension with the demands of his Muslim masters. When the Caliph al-Mutawakkil asked Ḥunayn, whom he had named his personal physician, to poison one of his enemies, he refused. After a year in prison, the Caliph released him asking him for what reasons he might refuse to serve his king. Ḥunayn replied,

¹³² For more on the translation movement see Gutas, *Greek Thought*; Griffith, *Church in the Shadow*; Bergsträsser, *G. Hunain Ibn Ishāq und seine Schule*. (Leiden: Brill, 1913); Brock (1991) 139-162; Brock, Sebastian. "The Syriac Background of Hunayn's Translation Techniques." *ARAM*, 1991: 139-162

¹³³ See Le Coz, Raymond. *Les médecins nestoriens au moyen âge: Les maîtres des Arabes*. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004)

¹³⁴ See Reinink, Gerrit. "Theology and Medicine in Jundishapur: Cultural Changes in the Nestorian School Tradition." In *Learned Antiquity: Scholarship and Society in the Near-East, the Greco-Roman World, and the Early Medieval West*, by Alasdair A. MacDonald, Michael W. Tworney, & Gerrit J. Reinink, 163-174. (Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 163; cf. Le Coz, Raymond. "Les médecins nestoriens du VIe au VIIIe siècle: à l'ombre d'Avicenne. La médecine au temps des califes." *Histoire des sciences médicales*, 1997: 315-339; Taylor, G. "The Physicians of Jundishapur." *e-Sasanika*, 2010: 1-16

Two things: my religion and my profession. My religion decrees that we should do good even to our enemies, how much more to our friends. And my profession is instituted for the benefit of humanity and limited to their relief and cure...¹³⁵

It is safe to say that not all Christians would have conducted themselves in the same way that Hunayn did. Jahiz arguments which will be covered more in the next chapter would have held little weight if they did. Nor can it be said that Timothy is the source of their inspiration to excellence. What is evident, however, is that Timothy, riding the same wave that carried his churchmen to these heights, sought to motivate its continuance. On the one hand that would take Christians continuing to pursue the highest offices they might hope to hold, and doing so as candidates of the highest quality. In a letter to Sergius, Timothy writes concerning the appointment of a new bishop, “I am especially pleased with the well-formed and developed qualities of this man about whom you wrote, as well as his spiritual way of life. For these (qualities) of a heavenly man transform an earthly one. I am also pleased with his sound and admirable knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, together with his ability in three languages.” He goes on however to lament the shortage of candidates with such qualities, “It is rare that we consecrate such a bishop. Either he cannot perform these tasks at all, or (he can do them) only with great difficulty¹³⁶.”

In a canon, Timothy declared on behalf of the church as a whole what he saw as the characteristics essential to lead in his church, and one could as easily extrapolate this to any position serving in the upper echelons of the government:

Three characteristics are necessary for a leader in the Church, that is to say a director, and governor of affairs. We must examine and see whether or not they are present in the person who has been chosen from the world. First, a natural intelligence; for he who lacks this, even though he possesses everything else, lacks everything. Second, the quality of the fear of the Lord, which is the

¹³⁵ Bar Hebraeus, 251-252, Quoted from Hitti, *History of the Arabs*

¹³⁶ Hurst, *Timothy I*, 16; from Letter 54, Vat Syr 605, Folio 324v.

beginning of Wisdom. This is divided into the practice of the holy way of life and the *theoria* which adorns the true faith and orthodoxy. The third characteristic is a knowledge of the divine scriptures. This is most important for a director in the church¹³⁷.

Evident herein is the caliber of individual he expected to assume leadership in his church and in offices outside of the church. In addition, through holding a government office one might be able to extend that opportunity to other Christians. The clearest example of this in a near contemporary was Al-Faḍl ibn Marwān. Al-Fadl served as minor palace official in the regime of Harun al-Rashid, putting him in Timothy's context, and later was raised to vizier, the second highest position in the caliphate, under multiple caliphs¹³⁸. It is impossible to say that he and Timothy were directly connected, but he illustrates the possibilities open to one with talent and connections.

Beyond utility and encouragement towards those in high positions, the other component of Timothy's push in this area was in education¹³⁹, and this was for two reasons. First, one could hardly hope for quality candidates for any role if their talents were not cultivated. Secondly, the schools served as a point to begin forming the basic elements of worldview that might not merely provide men of character for various government posts, but could also prevent apostasy when the temptation might arise. Timothy himself stated, "Remember that the school is the mother and nurse of the sons of the church¹⁴⁰." For Timothy, education was paramount. Consider the following letter to his friend Sergius, headmaster of his alma mater:

¹³⁷ Ibid. 18, from Mai, *Scriptorum*, vol. 10, 305

¹³⁸ For more on Fadl, see Sourdel, D. "Al Fadl b. Marwan." In *The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition, Volume II C-G*, 730. (Leiden: Brill, 1991); cf. Dodge, B. *The Fihrist of al-Nadim: A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970) 278; also MacGuckin de Slade, W. *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*. (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1843) 476-77

¹³⁹ See Becker, *Fear of God*, 169ff

¹⁴⁰ Fortescue, A. *The Lesser Eastern Churches*. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1913) 95; Quoted in Moffet, *History* vol. 1, 355

And you our brother, Mar Sergius, remain in your place as on a rock, as on the precious cornerstone which, “is set for the rise and fall of many and the rise, i.e. for the rise of many and their fall (Lk. 2:34).” Guard in yourself all the glorious images of the excellent fathers through whom you have been spiritually born and reared. Educate the flock of the church by the power of the Holy Spirit. Tend them in the meadows of the power of the Scriptures and make them recline near the restful waters of virtue (Ps. 32:2)¹⁴¹.

He goes on to more directly and materially support Sergius, granting him a significant degree of autonomy:

Manage the affairs of the monastery and the school with the correctness which is fitting for a wise steward. You should teach and supervise your brothers; they should not teach or direct you. We are assigning you five hundred *zûzê* for the repair of the cell about which you wrote us. If it seems to you that you should use it for something else which is needed even more, that is your decision, not anyone else's.¹⁴²

Considering the importance that Timothy placed on “the School” as a source of strength in the interior house, it is useful to briefly assess what materials might have been used in schools of that period. We fortunately have extant a text that might have served as a sort of curriculum of that day, likely written in the middle of Timothy's reign, the *Scholion* of Theodore Bar Kôni¹⁴³. Though a direct connection between the men is impossible to prove, they were likely contemporaries. Bar Kôni himself states that the book is “a fittingly handy convenience for one who is a seeker after the truth...” useful for putting “before both auditors and students the standard of good thoughts¹⁴⁴.” Sidney Griffith states that the text is “here put to the comprehensive purpose envisioned by the compiler of an introductory textbook in Nestorian theology¹⁴⁵,” and later shows that the intention of the book is to erect a clear apologetic

¹⁴¹ Hurst, *Timothy I*, 17; cf. Braun, *Timothei*, Vol. 74, 117

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 18; cf. Braun, *Timothei*, Vol. 74, 122-123

¹⁴³ Griffith, Sidney H. "Theodore bar Koni's Scholion: A Nestorian Summa contra Gentiles from the First Abbasid Century." In *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, by T. Matthews, and R. Thomson N. Garsoian, 53-72. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982)

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 59;

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 60

framework over and against Islam. “The Muslim presence calls for a clear intellectual statement of Christianity’s most basic claims and so may be considered one of the original impulses that inspired the compilation of the *Scholion*¹⁴⁶.”

In order to slow the attrition they were facing, the schools had to stand as an apologetic bulwark against the prevailing worldview of Timothy’s day. Books like the *Scholion* demonstrate the importance of this apologetic endeavor. “The impetus for the production of a school manual of this sort ultimately lies in the apologetic imperative brought about by Muslim polemical pressure on the Nestorian community in Iraq¹⁴⁷.”

The comprehensive nature of Timothy’s interior focus, however, was neither limited to the schools and monasteries in which they were often situated, nor to the intellectuals in the capital, but his concerns ultimately extended to the lowliest of his churchmen. The millet system inherited by the Abbasids mentioned earlier essentially limited meaningful interaction between everyday Christians and Muslims. A Christian in Abbasid Iraq was not any more likely to adopt the faith of his tailor or grocer than a Muslim in contemporary London might be, which is not to say that it never happens, but simple contact with a member of another faith is rarely adequate grounds for conversion¹⁴⁸.

Thus, the importance of texts such as the canons of Timothy’s second synod. While Timothy might encourage those with adequate education and preparation to engage their rulers in conversation and debate, as he himself had, his take on the less educated echelons of his churchmen, at least by the time of these canons, encouraged more protection than discernment.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 62

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 65

¹⁴⁸ See Fiey, *Abbasides* 125; cf. Morony, *Christianity in Iraq*, 334ff

The delivery of these canons was like a fence to protect the flock. The cynicism in the intro could be argued to indicate a degree of resignation on the part of the Catholicos towards his churchmen. As a young reformer he might have thought that all men could rise above the petty motivations that were now driving them to seek arbitration from other circles, but as an old man his vision had changed. It is ironic that even as he was granting the exterior greater autonomy to run their own affairs, he was binding the interior more firmly behind rules of his devising.

Conclusion

In this study, the life, some of the writings, and the actions of Timothy I, Catholicos of the Church of the East have been explored. Timothy has been the centerpiece of this chapter for more than just the fact that he was a prolific writer, or even simply a reformer. This study has focused on him due to his vision. As with Babai, Timothy gained the epithet great from his peers and subsequent generations because his actions well represented the aims of the church that he led as well as the manner in which he directed it. He had his opponents, such as his successor Isho Bar Nun, who worked to overturn some of his work, especially those actions more conciliatory towards Christians who were not part of the Church of the East.

But as the centuries unfolded after Timothy's passing, the constant attrition only lightly felt in his day began to take its toll. Christians found it more and more difficult to compete with Muslims to occupy the posts that Christians had always held, losing their positioning first in the realm of science and philosophy, then as scribes and court attendants, and eventually even in the medical fields. These are components of life in the later Abbasid milieu that will be touched on in the next chapter.

For now, suffice it to say that perhaps Timothy's greatest contribution to his church was readying it for decline, and laying the groundwork for an ultimate confrontation with Islam even in the political sphere. It would be impossible to allege that Timothy was planning on constructing an army to overthrow the Muslim polity; he likely even would have been opposed to such an idea and certainly never advocated bloodshed in his own context, though that context did have certain limitations. If anything, Timothy probably had more eschatological deliverance in mind. But though unadvocated, a militant overthrowing of the Muslim polity was attained, not in the form of Western Crusaders whose inroads of the Caliphate never reached areas of significance to the Church of the East population, but at the hands of pagan rulers heavily influenced by Timothy's own spiritual descendants in one form or other. This was a point of jubilee for all confessions, but especially for the Church of the East. The missions had paid off tangibly. For centuries, the hope of an East Syrian Constantine had probably proven harder and harder to hold onto, as the Catholicos' proximity to the Caliph or Emirs in power dwindled. Now they were once again seated firmly at the elbow of the kings. Celebration seemed to be in order.

Yet it is doubtful Timothy would have joined these celebrations. Though he would have delighted in putting a young oriental monk on his throne, he probably would have warned his spiritual descendants against overly relying on the powers of the world, and for good reason, which this study will look to in the next chapter.

Chapter Appendix: Timothy I, Rules of Ecclesiastical Judgement and Inheritance,

Gesetzbuch des Patriarchen Timotheos, 99 paragraphen from (Sachau, *Syrische**rechstbücher*, Vol. 2, 1907, 53-117) Translation to follow.

1
 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9
 10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20

1
 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9
 10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20

¹ leg. ܕܡܪܝܬܐ.² leg. ܡܪܝܬܐ.

¹ add. دڻ nach ۱۰۰۰۰. ² ۱۰۰۰؟ ³ leg. ۱۰۰۰۰. ⁴ s. Anm.
⁵ leg. ۱۰۰۰۰. ⁶ leg. ۱۰۰۰. ⁷ leg. ۱۰۰. ⁸ Zu tilgen ۱۰۰۰۰.

[illegible]

¹ **تُطْفِئُ** zu tilgen.

³ leg. **حجۃ**.

⁸ leg. **قَسَمَ**.

⁴ leg. **محبكم لهم**.

^b add. 5450?

(Pg 54)

Again we write, **Rules of Ecclesiastical Judgment and Inheritance**

- Done by the pure one of God, Mar Timothy Catholicos Patriarch of the East. In the 26th year of his patriarchate, Year 1116 of the Greeks (805 CE).

Apologies on account of the delay on writing (5) till present of the writer, though the fathers and faithful pled with him concerning it many times. If Christians are in some mystical fashion presently in the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the Kingdom of Heaven there is not a single controversy or dispute, then where there are neither disputes nor controversies one should not see religious decrees for Christians. Such worldly decrees are (10) superfluous and useless. For to children of the world these decrees and limitations might be useful, as the Godly Apostle somewhere taught and declared, "For where you have jealousy and quarrels and divisions, behold, are you not bodily beings? Are you not walking in the flesh¹⁴⁹?" And if you have instituted a form of worldly judgment for those who are despised (15) in the church, I tell you as a reproach, thus one deals with the sons of the world, who at times oppress each other and at times are oppressed by each other. Or with the sons of the light, he who renounces the whole of the Earth and anything earthly, embracing and loving Heaven and heavenly things, who puts off (20) the old, hidden man, corrupted by the passions of his sinfulness, and clothes his new man in the renewal that is by the knowledge and likeness of his creator. Religious decrees and judgments are thus superfluous and needless. For who would need a decree or judgment if in being struck on the right cheek, he yielded up his left as well? Who would seek judgment

¹⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:3

(Pg 56)

and decrees, if in bestowing upon the oppressor his coat, he likewise granted his cloak? To which court or tribunal should he rush off, who has impoverished himself giving everything he has to the poor, who carries his cross on his shoulder and is dead to the world and all that is in it, according to the commands and decrees of (5) the Heavenly King. For Christians are indeed right now mystically and typically, though not in reality, in the Kingdom of Heaven... (following are several lines of missing or garbled text. Translation is according to what text Sachau was able to reproduce).

- Up to the measure of bloody sufferings and in passions -- which in flesh the divinity seized and equipped himself with, sometimes through the power of suffering in his nature, and sometimes (10) through struggles --,

...resolved in this world, and now one contends with another, now one is in contention with another. For paltry and few are the heavenly. Many and even more are the lawbreakers and earthly. Because of this, people do not go before the saints, but rather before the wicked for judgement and resolution, as if they do not possess, (15) so to speak, laws and commandments suitable for this world and the conduct of mortals. Thus, they transgress both apostolic and divine law, which commands believers that they should not stand before the wicked to be judged but rather the saints. For they are the ones by whom the angels and even the whole world will be judged.

Because of this, (20) at the request of the brethren, bishops, and metropolitans – I am speaking of the blessed Mar Jacob, Metropolitan Bishop of Perath-Maishan (Basra), and the blessed Mar Habiba, Metropolitan Bishop of Raziqiya (Rey), and of many believers far and near

– because of this I was led to delivering statutes, judgments, and decrees. (25) This is for two reasons. First, in order to stay the desire of those who repeatedly roused and exhorted me towards this. Second, to take away any excuse for those who break the divine laws, who, because of a lack of statutes, rulings, and laws, are going to the chambers and courts of outsiders, as if there were no judgements or (30) decrees fitting for this world. As the divine book says,

(Pg 58)

"Is there no God in Israel, that they go to inquire of Beelzebub, God of Ekron¹⁵⁰." This was in the time of a king who worshipped idols and was found wanting by God through the mouth of the fiery prophet Elijah. It was therefore for these two reasons that I was compelled to sit down to (5) this purpose.

My restraint from carrying this out, however, arose for many reasons. Foremost, my own weakness, on account of my many years, for I have 65 years of life now, more or less, as well as being continuously and severely stricken by illnesses. Additionally, the worries (10) and distresses of the mind, on account of the miseries and griefs surrounding the world and the Church, for which one can respond with tears and excessive lamentation, or can answer only with the right kind of speech. Furthermore, I was tied up and bound in the complexities of these affairs, whether they are viewed from outside and in general, or particularly with each person. (15) Overall, however, the most debilitating thing for me was not having firm knowledge or perception concerning these matters.

For these matters are not few and definite, answerable merely with careful inquiry and examination. Rather they are many and abundantly diverse. If it is difficult to resolve (20) the

¹⁵⁰ 2 Kings 1:3

circumstances of these matters, yet is all the more necessary to come up with a solution for them. The greatest challenge of all, though, is distinguishing and separating people one from another, whether by geographical region, country, race, language, custom, or law. Every one of them, by custom and law, is accustomed to and has been raised delighting in (25) what is to them their manner and way of life. They might not change or distance themselves at all from their customs and upbringing, or they might be strengthened despite extreme peril by accepting the changes that come from what they long for, for custom is second nature, as it has been beautifully stated.

For while each and every creature, according to its nature and kind, is equal, (30) it possesses for itself simply its own specific identity. As power

(Pg 60)

and strength is to every lion, timidity to every rabbit, and craftiness and contrariness to every fox, so man alone, of all that is on the earth, possesses equality with his brethren in his own nature, on account of the works he has received. Mankind is also distinguished in his characteristics and (5) actions, due to the power of knowledge and free-will, received from his creator. Who then could bring together that which according to its nature is greatly and wholly diversified besides the one whose origin and formulation is the divine command.

Because of these and similar reasons, I have been hindered and delayed from taking on this task. (10) Nevertheless, due to the entreaty of the opinions of persuasive people, and because of the increase of offenses between parties that I mentioned, behold, I have undertaken this toil. In the first place, it is through trust in God, who is, so to speak, the source of all good things for his creatures. Furthermore, I trust in the freedom and confidence I have in God. (15) These are the factors that induced me to undertake this. For as spectators of athletes and

competitions call out with shouts and cries of encouragement flattering the combatants, so the loving saints assist us through prayer before God, giving strength, and empowering and aiding us in our struggles.

The form of composition is question and (20) answer, not difficult but simple. Such that anyone might understand and master it. Not only those who have sought out and studied books, but also those who completely lack education and study.

The End of an Age

The Church of the East in the Late Abbasid Period and into the Time of the Mongols.

The aim of this study is to assess the Church of the East at three periods. The first two are in relatively close proximity to each other, and the geographical area of the church in both of those periods, though expanding and certainly comprising outlying realms, was largely centered in Mesopotamia and Persia. The third period of this study, though equally relevant in its impact on the church, is somewhat more distant chronologically as well as geographically broad. This period has as its background the time from the end of Timothy's life to the close of the life of Marqos/Yaballaha III, who is the third and final central persona in this study. This is a period that spanned nearly 5 centuries and practically the entire continent of Asia.

This chapter will consist of several components. The first section will be a quick assessment of the life of Marqos/Yaballaha III, and of his contributions and the writings that inform about his life. In keeping with earlier chapters, this will begin with a brief bio and follow up with a short assessment of notable period works about Yaballaha. Unlike with Timothy and Babai, there are no extant works that can be positively identified as written by Yaballaha himself, but there are several pieces which describe his life and accomplishments and this dissertation will examine two of those in some detail.

Then, in keeping with previous chapters, this chapter will move on to examine the background of Yaballaha's life and times. Marqos and his companion Sauma were monks of Central Asian tribal heritage born in the environs of the Mongol capital, who wended their way through the center of the vast Asian continent to visit the homeland of their church. As such,

their lives were intimately affiliated with three separate macro-cultural areas, the Middle East, Central Asia, and China. This is not including the European component of Sauma's travels¹.

Therefore, it is necessary to establish a strong background of the Church in each of the three regions of Marqos and Sauma's experience, or more precisely for the purposes of this study, in both the inner and outer houses of the Church of the East. This chapter will develop that background for both areas, first with an assessment of the inner house, situated as it was in the crumbling edifice of Abbasid Imperium where the brunt of the church's apparent fortunes laid; then with a look at the outer house where it can be argued that the Church of the East sought their political salvation. Marqos' upbringing was a product of the latter region, but his life, for the first time in history, brought the two houses firmly into alignment.

This chapter will also investigate a difficulty lying at the heart of much of the research today, namely that the Christianity of Marqos and his countrymen was lacking or suspect as being other than Christian. The error of this assumption has been noted and contested elsewhere², but as it is a central component of much present analysis on the subject, it will be shown that the Christianity of these more eastern members of the Church of the East was as valid as that of their Mesopotamian and Iranian brethren. Marqos and Sauma were medieval Central Asians living on the edge of the Chinese world who relocated to the heart of the Middle East, and their faith was a central component of their lives. That a sentence like that could be written is itself astounding. That they can and do represent their religious brethren and countrymen is as

¹ See Borbone, Pier Giorgio. "A 13th-Century Journey from China to Europe. The "Story of Mar Yahballaha and Rabban Sauma"." *Egitto e Vicino Oriente*, no. 31 (2008): 221-242.

² See Murre-Van Den Berg, Heleen. "The Church of the East in Mesopotamia in the Mongol Period." In *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia*, by Roman Malek, & Peter Hofrichter, 377-394. (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006).

true as saying that the clergy of any faith represent the lay members of their respective confessions.

Likewise, no historical background of the period would be complete without considering the impact of the Mongol conquests on the world of that day and more specifically the Church of the East itself. Marqos' life was contemporary to the *Pax Mongolica* and he definitely took advantage of this for his travels, but this period itself was a result of the conquests that had rocked the world for the generations immediately preceding his life. The actions of the Church of the East and of the peoples among which it was situated at that time cannot be understood apart from grasping the brutality characteristic of the Mongol campaigns. This study will attempt to engage with that reality and interpret the gravity of its effects on the Church of the East and its future.

Yaballaha (Given of God)

Mar Yaballaha, born Marqos in the land of the Mongol vassals the Önggüt Turks, set out from his native land in what is today roughly the center of China in the last quarter of the 13th century with his mentor, Rabban Sauma, to travel as pilgrims to Jerusalem that they might receive a pardon for their sins³. They never made it home. The journey took a few years, and ended with Marqos re-christened Yaballaha and raised to be the head of his church where he served admirably for several decades, and Sauma getting a tour of Europe as ambassador for the Khans.

This study will use two primary sources as central references on the life of Yaballaha. The first is a 13th/14th century text detailing their story often known in the English speaking

³ Bedjan, *Histoire*, 12.

world today as *The Monks of Khubilai Khan*, the name given it by one of its early English translators, Ernest Budge⁴. The Syriac of the text is available in a modern edition by Paul Bedjan⁵, and though there are a number of manuscripts available, Bedjan's edition is derived from the Or. 9379 manuscript at the British Library. A French translation is available from J-B Chabot⁶, and there is an Arabic recension edited by R. Hilgenfeld⁷. This text hereon will be referred to simply as the History.

Unlike the other periods in this study where the primary texts have been written by the figure being focused on, the History was clearly not by Yaballaha. Though there have been a few suppositions regarding its provenance. For instance, Heleen Murre-Van den Berg makes a reasonable suggestion that the author was the future Catholicos Timothy II who was Metropolitan of Arbil during the siege⁸, yet the anonymity of the author will likely remain. This anonymity, however, does not render the text invalid as a source of information on the Church of the East in this period. It seems likely from the text itself that the author not only knew Yaballaha personally, but also wrote much of it from a travelogue potentially authored by Sauma himself. In that case, this text stands as one of the only extant voices of Medieval Inner Asian Christianity, a group that is today virtually unheard of though they were not insignificant throughout much of the middle ages.

⁴ *The Monks of Kublai Khan: Emperor of China*. (London: Harrison & Sons, 1928). Budge's translations, at times err on the side of speculation, though it gives a solid enough reading for overview purposes. Fortunately, as befits the text, there are a number of other translations available. For the modern Syriac edition from which these translations and studies come from see Bedjan, *Histoire*. For an indispensable analysis of the text and its history see *Storia di Mar Yahballaha e di Rabban Sauma. Un orientale in Occidente ai tempi di Marco Polo*. (Torino: S. Zamorani, 2000).

⁵ Bedjan, *Histoire*

⁶ Chabot, Jean-Baptiste. *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha III, patriarche des Nestoriens (1281-1317) et du moine Rabban Çauma, ambassadeur du Roi Argoun en Occident (1287)*. (Paris: Leroux, 1895.)

⁷ Hilgenfeld, Heinrich. *Textkritische Bemerkungen zur Geschichte des Patriarchen Jabalaha und des Rabban Sauma*. (Leipzig: Otto Harrasowitz, 1894).

⁸ See Murre-Van Den Berg, *Church of the East in Mesopotamia*, 393

The History is narrative in nature, composed of 19 chapters (memre) dealing with the life and times of Yaballaha. After the introductory first chapter, chapters 2-6 deal with the childhood and early travels of Marqos and Sauma, and Marqos' selection and ascent to the Patriarchal throne. Chapter 7, is a long chapter on Sauma's embassy to Europe. Subsequent chapters, while occasionally presenting bright points in the history, follow the decline of Christian influence at the court of the Ilkhans, and the last quarter of the text is devoted more or less to the events leading up to the massacre of Christians in Arbil. In this study, the focus will be on the opening sections, particularly Marqos' selection and elevation to the head of his Church, as well as the final section dealing with the massacre in Arbil.

The second text on which this chapter will focus is likewise about and not by the Patriarch. It is part of the colophon of what is now known as the Evangelion of Karmeleth, written by one Abdisho of Nisibis to honor his patriarch Mar Yaballaha. The text was edited and translated into French by Jacques Marie Vosté⁹. The format of the text, according to Vosté, is "la forme de prose cadencée et rimée heptasyllabique, dont la septième syllabe est une assonance qui se répète quatre fois." As part of the colophon, it is a unique piece in that it preserves the sense of glory engendered by Yaballaha's ascent to the patriarchal throne and rule, or as Vosté puts it, "l'enthousiasme non contenu avec lequel le nom de Mar Iahballaha est introduit, prouve encore la sensation qu'avait produite en ce temps l'élévation d'un étranger, d'un Chinois, sur la siège patriarcal d'Orient." The preservation of this sense is valuable, because written as it was prior to the sharp downturn in imperial influence experienced by the Church of the East in 1295, it grants modern readers a glimpse of the euphoria present among the highest circles of Christianity across confessions in the early years of Yaballaha's reign. The same, if somewhat

⁹ Vosté, Jacques Marie, "Memra en l'honneur de Iahb-allaha III († 1317)", *Le Muséon* 42 (1929): 168-176.

measured, sense of enthusiasm is present in the first portion of the History. This text will be referred to in this chapter as the Colophon.

These are not the only extant texts that describe the life of Yaballaha. But they do focus specifically on Yaballaha and his life. The details that these texts relay are in accord with other writings, such as those of Bar Hebraeus¹⁰ and a biography written by Amr ibn Matai¹¹. The History in particular has been the subject of many investigations generally in regards to Sauma's embassy to Europe, but the interest in Yaballaha has been less general. Nevertheless, a number of present day authors have written on him to some extent including particularly useful treatments by J-M Fiey¹², and P. G. Borbone¹³.

The History (The First Half)

The History has its beginning in the background of Rabban Sauma, who was a generation or so older than his travelling companion, Marqos, and hailed from a village near what is now Beijing, though there was not much in that vicinity at the time of his birth. Marqos was from further West in the Önggüt territory of today's inner Mongolia or Ningxia province¹⁴. The text gives the name as Keshang¹⁵, though it has been argued that this was actually Olon Süme¹⁶. According to the History, Marqos sought out Rabban Sauma to study under him on account of his wisdom and righteousness. Rossabi goes so far as to label him a "holy man" and "guru"¹⁷.

¹⁰ Abbeloos and Lamy, *Chronicum*; cf. *The Chronography of Abu'l-Faraj Bar Hebraeus*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932)

¹¹ See Kawerau, Peter. *Christlich-Arabische Chrestomathie aus historischen Schriftstellern des Mittelalters (CSCO 385)*. (Leuven: Peeters, 1977) 108-127, 208-227

¹² Fiey. "Le Grand Catholico turco-mongol Yahwalaha III (1281-1317)." *Proche-Orient chrétien*, 1988: 209-220

¹³ Borbone, *Storia di Mar Yahballaha*

¹⁴ Rossabi, Morris. *Voyager from Xanadu: Rabban Sauma and the First Journey from China to the West*. (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1992) 24, 34.

¹⁵ Budge, *Monks*, 42

¹⁶ Halbertsma, Tjalling H.F. *Early Christian remains of Inner Mongolia: discovery, reconstruction and appropriation*. (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 150-157; For more on the city itself see Lattimore, Owen. "A Ruined City in Inner Mongolia." *Geographical Journal*, no. 6 (1934): 481-497.

¹⁷ See Rossabi, *Xanadu*, 24.

Bar Sauma at first refused, but Marqos at this early point in his life showed a knack for winning others over to his point of view, and a teacher/student relationship was born.

After a few years as monks in a cell (after a fashion¹⁸) Marqos again persuaded his mentor that it was in their best interest to head west and see the holy sites of their church and their faith, ostensibly earning complete forgiveness in such a pilgrimage. According to the History, those around them attempted to dissuade them, the Khan's sons-in-law even remarking that the Mongols were working to populate the lands of the east with Christians, why would two of the best choose to leave now? This is likely a statement of how the Chronicler saw the relationship between the Mongols and the Church of the East, but it is not impossible that its antecedent lies in the now lost text potentially written by Sauma himself¹⁹.

According to other accounts²⁰, the Khan himself dispatched them as his representative, asking them to “dip his cloak in the Jordan.” Even if true, this does not indicate any real acceptance of Christianity on the part of the Khan. This particular Khan, Khubilai, had clearly not taken to the faith of his Christian mother, preferring instead a sort of blend of Lamaistic Buddhism and his own Mongol faith²¹, though in the religious climate of the day, it is not unlikely that a Great Khan raised by a Christian mother and Tengrist relatives and living in Buddho-Confucian China might have wanted to hedge his bets somewhat. Nevertheless, there are those who, in attempting to account for Yaballaha's early political influence, have argued that the Khan was simply using these men as spies²². While not impossible, there is no real evidence to support this. It is just as plausible that the Khan, having been brought up by a

¹⁸ For an overview of Monasticism in Central Asia see Gilman and Klimkeit, *History*, 240-241.

¹⁹ See Bedjan, *Histoire*, 17.

²⁰ Budge, *Chronography*, 1:492 and Gismondi, *Amri et Slibae*, 1:79.

²¹ Rossabi, *Xanadu*, 43-44

²² Wilmshurst, *Martyred Church*, 247ff

Christian mother, felt that a gesture of goodwill towards practitioners of this faith might serve as a sort of insurance policy.

The History continues with the journey from Yuan China to the Ilkhanate. After leaving the frontiers of what was then considered to be China (not far west of modern Lanzhou) they travelled through central Asia, torn by infighting between the Chagatids and followers of Khubilai, and after a few years' travel skirting the worst of the war, they finally arrived in Mesopotamia. After running some errands between the Mongol Ilkhans and the Patriarch, Denha, they sought to continue to Jerusalem, but discovered that not only was it still in enemy (non-Mongol) hands; it did not look as if the Mongol armies would take it any time soon. Their hope to see it perhaps indicated a confidence further East in the ever-victorious aspects of the Mongol armies. The Patriarch saw in these men, however, an opportunity and attempted to appoint them to administrative offices in their native land. The strain of travelling through a war-torn land had proven great, yet the Catholicos prevailed to name them to new offices, Marqos to the post of Metropolitan of China, and Sauma to that of Visitor-General of the East.

Some degree of ability must have been clear in Marqos at this point because the next stage in the story saw the young man singled out. The History reads as follows:

When the monks saw that their excuses were not working, they said, "The will of our father be done." Then the Catholicos said, "Let no one say Mar Marqos any longer. My desire is that from now on Rabban Marqos will be called following this idea I had. We will write names down and put them on the altar. Whichever one is clearly indicated, that will be his name." They did this, and the name that came up was Yaballaha (Given of God). Then the Catholicos said, "This is from the blessed Lord, blessed be he. They are worthy!" Rabban Marqos received the rank of Metropolitan over China and Ong from the Catholicos, Mar Denha in his 35th year. Rabban Sauma received a blessing from him, and was made Visitor-General. The two of them took letters, each in part to satisfy the needs of their service²³.

²³ Bedjan, *Histoire*, 28-29: translations from this text are author's own (see chapter appendix); cf. Murre-Van Den Berg, *Church of the East in Mesopotamia*, 383-4

In good faith to their new position, the two easterners tried to return to their homeland to take up their duties, but the roads proved impassible, so they settled in at a nearby monastery, perhaps assuming that was where the story would end. Then Denha died, and Marqos' world was changed. Here is the account from the History:

The following day, the fathers gathered to elect a person suitable to sit upon the patriarchal throne. Among such were foremost Maran-Ammeh, the Metropolitan of Elam, as well as the metropolitan of Tangut, the metropolitan of Tirhan, and the metropolitan of Ture. Alongside these were the nobles, chiefs, scholars, lawyers, and doctors of Baghdad. One of them would say that this one should be patriarch, and another would say that one. Finally, everyone agreed that Mar Yaballaha should be the chief and administrator of the throne of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the reason for his election being that the kings directing the government of the whole world were Mongols. There was no one except Yaballaha able to really understand their customs, culture, government, and language.

When they told him this, Yaballaha declined their offer, excusing himself saying, "I lack instruction and doctrinal knowledge. And my tongue itself is a shortcoming. How am I to rise to this position? On top of that, your Syriac language, I don't know it at all. That's completely not what you need." But they pushed their request on him, and he relented and accepted the office²⁴.

The monk from the western reaches of China was now the head of the Church of the East. The interior had placed a member of the exterior house on the throne of their church. The History points out that political exigency helped dictate this placement, alongside fortuitous timing, but it also shows Marqos evading the responsibility at least to a point. Though he contends that his language and theology are not up to the task, he later shows himself competent at both of these elements of Church life particularly in repeated letters to the Pope²⁵.

The History then goes on to relate the travels of Rabban Sauma to and from Europe on an official embassy for the Ilkhan, followed by Sauma's passing²⁶. This section of the history has

²⁴ *Ibid.* 33-34

²⁵ For more on this see Le Coz, Raymond. *L'Église d'Orient: chrétiens d'Irak, d'Iran et de Turqui*. (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995) 290, 335.

²⁶ See Borbone, *13th Century Journey*, 225

received much modern attention, largely due to the fact that it is a catalogued instance of East to West travel in the Middle Ages, and this dissertation will not therefore examine it in detail.

The Colophon

Before moving on to the darker part of the History, it is worthwhile to look at the Colophon and compare the optimistic tone present in both documents. What the History relates in narrative, the Colophon describes in poetry. The first section describes the qualities and attributes of the Patriarch, followed by a summary of his accomplishments to that point. For example,

A steadfast friend of Christ,
A vigilant and careful pastor,
Wholly skillful and studious,
A brilliant and striving
Athlete of the Holy Church.
Pilot and Governor
Who did not turn from the goal of his Lord,
Yet reached the height of virtue,
And fearlessly guided his flock.
He founded schools and churches,
Built convents and monasteries,
Repaired the ruins of our people,
And abundantly gave out alms²⁷.

In the next section he is identified as the Patriarch, after which the author briefly touches on his origins and lays out the extent of his influence.

Glorious Mar Yaballaha,
Patriarch of the East,
Brilliant Catholicos,
Steward of spiritual treasures.
Whom the Eternal Being
Seated on this throne.

²⁷ Vosté, “Memra en L’honneur” 171, Column 1. Translation author’s own, for text and translation see the end of the chapter.

From the land of the Turks.
 A Miracle full of Wonder!
 Who took on the Ephod of honor
 And the Stole of glory and beauty.
 Serving all in honor, love, and excellence.
 Kings came to him in obeisance,
 Queens with offerings,
 Emirs and Sultans
 Bowing before him like subjects
 Thus he remains free from all harm,
 And is delivered from any distress.
 Thus he enjoys the honor of kings
 And lives forever victorious.
 Amen²⁸.

The next section is a more detailed look at his accomplishments particularly in
 construction and endowments. For example,

(Yahballaha) built (this monastery) near the city of Maragha.
 In the area of Azerbaijan.
 He adorned it and embellished it in every way.
 He even finished it off with complete beauty,
 Such that its name remains forever
 And its reward never ends²⁹.

The last part of this section is a prayer for the continued prosperity of the Patriarch and
 his church.

Messiah, on account of your love for him,
 May those of his labors done before you be received,
 And may he be strengthened and rejuvenated
 By his many gifts.
 Let him be watchful
 Against any who would spite him.
 Let his life endure long
 With exuberance and physical well-being.
 Let peace abound in his time,
 And reconciliation in each of his flocks
 May the same sort of joy be within him,
 And may he come into his inheritance. Amen.³⁰.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 172, column 1

²⁹ *Ibid.* 172, column 2

³⁰ *Ibid.* 173, columns 1-2

It closes with the author identifying himself as Abdisho, bishop of Carmeleth, in the year 1606 of the Greeks (1295).

The picture these two texts paint together up until the year 1295 was one of a church ascendant. There is optimism, grounded in the presence of a patriarch who was of the same cultural background as their rulers, a first in their church's long history, but who also had proven to be wise and capable. Though the format of the texts differs, the language and tone are similar and there is little to indicate that the political downturn later that year was foreseen. The prayer in the Colophon, with its plea that "peace abound in his time" might be put forward as such, but this was a common enough sentiment in prayers of that day and a lone statement in an otherwise rosy piece. It can reasonably be concluded that in the beginning of the year 1295, members of the Church of the East generally felt that life was going well for them and their co-religionists, and that to some extent this had to do with both Mongol rule and the ascent of Yaballaha to the patriarchal throne.

The political shift in the latter part of the year 1295 was not unprecedented; Yaballaha had been imprisoned earlier by another zealous Khan; but 1295 was remarkable for both its severity and its duration. Though the persecution that ensued as a result of the shift came to be mitigated by the Khan Ghazan himself, for all practical purposes, the specter of a Christian Ilkhanate would never again be raised. The details of this shift will be examined in a moment. For now, it serves to look at the end of the History and see the author's take on events.

The History (Part 2)

Chapter 10 of the history is titled “The deaths of Rabban Sauma, and of the kings Kaikhatu and Baidu³¹.” This is perhaps the last positive chapter of the text and it closes with an ominous reveal concerning the remainder, “It was heard that King Baidu had fled and was destroyed, and with that was proof that truly the church had been abandoned by God³².”

Subsequent chapters unfold as follows: the shift in imperial favor against the Christians, spearheaded by the Muslim Emir, Nauruz, and the intense persecution suffered by Yaballaha personally; the brief positive turn in Yaballaha’s favor by the Khan Ghazan which lasted more or less throughout the Khan’s life, though there were further periods of persecution therein; and then the remainder of the text, the fall and massacre of the Christians in Arbil which Yaballaha worked diligently against.

It is worth noting that the History save only the very end consistently paints Yaballaha as a friend and ally of the Mongol administration as well as a believer in that administration’s beneficence towards Christians or at least impartiality in regards to religion. In the early part of his reign this was easy enough, but by the time of Ghazan, it had become more difficult. Consistently, however, when the Catholicos appealed to Ghazan after a period of persecution, the Khan acted favorably on behalf of the Christians, “showing him love from the heart.”³³

This might account for one of Yaballaha’s most impassioned speeches before his king, delivered on behalf of his besieged coreligionists in Arbil. In many ways the city of Arbil was a test. Could Christians count on the Mongol administration to protect them against the

³¹ Bedjan, *Histoire*, 93

³² *Ibid.* 99

³³ *Ibid.* 141; this affection and partiality is clear throughout Ghazan’s life, see particularly chapters 11-16.

numerically superior Muslims? This test took place twice. The first time in 1297, seemed for a time tenuous, but ultimately worked out for the Christians. The second time had a much more sinister outcome for the Church of the East. Each instance will be further investigated here.

According to the History, under the sway of Nauruz, who had convinced Ghazan to adopt Islam as his religion, a number of Muslims had received political appointments, and their desire for vengeance was the root cause of most of the struggles for Christians post 1295. This was also a direct source of the difficulties in Arbil.

Arbil and its environs had a significant Christian population that had enjoyed the political situation of the early Ilkhanate, even having a number of Christian Mongol or Central Asian tribal soldiers settle in the area³⁴. 1295 affected the typical Christian in these areas by once again placing them under the authority of Muslims, though Muslims who were still ultimately answerable to a Khan. This was a first for the Central Asians. Persecution ensued, as in other areas, but the Mongol Christians were of a different bent when it came to warfare than their Middle Eastern brethren. When persecution came their way, these “Mountain dwelling” Christians fought back. In 1297, they took control of the fortress of Arbil and used it as a base of operations for what amounted to a small scale putsch against Muslim authorities. Ordinarily, the Mongol overlords would have moved in to determine the source of conflict and resolve it, but at this point, Nauruz had attempted an uprising and the Mongol armies were mostly in Khorasan fighting him. Local Muslim leadership perhaps saw this as an ideal opportunity to put down these Christian easterners with impunity, but it soon became clear that the “Mountain Dwellers”

³⁴ *Ibid.* 122

were actually a formidable opponent, and an impasse came to be. Thus both Christians and Muslims sought the Khan to gain royal support.

That support was indeterminate. The Khan was in a difficult place. While he admired the Christians and having just put down a rebellion led by the Muslims was not inclined to support the Christians' opponents, these Christians had for all appearances committed rebellion against a duly appointed Mongol government. In response to Yaballaha's pleas on behalf of members of his flock, the History relates the Khan's words as follows:

If the king were to have the Christians come down from the fortress and he were to give them land and water and homes, protecting them from everyone who might hurt them; were he to bring them here and release them from all duties and taxes, what then? What do you think should happen? The enmity between the religions of the Arabs and Syrians has increased. If the situation remains as it is, it will greatly damage this kingdom; and if these rebels remain as they are, other rebellions will come to be. What does the Catholicos suggest concerning this matter and how it should be handled³⁵?

Yaballaha's response is an emotional plea banking everything on his relationship with the Khan:

There was a cell in Baghdad. A church and many possessions that were granted to me. They have been taken. The church and cells in Maragha were torn up and destroyed and everything in them was plundered, but you know this. I have only just escaped being murdered, which should be plain to see. The church and cells in Tabriz? There is nothing but empty ground there now, and everything that was in them is gone. The cells and church in the city of Hamadhan, they were picked apart to the point where no remains can be seen. All that is now left is the church and cells in the fortress of Arbil and a hundred souls with them. Do you want to scatter and plunder these as well? Why should I go on living? My king, either order me to go East to the land from which I came or send me to the country of the Franks that I might live out my life there³⁶.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 126

³⁶ *Ibid.* 127

Yaballaha's pleas had the desired effect. Ghazan was moved and ordered relief and troops to bail the Christians in Arbil out of their predicament. In a sense, he was demonstrating to his Muslim subjects that Christians would still be equal if not specially treated.

Following Ghazan's death, the new Khan, Uljaito did not have nearly the same sentiment for Christians. Though baptized as a boy and having enjoyed the affection of the Catholicos personally³⁷, after converting to Islam as an adult he became respectfully cool towards the Christians in his midst and the Catholicos in particular. For a time, the status quo prevailed, but Arbil had already assumed the stage as a test of Imperial support for the cause of the Christians.

The next time the test came about, it was, simply put, a massacre. Where the administration had come in on the side of the Christians under Ghazan, under Uljaito, Muslims prevailed. After several months of siege, the fortress was stormed by a combined Muslim/Mongol force. Men who remained to defend it were killed, many thrown from the walls. Women and children were enslaved. Events leading up to this played out much the same way as they had the first time, but the best efforts of the Catholicos to construct peace had little effect either on the Khan or the defenders, and eventually the men in the fortress were treated as rebels and destroyed. The History says that in the months leading up to the surrender of the Christians, on multiple occasions the Catholicos was able to persuade some of the defenders to give up their position. Each time the result was the wanton murder on some pretext of any who left the shelter of the fortress³⁸. Furthermore, on multiple occasions the Catholicos was imprisoned and

³⁷ *Ibid.* 148

³⁸ For instance, *Ibid.* 183

beaten³⁹, yet he would continue to work for the benefit of his churchmen trusting the khan for protection.

For instance, at the outset of the difficulties while residing personally in the fortress of Arbil, the Catholicos did not stir up his coreligionists to report on their situation to the Khan, not believing that the events that would come to pass could happen “because of his love for the Kingdom⁴⁰,” meaning the Mongol administration. This is the same man who had spent several days in the last couple decades imprisoned, beaten, or hanging upside down from the ceiling⁴¹. Nevertheless, he trusted the Khans.

This trust is reiterated many times⁴², thus its absence after the siege was complete is telling. Thereupon, the Catholicos had occasion to sit in the presence of the Khan. After carrying out the necessary ceremonies attendant upon coming into the presence of the king, the Catholicos waited patiently for even a mere inquiry on the part of the Khan regarding the state of his church. It never came. The History says the Catholicos waited in proximity to the king for a month, but the Khans were no longer interested in the situation of the Christians. Yaballaha eventually left, saying, “I am tired of serving the Mongols⁴³.” He lived in his cell for the next half decade and in 1317 passed away.

At the end of his life, it is clear that Yaballaha had become disillusioned with the Mongol administration and its relationship with Christians. He had fought ardently for the rights of his coreligionists, believing in the honor of his rulers, but at Arbil, when tested, the honor of those rulers was found to be lacking. His words in the first instance to Ghazan most likely reflect what

³⁹ For instance, *Ibid.* 181

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 159

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 101; torture can be quite creative.

⁴² See for instance *Ibid.*, 172, 180-182, 187

⁴³ *Ibid.* 202

he wanted to say to Uljaito 13 years later, but his relationship with Uljaito was not the same. Despite his best efforts, in the end there was nothing to say. Thus, at the end of his life, Yaballaha né Marqos had apparently seen both the apex and nadir of the power of the Church of the East.

These two texts, while tracing the life of Yaballaha, have also traced the course of Mongol/Christian relations, from Marqos' youth when the Mongol rulers were actively seeking Christians to people their administration to the grudging shift away from Christian influence in political circles and the inevitable repercussions of such a fall from grace in his later life. In some ways Marqos' life could be said to outline the Mongol age of Church of the East history, from its rise to its fall. Now it is time to examine the various socio-political dynamics that both resulted in this brief period of Church/State synergy on the part of the Church of the East as well as its eventual collapse.

Historical Background

The latter part of this chapter will attempt to analyze the elements that contributed to the socio-politics of Marqos' day, and thereby synthesize some possible reasons for it. This background investigation will consist of three components; a look at the structure and format of the Church of the East from the late 9th to early 14th centuries in each of three cultural settings, Mesopotamia and the environs of the Abbasid caliphate, Central Asia, and China; an investigation inasmuch as possible of the theology of the Outer House of the Church of the East in particularly the latter portion of this time frame, and a more detailed examination of the relationship between the Church of the East and the Mongol polities, focusing especially on Mongol religious policies.

The Inner House: Abbasid Political Decline and Fragmentation and its Effects on the Church.

As with all empires, the seeds of Abbasid decline were present in its formation. Their rise to power on the platform of purer Islam and ethnic equality for those who believed carried within it the origins of later dissidence, especially among powerful but disenfranchised leaders beyond the immediate reach of the government. Coupled with the sheer size of the Muslim Empire, significant lands were effectively beyond the reach of the central government that came to be housed in Iraq. This was not a new development, as the Umayyads had likewise struggled with the scope of their holdings, even losing a substantial portion of North Africa to the Berbers well before the fall of Damascus⁴⁴.

Once the Abbasids came to power, the issues that had plagued the Umayyads became their own with a number of additional ones thrown in. Already in the beginning they had lost most of the west, with Andalusia remaining under an Umayyad prince⁴⁵, and much of North Africa remaining under the Berbers. The eventual rise of the Fatimids can be traced to this failure on the part of the Abbasids to gain control of the whole of the Maghreb, though the Fatimids were certainly not a Berber dynasty⁴⁶.

Nevertheless, at the outset of their dynasty, the Abbasids still controlled all the land between what is now Tunisia and just beyond the Oxus River in central Asia. As with their

⁴⁴ Miller, James A. "Trading through Islam: The Interconnections of Sijilmasa, Ghana, and the Almoravid Movement." In *North Africa, Islam, and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War*, by Julia Clancy-Smith, 29-58. (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001) 38ff

⁴⁵ See Watt, W. Montgomery: Cachia, Pierre. *A History of Islamic Spain*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965) 30ff

⁴⁶ For discussion on their origin and the role of the Berbers in the rise of the Fatimids see Brett, Michael. *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Middle East and the Mediterranean in the 10th Century CE*. (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 29-48

forebears, they were somewhat constantly struggling to expand their lands, continuing Umayyad campaigns in Transoxania and Transcaucasus and launching their own assaults in Crete, Sicily, Anatolia, and an abortive attempt to regain Andalusia⁴⁷. They even at one point attempted to negotiate an alliance with the Carolingians against both Umayyad Spain and the Byzantines⁴⁸.

But at the height of their power, the Abbasid Caliphs still found it difficult to maintain control over the whole of their territory. The vastness of it necessitated extraordinary reliance on the governors of each region, a reliance that often proved misplaced. This became clear very early in the regime when the civil war between al-Amin and al-Ma'mun created a situation in which the Caliph was beholden to a regional power, Tahir, a lord of Khorasan. Tahir's support was secured with a promise of hereditary governorship of the region, which, as Ira Lapidus says, meant that the "empire was now to be governed by an alliance of the Caliph with the most important provincial lord⁴⁹."

In addition, the regime had been built on the premise of equality, and had brought dissident elements into the fold of Islam with little compunction, but found it a greater challenge to maintain this magnanimity among Muslims, not to mention *Dhimmi* peoples. The revolt of the Zanj (869-883)⁵⁰, and the proliferation and reliance on Turkish troops⁵¹ were among the

⁴⁷ See Kennedy *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In*. (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2007) 325ff, 343, 363ff; for a more concise look specifically at attacks against the Byzantines see Mikaberidze, Alexander. *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011) 219-225

⁴⁸ Scholz, Bernard Walter, and Barbara Rogers. *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals, Nithard's Histories*. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1972) 15-17; cf. Deanesly, Margaret. *A History of Medieval Europe, 476-911*. Vol. 1. 8 vols. (London: Methuen, 1956) 294

⁴⁹ Lapidus, *History*, 103-5

⁵⁰ The most complete primary source is Tabari, in Waines, David. *The History of al-Tabari (Ta'rikh al-rusul w'al-muluk)*. Translated by David Waines. Vols. 34, 36. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992) Vol. 36; For a concise assessment of the rebellion and its causes see Furlonge, Nigel D. "Revisiting the Zanj and Re-visioning Revolt: Complexities of the Zanj Conflict (868 - 883 AD)." *Negro History Bulletin*, 1999: 7-14

⁵¹ For detailed information on the rise of Turkish troops in the Abbasid military see Gordon, Matthew S. *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra (AH 200-275/815-889 CE)*. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), esp. 15ff; for a concise look at the role of Turks in the collapse of the Caliphate see

many strains that led to the decay of the Abbasid polity. The end result of the process begun here was an impotent Caliph as the titular head of a greatly diminished empire of semi-associated emirates.

This collapse is well documented⁵²; its effect on Christianity in the empire less so. This is because as the empire essentially became a series of small polities with a vaguely centrist focus, the church had to address itself to both the center as well as each separate political entity on an individual basis. This was not always a negative for Christians as it had potential to elevate local believers to senior political positions in a moment. A case in point is the East Syrian Isa ibn-Nastur, discussed further below, who became vizier under the Fatimids⁵³.

Nevertheless, despite a weakening of power the Caliph often retained a degree of influence among the various emirs such that as long as the Church of the East could maintain positive relations with the Caliph, they could guarantee some rapport with at least those individual emirs who expressed an interest in the interests of the Caliph. An example of this is the designation of the Catholicos as the protector of all Christians, meaning Christians of all sects. This had probably existed in some form as early as Timothy, evidenced among other episodes in his exhortation to the Caliph to begin reconstruction by the government of the Churches in southern Anatolia mentioned in the last chapter. It probably did not become official until al-Mutawakkil (847-861)⁵⁴.

This influence with the Caliph, however, was severely limited and at least two situations can be mentioned in which such influence could be rendered moot if not indeed a liability. First,

Bennison, Amira K. *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the 'Abbasid Empire*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009) 36-39.

⁵² The best source is Lapidus, *History*, 106ff.

⁵³ See Moffet, *History vol. I*, 380

⁵⁴ Lapidus, *History*, 105

when the local polity was indifferent to or hostile towards the government in Iraq and/or to Christians in general, and second, when the government in Iraq took an indifferent or somewhat hostile stance towards the Church of the East or Christians in general. An example of each should suffice. The first is most clearly illustrated in the reign of a ruler such as the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim. The second is best demonstrated in the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil.

The Fatimids, based in Egypt, were the first major rival Muslim government in immediate geographic context of the Abbasids in Iraq⁵⁵. They were not necessarily antagonistic to the Church of the East. Under the Fatimid Caliph al-Aziz, the East Syrian Isa ibn-Nastur (literally Jesus, son of Nestorius) was named Vizier. He served al-Aziz faithfully for over twenty years before Aziz's son al-Hakim came to power and had him murdered⁵⁶.

Al-Hakim (996-1021) was even by conservative estimates a fanatic, called the "Mad Caliph" in most crusader and western literature as well as many Sunni sources, though one should expect a polemical quality from any of these origins⁵⁷. Whether or not the more extreme accounts of his actions are reliable, there is generous support confirming his oppression of Christians in his own lands, and sources agree that he was responsible for the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, an act with undeniably far-reaching repercussions. It

⁵⁵ For an overview of the history of the Fatimids see Walker, Paul. *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources*. (London: Tauris, 2002) 15-93

⁵⁶ See Baumer, *Church of the East*, 152

⁵⁷ For a fairly balanced view of his life see Walker, Paul. *The Caliph of Cairo: Al-Hakim Bi-Amr Allah, 996-1021*. (Cairo: American University of Cairo, 2012); for a more concise version see Daftary, Farhad. "ḤĀKEM BE-AMR-ALLĀH." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. December 15, 2003. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hakem-be-amr-allah> (accessed July 18, 2014).

incensed all Christians and though it did not result in immediate reprisals⁵⁸, “control of the Holy Sepulcher” stood as one of the aims of the Crusaders in their initial descent on the Middle East⁵⁹.

Admittedly, the Church of the East was not as strongly represented among Hakim’s subjects as the other two significant Middle Eastern churches, but at this juncture there were a good number of East Syrian congregations in a variety of Fatimid controlled cities and regions, including hearty congregations in firmly Fatimid Palestine and Egypt as well as at-times Fatimid controlled Damascus and Aleppo. There was actually a Church of the East metropolitan in Damascus⁶⁰.

For the purpose of this study, what is obvious is that Church of the East influence in Baghdad certainly had no positive effect on those East Syrian churchmen under Fatimid control. Indeed, one could speculate that on the occasions in which their proximity to the Abbasid Caliphs might come to Hakim’s attention it was actually detrimental to their health. The apparent principle that can be drawn from this is that for those East Syrians beyond the political influence of the Catholicos, there was little the Catholicos could hope to do, and this is in regards to those realms with which they might reasonably correspond. For those of the Church of the East who lived in far-flung realms such as China and India, the Catholicos and central church body in Baghdad might at times be fortunate to even know if they continued to exist.

Nevertheless, despite having a membership that extended geographically far beyond the bounds of Abbasid control, the Catholicoi throughout the majority of the Abbasid Caliphate’s

⁵⁸ Whittow, Mark. *The Making of Byzantium, 600-1025*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996) 381

⁵⁹ Morris, Colin. *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West: From the Beginning to 1600*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005) 135

⁶⁰ For a complete listing of bishops, etc. see Fiey, Jean Maurice. *Pour un Oriens Christianus novus; répertoire des diocèses Syriaques orientaux et occidentaux*. (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1993). For more on the East Syrian presence in Egypt see Meinardus, Otto. *The Nestorians in Egypt*. Vol. LI. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967).

duration chose to remain in continued proximity to the Abbasid Caliph's court. When the Caliph al-Mutasim (833-842) moved his court to Samarra in 837, the patriarch followed, conceding to sell a monastery in the process. And when Turkish troops forced the Caliph al-Mu'tadim (870-892) to return to Baghdad in 889, the Church leadership, which had given up much of its land in Samarra to the polity, likewise returned to Baghdad⁶¹.

It is useful here to point out that the effects of the political fragmentation described herein might at times have actually been advantageous for the more distant elements of the Church of the East. It permitted for and indeed encouraged a more indigenous form of the faith to spring up in the exterior areas. Relatively little is known about the form and practice of the Church of the East to the east of Persia, precisely because it was largely disconnected from the center, but what is known is fascinating. Suffice it to say that there were a number of Turkish Tribes who had wholly or in part converted to Christianity by the advent of the Mongolian Age of which Yaballaha was but one member. But the manner in which those groups became Christian is lost to us. As far as is known, a few missions were dispatched to these people, and a few requests for further teaching were received from them, but little remains to describe the details of form or function of these churches and the manner in which they spread⁶². What is known will be further detailed below.

From Friends of the Caliphs to Pariahs

Dealing with the political dimensions of a fragmenting Abbasid state provided significant challenges, but what about those who remained under relatively direct Abbasid control. To put it

⁶¹ Baumer, *Church of the East*, 154-155

⁶² See Borbone, Pier Giorgio. "Some Aspects of Turco-Mongol Christianity in the Light of Epigraphic Syriac Sources." *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2005): 5-20.

simply, their status changed. In the last chapter it was made evident that in Timothy's day the Church of the East had enjoyed fairly high social regard and had likely constituted at least a plural majority. This status did not change immediately, but it did change.

Jahiz's *Disputation against the Christians* was referenced in the last chapter concerning the beginnings of this shift at the political level. This document was written after Timothy's passing, likely during the reign of al-Mutawakkil⁶³. Jahiz's work is once again worth noting for a couple reasons. First, its existence indicates that the status of Christians had become openly debatable⁶⁴. Polemical conversations that had before taken place behind closed doors and in exclusive meetings could at this point be openly disseminated.

Second, this conversation, while open, is taking place while Christians are still a significant component of Abbasid society, culturally, materially, and politically, and from the Muslim perspective, this is not likely to change anytime soon. Jahiz himself points this out. At one point in the *Disputation*, he actually laments the proliferation of the Christians and the steadfastness of their faith:

We know that the Christian bishops as well as all inmates of monasteries, whether Nestorian or Jacobite, in fact monks of every description, both male and female, all practice celibacy. When we next consider how great is the number of the monks, and that most of the clergy adhere to their practices, and when we finally take into account the numerous wars of the Christians, their sterile men and women, their prohibition against divorce, polygamy, and concubinage (is it not queer) that, in spite of all of this, they have filled the Earth, and exceeded all others in numbers and fecundity? Alas! This circumstance, has increased our misfortunes, and made our trials stupendous! Another cause for the growth and expansion of Christianity is the fact that the Christians draw converts from other

⁶³ Gibson, Nathan P. *Closest in Friendship? Al-Jāḥiẓ' Profile of Christians in Abbasid Society in 'The Refutation of Christians' (Al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā)*, Dissertation (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2015).19ff

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 134ff

religions and *give none in return* (while the reverse should be true), for it is the younger religion that is expected to profit from conversion⁶⁵.

While it is risky to cite polemic such as this for historical purposes, there is merit in seeing the context in which it was written. The italicized statement, that Christians are not in Jahiz' day converting at all, can rightly be seen as hyperbole, but it is exceedingly unlikely that it is pure falsehood. In fact, the argument in the text is based on the premise that it would be apparent, whether or not true, to the average Muslim that the population of Christians was not diminishing through conversion. Otherwise the argument has no merit. Political pundits can only provide a convincing argument to their readership if the alleged evidence of that argument is readily visible.

If Christians still comprised significant enough of a population in Jahiz' day to warrant such writing, what had changed between Timothy's day and the writing of this letter, the span of perhaps a generation? In Timothy's day, what polemic might exist was often confined to the *Majlis* and formalized debates. It was a gentleman's debate. It took the form of an argument here or there, and the Christian, as evidenced by the writings in Arabic of many an apologist⁶⁶ had recourse to their own arguments and were permitted to circulate them, at least to some extent. In a sense it could be said that the *convivencia* of early Abbasid Baghdad permitted "gentlemanly" discourse on all manner of topics, including religion. This was not free license to openly attack Islam, hence Timothy's guarded answers to the Caliph, but in the course of argument, limited critiques were permissible, allowing a sort of rapport that enabled mutual conversation between the various factions of both faiths present in the Abbasid capital.

⁶⁵ Finkel, J. (*Thalith rasa'il li-Abi Uthman al-Jahiz*. Cairo, 1926) 332. Translations are Finkel's. Italics authors own.

⁶⁶ See the discussion in Griffith, *Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 109ff

Timothy's great foresight detailed in the last chapter was that an end to this was approaching. Jahiz as a writer stands as a sort of herald of that end, in tandem with others such as 'Ali ibn Rabban al-Tabari, also mentioned earlier. But these writers did not broach this subject unsolicited. They were patronized into it, and their patronage came from the highest order, the Caliph himself. The Caliph Ja'far 'Alā Allāh Al-Mutawakkil ibn al-Mu'tasim (847-861) stands as perhaps the first wherein Christians found themselves marked out for a significant degree of persecution⁶⁷. Bar Hebraeus later labeled him the "Hater of Christians"⁶⁸, though it must be stated up front that Mutawakkil was not particularly kindly to any who fell outside of his perspective of orthodoxy⁶⁹. For instance, he also instigated brutal measures against the Shi'ites⁷⁰. Concerning the Mu'tazilites, he effectively ended their political dominance and imprisoned many of their most prominent partisans (it is worth noting here that Jahiz was a Mu'tazilite, which may account for the difficulty in tracing his patronage directly to Mutawakkil)⁷¹. As to the Zoroastrians they too were oppressed. For instance Mutawakkil went as far as to order the felling of a large Cypress tree in Khorasan allegedly planted by Zoroaster himself for the purpose of gaining timber for his palace⁷².

Towards Christians this development began with the written word, the area of life where their presence was most noticeable and in which their defamation would be most effective, and Mutawakkil's weapon of choice, at least initially, was polemic, which has been described in a

⁶⁷ For an original account of Mutawakkil's life see Waines, *Tabari*, vol. 34, 61-194. For the timing of the shift in Christian fortunes, see Moffett, *History*, vol. 1, 355

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* cf. Budge, *Chronography*, 141.

⁶⁹ For an overview of Mutawakkil's religious policy see Kamil, Bahjat al-Tikriti. *The Religious Policy of Al-Mutawakkil 'Ala Allah al-Abbasi*. (MA Thesis: McGill University, 1969).

⁷⁰ Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 439ff

⁷¹ For details of Mutawakkil's actions against the Mu'tazilites, see Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Religion and Politics Under the Early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite*. (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 106

⁷² See Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 158ff

religious context as “a war in which words are the weapon and the religious beliefs of the ‘other’ are the target⁷³.” Specifically he sought out the aid of Jahiz, despite his Mu’tazilite leanings, because he was one of the most eloquent writers and polemicists of his day. Finkel says of Mutawakkil’s selection:

Mutawakkil, in the course of his persecution of the Christians, might have assigned the writing of this epistle to more than one scholar of the ranks of the staunch orthodox Moslems who would have been only too ready to pounce upon the Christians with all the venom and fury of his blind prejudice. Instead Mutawakkil entrusted this task to Jāḥiẓ, a man who had been in close association with Christians, and had been suspected of harboring indifferent views toward religion in general, because the court well knew that it could depend upon the pen of Jāḥiẓ more than upon the conviction of others⁷⁴.

This is not to say that there were not others whom the Caliph commissioned in this era to write anti-Christian polemic. Despite his likely imperial patronage, Jahiz is not entirely forthcoming in his text as to that support, but authors such as Ibn Rabban al-Tabari leave little to question, referring, for instance, to the Caliph as “the rope extended between God and his servants⁷⁵.”

When taken in tandem with the stated aim of Ibn Rabban, a concerted effort to slander the Christians becomes apparent:

They have hidden his name and changed his portrait found in the Books of their prophets – peace be with them. I shall demonstrate this, disclose its secret, and withdraw the veil from it, in order that the reader may see it clearly and increase his conviction and his joy in the religion of Islam⁷⁶.

Eventually, Mutawakkil’s enmity towards those who did not believe as he did would sprout into a full on enforcement of the segregationist laws that gradually evolved into the

⁷³ Kassis, Hanna E. "Critique of Scriptures: Polemics of al-Jahiz and Ibn Hazm against Christianity and Judaism." In *Religious Apologetics - Philosophical Argumentation*, by Yossef Schwartz, & Volkhard Krech, 237-250. (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 238

⁷⁴ Finkel, *al-Jahiz*, 316; cf. Pellat, Charles. *The Life and Works of Jahiz (Islamic World)*. Translated by D.M. Hawkes. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969) 8

⁷⁵ See Mingana, Alphonse, and 'Ali Tabari. *The Book of Religion and Empire*. (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1922) ix.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 3; cf. Siddiqui, Mona. *Christians, Muslims, and Jesus*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) 100-104

Covenant of Umar. It must be noted, however, that Mutawakkil cannot be said to have originated these laws or been the first to employ them. That distinction probably lies with the Umayyad Caliph Umar II (717-720) who tried relatively early to institute many of the reforms that began or characterized the Abbasid caliphate, such as ease of conversion, tax reform, and clear identification through segregationist policies of Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. His opponents halted these early attempts, however, by poisoning his food⁷⁷.

Though he employed polemical authors and segregationist policies, Mutawakkil never quite stooped to the pogroms that the Fatimid al-Hakim appeared to endorse. But his efforts did restrain any groups that believed differently than he did. Christians, because of their numbers and former influence, felt this to an extent that other groups might not have. This accounts for his receipt of Bar Hebraeus' calumny, not due to his brutality, but rather to his simple disdain for Christians and the status quo that they represented. As Sidney Griffith put it, this marked the "end of the first period in the history of *Kalām*, for Muslims and Christians alike⁷⁸."

But one does not effect a change of the status quo without some popular support. Witness the effects of such measures on the Umayyad Caliph Umar II mentioned above. This means that Mutawakkil had at least a degree of popular support in order to carry out his agenda. A sort of invisible line had been crossed sometime around his reign, and the simplest explanation

⁷⁷ See Shaban, M.A. *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) 85ff; cf. Hawting, Gerald. *Muslims, Mongols and Crusaders*. (London: Routledge, 2005) 77. For more on the covenant see Thomas, David; Roggema, Barbara. *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Biographical History*. (Leiden: Brill, 2009) 360ff. For a detailed look at the sources of the covenant and the controversy surrounding its provenance see Levy-Rubin, Milka. *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); cf. Tritton, A.S. *Caliphs and their non-Muslim Subjects*. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁷⁸ Griffith, Sidney H. "Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām: Theodore Abū Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion." In *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, by Samir Khalil Samir, & Jørgen S. Nielsen, 1-56. (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 2

is that this was a likely point at which Muslims were or nearly were outnumbering Christians at least in the heartland of the Caliphate.

To see this, one must go back again to the demographics of the Umayyad period. There is little question that the situation in the Umayyad age was one of a Muslim minority ruling a polity composed of a variety of different ethnic and religious groups, and that in much of the empire Christians comprised the majority. Conversion in that period is discussed above, but it is worth reiterating that by Abbasid times, there was an uptick in conversions. This does not mean, however, that Christianity slid into the minority overnight. While there are accounts that Christians numbered substantially among those converted in early Abbasid times it is also clear that there were other *Dhimmi* peoples, such as the Zoroastrians, converting in numbers as substantial if not greater⁷⁹, thus the overall growth of Islam likely had its origins in the conversions of people of a multitude of backgrounds as opposed to simply those of Christian provenance.

But as with in the earliest stages of Islamic society, Christians tended to be among the most educated group and the most capable of carrying out the various functions of government work. Just as the Umayyads had by necessity relied on Christians to serve as government functionaries, so too did the Abbasids, lest government come grinding to a halt. But in politics, there were advantages given to Muslims that were not available to Christians. This meant that given adequate time Muslims would soon be available, either through conversion or training, to serve in the positions that had once been exclusive to Christians. Mutawakkil's reign stood at

⁷⁹ See Stepaniants, Marietta. "The Encounter of Zoroastrianism with Islam." *Philosophy East and West* 52, no. 2 (2002): 159-172

that point in time. By engaging the services of anti-Christian polemicists, he hoped to incite the population to stand behind him in his removal of the Christians from their positions of prestige.

It might be asked why the Eastern Christians, if they had genuinely constituted a majority at any point in the Abbasid period, did not actively seek to establish their own polity in a way similar to the Shi'ites later in the Caliphate. One might almost propose that the Middle Eastern churches were generally averse to militant conflict. This is evident throughout much of their histories. It is true that Middle Eastern Christians never really became the 5th column in the crusader march, and largely held themselves aloof from Byzantine attempts to take over its lost provinces⁸⁰. The Church of the East, in particular, seemed to avoid any and all militant action, earlier taking measures such as paying the Sassanid government a head tax, much like the *Jizya*, in lieu of military service⁸¹.

This aversion to war is important, but first it is worth pointing out a few other factors. The Christian communities individually were strategically unlikely to be able to fend off superior imperial military forces. And their differences rendered taking up arms together generally unpalatable. It is interesting that one of the only points in history in which each major branch of Middle Eastern Christianity was represented in the same army took place as members of the Mongol army among fringe elements of each group, namely Frankish and Georgian "Melkites," Armenian "Jacobites," and Turkish Tribal or Mongol "Nestorians"⁸².

⁸⁰ There are exceptions. The Mardaites in the Umayyad period come to mind. See Vasiliev, Alexander A. *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324-1453*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952) 215ff

⁸¹ See Morony, *Christians in Iraq*, 360ff

⁸² See Man, John. *Kublai Khan: From Xanadu to Superpower*. (London: Bantam Books, 2007) 74-87

Likewise, for all of the Christian presence in Baghdad or Basra or even Mosul, these were Arab cities⁸³. This was particularly true in Baghdad, founded as an Arab religious capital and drawing Arabs of all stripes as a capital city is wont to do. Though the city was built on a Christian village and possessed a sizeable Christian population up to at least the Mongol period, if there was anywhere in the *Dar-al-Islam* where Christians might actually have been in the minority in the early Abbasid period, Baghdad is a likely location. Concerning Basra, though the Christian presence was more significant, as a premier port city for the caliphate as a whole and Mosul as a trade capital and eventual political capital of the Hamdanids and a number of subsequent dynasties, Christianity generally tended to be fairly marginalized⁸⁴. Mosul was Abbasid Iraq's other major urban center, and though Christians likely remained a majority well beyond the time frame when that status would have shrunk in other prominent cities, Mosul's political importance ensured that its rule would ultimately remain in the hands most sympathetic to the ruling party's religion⁸⁵.

Additionally, though Islam may have had its roots among rural Bedouin, it had quickly become the religion of the state which meant an urban religion. Its practitioners were concentrated in the cities. This meant that even when Christians were institutionally well-connected, unlike the Shi'ites or their sympathizers who might have had numbers adequate to overrun political garrisons in a given city, Christian political strength laid in rural villages and monastic centers removed from Urban areas. This meant that Christians generally never held

⁸³ See Goodwin, Jason. "The Glory that was Baghdad." *The Wilson Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2003): 24-28: cf. Le Strange, "Baghdad"; Miura, Toru. "Mashriq." In *Islamic Urban Studies*, by Masashi Haneda, & Toru Miura, 83-184. (New York: Routledge, 2010) 98-104

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 97

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 104.

enough influence in the sectors of society wherein rebellion could ultimately be fostered and promoted⁸⁶.

The assumption that Christians would rise up against an oppressive regime rests on the idea that Christians should and would fight oppression, which is a distinctly Western notion. Because medieval and modern Western Christianity seemed to favor the sword, it can be difficult to ascertain the distaste and even disdain in which it was held by the early Church and most of Eastern Christianity, despite suffering under considerable oppression from time to time, such as is evident in the History. The Byzantines, who were no strangers to military activity, developed a nuanced theology in which violence might have its reasons but was never condoned⁸⁷. For the Church of the East, it was unheard of⁸⁸. Furthermore, the reluctance of Christians to rise up during the initial Arab invasions, based on a myriad of pretexts, set a precedent for their descendants under Islam that would have been difficult to overcome.

There were Muslims aware of this pacifist aspect of Christian religion. Jahiz, in another work, relates this curious element of Christianity as it had theretofore been seen from outside:

It is known that before the Byzantines embraced Christianity they held their own against the kings of Persia, and that war raged between the two peoples with varying fortunes. When they adopted a religion which forbade them kill, fight, take revenge or apply the law of retaliation, they fell prey to a sort of faintheartedness, so that it became a strain on them to go into battle. When this religion sank into their character and took hold of their body and blood, entirely against their natural inclinations, they forsook the victor's camp for that of the vanquished⁸⁹.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ McGuckin, John. "Nonviolence and Peace Traditions in Early & Eastern Christianity." *In Communion: Website of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship*. December 29, 2004. <http://www.incommunion.org/2004/12/29/nonviolence-and-peace-traditions/> (accessed August 1, 2014)

⁸⁸ It would be a much different study to fully address non-violence in the Church of the East tradition, one that as yet has not been done. At this point a good source on the proscription of violence in the Early Syriac tradition is AbouZayd, Shafiq, "Violence and Killing in the Liber Graduum", ARAM 12 (2000): 451-465

⁸⁹ Pellat, *Jahiz*, 191.

It is telling that this realization came via Jahiz, in Mutawakkil's day. While the passage is speaking specifically of the Byzantines, it would have been clear in that milieu that this particular argument does not apply fully to the Byzantines, and it can thus be understood as more in reference to the faith of Rome than to the political adversary of the Caliphs; in other words, Christians in general. If such a conceptualization of the Christians was becoming the norm in the mid-9th century, it would weigh heavily in consideration of the "military" potential of a subject people.

Though Muslim rulers and elites might have felt strongly that military action on the part of the Christians was unlikely, they could not afford to discount the possibility. It can therefore be posited that this potential, alongside the lack of viable candidates for government work mentioned above, were key inhibitors of an earlier Muslim imposition of the treaty restrictions that would come to govern the life of the *Dhimmi* in later Islamic periods, or their uniform continuation after men such as Mutawakkil. A minority that rules over others has to take a variety of measures to stay in power. For examples, consider the Manchu rulers of Qing China who helmed several centuries of relative prosperity for their country, or the Afrikaners in mid-twentieth century South Africa whose regime was considerably more short-lived. Though these examples had different histories and outcomes, both demonstrate the perpetual military threat of the majority as well as very different approaches to the management of that threat⁹⁰.

The Arabs showed comparable political wisdom to the Qing in their dealing with the variety of people under their rule, but there was a substantial difference between the Arab regime

⁹⁰ On South African Apartheid see Clark, Nancy L., and William H. Worger. *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. (New York: Routledge, 2011); cf. Louw (2004) 85ff. On Qing prosperity and early laws see Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. (New York: Norton & Company, 1990), 34ff; cf. Steele, Valerie, and John S. Major. *China Chic: East Meets West*. (Singapore: Yale University Press, 1999) 41. On the collapse of the Qing due to Han uprisings see Spence, *Modern China*, 173ff, 216.

and the Qing. The Qing ruled under the auspices of the “Mandate of Heaven” claiming this age old justification for the success of their rule and failure of the late Ming. The Umayyads at least predicated their rule on the alleged revelation of a better path, more akin to the colonizing powers of the European world than with the Qing endeavor. But the rise of the Abbasids marked a change, one that very few demographic majorities ruled by a minority in world history have faced, access to the minority itself. No Han could ever become a Manchu. No black African could ever become an Afrikaner. But the Abbasid revolution was fought to declare that race and ethnicity were not factors in the governance of a Muslim Empire. Being Greek, Aramaean, Persian, or eventually even Turk or Zanj did not forbid entry. A Christian, Zoroastrian, Jewish, or even Buddhist child of any ethnic background could grow to be a member of the ruling ethnicity by reciting a handful of words in front of witnesses, and thus the minority grew into the majority. By the time of Mutawakkil this process had begun to reach a critical mass.

Mutawakkil then was simply following in the footsteps of his predecessors completing steps first instituted nearly a century before. Al-Hakim’s later motives are difficult to discern, lending credence to the idea of some imbalance on his part. Mutawakkil had no such difficulty. He may have truly believed the message of his faith, but belief aside, he sought to preserve his kingdom by marginalizing any who were not members of the religious inner circle. This puts him in company with thousands of other rulers in any regime who have done the same thing. The difference is that in his regime’s case, it was very easy to become part of that ruling class⁹¹.

This is not to suggest that as the Muslims grew in population, they simply became metaphorical bullies enforcing their will. This would be akin to saying that every child of

⁹¹ For more on Mutawakkil’s agenda see Melchert, Christopher. "Religious Policies of the Caliphs from al-Mutawakkil to al-Muqtadir, A H 232-295/A D 847-908." *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 3 (1996): 316 - 342

significant stature is by sheer virtue of his size destined to abuse his classmates. As has been pointed out time and again, for most of the history of Islam, persecution was limited⁹². In much of the history of the Islamic world, the rulers and those under them lived together in relative peace.

Mutawakkil and Al-Hakim were rather the exception than the norm. Had they been the norm, discounting the likelihood that their empire would have been short-lived, the population of Christians under them would have diminished far more rapidly. Such a norm often existed in the no-man's land that Anatolia became after the fall of Byzantine power there. Its Christian population is worth examination in this regard⁹³. If anything, the staying power of Christians in the Dar-al-Islam demonstrates relative restraint on the part of their rulers.

But even allowing for the prevalence of a much more moderate Muslim population than the example of either al-Hakim or Mutawakkil portray, as Islam assumed the same dominance among the general population as it had always enjoyed in the military or at the upper echelons of the political world, it came to be the dominant faith in every other realm of life, be it commerce, academia, or eventually even agriculture, and this dominance came at the expense of those who remained distinct from what was becoming a Muslim norm. As the *Dar-al-Islam* actually became Islamicized, the room for differences in the public sphere became smaller and smaller.

In the time of Mutawakkil this became evident in the public sphere, as positions previously dominated by Christians became closed to them. Christians had carved a niche for themselves under the Sassanids as scribes and scholars, and this was maintained and to an extent

⁹² See Jenkins, *Lost History*, 30-32. One might inquire, however, as to why simply limiting persecution makes it somehow more palatable.

⁹³ See de Courtois, Sébastien. *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, the Last Arameans*. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004) 99ff

enhanced under Islam. Mutawakkil, through polemic more than anything, began to whittle away at Christian prominence in the public world, including bureaucratic, academic, and business spheres. This did not immediately move Christians out of the public eye, but it did marginalize them and make them an “Other,” no longer contributing or able to contribute directly to the public good. This approach has often been used in history to marginalize opposition groups⁹⁴.

And as marginalization took place, limitations could be enforced as the communities no longer had the political influence or popular support to stay such measures. This limitation was essentially the Covenant of Umar mentioned above, which often took the form of the destruction of churches and restrictions on their rebuilding, new policies concerning the burial of the dead, the promotion of conspicuity through dress code, limitations on transportation and so on⁹⁵. While subsequent rulers did not necessarily wholly cleave to Mutawakkil’s policies, this had become an option among those available to the rulers, further removing Christians to the edges of society and the solace of their own communities.

A case in point of this process was Abbasid Iraq, particularly around Baghdad, where Christian influence had once been significant. While subsequent to Mutawakkil, Christians were once again eligible to serve in positions they had enjoyed before, they no longer held the privileged status they once had. In the “Academies,” the positions that had been filled by Christians gradually came to be replaced with Muslims. For instance, it is possible if not likely that the famed school of Gundishapur closed down in 869, shortly after Mutawakkil’s passing, that school being eclipsed by the prominence of similar Muslim led faculties in Baghdad⁹⁶.

⁹⁴ For a contemporary American example and possible explanation, see Lowery, Brian S., Miguel M. Unzueta, and Eric D. Knowles. "Why White Americans Oppose Affirmative Action: A Group-Interest Approach." *Latino Policy and Issues Brief*, no. 15 (April 2007): 1-44.

⁹⁵ See Moffett, *History* vol. 1, 357-8

⁹⁶ See Shahbazi and Richter-Bernburg, Gondēšāpur

Though the Bukhtisho family remained strong throughout the 9th century, their prominence faded in the 10th century⁹⁷. Likewise, famous Christian physicians began to convert, such as Ibn Rabban al-Tabari⁹⁸.

In Academia in general, the scribal roles that Christians had enjoyed went to Muslims, and even the translation movement that they had so long dominated came to be Muslim-led, though it is as possible that this had more to do with a growing lack of translatable materials, or even increasing disregard for external thought on the part of the rulers⁹⁹. Perhaps the only boon, at least from an East Syrian perspective, was that the caliphate finally recognized officially what had been de facto for years; that the East Syrians stood as representatives of all Christians (c. 1080)¹⁰⁰. However, this could have just been good fiscal sense, as by the time this took place the Christian populations had likely dwindled to the point, at least in the lands the Caliph controlled around Baghdad, that it was easier officially to look on Christians as a whole than as an assortment of sects.

As the empire both became more Muslim and further fractured, and Christian influence or the influence of the Caliphs diminished, the possibility increased that a ruler, seizing to strengthen himself at the expense of others, might choose to oppress the minorities in his midst who were least capable of retaliation. And if that minority will not fight, all the better. “A government drawn from a minority of the population cannot attempt to exterminate the majority, so it must try to find a modus vivendi. The majority can in fact exterminate a minority. That is

⁹⁷ Richter-Bernburg, BOKTĪŠŪ

⁹⁸ See Hamarneh, Sami K. "al-Tabari." In *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, by Helaine Selin, 930. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1997)

⁹⁹ Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 136ff.

¹⁰⁰ See Moffett, *History vol. 1*, 359.

why a majority government represents an existential threat to the minority, and that is why minorities fight to the death¹⁰¹.”

This meant that as the Abbasid Caliphate fragmented and Christians diminished in population and influence, they tended towards two actions, retreat to rural villages and strongholds seen earlier, and retreat to the fringes of Muslim control. For the Church of the East, with extensive missional and commercial connections in Central Asia and places east, while the doors of opportunity might be closing in Baghdad, they were opening in Cairo or Mosul or Sarmarkand¹⁰². The fields around the Tigris were rapidly becoming spent but those of Central Asia were flourishing, and to the East this study will now go.

The Outer House: Christianity East of Mesopotamia

Even as Christianity dwindled in the Mesopotamian heartland, it prospered at the furthest extent of the Church of the East’s mission work. This flourishing, as mentioned early, is little known and less understood, which is a result of the vicissitudes of history. Had it been lesser, it probably would not have played any role in world history. Had it been greater, Islam might legitimately be the unknown religion in that region. That evidence of Christianity exists for this region at all is largely due to the fact that for a brief moment Central Asian Christians were among the ranks of the rulers of the world. That the Church of the East had the ability to name one of those outlying members of its flock as the head of their confession attests to that church’s wisdom. That the end result was less than favorable is what is being examined here.

¹⁰¹ Goldman, David P. “Contrary to Obama, the Terror War Has Barely Begun,” *PJ Media*, May 27, 2013. <https://pjmedia.com/spengler/2013/05/27/contrary-to-obama-the-terror-war-has-barely-begun>. (accessed August 15, 2014)

¹⁰² Starr, S. Frederick. *Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia's Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013) 90ff

Prior to this chapter, the Church East of Persia has served as little more than a footnote. While there were a number of mission successes among the tribal peoples of the Asian Steppes, it is difficult to even come to accord on which tribal groups are indicated in the sources.

The Church of the East house of the “exterior” post-Timothy is most easily divided into three geographical regions: China/East Asia; Central Asia, both nomadic and semi-nomadic and extending from the borders of the Caliphate to the Pacific Ocean; and finally India, which include what efforts were made in Southeast Asia and the East Indies.

Due to the scope of this study, India will only be briefly mentioned here. Though significant in the Church of the East, particularly in the present, India did not play a major role in Yaballaha’s life. While it is certain that the Indian church survived and perhaps even thrived in this time, clearly standing out besides the Church of the East holdings in Mesopotamia and West Persia as the most resilient of their regions to this day¹⁰³, the passage of time has left little material evidence of their experience in the period. Apart from the Kerala copper plates of the 9th century, giving such details of the local church as using a she-elephant to delineate property lines¹⁰⁴, and the first Western missionaries during Mongol times, many of whom availed themselves of the relative freedom of travel afforded by the *Pax Mongolica* to embark to China via India¹⁰⁵, there is little else of note.

The other two regions play a significant role in Marqos/Yaballaha’s life. He was a member of the Önggut tribe situated in what is now the Ningxia/Neimenggu provinces of the People’s Republic of China. His companion Sauma’s tribal affiliation is unclear, but he was

¹⁰³ See Baumer, *Church of the East*, 235-246

¹⁰⁴ See the discussion in Moffett, *History vol. 1*, 498-500; Cf. Pothan, S.G. *The Syrian Christians of Kerala*. (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963) 102-105; also Kuriakose, M.K. *History of Christianity in India: Source Materials*. (Bangalore: United Theological College, 1982) 10-12 for more information on the plates themselves.

¹⁰⁵ Yule, Henry. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. 4 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1913-1916) 3:45, 63, 75ff.

born in the environs of the Yuan dynasty imperial city of Dadu/Khanbaliq, modern Beijing¹⁰⁶.

Though these regions are firmly Chinese in the present, their connection to the Han world were more tenuous in the Yuan period, for the two were certainly not of the Han ethnicity. But even in the Yuan period, the region was considered part of the Chinese sphere of influence, and since the Mongols came during the life of these men to politically dominate the whole of that sphere, it is worthwhile to consider both men as citizens of both the Chinese world and the Central Asian world.

The Church of the East in China

Concerning Church of the East activity in China, the Middle Kingdom had experienced a number of successive exposures to Church of the East Christianity with significant missionary work taking place in each. Timothy's optimism regarding the Church in China was mentioned in the last chapter and in his day that optimism seemed warranted. The Church in China was experiencing both growth at least among non-Han in China as well as Imperial beneficence, but the Chinese Christianity of the Tang dynasty (618–907) apparently did not survive the vicissitudes of mid to late Tang politics, to the point that it is difficult to assert any sort of Christian presence during the subsequent Song dynasty (960-1279)¹⁰⁷. A number of scholars have speculated on why, and Moffett boils this down into four reasons, religious, theological, missiological, and political, each worth summarizing here¹⁰⁸.

Concerning matters of religion, Moffett details the political decree of emperor Wuzong (840-846) in 845. Wuzong blamed foreign religion, specifically Buddhism, for many of China's

¹⁰⁶ Bedjan, *Histoire*, 12; cf. Rossabi, *Xanadu*, 24, 34

¹⁰⁷ For a general overview of Song China see Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 136-163.

¹⁰⁸ Moffett, *History vol. 1*, 303.

ills and in an attempt to outmaneuver the rapidly growing power of Buddhism in his country, issued a decree banning all foreign religions and depopulating all foreign monasteries. While this was primarily aimed at countering Buddhist influence, it likewise applied to Christians, with the official records stating, "...as for the Ta Ch'in (Syrian) and Muh-hu-fu (Zoroastrian) forms of worship, since Buddhism has already been cast out, these heresies must not be allowed to survive. People belonging to these also are to be compelled to return to the world... and become taxpayers. As for foreigners, let them be returned to their own countries, there to suffer restraint..."¹⁰⁹ The emperor Xuanzong (846-859), repealed this edict, but it was probably too late for what remained of the Christian community, which due to its predominantly foreign constituency, likely saw several key members being deported. As Moffett says, "If Buddhism, powerful as it was under the T'ang dynasty, which has been called the 'Buddhist age of China,' never completely recovered from that nationwide persecution, how much more crippling its effect on the small scattered communities of Christians in the empire"¹¹⁰?"

Concerning theology, this is perhaps the most debated reason and has to do with the formerly accepted conceptualization of the East Syrians as being particularly prone to theological error and thus syncretism due to their "Nestorian" heritage. In the Tang period, the question of syncretism has little to do with the Christological heresies of which the Church of the East had been accused and rather would include a number of other issues such as difficulties in translation, the omission of key concepts, the Central Asian role in the process, and so on. As was often the case, the East Syrians might have fallen prey to overly zealous attempts to "contextualize," i.e. to render Christian concepts into modes understandable in an alien culture,

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 304. Quoting the *Jiu Tang Shu* (Old Tang Records) c. 941.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 304

but while the effect may at times have approached syncretism, the intention never did. Moffett does an excellent job of summarizing key arguments in the debate on this matter¹¹¹ and perhaps his closing words describe it best:

The line between distortion and adaptation or contextualization is difficult to define, and a baptized use of alien terminology and customs has long and honorable precedents in the history of the expansion of Christianity stretching back through Gregory the Great's counsel of adaptation to pagan English ways to the Hellenizing of the gospel sometimes attributed to the apostles Paul and John¹¹².

The third reason Moffett gives is the foreign aspect of the mission to China, i.e. that Christians in China were largely foreigners. From the names on the Xi'an stele, as well as those on the more recently discovered Luoyang Banner (pillar), it is clear that many of the practitioners of the faith were of foreign background. As strong a reason as this might appear, there are at least two arguments one can make against it. First, as Moffett asks, why is almost all of our information on the Tang church in good Chinese and not in Syriac or Sogdian¹¹³? Secondly, this was China's most cosmopolitan dynasty. A number of prominent officials and citizens were of foreign background. It was the Tang who gave asylum to the final Shahs of Sassanid Persia, granting them support and a position at court¹¹⁴. The greatest political upheaval in the Tang Dynasty, was led by a rebel Turkish general, An Lushan. It is not improbable that a Sogdian Christian merchant might receive a minor government post at the outset of the Tang period and over several generations his family might become more and more Chinese, especially if they wanted to climb the social ladder in their country of choice. As one scholar puts it:

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 305-312

¹¹² *Ibid.* 311-312

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 313

¹¹⁴ Baghbidi, Hassan Rezai. "New Light on the Middle Persian-Chinese Bilingual Inscription from Xi'an." In *The Persian Language in History*, by Mauro Maggi, & Paola Orsatti, 105-115. (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2011) 105ff.

The Tang state's best known Sinicizing and civilizing institutions were academies established in the capitals and major cities to educate the children of Tang and foreign elites. Many of the former were students of non-Han ancestry who, with the authorities' assent, aimed to assimilate further and climb socially by acquiring prestigious Confucian learning and thence gaining office... A number reached important positions in Tang society and officialdom, some even achieving the Tang equivalent of citizenship and almost completely assimilating to Tang society¹¹⁵.

Considering that the Church of the East in the early Tang seemed to have imperial approval if not occasionally direct patronage, there is little reason to assume that Christian foreigners under Tang employ would have felt pressure to rescind their faith.

Indeed, an essay written at the height of the Tang, defends the appointment of one Li Yansheng of Central Asian ancestry justifying that appointment by arguing that an individual could be Chinese in appearance but a barbarian at heart, and vice versa¹¹⁶. Though Li was probably not a Christian, his case serves as an example of such appointments and their supporters in the Tang political infrastructure.

As a final reason, Moffett gives political upheaval, discussing the An Lushan rebellion and the turmoil of that period as essentially removing the imperial support on which the mission had been founded. The dynasty recovered, and lurched forward for a century longer, but lacking the resources or wherewithal to support the interests of a foreign church as it had in the past. When the last Tang emperor abdicated in 907, anti-foreign sentiments rendered China too hostile for the church to remain¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁵ Abramson, Marc S. *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) 176

¹¹⁶ See Chen Yuan. *Western and Central Asians in China under the Mongols*. Translated by Ch'ien Hsing-Hai, & L. Carrington Goodrich. Vol. xv. (Los Angeles: Monumenta Serica Monographs, 1966) 8-10. For analysis of this see Abramson, *Ethnic Identity*, 186.

¹¹⁷ Moffett, *History vol. 1*, 313-314.

Beyond the reasons given by Moffett and presented here, one could also posit a resistance to external influence embedded in the cultural framework of the Chinese people themselves. There are a number of reasons one could put forward for this, though the prevalence of ancestor worship especially in Chinese folk religion likely lies among the most significant¹¹⁸. This resistance held Buddhism aloof for a thousand years after its introduction to China, and undoubtedly played a role in Christian fortunes in the country. That the East Syrians kept trying stands as a testimony to their perseverance. But the same resistance that made China a difficult mission field in the Tang grew and was amplified by the time of the Yuan and its subsequent Ming dynasty. In the Tang, Christianity might have suffered a stigma of weakness by being connected to the refugee Persian community. By the Yuan it was met with disdain as being connected with the Central Asian Conquerors, and it is likely that any Han who might have considered accepting the Christian faith would have done so in peril of severe local opprobrium.

Though a definitive cause of the fall of Tang Christianity will probably always be elusive, the fact remains that between the end of the Tang and rise of the Mongols, there is no present tense reference to Christians in China. The words of an unknown monk in Baghdad, quoted in the *Fihrist*, make clear the sentiment of the home church on what had happened in China, though they also make it very clear that by nearly the 11th century the Church in Mesopotamia was yet strong enough to send missionary monks as far away as China:

In the year 377 (A.D. 987), in the Christian quarter [of Baghdad] behind the Church, I met a monk from Najran who seven years before had been sent by the Catholicos to China with five other clergy to set in order the affairs of the Christian Church... I asked him for some information about his journey and he told me that Christianity was just extinct in China; the native Christians had

¹¹⁸ Liang, Jialing. *Gaige kaifang yilai de Zhongguo nongcun jiaohui*. (Hong Kong: Jiandao Seminary Press, 1999) 222; cf. Gao, Shining. "The Impact of Contemporary Chinese Folk Religions on Christianity." In *Christianity and Chinese Culture*, by Mikka Ruokanen, & Paula Huang, 170-184. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010) 174

perished in one way or another; the church which they had used had been destroyed, and there was only one Christian left in the land...¹¹⁹

By the time of the Mongol conquest, Christianity had to be planted anew in China, coming once again as a foreign faith. But as a product therein of Central Asian Christianity, its status will be assessed alongside the growth of Christianity in that region.

Central Asian Christianity

If the outcome of Abbasid era missionary efforts in China is somewhat somber, Central Asia provides a far more positive image. The Church of the East had long directed resources to the land between the Middle Kingdom and the *Dar al-Islam* and had been met with considerable success from very early, with a number of unidentifiable Turkish tribes throughout history accepting Christianity en masse. From the era of Bardaisan on, who mentions Christianity among the Bactrians (Geli), Kushans, and Parthians, all central Asian groups¹²⁰, the promise of a Turkish Church had been dangling before the churches in Mesopotamia. Much effort had been poured into missions in Central Asia by all confessions with this aim in mind, though the Church of the East had the obvious geographical upper hand.

The results of these efforts were such that “it appeared that Christianity might become the dominant faith in the whole region between the Caspian Sea and Sinkiang in Northwest China¹²¹.” This study has already examined the situation in late Abbasid Mesopotamia. Is it any surprise considering those conditions that when horsemen bearing crosses on their spears and helmets came pouring into the region, the Church responded with joy? They once again had

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Moffet, *History vol. 1*, 302.

¹²⁰ Drijvers, H.J.W. *The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on the Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa*. Edited by H.J.W. Drijvers. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007) 61

¹²¹ Chapman, Gordon. "Christianity Comes to Asia." In *The Church in Asia*, by Donald E. Hoke, 181-203. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975) 194-195, Sinkiang is modern Xinjiang or the Chinese province comprising much of classical Central Asia.

hope, and despite the eventual results, these hopes were not baseless. Indeed, understanding the reasons the East Syrians held out this hope will aid in understanding the psychological and spiritual depths to which the Church of the East fell in seeing these hopes dashed and to a large part can help explain how a Church as potent and cosmopolitan as the Church of the East had been could plummet into the tribal insularity later evident.

Prior to the Mongol empire, history records little concerning where these people came from, the nuances of their beliefs, or even definitively who they were. "As no narrative history of the advance of the Nestorian church into Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan survives, the evidence must be pieced together from many separate sources, both archeological and literary¹²²." In the last century, though, a number of studies have been carried out collating and building off of the handful of textual and material remains extant, giving further insight into the identity of these Christians¹²³. These studies lend to a few observations.

First, these believers were generally nomadic, though there were semi-nomadic peoples and even some urban believers included in the mix. This required a number of special adaptations on the part of the home church but due to the influence of men such as Timothy, Baghdad was willing to make adjustments. For instance, though it is unclear how long the position lasted at any given point in time, in several periods a mobile metropolitan is named for the Turks¹²⁴.

¹²² Sims-Williams, Nicholas. "Christianity in Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. December 15, 1991. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/christianity-iii> (accessed August 9, 2014)

¹²³ Halbertsma, *Ruins*, 29ff; cf. Tang, Li. "Turkic Christians in Central Asia and China (5th–14th Centuries)." In *Studies in Turkic Philology: Festschrift in Honour of the 80th Birthday of Professor Geng Shimin*, by Dingjing Zhang, & Abdurashid Yakup, vii-xx. (Beijing: Minzu University Press, 2009); Gilman and Klimkeit, *Christianity in Asia*, 204-262

¹²⁴ Dickens, Mark. "Patriarch Timothy I and the Metropolitan of the Turks." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 20, no. 2 (2010): 117-139

One accommodation in particular brings to light the special challenges raised by the different cultural backgrounds of various peoples constituting the membership of the Church of the East. A question of rites arose in the midst of the growing church on the Central Asian Steppes, and the church hierarchy's response is telling. After a miraculous conversion, the chief of one Turkish Tribe, described as Kerait by Bar Hebraeus although controversy has arisen regarding that designation,¹²⁵ became a Christian and seeking other Christians for guidance contrived a number of interesting approaches to the rituals of his new faith. The account from the Book of the Tower follows:

Astounded by this extraordinary event, he inquired about the Christian religion, about prayer and the Book of the Law. He learned [the prayers beginning with the words "Our Father who art in Heaven, To you, Lord of the Universe and Holy God..."] Those Turks used to live on meat and milk only. The king himself had arranged a table to serve as an altar, upon which he had put a cross and the gospel, dedicating it to Mar Sargis. He had then tied a mare [nearby], whose milk he used to put in a cup between the cross and the Gospel, [to be used instead of wine for the Holy Sacrament.] After reciting upon the latter the prayers his memory served, he used to make a sign of the cross on the cup and take a sip from it, and after him all the others of his people.

The story continues that the chief's inquiries had eventually reached 'Abdisho, Metropolitan of Merv, who relayed them to the Catholicos. The metropolitan was particularly concerned over the lack of bread for the sacrament or even wheat to make it. The Patriarch's instructions were that Abdisho was to, "make an effort to find some wheat and some wine, at least for the solemnity of Easter. Further, he forbade them the consumption of meat at the time of fasting, but allowed them to drink sweet milk instead of sour milk¹²⁶."

¹²⁵ See Hunter, Erica. "The Conversion of the Kerait to Christianity in A.D. 1007." *Zentralasiatische Studien* 22 (1989): 158-176

¹²⁶ From the Book of the Tower (*Kitāb al-majdal*). A parallel account is in Bar Hebraeus' *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*. Quoted and translated in Borbone, Turko-mongol Christianity, 9

The efforts of the Patriarch in this instance are quite inclusive, recognizing the challenges inherent in fitting the gospel to the cultural setting of plains nomads, yet endeavoring to maintain a standard of orthodoxy. By encouraging the Metropolitan to seek wheat for them (and not mentioning wine), he is making it clear that the Eucharist is an important rite of the faith that can nevertheless be contextualized to the situation of the individual congregation in its own milieu, yet he places the impetus for these requirements being instituted on the official of the established Church, not on the leadership of the distant congregation. In addition, he recognizes the difficulty of this task and mitigates it by demanding merely an effort to be made towards gaining the wheat rather than insisting that they use wheat or nothing else.

Among these nomadic peoples a tribal social system prevailed, though again this did not preclude the construction of significant cities even within the tribal context, such as Olon Süme¹²⁷. These urban components of Medieval Central Asian society will be discussed shortly. Concerning the tribes, one of Genghis Khan's greatest accomplishments was overcoming the tribal differences that dictated life on the steppes and replacing that with a loyalty to essentially one's unit and the Mongol people as a whole¹²⁸. This challenge was all the greater because the great Khan sought to unify his people in spite of tribe, class, race, or religion. While in the outset this caused him significant difficulty, it also forged an army that would go on to obliterate almost every foe for the better part of a century, in part because it could easily accommodate the absorption of auxiliary forces¹²⁹.

¹²⁷ Olon Süme for instance. For more details on this city, see Halbertsma, *Ruins*, 150-157.

¹²⁸ See Weatherford, Jack. *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004) 85.

¹²⁹ Saunders, John Joseph. *The History of the Mongol Conquests*. (Philadelphia: J.J. Saunders, 1971) 56; Jackson, Peter. *The Mongols and the West: 1221-1410*. (New York: Routledge, 2005) 48.

Christianity in this tribal context became a tribal faith, thus it was potentially owned by one tribe but not by its neighbor. In the Mongol context, this meant that It was not uncommon for a tribe to be Christian, and to have accepted the faith en masse, without meaning either that all or even most of the Mongol forces were Christian, or even in the context of a Christian tribe itself, that the faith would be fully understood by every practicing member of the tribal community.

This should not be understood, however, as an allegation that theology or genuine spirituality was absent among the tribes. “Holy men” such as Sauma could live and practice their faith in study and solitude and this is never presented as an anomaly. Likewise, a young monk/sage named Marqos could be raised to the headship of the church, serve faithfully for decades, and receive acclaim from everyone who met him, despite not having formal theological training. If Marqos had been merely an unschooled syncretist from a background that was little more than pagan, why would his Syrian chroniclers praise his “orthodoxy.” They certainly would have balked at any of his efforts towards interconfessional dialogue. Yet, as already seen, Bar Hebraeus himself speaks glowingly of the Catholicos.

In essence, the nuances of the East Syrian faith were no more lost on the average Kerait or Naiman herder than they were on the average Aramean Merchant or Frankish Peasant. There are clergy and laity with faith of varying quality among the religious of all religions and confessions in all geographical locations; and among Christians, the impact of this distinction is apparent in every culture that has felt its touch¹³⁰.

¹³⁰ See Goff, Christopher Wyatt. *Measuring the Clergy/Laity Gap and its Effect on Church Health and Outreach (Dissertation)*. (Ann Arbor: Proquest, 2008) 94ff

That the tribes which had adopted Christianity were politically influential among the Mongols was very evident. Many of the key steppe tribes which comprised the original Mongol Confederation, such as the Naimans, Keraites, and Ongguts, were Christian, which meant that Christians wielded significant influence in the Empire that came to be as a result of the conquests carried out under Temujin. This will be covered in more detail below, especially where it regards the Christian queens of the Mongol world.

But Central Asia was not simply a nomadic grassland. There were a number of oasis towns, essentially city states, along the Silk Road as well as other cities that housed bishops and metropolitans, such as Otrar, Kashgar, etc¹³¹. When Yaballaha and Sauma embarked on their journey, they were supported at several points along the way by Christian communities eager to see them succeed.

But the ravages of time and war could adversely affect both the settled and itinerant cultures. For instance, consider the situation when the two monks sought to stop over in Kashgar, a Christian site attested from very early on. Although they had been warned of its fate, they apparently felt the city to be too significant for ruin, either culturally or politically or both, and continued on. They were disappointed to discover that Kashgar indeed was little more than a pile of stones, its church and many of its other buildings destroyed. Though the people eventually returned, and it was later cited once again as a metropolitan see, the city's status at the time of Yaballaha shows how quickly the fortunes of a city or region could change¹³².

While a tribe would tend to convert as a whole following their rulers, cities provided settings where people of varied tribal backgrounds might live in proximity, meaning that various

¹³¹ See Dauvilliers, *Les Provinces Chaldéennes*

¹³² See *Ibid.*, 288; cf. Baumer, *Church of the East*, 210.

faiths might also be present. Even when Christians did not comprise a clear majority, such as among the Uighurs, they still were a significant component of the population, a situation not at all unusual among the settled urbanites in the villages and cities along the Silk Road. Many Silk Road cities populated by urbane Uighurs among others boasted significant, potentially even majority Christian populations¹³³.

Before moving on, it must be reiterated that the Christianity of these peoples did not look like that of other Christian groups, but this again in no way impinges on the validity of their faith. The more nomadic a tribe, the more alien their faith might appear in settled eyes. Jack Weatherford, though at times discounting their Christianity, gives a suitable approximation of their beliefs:

Without churches or monasteries among the nomads, the tribal branch of Christianity claimed descent from Thomas and relied on wandering monks. They practiced their religion in sanctuaries located in *gers*, and de-emphasized theology and rigidity of belief in favor of a varied reading of the scriptures combined with general medical care. Jesus exercised a strong fascination for the nomads because he healed the sick and survived death. As the only human to triumph over death, Jesus was considered an important and powerful shaman, and the cross was sacred as the symbol of the four directions of the world. As a pastoral people the steppe tribes felt very comfortable with the pastoral customs and beliefs of the ancient Hebrew tribes as illustrated in the Bible. Perhaps above all, the Christians ate meat, unlike the vegetarian Buddhists; and in contrast to the abstemious Muslims, the Christians not only enjoyed drinking alcohol, they even prescribed it as a mandatory part of their worship service¹³⁴.

It is tempting to cast the Christianity of these groups in a negative light based on these differences, a practice that is frankly little more than biased conjecture, but it has been the practice of Westerners from first contact. William of Rubruck, a Franciscan who travelled

¹³³ See Tang, Li. "Medieval Sources on the Naiman Christians and on their Prince Kuchlugh Khan." In *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters 2. Auflage: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, by Dietmar W. Winkler, & Li Tang, 257-266. Salzburg, Austria: Pro Oriente, 2009.

¹³⁴ Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 29.

extensively in Mongol controlled lands, looked on the “Nestorians” with blunt derision. Speaking of one King John (Wang Khan), likely of the Prester John legend he says, “The Nestorians called him King John (the chief of the Naiman tribe), and only a tenth of what they said about him was true. For this is the way with the Nestorians who come from these parts; they create big rumours out of nothing...¹³⁵”.

Modern scholars are often no better. Igor de Rachewiltz, writing of the tribes who had accepted Christianity, reports as follows:

To be sure, Nestorianism added but a thin veneer of civilization, and it is doubtful whether any of the converted tribesmen ever abandoned their native shamanism with all its strange admixture of animistic beliefs, divination, and sorcery. Nor as far as one can judge, were their warlike customs greatly affected by Christianity. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that they borrowed from other cultures only those elements that had an obviously practical or prestige value. The adoption of Christianity was seemingly conceived by their leaders as a means of obtaining the assistance of yet another superhuman power, and this was in no way incompatible with their traditional beliefs.¹³⁶

It is questionable whether anyone has the right to judge the faith of another in such a way, much less the faith of an entire subculture of humanity. Even were this in the realm of human capability, there is too little information available to do so accurately. The same problems faced in the question of the orthodoxy of the Christians in Tang China inhibit definitive answers here, and there is considerably less information to base any assessment on. Was there residual shamanism present among the Christians of Central Asia in the 13th century? Probably, but the same could be said of 13th century Brits or even sophisticated Greeks in contemporary Constantinople. But this is not necessarily a negative. Moffett puts it thus regarding apparent

¹³⁵ Jackson, Peter (ed.). *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253-1255*. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1990) 122; cf. Baum (2002) for an overview of the Prester John legends as they relate to Christians on the Asian Steppes; cf. Neal, Gordon Lea. *The Descriptions of Asian Religions in Friar William of Rubruck's Itinerarium*. (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1995) 41-50 for more on Rubruck's life and interaction with the East Syrians.

¹³⁶ Rachewiltz, Igor. *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971) 46

syncretism, "...in animistic societies such similarities often prove to be as much a bridge toward conversion to Christianity, as from a more primitive to a more intellectually credible faith, than a downward spiral toward syncretism¹³⁷."

Even if a medieval traveler's account of a distinctly shamanistic practice in action turned up, there is no way to affirm that what the traveler was seeing was indeed shamanism, any more than a non-Christian account of a Christmas celebration in America with its prevalence for evergreens might conclude that ancient Norse and Germanic gods continue to be worshipped. One might cite the use of magic or talismans among the central Asian tribesmen, but those practices were not uncommon in Mesopotamia (not to mention in Europe)¹³⁸ and do not necessarily disqualify the Christian beliefs of those who used them. Indeed, the best extant sources by far concerning the actual beliefs and practices of Central-Asian Christians are those they wrote themselves, such as what can be gleaned from the History of the travelogue of Rabban Sauma¹³⁹. Even attempting to separate this account from its likely Mesopotamian authorship, one is left with a Christianity that appears far more commensurate than might otherwise be expected with that of Medieval Europe or Iraq. Furthermore, in contrast to the negativity evident in contemporary sources such as that of William of Rubruck, Sauma's accounts of European Christianity convey a sentiment of wonder concerning the physical

¹³⁷ Moffett, *Histoire*, 436

¹³⁸ See any of a number of works by Erica Hunter on amulets among Turkish tribesmen, ie. Hunter, Erica. "Magic and Medicine amongst the Christians of Kurdistan." In *Christian Heritage of Iraq: Collected Papers from the Christianity of Iraq I-V Seminar Days*, by Erica C.D. Hunter, 187-202. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009). See also Trzcionka, Silke. *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth-Century Syria*. (London: Routledge, 2007) for a background and overview of these concepts in the Syriac Milieu. For the European connection see Skemer, Don C. *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*. (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006), specifically the chapter on doctrine and practice.

¹³⁹ For a concise assessment of the religious practices c. 1300 of the East Syrian Church as a whole, see Murre-Van Den Berg, *Church of the East in Mesopotamia*, 380-382.

evidences for Christianity west of his homeland. This sort of language, however, is often lamented by modern historians as lacking informative quality¹⁴⁰.

To be fair, there are western sources that are equally gracious towards eastern Christians, such as Marco Polo. His writings abstain from denigrating the many “Nestorians” he came into contact with¹⁴¹.

While there is too little information to do more than really speculate regarding the theology and faith of Central Asian Christians, one modern criticism does apply, that Christianity seemed to have a very limited effect, if any, on the warlike nature of these tribes. This is painfully apparent from the participation of Christians in the military campaigns of Genghis Khan and his progeny and in the brutality that attended such campaigns. That brutality, real and perceived, would go on to have a significant impact on the public perception of the East Syrian Church and Christianity in general which will be considered below. For present purposes however, it is sufficient merely to point out that having a warlike Christianity untempered by Christ’s exhortation to “turn the other cheek” is yet another characteristic of Central Asian Christianity that was not unique to Central Asia. In this way it might almost be fortunate that the Mongol rulers were not openly Christian if at all, because they at least, unlike their European counterparts, fought under their own banner rather than that of the Prince of Peace¹⁴².

Mongol Hordes

To understand the impact association with the Mongols had on the Church’s reputation throughout the Mongol Imperium, it is important to examine the characteristics of the Mongol

¹⁴⁰ See Rossabi, *Xanadu* 106, 109, 116, etc.

¹⁴¹ For Polo’s remarks on the Nestorians along his route see chapter five in Moule, A. C. *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*. (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011)

¹⁴² Halbertsma, *Ruins*, 52-57

imperium. At the outset of the Mongol invasions of what is now North China, no one could have foreseen that these “uncivilized” horsemen would one day rule everything from Damascus to Korea. There were those among the Church of the East, including the anonymous author of the History, who saw in it the clear hand of providence, though even by the end of his book his take on providence has shifted somewhat¹⁴³.

In summary, the Mongols entered the world stage at the turn of the 13th under the guidance of their great leader, Genghis Khan, and challenged and defeated nearly every army that came at them. For the better part of a century they never experienced defeat, and in Eurasia there was no civilization, even at the most distant periphery (be it England or Japan) that remained beyond at least indirect influence¹⁴⁴. From the plains and deserts of Mongolia itself to the mountains and jungles of southern China, highlands of Afghanistan, settled cities of Iran and Mesopotamia, and forests and fields of Russia, Poland, and Hungary, kingdom after kingdom, empire after empire fell to the hordes. Since that time, people have set out to study their success and a number of solid works have contributed to this study¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴³ Murre-Van den Berg, Church of the East in Mesopotamia, 383.

¹⁴⁴ For more, Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 42ff

¹⁴⁵ The number of sources on the Mongols and their rise and fall are overwhelming. For the purposes of this study: Rossabi, Morris. *The Mongols: A very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*; Lane, George. "An Account of Gregory Bar-Hebraeus Abu al-Faraj and his Relations with the Mongols of Persia." *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 2.2 (1999): 209-233; Morgan, David. *The Mongols*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), Grousset, René. *The Empire of the Steppes*. Translated by Naomi Walford. (New Brunswick, NJ: State University of New Jersey, 1970). These contribute a variety of viewpoints to life in the Mongol worldview and the fortunes of the Mongol military and empire. For life among the Mongols see Lane, George. *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006). on relations with the West see especially Jackson, Peter. *The Mongols and the West: 1221-1410*. (New York: Routledge, 2005); on the Yuan dynasty in China see Mote, Frederick W. "Chinese society under Mongol rule, 1215-1368." In *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 6, Alien Regimes and Border States, 710-1368*, by Denis C. Twitchett, Herbert Franke, & John King Fairbank, 616-664. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); for an interesting look at Buddhist and Islamic relations in the Mongol context, although it does not really account for the presence of Christians, see Elverskog, Johan. *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road*. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

In 1206, after much internecine warfare, Temujin was crowned Great Leader (Genghis or Chinggis Khan) of all the tribes who roamed over what is now known as Mongolia, both inner and outer, as well as further lands such as parts of modern Russia, Kazakhstan, and China, to mention a few. Genghis was Temujin's title, not his name. He was born into the relatively minor Mongol tribe whose lands were probably located in what is now Northern Mongolia. His title is variously spelled Genghis or Chingis, or a variation thereof in most languages. He is also sometimes referred to as 元太祖 (Yuan Taizu) in Chinese documents. For the purposes of this study we will use his name and title interchangeably as both can be recognized as representing the same person¹⁴⁶.

Genghis launched assaults against the Tangut Xia dynasty in 1209 and the Jurchen Jin dynasty in 1211, both part of or on the periphery of the cultural edifice now known as China, but to westerners in that day often referred to as Cathay, a variation of the tribal name of the Khitai tribe, who were the rulers of the Jin dynasty. By 1214 the Jin had fallen. Though Genghis had his eye on Southern China, a failed diplomatic mission to the Khwarazm Shahnate of Central Asia in 1219 turned his attention west, and Genghis ordered an assault on that empire which resulted in its destruction and the death of millions of people including many Christians. He returned to the Ordos region of North Central China around 1227, intent on punishing the Tanguts for not living up to their alliance agreement, and died shortly thereafter, allegedly eliciting a promise from his progeny to finish what he'd started in China. After his death his armies thoroughly obliterated the Tangut kingdom¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁶ Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 42ff

¹⁴⁷ Rossabi, *Short History*, 42ff

Following the death of their great leader, the conquests did not stop¹⁴⁸. While there were separate divisions of the empire based on the sons of Genghis Khan and their inheritances, the lands conquered by the Mongols remained a unified whole, more or less, until the reign of arguably the 4th great Khan, Khubilai. Khubilai has variously been called the most powerful Mongol Emperor as well as the First Yuan Emperor and Last Mongol Emperor. He was the son of Sorgaghtani Beki, a member of the Church of the East who will be discussed in further detail below. What likely became clear to the sons of Sorgaghtani around the time of Khubilai was that the various regions of the empire could not truly be ruled as a unified whole¹⁴⁹.

The bolstering of each son's inheritance played a huge role in the eventual division of the empire. Genghis Khan's immediate successor, Ogedei, ordered the conquest of Russia and Europe, which had been scouted by Genghis' trusted general Subotai at the end of Genghis Khan's campaign against the Khwarazm Shah. This European expedition, though stopped at the walls of Vienna by Ogedei's death in Mongolia rather than any feat of arms, established what came to be known as the Golden Horde which ruled over Russia for centuries.

While this group eventually came to be known for their ardent adherence to Islam, in contravention both to the religion of the populace they ruled over as well as to the policies established by Genghis Khan to favor no religion, they offer the only explicitly Christian Khan (Khan of the Golden Horde, not the Great Khan), Sartaq Khan, Genghis Khan's Great-Grandson. Rubruk, although labelling him as a Nestorian apparently rejected his Christianity based on information received from Sartaq's secretaries that he was not a Christian, but a Mongol. There

¹⁴⁸ The politics of succession become fairly complicated. For a detailed breakdown of the succession after Genghis Khan's death see Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, chapters 5-7.

¹⁴⁹ See Rossabi, Morris. *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988) 53ff. cf. Man, John. *Kublai Khan: The Mongol King who Remade China*. (London: Bantam, 2006) 258ff.

are a variety of other sources, both Christian and Muslim which attest to his Christianity, though this Christianity did not ultimately influence the Golden Horde as he died young (likely poisoned) and his fervently Muslim uncle Berke took control. Other great Khans expressed sympathy to Christianity and some, such as the short-lived Arik-Boke or even Guyuk, might have secretly been Christians, but Sartaq is the only Mongol who both bore the title Khan and openly professed Christianity¹⁵⁰.

While Christianity was not the official religion of most of the Khans, it played a significant role among the Mongols, most notably through the influence of the Christian Queens of the Mongol empire¹⁵¹. Guyuk Khan, the Great Khan who followed Ogedei, came to power more or less through the influence of his Christian mother, Torogene. Weatherford posits that “Guyuk was likely a Christian himself...”¹⁵² While this may be a stretch, there is little question that, as Weatherford points out, through his Christian mother Guyuk was well acquainted with Christian practice as it would have been conducted on the Asian steppes. Torogene’s Christianity did little, however, to temper her political machinations, such efforts being instrumental in putting her son on the throne.

Likewise, on Guyuk’s death an even more formidable Christian woman became the dominant force in Mongol politics, Sorghaghtani Beki¹⁵³. The mother of 2 Great Khans, 1 claimant to the seat, and the founder of the Ilkhanate, her deft manipulation of the political threads at the center of the Mongol world helped preserve the empire as a whole for another

¹⁵⁰ For the most comprehensive information on Sartaq see Barthold, V. V. *Работы по отдельным проблемам истории Средней Азии Том 2*. (Москва: Наука, 1964) 651; cf. Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 99ff

¹⁵¹ For an overview see Ryan, James D. "Christian Wives of Mongol Khans: Tatar Queens and Missionary Expectations in Asia." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* III, no. 8:3 (1998): 411-421.

¹⁵² Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 163

¹⁵³ Tang, Li. "Sorkaktani Beki: A Prominent Nestorian Woman at the Mongol Court." In *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia*, by Roman Malek, & Peter L. Hofrichter, 349-355. Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006

generation, though not without considerable bloodshed and intrigue at the highest levels¹⁵⁴. It also resulted in the third great push by Mongol forces, the destruction of both the Assassins and the moribund Abbasid caliphate, as well as the final collapse and absorption of Song China into the Mongol fold.

At the outset of these campaigns, Sorgaghtani's son Mongke, also known as Mangedai, through no small effort on her part, had been named Great Khan, and her son Hulegu was at the head of the army tasked with carrying out the western end of this conflict, while her son Arik Boke held the heartland of the empire in Mongolia and her son Khubilai both ruled what was left of Jin or Northern China as well as being responsible for the campaigns against the Song Chinese south of the Chang Jiang (Yangtze River) which were completed with the fall of Hangzhou in 1279.

While Sorgaghtani was alive, Temujin's empire remained whole, but on her death it began to crumble. Mongke was the last Great Khan who could claim obeisance from the whole Mongol Empire. . When Mongke died in 1259, Khubilai and his brother Arik Boke both called a separate Khuriltai (gathering of tribal leaders) in their own territory and though Arik Boke received the recognition of most of the Golden Family, or descendants of Genghis Khan, his brothers Khubilai and Hulegu both refused to recognize him as Khan. A short civil war later saw Arik Boke bowing before Khubilai's superior army at a more legitimate Khuriltai in the Mongol homeland. Though Khubilai now ostensibly held the reigns of the worldwide empire his Grandfather had begun, the Golden Horde along with much of the Golden Family never recognized his rule. The Golden horde instead focused on internecine warfare with Hulegu, who

¹⁵⁴ Rossabi, *Xanadu*, 31-33

likewise merely nodded to Khubilai's lordship, perhaps because he knew his brother¹⁵⁵. Thus the house that Genghis built fragmented into 4 distinct realms: the Yuan dynasty of Khubilai Khan in China, Tibet, Manchuria, and Mongolia; the Central Asian Chagatayid Khanate based in Bukhara; The Golden Horde or Jochids in Russia and Eastern Europe; and the Ilkhanate in Persia, Iraq, portions of the Caucasus, and Syria¹⁵⁶.

Despite Sorgaghtani's Christianity, it is impossible to assuredly name any of Sorghaghtani's sons as Christians, or say that there was a direct Christian connection in the actions of these men, but this is not to say that they were not favorably disposed to the Christians. Khubilai's dispatch of Marqos and Sauma stands as one element of this disposition, as does his placement of Christians in key administrative positions throughout the empire¹⁵⁷.

This favorable disposition can be seen further west as well, particularly in the conquest of Baghdad. Hulegu spared all Christians as he entered the city and Christians of a variety of confessions composed a significant proportion of the army with which he campaigned throughout the Middle East. In addition, his good friend and one of his premier commanders, Kitbuqa, was certainly a Christian¹⁵⁸ as was Hulegu's wife, Dokuz Khatun. Though of the Church of the East herself, she is often lauded by all branches of the Church. For instance, the Armenian Chronicler Stephannos Orbelian refers to her and Hulegu as "the Constantine and Helen of the age¹⁵⁹." She was behind Hulegu's treatment of Christians in Baghdad¹⁶⁰. But neither her husband nor sons officially adopted her faith. Towards the end of Hulegu's life he

¹⁵⁵ Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 222

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 226.

¹⁵⁷ Halbertsma, *Ruins*, 48-51; more below

¹⁵⁸ Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades: The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades*. Vol. III. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951) 308.

¹⁵⁹ Lane, *An Account* 223

¹⁶⁰ Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 303; cf. Melville, Charles. "DOKUZ KĀTŪN." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. November 29, 2011. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dokuz-doquz-katun> (accessed November 15, 2014).

actually favored not only the shamanism of his fathers but also Buddhism, confirmed by the endowment of a large Buddhist monastery at Koy¹⁶¹.

Though Hulegu continued to dispatch tax revenues East throughout his life and communication lines across Asia remained open through most of Khubilai's life, unity was becoming more and more of a fiction, which likely prompted in 1272 the construction of a new imperial capital located firmly in Khubilai's Chinese sphere, Khanbaliq, literally "City of the Khan", also known as Shangdu, Chinese for Upper City and likely the source of Marco Polo's term *Xanadu*¹⁶². This area was the home of Rabban Sauma, and the location of the cell that Sauma and Marqos shared. If Sauma had fame as a holy man in that region as indicated by the History, it is reasonable that the two might have legitimately been dispatched west by the Khan himself¹⁶³.

Mongol Religious Policies and Christianity in the Mongol Empire

At this point it is worthwhile to examine Mongol religious policies before looking more wholly at Christianity in particular. The Mongols had a relatively open religious policy to all save the Golden Family instituted by Genghis Khan himself¹⁶⁴. This meant that, as seen above, Mongol rulers were generally forbidden to adopt any religion outside of the Shamanism of their illustrious ancestor. The Great Khan's immediate successors more or less held to this, which was ultimately detrimental to the Christians in their midst, for while they employed Christians to serve throughout their kingdom and early on were clearly at least warm towards Christianity,

¹⁶¹ See Amitai, Reuven. "HULĀGU KHAN." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. March 23, 2012.
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hulagu-khan> (accessed August 20, 2014)

¹⁶² Becker, Jasper. *City of Heavenly Tranquillity: Beijing in the History of China*. (London: Penguin, 2008).

¹⁶³ Bedjan, *Histoire*, 14

¹⁶⁴ Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 69

their aloofness ultimately meant that they would become subject to the religious leanings of the populace in each of their successive regions. A look at these elements in turn will help clarify.

At the empire's outset when Temujin, through the encouragement of his Khitan minister Yelü Chucai, decided against obliterating the population of North China¹⁶⁵, he chose to be an emperor and not simply a chief herder. This meant that the Mongols would rule over people instead of just grass, and thus be changed by them. While the Golden family, as mentioned previously, were not to become religiously attached to the cultures they ruled over, religion is a significant part of any culture and participation in the local religion is often a critical component of rulership over any given people. Among the lesser Khans, whose rule generally only extended over a handful of major ethnic groups, over time there was an increasing pressure to conform to the culture of their ruled, and likewise the religious ideals of their populations, especially as their connections to the Mongolian Steppes began to wane. Even in the early stages this is evident, perhaps most clearly in the conversion of Sartaq¹⁶⁶ in Christian Russia. It certainly played a role in the later adoption of the local faith on the part of the lesser khans in all the major sections of the Empire, Islam in the Ilkhanate and among the Chagatayids, and Buddhism and Chinese popular faiths mingled with Mongol Shamanism in the Yuan dynasty¹⁶⁷.

In the early years, however, the Mongols were working within a context of what they knew. When they decided to run an empire, they knew they needed functionaries and administrators and they did not trust the locals. So they brought in such functionaries from the

¹⁶⁵ Perkins, Dorothy. (*Encyclopedia of China: History and Culture*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013) 603.

¹⁶⁶ Barthold, *Работы по отдельным*, 651

¹⁶⁷ See Rossabi, *Xanadu*; cf. Mote, Frederick W. "Chinese society under Mongol rule, 1215-1368." In *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 6, Alien Regimes and Border States, 710–1368*, by Denis C. Twitchett, Herbert Franke, & John King Fairbank, 616–664. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 645; on later developments among the Moguls see Lane, *Daily Life*, 181ff.

steppes. There, the pool of potential candidates for this work was not high. As Islam was not yet greatly represented among the steppe tribes, Christianity had a near monopoly on the literary element in that society. This does not mean, however, that the relationship between the Church and rulers in Central Asia was simply utilitarian. There seemed to be genuine friendship or at least preferential treatment, and the result was a flourishing of the faith throughout the empire from Damascus to Korea. This was despite the Mongol rulers avowed disassociation with any non-Mongol religion¹⁶⁸. Though there might have been closet Christians such as Guyuk Khan or Buddhists such as Hulegu, it was rare to have a Sartaq or Berke who came right out and declared a non-Mongol religious affiliation¹⁶⁹.

After Temujin, however, probably due in part to the queens' relationships with the church, many great Khans while not accepting the faith itself, did show preference to Christians¹⁷⁰. This approval preferential treatment by many of these early Khans is part of what drew East Syrian Christians to political service and created a sort of Church of the East diaspora throughout the empire¹⁷¹. The effect was profound, though it differed from place to place. China and the former Abbasid lands serve as good examples.

In Yuan China, where Christianity had not existed in any significance if at all since the Tang, some Buddhist monasteries were turned over to the Christians, and Christian Central Asians and Middle Easterners, including many Muslims, became distributed throughout the Middle Kingdom. Mongol authorities actively sought to bring in Christians from the West for

¹⁶⁸ Roberts, John Morris. *A Short History of the World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 174; cf. Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 143ff

¹⁶⁹On Guyuk, *Ibid.* 163; Sartaq, see Barthold, *Работы по отдельным*, 651; cf. Jackson, *William of Rubruck*, 99ff; Berke, See Deweese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*.

¹⁷⁰ Halbertsma, *Ruins*, 48-51; cf. Van Mechelson, Johan. "Yuan." In *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 1: 638-1800*, by Nicolas Standaert, 43-111. (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 43-63; Moule, *Christians in China*, 145-165.

¹⁷¹ Baumer, *Church of the East*, 223-225.

the purpose of administering their empire. In the *History* the sons-in-law of the Khan say explicitly that they are seeking men such as Marqos and Sauma to help rule¹⁷².

But Christians were not the only Westerners brought to China. Had the Mongols conquered Europe and had a greater pool of Christians to draw from, perhaps history would have been different, but in the lands that they did conquer, Christians were no longer in abundance. While they might have preferred Christians, the critical component of service eligibility for the Khans was not religion but ethnicity. There were four levels in Mongol society in China. Mongols were *sine qua non* in all government offices and administrations, and Central Asians were usually close behind, of which the East Syrians comprised a significant portion, but this also included Persians and Arabs, Muslim and Buddhist Turks, and Manichaean Uighurs. The true measure for service in Mongol China was that one not be Chinese. Being of good non-Chinese stock elevated one above both the Northern Chinese (often Sinified Central Asians) as well as above the Han Chinese inhabitants of *Jiangnan*, or the area south of the Chang Jiang in Central China¹⁷³. This meant that Christians as well as Muslims and Buddhist served in China and occupied Korea as scribes and administrators, bringing their families, at times their clans, and always their faith¹⁷⁴. For Christians, they came in adequate numbers that the Yuan administration formed the *Chongfusi*, or office for Christian clergy, to manage Christian affairs in the empire¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* 17; cf. Halbertsma, *Ruins*, 48-51; Van Mechelson, "Yuan", 43-63; Moule, *Christians in China*, 145-165.

¹⁷³ See Rossabi, *Short Introduction*, 93; cf. Chen Yuan, "Yuan Yelikewen Jiao Kao", 3

¹⁷⁴ See Yin, Yin, Gang. "Between Disintegration and Expansion: A Comparative Retrospection of the Kaifeng Jewish and Muslim Communities." In *Youtai - Presence and Perception of Jews and Judaism in China*, by Peter Kupfer, 185-200. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008)190

¹⁷⁵ Concerning this office see Farquhar, David M. *The Government of China under Mongolian Rule* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990) 157; cf. Halbertsma, *Ruins*, 66-67; Van Mechelson, "Yuan" 84-87.

This distribution of ethnicities during the Yuan dynasty was likely the origin of the Hui Muslim minority, one of the more significant minorities in present China¹⁷⁶. But though the term Hui (回) which comes from the Chinese word for return, and implies a foreign provenance, has come to simply be equated with Chinese Muslims, in the Yuan period it stood for all those who hailed from *Xiyu* 西域 (Central and West Asia). Christians and Jews were both designated under this term as well as Muslims¹⁷⁷. This means that the Hui people of the Mongol period were very likely a microcosm of that period's Central Asian world, and in turn that the fate of Christianity among the Hui can be tied to the fate of Christianity in Central Asia.

In the Middle East and Persia, the fate of Christianity was intimately tied to the relationship between the conquerors, the general populace, and the Church, which will be examined in more depth shortly. As mentioned above, in the initial conquests Christians were treated quite well, relative to the rest of the population. In 1258 Mongol forces led by Hulegu, one of Sorgaghtani's sons, seized Baghdad and destroyed the last vestiges of the caliphate, granting special treatment to the Christians. After his forces took Baghdad, other important cities soon followed, Damascus, Aleppo, etc. In each of these instances apart from Central Asian tribesman who were adherents to the faith, Georgians, Armenians, and even crusaders rode as part of the the Mongol forces, although subsequent attempts to form a crusader alliance against Cairo proved fruitless¹⁷⁸. The conquest of most of these cities was, in keeping with earlier

¹⁷⁶ For a concise summary of this idea see Dillon, Michael. *China's Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement and Sects*. (London: Routledge, 2013) 25ff

¹⁷⁷ Liu, Yingsheng. *关于元代中国犹太人 (Jews in the Yuan Dynasty)*. (Beijing: Forum on Yuan History, 1997) 204-206

¹⁷⁸ See Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 6, 97, 132, and 160ff.

Mongol conquests, brutal, a brutality this study will examine in more detail shortly. That Christians were involved in this was not lost on the residents of the former caliphate.

Earlier it was made clear that the conversion of the Middle East was a gradual process, but one that, by the 13th century, had moved steadily forward. Muslims by that time genuinely comprised the majority in much of the Middle East and Christians had become, while not a despised minority, *per se*, certainly a dismissed minority. The early days of Christian/Muslim *convivencia* had passed. Baghdad was not what it had once been. While there were still Christians present throughout the caliphate, it was now possible that a typical Abbasid Muslim might live his life with little exposure to Christians. When they were encountered, the uniform they wore gave distinct and immediate permission to overlook them. They were still significant enough to warrant oversight, especially concerning taxation, but any potential threat to the general Muslim life of the Caliphate posed by the *Dhimmi*, whether political, military, and/or cultural, had become a distantly perceived shadow¹⁷⁹.

The Mongol conquest changed that and brought Christians once again into the spotlight and Christians reveled in it. Christians of all confessions seized the opportunity and celebrated in a variety of different ways. Take this account from Mongol Damascus, related by John Joseph:

With the fall of Damascus the Arab historian Maqrizi wrote that the Christians there began to be in the ascendancy, and started to act accordingly. "They drank wine freely in the month of Ramadan," he reports, "spilling it in the open streets on the clothes of Muslims and the doors of the mosques." It was the turn of the Christians to treat the Muslims as second-class citizens. They traversed the street, writes Maqrizi, "bearing the cross, [compelling] merchants to rise and ill-treated those who refused." They preached sermons proclaiming their new-won liberty, saying that "the true faith, the faith of the Messiah, is today triumphant." When

¹⁷⁹ Tritton, A.S. *Caliphs and their non-Muslim Subjects*. (New York: Routledge, 2008) especially 48, 117, 222ff

the Muslims complained of these indignities to Hulagu's governor, they were bastinadoed¹⁸⁰.

There had always been a fear among the Muslim populations that the *Dhimmi* might coordinate, rise up, and overthrow the Muslim polity. This is a fear natural to any conqueror. Among the Arabs it had happened numerous times already, in places such as Iran and North Africa outright, and even in the fragmented emirates of the Abbasid heartland, but in those lands, the *Dhimmi* had become Muslims and Islam had retained its control of society, even as Arabs had been superseded as its rulers. In the Turks, Central Asian horsemen had become the rulers of the heartland of the Caliphate one way or another time and time again, but had become Muslims first¹⁸¹. This was perhaps annoying to Arabs, but was, in a sense, a natural progression of the universal revolutionary ideals that fired the Abbasid uprising, which to an extent exonerated those fellow Muslims who would rise up against an oppressive regime¹⁸².

The invasions of the Crusades had threatened to alter this situation in what amounted to the borderlands between Fatimid and Abbasid control, but those conquests though not insignificant had proved relatively short-lived by the standards of history. If anything they likely put the Muslims at ease. If that was all the Christian world had to offer in this combat, what was there to worry about? In the Mongols, however, the fear of a Christian takeover seemed to be suddenly and unexpectedly realized, particularly with avowed Christians such as Kitbuqa, Hulegu's second in command, serving in positions of significant authority, and the Mongols forging alliances between a variety of Christian sects. Muslims now had to worry about becoming subjects to unbelievers. Though as noted before, this did not usually take the form of

¹⁸⁰ Joseph, John. *Muslim-Christian Relations and Inter-Christian Rivalries in the Middle East: The Case of the Jacobites in an Age of Transition*. (New York: SUNY Press, 1983) 17; cf. Brown, *Eclipse*, 150.

¹⁸¹ See Peacock, A.C.S. *Early Seljuq History: A New Interpretation*. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁸² See particularly Black, Antony. *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011) 85, 111ff, 137

life-threatening persecution, it was certainly not as comfortable as the life to which many had been accustomed, especially the elite. This fear was particularly notable during the life of Hulegu, when Muslims throughout the Middle East witnessed what for all appearances was the end of their way of life, hence the disdain his name maintains to this day among the Arab peoples¹⁸³.

Christian celebrations did nothing to allay these fears. In addition to the response in Damascus mentioned above it should be pointed out that the Church of the East was just as guilty of putting on grand displays of their assumed new authority. For Instance, under the auspices of the Khan, they took control of one of the Caliph's palaces, the head of the ministry of finance, in Baghdad¹⁸⁴. Grand parades featuring the cross were held throughout Syria and Northern Iraq. Hulegu's successor, Abaqa Khan, so favored Christianity, though he never officially became a Christian, that he minted decidedly Christian coins featuring the cross and the pointedly anti-Muslim inscription, "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, only one God¹⁸⁵ ." Years of pent up aggression at being treated as second-class citizens were poured out on former Muslim masters and ongoing Muslim neighbors as Christians exacted a petty sort of revenge.

One episode is of note concerning the Church of the East and Yaballaha's predecessor, the Patriarch Denha. In a very public display, he attempted to baptize in the Tigris an apostate to Islam who wanted to revert to Christianity. This predictably went badly, and the end result was

¹⁸³ See Frazier, Ian. "Invaders: Destroying Baghdad." *The New Yorker*. April 25, 2005. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/04/25/invaders-3> (accessed October 13, 2014); cf. Black, *History of Islamic Political Thought*, 141ff

¹⁸⁴ Wilmshurst, *Martyred Church*, 240.

¹⁸⁵ Drouin, Edme Alphonse. "Notice sur des monnaies mongoles, XVII, Monnaies d'Abaqa (a legende Chretienne)." *Journal Asiatique* IX, no. 7 (1896): 513-514

Denha's flight from the city. Bar Hebraeus tells us that the apostate came from Takrit, and was alone¹⁸⁶. Later conflation makes this hundreds of people and have the baptisms being forced. This in tandem with his possible role in the death of Shem'on bishop of Tus, has granted Denha the Moniker Denha Qatola (Denha the Murderer)¹⁸⁷. Bar Hebraeus is tactfully silent on whether or not Denha was behind this. Others (such as the author of the History of Yaballaha) are wholly silent. Denha's flight from the city had severe future ramifications.

This period was not, however, all negatives. There were some quite positive effects for Christianity that sprang out of this, such as increased interaction between the confessions themselves. In the years preceding the Mongol conquests, doctrinal disagreement had not become silent so much as gently fallen by the wayside. As with Muslims, Christians tended to live in villages of one sect or another, and there was little incentive to interact. This played out in higher politics with the concentration of power over Christians in the hands of the Catholicos of the Church of the East, mentioned earlier. Bar Hebraeus also reveals that preceding and up to himself, the Maphrians of the Syrian Orthodox Church, their highest figure in Mesopotamia and the Caliphate, were receiving their investiture from the Catholicos of the Church of the East¹⁸⁸.

While the advent of Mongol rule gave Christians room to once again push doctrinal differences, it also prompted further communication between the communities. An example of the former can be seen in one instance of epistolary interaction between Denha and Bar-Hebraeus. Though Denha's letter is lost, Bar-Hebraeus' response reveals that past doctrinal differences were as strong as ever¹⁸⁹. Nevertheless, even in Denha's day, positive interaction

¹⁸⁶ Abbeloos and Lamy, *Chronicum*, III, 2, Col. 451ff

¹⁸⁷ Wilmshurst, *Martyred Church*, 246.

¹⁸⁸ Abbeloos and Lamy, *Chronicum*, III, 331-2, 335-8

¹⁸⁹ Chabot, Chabot, Jean-Baptiste. "'Une lettre de Bar Hébréus au catholicos Denha Ier, publiée et traduite'." *Journal Asiatique* IX, no. 11 (1898):75-128. For commentary on the letter, specifically concerning the motives Bar-

between the sects was increasing. For instance, Denha granted West Syrians the right to build a congregation and facilities for refugees in the “secure” East Syrian city of Arbil¹⁹⁰.

Following Denha, Yaballaha was a strong proponent of this sort of interconfessional interaction, perhaps sourced in his background in the Central Asian Church. Prior to the Mongol era, what Christianity was present in Central Asia was largely of the Church of the East variety, and as such, interconfessional rivalry was largely non-existent. When this began to change in the Mongol period, men like Yaballaha and Sauma met the differences firm in their own beliefs but generally warm and open to communication. Perhaps the clearest example of this was the patriarch’s warm friendship with Bar-Hebraeus, and the manner in which Yaballaha honored the Maphrian’s passing by arranging his funeral in his own church in the Mongol capital of Maragha¹⁹¹. As Roger Pearce says, “There was rarely a time when the two churches which share the use of the Syriac language stood on more friendly terms¹⁹²”. Another example is the aid rendered Yaballaha in his distress by the Miaphysite Armenian king Hethum II, without which, at least according to the History, Yaballaha might not have survived the difficulties of Nauruz’ rise to power¹⁹³.

There were obviously those Christians who fell outside this inter-confessional détente, most notably the Copts, who remained under a Muslim regime. Ominously they received some of the first tastes of the Muslim reaction to the Mongols, despite never interacting with the new

Hebraeus might have had in writing, see Jullien, Florence. "Une question de controverse religieuse: la Lettre au catholicos nestorien Mār Denha I." *Parole de l'Orient*, no. 33 (2008), 95-113.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; Cf. the discussion in Wilmshurst, *Martyred Church*, 243-246.

¹⁹¹ Budge, *Chronography*, xxix cf. Lane, “An Account,” 226ff

¹⁹² Pearce, Roger. "Gregory Barhebraeus." *Encyclopedia of Syriac Literature*. January 1, 2008. http://roger-pearce.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gregory_Barhebraeus (accessed March 15, 2014)

¹⁹³ Bedjan, *Histoire*, 103ff

rulers of most of the Middle East¹⁹⁴. The persecution they faced could almost serve as a foreshadowing of things to come throughout the region. As Mongol power became less concentrated on military prowess and more concerned with the day-to-day appeasement of their client populations, it became necessary for the Mongol polity, whether in Yuan China or Ilkhanate Persia, to address the concerns of the greater populace, and the lower Christian numbers and influence meant that where their support and wisdom had been valuable if not necessary in the remote plains of Central Asia and Mongolia, it was increasingly a liability in the more urbane areas of the empire. Thus, the support the Christians had enjoyed began to wane throughout the empire, and once the surety of Mongol protection faded, all Christians suffered. In some cases, such as in Damascus or Mosul, the tables turned quickly¹⁹⁵.

Mongol Brutality and Its Effect on Christian-Muslim Relations

This is a good point to interpose one of the greatest challenges the Church of the East faced in this period, the fact that its relation to the Mongol polity in many ways exposed it to the opprobrium of those the Mongols had conquered. This likely would have been the case no matter who the conquerors might have been but in the case of the Mongols, the manner in which they acquired power had been, to put it mildly, severe. This chapter has touched on that severity at a number of points, but it serves here to examine it somewhat more pointedly as it accounts for later reactions of the populace against the Church and eventually against the Mongols themselves.

¹⁹⁴ See Mikhail, Maged S. A. "The Early Islamic Period (641-1517): From the Arab Conquest Through Mamluk Rule." In *The Coptic Christian Heritage: History, Faith, and Culture*, by Lois M. Farag, 39-53. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014) 48ff.

¹⁹⁵ Quatremère, Etienne. *Histoire des Mongols de la Perse (Rashid al-Din)*. (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1968) 341-353.

There has been a debate fostered in recent years concerning the extent of this brutality. For most of history it has been unequivocally accepted that the Mongols were quite vicious based largely off the primary or near primary accounts of the conquests. Most modern scholars have dismissed the exact quantity of fatalities numbered by early chroniclers as absurdly high¹⁹⁶. This practice is not without difficulty, because rather than bolstering the sensibility of their arguments by subjecting the figures given by classical authors (such as the number dead in a given circumstance) to the metric du jour they are eating holes in their arguments by questioning the reliability of the sources. It is impossible to know whether .5 million, 1.4 million, or 2.5 million people died in Herat without knowing how many people lived in Herat. The point is simply that the Mongols killed an absurd number of people, which almost no one would argue with¹⁹⁷.

It is only in recent years that some scholars have begun a project of excusing the Mongols for their brutality¹⁹⁸. While the contributions of the Mongols to modern society should be weighed and considered, one should take great care not to unduly exonerate a regime which can, without any exaggeration and using very conservative estimates, be argued to have killed half as many people in the pre-industrial world as died in the whole of World War II. Estimates on those numbers vary widely. A conservative or low estimate simply in the reign of Genghis Khan is in the range of 38 million people¹⁹⁹. The alternative high estimate gives that many or more

¹⁹⁶ For instance, Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 151

¹⁹⁷ See Rubincam, Catherine. "Numbers in Greek Poetry and Historiography: Quantifying Fehling." *The Classical Quarterly*, Nov., 2003: 448-463

¹⁹⁸ i.e. Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 23ff.

¹⁹⁹ McEvedy, Colin, and Richard Jones. *Atlas of World Population History*. (London: Penguin, 1978) 172ff

dead in North China alone not including southern China, Korea and Japan, Central Asia, Persia, the Middle East, Russia, and Eastern Europe²⁰⁰.

Regardless of the actual numbers dead, the fact remains that many people died directly as a result of the Mongol conquests. We know this from a variety of reports both from the Mongols and conquered peoples. Rossabi speculates that this form of reporting was tactical in nature. “If the cities had surrendered without opposition, would Chinggis have unleashed such destruction on them? It appears unlikely though he may have deliberately wreaked havoc on the inhabitants in order to terrorize other Central Asians and to deter further opposition. Reports of these incidents intimidated the population and contributed to the Mongol’s image as cruel and brutal barbarians²⁰¹.” The Mongols deliberately sowed fear, spreading it through sometimes exaggerated accounts of their brutality to make the populations they faced more quiescent. How else could a relatively small number of tribesmen from the steppes hope to pacify the armies and citizens of diverse, significant, and powerful empires all over Asia? Coupled with a perception of invincibility²⁰², many of their battles were likely won before they were ever fought.

If coming across as brutal was one of their aims, they achieved it with gusto. A few passages from various primary sources will demonstrate this. From Central Asia:

Whoever presumed to oppose him (Genghis Khan), that man... he utterly destroyed, together with all his followers, children, partisans, armies, lands, and territories. There has been transmitted to us a tradition of the traditions of God that says: 'These are my horsemen; through them shall I avenge me on those that

²⁰⁰ See Man, *Genghis Khan*, 262

²⁰¹ Rossabi, *Short Introduction*, 53; Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 39; for other studies on the Mongol use of fear see Lane, George. *Genghis Khan and Mongol Rule*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004) 38; for insight into Western perceptions of the subject see Baraz, Daniel. *Medieval Cruelty: Changing Perceptions, Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003) 90ff.

²⁰² See Saunders, *History of the Mongol Conquests*, 131; cf. Byfield, Ted. *A Glorious Disaster: AD 1100 to 1300: The Crusades: Blood, Valor, Iniquity, Reason, Faith*. (Edmonton, AB: Friesens Corporation, 2008) 254; Marshall, Robert. *Storm from the East: From Genghis Khan to Khubilai Khan*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993) 193; Lane, *Daily Life*, 10

rebelled against me,' nor is there a shadow of a doubt but that these words are a reference to the horsemen of Chingiz-Khan and to his people... when through pride of wealth, and power, and station the greater part of the cities and countries of the world encountered him with rebellion and hatred and refused to yield allegiance (and especially the countries of Islam, from the frontiers of Turkestan to uttermost Syria), then whenever there was a king, or a ruler, or the governor of a city that offered him resistance, him he annihilated together with his family and followers, kinsman and strangers; so that where there had been a hundred thousand people there remained, without exaggeration, not a hundred souls alive...²⁰³

From the Mongol's own *Secret History* concerning their erstwhile allies in Western China:

Chingis Khan took everything from the Tanghut people.

He gave their ruler Burkhan the name Shidurghu
and then executed him.

He ordered that the men and women of their cities be killed,
their children and grandchildren, saying:

"As long as I can eat food and still say,

'Make everyone who lives in their cities vanish,'

kill them all and destroy their homes.

As long as I am still alive

keep up the slaughter."

This is because the Tanghut people made a promise they didn't keep²⁰⁴.

And from Russia:

...they burned this holy city with all its beauty and wealth, and they captured the relatives of the Riazan princes, the princes of Kiev and Chernigov. And churches of God were destroyed and much blood was spilled on the holy altars. And not one man was left alive in the city. All were dead. All had drunk the same bitter cup to the dregs, and there was not anyone to mourn the dead. Neither father nor mother could mourn their dead children...²⁰⁵

These are but a handful of the accounts available. In virtually every place where the Mongols invaded, conquered, and left anyone alive, the title Genghis Khan, as well as the names of many of his more capable generals or successors, has become synonymous with death, destruction, and fear even to the present. For instance, in reference to the rise of the ISIS or ISIL

²⁰³ Boyle, J.A. "Juvaini and Rashid al-Din as sources on the history of the mongols." In *Historians of the Middle East*, by Bernard Lewis, 133-7. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962) 24-25

²⁰⁴ Khan, Paul. *The Secret History of the Mongols: The Origin of Chinghis Khan*. (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984) 180

²⁰⁵ Turnbull, *Genghis Khan*, 45-48

government in Northern Iraq, a headline ran “Iraq Catholic leader says Islamic State worse than Genghis Khan²⁰⁶.”

That the Mongols were brutal is one thing, but how did that pertain to Christians? This study has already shown that in the early years the Church of the East enjoyed a certain degree of partiality from the Mongol rulers. This is not to mention that they were at times, notably in the conquest of Baghdad, spared or granted significant boons at the expense of often brutally slain Muslim citizens. How did those citizens perceive this? Not well.

A *Qasida* was written by one adh-Dhahabi, variously identified as *Musnid ash-Sham* and Ibn abi'l-Yusr, who was according to Somogyi a court poet in Ayyubid Damascus. This *Qasida* was written while there were Ayyubid Emirs, probably before the 2nd Mongol invasion in 1300, but potentially even within a year or two of the fall of Baghdad and thus possibly before the initial Mongol invasion of Damascus in 1260. Historically speaking, either case was within a relatively short time of the conquest before the Mongol polity had turned against the Christians²⁰⁷. This *Qasida* illustrates the Muslim sentiments surrounding the fall of their perhaps most famous city, and for the purpose of this study points out fairly clearly whom they see as at least complicit in that fall, the Christians. Here are the opening lines:

The fast-flowing tears give tidings of [the fate of] Baghdad;
why stayest thou, when the lovers have departed?

Ye pilgrims to az-Zawra' go not forth; for in that sanctuary
and abode is no inhabitant.

The crown of the Caliphate and the house whereby the rites of
the Faith were exalted is laid waste by desolation.

There appear in the morning light traces of the assault of decay
in its habitation, and tears have left their marks upon its ruins.

²⁰⁶ Evans, Dominic, and Raheem Salman. "Iraq Catholic leader says Islamic State worse than Genghis Khan." *Reuters UK Edition*. July 21, 2014. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/07/20/uk-iraq-security-christians-idUKKBN0FP0RJ20140720> (accessed August 13, 2014)

²⁰⁷ See de Somogyi, Joseph. "A Qaṣīda on the Destruction of Baghdād by the Mongols." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 7, no. 1 (1933): 41-48

O fire of my heart, for a fire of clamorous war that blazed out
upon it, when a whirlwind smote the habitation!
*High stands the Cross over the tops of its minbars, and he whom
a girdle used to confine has become master...*²⁰⁸

While this Qasida is characteristic of its genre and typical of works written in the period concerning the Mongol conquests, what stands out concerning the Church of the East are the last two lines given here. These demonstrate that Mesopotamian Muslims of that era were attributing at least some responsibility for the conquest to their Christian neighbors. By taking a dominant place in the public sphere, Christians had been aligned, in the eyes of many Muslims, with the Mongols, destroyers of the Muslim polity. Islamic society had been upended and in the late 13th century there was no clear indication yet that their reign would not last.

Christianity's Decline

Two things changed which began to quickly upend Christianity's role throughout the Mongol Empire. First, as mentioned earlier, Christianity lost its preferential place among the Mongols themselves, leaving Christians exposed out on the limb of Mongol support. This is clearly evident in Arbil. Second, Mongol power itself began to wane.

At this point, many Muslims blamed Christians. No confession was spared, but it is possible that the Church of the East felt it more acutely than others because of its proximity to the Mongol powers. After all, none of the other churches had appointed a "Mongol" to the headship of the church, but the Church of the East had and had enjoyed great power thereby. Fiey quotes the Kitab al-Majdal on that power as follows:

*[Yahwalaha] jouit d'un degré de gloire et de puissance que personne n'avait eu
jusqu'alors, au point que les rois mongols, les il-khan et leurs enfants se
découvraient la tête et fléchissaient le genou devant lui. Ses ordres étaient*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 45. Italics author's own.

*exécutés dans toutes les provinces d'Orient. De son temps, les chrétiens furent très honorés et très puissants*²⁰⁹.

This was initially a great boon for the Church of the East, but by transferring their allegiance conspicuously to the Mongol other, they identified themselves to an extent as being a part of that other. Yaballaha's ascension was not the only indicator. For instance, when Denha fled Baghdad, first to Arbil and eventually to the Mongol Ilkhan capital, he demonstrated that the Church looked to the conqueror for support. But when the Church raised a "Mongol" to its leadership, what we moderns judge as a beautiful moment of inclusiveness, 13th century Muslims likely saw as an act of betrayal.

The author of the Qasida on the destruction of Baghdad is an example of this. Beyond what was cited in this study, the poem is lengthy, spending a considerable amount of time lamenting all the finer things of life lost due to the fall of the Abbasid capital. This included more than one friend or acquaintance, who had not made it out of Baghdad alive, yet "high stands the cross over the minibars...".

What is not clear is whether the Christians of the Middle East could have done much differently. Though it is unlikely they would have wanted to, they might have condemned the Mongols for their conquest but this would have set Christian leaders in opposition to the rulers of their world, and the Mongols had demonstrated a lack of compunction at the thought of obliterating whole civilizations. Such a regime one slanders at one's own peril. It would also have alienated those Christians among the Mongol tribes who would probably have frowned at being told how they were not being good Christians when they conquered people who were persecuting their mother church. Indeed, one could interpret the actions of East Syrian church

²⁰⁹ *Kitab al Majdal (Mari)*, translated and quoted in Fiey, "Le Grand Catholikos," 212.

leadership transferring their loyalties to the Ilkhans as being politically not all that different from the actions of their predecessors, for instance of Ishoyab I when Chosroes was deposed²¹⁰, or Ishoyab II at the rise of the Arabs²¹¹. Christianity is ultimately part of the cultures in which it is manifest, and subject to those cultures' authorities.

Choice or not, when things began to turn against the Christians they turned quickly. The History gives a good picture of this, and that is fairly well detailed in the first part of this chapter. For a short recap, In the Ilkhanate, where the majority of the Church of the East hierarchy was located, the beginning of this shift on the part of the Mongols away from the faith of their ancestors came under what Christians had highly anticipated to be a golden period, the reign of the Ilkhan Ghazan, baptized a Christian in his childhood and taught at times by Christian teachers. Ghazan nominally converted to Islam in 1295²¹². This conversion was not the first of an Ilkhan, there had been a brief period of Muslim animosity on the death of Abaqa in 1282, when Teguder succeeded his pro-Christian brother as Khan²¹³. Though this was ended by a period of resumed status quo (Shamanistic Khans who treat Christians well) it would not last. Ghazan's conversion was painful for the Church, and though his Islam might have only been a political expediency²¹⁴, his successors appeared to believe more deeply, with the events in Arbil, treated at the beginning of this chapter standing as a clear indicator of the change.

This turning against the Christians as agents of the state was not limited to Muslim lands. In China, shortly after the passing of Khubilai in 1295, we begin to see the first proscriptions of

²¹⁰ Labourt, *Le Christianisme*, 206

²¹¹ Wood, *Seert*, Part II, Vol. 2, 618-624; cf. Budge, *Book of Governors*, 126.

²¹² Baumer, *Church of the East*, 226.

²¹³ Budge, *Monks*, 209. For the history of the Ilkhanate succession see Morgan, David. *Medieval Persia, 1040-1797*. (London: Longman, 1988) 62ff.; cf. Baumer, *Church of the East*, 225-226.

²¹⁴ See Lambton, Ann K. S. *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia*. (Albany, NY: Persian Heritage Foundation, 1988) 253.

the Christian population. As far as we know there was not a concerted persecution on the part of the Chinese Yuan hierarchy against the Christians in their midst, which might have to do with relatively small numbers and/or lack of conversions among the ethnic Han²¹⁵, but there were ramifications when the Christians apparently overstepped their authority. In 1304, Christians were called out in one village for seeking converts among the Daoists, allegedly for little more than tax breaks, though Standaert argues that theology likely probably also played a role²¹⁶. In 1311, an imperial edict declared a pair of monasteries erected by one Mar Sargis in violation of Buddhist property rights, and “returned” them to the Buddhists. As Standaert points out, this is remarkable because it is one of the only instances in which we have official Chinese memorials that serve as a polemical declaration against the Christians. “Zhao refers to Nestorianism as wai-dao 外道 (off the straight path), while Pan writes that ‘the sects of the west are ninety-six in number, but our Buddhism alone is the true law’ (Xizhu zhi dao jiushi youliu wei wu fo wei zhengfa 西竺之道九十有六唯吾佛为正法) and that ‘there are no two gates of the law (famen bu er 法门不二)²¹⁷.”

Thus Christianity which had briefly enjoyed an elevated status moved once again off the radar in China. It was not complete or immediate, and pockets of the faith remained for at least a few generations, enough so that by the time Matteo Ricci arrived in Ming China in the early 16th century, he could pursue rumors of those who “adored the cross.” He actually confused the more well-established Kaifeng Jewish community for Christians until he was able to converse with them. Later, on finding the “Adorers of the Cross” themselves, likely descendants of Yuan

²¹⁵ Van Mechelson, “Yuan,” 92

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* 93

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* 94

dynasty Nestorians, he found a people with but a vestige of the religious practices of their fathers, performing little more than a sign of the cross over their food before a meal, who knew nothing of note concerning their theology or heritage²¹⁸.

Conclusion

The last chapter left off with a Church peering into the future with a curious blend of fear and optimism. This one closes on a much more somber note. When the author of the History writes, “Leap for joy, men of Arbil, the cup has even come to you. You will be whipped about and brought low and nothing will pull you out of it²¹⁹,” there is a sense of resignation. Even Arbil, a city so securely Christian that Yaballaha’s predecessor Denha offered refuge there to members of other sects, was anything but secure.

This chapter has detailed the optimism of the Church of the East in the rise of its Eastern leader, steeped in the ways of the rulers of the world, and it closes with that Church finally abandoning hope, trying to justify the cup of oppression. In the background to this period, many points have been covered, social, sociological, political, and religious. At the outset of the life of Yaballaha, Christians were the chosen confidantes of the rulers of the world. By its end, they were fleeing the proximity of the royal courts and beginning to question their own safety. This was for good reason, as if there was any doubt of their fall from the rulers’ grace, the subsequent predations of men such as Tamerlane would quickly quell that. This is why the next several centuries of Church of the East history have been called the “Years of Darkness²²⁰.”

²¹⁸ Cronin, Vincent. *Wise Man from the West*. (New York: Random House, 2011) 222-5, 255, 287.

²¹⁹ Bedjan, *Histoire*, 200

²²⁰ Wilmshurst, *Martyred Church*, x

In the next chapter, this study will close with a brief summary of the information presented herein and an assessment thereof.

35 . מַדּוּ מִשְׁכָּן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ .

דִּמְיוֹתָ שָׁמָּה : חֶסֶד כְּדִבְרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ בְּיָדֶיךָ
לְעַמְּךָ . וְהָיָה כִּלְכִּיל בְּכָס דָּבָר עַל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ : וְהָיָה
לְךָ : דִּבְרֵי תַּעֲבָרֶיךָ אֵל וְלֹא תִשָּׁא : לֹא מִיִּצְחָק וְלֹא
לִמְעֵלָה לֹא (1) מִיִּצְחָק . מִיִּצְחָק עֲלֶיךָ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וְלֹא
וְלֹא אֵל וְלֹא דִּמְיוֹתָ (2) : עַל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ בְּיָדֶיךָ .

וְשִׁמְךָ וְהָיָה לְךָ דִּבְרֵיךָ : בְּכָס (סִפְּתֵי
וְהָיָה לְךָ (3) וְהָיָה לְךָ שָׁמָּה לְךָ : בְּיָדֶיךָ
וְהָיָה לְךָ מִיִּצְחָק וְלֹא . וְהָיָה לְךָ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ
לְךָ דִּבְרֵיךָ : דִּמְיוֹתָ דִּבְרֵיךָ וְהָיָה לְךָ (4) .
וְהָיָה לְךָ וְהָיָה : וְהָיָה לְךָ וְהָיָה . וְהָיָה
לְךָ : דִּבְרֵיךָ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ לְךָ : וְהָיָה לְךָ בְּיָדֶיךָ .
וְהָיָה לְךָ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ מִיִּצְחָק וְלֹא : דִּבְרֵיךָ
בְּיָדֶיךָ וְהָיָה מִיִּצְחָק וְלֹא : דִּבְרֵיךָ וְהָיָה
מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ? וְהָיָה (6) : דִּבְרֵיךָ וְהָיָה וְהָיָה דִּבְרֵיךָ

(2) דִּמְיוֹתָ S.

(1) לִמְעֵלָה L. sic לִמְעֵלָה S.

(3) סִפְּתֵי דִּבְרֵיךָ S. (4) (מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ? N. E.) (5) פִּיךָ L.

(6) וְהָיָה L.

36 . 7. מִכָּזֶּה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל פְּהִיזְדָּן.

סִפְתָּהּ וְהָאֵלֹהִים : וְהָאֵלֹהִים בָּרַךְ אֶתְּכֶם בְּתִיבָה לֵךְ
 וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה לֵךְ וְהָאֵלֹהִים . אֵלֶיךָ מִן הַיָּם וְהָאֵלֹהִים
 מִן הַיָּם לֵךְ לֵךְ לֵךְ : לֵךְ לֵךְ לֵךְ
 לֵךְ לֵךְ לֵךְ . אֵל מִן הַיָּם לֵךְ לֵךְ לֵךְ :
 וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה : וְהָאֵלֹהִים לֵךְ לֵךְ :
 וְהָאֵלֹהִים בָּרַךְ הָאֵלֹהִים . וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה דְּמִכָּזֶּה
 מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְהָאֵלֹהִים : וְהָאֵלֹהִים וְהָאֵלֹהִים :
 וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה . וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה :
 וְהָאֵלֹהִים בָּרַךְ הָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה . וְהָאֵלֹהִים
 מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל בְּתִיבָה : וְהָאֵלֹהִים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל :
 אֵל לֵךְ לֵךְ (1) דְּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל (2) :
 וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה :
 וְהָאֵלֹהִים : לֵךְ לֵךְ (3) מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל דְּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל :
 וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה לֵךְ לֵךְ לֵךְ . וְהָאֵלֹהִים
 לֵךְ וְהָאֵלֹהִים : דְּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל .
 וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיבָה : אֵל מִן הַיָּם : דְּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל בָּרַךְ :

(2) (N. E. ?) (הוֹחֵד ?)

(1) L. דְּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל (N. E. ?)

(3) . וְהָאֵלֹהִים לֵךְ לֵךְ S.

37. מִזֶּה מִשְׁבֵּחַ לְהַלְלֵהוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

בְּחַסְדְּךָ יְיָ: דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵי לְבָבְךָ דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵי
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ: בְּחַסְדְּךָ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 לְהַלְלֵהוּ: וְיָבוֹד לְךָ. וְשִׁיב לִפְנֵי לְבָבְךָ:
 וְיָבוֹד לְךָ דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵי דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵי מִזֶּה מִשְׁבֵּחַ לְהַלְלֵהוּ
 מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ: חַסְדְּךָ: לְהַלְלֵהוּ לִפְנֵי (1)
 דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵיךָ בְּחַסְדְּךָ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ. וְיָבוֹד לְךָ מִזֶּה
 דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵיךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ:
 מִזֶּה מִשְׁבֵּחַ לְהַלְלֵהוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ: חַסְדְּךָ:
 וְיָבוֹד לְךָ מִזֶּה מִשְׁבֵּחַ לְהַלְלֵהוּ: וְיָבוֹד לְךָ מִזֶּה
 מִשְׁבֵּחַ לְהַלְלֵהוּ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ:
 (2) דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵיךָ מִזֶּה מִשְׁבֵּחַ לְהַלְלֵהוּ: חַסְדְּךָ:
 דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵיךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ:
 וְיָבוֹד לְךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ:
 וְיָבוֹד לְךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ:
 וְיָבוֹד לְךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ:
 דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵיךָ (3) וְיָבוֹד לְךָ (4): חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ:
 מִזֶּה מִשְׁבֵּחַ לְהַלְלֵהוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ: חַסְדְּךָ: חַסְדְּךָ:

(3) (דְּשִׁיב לִפְנֵיךָ):

Desunt in S. (2)

L. S. לְהַלְלֵהוּ (1)

L. מִזֶּה מִשְׁבֵּחַ (4)

(N. E. מִזֶּה מִשְׁבֵּחַ)

38. 7. מִזֶּה מִשְׁבֵּי הַיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם פְּחֻצָּה.

מִשְׁבֵּי הַיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם פְּחֻצָּה: בְּזֶה בְּזֶה מִיָּדָיִם
 דְּשִׁיבָה שֶׁהִיא בְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם⁽¹⁾. שֶׁהִיא בְּשִׁיבָה
 שֶׁהִיא בְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם: בְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם
 דְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם
 דְּשִׁיבָה⁽²⁾: דְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם.

לְכָל דִּין שֶׁהִיא בְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם: שֶׁהִיא בְּשִׁיבָה
 מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם. מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם
 לְכָל שֶׁ: בְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם. שֶׁהִיא
 מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם⁽³⁾ דְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם.
 מִיָּדָיִם לְכָל שֶׁהִיא בְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם: מִיָּדָיִם לְכָל שֶׁהִיא
 דְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם: מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם
 מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם: מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם: דְּשִׁיבָה
 מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם. מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם
 לְכָל שֶׁהִיא בְּשִׁיבָה מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם.

(1) (מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם)

מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם מִיָּדָיִם

(2) (1281 ? 1281) (Ass. B. O. t. II., p. 456.) (N. E.)

(3) (N. E.) S. מִיָּדָיִם

is hidden in our hearts. We did not, enduring great difficulty, overcome hardship to get here just to turn around and do it all over again. For the man who gets hung up on a stone twice is an idiot.

(28) Furthermore, we want to say that we are not worthy of this gift; for lowly ones to be given an office such as this. Rather, this is what we want, to settle down in a monastery, and to serve the Messiah until we die."

The Catholicos then said to them, "This gift suits you fine. Your modesty becomes the position."

When the monks saw that their excuses were not working, they said, "The will of our father be done."

Then the Catholicos said, "Let no one say Mar Marqos any longer. I've had an idea for how to give Rabban Marqos a new name and I want him to be called by that from now on. We will write names down and put them on the altar. Whichever one is clearly indicated, that will be his name."

They did this, and the name that came up was Yaballaha. Then the Catholicos said, "This is from the blessed Lord, blessed be he. They are worthy!"

Rabban Marqos received the rank of Metropolitan over China and Ong from the Catholicos, Mar Denha in his 35th year.

(29) Rabban Sauma received a blessing from him, and was made Visitor-General. The two of them took letters, each in part to satisfy the needs of their service.

After a few days, a report came that the route they had taken was completely cut off and no one could travel it, because the hearts of the kings on both borders, both on this side of the river (Gihon) and the other, were changed (from what they had been).

Thus those enlightened ones went back to the Monastery of Mar Michael of Tar'il, and lived in cells there for around two years...

(32) Chapter 5
Mar Yaballaha is elected patriarch

While these things were taking place, The Catholicos Mar Denha was still around, but he was suffering from an excruciating illness in Baghdad. Many monks and fathers were seeing visions similar to those written about above.

After a few days, Mar Yaballaha got the notion that he should go to Baghdad to see the Catholicos in order to receive a blessing as well as the bishop's cloak and rod, both to take along with him to his country. When he had reached the area around Baghdad, he happened upon a man he knew who told him, "The Catholicos has passed away, but could be that if your company moves along, you might arrive before he is buried."

Then, greatly distressed and with a troubled heart, he set out quickly until he made it to the church door. Entering, he saw great crowds, (33) some weeping and some praying. He went up to the altar, loosened his turban, tore his clothes, and wept and wept bitterly, until he fell to the ground like a dead man. After a while, others lifted him up, redid his turban, and comforted him. After saying the prayers for the dead, the Catholicos was buried, blessed be his memory. And the fathers returned to their cells.

The following day, the fathers gathered to elect a person suitable to sit upon the patriarchal throne. Among such were foremost Maran-Ammeh, the Metropolitan of Elam, as well as the metropolitan of Tangut, the metropolitan of Tirhan, and the metropolitan of Ture. Alongside these were the nobles, chiefs, scholars, lawyers, and doctors of Baghdad. One of them would say that this one should be patriarch, and another would say that one. Finally, everyone agreed that Mar Yaballaha should be the chief and administrator of the throne of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, (34) the reason for his election being that the kings directing the government of the whole world were Mongols. There was no one except Yaballaha able to really understand their customs, culture, government, and language.

When they told him this, Yaballaha declined their offer, excusing himself saying, "I lack instruction and doctrinal knowledge. And my tongue itself is a shortcoming. How am I to rise to this position? On top of that, your Syriac language, I don't know it at all. That's completely not what you need." But they pushed their request on him, and he relented and accepted the office.

Everyone in Baghdad, the elders, priests, nobles, scholars, and doctors, all gave him their support. And he rose and went to the holy monastery of Mar Michael of Tar'il, to Rabban Sauma. By the time Yaballaha had arrived, the monks had already heard of the passing of the holy father Mar Denha. They happily received and comforted him and approved of his becoming Catholicos. This was a divine movement, an act of God. All of creation was obligated to see this done.

Once he had spoken with Rabban Sauma, Sauma said, "This is a divine affair. You cannot be excused from it. Let us go to the King Abaga, and if he agrees, we must finally accept it."

Then they rose and set out for Adorbigan (Azerbaijan), accompanied by the elders, fathers, and monks. At that time the kings would spend the summer there. They arrived at Black Mountain, where the king was, which in Persian is Syakuh, and the Emirs presented them, and submitted their request, declaring to him, "Long live the King! The Catholicos has passed away and all Christians in accord are pleased to suggest that this Metropolitan who has come from the countries of the East to go to Jerusalem should stand in his place. What does the king command?"

(36) The king replied, "This purity of thought and mind is wondrously admirable. God is with those who seek him and carry out his will. This man and his friend have come from the East to go to Jerusalem. This all happened to them by the will of God. We too will serve the divine will and the pleas of the Christians. He will stand as their chief and be seated upon the throne."

He took Mar Yaballaha's hand in his own and said to him, "Be strong and rule, and may God be with you and help you."

The king then covered his head with a cloak, because his cloak was on his shoulders. He also gave Yaballaha a Sandali, or a small throne. He even gave him a Shatar, or a Sukor in Mongolian, which is raised up over the heads of the kings, queens, and their children. This device is adequate to protect royalty from the force of the sun and rain, but is often used to distinguish them in honor. He also gave him a golden Paiza, the symbol of these Mongol kings, and the customary set of written orders, which granted Yaballaha authority over everyone. (37) This was alongside the great seal that had belonged to earlier Catholicoi and enough funding to cover the cost of ordination (the laying on of hands).

Then Yaballaha's party rose and went to Baghdad, to the Great Church of Koke. Here, Mar Yaballaha received the Kiritonia, or the laying on of hands, in order to take up the reigns of the Church of the East. He sat upon the throne of Seleucia-Ctesiphon through the mediation of the holy father Maran-Ammeh, Metropolitan of Elam, steward and guardian of the apostolic throne, and through the assembled fathers as follows:

Mar Isho-Zeka, Metropolitan of Suba (Nisibis) and Armenia;

Mar Mosha, Metropolitan of Arbil;

Mar Gabril, Metropolitan of Mosul and Ninwa (Ninevah);

Mar Ilya, Metropolitan of Dakuk and Beth Garmai;

Mar Abraham, Metropolitan of Turplos (Tripoli) and Jerusalem;

Mar Yaqob, Metropolitan of Samarqand;

And Mar Yohanan, Metropolitan of Adorbigan;

(38) And the rest of the bishops, 24 in all. (Footnotes also include Mar Yusef, bishop of Salamas; Mar Abraham, Bishop of Ushnuk; and Mar Yohanan, bishop of Shushtar.)

This ordination took place in Second Teshri, the first Sunday of the Sanctification of the Church, in the year 1593 of the Greeks (November 1281), when Yaballaha was 37.

It so happened then that later that winter King Abaga came to Baghdad. The Catholicos Mar Yaballaha went to him on the Sabbath before the fast of the Lord (Lent) and he showed him the situation of the Christians, and found mercy in his sight. The king conferred upon him great gifts, and gave him a letter authorizing the annual collection, on behalf of the churches, monasteries, monks, priests, and deacons, of thirty thousand dinars, or 180,000 white zuze. The Catholicos dispatched men to take that amount as a gift from the nations. (39) When the king left this mortal life, the gift was stopped.

Translation (Following Columns of Original)

For the honor and the glory.

For the exaltation and the confirmation

For the pleasure and the goodwill

Of the worshipful trinity

Was acquired this deposit,

Spiritual and wholly profitable,

By the command and diligence,

Through the insight and endeavor,

Of our holy and upright father,

Blessed and compassionate,

Valiant and well-disposed,

A steadfast friend of Christ,

A vigilant and careful pastor,

Wholly skillful and studious,

A brilliant and striving

Athlete of the Holy Church.

Pilot and Governor (Xuberneiteis)

Who did not turn from the goal of his Lord,

Yet reached the height of virtue,

And fearlessly guided his flock.

He founded schools and churches,

Built convents and monasteries.

Repaired the ruins of our people,

And abundantly gave out alms.

Father of all the fathers,

Supreme head of every diocese,
Chief of the prelates and the faithful,
Good king of the Shepherds,
The fountain from which pours forth the priesthood,
Likewise the source of the priestly office.
He seized the royal keys
Unbarring and redistributing gifts.
Light of orthodoxy
And glory of the Church.
In both will and essence,
He is truly sanctified.
Holy in everything and renowned.
Fortunate, noble, and good,
Celebrated in every region,
Dearly beloved by all peoples,
He is the temple of the Holy Spirit,
The refuge of all believers
In his time he gave out the portion
According to rank and law

Glorious Mar Yaballaha,
Patriarch of the East,
Brilliant Catholicos,
Steward of spiritual treasures.
Whom the Eternal Being
Seated on this throne
From the land of the Turks.

A Miracle full of Wonder!
Who took on the Ephod of honor
And the Stole of glory and beauty.
Serving all in honor, love, and excellence.
Kings came to him in obeisance,
Queens with offerings,
Emirs and Sultans
Bowling before him like subjects.
Thus he remains free from all harm,
And is delivered from any distress.
Thus he enjoys the honor of kings
And lives forever victorious.
Amen.

He founded a monastery in glory,
Which is called the king of monasteries,
In the name of the great saint,
Chief of the ascetics and the holy ones
Saint John the Baptist,
Apostle, prophet, and priest,
Monk and teacher,
Martyr and best man of the Groom.
By the toil of his pure soul,
With extreme fatigue and anxiety,
With the intellect and wisdom
Of our great father and head prelate,
At great expense,

Thousands of gold and more,
 (Yahballaha) built (this monastery) near the city of Maragha.
 In the area of Azerbaijan.
 He adorned it and embellished it in every way.
 He even finished it off with complete beauty, such that its name remains forever
 And its reward never ends.
 Although ten years have already gone by,
 He built and finished the beautiful temple

 Of our blessed and well-known father
 Mar Shalita the first.
 Apart from that, he founded a new monk's cell,
 i.e. the glorious patriarchal home,
 In the previously mentioned city,
 As well as completing a new church there.
 In the city of Baghdad as well he rebuilt,
 Repossessing, renewing, and embellishing,
 The church and residences
 Of the renowned Darat Romye (Court of the Romans)
 Establishing near the great residence
 A wondrously adorned portico
 As a place of relaxation and pleasure
 And the gathering of the fathers.
 Messiah, on account of your love for him,
 May those of his labors done before you be received,
 And may he be strengthened and rejuvenated
 By his many gifts.

Let him be watchful

Against any who would spite him.

Let his life endure long

With exuberance and physical well-being.

Let peace abound in his time,

And reconciliation in each of his flocks.

May the same sort of joy be within him,

And may he come into his inheritance. Amen.

Written by the servant of his lordship,

Disciple of his fatherhood,

Recipient of his grace, pouring out of his blessedness,

Abdisho, the rather weak,

Bishop and scribe,

Who needs the mercy and pity

Of a lord both good and merciful.

This book of the gospel,

Finished, by the hidden power,

In the year 1606

Of the Greeks (1295 CE)

Through the diligence of the noble priest

Abdallah, servant of the Lord,

And the chiefs of the most excellent assembly

Of the charming village of Carmeleth.

Peace.

Conclusions

Beginnings and End of a Dream

This study began, if the background is counted, in the years after the great Persian persecution of Christians initiated under Shapur II. It ended nearly a millennium later, with the death of Mar Yaballaha III. The beginning showed a church moving out of survival mode and taking its first steps towards identifying itself over and against its Roman brethren. The end reveals a church that is returning to the bunker, so to speak, anticipating an apocalypse in which hope might be all but lost. That this church survives to the present and has to an extent moved out of this survivalist mentality is a testimony to perseverance that is rarely matched in human experience. In this conclusion the primary points of each content chapter will be reexamined and assessed in tandem, implications that can be drawn from these points will be presented, and finally an attempt will be made to determine at least a few applications for further research.

In the chapter on Babai, this study examined how the Church of the East had almost stumbled into political influence without even realizing it, and were taking their first steps into defending that influence from those who would pry it away, Christian or not. This study has shown how Mar Babai the great is representative of the Church of the East's aims at this juncture demonstrated through not only his defense and indeed definition of Dyophysite orthodoxy, well known and regarded elsewhere, but also his vision of a genuine Church of Persia, a Persian socio-political position for the Church of the East. This study brings to the fore the idea that Babai sought to use the ethnic Persian identity of his friend George to reveal in the court of the Shah himself the culturally unifying nature of the Christian faith within a Persian context and how that faith in Persian form was distinct from that adopted by the Roman Emperors. By

putting a former Zoroastrian/ethnic Persian monk in front of the king, and later defending that monk's orthodox legacy alongside his Persian identity, Babai was doing nothing less than attempting to present Christianity as a worthy counterpart and successor to the Zoroastrianism of the courts. As Rome had had its Constantine, in Babai's eyes and those of many if not most of his churchmen, Persia too would one day know a ruler who worshipped their God.

The chapter on Timothy reveals the changes that had already taken place in the century and a half that laid between the two men. By this time, one Muslim regime had already fallen, another had risen, and hopes for a Christian ruler were probably not what they had been in Babai's time. This chapter argues that Timothy was a reformer at heart, and sought to correct the corruption in his church, a common reformer's goal. More than that, however, he hoped to carve out a path for his Church in a world that he had come to realize would not likely embrace his faith. His aim was to formulate an approach to living in the Abbasid world. When Timothy debated the Caliph, tempting as it is to cast in this an attempt at the conversion of his opponent to his creed and the subsequent Christianification of Islam, such a motivation would have at best been a faint dream, something beyond hope itself. It is not likely that a Catholicos with a reputation for wisdom such as Timothy possessed would have lent much credence to such fantasies.

Whatever the motive for the debate, its aftermath clearly demonstrated that there would be little numerical advantage to the Church in open debate with its Muslim rulers, and this chapter posits that this served as a framework for the cementing of Timothy's aim as a Catholicos, the bolstering of the knowledge and morale of Christians under the crescent, appealing to and holding their own against their Muslim rulers, as well as defending the feeblest from the allure of a somewhat easier rise to power afforded by the faith of their rulers. This at

the same time designed not to hobble Timothy's co-religionists who lived beyond the crescent's reach, either by imposing the political rulership of his region or through high-minded ecclesiastical obligations.

Again, convenience might argue that Timothy anticipated the rise of East Syrian Warrior Christians riding under the banner of the Mongol Hordes, yet that would both be giving him a prescience uncommon to man, as well as framing an argument that he fell outside the norm for his churchmen in advocating violence. There is no real evidence for such an argument, and rather a fair sum against it, such that any implication of a political motive for Timothy's missional reforms is unfounded. It makes more sense to argue that Timothy simply sought the growth and expansion of his church as a part of his concept of the Mission of Christianity itself. By bifurcating the missional focus of his churchmen, reinforcing apologetic in the interior and releasing the outer house to its own devices, this aim was more or less accomplished. Certainly, this approach enabled the Church of the East to remain a vibrant, missional church well after many of the other sects in the Middle East had significantly curbed or ceased altogether the pursuit of outreach endeavors.

Through the lens of history, many of the effects of Timothy's reforms as well as the nearly realized aspirations of Babai's era can be seen as culminating to some extent in the time described by the final content chapter on Yaballaha. While Timothy's attempts at fortifying his church against diminution in the inner house did not stop the flow of converts to Islam, it is reasonable that this process was likely slowed. Likewise, the presence of Christians among the Mongols, while certainly not directly attributable to Timothy, is at least an indication that the policies of the Church of the East in Central Asia following Timothy's aims had been relatively successful in terms of growing and expanding the representation of the church. This chapter

argues that it can be understood that Marqos and Bar Sauma were representative of the faith of at least holy men and clergy in central Asia, meaning that they were to a significant degree knowledgeable of the doctrine of their church, as ably demonstrated by the latter in his discourse with European clergy.

In its background, the chapter covers the breadth of Church of the East expansion across Asia, particularly in Central Asia and China. The Mongol dynasty witnessed an explosion of opportunities for all Christians throughout their lands. The Church of the East seized on these opportunities. This chapter touches on ways that the Church pushed forward in this respect.

From the political point of view, this chapter makes clear that the aim of the church in raising Yaballaha to the fore was at least in part political in nature in order to better relate to their Mongol overlords, as is clearly stated in the History. This was also clearly an aim with which the author of the text and Yaballaha were in accord. It could not have seemed wild speculation on the part of Church of the East leadership of that day that their long-held hope for an East Syrian Constantine might finally be realized. The text embraces each baptized infant member of the Golden Family as evidence of this, and treats their death, fall, or conversion as among the worst possible events in the life of the Church, though no event could parallel in negativity within the text itself the magnitude of the centerpiece of the last half of the History, the fall of Arbil. This fall represents to the author of the History the end of good graces on the part of the Mongol rulers, and could be said to represent the end of Church of the East political aspirations. History vindicated that viewpoint. This study argues that alongside the abandonment of the political sphere, the missional outlook that had been a part of the Church of the East from its foundation was if not forsaken, buried quite deeply after this event or at least the persecutions in

close proximity to it, so deeply that only in recent years might it be argued to have resurfaced in much capacity.

Two threads can be said, then, to wind throughout this study: first, the perception on the part of the Church of the East of the Mission of Christianity, best represented perhaps by the commission of Matthew 28:18-20, and the Church's role in that mission; and second, the concept of Church of the East leadership on Christian Kingship. These threads were intertwined, and generally relate to each other¹. The Chapter on the 6th and 7th centuries witnessed the stabilization of the Interior so that the expansion of the Church of the East could be further encouraged. As expansion occurred, interaction with the Shahs also increased, and a situation such as that which came to pass in early 4th century Rome likely seemed inevitable. In light of this, there was not a great deal of divergence in this period regarding the concepts of Mission and kingship between the views held by the Church of the East and those prevalent in the West.

Indeed, the rise of Islam as a political entity, its survival in that capacity through one regime change, and an increased awareness of that political power's survivability on the part of Christians living under it probably served as major catalysts for the changes noted in the chapter on Timothy. This period witnessed a reexamination of the mission of the Church of the East on the part of Timothy and its reformulation for a new political reality, not perhaps abandoning the notion of a Christian monarch, but recognizing that it was not going to become a reality under the current regime. The nature of this regime, then, required a radical reform of what could be

¹ For more on Mission in the Church of the East context see Neill, Stephen. *A History of Christian Missions*. (New York: Penguin, 1991) 81-83, 102-108; cf. Moffett, *History vol. 1*. For information on the spread of Christianity in Persia see Payne, *Christianity and Iranian Society*; cf. Morony, *Christianity in Iraq*, 332ff. For more on the concept of Mission in general as well as from a Western context, see Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011) 24-26; cf. Ohm, Thomas. *Machet zu Jüngern alle Völker. Theorie der Mission*. (Freiburg: Erich Wever Verlag, 1962), 37-39; Shorter, Aylward. *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999) 4-13.

termed local outreach, as well as the preservation of earlier models for those who did not live under the same political situation.

Yet the hope of a Christian monarch and the ability for widespread, unhindered evangelistic endeavor on the part of the Church of the East was not forgotten. The Mongol era political situation did not mean a reassessment of mission so much as the rediscovery and adoption of the reality of mission hearkening back to an earlier age, which had up for several centuries only been experienced at the fringes of the church's territory. That the common Muslim might resent this was not lost on the church's leadership, and is clear even early on in the History, but the faith of church leadership in the inevitability of Christian political rule meant that this disfavor could be disregarded. They had no way of knowing, nor even reason to assume that the favor they enjoyed politically would change or that their rulers would prove so fickle and their power so fleeting.

This is perhaps most clearly apparent in Yaballaha himself. Whether he and his companion had enjoyed the hospitality of the Great Khan himself or not, the two held a status in their homeland that was reasonably high and they were part of a Christian community there as stable and sure as any the world had seen. That their community would disappear would have likely seemed nonsensical to them. That their church might be struggling to survive in its homelands would have been absurd. How surreal the world must have seemed when Yaballaha was strung up and beaten after watching the monumental church he had commissioned to his God's glory looted and destroyed. How dark the world must have looked when he stood as an old man before a young apostate prince and watched the little bit of influence he had once counted sure drift into oblivion.

The last decade of the History is relatively light compared to the information preceding it, because little of note happened then in the life of its protagonist. He simply withdrew from most of his life and responsibilities. This withdrawal is similar to the life of the church itself as it reeled under oppressive political leadership for the next several centuries, and many elements of it fled to mountainous strongholds or other lands, finding in such places scant security. Like their leader, who left off the mission he had devoted himself to in order to quietly go on, the Church of the East was no longer the missionary church it had gained a name for.

To argue that they moved into survival is not, however, to argue that they in any way abandoned their faith or their commitment to that faith. Were that the case, why keep dying? As Tisserant said:

...far more numerous (than the apostates), especially in the wilds of Adiabene, Kurdistan, and Adarbaigan, were the Christians who stubbornly remained in their humble villages, at the mercy of their oppressors: bloodthirsty Kurdish tribesmen, who constantly plundered and raided their villages, and grasping Arab landowners, who swindled them out of their best lands or simply stole them from them, killing anybody who stood in their way. They were true martyrs for the Christian faith, since they could have put an end to their trials by simply converting to Islam².

Thus this study ends its attempt at answering several of the questions that gave it rise. Yet, there is much more that could be investigated based on what has been revealed herein. Perhaps most evident is the room for a much more thorough assessment of either of the two primary threads discussed just now, the idea of messianic or Christian kingship in the Church of the East, as well as their concept of mission or simply a mission history of that church. Indeed, these components could be studied in isolation within each period of this study in some detail. Much from any one of the periods could be pulled out for further investigation, and therein lies

² Tisserant, E. in Wilmshurst, *Martyred Church*, xx

the peril of any diachronic historical analysis. The more comprehensive an attempt is made at putting together a picture of a point in time, the clearer the lacunae in our knowledge of that point become.

As such, the answers to many questions raised herein will probably never be answered. Did Yaballaha meet with Khubilai? What would that mean? What happened to the church in Tangut lands? When did Muslims become the majority in Iraq? Iran? Central Asia? What happened to the Buddhists in Central Asia? Manichaeans? What did the interreligious dialogue in, say tenth century Kashgar or Merv look like? The questions go on, piling up. What is not questionable, however, is the perseverance of the Church of the East in the face of overwhelming change and challenge, and the fact that we today, Christian or not, have much to learn from their example.

Bibliography

- Abbeloos, J.B., and T. Lamy. *Gregorii Bar Hebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*. 3 vols. Louvain: Peeters, 1872.
- AbouZayd, Shafiq. "Violence and Killing in the Liber Graduum." *ARAM*, 2000: 451-465.
- Abramowski, Luise. "Babai der Grosse: Christologische Probleme und ihre Lösungen." *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 41, 1975: 289-343.
- Abramowski, Luise. "Der Bischof von Seleukia-Ktesiphon als Katholikos und Patriarch der Kirche des Ostens." In *Syrien im 1-7 Jarhundert nach Christus. Akten der 1. Tübinger Tagung zum Chrislichen Orient (15.-16. Juni 2007)*, by Dimitrij Bumazhnov, & Hans Reinhard Seeliger, 1-55. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.
- Abramowski, Luise. "Die Christologie Babais des Grossen." In *Symposium Syriacum, 1972: célébré dans les jours 26-31 octobre 1972 à l'Institut Pontifical Oriental de Rome*, by Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina, 219-244. Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1974.
- Abramowski, Luise, and Alan Goodman. *A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts: Cambridge University Library MS. Oriental 1319, vols 1-2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.
- Abramson, Marc S. *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- Akhtar, Shabbir. *Islam as Political Religion: The Future of an Imperial Faith*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Albert, Stuart, and David A. Whetten. "Organizational Identity." *Research in Organizational Behavior* 7 (1985): 263-295.
- Alexander, Paul, and Dorothy D. Abrahamse. *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*. Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 1985.
- Amitai, Reuven. "HULĀGU KHAN." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. March 23, 2012. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hulagu-khan> (accessed August 20, 2014).
- Andreas, F. C., and K. Barr. "Bruchstücke einer Pehlevi-Übersetzung der Psalmen." *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1933: 91-152.
- Arel, Dan. "The Christian Right's Plan for a Strategic Theocratic Mid-Term Takeover." *The Blog: HuffPost Politics*. March 3, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dan-arel/the-christian-rights-plan_b_4885747.html (accessed May 26, 2015).

- Asmussen, Jes P. "Christians in Iran." In *The Cambridge History of Iran. Vol. 3(2): The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, by Ehsan Yarshater, 924-948. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Baghbidi, Hassan Rezai. "New Light on the Middle Persian-Chinese Bilingual Inscription from Xi'an." In *The Persian Language in History*, by Mauro Maggi, & Paola Orsatti, 105-115. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2011.
- Bakker, Jan. *Umat Katolik perintis di Indonesia (k.l. 645-1500)*. Vol. I, in *Sejarah Geraja Katolik Indonesia*, by M.P.M. (ed.) Muskens, 19-40. Jakarta: KWI Indonesia, 1972.
- Ballou, Adin. *Christian Non-Resistance in All its Important Bearings*. Philadelphia, PA: Universal Peace Union, 1910.
- Baraz, Daniel. *Medieval Cruelty: Changing Perceptions, Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Barthold, V. V. *Работы по отдельным проблемам истории Средней Азии Том 2*. Москва: Hayka, 1964.
- Bauer, Walter. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity, 2nd Ed.* Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1996.
- Baum, Wilhelm. "Der Priesterkönig Johannes und die syrische Christenheit." In *Syriaca: Zur Geschichte, Theologie, Liturgie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen. 2. Deutsches Syrologen-Symposium (Juli 2000, Wittenberg)*, by Martin Tamcke, 177-184. Münster: LIT, 2002.
- . *Shirin: Christian–Queen–Myth of Love. A Woman of Late Antiquity: Historical Reality and Literary Effect*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004.
- Baum, Wilhelm, and Dietmar Winkler. *The Church of the East: A Concise History*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2003.
- Baumer, Christoph, and Mar Dinkha IV. *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*. London: IB Tauris, 2006.
- Baumstark, Anton. *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*. Bonn: Verlag, 1922.
- Becker, Adam. *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- . *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008.

- Becker, Jasper. *City of Heavenly Tranquillity: Beijing in the History of China*. London: Penguin, 2008.
- Bedjan, Paul. *Histoire de Mar Jab-Alaha: Patriarche et de Raban Sauma*. Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1895.
- . *Histoire de Mar-Jabalaha de trois autres Patriarches, d'un Prêtre et de deux Laïques Nestoriens*. Paris: Harrassowitz, 1895.
- Bedjan, Paulus. *Liber superiorum, seu Historia Monastica, auctore Thoma, Episcopo Margensi. Liber Fundatorum Monasteriorum in regno Persarum et Arabum. Homiliae Mar-Narsetis in Joseph. Documenta Patrum de quibusdam verae fidei dogmatibus*. Paris/Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1901.
- Behnke, Alison. *The Conquests of Genghis Khan*. Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books, 2008.
- Bennison, Amira K. *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the 'Abbasid Empire*. New Haven, CO: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Bergsträsser, G. *Hunain Ibn Ishāk und seine Schule*. Leiden: Brill, 1913.
- Berti, Vittorio. *Idéologie et Politique Missionnaire de Timothée Ier, Patriarche Syro-Oriental (780-823)*. Vol. IV, in *Itinéraires Missionnaires: Echanges et Identités*, by Christelle Jullien, 71-110. Paris: Association Pour l'Avancement des Etudes Iraniennes, 2011.
- . *Vita E Studi Di Timoteo I Patriarca Cristiano Di Baghdad*. Paris: L'Association pour l'Avancement des Etudes Iraniennes, 2009.
- Bhala, Raj. *Understanding Islamic Law (Shari'a)*. Danvers, MA: Lexisnexis, 2013.
- Bidawid, Raphael. *Les Lettres du Patriarche Nestorien Timothée: Studi e Testi 187*. Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1956.
- Bingham, Thomas. *The Rule of Law*. London: Penguin Books, 2011.
- Biran, Michael. *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State In Central Asia*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013.
- Biran, Michal. "The Chaghadaids and Islam: The Conversion of Tarmashirin Khan (1331–34)." *Journal of American Oriental Society* 122, no. 4 (Oct - Dec 2002): 742-752.
- Birnie, Michael J. "The Church of the East and Theodore of Mopsuestia: The Commitment to His Writings and its Implications for Dialogue." *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 10, no. 1 (1996): 14-19.

- Black, Antony. *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
- Blum, Georg Günter. *Die Geschichte der Begegnung christlich-orientalischer Mystik mit der Mystik des Islams*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009.
- Borbone, Pier Giorgio. "A 13th-Century Journey from China to Europe. The "Story of Mar Yahballaha and Rabban Sauma"." *Egitto e Vicino Oriente*, no. 31 (2008): 221-242.
- Borbone, Pier Giorgio. "Some Aspects of Turco-Mongol Christianity in the Light of Epigraphic Syriac Sources." *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2005): 5-20.
- . *Storia di Mar Yahballaha e di Rabban Sauma. Un orientale in Occidente ai tempi di Marco Polo*. Torino: S. Zamorani, 2000.
- Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011.
- Bosworth, C.E. "The Concept of Dhimma in Early Islam." In *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, by Benjamin Braude, & Bernard Lewis, 37-51. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982.
- Bosworth, Clifford Edmund. *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual*. New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys (2nd ed.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.
- Boyce, Mary. "Arsacids (religion)." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. August 15, 2011.
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/arsacids-index#pt4> (accessed May 12, 2015).
- . *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Boyle, J.A. "Juvaini and Rashid al-Din as sources on the history of the mongols." In *Historians of the Middle East*, by Bernard Lewis, 133-7. New York: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Braun, Oscar. *Ausgewählte Akten persischer Märtyrer*. München: Jos. Kösel, 1915.
- . *Das Buch der Synhados oder Synodicon Orientale: Die Sammlung der Nestorianischen Konzilien, zusammengestellt im neunten Jahrhundert nach der syrischen Handschrift, Museo Borgiano 82, der Vatikanischen Bibliothek*. Stuttgart, Wien: Rothsche Verlagshandlung, 1900.
- . *Timothei Patriarchae I Epistulae*. Vol. CSCO 74/75. Louvain: Durbecq, 1914/15.
- Brett, Michael. *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Middle East and the Mediterranean in the 10th Century CE*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

- Brock, Sebastian. "Changing Fashions in Syriac Translation Technique: The Background to Syriac Translations under the Abbasids." *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies*, 2004: 3-14.
- . *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy*. Ashgate: Variorum, 2006.
- Brock, Sebastian. "'Monasticism in Iraq: The Cultural Contribution'." In *The Christian Heritage of Iraq: Collected Papers from the Christianity of Iraq I-V Seminar Days*, by Erica C.D. Hunter, 64-80. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009.
- Brock, Sebastian. "The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials." In *Doctrinal Diversity: Varieties of Early Christianity*, by Everett Ferguson, 281-298. New York: Garland, 1999.
- Brock, Sebastian. "The Nestorian Church: A Lamentable Misnomer." *Bulletin of the John Ryland Library of the University of Manchester* 78/3 (1996): 23-35.
- Brock, Sebastian. "The Syriac Background of Hunayn's Translation Techniques." *ARAM*, 1991: 139-162.
- Brock, Sebastian, and Susan Ashbrook Harvey. *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Brooks, Ernest Walter. *John of Ephesus. Lives of the Eastern Saints*. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1923-1925.
- Brown, Richard. *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia from the Time of Mohammed till the Fourteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933.
- Browne, Edward Granville. *Islamic Medicine*. Noida, India: Goodword Publishing, 2002.
- Buck, Christopher George. "The Universality of the Church of the East: How Persian was Persian Christianity?" *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, 1996: 54-95.
- Budge, Ernest A. W. *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Marga, AD 840*. Vol. 1 (Syriac). 2 vols. London: Trench, Trubner, & co., 1893 (a).
- . *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Marga, AD 840*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. London: Trench, Trubner, & co., 1893 (b).
- . *The Chronography of Abu'l-Faraj Bar Hebraeus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932.
- . *The Monks of Kublai Khan: Emperor of China*. London: Harrison & Sons, 1928.
- Bulliet, Richard W. *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

- Bundy, David. "The Syriac and Armenian Christian Responses to the Islamification of the Mongols." In *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, by John Victor Tolan, 33-54. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Byfield, Ted. *A Glorious Disaster: AD 1100 to 1300: The Crusades: Blood, Valor, Iniquity, Reason, Faith*. Edmonton, AB: Friesens Corporation, 2008.
- Cabrol, C. *Une famille de secretaries nestoriens, les al-Anbārī, sous les premiers abbassides*. Vols. 1 Parole de L'Orient, 27, in *Actes du II Symposium Syro-Arabicum (Sayyadat al-Bir, Septembre 1998) Etudes Arabes Chretiennes*, by S. Samir, 295-320. 2002.
- Caner, Daniel. *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002.
- Casiday, Augustine. *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Chabot, J. *Synodicon Orientale ou recueil des synodes nestoriens*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902.
- Chabot, Jean-Baptiste. *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha III, patriarche des Nestoriens (1281-1317) et du moine Rabban Ḥauma, ambassadeur du Roi Argoun en Occident (1287)*. Paris: Leroux, 1895.
- . *Le Livre de la Chastété composé par Jésusdenah, évêque de Bacrah*. Rome: L'école Francaise de Rome, 1896.
- Chabot, Jean-Baptiste. ""Une lettre de Bar Hébréus au catholicos Denḥa Ier, publiée et traduite"." *Journal Asiatique* IX, no. 11 (1898): 75-128.
- Chapman, Gordon. "Christianity Comes to Asia." In *The Church in Asia*, by Donald E. Hoke, 181-203. Chicago: Moody Press, 1975.
- Chau, Amy. *Day of Empire: How Hyperpowers Rise to Global Dominance—and Why They Fall*. New York: Doubleday, 2007.
- Chediath, Geevarghese. *Mar Babai the Great: Some Useful Counsels on the Ascetic Life*. . Kottayam, India: St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 2001.
- . *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great*. Khottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, 1982.
- Cheikh, N. *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

- Chen Yuan. *Western and Central Asians in China under the Mongols*. Translated by Ch'ien Hsing-Hai, & L. Carrington Goodrich. Vol. xv. Los Angeles: Monumenta Serica Monographs, 1966.
- Chen Yuan 陳垣. "Yuan Yelikewen Jiao Kao 元也里可溫教考." In *Chen Yuan Juan 陳垣卷*, by Liu Mengxi 劉夢溪, 1-46. Shijiazhuang, PRC: Hubei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1996.
- Chialà, Sabino. "Abraham de Kashkar et ses Règles monastiques." *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, no. 58 (2008): 248-262.
- Christensen, Arthur. *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*. Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1936.
- Clark, Nancy L., and William H. Worger. *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Coope, Jessica A. "Religious and Cultural Conversion to Islam in Ninth Century Cordoba." *Journal of World History*, 1993: 47-68.
- Coxe, A. Cleveland, Sir James Donaldson, and Alexander Roberts. *Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 5: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix*. New York: Christian Literature Company, 1886.
- . *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. New York: T&T Clark, 1885.
- Cragg, Kenneth. *The Arab Christian*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Publishing, 1991.
- Crone, Patricia. *God's Rule: Government and Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Cronin, Vincent. *Wise Man from the West*. New York: Random House, 2011.
- Daftary, Farhad. "ḤĀKEM BE-AMR-ALLĀH." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. December 15, 2003. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hakem-be-amr-allah> (accessed July 18, 2014).
- Daryaei, Touraj. *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010.
- Dauvilliers, Jean. "Les Provinces Chaldéennes de l'extérieur au Moyen Age." In *Histoire et Institutions des Eglises Orientales au Moyen Age*, by Jean Dauvilliers, 261-316. London: Variorum, 1983.
- Davies, Norman. *Europe: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- de Courtois, Sébastien. *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, the Last Arameans*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004.

- de Halleux, André. "La christologie de Martyrios-Sahdona dans l'évolution du nestorianisme." *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 23 , 1957: 5-32.
- de Somogyi, Joseph. "A Qaṣīda on the Destruction of Baghdād by the Mongols." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 7, no. 1 (1933): 41-48.
- de Vries, Wilhelm. "Antiochien und Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Patriarch und Katholikos?" In *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant. Vol. 3: Orient chrétien (Deuxième partie)*, 429-450. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964.
- Deanesly, Margaret. *A History of Medieval Europe, 476-911*. Vol. 1. 8 vols. London: Methuen, 1956.
- Deaux, K. "Social Identification." In *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles*, edited by eds. E. T. Higgins and A. K. Kruglanski. New York: Guilford, n.d.
- Decret, François. "Les conséquences sur le christianisme en Perse de l'affrontement des empires romain et sassanide: de Shâpûr Ier à Yazdgard Ier." *Recherches Augustiniennes*, no. 14 (1979): 91-152.
- Denzey, Nicola. "Bardaisan of Edessa." In *A Companion to Second-Century Christian Heretics*, by Antti Marjanen, & Petri Luomanen, 159-184. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- DeWeese, Devin A. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- Dickens, Mark. "Patriarch Timothy I and the Metropolitan of the Turks." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 20, no. 2 (2010): 117-139.
- Dillon, Michael. *China's Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement and Sects*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Dodge, B. *The Fihrist of al-Nadim: A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- Drijvers, H.J.W. *The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on the Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa*. Edited by H.J.W. Drijvers. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007.
- Drompp, Michael Robert. *Tang China and the Collapse of the Uighur Empire: A Documentary History*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Drouin, Edme Alphonse. "Notice sur des monnaies mongoles, XVII, Monnaies d'Abaqa (a legende Chretienne)." *Journal Asiatique* IX, no. 7 (1896): 513-514.

- Duri, Abd al-Aziz. *Early Islamic Institutions: Administration and Taxation from the Caliphate to the Umayyads and Abbasids*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011.
- Dyrness, William. *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003.
- Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Elukin, Jonathan. "From Jew to Christian? Conversion and Immutability in Medieval Europe,." In *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages*, by James Muldoon, 171-189. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997.
- Elverskog, Johan. *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.
- Escolan, Philippe. *Monachisme et Église. Le monachisme syrien du IV^e au VII^e siècle: un ministère charismatique.* . Paris: Beauchesne, 1999.
- Evans, Dominic, and Raheem Salman. "Iraq Catholic leader says Islamic State worse than Genghis Khan." *Reuters UK Edition*. July 21, 2014.
<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/07/20/uk-iraq-security-christians-idUKKBN0FP0RJ20140720> (accessed August 13, 2014).
- Farquhar, David M. *The Government of China under Mongolian Rule*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990.
- Fauchon, Claire. ""Les formes de vie ascétique et monastique en milieu syriaque, Ve-VII^e siècles"." In *Le monachisme syriaque. Études syriaques 7*, by Florence Jullien, 37-64. Paris: Geuthner, 2010.
- Fiey. "Le Grand Catholikos turco-mongol Yahwalaha III (1281-1317)." *Proche-Orient chrétien*, 1988: 209-220.
- Fiey, Jean-Maurice. "A la recherche des anciens monastères du nord de l'Irak." *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 9, 1959: 97-108.
- . *Chrétiens syriaques sous les Abbassides surtout à Bagdad, 749- 1258*. Vol. 420. Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1980.
- . *Chrétiens syriaques sous les Mongols (Il-Khanat de Perse, XIII^e- XIV^e s.)*. Vol. 362. Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1975.
- . *Jalons pour une histoire de l'Église en Iraq*. Vol. 310. Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1970.

- Fiey, Jean-Maurice. "Le sceau sassanide d'un catholicos melkite d'Asie centrale." *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 45, no. 1-2 (1995): 6-9.
- Fiey, Jean-Maurice. "Les étapes de la prise de conscience de son identité patriarcale par l'Église syrienne orientale." *L'Orient Syrien*, 1967: 3-22.
- . *Pour un Oriens Christianus novus; répertoire des diocèses Syriaques orientaux et occidentaux*. Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1993.
- Finkel, J. *Thalith rasa'il li-Abi Uthman al-Jahiz*. Cairo, 1926.
- Flusin, Bernard. ""Syméon et les philologues ou la mort du stylite"." In *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance: textes, images, monuments*, by Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, Michel Kaplan, & Jean-Pierre Sodini, 1-23. Paris: Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1993.
- Foltz, Richard. *Religions of the Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.
- Fortescue, A. *The Lesser Eastern Churches*. London: Catholic Truth Society, 1913.
- Frankenberg, W. *Evagrius Ponticus*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1912.
- Frazier, Ian. "Invaders: Destroying Baghdad." *The New Yorker*. April 25, 2005.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/04/25/invaders-3> (accessed October 13, 2014).
- Freund, W.H.C. *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus*. New York: Doubleday, 1967.
- Freund, W.H.C. ""Monks and the End of Greco-Roman Paganism in Syria and Egypt"." *Cristianesimo nella storia* 11, 1990: 469-484.
- . *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- . *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2008.
- Friedmann, Yohanan. *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Furlonge, Nigel D. "Revisiting the Zanj and Re-visioning Revolt: Complexities of the Zanj Conflict (868 - 883 AD)." *Negro History Bulletin*, 1999: 7-14.
- Gao, Shining. "The Impact of Contemporary Chinese Folk Religions on Christianity." In *Christianity and Chinese Culture*, by Mikka Ruokanen, & Paula Huang, 170-184. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010.

- Gavrilyuk, Paul. *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Gero, Stephen. *Barṣauma of Nisibis and Persian Christianity in the Fifth Century*. CSCO 426, Subs. 63. Louvain: Peeters, 1981.
- Gibson, Nathan P. *Closest in Friendship? Al-Jāḥiẓ' Profile of Christians in Abbasid Society in 'The Refutation of Christians' (Al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā)*. Washington, DC.: Catholic University of America, 2015.
- Gilman, Ian, and Hans Klimkeit. *Christians in Asia Before 1500*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Gismondi, Henricus. *Maris Amri et Slibae de Patriarchis Nestorianum Commentaria*. . Translated by Henricus Gismondi. Rome, 1899.
- Goff, Christopher Wyatt. *Measuring the Clergy/Laity Gap and its Effect on Church Health and Outreach (Dissertation)*. Ann Arbor: Proquest, 2008.
- Golzio, Karl-Heinz. *Regents in Central Asia Since the Mongol Empire: Chronological Tables*. Koln: Brill, 1985.
- Goodman, A.E. "The Jenks Collection of Syriac Manuscripts in the University Library, Cambridge." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1939: 381-600.
- Goodwin, Jason. "The Glory that was Baghdad." *The Wilson Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2003): 24-28.
- Gordon, Matthew S. *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra (AH 200-275/815-889 CE)*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001.
- Gregorian, Vartan. *Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003.
- Griffith, Sidney H. "Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām: Theodore Abū Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion." In *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, by Samir Khalil Samir, & Jørgen S. Nielsen, 1-56. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- Griffith, Sidney H. "'Monks, "Singles", and the "Sons of the Covenant": Reflections on Syriac Ascetic Terminology'." In *EYΛOΓHMA: Studies in Honor of Robert Taft, S.J., Studia Anselmiana 110, Analecta Liturgica 17*, by Ephrem Carr, Stefano Parenti, Abraham-Andreas Thiermeyer, & Elena Velkovska, 141-160. Roma: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1993.
- . *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

- Griffith, Sidney H. "Theodore bar Koni's Scholion: A Nestorian Summa contra Gentiles from the First Abbasid Century." In *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, by T. Matthews, and R. Thomson N. Garsoian, 53-72. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982.
- Grousset, René. *The Empire of the Steppes*. Translated by Naomi Walford. New Brunswick, NJ: State University of New Jersey, 1970.
- Guidi, Ignazio. *Chronicum anonymum*. Vols. 1-2. Paris: CSCO, 1903.
- Guilland, Rodolphe. "L'Expedition de Maslama contre Constantinople (717-718)." *Études byzantines*, 1959: 109-133.
- Guillaumont, Antoine. "Les Six Centuries des 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Evagre le Pontique." *Patrologia Orientalis* 28.1, no. 134 (1958).
- Guillaumont, Antoine. "'Perspectives actuelles sur les origines du monachisme'." In *The Frontiers of Human Knowledge: Lectures Held at the Quincentenary Celebrations of Uppsala University, 1977*, by Torgny Torgnysson Segerstedt, 111-123. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1978.
- Guillaumont, Antoine. "'Un colloque entre orthodoxes et théologiens nestoriens de Perse sous Justinien',." *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Paris*, 1970: 201-207.
- Gutas, Dmitri. "Farabi." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. December 15, 1999. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farabi-i> (accessed October 14, 2013).
- . *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Hack-Polay, Dieu. "When Home Isn't Home -- A Study of Homesickness and Coping Strategies among Migrant Workers and Expatriates." *International Journal of Psychological Studies* 4, no. 3 (September 2012): p62-72.
- Hage, Wolfgang. "Der Weg nach Asien: Die ostsyrische Missionskirche." In *Die Kirche des frühen Mittelalters*, edited by Knut Schäferdiek, 360-393. München : Kaiser Verlag, 1978.
- Halbertsma, Tjalling H.F. *Early Christian remains of Inner Mongolia: discovery, reconstruction and appropriation*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Hall, John. *Another blow to Christianity and civilisation: ISIS destroy 4th Century Mar Benham monastery in Iraq*. March 19, 2015. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article->

- 3002530/Another-blow-Christianity-civilisation-ISIS-destroy-4th-Century-Mar-Benham-monastery-Iraq.html (accessed May 12, 2015).
- Hallman, Joseph. "The Seed of Fire: Divine Suffering in the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5 (1997): 369-391.
- Hamarneh, Sami K. "al-Tabari." In *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, by Helaine Selin, 930. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1997.
- Harrison, Alwyn. "Behind the Curve: Bulliet and Conversion to Islam in al-Andalus Revisited." *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean*, 2012: 35-51.
- Hartog, Paul A. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015.
- Harun, A.M. *al-Radd 'ala al Nasara*. Vol. 3, in *Rasa'il al-Gahiz*, by A.M. Harun, 303-351. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1979.
- Hastings, James. "Belial, Beliar." *Hastings Dictionary of the New Testament*. 1918.
<http://www.studylight.org/dic/hdn/view.cgi?n=289> (accessed October 7, 2013).
- Hawting, Gerald. *Muslims, Mongols and Crusaders*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- . *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Heimgartner, Martin. "Jakob Baradai." In *Syrische Kirchenväter*, edited by Wassilios Klein, 191-203. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2004.
- . *Timotheos I, Ostsyrischer Patriarch: Disputation mid dem Kalifen Al-Mahdi*. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.
- Heuken, Adolf. "Christianity in Pre-Colonial Indonesia." In *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, by J.S. Artonang, & K. eds. Steenbrink, 3-7. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Hilgenfeld, Heinrich. *Textkritische Bemerkungen zur Geschichte des Patriarchen Jabalaha und des Rabban Sauma*. Leipzig: Otto Harrasowitz, 1894.
- Hilgenfeld, R. *Jabalaha III, catholici nestoriani, vita ex Slivae Mossulani libro, qui inscribitur 'Turris', desumpta*. Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1896.
- Hinkle, A. Barton. "Theocracy in America." *reason.com*. March 29, 2011.
<http://reason.com/archives/2011/03/29/theocracy-in-america> (accessed May 26, 2015).
- Hitti, Philip. *History of the Arabs*. London: Macmillan, 1964.

- Holtmann, Phillip. "A Primer to the Sunni-Shi Conflict." *Perspective on Terrorism* 8, no. 1 (2014): 142-145.
- Horrobin, David. "The Philosophical Basis of Peer Review and the Suppression of Innovation." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, no. 263 (1990): 1438-1441.
- Howard, George. *The Teaching of Addai*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981.
- Howard-Johnston, James. *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.
- . "K̲osrow II." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. March 15, 2010.
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khosrow-ii>.
- Hoyland, Robert G. *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1997.
- Hunter, Erica. "Magic and Medicine amongst the Christians of Kurdistan." In *Christian Heritage of Iraq: Collected Papers from the Christianity of Iraq I-V Seminar Days*, by Erica C.D. Hunter, 187-202. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009.
- . *The Christian Heritage of Iraq: Collected Papers from the Christianity of Iraq I-V Seminar Days*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009.
- Hunter, Erica. "The Conversion of the Kerait to Christianity in A.D. 1007." *Zentralasiatische Studien* 22 (1989): 158-176.
- Hurst, Thomas. *The Syriac Letters of Timothy (727-823): A Study in Christian-Muslim Controversy. PhD Dissertation*. Washington, DC.: Catholic University of America, 1986.
- Jackson, Peter (ed.). *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253-1255*. London: Hakluyt Society, 1990.
- Jackson, Peter. *The Mongols and the West: 1221-1410*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Jenkins, Philip. *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia - and How it Died*. New York: HarperOne, 2008.
- . *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Jones, Charles B. *View From Mars Hill: Christianity in the Landscape of World Religions*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2005.
- Joseph, John. *Muslim-Christian Relations and Inter-Christian Rivalries in the Middle East: The Case of the Jacobites in an Age of Transition*. New York: SUNY Press, 1983.

- . *The Nestorians and their Muslim Neighbors: A Study of Western Influence on their Relations*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961.
- Jullien, Florence. "'Le monachisme chrétien dans l'empire iranien (IVe–XIVe siècles)'" In *Chrétiens en terre d'Iran: Implantation et acculturation. Cahiers de Studia Iranica 33, Chrétiens en terre d'Iran I*, by Rika Gyselen, 143-184. Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études Iraniennes, 2006.
- . *Le monachisme en Perse: la réforme d'Abraham le Grand, père des moines de l'Orient*. Leuven: Peeters, 2008.
- Jullien, Florence. "Une question de controverse religieuse: la Lettre au catholicos nestorien Mār Denha I." *Parole de l'Orient*, no. 33 (2008): 95-113.
- Juvaini, 'Ala-ad-Din 'Ata-Malik. *The History of the World Conqueror by 'Ala-ad-Din 'Ata-Malik Juvaini*. Translated by John Andrew Boyle. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958.
- Kalvemaski, Joel, and Robin Darling Young. *Evagrius and His Legacy*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016.
- Kamil, Bahjat al-Tikriti. *The Religious Policy of Al-Mutawakkil 'Ala Allah al-Abbasi*. MA Thesis: McGill University, 1969.
- Karavaltchev, Ventzislav. "How Just was the Ottoman Millet System." *Academia.Edu*. Journal of European Baptist Studies. May 2011.
http://www.academia.edu/2362427/how_just_was_the_ottoman_millet_system (accessed October 25, 2013).
- Kassis, Hanna E. "Critique of Scriptures: Polemics of al-Jahiz and Ibn Hazm against Christianity and Judaism." In *Religious Apologetics - Philosophical Argumentation*, by Yossef Schwartz, & Volkhard Krech, 237-250. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2004.
- Kawerau, Peter. *Christlich-Arabische Chrestomathie aus historischen Schriftstellern des Mittelalters (CSCO 385)*. Leuven: Peeters, 1977.
- Keevak, Michael. *The Story of a Stele: China's Nestorian Monument and Its Reception in the West, 1625-1916*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008.
- Kennedy, Hugh. *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- . *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2007.

- . *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2005.
- Khan, Arshad. *Islam, Muslims, and America: Understanding the Basis of Their Conflict*. New York: Agora Publishing, 2003.
- Khan, Paul. *The Secret History of the Mongols: The Origin of Chinghis Khan*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984.
- Khanbagi, A. *The Fire, The Star, and the Cross: Minority Religions in Medieval and Early Modern Iran*. London: Tauris, 2006.
- Kitchen, Robert A. "Babai the Great." In *The Orthodox Christian World*, edited by Augustine Casiday, 237-243. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Kitchen, Robert A., and Martien F.G. Parmentier. *The Book of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum. Cistercian Studies Series 196*. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 2004.
- Klein, Wassilios. "Christliche Reliefgrabsteine des 14. Jahrhunderts von der Seidenstraße. Ergänzungen zu einer alttürkischen und zwei syrischen Inschriften sowie eine bildliche Darstellung." In *VI Symposium Syriacum, 1992: University of Cambridge, Faculty of Divinity, 30 August – 2 September 1992*, by René Lavenant, 419-442. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1994.
- Konstantinovsky, Julia. *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009.
- Kreyenbroek, Philip G. "Religions in Iran." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. December 15, 2006. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iran-ix1-religions-in-iran-pre-islamic#1> (accessed January 13, 2014).
- Kuriakose, M.K. *History of Christianity in India: Source Materials*. Bangalore: United Theological College, 1982.
- Labourt, Jerome. *De Timotheo I Nestorianum Patriarcha (728-823) et Christianorum Orientalium condicione sub Chaliphis Abbasidis*. Paris, 1904.
- Labourt, Jérôme. *Le Christianisme dans l'empire Perse*. Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 1904.
- Lambton, Ann K. S. *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia*. Albany, NY: Persian Heritage Foundation, 1988.
- Lamoreaux, John C. "Early Eastern Christian Responses to Islam." In *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, by John Victor Tolan, 3-32. New York: Routledge, 2000.

- Landron, B. *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Irak: Attitudes Nestoriennes vis-a-vis de l'Islam*. Paris: Calscript, 2005.
- Lane, George. "An account of Gregory Bar Hebraeus Abu Al-Faraj and his Relations with the Mongols of Persia." *Hugoye*, 1999: 209-233.
- Lane, George. "An Account of Gregory Bar-Hebraeus Abu al-Faraj and his Relations with the Mongols of Persia." *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 2.2 (1999): 209-233.
- . *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006.
- . *Genghis Khan and Mongol Rule*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Lattimore, Owen. "A Ruined City in Inner Mongolia." *Geographical Journal*, no. 6 (1934): 481-497.
- Le Coz, Raymond. *L'Église d'Orient: chrétiens d'Irak, d'Iran et de Turqui*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995.
- . *Les médecins nestoriens au moyen âge: Les maîtres des Arabes*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004.
- Le Coz, Raymond. "Les médecins nestoriens du VI^e au VIII^e siècle: a l'bmre d'Avicenne. La médecine au temps des califes." *Histoire des sciences médicales*, 1997: 315-339.
- Le Strange, Guy. *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate: From Contemporary Arabic and Persian Sources*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900.
- Levi, Peter. *The Frontiers of Paradise: A Study of Monks and Monasteries*. New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987.
- Levtzion, Nehemia. *Conversion to Islam*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979.
- Levy-Rubin, Milka. *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Liang, Jialing. *Gaige kaifang yilai de Zhongguo nongcun jiaohui*. Hong Kong: Jiandao Seminary Press, 1999.
- Lieu, Samuel. *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*. Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1992.
- Linker, Damon. "The Benedict Option: Why the religious right is considering an all-out withdrawal from politics." *The Week*. May 19, 2015.

- <http://theweek.com/articles/555734/benedict-option-why-religious-right-considering-allout-withdrawal-from-politics> (accessed May 26, 2015).
- Liu, Yingsheng. *关于元代中国犹太人 (Jews in the Yuan Dynasty)*. Beijing: Forum on Yuan History, 1997.
- Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, Eliyahu. *Aphrahat's Demonstrations: A Conversation with the Jews of Mesopotamia*. Vol. 642. Louvain: Peeters, CSCO, 2012.
- Louw, P. Eric. *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2004.
- Lowery, Brian S., Miguel M. Unzueta, and Eric D. Knowles. "Why White Americans Oppose Affirmative Action: A Group-Interest Approach." *Latino Policy and Issues Brief*, no. 15 (April 2007): 1-4.
- Maas, Michael. *Exegesis and Empire in the Early Byzantine Mediterranean*. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003.
- MacGuckin de Slade, W. *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*. London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1843.
- Macomber, William F. "The Authority of the Catholicos Patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon." In *Patriarcati Orientali nel primo millennio. Relazioni del Congresso tenutosi al Pontificio Istituto Orientale nei giorni 27-30 Dicembre 1967*, 179-200. Roma: Pontificum Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1968.
- Mai, A. *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*. Vol. 10. Rome, 1838.
- Makripoulias, Christos. "Mardaites in Asia Minor." *Encyclopedia of the Hellenic World - Asia Minor*. December 13, 2005. <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=7807> (accessed July 31, 2014).
- Man, John. *Genghis Khan: Life, Death, and Resurrection*. New York: Thomas Dunne, 2004.
- . *Kublai Khan: From Xanadu to Superpower*. London: Bantam Books, 2007.
- . *Kublai Khan: The Mongol King who Remade China*. London: Bantam, 2006.
- Mango, Cyril. "New Religion, Old Culture." In *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, by Cyril Mango, 96-121. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Mango, Cyril, and Roger Scott. *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Mar Dinkha IV. "Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East." *The Holy See*. November 11, 1994.

- http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_11111994_assyrian-church_en.html (accessed May 12, 2015).
- Marozzi, Justin. *Tamerlane: Sword of Islam, Conqueror of the World*. New York: HarperCollins, 2004.
- Marshall, Robert. *Storm from the East: From Genghis Khan to Khubilai Khan*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.
- Martinez, Francisco J. "Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius." In *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius*, by Francisco J. Martinez, 58-201. Washington, DC.: Dissertation: Catholic University of America, 1985.
- Martinez-Sève, Laurianne. "Hellenism." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. March 22, 2012. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hellenism> (accessed May 12, 2015).
- McCullough, William Stewart. *A Short History of Syriac Christianity to the Rise of Islam. Scholars Press General 4*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.
- McDonough, Scott. "A Second Constantine? The Sasanian King Yazdgard in Christian History and Historiography." *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 2008: 127-140.
- McEvedy, Colin, and Richard Jones. *Atlas of World Population History*. London: Penguin, 1978.
- McGrath, Alister. *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.
- McGuckin, John. "Nonviolence and Peace Traditions in Early & Eastern Christianity." In *Communion: Website of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship*. December 29, 2004. <http://www.incommunion.org/2004/12/29/nonviolence-and-peace-traditions/> (accessed August 1, 2014).
- . *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy. Its History, Theology, and Texts*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- McLaughlin, J.L. "Beelzebul." In *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, by D.N. Freedman, A.C. Myers, & A.B. Beck. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- Meinardus, Otto. *The Nestorians in Egypt*. Vol. LI. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967.
- Melchert, Christopher. "Religious Policies of the Caliphs from al-Mutawakkil to al-Muqtadir, A H 232-295/A D 847-908." *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 3 (1996): 316 - 342.
- Melville, Charles. "DOKUZ KĀTŪN." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. November 29, 2011. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dokuz-doquz-katun> (accessed November 15, 2014).

- Menze, Volker L. *Justinian and the Making of the Syriac Orthodox Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- . *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Mikaberidze, Alexander. *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011.
- Mikhail, Maged S. A. "The Early Islamic Period (641-1517): From the Arab Conquest Through Mamluk Rule." In *The Coptic Christian Heritage: History, Faith, and Culture*, by Lois M. Farag, 39-53. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014.
- Miller, James A. "Trading through Islam: The Interconnections of Sijilmasa, Ghana, and the Almoravid Movement." In *North Africa, Islam, and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War*, by Julia Clancy-Smith, 29-58. Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001.
- Mingana, Alphonse. *Narsai doctoris homiliae et carmina*. Mosul, 1905.
- Mingana, Alphonse. "The Early Spread of Christianity in India." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 10 (1926).
- Mingana, Alphonse. "Timothy's Apology for Christianity." *Woodbridge Studies* 2 (1928): 1-162.
- Mingana, Alphonse, and 'Ali Tabari. *The Book of Religion and Empire*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1922.
- Miura, Toru. "Mashriq." In *Islamic Urban Studies*, by Masashi Haneda, & Toru Miura, 83-184. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Moffet, Samuel. *A History of Christianity in Asia*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.
- Morgan, David. *Medieval Persia, 1040-1797*. London: Longman, 1988.
- . *The Mongols*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- Morony, Michael G. *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005.
- Morony, Michael G. "The Age of Conversions." In *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, by Michael Gervers, & Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, 135-150. Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1990.
- Morris, Colin. *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West: From the Beginning to 1600*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005.

- Moschos, Dimitrios. *Eschatologie im ägyptischen Mönchtum: Die Rolle christlicher eschatologischer Denkvarianten in der Geschichte des frühen ägyptischen Mönchtums und seiner sozialen Funktion*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.
- Mote, Frederick W. "Chinese society under Mongol rule, 1215-1368." In *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 6, Alien Regimes and Border States, 710–1368*, by Denis C. Twitchett, Herbert Franke, & John King Fairbank, 616–664. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Moule, A. C. *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*. Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011.
- Murray, Robert. *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition, 2nd Edition*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004.
- Murre-Van Den Berg, Heleen. "The Church of the East in Mesopotamia in the Mongol Period." In *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia*, by Roman Malek, & Peter Hofrichter, 377-394. Sankt Augustin, Germany: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006.
- Narinskaya, Elina. *Ephrem, a 'Jewish' Sage: A comparison of the Exegetical Writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian and Jewish Traditions*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010.
- Nau, François. *La première partie de l'Histoire de Barhadbesabba 'Arbaïa; texte syriaque édité et traduit par F. Nau*. Vol. 33.2. Paris: Patrologia Orientalis, 1932.
- . *La seconde partie de l'histoire ecclésiastique de Barhadbesaba 'Arbaïa et une controverse de Théodore de Mopsueste avec les Macédoniens: texte syriaque édité et traduit / F. Nau*. Vol. 9.5. Paris: Patrologia Orientalis, 1913.
- Neal, Gordon Lea. *The Descriptions of Asian Religions in Friar William of Rubruck's Itinerarium*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1995.
- Nedungatt, George. "'The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-Speaking Church'." *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 39, 1973: 191-215, 419-444.
- Neill, Stephen. *A History of Christian Missions*. New York: Penguin, 1991.
- Neusner, Jacob. "Constantine, Shapur II and the Jewish-Christian Confrontation in Fourth-Century Iran." In *Understanding Seeking Faith: Essays on the Case of Judaism*. Vol. 2: *Literature, Religion and the Social Study of Judaism*, by Jacob Neusner, 119-142. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987.
- Nicolini-Zani, Matteo. "Jesuit Jingjiao: The 'Appropriation' of Tang Christianity by Jesuit Missionaries in the Seventeenth Century." In *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural*

- Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, by Dietmar Winkler, & Li Tang, 225-239. Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2009.
- Nicolini-Zani, Matteo. "The Tang Christian Pillar from Luoyang and its Jingjiao Inscription: A Preliminary Study." *Monumenta Serica* 57 (2009): 99-140.
- Oelsner, Andrea. "The Institutional Identity of Regional Organizations, or Mercosur's Identity Crisis." *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (2013): 115-127.
- Ohm, Thomas. *Machet zu Jüngern alle Völker. Theorie der Mission*. Freiburg: Erich Wevel Verlag, 1962.
- O'Keefe, John J. "Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth Century Christology." *Theological Studies* 58 (1997): 39-60.
- O'Keefe, John J. "Kenosis or Impassibility: Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus on the Problem of Divine Pathos." *Studia Patristica* (Peeters) 32 (1997): 358-65.
- Ott, Craig, and Stephen J. Strauss. *Encountering Theology of Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Padberg, Lutz E. *Die Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter*. Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1998.
- Palmer, Andrew. "A Single Human Being Divided in Himself: Ephraim the Syrian, the Man in the Middle." *Hugoye* 1.2 (1998): 119 - 163.
- Pardue, Stephen T. "An Invitation to Discuss Christian Theology with the Global Church." In *Jesus Without Borders: Christology in the Majority World*, edited by Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, & K.K. Yeo, 1-10. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014.
- Payne Smith, J. *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1903.
- Payne, Richard E. *Christianity and Iranian Society in Late Antiquity, ca. 500-700 CE*. Ann Arbor, MI: Proquest, 2010.
- Payne-Smith, Robert. *Thesaurus Syriacus*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1879.
- Peacock, A.C.S. *Early Seljuq History: A New Interpretation*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010.
- Pearce, Roger. "Gregory Barhebraeus." *Encyclopedia of Syriac Literature*. January 1, 2008. http://roger-pearce.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gregory_Barhebraeus (accessed March 15, 2014).
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*. New York: HarperCollins, 1987.

- . *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.
- Pellat, Charles. *The Life and Works of Jahiz (Islamic World)*. Translated by D.M. Hawkes. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969.
- Perkins, Dorothy. *Encyclopedia of China: History and Culture*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013.
- Pothan, S.G. *The Syrian Christians of Kerala*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963.
- Putman, Hans. *L'église et l'islam sous Timothee I (780-823): étude sur l'église nestorienne au temps du premiers 'Abbasides avec nouvelle édition et traduction du dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdi*. Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1975.
- Quatremère, Etienne. *Histoire des Mongols de la Perse (Rashid al-Din)*. Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1968.
- Rachewiltz, Igor. *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971.
- Radushev, Evgeni. "The Spread of Islam in the Ottoman Balkans: Revisiting Bulliet's Method on Religious Conversion." *Oriental Archive*, 2010: 363-384.
- Rahmé, Georges. "'Saint Ephrem et le monachisme'." In *Le monachisme syriaque aux premiers siècles de l'Eglise, IIe – début VIIIe siècle. I: Textes français. Patrimoine Syriaque, Actes du Colloque V*, by Georges Rahmé, 117-125. Antélias, Liban: Centre d'études et de recherches Orientales, 1998.
- Ramelli, Ilaria. *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostica: A New Translation of the Unreformed Text from the Syriac*. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015.
- Reeves, John C. *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic. A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Reinink, Gerrit. "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth': the School of Nisibis at the Transition of the 6th-7th century." In *Centres of Learning*, edited by J.W. Drijvers, & A.A. McDonald, 77-89. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Reinink, Gerrit. "Babai the Great's Life of George and the Propagation of Doctrine in the Late Sasanian Empire." In *Portraits of Spiritual Authority: Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium, and the Christian Orient*, by Jan Willem Drijvers, & John W. Watt, 171-194. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- Reinink, Gerrit. "From apocalypse to apologetics: early Syriac reactions to Islam." In *Endzeiten: Eschatologie in der monotheistischen Weltreligionen*, by Brandes W., & F. Schmieder, 75-88. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013.

- Reinink, Gerrit. "Heraclius, The New Alexander. Apocalyptic Prophecies during the Reign of Heraclius." In *The Reign of Heraclius. Crisis and Confrontation (610-641)*, by Gerrit Reinink, & B.H. Stolte, 81-94. Leuven: Peeters, 2002.
- . *Syriac Christianity under Late Sasanian and Early Islamic Rule*. Aldershot: Variorum, 2005.
- Reinink, Gerrit. "Theology and Medicine in Jundishapur: Cultural Changes in the Nestorian School Tradition." In *Learned Antiquity: Scholarship and Society in the Near-East, the Greco-Roman World, and the Early Medieval West*, by Alaisdair A. MacDonald, Michael W. Tworney, & Gerrit J. Reinink, 163-174. Leuven: Peeters, 2003.
- Reinink, Gerrit. "Tradition and the Formation of the Nestorian Identity in Sixth to Seventh Century Iraq." *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, 1-3 (2009): 217-250.
- Renoux, Charles. "Langue et littérature arméniennes." In *Christianismes orientaux. Introduction à l'étude des langues et des littératures*, by M. Albert, 107-166. Paris, 1993.
- Retso, Jan. *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads*. Abingdon, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2013.
- Richter-Bernburg, Lutz. "BOḲTĪŠŪ." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. December 15, 1989.
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/boktis-ancestor-of-a-syro-persian-nestorian-family-of-physicians> (accessed May 3, 2013).
- Rielly, Robin L. *Kamikaze Attacks of World War II: A Complete History of Japanese Suicide Strikes on American Ships, by Aircraft and Other Means*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2010.
- Roberts, John Morris. *A Short History of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Robinson, Chase Frederick. *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Rossabi, Morris. *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988.
- . *The Mongols: A very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- . *Voyager from Xanadu: Rabban Sauma and the First Journey from China to the West*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1992.
- Rubincam, Catherine. "Numbers in Greek Poetry and Historiography: Quantifying Fehling." *The Classical Quarterly*, Nov., 2003: 448-463.
- Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades: The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades*. Vol. III. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

- Russell, James. "Christianity i. in Pres-Islamic Persia: Literary Sources." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. January 4, 2012. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/christianity-i>.
- Ryan, James D. "Christian Wives of Mongol Khans: Tatar Queens and Missionary Expectations in Asia." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* III, no. 8:3 (1998): 411-421.
- Ryckmans, Pierre. "THE CHINESE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PAST." *China Heritage Quarterly*. June 2008.
http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=014_chineseattitude.inc&issue=014.
- Sachau, Eduard. *Syrische Rechtsbücher*. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1907.
- Sahas, Daniel J. *John of Damascus on Islam: The Heresy of the Ishmaelites*. Leiden: Brill, 1972.
- Samir, S.K. "The Prophet Muhammad as Seen by Timothy I and Other Arab Christian Authors." In *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, by David Thomas, 75-106. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Saunders, John Joseph. *The History of the Mongol Conquests*. Philadelphia: J.J. Saunders, 1971.
- Scher, Addai. *Histoire Nestorienne (Chronique de Séert)*. Vol. II.2. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1918.
- . *Mar Barhadbešabba 'Arbaya, (évêque de Halwan), Cause de la fondation des Écoles*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1971.
- . *Theodorus Bar Koni Liber Scholiorum*. Vol. 55 and 69. Paris: CSCO, 1910 and 1912.
- . *Theodorus Bar Koni Liber Scholiorum*. Paris: CSCO, CDXIV, 1912.
- Schindel, Nikolaus. "KAWĀD I." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. May 31, 2013.
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kawad-i-reign> (accessed January 13, 2014).
- Scholz, Bernard Walter, and Barbara Rogers. *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals, Nithard's Histories*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1972.
- Segal, J.B. *Edessa, "The Blessed City"*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.
- Shaban, M.A. *The 'Abbāsīd Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Shahbazi, A. Shapur. "Sasanian Dynasty." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. July 20, 2005.
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sasanian-dynasty>.
- Shahbazi, A. Shapur, and Lutz Richter-Bernburg. "Gondēšāpur." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. December 15, 2002. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gondesapur> (accessed August 6, 2014).

- Shepard, Jonathan. "Spreading the Word: Byzantine Missions." In *Oxford History of Byzantium*, by Cyril Mango, 230-247. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Shorter, Aylward. *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999.
- Siddiqui, Mona. *Christians, Muslims, and Jesus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.
- Simonsohn, Uriel. *A Common Justice*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2011.
- Simonsohn, Uriel. "Conversion, Apostasy, and Penance: The Shifting Identities of Muslim Converts in the Early Islamic Period." In *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond: Papers from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar, University of Oxford, 2009-2010*, by Arietta Papconstantinou, Neil McLynn, & Daniel I. Schwartz, 197-216. Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2015.
- Sims-Williams, Nicholas. "Christianity in Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. December 15, 1991. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/christianity-iii> (accessed August 9, 2014).
- Skemer, Don C. *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006.
- Smith, Kyle Richard. *The Persian Persecution: Martyrdom, Politics, and Religious Identity in Late Ancient Syriac Christianity*. Durham, NC: Duke University, 2011.
- Snow, David. "Collective Identity and Expressive Forms." *CSD Working Papers*. 10 01, 2001. <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2zn1t7bj> (accessed 10 13, 2015).
- Sorabella, Jean. "Monasticism in Western Medieval Europe." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. March 2013. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mona/hd_mona.htm (accessed May 12, 2015).
- Sourdel, D. "Al Fadl b. Marwan." In *The Encyclopædia of Islam, New Edition, Volume II C-G*, 730. Leiden: Brill, 1991.
- Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. New York: Norton & Company, 1990.
- Staats, Reinhart. "Messalianerforschung und Ostkirchenkunde." In *Makarios-Symposium über das Böse: Vorträge der Finnisch-Deutschen Theologentagung in Goslar 1980. Göttinger Orientforschungen: Reihe 1, Syriaca 24*, by Werner Strothmann, 47-71. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983.
- Starr, S. Frederick. *Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia's Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

- Steele, Valerie, and John S. Major. *China Chic: East Meets West*. Singapore: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Stepanians, Marietta. "The Encounter of Zoroastrianism with Islam." *Philosophy East and West* 52, no. 2 (2002): 159-172.
- Stussi, Marcel. *Models of Religious Freedom: Switzerland, The United States, and Syria by Analytical, Methodological, and Eclectic Representation*. Zurich: Lit Verlage, 2012.
- Suermann, Harald. "Le monachisme, la politique et les querelles théologiques du cinquième au septième siècle." In *Le monachisme syriaque aux premiers siècles de l'Eglise, IIe – debut VIIe siècle. I: Textes français. Patrimoine Syriaque, Actes du Colloque V*, 259-274. Antélias, Liban: Centre d'études et de Recherches Orientales, 1998.
- Swanson, M. "Abū Nūḥ al-Anbārī." In *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, by David: Roggema, Barbara Thomas, 397-400. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Takahashi, Hidemi. *Barhebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005.
- Talia, Shawqi. "From Edessa to Urmia: Christianity in Iran." *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies* 7/2 (Autumn/Winter 2005): 37-68.
- Tamcke, Martin. "Abraham of Kashkar: A Biographical Sketch." *The Harp*, no. 19 (2006): 109-116.
- Tan, Sor-hoon. *Challenging Citizenship: Group Membership and Cultural Identity in a Global Age*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.
- Tang, Li. *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christianity in China and its Literature in Chinese*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002.
- Tang, Li. "Medieval Sources on the Naiman Christians and on their Prince Kuchlugh Khan." In *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters 2. Auflage: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, by Dietmar W. Winkler, & Li Tang, 257-266. Salzburg, Austria: Pro Oriente, 2009.
- Tang, Li. "Sorkaktani Beki: A Prominent Nestorian Woman at the Mongol Court." In *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia*, by Roman Malek, & Peter L. Hofrichter, 349-355. Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006.
- Tang, Li. "Turkic Christians in Central Asia and China (5th–14th Centuries)." In *Studies in Turkic Philology: Festschrift in Honour of the 80th Birthday of Professor Geng Shimin*, by Dingjing Zhang, & Abdurashid Yakup, vii-xx. Beijing: Minzu University Press, 2009.

- Taylor, David. "The Syriac Tradition." In *The First Christian Theologians*, by G.R. Evans, 201-224. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.
- Taylor, G. "The Physicians of Jundishapur." *e-Sasanika*, 2010: 1-16.
- Teule, Herman G.B. "Thomas of Margā." In *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. Volume 1 (600–900)*, by David Richard Thomas, & Barbara Hjärdís Roggema, 688-690. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009.
- Thomas, David. *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Thomas, David; Roggema, Barbara. *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Biographical History*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Tillman, Hoyt C., and Stephen H. West. *China Under Jurchen Rule: Essays on Chin Intellectual and Cultural History*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995.
- Tritton, A.S. *Caliphs and their non-Muslim Subjects*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Trzcionka, Silke. *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth-Century Syria*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Turnbull, Stephen. *Genghis Khan & the Mongol Conquests 1190-1400*. New York: Osprey Publishing, 2003.
- . *The Mongol Invasions of Japan: 1274 and 1281*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.
- UNHCR. *Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter Agency Information Portal*. January 31, 2015. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/region.php?country=103&id=65> (accessed February 16, 2015).
- United Nations Publications. *Technical Reference Manual for the Standardization of Geographical Names*. New York: United Nations, 2007.
- Van Mechelson, Johan. "Yuan." In *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 1: 638-1800*, by Nicolas Standaert, 43-111. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- van Rompay, Lucas. "Impetuous Martyrs? The situation of the Persian Christians in the last years of Yazdgard I (419-420)." In *Martyrium in Multidisciplinary Perspective: Memorial Louis Reekmans*, by Mathijs Lamberigts, & Peter van Deun, 363-375. Leuven: University Press, 1995.
- Vaschalde, Arthur. *Babai Magni Liber de Unione*. Vols. 79-80. Leuven: CSCO, 1915.

- Vasiliev, Alexander A. *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324–1453*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952.
- Vööbus, Arthur. *History of the School of Nisibis*. Vol. 266. Leuven: CSCO, 1965.
- Vosté, Jacques Marie. "Memra en l'honneur de Iahb-allaha III († 1317)." *Le Muséon*, no. 42 (1929): 168-176.
- Waardenburg, Jacques. *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Waines, David. *The History of al-Tabari (Ta'rikh al-rusul w'al-muluk)*. Translated by David Waines. Vols. 34, 36. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992.
- Walker, A. *The Emperor and the World: Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Walker, Joel. *A Saint and his Biographer in Late Antique Iraq: The History of St George of Izla (d. 614) by Babai the Great*. Vol. Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 9, in *Writing 'True Stories': Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East.*, by Arietta Papaconstantinou, Muriél Debié, & Hugh N. Kennedy, 31-41. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010.
- Walker, Joel. "From Nisibis to Xi'an: The Church of the East in Late Antique Eurasia." In *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, by Scott Johnson, 994-1052. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- . *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
- Walker, Paul. *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources*. London: Tauris, 2002.
- . *The Caliph of Cairo: Al-Hakim Bi-Amr Allah, 996-1021*. Cairo: American University of Cairo, 2012.
- Walls, Andrew. *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.
- . *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of the Faith*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.
- Watt, W. Montgomery; Cachia, Pierre. *A History of Islamic Spain*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965.

- Weatherford, Jack. *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2004.
- Weinreich, P, and W. Saunderson, . *Analysing Identity: Cross-Cultural, Societal and Clinical Contexts*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Weltecke, Dorothea. "Michael the Syrian and Syriac Orthodox Identity." *Church History and Religious Culture*, no. 89 (2009): 115-125.
- Wessels, Cornelius. *Early Jesuit Travelers in Central Asia: 1603-1721*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992.
- Whetten, David A., and Alison Mackey. "A Social Actor Conception of Organizational Identity and Its Implications for the Study of Organizational Reputation." *Business and Society* 41, no. 4 (2002): 393-414.
- Whittow, Mark. *The Making of Byzantium, 600-1025*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996.
- Widengren, Geo. *Status of the Jews in the Sassanian Empire*. Leiden: Brill, 1961.
- Wigram, William. *An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004.
- Wijzen, Frans, and Robert Schreiter, . *Global Christianity: Contesting Claims*. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2007.
- Wilken, Robert. *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Wilmshurst, David. *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East*. Bishop's Stortford, UK: East & West Publishing Ltd , 2011.
- Winkler, Dietmar W. *Ostsyrisches Christentum*. Munster: Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte, 2003.
- Wood, Philip. *'We Have No King But Christ': Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c. 400–585)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- . *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Wright, William. *A Short History of Syriac Literature*. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894.
- Wu, Xiaoxin. *Christianity in China: A Scholar's Guide to Resources in the Libraries and Archives of the United States*. San Francisco: The Ricci Institute, 2009.

Xu Xin. *The Jews of Kaifeng, China: History, Culture, and Religion*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2003.

Yin, Gang. "Between Disintegration and Expansion: A Comparative Retrospection of the Kaifeng Jewish and Muslim Communities." In *Youtai - Presence and Perception of Jews and Judaism in China*, by Peter Kupfer, 185-200. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008.

Young, W.G. *Patriarch, Shah, and Caliph*. Rawalpindi, India: Christian Study Center, 1974.

Yule, Henry. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. 4 vols. London: Hakluyt Society, 1913-1916.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Religion and Politics Under the Early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.