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ANGELIC AND EARTHLY PRIESTHOODS:

Bar Hebraeus's *Candelabra V* and *VI* and West Syriac Liturgical Commentary

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ABSTRACT

What is the relationship between the celestial and earthly churches? This article analyzes Bar Hebraeus's ranking of angels and his analysis of the role of the priesthood in his Candelabra V *and* Candelabra VI. *It is an exploration of his use of sacerdotal imagery in the angelic hierarchy, as well as an analysis of the sources that shape his understanding of the priesthood. Bar Hebraeus sees the ranks of angels as priests organized in three celestial churches, continuous with the human church. This interpretation diverges from Dionysius but developed through the West Syriac commentary tradition and is*

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intimately interlinked with sacramental theology. This article traces the sources Bar Hebraeus draws on to interpret the Dionysian hierarchy and situates him within the West Syriac commentary tradition, showing how he innovates to address the political turmoil of his day through an expansive view of the Church.

INTRODUCTION

In *Beyond Smells and Bells,* Mark Galli, an editor at *Christianity Today*, seeks to explain the appeal and wonder of the liturgy for modern Americans. He writes, "The liturgy lives out a story in a story-deprived world. Liturgy is not a once-upon-a-time story we merely watch others perform. We are the characters in this story, actors in the divine drama whose opening and closing has been written by Jesus Christ himself."[2] He attempts to explain, for as broad an audience as possible, the church calendar, the sacraments, and the ecclesiology that come together in the liturgical life of the Church. In this way, he joins the company of many Christian writers before him, trying to elucidate the peculiarities of the church's practice.

In much greater detail, the 13th-century Syriac Orthodox author Bar Hebraeus attempts the same task.[3] He addresses

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[2] Mark Galli, *Beyond Smells and Bells: The Wonder and Power of Christian Liturgy* (Brewster, Mass: Paraclete Press, 2008), 13.

[3] In this paper, I use two works by Bar Hebraeus both from his *Candelabra of the Sanctuary.* These are the fifth base, ܡܢܪܐ ܕܩܕܫܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܠ ܟܠ ܥܡܘܡܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܬܚܙܝܘ ܡܢܗ ܥܡܘܡܐ and the sixth, ܟܬܒܐ ܕܡܢܪܐ ܕܩܕܫܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ. The *Candelabra of the Sanctuaries* (ܡܢܪܐ ܕܩܕܫܐ), called Bar Hebraeus's "Summa" by Antoine Torbey, is a twelve-volume work covering all manner of theology. The Candelabra was written in the late 1260s to the early 1270s, after Bar Hebraeus's elevation to the Maphrianate. It was originally written in Syriac, an ecclesial language, and later translated into Arabic, already the common tongue of Syriac Christians. Antoine Torbey, "Introduction," in *Le Candélabre Du*

questions like "Why there is one time in the year on which [Myron] is consecrated, and this is the Thursday of Mysteries"[4] and "How many and which names is this consecration i.e. baptism called?"[5] as well as "Given that the bread is not fleshly, and the wine is not bloody, how are they called the Body and

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Sanctuaire de Grégoire Aboulfaradj Dit Barhebraeus Cinquième Base: Des Anges, ed. François Graffin, Patrologia Orientalis (Paris: Fermin-Didot, 1963), 30:607; Hidemi Takahashi, "Simeon Of Qal'a Rumaita, Patriarch Philoxenus Nemrod and Bar 'Ebroyo," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 4, no. 1 (January 2010): n. 45, https://doi.org/10.31826/9781463214098-004. I use the edition by Antoine Torbey. The second work is Bar Hebraeus's sixth base, and I use the German edition: Radbert Kohlhaas, *Jakobitische Sakramententheologie Im 13. Jahrhundert : Der Liturgiekommentar Des Gregorius Barhebraeus*, Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen Und Forschungen 36 (Münster, Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1959). Neither base has been translated into English. The fifth base has been translated twice, first into French (prepared also by Torbey) and second into Italian: Bar Hebraeus, *Le Candélabre Du Sanctuaire de Grégoire Aboulfaradj Dit Barhebraeus Cinquième Base: Des Anges*, ed. Antoine Torbey and François Graffin, vol. 188, Patrologia Orientalis (Paris: Fermin-Didot, 1963); Vittorio Berti, "L'angelologia siriaca: Gregorio Abu-l-Farag Bar Ebraya, Della conoscenza delle essenze celesti, che sono gli angeli, nei loro differenti cori," in *Angeli: ebraismo, cristianesimo, islam*, ed. Giorgio Agamben and Emanuele Coccia, La quarta prosa (Vicenza: Pozza, 2009), 1403–51. All of my translations are made from Torbey's Syriac edition, though I would not recommend his French translation (it has some fatal flaws in an attempt to harmonize with the Latin Dionysian tradition, thereby obscuring the Syriac) – the Italian translation is superior. The sixth base has been translated to German by Kohlhaas.

[4] Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* VI.2.2.2 ܡܬܡܐ ܕܥܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܒܗ ܡܬܩܕܫ ܡܪܝܘܢ ܘܗܠܝܢ ܗܘ ܝܘܡܐ ܕܡܣܬܪܝܐ This refers to the older orthodox practice, where chrism was originally consecrated on Holy Thursday each year in a six-to-seven-hour ceremony. See: Baby Varghese, "Studies in the West Syrian Liturgy of the Consecration of Holy Myron," *The Harp* 6 (1993): 72–73. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[5] *Candelabra* VI.2.3.2 ܡܢܘ ܫܡܗ ܕܡܬܩܪܐ ܗܢܐ ܕܡܥܡܕܐ ܕܡܫܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܒܣܪܐ ܘܕܕܡܐ ܕܠܐ ܒܕܡܐ ,ܗܠܝܢ

Blood?"[6] He answers questions about practice, like "whether the [communion] bread should be leavened or unleavened? And the wine mixed or not?"[7] On theology, he considers "why, if [those who believe in the Lord] are not experiencing death, that is to say torment, why is there a need for prayer for believers?"[8] However, before he can proceed to specific questions about the liturgy, he needs to address the people who conduct the liturgy and sacraments: priests and deacons. It is to the priesthood that this paper turns.

I consider the ecclesiology presented in his *Candelabra of the Sanctuary*, bases V and VI, to be on the celestial and earthly priesthoods, respectively. I explore how he (and the wider West Syriac tradition) expands on Dionysian angelology and ecclesiology to create a strongly sacerdotal reading of Dionysius and a sense of continuity between heaven and earth. In Christianity, the earthly priesthood has frequently mirrored the heavenly worship of angels.[9] Further, there is a strong mystagogic component to Eastern Christian liturgies, beyond just the West Syriac tradition.[10] However, as we will see in Bar

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[6] *Candelabra* VI.2.4.2 ܡܢܐ ܕܢܗܘܢ ܠܗ ܡܫܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܢܗܘܢ ܠܗ ܡܫܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܢܗܘܢ ܠܗ ܡܫܬܐ

[7] *Candelabra* VI.2.4.5 ܡܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܢܗܘܢ ܠܗ ܡܫܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܢܗܘܢ ܠܗ ܡܫܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܢܗܘܢ ܠܗ ܡܫܬܐ

[8] *Candelabra* VI.2.5.4 ܡܢܐ ܕܢܗܘܢ ܠܗ ܡܫܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܢܗܘܢ ܠܗ ܡܫܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܡܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܢܗܘܢ ܠܗ ܡܫܬܐ

[9] *Candelabra* VI.2.2.2 he potentially goes back to Second Temple Judaism. For one analysis, see: Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London ; New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 73–145. For analysis and development of the Syriac liturgy in particular, see: Baby Varghese, *The Early History of the Syriac Liturgy: Growth, Adaptation and Inculturation*, Göttinger Orientforschungen, Band 62 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2021).

[10] Stefanos Alexopoulos and Maxwell E. Johnson, *Introduction to Eastern Christian Liturgies*, Alcuin Club Collection, no. 96 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press Academic, 2022), xxx–xxxi, 130–35; Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, Liturgy, Worship and Society (Burlington, VT:

Hebraeus, the West Syriac tradition expanded on these two elements present in all Eastern Christian liturgical thought, and the fusion of liturgical mystery and hierarchy that originated with Dionysius himself.[11] Bar Hebraeus presents a unique framing and synthesis of Dionysian ideas, bringing them to bear on his understanding of the liturgy.

The priesthood and the rites of the Church are hardly self-explanatory, and Bar Hebraeus sets out to shed light on how the church's hierarchy sheds light on believers.

PART I: BAR HEBRAEUS, DIONYSIUS, AND WEST SYRIAC LITURGICAL COMMENTARIES

In this section, I introduce Bar Hebraeus and Dionysius's reception in Syriac, as well as the genres of the liturgical commentary. The 13th-century Syriac Orthodox Maphrian Grigorios II Abu ʿl-Faraj bar Ahron (ܓܪܝܓܘܪܝܘܣ ܐܒܘ ܥܠܦܪܓܝ ܒܪ ܐܗܪܘܢ), known to us as Bar Hebraeus, was writing against the backdrop of extremely turbulent times and a renaissance of Syriac learning, thanks to the wider acceptance of the Islamic genre and subjects.[12] While sometimes accused of either a lack of

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Ashgate, 2004), 16–29; Emmanuel Hatzidakis, *The Heavenly Banquet: Understanding the Divine Liturgy* (Clearwater, FL: Orthodox Witness, 2008), 46–50, 341–44.

[11] Emiliano Fiori, "Mystique et Liturgie Entre Denys l'Aréopagite et Le Livre de Hiérothée : Aux Origines de La Mystagogie Syro-Occidentale," in *Les Mystiques Syriaques*, ed. A. Desreumaux, Études Syriaques 8 (Paris: Geuthner, 2011), 27–44.

[12] Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur, mit Ausschluss der christlich-palästinensischen Texte* (Bonn, Weber, 1922), 285–95; Herman G. B. Teule, "Renaissance, Syriac," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage: Electronic Edition* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011), https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Renaissance-Syriac; Hidemi Takahashi, "Bar ʿEbroyo, Grigorios," *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage: Electronic Edition*, Beth Mardutho, The Syriac Institute/Gorgias Press, 2011, https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Bar-Ebroyo-Grigorios.

originality or a lack of depth, no one can deny the breadth of his work.[13] Of his 40 surviving treatises, we have works on theology, philosophy, psychology, medicine, literature, ethics, canon, law, astronomy, history, poetry, linguistics, exegesis, and mathematics. His genius lay in how he integrated and synthesized ideas from a wide range of subjects and sources into coherent treatises. Of particular interest to me are two treatises in his "systematic" theology, *The Candelabra of the Sanctuary,* which together summarize his perspective on the priesthood. These are the fifth and sixth bases (treatises): "Concerning the knowledge of Celestial Essences, which are Angels, in the diversity of their Ranks" and "On the Earthly Priesthood."[14] Dionysius is his most significant named source, though he draws on a long tradition of both Dionysian and liturgical interpretations to arrive at his particular synthesis.[15]

Dionysius's Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies

There is significant debate about what, if anything, can be known about the authorship of the Dionysian corpus, which first appeared in Greek in the mid-sixth century.[16] However,

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[13] E.g. in Baumstark's classic *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur,* Baumstark compares Bar Hebraeus to Albert the Great, saying despite the great breath of Bar Hebraeus's work "allerdings ermöglichte naturgemäß nur eine mehr in die Breite als in die Tiefe gehende, nicht selten den Charakter sklavischer Anhängigkeit oder bloßer Übersetzertätigkeit annehmende Arbeitsweise dieses umfänglich gewaltige Lebenswerk, zu dem die Bedeutungslosigkeit einiger jüngerer jakobitischer Zeitgenossen eine geradezu klägliche Folie bildet". Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur, mit Ausschluss der christlich-palästinensischen Texte*, 313.

[14] Syriac Titles : The fifth, ܡܬܟܬܒܐ ܕܥܠܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܕܡܠܐܟܐ ܕܫܘܢܝܗܘܢ ܕܫܘܚܠܦܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ and the sixth, ܡܬܟܬܒܐ ܕܥܠ ܕܟܗܢܘܬܐ ܕܐܪܥܐ.

[15] "Significant" here in the sense that Dionysius is the source he claims influences him the most.

[16] Beate Regina Suchla, *Dionysius Areopagita: Leben, Werk, Wirkung* (Freiburg: Herder, 2008), 15–25; Sarah Coakley, "Introduction -- Re-

Pseudo-Dionysius (hereafter: Dionysius) was an influence on West Syriac understandings of the liturgy and, by extension, of the Church. Dionysius was a dominating voice on angelic and liturgical matters.[17] Anonymous commentaries[18] and the works of the tradition's most esteemed commentators, such as Jacob of Edessa (d. 708),[19] George Bishop of the Arabs (d. 724),[20] John

Thinking Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Re-Thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, ed. Charles M. Stang, Directions in Modern Theology (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 1–10; Rosemary A. Arthur, *Pseudo-Dionysius as Polemicist: The Development and Purpose of the Angelic Hierarchy in Sixth Century Syria*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008); Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Odyssey of Dionysian Spirituality," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 11–24.

[17] This was also true of the Greek Byzantine world. See: Germanus and Paul Meyendorff, *On the Divine Liturgy* (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 23–48; Andrew Louth, "The Reception of Dionysius in the Byzantine World: Maximus to Palamas," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 586–99; Suchla, *Dionysius Areopagita*, 64–73.

[18] Sebastian Brock, "An Early Syriac Commentary on the Liturgy," in *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy*, Variorum Collected Studies Series CS863 (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Variorum, 2006), 387–403.

[19] Gabriel Aydin and Ephrem Aboud Ishac, "Jacob of Edessa's Liturgical Commentary to George the Stylite of Serugh", *The Syriac Orthodox Patriarchal Journal* 60 (2022), 67–89.

[20] Of George, Heinz writes "Wie schoon die Liturgieerklarung von Georg…zeigt, liess sich die syrischen Kommentatoren stark von Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita beinflussen. Das gilt auch fur das Komentarwerk von Mose bar Kepha." Andreas Heinz, *Die Eucharistiefeier in Der Deutung Syrischer Liturgieerklärer: Die Liturgiekommentare von Georg Dem Araberbischof* ([*d.*] *724*)*, Mose Bar Kepha* ([*d.*] *903*)*, Dionysius Bar Ṣalibi* ([*d.*] *1171*), Sophia 33 (Trier: Paulinus, 2000), 40.

Dara (d. 860),[21] Moshe bar Kepha (d. 903),[22] and Dionysius bar Ṣalibi (d. 1171),[23] show Dionysian influence and quote from "the great Dionysius" in their efforts to explicate the liturgy.

Dionysius's project is to demonstrate what has been "revealed to us in a symbolic and uplifting fashion."[24] He applies this heavily symbolic reading both to scriptural accounts of angels and to the contemplation of the liturgy. He wants to understand the significations of angelic names, as well as lay out how to understand imagery in Scripture through unlike-likenesses: how angels are both like and unlike the images we see in Scripture.[25] Dionysius also applies this symbolic reading to the elements of the liturgy, and the institution of both the legal priesthood and "our" hierarchy, in contrast to the celestial one:

> Now the Word of God asserts that our hierarchy represents a more perfect imitation in that it is a fulfillment and completion of that [legal] hierarchy. It is both celestial and of the Law for it occupies a place halfway between two opposites. With the one it shares the contemplations of understanding; with the other it has in common the use of varied symbolism derived from the realm of perception, symbolism, by means of which there is sacred uplifting to the divine.[26]

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[21] John Dara, *The Commentary of John of Dara on the Eucharist*, trans. Baby Varghese, Moran Etho 12 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011).

[22] Moses bar Kepha's *Commentary on the Eucharist,* see Heinz, *Die Eucharistiefeier in Der Deutung Syrischer Liturgieerklärer*, 54.

[23] Dionysius bar Ṣalibi, *Expositio liturgiae* IV. See: Jérôme Labourt Dionysius bar Ṣalībī, *Expositio liturgiae* (E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1903), http://archive.org/details/expositioliturgoolabogoog.

[24] Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* 1.2, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[25] *Celestial Hierarchy* 15.

[26] Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* V.1.2, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

As such, the ecclesiastical hierarchy is the more perfect successor of the legal hierarchy because it shares more with the celestial hierarchy, according to Dionysius. And that which is farther from God is less perfect: "The final ranks lack the full and complete power of the more senior ones. But they do have a partial, proportionate share in that power and they do so as part of that one, harmonious, intertwined communion of all."[27] As such, even human hierarchs (or high priests) can be called angels, because "it is characteristic of him that like the angels he is, to the extent of which he is capable, a messenger and that he is raised up to imitate, so far as a man may, the angelic power to bring revelation." [28]

There is a "triple power connected with the holy work of the sacraments"[29] Dionysius argues that

> From scripture it has been shown that the sacred divine birth is a purification and an illuminating enlightenment, that the sacraments of the synaxis and of the Myron ointment provide a perfecting knowledge and understanding of the divine workings and that it is through this that there is effected both the unifying uplifting toward the divine and the most blessed communion with it.[30]

The triad of purification, illumination, and perfection is key to Dionysian ascent.[31] From there, Dionysius endeavors to show how the three clerical ranks are three harmonious orders, "the one which purifies, the one which illuminates, and the one

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[27] CH 12.2, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[28] CH 12.2, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[29] Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* V.1.3, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[30] *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* V.1.3, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[31] Though these are not exclusively Dionysian – see Paul Rorem, "Negative Theologies and the Cross," *The Harvard Theological Review* 101, no. 3/4 (2008): 451–64.

which brings about perfection."[32] As such, the place of the priesthood is that of the hierarchy on earth, which uses the perceptible symbols of the liturgy to uplift congregants to the extent that is possible for humans. In this, the ecclesiastical hierarchy has the same function as the celestial hierarchy, and indeed all hierarchies.

Dionysius was extremely influential in Syriac, but translation and redaction led to a few important differences between the Greek and Syriac Dionysii.[33]

Syriac Dionysius

This earliest Syriac reception of Dionysius takes the form of a late sixth/early seventh-century translation by Sergius of Reshayna, accompanied by his introduction. The introduction circulated also with a later revision of the translation by Phocas in 684/686 CE. Notably, in both of these translations, the Greek Celestial Hierarchy is rendered as the Syriac *Angelic High Priesthood*.[34] Bar Hebraeus also refers not to the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* but to the *Priesthood which is On Earth.*[35] In many ways, this is significantly neater than the Greek tradition: "Ecclesiastical" is mentioned only once in the body of the Dionysian corpus, and even then it does not refer to the

[32] Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* V.1.3, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[33] Scholarly consensus today is that Dionysius probably comes from a Syrian (though not necessarily Syriac) milieu, see for example Arthur, *Pseudo-Dionysius as Polemicist*. Sebastian Brock wonders if Dionysius could be a reader of Ephrem because of their shared interest in the theology of names, see Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem*, Cistercian Studies Series 124 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 147.

[34] Περὶ Τῆς Οὐρανιας Ἱεραρχιας as ܥܠܝܬܐ ܥܠܝܡܬܐ ܕܟܗܢܘܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܕܠܐ.

[35] Περὶ τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱεραρχίας as ܥܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܕܬܐ ܕܟܗܢܘܬܐ ܕܠܥܠܡ.

hierarchy itself.[36] Normally, Dionysius simply says "our hierarchy".[37]

Later commentators, particularly John Dara, expand on this heightened emphasis on priests, a point that Bar Hebraeus repeats: angels are organized in churches, priestly imagery in the Old Testament is read to understand the angelic hierarchy, and the function of each rank is understood in Aristotelian terms.[38] Consider John Dara's explanation:

> The heavenly high priesthood is divided into three churches, and every church has three ranks, and every rank has three orders, that is, a highest, a lowest, and a middle. And each order is divided into many hypostases, and every hypostasis has three things- essence and power and operation. And essence is what is inside of each one of them, and power is the ability that each one of them possess, and its capacity for receiving the rays, and for moving to those things that have been given to them by God. Likewise, the operation that is within each is its own proper thing that it performs rightly when it receives the gifts and rays and enlightenments from God.[39]

This is the essential nature of all the entities in the hierarchy, which is imaged by churches and understood in terms of their

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[36] Paul Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, Studies and Texts 71 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 28–31.

[37] Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, n. 6.

[38] Elizabeth Anderson, "The Interpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius in the Works of John of Dara" (PhD diss, Yale University, 2016).

[39] *Commentary on the Angelic High Priesthood* 10, 11v-12r, 26 of Anderson's revised translation. That is "and each order is divided into many hypostases, and every hypostasis [ܩܢܘܡܐ] has three things- essence [ܩܢܘܡܐ] and power [ܚܝܠܐ] and operation [ܦܥܠܐ]".

operations. As such, the Angelic high priesthood of the Syriac Dionysius was expanded and expounded overtime, including in the work of Bar Hebraeus. This leads to a stronger connection between priestly imagery in the Old Testament and Syriac angelology: while Dionysius mentions that "the priestly vestment signifies the capacity to guide spiritually to divine and mysterious sights," both John Dara and Bar Hebraeus consider the nitty-gritty of priestly adornment and read even the order of the stones on the priest's breastplate as signifying the angelic hierarchy.[40]

Other differences between the Greek and Syriac versions have been identified, in part because of the interests of the first translator, Sergius of Reshayna.[41] Sergius's translation circulated with an introduction from his "Discourse on the Spiritual Life."[42] In his introduction, Sergius presents the stages

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[40] John of Dara, *Commentary on the Angelic High Priesthood 6*; Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* V II.1.2. There is a long history of Syriac reflection on priestly clothing, since Ephrem uses clothing imagery to tell salvation history, see Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 85–98. Other Christian traditions also interpret the stones, for example as representing the martyrs in the Coptic Ps.-Sevarian of Gabala's *Encomium on the Twelve Apostles* 31 (CPG 4281).

[41] Emiliano Fiori, "Un Intellectuel Alexandrin En Mésopotamie. Essai d'une Interprétation d'ensemble de l'œuvre de Sergius de Rēšʿaynā," in *De l'Antiquité Tardive Au Moyen Âge Études de Logique Aristotélicienne et de Philosophie Grecque, Syriaque, Arabe et Latine Offertes à Henri Hugonnard-Roche*, ed. Martini Bonadeo and E. Coda (Paris: J Vrin, 2014), 59–90; Emiliano Fiori, "Mélange Eschatologique et 'Condition Spirituelle' de l'intellect Dans Le Corpus Dionysiacum Syriaque: Un Cas Remarquable de Divergence Entre Le Corpus Dionysien Grec et Sa Traduction Par Serge de Rešʿaynā," *Parole de l'Orient* 35 (2010): 261–76.

[42] Fiori, "Un Intellectuel Alexandrin En Mésopotamie. Essai d'une Interprétation d'ensemble de l'œuvre de Sergius de Rēšʿaynā," 77–78. "Discourse on the Spiritual Life" is available in Sherwood's edition, with French translation or in Fiori's more complete Italian translation (mostly based on Sherwood's edition): P Sherwood, "Mîmro de Serge de Reayna Sur La Vie Spirituelle," *L'Orient Syrien* 5,6 (1961 1960): 433–59; 95–

of spiritual life according to Evagrius (whom he does not name).[43] The image Sergius gives us is of the soul's original oneness which exists as pure mind and contemplates God. It falls from the state of pure mind, and, as Perczel phrases it "acquires the spirited and desiderative faculties of the soul, while its rational faculty is also darkened."[44] The healing of the soul must come both for the lower faculties and the high faculties. The lower faculties are purified by following commandments, but the mind is healed and brought back to its original state through contemplations.

The rational beings (i.e., angels) make divine contemplation possible for humans, and a part of the healing of the rational faculties. This is how Sergius understands the Dionysian Corpus's aim, and this is how he introduces and orders it for his audience and the subsequent Syriac tradition.[45] He establishes a connection between *the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and ascetic and sacramental life. The "lost" *Symbolic Theology* is connected

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115, 121–56; Sergius of Reshayna, *Trattato sulla vita spirituale*, trans. Emiliano Fiori (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2015).

[43] Fiori resists the use of "Origenist", which Perczel uses, for Sergius, cautioning against using the term because the "catégorie très vague d' 'origénisme' dont se servirent certains écrivains après 553 et encore beaucoup de savants aujourd'hui, qui a été utilisée pour condamner ou simplement indiquer des tendances intellectuelles très diverses. " Here is a particular set of tendencies he would label as Origenism, such as those "anathématismes contenus dans les canons de 553". Fiori, "Un Intellectuel Alexandrin En Mésopotamie. Essai d'une Interprétation d'ensemble de l'œuvre de Sergius de Rēšʿaynā," 65. Perczel also proposes an "Origenist" reading of the entire Syriac Dionysian corpus which I did not find particularly convincing (and neither did Fiori). For an alternate reading, see: Emiliano Fiori, "Dionigi l'Areopagita e l'origenismo siriaco. Edizione critica e studio storico-dottrinale del trattato sui Nomi divini nella versione di Sergio di Res'ayna" (PhD Dissertation, Università di Bologna, 2010), 47–76, 426–68.

[44] Perczel, "The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius," 560.

[45] Perczel, 561.

to natural science and the Celestial Hierarchy is a second natural science, contemplation of the Intelligibles. Then, both the "lost" *Theological Outlines* and *The Divine Names* concern "substantial knowledge."[46]

Bar Hebraeus is receiving Dionysius as introduced by Sergius, with a particular view of contemplation. More importantly, though, he is receiving a tradition in which the *Celestial Hierarchy* is understood particularly as an angelic priesthood, and in which priestly imagery is the key to understanding Dionysius. In summary, the Syriac Dionysius links angelic and earthly hierarchies as priesthoods and connects contemplation with the rational faculties. The Syriac tradition uses Aristotelian terms to understand how hierarchies function.

West Syriac Liturgical Commentary

As influential as Dionysius was on Bar Hebraeus, he is not Bar Hebraeus's only source. There was a rich tradition of commentaries on the liturgy, which employed typological and allegorical methods by the fourth century, and figures like Ephrem, Aphrahat, Jacob of Serugh, and Isaac of Antioch mobilized typology to comment on the mystery of the liturgy.[47] Systematic allegory used to explain doctrinal issues and to link liturgical events to the life of Christ first appears in Theodore of Mopsuestia, who is important and almost as a pole, pulling

[46] It is unlikely that the Symbolic Theology ever existed, it seems to have been created lost. See: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), n. 89.

[47] Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 17. The addition of Isaac of Antioch to this list was suggested to me by Ephrem Ishac, citing the fascinating "The Memra on the Parrot" which comments on the Trisagion. See: Michel van Esbroeck, "The Memra on the Parrot by Isaac of Antioch," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 47, no. 2 (1996): 464–76.

liturgical understanding towards details, vis-à-vis the decontextualized reading of Dionysius.[48] And while, as I have said, Dionysius influences and is quoted by Syriac liturgical commentators, most commentators (with the exception of John Dara) are not Dionysian, in the sense that they follow Theodore of Mopsuestia's more Antiochian mystagogical tradition grounded in the details of Christ's life.[49] John Dara is the exception here, and while he shows more interest in the details (he comments on architecture, liturgical texts, and liturgical implements), he applies the hermeneutical scheme that appears in Dionysius more consistently than any author before (or after) him.[50]

Bar Hebraeus's treatise considers, in depth, many rites at once. While other authors have done this, such as George Bishop of the Arabs in his *Exposition of the Mysteries of the Church,*[51] it is more common for authors to consider one sacrament at a time.[52] Further, while other authors reflect on the role of priests within a Dionysian framework in their liturgical commentaries, Bar Hebraeus is unique in how he

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[48] Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 18–19.

[49] Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 16–34. For Theodore, catechesis is the process whereby Christians become citizens of heaven, see Daniel L. Schwartz, *Paideia and Cult: Christian Initiation in Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington DC.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2013), 37–47, https://chs.harvard.edu/book/schwartz-daniel-l-paideia-and-cult-christian-initiation-in-theodore-of-mopsuestia/.

[50] Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology*, 29–34; John Dara, *The Commentary of John of Dara on the Eucharist*.

[51] George Bishop of the Arabs, *An Exposition of the Mysteries of the Church*

[52] Cf. George Bishop of the Arabs's *Memra* on the Consecration of Myron; John Dara's *Commentary on the Eucharist*; Moses Bar Kepha's Commentary on the Eucharist in *The Explanation of the Mysteries of the Oblation*; Dionysius bar Salibi's commentaries on the Myron and Baptism.

brings the angelic reality to bear on his liturgical interpretation.[53]

It is not that angels had no place in the liturgy. In fact, angels frequently attend and participate in terrestrial liturgies across the eastern Christian world.[54] There are moments when they appear specifically in the liturgy, such as the Cherubic hymn in the Greek Divine Liturgy or the Syriac Liturgy of St. James.[55] However, they are not just the subject of prayers, but also active participants in the proceedings. The 14th century Byzantine Nicholas Cabasilas, writes, for example, in his *On the Divine Liturgy* that even the Latins pray that the offerings "may be carried to the altar…for this, they have need of the hand of an angel, in the sense in which the great Dionysius speaks when he says that the first hierarchy, that of the angels, comes to the aid of the second and human hierarchy."[56] Contemporary 14th-century iconographic developments showed Christ presiding over a heavenly liturgy, replete with angelic ministers dressed in priestly garb.[57] However, despite this common backdrop of liturgy and angels in the eastern Christian world, Bar Hebraeus has a unique synthesis of West Syriac angelology, the Syriac reception of Dionysius, and his liturgical commentary tradition.

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[53] Cf. the introductory part of George Bishop of the Arab's *Exposition of the Mysteries of the Church,* or Dionysius bar Salibi *On Baptism* 9.2

[54] For the Coptic tradition, see: Ibrahim Saweros, "Angels in Coptic Tradition," *Shedet* 6, no. 6 (December 2019): 76–77, https://doi.org/10.21608/shedet.006.05.

[55] Hatzidakis, *The Heavenly Banquet*, 22, 163–65.

[56] Nicolaus Cabasilas, *On the Divine Liturgy* II.30.7, trans. Hussey and McNulty. It is not clear to which Dionysian passage Nicholas is referring – perhaps *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* V:501?

[57] Hans-Joachim Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy: Symbolic Structure and Faith Expression*, 1st ed, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Pub. Co, 1986), 111–14; Vasileios Marinis, "On Earth as It Is in Heaven? Reinterpreting the Heavenly Liturgy in Byzantine Art," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 114, no. 1 (February 2021): 255–68, https://doi.org/10.1515/bz-2021-9012.

With all these elements, he draws a fascinating picture of the role of the priest in the universe.

PART II: CANDELABRA V AND VI

Angelic Priests in Bar Hebraeus

One of Bar Hebraeus's most important moves, following John Dara, is to conceptualize the angels as organized into heavenly churches, instead of just Dionysius the Areopagite's ranks in the hierarchy.[58] Bar Hebraeus opens his section on the order and ranks of angels: "the word of theology knows three celestial churches, and in each there are again three orders, that is to say, ranks."[59] This is not just a one-off reference: in fact, his commentary on angels is infused with sacerdotal readings and how these "churches" are prefigured in the Old Testament priesthood.[60] I will give only a few examples here of how Bar Hebraeus uses ecclesiastical terms to understand angelic operations, compared with the Greek Dionysian tradition. Consider the origin he gives for the names of the angelic ranks:

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[58] In this, Bar Hebraeus has an unacknowledged debt to John Dara, who in his commentary on the *Celestial High Priesthood* (which in turn is following the Syriac tradition of calling Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy* by that title) organizes angels not into choirs or ranks but "churches". See: Anderson, "The Interpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius in the Works of John of Dara." Both John Dara and Bar Hebraeus use the Syriac word which generally translates ἐκκλησία (rather than "hierarchy"). This is contrary to the claim of Berti, who says that Bar Hebraeus is the only "medieval" author to do this. See: Berti, "L'angelologia siriaca: Gregorio Abu-l-Farag Bar Ebraya, Della conoscenza delle essenze celesti, che sono gli angeli, nei loro differenti cori," 1408.

[59] Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* V.II.1.1 ܡܠܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܘܬܐ ܡܬܝܕܥ ܬܠܬ ܟܢܝܫܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܘܒܟܠܗ ܟܢܝܫܬܐ ܬܠܬ ܣܕܪܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪܝܢ.

[60] *Candelabra* V.II.1.2 There are many other ways of conceptualizing the celestial hierarchy. Thomas Aquinas, for example, uses civil imagery of princes. See: ST I.108.5 ad 2-4.

	Rank	Origin in Dionysius	Origin in Bar Hebraeus[61]
3	Thrones Θρόνος ܡܘܬܒܐ (mawtbe)	"transcendence over every earthly defect…forever separated from what is inferior…free of all passion and material concern"[62]	From their repose in doing the will of God.
5	Powers δύναμις ܚܝܠܘܬܐ (ḥaylawoto)	"masculine and unshakable courage in all its godlike activities. It is a courage which abandons all laziness and softness during the reception of the divine enlightenments granted to it, and is powerfully uplifted to imitate God"[63]	"From the manly power, unshakeable in all the operations, bearing resemblance to God."[64]
7	Principalities ἀρχός ܪܝܫܘܢܘܬܐ (rišonuṯe)	"the ability to returned completely toward that principle which is above all principles and to lead others to him like a prince."[65]	"From what which towards the principle: turning from the majesty of this principle to both wholly direct others, like a high priest,

[61] *Candelabra* V.II.2.1.

[62] Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* VII. 1, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[63] Dionysius, *Celestial Hierachy* 8.1, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[64] Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* V.II.2.1 ܡܢ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܠܥܠܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ ܕܟܠܗ ܕܡܫܡܫ ܒܬܪܥܝܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ ܕܠܥܠ ܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܕܡܬܟܢܫ ܒܬܪܥܝܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ.

[65] Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* 91, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

			and in that prefigured."[66]
8	Archangels ἀρχάγγελος ܪܝܫܝ ܡܠܐܟܐ (riši malake)	It has relationship with both the turning principalities and the angels, bringing order to them.	"also taken from the high priest. For as the name of the Principalities is above the name of the Archangels, so to the order of the archangels is above that of the angels"[67]

There are four places at which we see this at play in the explanation of the origins of different angels in the hierarchy, or four places at which Bar Hebraeus diverges from Dionysius: in his description of the Thrones, in his description of the powers, and in his descriptions of the Principalities and Archangels.

Bar Hebraeus makes his link with the Thrones from the world of men. Potentially, there is a liturgical link in that hierarchs repose on thrones during the liturgy. This link is not in Dionysius, and it is not in John of Dara's *Commentary on the Celestial High Priesthood,* but he does make similar comments in his *Commentary on the Eucharist.* He says that the priests "should be like the Thrones, that is, he shall be a resting place for the Holy Spirit."[68] Perhaps, in the tradition of Aristotle, he is simply incorporating information from observation into his

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[66] Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* V.II.2.1 ܡܫܬܝܢ ܫܠܝܛ ܕܝ ܬ. ܡܫܠܝܛܘܬܐ ܡܬܬܪܥܝܢ ܫܠܝܛܝ ܡܫܬܝܢ ܕܝ ܫܠܝܛ ܦܢܝ ܫܠܝܛ ܒܗ ܠܘܬ ܫܠܝܛ ܡܬܥܠܝܢ ܫܠܝܛ ܒܗ ܕܝ ܡܫܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܫܠܝܛ ܡܬܬܪܥ.

[67] *Candelabra* V.II.2.1 ܫܠܝܛܘܬܐ ܡܬܬܪܥ ܫܠܝܛ ܕܝ ܡܬܬܪܥ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܪܥ ܡܬܬܪܥ. ܡܬܬܪܥ ܡܢ ܡܫܬܝܢ ܡܫܠܝܛܘܬܐ ܡܬܬܪܥ ܕܝ ܡܢ. ܡܫܠܝܛ ܡܬܬܪܥ ܡܢ ܡܫܬܝܢ. ܡܬܬܪܥ ܡܢ ܡܫܬܝܢ ܡܫܠܝܛ ܫܠ.

[68] John Dara, *Commentary on the Eucharist* 1.19 trans. Varghese.

understanding of the universe: in this case, seeing people, or hierarchs in particular, reposing. John Dara adds that what characterizes the Thrones "is that it avoids wandering, that is toil over earthly things and illegitimate things."[69]

The second difference is also an Aristotelian one. The word Bar Hebraeus gives for Powers (ܗܝܠܘܬܐ, ḥaylawoto) comes from ܗܝܠܐ (ḥaylo)– which itself also translates δύναμις, but the Aristotelian δύναμις, i.e. power in action (i.e. not the potentiality of inactivity). The rank, then, is intertwined with the philosophical principle.

The final divergence comes from the infusion of priestly imagery into Bar Hebareus's understanding of the Principalities and the Archangels. A lot of the connection rests on a repetition of the root resh-shin, the same word that gives us "head" ܪܝܫܐ (rišo) (cognate with the Hebrew רֹאשׁ). The ܪܝܫܐ (rišo) can be *head*, *source, summit*, *ruler*/ἄρχων. It is the word that translates "ἄρχοντα" in Exodus 2:14a/Acts 7:35[70], as well as the anatomical head in 1 Cor 12:21 (κεφαλὴ)[71] and "beginning" (Ἀρχὴ) in Mark 1:1.[72] Syriac ܪܝܫܐ (rišo) appears very frequently with the sense of chief or ruler (e.g., Matthew 12:24, Matthew 20:25, Acts 3:17, Revelation 1:5). ܪܝܫܐ (rišo) for source or beginning and often translates the Greek ἀρχή for origin (e.g. Matt 24:8, Mk 13:8, Col 1:18, Heb 5:12), and it is a compound derivative of ܪܝܫܐ (rišo) that begins John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1, ܒܪܝܫܝܬ (berišiṯ). Importantly for our purposes, ܪܝܫܐ (rišo) also translates the Aristotelian ἀρχή, meaning starting point or principle.[73] All these different senses

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[69] John Dara, *Commentary on the Eucharist* 1.19, trans. Varghese

[70] "ὁ δὲ εἶπεν τίς σε κατέστησεν ἄρχοντα καὶ δικαστὴν ἐφ᾽ ἡμῶν" (ܡܢ ܕܡܩܝܡ ܠܟ ܪܝܫܐ ܘܕܝܢܐ ܥܠܢ).

[71] "ἢ πάλιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῖς ποσίν" (Sy: ܐܘ ܬܘܒ ܪܝܫܐ ܠܪܓܠܐ).

[72] "Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου" (Sy: ܪܝܫܐ ܕܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ).

[73] Importantly for our purposes, ܪܝܫܐ also translates the Aristotelian ἀρχή in the works of Sergius of Reshayna, meaning starting point or principle. See: Sami Aydin, *Sergius of Reshaina: Introduction to Aristotle and His*

are at play in the Bar Hebraeus's understanding of the role of the Principalities:

And the name of the **Principalities**	ܪܫܝܬܘܬܐ ܫܡܗܘܢ
From what which towards the **principle**	ܡܢ ܡܕܡ ܕܠܬܪܝܢ ܪܫܝܬܐ ܡܬܠܝ
turning from the majesty of this **principle** to both wholly direct others	ܕܢܦܩܝܢ ܡܢ ܗܕܐ ܪܫܝܬܐ ܕܝܩܪܐ ܕܬܪܝܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܠܡܝܢ ܠܐܚܪܢܐ
like **high priests**, and in that (priesthood) prefigured	ܟܗܢܐ ܪܫܝܬܐ ܕܟܗܢܐ ܕܢܝܬ ܒܗ ܡܬܬܨܒܝܢ.

The first instance in this passage is the word "principalities". This is translating ἀρχός/ ἄρχων ܪܫܝܬܐ (rišonuṯe). ܪܫܝܬܐ (rišonuṯe) means any number of ruler-type things: principality, governorship, magistracy, dignity, principle, primacy, episcopacy, abbacy.[74] The second and third mobilize a different meaning: ܪܫܝܬܐ (rišiṯo) is "beginning, origin, chief part, principle part", or the Aristotelian ἀρχή. For Bar Hebraeus, of course, Principle is God.

The fourth instance of it is in the Syriac word for High Priest - ܪܫܝܬܐ ܕܟܗܢܐ (rišuṯ kohnoyiṯ). (the adverbial form of ܪܫܝܬܐ

Categories, Addressed to Philotheos (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 301. Sergius is particularly influential for the transmission of Aristotle and Dionysius, as we see Bar Hebraeus following him. Not all Syriac authors use ܪܫܝ for Aristotelian ἀρχή. Jacob of Edessa and George Bishop of the Arabs use ܪܝܫܐ in their translation Aristotle's *Categories* VIII 9b20 (ἀρχὴν) This is also what the anonymous translator of *De Interpretatione* uses: ὁρῶμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἔστιν ἀρχὴ with ܪܝܫܐ. All Syriac and Greek texts, here, come from the Hunaynnet Project: https://hunaynnet.oeaw.ac.at/index.html (accessed 12/04/23).

[74]Ad. Loc, see R. Payne Smith and Jessie (Payne Smith) Margoliouth, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary, Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R.Payne Smith, D. D.* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1903), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000017168.

ܪܝܫܘܬܐ, rišuṯ kohnuṯo) [75] Resh-shin words are also in Bar Hebraeus's description of the Archangels, six times over:

And the name of the **Archangels** is	ܘܫܡܗ ܕܪܫܐܝܬܐ
also taken from the **high priesthood**	ܕܢܦܩ ܡܢ ܟܗܢܘܬܐ ܪܝܫܬܐ
For as the name of the **Principalities** is **above**	ܡܛܠ ܕܐܝܟ ܫܡܗ ܕܪܫܝܬܐ ܠܥܠܐ
the name of the **Archangels**	ܕܫܡܗ ܕܪܫܐܝܬܐ
so to the order of the **archangels is above** that of the angels	ܐܦ ܠܣܕܪܐ ܕܪܫܐܝܬܐ ܠܥܠܐ ܡܢ ܕܡܠܐܟܐ

Archangels, then, are to angels as high priests are to priests.

In short, Bar Hebraeus does not diverge from Dionysius as much as fit him into the frameworks he has, both his understanding of the celestial hierarchy as a divine priesthood and his understanding of the world as working on Aristotelian principles, which goes back in the Syriac tradition at least to

[75] This is not the only Syriac word for High Priest: In Hebrew 4:16, in the Peshitta for example, Jesus is called "ܪܒܝܢܐ ܪܒܐ" (high priest), and this is also the term for Caiaphas. Both in the Peshitta and in the Old Syriac as well, where Καϊάφαν τὸν ἀρχιερέα = ܩܝܦܐ ܪܒ ܟܗܢܐ (Mt 26:57). Bar Hebraeus's term, ܟܗܢܘܬܐ ܪܝܫܬܐ, "high priesthood" is the same as the term for high priest in the Harklean version (ܪܒ ܟܗܢܐ). The Harklean term (ܪܒ ܟܗܢܐ) is also Bar Kepha's term in his *Commentary on Luke,* where he says that (ܘܡܢ ܗܘ ܙܡܢܐ ܕܗܪܘܕܝܣ ܟܗܢܐ ܪܒܐ ܗܘܘ ܡܫܠܛܝܢ ܥܠܝܗܘܢ) "and from that time to the time of Herod high priests ruled over them". It is also the term John of Dara uses, when he says "Angelic High Priesthood" (ܟܗܢܘܬܐ ܕܡܠܐܟܐ ܪܝܫܬܐ). For John of Dara, see: Harvard MS Syriac 122 (2v-18v). For a comparison of the versions, see: George Kiraz, *Comparative edition of the Syriac Gospels: aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshîṭtâ and Ḥarklean versions*, vol. 1, New Testament tools and studies, 21 1-4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 416. For Bar Kepha, see: Abdul-Massih Saadi, *Moshe Bar Kepha's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 59 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2020), 281.

Jacob of Edessa's *Hexameron*.[76] There is also wordplay, already present in Greek (ἀρχάγγελος, ἀρχιερεύς, ἄρχων/ἀρχός, ἀρχή), mobilizing multiple levels of ἀρχή : the Aristotelian and ruler-sense. The priestly imagery pervades Bar Hebraeus's reading of the angelic hierarchy. The consequences of this difference are significant. As Berti explains in his introduction to his translation Bar Hebraeus's *Candelabra V,*

> If the work of the Areopagite was all aimed at incorporating the structure of the church together with the monastic experience (which was problematic from the standpoint of politics in Palestine at the end of the fifth century, where [the Areopagite's] work originated) into the framework of the Neoplatonic Emanation which had in heaven its most perfect symbol, then Bar Hebraeus instead lived in a time when the connection between the life of the church and the hierarchical structure is a completely established fact, which could then be re-projected onto heaven, since the church has become the perfect symbol of the cosmic hierarchy.[77]

For Bar Hebraeus, there is a powerful and intimate connection between the church on earth and the church in heaven. However, what does this connection mean for the earthly priesthood and the place of the church in the universe?

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[76] Marina Greatrex, "The Angelology in the Hexameron of Jacob of Edessa," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 4, no. 1 (2009): 33–46, https://doi.org/10.1515/jcsss-2009-040106. Jacob of Edessa's main influences were Gregory Nazianzus and Pseudo-Dionysius, but he was also involved in the translation and study of Aristotle. See: Henri Hugonnard-Roche, "Jacob Of Edessa And The Reception Of Aristotle," in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day* (Brill, 2008), 205–22, https://brill.com/display/book/9789047426936/Bej.9789004173477.i-314_014.xml.

[77] Berti, "L'angelologia siriaca: Gregorio Abu-l-Farag Bar Ebraya, Della conoscenza delle essenze celesti, che sono gli angeli, nei loro differenti cori," 1408. My translation from Italian.

Earthly Priesthood

The idea of angelic priesthood is also infused in Bar Hebraeus's understanding of the earthly priesthood's function. While I will focus here on the theological backing for the function of the priesthood, it is important to note in his treatise on the earthly priesthood, 4455 of 5542 words in the treatise are dedicated explicitly to the sacraments: consecration of different offices (such as priests and deacons), consecration of the chrism, theology and practice of baptism and eucharist, rituals related to the "sleeping". I will primarily focus on the first section of his treatise, where he discusses what the priesthood is. Obviously, the priests are the people who engage in all of these rituals – who conduct the business of the church. However, Bar Hebraeus specifically addresses the place of the priesthood in the cosmos, which is what I analyze here.

He begins by exploring what defines priesthood. The entire priesthood, regardless of rank, performs one single operation: "its operation is guiding humans towards similarity to God, as much as is possible for human nature, through the mediation of the similarity of intellectual essences."[78] Thus, as much as is humanly possible, the basic work of the priesthood is to bring people into similarity of God through its mediation. This happens "by (1) the comprehension of contemplative thoughts and (2) by the adornment of these customs which are for our spiritual churches, and (3) by mediation of similarity which is in the conceivable essence, [the priesthood does its work]."[79]

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[78] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.1 ܟܕ ܡܬܟܪܙܝܢ ܒܗ ܠܒܢܝܢܐ ܡܬܕܡܝܢ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܒܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܐܢܫܘܬܐ ܒܡܨܥܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܟܝܠ ܠܗ ܟܕ.

[79] Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* VI.I.1.1 ܒܡܬܟܝܠ ܕܐܢܫܘܬܐ ܕܟܠ ܚܕ ܡܬܕܡܝܢ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܒܡܨܥܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܟܝܠ ܠܗ ܟܕ. ܘܒܬܪܝܨܘܬ ܕܡܨܘܬܐ ܕܠܬܪܝܢ ܕܡܬܟܢܫܝܢ ܒܗ ܠܒܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܬܕܡܝܢ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܒܡܨܥܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܟܝܠ ܠܗ ܟܕ Kohlhaas, in his German translates this as "und in der Ausschmückung mit Sitten, die den des Geistigen eigen sind, und vermittels der Angleichung an die geistigen Wesen" (17).

Mediation happens through contemplation of divine things, the Church's practices, and through the basic fact of the similarity of the priesthood to the divine. In essence, mediation occurs by delving into the spiritual sense of the church's actions and by participating in the church's activities, whereby there is a mediation of similarity to that in the conceptual world through physical actions. This is very Dionysian, and in fact Bar Hebraeus follows this explanation with a quote from Dionysius, say that he also says that which was said "by the Great Dionysius, by who we are guided in each of our mysteries, who said: 'we come towards the Holy Activity of the priesthood, we are in proximity to the essence which is greater than us, with similarity according to our power, which is unchangeable stability of their holy foundation.'"[80] The priesthood is in action, and through this action, there is stability.

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[80] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.1, Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* I.1:372 B ܡܢ ܪܒܐ ܕܝܘܢܘܣܝܘܣ ܗܘ ܕܡܢ ܟܠ ܐ̈ܪܙܝܢ ܐܬܕܒܪܢ ܕܐܡܪ. ܕܡܢܗ ܕܝܢ ܠܘܬ ܡܥܒܕܢܘܬܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ ܕܟܘܡܪܘܬܐ ܐܬܝܢ܆ ܗܘܝܢ ܒܩܘܪܒܐ ܕܐܘܣܝ̈ܐ ܕܠܥܠ ܡܢܢ. ܒܕܡܘܬܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܚܝܠܢ. ܕܡܡܘܬܪܐ ܠܐ ܡܫܬܚܠܦܢܐ ܕܫܘܬܐܣܬܗܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ. The Greek gives: ἐξ ἧς ἐπὶ τὴν ἁγίαν ἐρχόμενοι τῆς ἱερατείας ἐνέργειαν ἐγγύτεροι μὲν αὐτοὶ γινόμεθα τῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς οὐσιῶν τῇ κατὰ δύναμιν ἀφομοιώσει τοῦ μονίμου τε καὶ ἀνεξαλλάκτου τῆς αὐτῶν ἱερᾶς ἱδρύσεως (coming to that which is the holy activity of the priesthood, on the one hand we become nearer to the beings who are better than us, with the imitation of their power of stability and unchangeability of their holy foundation). Kohlhaas translates the Syriac quote as: Indem wir von ihr zur heiligen Betätigung des Priestertums gelangen, sind wir in der Nähe der Wesen, die über uns sind, in der unserer Kraft gemäßen Angleichung an die unveränderlich Dauer ihrer heiligen Beständigkeit (17). There are several important translation points, here, especially the words which translate Greek ἐνέργειαν and δύναμιν, both of which are significant Aristotelian terms. "activity" is here Syriac ܡܥܒܕܢܘܬܐ, frequently a translation of Greek ἐνέργεια. It frequently translates the Aristotelian ἐνέργεια ("operation") in Syriac. For example, we see it in George Bishop of the Arab's translation of *De Interpretatione.* Where the Greek gives Φανερὸν δὴ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ὅτι τὸ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὂν κατ' ἐνέργειάν ἐστιν, ὥστε εἰ πρότερα τὰ ἀΐδια, καὶ ἐνέργεια δυνάμεως προτέρα, the Syriac has: ܓܠܝܐ ܗ̣ܝ، ܕܝܢ ܡܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܐܬܐܡܪ̈ ܗܘܐ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܢܩܐ ܐܝܬܘܗܝ، ܐܝܟ

Mediation is a major function of the sacred institution of the hierarchy in both Dionysius and Bar Hebraeus, though Dionysius specifies that "the common goal of every hierarchy consists of the continuous love of God and of things divine, a love which is sacredly worked out in an inspired and unique way."[81] Bar Hebraeus, however, turns his attention specifically to the limits of mediation, saying "the priesthood has a manner of conducting humans from animalistic customs to angelic customs, as much as is possible through the mediation of corporeal materials which, in this, depicts the Type of those things which are not corporeal."[82] What does he mean by these things that depict these Types? The liturgical elements: "aromatic oil, and the heavenly bread, and the life-giving wine."[83] These things are the

> The words set to music, through which, by hearing it, the soul is aroused from sleep, and it is made to remember

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ܣܠܝܐ ܕܥܒܕܬܐ ܡܬܩܢܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܕܡܐ ܒܗ ܕܢܐ ,ܡܢܗܝܢ ܥܒܕܬܐܝܬ ܡܬܩܢܐ. In the Greek NT, there are 8 occurrences of the lemma ἐνέργεια, and half of those instances are translated by ܥܒܕܬܐ (Eph 1:19, Eph 3:7, 2 Thess 2:9, 2 Thess 2:11). There are no other instances of the Syriac ܥܒܕܬܐ in the NT. Unsurprisingly for Bar Hebraeus, the concepts of 'powers' and 'operations' are closely linked – in his *Candelabra* V.II.2.1 he describes the angelic rank of powers as: ܡܢ ܥܒܝܕܐ ܬܩܝܦܐ ܕܥܒܕܬܐ ܕܟܠܗ ,ܕܡܐ ܥܠܡܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܝܟܢܘܬܐ. "From the manly power, unshakeable in all the operations, bearing resemblance to God." This George translation also shows us that the Syriac translated as "power" here (ܣܠܝܐ) translates Greek προτέρα. this ܣܠܝܐ word also translated δύναμις in our Dionysius translation and is the name of Dionysius's fifth rank in Syriac (δύναμις/ܣܠܝܐ) (cf. *Candelabra* V.II.2.1). All Syriac and Greek texts, here, come from the Hunaynnet Project: https://hunaynnet.oeaw.ac.at/index.html (accessed 12/04/23).

[81] Dionyisus, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* I.2.

[82] Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* VI.I.1.1 ܕܡܬܬܠܝ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ ܕܒܪܢܫܐ ܠܡܠܐܟܝܐ ܡܢ ܕܡܬܟܠܝܢ ܡܕܡܐ ܕܒܪܝܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܩܢܐ ܕܒܗ ,ܕܡܐ ܕܡܬܬܥܒܕܐ ܠܗ ܒܫܘܡܐ ܕܡܬܩܢܐ ܠܗ ܒܗ ܕܡܬܬܚܙܝ ܠܗ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܩܢܐ.

[83] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.1 ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ. ܕܚܡܪܐ ܕܡܫܠܐ. ܕܚܡܐ ܕܚܝܐ ܕܡܫܬܐ.

> its first homeland. Therefore, though from the yoke of matter, [the soul] is liberated, and from its bonds, it is related. Unimpededly, [the soul] is united to heavenly essences, according to what is constituted in its associations.[84]

The priests, and even more so the high priests, are those whose activity wakes up the sleepers to a higher reality. There are two kinds of priesthoods: "Either the celestial, which is the same as the angels, or the earthly."[85] While Dionysius does say that God modeled the "our most pious hierarchy" on "the sacred institution and source of perfection" that is the celestial hierarchy, he does not conceptualize the angelic activities as an angelic priesthood in the way Bar Hebraeus, following John Dara, does.[86] Bar Hebraeus writes that "the celestial priesthood is endowed with the possibility of mediation of similarity which is in it to God, without the material veil (that is to say, a persistent cloud over the faces of intellectual eyes) constantly occupying the created nature of angels."[87] This key difference shapes how Bar Hebraeus understands the place of the ecclesiastical priesthood in the cosmos: as a middle ground between the legal priesthood, which was given through Moses by God, and this angelic priesthood. "The legal priesthood," Bar Hebraeus explains, "is the dimmer and more distant one, endowed with the mediation of similarity to God and that which was known and was given and established in limits and

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[84] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.1 ܘܒܬܪ ܗܠܝܢ ܠܡܒܠܬ ܒܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܐܝܕܐ ܕܒܡܡܠܠܗ ܡܬܬܠܒܫܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܥܒܕܬܐ ܢܦܫܐ ܘܡܚܡܕܐ ܐܬܪܗ ܩܕܡܝܐ. ܘܗܟܝܠ ܟܕ ܡܢ ܢܝܪ ܗܘܠܐ ܡܬܚܪܪܐ. ܘܡܢ ܐܣܘܪܝܗ ܡܫܬܪܝܐ. ܠܐ ܡܬܟܠܝܢܐܝܬ ܠܐܘܣܝܣ ܫܡܝܢܝܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܒܝܬܝܬܐ ܒܒܢܘܬܗ ܡܬܬܣܝܡܐ.

[85] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.2 ܐܘ ܫܡܝܢܝܬܐ ܗܝ܆ ܐܝܟ ܗܝ ܕܡܠܐܟܐ. ܐܘ ܐܪܥܢܝܬܐ.

[86] Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* 1.3, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[87] Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* VI.I.1.2 ܘܟܗܢܘܬܐ ܗܝ ܫܡܝܢܝܬܐ܆ ܡܬܝܪ ܒܡܬܬܐ ܡܨܥܐ ܠܕܡܘܬܗ ܚܢܘܬ ܕܡܗܘܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ. ܟܕ ܗܝ ܕܠܐ ܒܝܬ ܬܟܣܝܬܐ ܗܘܠܢܝܬܐ. ܐܘܟܝܬ ܥܢܢܐ ܕܩܒܝܥ ܠܐܦܝ ܥܝܢܬܐ ܗܘܢܢܝܬܐ ܟܠܐ ܒܟܝܢܗܘܢ ܒܪܝܐ ܕܡܠܐܟܐ.

corporeal admonitions."[88] So between the fully corporeal and fully incorporeal realities is the church: "After in it, indeed, participation is mixed through rational Contemplations with perceptual signs and through these, it has been brought sacredly to God."[89] Bar Hebraeus supports his point with an explanation of Dionysus, saying, "And this, the great Dionysius explains when he says: for there is another, collegially in the midst of the two breads, that is to say the celestial and the legal one."[90] The Church is between these two hierarchies: not fully incorporeal, not fully corporeal, and can understand the symbols of the legal priesthood as such.

Participation in the divine is not a unique idea, but instead a fairly common idea in Christianity.[91] What is particularly

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[88] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.2 ܡܫܬܬܦܘܬܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܡܬܬܩܪܒܐ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܡܪܝ ܕܝܢܝܣܝܘܣ ܕܡܠܦܢܐ. ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܡܬܬܩܪܒܐ.

[89] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.2 ܕܐܝܬ ܐܚܪܝܢ. ܕܒܡܨܥܬܐ ܕܬܪܝܢ ܠܚܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܡܢ ܕܐܝܬ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܘܕܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܬܩܪܒܝܢ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ.

[90] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.2 ܕܐܝܬ ܟܢܝܫܬܐ ܒܡܨܥܬܐ ܕܬܪܝܢ ܠܚܡܐ. ܗܢܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܡܢ ܕܐܝܬ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܘܕܕܝܢܐ. Maybe a reference to EH III.3.12, when Dionysius discusses the fraction of the bread?

[91] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.2; *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* V.1; *Divine Names* II.4 (and throughout Divine Names). Thomas Aquinas, for example, also following Dionysius, situates angelic work within the idea of participation in *Summa* I.108.5.co. These properties show their participation in some aspect of God: "by participation, when an attribute is possessed by something not fully but partially; thus holy men are called gods by participation." This is Thomas's way of expressing Dionysius's dissimilar similarities: there are certain ways in which the angels participate in properties to which they most adhere, though "in the angelic orders all spiritual perfections are common to all the angels." Therefore, Thomas explains, "Dionysius explains the names of the orders accordingly as they befit the spiritual perfections they signify." For more on participation, see: Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2011).

interesting here is how Bar Hebraeus's reading of the angelic hierarchy as a priesthood brings him to situate the earthly priesthood, the fourth church, as between the fully perceptible and imperceptible.

What these three divisions of the single priesthood share, that the so-called heathen priesthood does not share, is the "priestly office, which is imitation of that which is in God."[92] This priesthood is the inverse of real priesthood: "it cultivates that which is demonic through the mediation of idolatrous images, and without a certain participation and with a certain operation, so it deceives in its name."[93] Notably, like Dionysius, Bar Hebraeus makes no mention of other Christian confessions: there is only the Church, "our priesthood," and the angelic high priesthood.[94]

The process of elevation is "through a threefold birth",[95] where the one higher in the hierarchy "takes pains to carefully draw the inferior thing to association with that which is excellent (as much as is possible)."[96] The process happens:

1) Through the purification of despicable fornicators [or ways] who are aliens to the imitation of its own similarity and,
2) The illumination, which is after purification

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[92] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.2 ܕܡܘܬܐ ܕܒܐܠܗܐ ܡܕܡܝܢܐ.

[93] *Candelabra* VI.I.1.2 ܐܠܐ ܠܟܘܡܪܐ ܗܘ ܦܠܚܐ ܒܡܨܥܝܘܬ ܨܠܡܐ ܦܬܟܪܝܐ. ܠܐ ܒܡܕܡ ܡܫܘܬܦܘܬܐ ܠܡܥܒܕܢܘܬܐ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܘܡܥܒܕܢܘܬܐ ܡܕܡ ܕܐܝܟ ܫܡܐ ܗ̱ܘ.

[94] Could this be because of his ecumenism? Bar Hebraeus was an extremely influential advocate for Christian unity. See: Ephrem Aboud Ishac, "Being Christians Together? The Situation of Ecumenism in the Middle East. An Institutional Perspective," in *Thinking about Christian Life in the Turmoil Times of the Middle East: Insights and Reflections from East and West*, ed. Martin Tamcke and Claudia Rammelt, Universitätsdrucke Göttingen (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2020), 67–69.

[95] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.1 ܒܝܕ ܬܠܬ ܗܘܝܐ.

[96] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.1 ܐܝܟ ܕܡܨܝ ܒܟܠܐ ܕܢܓܪܘܪ ܠܗܘ ܕܒܨܝܪ ܠܫܘܬܦܘܬܐ ܥܡ ܗܘ ܕܡܝܬܪ ܗ̱ܘ.

3) And next, through the drawing of excellent images, which are the inimitable part of that which is perfection.[97]

Once again, we see the threefold process: purification of that which is foreign to godliness, illumination, and then the individual is drawn, though exemplars, to imitate what about those exemplars is imitable and drawn near to perfection. This is the scheme of purification, illumination, and perfection accomplished by the ranks of the priesthood. Purification happens through the deacons: "through the deacons, [the soul] is guided and on account of this, the deacons are dubbed 'purifying ones'".[98] Illumination happens through the priests: "and through the priests, [the soul] is filled, and on account of this, the priests are named 'enlighteners'."[99] Finally, perfection happens through the high priests: "through the high priest, the soul is perfected, and on account of this, the high priests are called 'perfectors'".[100] In summary, Bar Hebraeus says, "And thus are the three ranks of the fourth and earthly church, I have said: the deacons, priests, and high priests, each one from the churches which are in heaven."[101]

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[97] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.1 ܟܕ ܕܘܡܝܐ ܕܙܢܝܐ ܒܫܦܝܪܐ ܕܡܬܕܒܩܝܢ ܠܡܬܕܡܝܢܐ ܡܢ ܡܠܬܗ ܕܡܬܕܡܝܢܐ. ܘܟܕ ܡܬܢܗܪܘܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܕܘܡܝܐ. ܐܝܟܢܐ ܟܕ ܡܬܓܡܪܘܬܐ ܕܟܝ ܘܬܪܬܐ ܡܫܬܪܬܐ ܕܡܬܕܡܝܢܐ ܕܗܝ ܗܝ ܠܡܫܒܘܪܘܬܐ. Images/imagery and the interpretation of images is a major theme in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy.* Eg. *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 4.3.

[98] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.1 ܟܕ ܡܫܡ̈ܫܢܐ ܡܬܕܒܪܐ. ܘܡܛܠܗܕܐ ܡܕ̈ܟܝܢܐ ܐܫܬܡܗܘ ܡܫܡ̈ܫܢܐ.

[99] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.1 Presumably, filled with light ܟܕ ܟܗܢܐ ܡܬܡܠܝܐ. ܘܡܛܠܗܕܐ ܡܢܗܪܢܐ ܐܬܟܢܝܘ ܟܗܢܐ ܡܫܬܡܠܝܢܐ.

[100] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.1 ܘܡܛܠܗܕܐ ܠܓܡܘܪܐ ܐܬܩܪܝܘ ܪ̈ܝܫ ܟܗܢܐ.

[101] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.1 ܘܗܟܢܐ ܬܠܬܐ ܗܘܘ ܠܗ ܛܟܣ̈ܐ ܕܥܕܬܐ ܪܒܝܥܝܬܐ ܘܐܪܥܢܝܬܐ. ܡܫܡ̈ܫܢܐ ܐܡܪ ܟ̈ܗܢܐ ܘܟܗܢܐ ܘܪ̈ܝܫ ܟܗܢܐ. ܐܝܟ ܕܐܦ ܬܠܬܐ ܠܗ ܠܓܒܝܢ ܕܥܠܝܐ ܡܢ ܥܕ̈ܬܐ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ.

Three groups are undergoing purification: the two types of penitents and the catechumens. All these have not been purified, and must be sent out by the deacons after the reading: "For their eyes are too dim for their sight, until they are purified from the stickiness of the eyes, which afflicts them, that is to say [until] the spiritual gifts are imparted to them."[102] It is not possible to be enlightened without being purified, and similarly, enlightenment is necessary for perfection.

Next Bar Hebraeus turns his attention to those who think that there are three churches in nine orders on earth as in the celestial hierarchy. These (incorrect!) people

> divide the heavenly churches, and the first [church] in three ranks – that of the patriarchs and metropolitans and bishops, they count. And then again they set up the middle/second church in three ranks: that of elders, of deacons, and of subdeacons. And again, the other/third church, they reckon into three thanks: that of readers, and of cantors, and of exorcists.[103]

This would lead to nine ranks within the church. For Bar Hebraeus, this completely misunderstands Dionysius, who "teaches that there is only one earthly church in three ranks."[104] The major issue is that this nine-rank interpretation misunderstands the nature of the ranks: each member of a

[102] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.2 ܗܠܝܢ ܠܚ̈ܙܘܐ ܥܡܝܐ ܒܠܝܚܘ: ܕܒܠܬ̈ܐ ܐܠܗ̈ܝܐ ܦܩܝܚ ܠܗܘܢ. ܐܝܟ ܡܬܬܦܫܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܥܡ̈ܥܢܐ. ܐܡܬܝ ܕܠܐ ܗܦܟܐ ܐܢܘܢ ܠܡܬܠ ܓܘܗ ܘܠܡܫܚܐ ܠܐܪ̈ܙܐ ܡܠܟ̈ܝܐ ܘܐܠܗ̈ܝܐ.

[103] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.3 ܘܐ̱ܢܫܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝ ܐܡܪܝܢ. ܕܒܪ̈ܬܐ ܥܕ̈ܬܢܝܬܐ ܒܬ ܒܠܚܘܕ ܐܚܝܕܐ ܡܬܬܪ̈ܚܝܢܬܐ ܐܝܟ. ܘܗܕܐ ܕܝܠܝ ܐܪܟܝܢܬܐ ܡܬܬܪ ܟܢܝܫܬܐ ܗ̣ܝ، ܐܝܠܝܢ ܐ ܕܐܦ ܗܪܟܐ ܠܬܘܢ ܐܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܐܦ ܗܪܬܡܢ. ܬܠܬ ܢܣܩܝܢ ܒܬ̈ܪܬܐ ܒܬܫܥܐ ܬܢ ܒܢ̈ܝܐ. ܘܗܟܝܠ ܒܬ ܡܬܦܪܫܝܢ. ܒܬܪܬܐ ܒܠܥܬܐ ܘܡܕܡܢܬܐ ܒܬܠܬܐ ܬܢ ܒܢ̈ܝܢ ܕܦܛܪ̈ܝܪܟܐ ܘܡܛܪ̈ܘܦܘܠܝܛܐ ܘܐܦܣܩ̈ܘܦܐ ܡܢܝܢ. ܘܡܒܬܪܬܐ ܬܘܒ ܡܢ ܒܢܬܐ ܘܬܪܝܢܬܐ ܒܬܠܬܐ ܬܢ ܒܢ̈ܝܢ ܕܩܫܝ̈ܫܐ ܘܡܫܡ̈ܫܢܐ ܘܐܦܘܕܝܩܢܘ ܡܫܚܢ. ܘܒܬܪܬܐ ܬܘܒ ܐܚܪܝܬܐ ܘܬܠܝܬܝܬܐ ܒܬܠܬܐ ܬܢ ܒܢ̈ܝܢ ܕܩܪ̈ܘܝܐ ܘܡܙܡܪ̈ܢܐ ܘܡܫܒ̈ܩܢܐ ܚܫܒܝܢ.

[104] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.3 ܚܢ ܕܝܢ ܡܛܠ ܕܠܬܐܘܪܝܘܣ ܗܠܝܢ ܕ̈ܪܫܬܐ ܡܢܗ ܕܕܝܢܐ ܕܝܘܢܘܣܝܘܣ ܐܬܬܠܡܕܘ ܐܝܟ. ܘܗܘ ܚܕܐ ܒܠܚܘܕ ܒܪܬܐ ܐܪܟܝܢܬܐ ܒܬܠܬܐ ܛܟܣܝܢ ܐܠܦ. ܠܗ ܕܕܝܐܢܐ ܢܦܫܝܢ ܘܡܩܒܠܬܗ ܕܪܝܢ.

given rank shares one charisma.[105] Its perfection, illumination, or purification, and "no way do they surpass one another concerning the sort of charisma."[106] So all three of the last rank (lectors, cantors, and exorcists) are one charisma, though they are specifically appointed to different functions. Bar Hebraeus elaborates: "they are not made perfect through the laying of hands – instead, permission is given to them so that he might read, and that he might sing, and that he might exorcise those who are baptized."[107]

With this, he concludes his introductory chapter, though Bar Hebraeus himself begins his commentary on the particular rites of the liturgy. It is with this reflection on and interpretation of Dionysius that Bar Hebraeus uses to introduce his commentary on the liturgy, grounding the activities the clergy do in what the clergy are: mediators, in the fourth and earthly church, imitating God.

CONCLUSION

For Bar Hebraeus, the earthly church is one of four, and the earthly priesthood of the church is one of three, finding itself between the rational celestial high priesthood of the angels and the perceptible legal priesthood of Moses. He does not, in contrast to contemporary writers, discuss schisms within the church and instead discusses one earthly priesthood.[108] Bar Hebraeus closely reads and follows Dionysius, integrating Syriac Dionysian thought and liturgical commentary tradition into a new synthesis. He has an unacknowledged debt to John

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[105] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.3.

[106] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.3 ܘܠܐ ܒܡܕܡ ܡܢ ܚܕ̈ܕܐ ܒܙܢܐ ܕܡܘܗܒܬܐ ܡܬܝܬܪܝܢ.

[107] *Candelabra* VI.I.2.3 ܗܠܝܢ ܓ̈ܒܪܐ ܩܪ̈ܘܝܐ ܐܡܪ ܕ̈ܝܢ ܘܡܙܡܪܢܐ. ܘܡܡ̈ܫܩܝܢܐ. ܠܐ ܒܣܝܡ ܐܝܕܐ ܡܫܬܡܠܝܢ. ܐܠܐ ܡܦܣܢܘܬܐ ܒܠܚܘܕ: ܡܬܝܗܒܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܕܗܘ ܡܢ ܢܩܪܐ. ܘܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܢܙܡܪ: ܘܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܢܘܡܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܕܡܥܡܕܝܢ. ܘܐܦܘܪܕܐܩܘܣ ܡܢ ܘܐܦ ܡܬܬܪܫܝܢ:

[108] Cf. Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*.

Dara and many other commentators before him, who lay down the principles by which Bar Hebraeus opens up the world of Dionysius to his 13th-century audience. Bar Hebraeus envisions a world of heavenly participation through the priesthood, liturgy, and sacraments through which, priests, like angels, guide humanity towards similarity to God through Types and symbols. However, there is one more unique aspect of his approach: he follows Dionysius in avoiding overt polemic in his *Candelabra V and VI.*

In the Dionysian world, the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* serves to smooth divisions and differences into union. When description the work of the eucharist, Dionysius says "Every sacredly initiating operation draws our fragmented lives together into a one-like divinization. It forges a divine unity out of the divisions within us. It grants us communion and union with the One."[109] Reading Dionysius's work, there are no overt polemics against the author's contemporaries or acknowledgement of multiplicity of churches. There are hierarchs, deacons, and presbyters – but no patriarchs, named schisms, or councils. The author, writing under the pseudonym of Paul's convert in Athens, Dionysius the Areopagite, would certainly have revealed he was not a first-century disciple. Dionysius's vagueness about the doctrinal disputes of his day also enabled his popularity, and the enduring significance of his work for Christians who were otherwise not reading the same new work.

Bar Hebraeus was a famously ecumenical leader.[110] He considers the history of the Church of the East in his ecclesiastical chronicle, and even while holding his ground about his own Christological believes and refuting heresies (as in *Candelabra IV*), he claims that the pernicious heresies have

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[109] Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1, trans. Luibheid and Rorem.

[110] Hidemi Takahashi, *Barhebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography*, 1st Gorgias Press ed (Piscataway, N.J: Gorgias Press, 2005), 47–53.

passed and that the modern divisions of the church are a matter of terminology.[111]

In *Candelabra* V Bar Hebraeus considers the question of when angels were created. His conclusion is definite: "all anteriority and posteriority must be within time" and cannot be considered outside of time.[112] Angels were created beyond the determination of time, and Bar Hebraeus insists that all the Bible's temporal associations with the creation of angels must be taken metaphorically.[113] However, in contrast to his predecessors in the Syriac liturgical commentary tradition and in contrast, indeed, to a preoccupation that is common when Christians considered the sacraments and priesthood, Bar Hebraeus chooses to write a work of liturgical theology in the tradition of Dionysius, where there is one Ecclesiastical Hierarchy mediating between heaven and earth.

In this paper, I have only really considered the first part of Bar Hebraeus's *Candelabra* VI and V. Analysis of the rest of the work, compared to other West Syriac liturgical commentaries as well as more Byzantine and East Syriac liturgical commentaries, could reveal more about what is common to the West Syriac and wider Eastern Christian liturgical tradition and ecclesiology.[114]

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[111] Takahashi, *Barhebraeus*, 50. A similar approach has been attempted by scholars today, see: Sebastian Brock, "The 'Nestorian' Church: A Lamentable Misnomer," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78, no. 3 (September 1996): 3, https://doi.org/10.7227/BJRL.78.3.3.

[112] Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* V.III.1.1 More research is needed to understand Bar Hebraeus's acceptance (or not) of the idea of the eternity of the world, something he seems to accept in some of his works but not in others. See: Hidemi Takahashi, "The Reception of Ibn Sīnā in Syriac: The Case of Gregory Barhebraeus," in *Before and After Avicenna*, Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 52:272.

[113] Bar Hebraeus, *Candelabra* V.III.1.

[114] Wilhelm de Vries, SJ, has already done considerable work West Syriac sacramental theology and some work on ecclesiology. His analysis of the

Bar Hebraeus, much more so than any West Syriac liturgical commentator other than John Dara, integrates Dionysian thought in a meaningful way into his liturgical commentary. However, unlike Dionysius, he sees the earthly church as the fourth and final church, continuous with the three heavenly churches.

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Bar Hebraeus. *Le Candélabre Du Sanctuaire de Grégoire Aboulfaradj Dit Barhebraeus Cinquième Base: Des Anges*.

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mysteries of the Church and the particular sacraments draws on many West Syriac authors, and is sensitive to the development of various idea. See: De Vries, *Sakramententheologie Bei Den Syrischen Monophysiten.* However, he is a Catholic scholar which shapes the sorts of questions he considers. For example, he has an entire section on the concept of "transubstantiation" (142-155). Another example is in paper on ecclesiology, where he considers Syriac perspectives on the primacy of Peter, rejection of the jurisdiction of the Pope, and issues of ecumenism (e.g. "die monophysitische Kirche die allein wahre Kirche Christi?"), heretics, and schismatics. See: Wilhelm De Vries, "Zum Kirchenbegriff Der Späteren Jakobiten," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 19 (1953): 128–77.

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